

Fractional Feelings in Knut Hamsun's *Hunger*

Early in Knut Hamsun's novel *Hunger* [Sult 1890] this happens: The novel's main character walks down the hill from the palace and overtakes two women. He passes them by and barely brushes the arm of one woman. She blushes just then, and the first-person narrator perceives her as being singularly beautiful. He experiences a powerful emotional reaction, which is followed by a surprising whim: he feels an irresistible urge to make the woman afraid. He makes up a name for her, Ylajali, and makes contact with her by telling her that she is losing her book. The woman has no book with her at all and becomes confused. But the narrator does not give in. He makes contact again and repeats the fabrication about the book. The other woman states that he must be drunk, and the two walk on. The narrator follows them all the way until they enter a house. Then he sees her at a window, their eyes meet, and he goes on his way as he feels her eyes following him.

The emotional reactions described in this event appear spontaneous and physical; they are intense and they lead to actions that are difficult to relate causally to the feelings. There is little doubt that the reactions are induced by emotional impulses. In that sense it is a matter of what Keith Oatley would call *reactive emotions*. Oatley describes reaction emotions in this way: "Reactive emotions occur when a concern, a project, an aspiration, has fared either better or worse than we had expected" (Oatley 2004, 10). The element of unexpected change is likely applicable to the episode in *Hunger*, but it is not likely that there was any real project, aspiration or motivation on the part of the main character. The entire episode begins quite accidentally and spontaneously. Oatley does also mention *odd* reactive emotions, but only in the next instance to explain them causally when hidden elements and connections are revealed. Such causal attribution is part of both psychologists' and literary scholars' normal activity. Considerable ingenuity and imagination have also been used to explain the *Hunger* hero's strange feelings and actions. For example, Atle Kittang writes about this scene in his book *Luft, vind, ingenting: Hamsuns desillusjonsromanar frå Sult til Ringen sluttet* (1984) and contributes the following *attribution*:

By means of the "unheard of" name, he wants to conjure up a beauty that he is left out of and does not own. Language, the conjured name, will remove the

chasm between subject and object. But precisely because it is a “name” and not a “thing,” the magical language itself becomes an affirmation of the chasm, also because it is, in its essence, a private language.

(Kittang 1984,42).

Personally I think it is difficult to follow the reasoning here, and I frankly believe that some of the fascination of *Hunger* is precisely because the reader's causal attribution now and then comes to a halt or appears as quite difficult to accomplish, let alone argue in favor of. It is interesting to see that the attempts in understanding and the difficulties in accomplishing this belong not just to the history of literary reception, but starts in the work itself. The *Hunger* hero makes an attempt to explain the woman's reaction: “Suddenly she blushes and becomes wonderfully beautiful, I don't know why, maybe from a word she's heard spoken by a passerby, maybe only because of some silent thought of her own. Or could it be because I had touched her arm?” (Hamsun 1998, 11).³⁵ Then he wants to explain his own reaction: “I was in an irritable mood, annoyed with myself because of the mishap with the pencil and highly stimulated by all the food I had put away on an empty stomach” (ibid.). But it is a matter of tentative assumptions without clear conclusions (“I don't know why”). Kittang's contention is that the transition from affect to action is a matter of a change from “beauty” and “consciousness of beauty” to sadism, that is “the conversion of aggression to a sexual urge.” But rather than beauty, could it not just as well concern shyness or embarrassment? To me Kittang's interpretation appears a little too much like an *attribution*. We are told that the Ylajali name is a direct result of the tension between sadism and the desire for contact, without the connection being made particularly clear, and the whole thing boils down to *desire*. From my experience with the text this appears as an example of reading a preconceived explanatory model (psychoanalysis) *into* the text instead of reading meaning *from* it. (The *Hunger* hero's aggressiveness is not at all tied just to erotic relations.) Personally, I prefer the *Hunger* hero's more cautious and experimental suppositions.

