

Johannes V. Jensen

Made in Germany

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Abstract

It is a fact that many Scandinavian writers from around 1900 until the 1920s – names such as Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg at the top of the list come to mind – revelled in popularity in the German-speaking countries and here were able to ‘survive’ as canonised authors. The public interest in literature from Scandinavia was enormous, alone the fact that being a Scandinavian writer was often enough to provoke the interest of the readers.

The aim of this article is to show the strategies in marketing Johannes V. Jensen in Germany and the resulting dynamics of these strategies here compared with Denmark, where special branding did not take place and where the author’s profile was profoundly different from the one in Germany. This article also includes a look at the reception of Jensen in Germany, which, however, is not limited to ‘common’ readers, but includes a wide range of recognised German-speaking authors who have acknowledged Jensen’s literary merits.

Key words

Danish literature, Johannes V. Jensen, Germany, S. Fischer, reception

Introduction

It is a fact that many Scandinavian writers from around 1880 until the 1920s – notably Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg and later Herman Bang – enjoyed great popularity in the German-speaking countries; some of them were even able to ‘survive’ there and obtain the status of canonised authors. The public interest in literature from Scandinavia at that time was enormous; in fact, being a Scandinavian writer was often enough to provoke the attention of the reading public (cf. Fallenstein and Hennig 1977).

It is against this background that the status of the Danish writer and Nobel Prize laureate Johannes V. Jensen (1873-1950) in the German-speaking countries, especially Germany, will be examined in this article. The fact that Jensen once played a significant role in a German publishing context is rarely remembered today, either in Germany or in Denmark. However, his works were bestsellers in Germany, and Jensen was considered a literary superstar from the turn of the century and during the following decades. The print run figures speak for themselves. It was not only his fictional works that were translated into German but also his essays and articles as well as a large number of contributions to the press and periodicals on current topics.

Jensen’s success in Germany is closely connected with his German publishing house, S. Fischer Verlag in Berlin (now Frankfurt am Main), particularly with the publisher himself, Samuel Fischer (1859-1934), a prominent and charismatic figure in the German publishing world. Thus Fischer launched Jensen in a very efficient way with regard to his ‘product placement’ in the German publishing context. Not only was Jensen introduced as a modern, even modernist, writer with special interest in the exotic and everything American, but the way in which the first selection of short stories with the title *‘Die Welt ist tief ...’* (1907) was launched in Germany was also extraordinary: the volume was contextualised in Germany through references to Friedrich Nietzsche in the title of the publication and to Germany in a foreword by the author, exclusively written for this German edition. Through a selective and focused marketing strategy aimed at the German market, Jensen’s status as a writer of original, ‘different’ literature, not comparable to

contemporary Scandinavian – or for that matter German – writers, was further enhanced in the years that followed. This article will focus on the above-mentioned publication as a case study, but also on other literary publications that are characterised by being selections of texts specifically chosen for publication by the *German* publisher for the *German* market, thus creating the *German* Johannes V. Jensen.

Hence the chief aim of this article is to show the strategies used by S. Fischer Verlag in marketing the literary writer Johannes V. Jensen in Germany. As a starting point, I will examine which texts were chosen for publication and in which way; and a look at the number of print runs will lead to conclusions regarding the popularity, or sometimes lack of popularity, of the different genres represented. Furthermore, I will depict Fischer's general strategy of choosing authors with special emphasis on the important role of Fischer's literary magazine, *Die neue Rundschau*. Here, the article will also make brief references to some examples of the reception of Jensen in Germany by literary critics. In general, those critics were excited by Jensen's 'new' and 'fresh' literary outlook, so different from what was commonly found in German literature.

With reference to '*Die Welt ist tief ...*' as a case study and some reviews from the German literary critics, these general considerations will be exemplified. The remaining text selections, exclusively intended for the German market, will also be looked at as they will support my argument.

Finally, an attempt at drawing some conclusions regarding the reception of Jensen in Germany will be made, as well as a few remarks about the Danish reception, which taken in conjunction with the previous considerations will show that the author's profile in Denmark was significantly different from his reputation in Germany.

Jensen's Works in German

To begin with, it is important to note in an international context which of Jensen's works were translated. According to the figures in Frits Johansen and Aage Marcus's bibliography (Johansen and Marcus 1933 and 1951) regarding translations of Jensen's works into other

languages, German tops the list with 26 translated titles, followed by Swedish (17 translations),¹ Russian (16) and Czech (13), whereas only seven works are translated into English, mainly novels such as *Kongens Fald* (1900-01) and five volumes of *Den lange Rejse* (1908-22). It is also noteworthy that it was almost exclusively in Germany that Jensen had the opportunity to publish both fiction and non-fiction – the only exception is a Russian translation of *Den ny Verden* (1907). For example, *Den ny Verden, Introduktion til vor Tidsalder* (1915), *Dyrenes Forvandling* (1927) and *Aandens Stadier* (1928) were published in German translations in 1908, 1917, 1927 and 1929, respectively (as *Die neue Welt, Unser Zeitalter, Verwandlung der Tiere* and *Stadien des Geistes*). Johansen and Marcus do not list the publishing years of the works in translation, but in the case of Germany, Jensen's works were issued between 1907 and 1937 and exclusively by S. Fischer Verlag.² Not surprisingly, the print run figures decreased over the years, but they were nevertheless extremely satisfying throughout the first couple of decades.

