
Romantic Love in Norwegian Children's Literature: Tormod Haugen's The Georg and Gloria Trilogy

The disease of love is very changeable. Now the lover is playful, now tormented, now desolate. In one hour he weeps and at another sings,' says the God of Love in Guillaume de Lorris' famous medieval allegory from *The Romance of the Rose* (1230-35) (1995, p.61), where the narrator unfolds a love dream that he had when he was nineteen, 'at the time when Love exacts his tribute from young people' (p. 31).

The unpredictable nature of romantic love has always been a fascinating literary subject, and it naturally plays an important part also in children's literature. A classic point of reference is Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* (1876), where Tom's romantic feelings are one of many threads through the text. In his relationship with Becky Thatcher, the protagonist changes from a state where he is 'swimming in bliss' to a condition where his soul is 'steeped in melancholy' (Twain 1981, pp.52, 56). In a dark moment he is about to follow in the footsteps of Goethe's Young Werther and bid farewell to this world - 'temporarily' (p. 57), but after a while the pain vanishes, since 'the elastic heart of youth cannot be compressed into one constrained shape long at a time' (p.57).

This kind of *lightness* about the joy and pain of love has in the tradition from Mark Twain been a central feature of love stories in children's literature, especially in books for the younger readers. In books for the young adult audience, the narratives about romantic love have had a tendency to grow more serious, whether it has resulted in what John Cawelti called the archetype 'romance', with 'love triumphant and permanent, overcoming all obstacles and difficulties' (Cawelti 1977, p.41ff), or love has been problematized in complex identity crises. In adolescence, the experience of love naturally plays a part in the process of individuation, 'the discovery of the subjective self and of subjective experience as something unique' (Appleyard 1991, p.96). This may lead to an expectation among teenage readers of a sincere and thoughtful attitude to the love theme in literature.

However, there are some important qualities in the light and playful approaches to love in children's literature, which also can be found in a number of books for young adults. Devices such as humour, irony and parody, on different levels of difficulty, often result in stimulating surprises and variations in the text, as 'rupture in the narrative line' (Nodelman 1996, p.168), that may activate the reader's imagination and his ability to discover and build meaning. Moreover, these kinds of elements generally bring in a

light-hearted atmosphere and a distancing effect that offer a sense of relief for young people who are in the middle of the difficult processes handled in the book. Different sorts of literary playfulness can also draw the reader's attention towards the underlying narrative patterns of the text, and evoke, to use Perry Nodelman's words, 'the pleasure of recognizing forms and genres' (Nodelman 1996, p.21). In a modern media world, the structures of love stories tend to be more or less silent knowledge for children who can hardly avoid being confronted with romantic motifs and narratives in all kinds of versions, especially through film and television. The power of such visual narrations — not least in the field of romantic love — is unforgettably depicted in Giuseppe Tornatore's charming and bittersweet film *Cinema Paradiso* (1989), where young and old gather in the cinema of a village in Sicily to watch romantic Hollywood films in the 1940s.

In Norwegian and Swedish children's literature, which is my main reference, there have been published quite a number of children's books during recent years where the serious and exciting love theme is combined with the kind of liberating playfulness, humour and irony mentioned above. A good example from young adult literature is Rune Belsvik's tetralogy (Oslo, 1988-2000) about the protagonist Arne Bu, with titles like *Alle de fine jentene* (*All the Beautiful Girls*, 1988)¹ and *Kjærleiken er eit filmtriiks* (*Love is a Cinematic Illusion*, 1992). In literature for younger adolescents, Anders Jacobsson's and Søren Olsson's series (15 vol., Stockholm, 1987-1999) starting with *Berts dagbok* (*Bert's Diary*), and Per Nilsson's series (4 vol., Stockholm 1998-) starting with *Flickan jag älskar heter Milena* (*Milena is the girl I love*) are equally good examples. Jacobsson's and Olsson's books have been developed into widely popular multimedia products, through films, comics and games, thus forming a direct link to children's experiences with love stories from visual narratives.

