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“Hymns and scornful laughter – forms of power in Finland-Swedish literary reviews in the 1920s and 1930s with focus on authors Jarl Hemmer and Elmer Diktonius”

Aim and background

In the 1920s and 1930s a quite offensive aesthetic struggle between the traditionalist and the modernist authors took place within the Finland-Swedish literary field. One of the most visible arenas for this struggle was the relation between the traditionalist writer Jarl Hemmer (1893-1944) and the modernist Elmer Diktonius (1896-1961).

A point of departure in this story about literary rivalry takes place in 1922 (see the appendix, “Jarl Hemmer – Elmer Diktonius chronology”). The young, unknown author Elmer Diktonius publishes in *Ultra* (Journal of New Art and Literature), the Finland-Swedish modernist authors’ first magazine, a fiercely parodical review of the poet Jarl Hemmers collection of poems, *Väntan*. Diktonius, known for his polemical style and his love for literary fights, has to wait in three years before he gets an answer from Hemmer. 1925 Hemmer published his one and only review of Diktonius works of literature, an evaluation of *Taggiga lågor*. This was in *Nya Argus*, a liberal review of culture and politics with an academic profile, for the intelligentsia and with several editors from the literary elite (see Knapas 2000, 363, also Ekman 2011). (It has been argued by Sven Willnér (1989) that the 1920s was politically and aesthetically the most reactionary period in the history of *Nya Argus*.)

My aim here is to analyze reviews as a language of power, that is: to take a look at the possible ways to perform power in reviews, and in the act of writing reviews, to analyze and contextualize the reviews in order to show some of the features and strategies of an ongoing

power play. I will focus above all two reviews, the one written by Diktonius in 1922 and one by Hemmer in 1925, two texts in which they review each other's works. Special attention is paid to words and expression used in evaluation. (There are altogether one review by Hemmer on Diktonius and five reviews on Hemmer by Diktonius.)

Literary scholars use reviews for example to throw light upon the reception of an author, a work of literature, a genre, to analyze a reviewer or a critical institution, to study the style and rhetoric of reviews, to look how a phase in reception relates to the process of canonization. And finally: to understand those processes of selection and evaluation that are the weapons in the struggle over the taste that all the time takes place within the literary institution (Svedjedal 1998, 58). I am writing a monograph in which I examine how the social value of the two Finland-Swedish authors Hemmer and Diktonius was performatively "done", created in literary acts involving power plays of different kinds within the Finland-Swedish literary field. Reviews play a considerable role in this production of social value. What I am interested in are the ways aesthetics and politics are interconnected, the more or less indirect and invisible ways of doing class in the texts. This, then, is based on an apprehension according to which class as something performatively done, in for example in the valuation acts within the literary field. As Pierre Bourdieu puts it, class is not something that **is**, but something that is **done**. (See eg. Bourdieu 1984, 1998: 12-14)

Politics was of course also one of the obvious topics of the time. One of the subjects in the discussion of the early modernism in Finland-Swedish literature was a highly political one, namely, the expected "bolshevism" of the modernist authors. This had its roots in Russian revolution and the Finnish civil war between the white (right wing politics) and the red (left wing) in 1918. After the victory of the white side, the question of class became an inconvenient topic, either totally ignored and repressed or discussed only indirectly. Diktonius had his connections to people with powerful position within the Labour movement. But scholars, for example Thomas Henrikson have indicated that his interests in actual politics were small. He did not take over the role of a revolutionary poet offered by his communist friends. (Henrikson 1971) Most of his reviews were however published in *Arbetarbladet*, a newspaper which had a clear political agenda. It was the mouthpiece of the

Swedish Labour movement in Finland and financed by Oy Kansanvalta [a union called The Power of the People]. (In 1931 *Arbetarbladet* declares in an advertisement that it is "det är ej blott en pigg och rapp politisk tidning utan även ett vaket och välredigerat kulturorgan." Kalevi Granqvist means that it actually was Diktonius who in the 1920s made the newspaper into an alert culture institution (1971, 311), Anna Bondestam states that *Arbetarbladet* in the middle of 1920s was more a culture review than a political organ (1964, 115). See also Marit Lindqvist om Diktonius trettiotalstexter i *Arbetarbladet*.)

