PÄR LAGERKVIST AND CUBISM:

A STUDY OF HIS THEORY AND PRACTICE

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A Critical Essay

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What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.

T. S. Eliot, ***Burnt Norton***

Ordkonst och bildkonst **sets forth Lagerkvist's theories of the rejuvenating possibilities to be found in the 'architectonic ideas' of cubism. It was published in 1913, but received little attention from the literary world outside Scandinavia. It gradually fell into obscurity until it was reprinted after his death. An English-language version [LITERARY ART AND PICTORIAL ART] translated by Prof. Roy Arthur Swanson and the author—has been available since 1991 (see Appendix).**

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Jag hade tänkt ett paradis för dem
men sen vi lämnat ett som vi förstörde
blev tomma rymdens natt vårt enda hem
ett ändlöst svalg där ingen gud oss hörde.

Stjärnhimlens eviga mysterium
och den celesta mekanikens under
är lag men inte evangelium.
Barmhärtigheten gror på livets grunder.

Så föll vi ned på Lagens sanna bud
och fann vår tomma död i Mimas salar.
Den gud vi alla hoppats på till slut
satt kränkt och sårad kvar i Doris dalar.

Harry Martinson, *Aniara*

CHAPTER I

The Genesis of a Writer

Pär Lagerkvist was born in 1891 in the small railroad town of Växjö, located in the southern Swedish province of Småland. His family lived at the railroad station, where his father was a foreman. Lagerkvist's early childhood, as his strongly autobiographical book ***Gäst hos verkligheten*** (1925) illustrates, was peaceful and secure; anchored in a pious atmosphere provided by his parents and grandparents who read the Bible religiously.

In 1910, as a student in Växjö, Pär Lagerkvist was exposed to new ideas that caused him to break out of the social and religious bounds of his childhood. He had already begun his career as a writer the previous year with a poem published in the ***Motala Tidning*** (5 July, 1909), entitled ***Till Verner von Heidenstam på 50-årsdagen,*** and signed with the nom de plume, Stig Stigson.

Lagerkvist made his first trip to Paris in 1913, where he came into contact for the first time with L'école moderne de peintre—an experience that was an important and fateful milestone for the future Nobel Prize-Winner. On the 16th of August, 1913, an article appeared in ***Svenska Dagbladet*** entitled ***En bok om kubismen,*** which was a review of Apollinaire's book, ***Les Peintres cubistes,*** signed by Pär Lagerkvist. Little of what he said dealt directly with the book per se; mainly, he discussed and explained the concepts of cubistic painting and compared it to the poor state of contemporary literature. Lagerkvist reiterated and greatly expanded his comments that same year, when he (at the early age of twenty-two) published a book on the decadence of contemporary literature entitled ***Ordkonst och bildkonst,*** in which he set forth his theories of the rejuvenating possibilities to be found in the architectonic ideas of cubism. This treatise received little attention from the literary world outside Scandinavia, and when the author did not allow a second printing (perhaps because of its rather stilted prose), it was temporarily almost forgotten.

His first breakthrough as a poet came in 1916 with the publication of a collection of disturbing poems, appropriately entitled ***Ångest.*** A fear of death, of which he speaks in ***Gäst hos verkligheten,*** coupled with the chaotic events of the First World War were perhaps some of the reasons for the existentialist dread to which Lagerkvist gives expression in these poems:

Ångest, ångest är min arvedel,
min strupes sår,
mitt hjärtas skri i världen.[1]

There is also another motif in this collection of poems, a motif upon which Lagerkvist (like Ingmar Bergman) was to expend most of his artistic energy. This 'fixation' is the silence of God:

Runt omkring mig ligger evigheten,
runt omkring mig tiger du, o Gud.
Vad är stort och tomt som evigheten,
vad är tyst, förtegat såsom du, o Gud?[2]

Pär Lagerkvist's preoccupation with the mystery of God is also found in his one act drama ***Himlens hemlighet,*** which was written during these war years and published in a volume entitled ***Kaos*** (1919). This same volume also contains a collection of poems under the title ***I stället för tro,*** which show however, that Lagerkvist has come to a turning point. These poems have a lighter and softer tone:

Det är vackrast när det skymmer.
All den kärlek himlen rymmer
ligger samlad i ett dunkelt ljus
över jorden,
över markens hus.[3]

This dim light is once more a symbol of love in Lagerkvist's religious prose work, ***Det eviga leendet*** (1920). The dead, upset by the silence of God, go in search of him, and, seeing a dim light far off in the distance, migrate toward it.

[1] ***Dikter*** (Stockholm, 1965), p. 7. "Anguish, anguish is my legacy, / the wound in my throat, / my heart's scream in the world."
[2] ***Dikter,*** p. 20. "Round about me lies eternity, / round about me you remain silent, oh God. / What is great and empty as eternity, / what is silent, secretive as you, oh God?" (All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.)
[3] "In lieu of faith," ***Dikter,*** p. 28. "It's most beautiful at twilight. / All the love that heaven holds / lies gathered in a dim light / over the earth / over its houses."

There they finally find God: an old man sawing wood. They do not find the answer to anything, but they do experience "någonting ljust och gott."[4]

During this time, Pär Lagerkvist continued to write critical articles concerning both the pictorial arts and the literary arts for various magazines and newspapers, especially ***Svenska Dagbladet.***

The light with which Lagerkvist had illuminated his prose and his poetry during the twenties began to flicker and darken along with the politics of the thirties. Although he had not concerned himself up to this point with the mundane politics of the world, the 1932 collection of his poems and its title, ***Vid lägereld,*** reveals that he had, perhaps, a much better insight into the forces that were loose in the world than many politicians of the times:

> Ryttare rider ensam i natten,
> under hovarna
> växer upp blommor.
> Eldröda, vilda.
>
> Eld är hans själ
> och jorden befruktas,
> bär kostliga blommor
> ännu i fjärran, främmande tider
> som minne av honom
> — sen länge långt borta,
> fallen i striden.[5]

Hitler came to power in 1933, and Lagerkvist was quick to recognize the threat that the Nazi ideology presented to his "tro på människoanden."[6] He mounted a devastating attack against Nazism with the book ***Bödeln*** (1933), a penetrating chiaroscuro on the nature of evil.

In the first part, the executioner, who is a composite symbol of mankind's

[4] "The eternal smile," ***Prosa*** (Stockholm, 1951), p. 126. "something light and good."

[5] ***Dikter,*** pp. 122–123. "Rider rides alone in the night, / under the hoofs / springs up flowers. / Fire-red, wild. / Fire is his soul / and the earth fecundated, / bears precious flowers / still in the morning, / still in far off, distant times / in memento of him / —long ago far away, / fallen in battle."

[6] "faith in the spirit of man."

thirst for blood, is both feared and pitied by the 'devil-fearing' people in the medieval tavern; in the second part, seated in a restaurant in Germany, he finds himself no match for the brutality of these homines saevi who salute him with rigid arms.

At the same time that he bitterly attacked the violence of Nazism, Lagerkvist also projected an expression of his belief in the innate goodness of mankind. He did this most clearly in his book ***Den knutna näven*** (1934) in which he prophesies that the triumph of violence will be overcome by the power of love: "Kärlekläran med sina enkla, sublima ord skall alltid förbli levande."[7] It is in this book that Lagerkvist states: "Jag är en troende utan tro, en religiös ateist. Jag förstår Getsemane men inte segerjublet."[8]

In 1944, Lagerkvist returns in his book ***Dvärgen*** to that psychological study that holds such fascination for him: the study of evil. In this Machiavellian novel, the dwarf represents the tenaciousness and timelessness of evil that is, nonetheless, also depicted as being sterile, immobile, and self-destructive. The inferred antithesis again being Lagerkvist's belief in mankind and in the power of love. A power that was amplified into the guiding light of Lagerkvist's next, great novel, ***Barabbas*** (1950). ***Dvärge***n was his first bestseller, but ***Barabbas*** brought him worldwide recognition, and the Nobel Prize in 1951.

In ***Barabbas,*** we meet the words "älsken varandra" (love one another) again and again. Christ died that man might be free from death and from darkness, and Barabbas is literally this man. Blinded by the light of a 'new' day and bewildered by the words "älsken varanda," Barabbas repeatedly fails to understand the mystery of his Savior. In the second part, chained to the Christian slave Sahak in a Roman copper mine, he is once again in 'darkness'.

Although this Christian alter ego instructs him in faith and literally brings him back into the light of the world or 'saves him', Barabbas continues to deny his faith and finally dies on a cross outside of Rome. Whether or not he finally does accept such faith is debatable, but the book's deep religious significance is most decidedly not.

[7] "The clenched fist," ***Prosa*** (Stockholm, 1955), p. 108. "The doctrine-of-love with its simple, sublime words will always remain alive."
[8] ***Prosa,*** p. 105. "I am a believer without faith, a religious atheist. I understand Gethsemane but not the victorious exaltation."

Barabbas was the first of a series of six books by Lagerkvist, each of which delves deeper and deeper into the mysteries of God, and man's endless quest of him. A collection of poems, ***Aftonland,*** followed in 1953, and then four prose works: ***Sibyllan*** (1956), ***Ahasverus död*** (1960), ***Pilgrim på havet*** (1962), and ***Det heliga landet*** in 1964. In all of them, the eternal search must continue, for he who seeks knows, as Ahasverus did, that "bortom all helig bråte måste det heliga finnas, trots allt."[9] Yet, at the same time, he also realizes, like Tobias, "att den fullkomliga kärleken finns och Det heliga landet finns, vi kan bara inte nå det. Att vi kanske bara befinner oss på resa dit. Bara är pilgrimer på havet."[10]

Pär Lagerkvist's most recent work, ***Mariamne*** (1967), breaks away from the deeply religious framework of the previous six, but firmly reiterates his faith in the power of the words "älsken varandra" nevertheless. In this tragic 'love-story' involving Herod, King of the Jews, and a daughter of his enemies, the dimensions of this power materialize out of the kaleidoscopic perspectives of love and hate, good and evil. Although they, like "pilgrimer på havet," never reach what they are seeking, namely, to comprehend and utilize the omnipotence of love, one does glimpse something of this power in the context of their struggle.

[9] The death of Ahasverus, "Ahasverus död", in ***Pilgrimen*** (Stockholm, 1966), p. 93. "beyond all sacred rubbish the holy must exist, despite everything."
[10] Pilgrim at sea, "Pilgrim på havet", in ***Pilgrimen,*** p. 201. "that absolute love exists and the Holy Land exists, only we cannot reach it. That we perhaps only find ourselves on the way to it. Only pilgrims on the sea."

Paul Cézanne, *Bibemus Quarry,* c. 1895

The rudimentary fundamentals for what was to become known as "cubism" are already clearly evident in this early painting by Cézanne. Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, among others, were quick to grasp the impact of this primeval-based art form. Although impressionism and expressionism served as solid platforms for a new pictorial renaissance, Lagerkvist, like many artists active in the first decade of the 20th century, believed that cubism, founded on the inner artistic fabric of primitive art, was "the bearer of the richest and most fruitful ideas."

CHAPTER II

Cubism: New Dimensions in Literature

Lagerkvist's Theory of Literary Decadence and Cubist Vitality

When Pär Lagerkvist wrote his review of Guillaume Apollinaire's book for ***Svenska Dagbladet,*** he put down, in condensed form, those ideas that he apparently had already formulated for his book ***Ordkonst och bildkonst,*** published the same year. The subtitle of the latter work, "*Om modärn skönlitteraturs dekadans / Om den modärna konstens vitalitet,*" would indicate that the criticism of contemporary belles-lettres found in the Apollinaire review is also to be found here. As these two writings deal with the literary theories of Lagerkvist concerning, for example, the rejuvenating effect of cubism on the literary arts, I shall discuss them both.

The pictures in Apollinaire's book, states Lagerkvist, give one, in spite of the loss of color, a good idea of the paintings' construction. It is the construction of a painting that is the most important aspect of cubism, because, continues Lagerkvist, "För kubisten betyder ju det konstruktiva i ett konstverk mera än något annat, det är tanken, stommen, utan hvilken allt skulle falla samman, det bestämmer färgen, ljuset, volymerna."[11] Many of the critics of cubism, stunned by the "bewildering geometry", think that they can write it off as mere "ingenjörskonst,"[12] but this, far from being a negative criticism (which incidentally shows that they understand nothing about the subject), is indeed a good description of the quintessence of the art. It has not been said that there is anything wrong with the clarifying logic and technique of the engineer.

Artistic ratiocination instead of vague feelings is the whole idea behind cubism, as indicated by Lagerkvist's quotation of Apollinaire, which states that

[11] "A book about cubism," ***En bok om kubismen, Svenska Dagbladet,*** No. 220 (16 August, 1913), p. 9. "For the cubist, the constructive in a work of art means more than anything else, it is the thought, the framework, without which everything would fall apart, it determines the color, the light, the volumes."

[12] "engineers-art" (I shall discuss this analogy in greater detail later in the text.)

they (the cubists) “nous offrent des oeuvres plus cérébrales que sensuelles.” This is more than Lagerkvist has to say about contemporary literature, which he compares to a good after-dinner cigar, pleasant and satisfying, but only briefly.

