

Highbrow and Lowbrow Pornography: Prejudice Prevails Against Popular Culture. A Case Study

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WHEN IT COMES TO PORNOGRAPHY, PREJUDICE AGAINST POPULAR culture prevails. During the “sexual revolution” of the 1960s and 1970s, pornography entered the scholarly realm as a worthy sociological, psychological, and sexological topic of study. Although there is a staunch group of Christian conservatives and feminists who zealously oppose pornography as degrading to women and a factor in abuse and rape (e.g., Andrea Dworkin [recently deceased] and Catharine MacKinnon), there are also a number of (postmodern) feminists and advocates of GLBT who support pornography as liberating for women’s and minorities’ sexuality (e.g., Nadine Strossen). In recent years, several books and articles have been published that support the study and existence of pornography in how it may elucidate our sexual desire and the function of pleasure and power, enhance sexual equality, diminish sexual inhibitions, nurture essential dreams and fantasies, and promote the freedom of speech to express sexual difference. Linda Williams is notable here with her historical study of pornography, *Hardcore* published in 1989. Williams supports the study and existence of pornography, but regrets its male-centered focus on men’s desire and pleasure. She is, however, optimistic considering recent diversification that has made pornography less of a patriarchal monolith and concludes her study with an appeal to women to pursue a female-centered pornography where man would serve as the “sexual other.”

Williams’s study of pornography, from stag flicks and musicals to hard and soft porn, represents a milestone in popular culture. For as

Williams notes in her introduction, the study of pornography has from the beginning been driven by an anxious hope to recover its aesthetic quality by turning to its classical heritage (10). Susan Sontag's influential essay "The Pornographic Imagination" (1969) is a premonition of the prejudice against popular pornography that prevails to this day. Analyzing French classics, such as Pauline Réage's *The Story of O*, Georges Bataille's *The Story of the Eye*, and Jean de Berg's *The Image*, Sontag makes a case for an elitist, *avant-garde*, intellectual, and philosophical pornography, against the mundane, crass materialism of a dominant mass culture. Although popular pornography has received significant scholarly attention in recent years, for example, by Williams, such elitism haunts popular pornography. Hence, though there are some scholars who now speak up in the name of pornography, most viewers of X-rated videos prefer to remain private about it.

In Norway, this schism between highbrow and lowbrow pornography has become piercingly clear in recent years. On the one hand, newspapers, magazines, and statistical surveys report that an increasing number of young women are consuming pornography and feminists and other female public figures publicly defend and promote pornography.¹ Couples feel free to speak openly and publicly about how they have used pornography to spice up their sex life. However, on the other hand, as sociologist and pornography researcher Kjetil Rolness has pointed out, those men who rent porn videos for their own use and pleasure still feel like scapegoats because pornography continues to be stigmatized by antiporn feminists and Christian conservatives as filthy, degrading, and dangerous to women (152–53).²

Only highbrow pornography is publicly acceptable. This past year, pornographic classics have been published in new Norwegian translations (e.g., by Réage, Bataille, Marquis de Sade, and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch) and pornographic films from France and Japan that pass as "high art" (e.g., Cathérine Breillat's *Romance*) have been shown in Norwegian movie theaters. Established film critic Per Haddal has endorsed this trend and defends erotic openness in a film of high artistic quality; however, he dismisses popular pornography as simple "bangbang" that belongs in the same class as such trashy magazines as *Se og hør*, a Norwegian version of the American magazine *People*.