(The rivalry between Hemmer and Diktonius was, of course, expressed not only in reviews but also in other ways and forms. There are for example letters in which they comment upon each other's works of literature to other colleagues. It has also been pointed out that their works of literature enter in a kind of "dialogue" with each other. In reviews of the time Diktonius *Onnela* is seen as a counterpart to Hemmers prize winning epic poem *Rågens rike*, and *Janne Kubik* as an opposite to Hemmers (also prize winning) *En man och hans samvete*, both depictions of the Finnish Civil war. (It seems to me that the dialogue between their literary works actually follows the same pattern as that of the reviews – it is Diktonius who is the one who reacts to and comes with parodic replies to the texts of Hemmer.) One aspect of their rivalry was what one could call the struggle over Edith Södergran. *Landet som icke är. Efterlämnade dikter*, a Södergran publication edited by Diktonius come out in 1925, a few years later *Min lyra. Dikter i urval* (1929), the collection of poems by Södergran, edited by Jarl Hemmer, was published (and reviewed by Diktonius in *Arbetarbladet* 8.11.1929).

Power, politics, literary reviews

My focus here is, then, on the forms of power in Finland-Swedish literary reviews in the 1920s and 1930s, a topic that relates to literature and politics in several ways. One of the definitions of politics is put like this: "social relations involving authority or power". (*Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary*, 1913) Power is a most amorphous phenomenon and has been defined as a part of or a quality of human relationships. Jonathan Eastwood discusses critically Pierre Bourdieus view on power and summarizes the problematic within classical sociology: "For

Weber, of course, power is nothing more than the likelihood that one's will shall prevail, even 'despite resistance'. It is, as he further notes, a highly diffuse phenomenon. It is a quality of the structure of human relations but, unlike class, cannot be readily quantified and, unlike status, is not directly reflected in the subjective judgments that individuals make of themselves and others (i.e., *power* is not a meaningful phenomenon in Weber's sense – i.e., it largely lies outside of constellations of motive springs of action – but it is a quality of meaningful relationships).” (Eastwood 2007, 152) (discuss in terms of dominant – dominated?)

How to grasp this amorphous phenomenon, then?

The language of literary reviews is, as Johan Svedjedal has pointed out, a language of power but it consists not only of words written, but also of what is done (Svedjedal 1998, 53-54). He means that a literary reviewer regains actual political influence only if he or she is connected to a social movement, for example feminism or the Labour Movement. Literary criticism is also connected to overall power relations in the society of which the “book society” is a part of. Relations of power within class, gender and ethnicity tend to penetrate even the literary life, nor however as a mirror image of the society because the literary field has its own autonomy (Svedjedal 1998, 54). Also, the power of the critic in the society is dependent on the status of literature in the society. What comes to literary reviews it is important to understand that the power of reviews is not abstract but concrete, it lies not only in words, Svedjedal argues. His final argument is that criticism should be analyzed as praxis (collective behavior, patterns of behavior, relations between individuals and institutions). (1998, 55, 59-60). (This view of literary criticism as praxis and power as something expressed in relations between individuals and institutions takes Svedjedal very near the ideas of literary field out forward by Bourdieu. Elsewhere Svedjedal also emphasizes the centrality of the question of power and domination for literary sociology. Later he however is quite critical towards Bourdieus theories, Svedjedal 2004).

Hemmer versus Diktonius

To begin a scrutiny of the reviews of two authors in question of importance are the positions of the reviewer and the reviewed. Jarl Hemmer, an author today relatively forgotten, was by

the time one of the most celebrated traditional authors of his generation. To illustrate Hemmers position in the literary field of the time you can for example take a look at the list of the literary prizes he was awarded during 1910-1940 (appendix "Hemmer-Diktonius kronologi"). In a Swedish novel competition in which Hemmers novel *En man och hans samvete* (1931) was awarded the first prize, the second prize was given to the Swedish author Karin Boye, and when Hemmer in 1933 was elected the receiver of the Fröding stipendiat, the other candidates in question were the Swedish authors Pär Lagerkvist and Frans G. Bengtsson (see also Möller 2009, 288). Hemmer seldom wrote literary reviews, Diktonius lived on writing them. Hemmer only reviewed now and then, at the end of the 1910s and always in *Nya Argus*, while Diktonius wrote in several newspapers and reviews. In the 1910s and 1920s Hemmer was productive; he published regularly works in several genres (poems, prose, short stories, drama). Poetry was however apprehended as the genre that best suited his "artistic temperament".