At the very beginning of his book ***Ordkonst och bildkonst,***[13] Lagerkvist again strikes out against the same nonexistence of any real contemporary literature. Although books are filled with modern life and modern people, states Lagerkvist, they are actually only images of nineteenth-century realism: “Vår tid känner i sin skönlitteratur inte ijän sej själv, denna litteratur jömmer inget av vårt innersta väsen hur mycket den än må sysselsätta sej med oss, vår skepsis, vår erotik, vår psykologi.”[14] He maintains that the decadence of contemporary belles-lettres is evident in the fact that with the establishment of the professional writer, one has become more concerned with good sales than with good literature. In an ever-increasing effort to create the widest possible demand, this author has lost his way in the murky wood of psychological studies and naturalistic details: “Författaren behärskar ej sina personer, han behärkas av dem.”[15]

The literary creation, no longer under the control of the artist, swells out of all proportions and believes that its worth measurable by its thickness. Lagerkvist makes a very appropriate remark: “Ofrivilligt kommer man att tänka på hur Gutzkow när han en kväll jick förbi Goethes och Schillers monument i Weimar knöt händerna och utbrast: ‘Romaner i nio delar ha de dock inte skrivit!’”[16]

[13] ***“Literary Art and Pictorial Art,” Ordkonst och bildkonst*** (Stockholm, 1913), hereinafter abbreviated ***Ord.*** I felt it necessary to quote extensively from this work for two reasons: first, in order fully to illustrate Lagerkvist’s theories concerning cubism; secondly, because the reader may experience great difficulty in obtaining a copy for his or her own perusal. *(The book was never reprinted until 1991 [see illustration, page 2, and reference page]. The only English translation in existence—translated by Prof. Roy A. Swanson [University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee] and me—may be equally difficult to obtain, since, most likely, it is not available in any local library. It can be purchased, however, by sending an e-mail to rainbow_ltd@yahoo.com“ [see reference page]).*

A. Gustafson, however, briefly discusses ***Ord.*** in his book, ***A History of Swedish Literature*** (Minn., 1961, pp. 394–395.) The unusual spelling forms represent Lagerkvist’s attempt at a more phonetic transcription. (N.B. The translated quotations from ***Ord.*** herein have been taken from ***Literary Art and Pictorial Art*** mentioned above. The page numbers in the following footnotes refer first to the original Swedish work and then to the above-mentioned English translation, e.g., 16/13.)

[14] ***Ord.,*** p.16/13. “Our epoch does not recognize itself in its literature. This literature retains nothing of our innermost being however much it is occupied with us, our skepticism, our eroticism, our psychology.”

[15] ***Ord.,*** p.18/16. “The author does not control his characters, he is controlled by them; . .”

The magnitude of modern literary decadence is clearly apprehensible, says Lagerkvist, when one places contemporary belles-lettres in juxtaposition with the 'solid' logic of modern cubist paintings. The clearness, indirectness, and simplicity of cubism is directly traceable to primitive arts: a statement that is also found in Lagerkvist's article on Apollinaire. There, too, he criticizes the overloaded psychology of modern writers and looks back to earlier times for primitive inspiration:

> Kanske skola diktarna en gång få ögonen öppna för betydelsen af verkligt ingående studier i primitive litteratur, alldeles som det moderna måleriet funnit den primitiva konsten vare en outtömlig källa till kunskap och inspiration.[17]

This does not mean that we are to create a synthetic, lifeless copy of the ***Edda,*** for example, but that we should use the artistic richness, the ideas, and the lifeblood of primitive art and literature to transfuse new energy and life into modern literary efforts.

Although both impressionism and expressionism have been noteworthy stages in the new renaissance of the pictorial arts, Lagerkvist believes that cubism, founded on the inner artistic fabric of primitive art, is "bäraren av de rikaste och fruktbaraste idéerna."[18] And, one of the richest and most fecund ideas of cubism (as stated above concerning Apollinaire) is that of 'construction', as against mere composition. The cubist, like the architect, must always keep his eyes on the monumental wholeness of his idea, while not forgetting the various details that go into that whole:

> En god kubistisk tavla är som en konstruktionsritning: på en dylik kan ju ingenting ändras med mindre att det hela blir meningslöst – man kan ej tillåta att en linje minskas med

[16] ***Ord.,*** p. 19/17. "One is involuntarily reminded of how Gutzkow, walking one evening past the monument of Goethe and Schiller in Weimar, clenched his fists and burst out: 'They still did not write novels in nine parts!' "
[17] "En bok om kubismen," ***Svenska Dagbladet.*** "Perhaps writers shall finally open their eyes to the importance of truly thorough studies of primitive literature, exactly as modern painting has found primitive art to be an inexhaustible source of knowledge and inspiration."
[18] ***Ord.,*** p. 22/20. "the bearer of the richest and most fruitful ideas."

någon millimeter, en vinkel ökas med någon grad.[19]

This again is "ingenjörskonst!" When the new renaissance of modern belles-lettres finally arrives, says Lagerkvist, this pure art of cubism must be used to clean out the decadent psychological and milieu-minded naturalistic purveyors of reality and redirect the goal of literature to a more penetrating study of reality's inner being:

> Den skall visa vägen och lära att målet ligger avsevärt bortom det skickliga återjivandet, det på god iakttagelse och slagfärdig realism bygg ande berättandet, lära diktaren att rätt fatta sin uppjift: ur värkligheten prässa fram dess konstnärliga innebörd – avslöjande och förklarande en sida hos livet och tingen som honom för utan skulle lämnas obelyst.[20]

Just as cubism had given new life to the pictorial arts, so too could it inject vitality into the contemporary effete literary arts, for, as Lagerkvist so aptly expresses it, "den värdefullaste insats kubismen kan jöra vid omstöpandet och föryngringen av den modärna skönlitteraturens tankeliv är att rikta detta med sina konstruktiva och arkitektoniska idéer."[21]

In order to clarify what is meant by the terms "constructive and architectonic ideas," Lagerkvist delves into what he calls "den oerhörda nonchalans som utmärker modärn skönlitteratur."[22] Modern belles-lettres appears to be an improvised assortment of various indifferent episodes, bagatelles and details, so saturated with extraneous ingredients that the artist's wholeness

[19] ***Ord.,*** p. 28/27, n. 1. "A good cubist canvas is like a construction drawing: on such a drawing nothing can be changed without the whole's becoming meaningless. One cannot permit a line to be shortened by so much as a millimeter, an angle to be increased by so much as a degree."

[20] ***Ord.,*** p. 34/34. "It is to point the way and teach that the goal lies at quite a distance from clever reproduction and from narrative constructed from good observation and clever realism; it is to teach the poet to apprehend his task properly: squeezing the artistic meaning out of reality, disclosing and clarifying a side of life and things that would be left unilluminated without him."

[21] ***Ord.,*** p. 35/36. "The most valuable contribution that cubism can make in the molding and the rejuvenation of modern literature's thought is to enrich it with its constructive and architectonic ideas."

[22] ***Ord.,*** p. 36/36. "the incredible nonchalance that characterizes modern literature."

sublimates before one's eyes. The fact that the author tries to improve its value through an elegant style and a smattering of bon mots and flashy views (like salting a gold mine) makes perhaps for quite suitable reading, but nothing else. The antithesis of such carelessness, Lagerkvist shows, can be found in the intellectual and calculating ideas expounded by Edgar Allan Poe in ***The Philosophy of Composition.*** It is with this kind of ratiocination in mind that Lagerkvist states,

> Mot den modärna skönlitteraturens regelösa själv våld måste ställas stränga krav på samlad enhet i konstverket och ett borträngsande från detsamma av allt blott tillfälligt. Och det är kubismen som skall jälpa oss vid formulerandet av dess krav.[23]

The cubist writer, then—like the architect; like the engineer—must construct a work in which even the most minute detail is constantly weighed and matched against the projected artistic image of the whole. To this end, he must, like Poe, begin with the building blocks of his trade, that is, the phonetic sounds: the bases of the words of his language. In turn, each word, each phrase or expression must be weighed in an artistic balance and, if found wanting, cast out:

> Vi måste lära oss inse att den arkitektoniska idén är det jupast sköna i ett diktvärk, att den uppbär och med sin måttstock värdesätter allt annat. Dess mäktighet och hänryckande lidelse är det enda absolut nödvändiga för skapandet av även den väldigaste litterära konst. Allt annat kan negligeras – de rika, bländande orden, det musikaliska väljudet, den för de finaste nyanser känsliga rytmen och bilderna som je språket färj och must. Härmed påstås naturligtvis på intet sätt att allt detta borde strykas, tvärtom, det representerar obestridliga och stora skönhetsvärden och kan bringas att intimt samarbeta med den arkitektoniska idén, men man må inte glömma att det allt utan

[23] ***Ord.,*** p. 38/38. "Against the undisciplined self-indulgence of modern literature, there must be stringent demands for assembled unity in the work of art and a purging of the same of everything that is merely incidental."

> försyn måste offras så snart det ej låter sej underordnas denna.[24]

It is this artistic freedom to do that which is necessary for the organic unity of a work and its consequent climatic effect on the reader that is equally important according to Lagerkvist. The artist must not allow anything to interfere with the cerebral amalgamation of his fantasy and the architectonic ideas of cubism, not even verisimilitude. He uses language as a means of expressing his inner passions, thoughts, and feelings. His goal is the artistic shaping of these emotions into a unified construction of depth and beauty and not the exact copy of some 'real' thing:

> Att överhuvud beträffande någon art av konst hålla före att den skall imitera naturen är ju absurt. Vad blir då högsta målet: –att skaff en duplik på naturen![25]

One might compare such futile attempts to the unfortunate practice, so prevalent today, of trying to make plastic objects imitate wood instead of using the unusual properties of this new medium, and some imagination, to form artistic objects having their own intrinsic beauty.

Lagerkvist maintains that literature, like architecture and music, and cubist painting, rests on certain mathematical principles, and that these 'mathematical truths' are what make the aesthetic value of a real work of art timeless. The same mathematical foundation of cubism that has given new life to the pictorial arts can do the same for belles-lettres:

[24] ***Ord.*****,** p. 38/39. "We must learn to realize that the architectonic idea is the deepest beauty in a poetic work, that it supports and, with its measure, adds value to everything else. Its power and enrapturing passion are the sole absolute necessity for the creation of even the most tremendous literary art. Everything else can be neglected, the rich, dazzling words, the musical euphony, the intuitive rhythm that is necessary to the production of the finest nuances, and the images that give language color and pith. This is, of course, not to assert in any way that all of this ought to be eliminated; on the contrary, it represents incontestable and great values of beauty and can be brought to work in intimate conjunction with the architectonic idea, but it should not be forgotten that, without any exception, this must be sacrificed the moment it does not permit itself to be subordinated."

[25] ***Ord.*****,** p. 41/42. "To maintain at all, concerning any kind of art, that it should imitate nature is patently absurd. The highest aim in that case is to produce a duplication of nature!"

> Kubismens konstruktiva prinsiper tillämpade på skönlitteraturen skall tillföra denna ny sundhet och kraft och en manligt behärskad lidelse till det sköna vilken just är efter tidens kynne. De ska förjälpa oss till en ren konst.[26]

In order to recognize and understand these principles, principles that will help us penetrate to "det jupa konstnärliga vetandet,"[27] we must avoid the mere copying of a foreign literature's elegant style, states Lagerkvist, and go back to the primitive cultures. It is in primitive art that we can at once recognize artistic creativity, a spontaneity that has been lost by years of over-refinement in our culture:

> Därför måste vi gå tillbaka och lära–enkelhet och åter enkelhet. . . . måste icke här även för litteraturen jivas källor till kunskap, till sundhet och förnyelse, måste icke i den samtida diktningen finnas skatter att söka och tillvara taga?[28]

Lagerkvist reasons logically that just as the modern artists, that is, the expressionists and cubists, have returned to the simplicity of primitive art, so too must the cubist writer look to primitive literature for inspiration. A mere cursory glance into the poetic works of these cultures will reveal to us their rich potential. A more penetrating study will open a vista of depth, magnificence, and power of imagination,

> och vi inse att det skulle ha den största betydelse för skapandet åt oss av en renare och full ödigare litteratur om den modärna konsten kunde locka också diktaren att lära hos de folk från vilka den hämtat inspiration och kunskap.[29]

[26] ***Ord.***, p.42/44. "The constructive principles of cubism applied to literature will supply it with new soundness and power and a sternly controlled passion for the beautiful, which is exactly in keeping with the ethos of the age. This will help us toward a pure art."
[27] ***Ord.***, p.43/45. "profound artistic knowledge."
[28] ***Ord.***, pp. 45–46/46–47. "We must therefore go back and learn, simplicity and more simplicity. . . . must there not, for literature too, be available here springs of knowledge, health and regeneration, must there not exist in contemporary writing treasures to seek and find?"
[29] ***Ord.***, p. 46/48. "And we realize that it would be of the utmost importance to the creation for us of a purer and more genuine literature if modern art could also entice the writer into learning from the peoples from whom it has drawn inspiration and knowledge."

That is, means Lagerkvist, if contemporary literature can avoid, as modern art has done, "allt arkaiserande i såväl from som ämnesval,"[30] which is of no use in any study, then its potential would increase greatly.

A study of the primitive literary arts will indicate, says Lagerkvist, that they are, for the most part, of a religious nature. These writings, whatever religion they may be concomitant with, are constructed of the simplest thoughts and emotions—universal expressions of love, hate, sadness, and joy, which sublimate individuality into the broadly humane. Modern belles-lettres should not fail to see

> att just jenom användande av en så enkel apparat, jenom att se allt så helt och osammansatt samt jenom förmågan att ränsa sin uppfattning från allt blott tillfälligt, höja sej till det allmänmänskligas plan, förmå dessa namnlösa diktare fulla oss med en känsla av den jupaste poesi.[31]

The proper cathartic agent for cleansing our northern decadent literature, suggests Lagerkvist, is to be found in the poetic world of our own forefathers, in the splendid richness of Icelandic literature:

> Den äldre, poetiska eddan låter oss kanske – så som innehållande det rent musikaliskt-rytmiskt urkraftigaste – jupast förnimma brösttonerna i de nordiska språken. Dessa måste vi lära oss avlyssna, förstå och älska. Ty vårt språks musikal iska egenart (pekande hän på dess begränsning men framförallt dess oerhörda möjligheter) måste vi a priori känna och kärleksfullt vörda. Det är ju fullkomligt löjligt om en författare jer sej till skönlitterature skapande utan att äga kundskap om det mäst primära han har att bygga på.[32]

[30] ***Ord.***, p. 46/48. "all archaizing in form as well as choice of subject."
[31] ***Ord.***, p 47/48–49. "that precisely through using so simple an apparatus, through seeing everything so uncomplicated and complete, as well as through the ability to cleanse their apprehension of all that is merely incidental, raise themselves to the level of the broadly humane, these nameless writers are able to fill us with a feeling of the profoundest poetry."

