



Lasso rundt fru Luna

Agnar Mykle

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«En høy, vadefuglaktig mann» stiger inn i nattoget på Østbanestasjonen i Oslo. Det er den 32 år gamle komponisten Ask Burle. Han er på vei hjem for å følge sin yngre bror Balder til graven. Og der, i den skakende, nattsvarte sovevognkupeen, begynner Ask Burles jakt etter den tapte tid. Herfra rulles opp den medrivende historien i en av våre virkelig store etterkrigsromaner, en vital og øm knyttneve av en fortelling.

Denne utgaven av Lasso rundt fru Luna er basert på Agnar Mykles originalmanuskript. Flere partier herfra ble strøket før boken utkom i 1954 – og mange av dem mot forfatterens ønske. Disse er for første gang nå tatt med. Anders Heger har ledet arbeidet med å tilføye de utelatte passasjene, og han har skrevet et forord til den nye utgaven.

«Lasso rundt fru Luna er ikke bare Mykles betydeligste bok hittil. Den er ikke bare en rundhåndet innfrielse av alle de løfter Agnar Mykle har gitt i sine tidligere bøker. Den er, i absolutt forstand, et kostelig og betagende kunstverk ...»

Gordon Hølmebakk, Morgenbladet

Agnar Mykle betraktes som en av etterkrigstidens mest betydelige forfattere, ikke minst fordi bøkene hans stadig evner å begeistre unge og nye lesere. Han ble født i Trondheim i 1915 og døde i januar 1994 i Asker. Han debuterte som forfatter med novellesamlingen Taustigen, som utkom i 1948. Etter dette ga han ut en rekke glitrende romaner og noveller, ikke minst Sangen om den røde rubin (1954) og Largo (1967).

Lasso rundt fru Luna Details

Date : Published 2007 by Gyldendal (first published 1954)

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Author : Agnar Mykle

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Manny says

From Jan Kjærstad's *Forførelsen* (my translation):

"Okay, listen up guys, who wrote this: 'Her body was moving in great surging billows under him. For one fearful moment they listened to each other's gasping breathing and she whispered in his ear: 'Yes.' The darkness in front of his eyes was lit by myriads of tiny twinkling, singing stars. In cruel rapture mingled with pain and fear he let it happen.'"

"Nabokov," suggested Thomas. "Miller," said Trine. "It's got to be an Englishman," said Alva. "D.H. Lawrence." Axel smiled and shook his head as wilder and wilder suggestions rained down on him from all sides.

"Agnar Mykle," he said. If he had been wearing a hat, he would have raised it: Axel had only one literary hero in Norway, Agnar Mykle. "From a translation of *Lasso rundt fru Luna*. A scandalously bad one, I should add. The stupid fuckers have cut at least ten sentences just in this little passage. It's a joke."

I give in: I just have to check out Mykle's controversial masterpiece.

Update: having finally obtained a copy (thank you Stian!) I have now read the passage in question in the original Norwegian. It turns out that Axel wasn't exaggerating at all.

More when I've finished...

Mid 20th Century Norwegian Literature. 90 minutes

1. When Agnar Mykle was 20, he worked for a year at two business schools in the extreme North of Norway, becoming the youngest headmaster in the country. During this time, he was romantically involved with two different women, both of whom became pregnant.

Mykle's novel *Lasso Rundt Fru Luna*, in contrast, is about a 20 year old man, "Ask Burlefot", who works for a year at two business schools in the extreme North of Norway, becoming the youngest headmaster in the country, and is romantically involved with two different women, both of whom become pregnant.

How would you assess the author's claim in the Foreword that "the characters in this book are entirely fictitious, and it is in no way based on real events"?

2. The greater part of the action takes place in the town of "Indrepollen", often identified with the real Kirknes.

Which answer best fits the geographical location of Kirknes?

A. Middle of nowhere.

B. Back of beyond.

C. When you get to the back of beyond, keep going until you see the sign for Ultima Thule. Then take the next right and you can't miss it.

D. Like C, but a bit more so.

3. Which of the following novels do you consider is most similar to *Lasso Rundt Fru Luna*? To what extent do you think each one was influenced by it? Justify your answer.

