# (Trans)national Geographies and Alternative Families in Selma Lagerlöf's *Bannlyst*

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In the core argument of the article a case is made for interlinking the problematisation of national parameters and the problematisation of gender relationships in Selma Lagerlöf's wartime novel *Bannlyst* (1918) and in related unpublished manuscripts. Drawing on Jonathan Culler's development of the understanding of the novel's role in modelling the nation, the article demonstrates how (sections of) *Bannlyst* evidently share(s) features with the novel of nation. The article goes on to argue, however, that interconnected constructions of place and character serve to unbalance Lagerlöf's novel as a national narrative and promote a transnational or non-territorial understanding of both large- and small-scale relationships. Thus, the article examines how the novelistic paradigm of the rewarding national marriage journey as discussed by Franco Moretti is challenged in *Bannlyst* from the twin angles of 'new man' and 'new woman' characters. The article explores, moreover, how this challenge is linked to a broader drift away from the national foundations towards the chronotope of the sea as a site for the sublime, for alternative artistic articulation, and for the understanding of the horror of war. In the concluding sections of the article Freudian concepts of the uncanny are utilised to illuminate the novel's treatment of war as well as confined marital cohabitation. Overall, Lagerlöf's novel is seen as an experimental enquiry into the ambiguities of nation, family and gender, conducted in the context of global territorial conflict and new ideological responses.

## Beyond the national marriage novel

Selma Lagerlöf's 1918 novel *Bannlyst* clearly draws on the national perspective on place which a decade or so earlier had been developed in sophisticated forms in *Nils Holgerssons underbara resa genom Sverige* (1906–07). Central to its plot structure is the story of marital complications that involve a bride from Sweden's Upper Norrland and a groom from Bohuslän on the west coast of the country, more than 1000 kilometres south. In *Atlas of the European Novel* Franco Moretti discusses, with reference to Jane Austen's England, the role played by marriage between

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partners from different parts of a country in constructing the nation as home-land in the nineteenth-century novel. This national marriage market requires of woman in particular a new mobility, both physical and spiritual, which is rewarded as the "territorial uprooting" typically develops into "a seductive journey" and the "harsh novelty" of the nation is turned into "a large exquisite home" (Moretti 2009 [1998], 18). In *Bannlyst* the paradigm of the female marital journey is activated, but also problematised.

As Ulla-Britta Lagerroth has documented in her seminal *Motiv- och idéstudier i Selma Lagerlöfs 10-talsdiktning* (1963, 273–74), the final version of *Bannlyst* forges together heterogeneous stories. The novel was initially intended as a mainly marital narrative with the working title of *Sigrun*, focusing on the eponymous heroine's troubled relationship with the vicar Edvard Rhånge. Into this narrative Lagerlöf imported and expanded a sketch of a visionary working-class woman from Norrland – called Lotta Hedman in the novel – which exists as a separate manuscript in an unpublished compilation of "sentiments from the war years".[1] Subsequently, the Sigrun and Hedman narratives were framed by and interconnected with a third storyline that tracks (first in retrospect, then directly) the transnational trajectory of Sven Elversson: adopted as a nine-year old from the Bohuslän archipelago into an English family, participating as an adult in a British polar expedition, accused, alongside the other explorers, of cannibalism and forced to return to Sweden where he is driven into isolation by public rejection but eventually redeemed.

The addition of Sven's story of stigmatisation – reflected in the title change to *Bannlyst* in November 1918, just weeks before the novel's publication – was motivated, as Vivi Edström accounts for in her biography of Lageröf's life and work, *Livets vågspel*, by the ideological turn the novelistic project took in 1918 towards accomplishing an anti-war text (Edström 2002, 452–53). Lagerlöf's correspondence suggests that the relationship between her writing and the reality of the First World War had been a concern to her for a longer period. Already in the autumn of 1916 she explains in a letter to her friend and colleague Sophie Elkan that the context of war calls her role as author and the value of 'pure' literature into question: "Sedan kriget känner jag mig rakt inte som författare. Jag kan inte förstå, att människor kunna ha tid att läsa rena diktverk" (21

[1] The sketch consists of six hand-written pages. As is the case in other of Lagerlöf's unpublished manuscripts from the period, its language is an approximation of spoken and dialectal style. It is a monologue in the voice of a lone working woman called Märta Gustava Barrman: "Å ja ä född i Norrland å bor i ett municipalsamhälle, å ja går å arbetar var dag i ett sågverk, å ja ä ensam å fattig, ja har varken man eller barn" (Lagerlöf: "Å dä var en kväll..."). The sketch is preserved in a group of manuscripts entitled *Stämningar från krigsåren* (signature: Ligg-pf, Sn-Sö, LI: 247) in the Swedish Royal Library, Stockholm.

November 1916; Lagerlöf 1993 [1992], 445–46). In the summer of 1917 she states in general terms that she is contemplating a major literary project which would encapsulate the events of period: "Jag ville så gärna sammanfatta tidens företeelser i en stor bok, nu medan vi stå mitt uppe i det" (9 June 1917; 1993 [1992], 453). Then, in the spring of 1918 she indicates more concretely that she is trying to tackle the topic of contemporary conflicts, while struggling with the 'deformity' of her text: "Vad jag skriver är något ganska oformligt och vanskapligt. Jag strider för att liksom bli herre över det stoff, som händelserna omkring oss lägger för mig" (21 March 1918; 1993 [1992], 471). Eventually, with the end version of *Bannlyst*, the author could be said to meet the expectation, her own and others, that she should produce a "book for world improvement" (Edström 2002, 452). The novel's method had now become profoundly comparative in nature, aiming to conceptualise war in the context of, and as a more serious crime than, cannibalism and to engineer a specific reader response in which a sense of nausea and moral rejection was rerouted towards the political field of modern military force. In a letter of 19 October 1918 to her friend and collaborator Valborg Olander, Lagerlöf spells out the novel's didactic strategy:

> Därför ville jag skriva en bok, som skulle säga i sin första del, se så stark är äcklets makt och i sin andra säga: Lägg kriget och vad till kriget hör under äcklets bann. Förr i världen bannlystes syndare, gör detsamma med kriget. Därtill skulle det komma en kärlekshistoria för att försona med det hela. Men den är minsann lika vild, som allt annat i denna bok. […] Det hjälper ju inte att tala vackert med människor, men visa dem, att man betraktar dem, som människoätare, du skall få se, att det tar. Nåja litet finare får man framställa tesen. (Lagerlöf 2006, 145)

Similarly, in a letter to Elkan from the same time (21 October), Lagerlöf stresses that the aim of the novel is not just to champion a humanitarian idea intellectually, but to provoke a bodily reaction against war.[2]

Thus, the "äktenskapsroman" becomes "fredsroman", the two main headings under which Lagerroth conducted her innovative investigation into the rich web of cultural ideas, motifs and influences that inform Lagerlöf's text. With the Hedman story added in, the novel rests, in Lagerroth's formulation, on a "triple conception", which in her assessment puts the cohesion of the novel at risk (cf. Lagerlöf's own concern with the problem of deformity), the effects of the Hedman component being particularly double-edged:

> Lotta Hedman-historien arbetades in redan i äktenskapsromanen. Men sådan den i utvidgad form föreligger i den färdiga romanen Bannlyst, har den kommit att på en gång utgöra kitt och sprängstoff. Den binder samman intrigen i äktenskapsromanen med den i fredsromanen, samtidigt som den allvarligt hotar sammanhållningen i romanen i dess helhet. (Lagerroth 1963, 273–74)

[2] "det borde gå in i blodet i kroppen" (Lagerlöf 1993 [1992], 474).

This perspective on the triple structure of the text may be modified by suggesting that it is the very undermining of the novelistic paradigm of the rewarding national marriage journey from the twin angles of Hedman's 'new woman' and Elversson's 'new man' that enables the text to open up alternative avenues to exploring non-confrontational cohabitation of individuals as well as nations.

## Drift towards the sea

*Bannlyst* is a novel that centres on the national periphery and from here opens up to the sea, displaying a westward drift of its imagination, which serves to unbalance it as a national narrative. Right from the outset its information flow is internationalised, taking in recent events from the Polar region and London, as channelled through the medium of the newspaper.[3] The text is drawn to the maritime sphere as a zone of contact and conflict, as a site of the uncanny and the sublime. Similarly, at the level of characterisation, both Sigrun and Sven, who constitute one of the novel's two 'alternative' couples, are linked to water, vessels and (extra-national) openness since childhood. Sven's adoption – which creates the conditions for his emergence later as a 'hybrid hero' who transgresses national, class and conventional gender boundaries – results from the maritime mobility of English affluent tourists visiting the Swedish west-coast archipelago.[4] In spite of growing up in the interior of the country,

[3] The digesting by Sven's parents of a newspaper article in the opening chapter enables the text to indirectly 'display' foreign events involving the protagonist ("Det var millioner människor i rörelse för att möta de här nordpolsfararna"; "Det står […] här i tidningen, att de inte hade tagit mer än ena armen" (Lagerlöf 1918, 13, 18)), without breaking the novel's overriding 'rules' of spatial composition. These rules seem (with one possible exception as discussed later in this article) to exclude scenes from outside Sweden and, notably, the western waters bordering on the country from direct description. The motif of the newspaper as a window onto a wider world reappears later in the novel when Sigrun explores adverts for steamship and railway travel in her bid for freedom through participation in international aid work (Lagerlöf 1918, 205). The plot component of the ill-fated polar adventure was, according to Lagerlöf's letter to Elkan of 21 October 1918, inspired by a British North Pole expedition – into which the fiction places a foreign element: "föreställ dig nu, att en svensk, son till en bohusländsk fiskare var med i skaran" (Lagerlöf 1993 [1992], 474). In a much later letter to Olander (17 April 1930), Lagerlöf adds the information that her source was an English newspaper report which she read around the turn of the century (Lagerlöf 2006, 254). Ulla-Britta Lagerroth argues that the event in question is most likely the Greely expedition of 1881–84 (1963, 367–68).

[4] The adopters are "ett engelskt herrskap, som seglade omkring i skärgården på sin lustjakt" (Lagerlöf 1918, 11–12). The motif of the English yacht in Scandinavian waters is very reminiscent of scenes in Henrik Ibsen's epic anti-war poem *Terje Vigen*

Sigrun is likewise a representative of the drift towards the sea, as evidenced by her childhood friend Lotta Hedman's recollections of river journeys and transport preferences:

> Vi var ute och rodde mest var afton […], för Sigrun tyckte om att sitta i en båt och bara glida fram längs med stränderna utan att ha ärende åt något håll. Hon tyckte inte om ångbåtar och inte om järnbanor, och inte tyckte hon om att åka efter häst, men hon tyckte om att driva omkring i en roddbåt. Och vad hon allra mest längtade efter, det var att komma ut på ett stort hav. (LAGERLÖF 1918, 158)[5]

The role of the river as a topos for the longing out is discussed by Margaret Cohen in a stimulating survey of "chronotopes of the sea" in novel-writing, divided into the fields of "blue water", "brown water", "white water", "island", "shore" and "ship". Cohen observes that brown water, i.e. the river, gives elemental form to the tension between origins and outreach, as it "connects the earth of home and the great waters of the wide world in its linear flow" (COHEN 2006, 655). The bond between Sigrun and the sea is further substantiated by Lagerroth who links *Bannlyst* to Andersen's fairy tale of "Den lille Havfrue" (1837) and to Ibsen's drama *Fruen fra havet* (1888) (1963, 282, 298–304), both depicting women who are torn topographically and emotionally.