A thing to take into account when analyzing reviews that even literary reviewers are persons who sell their opinions in the media marketplace (Svedjedal 1998, 50-51). This certainly corresponds to Diktonius role as literary reviewer, but not so much to Hemmer. He seemed to have been had a more stable economy and was able to support himself without writing to newspapers. Diktonius, on the contrary, was all dependent on his extra jobs in especially *Arbetarbladet*. In Diktonius case, the question of money is of significance when one scrutinizes his job as literary critic. The language and style of reviews are also steered by journalistic conventions and conditions. Granqvist remarks that a change takes place in Diktonius reviews in the 1930s. The journalistic condition steer both the form and the language more than before, the reviews were collected under titles like "Bokrevy" and "Litterärt", with the result that there was very little room for every book reviewed and the style was characterized by hurry (Granqvist 1971, 325).

During 1922-1925 Diktonius publishes *Hårda sånger, Brödet och elden och Ungt hav*. To ignore is a strategy, a form of power, often used effectively in the literary field, and the one first chosen by Hemmer vis-à-vis Diktonius. Not until 1925 Hemmer publishes a review of Diktonius collection of poems, *Taggiga lågor* in *Nya Argus*. The match is now one – one. All in

all the rivalry that takes places in literary reviews between Hemmer and Diktonius is not a very dialogic one: Against Hemmers one review on a work of Diktonius, the one from 1925, Diktonius comments frequently upon Hemmers works during the years, and publishes altogether six reviews of Hemmers works. After the famous *Ultra* review Diktonius publishes reviews on Hemmers works in 1929, 1931, 1934 and 1936. One can of course ask whether Diktonius on purpose had such a long pause (from 1922 to 1929) before he reviewed a work by Hemmer? And whether the silence was due to Hemmers review on *Taggiga lågor* in 1925?)

It is obvious that reviews exercise performative power, that is, make things happen. They produce “authorships”, ideas and interpretations not only of works of literature but also about the authors, their qualities and abilities, even their bodily appearances. Reviews create attitudes towards authorships; contribute to the ongoing creation of the name and fame of the authors. Actually, the point of departure in this story about literary rivalry between Diktonius and Hemmer is much earlier, in the 1910s when the literary establishment actively produces the picture of Jarl Hemmer as “the blonde and blue-eyed Nordic adolescent”, “our celebrated young poet”, “the blonde singer of the idyllic”. The overall picture of Hemmer by the time was that he was a man of many valuable traits, a bodily and mentally very well provided person. The reception shows how Hemmers position as “our celebrated young poet”, is produced during the 1910s. The depictions repeatedly put forward that he is born to be a poet, he is a singer of nature; he is called the “golden boy”, the son of the Gods and “the blonde singer of the idyllic”. An analysis of the portrayal of Hemmer and the reception of his literary works show how he became to embody an ideal Finland-Swedish poet. Traces of discourses related to masculinity and race intertwine in the evaluations of his aesthetics. And not only masculinity and race, but also class. The ways Hemmers body, behavior, and use of language are described by the reviewers indicate that he is the most suitable person to be placed in the position of **the** young poet. (Malmio 2010)

The making of Hemmer is of importance because it throws new light on the strategies of the modernist author Diktonius when he enters the field and strives to make himself a position. It also offers insight into the power of language used by the agents, into the praxis of the literary field, praxis that indirectly also contributed to the production of class in the time. What is of

worth within the literary field, then? Appreciation of the most important critics, admiration of the reading audience, money, fame? A close analysis of the vocabulary and literary strategies used in Diktonius review in *Ultra* in 1922 and a careful contextualization of them show how consciously he plays with all the various aspects that make up Hemmers name and fame. It is precisely a parodic repetition of the power of language used to create Hemmers position and authority and to make the agents and the language used to the targets of Diktonius.