Fischer bought the rights of the following main literary works by Jensen for the German market: the two novels set in, respectively, New York and Chicago, *Madame D'Ora* (1904; *Madame d'Ora*, 1907) and *Hjulet* (1905; *Das Rad*, 1908), all the volumes of the sequel *Den lange Rejse* – i.e. the novels *Bræen* (1908; *Der Gletscher*, 1911), *Skibet* (1912; *Das Schiff*, 1915), *Det tabte Land* (1919, *Das verlorene Land*, 1920), *Christofer Columbus* (1921; *Kolumbus*, 1923), *Cimbernes Tog* (1922; *Der Zug der Cimbern*, 1925) and *Norne-Gæst* (1919; *Norne-Gast*, 1926) – *Kongens Fald* (1900-01; *Des Königs Fall*, 1912), and the late novels *Dr. Renaults Fristelser* (1935; *Dr. Renaults Versuchung*, 1936) and *Gudrun* (1936; *Gudrun*, 1937).³ As we saw above, four non-fictional works were also translated. The remaining publications consist of eight text selections made by the publisher and in general released at short intervals, not – or only up to a point – corresponding to collections published in Danish: *'Die Welt ist tief...'* (1907), *Exotische Novellen* (1909), *Mythen und Jagden* (1910), *Dolores und andere Novellen* (1914), *Olivia Marianne. Exotische Novellen* (1916), *Der Monsun und andere Tiergeschichten* (1925). These collections are of major interest when it comes to the launch of Jensen in Germany, as are, though to

a lesser extent, the two collections *Himmerlandsgeschichten* (1908) and *Mr. Wombwell* (1936), i.e. short stories set in Jensen's native region, Himmerland, which focus on a rural setting and the special but gradually vanishing mentality of the inhabitants (see below).

Looking at the total print run figures over the years, one can draw some conclusions about which books and genres were most popular with the German audience. At the very top appears the collection *Dolores* (52,000 copies), followed by *Bræen* (29,000 copies), *Exotische Novellen* (16,000 copies), the two first book publications in German: *Madame D'Ora* and 'Die Welt ist tief ...' (10-11,000 copies), *Hjulet, Det tabte Land, Skibet and Cimbrernes Tog* (8-9,000 copies), *Mythen und Jagden, Christofer Columbus* and *Olivia Marianne* (6,000 copies). At the bottom end of the scale we find *Himmerlandsgeschichten* with a total of just 2,000 copies (which is rather striking, considering the early year of publication, 1908).⁴

In terms of chronology of publication, the various genres are evenly balanced. For example, in 1907 the novel *Madame D'Ora* and the collection of exotic stories 'Die Welt ist tief ...' (previously published in *Die neue Rundschau*, see below) both appeared.

This list illustrates that in Germany novels and short stories, especially the so-called exotic stories set in tropical forests or in environments outside Europe and texts employing Jensen's genuine mythic technique (see below),⁵ were the preferred text genres. Hence, it is important to stress that the milieus depicted must be either exotic, American or mythical in order to succeed on the German market. That also explains why Jensen's Himmerland stories were not successful at all or at least of limited interest to the German-speaking market, since it was the new, modern Jensen who was in high demand.⁶ This fact might explain the title of the second collection of Himmerland stories, *Mr. Wombwell*, which conveys a certain international aura, 'Wombwell' being a story about an English menagerie that visits rural Himmerland with a number of exotic animals and flamboyant artists. Nevertheless, it was an unsuccessful attempt at re-launching the Himmerland stories.

Accordingly, Fischer adjusted his publishing strategy for Jensen. All the volumes of *Den lange Rejse* fared quite well, due to the fact that this comprehensive history of mankind in six volumes ranging

from the Ice Age to the discovery of America by Columbus contained a mythical dimension⁷ and, in addition, attracted great attention because of its language and narrative qualities. Jensen's novel *Kongens Fald* was launched not so much as a historical novel set in the sixteenth century, but as a novel cast in a powerful, vibrant language and, again, displaying mythical features; sales figures of *Kongens Fald* are not known, but a number of reviews suggest that it fared well and received positive reviews by the critics. Only Jensen's poetry was never seriously introduced to the German readers, apart from some scattered poems interspersed in the novels. However, this is a genre for which Jensen was increasingly acknowledged and admired in Denmark (cf. Rossel 2008).

The Strategies of the Publisher

In 1907 the novel *Madame D'Ora* and the text compilation '*Die Welt ist tief...*' were the first books by Jensen to appear in German translation. However, the launching of the author for a new German readership was carefully planned and prepared, as was typical of the publisher Samuel Fischer. As early as around 1905 he began to consider publishing Jensen's works. From the correspondence with the Danish publisher and writer Peter Nansen (1861-1918), who had recommended Jensen, it is known that Fischer was very eager to choose the most appropriate works, which would sell well on the German market. From a letter to Nansen, dated 10 March 1905, it becomes clear that Fischer did not take any risks and very diligently chose his authors. In this letter – written two years before the first book was printed – Fischer states that he had commissioned translation samples from different books and that on this basis he would consider publishing Jensen in German. Nansen is consulted about which of Jensen's books he thinks would best suit the German market.⁸ Unfortunately, Nansen's response has not been preserved, but whether the choice was made by Fischer or Nansen, the decision proved to be right.

Samuel Fischer, who had founded his publishing house in 1886, was not only a very professional and competent businessman in general, he also knew the publishing business inside out and became one of

the most prominent publishers in Germany. His publishing house was extremely close to his heart and he established a life-long friendship with many of the authors he published, including a number of Scandinavian authors such as Peter Nansen, whom he met personally for the first time in 1897, and Johannes V. Jensen.