Such character symmetry as supplied by the element of water is absent from the relationship between the partners of the novel's official, 'national', marriage, who seem incompatible in spatial terms, with the possessive pastor Rhånge connected to claustrophobic, controlled and land-based sites. In discussing the tension between open and closed space in *Bannlyst*, Vivi Edström makes the interesting observation that the hermetic sense of place in the text represents "a form of trench syndrome"[6] which is key in transmitting sensations of the workings of violence and war.[7] This perspective would make the vicar a symbol of the trench syn-

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(1862), which was adapted into a highly successful silent film by Victor Sjöström in 1917, the year before the publication of *Bannlyst*. Lagerlöf was, of course, a major player in the 'golden age' of Swedish silent cinema, with no fewer than eight of her works being adapted in the period 1917–1924, and her engagement with the cultural sphere of cinema at the time of writing *Bannlyst* is clear from her letters and other sources.

5 In the following, only page references will be given after citations from *Bannlyst*, first edition, 1918.

6 "ett slags skyttegravssyndrom" (EDSTRÖM 2002, 456).

7 Edström additionally argues that the hermetic experience is more effective in conveying the essence of violence than the novel's "ideological construction" as such (2002, 456). Edström's identification of an implicit trench syndrome in the text is particularly interesting in light of Lagerlöf's own observation, in a letter to Elkan of 21 March 1918, that she would be unable to write about trench warfare as such, but aims to cover the topic of war in her own way: "Jag kan naturligtvis inte skriva en sådan där riktig och utmärkt bok, som Le feu [anti-war novel from 1916 by French author Henri Barbusse, published in Swedish in 1917]. Även om jag hade levat i skyttegravar i år

drome and of the wider complex of territorial control and aggression – be the territories in question those of marriages or nations – that is exposed in the peace-promoting novel.[8]

These spatio-personal incompatibilities and affinities are played out in the closely connected sequence of three chapters, "Kullarna", "Havet" and "Segelturen", which are instrumental in bringing the Sven Elversson and Sigrun Rhånge storylines into contact with each other. The chapters read as a radical application of the comparative focus on the national landscape that is fundamental to the method of *Nils Holgersson*[9] (and to Benedict Anderson's 'grammar' of national imagining), but without achieving an unequivocal or sustainable sense of national fusion and belonging to hitherto 'foreign' terrains of the country.[10]

It is telling that, in "Kullarna", Elversson is a co-passenger on the carriage that transports the newly-wed couple to their common destination in the pastor's Bohuslän parish.[11] It is as focalised through his eavesdropping but empathetic mind that the bride's spatial predicament and its comparative national context is summed up:

> "Det ser naturligtvis inte så här ut i Norrland," tänkte Sven Elversson. "Jag skulle ha önskat, att de här kullarna, som verkligen är dystra och fula, inte hade varit det första, som den unga, vackra frun hade fått se av Bohuslän."
> I detsamma hörde han hur hon sade till mannen, att hon kände sig likaså vilsekommen bland dessa kullar som i den mörkaste skog.
> På ett ställe gick en fårflock och betade, på ett annat ett par kor, och på ett tredje stod ett par barn och plockade bär. Och nu förklarade den unga hustrun, att det var väl, att de stodo där, för om hon inte hade fått se djur och barn, skulle hon inte ha trott, att hon befann sig i ett kristet land. (64–65)

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efter år skulle jag inte kunna göra något sådant, men bland detta överflöd av material skall väl finnas något som passar för mig" (Lagerlöf 1993 [1992], 471).

8 In contrast, the father's metaphorical description of Sven as a stone shaped by sea and shore points up features such as receptiveness towards outside influences, malleability and 'non-retalliation': "den här sonen vår är som en av stenarna, som ligger vid stranden och förs opp och ner av vågsvallet. Han blir så avslipad och fin av alla stötar han får, så att snart blir det inte ett hörn kvar på honom" (33).

9 For a fuller discussion of the national vision in *Nils Holgersson*, see my monograph *Lagerlöfs litterære landvinding* (2007).

10 In *Landskapets upplösning* David Anthin argues that *Bannlyst* exposes a "landscape myth", connected to nationalism, which Lagerlöf herself had been a co-creator of in Sweden, not least through *Nils Holgersson* (Anthin ca. 2000, 53). While this argument is of interest, it seems to overstate the discontinuities somewhat. Already *Nils Holgersson* is characterised by landscape 'relativity' and mobility and by an intricate interplay between regional and national, familiarisation and 'foreignisation'.

