Aspect and narration applied to lyrical poetry

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This paper deals with the category of aspect and its usefulness in the characterisation of texts of lyrical poetry. The category of aspect has essentially to do with the way how the narrative moves forwards, and hence has an affinity to narrative structuring. The category has no direct manifestation in Danish grammar, yet its presence in the semantic structure may be inferred from certain constructions, and a number of characteristic aspect-marking phrases may be identified. In lyrical texts the characteristic aspectual meaning is static. This is demonstrated through two classical texts by Emil Aarestrup and Viggo Stuckenberg. Finally the minimal narrative element in lyrical poetry is demonstrated through an analysis of a modern poem by Per Højholt.

Keywords: aspect; narration; lyrical poetry; semantics; Danish literature

1. Introduction

Jakobson's famous closing statement on Poetics and Linguistics (Jakobson 1960) has been discussed ever since it appeared in 1960 because of its challenging way of combining literary text analysis with language structures. Looking at these matters from today's point of view, the aim of text theoreticians still is to combine poetics and linguistics, and probably for exactly the same reasons as 50 years ago: the aim is to demonstrate the power of linguistic explanation by applying it to highly individualized texts, like poetic texts, and at the same time to lend weight to poetics and interpretations of poetical texts by drawing upon a branch of humanities with strong attachments to formalized science and hence with some kind of authority. Yet, such attempts are faced with radically different tasks today. Jakobson's first and foremost area of specialization in linguistics was phonetics, and it is obvious when you read the closing statements that relations to the sound aspect of language are in focus. Now, poetic texts certainly draw upon other aspects of language, and the investigation into syntax, semantics and pragmatics since 1960 has opened grounds that poetics could benefit from, too. The aim of this paper is to investigate into the possibilities of the semantic category of aspectuality in the interpretation of texts of lyrical poetry.

The term 'lyrical poetry' in the title deserves a comment. The term draws upon classical literary approaches like Hugo Friedrich (Friedrich 1956). The core

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of this concept is found in poetry describing a state of matters or of mind. This definition of genre is clearly narrower than the Jakobsonian concept of 'lyrical function', since it relies on quite specific types of situation and of enunciation. One of the ways Jacobson defined poetic language, was through the absence of 'real' shifter functions: whatever the actual situation of the enunciation could have been, the shifters in poetic texts did in principle never refer to them. But in the tradition of lyrical poetry we are much closer to Aristotle's definition of this genre as it is given in the beginning of his treatise on Poetics:

> There remains the third point of difference in these arts, that is, the manner in which each kind of subject may be represented. For it is possible using the same medium to represent the same subjects in a variety of ways. It may be done partly by narration and partly by the assumption of a character other than one's own, which is Homer's way; or by speaking in one's own person without such a change; or by representing the characters as performing all the actions dramatically. These, then, as I pointed out at the beginning, are the three factors by which the imitative arts are differentiated: their media, the objects they represent, and their manner of representation. (Aristotle ch. 3, 1448b, quoted from Dorsch (ed.) 1975 (1965): 34)

What is striking here, is the contrast between Jakobson's theme of pseudo-communication and Aristotle's approach where the poet speaks "one's own person without such a change [i.e. into another character, like Homer does, in Aristotle's understanding]". The Jakobsonian poet does nothing of the kind, on the contrary he disguises himself behind other voices in the enunciation. This points to an interesting split in lyrical poetry: on one hand such texts have this effect of reality, of the author's "own voice", as it were, talking directly to its listeners, free from all contracts of fictitiousness. On the other side all shifters are suspect of being postulated. Poems may be fictitious, but they are not evidently so. First person novels, e.g. are blatant and obvious lies, but still today everybody feels free to assume that William Shakespeare, the actor-author from Stratford, really was in love with some dark-haired lady, or that he was sexually attracted to younger men. We may think of such speculations as insipid, but they underline that the 'I' of texts of lyrical poetry has no obvious distance to the pragmatically identifiable author of the next. When the first-person *singularis* in a classical Danish poem like Schack Staffeldt's "Indvielsen" ("The Initiation", 1804, quoted from Staffeldt 2001: 238) tells how this first-person became a poet through a magical kiss from the muse, the text has an obviously metaphorical character, but still it is most likely that you are not assumed to calculate with any distance between the externally evident biographical 'I' Adolph Schack v. Staffeldt and the textual first-person. Jacobson's characterisation of the poetic function must have superordinate status in relation to poetic genres as such, and no text interpreter will do well if s/he disregards this dogma. However, in the narrower perspective of the specific lyrical genres the absolute delimitation of the manifest *'I'* from the enunciator becomes less obvious and indeed pragmatically speaking unclear, the presence of some kind of 'the author's own voice' making itself felt within this specific genre.