Fischer's sense of business can be exemplified by the fact that he managed to obtain the printing rights for Henrik Ibsen's collected works, which were published in German translation even before they were published in Scandinavia. In fact, Fischer was considerably involved in introducing Scandinavian authors to the German market, above all Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg, but also Arne Garborg, Knut Hamsun and not least Herman Bang are other prominent authors published by Fischer; Peter Nansen, too, had success with his novels in Germany. Especially the years from c. 1880-1920 were marked by a veritable boom of Scandinavian authors on the German market, everything coming from Scandinavia was considered attractive, a wave of popularity comparable only to the one during the Romantic period. But even though Scandinavian literature in general was very popular, Jensen seems to buck the trend. Whereas 'previous' authors in general represented a literature characterised by a certain 'Nordland-Sehnsucht' ('longing for the North') as it can be seen in German reviews and criticism, Jensen enters the stage as a Scandinavian author of more international dimensions, which again can be explained by the settings (exotic, American and mythical) he chooses for his texts, as a portrait of Jensen in a literary magazine from 1920 makes clear:

Zu Beginn des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts wurde man in Deutschland auf den dänischen Schriftsteller J.V. Jensen aufmerksam, der sich auf aparte Weise von seinen berühmten Zeitgenossen unterschied. Die Schwärmerei für Ibsen und Björnson hatte den Höhepunkt überschritten, wir hatten schätzen und lieben gelernt die jüngeren Repräsentanten des nordischen Schrifttums: Knut Hamsun, Jonas Lie, Alexander Kielland, Arne Garborg; (...) da erschien ein neues Gesicht. Ein schnittiges Profil, Jensen. Er war für uns ein Mann aus der großen Fremde. Seine Bücher erzählten von den Wundern ferner

Zonen (...). Er hat schärfere Augen als andere Reisende, er ist völlig unsentimental, und seine Ausdrucksmittel sind die des früheren unverbrauchten Impressionismus. Seine Anschauung von den Dingen ist die des wahrhaften, guten Europäers (...). Jensens Stil beherrscht die Ironie des Selbstverständlichen, sein Wort hat Farbe (Elchinger 1920: 25).

(At the beginning of the 20th century, attention in Germany was drawn to the Danish writer J.V. Jensen who in a distinctive way stood out from his famous contemporaries. The enthusiasm for Ibsen and Bjørnson had passed its peak, we had learned to appreciate and love the younger representatives of Nordic writing: Knut Hamsun, Jonas Lie, Alexander Kielland, Arne Garborg; (...) suddenly, a new face appeared: a racy profile, Jensen. To us he was a man from strange and foreign shores. His books told us about the wonders of distant zones (...). He has sharper eyes than other travellers, he is without any sentimentality, and his means of expression are those of the earlier but still vibrant impressionism. His view of things is that of the true, good European (...). Jensen's style masters the irony of the self-evident, his word is colourful.)

The author of another, earlier essay on Scandinavian literature comes to a similar conclusion:

Merkwürdig viele Plastiker der Sprache, die gleichzeitig die feinsten Ausstrahlungen des psychischen Lebens zum Ausdruck bringen, sind Nordländer. Und der modernste unter diesen modernen Dichtern heißt Johannes V. Jensen. Ihm wurde die Heimat bald zu klein, und er sah sich daher die 'bunte Welt' von allen Seiten an. Das Schauen war bei J.V. Jensen stets die Hauptsache: die bis zur Grenze des Möglichkeiten verfeinerten Sinne nahmen die Außeneindrücke auf, dann erst verarbeitete sie die Psyche des Dichters. Auf diese Art prägt J.V. Jensen die neuen Werte für das Weltgefühl (Adam 1909: 222).

(Surprisingly many sculptors of language, who at the same time express the most subtle emanations of mental life, are Nordic. And the most modern amongst these modern poets is called Johannes V. Jensen. For him, his native country soon became too small, and therefore he viewed the 'colourful world' from all angles. Observation was always the most important thing with J.V. Jensen: the senses, refined to the limits of possibility, absorbed the impressions from the outside, and only then were they processed by the author's psyche. In doing so, J.V. Jensen forms the new values of world feeling.)

These quotations illustrate that Jensen in many ways was considered to be different from other Scandinavian authors known in Germany; at the opposite end to, for example, Herman Bang or the earlier naturalistic Scandinavian writers. Jensen epitomised the cosmopolitan figure, receptive to the new both in literature and in 'real life', an author capable of building a bridge from the literary representatives of the already mentioned 'Nordland-Sehnsucht' to the modern world and of an expansion in time and space that encompasses both the civilised world and exotic milieus.

In 1906, i.e. in the midst of the general wave of popularity of Scandinavian literature in Germany, Jensen makes his appearance with a fictional text in Fischer's literary magazine, *Die neue Rundschau*, but as early as in 1904 Jensen had been mentioned for the first time in another German literary magazine, *Das literarische Echo*. *Die neue Rundschau*, established in 1890 and originally published under the title *Freie Bühne für modernes Leben*, and only from 1904 as *Die neue Rundschau*, had – and still has – a considerable position among German intellectuals. As stated in the issue from May 1895, *Die neue Rundschau* was compared to Scandinavian periodicals such as *Nordisk Revy* and the conservative *Svensk Tidskrift*. An advertisement in a brochure from S. Fischer Verlag from 1924 states the following, giving us an insight into the publishing context of Jensen's contributions to the magazine:

Die neue Rundschau ist die lebendigste deutsche Monatsschrift. Kritisch und frei von Parteiengedanken gibt sie ein reiches Bild der deutschen und europäischen geistigen Gegenwart. Jedes Heft enthält Aufsätze über literarische, philosophische, soziologische und politische Gegenstände sowie dichterische Arbeiten der bedeutendsten in- und ausländischen Autoren.

(Die neue Rundschau is the most vibrant German monthly magazine. Critical and without the constrictions of political parties, it provides a broad picture of contemporary German and European intellectual life. Each issue consists of essays on literary, philosophical, sociological and political topics as well as literary works by the most prominent domestic and foreign authors.)