11 Sigrun's aversion to horse-drawn transport (see above) could also be observed in this context.

The bride's sense of exile, disorientation and loss of faith[12] is turned into a tentative reconciliation with her marital habitat in the subsequent chapter in the series, but complicated, or compromised, by two factors: firstly by the fact that it is only on finding the gateway to the sea, and the maximum of scale and outward perspective it provides, that her new home is validated: "Och hon tackade Gud för sitt hem och för att det stora, mäktiga, vida, friska havet fanns i dess närhet" (80). Stylistically, the imbalance in the distribution of attributive adjectives neatly mirrors the spatial priorities. A further complicating factor is the fact that it is the 'third party' of Elversson who holds the key to the opening up of the landscape. Thus, Sigrun's proper 'seductive journey' occurs as she is led towards the sea by Elversson, the landscape metaphors serving to portray bridal bliss: "Hon tyckte, att luften omkring henne fick färg och blev synlig. Hon tyckte, att den fylldes med små späda rosenblad, som kommo dalande ner såsom snöflingor och gjorde hela slätten omkring henne skär som en rodnande brud" (78). The final chapter in the series progresses right into the chronotopes of sea and sail ship, establishing an environment in which a closer encounter between the sea-linked soul-mates can appropriately happen. The chapter's ethos is one of acknowledging the counterpart's predicament and (extra-national) otherness. The framing motif is that of a southerly wind whose foreign voice[13] can be connected to Sigrun's later realisation of the unusual accent[14] that characterises Sven's speech. Sven, in turn, appreciates Sigrun's own hybridity by perceiving her as a mermaid in a scene which, as Lagerroth argues, may have been inspired by Edvard Eriksen's statue of The Little Mermaid, displayed at Langelinie in Copenhagen in 1913 (1963, 282):

> […] visserligen sågs ingen vit kropp, hälften jungfru och hälften fisk, ute bland vågorna, men på en hög sten, som låg i vattenbrynet, satt en ung kvinna. Och som hun satt där, ljusklädd, smidigt ihopkrupen överst på stenen, kunde hon likaväl vara kommen från vatten som från land. (83)

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12 The crisis of orientation and 'belief' Sigrun suffers is not dissimilar to the disconnect between the imagined locations of the Holy Land and the alienating and labyrinthine land- and cityscapes of 'abroad' experienced by the Swedish emigrants on arrival in Palestine in the opening parts of the second volume, "I Österlandet", of Lagerlöf's novel *Jerusalem* (1901–02). Both of these crises could be considered in the context of Michael Valdez Moses' discussion in "Disorientalism: Conrad and the Imperial Origins of Modernist Aesthetics" of what he identifies as a paradigmatic topos of modernist narrative: scenes where characters find themselves disoriented and imperilled in confusing surroundings. Valdez Moses goes on to argue that this paradigm owes as much to the peripheral and exotic settings of empire (originating in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*) as to the metropolitan centres of the west typically associated with modernism (Valdes Moses 2007, 43–46).

13 "som om man hörde en främmande man tala ett obekant språk" (81).

14 "den där främmande brytningen" (97).

The chapter concludes with Elversson articulating in the maritime milieu a liberating insight which mirrors the novel's innovative method of mobilising and re-routing sensations of revulsion, as discussed above: "Men äcklet är ingenting ont. Det är en varnare och vaktare. Och den, som kan begagna sig av äcklet och bruka det till sådant, som är gott, han kan göra mycken nytta bland människorna" (103). The fact that the novel uses the sea as the site for this self-referential statement of a reforming intention is not insignificant. Margaret Cohen comments on the connection between the ocean, "blue water", and alternative artistic activity in a modernist context, observing that "[a]t the turn of the twentieth century, literary modernism makes the freedom of blue water artistic freedom in rebellion against stifling, ossified hierarchies" (2006, 655). Ulla-Britta Lagerroth approaches a similar understanding when she speculates that the sea outside the western shoreline to Lagerlöf came to signify not only the shedding of inhibitions and the extension of sightlines, but an incentive to creativity as such, to "the free ascent of poetic thought".[15]

## Mobile women

Sigrun is not the only female protagonist on the move in *Bannlyst*. Lotta Hedman is likewise introduced while travelling through a national terrain, embedded in a wider world. In contrast, however, with the claustrophobia, apparent privacy and traditionalism of Sigrun's carriage ride, Lotta Hedman's mode of transport is modern, collective and informed by freedom. The four chapters that begin the novel's middle part and foreground her story are set in a train that connects Sweden from north to south. This immediately introduces a sense of updated calendrical time, common course (although socially stratified) and national 'conversation' into the text: "På tåget, som en dag i slutet av september år 1915 rullade från Norrland ner mot de sydligare delarna av landet, satt i en tredjeklasskupé en ung kvinna […] och talade med de medresande" (133). The mapping of co-ordinated practise and shared destiny within a national landscape is reinforced in Hedman's visionary voice which figures the nation as one body: "klockan slår tolv och ett, och hela Sverige har lagt sig till vila, och alla ljus är släckta, och det stora, vita landet ligger utsträckt i tyst sömn" (137). As her discourse on war and nation gathers momentum and the number of listeners grow, the train passengers morph into a national audience, allowing the narratorial voice for the first time in the novel to offer a conspectus of the Swedish war-time experience of shortage of

[15] "diktartankens fria lyftning" (Lagerroth 1963, 309).

goods, inflation, neutrality guard and a sense of threatened borders: "man undrade vad ryssarna sysslade med där uppe åt Haparanda hållet" (138).