2. Aim of the paper

The aim of this paper is to discuss certain questions around the microorganisation of narration in texts of lyrical poetry in relation to the linguistic structure of the text. The particular problem is the nature of aspect, a verbal category, whose status in linguistic description is not always quite clear. I want to discuss the scope of this category and its impact on narration in general. After an overview of the semantic fundamentals of the category follows a brief introduction to the formal manifestations of the category in Danish. The paper concludes with a section of text interpretations meant as an illustration of the usefulness of this approach. This phenomenon is really sentence-to-sentence narration, not unlike Cl. Bremond's way of organizing narrative structures (Bremond 1973).

For the purpose of isolating narrative elements we need definitions.[1] The first concept to be introduced is 'narrative unit'.[2] According to this definition a 'narrative unit' is the transgression from one state to another, the two states being kept together by an isotopy.[3] Isotopies are traditional concepts of theoretical semantics. Practically speaking isotopies between states rely either on semantic elements belonging to the categories of causation, time and place, or on presupposed actants carrying the action that is going on. The narrative unit containing a transgression of states will therefore as its logical counterpart entail elements that remain constant.

The next concept to be introduced is the concept of 'narrative chain'. A narrative chain is the linking of at least two narrative units by means of an isotopy. A narrative chain may rely on only one isotopy, e.g. if one subject carries out two actions in sequence. But more isotopies may be involved, e.g. if two subjects carry out different actions within the same space, or if two subjects do different things in different spaces, but at the same time or within one string of causation of actions. In a complicated pattern of actions quite many isotopies may be involved to create coherence between the single narrative units. Several subjects may carry out several actions through time and space, only kept together by some kind of causation, as the case would be in a traditional realistic novel, and if there is coherence the text can be construed as a narrative chain. The degree of coherence between the isotopies is a factor that may be estimated, much in the same way as this is done in text linguistics, cp. Beaugrande & Dressler 1981: 5-9.

The approach, as it is outlined here, calls back to Aristotle's description of plots in literary texts. Aristotle sees the single actions in a literary text as joined into a plot by dependencies: an action is made possible through something that has taken place before, but the same action in itself makes other actions possible.[4]

You may compare the process with two other Jakobsonian concepts, metaphor and metonymy, which he himself coupled directly on traditional

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[1] These definitions are taken from Jørgensen (2009).
[2] This concept draws heavily upon Claude Bremond, cp. Bremond 1973: 32 and 309.
[3] The concept of isotopy in this context draws mainly upon Greimas 1966 and Togeby 2003.
[4] Cp. Dorsch (ed.) 1975 (1965): 41.

literary genres: metaphors belonging to poetry, and metonymy to prose.[5] The metonymic process in prose lies in the combination of single sentences into text passages and whole texts. The metaphorical process lies in other aspects and probably does not touch directly upon the combination of sentences. The present analysis is not dealing in detail with metaphors, but metonymy will play a role.

3. The Category of Aspect in General Linguistic Description

The category of Aspect was recognized within Ancient Greek, where it was used to account for differences between different past tenses. They were thought of as different ways of seeing the same thing happen, hence the name. Similar phenomena are found in French, where the different past tenses denote differences in the way an action is thought to happen. English has a similar difference between the simple and the expanded tenses, cp. *He got up when I entered the room* vs. *He was getting up when I entered the room*. The 'getting up' is roughly a process of the same sort happening in any instance, but the accomplishment is differing in these examples. Russian finally has a complete systematic division of the lexicon of verbs into pairs, where one member of the pair is the concluded version of the action and the other member is the action in unfinished form. Since the Russian verbs are normally derived from each other, the category is thought to belong to morphology in the case of Russian, whereas the Greek, French and English cases, having to do with tense forms and their interrelations, are thought of as syntactic questions. What really is at stake, is of course the semantic nature of this category.

Since Vendler (1957) a quadruple set of concepts has been used to describe the semantics of these phenomena. See Table 1.

Vendler's analysis means that the group of verbs may be seen as split up in three groups:

a. States, always describing static situations
b. Changes, always describing the transition from one state into another
c. Processes, where both static and transitory meaning are possible

In most practical matters the two vertical columns suffice to make the distinctions necessary to keep the inventory of forms apart.

Carlota Smith (Smith 2004) has extended Vendler's definitions in a way that makes the connection to the enunciation obvious. Smith establishes aspectual distinctions by way of two parameters: Situation Type and Viewpoint (Smith 2004: 3). The concept of situation type "indirectly classifies a clause as expressing a situation with certain internal temporal features" (Smith 2004: 3). Smith claims that there are three 'temporal features': Static-Dynamic; Telic-Atelic; Durative-Punctual. Although Smith does not do this, these features may be coupled with the aspectual types in a model like Table 2.[6]

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[5] Jakobson 1956: 90-96.
[6] Based on fn. 3, Smith 2004: 3.

Table 1.

	Unaccomplished	**Accomplished**
Absolute	States	Change between states
Processuality	Processes without a goal	Processes with a goal

Table 2.