ULTRA: Diktonius reviews Hemmer

The position of the author reviewed and the rank of the reviewer are important aspects to be taken into account when one looks at the performative power of a review. Diktonius was in an underdog position when he turns all the powers of parodic language use towards Hemmer. His review on Hemmers newly published collection of poems *Väntan* in *Ultra* 1922 has later been called a “nidrecension”, a declaration of war and a volcanic eruption (see eg. Holmström 1986). It is characterized by a polemic and parodic tone, and can be seen as a contribution to the production of the name (identity) and authority of Diktonius as a writer. The title of the review is “HEMMERS VÄNTAN”, in capital letters so that the reader is unable to know whether it is about the name of the book written by Hemmer or about Hemmer waiting, something that is alluded to already in the first meaning of the review: “Skalden Jarl Hemmer väntar. Och när en skald väntar blir det naturligtvis dikt. Och när det blir dikt blir det hos Hemmer naturligtvis en hel samling. Ser ni: han har lättheten. 94 sidor väntan således.” Diktonius transforms Hemmers romantic and abstract waiting into something very concrete. This waiting is characteristic of the poetic youth Hemmers belongs to. They are, contrary to the Ultra youth (Diktonius own “gang”), extraordinary in many ways, among others their patience, asexuality, religiousness, well behavior and love of nation. A calm which Diktonius further on connects with the countryside and deep sleep. “Väntan? – det doftar bekant? Ack ja: för vårt inre öga ter sig landets unga parnass som en II klass landsortsstations väntsäl. Flugor, snarkande gestalter, uret ett par år efterlunkande, [...] väntan, melodiöst snarkande väntan (de tro det är dikt!) på inspirationsexpressen – som aldrig anlöper sovande stationer. ”

Diktonius then continues by making everything that is "high" and appreciated in Hemmer, and turns it into something laughable and little, meaningless. The words by which Hemmer has been called, the meanings used to praise him, as well as his audience. Diktonius writes: "I denna samling så väl som i de tidigare strömmar plaskande välljud ur hans lyra, ungmör bedåras gamlingar blir näsrörda kritiker får skrivkramp – men Dikt är det ej, allra minst ung. Hemmer är berömd för sin "gnista" – han har den, det må sägas; han har en (topeliansk) porlande källa i sitt inre vid vars rand han (topelianskt) björkomsloten leker kuddamu med beskedliga (topelianska) poesitallkottar under (topelianskt) blånande himmel. Väl unnat! – men när förläggar- och skråkritiken försöker lancera honom som det unga Finlands diktare vid sidan av en Södergran, tycker vi "de stillsammans" fräckhet går för långt, och tillåter oss att ha våra tvivel och löjen." It is easy to see where Diktonius gets his inspiration if one compares the words he uses to the review on Hemmers *Väntan* written by the literary critic Gunnar Castrén: "Hans [Hemmer] vers strömmar lätt, melodiskt och flytande, och den äger framförallt i utomordentlig grad denna smidiga, uttrycksfulla inre rytm, som är lyrikens verkliga själ, men han älskar mest de osammansatta formerna, blankversen eller enkla strofer. Det är ett drag som hör till hans från all förkonstling fria skaldekynne." (Holmström 1986, 143.)

Diktonius also talks ironically about how the "modest and sympathetic" poet Hemmer "wraps the grey coat of poverty round himself only to hide himself from the audience's attention and the critics song of praise which he so hates. " To talk about Hemmers poverty by the time is ironic indeed, little before he had received a huge literary prize in Sweden, Åhlén & Åkerlundiska priset. A prize that was critically commented upon even elsewhere in *Ultra*.