The key features here are the word 'European' (i.e. international) and the wide range of fields of interest, thus displaying a broad, expanding focus which is not limited primarily to German topics. Similarly, Jensen himself was seeking to achieve an expansion as seen in his works. His writings therefore fit perfectly into the programme as expressed in the above quotation. Furthermore, it is striking and prescient that Jensen is considered to be one of these 'most prominent' foreign authors, since he was to become a contributor to the magazine on a regular basis.

Apart from the general aim of the magazine as stated above, a look at the relationship between the publishing house and its journal is also relevant: first and foremost, *Die neue Rundschau* functioned as a medium to promote new literature and emerging authors. Here it was the publishing code of praxis that the most prolific authors would have a platform where they could be launched, and hitherto unpublished texts or extracts from works prior to their book-length publication could be printed for the first time. In Jensen's case, for example, the entire text of the novel *Bræen* in 1911 (more than 280 pages) was printed, as well as the novel *Skibet* in 1914 (more than 240 pages), but so were many of the (non-fictional) texts from the German edition of *Vor Tidsalder* in 1917. Furthermore, many texts from the

later selections of fictional texts were pre-issued here (see below).

In general, Samuel Fischer played an important role with regard to *Die neue Rundschau*; although officially he was the publisher and not the editor-in-chief, in reality he served in both functions. It was to a large extent Fischer himself who decided what was to be printed in the magazine. Moreover, he was keenly aware that as well as publishing books, it was just as important to find the right market for these books – or to *create* a market for them – and to arouse the curiosity of the reading public through a feeling for what it would like to read. This was yet another function of *Die neue Rundschau*, which became the leading German literary journal of the time, reaching 12,000 copies at its peak in 1913. It was a journal whose aim was both to reflect the literary and intellectual waves of the time and to represent and create certain values.

‘Die Welt ist tief ...’

As mentioned above, the publication *‘Die Welt ist tief ...’* (1907) is exemplary insofar as it demonstrates the marketing strategies of Samuel Fischer in launching his authors: a pre-release in *Die neue Rundschau* followed by a book edition. But at the same time the work is exceptional compared with his other book publications in German.

The volume numbering 260 pages consists of four texts, the short stories ‘Forsvundne Skove’, ‘Dolores’ and ‘Louison’ (all from *Intermezzo*, 1899) as well as of 21 out of the 22 chapters of the significantly longer travelogue *Skovene* (1904). In addition, it has a foreword by Jensen. ‘Forsvundne Skove’, ‘Dolores’ and *Skovene* (slightly abbreviated) had all previously been printed in *Die neue Rundschau* (in 1906 and 1907).

The two – fictional – travelogues ‘Dolores’ and ‘Louison’, written from the perspective of a just as fictional first-person narrator, in which the main character is a traveller from Denmark by the name of Jensen, with embedded romantic storylines (cf. the names in the titles) and taking place in Spain and Paris respectively, are framed by the two texts set in the tropical jungle, ‘Forsvundne Skove’ (6 pages) and *Skovene* (140 pages). While also *Skovene* is told by a first-person narrator, we find in ‘Forsvundne Skove’ a third-person omniscient

perspective. The plot has a non-identified setting, whereas *Skovene* takes place in the fictional Birubunga, modelled after a principality in Malaysia called Terengganu. Nevertheless, there are some clues that imply that the two stories share the same milieu, for example the character Korra appears in both texts.

It is striking that the publisher chose a quite open genre characterisation for these texts – ‘Novellen’ (‘short stories’) – despite the fact that in the case of the original volumes, *Intermezzo* and *Skovene*, no classification or genre specification is used.⁹ However, it seems that ‘Intermezzo’ is used as a genre definition, which may be understood as a reference to Jensen’s literary model Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) and his work *Lyrisches Intermezzo* (1822-23) on the one hand, and to Heine’s travelogues *Reisebilder* (1826-31) on the other hand, especially his satirical style which serves as an inspiration for Jensen’s own texts.

Concerning the pre-issue of the texts, ‘Louison’, i.e. the text situated in Paris, was not published in advance in the magazine, one reason perhaps being the erotic undertones that may have appeared too daring for the rather conservative readership of *Die neue Rundschau*. Another reason could be that the text was too trite in relation to the milieu. The latter explanation seems to be the most likely one, since none of the German book reviews discuss ‘Louison’ – nor ‘Dolores’ for that matter – whereas the other texts, i.e. ‘Forsvundne Skove’ and *Skovene*, are mentioned with their exotic settings, the jungle and the tropics. Nevertheless, in 1914 ‘Dolores’ became the title of an anthology consisting of both myths, Himmerland stories and exotic stories (see below).

The marketing stunt of the German edition lies within its paratexts, i.e. all the elements that surround the main text and which are intended to influence the consumption and reception by the reader, in this case title and foreword (Genette 1997: 1-2). The publishing house chose to supply the book with a title with a specific reference to the German philosopher and writer Friedrich Nietzsche’s (1844-1900) work *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1883-85), which was extremely popular in Germany before the turn of the century and which everybody had heard of, and with a foreword specifically written by Jensen for this

German edition. These were deliberate choices aimed at influencing the readers and triggering an interest in this new author.

With both the title and the foreword, Jensen/the publisher creates a connection between the German reading public and the Danish author, since both refer directly to Germany and thus conjure up a feeling of relatedness and connectivity, perhaps even a personal bond.