A different approach than Oatley's *reactive emotions* or Kittang's psychoanalysis could be Brian Massumi's conception of affects, where intensity plays a larger role than the qualification of what type of feelings are concerned. Massumi emphasizes the physical and pushes the cognitive aside. Spontaneity and speed are decisive for Massumi. The affects are “unqualified,” they are “irreducibly bodily

35. English translations from *Sult* are from the Sverre Lyngstad translation of 1996. (Penguin edition of 1998.)

and autonomic” (Massumi 2002, 28). He even discusses them as “virtual.” They are of such short duration that they happen “too quickly, actually, to have happened” (30). They will have been recorded by the consciousness, Massumi says, but consciousness is “subtractive and inhibitive.” Both the detachment from a conscious project or motivation and the distinctly physical forms of reaction, in the *Hunger* hero as well as in the woman, could point towards utilizing Massumi’s affect concept. But, as I have pointed out, with reference to Antonio Damasio for one, such a division between body and consciousness is uncertain. In Hamsun’s text it is also clearly stressed that the little, accidental emotional stimulus that sets the scene in motion leads to both an emotional process and a conscious reflection parallel with reactions and actions: “I was at that moment fully conscious of playing a mad prank, without being able to do anything about it” (Hamsun, 12). Yet what seems “Massumi-ish” is that the reactions above all are characterized by their intensity, something that is perhaps even more striking in a succession of other episodes in the novel. Qualifying the feelings is more problematic. Hamsun himself called them “fractional feelings”: There are fractional feelings, even today, an unconscious, almost uninterpreted additional mental life” (Hamsun 2009, 143). In *Hunger* he calls them “trivial incidents, miserable trifles” (Hamsun 1998, 16). The point of focusing on these type of feelings is their aspect of undermining or deconstruction. Fractional feelings or trifles sometimes prove to be stronger determinators than conscious choices, values, ideas or perceptions of reality. The phenomenon is perhaps most clearly depicted in Knut Hamsun’s *Hunger* and in Ola Hansson’s little book *Sensitiva amorosa* (1887).³⁶

One can safely say the same about *Hunger* as one can about several of Dostoevsky’s narratives; affects are often the driving force in the epic movement. The changes between different emotions are generally of just as much importance in the story as external events. The changes in mood of the *Hunger* hero are frequent and they steer his activities. In contrast to the case of Dostoevsky, where ideological interpretations have dominated the history of reception, in the reception of *Hunger*; it is often precisely emotions, moods and the inner mental life that has been of the most interest. So yet another *Hunger* reading with the emphasis on affects would probably not bring astounding new insights. Nevertheless, the novel contains depictions of types of affects that should be represented in a reasonably wide discussion of affective narratology. The point here will not be literary historical and developed in the research tradition of New Romanticism or Modernism,

36. Eivind Tjønneland tries to establish a direct contact between Hamsun and Hansson in his article “Sult og ‘Fra det ubevidste Sjæleliv’” in Dingstad, *Den Litterære Hamsun*. See also Andersen 1992, 328 ff.

nor shall I contribute to the tradition of psychoanalytical research. I wish to stick to the endeavor of scrutinizing the actual relationship between emotion and story.

Right from the beginning the epic plot appears as a series of mood changes in the main character's mind, initiated by small trivial stimuli. The *Hunger* hero awakens in his room at a boarding house fairly unhappy because of the recent worsening conditions of his life. Still, as soon as he goes outside, the noisy traffic in the street cheers him up and puts him in a good mood. Then he sees an old cripple ahead of him and the feelings shift again. At first he is irritated, then embittered, and so the first strange act is underway. He pawns his vest in order to give the old man a *krone*. This brings about yet another emotional change. He has fifty *øre* remaining, and with a prospect for breakfast, he begins to find existence better again. However, the old man will not accept his gift; he probably understands that the benefactor is worse off than he is. The *Hunger* hero feels that his sense of honor has been affronted and once again becomes irritated. Then he has breakfast, calmness descends, and his spirits improve greatly. But indignation strikes again when he discovers that he had forgotten his pencil in the vest that he pawned. And it is on his way back to "uncle" that he meets the two women in the scene we focused upon. In other words: no fewer than seven quick emotional shifts in the course of a few opening pages, and largely induced by trifles.

