

The Figure of the Prostitute in Scandinavian Women's Literature of The Modern Breakthrough

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Abstract

Despite the fact that prostitution and the figure of the prostitute as represented in Scandinavian women's literature of the last decades of the nineteenth-century is a significant topic, a systematic study on the role of prostitution in Scandinavian women's literature of The Modern Breakthrough is largely lacking. This article, in which prostitution is conceptualised in the broadest meaning of the word, analyses the literary representations of the figure of the prostitute in the novel *Lucie* (1888) written by the Dano-Norwegian Amalie Skram, *Rikka Gan* (1904) by the Norwegian Ragnhild Jølsen, and the Swedish novella *Aurore Bunge* (1883) by Anne Charlotte Leffler. By means of close textual analysis, this article analyses how prostitution is represented in these three works and explores what factors were at play in causing the protagonist to be 'fallen' and with what consequences. The findings highlight the psychological and social implications of three unique forms of prostitution: prostitution within the marriage, a socially constructed form of prostitution as a shadow hanging over a marriage, and a relational form of prostitution parallel to a marriage.

Keywords

Modern Breakthrough, Scandinavian literature, women's writing, prostitution, sexual transactions, Anne Charlotte Leffler, Amalie Skram, Ragnhild Jølsen

Introduction

Prostitution was a central theme in Scandinavian society and culture during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth century. A significant turning point in this respect came in 1871, when the eminent Danish critic Georg Brandes (1842–1927) proclaimed a new paradigm in literature. According to him, literature should place societal problems under debate. In line with this paradigm for a new and modern literature, Brandes coined the term *The Modern Breakthrough* in 1883. Today, this term is commonly used to refer to a special period in literature in which Sweden, Denmark, and Norway were exceptionally closely related in the literary marketplace. Following the input from Brandes, several writers, dramatists, thinkers, and painters proved ready to play a more active role in debates evolving around pressing social issues of their time, including inequality of the sexes, women's rights, double standards in matrimonial morality, female sexuality, emancipation, and prostitution (Ahlström 1947; Bredsdorff 1973; Hägg 1996; Steene 1996; Van der Liet 2004).

Between 1840 and 1918, as in many other European countries, prostitution in Scandinavia was considered a 'necessary evil' (Lundquist 1982: 433), which in the larger cities was regulated by law (Blom 2004). All (young) women engaging in prostitution had to be registered in police protocols under the name of 'offentlige fruentimmere' (public women) (Pedersen 2001: 26). These public women 'were subjected to special ordinances' and, unlike their clients, had to undergo weekly medical inspection. Hundreds of (young) women were subject to this system. In Stockholm, the number of active registered public women in that period 'generally varied between 300 and 400' (Lundquist 1982: 433–438). In Copenhagen, during the Danish period of legalised prostitution (1871–1906), Pedersen (2000: 123) mentions a number totalling 605 possible 'københavnske prostituerede' (Copenhagen prostitutes). In Norway, prostitution was regulated in the cities of Bergen and Kristiania, between 1816 and 1909 and 1846 to 1888, respectively (Blom 2004). For the latter city, there are indications that there were as many as 17 brothels in 1850, while this number later decreased (Svanström 2000).

This regulatory system was an unworkable effort to eliminate venereal diseases, especially syphilis, but at the same time, it represented an institutionalised system that ‘allowed’ men to satisfy their sexual drive both before and during their marriage without disturbing ‘respectable’ women, who, in contrast, were not supposed to be sexually active before marriage (Lundquist 1982; Smith 1989; Jansdotter & Svanström 2007). In this sense, one could argue that this system functioned as a rational, regulated programme to accommodate the idea that only men had the right to fulfil their sexual desires (Ahlström 1947; Bredsdorff 1973; Smith 1989).

Besides these so-called ‘common prostitutes’ – as they are conceptualised today – i.e. the girl who sells her body (almost) as an occupation, certainly around the turn of the nineteenth century, the phenomenon of women offering sexual services in return for material gifts or financial recompense was much broader (Walkowitz 1980; Logan 1998). For the poor and so-called non-respectable women, such as servants, dancers, and dressmakers, occasionally offering sexual services could offer a way out and open opportunities to earn some extra money and to receive gifts, allowing them to make a living. Similarly, Smith (1989) argues that the reasons why a girl or woman would prostitute herself varied greatly:

Desperation was hardly the only motive for becoming a prostitute. Some women found that prostitution paid relatively well and was thus a way to achieve an acceptable standard of living. [...] Women who dealt in commercial sex did so to different extents, beginning with the woman who merely exchanged sex for treats or gifts. Other working women took up prostitution casually, as the need for extra income arose.
(Smith 1989: 150–152)

In this article, we consider prostitution in the broadest meaning of the word and include all women who, to different extents, sell themselves to the opposite gender. By saying so, we acknowledge that engaging in a (sexual) relationship for economic return is a phenomenon whose scope is wider than just women working in houses of pleasure or

streetwalkers. Rather, we recognise that the manifestations in which women may sell their body are varied and complex (Smith 1989; Logan 1998). Indeed, the range of women engaging in sexual transactions extends far beyond professional prostitutes, from a dancer of ill repute to a mistress, to a servant accepting sexual advances from her employer so as not to lose her job, to a middle-class woman sold off into an unhappy (arranged) marriage for the sake of economic stability. Accordingly, and building on Logan (1998) and White (1987), we define prostitution as a sexual relation between a man and a woman in which the woman's sexuality is characterised by an absence of personal desire and free choice, and is traded for money or other benefits in return. This broad definition of prostitution, to some extent, follows the much broader debate on the position of women during The Modern Breakthrough, a period in which, as earlier mentioned, so many artists were highly socially engaged. Although their artistic creations were often centred on the same social themes, their descriptions, analysis, and criticisms are characterised by diverse perspectives, literary genres, and styles. Prostitution was one of the key themes debated at that time and therefore relevant to literary scholarship.

For example, in *Paria'er* (1878, Pariahs) the Danish writer Herman Bang (1857–1912) describes the tragic life and sad destiny of three women who prostitute themselves. Exemplifying his social engagement, these women were not portrayed as 'bad or immoral'. In fact, as Heede states, Bang made it very clear that these women, from the beginning up to the very end, 'viser sig at have et hjerte af guld' (prove to have a heart of gold) (Heede 2002: 23).

Following the paradigm of socially engaged arts, in his provocative novel *Albertine*, Christian Krohg (1852–1925), one of the most important Norwegian bohemian painters and writers of his time, describes the tragic life of the young and poor seamstress Albertine, who ends up prostituting herself in Kristiania (now Oslo).