Such an author, no doubt, is exactly the one who perpetuates what Lagerkvist calls the decadence of contemporary literature. The cure, then, of this kind of literary carcinomatosis is the application of the rejuvenating principles, the untainted essence of life, contained in the writings of the old Norse skalds. Lagerkvist asks whether anyone can read the ***Voluspa*** without feeling "hur konstruerat det hela är, hur på förhand klart och nyktert beräknat här allting blivit, hur skalden alltijenom inriktat sej på vissa bestämda egendomliga effekter."[33]

The skald's use of repetition (found in almost all primitive literature) forces the reader's imagination into the same sensitivity as his own. No one who reads the passages of the ***Ragnarök,*** who feels the horror of these words, can possibly maintain that construction is incompatible with inspired poetry or that the architectonic idea of cubism is foreign to the inner nature of such poetry, inasmuch as, states Lagerkvist,

> ett sådant absolut skönhetsvärde – det mäst betydande av alla och för ett värkligt konstvärk all deles oundjängligt – är en dikts egenartade arkitektoniska idé; dylika egenartade, fasta, klara idéer möter oss i den äldre eddan ävensom i sagorna.[34]

Lagerkvist goes on to say that one can also find this absolute aesthetic value elsewhere, it may

> ligga dolda i relationen mällan en järvt konst närlig framställning och den värklighet den belyser, i motsättning mällan en

[32] ***Ord.***, p. 48/50. "The older, poetic ***Edda*** gives us perhaps an opportunity to apprehend fully the emotional depths in the Nordic languages, insofar as it contains the most original powers of pure music and rhythm. We must learn to listen to, understand and cherish these. For we must feel a priori the musical individuality of our language (taking note of its limitations, but above all of its immense possibilities) and must affectionately revere it. It is indeed completely ridiculous for an author to devote himself to literary creation without mastering a knowledge of the most elementary materials upon which he is to build."

[33] ***Ord.***, p. 49/51. "how the whole is constructed, how clearly and soberly everything here has been calculated beforehand, how the poet concentrates thoroughly upon particularly characteristic effects."

[34] ***Ord.***, p. 50/52. "Such an absolute aesthetic value (the most significant of all and the most utterly essential to a real work of art) is a poem's unique architectonic idea; such unique, firm, clear ideas we find in the older ***Edda*** as well as in the sagas."

> ytterligt enkel form och en innehållets väldighet som nästan alldeles dränker våra förnimmelser av ord, i motsättningen mällan det lilla och det oerhörda i det berättade o.s.v.[35]

The absolute aesthetic value of which Lagerkvist her speaks is a sort of third dimensionality that is simultaneously created in the reader's mind through the instantaneous comparison of the various aspects present in an architectonically constructed work of art. Because modern literature lacks these architectonic ideas, so too does it lack an absolute aesthetic value.

A good example of the application of these architectonic ideas and of the aesthetic value thereby produced is found in the Icelandic prose as well. The modern writer should take note that the Norse skalds, far from laboring over an 'elegant style' and entangling themselves in fancy phrases, employed the simple, basic building blocks of their language—a language that is characterized by a

> fattigdom på mångstaviga, rikedom på korta ord . . . . därför är och förblir en enkel satskonstruktion och korta meningar – vilket understryker denna deras egenart – det för dem enda naturliga.[36]

Lagerkvist therefore recommends that we pay attention to the fact that these poets used the spoken language to create their monumental works, and, that "det må jöra oss uppmärksamma på hur konstnärligt uttrycksfullt talsspråket är och komma oss att över väga om det icke bör vid skönlitterarärt författarskap i största möjliga utsträckning tagas i bruk."[37]

The spoken language is ofttimes, especially in the case of the Scandinavian dialects, closer to that spoken by a person's forefathers than the

[35] ***Ord.***, p. 50/52–53. "lie hidden in the relation between a daringly artistic representation and the reality it illuminates, in the opposition between an extremely simple form and a vastness of content that almost drowns our perceptions of words, in the opposition between the small and the immense in the narration, *et cetera*."

[36] ***Ord.***, pp. 51–52/54. "poverty of polysyllabic words and a wealth of short words . . . . therefore what alone remains natural for them is a simple sentence structure and short clauses, in emphasis of their individual character."

[37] ***Ord.***, p. 52/54–55. "This should make us aware of how artistically expressive the spoken language is and cause us to consider whether we ought not to begin using it to the greatest possible extent in literary authorship."

cultured language of the universities; for this reason "det är rikare, smidigare, spänstigare, oändligt mera levande än ett ur dess inkonsekventa virrvarr utristalliserat skriftspråk."[38]

It should not be difficult for an author to realize the superiority of such building-blocks. And, as Lagerkvist points out, if further evidence is desired, then, one ought to turn to Spencer's extraordinary study, ***The Philosophy of Style.*** His psychological and scientific reasoning about the proper "economizing of the reader's energy" states that those words we learn earliest as a child (that is, the basic, simple ones) cause us the least energy to apprehend later in life and should, therefore, be used in any genuinely artistic style. Not only this, adds Lagerkvist,

> dessutom innebär användande av talspråket ytterligare inbesparing av energi: dels jenom att det brukar kortare ordformer och bortkaster alla onödiga stavelser och dels jenom att det starkt betonar det rytmiska, musikaliska, vilket högst väsentligt underlättar mottagarens arbete.[39]

He also indicates that the application of these principles is even valid when it comes to choosing literal symbols for the phonetic sounds of this spoken language. The author is to attempt to come as close to a phonetic spelling as possible. This, too, in order to 'economize' the reader's energy, for he immediately sees—instead of abstract orthography—the true sound values of the words.

In the last several pages of ***Ordkonst och Bildkonst,*** Lagerkvist relates these concepts of the constructive and architectonic ideas of cubism and the desire extraction of an absolute aesthetic value to other primitive and ancient cultures beside Northern mythology. He expresses dissatisfaction over the limited available study material of primitive poetry and wonders about the vast poetic riches that must still exist undetected:

[38] ***Ord.,*** p. 52/55. "It is richer, more flexible, more vigorous, infinitely more alive than a literary language crystallized from its own inconsistent muddle."
[39] ***Ord.,*** p. 53/55 n. 1. "Moreover, the use of the spoken language involves further saving of energy: partly through its use of shorter word forms and its dispensing with all unnecessary syllables and partly through its heavy stress on the rhythmic and the musical, which most essentially facilitates the listener's work."

> Blott de jordes tilljängliga, droges fram till beskådan och utnyttjande! De skulle kanske kunna väcka lika livligt inträsse som de ”barbariska” negerskulpturerna i den gamla kulturmetropolen vid Seine.[40]

If we examine, for example, the great ancient cultures of the East, then, maintains Lagerkvist, we will find the same “väldhet i den konstnärliga inbillningen, stora mått, stora linjer på allt.”[41]

In the ancient Egyptian, Assyrian-Babylonian, and Judaic cultures, the poetic world merges with the religious. Although these cultures were richer in modes and skills of expression, such refinement still did not hide the pulsating power of original inspiration. These writings show

> det skickliga avvägandet av de olika massorna så att allt värkar just såsom det bör, ingenting bryter sej ut ur helheten, allt får sitt rätt värde, det lilla förblir smått och underordnat, det som är avsett att värka jenom sin väldighet också absolut dominerar.[42]

Finally, Lagerkvist turns toward a fecund paradise of ancient literature, India. As Lagerkvist phrases it, “det är som att från beundran av mänskliga kraftprov komma i hänryckning över mänskoandens undervärk.”[43]

The magnificence, the magnitude, and the multiplicity of India’s literature, and the almost infinite diversity of its artistic scope, should make us see our own literary incapabilities and provide, at the same time, an overflowing wellspring of knowledge and inspiration. Yet, we have not even touched the aes-

[40] ***Ord.***, p. 55/58. “If only they were made accessible, brought under the inspection and exploited! They could perhaps arouse as vital an interest as the ‘barbaric’ negro sculptures did in the old culture-metropolis on the Seine.”
[41] ***Ord.***, p. 56/59. “power in the artistic imagination, great proportions, great lines in everything.”
[42] ***Ord.***, p. 57/60. “the skillful balancing of the different masses so that everything gives the appearance of being as it ought to be, nothing appears to break away from the whole, everything has its appropriate value: what is little remains small and subordinate, and what is meant to produce an effect by virtue of its power is also absolutely dominant.”
[43] ***Ord.***, p. 57/61. “is like turning from the admiration of a feat of human strength to a delight before a wondrous work of the human soul.”

thetic values held locked for thousands of years in the poetic treasures of Japan and China:

> Östern kan bli en sannskyldig guldgruva for diktaren såsom den varit och är det för den bildande konstnären! Må den vidga vår inbillnings gränser, begåva oss med en hänsynslösare konst närlig vilja och ägga oss att sätta större mått på diktens lidelse![44]

Lagerkvist concludes by saying that if we all were able to see how far contemporary literature has gone astray in its misguided search for the sublime, and if we could but remember, for instance, the three guiding principles of the poet: "enhet i den konstnärliga idé som ligger till grund för värket, enhet i den för denna idés ut vecklande till en litterär skapelse nödvändiga fantasin samt enhet i formen"[45]—then it would be possible gradually to develop a poetry that has some real meaning for us, that holds us, and that can enrich our vision of life. We, like the cubist painters, must look into the depth of primitive art from which we can retrieve the constructive and architectonic ideas necessary "för nya poetiska skönhetsvärden, nya möjligheter att uttrycka konstnärlig lidelse, för nya sanningar i diktens psykologi!"[46]

Concepts of Cubism and Percepts of Reality

In the interest of a clearer understanding of the theories expounded by Lagerkvist in this early (and largely unknown) treatise on literature and cubism, and before studying their application, it might well be worthwhile to examine the writings of other scrutinizers of cubist techniques, and other cubist novel-

[44] ***Ord.***, p. 59/63. "The East can be a veritable treasure trove for the writer, as it was and is for the pictorial artist. May it extend the limits of our imagination, endow us with a more uncompromising artistic will and stimulate us to set greater goals for the passion of poetry!"
[45] ***Ord.***, pp. 59 & 60/62–63 & 64. "unity in the artistic idea that forms the basis of the work, unity in the imagination needed to develop this idea toward a literary creation, and unity in form . . . . "
[46] ***Ord.***, p. 55/59. "to what new aesthetic values in poetry, what new possibilities in the expression of artistic passion, what new truths in the psychology of a poem!"

ists (both efficacious and otherwise), as well. It is especially important to fully comprehend the cubist's distinct perception of reality, or the 'appearance' of such reality.

Although many of us are familiar with the geometric forms created by Picasso and Braque, many others of us (and not a few somewhat disdainfully) complain that we do not understand such paintings avec des petitis cubes. "It doesn't look like anything," we object. Such statements only prove a total inadequacy in grasping the true nature of the art. Quite the same reaction might be expected from the uninitiated when viewing, for example, a mechanical drawing or a blueprint. The viewer's untrained eye is 'confused' because it sees, not the accustomed representation of three-dimensional surfaces on a two-dimensional plane by the illusionary use of 'conventional' chiaroscuro, but the penetration of these surfaces through the principles of solid geometry.

Cézanne was one of the first to develop this new insight into methods of reinterpreting spatial objects within the confines of a two-dimensional canvas, "and in the process breaking the laws of scientific linear perspective."[47] The problem of representing the reality of space, though, was not new, only the solution presented by Cézanne;

> indeed, it should be emphasized that Picasso had been dissatisfied with the limitations imposed on pictorial volumes by a scientific or linear system of perspective for some time before he became aware of the fact that Cézanne's painting suggested a new concept of form and space. (p. 76)

Kahnweiler speaks of Picasso's 'discovery' in ***Der Weg zum Kubismus*** (1915):

> Picasso's new method made it possible to "represent" the form of objects and their position in space instead of attempting to imitate them through illusionistic means. With the representation of solid objects this could be effected by a process of representation that has a certain resemblance to geometrical drawing. This is a matter of course since the aim of both is to render

[47] John Golding, ***Cubism: A History and an Analysis*** (1907–1914) (Boston, 1968), p 69.

> the three-dimensional object on a two dimensional plane. In addition, the painter no longer has to limit himself to depicting the object as it would appear from one given viewpoint, but wherever necessary for fuller comprehension, can show it from several sides, and from above and below.[48]

The last line of the above quotation is of significance here, for it reveals the exact difference between an ordinary drawing of solid geometry and a more complex blueprint. In the blueprint, for example, the surfaces of an object are made transparent (i.e., penetrated) from all six sides at once. Anyone trained in reading blueprints must intellectually reassemble these six different aspects of the object and be able to 'see' the perspective of the intended object, namely, all six sides simultaneously, in his mind.[49] Kahnweiler, however, maintains that this simultaneous reassembling process must be facilitated by real images that supply a sort of catalytic action:

> But, if only this scheme of forms were to exist it would be impossible to see in the painting the "representation" of things from the outer world. One would only see an arrangement of planes, cylinders, quadrangles, etc. . . . when "real details" are thus introduced the result is a stimulus which carries with it memory images. Combining the "real" stimulus and the scheme of forms, these images construct the finished object in the mind. Thus the desired physical representation come into being in the spectator's mind. (pp. 11–12).

Perhaps a practical example of this idea might be the architectural drawing in which one sees both the transparent floor plan and a conventional three-dimensional pictorial representation of the structure together on the same piece of paper. Such use of 'keys' and 'clues' is also supported by Golding when he discusses

[48] Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, ***The Rise of Cubism,*** tr. Henry Aronson (New York, 1949), p. 11.
[49] This is what Sypher means when, in referring to Pirandello's theater, he states: "All these levels of representation are held together in a simultaneous perspective of transparent dramatic planes to be read in many directions at the same time." Wylie Sypher, ***Rococo to Cubism in Art and Literature*** (New York, 1960), p. 291.