A typical feature of these books is the anti-heroic protagonist, which is connected to the complex impression of seriousness, humour and irony that comes out of their reflections and projects. Their thoughts circle around love affairs, and they often fall in love, but to get into and maintain a relationship is hard and exhausting work, not least because of the risk of humiliations and fiascos. A slightly ironic awareness of the love story as genre is often visible in

the texts, through intentional use of clichés, exaggerations, contrasts in style, etc. When the protagonist David in Per Nilsson's first book has made ten hopeless and rather comic attempts to get attention from the girl he is in love with, and has ended up by insulting her, he thinks to himself: 'Sigh, sigh. Misery, misery. The most stupid boy in the world, and most unhappy and lonely. That was me. [...] One isn't very smart when one is unhappy in love. One gets stupid in the head by being it' (p.60). But then at last, when she shows signs of falling in love with him, 'it was like a film scene' (p.64), and he faces 'the mystery that may occur when a boy meets a girl' (p.68).

Different sorts of irony are brought into play in these texts. In Belsvik's novels, there is a constant distance between ideal and reality in the protagonist's projects, strongly influenced as they are by his tendency to 'see girls as a projection of his own desires' (Romøren and Stephens 2002, p.230). His reflections often reveal a kind of self-ironic awareness, as in *Alle dei fine jentene*: 'And now I was on my way up. Nice and easy, up to all the beautiful girls. All the things I could tell them. So they could realize what a nice fellow I was' (p.93). In *Bert's Diary*, a diary novel in the same tradition as Sue Townsend's *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole Aged 13 3/4* (1982), there is another ironic effect in the contrast between the glorious love dreams on the one side and the many trivial arrangements on the other — such as the institution with messengers ('bud'): 'I'm going to ask if I have a chance. It's a matter of finding a good messenger that you can trust. A good messenger that can negotiate' (p.20).

Both Belsvik's, Jacobsson's and Olsson's, and Nilsson's books show the three main different aspects of the love theme: falling in love, being in love, the end of love. I will now examine more closely these aspects as genre structures in children's literature, by focusing on three books from the Norwegian author Tormod Haugen, a trilogy that share the literary qualities of the series mentioned above, but which has a more concentrated and poetic expression: *Georg og Gloria og Edvard* (1996), *Hjerte og smerte* (og Taj Mahal) (1997), and *Hellou og guddbai* (og høstens regn) (1997); in English: *Georg and Gloria (and Edvard)*, *Heartache (and Taj Mahal)*, *Hello and Goodbye (and the Autumn Rain)*.

Tormod Haugen is today perhaps the most prominent Norwegian author of books for children and young adults. Among several awards, he has received the H.C. Andersen Medal (1990). With the three small books about Georg and Gloria's romantic relationship he moves into a new field: from social-critical and rather complicated young adult novels, experimenting with various elements of fantasy, to a simple, poetic story about two children falling in love—a sort of minimalist movement 'back-to-basics'.

Georg and Gloria are around 12 years old, and each of the three books tells a part of the story of their relationship. The first book follows the long and winding road up to the point where they fall in love, with the culmination in a dramatic fight where Gloria tears herself away from the hopeless love for the unattainable Edvard, and becomes filled with warm feelings for the humble admirer Georg. In the second book Georg and Gloria explore the diverse nature of love, and their relationship is developed and strengthened. In the third book we move towards the dissolution of the relationship, in a melancholic atmosphere of fading love and fumbling uncertainty. Thus the story is spun out in the tension between hope and sorrow, as is common in Haugen's writing, but at the same time it brings this strange lightness created by great humour, not least because of the characteristic collisions of the sublime and the trivial. These effects are strengthened by Anders Kaardahl's sensitive illustrations, which often add new perspectives to the verbal text.