Despite this, Jensen was not any longer fascinated by Nietzsche by the time the German volume – and for that matter the original texts – was published. Jensen, whose first novels, *Danskere* (1896) and *Einar Elkær* (1898), contain a certain admiration for Nietzsche as reflected in the almost pathological self-introspection of the main characters, Buris and Einar Elkær, now adopts a much more critical and scrutinising position, alternating between irony and outright criticism of him, and as it is the case with ‘Dolores’, he becomes rather belligerent. The reference to Nietzsche is most prominent in this short story, where Zarathustra himself appears, but in ‘Forsvundne Skove’ and *Skovene*, too, one can find allusions to Nietzsche.

On the other hand, in the foreword, which is kept in a rather private tone, Jensen refers to his personal relations with Germany, which he characterises with the romantic term ‘unhappy love’, and to his first journey to Germany in 1899, which he calls both a ‘journey of exploration to the inner Germany’ (‘Entdeckungsreise in das innere Deutschland’), a ‘research journey’ (‘Forschungsreise’) and a ‘pilgrimage’ (‘Wallfahrt’). Jensen, the Heine-admirer, had hoped to visit the poet’s place of birth, but all he got to see was the industry of the Ruhr district and the cities of Cologne, Düsseldorf and Essen. He states that the objects he had seen, the Cathedral of Cologne and the chimney stacks of the factories, have inspired him to write the texts. He further mentions the image of the slave in the tropical forests and one could add the factory slaves whom the traveller sees in the myth ‘Knokkelmanden’ as another example.

Jensen claims that the texts in the volume have their origin in Germany and that the initial inspiration stems from the earliest features (‘Urton’) of the Germanic imagination, which made him find the ‘common denominator of all times’ (‘Generalnenner aller Zeiten’). Thus it is indirectly stated that it was Germany that helped Jensen

create his mythical method – the expansion of time and space, ‘the invocation of longing, rooted in the tension between the distant and the close’ (Rossel 1984: 84).

Somewhat coquettish and with some pathos not unknown in the literature of the time, Jensen ends with the rhetorical question whether Germany is willing to accept him now, as he has discovered his way of writing in Germany, even though his love for Germany earlier on had been an unhappy one (see above).

It must be added that Jensen deliberately constructs this presentation of ‘a journey of exploration to the inner Germany’ and of a ‘Heine-pilgrimage’ in order to even better fit in the desired publishing context. It can be stated as a fact that Jensen on his European journey to the Rhineland, Paris and London in 1898-99 had stayed approximately six weeks in Düsseldorf in 1899. The aim of this journey was to send literary texts to his publisher back in Copenhagen, Ernst Bojesen (Nordisk Forlag), who financed this journey (Friis 1974: 24). That Jensen at the same time was able to visit Heine’s place of birth was a welcome bonus of the journey, but not its primary incentive, as he attempts to indicate in his foreword – thus to a certain extent the foreword can be characterised as fictitious. Nowhere else in his preserved statements does Jensen highlight the role he ascribes to Germany. Stylistically, too, Jensen’s foreword conforms to a myth, taking the point of departure in a real, self-experienced situation (his journey to Germany) and expanding in time and space later on, as it is the case in a number of myths, so-called ‘erindringsmyter’, myths of recollection, for example ‘Vejviseren’ which commences with a recollection of a now vanished street sign in the Himmerland of Jensen’s childhood. Similarly, in the foreword Jensen is building up a – for a myth typical – ‘tension between the tangible and the transcendental’ (Rossel 1984: 84), as further corroborated by his references to a ‘common denominator of all times’ and to the ‘earliest features of the Germanic imagination’.

Hence, the foreword functions as encouragement for German-speaking readers to buy a book by this new, promising writer from Scandinavia, or as affirmation that it was the right choice to have bought the book or perhaps to generate an interest in this author. On the other hand, the foreword does not necessarily reflect Jensen’s

genuine thoughts. On the contrary, it represents a fiction in itself, a myth which at the same time has the function of an advertisement, an invitation to read the book and provoke interest in the author and curiosity in the works to come.

Nevertheless, the stunt seems to have succeeded, since the reference to Nietzsche – even though Jensen by then had turned his back on all of Nietzsche’s ideas – made its way into the book reviews; furthermore, the following quote illustrates the concentration on the stories with tropical milieus, whereas there is no focus on the texts ‘Dolores’ and ‘Louison’ – the reviewer appears not to distinguish between the author Jensen and the fictional character Jensen in the narrative:

Die Novellen, die er mit dem halb ironischen, halb ernstern Zarathustra-Titel ‘Die Welt ist tief ...’ versehen hat, zeigen ihn als einen rastlosen, seine Neugierde nie sättigenden, kulturermüdeten Erdenbummler. (...) Sie gehören zum besten, was jemals über exotische Landschaften geschrieben wurde. In ihnen lebt die ganze Schwüle, Üppigkeit und Farbenpracht der Tropen. Das Mysterium des Urwaldes spricht aus ihnen, Schöpfungsahnungen blitzen auf (Hoffmann 1907: 21).

(The short stories which he issued with the semi-ironic, semi-serious Zarathustra-title ‘Die Welt ist tief ...’ show him as a restless globetrotter who, tired of culture, can never satisfy his curiosity. They contain some of the best texts that have ever been written about exotic landscapes. Within them live all the mugginess, opulence and blaze of colours of the tropics. The mystery of the jungle articulates itself in them, notions of the creation come to light.)

Even though the translation by Julia Koppel is rather poor in places – or at least not as good as one could wish – the volume sold very well, with an initial print run of 2,000 copies, of which 25 copies were numbered and printed on special, hand-made paper, to be followed the next year by another edition of 2,000 copies. All in all, the book enjoyed five printings (in 1907, 1908, 1913, 1918 and 1923), totalling

10,000 copies by 1923.