The reception of two postwar novels that were both confiscated and accused of being pornographic reflects the prevailing prejudice. They are Agnar Mykle's *Sangen om den røde rubin* from 1956 (translated as *The*

Song about the Red Ruby and published by Dutton in 1961 and Dell in 1962 and 1967) and Jens Bjørneboe's *Uten en tråd* from 1966 (translated by Walter Barthold as *Without a Stitch* and published by Grove Press in 1969).³ Both authors were well established, yet also quite rebellious, resenting the oppressive conformity of established cultural norms. Inspired by Alfred Kinsey's reports from the late 1940s and early 1950s—which brought increased knowledge to sexual behavior, slowly legitimizing a diversity that had previously been considered immoral—Mykle and Bjørneboe were set on liberating sexuality through articles and novels.⁴ Their novels are legendary for the proceedings against them, the trials and the confiscations, accused of being pornographic. Committees appointed by the parliament to review the pornography law (which to this day regulates and ensures censorship of pornography in Norway, even as the High Court ruled in favor of uncensored pornography on December 7, 2005 in a landmark case against the notorious porn maker Stein-Erik Mattson) continue to revisit the cases of Mykle and Bjørneboe. The most recently appointed committee concluded in their report (1999) that the rulings against Mykle and Bjørneboe were in disagreement with three essential principles: the pursuit of truth, democracy, and the formation of opinions. The committee therefore recommended a liberalization of the law, a recommendation the government failed to follow (Rolness 250). In any case, the hype about the novels in the midst of the ongoing controversy about pornography insures their continued publication in new editions and with new reviews.

While critics and reviewers of Mykle's and Bjørneboe's novels have by now ascertained that the legal proceedings against them were uncalled for, a prejudice against Bjørneboe's novel as literature of lesser quality than Mykle's novel holds sway. This prejudice can be traced back to the original courts' rulings. During the proceedings against Mykle (1957, 1958) and Bjørneboe (June and December 1967), the defense argued for the respective work's literary quality and the judgment was based on this question. Mykle was finally acquitted by the High Court in 1958 because the defense succeeded in convincing the court about the novel's high literary quality and the artistic necessity of including the detailed depictions of the protagonist Ask's sexual affairs.⁵ These consist of Ask—a 23-year-old student at a business college—fingering, licking, and drinking the juices of the various women he has sex with in varying positions and multiple times, taking

them standing and lying down, front up or down. Oslo Municipal Court had the previous year declared that the book should remain confiscated because of its obscenity. The High Court, on the other hand, acknowledged that an author must be granted considerable freedom in the artistic development of his ideas. At the same time they asserted that literature is subject to the law and that it is the High Court's job to judge a work's literary quality. But in so doing, the High Court was led—in the case of Mykle—to see that the graphic sexual details fit into a larger whole and a story with literary merits, as they put it.

Bjørneboe's defense was not as successful. Both the Municipal Court and the High Court found the text trashy. Bjørneboe was sentenced to pay fines, and the book was confiscated because it was, according to the judge,

utuktig. Den litterære verdi kan ikke vurderes høyt. Dens opplysningsverdi ligger heller under nullpunktet. Dens budskap er seksual-nihilisme i roman-saus.

[immoral. The literary value cannot be placed high. Its edifying value is rather below zero. Its message is sexual-nihilism in novel-sauce.]

(qtd. from Wandrup 117)

Bjørneboe's novel provoked in particular for its sheer sexual focus with hardly any character development or psychological complexity, focusing primarily on sexual acts in an extreme diversity as it portrays the protagonist Lilian—18 and just out of high school—being fingered and licked, having sex with men and women using a dildo. She participates in threesomes, experiences troilism (one man in front and one behind), partakes in the making of a pornographic film, has anal sex, and encounters sadomasochism in Hamburg. It is true that the novel is quite shallow psychologically speaking; Lilian goes from being sexually inhibited and unable to achieve orgasm through intercourse because she is haunted by the guilt and shame that has been instilled in her by societal norms in general and her mother and grandmother in particular, to—after a couple of months therapy in the good hands of orgasm specialist Dr. Peterson—being sexually liberated, upon which she launches an astounding sexual tour traveling around in Europe. Ask, on the other hand, is constantly tormented to the bitter end about his sexuality (feeling guilty and ashamed, yet wanting to be liberated) and

about his political position (drawn to an idealized notion of the socialists, yet fond of the comfortable life of the bourgeoisie).