Falling in love is 'the nascent state of a collective movement involving two individuals,' says sociologist Francesco Alberoni in his famous book about Western romantic love, *Falling in Love* (Alberoni 1983, p.3). In 'an attempt to remake the world, starting with this different way of thinking and living', man in the nascent state 'tears the flaming sword from the cherubim's hand and enters the Garden of Eden' (p.60). This state of being is based on a dream of a perfect world. It might be compared with a brave flight towards the sun. Sooner or later the relationship will have to be secured on another, protected platform, or its cohesive mechanisms will burn up. 'The experience of falling in love doesn't last forever' (p.60), and therefore it bears the characteristics of an organic phenomenon: it is born, it flowers, and it dies — but it can also create fertile ground for new life processes.

Each of the three stages in the experience of falling in love — birth, flowering and death — can be seen as centres of gravity in three different genre patterns of love literature, which are also visible in the three parts of the story about Georg and Gloria. First, stories of love represent an *heroic project*, an arduous journey where the hero moves towards the conquest of the beloved. Secondly, *the pastoral idyll* explores the joy and pain of passionate love in a kind of innocent paradise. And thirdly, *the love tragedy* follows the nature of the experience of falling in love, and then inevitably drives the lovers towards separation or death.

We will follow the three phases, and the genre patterns that belong to them, through Tormod Haugen's trilogy. At the same time we will keep an eye on how author and illustrator create what I have called lightness and distance in the text, through ironic contrast effects and playful variations on the genre patterns.

Birth

At the start of the story, both Georg and Gloria set out with a substantial project. They stand on the threshold of the transforming process of falling in love, and their main goal is to conquer their object of desire. By an irony of fate, their passion goes in different directions. Georg loves Gloria, but Gloria does not love Georg. She loves Edvard! Thus, we have two parallel lines through the text, and the story oscillates symmetrically between them. It is like following the hero's journey in the myth or the fairy tale, towards a glorious victory. The two heroes each hope that their love will be returned, and that their affection is part of the good forces of life, the forces that ultimately will reward the faithful and patient, who 'waited and waited and sighed and waited with a bursting heart' (I, p.10)². The one who has fallen in love can endure a lot of suffering, for '[h]ope makes him bear pains that no one can tell for the joy that is worth a hundred times as much', as it is said in *The Romance of the Rose* (de Lorris & de Meun 1995, p. 67).

We have two love projects, then, and in a way both of them reach their goal. That is to say, two people longing for love end up entering the nascent stage of love together with a partner. But before this can happen, Georg must manage to turn Gloria's love towards himself, so he can take over Edvard's position as the object of her affection. Edvard is

a dangerous third party, not only because Gloria has fallen in love with him, but because he might threaten her self respect and her belief in love with it. Like the self-centred Narcissus of Greek mythology, who bluntly rejects the adoration from the nymph Echo and destroys her, the cynical Edvard does not mind making fun of Gloria's vulnerable emotions. And like his brave namesake from another myth, St. George, Georg thus has to save the glorious princess, Gloria, from the dragon's mouth. Fittingly, Georg visualizes Edvard as 'a monster, an alien, a beast, a shit' (I, p.13), and the illustration on the same page shows his antagonist with dragon tail, claws and scales.



'George thought Edward was a monster, an alien...'

Illustration by Anders Kaardahl for Tormod Haugen's *George and Gloria (and Edward)*, 1996 p.13.

Georg and Gloria both adore the object of their choice from a distance. Gloria follows Edvard, and Georg follows Gloria. Georg is the most active adorer. Despite his young age, he has been given some of the attributes of the courteous knight in medieval love literature, who carefully approaches a noble lady. He submits himself to the idealized female in everything he does — 'Georg loved everything about Gloria' (I, p.5). Nevertheless he stays in the background, he is utterly discreet and dignified, and expresses himself through anonymous letters and gifts. 'The secret admirer' (I, p.8) utters his faithful devotion in poetic phrases: 'yours forever', 'you are always in my thoughts', 'my heart is yours' (I, p.7), and makes use

of flower symbolism in bouquets of forget-me-not. He is tormented by jealousy and a feeling of inferiority, but he does not give up, although the antagonist seems to be invincible. He is faithful until death, and is willing to shed blood for his lady's honour at any time. He does not reveal his love until she is offended, when he rushes forth and shows his love openly by attacking the provoker.

