

*Luften så klar. Nordeuropeiska konstnärer och författare i Rom 1780–1950*, eds. Roland Lysell, Mattias Pirholt and Anna Smedberg Bondesson. Makadam förlag. Göteborg och Stockholm 2020.

*Luften så klar. Nordeuropeiska konstnärer och författare i Rom 1780–1950*, edited by Roland Lysell, Mattias Pirholt and Anna Smedberg Bondesson, is an anthology of fifteen chapters developed following the symposium ‘Nordeuropeiska konstnärer och författare i Rom 1780–1950’ organised by Nordisk Selskab for Romantikstudier at Svenska Institutet i Rom and Det Danske Institut i Rom on 6–7 April 2017. The aim of the volume, as set out in the introduction, is to contribute to the otherwise already well-explored theme of the ‘dream of Italy’. This established phrase is borrowed from the title of the Swedish scholar Bengt Lewan’s doctoral thesis, *Drömmen om Italien. Italien i Svenska resenärers skildringar från Atterbom til Snoilsky* (1966), but it has generally been used in a wide range of publications and TV shows to refer to Italy as a popular destination for its nature and culture. Focusing on the Northern European context from the late eighteenth century onward, the contributions in *Luften så klar* wish to ‘breda perspektive dels mot andra nordeuropeiska kulturer än våra egna svenska och danska, dels mot andra konstarter än litteraturen, i syfte att delta i en mer internationellt och interartiellt nyanserad estetisk debatt’ (10).

The description of the overall aim of the collection is immediately followed by references to pivotal European figures in the context of representations of Italy, namely Goethe with his *Italienische Reise* (1816–1817), Madame de Staël with her *Corinne, ou l’Italie* (1807) and Jacob Burckhardt with his *Der Cicerone. Eine Anleitung zum Genuss der Kunstwerke Italiens* (1855). The importance of these writers and of other British, French and German writers and artists such as Keats, Shelley, Constable, Addison, Sterne and Stendhal, in shaping representations of Italy within the Northern European context is acknowledged in several chapters. This is done either through an examination of the impact Italy and Rome had on their work and life (as in Mattias Pirholt’s chapter ‘Allt gamla bekanta’. Reflektioner över Goethes italienska resa och konstverkets idé’ and Roland Lysell’s chapter ‘Keats sista dagar och Shelley som dramatiker’) or through references to how these figures and their works influenced in different ways how Italy has been represented by Danish and Swedish artists,

writers and/or travellers. In her chapter ‘Drömmen om Italien. Rom som mentalt sted – et rejsebrev’, Lotte Thrane discusses, for instance, how the dream of Italy formed and followed certain patterns. Focusing in particular on Danish artists, she reflects on how Goethe’s first stanza from ‘Mignon’, which begins with the iconic question ‘Kennst du das Land? wo die Citronen blühn’, expresses ‘en kollektiv forventning om hvad Italien betyder eller er’ (109–110). Similarly, in her chapter ‘Selma Lagerlöf och Rom. Resan och romanen’, Anna Smedberg Bondesson considers the role Jacob Burckhardt played in influencing the understanding and fascination for Renaissance art and culture in Europe, also among Danish and Swedish writers and artists (225–226). These references show the anthology’s somewhat implicit focus on the mobility of culture and on the dialectic nature of representations of Italy as individual and collective. While each representation is unique and individual, it is never created in a vacuum but informed by previous representations and collective conceptual maps (Stuart Hall: *Representation*, 17, 19).

The tension between individuality and tradition is, in fact, what I see as one of the two key contributions *Luften så klar* makes as a volume. Using Thrane’s words in her chapter ‘Drömmen om Italien’, all the texts, artworks and life stories included in this collection, ‘skriver sig ind i en tradition, og de er samtidig med til at utforme og ændre traditionen’ (105). As I will come back to when dealing with the individual chapters, they are all part of a collective tradition by which they are influenced – even when they actively try to reject it – but which they also continuously develop and enrich. Besides being an important addition to the field of representations of Italy in Northern European art and literature, this anthology also distinguishes itself for its distinctive interart approach which aims, as defined in *Interart Poetics*, to link ‘the separate but interrelated developments in criticism, aesthetic thinking and artistic practice’ (Lagerroth et al., 7). *Luften så klar* demonstrates through its case studies how ‘the interart exchange runs in all directions’ (Lagerroth et al., 7). This is not only because it combines chapters with case studies that focus on different forms of art (such as architecture, painting, sculpture, literature and music) but also because several chapters present different theoretical perspectives on interart relations drawing attention to (a) the role of Rome as a place of cultural exchanges where different artists, intellectuals

and travellers met and influenced each other, and (b) the impossibility of compartmentalising disciplines and arts when dealing with representations of Italy as a whole.

