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| Bjørnson, Bjørnstjerne Martinius (1832-1910) |
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| Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson is one of the most important Scandinavian writers of the second half of the 19th century, a novelist and playwright as well as a journalist, theatre director, and political activist. In the Scandinavian context, he was a pioneer of a variety of literary forms, including late Romantic prose, historical and bourgeois drama, and the modern novel. He was deeply involved in the literary and political debates of his age, both in Norway and elsewhere in Europe, where he enjoyed, at least until his death, a degree of public recognition. He received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1903.  Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson made his literary debut in 1857 with *Synnøve Solbakken*, the first of a series of prose works which combined a late Romanticism with an interest in the contemporary period and its problems. The main characters Synnøve and Thorbjørn, and the contrast between good and evil they represent, are still dependent on the stylization of Romanticism, but the environment in which they grow comprises a problematic social space in which alcoholism and bigotry plague the population. Such a duality is also evident in Bjørnson’s historical plays published between 1857 and 1862. His production took a turn towards the Modern Breakthrough with the play *En Fallit* [*A Bankruptcy*] (1875), which introduced theatrical realism in Scandinavia and paved the way for Henrik Ibsen. |
| Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson is one of the most important Scandinavian writers of the second half of the 19th century, a novelist and playwright as well as a journalist, theatre director, and political activist. In the Scandinavian context, he was a pioneer of a variety of literary forms, including late Romantic prose, historical and bourgeois drama, and the modern novel. He was deeply involved in the literary and political debates of his age, both in Norway and elsewhere in Europe, where he enjoyed, at least until his death, a degree of public recognition. He received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1903.  File: bjornson1.jpg  1 From http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bj%C3%B6rnstjerne\_Bj%C3%B6rnson,\_1901.jpg  Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson was born in 1832 in Kvikne, in the Norwegian district of Østerdalen. He made his literary debut in 1857 with *Synnøve Solbakken*, the first of a series of prose works which combined a late Romanticism with an interest in the contemporary period and its problems. The main characters Synnøve and Thorbjørn, and the contrast between good and evil they represent, are still dependent on the stylization of Romanticism, but the environment in which they grow comprises a problematic social space in which alcoholism and bigotry plague the population. Such a duality is also evident in Bjørnson’s historical plays published between 1857 and 1862. His production took a turn towards the Modern Breakthrough with the play *En Fallit* [*A Bankruptcy*] (1875), which introduced theatrical realism in Scandinavia and paved the way for Henrik Ibsen. From this point on, Bjørnson almost exclusively wrote literature centred on contemporary topics. Two years before Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*, he published the novel *Magnhild* (1877), focused on a woman that flees from marriage. In the same year, his play *Kongen* [*The King*] directly addressed the question of Republicanism and made Bjørnson an extremely controversial political figure. In *En Hanske* [*A Gauntlet*] (1883) he gave his answer to the issue of parity of the sexes by insisting on premarital virginity for men, and in *Over Ævne. Første stykke* [*Beyond Human Might. First Part*] (1883) he investigated the struggle between science and religion by portraying the rise and fall of a pastor who is said to perform ‘miracles,’ but fails to heal his own neurotic wife. Having abandoned Christianity, Bjørnson developed a ‘secular’ faith in human progress, which is evident in several works of the 1890s, alongside an interest in politics and in the cause of the working classes. He died in Paris in 1910. Chronology of worksCollected works *Samlede digter-verker* (1919-1920), Oslo: Gyldendal. 9 vols. Novels *Synnøve Solbakken* (1857)  *En glad Gut* (1860)  *Fiskerjenten* (1868)  *Magnhild* (1877)  *Det flager i Byen og på Havnen* (1884)  *På Guds veje* (1889)  *Mary* (1906) Plays *Mellem Slagene* (1857)  *Sigurd Slembe* (1862)  *De Nygifte* (1865)  *En Fallit* (1875)  *Kongen* (1877)  *En Hanske* (1883)  *Over Ævne. Første Stykke* (1883)  *Geografi og Kærlighed* (1885)  *Over Ævne. Andet Stykke* (1895)  *Når den ny Vin blomstrer* (1909) English translations *Sunny Hill: a Norwegian idyll* (1932). Trans. N/A. New York: Macmillan.  *The Fisher Maiden* (2003). Trans. N/A. Honolulu : University Press of the Pacific.  *Three dramas: The editor, The bankrupt, and The king* (2005). Trans. N/A. Whitefish, Mont.: Kessinger Publ.  *A Happy Boy* (2009). Jacson Hole, Trans. N/A. You.: Akasha Publ. |
| Further reading:  (Amdam)  (Bull)  (Hoem)  (Keel)  (Sørensen) |