In *The Romance of the Rose* we hear of 'the grief of those loyal lovers who are so basely denied' (Lorris 1995, p.50), and Georg and Gloria's story in the first book remains for a long time such a tale of suffering. The idea of love as suffering is on the whole an important characteristic of the classical ideal of romantic love. The famous medieval work on courtly love, Andreas Capellanus' *The Art of Courtly Love* (1184-86), says that 'love is an inborn suffering' (1982, p.33), and a detailed account of the lover's pain 'caught in bonds of desire' (p.37) is a standard part of the love story. The first phase of Georg and Gloria's story, too, is characterized by a detailed, and often tragicomic depiction of the suffering in the agony of jealousy, self-pity, lacking self-confidence, crying, sleeplessness, lack of appetite, and general physical weakness: 'Georg had black rings under his eyes, his freckles faded like stars at dawn, and his thin, fair hair became ghostly pale and twice as thin and pricked his eyes' (I, p.16).

The story of suffering culminates in the final confrontation where Georg takes up the fight with Edvard, who has humiliated Gloria. Through this battle Georg gets a part of his namesake St. George's other dimension too, namely the martyrdom. The shedding of his blood changes Gloria, who 'seemed to wake up' (I, p.37), and kneeling by the bleeding Georg she expresses her love for 'her defender' (I, p.42). A similar response is found in *Tom Sawyer*, when Tom has taken the blame for Becky's mistakes in an incident at school: 'the adoration that shone upon him out of poor Becky's eyes seemed pay enough for a hundred floggings' (Twain 1981, p.131).

Thus, the story of Georg as a brave knight of love moves forward to the final triumph at the end of book one. Through his patient suffering he has managed to protect the seed of love. Now it is time for both Georg and Gloria to transcend into the nascent state of falling in love, like a kind of remaking or *rebirth* (Alberoni 1983, p.25). The

situation at the end of the book has in fact this resemblance to a birth scene. Georg is lying there after the drama, the pain and the blood, and Gloria's loving eyes examine his body and face as though for the first time.

This concluding transition scene is not without parodic elements which reminds us of the earlier mentioned playful and distanced character of the narration. Gloria's performance as a formidable fighter in the last act, where *she* takes over on the crucial point and crushes Edvard, contrasts radically with the highly masculine conception of women in courtly literature and generally in love literature through the centuries in which the woman is an elevated object and passive receiver of men's love and heroic deeds. Instead of the distant beauty, it is a powerful and brutal animal figure that enters the arena: 'She howled, she screamed like a wild cat, she roared like a gorilla, she growled like a lioness and set off after Edvard' (I, p.38).

This kind of comical contrast effect, on different levels and by different means, is a characteristic feature all the way through Georg and Gloria's love projects. An important contrast on the macro level is found in the collision between their ambitious projects and Georg and Gloria's anti-heroic appearance which parodies the love-sick hero, the knight of the sad countenance, for Georg is chubby and knock-kneed, has thin hair and a 'snotty, snub nose' (I, p.6), while Gloria is skinny, red-haired and freckled.

Contrast and breach of style are also characteristics on the micro level of the text, often with a trivializing effect, such as when the devoted Georg follows Gloria everywhere, 'but not into the jeans shop, because they didn't have his size in the particular brand he most wanted' (I, p.12); or in the text's excesses emphasising the comically sentimental, through an intentional accumulation of emotional words: 'Gloria grew miserable, out of sorts, dreadfully sad, completely broken-hearted' (I, p.27), 'she didn't want to cry, WOULD'N'T, wouldn't show that fool, that shit, that jerk, that CHAUVINIST that she cared about it' (I, p.35). The use of capital letters works in the same direction, and also contributes to the trivializing effect of making the fictitiousness of the text visible: We are reminded of the narrator behind the words, who leads the reader into new, constructed incidents: 'BUT then one day in the supermarket...' (I, p.31). The will to make jarring contrasts

and comical combinations can be marked even down to food: 'Not even pizza, cheeseburger or fried herring helped' (I, p.17).