While as a conceptual and geographical region Northern Europe in this book appears to encompass several nations, there is no explicit tackling of how 'Northern' is defined by the anthology as a whole, and the great majority of the case studies are indeed linked to Denmark and Sweden. The context of the volume – namely the seminar organised at the Danish and Swedish Institutes in Rome – may be part of the reason why other Nordic countries are only marginally represented in this volume. Moreover, as the two monarchies in the Nordic region throughout the nineteenth century, Denmark and Sweden were indeed more actively engaged in the Grand Tour tradition originating in Britain, France and Germany. However, while Norway, Finland and Iceland were not independent national entities for the majority of the time-period covered by *Luften så klar* (1780–1950), several artists, writers and travellers from these latter countries played a much more important role within the field of Northern European representations of Italy than this volume shows, and it is difficult not to notice their absence despite the fact that this anthology does not claim to be in any way comprehensive. It should also be noted that, while the timespan of the volume is 1780–1950, most chapters, which are arranged chronologically, focus on the eighteenth century (the first four chapters) and nineteenth century (the following nine chapters), while only the last two chapters project us into the first half of the twentieth century.

As indicated by the subtitle of the volume, the dream of Italy in this anthology is mostly geographically and conceptually represented by Rome and the influence that the layered history of this physical and imagined city has had on the work and life of the authors and artists at the centre of the individual case studies. In this respect, *Luften så klar* thus complements earlier studies such as Anne Eriksen's *Minner fra Den Evige Stad* (1997), which offers a sociological analysis of Scandinavian travellers' life in Rome in the nineteenth century, and Helge Dahl's *Bjørnson i Roma* (2008), which considers the impact of the city on a single Scandinavian author. As the editors of the volume acknowledge in their introduction, while an anthology of this kind cannot and does not have the aim of being comprehensive, it can still offer a number of dif-

ferent valuable perspectives that can renew and expand our knowledge of the role that Rome played in Northern European culture: 'De olika perspektiv vi återger visa hur Rom för somliga är de antika ruinernas Rom, för andra den italiensk renässans- och barockkonstens Rom. Somliga resenärer fäster sig vid det katolska Rom; sentida besökare också vid 1900-talets monumental Rom' (15).

Throughout the volume we do indeed meet all these 'Romes': the classical Rome with its ruins, the Renaissance and Baroque Rome, the Catholic Rome and, I would add, the Scandinavian or Foreign Rome where communities of travellers from different regions and nations gathered to find a 'familiar' environment abroad. The chapters also often explore the connections between the different historical periods and cultural traditions that these 'Romes' represent, reflecting on why they have attracted travellers and how they have garnered the city the status of cradle of Western civilisation particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The powerful lure of Rome as an important and popular destination is also exemplified in this collection by the inclusion of chapters about well-known artists and authors (such as Hans Christian Andersen, August Strindberg and Selma Lagerlöf) alongside case studies about figures lesser known today (such as the Swedish architect and artist Gustaf af Sillén and Swedish governess and language teacher Amalia Lundberg).

The first four chapters in the book deal primarily with Rome's status as the centre of classical heritage and of old and new artistic traditions in the seventeenth century. While these chapters mostly focus on the visual arts, they do so through the use of written sources (often in the form of letters and travel diaries) in order to examine the effects the meeting with Rome's artistic heritage had on the artist or traveller in question. Thanks to the variety of sources on which they draw, the case studies in this section also make a clear statement about the book's interart approach mentioned above.

Pirholt's chapter "Allt gamla bekanta", which opens the collection, is a clear example of this. It is not Goethe's impact as the famous author of *Italienische Reise* that is explored here. Rather, the chapter explores how Goethe's encounter with art in Rome was mediated by the dialectic relationship between original and reproduction (in the form of drawings, copperplates and lithographs). While Goethe never really pursued an artistic career, art occupied a special place in his thinking, as

also demonstrated by the many sketches he made during his Italian journey. Through concrete examples of Goethe's meeting with works by great masters such as Rafael and da Vinci, Pirholt shows how, for Goethe, in some cases the original gives new meaning to the reproduction and in others it can be understood better thanks to the reproduction (25).