NYA ARGUS: Hemmer reviews Diktonius

What comes to Hemmers review on Diktonius in 1925 it is already of significance that he at all reviews Diktonius work. Not only because Hemmer already had a solid position within the literary field and a comparatively stable economy (wealthy parents, several literary prizes, quite good incomes from the selling of his books and of his contracts with his publisher, Holger Schildts förlag), but because he quite seldom reviewed books. He published in *Nya Argus* for example essays on Anders Östlings *Sånger i krig* (1917) and Pär Lagerkvist (1922)

and a review on Harry Blombergs *Kap Horn* (1920). Seen from a perspective of literary field with its emphasis on rivalry and power play within the field, I could interpret this action as revenge, as a way to “möta Olle i grind”, “nip it in the bud”, to stop something before it has become too strong. Alternatively I could emphasize Hemmers ambivalent attitudes towards modernism, he was positive towards the works of Edith Södergran. Also his second collection of poems, *Pelaren*, 1916, contains verses in which he strives towards an untraditional poetics, a free verse combined with a symbolistic imagery. (Södergran was also an admirer of *Pelaren*.)

Both “hymns” and “scornful laughter” are two approaches regularly used by critics of the time. Hymns are one of the genres/styles used regularly by Hemmer in his poetry, and his reviewers surely answered him in the same way. His reception especially in the late 1910s and early 1920s consisted of almost religious praising of his literary and cultural contributions to the Finland-Swedish literature. Scornful laughter is on the one hand the attitude of the majority of the contemporaries to Diktonius first literary works but also the style he used in his reviews, and especially when writing about Hemmer in the 1920s. (Diktonius review of Hemmer in 1922 gets a part of its power due to the background: that of the overall appraisal of Hemmers works, and especially the appraisal that took place in 1919 when the “usually so calm” (vems ord?) Gunnar Castrén, one of the leading critics, published a review of Hemmers *Över dunklet* which began with the following words: “Över dunklet är kanske den vackraste lyriska diktsamling som någonsin utkommit i detta land.” (C.G., “Jarl Hemmer: Över dunklet.” *Nya Argus* 16.12.1919)[Över dunklet is probably the most beautiful lyrical collection of poems ever published in this country.]

In 1925 (nr 7, 83-86) Hemmer publishes in *Nya Argus* under the heading “Stillhet och missljud.” [Stillnes and Discord] a review in which he scrutinizes the works of two authors, Naima Jakobson, a newly deceased female writer, and Elmer Diktonius, already known as a literary rebel, enfant terrible, famous for his “ugly words”. It is not hard to guess the target of the title, who the word “discord” points at. Both are given as much space in the review. Naima Jakobson (1866-1923) was a pedagogue, who only published one novel, *Befrielse* (1920) during her lifetime. The collection of poems, *Dikter* (1924) shows a traditional poet who

strives in her lyrics for an expression of an inner unity and holiness. (Warburton 1984, kola sida). (*Befrielse* got altogether seven reviews, *Dikter* five.)

According to Hemmer she “is”, but he “strives”. “He [Diktonius] wants to be”, Hemmer writes, “the extrovert subverter, the flame and the ashes as his ends.” The two authors are seen as each other’s opposites, but have certain things in common. They are personalities; their poetry is produced by an inner compulsion (necessity) and has a preaching tone. “The most remarkable with them both – maybe the only thing that is remarkable about them– is that they both have something to say“, Hemmer notes in an ironic tone. (Strategy: make your rival smaller than he is, a strategy used with a force and variety by Diktonius.) What more; both are most exclusive, in the following sense: they are probably not going to have many readers (different from Hemmer, who according to Johannes Salminen was besides Bertel Gripenberg, the author with the hugest audience by the time. Salminen 1955). They are special, then, but in a negative way and neither of them can be evaluated with an aesthetic measure. “In front of them both, one has to let the discriminating sense down and look after other qualities than the traditional artistic ones,” he draws his conclusion. Hemmer makes, then, already in the introduction, several moves by which he creates a barrier between his readers and the authors he is about to present for them. His rhetoric lets his readers understand that he, an authority on good taste and artistic qualities, is here forced to let his “normal” standards down. Neither of the books qualifies as art in his eyes.