A totally different, but important and unconventional, way of seeing prostitution is that of the world-famous Swedish writer and dramatist August Strindberg (1849–1912) in *Giftas II* (1886, Married II). In this collection of short stories, Strindberg portrays the institution of marriage as a legalised form of prostitution in which the woman is a

femme fatale exploiting her husband, who, in effect, becomes her slave: 'Att ta betalt för sin gunst är kvinnans uppfinning. I prostitutionen tar hon betalt per gång, i äktenskap per ackord. Det är samma sak'. (To be paid for their favours is a female invention. Prostitutes are paid per time slot; married women are paid per contract. It is the same thing.) (Strindberg 1982: 173).

In the play *Gengangere* (1882, *Ghosts*), the equally celebrated Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906) explores themes like inherited venereal disease (syphilis), men's marital unfaithfulness, illegitimate children, and wives tolerating their husbands' adultery for economic reasons.

Besides the above-mentioned male authors, it is important to stress that during The Modern Breakthrough female artists also took part in discussions concerning sexuality, emancipation, and for the first time, also prostitution (Møller-Jensen 1993; Leffler 2005). For instance, in the novels *Constance Ring* (1885, *Constance Ring*), written by the Dano-Norwegian novelist Amalie Skram (1846–1905), *Pengar* (1885, *Money*), by the Swedish Victoria Benedictsson (1850–1888), and *Judith Fürste* (posth. 1884), by the Danish Ada Ravnkilde (1862–1883), all the protagonists sell themselves – to different extents – into unhappy marriages for economic reasons. The eminent Swedish novelist and Nobel Prize winner Selma Lagerlöf (1858–1940) describes in the novel *Kejsarn av Portugallien* (1914, *The Emperor of Portugallia*) a father who is incapable of facing the sad destiny of his daughter, who was driven into prostitution to earn money to help her family. Other female Scandinavian writers who have discussed prostitutes and prostitution in the broadest sense of the word include Anne Olivia Levison (1847–1894), Anne Charlotte Leffler (1849–1892), Frida Stéenhoff (1865–1945), Agnes Henningsen (1868–1962), Ragnhild Jølsen (1875–1908), and Anna Johansdotter (1877–1906). Many women writers not only actively took part in the moral debate on prostitution by writing literary works (prose, theatre, or poetry), but also tried to influence the course of opinion by producing pamphlets, letters, and other forms of non-literary works.

All the above-mentioned literary works represent and discuss in their unique ways different female characters and relationships

between men and women in which the latter 'sell' themselves to men in different manners, gradations, and social contexts. By giving voice to these characters, these authors expose and criticise the hypocrisy of double moral standards in their society. The next section shows that the importance of this theme has not gone unnoticed in works studying the literature of The Modern Breakthrough.

Scholarship so far, Research Gaps, and New Questions

Since the end of the 1940s, various studies – including Ahlström (1947), Bredsdorff (1973), Dahlerup (1983), and Hjordt-Vetlesen et al. (1993) – have been devoted to The Modern Breakthrough. These scholars have provided important insights into Scandinavian literature of that period and made considerable contributions to the knowledge and understanding of various literary works dealing with the debate on sexual morality, arranged marriages, and women's (sexual) self-awareness. Sexual transactions and prostitution in a variety of forms, gradations, and meanings are often touched upon in these studies, but this theme has not yet been fully explored.

By quoting, analysing, and comparing different works written by Scandinavian critics, writers, and poets, Ahlström (1947), for instance, provides an extensive contextualisation and accurate description of The Modern Breakthrough in his study *Det moderna genombrottet i Nordens litteratur* (The Modern Breakthrough in Nordic Literature). This study takes all social, cultural, and literary phases of this period into account and analyses the economic aspects in (sexual) relationships, including prostitution as well.

With his study *Den store nordiske krig om seksualmoralen* (The great Nordic war over sexual morality) Bredsdorff (1973) also makes an important contribution to a better understanding of the debate on sexual morals and prostitution in Scandinavia. This study reports, analyses, and compares different, and often opposing, writers' points of view expressed in letter exchanges, journal articles, and essays. In this manner, Bredsdorff not only guides the reader through the complexity of these issues, but also demonstrates the central role of both Georg Brandes and the Norwegian writer Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson

(1832-1910). In fact, Bredsdorff explains the opposing perspectives the two had on premarital sex and sexual behaviour, as well as the related controversy. Bredsdorff speaks about 'den hykleriske dobbeltmoral' (the hypocritical double morality) that allows men to engage in infidelity, free love, and prostitution, as one of the major problems of that period (Bredsdorff 1973: 37).

Ten years later, in 1983, the Danish researcher Dahlerup published her seminal work *Det moderne gennembruds kvinder* (Women of The Modern Breakthrough). This study analyses Danish women writers of The Modern Breakthrough and their literary works by exploring different aspects of their biographies and literary production, including aspects such as being a mother, wife, and artist, mother/son or mother/daughter relationships, and other themes related to femininity and feminism.

By providing comprehensive studies on Nordic women authors, several other researchers, such as Hjordt-Vetlesen (1993), Nordin Hennel (1993), and Witt-Brattström (1993), also contribute to our understanding of important themes of The Modern Breakthrough. These scholars, whose work is included in the *Nordisk Kvinnolitteraturhistoria* (History of Nordic Women's Literature, Vol. II and III), a valuable biographical and encyclopaedic work of the literature history of women's writings, explore novels like Benedictsson's *Pengar* (1885), Skram's *Constance Ring* (1885), and Adda Ravnkilde's *Judith Fürste* (1884), that is to say, literary female characters who, to some extent, could be seen as 'fallen'.

Even if the above-mentioned studies provide a rich and extensive analysis of the delicate and complex liaison between love, sex, and money represented in the literary production of various Scandinavian authors, a systematic and comparative study of the *leitmotif* of prostitution in a broad sense is missing, let alone a specific focus on prostitution in the works of women authors of The Modern Breakthrough. For instance, even though Ahlström (1947) and Bredsdorff (1973) refer to literary characters written by women writers, these works mainly focus on male authors. Dahlerup (1983), instead, focuses exclusively on Danish female writers. Moreover, in this work the theme of prostitution, in the broadest meaning of the word, lacks a deeper analysis. Also,

the *Nordisk Kvinnolitteraturhistoria* does not provide a systematic analysis of prostitution. All in all, despite prostitution's importance and ubiquity, this brief survey shows that it remains largely neglected. This article aims to address this research gap by providing an analysis of the role of prostitution in Scandinavian literature by female authors in the period between 1872 up to 1914, the central era of The Modern Breakthrough. By means of close textual analysis, we aim to show how prostitution is represented in three literary works. Equally important, if not more so, is our desire to explore what factors (social, economic, rational, and emotional) were at play in causing the protagonist to be 'fallen' and with what consequences.