FRACTIONAL FEELINGS

Hunger gives many examples of the impact of fractional feelings. Perhaps to some extent one can utilize some of the concepts that Brian Massumi employs to classify especially short, physical affects in his chapter "The Bleed. Where Body Meets Image" from his book cited earlier (Massumi 2002, 46 ff). Here Massumi differentiates between *proprioception*, *exteroception* and *interoception*. These concepts can be included as specifications of what I have earlier called affective sources of stimuli. Proprioception are impulses that come from the body itself, from muscles and ligaments. Primarily it is a matter of the body's internal sensation of the positions of body parts. Proprioception has been called the sixth sense. Applied to *Hunger*, it would be out of the question to use the concept in a strictly medical sense, but nevertheless it makes good sense to allow for stimuli of fractional feelings that come from the body itself, as opposed to exteroceptive and interoceptive stimuli. Naturally there are many examples of internal bodily impulses in *Hunger*. The very title refers to a physical state that affects the subject on several different levels. It happens time after time in the course of the narrative that the bodily reactions to lack of food places the *Hunger* hero into peculiar affective, physical and sensory states. In the little scene I have chosen to focus upon as

a point of departure, there is also an example of a reference to what one could call *proprioception*: The Hunger hero is in “an irritable mood” for one thing because he is “highly stimulated by all the food [he] had put away on an empty stomach” (Hamsun, 11). Even if here there is talk of food for once, instead of lack of food, there is no doubt that it is a question of stimuli that come from the body itself.

At any rate, even the initiating stimulus for the scene is what Massumi would call an exteroceptive incident, a tactile little fractional event: “As I walked by I brushed the sleeve of one of them” (11). The *Hunger* hero is himself aware that perhaps this was the scene’s commencing stimulus, but he also keeps open the possibility that it could have been what Massumi would call an *interoceptive* impulse, a *visceral sensibility*: maybe the woman blushes because of “some silent thought of her own” (ibid.). The most discussed occurrence in the scene, the invention of the name Ylajali, also represents such an interoceptive event: “As I stand there looking her straight in the eye, a name I’d never heard before pops into my head, a name with a nervous, gliding sound: Ylajali” (11–12).

All three of these types of stimuli repeat over and over again in *Hunger*. In a sense, the *proprioceptive* variant dominates in the sense that it is the phenomenon of hunger that is the main subject of the novel. But the novel is a classic not just because it describes hunger, but because, in addition, it portrays emotional reactions and states of consciousness that are directly as well as indirectly related to the physical phenomenon of hunger. The affective and consciousness aspects of the phenomenon are just as important as the physical.

INTENSITY

The effects of Hamsun’s fractional feelings are astounding. *Hunger* is a first person novel and the representation is, as Dorrit Cohn has stressed, a paradigmatic example of so-called consonant first-person narration, that is, the perspective of the narrator and the narrating self are very close together.³⁷ There is no correcting authority in the story. This implies that what is first and foremost at issue in *Hunger* is what I have previously called performative emotionality (see the Dostoevsky analysis). Analytical emotionality is not literally represented in the text, except that the Hunger hero often reflects over his states of consciousness. Still, they do not represent confidence inspiring analytical insight to any great degree. The *Hunger* hero is in thrall to his emotions, he does not have power over them, neither performatively nor analytically.

37. See Cohn, pp. 155–158 ff.

It appears several times from the reactions of other people that the *Hunger* hero's notions are perceived as gibberish. In Hamsun's novel we can view this activity as a very cautious use of what I have earlier called emotional trigger figures. In the scene I chose to focus on, this first appears in the confusion of the woman, then by her friend's repudiation and characteristic: "he's drunk. Can't you see the man is drunk!" (Hamsun, 13). The same thing happens in other scenes, whether it involves beggars, people he encounters by chance on a park bench or patrolling policemen who react. The *Hunger* hero appears as more or less insane. The hero himself realizes that he clearly makes a suspicious impression on others, and reflects on it: "The man was still keeping an eye on me, maybe I had somehow aroused his suspicion; standing or walking, I felt his suspicious glance following me, and I didn't like being persecuted by this individual" (139). The aberrations can come about in several ways, but a general characteristic is the intensity of the emotional outburst, often in the form of anger or rage. Several of the *Hunger* hero's outbursts of rage are reminiscent of what I have called *free floating emotions* in connection with Dostoevsky's Dmitri. The difference is that the *Hunger* hero does not resort to violence, as Dimitri does, for example with the staff captain. Independent of the nature of the feeling, it is a matter of a loss of control, as with Dmitri. Feelings and strange whimsies take possession of him, and he cannot manage to stop himself, even in instances where he knows he is heading for disaster.

The most intensive scene of rage follows directly after an intense physical experience of hunger, and the aggressiveness is not directed towards another person, but towards God or fate. The *Hunger* hero has just been so down and out that he has sought out a butcher and asked for a bone for his dog. He gnaws on it, but the few shreds of meat left on the bone just cause him to vomit. He tries to force the pieces down, but his stomach refuses to tolerate them. He then is overcome with weeping and wrath.