	Static/Dynamic	Telic/Atelic	Durative/Punctual
States	Static	atelic	durative
Events	dynamic	telic	punctual
Activities	dynamic	atelic	durative
Semelfactives	dynamic	atelic	punctual
Accomplishments	dynamic	telic	durative
Achievements	dynamic	telic	punctual

Let us point out why this category has to do with narration. A narrative must consist of a string of actions, what was defined above as a narrative chain, following each other with necessity. Aristotle did in a sense use a comparable mechanism when he defined the sectors of an action. Aristotle's unspoken key word is dependency: the chain of composition in a literary text is built from logical relations: one action makes the next possible, and this action in turn may only take place because of the preceding action. The category of aspectuality has exactly this function: if we describe one thing undergoing two changes, the most straightforward interpretation will be that the changes succeed each other, if not by necessity, then as a matter of fact. Aspectual forms thus constitute intersentential concatenations, securing the right ordering of the actions in the content. The relevance of the category of aspect to simple Bremond-like narrative structures is evident. More complex narrative models, like Greimas' models (Greimas 1966: 204–213; Greimas & Courtés 1979: 269), make the same essential implication that each step in a narrative sequence must be a change to a situation. In this way the semantic category of aspect must be of interest to narrative studies. Compare also Christensen & Christensen 2001: 34–52 for a detailed discussion of these matters.

The normal bipartite scheme of aspectuality may be extended in several ways. In this way further semantic information may be included. For the purpose of this context, we restrict ourselves to the simple bipartite model.

Aspectual meaning is located in an intermediate position between the content side, the énoncé, and the expression side of the text, the enunciation. It is related to both through the fact that it deals with the way the single actions take place in the text, and at the same time the way actions take place is seen through some kind of subjective framing. How the action is staged, and how much of it is

shown, is a question of subjective choice. At the same time, aspect shapes and interrelates the actions of the énoncé.

4. The Representation of the Category of Aspect in Danish

There is no evident grammatical category of aspect in Danish. In spite of this lack of formal devices, in many cases it is easy to see that aspectual meaning is crucial to other kinds of meaning in Danish. Obvious cases are the periphrastic Perfect and Future Tenses. Perfect in Danish was analysed by Otto Glismann (1986) as relying on a complicated interrelation between the aspectual meaning in the verb roots and aspectuel factors in the auxiliary verbs, and recently Birgitte Skovby Rasmussen (2007) has shown that future meanings seem to have an even more complicated grammaticalisation which intertwines aspectual root meanings with aspectuel meanings of different constructions. Thus aspectual meanings should be included in Danish grammar.

We may set up a complete hierarchy of linguistic factors determining how aspectual meaning is realized. The ordering begins with the weakest kind of marking and proceeds to the most powerful ones:[7]

4.1 Aspectual meaning of verbal roots

Aspectual meaning may be seen as a part of the root meaning of the verbs in question. E.g. it is most natural to see verbs like 'sove' ('sleep') or 'leve' ('live') as imperfective, while verbs like 'dø' ('die'), 'få' ('receive') or 'give' ('give') are perfective. However, such assumptions are often bent by circumstances. The verb 'sige' ('say') is normally perfective, but in typical blending quotes like 'Jakobson siger at alle shiftere i poesi er uden referent' ('Jakobson says that all shifters in poetry are without referent'), the meaning is static, due to the blending structure. Some Danish grammarians (Hansen & Heltoft 2005: 47) have assumed that the meaning of verbal roots has no clear telicity, a claim that is difficult to follow.

4.2 Different valency constructions of one verbal stem as concomitantly aspectual

Aspectual meaning may be expressed through the construction of the verb, i.e. a verb which may have both transitive and intransitive constructions, also has concomitant aspectual differences. A clear case is verbs like:

(1) Jeg læser
I read-PRES
'I am reading'

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[7] This passage is an abbreviated version of Jørgensen 2001; the complete range of semantic markers of aspectuality is much longer than space allows here. The hierarchy between aspectual markers is not used in my analysis, but potentially it is a powerful analytical tool.

(2) Jeg spiller
     I play-PRES
     'I am playing'

As intransitives they are imperfective, but as transitives with definite objects they tend to become perfective. With indefinite objects the process still is unaccomplished:

(3) Jeg læser datalogi
     I study-PRES IT-sciences
     'I am studying IT-sciences'
(4) Jeg spiller valdhorn
     I play-PRES French-horn
     'I play the French Horn'

- but with definite objects accomplishment is at least in sight:

(5) Jeg læser 'Hamlet'
     I read-PRES 'Hamlet'
     'I am reading 'Hamlet'
(6) Jeg spiller 'Måneskinssonaten'
     I play-PRES 'Moonlight Sonata'-THE
     'I am playing the 'Moonlight Sonata'

An interesting case is a verb like *gabe* ('yawn', 'be open'). With an animate subject the action takes place and reaches a conclusion:

(7) Dronningen gaber
     Queen-THE yawn-PRES
     'The queen yawns'

- whereas with inanimate subjects the verb describes an unchangeable state:

(8) Skoene gaber
     Shoe-PL-THE yawn-PRES
     'The shoes yawn', i.e. There is a hole in the shoes

4.3   Aspectual implication of the tenses

As mentioned above, the present tense in Danish mainly denotes unaccomplished meanings, whereas the past tense mainly denotes accomplished meanings. This is in line with the general principles of the tense-aspect relation as described by Carlota Smith (2004: 5–6).