In summary, both the choice of the title with its reference to a sentence in Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra* and the foreword exclusively written for the German edition are significant. The goal was to influence and control the reception by the reader, who might feel personally addressed by the (foreign) author.

Jensen employs a double, maybe even triple frame of reference, by (a) citing from Nietzsche's work, (b) referring to Heine as his ultimate artistic model – and perhaps (c) letting Zarathustra appear as a character in the short story 'Dolores', thus seeing Nietzsche's character in an almost Heinesque ironic light.

Moreover, by referring to both Nietzsche and Heine, Jensen contrasts two representatives of German culture and intellectual life – on the one hand, Nietzsche whom Jensen had distanced himself from around the turn of the century and whom he actually ridicules in 'Dolores', and, on the other hand, Heinrich Heine, whom he admires greatly. This mix of distance and admiration has an artistic impact on the texts represented in the volume: one finds an ironic-capricious style and tone, influenced by Heine, but Jensen turns this irony against Nietzsche when Zarathustra appears.

It is a multi-layered play with fiction and faction (foreword-short story/myth, author-character), in which the reader to a certain extent is being included. Thus there is also an interaction between paratexts and main text, which is a result of deliberate choices by the author and/or the publisher respectively, which undoubtedly has an effect on the reader's reception and acceptance of the text. Another consequence is a certain image of the author which has been manipulated in advance.

Other Text Selections

It is also illuminating with regard to the marketing of Jensen in Germany to take a look at the subsequently published anthologies (the two selections of Himmerland stories will not be taken into consideration here) – and the actual selection of texts – which along with '*Die Welt ist tief ...*' were virtually tailored for the German audience: *Exotische Novellen, Mythen und Jagden, Dolores und andere Novellen, Olivia*

Marianne and finally *Der Monsun und andere Tiergeschichten*, all of them being collections with exotic, foreign and even mythical milieus.

Exotische Novellen (1909) was one of the best selling titles with 16,000 copies in six printings between 1909-24, consisting of the texts 'Kulien', 'Arabella' and 'Moderen', i.e. all the texts from *Singaporenoveller* (1907), supplemented by 'A Koy', 'Monsunen', 'Bondefangeren' and 'Lille Ahasverus', i.e. all the texts from *Lille Ahasverus* (1909). Again a foreword specially written for this edition by Jensen was added in which Jensen points to his attempt 'jenseits von Zeit und Raum zu dichten' ('to write beyond time and space') – which is yet another reference to the mythical method; in addition, both 'Moderen' and 'A Koy' were pre-issued in *Die neue Rundschau* in 1908.

The reviews were extremely positive, as exemplified by the following quotation which Fischer chose to use on the advertising pages of the books by Jensen and which illustrates the fascination in Germany with both Jensen's choice of milieus and his narrative forcefulness and power to evoke lively images in the minds of his readers:

Jede dieser exotischen Novellen ist ein brennendfarbiges Bild asiatischen (zum Schlusse auch amerikanischen) Lebens. Man sieht in eine fremde Landschaft. Und wir empfinden mit Jensen, daß die Zeiten so nahe sind, wo man gar nichts Neues oder Fremdartiges mehr in dem geringen Unterschied sucht, den einige Jahrhunderte oder Meere zwischen Menschen legen. Das ist der große ethische Wert dieser Novellen, deren artistische Bedeutung über jeden Zweifel erhaben sind.

(Every single one of these exotic short stories is a burning-coloured picture of Asian (and in the end also American) life. One looks into a foreign landscape. And we feel with Jensen that the times are so close when one does not seek anything new or exotic in the small difference that a number of centuries or oceans place between people. That is the great ethical value of these short stories, whose artistic importance rise above any doubts one might have.)

In the following year, 1910, the next selection, *Mythen und Jagden*, was launched, a volume containing 31 myths – taken from *Myter og Jagter* (1907), *Nye Myter* (1908), *Myter. Ny Samling* (1910) and a single text from *Den gotiske Renaissance* (1901) – which will not be dealt with here; nevertheless, considering the fact that especially texts with mythical character seemed to attract the German audience, it may seem somewhat surprising that the German publisher did not try to introduce this genre by its name when given this specific opportunity to brand the product. Since the critics in Germany – as well as literary scholars in Denmark – time and again point to the mythical method by describing the intermingling of time and space in so many of Jensen's texts, the possibility of additional product placement was in fact present here but was not picked up, in spite of the term 'Mythen' in the title.

Even so, the following volume from 1914, *Dolores und andere Novellen* in particular, became a bestseller in Germany, and it is worthwhile considering it in the context of this article: First of all, *Dolores* was part of a series by Samuel Fischer, 'Fischers Bibliothek zeitgenössischer Romane' ('Fischer's Library of Contemporary Novels'), which had the goal to make 'challenging literature' ('anspruchsvolle Literatur') accessible at a reasonable price for a large reading public. This fact might be an additional reason for the high print runs (52,000 copies in seven printings between 1914-24). It is interesting that it is a collection of short stories that was chosen to be part of the series of *novels*, where the *crème de la crème* of contemporary writers were represented, not only German and Austrian writers such as Theodor Fontane, Thomas Mann, Arthur Schnitzler and Jakob Wassermann, but also internationally renowned names such as Leo Tolstoj as well as a whole range of other Scandinavian writers, for example Herman Bang, Gustaf af Geijerstam, Knut Hamsun, Jonas Lie and Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson.