> Picasso's use of illusionistically painted, or at least immediately legible details, coat-buttons, moustaches and so on, which help the spectator to identify his subjects, asserts in a more obvious way the realistic character of the style.[50]

Nevertheless, Kahnweiler's theory about real details is, I think, true only to a certain degree. The details may assist the orientation of the spectator, but they are not absolutely necessary nor even desirable for 'pure' cubism. Once the spectator has made the effort to initiate himself, so to speak, into these new methods of pereceiving reality, he should be able to accomplish the entire reassembling process independent of such stimuli. This is what Lagerkvist means when he states: "han [kubisten] . . . förklarar helt frankt det publiken ej har rätt utan vidare lägga beslag på ett konstnärligt resultat, utan att känna något av den möda dess erövrande fordrat."[51] If the cubist, then, expends energy by tearing asunder the real object and mentally reconstructing it on his canvas, the spectator must also do som cogitative work to reassemble this "arrangement of planes, cylinders, quadrangles, etc." into its proper spatial order. This process is what Golding terms the "optical synthesis which was one of the most important features of the Cubism of Picasso and Braque" (p. 149). The beginner, of course, cannot do this, but then neither could the neophyte cubists. The difficulties that the latter had to overcome are brought out in Lagerkvist's statement regarding the inclusion of naturalistic elements in cubist representation:

> Kubisterna gå hårdast fram i reaktion mot naturalismen. De borde, tyckes det, helt enkelt tvingas att överje densamma på grund av sina konstruktiva prinsiper and sin teknik. Dock återstår ännu för mången ej ringa arbete innan han är vid målet för sin sträven i detta stycke – man upptäcker inte så sällan i kubistiskt målari rent naturalistiska detaljer för vilka artisten ej funnit den konstnärliga formen och vilka därför faktiskt stöter vårt öga

[50] Golding, p. 105.
[51] ***Ord.***, p. 23/22. "he [the cubist] . . . quite frankly makes it clear that his audience has no right quite simply to take an artistic result, without feeling anything of the labor its achievement demands."

> mer än någonsin det järvaste våldförande på ”naturen”.[52]

The cubist’s ceaseless struggle for a new dimensionality finally resulted in the real object disappearing completely:

> Once the figure broke up into planes, these planes broke up, and there was no way to halt the destruction short of reabsorbing these smaller and smaller facets into the neutral continuum of process, which is featureless.[53]

The end result of such a ‘destructive’ process can be seen in the seemingly meaningless “arrangement of planes, cylinders, quadrangles, etc.” in Picasso’s ***Ma Jolie*** (Woman with a Guitar, see p. 51 below).

Although Kahnweiler makes the statement that “memory images connected with the title will then focus much more easily on the stimuli in the painting” (p. 13), there are no real stimuli in this painting at all—the beginner has only the title upon which to rely.

In all fairness to Kahnweiler’s observations, however, it should be pointed out that the number of spectators who are able to apprehend and perceptively synthesize the total destruction of ‘pure’ cubism into a new wholeness is, at best, extremely small. It is this practical consideration, I believe, that explains what might at first seem to be a contradiction in Lagerkvist’s theory. As we noted above, Lagerkvist complained about “offending naturalistic details” in cubist paintings, and yet, in speaking of absolute aesthetic values, he later states:

> Skalden arbetar stort sett endast med dem, [de absoluta skönhetsvärdena], kondenserar i dem nästan all den poesi han för diktens skapande behöver, som ämnets, uppjifterns betydenhet kräver and plaserar mellan dem med säker beräkning konst-

[52] ***Ord.***, pp. 26–27/25–26. “The cubists are severest in their reaction against naturalism. They ought, it seems, to be quite simply compelled to abandon the same on the basis of their constructive principles and their technique. Yet there still remains for many no little work before they reach the goal toward which, in this regard, they are striving. It is not very seldom that one discovers purely naturalistic details in cubistic painting for which the artist has not found the artistic shape and which therefore actually offend our eyes more than the boldest violation of ‘nature’ ever does.”

[53] Sypher, p. 307.

> närliga vågdalar, färjlösare partier (ej sällan redjörelser för fakta, släktförhållanden mytologiska episoder o.d.) varunder åhörarens fantasi – d.v.s. den del därav som används vid tillgodojörandet av poetiskt innehåll – får tillfälle att vila och samla sej.[54]

In this case (and Lagerkvist is careful to point this out), we must again take into account Spencer's theory concerning the proper "economizing of the reader's energy." Lagerkvist, in rephrasing this theory, states that one is not a poet because one has reached certain conclusions in one's own mind and soul:

> Men jag är diktare för det fall att jag tillika mäktar med språket som medel uttrycka min känslas och tankes lidelse. Detta förmår jag emällertid helt enkelt i den mån jag jenom min framställningsform förstår att väl ekonomisera med min läseres energi (jenom att på alla sätt underlätta hans arbete vid tillgodojörandet av innehållet) och hans känslighet (på vilken jag ideligen måste ställa till sin art olika anspråk, aldrig ensidigt ansträngande och därför blott relativt obetydligt tröttande – jöra intryck, adrässerade till så vitt skilda känslosentra hos mottagaren som möjligt). På denna hushållning och på intet annat beror hur mycket av det innehåll som jag har att je, jag kan je – hur stor konst jag skapar.[55]

[54] ***Ord.***, pp. 50–51/53. "On the whole, the poet works with these along; into these he concentrates almost all the poetry he needs for the creation of his poem, all that the importance of his subject and mission demands, and with accurate calculation he places among them artistic wave troughs, less colorful parts (not infrequently these are factual reports, family relationships, mythical episodes, and the like) by means of which the reader's imagination, that is, that part of it that is attuned to the benefit of poetic content, gains an opportunity to rest and collect itself."

[55] ***Ord***., pp. 39–40/40–41. "But I am a poet if I am at the same time capable of expressing through the medium of language the passion of my feeling and thought. I am capable of this, however, quite simply to the extent that I, through my manner of representation, understand how to be economical with the energy of my reader (through facilitating in every way his work in utilizing the content) and with his sensitivity (on the varied nature of which I must continually make demands, never straining one-sidedly and thereby merely tiring in a relatively meaningless way—must make an impression, addressed as much as possible to widely diverse centers of consciousness in the recipient). On this economy and on nothing else depends how much I can give of the content that it is mine to give—how great the art I create."

Whatever the artist, any artist, has to say is in itself without meaning, if he is unable to transmit his concepts to anyone else. Under these circumstances, Kahnweiler's idea about the real stimuli reassumes more validity; especially when one finds that "the dice that appear in some of Picasso's constructions are tubular or cylindrical forms rather than cubes, and are covered with dots that act as keys or clues, enabling the spectator to identify them."[56]

There is another major aspect or way of explaining this phenomenon of cubist perspective that can be extracted from a remark made by Braque: "It is always desirable to have two notions—one to demolish the other."[57] By this he means a kind of 'cubist dialectics' that purposely perpetrates an ambiguity through the juxtaposition of two opposing aspects. It should actually be two opposing aspects (or more), for this ambiguous 'synthesis' evolves more through the Marxian process of cascading reactions than through the simple Hegelian thesis—antithesis/synthesis. If one looks at cubism from this point of view, then perhaps one should speak of 'simultaneous dichotomy' instead of 'simultaneous perspective'—nevertheless, the final synthesis would be the same. And, the reason that one can call this synthesis ambiguous is that

> things exist in multiple relations to each other and change their appearance according to the point of view from which we see them—and we now realize that we can see them from innumerable points of view, which are also complicated by time and light, influencing all spatial systems. (pp. 264–275)

It is this ambiguity that imparts to cubism its existentialist nature. Although the analogy of the blueprint can be used to cogently illustrate the geometric principles of cubism, one must at the same time realize that the synthesis of these representations in the mind of the spectator is by no means a concrete thing, a manifested static drawing on an engineer's board, but a shifting, ambiguous reality that is synthesized simultaneously from an endlessly varying juxtaposition of innumerable points of view; Ortega states:

> El error inveterado consistía en suponer que la realidad tenía

[56] Golding, p. 126.
[57] Sypher, p. 265.

> por sí misma, e independientemente del punto de vista que sobre ella se tomara, una fisonomía propia. Pensando así, claro está, toda visión de ella desde un punto determinado no coincidiría con ese su aspecto absoluto y, por tanto, sería falsa. Pero es el caso que la realidad, como un paisaje, tiene infinitas perspectivas, todas ellas iqualmente verídicas y auténticas. La sola perspective es esa que pretende ser la única.[58]

Each spectator is thus responsible for the meaning he extracts from, or attaches to, this essentially ambiguous, synthesized reality.

As we are, nonetheless, mainly concerned with the literary aspects of cubism; a problem with which we must also occupy ourselves is: How does one 'transliterate' these myriad facets of cubism into the symbols of literature—how does one communicate these concepts to the reader through the printed word?

One could arbitrarily choose poetry, for example, which, like all uses of logos, is essentially a problem of communication, namely, how to convey to others exactly what one wishes to express, feelings, emotions, etc. If we then turn to T.S. Eliot's attack on Wordsworth's "emotion recollected in tranquillity"—and the romantic poets in general—we find that he criticizes mainly the manner of transmittal of emotion: "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion."[59] (The similarity here to the cubist's representation of reality or Bertolt Brecht's V-Effect *[Verfremdungseffekt]* is not unimportant.) The problem is the projection of the poet's emotions through choosing the proper 'audio visual' representations. Eliot's solution was his theory of his "objective correlative":

> The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative"; in other words, a set of objects, a

[58] Ortega y Gasset, ***El tema de nuestro tiempo,*** 9th ed. (Madrid, 1959), p. 87. "The inveterate error consisted of assuming that reality had, for and of itself, and independently of the point of view from which it is observed, its own physiognomy. Following such reasoning, every view of it from a specific point would, of course, not coincide with its absolute nature and would, therefore, be false. But, the fact is that reality, like a landscape, has an infinite number of perspectives, all of them equally veracious and authentic. The sole *false* perspective is that which claims to be the only one."

[59] Eliot, ***Selected Essays*** (New York, 1932), p. 10. (Cf., ***The Dehumanization of Art,*** pp. 28–30.)

> situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked. (p. 124)

Because poetry was, and remains, an essentially auditory medium, perhaps an analogy might be drawn between the above statement and the problems of the early radio pioneers who discovered that the radio audience were only able to apprehend the reality of a play only through the use of 'sound-effects', i.e., not the 'real' sounds, but sounds made to sound 'real'. They observed that, by transmitting the direct realistic action, they produced, for the most part, completely unintelligible 'sound images'. (One of the first attempts to produce a play in this medium included a battle that was literally fought on the radio-stage in full regalia including live horses.)[60] The unforeseen result was that the 'blind' listener was overwhelmed by the indiscrete, indiscriminately 'turned-loose' sounds—and did not understand a thing. These experimenters were subsequently forced to reduce the sounds to their most essential 'sound-images', which they then represented by technically recreated, illusionary sounds—objective facsimiles—or sound-effects.[61]

It is in these 'sound-effects' that one realizes the basic principles of cubism. These 'cubistically destructed' sounds were sent out by the station to re-unite in the fecund imagination of the 'blind' listener.[62] And analogous 'assembling process' is mentioned by Eliot when he states that "the poet's mind is in fact a receptable for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases and images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together" (p. 8). Yet the 'listener' is also given this same ability to seize and unite images because Eliot

> implies that the processes of the artist and the receptor are equivalent, since the references given by the objective correla-

[60] See, Armin P. Frank, ***Das Hörspiel*** (Heidelberg, 1963), p. 49; also, Heinz Schwitzke, ***Das Hörspiel*** (Berlin, 1963), p. 53.
[61] See, Frank, ***Das Hörspiel,*** pp. 105–108.
[62] The imagination, as all radio-drama fans well remember, can do a much better job of creating a character than any amount of 'realistic' description. This phenomenon, which I explain in more detail later, was also observed by Gide. (See below, p. 34–35.)

> tive are there in the poem to evoke in the receptor the art emotion which the poet expresses.[63]

And again, as in a cubist painting, it is not each individual image that is important per se, but the final total suggestion to the receptor: "that there is no isolated or independent existence, that the whole is constitutive of each part and each part constitutive of the whole."[64] Each discrete image must align itself with every other (like ferric atoms within a magnetic field) so that their 'correlative energies' are directed toward a unified whole and not dispersed in all directions. This the coiners of the term "cubism" did not understand, for they erroneously saw only the discrete images and not their total meaning—the unified wholeness of the work. This is a mistake that Golding effectively illustrates:

> Discussing the prose poem—a form of literature which, as used by Jacob, provides one of the closest literary parallels to Cubist painting in that it embodies simultaneously actions or events normally separated by time and space, which are fused into formal, difficult but rational and understandable creations—Jacob warns the poet and artist against 'the too dazzling precious stones which attract the eye at the expense of the whole'. (p. 95)

The "references given by the objective correlative," then, have a function similar to Kahnweiler's real details of cubism in that they are a part of, and assist in, the reassembling of the discrete images to create what Eliot terms, "the whole of feeling."[65] Finally, the seemingly complex and difficult process of cubist representation is saliently summarized by Kahnweiler:

> The unconscious effort which we have to make with each object of the physical world before we can perceive its form is

[63] G. T. Panicker, ***A Whole of Feeling*** (Ph.D. Diss. Abstract, Catholic Univ. of America, 1959), p. 4.
[64] Sypher, p. 296.
[65] p. 182. (Cf. Ortega's statement: "There can be no doubt that the best approximation to truth is contrived by a formula that in one unified, harmonious turn encompasses the greatest number of particular facts—like a loom which with one stroke interlaces a thousand threads," ***The Dehumanization of Art,*** p. 53.)

> lessened by cubist painting through its demonstration of the relation between these objects and basic forms. Like a skeletal frame these basic forms underlie the impression of the represented object in the final visual result of the painting; they are no longer 'seen' but are the basis of the 'seen' form. (p. 14)

The poet is faced with a similar task—he too must break down the real emotions and feelings, which he wishes to express, into their constituent parts—reform 'new compounds' and send them out as an "accumulation of imagined sensory impressions."[66]

Some Aspects of the Cubist Novel

Before investigating whether Lagerkvist has applied his theories concerning the rejuvenating vitality of cubism to his own works, it might be appropriate to look to a few other modern authors who have attempted to utilize (consciously or unconsciously) these principles of cubism. In examining their success or failure, we should be better able to understand more fully the substance of Lagerkvist's theory and practice.