Jakobson is described in a careful, objective, discussing way. Hemmer cites three of her poems and finds her last verses as the strongest in the collection. He reads the book largely against the background of her death and emphasizes the significance of it from a human point of view. “If one reads the book without a thought on its purely artistic outcome, it shows something much more admirable than a poet who has reached her literary ends – a human being, who has reached the goal”, Hemmer summarizes. Death, it seems, puts all the pieces together, and makes the reviewer sympathetic towards the author and her verses. Much harder is it with the living ones. Especially with Elmer Diktonius, who deserves right from the beginning a more critical, ironic tone.

After Hemmer has finished Jakobson (ladies first), he goes on to *Taggiga lågor*. The opening lines in Hemmers scrutiny of Diktonius are the following: “Strängt taget är det opåkallat besvär att skriva litterära kritiker om Diktonius. Han har så uttryckligt deklarerat sitt förakt

för allt vad konst och kultur heter, att man lika gärna kunde ta honom på orden och låta honom stå utanför all denna ynkedom. Men jag undrar om han icke då vore än missnöjdare.” [It is strictly speaking of an unnecessary inconvenience to write literary reviews about Diktonius. He has after all so expressly declared his contempt towards everything called art and culture that you could likewise take him by his words and let him stand outside all this pitiableness. But I wonder if he would then be even more discontent.]

Before I go on a short account on how Hemmers review on Diktonius has been described by other scholars. Olof Enckell means in his biography on Diktonius that the review shows above all how different the two authors were. “Hemmers strävan till objektivitet var påfallande, men det för Diktonius särpräglade förmådde han inte fatta”, Enckell writes (1946, 232) and declares that many struggles were still needed before the supporters of the traditional lyrics were able to at least moderately understand the modern poems. George C. Schoolfield describes Hemmers review on *Taggiga lågor* in the following words: “Jarl Hemmer was correct (in his review, which, for the rest, bore witness to Hemmer’s inherent fairness) that Diktonius’ ‘revolutionary spirit degenerates at times into sheer soft-mindedness,’ and that such poems as ‘They are so wise!’ is ‘reminiscent of a third-class piece of agitation in the manner of Työmies,’ the often bloody-minded Socialist paper of pre-Civil War days, edited by Edvard Valpas-Hänninen and, for a time, Kuusinen himself.” (1985, 64) I think, that the review which Enckell and Schoolfield interestingly find as characterized by “objectivity” and “inherent fairness”, is neither objective nor especially fair. It is more of an ironic answer to Diktonius, a way to draw the front lines (vi # them) in the literary struggle, but also to make ridicule of not only Diktonius works of literature but also of himself. And finally, show his lack of all sorts cultural capital, a highly appreciated resource in the Finland-Swedish literary field of the time. (The dominance of the upper class authors within the field has been observed (Willner 1979, 113-145) but no one has yet asked what the consequences of it are for the practices of the literary field.) Hemmers scorn is however a bit more hidden than Diktonius open disrespect. So what kind of strategies does Hemmer use, then?

Hemmer is obviously ironic. He begins his review with a declaration that he could as well let be and leave Diktonius outside the “miserable” art and culture, he has so openly despised for example in *Min dikt* (1921). Surely, to ignore Diktonius altogether and to leave him out, seems

to have passed Hemmers thoughts. And Hemmer is right about his guess that the option would not have suited Diktonius. Enckell reports that Diktonius waited anxiously for the reviews of *Taggiga lågor*, and wondered why the newspapers did not write about the book. (Hagar Olsson reviewed it positively in *Svenska Pressen*, Olof Enckell in *Hufvudstadsbladet* was more doubtful, contrary to Axel Åhlström who “blåste en fanfar”, sound a flourish in *Arbetarbladet* (see Enckell 1946, 230-233). He also describes how Åhlströms positive review was sent to Sweden, only slightly altered and with a short introduction of Lybeck, Janson, Hemmer and a couple of other authors, and then published in several radical newspapers in the countryside. Diktonius gave the review the name “En städad litteratursocietet – och en liten röd djävul” [A proper literary society – and a little red devil]. This is only one example of how consciously Diktonius tried and managed to influence the publicity of his books. It is also an illustration of how a social opposition is created by the time within the literary field. Diktonius deliberately and repeatedly places himself in opposition of and outside the dominant literary field, not only aesthetically but also socially.

