

Fascism through the Eyes of Swedish Neutrality and Norwegian Occupation:
Stig Dagerman's *Ormen* (1945) and Sigurd Hoel's *Møte ved milepelen* (1947)

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I. Introduction

Nazi Germany invaded neutral Norway on 9 April 1940. By June of that same year, the Norwegian army had surrendered, and the formal occupation of Norway began. This occupation would last until German capitulation in May of 1945, casting a dark shadow over this period of Norwegian history. Meanwhile, just across the border, Sweden avoided German occupation through a controversial and negotiated neutrality, continuing to trade with both the Germans and the Allied Powers and doing all that they could to not aggravate either sides. Despite these vastly different experiences, we see similar literary trends in both countries: both have heroic, and often patriotic, works (often by more conservative writers), while other writers shifted towards other theories, such as syndicalism and psychoanalysis, to understand these different wartime experiences and the postwar world. Two such authors were 22-year-old Stig Dagerman who published his first novel, *Ormen* (Eng. tr. *The Snake* [1995]), in 1945 in Sweden, and the literary critic and author, Sigurd Hoel, who published his psychoanalytical novel on the Norwegian occupation and fascism, *Møte ved milepelen* (Eng. tr. *Meeting at the Milestone* [2002]), in 1947 in Norway. These two works shift their gaze from home, on Swedish neutrality and Norwegian collaboration, to the larger political climate of Europe during the Second World War as they develop their own understandings of fascism and warn against the coming of future authoritarian states.

These two novels written in the immediate postwar period try to make sense of the war and the rise of fascism by delving into psychological explorations of the roots of fascism and authoritarianism while simultaneously depicting the wartime experiences of Sweden and Norway. In Sigurd Hoel's novel, we see brutality and violence, not perpetrated solely by German Nazis, but by Norwegian collaborators —people who the narrator once knew, but somewhere and somehow took a wrong turn which led them to turn on their own country and their own neighbors. It is this wrong turn that the narrator seeks to understand while slowly being taken over, or occupied, by his own guilt—a guilt that, in the end, we learn has been the driving force for this entire investigation into the source of fascism. Stig Dagerman's novel, set in a military camp in neutral Sweden, is driven by anxiety and fear that suffocates the many characters, while all but a few seek to escape this very

anxiety that slowly eats away at their being. It is this escape and a false sense of security in the submission to an authoritarian power (in the case of fascism) and to a democratic state (in the case of Swedish neutrality) that has led to the overwhelming feeling of anxiety experienced by the characters. Both novels depict the nature of fascism as repressive, but they also question what went wrong in their own countries—what led so many Norwegians to turn upon their neighbor and how so many Swedes looked on passively as the world around them erupted into chaos.

Not only do both novels investigate the psychology behind fascism, but both novels are set during the Second World War and examine the wartime policies of Norway and Sweden. I will argue in this thesis that the authors' exploration of the nature of fascism is based upon their critique of the policies of Norway and Sweden during the Second World War. I investigate how Reich's psychoanalytic theories on sexual repression and anarcho-syndicalist theories of the state develop in both novels in order to illustrate this point. Furthermore, I will argue that both authors saw literature as the solution to stopping future fascist states from developing, as seen in the figure of the writer in both novels and the importance given to the individual in the fight against fascism.

My thesis belongs to an ongoing trend in the study of the cultural memory of the Second World War in different media forms. Anthologies such as *Nordic War Stories: World War II as History, Fiction, Media and Memory*, published in February of 2021, epitomizes both an intellectual investigation into the cultural memory of the Second World War and a well-established fascination with this tumultuous period of history.¹ While many historical studies utilize government documents and non-fictional accounts of the war, such as the multi-volume *Norges krig, 1940-1945* (1948; *The War of Norway, 1940-1945*), studies about cultural memory, including this thesis, turn to non-traditional sources, including novels, films, and other media forms, to provide new interpretations of historical events.

¹ The anthology *Nordic Narratives of the Second World War: National Historiographies Revisited* is another important work within the genre of cultural memory of the Second World War in Scandinavia. While *Nordic War Stories* moves from traditional historical sources to examine different media forms, *Nordic Narratives* investigates the changing historiographies of the region, focusing upon more traditional historical sources.

With this thesis, I contribute to previous scholarship on the two authors—Sigurd Hoel and Stig Dagerman—but also to earlier work on fascism and the experiences of Sweden and Norway during the Second World War by demonstrating how both authors engage with fascism and the war-time policies of their two countries in similar ways. In doing so, I build upon the scholarship of the literary scholar Dean Krouk. Dean Krouk, who, in his chapter on Hoel in his book, *Fascism and Modernist Literature in Norway* (2017), argues that Hoel utilized psychoanalytical theories on mass psychology, patriarchy, and sexual repression to create some of Scandinavia’s most important reactions to Nazism. I will argue that the same applies to Stig Dagerman in this thesis. Krouk has made important additions to both the scholarship on Hoel’s anti-fascism but also Scandinavian scholarship on fascism more generally that I contribute to by arguing that Hoel’s own involvement with psychoanalysis serves as the basis for both his critique of fascism but also his critique of Norwegian collaboration.

My thesis also speaks to Stig Dagerman’s political engagements present within his novel *The Snake*. Dagerman’s anarcho-syndicalism and political interests have been previously explored in *Stig Dagerman och syndikalismen* (1974; Stig Dagerman and Syndicalism), a collection of essays on Dagerman’s political engagements, and Hans Sandberg’s *Den politiske Stig Dagerman: Tre studier* (1979; The Political Stig Dagerman: Three Studies).² However, I will analyze the novel in tandem with Sigurd Hoel’s psychoanalytical *Møte ved milepelen*, thus providing a unique analysis of both novels that differs significantly from prior scholarship on Dagerman’s *The Snake*. My approach to Stig Dagerman’s *The Snake* elaborates upon the work of Laurie Thompson, a British literary scholar and translator, who analyzes *The Snake* in his book *Stig Dagerman* (1983).³ He argues that Dagerman uses his own personal experiences in order to articulate his thoughts on modern Swedish society, while simultaneously Dagerman argues for “making a morally right decision in an

² It is important to note here that both works were published by Federativs förlag, an anarcho-syndicalist publisher based in Stockholm.

³ Thompson is responsible for the English translations of two of Dagerman’s novels, including *The Snake*, and a collection of Dagerman’s poems.

apparently meaningless, even absurd world.”⁴ In contrast to Thompson’s analysis, however, my thesis will not analyze the novel in relation to Dagerman’s personal experiences as a conscript in the Swedish army, but rather through his political engagements and his portrayal of both fascism and neutral Sweden.

In order to conduct my analysis, I utilize both historical scholarship and literary analysis methods. After a brief introduction to the experiences of Sweden and Norway during the Second World War, in the analysis section of this thesis, I will first analyze sexual repression by the patriarchal family in the two novels by utilizing Wilhelm Reich’s theories presented in his book, *Die Massenpsychologie des Faschismus* (1933; Eng. tr. *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* [1933]). Though Dagerman was not a student of Reich like Hoel, he was influenced by the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud and I will highlight different psychoanalytical aspects of Dagerman’s novel. Then I will turn to Dagerman’s anarcho-syndicalism, connecting his political engagements with Hoel’s psychoanalysis in order to analyze the role of the state in the novels. Dagerman’s anarcho-syndicalism plays a similar role to Hoel’s psychoanalysis in his novel, and though Reich critiques the failings of Marxism in the fight against fascism, Reich’s principles on the repressive nature of the state are based upon basic Marxist and Freudian theories. These theories are used in remarkably similar ways in both authors’ critiques of fascism and in their investigation into their own countries’ actions during the Second World War.

The purpose of this thesis is not to make overarching claims about how Swedes and Norwegians felt about the Second World War nor is it to give an overview of the wartime experiences of the two nations. In this thesis, I formulate two case studies of literary reactions to the Second World War to illustrate, not only the reactions themselves, but to demonstrate how novels can be just as fruitful in understanding moments in history as government documents and newspaper articles. The

⁴ Laurie Thompson, *Stig Dagerman* (Boston: Twayne, 1983), 17.

This echoes principles of existentialism. The existentialist nature of Dagerman’s works has been studied in works such as Kerstin Laitinen’s dissertation, “*Begärets irrvägar : existentiell tematik i Stig Dagermans texter*” (1986; *The Wanderings of Desire: Existential Themes in the Texts of Stig Dagerman*). For the sake of this thesis, I have chosen to focus upon Dagerman’s theories on sexual repression and anarch-syndicalism.

novels provide two distinct interpretations of fascism, through the lens of Swedish neutrality and Norwegian occupation, and the novels also address the importance of the individual writer in the fight against fascism in the postwar period.

II. Norwegian Occupation and Swedish Neutrality: Literature on the Front Lines

With the outbreak of war, Nordic representatives and foreign ministers met in Stockholm the 18-19th of October in 1939, and though the representatives discussed a formal declaration of neutrality between Norway and Sweden, it never made it onto paper.⁵ The Allied powers were more concerned with stopping Swedish iron ore being transported by way of the Norwegian port of Narvik to Germany than sending aid to Finland. Therefore, the Allied powers began discussing the problem of Swedish trade by way of the Norwegian port.⁶

Already in September of 1939, Winston Churchill began formulating a plan to stop Swedish iron ore from being transported by way of Narvik, and in January of 1940, Great Britain announced that it would advance its marina operations into Norwegian waters, and Sweden received the same announcement.⁷ However, no direct action was taken to stop trade coming from the port of Narvik at this time. Discussions of a blockade continued into February but were complicated by the Russo-Finnish situation; the first of the three wars fought between these two powers during the Second World War ended on 13 March 1940.⁸ However, by the end of March and early April, the Allied

⁵ Wilhelm M. Carlgren, "Svensk-norsk regeringsrelationer under andra världskriget," (Swedish-Norwegian Government Relations during the Second World War), *Broderfolk i ufredstid: Norsk-svenske forbindelser under annen verdenskrig* (Brother-folk in Time of Unrest: Norwegian-Swedish Relations during the Second World War), ed. Stig Ekman and Ole Kristian Grimnes (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1991), 19.

⁶ Carlgren, "Svensk-norsk regeringsrelationer under andra världskriget," 21.

Broderfolk i ufredstid: Norsk-svenske forbindelser under annen verdenskrig (1991; Brother-folk in Time of Unrest: Norwegian-Swedish Relations during the Second World War) is collaborative text written and edited by both Norwegian and Swedish historians. Wilhelm Carlgren, the author of this chapter, is also the author of *Svensk utrikespolitikk 1939-1945* (1973; Eng. tr. *Swedish Foreign Policy during the Second World War* [1977]).

⁷ Johannes Andenæs, Olav Riste, and Magne Skodvin, *Norway and the Second World War* (Lillehammer: Aschehoug, 1966), 14.