"Many novelists," states Sypher, "like Aldous Huxley and Philip Toynbee have used the cubist simultaneous perspective, but no modern writer has been more concerned with situating his narrative than André Gide" (p. 296). Sypher proceeds to explain that this is because Gide's novels "are not mere revolt but experiments with new means of representing reality" (p. 297).

André Gide, like the cubist painters or those early pioneers of radio for example, came to understand the true meaning of the words *mímesis práxeo.* In his book ***The Counterfeiters (Les Faux-Monnayeurs),*** Gide states through Edouard's journal:

> I am beginning to catch sight of what I might call the 'deeplying subject' of my book. It is—it will be—no doubt, the rivalry between the real world and the representation of it which we

[66] Eliot, p. 124.

> make to ourselves. The manner in which the world of appearances imposes itself upon us, and the manner in which we try to impose on the outside world our own interpretation.[67]

The symbol that Gide has chosen to illustrate this process is the counterfeit coin: "Well, imagine a false ten-franc gold piece. In reality it's not worth two sous. But it will be worth ten francs as long as no one recognizes it to be false" (p. 177). That is to say, it is a negative symbol—what one is not to do (contrary to Sypher's theory), for Gide writes: "In reality, Edouard had in the first place been thinking of certain of his fellow novelists when he began to think of ***The Counterfeiters,*** and in particular of the Comte de Passavant" (p. 176). And, Passavant ("Nothing spreads more ruin or receives more applause than men of his stamp" [p. 204]) is far from being a writer of the kind of works which Gide praises thus:

> Is there anything more perfectly and deeply human than these works? But that's just it—they are human only in their depths; they don't pride themselves on appearing so—or, at any rate, on appearing real. They remain works of art. (p. 171)

In art, one must represent reality by methods that go beyond the copying or imitation that produces a mere composition of external features to defraud the eye like a counterfeit coin, and, instead, penetrate to the solid substances of life at its core:

> The material never saves a work of art, the gold it is made of does not hallow a statue. A work of art lives on its form, not on its material; the essential grace it emanates springs from its structure, from its organism.[68]

Artistic works that have the appearance, but not the substance of reality "ring as false as counters," and lead to a state of 'poetical inflation': to a situation in

[67] ***The Counterfeiters,*** tr. Dorothy Bussy (New York, 1955), p. 189.
[68] ***The Dehumanization of Art,*** p. 75. (Cf. Lagerkvist's statement, footnote 25.)
[69] Gide, p. 307.

which "it's the honest man who passes for a charlatan."[69] If people have become conditioned to the bright, new glitter of counterfeit coins, they are not going to be able to appreciate the consequent 'unusual look' of the real thing. Gide understood, as Lagerkvist did, that much of contemporary literature was suffering from this poetical inflation, which was created by novels that were filled with overabundant real details—but void of any universal truths. This becomes evident when we compare Edouard's statement below with Lagerkvist's (Cf. footnote 20):

> By localizing and specifying one restricts. It is true that there is no psychological truth unless it be particular; but on the other hand there is no art unless it be general. The whole problem lies just in that—how to express the general by the particular—how to make the particular express the general. (p. 172)

It is this process of making the "particular express the general" that is the quintessential meaning of those ancient words mímesis práxeos. Thus, the solution to this problem is to be found in the rejuvenating principles of cubism as they have been explained by Eliot's objective correlative, by the engineer's blueprints, and by the sound-effects of radio.

Andre Gide's ***The Counterfeiters,*** is more than just an important treatise on cubist techniques, however, it is a "tableau-tableau, the art-form in the making."[70] It is a collage of discrete images, a mixture of fact and fiction, which successfully shows the author's "struggle between what reality offers him and what he himself desires to make of it."[71]

In writing this book, Gide has 'destructed' Stendhal's mirror and re-constructed the pieces in such a manner as to reflect multitudinous planes of reality simultaneously. In many cases, the views are diametrically opposite.[72] Such a method gives Gide the advantage of creating distance—ultimately allowing the reader to make his own choice. Each chapter is written to stand by itself, and, if any opinions are ventured, they are immediately either qualified or negated, e.g.; "nothing

[70] Sypher, p. 300.
[71] Gide, p. 173.
[72] This facet of cubism is mentioned both by Sypher (v.n. 57)—and by Golding, p. 153: "Leger . . . . stressed the fact that a painting must be built up of a series of deliberate contrasts, not only of colour but of forms as well."

that I wrote yesterday is true" (p. 104).

Another modern author to hold up such a 'cubist mirror' to life is John Fowles. In ***The French Lieutenant's Woman*** (1969), there is a diffraction of the time-continuum, as well as a spatial destruction, which adds the fourth dimension: the "simultaneous perspective." Fowles creates, as Gide did, a "tableau-tableau, the art-form in the making." Although the book was deliberately written in the Victorian style, the author's repeated intrusion into it of aspects from the twentieth century produces a Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* (a literal 'distance' of over one hundred years), aimed at allowing the reader to avoid entanglement in the normal romanticism of Victorian prose. Fowles' continuous leaping of the time-continuum and the resulting simultaneous contrast between the 'sliced' planes of reality (i.e., reality: as the Victorian characters see it—as the narrator sees it relative to then and relative to now—as it actually was, and is) functions as a very successful "antidote to emotionalism."[73] As in Gide's novel, the book is a mixture of discrete images of act and fiction. For example, Fowles introduces factual information concerning the language used by the servants of the times (pp. 46–47), and supplies in Chapter 35 a treatise on the particular mores of the Victorian era. I feel, were I forced to describe in a general way the style used by Fowles in this novel, that I should choose the term "cubist irony."[74] The following excerpt, I hope, will give some indication as to what I mean by such a term:

> He told himself he was too pampered, too spoilt by civilization, ever to inhabit nature again; and that made him sad, in a not unpleasant bitter-sweet sort of way. After all, he was a Victorian. We could not expect him to see what we are only just beginning—and with so much more knowledge and the lessons of existentialist philosophy at our disposal—to realize ourselves: that the desire to hold and the desire to enjoy are mutually destructive. (p. 72)

Perhaps, it is this unexpected incongruity or contrast between the two time-

[73] Golding, p. 65.
[74] I strive to explain this term more fully below; pages 50–56. (Cf. Ortega's view on such irony, ***The Dehumanization of Art,*** pp. 46–47, with that of Booth, n. 118.)

continuums that induces me to choose such a term. Compare another, for instance, almost identical passage later in the novel:

> But above all it seemed to set Charles a choice; and while one part of him hated having to choose, we come near the secret of his state on that journey west when we know that another part of him felt intolerably excited by the proximity of the moment of choice. He had not the benefit of existentialist terminology; but what he felt was really a very clear case of the anxiety of freedom—that is, the realization that one is free and the realization that being free is a situation of terror. (p. 328)

The time factor is once more quickly shifted in the next paragraph that begins: "so let us kick Sam out of his hypothetical future and back into his Exeter present."

Fowles' references to existentialism are far from accidental, for, as I have already mentioned, choice plays a large part in the reconstruction process or synthesis of cubism. The cubist merely provides all the necessary elements—the spectator or the reader is left to decide for himself what the constructed reality should look like:

> Ortega y Gasset, like the cubists, supposes that the structure of reality depends on the view we take of it: there are as many views as there are modes of consciousness. His philosophy of perspectivism is an attempt of the contemporary mind to cope with contradictions between doubt and belief, between the mind and reality outside the mind.[75]

This is similar to the existentialist ideas we have already seen expressed by André Gide through the character of Edouard:

> I said to myself . . . that nothing is true for everyone, but only relatively to the person who believes it is; that there is no

[75] Sypher, p. 286.

> method and no theory which can be applied indifferently to all alike; that if, in order to act, we must make a choice, at any rate we are free to choose. . . . For I can't prevent myself from doubting, and at the same time I loathe indecision. (p. 181)

This cubist ambiguity (also a major element in Lagerkvist's works) is dramatically illustrated in ***The French Lieutenant's Woman*** by the fact that the author has provided two diametrically opposed endings for the reader. Actually, I claim that there are four endings, because the novel comes to an abrupt conclusion with Chapter 44, then suddenly continues again with Chapter 45, and seems, if the author had his wish, to end once more in Chapter 55, with Charles on the way to London. What concerns us, in any case, are the two more important endings; the first in Chapter 60, the second in the 'final' Chapter 61.

One might say that by concluding his novel in such a manner, Fowles is merely following Lagerkvist's advice that "publiken ej har rätt utan vidare lägga beslag på ett konstnärlig resultat, utan att känna något av den möda dess erövrande fordrat" (see page 22). Perhaps, one might assume that Fowles, too, decided that the reader should expend a little mental energy to supply his own conclusion. In order for the reader to do this, however, he must be given the means to assemble in his mind the various perspectives constructed by the author within the dimensional diversity of his work. And, in order for it to be a successful cubist work, this perspective must be a 'simultaneous perspective' of the whole. John Fowles, I maintain, has clearly achieved this goal.

It therefore follows that were an author to employ the various aspects and perspectives of cubism, yet neglect to include simultaneity, the result would not be cubistic. John Steinbeck's ***Burning Bright*** is a case in point. Here, Steinbeck has attempted (whether consciously or not) to incorporate several ideas relative to the principles of cubism. Unfortunately, the lack of any simultaneous perspective has resulted in the reader's being unable to "collect the disintegrated event into one whole."[76]

Although Steinbeck has attempted the cubist method of constructing different planes of reality, they are arranged like the naturalist school's 'slice of life', or as Gide expounds; "the great defect of that school is that it always cuts its slice in the same direction; in time, lengthwise. Why not breadth? Or in

[76] Sypher, p. 283.

depth?" (p. 172). In ***Burning Bright,*** the different perspectives of reality—the circus, the farm, and the sea—are all merely successive points along the same time-continuum. Another failing is found in his thoughts about the description of characters:

> it can do no harm for theatergoers or theater people to have the fullest sense of the intention of the writer. . . . and for the many people who have not seen the play, and will never see it, this becomes an aid to which they are entitled.[77]

Apparently, Steinbeck did not place much faith in the power of the reader's imagination. Gide, on the other hand, has made a much more psychologically astute observation:

> And don't let it be argued that the dramatist does not describe his characters because the spectator is intended to see them transposed alive on the stage; for how often on the stage an actor irritates and baffles us because he is so unlike the person our imagination had figured better without him. The novelist does not as a rule rely sufficiently on the reader's imagination. (p. 67)

Anyone familiar with the old dramas of radio recognizes the particular power of the imagination to which Gide here alludes. How disappointed the children of the great radio-broadcasting era must have been when the 'magnificent' heroes that they had created in the dark fertility of their minds seemed to shrink away to nothing before the realistic eye of the T.V. camera.[78] Had Steinbeck but remembered this phenomenon, he would not have written the above statement nor the following description whose "form och iakttagelse är det gångna århundradets":[79]

[77] ***Burning Bright*** (New York, 1950), p. 11.
[78] Cf., ***The Dehumanization of Art,*** p. 64: "When I read in a novel 'John was peevish' it is as though the writer invited me to visualize, on the strength of his definition, John's peevishness in my own imagination. That is to say, he expects me to be the novelist. What is required, I should think, is exactly the opposite: that he furnish the visible facts so that I obligingly discover and define John to be peevish."
[79] ***Ord.,*** p. 15/13. "form and observation are those of the past century."

> A lithe and stringy man of middle age, Joe Saul. His jaws muscled against strain and cables down the sides of his neck. His arms were white and blue-veined, with the long cords of clinging and hanging rather than the lumps of lifting. His hands were white, the fingers spatulate, and palms and fingers calloused from the rope and bar. (p. 18)

Because of these and other 'miscalculations,' Steinbeck failed at creating a sensation of simultaneous perspective, and by doing so he also failed to solve the riddle of William Blake's poem that he quotes:

> Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
> In the forests of the night,
> What immortal hand or eye
> Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

The answer lies in the architectonic principles of cubism as expressed and practiced by Pär Lagerkvist. To show this, I shall now turn to his works.

Henri Matisse, *Bonheur de vivre,* c. 1906
This famous painting was inspired by the work of Cézanne.

CHAPTER III

LAGERKVIST'S PRACTICE OF CUBIST VITALITY

Although one might well assume, upon concluding a study of the foregoing material, that there is something to be learned from the architectonic principles of cubism, the question that still remains is: How does one apply these ideas in attempting to create literature of vital aesthetic worth? I hope to offer a solution to this problem by investigating Lagerkvist's own cubist style in several of his works—ranging from his earlier attempts to the more recent, more famous works, such as ***Barabbas.***

Expressionist Influence

In 1918, Lagerkvist wrote a play, ***Den svåra stunden,*** to which he gave the subtitle, *Tre enaktare*.[80] The physiognomy of this drama reveals that Lagerkvist is still heavily under the influence of Strindberg's expressionist "drömspelsdramtik" (dream-play drama). In his foreword to ***Ett drömspel,*** Strindberg states:

> Författaren har i detta drömspel . . . . sökt härma drömmens osammanhängande men skenbart logiska form. Allt kan ske, allt är möjligt och sannolikt. Tid och rum existera icke; på en obetydlig verklighetsgrund spinner inbillningen ut och väver nya mönster.
>
> Personerna klyvas, fördubblas, dubbleras, dunsta av, förtätas, flyta ut, samlas. Men ett medvetande står över alla, det är drömmarens. . . . Han dömer icke, frisäger icke, endast relaterar; och såsom drömmen mest är smärtsam, mindre ofta glättig,

[80] "The difficult hour: three one-acts," ***Dramatik,*** I (Stockholm, 1956), 93–131.

> går en ton av vemod, och medlidande med allt levande genom den vinglande berättelsen. Sömnen, befriaren, uppträder ofta pinsam, men när plågan är som stramast, infinner sig uppvaknandet och försonar den lidande med verkligheten, som huru kvalfull den än kan vara, dock i detta ögonblick är en njutning, jämförd med den plågsamma drömmen.[81]

In addition to employing such ideas in ***Den svåra stunden***, Lagerkvist has also given typical expressionist designations to the dramatis personae. In the first act, for example, a "herre i frack" stutters through a broken dialogue with a grotesque "herre med puckel" on a Strindbergian stage of "bolmande rök" in "ett blåviolett halvdunke."[82] The second and third acts are similarly expressionistic in scenery. The question is then: What has Lagerkvist done in an attempt to follow the dictates of his own cubist theories?