(9)   Naboen vasker bilen
      Neighbour-THE Wash-PRES car-THE
      'The neighbour wahes the car'
(10) Naboen vaskede bilen
      Neighbour-THE wash-PAST car-THE

'The neighbour vashed the car'With clearly perfective meanings, like
die, the present usually is understood as referring to a future incident. Only
verbs with some sort of static or processual meaning may denote true present
time meaning.

Even more clear is the situation with the copula verb combined with essential
qualities. Sentences like these in the present are ok:

(11)   To og to er fire
       'Two plus two is four'
(12)   Løven er et rovdyr
       Lion-THE be-PRES a predator
       'The lion is a predator'

If you put such sentences into the past tense they appear very odd, as if these by
definition eternal truths had lost their sense:

(11')   #To og to var fire
        'Two plus two was four'
(12')   #Løven var et rovdyr
        Lion-THE be-PAST a predator
        'The lion was a predator'

4.4   Sentence coupling

The term 'Sentence couplers' is a common denominator for what traditional
grammar calls conjunctions and sentence-connecting sentence adverbs. Certain
specimens in Danish are best understood as perfective, i.e. the two sentences they
couple, are combined to form a narrative chain:

(13)   *så, da, efter, før, pludselig, først, snart, straks, endelig, bagefter,
       derefter, omsider, igen, atter, tit* (the three last ones are iterative,
       too)

Some of them are imperfective, i.e. two sentences combined by them do not form
a narrative chain:

(14)   *når, mens, altid, endnu, stadig, samtidig, imens*

4.5   Prepositional objects

In some cases Danish marks the difference between accomplished and
unaccomplished meanings through the change between direct and prepositional
object (cp. Hansen & Heltoft 2003: 108–109):

(15)   gribe bolden / gribe efter bolden
       'catch the ball / attempt to catch the ball'
(16)   slikke skeen / slikke på skeen
       'lick the spoon / be licking the spoon'

(17)   læse bogen / læse i bogen
       'read the book / be reading in the book'

The change between direct and prepositional object may have other meaning implications, too, like in (18):

(18)   spille violin / spille på violin
       (both appr.: 'play the violin ')

The difference between the two examples is roughly that a person who 'spiller violin' (direct object) does so as an essential feature of the personality, whereas somebody who 'spiller på violin' (prepositional object) does so as a non-essential feature: it may not be so important, or the main instrument of this person is something else.

4.6   Periphrastic constructions

An important area is periphrastic constructions, i.e. combinations of light, auxiliary-like verbs and main verbs. There are quite many such constructions, and they differ widely in meaning. Typically inchoative is *tage og VB*; typically imperfective is *sidde/ stå/ ligge og VB*. An interesting pair is *gå og VB / gå hen og VB*, the first one being imperfective, the other perfective.

   As we have seen, the category of aspect has no particular connection to the verbal word class; rather aspectual meaning lies packed up in many different types of grammatical constructions. Table 3 (from Togeby 2003) shows how actionality is distributed among the different parts of speech.

5.   The Status of the Category of Aspect in Lyrical poetry

The aspectual meaning which seems most closely related to lyrical poetry is evidently the imperfect or static aspect. Intuitively we know that lyrical texts often deal with states of mind, descriptions of persons or situations, and other tasks that mainly involve static predications upon the subject (or the subjects) of the text. With the exception of old-fashioned genres like the ballad, longer passages of a narrative character are foreign to the lyrical genre. In a Jakobsonian context, lyrical texts are characterised by three specific features: the metaphor, the pseudo-citation and the projection of the paradigmatic axis upon the axis of combination. The aim of this paper is to extend the linguistic underpinning of lyrical texts in the direction of certain grammatical features. The point, however, is that the imperfect aspect may not rule the text entirely. We need some sort of change in order for the text not to fall flat and loose its literary qualities.[8] In the following this shall be demonstrated through analysis of two classical Danish lyrical texts and one modern.

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[8] You may find a similar thesis in Colm Hogan 2003: 152-156; Colm Hogan also develops the connexions to other genres, like ballads and hymns.

Table 3.