Lilian's story was, however, shocking at its time not just because of its sexual content, but because it cast a young woman in the role traditionally granted only young men, promoting sexual equality. In *Uten en tråd* Lilian did what most men did at that time and still do; they took a summer off to play before they settled down. Lilian is right in lamenting upon her return home that it was (is?) acceptable only for young men to get the kind of world experience she has attained (Bjørneboe *Uten en tråd* 180).

As Bjørneboe's defense pointed out, the nature of the sexual depictions in *Uten en tråd* is no more "utuktig"—"obscene"—than that of the "trivialpornografi" (popular porn) that was for sale in newsstands at that time. The main difference, as Bjørneboe alluded to in his defense speech, was the fact that he—as a prominent author of anti-authoritarian novels—presented more of a threat to the establishment than the anonymous authors of popular porn.⁶ The book remained confiscated until 1988 when it was rereleased by Pax, reminding the audience in the introduction that the definition of "utuktig" ["obscene"] changes with time. The book is technically still illegal as the sentence has never been revoked, but no legal action has been taken against it since it was republished first in 1988, and then in 1992, 1995, and 1999.

After the trial, Mykle's book was sold in thousand folds, and it has done remarkably well throughout the years.⁷ It has also become the subject of several scholarly publications, praising its literary qualities and its progressive social orientation.⁸ Not so in the case of Bjørneboe's book. True, it was not available for sale in Norway for twenty-one years, but while confiscated in Norway, the novel remained available for sale in both Denmark and Sweden, and copies of the book were acquired from across the border.⁹ Yet any critical discussion of the novel is virtually nonexistent. The tendency for literary scholars is to remain silent about it while embarrassment and confusion about the author's intention in writing the novel dominate discussions—if any—about it. Typically, it is considered an "exercise" for the completion of Bjørneboe's momentous work *Frihetens øyeblikk* (*Moment of Freedom*), which was published the same year, or a story written out of financial needs, or simply to provoke.¹⁰

The receptions of the two novels reveal that though critics' attitudes to sexuality have become less prudish they are still elitist. When Bjørneboe's *Uten en tråd* was published again in 1988, it received a lot

of attention in the media for its risqué attributes, but not for its literary value. The reviewer for the national newspaper *Aftenposten*, Line Baugstø, wrote that

Som pornografi betraktet er "Uten en tråd" av høy kvalitet. Det er en saftig bok, den er godt skrevet, og man blir kåt av å lese den. Som litteratur, som fortelling, er den noe stort vrøvl.

[Considered as pornography, *Without a Stitch* is of high quality. It is a juicy book, it is well written, and one gets horny from reading it. As literature, as a story, it is totally nonsensical.]

("Moralsk pornografi")

Note the peculiar distinction Baugstø makes between "well written pornography" and "nonsensical literature." To her, this is not pornography of high artistic quality. Jan E. Hansen, established cultural commentator and literary critic, likewise asserted in a commentary that "alle har vært enige om at "Uten en tråd" er av minimal litterær verdi" ["everyone agrees that *Without a Stitch* is of minimal literary quality"] ("Reprise—Uten en tråd"). And Willy Dahl, the renowned literary critic whose dismissive review the prosecutor relied heavily on in 1967, again declared that the book has absolutely no literary value; it is "dårlig og interesseløs" ["bad and insipid"] ("Forbudt Bjørneboe-bok"). Some did highlight the story's entertaining, innocent, and humorous aspects, but no one would defend its literary values.¹¹ The way critics refrain from calling it a "novel," preferring "book" or "story" are other indicators of the dismissive attitudes against *Uten en tråd*.

The dismissive rejection of *Uten en tråd* is troublesome for two reasons: first of all, because the novel carries an important social and political message that foreshadows current discussions—for example, Williams's—about the liberating potential of pornography and how it might be reinvented to overcome its male-centeredness; secondly, because it cleverly reinstates a literary genre of rebellious origins. Bjørneboe's point in writing *Uten en tråd* is to reform popular pornography, both its content and style. In the following I will show how Bjørneboe does this and reflect on the degree of his success in accomplishing what he set out to do.