If we study Lagerkvist's use of dialogue in this play, I am afraid that we must conclude that it is indistinguishable in form from the truncated dialogue of Strindberg's "drömspelsdramtik," for example:

> HERRN I FRACK. Ja . . . ja, det var då det! – För sedan, ser du, sedan blev det något helt anat . . .[83]

This kind of dialogue, fragmented and punctured by repeated cut-offs, is very much like that found in ***Ett drömspel***:

[81] "A dream play," ***Samlade skrifter av August Strindberg,*** XXXVI (Stockholm, 1920, 213–330. "The author has in this dream-play . . . . sought to imitate the disconnected but seemingly logical form of the dream. Everything can happen, everything is possible and plausible. Time and space do not exist; the imagination spins and weaves new patterns on an insignificant reality-base. The characters are split, doubled and redoubled, evaporated, condensed, they float away and are collected. But a consciousness stands over all of them, it is the dreamer's . . . . He does not judge or exonerate, only relates; and as dreams are mostly poignant, less often cheerful, a tone of melancholy, and compassion for all living things runs through the swaying narration. Sleep, the liberator, is often painful, but when the suffering is at its worst, the sufferer awakes and is reconciled with reality; which, no matter how agonizing it can be, nevertheless in that moment it is an enjoyment, in comparison with the painful dream."

[82] "gentleman in a dress coat" — "gentleman with a hump[back]" — "belching smoke" — "a blue-violet half-darkness"

> DOTTERN. Antingen hon svarar, eller icke svarar: slå henne! . . . Kom, Siare, skall jag – långt härifrån! - säga dig gåtan - men ute i ödemarken, där ingen hör oss, ingen ser oss! Ty . . .[84]

In content, one does notice, nevertheless, that Lagerkvist has attempted to utilize those basic building blocks (i.e., simple words), and the simple sentence structure—and the repetition, of which he spoke regarding the Norse skalds.[85] Unfortunately, they serve here to merely strengthen the expressionist, not the cubist form. The different points of view that are found in the three acts—the various aspects of life and of death—do not subsequently unite into the necessary simultaneous perspective. Perhaps this is partly because these variegated points of view have not been given enough detail to create the required dimensionality (the blueprint is not complete, so to say); the reader or spectator is unable to correlate these aspects with a unified "whole of feeling."

This also appears to be the case with Lagerkvist's Kafkaesque prose work ***Den fordringsfulla gästen*** (1919).[86] In this story, as in ***Den svåra stunden,*** Lagerkvist has also shattered Stendhal's mirror, but the pieces are neither small enough nor are they on different planes relative to one another (cf. footnote 53)—and, especially in this prose work, they have also been warped so as to present a distorted view of reality. But, as it has already been pointed out, the cubist view of reality depends on an infinite number of perspectives, and in order to accomplish this, the 'reflecting pieces' of the mirror, too, must necessarily be infinitely small in size—and each at a distinctive angle. (One could perhaps apply the principles of integral calculus here.) Yet, such destruction of reality is only part of the cubist formula, one must also be able to construct this 'chaos' into a new unity. In both of these works, Lagerkvist has apparently

[83] p. 98. "Yes . . . yes, it was that! — For later, you see, later it was something completely different . . ."

[84] p. 319. "Either she answers, or does not answer: hit her! . . . Come, Siare, I shall — far from here! — tell you the mystery — but out in the desert, where no one can hear us, no one see us! for . . ."

[85] Lagerkvist, however, it should be noted, has almost completely abandoned his earlier attempt at a general phonetic transcription of Swedish (e.g., ***Ordkonst och bildkonst***). Perhaps he came to realize that because of 'conditioning' to the conventional orthography, the reader found such 'realistic' spelling more difficult—thereby interfering with the "economizing" of his energy.

[86] "The expectant guest," ***Prosa*** (Stockholm, 1951, pp. 17–37).

failed to redirect this fragmentation toward such a new unity. The result is that the various cubist views have remained static discrete entities, instead of converging—thereby dissipating their correlative energies so that the mind is unable to synthesize them into a new simultaneous perspective. As in Steinbeck's ***Burning Bright,*** they are merely successive points along the same plane, the same time-continuum. (This does not necessarily imply that Lagerkvist has miscalculated as badly as Steinbeck did.) If these two early works were not a complete success cubistically—they were, at the same time, not total failures, for one can already see a substantial effort on the part of Lagerkvist to project the required "infinitas perspectivas, todas ellas igualmente verídicas y auténticas" (see n. 58).

A Turning Point

In 1920, Pär Lagerkvist began a 'short' story with the beautifully alluring, imaginative words:

> Det var en gång några döda, de satt samman någonstans i mörket, var visste de inte, kanske ingenstans, de satt och pratade för att få evigheten till att gå.[87]

The soft, quiet hope that one experiences at the end of this most 'fantastic' story (***Det eviga leendet***) shows that a marked change has taken place from the expressionist works of despair written by Lagerkvist during the war years. It is also, in my opinion, his first successful attempt at utilizing the architectonic principles of cubism. Instead of parallel, static reflections discussed previously, we now find the 'simultaneous dichotomy' of aspect, the process of 'cubist dialectics' that is necessary for a total synthesis of perspective.

Lagerkvist has abandoned the expressionist influence of Strindberg, and has managed to construct the simplicity of narration and dialogue that he had called for in ***Ordkonst och bildkonst*** (see n. 28). And, this is also the case—

[87] Det eviga leendet, ***Prosa*** (Stockholm, 1951), p. 41. "Once there were some dead [souls], they sat somewhere in the darkness together, where they did not know, perhaps nowhere, they sat and talked to get eternity to pass."

as we shall see—in his later works. This “enkelhet och åter enkelhet” has also been extended to include the use of adjectives in descriptive narration. (Lagerkvist, like Gide, clearly believes in the power of his reader’s imagination.) When he does feel that it is necessary to use such adjectives, he constructs the sentences in which they occur so that sufficient ambiguity always remains. If a class of art students, for example, were assigned to draw a picture based on the following description, I am sure that no two pictures would be even close to identical:

> Det var en fet, undersätig herre med små ögon och med händerna hopknäppta över den framskjutande magen. Han verkade grosshandlare, hans utseende var vederhäftigt men kanske lite intetsägande. De korta benen hängde och dinglade i det som liknade mörker. Man kunde se att om han suttit på en stol skulle fötterna inte räckt ner till golvet.[88]

I am equally sure, nonetheless, that each of them would have been able to draw a complete and clear picture of what they thought this merchant looked like.

Lagerkvist is also closely following his theory about “enkel satskonstruktion och korta meningar,” and, although he has more-or-less abandoned his attempt at a more phonetic spelling, one senses that there exists a definite predilection for the older, simpler words. Particularly (in the case of verbs), for those forms that exist in *landsmål* (regional Swedish). An example of this is found on page 64: “Vi satt sen och talte om honom, det var som vi talt om oss själv.”[89] The contraction of “sedan” to “sen” may be construed to be standard usage, but the verb forms “talte — talt” instead of “talade — talat” are found only in the various dialects.

The dead reminisce “för att få evigheten till att gå,” and by doing so, they speak and ‘reflect’ on their past lives. Each ‘reflection’ is a different plane of reality and, more importantly, from a different time-continuum. We also find

[88] “Det eviga leendet,” ***Prosa*** p. 46. “It was a fat, dumpy gentleman with small eyes and with his hands clasped over his protruding stomach. He appeared to be a wholesale merchant, his appearance was respectable but perhaps a bit insignificant. His short legs hung and dangled in what seemed to be darkness. One could see that if he had sat on a chair his feet would not have reached to the floor.”

that Lagerkvist has again included a distorted reflection of reality in the Kafkaesque tale of the young man at the flour mill. But this time, it is not a discrete unity in itself—instead, the distance created by its grotesque nature enables one to apprehend yet another view of reality that, in turn, correlates with all of the other fragmented segments of life, all of the reaches of time past, into a new meaningful wholeness.[90]

One example of the fragmentation of the time-continuum is to be found in the episode of the long-dead young man, which begins on page 79. He died while on his way to a rendezvous with his lover, and he holds onto this thought as his only reality, despite the fact that the old man (the son of this same girl) keeps insisting "Nu är hon längesen död. Nu är vi alla döda."[91] Such contradictions of time—and such paradoxical sentences as: "Det enda levande är allt det döda,"[92] flow together in the solitary darkness that permeates the story to form and re-form in an ever-shifting synthesis of new perspectives—creating a sort of dramaturgical chain reaction. It is the total synthesis in the reader's mind, of dimensionality and time (i.e., the 'fourth dimension') that enables him to assimilate the 'moment of truth' at the end of the story. God is found to be an old man who is sawing wood under the dim light of a lantern. When asked what the meaning of life is, he answers: "Jag har inte menat livet som någonting märkvärdigt. . . . Jag har gjort så gott jag kunnat."[93] When pressed still further for an answer to the mystery of life he goes on: "Jag har bara menat att ni aldrig skulle behöva nöja er med intet."[94]

The point is that we, the readers, like the billions of dead standing there in the infinite universe, can never really know the complete answer to such a question. We can, with the help of the new perspectives, however, experience the same epiphanic consciousness: "De förstod inte riktigt, bara anade allt. Ett under hade skett med dem . . . ."[95]

89 "We sat then and talked about him, it was as if we had talked about ourselves."
90 For a comprehensive study of illusion, reality, and the grotesque; see, Wolfgang Kayser, ***Das Groteske: in Malerei und Dichtung*** (Hamburg, 1960).
91 P. 80. "Now she has been dead for a long time. Now we are all dead."
92 P. 42. "The only ones alive are, without a doubt, the dead."
93 P. 115. "I have not meant life to be anything remarkable. . . . I have done the best I could."
94 P. 118. "I have only meant that you never would have to be satisfied with nothingness."
95 P. 119. "They did not quite understand, only had a presentiment of everything. A miracle had taken place with them . . ."

Cubist Chiaroscuro: Point and Counterpoint

Once Lagerkvist had discovered the proper literary formula for the successful application of his ideas of cubist vitality, he also, like Picasso, "became increasingly elaborate and complex."[96] I should perhaps clarify this (before the objection is raised that Lagerkvist has, on the contrary—as I have previously stated—become simpler and simpler) by saying that I speak here paradoxically of the complexity of his simplicity. I refer to the painstaking attention given to the multiple interwoven but exactly wrought details that, through their correlative action, create the phenomenon of the simultaneous perspective. The cubist constructs a simple subject by a complex process—it is not the process "avec des petits cubes" that one is to see, but the "samlad enhet i konstvärket."[97] Nonetheless, man inherently demands that things be classified, arranged, or structured in some way. Even the cubist process of 'destruction-construction' must be systematic and subservient to the intellect:

> To control the elaborate complex of facets or planes to which forms are now reduced, Picasso had to resort again to the use of a consistent light source, and there is in many of these paintings a new and strong sense of chiaroscuro. Inside the objects and figures the planes begin to be opened up into each other more fully and are less clearly differentiated than hitherto.[98]

As Lagerkvist's cubist style, then, developed—and began to approach this complexity—he too sensed the psychedelic panoptic impact that was to be gained through the exploitation of such contrasts in the fourth dimension of cubist perspective. This new cubist use of chiaroscuro emerges in Lagerkvist's works during the darkening politics of the thirties as the contrast between the forces of good and evil.

Bödeln (1933),[99] Lagerkvist's attack against the malignant ideology of

[96] Golding, p. 83.
[97] ***Ord.,*** p. 38. "assembled unity in a work of art."
[98] Golding, pp. 83–84.
[99] "The executioner," ***Prosa*** (Stockholm, 1955), pp.7–77. N.B. This book has been translated under the title, ***The Hangman.***

Nazism, is a cubist study of the nature of these forces that is constructed as a kind of 'enthymeme'. That is, although he concentrates on the forces of evil, one understands logically that evil is only relative—a counterpoint to it must exist—the reflected (and thereby reversed) image of evil is that which is good. Such a 'cubist syllogism', therefore, is dialectical: the reader must first deduce the missing premise by reversing the images in his mind if he is to 'see' the simultaneous perspective of the whole and thus construct the conclusion. One realizes that the reader's task in such "oeuvres plus cérébrales que sensuelles" is far from a simple process of logical deduction, since, although the cubist principles are based on the intellect, the 'cubist syllogism' of Lagerkvist reaches beyond the rational to the irrational. As Swanson accurately points out in his study of ***Dvärgen***[100] (Lagerkvist's most encompassing treatise on evil [1944]), such a novel "is not a riddle but an enigma."[101] This, I think, can be said of all of Lagerkvist's cubist works. In ***Bödeln,*** as in ***Dvärgen,*** it is not enough, however, to merely conclude that good is the logical opposite of evil, because, as Lagerkvist explores the nature of evil, we must in turn explore the nature of the counterpoint. If this is done conscientiously, it will be found (as Swanson has correctly deduced) that Lagerkvist has chosen to re-define this dichotomy rather in the context of 'love' and evil:

> We are not told what this other being is. We can only infer that it is as much a part of a person as his evil nature is and that awareness of it enables a person to look upon his own evil nature without fear. The impression produced in ***The Dwarf*** and in Lagerkvist's other stories and novels is that this second inner being is love. Each human being has within himself the nature of evil and love. (p. 195)

As I have already mentioned, Lagerkvist's increasing complexity is not inconsistent with his call for "enkelhet och åter enkelhet," for he does not change the simplicity of the whole nor the building blocks that he uses in his artistic expression. A cubist work of art is like a simple brick building—each surface of

[100] "The Dwarf," ***Prosa*** (Stockholm, 1962).
[101] Roy Arthur Swanson, "Lagerkvist's Dwarf and the Redemption of Evil," ***Discourse: A Review of the Liberal Arts,*** 13, No. 2 (Spring, 1970), 192.

each brick is a simple rectangle in itself, the design is simple, and so, too, the finished unit—but laying the bricks etc., is not so simple, as anyone not trained in the work is aware. And, one must remember, it is not the 'brick', but the final wholeness that is important:

> Kubisten är arkitekt. . . . Han måste som arkitekten samtidigt vårda sej om detaljen och förmå fullkomligt underordna den helheten, aldrig släppa blicken från monumentala och enhetliga i sin tankegång och framförallt aldrig glömma byggnadens ändamål – vilket problem som föreligger honom att lösa.[102]

In Lagerkvist's development, his destruction-construction process undergoes a transformation—becomes more elaborate, more complex—but his predilection for the older, simpler words and *enkelsatskonstruktion* still remains strong.