Torsten Gunnarsson's 'Oljestudier i det fria. Rom och Italien som katalysatorer för utvecklingen av nordiskt friluftsmåleri' explores how the tradition of open-air painting, which appears to have originated in Rome in the seventeenth century, may have indirectly contributed to the development of outdoor painting in the Nordic countries. While the connection between the two traditions does not seem to be a straightforward one, some of the Italian works of painters such as Eckersberg and Dahl are representative of shifting approaches to the representation of landscapes and new definitions of what art actually consists of: 'Konstnärerna menade att frågan inte längre borde vara om en målning var tekniskt färdig utan om den var konstnärligt avslutad' (45).

The role that classical heritage played in contemporary representations of Rome plays an important role in Mikael Ahlund's chapter 'Det forna och närvarande Rom. Louis Masreliez och Carl August Ehrensvärd i Italien'. Ahlund looks not only at the way these two Swedish travellers and artists – both classicists – influenced each other's views on the city; he also reflects on how, despite their somewhat different preferences and opinions on the significance of different artistic periods, both Masreliez and Ehrensvärd saw and represented the traces of Rome's past in an original and constructive light, recognising them all as part of their contemporary, 'living' Rome.

The fourth chapter by Carina Burman, 'Vår motvillige guide. Gustaf Sillén visar oss Rom i sin resedagbok', explores how the architect Gustaf Sillén represented his meeting with Rome in his travel diary in a polished and organised manner through a fairly cohesive narrative. Burman not only points out the importance that the journey had on Sillén as a classicist and on his later work as an architect; she also reflects on the hybrid genre of his travel diary, which, she argues, has a lot in common with the guidebook and thus, like many diaries and travel accounts of the time, blurs the boundaries between the private and public spheres.

The following nine chapters, which focus on the nineteenth century, further explore this tension be-

tween private experiences and the construction of a public persona and voice. Roland Lysell's chapter combines an account of the personal tragedies that characterised Keats and Shelley's encounter with the city with an analysis of the role Rome played in shaping and consolidating the fame of these British authors. Rome becomes not only an integral part of their personal life narrative but also, particularly in Shelley's case, the source of original literary motifs, such as the story and portrayal of Beatrice Cenci (1577–1599), which inspired the drama *The Cenci* (1819).

The above-mentioned chapter by Thrane follows. As already touched upon, this contribution emphasises Rome's ability to 'bringe alle de tidligere epoker i spill, thus attracting 'kunstnere og videnskabsfolk og filosoffer og studerende derned for at blive kulturelt oplyste og dannede' (105). Drawing on a large range of references but with the purpose of casting light particularly on key Danish figures such as H.C. Andersen, Georg Brandes and C. St. A. Bille, she addresses some of the patterns that seem to characterise the construction of the physical and symbolic space called Rome: the description of the first meeting with the city, and the process 'fra forventning over skuffelse til forståelse' that seem to characterise several travel accounts (115).

As Jacob Bøggild argues in his chapter 'Den evige stad. H.C. Andersens imaginære og allegoriske Rom', H.C. Andersen, like other travellers, met Rome with these patterns in mind. Bøggild states, in fact, that '[i]deen om Rom har været yderst nærværende for ham endnu inden han har sat sine ben i byen' (119), thus referring to the same tension between 'den konkrete by' and 'den metale idé' that Thrane discusses in her chapter. Through an analysis of Andersen's novel *Improvisatoren* and his tale *Psyken* Bøggild reflects on the complexity of this Danish author's literary Rome where pagan and catholic references are intertwined (137).

Self-construction is the key topic of both Héléne Ohlsson's chapter 'Världar av poesi. Skådespelerskan Emilie Höggqvist i Rom 1842–43' and Carina Lindström's chapter "'Mitt hjerta slår af rastlös längtan att komma til kristenhetens hufvudstad! Amalia Lundeberg i Rom". Ohlsson examines the nowadays little-explored figure of the Swedish actress Emilie Höggqvist through her own writings during her visit to Rome. Ohlsson convincingly argues that Höggqvist uses the journey and her accounts to renew her image as a public persona

through a process that she calls 'själviscenesättning' (145). Höggqvist attempted, on the one hand, to 'hålla ryktet om sig som ett eftersökt erotiskt object levande' by portraying herself surrounded by admirers as the centre of the attention of the Scandinavian and international communities in the city; on the other hand, she actively tried to change her public persona to that of 'en känslig och respekabel kvinna' by showing her engagement in cultural events and philanthropic initiatives (162). In her chapter, Lindström analyses the published travel account of an even lesser-known figure, the governess and language teacher Amalia Lundeberg. Although her initial meeting with the city is informed by several famous international works on Italy such as *Italienische Reise*, *Corinne* and *Murray's Handbooks*, Lundeberg combines her accounts of popular tourist sites with her marked interest for Catholicism, an interest that sets her apart from other travellers and, in her writings, shows her in conflict with her Swedish guide, the Swedish artist and art professor Gustaf Wilhelm Palm, who is otherwise interested in Roman art and architecture. Lundeberg's writings as explored by Lindström offer an alternative perspective and highlight the stratified symbolism encapsulated by Rome seen as both the centre of classical antiquity and Renaissance art and as the centre of Catholicism.

