

Summary of the PhD thesis “Function of Form – Melopoetic Method in song analysis with special regard to Church Hymns with Texts by N.F.S. Grundtvig” – Lea Wierød

The thesis investigates two related problems. The first is principal and deals with the development of a “melopoetic” method for song analysis, and the underlying research question is: how can *song* be theoretically understood and methodologically analysed as *one* sounding medium, in which words and melody are parts of a paratactic correlation? The other main question, then, deals with the empirical material studied in the thesis, i.e. church hymns authored by N. F. S. Grundtvig. This material has been selected from the assumption that form – construed both as the form of the church hymn’s lyrics and the form of the melody, as well as the interaction between these two – has a particularly decisive function in the Grundtvig hymn. This function has to a large extent received less attention in criticism, or has been regarded as less important than other research interests, as for instance the hymns’ theological themes. In the present thesis, the Grundtvig hymn is used in the developing, and the testing, of the general methodological approach to song.

The thesis is divided into two parts: the first consists of theoretical and methodological considerations, while the other is made up of five articles, each dealing with different dimensions of the main problem. The first part, then, includes three sections. The first of these is a survey of the research conducted in two fields to the study: the investigation of the song as an organic, cohesive expression uniting poetry and music, and the study of Grundtvig’s hymns. Following this, the theoretical cornerstones of the thesis are presented. The theoretical field primarily considered is that of intermediality, which provides useful perspectives on the notion of song as one medium. Although the song is heuristically divided into the entities “words” and “melody” in the course of the analyses, it is in its phenomenal, temporal form a cohesive utterance, rather than a mechanically assembled one. The other theoretical perspective is based on contemporary genre theory, and is used to join the medially blended structure of the Grundtvig hymn with its social and rhetorical function, i.e. as part of a liturgical context. And finally, ideas from aesthetic theory of enunciation are employed to answer, for instance, the question of how to account for the many interactional instances of utterance in the church hymn, while still affirming the view on the hymn as one medium. The last section of the first part puts forward a methodological approach to melopoetic song analysis. It is argued that the song’s words and melody interact most concretely on a rhythmic-metrical level.

The second part of the thesis consists, again, of five articles, which constitute the analytical part of the thesis and, among other things, highlight the interdisciplinary effort needed in approaching song. Article I, written in English, argues that musical notation, when used in analytical purposes, risks misrepresenting the song’s subtle performative aspects. The article instead advocates the opposite notational approach: the employment of analytical symbols derived from *poetic* metrics. Article II, also in English, aims at the ideological debate on church music that took place at the time of Grundtvig’s hymn production. Here, the central positions in

the debate are sketched, laying bare what seems to have been the crucial problem: the relationship between form and content in the singing of church hymns. A selection of Grundtvig's hymn texts are subjected to analysis and it is argued that Grundtvig's text to a significantly large extent makes use of poetic formal effects, which, however, have been interpreted rather differently by the tone setters, depending on their aesthetic ideals. Article III is a chapter from a Danish anthology, which focuses on Grundtvig's authorship from a genre theoretical point of view. By making use of rhetorical genre theory as well as considerations regarding Grundtvig's poetics, the article argues that the Grundtvig church hymn cannot be construed as an independent genre without taking into account the melody, as well as the rhetorical situation in which the hymn is sung collectively. This point is demonstrated by a number of hymn analyses. Article IV departs from the analysis of the formation of the genre called *kirkeromancen*, which saw light in the wake of Grundtvig's hymnal production; in the medial crossing of his lyrics and a particular musical style called *romancen*. Using perspectives from media and genre theory, the article investigates whether a medial blend (e.g. words and music in a song) has an influence on how the two media – in their separated state – are categorised in terms of genre. The fifth and last article addresses the hymns' precarious relation to the concept of art and the aesthetic. Through analyses of two Grundtvig hymns, each seeming to represent a position in the dichotomy of aesthetic—popular writing, it is maintained that the “aesthetic” character of the hymn not only depends on text-inherent traits, but equally depends on the level of effect it produces in meeting with the receiver/singer. The melody proves, in other words, to be just as important as the lyrics.

The thesis is concluded with a summing-up of the investigations conducted with reference to the research questions initially posed.