Carlgren, "Svensk-norsk regeringsrelationer", 22

⁸ Andenæs, Riste, and Skodvin, 20.

powers had approved a plan to create a blockade in Norwegian waters on April 8, informing both Sweden and Norway on April 4.⁹

Meanwhile, Germany began formulating plans for an invasion of Norway. Already in October 1939, Germany considered invading Norway, securing Trondheim as a marine base and for the repair of submarines, while Narvik would be secured for both trade purposes and as a refueling station.¹⁰ In December 1939, Vidkun Quisling, the leader of the Norwegian *Nasjonal Samling* (National Socialist party) and former Minister of Defense, met with German officials in Berlin, and finally met with Hitler himself and discussed plans for the invasion.¹¹ From this point on, Germany began to formulate plans for the invasion and occupation of Norway. Allied intervention would come too late as Germany invaded on the night of the 8th and into the 9th of April, taking both the Allied powers and the Norwegian government by surprise. Resistance would last just six weeks, and by June, the German occupation of Norway began.

Following the invasion of Norway, a small group of government officials, as well as the king of Norway himself, escaped into exile in London, setting up a government there and joining with the Allied powers. Though the German's initial plan was to "govern indirectly through a pacified Norwegian cabinet, in line with what took place in Denmark," the Norwegian resistance movement and the exile government in London made this impossible.¹² The king refused to recognize either German leadership or Vidkun Quisling, and the government-in-exile formally joined the Allied powers, turning over their merchant fleet to them.¹³ After a failed attempt to reach an agreement, Germany took complete control of Norway in September of 1940.¹⁴

⁹ Andenæs, Riste, and Skodvin, 24.

¹⁰ Andenæs, Riste, and Skodvin, 30.

¹¹ Andenæs, Riste, and Skodvin, 35.

¹² Ole Kristian Grimnes, *Norge under andre verdenskrig* (Norway during the Second World War) (Oslo: Ashehoug, 2018), 254, 267.

¹³ Grimnes, 254, 267.

¹⁴ Tom Kristiansen, "The Norwegian War Experience: Occupied and Allied," *Nordic War Stories: World War II as History, Fiction, Media, and Memory*, Worlds of Memory vol. 7, ed. Marianne Stecher-Hansen (New York: Berghahn, 2021), 54.

The term *hjemmefronten*—the home front—was used during this period to describe those that opposed the German occupation and the Norwegian Nasjonal Samling.¹⁵ The *hjemmefront* conducted several acts of resistance, ranging from passive objection to military action, the illegal press, and providing the Allied powers with information.¹⁶ However, the aspect of the resistance movement that is crucial for understanding Hoel's *Meeting at the Milestone* is the section of the movement tasked with assisting refugees across the Swedish-Norwegian border. While the Germans set up guard posts along the western coast where refugees would try to make the deadly passage across the sea to Great Britain, the Germans paid less attention to Norway's eastern border with Sweden.¹⁷ In Hoel's book, the narrator is a member of this division of the resistance movement responsible for housing the refugees along their journey to Sweden, and the narrator himself, escapes across the border in the end of the novel.

Already in the early years of the war, Norway began discussions with the Allied powers on how to best take back control of their country. After much consideration, they decided against an early invasion that would result in bloodshed and destruction. On May 16, 1944, an agreement outlining the civil jurisdiction during liberation was signed by the government-in-exile and the Allies.¹⁸ By April 1945, the exile government began pressing the Allies to intervene in Norway and were met with resistance. Sweden, after being approached by the exile government, too, hesitated in intervening, citing that it was unlikely that the Germans would openly resist Norwegian troops.¹⁹ However, no military intervention was needed as the German troops surrendered on May 7, 1945. On May 8, the Allied armistice commission arrived in Norway, and by May 13, members of the

¹⁵ Grimnes, 387.

¹⁶ Hoel's novel *Stevnemøte med glemte år* (1954; Date with Forgotten Years) focuses more upon the active military resistance against the Germans during the Second World War. However, in *Meeting at the Milestone*, little to no mention is made of this aspect of the 'hjemmefront'.

¹⁷ Grimnes, 417.

¹⁸ Andenæs, Riste, and Skodvin, 115.

¹⁹ Andenæs, Riste, and Skodvin, 120.

Norwegian government-in-exile began to arrive back in Norway, including Crown Prince Olav.²⁰ The occupation of Norway had finally ended.

In the immediate period after the war, the patriotic narrative remained dominant, demonizing those that collaborated with the occupying force. This is reflected in the postwar trials of Vidkun Quisling, who was executed, and the trials of other collaborators.²¹ Tom Kristiansen, a Norwegian historian, states that, “emphasis was firmly put on how the unified nation stood up in heroic civil and military resistance and how the country contributed to the Allied victory” in the initial post-war period.²² Heroic and patriotic accounts remained prevalent until the 1960s when there was a short decline in interest. Following this, new studies challenged this patriotic narrative. Younger historians who were born after the war, such as Ole Kristian Grimnes (b.1977), a Norwegian professor of modern history, showed renewed interest in this period of Norwegian history, providing new perspectives and a far more critical analysis in the book, *Norge under andre verdenskrig* (2018; Norway during the Second World War).

The literature of the period is also dominated by patriotic and heroic tales of resistance and solidarity. Works such as Nordahl Grieg’s collection of poems, *Friheten* (1943; Eng. tr. *All that is Mine Demand* [1944]), and *Flagget* (1945; The Flag) are reflective of the wartime and postwar patriotic literary climate focusing on peace and community, rather than just nationalism. *All that is Mine Demand* (the literal translation of this work is actually “Freedom”) is a collection of poems written about Norway during the Second World War, and the poems “are among the most significant that have been written about the war and the fatherland,” according to the literary historian Sven. H. Rossel.²³ Even though many of the works from the initial postwar period are patriotic in

²⁰ Andenæs, Riste, and Skodvin, 121.

²¹ In 1902, Norway had outlawed the death penalty during peacetime, but it was maintained in the Military Penal Code, and thus was enacted for war criminals, including Vidkun Quisling, 24 other Norwegian collaborators, and 12 German war criminals. Prior to this, the death penalty had not been used since 1876, and after 1948, the death penalty has not been given again and was formally abolished in 1979. See Andenæs, Riste, and Skodvin, 147-48.

²² Kristiansen, 84.

²³ Sven H. Rossel, *A History of Scandinavian Literature, 1870-1980*, trans. Anne C. Ulmer (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 189.

nature in Norway, they still embrace new theories and political movements such as socialism. Rossel connects these writers by their involvement in the journal *Mot Dag* (1921-36; Toward Day-break). These writers include lyricist Arnulf Øverland, Sigurd Hoel, and the Marxist drama critic Helge Krog. These are just some of the lyrical works that encompass the postwar literary climate of Norway.

In addition to lyrical works, several novels of the 1940s reflect Norway's experience during the Second World War, including Nils Johan Rud's *Godt mot, menneske* (1940; Good Courage, Man) and Tarjei Vesaas's *Huset i mørkret* (1945; Eng. tr. *The House in the Dark* [1976]), an allegorical representation of occupied Norway set in a large, maze-like house. Another novelist, Aksel Sandemose, published several postwar novels that portray the political uncertainty including *Det svundne er en drøm* (1944; The Vanished Is a Dream)—written while Sandemose was in exile in neutral Sweden—, *Alice Atkinson og hennes elskere* (1949; Alice Atkinson and Her Lovers), and *Varulven* (1958; Eng. tr. *The Werewolf* [1966]).²⁴ Though *The Werewolf* itself is not set during the Second World War, it is similar to Hoel's own construction of the drastic effects of repression upon individuals.²⁵ Hoel's work was not the only work that sought to understand the individual experience in the postwar period, however his novel is one of the few novels set directly during the occupation of Norway, depicting both the resistance and collaboration movements during this period.

While Hoel's novel portrays wartime Norway, Dagerman's novel is set in neutral Sweden. Under the Social Democrat and founder of the welfare state, Per Albin Hansson, Sweden remained neutral during World War II; however, this neutrality was a negotiated neutrality, a balancing act as Sweden became isolated from the rest of Western Europe. To the west was German-occupied Norway and to the east was Finland, the only thing standing between Sweden and their long-time enemy, Russia, who the Finns were desperately trying to hold at bay. Per Albin Hansson found himself the leader of a country that was toeing the fine line between neutrality and occupation, and in

²⁴ Rossel, 191.

²⁵ Rossel, 192.

the end, he did what he could to keep Sweden from ever seeing combat during this period. One aspect of this negotiated neutrality was, after Russia joined the Allied powers and continued in their attempt to gain control of Finland, “Sweden was forced to allow the German *Engelbrecht* Division to transit Sweden from Norway to Finland.”²⁶ Even to this day, the idea that Sweden had no choice, or that they were ‘forced’ to cooperate, is prevalent, and—to an extent—true. Though Germany did not have the resources to invade Sweden and had no plan of doing so, according to John Gilmour, a Scandinavian Studies professor, Sweden was unaware of this and lived in a constant state of fear of German invasion, an important aspect of Dagerman’s novel *The Snake*.²⁷

Another aspect of Sweden’s negotiated neutrality was the continued trade with Germany after the outbreak of the Second World War. Sweden justified this trade by citing the need to take care of their own citizens, much like the warring states themselves.²⁸ In December 1939, Sweden reached an agreement with Great Britain that allowed Sweden to continue selling iron ore to Germany.²⁹ The economic historian, Martin Fritz, argues that Great Britain agreed to allow Sweden to continue trade with Germany because Britain expected the war to be over before the Luleå harbor would have a chance to melt.³⁰ This, of course, proved false, and between the years 1938-1941, trade between Germany and Sweden grew steadily before beginning to decline in 1942. As the tides of war began to turn, the Allied powers pressured Sweden to diminish their exports to Germany. By the fall of 1944, all trade with Germany stopped as the end of the war drew near.³¹

²⁶ John Gilmour, “Sweden’s Ambiguous War: Contradiction and Controversy,” *Nordic War Stories: World War II as History, Fiction, Media, and Memory*, World of Memory vol. 7, ed. Marianne Stecher-Hansen (New York: Berghahn, 2021), 82.

²⁷ Gilmour, 83-84.

²⁸ Martin Fritz, “Sveriges ekonomiska relationer med Nazityskland” (Swedish Economic Relations with Nazi-Germany), *Sverige och Nazityskland: Skuldfrågor och moraldebatt* (Sweden and Nazi-Germany: Questions of Guilt and Moral Debate), ed. Lars M. Andersson and Mattias Tydén (Stockholm: Dialogos, 2007), 258.

²⁹ Fritz, 262.

³⁰ Fritz, 266.

³¹ For further information on the economic relationship between Sweden and Germany during the war, see Gerald Aalders and Cees Wiebes’ *The Art of Cloaking, The Case of Sweden Ownership: The Secret Collaboration and Protection of the German War Industry by the Neutrals* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996).