Hemmer is however favorable enough to take into consideration the collection at hand and goes on to discuss Diktonius view on words and to describe the essence of his aesthetics. He argues that Diktonius does not believe in words as art but as an “explosive” and a “germkiller”, “like a dung-fork in a decomposed world”. The ugliness and lowness of Diktonius worldview and vocabulary is a frequent topic in the 1920s among the critics, and also a signal of his lack of cultural capital and his social background. His view on words is according to Hemmer of course everybody’s own affair and “dependant on one’s temperament”. Temperament is another word regularly used by the critics of the time, in order to explain features in texts in connection to the habitus (here understood as embodied capital) of authors. “The only sad thing about this is”, Hemmer writes, “that it is precisely art that makes words mighty, powerful, not only rage.” Whereas Diktonius in his review imitates and parodies both Hemmers (and also the reviewers who have written about his books) vocabulary and stile, Hemmer lectures in an authoritative way on his views on art, and explains his views on the power of literary language. He argues that Diktonius does not understand where the boundaries between voice and roar go, “a misunderstanding of proportions, his and other peoples”. The nip the bud – there is an anxiety among the traditionalist authors about the modernist authors – they have already managed to turn at least some people’s heads. But Diktonius is not the “huge fist of armour he thinks that he is”, Hemmer states. On the few

opening lines Hemmer manages to say that Diktonius is unable to master his means, to change the world with his means, that he is not at all as powerful as he thinks, and that his view of the contemporary world is not altogether correct.

Hemmer then declares that he has now said “the only bad things that can be said about Diktonius”. He comes with a couple of positive evaluations of Diktonius god aphoristic intellect and his honest social despair and mentions verses from his collections of poems only to give them as examples of his revolutionary “sheer soft-mindedness”. He cites in full the poem “De är så kloka!” which according to him is an example of Diktonius’ “third-class piece of agitation in the manner of Työmies”. Hemmer then comments to his audience, the readers of *Nya Argus*, that “But we should not [or: we just decided not to] talk more about the weak sides.” He says one thing, and does the opposite. He is at home in the pages of *Nya Argus*. Firstly, Hemmer had since 1915 published several times in *Nya Argus*, poems, essays, reviews and translations of poetry. One of his very best friends, Hans Ruin, had since 1920 been one of the editors of the journal, and the editor Gunnar Castrén was an admirer of Hemmers poetry and besides the critics Hans Ruin and Erik Kihlman, the most important creator of the name of Hemmer.

In the next sentence Hemmer cites at length Hans Ruins critical words about the literary “ultraists”, how their literary tricks make poor thoughts look like they were of importance, and how many have been betrayed by them. Hemmer then pretends he is totally innocent, he declares that “I take this citation up only to point out that the words in general can’t be applied on Diktonius.” He says that he is not going to say any more negative things, but immediately goes on to saying negative things, and then end with the declaration that he is not going to say them anymore. Or: he cites a negative evaluation of the “ultraists” (Diktonius being one of them), only to declare that it has nothing to do with the characteristics of Diktonius works of literature. Only to proceed to his next ironic and negative description. Ruins words are not applicable on Diktonius because he is fully free from all kinds of “konstlad dunkel” [artificial dusk, obscurity] – his art is always fully understandable. Here Diktonius “meaningless revolt against punctuation” also helps according to Hemmer. “He is seldom a ‘poet’, and does not want to be one”, Hemmer writes and then compares Diktonius to Södergran as Diktonius had done in his review on Hemmer. Parallel actions take place. Both also find Södergran better in comparison.

Hemmer finds, however, among Diktonius verses a couple of good, peaceful, even beautiful ones and cites in full two, "Ansiktet" and "Dostojevskij" (Hemmer had studied Russian language and literature at the university, and was an admirer of Dostoevsky. Salminen shows in his book how several passages and themes in Hemmers works relate for example to Crime and Punishment). He also includes in the review a parenthesis in which he writes as if he was a near friend or a relative of the famous Russian author when he in an almost intimate way turns to Dostoevsky to ask for the following things: ("Oh little father Dostojevskij, [...] Put your hand over a fragmented man of storms and whisper to him some of the secrets of your power...")