Thus, the text presents a suspenseful whole, with the contrast between seriousness and laughter, identification and distance. There is perhaps a freedom and a potentiality in this, demonstrating that love — and life itself — cannot be locked in one definitive and final structure, for there are always different angles, versions and possibilities. These conclusions can be drawn from the next books in the trilogy also, where we follow the story through the flowering of love to the death of love.

Flowering

In the second phase of the story of Georg and Gloria, which stretches through the second book and first half of the third, the two lovers have torn the flaming sword from the cherubim's hand and entered the Garden of Eden, as Alberoni expressed it above. And it is exactly a garden, a park surrounded by a city on all sides, which functions as a sanctuary for their love. In the park they can be alone, protect the precious relationship and explore the mysteries of love.

From this scenario, too, there are threads back to influential genre patterns in love literature. Stories about a young couple's first innocent and curious exploration of love, accompanied by idyllic nature impressions, remind the reader of pastoral literature, and the Greek novel about the shepherd and shepherdess on Lesbos, *Daphnis and Chloe* by Longus (ca. 200 A.D.). It is possible to move through this middle phase in the three-part story about Georg and Gloria by following some of the threads between Haugen's text and the old pastoral novel.

The first point of contact has to do with the coupling of love and nature. The pastoral love story emphasizes over and over again how the pulse of love and the pulse of nature are in accordance with each other, like life forces working in the same rhythm. When Daphnis and Chloe, aged 15 and 13 years old, have kissed for the first time, 'you would have thought that the rivers were singing as they rippled gently past, and that the sigh of the wind among the pines was the moan of pan-pipes, and that the ripe apples dropping to the ground were yielding to a lover, and that the sun

was making everyone disrobe because he liked to spy on beauty' (Longus 2002, pp.17-18). Georg and Gloria's first kiss also receives applause from nature: 'The first time they kissed, it was behind a bush in the park. The moon hung in the tree above them. Angels were singing from afar. It was like there was music coming from the dark' (II, p.11). The beauty of the beloved is also illustrated by impressions from nature. While Daphnis thinks that Chloe's lips are 'softer than rose-petals' and her mouth is 'sweeter than honeycomb' (p.14), Georg thinks that Gloria's mouth is 'red like strawberries' (II, p.11), and he visualizes her navel 'like a flower he would like to smell' (II, p.20).

The connection between love and nature in Longus' story is accompanied by descriptions of divine forces. The God of Love, 'who is older than Cronos and all Time itself' (p.27), pulls Daphnis and Chloe together every morning and leaps 'up into the myrtles like a fledgeling nightingale' (p.27). The wise Philetas teaches the two young shepherds that Love 'has such power as even Zeus has not: Love rules the elements / Love rules the stars / Love rules the gods, his peers' (pp.27-8). In Georg and Gloria's story, no god materialises, but the idea that the lovers are taken care of by supernatural love forces is found here too: 'Georg didn't know how it happened, he was just pulled towards Gloria' (II, p.11). Their love is 'deeper than the deepest ocean, higher than the planet Pluto' (III, p.5). A feeling of being in contact with something elevated, sublime, is several times indicated by the movement of heavenly bodies above the two lovers: 'The stars hung between the tree branches. The moon rolled on the treetops' (II, p.32). They hear angel song, the moon sprinkles silver in the grass, and 'the grass along the path whispered that he was coming, and there he was, coming with gold dust in his hair' (III, p.22). Chubby Georg is strangely getting leaner, skinny Gloria becomes rounder, and both acquire the ability to fly — 'strange that no one noticed' (II, p.32). Thus, Georg and Gloria are regenerated, transformed and initiated into a mystical sphere for those who are driven by the forces of love.