Bjørneboe was always a freedom fighter. In his article "Istendenfor en forsvarstale" ["Instead of a defense speech"], he highlights this point while explaining his various intentions in writing *Uten en tråd*. He emphasizes women's rights in particular, declaring that "hele boken er

et eneste angrep på mannsamfunnets kvinnesyn—kvinnen som privateiendom” [“the entire book is an attack against our chauvinistic society’s view on women, i.e. woman as private property”] (43). He also upholds sexual freedom for women and men from all the feelings of shyness, shamefulness, and guiltiness. Bjørneboe was well aware that there was plenty of bad trashy pornography around that did not protect the integrity of women and men. He concludes his article by presenting an example of such pornography that is highly degrading to women. It is a book titled “Prinsen og slavinden” [“The prince and his slave girl”] and depicts, among other appalling acts, young naked girls tortured by temple priests and raped by baboons under the direction of the priests. Bjørneboe bemoans that such tacky trash literature with hyper-pornographic pictures that graphically depicts rape and violence and shows women as objects for use, is available for sale while his own novel, as well as Henry Miller’s *Sexus*, are forbidden (48).¹²

Previous to the publication of *Uten en tråd*, Bjørneboe suggested (in letters to his editors) that he might “ride” on the pornographic wave that Norway was experiencing in the 1960s, and that he might take advantage of the genre’s popularity to write pornography that is “annerledes” [“different”] (Bjørnsen, Hoel and Mowinckel 144). What is interesting in the case of Bjørneboe is that while recognizing the poor quality of the popular pornography in his day, he does not forsake it in favor of the classics or highbrow pornography. Rather, he sets out to change from within to create a different alternative; he wants to reform and improve the popular pornography available to most people.

Bjørneboe was not alone in searching for a new and liberating kind of pornography.¹³ Many were inspired by Kinsey to throw themselves on the sexual and pornographic joy ride, seeking to overthrow the shackles of the puritanical past. These became the budding years of pornography’s golden age portrayed in the movie *Boogie Nights* (1997).¹⁴

For his own progressive pornography, Bjørneboe chooses a literary genre that used to belong only to the people: the folktale. Bjørneboe cleverly reinstates the folktale, not in a reactionary return to the past, but in a radical employment of something that was always socially progressive. The folktales were “discovered” in the nineteenth century during the heyday of national romanticism when Asbjørnsen and Moe—inspired by the Grimm brothers’ work in Germany—collected, edited, and published the folktales. They are now a part of the literary

canon. However, for centuries before that they belonged only to the people and were their oral tradition. The Dano-Norwegian scholar of the Enlightenment Ludvig Holberg would not even touch them and famous poet of the Romantic period Henrik Wergeland did not even understand or know them.

It is now textbook knowledge that the Norwegian folktales are loaded with social satire and critique of political and social oppression. The typical hero of the Norwegian folktale is Espen Ash Lad, Norway's male version of Cinderella (in Norwegian Askepott, literally "Ashpot") and today a national icon. A slight boy, mocked by his two older brothers Per and Pål, and carped at by his parents, Espen prefers to sit by the hearth, poking in the ashes. He is, however, kind and good-tempered, unassumingly curious, yet courageous when called for, and with these qualities he is always able—as he gets up and heads out on his journey to try his luck when the opportunity arises—to kill the trolls and rescue the princess with the assistance of the friends he makes on his way, thereby winning her and half the kingdom. His brothers, on the other hand, fail because of their haughty arrogance.

Throughout the bleak and barren Middle Ages, Espen Ash Lad provided the toiling peasants an opportunity to dream for a better life and to overpower the king, typically portrayed as a fat wealthy farmer, symbolic of the often repressive landlords that the cotters had to rent land from as the population grew and land became sparser. In the folktales, the landlord (in the shape of the king who in turn is portrayed as a wealthy farmer) is ridiculed as a preposterous and selfish man, authoritarian and oppressive, rightly defeated by Espen.