The final aspect of Swedish neutrality that is crucial for understanding Dagerman's portrayal of neutral Sweden is the informal censorship that the government invoked. In the fall of 1939, the Minister of Justice, K. G. Westman, decided to reinstate the Press Act of 1810 that gave the state the power to "confiscate an issue of a newspaper or a book that had caused friction with foreign states."³² Though this statute was invoked 315 times between 1939 and 1943—including against *Arbetaren* (1921-; *The Worker*), the journal that Dagerman both wrote and edited for—it could not prevent a work or newspaper from being published; rather, it could only be invoked after a work had been published, and as newspapers often went directly to distributors, the Press Act did little to stop information from reaching the public.³³ Instead, the Swedish government advised newspapers and publishers to not publish anything that could aggravate a foreign power. Later, in 1940, the Swedish government passed a law that allowed for the transportation of newspapers to be banned for six-month periods, and it was mostly used against leftist and Communist papers, such as *Trots allt!* (1939-1945; *After All!*). That same year, the government established the State Board of Information, and the board began to release recommendations to newspapers on what not to publish, which ranged from information about the Swedish defense to more controversial recommendations that papers were not to criticize foreign states involved in the war.³⁴ Dagerman takes up this issue of censorship in both the chapters titled "Järnbandet" (*The Iron Band*) and the concluding chapter of the novel, "Flykten som inte blev av" (*The Flight that Never Was*).

To get past this indirect censorship, many authors turned to allegory and other literary devices. Writers such as Eyvind Johnson and Vilhelm Moberg utilized the allegorical novel to get past Swedish censorship and to depict the heroic fight against fascism. In both novels, they use metaphors and allegories—Johnson's *Krilon* trilogy (1941-1943) uses a workplace conflict and a splintered discussion group to represent the alienation of Winston Churchill, while Vilhelm Moberg's *Rid i natt!* (1941; Eng. tr. *Ride this Night* [1943]) is set in a small 17th-century Swedish town where

³² Klas Åmark, "Sweden: negotiated neutrality," *The Cambridge History of the Second World War*, vol. 2, ed. Richard Bosworth and Joseph Maiolo (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 365.

³³ Åmark, 365.

³⁴ Åmark, 366.

a German gentleman has been given a manor as well as the tax-rights of the peasants who live in the nearby town. While both novels criticize Swedish neutrality, the main focus is upon the hero characters of the novels—the Winston Churchill-figure, Krilon, in Johnson’s trilogy, and Ragnar Svedje, an allegorical figure of the Norwegian resistance movement in Moberg’s novel. In this way, many of the postwar works written in response to the Second World War in Sweden are quite similar to those of Norway, and, in some cases, even more focused upon the hero narrative than their Norwegian counterparts.

On the other hand, Sweden lived in constant fear of being invaded during the Second World War, and that, as well as the uncertainty of the postwar world and the beginning of the Cold War, led to the prominence of pessimism and anxiety in postwar literature, including Dagerman’s *The Snake*. Many of these younger writers who were active in the 1940s were known as the *fyrriotialister* (the 40-ers); a new journal, *40-tal* (the 40s), was started in 1944 in Stockholm, and many of the young Swedish writers of the time found a voice in this journal.³⁵ Pessimism was a common theme and topic within *40-tal* as well as in other literary works of the postwar period. In relation to this, literature of the 1940s focused upon the role and responsibilities of the individual rather than collectivism. Another train of thought that arose in the postwar period, both in Sweden and elsewhere in the world, was vitalism. A group of Swedish authors founded a school of New Vitalism and were known for their realistic depictions of sex and violence as an escape from the troubles of the postwar world.³⁶ Stig Dagerman, whose works include depictions of violence and may be described as crude, was opposed to New Vitalism. He illustrates how sex and violence are *not* a proper escape mechanism, as seen in both *The Snake* and *De dömdas ö* (1946; Eng. tr. *The Island of the Doomed* [1992]).

³⁵ Rossel, 257.

³⁶ Thompson, *Stig Dagerman*, 3.

In conclusion, Norway and Sweden had vastly different wartime experiences, culminating in a tense relationship between the two states in the postwar period. Hoel addresses the difference between neutrality and occupation in an essay written in 1943. Hoel begins the essay by citing three notices about arrests in Nazi-occupied Denmark, taken from Swedish sources. He then writes:

Folk i et nøytralt land leser om alt dette; de tviler eller tror, grøsser eller oprøres. De tar mer eller mindre del i det som skjer, alt etter fantasi og andre anlegg. Men de opplever det ikke like inn på livet av sig, de erfarer det ikke på kroppen.

I det lange løp oppstår det da nødvendigvis en viss mentalitetsforskjell, på grunnlag av forskjellen i livsforholdene, mellom menneskene i et nøytralt og menneskene i et okkupert land.³⁷

(People in a neutral country read about all this; they doubt or believe, shudder or rebel. They take more or less part in what happens, depending on imagination and other facilities. But they do not experience it directly in their lives, they do not experience it in their body.

In the long run, there will then of course be a certain difference in mentality, based on the difference in living conditions, between the people in a neutral country and the people in an occupied country.)³⁸

The Norwegian experience culminated in the postwar trials when many Norwegians called for harsh punishment for those who had turned on country and neighbor. Sweden, meanwhile, did little to acknowledge their own wartime experiences—their continued trade with Germany, their government-requested silence, and finally, their refusal to aid their neighbors. Instead, the war was something that happened to other countries but not to Sweden. It was in this political and social context that Dagerman and Hoel wrote their novels. As Sweden sought to move forward, Dagerman reflects upon the war and Swedish neutrality to keep the past from repeating itself again. Hoel, while the legal purge of Norwegian collaborators was underway, sought to find the source behind the rise of Nazism and to understand why so many Norwegians became collaborators.

III. Fascism, Neutrality, and Occupation in *The Snake* and *Meeting at the Milestone*

³⁷ Sigurd Hoel, “Nordisk ungdom” (Norwegian Youth), *Tanker i mørketid* (Thoughts in a Dark Time) (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1945), 89. Originally published in *Nordens Frihet* in 1943.

³⁸ All translations presented in this thesis are my own unless otherwise stated. Though English translations of both *Ormen* and *Møte ved milepelen* exist, I have decided to use my own translations as the English translations of the novels take certain artistic liberties. I agree with the translators’ interpretations of the texts, however, some of the subtleties are lost in these translations. I have tried to stay as true to the original text as possible in my translations.

Stig Dagerman's *The Snake*

Är dikt ett sällskapsnöje, då vill jag med svärtad fot gå ut i skymningen och göra mej till vän med ormarna och den lilla grå ökenråttan. Är dikt ett livsvillkor för någon, glöm inte sandalerna hemma, se upp för stenrösen! Nu jagar ormarna min häl, nu äcklar mej öknens råtta. (Min vän Scriver.)³⁹

(If poetry is a social pleasure, then I want to go out at dusk with my darkened foot and make friends with the snakes and the little gray desert rat. If poetry is a necessity of life for someone, do not forget your sandals at home, watch out for piles of stones! Now the snakes chase my heel, now the desert rat disgusts me. (My friend Scriver.))⁴⁰

So begins Dagerman's novel, *The Snake*, published in November of 1945, just two months after the end of World War II. Though unsettling at first, Dagerman's initial message in this quote becomes clear as one reads on. According to Dagerman, it is the responsibility of the individual—in particular, the writer—to face one's *Angst* and to seek to find the source of this *Angst*.⁴¹ For Dagerman, the fight against fascism did not end with the German surrender. The fight had to continue—not with weapons and arms—but with literature, such as his own novel *The Snake*.

Both written and set in neutral Sweden, the novel goes beyond examining Sweden's policy of neutrality; rather, intellectual and political theories, such as anarcho-syndicalism, support Dagerman's wider critique of fascism, authoritarianism, Swedish neutrality, and the welfare state. The first part of the two-part novel follows a young woman named Irène and her unsettling affair with the sadistic soldier Bill after she has left home to work at a Swedish training camp during the Second World War. The second half of the novel is divided into six chapters, resembling short stories, each following a different soldier or group of soldiers from that same camp as they seek to combat their ever-present *Angst*.

Irène is a woman who is full of *Angst* and guilt even prior to her affair with Bill. During the first half of the book, the symbol of the rat is used to portray how her guilt and anxiety affect her. Irène feels as if she is being gnawed at by a rat, and as shame turns into rage, she pushes her mother

³⁹ Stig Dagerman, *Ormen* (Stockholm: Pan/Norstedts, 1973), 4. Originally published in 1945.

⁴⁰ This character's name, Scriver, can be translated as "The Writer". "Skriver" means "to write" in Swedish. Scriver becomes the focus in the final chapter of the novel.

⁴¹ I use the word *Angst* instead of the English translation "anxiety" as the German word *Angst* better encapsulates the meaning of the Swedish word "ångest." In other works, including Thompson's *Stig Dagerman*, the word "Angst" in italics is also used instead of "anxiety".

from a moving train, and her mother is killed. These feelings of guilt are manifested in diverse ways in many of the characters in the second half of the novel. The second half of the novel focuses on the soldiers' growing anxiety by utilizing the symbol of a snake loose in the barracks. Dagerman himself was conscripted into the army during the Second World War, and he seeks to depict the anxiety that he, along with other soldiers in neutral Sweden, felt. The novel contains several symbols of the growing fear and guilt that Swedes, not just Swedish soldiers, felt during the war. Dagerman has captured these feelings in his debut novel from 1945.

Literary scholars in Sweden often describe *The Snake* as perfectly capturing the climate of the 1940s in Sweden, but many scholars also found Dagerman's depictions of sex, domestic abuse, and violence too brash, and they grouped him with authors of the New Vitalist movement—an anti-intellectual movement that uses themes such as sex and violence as an escape—in Sweden along with their American inspirations such as Hemingway and Faulkner.⁴² The British literary scholar, Laurie Thompson, argues against this conclusion, and I, too, disagree with those who find Dagerman a proponent of New Vitalism. Instead, Dagerman shows how the New Vitalists fall short—his characters who look for an escape from their *Angst* in violence and sex are given no reprieve from their ever-present anxiety. Despite these initial criticisms, literary scholars today consider *The Snake* an impressive first novel for its critical stance on authoritarianism and the welfare state and its more general depictions of life.

The Snake was not Dagerman's only anti-fascist and anti-authoritarian work from the 1940s. *The Snake* was soon followed by three novels, one reportage, one collection of short stories, three separate short stories, and four plays, all written between the years 1946 and 1949. His second novel, *The Island of the Doomed*, builds upon the same ideas of *The Snake* as Dagerman uses his characters to depict different political ideologies and schools of thought—or the victims of those ideologies—including authoritarianism, capitalism, elitism, existentialism, and Nazism. While *The Snake*, too, is unsettling and often appears dream-like, *The Island of the Doomed* is told almost

⁴² Thompson, 3.

completely in this nightmarish-style as the characters of the novel, who have been shipwrecked on an uninhabited island, face their imminent death and seem to lose touch with reality. Though the novel makes similar statements as *The Snake*, I have chosen to focus upon Dagerman's first novel as it is set during the Second World War and thus more directly involves themes of neutrality and fascism in the work.

Sigurd Hoel's *Meeting at the Milestone*

Han fikk åtte år.

På forhånd har han sittet de to. Seks gjenstår.

Han var—la meg se—en og tyve år i 1943. Nå i 1947 er han altså fem og tyve. Tar vi den vanlige forkortning av fengselstiden med i regnestykket, vil han komme ut ni og tyve år gammel. Ennå en ung mann—men stivnet, forherdet, full av hat og hevntanker. Skjønt, det kan hende så meget. De får lese Bibelen.