A. Jan Kjærstad, *Forføreren*.

B. Karl Ove Knausgård, *Min Kamp*.

C. John Updike, *Rabbit, Run*.

D. Erica Jong, *Fear of Flying*.

4. Which of the following authors would you say is most misogynistic? Justify your answer.

A. Guy de Maupassant

B. August Strindberg

C. Agnar Mykle

D. Bret Easton Ellis

E. None of them are misogynistic, they should all be read ironically.

5. The imagery in *Lasso Rundt Fru Luna* is largely based on...?

A. Classical sagas of the Norse gods.

B. Business administration workbooks.

C. Both A and B.

D. This is a trick question, right?

6. Match the characters from the book with the descriptions below.

i) "Gunnhild"

ii) "Siv"

iii) Ask's mother

A. Neurotic, shallow, manipulative, overweight, self-obsessed non-stop talker who dresses like a cheap

hooker and is unable to see the hero as anything more than a projection of her worthless self.

B. Neurotic, shallow, manipulative, grasping, dishonest blackmailer, con artist and part-time prostitute.

C. Tiny, radiantly beautiful, angelic blonde creature whose only wishes are to have sex with the hero at every hour of the day or night, bear his child, and cherish each moment she is fortunate enough to spend in his company.

7. The book became notorious for its explicit sex scenes. In the most memorable of these, Ask, who has never previously slept with anyone, is about to bed an experienced older woman and is terrified that he will disappoint her. He prays for guidance to the god Frej's steed Gyldenborste, after which he is able to bring her to a screaming orgasm twice, using a couple of acrobatic positions she has never previously tried, before regally taking his own pleasure.

How would you describe the above episode?

A. You can't have read that right. Are you sure your Norwegian is as good as you think it is?

B. Uh, I guess it must be ironic or something? Excuse me if I repeat myself.

C. Just because *you're* so pathetically inadequate, you needn't assume everyone else is too.

D. Didn't you know? This often happens when you address heartfelt prayers to magic sexy flying pigs.

(My answers here)

Ståle Elgåen says

Den beste romanen jeg har lest av en norsk forfatter!

Clare Seville says

Leser Lasso rundt fru Luna igjen etter mange år. Den framstår mer nevrotisk, springende og uferdig enn jeg husket den. Men uansett; jeg faller igjen for Mykles intense følsomhet og flotte, triste og fornøyelige beskrivelser av mennesker og omgivelser rundt Ask Burlefot. Det var verdt et gjensyn.

Simen Gjersvold says

Skjelden har jeg vært så ambivalent til en bok. Slitsomt er det når den unge manns minste følelser skal slås ut i utallige evige angstrytt, gang på gang og hele tiden, eller de langdryge gjenfortellingene av Asks handelsskoleforelesninger - for å ikke snakke om 50-tallets kvinnesyn som er å spore i fleng. Men så inneholder den likevel noen passasjer så vakre (og morsomme!) at jeg ikke vet hvor jeg skal gjøre av meg, og leser det bare derfor en gang til; en liten gutts storøyde fornøyelse av å få et halvt skrelt eple av sin kaldsindige far ("far er nå snill"); farens avkall på musikken; Zebedeussens fortelling om hvorfor han har 14

døtre; beskrivelsen av vennskapet med Kvase; et siste farvel på et hotellrom; en lillebrors stolthet av storebrorens heldåd. Opplevdes ikke som en bok med noe fast kjerne, men heller som et flytende virrvarr av minner som likevel sys flott sammen mot slutten, med klump i halsen. Også må det jo sies - for et språk!

Ole says

Utrolig morsom og velskrevet bok som sammen med Den Røde Rubin er noe av det beste som er skrevet i Norge. Jeg har lest alle Mykles bøker flere ganger. Synd at han ble sprø og sluttet å publisere.

Lisbeth Solberg says

Finished rereading this one, not in the original Norwegian (I wish I could--lasso rundt fru luna) and thinking on unhappy kinsmen. I must like it; I've read it 3 or 4 times, now. Sort of a *Crime and Punishment* with sex.

It has a character with a limp, too.

Damara says

I was unsure about this book at first. There are aspects of it that are very dated (it was written in the 1950s), and it smacked of mysogyny. There is a very strong, opinionated narrative voice, I couldn't decide if the attitudes expressed about (some) women were unconscious reflections of the author's own attitudes, or if it was a deliberate move to help the reader enter into the perspective of the young man protagonist. I'm inclined to think the latter. Mykle did a great job capturing the arrogance, innocence, and painful awkwardness of being a young adult. The book dealt with sex graphically, but none of it seemed gratuitous or sensational, and didn't make me squirm uncomfortably. Keywords? Sensitive. Poignant. Youth. Loss. All in all, I liked it, and it had me weeping in the end, which for me is a perverse sign of a good book (hey, it had me emotionally invested, right?).