Actionality of lexemes			Class of morphemes	Example
Static aspect	DURATION	CATEGORIAL	**NOUN**	*være en løve, et træ, en kiste, hund, bil, kobber, møllehjul* {to be a lion, a tree, a box etc.}
		FUNCTIONAL	**NOUN**	*være konge, soldat, ypperste-præst, hær* {be king, soldier, etc.}
		QUALITATIVE	**ADJ**	*være høj, hul, gammel* {be tall, hollow, old}
		EPISODIC	**ADJ**	*være sulten, rigtig, ækel* {be hungry, correct, disgusting}
		EXTENDED	**VERB**	*vare, koste, betyde, have* {take, cost, mean, have}
	STATE		**VERB**	*sidde, hænge, stå, kende, vide* {sit, hang, stand, know, know}
	PROCESS		**VERB**	*sove, lede efter nogen, brænde* {sleep, look for someone, burn}
	ITERATION		VERB	*dryppe, rotere, løbe, mødes* {drip, rotate, run, meet}
	INCOMPLETE		VERB	*skrive på en bog, bygge på et hus* {to be in the process af writing a book, building a house}
ASPECT OF CHANGE	ACCOM-PLISHED CHANGE		**VERB**	*bygge et hus, hente pengene, sætte sig, tage af noget* {build a house, fetch the money, sit down, take care of something}
	CHANGE TROUGH BREAK		**VERB**	*dø, finde noget, forråde nogen, ske, tage noget* {die, find some-thing, betray someone, happen, take something} dp,something}

However it is crucial to see the difference between the fact that a text may not appear to be a narrative text, and the fact that a text contains narrative structures. Even texts without overt narration may contain passages or turns which may be described as narrative; and this is in my view what many lyrical texts actually do.

Without quantitative analysis you may easily conclude that narrative texts will be dominated by perfective meanings and lyrical texts by imperfective meanings. But the semantic relation between the two members of the category may be somewhat more dialectic. If we rely on the assumption of Greimas and Courtés (Greimas & Courtés 1979: 284) that epical texts often have their point of departure in oppositions that are of a more general nature than the chain of actions they realise, one may herein see the basis for the action in the state marked by the general opposition. Obvious examples may be found in the typical introduction to classical realist novels, often opening with a description of a

landscape, a building or a situation, a type of textual passage of a typically static nature. On the other hand the situation in a piece of poetry is difficult to conceive without a limitation, i.e. the change *into* the situation, and the change *out* of the situation. In this sense, our coupling of aspects and genres may be right in a general way, but it is important to realize that the dynamic forces in the text often may be found on the other side, too. This crucial moment in the analysis will thus be the dialectic move in the text from one semantic aspect into another. It is important in this context to include an analysis of the enunciation, too.

This, then, is the first example to be analysed:

	Skoveensomhed Emil Aarestrup (1800-1856)	"Forest solitude"
1	Igjennem Bøgeskoven Jeg dig ved Haanden førte - Det var saa grønt og kjøligt, Vi Nattergalen hørte.	Through the beech wood I led you by the hand It was so green and cool, We heard the nightingale.
2	Det var, som hele Verden Med Blomster og med Grene, Med Skyer og med Stjerner, Tilhørte os alene.	It was as if the whole world With flowers and with branches With clouds and with stars Belonged to us alone.
3	Vi talte ikke sammen; Vi kunne intet sige, tause Ranker, Som snoede Eensomme, lykkelige	We did not talk to one another We could say nothing, Like winding silent briars, Alone and happy.
4	Saa frit, afsides var det, Saa ubevogtet, stille - Det var, som om vi Intet Meer ønskede og vilde.	So free, so remote it was, So unguarded, silent - It was as if we nothing More desired and wanted.

(Emil Aarestrup 1976: 209)

In this text all verbs are of a static meaning, with the exception of the first one *førte igennem bøgeskoven*, which denotes an ongoing movement and a traversed location, but apart from the implication that beech woods will stop at some point there is little to indicate a goal of accomplishment. There is no movement except this, no activities, not even a conversation. The static meaning reaches a culmination in the total absence of goals in the last stanza: no desires, no wishes. If there ever was a completely anti-narrative situation, this is.

And then yet again it is not. If we move on to the enunciation, we will find where the text has its level of action. Two features of the enunciation are remarkable: one is that the text describes a situation experienced in common by *you* and *I*. We may presume that *you* roughly knows what the situation was about and what the whereabouts were, e.g. which beech wood was it? when was it? The text is in no way epic, it is not the tale about how *I* took *you* through the forest; it is a memory put

on record and explained to the other participant of the memory. This feature may be seen as yet a way of underlining the connection between the situation and the memory. The use of the past tense displays the content as a not-now. Here we have to concentrate on the last two lines: it was as if we nothing more desired or wanted. The non-desiring may be seen under two different aspects. Within the enunciation it contrasts with here-and-now (as opposed to 'then in the beech wood'), and desiring is in principle a possibility; but within the confines of the enonce the content is given in an *as if*-sentence marking irreality, i.e. a parallel space. Through the analysis of the enunciation we may conclude that the non-desiring and non-wanting in the text is a character which you might normally expect the persons of the text to have, just like normal persons do. In this way desiring in itself appears to be the ground upon which the situation of the text, as interpreted by the first-person, appears as the figure. The non-narrative character of the situation thereby suggests the desiring subject as its opposition, and in this way at least the capability of reaching out for something, intending to get something or get somewhere becomes the background on which the narrated scene appears. So this is the way in which the situation is delimited. It finds its borders through the opposition.