Det hender de blir religiøse.

Hans far gikk seg utfor bryggekanalen sent på kvelden 7. mai 1945. Han hadde tatt bly i lommene. Ingen visste om det på forhånd, og han etterlot seg ikke noe brev eller budskap.

Henne har jeg ikke snakket med siden sommeren 45. Det brevet jeg sendte henne da jeg fikk høre om dommen, har hun ikke svart på. Jeg kommer ikke til å skrive til henne mer.

Åtte år. Hadde jeg meldt meg som vitne og fortalt det jeg visste, ville det blitt litt mer.

Alt dette angår meg ikke, jeg vet det. Det er fremmede menneskers skjebne. Jeg tror allikevel jeg får prøve å ordne disse papirene.⁴³

(He got eight years.

He has already served two. Six left.

He was, let me see, twenty-one in 1943. Now in 1947, he's twenty-five. If we work in the usual reduction of the sentence, he will be twenty-nine when he comes out. Still a young man, but solidified, hardened, full of hatred and thoughts of revenge. Though all sorts of things can happen. They are allowed to read the Bible.

It happens that they become religious.

His father went out on the pier late one night, 7 May 1945. He had put lead in his pockets. No one knew about it in advance, and he didn't leave a note or a message.

Her I have not spoken with since the summer of '45. The letter I sent her when I heard about the verdict, she has not answered. I won't be writing to her any more.

Eight years. If I had come forward as a witness and reported what I knew, it would have been quite a bit more.

None of this concerns me, I know. The lives of strangers, that's all.

Still, I think I will try to sort out these papers.)

⁴³ Sigurd Hoel, *Møte ved milepelen* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1947), 5.

Like Dagerman's prelude, the opening to Sigurd Hoel's *Meeting at the Milestone* begins ambiguously, but as the novel progresses, the significance of the opening lines becomes crucial in understanding the overarching themes of the novel. The 'he' of the prelude is the narrator's biological son who has become a Nazi collaborator, along with the man who raised him as his son, in occupied Norway. The narrator, on the other hand, is a member of the resistance movement and is referred to as 'den plettfrie,' or 'the spotless one.' The novel is centered on the narrator's internal reflections on fascism and the men he knows who have become collaborators themselves. He contemplates the various levels of collaboration and guilt, and in the end, the reader realizes that it is the narrator's own guilt over his son becoming a Nazi and the death of the narrator's wife and young child that has driven his search for the 'kime' [seed] of Nazism; the sprouting of the 'seed,' as it is referred to in the text, is the reason some become Nazi collaborators while others did not. However, as Krouk points out, it is not just within the novel, but also within Hoel's essay, "En av våre oppgaver" (One of Our Duties), that Hoel uses the seed as a symbol for the nature of Nazism. Hoel writes that, "i noen hver av oss—fins et lite punkt, ofte et meget kjært lite punkt, hvor det sitter en liten kime til—ikke till nazism, å langt ifra. Men til noe som ligner nazismen ganske betenkelig"⁴⁴ ["in each of us—there is a little place, often a cherished little place, where there sits a little seed of—not of Nazism, far from it. But of something with a troubling resemblance to it"].⁴⁵ This idea of the 'seed' of Nazism within everyone remains prevalent throughout the novel as the narrator struggles with his own guilt.

Published in 1947, *Meeting at the Milestone* is one of the first postwar works that investigates the roots of fascism in Norwegian collaborators. After spending the final years of the war in exile in Sweden as a political refugee, Hoel returned to Norway and set to writing his novel that

⁴⁴ Sigurd Hoel, "En av våre oppgave," *Tanker i mørketid*, Oslo: Gyldendal (1945), 157. Originally published in 1944 in *Norges-Nytt*.

⁴⁵ Dean Krouk, "Crises of Memory in Norway's Occupation Novel: Sigurd Hoel's *Meeting at the Milestone*," *Nordic War Stories: World War II as History, Fiction, Media, and Memory*, Worlds of Memory vol.7, ed. Marianne Stecher-Hansen (New York: Berghahn, 2021), 174.

would become *Meeting at the Milestone*. The novel is told in first-person with the narrator only being identified as ‘I’ or ‘the spotless one,’ as previously mentioned. The narrator, too, was forced to flee across the border to Sweden and now begins writing his story from his notes written during the war, much like Hoel himself started writing this novel at the close of the war. The novel is written primarily in past tense, serving as a constant reminder to the reader that, not only is Hoel writing this in the postwar period, but the narrator himself is addressing his own experiences and memories from the war and prior in the year 1947. However, the narrator shifts to present tense as he injects himself into the narrative, as seen in the opening lines of the novel quoted above. The reader is, in a sense, at the whim of the narrator—a passive by-stander as the narrator embarks upon his exploration of the ‘seed’ of fascism and traverses through time.

The novel is separated into three parts with a prelude and a postscript from the perspective of the narrator. Each part reflects the narrator’s notes—“Første Del: Nedtegnet 1947” (Part One: Recorded in 1947), “Annen Del: Notater fra 1943” (Part Two: Notes from 1943), and “Tredje Del: Notater fra Sverige 1944” (Part Three: Notes from Sweden, 1944). However, these titles are deceiving as the narrator often reflects upon moments and events that took place prior to the year in the title. For example, Part One begins with a memory from 1943 before moving even further back in time to the beginning of the occupation. Part Two recounts much of the narrator’s youth and his time as a university student in Oslo in the 1920s. Rather, time is fluid as one memory leads the narrator to contemplate another, and the narrator provides side-by-side commentary on the events recounted in the present day.

As the novel contains numerous flashbacks as well as psychological contemplation on the nature of fascism, the plot of the novel unfolds slowly. The novel begins in August 1943 when a man named Indregård comes to stay with the narrator, and we soon find out that the narrator is a member of the resistance movement during the occupation of Norway who has turned his house over to the resistance to use in smuggling people to Sweden. The narrative quickly shifts to a dis-

cussion of fascism and seeks to find the ‘seed’ of Nazism in his many acquaintances who have become collaborators. To do this, he takes the reader back to his days as a student and through a psychological exploration of youth, sexual relationships, and loneliness. Finally, the novel shifts back to 1944 as the narrator relates his encounter with his biological son and his son’s mother in a small seaside village in Norway before being whisked across the border to Sweden, fleeing the Nazis who have discovered his involvement in the resistance movement. It is not until this final section of the novel and the postscript that the narrator’s own guilt over the death of his wife and young child, as well as the fate of his previously unknown son, becomes clear.

Sigurd Hoel’s novel *Meeting at the Milestone* is by many literary scholars considered one of the most important contributions from Norway on fascism. Arve Moen, who worked for the literature and film division of the newspaper *Arbeiderbladet* (The Workers’ Newspaper) wrote in November of 1947, “hvis ikke denne boka [*Møte ved milepelen*] blir lest og diskutert som det betydeligste skjønnlitterære bidraget til etterkrigsdebatten, er det noe galt med hele vår lesekultur” [if this book [*Meeting at the Milestone*] is not read and discussed as the most significant fictional contribution to the post-war debate, there is something wrong with our entire reading culture].⁴⁶ Hoel’s book was positively received, as seen in this quote, and, as an already established author and literary critic, the novel was widely read. Following the publication of his novel, Sigurd Hoel even received an artist’s grant from the government the following year in 1948, receiving 116 of the total 137 votes, which demonstrates both the respect he gained as an author as well as the high regards that were given to his latest novel *Meeting at the Milestone*.⁴⁷ The novel is still highly regarded in academic circles and has gained more attention from scholars in recent years after its translation to English in 2002 by Sverre Lyngstad.

In addition to this novel, Hoel also published two other works that deal directly with the Second World War. In 1945, he published a collection of essays written during the 1930s and the

⁴⁶ Arne Moen, “Sigurd Hoel ved milepelen,” *Arbeiderbladet*, 29 Nov 1947.

⁴⁷ “Sigurd Hoel fikk kunstnerlønn,” *Porgrunns Dagblad*, 4 Juni 1938.

war titled, *Tanker i mørketid* (1945; Thoughts from a Dark Time) that will assist in my analysis of the novel. Dean Krouk has analyzed several of these essays as well as other essays written by Hoel both before the war and during in his chapter on Hoel in his book, *Fascism and Modernist Literature in Norway*. For the sake of this paper, though, I will focus upon the novel but refer to the essays when required in analyzing the novel itself. Hoel later in 1954 wrote another novel, *Stevnemøte med glemte år* (1954; Date with Forgotten Years), set after the Second World War, but the novel reflects upon the wartime experiences of a group of friends, many of whom joined the resistance movement themselves. However, this work does not feature a psychological discussion of Nazism and the collaborators but focuses instead on the story of the resistance members and their fates after the war.

Analysis of the Patriarchal Family and Reichian Theory on the Mass-psychology of Fascism

Though Stig Dagerman was not as involved in psychoanalysis and psychology as Hoel, certain aspects of Dagerman's novel are reminiscent of psychoanalysis, as I will highlight in my analysis. We see how themes of sexual repression by the family function in similar ways within *The Snake* as they do in *Meeting at the Milestone*. Psychoanalysis, founded by Sigmund Freud, is a set of theories used to study the subconscious mind, but it has also been adapted into literary theories by psychoanalysts including Carl Jung, Wilhelm Reich, and Charles Mauron.⁴⁸ Hoel was heavily influenced by Reichian theories of sexual repression and Reich's book, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*. Sigurd Hoel's former wife studied under Wilhelm Reich, and Sigurd Hoel himself had close and regular correspondence and meetings with Wilhelm Reich during Reich's time in Scandinavian in the early 1930s leading up to the Second World War.⁴⁹ This correspondence, along with

⁴⁸ Wilhelm Reich's *Charakteranalyse* (1933; Eng. tr. *Character Analysis* [1933]) is one such example of psychoanalytical principles being adapted for literary analysis.

⁴⁹ There are several mentions of both Hoel and his wife (later ex-wife), Nic Waal, within Reich's letters between the years 1934-1939. See Wilhelm Reich, *Beyond Psychology: Letters and Journals 1934-39*, ed. Mary Boyd Higgins, trans. Derek and Inge Jordan and Philip Schmitz (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux).

Hoel's close study of Reich's *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*⁵⁰, is pertinent in understanding Hoel's critique of fascism within the novel.

To explain the submission to the 'authority of the state', Reich uses the principles of psychoanalysis developed by Sigmund Freud, primarily the principle of childhood sexuality. Freud developed the theory that childhood sexuality is often repressed out of fear of punishment for sexual acts and thoughts by the father-figure.⁵¹ It is during childhood that the child learns to repress their own sexuality and resists confronting this repression. Upon reaching adulthood, the child-turned-adult must now find another figure for their repression—it is no longer the father, but the state. According to Reich, the submission to the state arises from sexual repression during childhood by an often violent father-figure, and therefore, I will start my analysis by discussing the role of the patriarchal family in the two novels and its relationship to Nazism according to Reich.