The reason that this study focuses exclusively on the production of female authors relates to the argument of Logan, who states that male authors can only write 'about fallen perspectives; [whereas] women writers, in contrast, write from that perspective' (Logan 1998: 11). An additional reason to focus on female authors is that their work is too often overshadowed by their canonical male colleagues, such as Strindberg, Ibsen, and Bang (Dahlerup, 1983). As to why this article concentrates on the period between 1872 and 1914, the reason is two-fold: (i) the lectures of Georg Brandes on the tasks of a new *engagé* modern literature were for the first time published in 1872; and (ii) 1914, the beginning of World War I, marks a relevant historic turning point in European (literary) history.

In this study, three literary works in which the protagonists sell themselves in different ways to men to obtain money or benefits in return, are subjected to close analysis: the short story *Aurore Bunge* (1883) written by the Swedish Anne Charlotte Leffler, the novel *Lucie* (1888) by the Dano-Norwegian Amalie Skram, and *Rikka Gan* (1904) by the Norwegian Ragnhild Jølsen. We chose to focus on these three works for two reasons. First, Skram, Leffler, and Jølsen were all well-known female voices of the Scandinavian Modern Breakthrough. Second, unlike most literary works that have been analysed in previous studies, these three texts include protagonists from different social milieus, affording us a better understanding of the variety in this theme.

The next sections will subsequently provide an analysis of each of these works, while the conclusion of this article seeks to compare

the three literary texts to identify differences, common factors, motivations, consequences, and underlying social problems.

Aurore Bunge

The novella *Aurore Bunge*, written by Anne Charlotte Leffler (1849–1892), one of the most famous Swedish woman authors in the 1880s, was first published in the second collection of short works *Ur Lifvet* (From Life) in 1883. This work tells about a beautiful, aristocratic, rich, thirty-year old woman, Aurore, who is married off by her mother to a baron she neither loves nor wants to marry. This arrangement is made when the protagonist becomes pregnant after a passionate (love) adventure with a lighthouse keeper on a remote island. Aurore's dominant mother decides to 'solve' this – in her eyes extremely unfortunate – situation by obliging her daughter to marry Baron Gripenfeldt, a man in need of money to repay his debts. In return for relieving his debts, the baron is willing to keep silent about the illegitimate child.

Being sold off in a marriage in order to find economic stability was not an uncommon practice at the end of the nineteenth century (Hjortd-Vetlesen 1993a). For instance, according to Nordin Hennel (1993), it was commonplace to be subjected to the marriage game during a ball, even if this was often experienced as 'en kränkning av den egna integriteten' (an insult to a woman's integrity), a terrible event whose purpose was 'för att exponera kvinnan som attraktiv dansdocka' (to display the woman like an attractive dancing doll) (Nordin Hennel 1993: 519). In the same vein, Ingwersen points out that 'marriage [at that time] came sometimes to be viewed as a form of prostitution, and prostitution itself' (Ingwersen 1993: 359). In Aurore's case, this calculated and cynical plan conceived and organised by her mother to marry off Aurore was motivated not by a search for economic stability, but to prevent a scandal.

Prostitution in this short novel is mainly represented in the protagonist's not being free to marry the man she loves, but rather being obliged to marry the one who, in return, can give her the certainty that neither Aurore's sexual adventure with the lighthouse keeper nor

her child's illegitimacy will ever become public. Indeed, according to Aurore's mother's reasoning, by marrying Baron Gripenfeldt a huge public scandal can be avoided:

Huvudsaken var nu blott att undvika skandal. Aurore måste gifta sig och detta så fort som möjligt. [...] Genom sitt skamlösa beteende hade hon ju nu gått miste om det bästa parti i hela Sveriges rike. Ty så beskedlig greve Kagg än var, så skulle han naturligtvis, då vissa upptäckter gjordes, ställa till skandal och troligtvis fordra skilsmässa. I den nuvarande situationen kunde man ej lita på någon annan än den, som behövde pengar. [...] Aurore skulle gifta sig med baron Gripenfeldt och friherrinnan skulle förbinda sig att underhålla dem, och så småningom – icke på en gång, ty han fick göras oberoende – avbetala hans skulder. (Leffler, 2007, 88-89)

(Now, the main issue was just to avoid a scandal. Aurore had to get married, and this should happen as quickly as possible. [...] Because of her shameless behaviour, she now, of course, had missed out on the best match in the whole Kingdom of Sweden. When certain discoveries were made, Count Kagg, as accommodating as he was, would certainly create a scandal and probably ask for divorce. In the current situation, the only person who could be trusted was the person in need of money. Aurore was going to marry Baron Gripenfeldt, and the baroness [Aurore's mother] would commit herself to maintaining them and gradually pay his debts off – not all at once, because otherwise he would have been made independent).

The passage above reveals the mother's conviction that Baron Gripenfeldt is the best choice for Aurore in order to *avoid a scandal* and shows Gripenfeldt's weak position caused by his need for money. Aurore's mother does not see this marriage as one option out of many, but as the only real option; in fact, she says that Aurore *had to marry*. She also speaks of *shameless behaviour* when referring to her daughter's previous love affair. As Nordin Hennel points out

‘Efter sitt äventyr hör hon till de fördömda’ (After her adventure she belongs to the condemned). Her mother’s main concern seems to be the illegitimate child, as Aurore now has become ‘less worthy’ ‘på äktenskapsmarknadens spel’ (on the wedding market) (Nordin Hennel 1993: 523-524). As a single, respectable aristocratic woman she is not supposed to engage in this sort of adventure, certainly not with a man from a much lower social class. Marrying the baron offers the opportunity to protect Aurore from the label of ‘fallen’ woman; Aurore’s mother does not want her daughter to be subject to such a shame. However, her plan goes against Aurore’s will and dreams about her future life. The passage below clearly illustrates the protagonist’s negative and hopeless feelings when she hears about the plan to marry her off to Baron Gripenfeldt:

Aurore fattades av en livlig avsky, då hon hörde detta cyniska program kallblodigt föreläggas sig. Men hon kände på samma gång, att hon ej hade kraft att motsätta sig moderns vilja.

Hon kastade sig ned på soffan i sitt rum med huvudet tillbakalutat och händerna pressade mot ögonen. Hur skulle hon kunna rädda sig från den förnedring som väntade henne? (Leffler 2007: 90)

(Aurore was taken by an intense disgust when she heard this cynical plan coldly presented to her. But at the same time, she knew that she didn’t have the strength to resist her mother’s will.

She threw herself onto the couch in her room with her head tilted back and her hands pressed against her eyes. How would she be able to rescue herself from the humiliation that awaited her?)