Since it avails me nothing however hard I try, I fling the bone at the gate, bursting with impotent hatred and carried away with rage, and shout fierce threats up at the heavens, screaming God's name hoarsely and savagely and crooking my fingers like claws... (136)

An uncompromising revolt against God follows. He yells and screams curses towards heaven, all alone in a narrow passage, and his entire body is exhausted from the emotional outburst:

Quivering with rage and exhaustion, I keep on standing in the same place, still whispering oaths and insults, catching my breath after my fit of crying, broken and limp after my insane explosion of anger. I stood there maybe for half an hour, gasping and whispering while holding on to the gate. (137)³⁸

Often the uncontrolled outbursts of feelings and whims lead the *Hunger* hero to act in a directly self-undermining way. Many scenes have the character of absurdity. One could perhaps say that some of these reactions appear to function in a similar way as those which Joseph LeDoux has called “low road” reactions, that is, rapid signals are sent that bypass consciousness. But it is certainly not a matter of reactions that can give the same historical evolutionary explanation as, for example, fear/flight reactions. If the forms of reaction are similar, they still nonetheless have differing explanations.

SUSPENSION

An effort in characterizing the special emotional states can in my opinion be tied to three main concepts: suspension, super sensitivity, and script-skipping. Suspension here means an emotional state where normal competencies are suspended temporarily. It can concern competence that the ego has intact under normal circumstances, that is, when fractional feelings do not take over. It can happen that several normal competencies are suspended at the same time. Most striking is the betrayal of social competence. This appears in meetings with other people and is attached textually especially to dialogues. The *Hunger* hero’s behavior towards the two women in the focalized scene is typical. A fractional feeling arouses an irresistible urge in him to make a random woman afraid. He is fully conscious that it is a matter of an insane sudden impulse, but still begins his “malicious” game. He behaves in a socially unacceptable fashion and so is also perceived as being a drunk. It does not seem as though the women become particularly afraid. They look at him with a “half-scared, half-curious glance” (13). The fright is evidently projected unto the women by the *Hunger* hero: “even the buttons on her dress seem to stare at me, like a row of terrified eyes” (13). In fact, the *Hunger* hero is surprised that she *doesn’t* become afraid: “Why didn’t she call for help? Why didn’t she push one of those flowerpots over on my head or send someone down to chase me away?” (14).

38. The Lyngstad translation contains changes and additions added in subsequent editions. This quotation omits one sentence in the Lyngstad translation to conform with the first edition.

Even earlier in the novel we have seen how social competence fails in the meeting with a random beggar in the city. Despite the plight he finds himself in, the *Hunger* hero is not able to refuse a random beggar. He initiates an entire project in order to procure money. In this case it is also clear that even self-interest and instinct of self-preservation are suspended as a result of the impulses of fractional feelings. In the case of the beggar, it is plain to see a value that is at risk for the hero of *Hunger*; a wounded sense of honor. This seems to be more important than the need for food. Still, it is not honor or shame that provokes the episode. The triggering factor is a fractional feeling, an irritation at the sight of the beggar: "In the end I was getting increasingly irritated by having this decrepit creature in front of me all the time" (7). That the hero of *Hunger* actually is in possession of social competency when fractional feelings do not set it aside he shows by the pretense he is able to accomplish confronted with police officers when he spends the night as homeless. He manages to convince the officer that he is a journalist with *Morgenbladet*, a daily newspaper, who has merely locked himself out, and not just a common pauper. Unfortunately, the ruse means that he will not get a meal ticket in the morning. But things often go wrong. For example, he seeks out a street vendor to whom he had earlier given alms, and suddenly demands the wares he paid for a long time ago. When she has difficulty understanding what he means, and when she will not comply with his demands, he acts in a bullying and threatening manner, and coerces her to give him some cakes. It is no wonder that she perceives him as insane. His behavior in the fourth section is even more striking, when he more or less refuses to be evicted from a lodging where he stopped paying rent several weeks earlier. He even goes back, occupies, and begins writing in his former room after having been duly thrown out. This audaciously grasping behavior in the situation seems particularly peculiar because here it appears that the otherwise almost instinctive reaction to loss of honor suddenly looks like it is out of the running. All of a sudden he seems entirely without shame.