The patriarchal family is encompassed not only in the violent, repressive father depicted in Hoel's novel, but also the in the narrator's betrayal of first his love affair Kari (who we later discover is really named Maria and is the 'her' of the prologue) and his marriage to his wife. However, to understand the narrator's supposed betrayals, we must first seek to understand how Reich's theories on the patriarchal family function in the novel. To do this, I will begin with Part Two of the novel and the religious father of a Nazi collaborator before returning to the narrator's own guilt stemming from his failed love affairs of first his youth and later his marriage.

Part Two of the novel begins with a chapter on the character Hans Berg. In Part One, we learn that the narrator is a member of the resistance movement and has turned his house over to the movement, using a small outbuilding to house refugees on their way to Sweden. His lodger, a former teacher named Indregård, in August of 1943 blames himself for Hans Berg becoming a Nazi because he ruined a love affair between Hans Berg and one of their students. Indregård, it turns out,

⁵⁰ The book itself was widely criticized and resulted in Reich being cast out of the Communist Party in Germany, and though initially quite successful and well-regarded, he was later shunned by colleagues and communists alike for his stance on teenage sex.

⁵¹ Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, ed. Mary Higgins and Chester M Raphael, trans. Mary Higgins (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980), 26.

was also in love with the girl and ended the love affair for selfish purposes. This brief account foreshadows the narrator's own guilt over someone becoming a Nazi and the passages that follow, especially when one considers the name of his lodger—Indregård, translating to 'inner-yard', evoking imagery of the typical inner-courtyard of many Scandinavian homes and alluding to the narrator's own inner reflection on his guilt that is to come.

The narrator, too, knew Hans Berg during his youth and begins to recount his memories. He notes three important characteristics—that Hans Berg, like himself, was from the country and had later moved to the city, that he was ambivalent towards the city due to his religious upbringing, and that “han hatet sin far” [he hated his father].⁵² Hoel begins to string together minute details about Hans Berg's childhood that the narrator learned over the course of several years, namely that it consisted of “ørefiker og gudsord” [slaps and Scripture].⁵³ This culminates into the most crucial experience of Hans' childhood. Hans Berg's father, or “Vårherre selv i farens skikkelse” [God himself in his father's image], beat Hans, after hearing him swear on a Sunday.⁵⁴ This event, according to Hans, taught him that there was true evil in the world. The father has instilled obedience and anxiety in the young Hans that continues to affect him in adulthood. According to Reich, it is moments such as these that are detrimental to a child's psyche, later causing the individual to shift obedience from the father to a fascist power.

The repressive nature of the family, which both Hoel and Reich link with the rise of fascism, is first depicted in this childhood memory and later in what Hans has become—a Nazi collaborator. As the narrator begins to investigate the characteristics of his acquaintances who have become Nazis, he notices several similarities. However, according to the narrator, “Hans Berg hadde det verre enn de fleste av oss. Han var hetere, voldsommere enn de fleste, og tingene brøt seg heftigere i ham. Protest, revolt—og underkastelse” [Hans Berg had it harder than the rest of us. He was hotter, more

⁵² Hoel, *Møte ved milepelen*, 89.

⁵³ Hoel, *Møte ved milepelen*, 90.

⁵⁴ Hoel, *Møte ved milepelen*, 91.

violent than the rest of us, and things broke out more violently in him. Protest, revolt—and submission].⁵⁵ It is Hans' submission to the repressive nature instilled upon him by his father and his feelings of guilt that have led him to become a Nazi collaborator. At first, the narrator ponders why Hans decided to join the party, only to conclude at the end of the chapter that it was Hans' wife who convinced him to join the party in order to get a promotion that, in the end, he did not receive. Hans did not join the party because he believed, but simply as a final act of submission to his wife.

In the following two chapters in Part Two, after discovering an old photo album, the narrator investigates several of the men present in the album who have since become collaborators before finally reaching the true reason behind this exercise—Carl Heidenreich. His name, Carl Heidenreich, attests to the vital role that Reich's theories play in the novel. Heidenreich serves as the conclusion to the "Galleri av fortapte" (Gallery of the Damned). The section on Heidenreich begins, "Og så er vi omsider ved Carl Heidenreich. Jag vet ikke riktig hvorfor jeg synes han er den verste av dem. Jo, jeg tror allikevel jeg vet det" [And now we have finally reached Carl Heidenreich. I don't know exactly why I feel that he is the worst of them all. No, I think I actually do know why].⁵⁶ The sections that address Heidenreich are filled with the phrase, "I think," as the narrator, who is writing in 1947, knows what role Heidenreich has played in his own guilt but is hesitant to admit it. While the narrator writes that Heidenreich was not like the others, that he had no excuse for crossing over to the other side, the narrator simultaneously provides details that he knows are false—that Heidenreich has children, when the narrator knows that Heidenreich has no *biological* children. The reader begins to suspect that the narrator knows far more about Heidenreich than he is providing.

Before truly confronting his guilt and motive, the narrator shifts to recounting several of his love affairs during his youth, weaving his own father into the narrative. After recounting his brief affair with a woman named Gunvor, the narrative is interrupted by the chapter titled, "Samtale med

⁵⁵ Hoel, *Møte ved milepelen*, 112.

⁵⁶ Hoel, *Møte ved milepelen*, 165.

min far” (Conversation with my Father). The narrator’s father visits him during his time in Oslo, and we learn that the narrative’s father, like Hans Berg’s, is also religious, considering the city a place of sin. The narrator considers his childhood milder than that of Hans Berg, harboring no apparent hatred for his own father. He notes that his father has aged, and the memory of his father transitions to the memory of an evening six years before his father’s visit.

In the memory, his father warns the young narrator of the sins of the flesh, instilling fear and anxiety in the young boy. Previously, however, the young narrator had discovered an odd book hidden on his father’s bookshelf—*Hunger* by Knut Hamsun. This haunts the narrator as he listens to his father speak of sin and immorality, and when he exits his home, he laughs before realizing that he is truly afraid and feels guilty though he does not understand why. This instilling of fear with regards to sex has been detrimental for the narrator in his youthful affairs, despite claiming that, while sitting across from his father that day in the city, “nå var jeg frigjort, selvfølgelig. Helt frigjort” [now I was liberated, yes of course. Completely liberated].⁵⁷ We can read this with a hint of irony, as the narrator realizes while writing these accounts that he perhaps will never be liberated from his feelings of guilt regarding sexual relations.

In the final part of the novel, the narrator, as a member of the resistance movement, has been sent to finish the mission that his lodger Indregård failed to complete. While investigating a possible leak in a small seaside village, the narrator sees his own face in a crowd and realizes Kari/Marie—one of his love affairs and subsequent betrayals—did not have an abortion as he had previously thought. A part of him, though, knew all along that Kari had married Heidenreich and given birth to the narrator’s child. In this moment, the reader begins to understand the narrator’s conflicting accounts and the lengthy, winding narrative. He blames himself for his son becoming a collaborator, much like Indregård blames himself for Hans Berg becoming a Nazi, transforming this initial

⁵⁷ Hoel, *Møte ved milepelen*, 219.

account of Hans Berg into the first example of how one “can take the blame for someone else becoming a Nazi.”⁵⁸ This betrayal, as a result of the narrator’s fear which subsequently arose due to the anxiety that his father instilled in him as a young boy, has caused both his biological son and Heidenreich to become Nazis, according to the narrator’s logic. Hoel constructs this elaborate causation by using Reich’s theories of the patriarchal family, which ultimately leads back to that evening in the father’s study during the narrator’s youth.

Part Three ends with Heidenreich himself capturing and torturing the narrator for information, but the narrator knows that it is not just for information that he is being beaten. Rather, this is an act of revenge. The narrator considers the beating a way of paying for his apparent sins. Heidenreich, in this scene, encompasses the violent, brutal Nazi, seeking revenge for past wrongs. The narrator is then rescued by Kari/Marie, and he finally confesses his guilt. The reader knows that something has happened to the narrator’s family, but it is not until this conversation between the narrator and Kari/Marie that the reason behind his guilt becomes clear. The narrator, after Kari/Marie left him, remained obsessed with his memories of her, only marrying his wife because she loved him. His relationship with his wife was yet another betrayal. After he was arrested by the Nazi forces early in the occupation, his wife, thinking his arrest was more serious than it was, drowned herself and their son in the family bathtub.⁵⁹ While one son has become a Nazi due to the narrator’s inability to take responsibility as a young man, another son has died along with his mother due to the narrator’s neglect.

Finally, the reader understands the narrator’s own guilt and how it is tied, in a long-winded chain of causation, to his childhood and youth. However, there is one final plot twist within the postscript. Though this study of the ‘seed’ of fascism began with Indregård and Hans Berg, the narrator learns through Kari/Marie that the only reason Hans Berg joined the party was because Hans’ daughter was in love with the narrator and Kari/Marie’s son, Karsten. Though the narrator does not

⁵⁸ Dean Krouk, “Crises of Memory in Norway’s Occupation Novel,” 176.

⁵⁹ Krouk, “Crisis in Memory in Norway’s Occupation Novel,” 178.

directly state it, the reader knows that, according to the narrator's own logic, he is to blame for Hans Berg becoming a Nazi. The narrator collects his own 'gallery of the damned' as the result of two betrayals, first Kari/Marie and later his wife. His own familiar relations—with his father, his non-existent relation with his son Karsten, and finally his relationship with his wife and unnamed son—are the underlying reasons for his guilt. In the end, 'the spotless one' is not so spotless after all.

The patriarchal family, like in Hoel's novel, looms over the first half of Dagerman's *The Snake*, inciting *Angst* and feelings of guilt. The main character's guilt mirrors the *Angst* felt by the soldiers in the second half of the novel. Even before we are introduced to Irène, the main character, we meet her mother and her "rättögonen" [rat-like eyes] that, along with the snake, are a symbol of *Angst* in the novel.⁶⁰ The mother serves as the representation of the patriarchal family in Dagerman's novel. In chapter two, Irène is introduced, and her thoughts quickly turn to her mother and father. She thinks about going home for the day and how they will react:

Sen skulle dom kanske fråga hur det kom sej att det blev så där, att hon gick och inte kom hem mera. Och hon skulle svara, ja naturligtivs inte bönfällande på något sätt, att hon kanske hade varit lite dum, ja lite nervös, skulle hon säga, det lät bra mycket bättre, hon hade varit nere, skulle hon säga, man var ju så ibland, det skulle åtminstone mamma förstå.⁶¹

(Then they would perhaps ask how it got to be like this, that she left and no longer came home. And she would answer, of course not too apologetically, that perhaps she was a little silly, a little nervous she would say, that sounded better, she'd been feeling a bit down, she would say, it happens occasionally, that of course at least her mother would understand.)

Though we never find out why Irène has left home, we know she has left home because she was "nervous" and that "her mother would understand". What then has caused her to be so nervous as to leave home? In this moment, we understand that Irène has suffered some form of trauma or repression in her home, driving her into despair. In order to try to escape these feelings and the ever-present rat-like eyes of her mother, Irène leaves home but is confronted with these same stifling feelings in the figure of the soldier Bill.