As a conclusion Hemmer states that *Taggiga lågor* is uneven when compared to the "consistently frantic" *Hårda sånger*, but that it "probably here and there achieves a higher quality". Once again he asserts the "lowness" of Diktonius by declaring that "En god del av Diktonius' originalitet består ju fortfarande i att han spyr ur sig första bästa barocka infall – allehanda dravel, som de flesta skulle anse ovärdigt att ge luft åt, annat än möjligen i mycket berusat tillstånd." Lack of self-control, unable to recognize what kind of behavior is proper within the literary field (unlike most people), a production consisting of trivialities. And again Hemmer criticizes Diktonius was a "inner contradiction", put there by Hemmer himself. If you have so much you to intensively want to say, it is unnecessary to publish something so dull and senseless as the suite "Smått sjunger". He also argues that Diktonius repeats himself. With some reservations he almost likes Diktonius poetry on children and the suite "Män". One can almost think that there is after all "something in him", Hemmer writes. All in all, a scrutiny of the review shows among other things that the picture of Hemmer as a helpless victim in the struggle between the modernists and the traditionalists given by Sven Willner (1968, 114) is not a correct one.

Class markers

Diktonius portrayed in his *Ultra*-review Hemmer as a member of the "beskedliga välfriserade salongsfähiga fosterlandsungdomen" who "med händerna på täcket knäppta till from bön väntar [...] stillsamt." Hemmers answer comes as the last comment in the 1925 review. He

refers to Diktonius “complimentary poem” to the composer Schönberg in *Taggiga lågor*, a verse in which Diktonius depicts Schönberg as the “wild boar in the garden of music”. Hemmer writes: “Samma ärenamn kan han själv göra anspråk på i vår litterära lund.” He uses Diktonius own the words against himself, in order to draw parallels between the poet and a what one could call extremely unpoetic animal and continues his associations in the same direction in the next meaning, where he draws in a sow, female swine. “Fåfängt sätta sadel på sugga, och när Diktonius är väl bäst som han är. I varje fall liknar han avgjort sig själv, vilket ju inte är allom givet.” Whereas Diktonius portrays Hemmer with childish weakness of the traditional poet which Diktonius plays with in his review is here returned with an even ruder comparison, that of animal likeness.

While Hemmers writings and his habitus suits the literary field so well that he becomes the bearer of literary ideals of the time, the one who is seen to embody poetry, it is obvious that Diktonius does not fit in. But it is not only his rebellious aesthetics with strategies taken over from the European avant-garde – even his bodily appearance, behaviour and language use makes him a stranger in the eyes of the contemporary critics. The Finland-Swedish literary field of the 1910 and 20s is dominated by authors and reviewers with much and embodied cultural capital. Hemmer had a background in a wealthy and well educated family, a family that belonged to the high society of the little city within which Hemmer grew up. When Hemmer came to the capital of Finland to take his university exam in aesthetics and Russian language, he quickly became a member of the literary circles of the city and the friend of all the important literary critics of the time. Diktonius, on the contrary, came from a family with roots within an urban working class, or is seen as a member of an social upward mobile class. He became a school dropout although his parents had plans for his education, he did not know anybody of importance within the literary field. Diktonius rebellious aesthetics which questions the dominant aesthetics is then partly a strategy that makes room for his “strange” habitus.

The emphasis on the cultural capital of Hemmer and the lack of it that the reviewers see in Diktonius, is by the time a clear marker of social class. To be an author within in the Finland-Swedish literary field was not only a question of the right kind of aesthetics, but also of a body, behavior, dress, language and manners suitable within the literary field dominated by

authors and critics with an upper class background. To be an author involved refinement – that is: embodied cultural capital. The expressions by which Hemmers high position within the field is created, like him being described as the natural born talent, and the “divinely gifted singer” who has the “blood of a poet running in his veins”, are metaphors for an intimate relation between the poet and his text and thus an expression for a contemporary aesthetics. But they are also metaphors and portrayals that put forward that certain bodies are better suited to embody poetry than others.

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