The suspension of basic needs, the instinct for self preservation, self-interest and social competence are among the most peculiar characteristics of the *Hunger* hero. Now and then it can seem as if the sense of time also is suspended, without causing equally conspicuous consequences as the other suspended competencies mentioned. It is often small, incidental emotional stimuli that cause the suspensions: the aforementioned *proprioceptions*, *interoceptions* or *exteroceptions*.

SUPER SENSITIVITY

Another effect of fractional feelings is super sensitivity. This emerges in the focus scene in the following way:

However estranged I was from myself in that moment, so completely at the mercy of invisible influences, nothing that was taking place around me escaped my perception. A big brown dog ran across the street, toward the Students' Promenade and down to the amusement park; it had a narrow collar of German silver. Father up the street a window was opened on the second floor and a maid, her sleeves rolled up, leaned out and began to clean the panes on the outside. Nothing escaped my attention, I was lucid and self-possessed; everything rushed in upon me with a brilliant distinctness, as if an intense light had suddenly sprung up around me. (13)

In this scene super sensitivity is portrayed as a part of the influence of fractional feelings. At other times, the phenomenon is directly tied together with the physical effects of hunger, for example, in the beginning of the third section:

...my nervousness refused to go away. During the day I sat and wrote with my hands swathed in rags, merely because I couldn't stand my own breath on them. When Jens Olai slammed the stable door downstairs or a dog entered the back yard and started barking, I felt as though pierced to the quick by cold stabs of pain which hit me everywhere. I was fairly done for. (99).

SCRIPT-SKIPPING

"All at once my thoughts, by a fanciful whim, take an odd direction – I'm seized by a strange desire to frighten this lady..." (11). This is the Hunger hero's reaction after having seen a "wonderfully beautiful" total stranger on the street. And he does not hold himself back. The impulse leads to action, and he begins his bewildering nuisance performance. The transition from the perception of beauty and fascination to malicious impulse appears enigmatic, and that the unpredictable whim also leads to applied action does not make the scene less bizarre. As I have pointed out several times before, there are some automated "low road" reactions that control the connection between certain emotional stimuli and actions (fear/flight). Most common are conscious and cognitively controlled patterns for the relationship between emotions and actions. The psychologist Silvan Tomkins

developed a script theory of narrative patterns or sequences of actions that often repeat in people's lives. Many *scripts* are widespread and have their origin in cultural conventions. But there also exist individual *life-scripts* that are formed in people's lives, and that can be mobilized by definite emotional stimuli. Individuals act based on such *life-scripts* to solve certain emotional problems, Tomkins believed. Nevertheless, both malicious impulses and the bothering of strangers on the street seem a highly unusual sequence of actions after a fascinating experience with feminine beauty. As a *script*, it is neither culturally or individually directly meaningful. The need for attention can, of course, in certain contexts lead to negative or destructive behavior. But in this case, it is not a question of a repudiated need for attention that is compensated for by negative attention. The sequence of actions appear both narratively and psychologically enigmatic. I choose to call the phenomenon *script-skipping*. Causal attribution comes to a halt. The creation of meaning is cut off. There exists no obvious comprehensible connection between the elements in the sequence. It appears more like a short series with clean jerks from one to the other. One could use deep and clever efforts in order to find hidden emotional problems that the *Hunger* hero possibly seeks to solve by means of this *script-skipping*. A different way of relating to the enigma is precisely to hold on to the senselessness in the sequence. As is well-known, it is not so long after Hamsun's *Hunger* that a movement within literature emerges in which the exact main point is to portray and stick to absurd sequences both literarily, psychologically and existentially.

Hunger is hardly a work of absurdist literature even if there are instances where causal attribution comes to a halt, and narrative sequences appear rather as absurd script-skips than meaningful *life-scripts*. There are namely a good many instances of events in which social competence is suspended, and where these instances of mad conduct can more easily be understood precisely as expressions of individual *life-scripts*. This concerns especially many episodes where rage and loss of control is caused by the triggering of the *Hunger* hero's deeply wounded sense of honor. The urge to compensate for social disgrace and debased feelings of honor is psychologically comprehensible, even if it leads to results that rather increase the loss of honor than restore honor lost. The behavior is self-undermining and contributes to make life worse for the most part. But as a life-script in the existence of the debased person, it is psychologically understandable. The *Hunger* hero's urge to give alms to others, even when he has nothing to give, is unreasonable, but it is not so difficult to understand the psychological mechanism. The urge to belittle others is understandable from the same principle of wounded self-assertiveness. Nevertheless in *Hunger* there exist such psychologically explicable individ-