Aurore’s physical reaction represents her emotions and sense of *disgust*, which is reinforced by the question about how she could rescue herself from the *humiliation that was waiting for her*. After the idea crossed her mind to run away, to hide herself until the baby was born, and then to put the baby into its father’s hands so that he could

give it a simple, but honest life and then kill herself, she abandons that plan for a more realistic, though tragic, resolution. Aurore follows her mother's plan, but obviously not because she desires the baron as her husband:

I detta ögonblick kände Aurore det, som om något hade dött inom henne. Vad lönade det att kämpa emot – vad tjänade det till att söka döden – hon visste nog att hon ej skulle hava mod att fullfölja detta beslut. Dödsångest skulle fatta henne i det avgörande ögonblicket, och hon skulle begärligt gripa ett halmstrå för att rädda sig – liksom hon nu grep den eländiga räddning, som erbjöds henne.

(Leffler 2007: 91).

(At this moment Aurore felt as if something had died inside her. What good would it do to resist – what was the use of seeking death – she certainly knew that she would not have the courage to follow through with this decision. The fear of death would grab her at the crucial moment, and she would eagerly grasp a straw to save herself – as she now grabbed the miserable rescue plan that had been offered to her.)

In the above passage, the use of the image of death shows Aurore's negative feelings, but she eventually ceases to view suicide as a viable option. In spite of everything, Aurore wants to live.

On a more abstract level, it could be argued that in order not to be judged by society as a prostitute, Aurore choses to be 'fallen' on an individual level. Indeed, she accepts *the miserable rescue plan that has been offered to her*; it is in these words that we find this woman's tragedy. Ironically, Aurore is considered a 'fallen' character either for the moral standards and values of Swedish society concerning illegitimate children, premarital sexual intercourse, and cross-class relationships, or in her own eyes because she ends up with a man she doesn't love, knowing that she is 'selling herself' for good. In fact, Aurore's suffering is represented not only in her position as a 'fallen' woman, but also in her awareness of having no strength to fight either with her mother or with the conformism and the social

rules she represents. In fact, as the passage below illustrates, Aurore is very much like her mother, probably more so than she likes to admit to herself:

Hennes ständiga dröm var att företaga något som stridde mot de konventionella sällskapslagar, hon var underkastad, att såsom hon ibland sade, 'chockera hela societeten'. Men hon visste mycket väl själv, att allt detta endast var fantasier, och att hon i själva verket var lika mycket slav av sällskapslivets konvenans-lagar, som någon i hennes omgivning. (Leffler 2007: 51)

(Her constant dream was to take action and to fight against the conventional rules of society to which she was subject, and that would, as she sometimes said, 'shock all of society'. But she knew very well that all this was merely fantasy and that in fact she was as much a slave to the conventional rules of social life as anyone in her surroundings.)

On the one hand, Aurore dreams about great changes, freedom, and her wish to *shock all society*, yet on the other hand she is also aware that *all this was merely fantasy*. In the end, the protagonist lives as a prisoner of society's rules and conventions, and it is this side of Aurore – her rationalism and conformism – that prevails and explains why she eventually accepts her fate and marries the baron. It is for this reason that we can speak of a form of prostitution *within* the marriage.

The narrator's description of Aurore's posture and behaviour just before her mother is about to hear the 'good news' of the upcoming wedding, exemplifies Aurore's repulsion and awareness of a loss of freedom:

Hon fann då Aurore stående vid fönstret med ryggen vänd åt rummet och baronen gående av och an, vridande på sin klockkedja.

Då Aurore hörde henne komma fram åt rummet vände hon sig om. Hon var så blek, att friherrinnan trodde henne färdig att

svimma. Hon famlade med handen efter stolsryggen, stödde sig tungt mot den och sade med ett framtvingat småleende:

‘Gratulera oss, mamma! Vi äro förlovade’.

(Leffler 2007: 91)

(She then found Aurore standing at the window with her back to the room and the baron walking to and fro, twirling his watch chain.

When Aurore heard she [her mother] was entering the room, she turned around. She was so pale that the baroness thought she was about to faint. She groped with her hand for the back of the chair and leaned heavily back against it while saying with a forced smile:

‘Congratulate us, mother! We are engaged’.)

The above quoted passage shows Aurore’s inability to say no. Her posture, physical condition – *pale, about to faint* – and her *forced smile* represent Aurore’s deep sense of desperation and, gradually, lead to the anti-climax of her last words: *Congratulate us mother! We are engaged*. At the same time, this passage is the perfect illustration of the deep discrepancy between her feelings and actions after her sexual adventure with the lighthouse keeper, knowing that she will be ‘fallen’ forever.

Lucie

Lucie, a novel published in 1888, was written by Amalie Skram (1846–1905) as a contribution to the debate of the day about morality in Scandinavia. The story takes place in Kristiania (i.e. Oslo) and narrates the sad destiny of Lucie, formerly a beautiful young dancer at the Tivoli pleasure gardens, now trapped in an unhappy marriage with Theodor Gerner, a 36-year-old upper-class lawyer she had met at Tivoli. Although Lucie desperately tries to find happiness and stability, and Theodor is sincerely in love with her, he is unable to forget Lucie’s past life as a Tivoli dancer. Indeed, despite all efforts on Lucie’s part to accept Theodor’s jealousy and although she strives to meet his expectations

about changing her independent nature, it seems to be impossible for the two to be happy together; Lucie's past life as a pleasure dancer remains an indelible shadow hanging over their marriage.

Garton characterises Lucie as 'a "woman of ill repute", not a prostitute, but almost equally reprehensible – a Tivoli dancer who has had an illegitimate child' (Garton 1993: 54). In our conceptualisation, prostitution in this novel is mostly represented in what Theodor, and some of his friends, think about Lucie's past life and how they judge her. This is, for instance, illustrated in the following passage in which we learn how one of Theodor's closest friends seeks to avoid association with Lucie: «Vi kan da ikke be ham uten i herreselskap, for du vil da vel ikke tvinge mig til å omgås en slik en?» (Skram 1976: 21) – "We can't invite him [Theodor] to anything but gentlemen's parties, because surely you aren't going to force me to associate with that kind of woman?" (Skram 2014: 21). But Theodor himself cannot forget her past either, without feeling a terrible pain and jealousy thinking about all those men who 'hadde hatt henne før ham' (Skram 1976: 16) ('who possessed her before him', Skram, 2014: 16). Indeed, the tragedy of Lucie's story lies in the fact that no matter how much she loves Theodor, and no matter how much she tries to show him that she is a good person capable of transforming from a Tivoli girl into a lady, in Theodor's eyes, Lucie cannot have good manners, and if she tries so, he continuously misunderstands her intentions. For example, when during a morning walk Lucie says hello and smiles to a man who is greeting Theodor, Lucie's kindness bothers him. Just as so often, it makes him think of her past: 'Det hadde fart som et stikk igjennem ham, at Lucie kanskje kjente ham fra før' ('The painful thought had occurred to him that Lucie might have known him from before', Skram 2014: 30).