The incorporation of this volume in a series of novels appears somewhat peculiar in itself, but it is also a rather strange compilation of texts that Fischer chose to group together. As a matter of fact, the volume contains a heterogeneous collection of six texts: 'Dolores'

(previously included in *'Die Welt ist tief ...'*), the myths 'Kondignogen' and 'Paa Ski' (both previously issued in *Mythen und Jagden*), the exotic story 'Arabella' (previously found in *Exotische Novellen*) as well as two Himmerland stories, 'Jomfruen' and 'Wombwell' (both from *Nye Himmerlandshistorier*, 1904), which are published here for the first time in German translation – and this is a new attempt to hit the market with two Himmerland stories. The inclusion of two Himmerland stories appears somewhat strange, but it is to a great extent precisely the exotic element – the clash between the Himmerland people and the wide, unknown and *exotic* world as it is moving into Himmerland in the shape of an English menagerie – that characterises the Himmerland story 'Wombwell' and is the most important feature of this text. Besides, of all the Himmerland stories 'Wombwell' is the only one which was published in different contexts: in two volumes, 1914 and 1936, and in *Die neue Rundschau* in 1936 – again an attempt to advertise the forthcoming edition of Himmerland stories, *Mr. Wombwell*. 'Wombwell' is thus, apart from an (in this context) irrelevant text in 1919,¹⁰ the only Himmerland story to be published in *Die neue Rundschau*, due to its exotic theme.

The next selection of texts in German translation is the volume *Olivia Marianne. Exotische Novellen* (1916), which consists of more texts than the Danish version (*Olivia Marianne*, 1915) with its five texts. Thus in addition to these texts – 'Olivia Marianne', 'Moderen', 'Paa Java', 'Wang Tsung Tse' and 'Et Møde' – the volume contains the translations of 'Fru Dominick' (1915), 'Den kinesiske Kvinde' (1916) and 'Sort og hvidt' (1912). The very titles of the texts make it clear that it is once more the texts with an explicit foreign/exotic touch that have been chosen. Here, too, several of the stories were pre-published in *Die neue Rundschau*, respectively in 1915 and 1916 ('Moderen', 'Paa Java', and 'Fru Dominick').

In the last collection of importance it is still obvious that it is the texts with a certain exotic milieu that were able to attract the interest of the German readers, i.e. those texts which present the cosmopolitan Jensen, a genuine citizen of the world, in contrast to Jensen the author of the Himmerland stories which represent the author as a Dane. *Der Monsun und andere Tiergeschichten* (1925) was – like *Dolores*

und andere Novellen before – published in one of the Fischer-series, namely ‘Fischers illustrierte Bücher’ (‘Fischer’s Illustrated Books’). This series, with a ‘hand-coloured cover’ (‘handkoloriertem Einband’) and illustrations, i.e. something approaching bibliophilic editions, included works of prominent writers of the time, such as Gerhart Hauptmann, Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann and Herman Bang. With regard to the labelling, the genre characterisation ‘Tiergeschichten’ (‘animal stories’) must be considered somewhat unfortunate since it conveys a distorted picture of the texts represented in this book. The volume consists of six texts, exotic stories and myths, of which the first one, ‘Monsunen’, had previously been published in *Exotische Novellen*, whereas the remaining five texts had appeared in *Mythen und Jagden*. Although only 2,000 copies of this edition were printed, the fact that Jensen’s texts were incorporated in this series speaks volumes for his popularity.

These examples show that the whole publishing concept was tailored to the author in question with special focus on the German market: selections of handpicked texts made by the publisher; the pre-issue of a wide range of texts in *Die neue Rundschau* as ‘product placement’; paratexts in terms of two specially written forewords to German editions combined with the smart move to insert a reference to Friedrich Nietzsche in one of the titles and to Heine in the foreword, thereby contrasting them with each other and evoking the readers’ special interest; in two cases the incorporation into whole series – these were all strategies that obtained the intended results: high print runs, positive reviews throughout, and a deliberately focused marketing of the ‘German’ Johannes V. Jensen.

Conclusion

It should be pointed out that there was a huge difference between this ‘German’ Johannes V. Jensen and the way in which he was perceived in his homeland Denmark. The very fact that Jensen was introduced to the German book market with works containing exotic and American milieus and a mythical dimension created a profoundly different image of this new author from the one existing in Denmark. There, however,

the introduction of Jensen as a writer took a different course and happened without a special launch. He had worked his way up, starting his career with a number of artistically rather trashy novels published in a magazine under a pseudonym and with minor contributions in the press, before his actual debut with the two novels *Danskere* (1896) and *Einar Elkær* (1898) (neither translated into German) – works that he later distanced himself from – followed by his Himmerland stories (1898, and two further volumes in 1904 and 1910). No fewer than eleven books followed up to 1906 (novels, short stories, essays and poetry), which consolidated and further strengthened his position as a professional and recognised writer; by his death in 1950 Jensen had published more than 80 works – not all of them of the same high artistic quality – along with his anthropologic studies and not least his numerous contributions and feature articles for different Danish newspapers, which illustrate Jensen's position as an extremely industrious writer and contributor to the daily debate.

Many of Jensen's works have become canonised, such as *Kongens Fald*, his Himmerland stories and in particular in his very own genre, the myth – a term and concept closely connected with his authorship – which is not the case in Germany. In Denmark Jensen is also seen as an enthusiastic traveller, a cosmopolitan, with affinities to Christopher Columbus, but at the same time he was seen as a true Dane. In Germany, Jensen is seen as a real European and a cosmopolitan personality, but not as a Dane or a Scandinavian. His anthropologic studies, too, add to the picture of Jensen in Denmark, which is not the case with the German Johannes V. Jensen.

The reception of Jensen in Denmark, then, was fundamentally different. Not only did Jensen publish more than 80 books in his home country as opposed to around 25 in Germany but a number of features relevant to his image as an author in his home country were not taken into consideration either.