ual *life-scripts* side by side with what I have chosen to call *script-skipping*. Another example of *script-skipping* in *Hunger* is the scene in which the hero spends the night in a police cell. He is seized with an intense fear of the dark: “My nervous state had gotten out of hand, and however hard I tried to fight it, it was no use. A prey to the quirkiest fantasies, there I sat...” (65). He imagines for example, that the darkness must be “a special kind of darkness, a desperate element which no one had previously been aware of” (ibid.). He finds a hole in the wall, and is convinced that it is a special and mysterious hole. But then the following happens: In the midst of the peculiar fear of darkness scene, he suddenly snaps his fingers, and the mood shifts. He has invented a new word, Kuboå. The change of mood is totally without transition. Once again it is a matter of a *skip*. He is suddenly lying on the bunk, chuckling, and deliberating over all the meanings such a new word could have. However, he cannot reach an agreement with himself about the meaning of the word, and then the mood shifts once again. Anxiety returns, he feels feverish and begins to fantasize. “My madness was a delirium of weakness and exhaustion, but I was not out of my senses” (68). He fears for his reason, jumps out of bed, staggers to the door and tries to open it. “I...bang my head against the wall, groan aloud, bite my fingers, sob and curse...” (ibid.). Especially the first reversal, tied to the word kuboå, is depicted as a spontaneous and unexplained *skip*.

EMOTIONAL SPACE

The conception of emotional space plays an important role in *Hunger*; as it does in Dostoevsky.

The opening sentence is famous in Norwegian literary history: “It was in those days when I wandered about hungry in Kristiania, that strange city which no one leaves before it has set its mark upon him” (3). The marks that the city sets on someone can no doubt here be both physical and mental. But no matter what, it is evident that the city itself is perceived as a special space with its distinctive effect on people. After this short and general introduction, the entire remainder of the novel, with its description of emotions, affects and social conditions, can be understood as specifying what characterizes this distinctive space, the city Kristiania. Atle Kittang makes a very pertinent observation about the relationship between the city and the “I” character in *Hunger*: “In a remarkable contrast to the diffuse and anonymous “I” of the text, stands the topographical accuracy in some of the descriptions of the city” (Kittang 1984, 37). He interprets this relationship in the following way:

On the one hand the text contains a completed world, permanently cast with its streets, buildings and names. But the main character is closed off from this world; he only notices it as a stream of details, precise, but without depth and temporal precision. (ibid.)

Quite a few places within the city space are portrayed in *Hunger*; and movements from one space to another often accompanies an affective change. It is sufficient to mention the very first shift of scene. When the *Hunger* hero awakens in his "attic," he is in a bad mood. But that changes as soon as he gets out on the street and hears voices and the rumble of wheels. In this instance, it seems as if the shift of space is at least partially the reason for the emotional reversal. We can very well talk about emotional rooms.

The different rented rooms and lodgings share the common characteristic that seldom does the hero of *Hunger* feel at ease inside by himself. Still, the changes in rooms and lodging signal above all social decline and increasing misery. This spatial degradation is most clear when he has to move out of his room and obtains temporary residence in the owner's own apartment. Family life here is certainly not in keeping with any established social standard. The decline is underscored in that the *Hunger* hero now seems to have lost his usual powerful urge to maintain his feeling of honor. There is also a clear connection between space and emotion in the cell where the hero sleeps one night, and where he is seized by fear and feelings of madness when darkness falls.

There is no doubt that Hamsun uses different literary spaces in his composition of *Hunger*. To a certain extent this geographical composition can be tied explicitly to emotions or affects. However, in some cases literary spaces are used rather to organize elements and motifs of the text such as, for example, social status, poverty and the like.

I shall not undertake any systematic analysis of affective space in *Hunger*. But it is quite clear that Hamsun organizes with both macro-geographies (Kristiania) and micro-geographies (rented rooms, streets, parks, etc.) in the novel. Analytically, I shall be satisfied with returning to the wandering in the street that has functioned as the focus scene in this chapter. The walk goes down Palace Hill, to the corner by University Street, where the pedestrians turn up towards St. Olaf Place. By Cisler's Music Store they stop, turn and go back the same way they had come. Then the expedition ends as the two women go into "number 2, a big four-story building." There is nothing sensational about this rambling seen externally, other than, as Kittang has pointed out, that it is described with topographical precision, marked by "the conscientious naming of streets, businesses and buildings"