⁶⁰Dagerman, *Ormen*, 7.

⁶¹ Dagerman, *Ormen*, 10.

The patriarchal family continues to haunt Irène through her relationship with the sadistic soldier Bill, who despite being a soldier in neutral Sweden, encompasses many characteristics of fascism like Carl Heidenreich in Hoel's novel. After imagining the encounter with her parents, she hears footsteps approaching the window of her dormitory as she lays naked in bed. She realizes that it is Bill, and even before he reaches the window, she imagines how he will attempt to coax her out, and she will refuse. However, as soon as she feels his hot breath coming through the window on her face, she changes her stance, instead she decides she will draw back the curtain of the window. He informs her that he is throwing a party that day and she must go on ahead to the cabin to prepare for the party. When she makes as if to refuse, he pulls his bayonet from his belt, resting it in the window. Not only does the bayonet serve as a phallic symbol in this scene, but it is also a symbol of the threat of violence and brutality, a defining characteristic of fascism according to Reich. Without truly understanding her actions, Irène leans over to kiss Bill. The bayonet falls, cutting her wrist, and both the kiss and the cut are "som två bett" [like two bites].⁶² She then nods submissively, agreeing to his plans. Though she has attempted to escape the repressive nature of her family and find sexual freedom and liberation in her relationship with Bill, she finds no such solace; instead, the cycle of sexual repression continues.

While on the train on the way to the cabin, Irène is confronted by her mother as she speaks with a soldier who unsuccessfully is trying to seduce her. Upon hearing her mother's voice, Irène is overcome with shame that the old woman is her mother. She will do anything to combat her shame and what her mother represents. Like Bill's bayonet, Irène's resistance takes on the image of a weapon and phallic symbol, in this case, a dagger. Dagerman writes, "Hon [hennes mor] måste gå, tänkte hon glödgat och dolken vippade mellan tänderna och det still hatet smög ut" [She [her mother] must go, she thought, red-hot, and the dagger trembled between her teeth and the silent hatred snuck out].⁶³ The heat of her thoughts is overwhelming and yet another symbol of violence—

⁶² Dagerman, *Ormen*, 13.

⁶³ Dagerman, *Ormen*, 37.

the dagger—threatens Irène’s freedom. In order to silence her mother and hide her shame, she pushes her mother from the train, presumably to her death. Though she kills her mother, what her mother represents does not die with her. After disembarking from the train, the rat-figure returns as she imagines the creature shut away in a box, slowly gnawing its way out, and no matter how many more boxes she puts the creature inside, it will eventually get out.

With the death of her mother, Irène now becomes the mother-figure in her encounter with an errand boy as she attempts to find her way to the cabin. As he approaches, she realizes that he is much younger than her, and when he blushes profusely, “hon deltar i hans förvirring som en förstående mor” [she shares in his embarrassment like an understanding mother].⁶⁴ She quickly asks the boy for directions, and he offers to accompany her. Irène notices his blood-stained apron, and the boy soon begins to describe his work for the butcher, explaining to her the slaughtering mask that they use to kill animals. The scene that began as innocent exchange between Irène and the young boy becomes warped by blood and his excited explanations of the methods of slaughtering and butchering. Irène continues to be oblivious to his obvious excitement at scenes of violence, continuing to smile at him like a mother would upon her child. She is genuinely shocked when he throws her down on the bed in the cabin and forces himself upon her. She yells at him to get off, calling him an “odjur” (“beast”, or literary a “non-animal”), but soon, she submits to him, lying passively as he rapes her, just like she has submitted repeatedly to Bill.⁶⁵

The final two chapters of first half of the novel become even more dream-like and absurd. The partygoers have arrived at the cabin, with several girls in tow. Bill, too, has brought a girl to Irène’s displeasure. Irène wants everyone to like her, going as far as to drink more than the others and to lead them in their drinking songs. She wishes she could be free like the other girls at the party, but she cannot achieve true sexual liberation as the memory of her mother continues to haunt

⁶⁴ Dagerman, *Ormen*, 50.

⁶⁵ Dagerman, *Ormen*, 60.

her. She exits the cabin and lays in the grass, watching Bill and the woman he has brought. In a culmination of Bill's cruelty, Bill, according to Irène, pushes the unsuspecting girl down into a well and covers it with the lid before returning to the party. At first, Irène is happy that Bill has abandoned the girl, named Wera, before realizing the severity of the event. She rushes to remove the lid and assists Wera in her escape, before dutifully taking Wera's place at Bill's side. Her happiness is soon shattered when Bill lets the snake, caught earlier in the grass at the military camp, free. Irène begins to scream as she is once again confronted with the memory of her mother. Finally, the first part of the novel ends with Bill knocking her to the ground, dashing all hope that the day and the death of her mother has been a dream.

What can we make of this first half of the novel and what relation does it hold to the second half? The first half of the novel depicts repression by the patriarchal family and society that is similar to Hoel's own construction of the affects the patriarchal family has on an individual's sexuality. Irène is overtaken by her anxiety, followed by her guilt after the death of her mother. She will do anything to escape these feelings, much like the soldiers of the second half of the novel. In order to understand the first half of the novel and its relation to Dagerman's critique of authoritarianism and Swedish neutrality, I will shift to Dagerman's anarcho-syndicalism that dominates the second half of the novel.

Analysis of the State and Anarcho-syndicalism

While Hoel was involved with psychoanalysis, Dagerman was an active member of the anarcho-syndicalist movement in Sweden. His political engagements are evident in *The Snake*, and I would now like to turn to the role of the state in both of the novels. Anarcho-syndicalism is both a political and anarchist school of thought that stems from principles of syndicalism—a worker's movement based on the idea of local workers' organizations and the promotion of workers' rights—

and wishes to abolish the wage-system as members of the school regard it as wage-slavery.⁶⁶ Reich, despite his critique of Marxism and its failing in stopping the rise of fascism, also investigates the repressive nature of the state, as the state uses the patriarchal family as its basis.⁶⁷ I align this theory, as well as Reich's theory on the social function of state capitalism, with Dagerman's anarcho-syndicalism when comparing the two novels in the following analysis.

To best understand the connection between anarcho-syndicalism and the Swedish state, I turn to Dagerman's own thoughts on the subject in his article titled, "Anarkism" (Anarchism) from 1946. He writes:

Sådana skräckens system som nazismen avslöjar ju ögonblickligen sin art genom ohämmad fysisk brutalitet, men en närmare eftertanke ger lätt vid handen att även mest demokratiska statsystem utöven en ångestprocess mot vanligt folk som varken spöken eller detektivromaner har den ringaste chans att konkurrera med.⁶⁸

(Systems of terror such as Nazism instantly reveal their nature through unbridled physical brutality, but a closer reflection easily suggests that even the most democratic state, too, practice a process of *Angst* against ordinary people toward which neither ghosts nor detective novels have the slightest chance to compete.)

Here, Dagerman argues that democratic states impose a similar sense of anxiety upon their people as Nazism does, though Nazism achieves this through brutality. As we see in the novel, this holds true for the Swedish soldiers who have been conscripted by the government—they live in a constant state of *Angst*. The second half of the novel explores the feelings of guilt and anxiety that plagues the characters, and while many of the characters try to escape rather than understand their *Angst*, at least two characters seek to find the source of their fears within the chapters "The Iron Band" and "The Flight that Never Was". However, the chapters leading up to and between these two demonstrate how simple escapism only provides a temporary comfort, furthering Dagerman's argument that it is the responsibility of the individual to seek to understand their individual *Angst*.

⁶⁶N. Y. Kolpinsky, "Preface," *Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism* (New York: International Publishers, 1972), 7-8.

⁶⁷ Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, 104.

⁶⁸ Stig Dagerman, "Anarkism", *Stig Dagerman och syndikalismen*, Federativ-serien, no. 14 (Stockholm: Federativ, 1974). Originally published in *40-tal* in February of 1946 and later in *Arbetaren* on 9 March 1946.

The first chapter within the second half of the novel is titled “Vi kan inte sova” (We Can’t Sleep) and introduces us to many of the central characters for this half of the novel and the central theme of *Angst*. The soldiers lay in bed, consumed by their own individual *Angst*, unaware that each soldier is experiencing the same feeling. However, soon their anxiety becomes collective, and they lay awake at night telling brutal and violent stories, including stories of bloody pub fights and nights with prostitutes. Rather than discuss the matter at hand—the Second World War and Swedish neutrality—the soldiers resort to violent tales of fights and sex, representative of the New Vitalist movement that Dagerman comes to critique in the final chapter of the novel. While Dagerman first portrays the New Vitalist mode of escapism in this first chapter, he rejects this school of thought in the final chapter which I will return to later in this paper.

The chapter entitled “The Iron Band” best represents Dagerman’s anarcho-syndicalist thoughts, not only on the Swedish welfare state, but also Swedish neutrality during the Second World War. The soldiers have spent a whole evening wandering from pub to pub, and their conversation soon shifts to a discussion of the state. The soldier Edmund declares that, “vi tror vi lever vårt eget liv men vi gör så helvite heller” [we think we are living our own life but the hell we are].⁶⁹ One of the soldiers, Kalle Glader (Happy Kalle), asks Edmund, “vems fan lever vi då? Carnegiegubbens eller Hitlers eller Johan på Snibbens?” [whose fucking life are we living then? Old man Carnegie’s or Hitler’s or Johan from Snibben’s?].⁷⁰ This mention of Hitler, inserted between a reference to a Swedish alcoholic beverage and a Swedish folksong, seems out of place at first, but as the chapter progresses, Dagerman constructs a comparison between the democratic state of Swe-

⁶⁹ Dagerman, *Ormen*, 160.

⁷⁰ Dagerman, *Ormen*, 160.

On the previous page, the soldiers see an advertisement for Carnegie port, a Swedish alcohol brand started in 1936 in Göteborg, with the image of a man with a pipe. “Johan på Snippen”, also known as “Bonnjazz” (Peasant Jazz) was a Swedish folk song written in 1922 by Theodor Larsson. “Snippen” means to be on the edge of something. The title of the song could either be translated as, “Johan from Snippen” or “Johan on the Edge”.

den and Nazi Germany. This first mention of Hitler, snuck in between two Swedish symbols—alcohol and folk music—is the reader’s introduction to Dagerman’s comparison between the Swedish state and fascism that he constructs in “The Iron Band.”