In the novel, we not only learn about the consequences of Lucie's life as a dancer, but also about the factors that played a role in Lucie's decision to work at Tivoli in the first place:

Moren og faren og søsknene, ja. – Hvordan de nu hadde det? Dem fikk hun nok ikke se mer, for til Kragerø torde hun da aldri komme, og hun var da vel fri for, at noen av dem kom til Kristiania. Å nej, de hadde nok med å trelle og slite og streve

for føden, især nu siden faren hadde fått den ene foten knust på verftet.

[...] – Stakkars gamle knarken, ham hadde hun ondt av, men moren kunde det akkurat være det samme med, for hun hadde nu alltid vært så fæl og slem imot henne. [...]

Å gid! – Alt det, hun hadde utstått av moren i den tiden! Hun isnet bare hun tenkte på det. -- Og var det hennes skyld, kanskje? Kunde hun hjelpe for, at hun var så vakker, at mannfolkene ikke kunde la bli henne? Hun hadde vært orntlig forlovet og all ting. Hvem kunde tenkt, at styrmann var en sånn skarv. Å gid, å gid! Som den fyren hadde besnakkert henne, og tigget og båret sig, og lokket og tvunget. [...] Gud skje lov at barnet var dødt! Så hadde hun ikke det på sig. – Å ja, ja! Slik gikk det her i verden. Hadde han ikke forført og narret henne, så hadde hun nu ikke sittet her.

(Skram 1976: 8-9)

(Her mother, father, sisters and brothers – yes. How were they all? She wouldn't see them anymore, because she didn't dare to go to Kragerø and none of them would ever come to Kristiania. Oh no, they were plenty busy slaving away and struggling to make a living, especially now that her father had crushed his foot at the shipyard. [...] – Poor old fellow, she felt bad about him, but she didn't care about her mother, because she'd always been so mean and horrid to her. [...]

Oh God – the things she had to put up with from Mother during that time! She shivered just thinking about it. And was it her fault, really? Could she help it that she was so beautiful that men wouldn't leave her alone? She had been properly engaged and everything. Who would have guessed that the ship's mate was such a scoundrel. Oh God, Oh God! The way the fellow had talked her around – begged and carried on, coaxed and had his way with her. [...] Thank God, the baby was born dead, so she didn't have that burden! – Oh well. That was life. If he hadn't seduced and deceived her, then she wouldn't be sitting here now.)

(Skram 2014: 9-10)

In the above passage it is obvious that Lucie's socio-economic background is modest and her family poor – *they were plenty busy slaving away and struggling to make a living*. In addition, we learn that before going to Tivoli, Lucie had a highly complicated relationship with her mother – *the things she had to put up with from Mother during that time! She shivered just thinking about it*. The relationship with her fiancé was also destructive. Nevertheless, in the conditional past sentence we read that Lucie is capable of seeing the positive side of these negative experiences: *If he hadn't seduced and deceived her, then she wouldn't be sitting here*. Lucie believes that it is thanks to her job at Tivoli that she has met Theodor, the man she falls in love with and the man who asks her to marry him. Lucie hopes to find true happiness in their love and life together, as well as a real chance to change her lifestyle:

Hun elsket ham. Ja, det gjorde hun riktignok. Så mye som hun hadde holdt av styrmannen – men det var da ingenting mot det hun følte for Theodor. Og det var godt for noe, at hun var kommet til Tivoli, for ellers hadde vel Theodor ikke visst om, at hun var til engang. [...]

Pyttсан, hendte! Slikt hendte nok bare i eventyr og på komedien, slikt. Ja, nok at en fin, rik mann giftet sig med en simpel kanskje, men nok ikke med en, som hadde vært sånn før. (Skram 1976: 9-10)

(She loved him. Yes she truly did. As much as she had loved the ship's mate, it was nothing compared to what she felt for Theodor. And it had been good in some ways that she had gone to Tivoli, because otherwise Theodor would never have even known she existed. [...])

Pooh, happen! Things like that only happened in fairy tales and comedies and the like. Well, a fine, rich man could marry a simple girl perhaps, but not someone who'd been like she was before.) (Skram 2014: 10, 11)

This passage describes Lucie's love, her positive attitude towards

the 'Tivoli experience', and her gratitude towards Theodor, who, after all, is prepared to marry a girl 'with a past'. Lucie's sense of incredulity is strictly connected to her awareness about who she had been in the past. Theodor knows that loving Lucie entails accepting her past life, and this proves to be incredibly difficult for him:

Ja, naturligvis skulde han gifte sig med henne. Han vilde ha gjort det for lenge siden, hvis det ikke hadde vært det med hennes fortid. Det var og blev dog en forfedelig klikk på en kvinne, skjønt det fikk nu enda være, men de gjorde så ondt, så ondt, Ja, ondt gjorde det, men Herregud, han visste jo om det. Rubb og stubb hadde hun fortalt ham. Han fikk vel saktens se til å komme over det en gang. Det kunde jo ikke være anderledes, og han elsket henne jo til tross for det, just akkurat sånn som hun var. (Skram 1976: 15)

(Yes, of course, he should marry her. He would have done it a long time ago if there hadn't been that business of her past. That was and remained a terrible stain on a woman's reputation, and though there was nothing to be done about it, it was so painful, so painful. Yes, it was painful, but dear God, at least he knew about it. She had told him everything, down to the last detail. He would have to try to put it behind him. It couldn't be otherwise, and he loved her in spite of it, just exactly as she was.) (Skram 2014: 15)

This passage illustrates Theodor's love for Lucie, on the one hand, while on the other hand it describes his difficulty, on a social level, to accept Lucie's past. By using the metaphor *terrible stain*, Skram lets the reader visualise and understand the sense of dirtiness and negativity that Theodor feels when he thinks about Lucie's past. The repetition of the word *painful* emphasises how unbearable this knowledge is to him. In his view, she will always remain a 'fallen' woman, and not only in Theodor's eyes, but also in the perception of their social milieu, and ultimately, also in her own view. Even if by the time of their engagement Lucie no longer works as a Tivoli dancer,

Theodor's feelings and jealousy lead to painful conflicts and tragic consequences.