(Kittang 1984, 37). What I want to direct attention to is the rhythm that is established in the text by means of a simple, but conspicuous device. The *Hunger* hero and the two women pass by each other no fewer than eight times in the relatively short walk. Whenever they pass each other, it is clearly indicated in the text (except for one time when the hero must have passed the women without it being specified in the text). These repeated scene instructions do not just shape a literary rhythm; they are also tied to a story of an emotional progression where affects change several times in correlation with their passing of each other. It must be a matter of quite short-lived affects since they change so many times in a short period of time. If they are not so brief that they “happen too quickly to have happened,” it is at any rate the case that the topographically precise scene of the walk also represents a complete rendition of an entire affective repertoire of rapidly changeable affects in the *Hunger* hero.

I don't think it is a matter of a random numerical system of composition from Hamsun's point of view, nor just about a pattern of repetition. I think it also concerns a coupling between body and affect, more explicitly stated between the position of the body and affect. There is a big difference between standing face to face with someone, and being observed from the back. Likewise, it is quite different for one to observe someone from the back, and to be observed from the back oneself. No one has, when all is said and done, seen themselves full length from the back. It is an insecure, vulnerable position that gives little feeling of control. If one can follow after somebody oneself, and can observe them from the back without being observed oneself, then one has a much greater degree of control of the situation, and is oneself less vulnerable.

There are some interesting reflections about such “axes of vision” in the aforementioned Brian Massumi chapter (Massumi 2002, 48ff). The ordinary picture we have of ourselves is a type of “mirror-vision,” according to Massumi. In a mirror it is difficult to see ourselves from the back, and it is hard to see ourselves making normal movements. We can at the most see individual body parts move, the arms, head and so forth, but not the entire body in normal movement. Film is required in order for us to see ourselves from the back or with normal movements. Only on film is it possible for us to achieve “a seeing of oneself *as others see one*” (47). And appropriately, the point of departure for Massumi's chapter are the reflections of a movie actor, namely Ronald Reagan's autobiography (!).

When you observe someone from the back, the other object is in your own “axis of vision,” you have the position of the subject. With others' eyes in your back, you are the object of others' “axis of sight,” you have lost the position of subject. Others look at you, and they see something you yourself are not able to perceive.

One is forced to imagine “a seeing of oneself *as others see one*.” For someone suffering a weak social or mental situation, it would be challenging to endure the gaze of such “seeing of oneself *as others see one*.” That this is really valid for the hero of *Hunger* is clearly confirmed in the final phase of the focal scene. He imagines that “Ylajali” is standing looking at him from the window as he moves away from the spot:

In all likelihood she was at this moment closely following every movement of mine, and it was absolutely unbearable to know that you were being scrutinized like that from behind. I pulled myself together as best I could and walked on; my legs began twitching and my walk became unsteady just because I purposely tried to make it graceful. In order to seem calm and indifferent I waved my arms absurdly, spat at the ground and cocked my nose in the air, but it was no use. I constantly felt those pursuing eyes on my neck and a chill went through my body. At last I took refuge in a side street. . . (Hamsun 1998, 14).

Even early in the focal scene it is clear how the shift in the “axis of vision” implicates affective change. The first time the *Hunger* hero passes by “Ylajali” the “strangeness” that provokes the powerful experience of beauty occurs. It apparently happens spontaneously and is not planned. The emotional reaction is so strong that for a moment he is not able to walk further, but must stop to collect his thoughts. Then she passes him. With this passing the most astounding affective reversal occurs: He feels an desire to make her afraid. He himself says his “malice” increases. He takes advantage of the subject position where she is the object of his “axis of vision.” He comes from the back, overtakes her and turns around abruptly towards her with his bullying fabrication: “Miss, you’re losing your book” (12).