Sophia B says

4.5 A tale of the artist as a young man, a tale of a young man and his sexual awakening, a tale of a young man searching for his identity, a tale of a young man fleeing his family and the feeling of being trapped. A tale of a selfish young man that thinks of no one but himself. A tale of a young man not knowing what he wants but that has these extreme longings, a longing for greatness and desire to create something larger than himself. A tale of a young man going to the north of Norway, like so many young men after him (like Knausgård), to try himself. A tale about loss and losing the only person that really matters. A very poetic and emotional novel.

(And yes it is sexist, but if you are going to portray a young man going through a sexual awakening in the 30s in a society with strict morals, you must go there, but of course it gives you mixed emotions reading it today)

SiriSM says

Kanskje den beste boken jeg har lest. Kanskje.

Valle Wigers says

Beautifully written. I had to dry my eyes after finishing it and it will have a special place in my heart for the rest of my days.

JohnnyLee says

A different kind of Nordic Noir! Plot (youth confronting realities of life after leaving the family home in 1930s Norway) is a bit dated but writing still has power. Part one of a trilogy that I hope to read.

Matt says

After Jens Bjørneboe and Karl Ove Knausgård Agnar Mykle was the third author from Norway, with whom I got into contact. What is it with these men from the North? Somehow they all seem to have some serious problems, and show it in their works. Depression, alcoholism, melancholia, mania, or, like in this book, egoism, ignorance and lack of sense of responsibility.

Ask Burlefot is the hero of this story. Ask is his name, a Nordic name, "Ash" (as in the tree) in the English edition. As a 20-year-old Ask unexpectedly gets a temporary position as headmaster of a trade school in the far north of Norway. The city in the book is called Indrepollen, but in truth it is Kirkenes at the border with Russia, a city so far from everything that you have to reset your clocks when traveling from Finland eastward to Kirkenes! — (just think about it).

After several unsuccessful attempts by Ask to come together with a girl, it finally works in Indrepollen/Kirkenes. He starts not one but two relationships with women (more or less consecutively) and it is safe to say that both relationships pretty much failed. And to me, it is his fault. He is not particularly endearing. Sure, he has his problems, like all young men at that time (1936-37). With his parents, his younger brother Balder, with superiors and particularity with women. His insecurity and feelings can be understood in some ways.

His resulting actions, however, cannot! I know that in the second part of the series (The Song Of The Red Ruby) it even gets worse with this reckless fellow.

Mykle and his publisher were accused of publishing obscene material in *Red Ruby*. But also the first part contains some explicit descriptions. This was perhaps remarkable for that time (1954) but today it's nothing to write home about. Nevertheless I learned that the most "hot" scene of the book got heavily crippled for the English edition. After all both books are considered a kind of clearance and helped to eliminate sexual taboos in Scandinavia in the 1950s and 60s.

And that's something, I think?

I assume that what we are dealing here is some kind of autobiographical essay. If you put the live of Ask Burlefot beside the known biography of Agnar Mykle, there are simply too many similarities (equalities), to call this book "fictional". I don't buy the disclaimer about people and incidents in this book being fictitious. Neither does it help to write the story from the perspective of a neutral narrator. And there's no reason for it too, because the only person we actually learn about his inner life is Ask. Nice try, Agnar Mykle!

What I liked most about this book, apart from the beloved/behated protagonist, are the interesting insights into the pre-war Norway social- and family structures. I hope the second part will continue with this. There is also an interesting background story that is set twelve years after the events of the main story. The background actually moved me quite a bit.

So, where do I stand with my men from the North now? It seems to me that Agnar Mykle was a rather problematic (or should I say unlikeable?) man that I want more to read about. I'm not sure about Knausgård after only two of six books of his *Min Kamp* series. The tragic figure to me, is Jens Bjørneboe, the only one who had a *real* struggle with his life. Incidentally, Bjørneboe defended his fellow author Mykle after his trial and offered high praise for his books (see lecture *Svikeren* in Norge, mitt Norge). Bjørneboe's *Without a Stitch* has probably also caused also quite a stir. It's sitting on my shelf right next to Mykle's *Red Ruby*.

[to be continued here]

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Maria says

Mykle er den eneste som kan få deg til å gråte av en skildring av en sovekupé på toget. En uendelig god og uendelig sår bok.

Daniel Milford says

Fukketu.