Edmund’s monologue on the repressive nature of the Swedish state consumes the chapter. He describes the Swedish state as providing a false sense of security and refers to the state as “trygghetsgivaren” (literally “the giver of security”).⁷¹ However, in that same line, he links the security-giver with danger and considers the state a threat to his own personal safety. This section illustrates Dagerman’s own opinions on the repressive nature of the democratic state. Both Nazism and the democratic state of Sweden have forced feelings of *Angst* and guilt upon their citizens. While Dagerman differentiates between the two—a Nazi state and a democratic one—by aligning Nazism with violence like in the figure of Bill, the security-giver of this chapter, too, takes on a violent persona. Dagerman writes of the security-giver as “en fysisk fara” [a physical danger], thus blurring the lines between Nazism and the democratic state of Sweden.⁷²

Edmund further develops his opinions on the ways that the security-giver threatens his own being and strips him of his individuality. He says to the soldiers present that, “man säljer sej var-enda dag för å få en liten trygghet, en liten skittrygghet, en billig försäkring för potatiskällaren å brännvinsskåpe. Sen accepterar man [tryggheten] utan att knysta den verkligt stora otryggheten” [you sell yourself every single day to get a little security, a little fucking security and cheap insurance for the potato cellar and the brandy cabinet. Then you accept [the security] without crushing the truly great insecurity].⁷³ The iron band is symbolic of an oppressive state and of losing one’s own will. This symbol of the iron band could in many ways be applied to fascism, but Dagerman uses this double symbolism to pose the question, does not the Swedish state, too, oppress its citizens by creating a false sense of security. By remaining neutral, the Swedish state gives a small sense of security which in turn leads to greater anxiety.

⁷¹ Dagerman, *Ormen*, 161.

⁷² Dagerman, *Ormen*, 161.

⁷³ Dagerman, *Ormen*, 160.

Edmund continues the discussion by addressing the inability to confront this fear created by submission to the state. He warns the men to, “kom ihåg: Bär det [järnbandet] inte som var du en martyr, som järnbandet va en törnekrona. Du bär de inte på grund av egna förtjänster utan för mångas feghet å din egen otillräcklighet” [remember: Do not wear it [the iron band] like a martyr, like the iron band is a crown of thorns. You bear it not for your own merits but for the cowardice of many because of your own inadequacy].⁷⁴ This feeling of security is a burden created by the cowardice of others that each individual must bear and is symbolic of the anxiety created by a false sense of security. In this symbolic speech by Edmund, Dagerman criticizes Swedish neutrality and the refusal to participate in the fight against fascism, while simultaneously illustrating the role of the individual—each individual suffers due to the actions of the state, and therefore, each individual must work to combat and understand their *Angst*.

The state has both threatened Edmund’s own individuality but has more directly threatened his safety by conscripting him into the army. It is interesting to note that the symbol of repression is an *iron band*, much like the iron that Sweden continued to sell to Germany throughout the initial years of the war, further strengthening the relationship between Swedish neutrality and the symbol of the iron band. Thompson, too, makes a similar connection between Dagerman’s critique of the welfare state and Swedish neutrality: “How many conscripts would be in the army were it not for the fact that they are forced to enlist in accordance with laws brought in by the state which is supposedly providing the individual with security?”⁷⁵ Even though Sweden remained neutral, this neutrality, as seen throughout the novel, has given rise to a constant state of *Angst*. By simultaneously comparing Sweden to a Nazi state while also problematizing the Swedish policy of neutrality, Dagerman has constructed both a critique of Nazism, but also of states such as Sweden who he believed provided its citizens with a false sense of security.

⁷⁴ Dagerman, *Ormen*, 163.

⁷⁵ Thompson, *Stig Dagerman*, 27.

The soldier Gideon, a member of the bourgeoisie, becomes the focus of the chapter, “Ormen” (The Snake), and his identity is central to his significance—he is an example of the Swedish citizen who has lost his individuality to the state. Thompson argues that Gideon is a representation of the “old order which has been shaken by the Second World War and his [Gideon’s] standards...are those of order, cleanliness, duty and tradition.”⁷⁶ He slowly becomes aware of his *Angst*, and the barracks suffocate him with the memories of dead soldiers, the dirt and grime of the floors, and the smell of sawdust. In the end, he relies upon order and rules imposed by the Swedish state to escape his feelings of anxiety. He asks his fellow soldiers “är inte ordningen det nödvändigaste av allt” [is discipline not the most essential thing of all], and while he tries to convince them of this, no one listens, and he remains a loner.⁷⁷ Gideon, does however, realize the symbolic meaning of the snake—that the snake was just a symbolic representation of the soldier’s *Angst*, and that even after the snake is killed, their *Angst* has not gone away.⁷⁸

The first half of the novel is dominated by metaphors and symbolism—the bayonet, dagger, snake, rat, and the box in which the rat resides, and the second half of the novel, too, utilizes symbols; however, Dagerman’s political message is clear within chapters such as “The Iron Band” and “The Snake”. While the significance of the first half of the novel is ambiguous, the second half is clear—it is the responsibility of each individual to acknowledge and seek to find the source of their *Angst*, and that sex and violence—key principles of the New Vitalist school—may provide a temporary sense of security. However, like the Swedish welfare state and neutrality, these escapes fall short. Dagerman elaborately weaves his discussion of fascism and authoritarianism with that of Swedish neutrality in the novel.

Part One of *Meeting at the Milestone*, specifically the chapter titled, “Sammenbrud” (Breakdown), reads almost like a philosophical exercise, resembling many of Hoel’s essays written during

⁷⁶ Thompson, *Stig Dagerman*, 28.

⁷⁷ Dagerman, *Ormen*, 186.

⁷⁸ The figure of the man who gives into discipline is also present in Dagerman’s *The Island of the Doomed* in the figure of Boy Larus who, too, loses his individuality in favor of accepting discipline by a higher authority, Captain Wilson, who is symbolic of both elitism and fascism.

the Second World War. Though the story of Indregård and Hans Berg gives Part One some narrative consistency and sense of destination, it is dominated by Hoel's investigation, by way of the narrator, of the collaboration phenomena in relation to the resistance movement. Indregård, while speaking with the narrator, claims that he has begun to hate the Norwegian people. This section is key as it demonstrates the shift from Reich's theories on the patriarchal society previously discussed to the question of the nation-state's role in the prevalence of Nazism. Hoel merges the narrator's own opinions with those of Indregård, reiterating the role of Indregård as a part of the narrator's own 'inner-yard':

De [de norske kollaboratører] var rå, sjelløse folk, de aller fleste av dem. Avsporet, avstumpet, forpøblet—i den grad at en ofte måtte spørre seg selv: Men de må da ha vært barn engang—de må da ha ledd, og grått, og sterkt armene ut etter en de var glad i...de må ha vært forelsket en gang i ungdommen, må ha ledd og grått og tenkt: Jeg er lykkelig! Verden er min!

Men nei. De sist nevnte tingene kunne de neppe ha opplevd, de fleste av dem. Forrælsen gikk dypere enn som så. Den gikk undertiden så dypt at en kunne spørre seg selv om de noen gang hadde vært mennesker. Og en spurte seg, andre ganger, om det var noe galt ved selve [norske] folket, siden det kunne frembringe slike skapninger.⁷⁹

(They [the Norwegian collaborators] were raw, soulless people, the vast majority of them. Derailed, blunt, mocked—to the extent that one often had to ask oneself: But they must have been children once—they must have laughed and cried, and stretched out their strong arms to someone they loved ... they must have been in love once in their youth, must have laughed and cried and thought: I am happy! The world is mine!

But no. They could hardly have experienced the latter, most of them. The brutalization went deeper than that. It sometimes went so deep that one had to wonder if they had ever been human. And one wondered, other times, if there was anything wrong with the [Norwegian] people themselves, since it could produce such creatures.)

Here, Hoel begins with the idea of the innocent child who once knew love but somewhere became brutal and cruel like Hans Berg (who we have not yet been introduced to at this point in the novel). Then, by way of the narrator's retelling of Indregård's monologue, he claims that some never experienced love and that the brutalization ran deeper than that. Finally, he poses the question: Is there not something wrong with the people, and the nation, itself.

While Dagerman criticizes Sweden's actions during the war, Hoel focuses more upon the fate of the Norwegian people at the close of the war and into the postwar period. Hoel questions the

⁷⁹ Hoel, *Møte ved milepelen*, 33-34.

narrative of the ‘good Norwegians’ versus the evil Nazi collaborators by discussing the motives for why people either joined the resistance movement or became collaborators. Indregård, in his conversation with the narrator, constructs different levels of guilt—farmers who traded with both the Germans and the Norwegian resistance movement throughout the war, those who were simply misled or narrow-minded, and men who joined the National Socialist party to fight on the frontlines in Finland against the Russians. He also mentions members of the resistance movement who were “pisket til heltemot på en eller annen måte” [whipped into being heroic in some way] or joined the resistance movement in order to secure their position and to profit.⁸⁰ While the postwar trials in Norway painted the issue of collaboration in terms of black and white, Hoel illustrates that there are varying levels of guilt.

Hoel addresses the question of what to do with those Norwegian who collaborated with the Nazi occupation forces after the end of the war. Even before the war, according to Indregård, “gitt av regjeringen i London—den skjærer alle [de kollaboratører] over én kam. Ingen blir hjulpet” [the government in London groups them [the collaborators] all together. No one is helped].⁸¹ Many of the collaborators will be given the same punishment, even despite their varying levels of guilt. In the years following the war, the death penalty was reintroduced to punish the collaborators. The death penalty is “et lån fra Hitler. Et dobbelt lån fra Hitler” [a loan from Hitler. A double loan from Hitler].⁸² Hoel compares the actions of postwar Norway with those of Hitler during the Second World War. The first loan is the death penalty itself, while it takes on a double meaning as it is applied to a defined group of people, namely the collaborators. Like Dagerman’s discussion of the security provided by Swedish neutrality that is blanketed over the entire population, Hoel alludes to the fact that these war trials did not provide justice but were broadly applied to a wide group of collaborators with ranging motives and levels of guilt.

⁸⁰ Hoel, *Møte ved milepelen*, 38.

⁸¹ Hoel, *Møte ved milepelen*, 44.

⁸² Hoel, *Møte ved milepelen*, 52.

Hoel creates yet another parallel between the Norwegian state, or at least the Norwegian people themselves, and the collaborators. In the initial outbreak of war, many Norwegians volunteered to fight in the first war between Finland and Russia, while Russia was still aligned with Nazi Germany. Many joined because of “denne korstog-stemningen, som gikk så langt at en ung mann som ikke reiste som frivillig, følte seg som litt av en forræder” [the crusading mood, that went so far as to a young man who did not volunteer would feel a little bit like a traitor].⁸³ However, those who joined during the second war between Finland and Russia, after Russia had joined the Allied powers and Germany came to Finland’s aid, were branded as traitors. On their return to Norway, they were sent to prison, even those young men who joined for noble motives and grew up hearing Russia referred to “som selve djevelen” [as the devil itself] and wanted only to assist their Nordic brothers.⁸⁴ These men, Indregård claims, do not need time in jail but help. Norway should explain to them their mistakes and help them upon the right path. He refers to Norway’s treatment of these soldiers as “barbari” [barbarism], much like we regard the actions of Nazi Germany as barbaric; instead, “vi straffer [dem], veltet dermed ansvaret fra oss” [we punish [them] and shove the responsibility away from us].⁸⁵ According to the novel, rather than accept their role in the fate of these young men, the Norwegian government places universal blame upon them and all who collaborated during the Second World War, no matter their motive.