In his development of Benedict Anderson's thinking on the role of the novel in the modelling of the nation, Jonathan Culler stresses that it is crucial to this role that the fictional world should include a sense of simultaneity and plurality, extend beyond individual experience, and present "the space of a community" (CULLER 2003, 33). On these criteria, *Bannlyst* in general and its train sequence in particular evidently share features with the novel of nation. Moreover, the "triple conception" of Lagerlöf's text in itself reads as a comment on the layered composition of events in the community evoked in the novel, while the gradual intertwining of the three story threads reflect the nation as the space of coincidental meetings and new familiarity. Just like Sven meets Sigrun in the context of (the concluding stage of) nation-wide transport, he happens to be a passenger on the train that takes Lotta through the country. Character connections are clarified through conversation as Sigrun's status as a common denominator in events and emotions north and south is illuminated. With Hedman operating as an 'assistant' or embedded narrator, information is provided which further invalidates the notion of the seductive rewards of the marital alliance, but from a new angle: thus insights are gained into Lotta's attraction to Sigrun since childhood, the rupture of the friendship between the women occasioned by the arrival of Sigrun's fiancé in Norrland and the damage to Lotta's 'vision' caused by the pastor's insensitive comments. The train route itself is not only nationally symbolic but also signifies the bond between the women, as Lotta's ambitious journey is designed to take her to her lost friend in the marital set-up (which, as a result of the husband's defences against perceived rivals, his trench syndrome, has been re-located to the north-eastern corner of Bohuslän, far removed from the attractions of the west coast). Thus lines are drawn between lives as well as locations, and as the train continues its programmed course,[16] a clear sense is maintained of a connected national organism moving though time (to paraphrase Anderson) and being addressed in the novel, while individual trajectories are interlinked in the process.

The voice, viewpoint and mobility of Lotta Hedman are crucial in achieving this effect. As a character construction she is innovative and also controversial.[17] A factory worker from Lapland in the grip of new

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16 "Det långa tåget från norden rullade oupphörligt vidare ifrån station till station" (142).

17 Lagerlöf's letters suggest a real-life source of inspiration for the figure of Hedman. Writing to Elkan on 21 February 1918, she describes how she is engaged in a correspondence with a prophesising woman from the north: "Jag har brev ibland från en norrländsk profetissa. Hon påstår, att hon har räknat ut i uppenbarelseboken, att detta

industrialisation, she is a proletarian product of the periphery, yet engaged in the negotiation of the nation's internal divisions. Her natural language is far from the national norm in which she strives to express her message: "jag är inte van vid svenskan. Den är inte sådan som det språket vi talar emellan oss" (140), "Vad hon ansträngde sig för att tala högsvenska!" (171) – another instance of the novel acknowledging 'heteroglossia' in a hero(ine) (cf. on Elversson above). The ambition of her national address is all the same of maximum proportions: "Till det höga slottet i Stockholm gick brevet från den ringa fabriksarbeterskan i Stenbroträsk" (137).

A comparison of Hedman's address in the novel with the monologue of her precursor character in the hand-written sketch discussed in note 1 above shows that the sense of marginalisation, poverty, control from and criticism of the national centre was emphasised even further in the unpublished draft. This opens with a concrete insight into food scarcity and goes on to criticise centralised administration: "Å dä var en kväll när ja satt å tänkte på hur dä skulle bli, när vi slapp te å äte kålrötter […] Å när en skulle […] få slippa alla förordninger ifrån Stockholm". The exclusion of the industrial worker from education is also highlighted: "Och ja har undrat vafför jag aldrig skall få göre anne än stå å vakta på min maskin å vafför ja inte fick skaffa mej kunskapen". Similarly, the criticism of the monarch's lack of action is more overt in the manuscript. The dialectal style of the sketch, while not reproducing northern Swedish speech as such, of course in itself works to signal distance from/towards the centre. As for the longing out, this is articulated in terms of both traditional-romantic and hyper-modern dreams and means of transport: "[Å ja har undrat] vafför dä inte kan komma någon ridande å ta mej opp på sin häst eller varför dä inte kan komma någon flygande å ta mej opp i sin flygmaskin" (LAGERLÖF: "Å dä var en kväll …"). While in the novel the aeroplane is replaced by that other emblem of modernity, the long-distance train, the dream of airborne ascent is not absent from the published narative either, as we shall now see.

In *Bannlyst*, the range of Lotta Hedman's vision by no means stops at the national borders. Perhaps already her image of Sweden asleep cited above implies a degree of the unsettled outside/inside perspective on the nation, which Culler discusses in "Anderson and the Novel". And it is from her bird's-eye view, later in the text, that the novel provides its most globalised and most universalised 'satellite picture' of the joined-up nature of both geographies and destinies – a fine example indeed of Lagerroth's notion of "the free ascent of poetic thought":

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är det stora kriget, som skall föregå det tusenåriga lyckoriket. Det är sålunda inte fråga om yttersta domen utan om inrättandet av en ny världsordning. […] Jag tycker inte att det ser så olikt ut, att hon inte kan få rätt" (LAGERLÖF 1993 [1992], 467).

> […] hennes själ [skilde sig] från kroppen, höjde sig och begav sig i svävande flykt uppåt mot världsrymden.
> Snart var den kommen så högt, att Lotta Hedman kunde se de jordiska tingen i deras sammanhang. Hon såg nu inte som annars bara ett litet stycke av dem, utan hon såg dem i hela deras utsträckning. Hon såg inte ett kort stycke av älvar och floder, utan hon kunde följa vattendragen från källan till mynningen. […] Slätterna bredde ut sig under henne, och ländernas skapnad avtecknade sig mot havens blänkande ytor.
> Lotta tycke, att detta var ett skönt och upplyftande skådespel, men hennes själ stannade inte vid detta, utan steg ändå högre.
> Om ett par ögonblick hade den nått till en rymd, därifrån den kunde överskåda människoödena i deras sammanhang. (232)