The different reasons that draw travellers to Rome due to the city's layered history are at the core of the three chapters on Strindberg, which form a little compendium of their own: Astrid Regnell's 'Rom som heligt rum. Uppbrott från fader och förfäder i August Strindbergs författarskap'; Karin Aspenberg's 'Ruiner, revolt, dödsfruktan. Strindberg och det ambivalenta i "Rom på en dag"'; and, finally, Elena Balzamo's '"Ingenting är heligt för en sappör". Strindberg och den eviga staden'. While they focus on different texts, all three chapters stress Strindberg's ambivalent relationship with Rome in the course of his authorship. Rome is the source of inspiration for artists, a place where characters can find their individuality (Regnell, 194). Yet, Rome and its cult are progressively represented as an illusion in Strindberg's writings. The city not only attracts travellers; it also repels them, as it becomes, in the course of the nineteenth century, an obligatory tourist destination that commercialises its antique heritage and where ruins are historical objects cut off from their original context (Aspenberg, 200, 205). Through what she calls 'ett citatkollage', Balzamo yet again puts the accent on

the dialectic nature of representations of Rome as a physical and as an imaginary space. She also points out, however, how, while claiming that Paris has taken Rome's place as the new European cultural centre, Strindberg still recognises Rome as the centre of Catholicism (Balzamo, 218–220).

The religious dimension that emerges particularly in Lindström's and Balzamo's chapters is also part of the chapter by Anna Smedberg Bondesson on 'Selma Lagerlöf och Rom. Resan och romanen', which concludes the volume's section on the nineteenth century. Smedberg Bondesson traces and examines the complex context behind Lagerlöf's novel *Antikrists mirakler*. Besides engaging with the earlier international and Swedish tradition of representations of Italy by other female authors (Madame de Staël and Frederika Bremer to mention two central examples), Smedberg Bondesson's chapter discusses the role that art – particularly religious art – plays in the text. By doing so and employing the concepts of ekphrasis and *transposition d'art*, Smedberg Bondesson also offers an important contribution to the interart approach of the volume.

The last two chapters in the collection take us to the twentieth century. While they both deal with original and previously little-explored case studies, they only partially expand the vision of Rome constructed through the volume up to this point. In his chapter 'Hendrik Christian Andersens liv och arbete i Rom', Mikael Andersson presents the case study of the Norwegian-American architect Henderik Christian Andersen and his architectural and intellectual plans for a World Centre of Communication during the first half of the twentieth century. While the project, which had the aim of creating a physical meeting place for athletes, artists and scientists, never came to be, its ambition is a clear example of how figures like Andersen tried to preserve and yet develop in new directions the ideal of internationalism that had characterised Rome for centuries (253). It is also in Andersen's contribution that we see a glimpse of a 'modern' Rome that, within the Italian context, attempts to take on the role of capital of a relatively new nation, unified only in 1861 (251). While the last chapter deals with the most recent primary text, the song 'Rönnerdahl målar' or 'Rönnerdahl polka' from 1942 by the Swedish artist, musician and composer Evert Taube, the content of the chapter itself does not point to the representation of a 'modern' Rome. Anna Smedberg Bondesson examines, in fact, how Taube's piece creates 'ett sceniskt rum', one that em-



phases the role of Rome as a meeting place for the arts. This chapter is, in my opinion, a final nod to the central topic of the book as a whole – the dream of Rome and Italy in traditional terms (256). Here we find Rome as the source of artistic inspiration where all the arts (and artists) meet and come into dialogue surrounded by a classically inspired idyllic nature, ‘myrtenlundan’.