Hoel begins with the question of resistance and collaboration during the occupation of Norway before shifting to the narrator’s own guilt in the latter two parts of the novel. This shift does not negate the significance of the occupation or directly compare the two, rather it promotes “vigilance about the self-deceptive mask of innocence or self-righteousness that allow people to become complicit in what they ostensibly oppose.”⁸⁶ The issue of complicity is central in the novel, as is the

⁸³ Hoel, *Møte ved milepelen*, 53.

⁸⁴ Hoel, *Møte ved milepelen*, 53

⁸⁵ Hoel, *Møte ved milepelen*, 54.

⁸⁶ Krouk, “Crisis in Memory in Norway’s Occupation Novel,” 258.

question of guilt and motive. Much like Dagerman's iron band, Hoel seeks to question the repressive nature of the Norwegian state in the immediate postwar period. Both Dagerman and Hoel highlight the failure of their two governments in addressing the issue of fascism, instead adapting similar policies of repression.

Literature in the Fight Against Fascism

The two novels do not simply end with their critique of the actions of Norway and Sweden during the war and the prevalence of fascism, but they offer a possible solution. Sigurd Hoel highlighted this possible solution even before the war, in a lecture given in 1936 to the *Norske Studenterforening* (Norwegian Student Association). Sigurd Hoel said, "litteraturens viktigaste oppgave her og nå er å utnytte den frihet vi enda har til å søke hindret at denna friheten blir gjort enda mindre" [the most important task of literature here and now is to utilize the freedom we still have to try to prevent this freedom from being further diminished].⁸⁷ Throughout his essays written after the rise of Hitler and in the postwar period, Hoel highlights the importance of literature in, not just the preservation of history, but in keeping history from repeating itself. *Meeting at the Milestone* is one such example of literature in the fight to preserve these freedoms that Hoel spoke about in 1936. This novel, told through the perspective of 'the spotless one,' seeks to do far more than to simply preserve history and the experiences of the occupation period, but it seeks to understand it.

The act of writing and recording is central in the novel. The task at hand, according to the narrator, is sorting out the papers he has written during and after the war, though that task soon becomes overshadowed by another task—a search for the source of the narrator's own guilt. While seeking to understand why so many of his acquaintances became Nazis, he recognizes his own guilt. The narrator further elaborates on what he hopes to achieve by writing as he looks through the photo album from his youth:

Du har kjent en rekke folk som er blitt nazister. At de ble det, må ha en eller annen grunn. Kanskje det fins en felles grunn. Kanskje du kan oppdage den, eller iallfall komme i

⁸⁷ Sigurd Hoel, "Kulturkamp og litteratur" (The Culture Fight and Literature), *Tanker i mørketid* (Thoughts in a Dark Time) (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1945), 18.

nærheten av den, mens du skriver. I så fall er det viktig det du gjør. Det er viktig å komme på det rene med det der...du famler og søker etter årsaken—eller årsakene. Kunne du finne dem, så er det en mulighet for at slike uhyggelige ting kunne hindres i fremtiden.⁸⁸

(You knew a number of people who became Nazis. There must be a reason why. Perhaps there is a common reason to all. Perhaps you can discover it, or at least get close to it, as you write. If so, the work you're doing is important...you search and fumble for the cause—or causes. If you could find them, there is a possibility that such horrible things might be prevented in the future.)

The narrator recognizes that he had a role in these “horrible things” that have occurred because of the betrayal of Kari/Marie and his wife. Writing, then, is not only a method of preservation, but also a method of processing and to reflect on their own actions and the effects they have.

Hoel directly addresses the role of the Norwegian people in the postwar period within the essay “One of Our Duties.” He writes, “vi—som ett av de okkuperte folk—har både særlige betingelser for og en særlig plikt til å avsløre nazismen, ned til dens dypeste røtter, grundig, avgjørende, en gang for alle” [we—as one of the occupied peoples—have both particular qualifications for and a particular duty to expose Nazism, down to its deepest roots, thoroughly, decisively, once and for all].⁸⁹ To keep these events from repeating themselves in the future, it is the role of every Norwegian—even those who were members of the resistance—to seek to get to the very root of Nazism and expose it, no matter how much of an “ubehaglig arbeide” [uncomfortable job] it is.⁹⁰

The purpose of literature is a central theme in Dagerman’s novel as well. Dagerman, who was both an author and journalist, criticizes Swedish censorship and highlights the role of the writer. In the chapter, “The Iron Band,” Edmund claims that he has been sending many letters to the security-giver, to which he was granted no reply. He then wrote to newspapers and published articles about the relationship between the individual and the state, but they garnered no result. As previously stated, there was no formal censorship that stopped newspapers from being printed during the Second World War. Instead, the government relied upon publishers and newspapers to adhere to

⁸⁸ Hoel, *Møte ved milepelen*, 82-83.

⁸⁹ Hoel, “En av våre opgave,” 155.

⁹⁰ Hoel, “En av våre opgave,” 156.

their recommendations. In this section of the novel, it appears that Dagerman is criticizing this very policy, going so far as to mention *Dagens Nyheter* (The Daily News), a daily newspaper that was criticized for complying with the government's request to not criticize Nazi Germany.⁹¹ Despite writing and distributing pamphlets, no one has listened to Edmund's critique of the Swedish state; instead, the only notices he will get in *Dagens Nyheter* are his death notice after questioning the state and the notice for "Lediga platser" [available positions].⁹² His objection is futile—someone else will simply take over his place in the machine that is the Swedish state.

Dagerman's argument for the importance of the writer is continued in the last chapter, "The Flight that Never Was." The allegorical Dagerman-figure, Scriver, finds himself in a hotel room with a bard and a cultural critic as he muses on his own *Angst*. Scriver declares that his *Angst* is the greatest in the world due to his being a writer, and that "diktaren, enligt min mening, bör vara en symbol för all människor världen över, som inte dras med ambitionen att söka förkväva sin fruktan... människan av ångest symboliseras av den som gått till botten med sin fruktan" [a writer, according to my definition, should be a symbol for all people all over the world who are not tempted to try to suffocate their fear... an *Angst*-ridden person is symbolized by somebody who's gotten to the bottom of his fear].⁹³ He rejects the romanticization of anxiety, rather it is the duty of the writer to depict his own *Angst*, no matter how uncomfortable.⁹⁴

Scriver links the symbolism of the snake with the anti-intellectual movement that has, in many ways, been depicted in the characters of the previous chapters who have done all that they can

⁹¹ See Göran Leth's "Mediernas svek i skuggan av Förintelsen" (The Media's Betrayal in the Shadow of the Holocaust) in *Sverige ohh Nazityskland: Skuldfrågor och moraldebatt* (2007) for more on the policies of individual newspapers, including *Dagens Nyheter*, in regards to the censorship.

⁹² Dagerman, *Ormen*, 162.

⁹³ Dagerman, *Ormen*, 205.

⁹⁴ These ideas are also present in the final essay of *Tysk höst*, "Litteratur och lidande" (Literature and Suffering).

See also Roland Schröder's published dissertation, *Stig Dagerman—Litterature engagée im Schweden der Nachkriegszeit* (2001; Stig Dagerman—Litterature engagée in Postwar Sweden). Schröder analyzes the works of Stig Dagerman through the lens of the French idea of *litterature engagée* (engaged literature). However, only four pages are devoted to an analysis of *The Snake*, focusing primarily of the symbolism of the snake and the sun.

to escape and ignore their anxiety. To ignore the snake and to refuse to be afraid is to stop thinking, according to Scriver. The bard rejects Scriver's comments, insisting that it is the job of the poet to liberate and show how there is nothing at all to be afraid of and that the ideal is security. Scriver's rebuttal of the bard's comments echoes those of Edmund's critique of the security-giver; instead, he sees the role of the writer as the opposite—to create unease and write about his own *Angst*.

The novel ends with a bizarre analogy that goes terribly wrong for the character of Scriver. He compares the anti-intellectual movement and the act of ignoring one's *Angst* to a person who climbs out a window only to climb in through a different window but into the same room. In order to prove his point, he decides to climb out the window of the hotel room to the neighboring building, and after passing the second window that would lead to the same room, he falls to his death before reaching the third window and the other room. His death does not undermine the ideas developed throughout the novel; rather I agree with Thompson's argument that, "Scriver's death illustrates the point that awareness of one's *Angst* and its causes does not put the individual in a comfortable and secure position."⁹⁵ The death of Scriver illustrates the length that the individual writer must go to combat their *Angst* and the possible dire consequences. Though Scriver dies, he has written about and spoken openly about his anxiety to others thus fulfilling what he claims is the role of the writer.

Both Dagerman and Hoel recognize the importance of the writer in the fight against fascism in a postwar world. It is not the job of the writer to romanticize anxiety or to stray from writing about difficult topics—quite the opposite. The postwar writer must not only preserve history so that we do not forget what has occurred, but the writer must seek the source or circumstances that led to the rise of fascism, no matter the consequences.

IV. Conclusion

⁹⁵ Thompson, 32.

In their novels, Stig Dagerman and Sigurd Hoel react to fascism and address the wartime experiences of Sweden and Norway, constructing their critiques of the wartime actions of their own countries and fascism in remarkably similar ways. In this paper, I have highlighted how Reichian theories on sexual repression and anarcho-syndicalist theories on the state function within the novel. Both novels are also a testament to the role of the writer as depicted in the novel. Hoel, like his narrator, has chosen to write about this dark period of history in Norway and to seek to understand the nature of fascism. Dagerman addresses the controversial nature of Swedish neutrality during the Second World War while also warning against the development of future authoritarian states.

Sexual relationships and anxiety stemming from sexual repression are key features to both of the novels and prove crucial in understanding the authors' commentaries on fascism, neutrality, and collaboration. Hoel, heavily influenced by the theories of Reich, depicts sexual repression in childhood by a violent, religious father-figure as the reason behind the rise of fascism. Dagerman, on the other hand, illustrates how neither sex nor violence—a characteristic of fascism—are sufficient escape mechanisms in dealing with one's *Angst*. The multitude of narratives all serve a purpose, whether it be to illustrate the effects of childhood sexual repression by the patriarchal family or to problematize Swedish neutrality and the punishment of Norwegian collaborators.

Dagerman illustrates the controversial and repressive nature of Swedish neutrality and the repressive nature of this neutrality. The symbol of the iron band is both a representation of the controversial trade with Germany during the Second World War and the repressive nature of the state itself. Dagerman describes the security-giver in similar terms that one might expect fascism to be associated with—violence, repression, and control. Hoel, too, compares the actions of Norway, primarily at the close of the war and in the postwar period, with Nazism. He juxtaposes the actions of Nazi Germany with the reinstatement of the death penalty in order to punish the collaborators and provide the Norwegian public a sense of closure and justice. Both authors highlight that, even though the war has ended, the threat of fascist ideology persists

In conclusion, I sought to investigate and analyze two examples of the immediate reaction to the Second World War in two countries that had drastically different wartime experiences—both one another and from the other countries involved in the war. Not only do the novels address the wartime experiences of Sweden and Norway and the dilemmas the two nations faced in regards to neutrality and occupation, but the novels also leave us with a message: each individual must not hide from their guilt and *Angst*, but face it head-on, and in the case of the writer, write about it to keep history from repeating itself.

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