We recognise from earlier in the discussion the interest in the run of rivers and the relationship between land(s) and ocean in this sublime panorama, which may be seen as emblematic of the novel's ultimate vision of a world of continuities rather than territorial hostilities (just like another 'alternative' character, Elversson, was instrumental in formulating the novel's essential method, as discussed above). The vision, although highly character focalised, is having added impact by so demonstrably extending the spatial rules for direct description that otherwise govern the text (rules which privilege the national territory and, significantly, its porous borders and acquatic contact zone – through which foreign influences and outbound impulses pass – as the main field of representation, cf. note 3). Interestingly, a similar striving towards establishing an unlimited overview of humanity forms the central idea of an unpublished typewritten fragment entitled "Professor Hanslick från Wien", contained in the same compilation of "Sentiments from the war years" as the early sketch of what was to become the Hedman figure.[18]

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[18] The fragment is experimental in style and theme and seems to reflect a creative crisis not unlike the low in literary productivity Lagerlöf experienced in the war years before *Bannlyst* ("Å jag är ledsen, att jag inte har mitt stora arbete färdigt"). Its voice resembles Hedman's at times, while at other times it is tempting to read Freudian references into the text. The script contains a fascinating play with micro and macro perspective as it articulates the desire for a full view of collective existence at both the level of a member of mankind and that of the biological cell in the individual body: "Jag har upplyftats i andanom över jorden […] Vad har mänskligheten för ett utseende [/] Denna stora varelse i vliken [sic] vi leva vaad är den för ett väsen [/] Deenna skapelse, som bildas av våra kroppar, denna evigt bestående mänsklighet [/] Hur ser hon ut, då man skådar den, som ett helt väsende. [/] Må människa tänka på de små cellerna, som [/] Å jag är professor Hanslick från Wien, jag forskar i en vetenskap som ingen före mig har bedrivit, [/] Jag söker att utforska den stora varelse, som bär namn av mänsklighet [/] Jag tänker mig, att jag vore en av de små cellerna i min kropp [/] Finns det då någon möjlighet, att för den storden lilla cell, som sitter inklämd i mitt kropp [/] Den lilla cellen, som bygger upp min varelse iåförening med millioner andra [/] cellen, som endast lever ett ögonblick [/] som går och ersättes av andra [/] kan den ett ögonblick veta hur en [sic] den människa ter sig, som han varit med om att bilda. [/] Vet den ens om, att den tillhör en större enhet. [/] Men vi vad

Lotta Hedman's woman with a mission is clearly a figure that is difficult for critics to come to terms with. We can recall Lagerroth's characterisation of her function as both cohesive and destabilising – in a sense exactly the effects she has on the national parameters in the text – and point to Edström's blunt admission of her dislike of the character.[19] The contribution of Hedman's 'new' woman to transgression in a gender context too is reinforced as she and Sigrun – re-connected by the railway – set up a temporary alternative household in the margins of the marital home, sheltering (not unlike a war-time experience) from the husband's aggression. Edström argues that the novel's "centre of emotion" is to be found in the relationship between the two women rather than in the attractions between Sigrun and either of the men, adding that the novel provides possibly the most unequivocal expression of lesbian love in Lagerlöf's fiction.[20]

Sigrun and Lotta seem to alternate in performing the role of the mobile woman in the text. Thus, while the third party of Lotta stays on in the periphery of the pastor's domain, his wife sets out on a distinctly counter-marital journey, initially aiming for America and subsequent work in the war zone as a Red Cross nurse, but eventually leading to cohabitation with Sven Elversson in the husband's abandoned ancestral home, which has been reconstituted to incorporate a hostel for the homeless. This is one of several 'hybrid households' in the novel which together seem to underline the ambiguous – and indeed experimental – status of 'family' and 'home' in the text overall.

## Uncanny conclusions

The novel's most radical experiment in extending its notion of community, or 'family', happens in its concluding parts – until a degree of limitation or regression is noticeable in the final brief chapter, simply entitled "Afslutning". The novel's ending is contested, both because of its shocking close-ups of corpses in the aftermath of sea battle, and because it was amended by the author at a late stage – principally by the insertion into the text of evidence that Elversson had not been complicit in cannibalism – as a result of the strong unease about the book expressed by Lagerlöf's friends, Olander and Elkan. It is difficult to dispute, however, that the novel's uncanny components are essential in displaying the breaking

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äro vi annat än celler i mänskligheten stora kropp" (Lagerlöf: "Professor Hanslick från Wien").

19 "Lotta Hedman står jag bara inte ut med" (Edström 2002, 460).

20 "det mest oförbehållsamma uttrycket för kvinnas kärlek till kvinna som Selma Lagerlöf vågat uttrycka i sin fiction" (Edström 2002, 456).

down of the barriers between living and dead, national and foreign, friend and foe, individual and collective, which is central to the novel's agenda of peace.

Margaret Cohen makes clear the capacity of the sea, as the chronotope of "white water", to unleash catastrophe – "a moment when the violence of maritime elements gets so excessive that it throws the narrative into a crisis threatening its breakdown" (2006, 657) – and gives as one of her examples the human violence manifested in sea battles.[21] One of the primary sources of inspiration for *Bannlyst* was the author's personal experience of the gruesome effects of the Battle of Jutland between Britain and Germany on 31 May-1 June 1916, the largest naval battle of the First World War, while holidaying with Elkan in Strömstad on the Bohuslän coast. Vivi Edström argues that the trauma of witnessing scores of corpses drifting towards land (with events closely monitored in newspapers as well) was decisive for Lagerlof's definitive position against war – war as abominable, devoid of any lure of heroism it might have had (Edström 2002, 453).