One night, during one of their social dinners hosted by one of Theodor's friends, Lucie dances with a young lieutenant. This leads to a big fight with Theodor, after which she decides to walk back home alone. During that night tragedy strikes, and Lucie gets assaulted and raped by a stranger. In light of Theodor's awful jealousy and judging behaviour, Lucie decides to keep this tragedy quiet, even when she realises shortly afterwards that she is pregnant. Her anxious feelings about the possibility that the baby is not Theodor's destroys her nerves. Several months later, after giving birth, her worst fear becomes true: a small 'brun føflekk' 'brown birthmark' (Skram 2014: 143) on the baby's body indicates that it is not Theodor's son. Shortly after giving birth to this illegitimate child, Lucie dies from an attack of hysteria. And even when Lucie is about to die, the shadow of her past is on Theodor's mind:

Han hadde vært en ærlig mann like overfor henne. Fordi han var så glad i henne, at han ikke kunde leve uten henne, hadde han gjort henne til sin hustru, og han hadde trofast og iherdig strebt for å få noe godt ut av deres ekteskap. Når det ikke var lykkes bedre, var det ikke hans skyld, men dels hennes egen, dels noe, som hadde vært sterker enn han selv, dette, at han ikke hadde kunnet glemme hennes fortid.

(Skram 1976: 150)

(He had been an honourable husband to her. Because he was so in love with her that he couldn't live without her, he had made her his wife, and he had faithfully and energetically striven to make their marriage succeed. That it hadn't been more successful was not his fault, but partly her own, partly something stronger than himself – his inability to forget her past.)

(Skram 2014: 145)

Theodor is sitting next to her in the last moments of her young life, while thinking deeply about their love and everything that has

happened to them. By using the words 'ikke hadde kunnet' (couldn't have), in combination with his sense of not feeling any responsibility for what has happened to her, Skram represents Theodor's inability to forget Lucie's past. The novelist shows that this inability is something that he cannot control, something that goes beyond his keenness to love and to forget. By marrying Lucie, Theodor Gerner transgressed not only the rigid social borders of society, but also his own.

The novel *Lucie* represents an excellent example of the socially engaged literature from The Modern Breakthrough. For instance, and in line with the double moral standards of that time, there is not a single word in the book speaking about the fact that Theodor was a former Tivoli client himself. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that there are a few occasions on which friends of Lucie and Theodor directly refer to Scandinavian literature and theatre dealing with double moral standards in marriage, prostitution, and the position of women, including Bjørnson's *En Handske* (A Gauntlet), *Albertine* by Krohg, and *Kommandøren's Døtre* (The Commodore's Daughters, 1886) written by their compatriot Jonas Lie (1833–1908). For example, when Lucie's old friend from Tivoli asks her if she has read *Albertine*, Lucie answers: '«Nei, det holder jeg mig for god till, lel. Gerner sier dessuten, han ikke vil se sånne bøker i sitt hus.»' (Skram 1976: 48) ('No, I have more respect for myself than that. Besides, Gerner says he won't have a book like that in his house', Skram 2014: 47). This passage illustrates that she does not place herself at the same level as the fictitious Albertine (a desperate prostitute). In addition, by explicitly mentioning her husband in her answer, she reminds her old friend that the world she belongs to now is different from Tivoli. At the same time, when Lucie thinks about *Kommandørens Døtre* and the type of women who are represented in Lie's book, she feels that she will never be one of the respectable ladies either: 'Å nej, de var og blev nog et helt hav av forskjell mellem de fine damene og en, som hun'. (Skram 1976: 100–101) ('Oh no, there was, and would always be, a whole sea of difference between the fine ladies and someone like herself', Skram 2014: 98).

Rikka Gan

The Norwegian bohemian writer Ragnhild Jølsen wrote *Rikka Gan* in 1904, whereas the story itself takes place at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The novel tells about the tragic life of Rikka Torsen, a strong woman living with her sick brother Jon, his wife Fernanda, and their children. They live at Gan, a large farm in Norway that used to be owned by their family, but which had to be sold. The new owner, the rich and selfish Mattias Aga, allows Jon to work for him as ‘bestyrer’ (manager) (Jølsen 1933: 9), but when he falls ill and his condition becomes so bad that he can no longer work, Aga threatens to fire him. To avoid that from happening, Rikka, half forced by her sister-in-law Fernanda, but also moved by her wish to keep living at the farm with her family, prostitutes herself and has sex with Aga. Prostitution in this novel is thus represented in the protagonist’s becoming the mistress of the married Aga for the simple, yet tragic reason that he could give both her and her family something very important in return, a place to live. A desperate choice with devastating consequences, as it turns out.

At the beginning of the novel, an external narrator already gives a few proleptic hints about Gan and its people and introduces the farm as a spooky place that changes mysteriously when it gets dark and the moon is shining upon the lake. Gan is described as a place with a ‘mummel av historier og minner’ (Jølsen 1933: 7) (murmur of histories and memories). Moreover, it is interesting to note how the narrator introduces Rikka and Fernanda: ‘to kvinner, en mørk og en lys’ (Jølsen 1933: 13) (two women, a dark one and a light one) after mentioning that the people of Gan had started to wonder why the weak Jon Torsen could have got his job at Gan and even was able to keep it: ‘Men hvordan i allverden kan så den Jon Torsen holde sig der på Gan?’ (Jølsen 1933: 14) (How in the world is it possible that Jon Torsen could keep himself there at Gan?). Later, it becomes clear that the reason why Jon and his family could keep on living at Gan is Rikka’s transactional sexual relationship with Aga.

The motivation for Rikka to prostitute herself with Aga is partly related to the fact that she is forced into it by her sister-in-law

Fernanda, and partly related to the fact that she sees no other solution. The following passages describe Rikka's conflict between Fernanda's requests, and her personal aversion towards Aga:

«Du tenker vel på at din bror er syk – at han kanskje aldri mer kommer sig op? Og da tenker du vel på hvad vi så skal gjøre med ham?» [...] «Og du tenker vel på at Aga er en skurk?» spurte hun tilbake. «Og da tenker du vel på at du nødig vil styrte din svigerinne i elendighet; – fordi du også selv er den nærmeste til å sørge for din syke mann og dine barn?»
(Jølsen 1933: 39)

(‘You think that your brother is sick – that he may never get up again? And do you think about what we will do with him?’ [...] ‘And you think that Aga is a villain, don’t you?’ she retorted. ‘And do you think then that you would plunge your sister-in-law into misery; – because you yourself are the closest one taking care of your sick husband and your children?’)

By emphasising Jon's sickness, Fernanda tries to convince Rikka to talk to Aga, whereas Rikka tries to make her understand that Aga is *a villain* and that she feels that her sister in law wants to plunge her into *misery*. Of course, Fernanda does not agree with Rikka:

«Elendighet?» svarte Fernanda Torsen, idet hun grep hårdt om jomfru Rikkas håndledd. «Hvem snakker om elendighet for dig? Det er jo over oss andre elendigheten kommer – sult, sykdom og skam.»

«Sa du skam, Fernanda?»
(Jølsen 1933: 39-40)

(‘Misery?’ answered Fernanda Torsen, as she took Miss Rikka forcefully by the wrist. ‘Who talks about misery for you? We are the only ones whom misery will befall – hunger, sickness and shame’.