In the pastoral love story the notion of love as a sacred realm is emphasized by the constant dichotomy of 'us and them'. The lovers' sphere is separated from the more trivial life of other people, and influences from the outer world

can be seen as a threat to the treasure of love. Daphnis and Chloe's 'innocence and vulnerability' (McCail 2002, p.xxix) are threatened by 'break-ins' from vulgar rivals and burglars, or from foster parents and potential suitors who are concerned about economy and status. In their more peaceful existence, Georg and Gloria also strive to protect their precious unity, which may be threatened by seemingly trivial events: A lively dog that distracts attention from the relationship and causes a touch of discord, fellow pupils at school who are teasing and laughing, parents with family thoughts, who don't understand the endless needs of love. But all in all, both Longus' novel and the 'pastoral' phase of Georg and Gloria's story show that the overwhelming power of love itself influences the environment and creates goodness. Family, town people and rivals capitulate to Daphnis and Chloe's love, and the teasing situation in Georg and Gloria's class room is changed by the teacher to a praise of love: 'Our heart never gets too small for love' (II, p.31).

The pastoral novel *Daphnis and Chloe* is in parts a veritable topographic survey of how thoughts and emotions are influenced by the experience of falling in love. Again and again, the narrator focuses on how eye contact, touches and kisses cause certain effects: 'But as for Daphnis, he behaved as though he had been bitten, not kissed. He immediately began to scowl, and little chills kept running over him, and he could not stop his heart from fluttering' (Longus 2002, p.14). Georg and Gloria's world is marked by more calmness and wonder, but the detailed survey is found here too. Looks are exchanged, hearts beat faster, hands sweat. Hair, eyelids, nape, lips, tongue, teeth, and belly are examined and touched. The warmth from Georg floats through Gloria's arm 'and into the whole body. It was lovely strange' (II, p.15). To Georg, it is like 'a wave breaking over him' (p. 16). Thus, the flowering phase of the falling in love becomes a broad, sweeping examination of a condition where the lovers have somehow stepped out of time and nurture themselves by their own symbiosis.

In Longus' romance, the pain caused by want and longing also plays an important part in the examination. On several occasions Daphnis and Chloe are separated against their will, whether caused by dramatic kidnapping or by the regular cycle of seasons in peasant society. When pastoral life takes a pause during the winter, and they are

bound to stay with their foster parents, Daphnis and Chloe 'passed sleepless nights and doleful days, and waited for the spring, that rebirth after death' (Longus 2002, p.46). In Georg and Gloria's case, it is the trivial weekly rhythm with weekend travelling and adult-controlled activities that leads to the separation, but the longing is strong and dramatic here too: 'Georg missed Gloria so badly that he was afraid the parents could destroy what was between them' (III, p.16), because 'no grown-ups could comfort longing or heal desire' (p.19). 'Time passed far too slowly when they were apart. Time passed far too quickly when they were together' (p.12).

Love receives new nourishment through separation. But at the same time, Georg and Gloria cannot avoid the melancholy that comes when the perfect pictures of longing are replaced by the lover's physical presence: 'The weekend had been full of longing, and now it was fulfilled. Still, there was something. Georg didn't dare to think: Isn't there more than this, after all my longing?' (p.23). These thoughts point forward to the third and last phase in the story, the dissolution and death of love.

Longus' romance is not just a delightful story of love in pastoral surroundings. It also has an abundance of 'delicate humour' (McCail 2002, p.xxviii). The young lovers' charming innocence and naivety are mixed with a clumsiness in the area of love that often creates comic situations. This characteristic doubleness, with its distance-making humour, is a tendency also through the flowering phase in Georg and Gloria's love story, even if it is more subdued here than in the dramatic creation phase in the first book. Again, the use of trivializing effects is especially important. One example is an excessively detailed description of *food* in a rather sincere context where the transformative effect of love has been emphasized: 'Gloria had a better appetite, she ate ONEANDAHALF sandwiches for breakfast, instead of just A HALF. 1/2 with liver paté (thick layer) + slices of cucumber' (II, p.25). Kaardahl follows up with effective caricaturing in the illustrations where the grotesque, animal-like face of the eating Gloria contrasts against the tender, singing bird of love in the background.