When Bjørneboe casts Lilian as Espen Ash Lad in *Uten en tråd*, he is invoking the rebellious nature of Espen's feats, socially and politically.¹⁵ Espen defeats the oppressive power system and escapes his family's derision; Lilian defeats the oppressive moral code and escapes her mother's and grandmother's puritanical judgment of sexuality.

The narrative structure follows the Espen Ash Lad folktales. Lilian goes from being teased and oppressed to empowered and victorious after overcoming the obstacles in front of her. Like Espen, Lilian cheerfully sets off on her journey on which she encounters—due to her kindness and good-temperedness—men and women who gladly share what they have to offer, thus helping her on her way. She gives and receives abundantly, sexually, intellectually, and socially, as they

become her friends. Like Espen, she shows no arrogance. Rather she delights in how the god Sexus, as she puts it, brings about an actual classless culture when she has sexual and intellectual intercourse with a young count and a girl of the people, the daughter of a railroad worker, both at the same time, whereas she herself is a girl of the middle class as the daughter of a businessman (151).

The narrative tone too is that of the innocent childlike folktale. Dr. Peterson's lesson to Lilian on morality echoes with the moral message found in a popular story for kids, *Kardemommebyloven* (The Cardamom town law) by Torbjørn Egner.¹⁶ This law asserts that as long as you are good and kind and refrain from pestering others you may do whatever you would like to do. In the same spirit, Dr. Peterson explains to Lilian that as long as she does no harm to others and remains honest, courageous, compassionate, and considerate, she can do in her sexual life, as in all other affairs of life, whatever she wants to do (17).

The Cardamom town law follows a popular children's tune, underscoring its innocent optimism that resonates in Dr. Peterson's words. Indeed, a childlike innocence colors all of Lilian's adventures. Her sexual experiences are described with a vocabulary that borrows heavily from the botanical world and we learn that she rides men "som et barn som rider ranke til møllerens hus" ["as a child who rides a cock-horse to Banbury cross"], an allusion to a popular children's rhyme (129). In between her sexual adventures, Lilian discusses art and music with her sexual partners. She collects books and eagerly visits bookstores in each city she visits to buy national classics. In the spirit of true idealism, she embraces the revelation that Eros and Agape are one: "den virkelige *caritas*, kjærligheten til legeme og sjel. Hva kunne ikke dette bety for demokratiet! Jeg hadde store oppgaver foran meg" ["the real *caritas*, love to body and soul. To think what this might mean for democracy! I had great undertakings ahead of me"] (106). Moreover, Lilian has a wholesome appetite for breakfast, especially hardboiled eggs with anchovies, and she has a childlike preference for hot chocolate.

To complete the folktale's nationalistic wholesome aura, Bjørneboe even incorporates a popular national melody. When Lilian launches her excursion to Europe as a regular Ash Lad, marching down the road down in plain clothes and a knapsack on her back, she is humming a song from her school years to the popular melody of a national song:

Mot i brystet, vett i pannen, stå i ben og arme! . . . Av med blusa/
 Ner med trusa./Ut med ben og arme!/Slike jenter/Det vil Gamle
 Norge ha!/Av med klærne her,/Ut med knærne der,/La oss se du er/
 Av rette slag!

[Courage in your chest, wisdom in your head, steel in legs and arms!
 Off with your blouse, down with your panties, out with your legs
 and arms! This is the kind of girl our old Norway wants! Off with
 your clothes here, out with your knees there, let us see you are of the
 right kind!]. (108)

No Norwegian citizen can fail to recognize the oxymoronic nature of mixing a patriotic national anthem with such in-your-face sexual portrayal.

In the end, Lilian is fully satisfied and ends her journey in Paris where she has met Pierre, a wholesome craftsman, mechanic and smith, who has made gentle, traditional love to her (176–80). She returns to Norway with all the books she has bought on her way, ready to work and study. On her journey, she has glimpsed a sexual and political utopia where men and women, freely and equally, engage sexually and intellectually.