So when in the next instance he has her eyes in his back, the affective situation changes completely. As he finds himself in the object position and is left to imagine “a seeing of [himself] *as others see [him]*,” he suddenly feels shame: “Strolling on thus at a slow pace, always with a few steps’ lead, I could feel her eyes on my back and instinctively ducked with shame at having pestered her” (12). Still, he takes care to recapture the subject position by repeating his attack from the rear. Once again the affective situation changes emphatically: “I gloat cruelly over her confusion, the bewilderment in her eyes gives me a thrill” (ibid.). Then, just as the women turn by St. Olaf Place, the affective situation also turns irrevocably. From now on, the *Hunger* hero is no more on the offensive, the aggressiveness is gone, and he sees himself “*as others see [him]*” even as he now slinks behind them:

All the while I followed as hard upon their heels as I dared. They turned around once, giving me a half-scared, half-curious glance; I didn't perceive any resentment in their looks nor any knitted brows. This patience with my harassment made me feel very ashamed, and I lowered my eyes. I didn't want to pester them anymore – I would follow them with my eyes out of sheer gratitude, not lose sight of them until they entered somewhere and disappeared. (13)

In my opinion this review has shown that the first meeting with “Ylajali” first and foremost displays a self who is characterized by rapidly shifting fractional feelings. I can hardly see that the scene in any way shows a clear sadistic desire, as Kittang claims. Fluctuating between self-assertion and shame is a clearer signal from the text, and is in agreement with other episodes in the novel. Perhaps this discussion also shows that rapid and constant changeability is a better description of the *Hunger* hero's affective pattern than ambivalence. An interesting feature in the analysis in my opinion is that the affect reversals seem to be in accordance with shifts in the “axis of vision.” This is not a traditional narratological category à la point of view. The point of view does not change. It is the subject himself who shifts between seeing himself as the subject of his own actions, and seeing “[him]self as others see [him].” The episode shows a subject who is in a weak position at the outset. It takes a considerable irritable mood, aggressiveness and madness for him to dare to assume the subject position, and the position is thereby tied to the suspension of social normality. It takes almost nothing for him to switch over to the object position – and the object position also in his own eyes. Such a status is linked to shame for the hero of *Hunger*. When one rejects oneself in one's own eyes, one feels shame. In the analyzed focal scene Hamsun depicted these relationships by a simple positioning of bodies in an emotional space.

CONCLUSION

Hunger is a novel that, similar to Doestoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, has its epic driving force in emotionality to a great extent. The emotions of the “I” character are often just as important as outer events when it is a question of moving the narrative forward. One of the reasons that it was important to have a novel like *Hunger* included in this examination of affective narratology, is the types of affects that impel the actions in this case. That is, the small, spontaneous and apparently insignificant affects, trifles or fractional feelings, as Hamsun calls them. They are able to take power and control from the self. This kind of affect must be included in attempting to establish a repertoire of emotions, affects and

forms of reaction that have meaning for an affective narratology. It is a question of affects that have a potentially undermining function in relationship to norms, values and cognitive choices that we ordinarily view as having basic importance in our individual lives. Fractional feelings can deconstruct the connection between trifles and what we perceive as the most important things in our lives.

One of the reasons that the affects can have such impact is likely because they impact with their *intensity* more than with their specific content. Such a connection between intensity and content is reminiscent of points of view found in the theorist Brian Massumi. For this reason I have let myself be inspired by his classifications: *proprioception, exteroception and interoception*. Applied to a fictional text such as *Hunger*, the concepts should hardly be perceived in any strictly medical sense. Still, the division itself gives meaning relative to *Hunger*. There are examples here of intense affects that come from within the body, from tactile stimuli and from the inner life of the consciousness. Perhaps it would also be appropriate to include stimuli from the other senses, especially the visual, and from dreams and hallucinations. However, such stimuli are less specific for *Hunger*.

I have attempted to describe the effects of fractional feelings by means of three main concepts that say something about meaning both for the depiction of character and for the narrative plot. The affects result in the suspension of normal competencies, at least temporarily. They implicate loss of control over feelings, performances and actions. They also bring a special form of potentiated ability to pay attention, a super sensitivity for details in the surroundings and a lowered tolerance threshold for sensory stimuli, both tactile and auditory. What has the most direct effect on the narrative level is what I call *script-skipping*, that is sequences of events that are, and often remain, enigmatic; a course of events that apparently do not have meaning either from culturally conventional *scripts* or from meaningful *life-scripts*.

The analysis of Hamsun's *Hunger* also shows that in an affective narratology, one probably should have attention directed towards the position of bodies in emotionally coded spaces, and alterations in the space. The question of "axes of vision" or changes in "axes of vision" can also find a place in the affective narratology repertoire of concepts. For individuals caught in the play of fractional feelings, such changes could have a direct meaning for affects and for actions that propel the narrative forward.

I believe these phenomena can have a certain transfer value to other texts, and that they therefore should be included in a repertoire of phenomena one can direct attention to in connection with analyses of affective narratology.