These traumatic 'tourist' impressions are in the text initially developed into an understated, but subtly unsettling mapping of two very different types of mass migration converging on the west coast resorts, one national and one extra-national. While the railway seems to re-locate the whole of Sweden's population as one holiday-hungry collective, another type of 'tourism', in which corpses are cast as unexpected guests, cannot be ignored for long:

> Det var juni månad, den årets tid, då man i Bohuslän eller kanske, rättare sagt, i kusttrakterna och skärgården i Bohuslän väntade främmande.
> […] nu började också järnvägstågen anlända, fullpackade av gäster från landets alla hörn. […] Nu var det, som om hela Sverige skulle vara på väg till de kala skären och det vresiga västerhavet.
> Men alla de gäster, som man hade berett sig att få mottaga, väntade man österifrån, från landsidan. Västerifrån, från havet, väntades inga främmande. För deras mottagande hade man inte gjort några tillrustningar. Från det hållet hade det inte kommit några förebud eller några beställningar.
> Och när det nu i alla fall kom gäster västerifrån, då kunde inte deras mottagande bli detsamma, som skänktes dem, som kommo från land. Genom dem uppstod jämmer och förvirring och dysterhet, men ingen glädje. (312–13)

In order to imprint onto the mind of the reader the full extent and fine detail of the human disaster that underlies this wave of 'immigration', on which the nation cannot turn its back, the novel insistently shifts its perspective off-shore into the centre of the crisis. It lets three of its male characters, who have previously been designed mainly in terms of diffe-

[21] Another of her examples is the resort to cannibalism as survival strategy following disaster at sea.

rence, share similar experiences of horror. In succession (be it narrated indirectly or directly), Sven's brother, Sven himself and finally the hitherto land-oriented pastor Rhånge occupy maritime settings and engage with scenes informed by tensions and slippages between sight and non-sight, life and non-life. Thus, the macabre bodily performance of the masses of the living dead and the visual impact of the victims' absence of eyes are motifs central to the pastor's concluding anti-war address to parishioners and novel readers alike:

> Jag själv begav mig i går dit ut för att se dem, […] dessa tusental, som är vräkta i havet såsom avfall, som man vill göra sig av med.
> Jag ber er, att ni alla, i tanken åtminstone, följer mig dit ut och försöker att se synen. Ni ska se de svarta ögonhålorna, som gapar i de gråbleka ansiktena. Ni ska se de nerfallna käkarna, ni ska se händer, som på något besynnerligt sätt hålles upplyfta och viftar och vinkar i takt med vågsvallet, […] ni ska se dem, som ligger med fötterna upp och rullar runt ibland och sticker upp huvudet, såsom vore de konstberidare, som slår volter. Ni ska se dem, som har kommit i vattnet sönderskjutna och styckade.
> Ni ska se huvuden, som vändes åt höger och åt vänster och tycks ha något att säga er. […] Ni ska se allt detta och fästa synen i era ögon så fast, att den aldrig må försvinna. (341–42)

This passage demonstrates some of the uncanny devices of literature which Sigmund Freud explores in his influential essay on "Das Unheimliche", first published at approximately the same time (1919) as *Bannlyst*. The notion that a capability for independent action has been retained by body parts is among the effects Freud identifies: "Detached body parts, a head that has been cut off, a hand severed from the arm, feet that dance by themselves all have something immensely uncanny about them, especially when independent activity remains attributed to them."[22] Similarly, the (fear of) enforced loss of eyes figures in Freud's analysis as key to the unsettling impact of Hoffmann's story of "Der Sandmann": "the feeling of the uncanny is closely connected to the idea of being deprived of one's eyes."[23]

A variant articulation of uncanny war impressions in the context of the chronotope of "white water" can be found in another of Lagerlöf's unpublished precursor texts to *Bannlyst*, the west-coast narrative of "Den fridsamme". This reads as a radical deconstruction of a romantic notion of turbulent waters. While the novel charts collective tourism, as we saw, the manuscript focuses on the individual experience of its eponymous

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22 „Abgetrennte Glieder, ein abgehauener Kopf, eine vom Arm gelöste Hand […], Füsse, die für sich allein tanzen […], haben etwas ungemein Unheimliches an sich, besonders wenn ihnen […] noch eine selbständige Tätigkeit zugestanden wird" (Freud 1947, 257).

23 „das Gefühl des Unheimlichen [haftet] an der Vorstellung, der Augen beraubt zu werden" (Freud 1947 [1919], 242).

sea-side visitor, the author's male alter ego of sorts. Already the description of the approach journey by train is punctuated by the warning sounds of a westerly storm penetrating through the natural defences of the coastal cliffs and into the valley where the railway runs. When the visitor immediately after arrival makes his way to the most protruding point of the shore and challenges the wind-swept sea to display its secret life of sublime mythical beings, what emerges is a futuristic monochrome display of the monsters of living, but deadly machinery engaged in combat on an industrial scale:

> Hela viken framför honom var uppfylld av de väldigaste krigsskepp inbegripna i strid. Mörka höga kolosser av järn gråa som havet inte liknande skepp, men någon aldrig hittills sedda vidunder. Det rasade strid mellan dem, ett stod i lågar, ett vände sig vacklande och sjönk med aktern medan fören reste sig. Och mellan dessa fnysande vidunder, som sprutade ut eld och järn ett vatten fullt av döda av drunknande, av vrakdelar, av båtar som bräktes och kantrade. (LAGERLÖF: "Den fridsamme")

In this apocalyptic vision the battle zone itself and its animated war ships (cf. Freud on "Beseelung" (1947 [1919], 237)) have been transported right into the vicinity of the shore, thereby creating a 'horror of scale' effect. The impact of the visual shock is intensified by the fact that the scene only manifests itself for a moment, thus offering a different version of the uncanny slippage between sight and non-sight. The frame of the unpublished narrative signals authenticity, the text opening with a concise marker of contemporariness[24] and concluding with exact background information about the battle. In another instance of the horror of scale, the enlarged and doubly darkened graphics of the modern news medium works as a metaphor for the shock of war in the final lines of the manuscript:

> På kvällen […] var det första han såg ett telegram som med stora bokstäver dubbelt mörkare än eljest berättade om det stora slaget utanför Horns rev på Jyllands västkust. Massor av skepp voro förlorade och på det stormande havets yta vältrade i denna stund massar av döda. (LAGERLÖF: "Den fridsamme")

Returning to the novel proper, we can observe that, in transcending the barrier towards the chronotope of the sea, and by implication towards transnational and interpersonal commitment, Rhånge forms part of a wider concluding movement in the novel towards reconciliation, co-ordination and equalisation of differences. In Rhånge's case this was foreshadowed by his turn towards the notion of "love as forsaking" in accepting Sigrun's cohabitation with Sven and renouncing his own marital demands. In the novel's wider vision the whole Bohuslän community comes together in honouring the rescued dead, German and British alike, in a mass burial ceremony, and in accepting Elversson.[25] Even after death one

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24 "År 1916 i början av Juni" (LAGERLÖF: "Den fridsamme").

25 The notion of collectively co-ordinated thought processes is flagged up specifically at the beginning of the novel's concluding chapter sequence in a reflection which has

of the rescued bodies plays an active and constructive part in plot development, as the proof of the protagonist's non-involvement in cannibalism consists of a letter recovered from the pocket of a dead British soldier and former participant in the Polar expedition, an additional example of the coincidental, but significant encounters and the transnational information flow that characterise the novel. As for equalisation in gender terms, it is noteworthy that the text awards Lotta Hedman the role of concluding the novel's sermon of peace, when she poignantly replaces the pastor (who has to retire to attend to the fatally ill Elversson). Thus, the alternative female voice, following on from the more orthodox male voice, is the medium of the novel's ultimate utterance which comes forth (a resurrection of sorts) from the margins of the masses: "Under det att folket väntade på fortsättningen av talet, hördes en röst, inte från graven, utan från utkanten av folkmassan. Det var en kvinnostämma, som ljöd tunn och skrikig, men som i alla fall var förunderligt hörbar och tydlig" (346).

Or Hedman's sermon is the novel's penultimate statement, more precisely, because, in what may be viewed as a 'variant' or additional ending, conventional marriage – and the national marriage alliance, if we wish – appear to be embraced. Alternatively, the ending could read as an ironic, overly accomodating response to the demands for a less controversial text and conclusion in particular. In any case, we see a return to confined family space and, apparently, the subordination of the female. While the final reunion of Sigrun and Edvard Rhånge (after the demise of Sven Elversson) is conceived in terms of a romantic breakthrough, it is difficult to ignore that it is simultaneously the female's passage into a domain which is defined as the property of the male ("jag [Sigrun] vill inte mera lämna ditt hus" (353)) and that the precondition for the novel's construction of a symbolic location of love in its finishing lines seems to be the removal of the 'alien' floral emblems of the female in order to return to old foundations:

> "Se dit ut på gräsplanen!" sade hon. "Det finns ett hörn där, som var beväxt med styvmorsblommor, då vi först flyttade hit. De har [sic] väl hemmastadda där och kom varje år upp av sig själva. En gång lät jag anlägga en rabatt där och planterade andra blommor, och de växte och frodades även de. Men nu är rabatten med de främmande blommorna borta, och se styvmorsblommorna börjar åter växa upp ur jorden på sin gamla plats!" (353)[26]

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similarities with the macro embodiment of mankind in the "Professor Hanslick" fragment (cf. note 18): "Det vet nog en och var hur märkvärdigt det kan vara med tankar. Det är, som om de av en osynlig hand såddes ut över jorden. Och där kan man gå och tycka, att man har funnit något sällsynt och skönt, och är stolt och glad, tills man märker, att detsamma har vuxit upp samtidigt i hundratals andra hjärnor" (312).

[26] It is worth adding that the prioritisation of the old floral foundations is not supported, or at least not mirrored, by the front cover of the first edition of the novel, which displays in its centre a red and golden image of what seems to be three fuchsia flowers.

One may argue, even, that the final 'homecoming' is not devoid of a sense of the uncanny in the shape of the shadows of a sinister past. Just lines before the passage cited here, the face of the husband "darkened"[27] during an exchange between the partners as a reminder of the pastor's previous mood patterns. Similarly, the pastor's considerable and carefully preserved collection of mementoes of Sigrun's life, which is now a testament to the intensity of love,[28] was earlier in the text (in the chapter entitled "I sorg") a manifestation of obsessive behaviour. Thus, a Freudian conceptual continuum between "heimlich" and "unheimlich" (FREUD 1947 [1919], 235–37) may be relevant to the understanding of the concluding reconstruction of the marital home in *Bannlyst*. Overall, the novel is an ambitious and experimental enquiry into the ambiguities of family, gender, community and nation, conducted in the context of new ideological responses made urgent by the consequences of global territorial conflict.[29]

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27 "mannens ansikte mörknade" (353).

28 " het kärleksluft" (352).

29 Cf. Helena Forsås-Scott's argument in her study of gender and community in the work of Swedish writer Elin Wägner that the effects of the First World War impacted significantly on contemporary culture by contributing to "the deconstruction of the dominant discourse on the family" and to the formation of "alternative constructions of both gender and community" (FORSÅS-SCOTT 2009, 193). Wägner published a major Lagerlöf monograph 1942-43.

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