In ***Bödeln,*** for example, we find the words, "sitt anletes svett" (p. 12). The phrase is of interest for several reasons: first, the word "anlete" is the original Swedish word for "face" instead of the now more common word "ansikte", which was borrowed from Low German; second, the phrase happens to be a common everyday expression, and third, it has been borrowed from the Bible. In ***Första Mosebok (Genesis)*** 3:19, we read: "I ditt anletes svett skall du äta ditt bröd" etc. A careful notation of Lagerkvist's vocabulary would reveal many similar examples throughout this work as well as his later works. Indeed, a most interesting study (for which there is in this discourse neither time nor space) would be a thorough investigation of the biblical language employed by Lagerkvist.

In the case of the preponderance of short words, it is interesting to note that Lagerkvist slowly modifies his earlier more phonetic spelling to conform with standard usage. In many of his earlier works, we find such variations in spelling as "talte" instead of "talade" (spoke), "mente" instead of "menade" (meant), "lessen" instead of "ledsen" (sorry/sad), and others. These particular spelling forms gradually disappear until, in ***Mariamne,*** there are scarcely any

[102] ***Ord.,*** p. 28. "The cubist is an architect. . . . He must at the same time, in his role of architect, take care of details and be able to subordinate them completely to the whole, never losing sight of the monumental and the homogeneous in his line of thought and especially never forgetting which problem he is faced with solving."

to be found. Attention is not being directed here to the attempt by Lagerkvist to use phonetic 'transcription' of the everyday language as clues—this also occurs throughout his works, although, again, to a lesser degree in his later works. The difference in the use of such realistic details is quite evident if we compare the 'dialect' dialogue in ***Bödeln,***

> Tror du jag behöver spela falskt för å lura å dig dina usle bondpänger! Di trillar rätt i taska min, för di kan inte li lukten i dina dumma böxer![103]

with the standard orthography as found in ***Det heliga landet,***

> — Inte för mig heller. jag har sett för många störta och jag vet att alla skall störta till slut. Och sedan? Hur blir det sedan?[104]

Although Lagerkvist shows a progression toward abandoning the use of a more phonetic orthography, he has not abandoned his theory about simple words nor "enkel satskonstruktion och korta meningar." His use of such simple sentence structure is so explicit that it is hardly necessary to delve into it in greater detail—one has only to open one of his later stories at random:

> Tobias stod en stund bredvid honom. Så lade han sig också ner på samma sätt. De låg där tillsammans bredvid varandra i den ljumma natten.
>
> Havet var alldeles stilla och båten gled omärkligt fram över det eller rörde sig kanske inte alls. Det betydde ingenting, för den drev ändå utan något mål, bara vilade på havet, hos det oändliga havet.[105]

It should not be difficult to realize how this kind of straight, concise, and simple style 'economizes' with the energy of the reader.

[103] p. 39. "Do you think I gotta cheat to juggle your paltry peasant money outta you! They fall right into my pocket 'cause they can't stand the smell in your stupid pants"
[104] "The holy land," in ***Pilgrimen*** (Stockholm, 1966), p. 242. "Not for me either. I have seen too many collapse, and I know that all of them will collapse in the end. And then? How will it be then?"

Another good example is the description of the inn at the beginning of ***Ahasverus död*** (p. 9):

> Det var ett stort, kalt rum, längst bort var där så mörkt att han inte kunde urskilja någonting alls. Men så långt han kunde så låg det fullt med folk på knä i den smutsiga, tillsölade halm som var utbredd över hela golvet, det såg ut som de låg och bad, ett otydligt mumlande hördes från dem men några ansikten kunde han inte se, alla låg med ryggen åt honom, bortvända.[106]

"To begin with," as Spector observes, "he has finally developed in these works a prose style whose trimness and simplicity rival those of Imagist poetry. Nothing is wasted in its language and syntax; classical control governs his expression at every point."[107]

Like ***Det eviga leendet,*** Lagerkvist's book ***Bödeln*** also reveals variegated planes of reality and a sudden leaping of the time-continuum. Furthermore, in Bödeln, the individual 'pieces' of reality have been broken down into smaller and smaller fragments. What we learn of the executioner is derived more from the interwoven, complex pattern of contradictory dialogue than from a series of short narrations.

The leap in time from the medieval tavern to a restaurant ostensibly somewhere in Germany divides the novella into almost exactly equal parts. At first, one is not aware that things have changed much, but as one continues through the dialogue, it becomes increasingly evident that a switch in viewpoint has also taken place:

[105] ***Pilgrim på havet***, p. 147. "Tobias stood a while next to him. Then, he also laid down the same way. They lay there together alongside each other in the warm night. The ocean was completely quiet and the boat glided imperceptibly forward over it or perhaps did not move al all. It did not matter, for it drifted nevertheless without any goal, merely rested on the ocean, on the infinite ocean."

[106] "It was a large, bare room, at its further end it was so dark that he could not discern anything at all. But as far as he could see, it was full of people kneeling in the dirty, muddied straw that was spread over the floor, it looked as if they were praying, an indistinct murmur came from them but he could not see any faces, for they all knelt turned away, with their backs to him"

[107] Robert D. Spector, "Pär Lagerkvist's Dialogue of the Soul," in ***Scandinavian Studies,*** ed. Bayerschmidt & Friis (Seattle, 1965), p. 308.

— Han är stilig.
— Ja.
— Hur tror du det är med en bödel, va?
— Ä smaskigt, kan du tänka dig.[108]

These are not the words of the superstitious 'devil-fearing' peasants—on the contrary, they come from people who have driven themselves beyond either fear or respect for this symbol of all that is evil in man. Yet, there are other contradictions within each time-continuum; for, although the peasants, in their superstition, fear the figure of the executioner, they also, at the same time, are capable of pity:

> — Ja det var underligt å se på, det var det. Och när folket såg kärleken i öga på honom [bödeln] så blev de rörda och började viska och tala om det mellan sig, och det märktes att de tyckte allt det var synd på honom.[109]

The second part shows a similar dichotomy: the soldier with the machine-gun has no more respect for the executioner than the whores had—but this, once again, is countered by the good *Bürger* and the rigid-armed *Heil* salutes.

Such close examination of the text will reveal that there is, so to speak, a cascading process of contrasts in operation. First, the various different views in the first part are synthesized together into a new perspective—and then juxtaposed with similar amalgamations from the second part. Finally, the speech by the executioner serves as a catalyst to assist the reader in the synthesizing of all these discrete parts into the simultaneous perspective of the whole.

Lagerkvist's trend toward an increase in complexity in interweaving the myriad facets of reality appears readily evident in ***Dvärgen*** despite its outward simplicity. This is because "the method is more complex, but its objectives—to express the dualities of good and evil, meaning and chaos—correspond to his

[108] P. 47. "He looks great. — Yes. — How do you think it is with an executioner, huh? — Really yummy, you can bet."
[109] p. 33. "Yes, it was strange to see, that it was. And when the people saw the love in his eye [the executioner], they were moved and began to whisper and talk among themselves, and it was observed that they really were sorry for him."

general designs as a writer."[110] Instead of an interaction of various contradictory statements and viewpoints from a series of different characters, we now have only the dwarf who continually clashes diametrically opposed views together within his own mind.

On page 56, for example, the dwarf says: "Jag tror inte han [Bernardo] är någon egentlig människokännare"—but, only four pages later, he re-states: "Han är nog iallafall en stor människokännare."[111] Each character in the book is built up using such a pattern of paradoxical contradictions in the mind of the dwarf. The reader is left to make the choice as to which is true and which is false. The answer—and I hope that I have been able to make this clear—is that none of them are, in fact, true or false. The answer lies outside, beyond them, in the 'fourth dimension' of cubist perspective.

Another aspect of the increase in complexity is Lagerkvist's evolvement of a certain cubist vocabulary. For example:

> Vad anar fursten? Anar han ingenting? Eller kanske allt?
> Det verkar som om frågan om hennes hemliga liv inte existerade för honom. Men man vet inte, man vet aldrig någonting riktigt säkert med honom.[112]

The ambiguity created by the contradictory questions and answers is enforced by such words as "ana" (have a presentiment), "verka" (seem), and "som om (as though). These words, and especially "som om," are to appear in Lagerkvist's works over and over. In speaking of what he calls the ambiguity of dramatic irony (which I shall discuss below) in ***Barabbas,*** Braybrooke states:

> In each case Lagerkvist is careful to insert a saving clause. At Sahak's death he [Barabbas] sinks to his knees "as though in prayer"; at his own death he cries out into the darkness "as

[110] Spector, ***Scandinavian Studies,*** p. 306
[111] "I don't think that he[Bernardo] is any real judge of people," — "He is at any rate quite a judge of people."
[112] ***Dvärgen,*** p. 14. "What does the prince suspect? Does he suspect nothing? Or perhaps everything? It seems as if the question about her secret life doesn't exist for him. But one doesn't know, one never knows anything quite for certain with him."

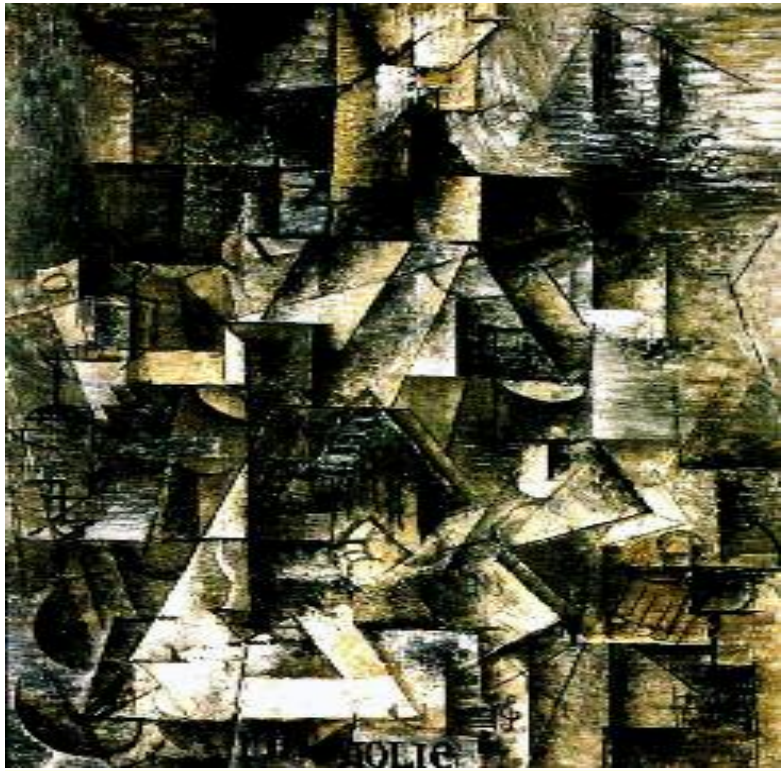
> though he were speaking to it." That "as though" leaves the ultimate verdict ambiguous.[113]

Through such careful 'side-stepping', Lagerkvist removes himself from the text (i.e., the ambiguity generates distance) and thus, objectively leaves the reader to make his own decisions. It is this process of intentional contradiction, ambiguity, and allusion that, in a continual sequential synthesis, builds up (like a cascade amplifier) the final unity in the reader's mind. It must generate one additional step: it must now instigate the process of the so-called cubist syllogism. The perspectives that have been gained at the end of ***Dvärgen*** (and ***Bödeln*** as well) must now be reversed—matched against the original—and a new final panoptic perspective synthesized.

It is this process of creating such a simultaneous perspective to which I referred when I spoke of the complexity of Lagerkvist's simplicity. It was this process, it seems, that Braybrooke either failed to see or forgot to explain when he said of Lagerkvist: "however with the years his work simplified in form (experimentation was put aside) and his thought proportionately deepened" (p. 263). Braybrooke is not wrong in calling the earlier works "experimentation," but, I think that it should be pointed out that for my analogy it would be better to give it the name of poor masonry: Lagerkvist did not simplify his form by any means, he finally magnificently managed to align his 'building blocks' so nearly perfectly that they (as individual 'cubes') no longer disturbed the eye of the beholder. The reader of these later works thus sees only the final intended 'wholeness' of the monumental, yet, simple structure.

Lagerkvist has reached this kind of perfection of construction, then, with his "Crucifixion Cycle,"[114] that consists of the pentalogy: ***Barabbas*** (1950), ***Sibyllan*** (1956); and the three works, ***Ahasverus död*** (1960), ***Pilgrim på havet*** (1962) and ***Det heliga landet*** (1964). The three latter works were published under one cover in 1966, entitled ***Pilgrimen***.[115]

[113] Neville Braybrooke, "Pär Lagerkvist," ***Catholic World,*** 176 (Jan., 1953), 266.
[114] See, Roy Arthur Swanson, "Evil and Love in Lagerkvist's Crucifixion Cycle," ***Scandinavian Studies,*** 38 (Nov., 1968), 302–317.
[115] It is this text to which I refer in this thesis.



Pablo Picasso, *Ma Jolie*—Woman with a Guitar, 1911–12
Picasso is perhaps one of the most famous purveyors of multifaceted dimensions: once referred to derogatorily as "cubism." His use of cubist chiaroscuro is clearly evident in this 'destruction-construction' painting.

Cubist Irony

All that I have heretofore discussed concerning Lagerkvist's theories of language and style, and concerning his proper "economizing of the reader's energy"—as well as the rejuvenating effect of his architectonic ideas—is applicable to these works of his later years. The basic building blocks; the contrasts and allusions; the points and counterpoints; and all of the elementary precepts of

cubism that I have labored to illustrate by the various analogies and examples; should now be recognizable to the eye that has been fine-tuned to perceive them. I hope that I have been successful in orientating the reader to such a task. As a fully detailed and documented account of Lagerkvist's cubist technique, covering all of its many facets, would be beyond the scope of this work; I also hope that if I now but point out some of the more important directions, and explain some of the new signs to be expected (along the way) in these more recent works, the reader will be able to finish the journey alone.