Similar features may be found in the next text, "Spring Rain" by Viggo Stuckenberg.

Foraarsregn Viggo Stuckenberg (1862–1905)	"Spring Rain"

1   Det regner over Mosen,
     saa mildt og blødt, saa fint og tæt,
     et Regnvejr graat af Grøde,
     en Livsens Dug, der lindt og let
       mod Jordens Hjærte rinder.
	It is raining in the bog,
	so mildly and softly, so finely and dense
	a rainy weather grey from growth,
	a dew of life that smoothly and lightly
	runs towards the heart of the earth.

2   Som smaa Krystaller perler
     i Kabbelejers gyldne Fang
     de vædeblanke Draaber,
     og Slaaentjørnens Tornehang
       i snehvidt Knopbrud skinner.
	Like little crystals pearling
	in the golden grip of marsh marigolds
	the drops shining from wetness
	and the thorny branches of the sloe
	shine in snow-white break of buds.

3   Det gule Græs, de spinkle,
     de silkefine brune Rør
     i Regnen lydløst bæver,
     og Spindelvævets Sølverslør
       om Straa sig draabet vinder.
	The yellow grass, the slender
	the silkfine brown reeds
	tremble without a sound in the rain,
	and the cobweb's silvery veil
	winds like drops around straws.

4   Det regner over Mosen,
     saa stille gaar den Dag sin Gang,
     en enlig Smaafugl pipper
     og løfter kvidrende sin Sang
       imedens Regnen rinder.
	It is raining over the bog,
	so silently the day passes on,
	a tiny lonely bird chirps
	and lifts up twittering its song
	while the rain streams.

(Stuckenberg 1910: 114)

This text is a notorious case of lyrical poetry in Danish, and its use of verbal aspect is obvious, too. All verbs are static (*regner, rinder, skinner, vinder, gaar*) or iterative (*pipper*); even the seemingly inchoative phrase *løfter kvidrende sin Sang* is not necessarily perfective in its meaning. The song begins, but might stop and be resumed; it does not introduce anything of absolute novelty in the situation. In this way the text appears to be a registration of what is going on at the bog in the rain, a situation without beginning, development or change. Note that each subject is only registred with one action each. This means that the single activities denoted by the verbs may not be fitted into any kind of a narrative chain. The static character of the text is supported by the use of the tenses. We noted above how present tense has strong affinities to unaccomplished actions. This dimension of enunciation therefore supports the static character of the text.

But if the text is so static, we might want to know how the borders around this situation are drawn. The room around the bog is exposed in the text as a room in its own right, and this is nowhere contradicted in the text. Therefore the only encirclement lies in the enunciation, the fact that the text reports on the rain in the bog as a quasi-here-and-now space, where the informations on the conditions in THE bog (well-known to the enunciatee) would be irrelevant if the enunciatee were in fact present. The text may remind you of a radio transmission in the way it has been shaped. But this sense of absence of the reader of the text makes up the meaning of the text: the text stages the loss of the situation through the sheer fact that the situation has to be reported to somebody not present, in spite of the suggested presence in the situation.

The last poem to be analysed is a modern one, "Kongen ankommer til cafeteriet ved havet" by Per Højholt.

Kongen ankommer til cafeteriet ved havet
"The king arrives at the cafeteria by the sea"
Per Højholt (1928–2004)

[1] derude mågernes sting og havets tørnen mod molerne
  out there the sting of the seagulls and the sea crashing against the piers
herinde supermarkedets termo-klima og bløde beat
  in here the thermo climate of the supermarket and soft beat [music]
og opkrænget kød i kø i kølediskens skrævende neonlys
  and everted meat in queue in the straddling neonlight of the refrigerator
derude havets dundren og flyveskum hen gennem luften
  out there the thunder of the sea and flying foam through the air
[5] derinde tyste salater og ost i vacuumpakninger tak
  in there silent salads and cheese in vacuum packages thank you
Inger ja og dig i cafeteriets nylonkittel m skråhue
  Inger yes and you in the nylon apron of the supermarket
du skraber mayonnaise og pommes frites og ketchup ned
  you scrape mayonnaise and french fries and ketchup down
i en spand (plast) og tørrer efter på bordene (plast)
  into a bucket (plastic) and wipe off the tables (plastic)
mens muzakken zikker i højttalerne over dig oh yes