His folktale completed, Bjørneboe exploited another popular genre to sell it and to reach out to the people (always hungry for sensational news): the popular press. Bjørneboe published *Uten en tråd* anonymously. As others have guessed (e.g., Gulliksen 130) he did so not in order to escape measures against him, but as a part of a scheme where he was out to shock and provoke attention—even prosecution—in the name of his objective to topple repressive customs and conventions. He wanted attention so that he could spread his gospel, his reformed pornography. He labeled his book “the first Norwegian erotic novel.” Of course, it was by no means the first “erotic” novel in Norwegian history—the erotic genre has played a significant role in Norway at least since the 1880s. However, as we have seen, with his new book, Bjørneboe did try to do something new and radically liberating, so in a sense it was a “first” one.

Bjørneboe cleverly staged the revelation of himself as the author of *Uten en tråd* by publishing it only weeks apart from the release of his momentous novel *Fribetens øyeblikk*, which includes the exact same depiction of the red light district Reeperbahn in Hamburg as can be found in *Uten en tråd*. The author was revealed; the stage was set for the discussion to begin. The trial ensured enormous publicity in the media

and hype about his book, providing an opportunity for Bjørneboe to defend his agenda, fight for freedom and an improved pornography. The sale of illegal copies of his book boomed.

Bjørneboe was successful in reaching out to the people with his new pornography, thereby making a huge contribution to popular culture. Why has no one recognized the significance of his contribution? Barbara Gentikow is the only one so far who has given proper attention to the progressive aspect of Bjørneboe's pornography. However, she does not recognize the clever choice of reinstating a progressive literary genre, the folktale; hence, she does not pay attention to the novel's literary merits. Geir Gulliksen has pointed out how *Uten en tråd* represents a "blokadebrytende" ["blockade breaking"] step for Bjørneboe, in that Bjørneboe abandons the genre of his previously published rather highbrow literature in favor of the lowbrow, entering the realm of "triviallitteratur" ["trivial/popular literature"] (120–31). To Gulliksen, however, "triviallitteratur" is by default reactionary; hence there is no room in his discussion for recognizing the highly progressive identity of Bjørneboe's work.

With *Uten en tråd*, Bjørneboe made it clear that popular literature is not necessarily reactionary, on the contrary. He was successful in launching a reformed pornography that was devoured by the people and that instigated heated discussion among the intellectual elite. His pornography did not fare well among the latter, though, who to this day have failed to recognize the significant value of its contribution to popular culture. The prejudice against popular culture prevails. It is high time we attack this prejudice and recognize the value of Bjørneboe's contribution.

NOTES

1. A statistical survey conducted in 2000 by MMI concluded that 60% of 580 students, mostly women, had used pornography, 31% sex toys. Other surveys also indicate a generational shift; there is support for pornography among the younger generation, as opposed to the older generation. Prominent female figures who defend pornography include Wenche Mühleisen, gender and media researcher at the University of Oslo; journalist Marte Stubberød Eielsen, who led a discussion on the topic in the national newspaper *Klassekampen* summer 2002; Heidi N. Lunde, member of *Kvinner for porno* (Women in Favor of Porn); Wenche Steen, editor of *Playboy*; Cecilie Kjensli, editor of the soft porn magazine *Cupido*; and Mayken Mangen, editor of the soft porn magazines *Lek* and *Coctail* and manager of the Norwegian branch of *Beate Uhse AG*, the gigantic German porn company.