In ***Barabbas*** and in the "Crucifixion Trilogy" of ***Pilgrimen***, we find that Stendhal's mirror has undergone an almost total destruction and dissociation—that the views of reality have now become almost infinite—and that out of this 'chaos', Lagerkvist—with his technique of total perspective in the simultaneity of the fourth dimension—has constructed for the reader a flawless unified structure. This effectiveness, it would appear, is accomplished to a large degree through Lagerkvist's perfection of what I have chosen to call "cubist irony."

Lagerkvist, by this time, has abandoned his outwardly unsuccessful attempt at 'economizing' by means of a more phonetic spelling, and has also reduced the irregularities (except in some cases of direct dialogue) in rikssvenska (standard Swedish). He has, nevertheless, successfully integrated the construction of the contradictory or contrasting perspectives into a refined pattern that no longer contains any undue protrusions to disturb the reader's aesthetic sensibilities. This new precision of expression is the result, then, as I shall endeavor to show, of the more subtle ambiguities of cubist irony.

One of the ingredients of this complex process has been pointed out by Swanson and designated as "lyrical suggestion":

> Lagerkvist prefers lyrical suggestion to flat statement. His death-scene prose is characterized by *som om* and semblance rather than by *det finns* and factual relation. . . . The 'as if' in Lagerkvist's cycle reflects the mystery of life. The reader is free to accept or reject the appearance of things. Lagerkvist presents the appearance and leaves it to the reader to look behind the appearance.[116]

[116] Swanson, "Evil and Love in Lagerkvist's Crucifixion cycle," p. 304, n.5.

This "som om" (which I have already referred to above) is only one item in the cubist vocabulary of Lagerkvist. A vocabulary that he uses with cubist irony to create a *Verfremdungseffekt* similar to that in Fowles' novel, ***The French Lieutenant's Woman.*** That is, the avoidance of straight 'factual' description sets the reader at a 'distance' and, thus, permits him to view the circumstances with an objective mind. Lagerkvist uses some of these words again and again.[117]

Although the list of words presented here are far from complete, it should give an idea as to the 'signs' to look out for. In addition to individual words, there are several phrases that Lagerkvist uses repeatedly in an ironic sense. One of the most common to be found is: "i själva verket" (as a matter of fact, in reality, actually).

It is not difficult to find examples of these words and ironic phrases, the difficulty is in choosing those for which there is room. In ***Pilgrim på havet,*** for instance, I have counted at a glance more than seven instances of "i själva verket." The pattern is common to all of Lagerkvist's later works.

It is important, before examples are brought up, to make clear the different narrative viewpoints employed by Lagerkvist in the construction of the works in question. There are at least four discrete narrators involved:

1. A 'straight' narrator who simply tells the story in the third person.
2. A narrator who speaks (in the third person) as though he were in the mind of the character.

[117]

ana	= have a presentiment, surmise, suspect, think, imagine
antagligen	= presumably, probably, very (most) likely, in all probability.
förefalla	= seem to, appear to.
kanske	= perhaps, maybe, probably.
kunde	= could, might, was/were able to.
känna	= be conscious of, know, feel.
kännas	= (det kändes) it felt.
lika	= resemble, look like, have a semblance of.
liksom	= as if, as it were, so to say.
lär	= said to, reported to, supposed to.
märkas	= (det märktes) it was observed, noticed.
som, som om	= as if/though.
tyckas	= (det tycktes) it seemed, would seem.
visst	= certainly, probably, no doubt.
väl	= surely, suppose, quite.

3. A 'dramatic' narrator (in the first person) who speaks when an individual character is thinking or speaking.
4. A kind of omniscient, objective narrator who employs the interjection of ironically charge words and phrases.[118]

I think that there should be no difficulty in distinguishing between the first three narrators, but Lagerkvist's unannounced continuous shifting between these and the fourth 'ironic' narrator may cause some problems. Such difficulty, however, can be easily avoided when the reader is made aware of the irony.[119] A study of the words and phrases used to develop such irony is consequently apropos.

Keeping this in mind, we can now return to an example of "i själva verket." Such an example is to be found on page 18 of ***Mariamne:***

> Men det påstods att där fördes ett liderligt liv med hedniska kvinnor av okända stammer och okända förnedrande laster. Och att han [Herodes] själv var den lastbaraste av dem alla. . . . I själva verket kände man inte mycket till detta. Sanningen var att han tillsammans med kvinnor var grym och våldsam, utan tanke på någon annan än sig själv.[120]

A careful reading of such passages will undoubted reveal the shift in viewpoint between the first part that is 'straight' narration, and the ironic perspective of "as a matter of fact, it was in truth so-and-so."

An excellent example of Lagerkvist's cubist vocabulary (if I may digress for a moment) is found in the description of the young girl on page 58 of ***Ahasverus död*** (the underlined emphases are mine):

> Flickan själv <u>verkade</u> lugn och sansad och <u>tycktes</u> ha litet svårt att förstå hennes upprördhet och <u>kände</u> sig <u>visst</u> förlågen

[118] For a detailed study of different kinds of narrators, see, Wayne Booth, ***The Rhetoric of Fiction*** (Chicago, 1961), pp. 149–165; also, Patrick Cruttwell, "Makers and Persons," ***Hudson Review,*** 12 (Winter, 1950–60), pp. 487–507.

[119] Cf. Booth's ideas concerning irony, pp. 311–336.

[120] "But it was said that a dissolute life was led there with heathen women of unknown race and unknown, depraved vices. And that he [Herod] himself was the most depraved of them all. . . . As a matter of fact, no one really knew much about this. The truth was that he was cruel and violent with women, without consideration for anybody but himself."

för att hon inte släppte hennes hand. I hennes fula, rätt grova drag märktes inte någon särskild hänförelse, hon föreföll bara naturlight lycklig över uppgrottet, över att pilgrimsfärden nu skulle fortsättas, men i hennes ögon fanns det kanske en glöd som inte kunde uppfattas på så långt håll.[121]

The effect of such words is to create, simultaneously, an objective distance to what is happening, and, enough ambiguity to allow the reader's own imagination to function.

A rather good example clearly illustrating what is meant by "cubist irony" can be found on page 91 of ***Barabbas:***

Men vad de inte visste, vad ingen alls visste, var att denne Eliahu, som nu stod fram så tydlig och levande för deras minne, var Barabbas' far. Det visste ingen, kunde ingen veta.[122]

What a casual reader might very well overlook is that such information could not possibly be known to the 'straight' narrator either. Such statements are revelations of the omniscient narrator. It, like the shattering of the time-continuum in Fowles' book, is used in an ironic sense to jerk the reader abruptly into a new perspective. Lagerkvist employs this "V-Effect" again and again, continually shifting from one perspective to another. As, for example, on page 218 of Det heliga landet: "Giovanni föreföll likgiltig för det som de pratade om, men om han verkligen var det kunde man ju inte veta."[123] Once more, the 'straight' narrator is suddenly dropped and the ironic narrator has taken over. This can also be shown regarding the passage from ***Barabbas*** above. If we back up a few lines, it is clear that the 'straight' narrator had been speaking:

[121] "The girl herself seemed calm and composed, and seemed to understand her agitation with difficulty, and she felt embarrassed certainly because she did not release her hand. In her ugly, quite coarse features, there was no particular elation observed, she appeared just naturally happy about leaving, about continuing the pilgrimage; but in her eyes there was perhaps a glow that could not be discerned from such a distance."

[122] "But what they did not know, what absolutely no one knew, was that this Eliahu, who now stood out so clear and alive in their memory, was Barabbas' father. That no one knew, on one could know."

[123] "Giovanni appeared indifferent to what they were talking about, but if he really was, that of course no one could know."

> Det var efter detta som Barabbas had blivit deras anförare. Förut hade det inte varit något särskilt med honom. Han hade inte blivit någon riktig man förrän han fått det där hugget.[124]

Finally, Lagerkvist draws on all these elements of irony and intentional ambiguity to construct, on a larger scale, a triangular arrangement of points dealing directly with the final total perspective of his work. I call the three points of this triangle:

1. "Antydning" (intimation, suggestion, hint).
2. "Bortförklaring" (explaining away).
3. "Ironisk bekräftelse" (ironic ratification-confirmation).

One should keep in mind that this triangular structure is an equilateral triangle: no individual point (or angle of perspective) is greater or lesser than any other. The result of this, of course, is again—ambiguity. Such an ironic and ambiguous triangulation can be found, for example, in the episode in which Barabbas thinks he sees a halo around Jesus (p. 11):

> Han tyckte han aldrig hade sett en sådan människa förr. Fast det berodde väl på att han kom direkt inifrån fängelsehålan och att ögonen ännu inte var vana vid juset. Därför såg han honom först liksom omgiven av ett bländande sken.[125]

Both the "antydning" and the "bortförklaring" contain, in themselves, such ambiguous words as "tyckte" and "berodde väl" and "liksom;" this touch of irony is but the application of Lagerkvist's V-Effect; it is the third point, found on pages 101–102, that is meant to be understood as completely ironic:

> Var gång Sahak bad honom om det berättade han om sin underbara syn den där gången för länge sen och tyckte själv

[124]"It was after this that Barabbas had become their leader. Before there had been nothing special about him. He had not become a real man until he had got that stab wound."
[125] "He didn't think he had ever seen such a person before. Although that was no doubt because he came straight from the dungeon and his eyes still were not used to the light. That is why he saw him at first as if surrounded by a blinding light."

att han såg den alldeles tydligt framför sig.[126]

This kind of double cubist irony leaves us with the enigmatic question: Did he, "i själva verket," see a mysterious light surround Jesus—or did he not? That enigma remains for the reader to solve in his own mind. Another similar scene (also dealing with light) is described at the of ***Ahasverus död*** (page 96):

> — Vad är det för ett ljus, för ett härligt ljus jag ser? viskade han svagt, så svagt att den lille lekbrodern knappt kunde uppfatta det. Men han förstod vad det måste vara . . . . För solen hade brutit igenom molnen och lyste nu direkt in i rummet . . . . Han böjde sig ner och förklarade för honom.[127]

The first suggestion of something mysterious is again explained away by the natural phenomenon of the sun breaking through the clouds. Or is it? What meaning are we to extract from the ironic statement that follows:

> För han ville inte säga annat än sanningen, bara så som det var. Och den döende föreföll nöjd med denna enkla förklaring på något som hade fyllt honom med stor förundran. Han slöt sina ögon men kände ändå ljuset över dem, att det fanns där, att det fanns.
>
> Och med detta för jorden helt vanliga ljus över sig skildes han hädan.[128]

What <u>is</u> the truth? Does the last sentence really say what it says? There is, "i själva verket," no definite answer that can be extracted from what Spector

[126] "Whenever Sahak asked him, he told him of his wonderful vision, that time so long ago, and he though himself that he saw it quite clearly before him." (p. 102).
[127] "'What is that light—that wonderful light I see?' he whispered faintly, so faintly that the little laybrother could hardly hear him. But he understood what it must be . . . . For the sun had broken through the clouds and was shining directly into the room . . . . He bent down and explained to him."
[128] "For he did not want to say anthing but the truth, just as it was. And the dying man appeared satisfied with this simple explanation of something that had filled him with great wonder. He closed his eyes, but still felt the light upon them, that it was there, that it was. And, with this light—a light so completely ordinary to the earth–upon him, his spirit departed."

calls: “a form intended to convey that very inconclusiveness, tentativeness, and uncertainty fundamental to Lagerkvist’s point of view.”[129]

It is in failing to recognize the inconclusiveness of Lagerkvist’s works that many of his critics have gone astray. They have unfortunately concentrated on the individual aspects of his construction and not on the final monumental structure. The result of ignoring, or not fully understanding, the function of Lagerkvist’s cubist irony can be, as we have already seen, a fruitless academic squabble over which statement by Lagerkvist proves what. The only false perspective, states Oretega, is the one that pretends to be unique.

[129] Spector, Scandinavian Studies, p. 308.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

When Pär Fabian Lagerkvist returned from Paris, he copied down his impressions concerning the possibility of a cubist rejuvenation of literature in the booklet, ***Ordkonst och bildkonst.*** We have seen, by looking at some of his first works, that he did not exactly follow his own advice in these earlier years. Instead, he turned out several works that were quite evidently under the expressionist influence of August Strindberg. (It should be noted, however, that Lagerkvist did state that expressionism had been a stepping stone to cubism among the painters in France.)

I have worked to develop two major arguments in the body of this study. First, through the different analogies and examples, I have sought to illustrate not only the similarities between literary and pictorial cubism, but also how they have developed, what they mean, and how they now function. Because a comprehension of the principles of cubism is vital to the understanding of Lagerkvist's theories, I have endeavored to explain as many different aspects of cubism as possible. As with the "objective correlative" of Eliot, we must not lose sight of the fact that, as reader and critic, our major concern is not with "des petits cubes," but with whether the 'whole of feeling'—that 'simultaneity of perspective' has or has not been achieved. Secondly, I have undertaken to 'blueprint' and explain Lagerkvist's development of literary cubism—both in theory and in practice. I thus consider it to be most important to investigate at some length, both his use of cubist chiaroscuro in such works as ***Bödeln*** and Dvärgen and the perfection of his technique in re-integrating the infinite viewpoints of reality through the use of ambiguity and cubist irony in his later works. By reducing Stendhal's mirror to ever-smaller pieces, he was able, in my opinion, to bring the innumerable diametrically opposed segments of reality closer and closer together in the mind of the reader—until they could be integrated into a monumental work of art.

In concentrating on Lagerkvist's style and technique, I have necessarily avoided becoming too deeply involved in the many philosophical and theological implications of his works. When Lagerkvist, upon receiving the Nobel Prize, was asked to say something—he reportedly replied that all he had to say was to be found in his works. I shall likewise refer the reader to them, but I hope that I have provided in this explication some information as to how to 'listen'.

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