while the muzack zicks in the loudspeakers over you oh yes
[10] og derude nålehvin og risp og tykke læber mod ruderne
and out there needlescream and risp and thick lips against the window panes
mens sivende tangpuder vendes og vendes og vendes indad
while oozing pads of seaweed are turned and turned and turned inwards
af brændingen under vindrummets hængende trapezer
by the surf under the hanging trapezes of the windroom
og derinde stilfærdig opslubren af mælk og kakaomælk
and in there silent consumption of milk and cocoa milk
balloner med juice og tomatsaft boblende i halvmørke
bottles of juice and tomato juice bubbling in dusk
[15] og friture-os og kongen ankommer til cafeteriet ved
and smell of friture and the king arrives at the cafeteria by
havet derude blinkene på forstranden af blå og grønne
the sea out there the lights from the foreshore of blue and green
og hvide flasker plast-citroner og gnistrende køkken-
and white bottles plastic lemons and scintillating kitchen
emalje og derinde Inger nylonindpakket med skum mellem
enamel and in there Inger packed in nylon with foam between
ørerne p-pigen som udspyr vattamponer i toilettet og
the ears the p-girl spitting cotton tampons into the toilet and
[20] derude en kutter på en bølgeside og kongen ankommer til
out there a fishing boat on the side of a wave and the king arrives at
cafeteriet ved havet og himlen hvid som en fiskebug og
the cafeteria by the sea and the heaven white like a fish stomach and
kongen ankommer til cafeteriet ved havet og derinde
the king arrives at the cafeteria by the sea and in there
roterende topstands og derude sildene på vej ind i
rotating topstands and out there the herrings on their way into
havnen i deres fenol-kapper og og kongen ankommer til
the harbour in their phenole cloacks and and the king arrives at
[25] cafeteriet ved havet og kongen ankommer til cafeteriet
the cafeteria by the sea and the king arrives at the cafeteria
ved havet og laminatvæggene bulner og blomster og
by the sea and the plastic walls bulge and blossom and
kongen ankommer til cafeteriet ved havet og kongen
the king arrives at the cafeteria by the sea and the king
ankommer til cafeteriet ved havet og kongen ankommer
arrives at the cafeteria by the sea and the king arrives
til cafeteriet ved havet og kongen ankommer til cafe-
at the cafeteria by the sea and the king arrives at the cafe-
[30] teriet ved havet og kongen ankommer til cafeteriet ved
teria by the sea and the king arrives at the cafeteria by
havet og kongen ankommer til cafeteriet ved havet og
the sea and the king arrives at the cafeteria by the sea and
kongen ankommer til cafeteriet ved havet og kongen
the king arrives at the cafeteria by the sea and the king
ankommer til cafeteriet ved havet og kongen ankommer
arrives at the cafeteria by the sea and the king arrives
til cafeteriet ved havet og kongen ankommer til cafe-
at the cafeteria by the sea and the king arrives at the cafe-
[35] teriet ved havet og kongen ankommer til cafeteriet

teria by the sea and the king arrives at the cafeteria
ved havet og kongen ankommer til cafeteriet ved havet
  by the sea and the king arrives at the cafeteria by the sea
(Højholt 1977: 25-26)

This text is interesting because of its simple and yet intricate play with static and dynamic moments of the situation described. It is built around a strong, frequently repeated opposition between 'out there' and 'in here'. As we noted above (p. 138), such oppositions are of a fundamentally static nature: features of the opposing sides being held against each other without any change as their perspective. What is *out there*, is nature and its forces, mainly illustrated through a description of the sea and the branding. *In here*, occasionally shifted to *in there* (e.g. l. 5), is a supermarket and a cafeteria where a woman (called *Inger*) is at work dressed up in a nylon uniform belonging to the supermarket. This only too obvious contrast is described in parallel terms through the use of static elements, mainly represented by nominal elements lined up without verbal or adverbial cohesion (except the place adverbials). This way of contrasting gives the confrontation a certain static character, which is maintained through the text. In the *out there* part, the nominal elements are mainly derived from (apparent) verbs: "sting" (l. 1), "tørnen" (l. 1), "dundren" (l. 4), "brænding" (l. 12). *In here*, on the other side, the nominal elements denote regular 'things', i.e. there is a more static character on the inside, according to Togeby's model of the actionality of lexemes (p. 137 above). It is worth noting that 'nature' only from a very superficial point of view may be identified with a conventionally lyrical concept of nature. Rather it should be seen in the light of an interpretation of Højholt, as conveyed by Carsten Madsen: 'Nature is what manifests itself through an investigation by the writing process of its material in a non-linguistically determined indetermination' (Madsen 2004: 41; my trsl.)