'Gloria had a better appetite...' (I, 1996 p.25)

Death

The visit in the Garden of Eden is an intermezzo in Georg and Gloria's saga. Unlike Longus' romance, where Daphnis and Chloe marry in the nearby town, and then return to joyful family life in their pastoral paradise, Haugen's trilogy moves inevitably towards the dissolution of happiness. 'Hello' is followed by 'good-bye', as the sweet strawberries and beautiful flowers of summer are followed by the autumn rain. Fair enough, one might say, given the inevitably fragile nature of a childhood love affair, as well as the fragile nature of romantic love in general. The description of this process, in Georg and Gloria's painful first time, is another version of the tragic love story, a persistent genre in the Western world, as the philosopher Denis de Rougemont has pointed out: 'Happy love has no history. Romance only comes into existence where love is fatal, frowned upon and doomed by life itself' (Rougemont 1983, p.15).

Tragedy is connected to conceptions of death. And death follows love stories in literature, because falling in love is a kind of vulnerable and impossible attempt to stop time and touch eternity. Francesco Alberoni puts it this way: 'Only the love that ends in death can serve as a device for expressing every uncertainty, every doubt, every desire of the person in love as well as their dissolution beyond past and future in that eternal present which cancels out every question. Hence death is the artistic signifier of the end of time which the lover experiences' (Alberoni 1983, p.34).

Tormod Haugen's children's trilogy does not lead the lovers into death, but the romantic love affair dies. This is described by Haugen through lines of connotations as a kind of death process, through atmospheres and scenes of

separation, coldness, darkness, dissolution and death.

In the early phase of the story, small and nearly unnoticeable details point towards the dark other side of the romantic relationship. One example is in the first book, when Gloria sees three objects in the window of Edvard's room: a UFO, something that looks like a magic, green crystal ball, and — a skeleton. The mystery of love, the magic of love and the death of love? At any rate, the skeleton in the window appears one more time, late in the third book, as a kind of accompaniment to the sad end of the relationship. It has been put in by Kaardahl in the second to last picture, without being mentioned in the text below.

Another detail is the development of what I call the dog motif. The words 'friendly dogs' (exact words in Norwegian: 'klappelystne hunder', i.e. 'dogs that want to be patted') are used already in the subtitle of the first book, and can serve as an expression for the life zest and the warmth that Georg and Gloria search for in their love projects. In the beginning they experience the night and the park 'without friendly dogs' (I, pp.2, 25, 30), and this corresponds to a painful feeling of unrequited love. Then there is an episode in the second book, where they meet a dog in the park, and Georg gets excited over it. Now Georg and Gloria are a couple, and a joyful dog should be exactly the right creature to accompany them! But what happens? At the peak of happiness, warmth turns into coldness: 'Gloria felt that her hand was cold' (II, p.38). An inhospitable and chilly atmosphere spreads around them. Instead of uncomplicated joy, Georg's affection for the dog brings about jealousy and melancholy. It is as if they suddenly realize how fragile and vulnerable their romance is, like a warm pulsating life that can easily be blown out and laid in a grave. The dog's name, Taj Mahal, named after a mausoleum built by an emperor in sorrow over his beloved queen, is perhaps not a coincidence?

Finally, the death of love comes inevitably. Different impressions of broken totalities or broken bonds signal the end. When Georg changes the phrase 'ALL eternity' to just 'eternity', Gloria stops breathing, and the feeling of complete safety disappears. Then Georg loses his ring, the symbol of faithfulness. The ring, it seems, has been linked to life itself: 'It made him feel his heart beating, and that he was breathing and that he was living' (III, p.34).

To lose it is to die a little. For her part, Gloria breaks a medallion with a picture of a loving couple flying in a plane towards the stars.