2. A journalist and editor for the leftist newspaper *Klassekampen*, Håkon Kolmannskog confessed in a commentary published last summer a few years ago to have experienced this stigma on a recent visit to a video store to purchase a pornographic film by the company of the renowned Danish director Lars von Trier. Trier, founding member of the famous Dogma movement, has now also become part of a company making pornography directed to and embraced by both genders and liberals in particular; yet, Kolmannskog left the video store feeling ashamed.
3. The English translations of the originals are no longer in print, but from an on-line search I found that Amazon.com sells used copies of Mykle's novel in English. I was not able to find any copies of Bjørneboe's novel in English on either Amazon.com or Barnes and Noble, but eBay did have a copy of the poster for the motion picture based on the novel that was made by a Danish director in 1968. The movie was a big hit in the United States. Mykle's novel was also made into a movie by a Danish producer, *Palladium*, in 1970.
4. Previous to the publication of *Sangen om den røde rubin*, Mykle published articles arguing that pornography fills a legitimate need in modern society. These include "Pornografi og samfunn," *Arbeiderbladet* November 29, 1952 and "Pornografien og eventyret," *Dagbladet* February 20 and 23, 1953. Like Bjørneboe later, he deplores tacky porn magazines, but promotes pornography of a higher literary quality, considering this to be within the author's responsibility as professional pornographer (Heger esp. 210–11, 528+). Bjørneboe wrote two significant articles vindicating pornography: "Istedenfor en forsvarstale" (1966) and "Pornografien i Norge fra Vikingetiden til i dag" (1978). Criticizing the tacky porn sold in kiosks, he did not like Mykle seek out a bourgeois highbrow alternative, but sought instead to develop a higher quality version of popular pornography.
5. The trial against Mykle has been carefully described by Anneus Schødt and Anders Heger.
6. Legal proceedings had previously been instigated in response to Bjørneboe's attacks against the justice system and he was not alone in suspecting that his past was a factor in the pornography charges (Gentikow 162–63). The question of an author's prominence and the significance of literary quality came up in two other cases at about the same time. The novel *Line* (1959) by acclaimed author Axel Jensen was also attacked for being pornographic by critics who feared that the novel's literary value would add to the work's dangerously corrupting power. No lawsuit was filed against Jensen. On the other hand, the lack of literary quality was used to exempt *Norske sengebester* (1966) from further proceedings, a collection of humorous erotic short stories, two of them by Jensen.
7. According to Mykle's publisher, 112,000 copies of the novel were sold between 1954 and 1997, 44,400 copies between 1991 and 2002. In addition it has been published and sold separately by book clubs.
8. See Pedersen's reception study for an introduction to the scholarly discussion on Mykle's novel.
9. Sweden published an edition of 30,000 copies after the trial of which approximately 20,000 were exported to Norway (Schwartz 8).
10. Bjørneboe frankly asserted that all of these paid a part among his intentions. What is curious to see is how scholars and critics have failed to take seriously what else he has to say about his intentions in writing the piece. Garton, Martin, and Hambro, authors of the three existing monographs on Bjørneboe's *œuvre*, discuss the novel only briefly. Garton mentions the various possible intentions, but concludes by emphasizing the connection between *Uten en tråd* and *Frihetens øyeblikk* with the former written as preparation for the latter, and sees that as the only redeeming quality of the book. Other than that, "it is not a particularly good novel," she writes (66). Martin dismisses it as "flat" (38), but finds the proceeding against it interesting as a part of a pattern that grew stronger throughout Bjørneboe's career in which his work would act not as "a closed system, but as a 'system' which interacts with society—as was the case with works like Ibsen's *A Doll's House*" (39). Hambro basically ignores the novel in the body

- of his main discussion and mentions it only in his concluding chapter where he summarizes the reception of Bjørneboe's work. Hambro, who was a friend of Bjørneboe, expresses confusion and perplexity about Bjørneboe's reason for writing the novel (183).
11. Hansen and Tang's reception analysis from 1989 of *Uten en tråd* confirms this.
 12. A translation of Miller's *Sexus* was prohibited in 1957. After that, the novel was not published in Norway until 1973/74.
 13. For example the anthology *Norske sengebester*, published by Pax in 1966 and edited by Ragnar Kvam, who in his introduction asserts that sexuality is the most natural thing of all and that we ought to have complete openness about it. The anthology includes ten essays by nine different authors who have written these essays to promote openness and to delight.
 14. *Uten en tråd* includes a depiction of the porn industry that Baugstø finds naïve while it might simply reflect the optimism of the industry's golden age.
 15. Schwartz actually refers to Lilian as "eventyrskikkelsen" ("the folktale figure"), but does not elaborate except for pointing to her successful fairytale journey (8).
 16. Schwartz also makes this connection (9).

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