The only finite verbs in main clauses through the text are connected to the acting persons, Inger and "kongen" ('the king'). The nature is characterised only with nominal elements engaged in pure processes (*sting, tørnen, dundren* etc.), an approach that probably is intended to mirror a conception of persons as acting intentionally, while nature is supposed to consist of unintentional incidents. This 'mirroring' is definitely not the attitude of the author, some kind of intentional meaning, but rather a point of view brought into play to be investigated into. The 'in there' side is mainly populated by the woman; certain nominal forms suggest the presence of other human beings: "stilfærdig opslubren af mælk og kakaomælk / balloner med juice og tomatsaft boblende i halvmørke / og friture-os" (l. 13 – 15), but these human figures are not mentioned directly through the use of nominalised verbs, that is, exactly the same way nature is described as unintentional. In this way the main acting person is Inger, described as an employee of the supermarket and through this a part of an artificial 'inside' (plast[ic], cp. l. 8; muzak, cp. l. 9), but at the same time menstruating and hence in contact with a 'natural' aspect of her life. Inger is acting in the text as a subject of finite verbs (l. 7-8), but the menstruation is described in relative clauses (l. 18 – 19) reducing this aspect of her

presence to some kind of identifying measure. In this way the text really does not move anywhere; most of what is described is static situations built up around nominal elements without main clause finite verbs. In this way the contrast from the outset of the text is maintained throughout.

The enunciator of the text is an omnipresent narrator, capable of having an overview on both spaces, inside and outside, and furthermore capable of following the woman into the restroom when she deals with the tampons. This Olympian view of the narration is reminiscent of traditional realist ways of narrating. Such a narrator is traditionally a character outside of the narrated scene, and yet the voice addresses the woman with the second-person pronoun (l. 6). The fact that he talks to her, seems, however, to be of no consequence for anything going on in the cafeteria; it may just be another allusion to old-fashioned novel narration. The use of a narrator of this kind may be interpreted as a self-ironic twist of the text, such narrators normally being capable of producing a unified total perspective on the matters touched upon in the narration - which is exactly the issue raised by the poem: is such a unified view possible?

The text includes two mediating thematic elements: the woman and the herrings. Both of them belong by consequence to the human world and the sea respectively; yet they show some kind of approach to the other side and some kinds of similarity. The woman is dressed in a nylon apron, as contrasted with the phenole aprons of the herrings. Through the menstruation the woman is in contact with an obviously 'nature'-related characteristic, a classical sign of fertility, contrasting neatly with the herrings, also dressed up, but in aprons of the extremely poisonous phenole. The passage on the fishes on their way into the harbour ("derude sildene på vej ind i/ havnen i deres fenol-kapper", l. 23-24) is formulated in a double meaning: the immediate understanding is that the fishes swim this way, but it is not excluded that they are onboard a fisherboat, and hence dead, as herrings are in a well-known Danish set phrase ("død som en sild" i.e. 'dead as a herring'). In this way the text introduces another thematic opposition of the same superordinate and slightly trivial kind: 'life | death'. Note that even in this case, the actionality of the verbs is not necessarily a sort of accomplishment. Neither the woman nor the herrings establish any kind of narrative units.

The most important figure in the text is the king who has lent the line describing his single act in the narrated world as a title to the poem. The king arrives at the cafeteria by the sea; the sentence unites the 'outside-inside' contrasts: the cafeteria and the sea, using one of them to identify the other. The king as a sovereign figure might potentially have power over both the 'nature side' and the 'culture side'; his arrival demonstrating some kind of superiority in this respect. In this way the dialectic relation between the two poles of the text might have reached a solution. Yet this solution seems to remain unfulfilled; the crucial sentence describing the accomplishment of the unifying act is repeated over and over, first separately once (l.15 and 20), then a couple of times (l.24-5), and finally the repetition of the sentence runs through two rounds where the sentence is fitted into the width of the page. This constant repetition of a sentence describing a

typical accomplishment ("ankommer" – 'arrives') tears off the meaning of the utterance; it makes no sense (literally) to repeat such a sentence since the act may not be repeated in successions. At the end of the second round the text finally concludes; it stops without any sort of resolution, but the act of enunciation at least has the triumph of filling out the graphic frames laid out for the poem. In this way the text achieves some kind of pseudo-completion of the task it has set for itself, but the 'pseudo' character of the completion is only too obvious, thus turning the artificial construction of the poem into a parody. Here the text is making a move designed to underline some kind of blind sovereignty of the nature side; it is possible to conclude the text, but there seems to be no resolution to the nature/culture contrast anyway.[9] This point fits well with the general idea about poems by Højholt, that they often form a reflexion upon the condition of lyrical poetry shaped as an ironic distance, cp. Madsen 2004: 65.

6. Conclusion

In order to conclude, we may state that these three lyrical texts describe static spaces in the enounce layer, and they do it through consequent use of static or at least unaccomplished verbal meanings. At the same time the situations they describe are moved into a space where they either have lost their presence, or at least where the presence is wavering and therefore suggesting a loss. This loss is the narrative move that encircles the static situation and makes it an object of melancholic reconstruction.

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[9] A first version of the text (printed in 1974, cp. Iben Holk: *Artister*. Copenhagen: Borgen 1975: 96-7 and 230) ended with the words " . . . cafeteriet ved havet og . . . ", thus underlining the lack of resolution in the text. The final version is artistically superior due to the ironic way of resolving the tensions built up throughout the text.

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