‘Did you say shame, Fernanda?’)

In the alternation of above questions and in the repetition of the words *misery* and *shame*, it becomes clear that both Fernanda and Rikka characterise their individual situation as hopeless and shameful. At the same time, and despite the use of these words, their perceptions differ considerably. For instance, when Fernanda says that *hunger, sickness, and shame* await them unless Rikka ‘talks’ to Aga to find a solution for their possible forced departure of the farm, Rikka answers with a question and by repeating ironically Fernanda’s words: *did you say shame, Fernanda?*

Later on, when Fernanda convinces Rikka to approach Aga, the discrepancy between what Rikka says and how her body reacts illustrate her internal conflict: ‘«Jeg skal snakke med ham,» [...] Og hun blev sittende med begge hender for pannen’ (Jølsen 1933: 43) (‘I will talk to him’, [...] And she remained seated holding her head in both hands’). A sign of shame, desperation, and defeat all at the same time. This feeling of defeat is made explicit by the sentence ‘Det later til du er blitt den sterkeste nu, Fernanda’ (It seems you have become the strongest now, Fernanda) (Jølsen 1933: 43).

After making the decision to approach Aga, Rikka cannot sleep for many nights: ‘Der forløp mange netter i hvilke jomfru Rikka slett ikke fikk sove’ (Jølsen 1933: 43) (Many nights passed in which Miss Rikka couldn’t sleep at all). Probably not only as a result of her reluctance to act as a mistress, but also because she is in love with an imaginary lover called Vilde Vå: ‘«[...] Du stolte Vilde Vå for allverdens skjønnhet – dig elsker jeg; Vilde Vå – dig og ingen, ingen annen’. (You proud Vilde Vå, beauty of the whole world – it is you that I love; Vilde Vå – you and no one else) (Jølsen 1933: 38). Needless to say, if Rikka had loved Aga, she would not have talked about misery, would not have felt defeated by Fernanda, would not put her hands on her forehead as a sign of desperation, and probably would not have dreamt about Vilde Vå. Rikka seems to be aware about this and knows what she is doing:

Rikka Torsen skjøv en smal lem tilside og kom opover en trang trap inne i brandmuren. [...] Der stod en mann derinne med ryggen til.

«Her er jeg,» sa Rikka Torsen. [...]

«Spør ikke, Mattias Aga,» sa Rikka Torsen og kastet stolt med hodet.

«Berolige dig forresten – og gi din frue et smukt diadem.» [...] Mattias Aga rakte hendene frem og lo: «Riketta, Riketta – hun er som ilden.»

(Jølsen 1933: 63)

(Rikka Torsen pushed a small limb aside and climbed a narrow staircase inside the firewall. [...] There was a man standing there with his back turned. 'Here I am', said Rikka Torsen. [...])

'Don't ask any questions, Mattias Aga', said Rikka Torsen, with her head thrown back proudly.

'By the way, you don't have to worry – and give your wife a nice diadem'. [...] Mattias Aga stretched out his hands and laughed: 'Riketta, Riketta – you are like fire'.)

When Rikka goes to Aga to have sexual intercourse with him, the access to the room is hidden, like their relationship: *Rikka Torsen pushed a small limb aside and came upward a narrow staircase inside the firewall*. Rikka knows well what she is doing and why she is doing it, and her words when she arrives at their secret spot are illustrative in this regard: *Don't ask any questions, Mattias Aga*. Likewise, by mentioning his wife, Rikka demonstrates her rational and pragmatic approach and shows that she is aware of her position as mistress. Later on, during a fierce fight with Aga, she even tries to kill him. During this violent encounter, Rikka fights like a tiger 'Hun blev smidig i kampen som en tiger'. (In the battle, she was agile like a tiger) and keeps calling him 'Skurk' (villain) (Jølsen 1933: 75), reconfirming that despite their sexual relationship she does not respect him. Rikka's feelings towards Aga are 'mixed', at best (Sjögren 2009: 122). Indeed, it is a clear transactional relationship; sex with a man she does not love at all, for a place to live in return.

The most tragic consequence of Rikka's fall and her sexual transactions with Aga is the killing of their three illegitimate children, the first and the third by Rikka, the second by Fernanda. As a mistress and a poor, unmarried woman there is no place for illegitimate children:

In the novel, infanticide is instead presented as the result of a merciless society where all the horrors of prostitution and sexual abuse, often with the consent of the young women's relatives, are unveiled. Infanticide is the inevitable result as there is no social space for illegitimate children.

(Sjögren 2009: 139)

Rikka suffers both mentally and physically from these horrible acts. Yet only after being inculpated of terrible crimes – and at least as important – after she realises that her beloved 14-year-old niece may follow her path and become Aga's next mistress, she finds the strength to change her miserable life and stops acting as Aga's mistress. In fact, she then decides to make a deal and to leave Gan forever.

«Det vil koste Aga mer enn taken,» sa nu Rikka Torsen. [...]

Og det vil koste Aga et gavebrev på 3000 spd. til min eldste brordatter. – Og til sist må Aga holde hester ferdig til mig på Gråen skysskifte.»

(Jølsen 2009: 115)

('It will cost Aga more than a thank you,» said Rikka Torsen now immediately. [...]

And it will cost Aga a gift letter of 3000 *spd.* to my brother's eldest daughter. – And in the end, Aga has to keep the horses ready for me at Gråen's ride station'.)

In line with her reason for prostituting herself in the first place, Rikka's motivation for leaving Gan is the best interests of her brother and his family. Since at this point Rikka is officially incriminated with the charge of 'skandaløse forbrydelser' (scandalous crimes) (Jølsen 1943: 112), Aga is happy to make the deal. Indeed, Aga wants Rikka to leave so that he can come clean about the matter.

After her departure both Rikka and Fernanda die, taking their crimes, bitterness, suffering, hate, and regrets with them. In one of the most tragic and sad moments of this novel, just before Rikka and Fernanda drown in a boat while trying to reach the opposite shore of

the lake, a desperate and confused Rikka confronts Fernanda with their horrible acts:

«Hvad gjorde du med den annen, du?» spurte hun hatefullt.

«Spør heller dig selv hvad du gjorde med den første og den tredje,» sa Fernanda brutalt – «og takk oss som skjulte ugjerningen.»

«Men den annen, du» sa Riketta igjen – «den du lovet å ta som din?» (Jølsen 2009: 121)

(‘What did you do with the second one?’ she asked hatefully.

‘Ask rather yourself what you did to the first and the second’, said Fernanda brutally – ‘and thank us for hiding the atrocity’.

‘But the second one, you’, said Riketta again, ‘the one you had promised to take as your own?’)