Some of Jensen's feature articles on contemporary issues and themes were printed and read in German newspapers and magazines, but it was his literary works that made him a superstar in Germany. His mythical method, if not labelled as such, was popular, but not as popular as his so-called exotic stories, although the boundaries are

somewhat blurred.

Another essential part of Jensen's work is not included in his German portfolio, viz. his exquisite and innovative poetry. Whereas in Denmark Jensen was known and highly regarded for his poems, in particular for the poems in free verse influenced by Goethe and Heine, this is not the case in Germany; apart from a few poems included in his novels, no serious attempts were made to introduce him to the German readership as a lyric poet. Nevertheless, in some of the reviews stylistic parallels are drawn to the American poet Walt Whitman, predominantly referring to Jensen's interest in America.¹¹

Samuel Fischer – in spite of his general instinct for literature – was not very knowledgeable about poetry. This is reflected in the striking absence – with some exceptions – of poetry published in *Die neue Rundschau*. Hence it is no surprise that Jensen's poetry also fell victim to Fischer's lack of appreciation of this genre. Another reason could be that Jensen's German translator, Julia Koppel, might not have been capable of translating poetry. In a letter Jensen himself mentions his reservations regarding the quality of Koppel's translations, though these did not diminish Jensen's success in Germany.

So when it comes to the German market as represented by the literary critics, the formula for Jensen's successful reception contains the following ingredients: His mythical texts/method (both found in his short prose and novels), everything relating to an exotic or American milieu as well as the absence of the Himmerland stories, his poetry and his anthropological and evolutionist thoughts.

Jensen's popularity in Germany derives from the fact that he did not remain within the confines of the Danish or Scandinavian borders but expanded beyond them. This was crucial to the reception of his works in Germany, where he was seen as a writer who seriously and wholeheartedly introduced so-called Americanism and Exotism to German literature. In addition, his outstanding power of observation as well as his linguistic and stylistic virtuosity was highly praised. Samuel Fischer must have sensed this potential by choosing the works which have precisely these characteristics: expansion together with the mythical element, emphasising both the concrete and the imaginary in his writing. In the German reviews buzzwords such as

‘world feeling’ (‘Weltgefühl’) occur repeatedly, but he is also addressed as ‘wanderer of the world’ (‘Erdenwanderer’) and ‘pilgrim of the world’ (‘Weltenpilger’) with certain metaphysical undertones.

Despite all this and the fact that Jensen eventually became a Nobel Prize laureate in 1944, he is – generally speaking – forgotten in the German speaking countries today. In Denmark, however, Jensen has remained an important figure and there his works are continuously re-printed; as late as in 1999 his novel, *Kongens Fald* was voted ‘the Danish book of the century’ (‘århundredets danske bog’) by the readers of the newspaper *Politiken*.

The article has outlined the publishing process of Johannes V. Jensen in Germany within the historical context of communication and transmission, including the deliberate and carefully planned marketing of him on the German market from 1906 onwards, and shown that the strategies used by his German publisher paid off very handsomely.

Endnotes

¹By contrast, only one title is translated into Norwegian, one into Icelandic and two into Faroese.

² It must be noted that after the coming into power of the National Socialist regime in 1933 and the death of Samuel Fischer, who had a Jewish background, in 1934, S. Fischer Verlag was split up in 1936: Peter Suhrkamp (1891-1959) continued in Berlin, publishing non-banned authors in the branch known as S. Fischer Verlag, before establishing his own publishing house in 1950, while Samuel Fischer’s son-in-law, Gottfried Bermann Fischer (1897-1995), continued with the other branch, Bermann Fischer Verlag, in exile, starting out in Vienna but after the Austrian so-called ‘Anschluss’ in 1938 moving to Stockholm; among ‘his’ authors was Johannes V. Jensen. Nevertheless, some of his works were still published by S. Fischer: *Mr. Wombwell* and the novel *Gudrun*, whereas the novel *Dr. Renaults Fristelser* was published by Bermann Fischer.

³ In the following, I will use the Danish titles of Jensen’s novels when referring to the German editions.

⁴ Since neither the number of copies of the first (and supposedly last) print run nor the sales figures for *Mr. Wombwell* (1936) are known, this volume will not be discussed here.

⁵ For a detailed definition and characterisation of Jensen’s mythical technique cf. e.g. Rossel, S.H. (1984): *Johannes V. Jensen*, Boston: Twayne.

⁶ Not even an explanatory foreword by the translator of *Himmerlandsgeschichten*, who emphasises the characteristics and significance of the texts, could compensate for this clear lack of interest.

⁷ In *Dyrenes Forvandling* (1925) Jensen himself calls attention to the mythical

dimension regarding the composition of *Den lange Rejse* (cf. p. 14).

⁸ The letter is kept in *Det Kongelige Bibliotek*, Center for Manuscripts, Copenhagen, signature NKS 4043,4^o.

⁹ However, Johansen and Marcus do not even use the classification 'short stories' in their bibliography. *Skovene* and *Eksotiske Noveller* appear under the same category, though without defining which genre *Skovene* belongs to.

¹⁰ Jensen, J.V. (1919): 'Jørgine. Eine Erzählung aus alter Zeit', in *Die neue Rundschau*, 44-82, but never in a book publication by S. Fischer Verlag; nevertheless the story was published later on by Reclam Verlag in Leipzig (1930). The (extended) Danish version of this Himmerland story with the title *Jørgine*, was not published until 1926. Cf. Johansen and Marcus, Vol. 1, p. 31.

¹¹ Jensen himself calls attention to the fact that his poetry in free verse actually isn't influenced by Whitman, but by Goethe and Heine. Nevertheless, an affinity to Whitman's poetry comes to mind.

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