The title of the book, *Luften så klar* is a quote from Per Daniel Amadeus Atterbom's *Minnen från Tyskland och Italien II*, a collection of Atterbom's writings about his journey to Germany and Italy between 1817 and 1819, which was first published posthumously in 1859. The expression ‘luften så klar’ is in the first sentence of Atterbom's comments on Rome's nature (Strödda dagboksanteckningar): ‘Äfven å den ödsligaste och osundaste sidan af Campagna di Roma, den åt Ostia till, der klimatet, fördärvat av täta Tiber-översvämningar och försumpningar, bildar en *aria cattivissima*, är luften så klar, att den i de skarpaste drag visar de fjärmaste föremål’ (9). On the whole, the anthology shows us with many of its original case studies how, like Atterbom in the early nineteenth century, Northern European artists and travellers were attracted by Italy's ‘clear air’. It also illustrates how each traveller attempted to deal with what Bengt Lewan calls ‘Italia-skildrarnas eviga dilemma, att så mycket redan var “tänkt och skrivet” about Italy, already in the eighteenth century (Bengt Lewan: *Drömmen om Italien*, 228–229). Yet, while, at the end of the same passage from which the title quote is taken, Atterbom suggests that ‘*Rom och dens omgivning* äro mera ämne för *historiemålare*’, with its range of case studies across arts and disciplines *Luften så klar* clearly demonstrates that this is not the case (P. D. A. Atterbom: *Minnen från Tyskland och Italien II*, 507).

*Elettra Carbone*

Magnus Nilsson, *Kampdiktare i folkhemmet. Arbetarpoeten Stig Sjödin*. Verbal förlag. Stockholm 2021.

Stig Sjödin fick sitt genombrott som poet med diktsamlingen *Sotfragment* (1949) och kom i och med det att räknas till den så kallade fyrtiotalismen. Samtidigt som han publicerade sina diktsamlingar på Bonniers förlag blev han också engagerad i arbetarrörelsens press. Magnus Nilsson vill i sin bok

*Kampdiktare i folkhemmet. Arbetarpoeten Stig Sjödin* studera hur poeten hanterade de två offentligheterna och vilka konsekvenser det fick.

Boken är indelad i fem kapitel där det första (15–42) behandlar hur Sjödin är ”Bonnierförfattare” men också ”arbetarrörelsepoet”. Han följer Sjödins rörelser mellan den litterära offentligheten med Bonniers förlag som centrum och rollen som poet inom arbetarrörelsen. Nilsson ser ett växelbruk där Sjödin använder sig av båda offentligheterna men där de även sammansmälter mot slutet av 1960-talet. Det andra kapitlet (43–70) handlar om Sjödin som ”arbetarpoet” och ”arbetarrörelsepoet”. I det tredje kapitlet (71–105) kommer Nilsson in på Sjödins poetiska texter och studerar hur ”arbetets estetik” gestaltas i dem. Det fjärde kapitlet (107–143) analyserar Sjödins verk som kampdiktning i folkhemmet. I det avslutande femte kapitlet, ”Arvet efter Sjödin i dagens arbetarlyrik”, (145–173) använder Nilsson två nutida poeter – Jenny Wrangborg och Johan Jönson – för att diskutera arvet efter Sjödin.

Det finns inte mycket forskning om Sjödins författarskap. Istället får Nilsson använda det lilla som finns i forskningen om tidsperioden och en rad artiklar och recensionier. Det är en lucka som han vill fylla med sin bok.

Sjödin hade själv betydande erfarenhet av olika arbeten, framför allt vid järnverket i Sandviken. Även om han själv inte ville inskränka sin lyrik till att enbart beröra arbete och klass, visar Nilsson att en stor del av författarskapet rör sig runt en marxistiskt inspirerad kampdiktning. Industrierbete och kroppsarbetare står i centrum i stora delar av författarskapet.

En viktig poäng som Nilsson understryker är att publiceringar i facklig press är förbisedda. Alldeles för många stirrar sig blinda på de stora förlagen och tidskrifterna. Pionjären när det gäller studier av litteraturen i fackförbundspressen är Kristina Wallander med sina två böcker *Metallarbetaren och litteraturen. Det litterära stoffet i en svensk fackförbundstidning 1890–1978* (1982) och *Med arbetarna som läsekrets. Fackförbundspressens kulturstoff från 1887 till våra dagar* (1992). Nilsson har själv gått igenom delar av den fackliga pressen på jakt efter texter av Sjödin och redovisar sina fynd i en förteckning.

Det finns goda grunder för att beteckna de tidningar och de förlag som tillhörde arbetarrörelsens partier, LO-förbunden och Kooperationen som en egen offentlighet. Nilsson kallar det, med sin faiblesse för sammansatta ord, genomgående för offentlighetssammanhang. Jag växte själv upp i ett