Rikka’s question about what Fernanda did to the second child reads as a final, desperate cry for help and a way to inculcate Fernanda because she had promised her that she would raise him as her own. Fernanda, on the other hand, argues that they share the responsibility for their cruelty, thus essentially admitting the *atrocity* of their crimes.

Conclusion and discussion

In this article, through an in-depth analysis of three Scandinavian literary works, we have examined *how* the broadly defined phenomenon of prostitution is represented in Scandinavian women’s writings of The Modern Breakthrough. For each of the works analysed – *Aurore Bunge*, *Lucie*, and *Rikka Gan* – we have explored *what factors* were at play in causing the protagonists to become ‘fallen women’ and *with what consequences*. Besides summarising our research findings related to those questions, this section highlights some key similarities and differences between the three texts. And finally, we will share some interesting points of reflection concerning the value of our approach, some limitations, and new perspectives.

Aurore, Lucie, and Rikka are three women who all engage in

prostitution, in the broadest sense of the word, as they all, to different extents, sell themselves to the opposite gender. The specific form of prostitution is, however, unique in each work: prostitution *within* the marriage in the novella *Aurore Bunge*, a socially constructed form of prostitution as a shadow hanging *over* a marriage in the novel *Lucie*, and a relational form of prostitution *parallel* to a marriage, in the form of being a mistress, in the novel *Rikka Gan*.

For each of these three women different factors for becoming a prostitute are at play. In both *Rikka Gan* and *Lucie*, economic reasons and the need to make a living play an important role. In the case of *Lucie*, however, we saw a combination of a poor milieu and a very negative family model. Rikka, as an unmarried and unemployed woman, prostitutes herself to Aga in order to secure a place to live for her and her brother's family. Aurore, in contrast, ends up with the baron, not because she needs money, but because she is bearing an illegitimate child. In both *Aurore Bunge* and *Rikka Gan*, we see that the protagonists' fallen behaviour is, at least partly, forced by people close to them: Aurore is married off by her mother, and Rikka is pushed into the arms of Aga by her sister-in-law. At the same time, in both *Aurore* and *Rikka Gan*, a degree of carefully considered pragmatism can be observed as well. Although it is obvious that neither of them love, respect, or feel any real affection for the men they are involved with, Aurore accepts her mother's plan and marries Baron Gripenfeld because this is the best option she is offered, whereas Rikka offers her sexual transactions to Aga in return for a place to live. The story of *Lucie* is different in this respect. Although she started her career at Tivoli to make a living, the consequences of her past manifest themselves most strongly after she married a former client, a man she sincerely loved.

Although we encounter three different forms of prostitution, for all three protagonists the related consequences are tragic and destructive: (i) Aurore perceives her forced marriage as a symbolic death; (ii) *Lucie* is devastated and persecuted by the shadow of her past life, and eventually dies from an attack of hysteria; and (iii) Rikka, devastated by images of her cruel actions, also tragically dies. Other common denominators are motherhood and illegitimate children. Aurore,

Lucie, and Rikka all become pregnant. Lucie becomes pregnant by her assailant. Rikka even gives birth to several children fathered by her lover, whom she considers a villain. Only Aurore becomes pregnant by a man she loves, but in her case this illegitimate pregnancy is the cause of her forced marriage. These are thus three examples of tragic pregnancies in a society at the turn of the nineteenth century where there was no place for illegitimate children, hence the derogatory wording of this phenomenon.

By writing about different forms of prostitution, these three women writers – Anne Charlotte Leffler, Amalie Skram, and Ragnild Jølsen – succeed in showing a socially stratified reality of their culture and society. Indeed, and as a result of this study's broad definition, we have seen how prostitution crosses different social classes: aristocratic in the case of *Aurore Bunge*, lower and middle upper class in the case of *Lucie*, and a mixed very poor and rich milieu in the novel *Rikka Gan*.

In light of the importance of this theme, in our opinion, more conceptual work, as well as empirical research, remains to be done. In particular, future research calls for additional empirical evidence expressed in the analysis of other 'fallen' women characters represented in the Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish women's writings of The Modern Breakthrough. Through their art, talent, and striving for change, we feel that these artists have greatly contributed to the discussion of the complex and varied phenomenon of prostitution. An additional trajectory for future research might be the inclusion of other artistic forms of expression, produced by female artists of The Modern Breakthrough. Numerous paintings, drawings, photographs, early cinematography, ballets, dances, songs and musical compositions, by women dealing with prostitution, are still awaiting comprehensive study.

Endnotes

¹ Prostitution was officially regulated between 1874–1906 (Denmark), 1847–1918 (Sweden), and 1840–1888 (Norway) (Pedersen 2000; Jansdotter & Svanström 2007).

² Regulated prostitution was first introduced in France during the Napoleonic wars at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Blom 2004). Thereafter, this system spread to most other European countries (Lundquist, 1982).

³ The number of officially registered prostitutes is not equal to the total extent of prostitution, because, as highlighted by, e.g. Lundquist (1982) and Lützen (2004), a considerable amount of prostitution always remained hidden.

⁴ The regulation system failed, causing indignation and various protests in the three Scandinavian countries. It was eventually abolished, starting with Norway in 1888, in Denmark in 1907, and in Sweden in 1918.

⁵ Except when otherwise indicated, all English translations are produced by the authors of this article.

⁶ This book appeared in 1886, but it was confiscated due to its content, i.e. Albertine being seduced and raped by a policeman.

⁷ More specifically, an important issue in this work is the question as to how Osvald Alving possibly could have ‘inherited’ syphilis (Johansen 2005).

⁸ See, for example, *Om Albertine* (1887, About Albertine) by Amalie Skram; *Den reglementerade prostitutionen* (1904, Regulation of prostitution) and *Penningen och Kärlek* (1908, Money and Love) by Frida Stéenhoff.

⁹ In his play *En Hanske* (1883), Bjørnson explained his opposition towards premarital sex for both men and women. Brandes, and others like him, supported a more liberal sexual attitude and did not agree with women’s chastity before marriage (Bredsdorff 1973; Garton 1993).

¹⁰ See, for instance, the comparison between three women characters sold off in unhappy marriages in Hjordt-Vetlesen (1993).

¹¹ Amalie Skram’s involvement in the Scandinavian societal debate about double moral standards, as well as a woman’s position in marriage and prostitution, was extensive and profound (Garton 1993; Hamm 2006).

¹² All English citations from *Lucie* in this article derive from the translation of this book by Katherine Hanson and Judith Messick.

¹³ As Sjögren (2009: 98) points out, even if the novel takes place at the beginning of the nineteenth century it ‘is pervaded by *fin de siècle* gender discourses’.

¹⁴ Spd. is the abbreviation for the Norwegian *Speciedaler*, a unit of currency used until 1875.

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