The gradual destruction of the relationship corresponds to the destructive forces in nature. Autumn is a natural setting for a tragedy in love. Goethe's Young Werther feels that 'as nature puts on her autumn tints it becomes autumn with me and around me. My leaves are sere and yellow, and the neighbouring trees are divested of their foliage' (Goethe 2002, p.53). Georg and Gloria's relationship dies when the leaves fall in the 'autumn rain'. Georg's thoughts are 'dark as the rainy sky' (III, p.39), and it rains in Gloria's life as well, while fog drifts in from 'dark, cold, deep oceans' (III, p.38). Kaardahl strengthens the effect by an illustration of Georg running towards a cold, dark stormy sea, apparently on his way towards certain death in the deep. In the end it is as if the heavenly bodies, the dear companions of the two lovers, die as well: 'The stars went out. The moon moved back' (III, p.54). And the cold rain 'dissolved the letters that were on their way from window to window' (p.54).

A sad ending, although not sad through and through, perhaps. The tiny, lightly humorous markings follow the story also in the dark part, in pictures and text. The rather trivial remarks in parenthesis, for instance, which occur now and then in the text, may puncture an atmosphere that threatens to drift over towards the much too solemn and gravely serious. The lovers embrace each other 'under the half-moon, the full moon, (no moon)' (III, p.24). Georg is so horrified by the loss of the ring, that 'the heart paused (two beats)' (III, p.37), and he searches for the ring '(even under the gymnastics mat)' (III, p.35). Unhappy thoughts are followed by cartoon-like sound markings: 'Even the night is ours. Was ours (sigh)' (III, p.51). And Kaardahl's illustration of the gloomy Georg on his knees behind the toilet in search of the ring inevitably mixes comedy and melancholy.

Thus, Tormod Haugen creates a romantic love story for children built on classic patterns, while holding on to some of the characteristic humour and lightness of the romantic theme in children's literature. This way of integrating different dimensions as a general quality in these books, is also present in the case of the reader's role. On the one



Georg's thoughts are 'dark as the rainy sky'

Illustration by Anders Kaardahl for Tormod Haugen's *Hello and Goodbye (and the Autumn Rain)*, 1997 p.39.

hand, the books are easy to read and easy to understand. The language is simple, and it is not necessary to have a high literary competence to follow the well-known projects and conflicts through the stories.³ On the other hand, the books have their own complexity in the way they invite the reader to further reflection and wonder. This is not done through a sophisticated double address, where the child is left behind on a closed, naive level, while the adult reader cracks hidden codes. The invitations are more open. Both the underlying genre structures and the comic and ironic effects that we have identified through this article, are related to common experiences in the lives of children from nine to twelve, and to their text competence: they fall in love, they become acquainted with different types of stories about love, and they develop the ability to see how existential seriousness, humour and irony combine to make this subject fascinating.

NOTES

1. The English translations that follow are my translations, and so are the quotations. None of these titles have been published in English translations so far. High quality children's books from Scandinavian countries are often translated into the neighbouring Scandinavian languages and often also into German, but it is very difficult to get material published in English-speaking countries. For example, the highly regarded Georg and Gloria trilogy by Tormod Haugen is at present translated into Swedish,

Danish, German, French, Spanish and Serbo-Croatian, but not into English.

2. The quotations from the first book in the trilogy are from an unpublished translation by Anne Born made for the Norwegian publisher Gyldendal, except for the two quotations (from p.17 and p.35) which are my translation. The quotations from books 2 and 3 are my translations. Page references are to the original Norwegian editions, and titles are marked with numbers I-III: I = *Georg and Gloria (and Edvard)*; II = *Heartache (and Taj Mahal)*; III = *Hello and Goodbye (and the Autumn Rain)*.
- 3 The wide appeal of the material can be illustrated by the use of Haugen's trilogy in a reading project in Mexican schools. A Norwegian educationalist, Kristin Holteng, who works for the literary foundation La Fundación Juan Rolfo, has translated the books into Spanish as part of a Nordic literature project in the foundation. In 1999 the Education Department got interested in the books, and decided to print 85,000 copies and spread them to schools all over Mexico through the reading project Rincones de Lectura. 'Humor is important in Mexico', says Holteng in an article, and she also refers to the director of the government publisher Unidad de Publicaciones Educativas, Mr Felipe Garrido, who said that 'these books were among the best children's books he had read, and the only books he had read in Mexico that described the life of children from their own perspective' (Holteng 2000, p.111, my translation).

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