

—— Camilla Schwartz, »'I wish I had gone on a diet'.
Citizenship in Danish campaigns and the novel *The Mountain*«

—— A B S T R A C T ———

Health and physicality play a key role in the citizenship grammar of the late welfare state, and the citizen's identity is increasingly linked to body functions and body appearance. In particular, overweight citizens are positioned as deviations from the norms of ideal citizenship in the late welfare state. However, health and physicality alone do not define citizenship in the late welfare state because alongside these ideals run demands for the citizen to be mobile, adaptable and adjusted to a constant process of optimization. The higher goal of this process is articulated as the illusion of future happiness. On the basis of various narratives on obesity, this article examines the frameworks for the citizenship ideals and subjectivity perceptions of the late welfare state (2009–2011) and looks at how the Danish novel *Bjerget (The Mountain)* from 2001 by Mads Brenøe establishes a dialogue with and problematizes these ideals.

The idea is to examine how the Danish welfare state creates different narratives about the welfare citizen: How do they interpellate the citizen, and how does literature respond to these narratives in their own words?

In the article obesity represents *an example* of subjectification in the late welfare state. The article deals with subjectivity in general, not specifically the citizenship of obese people, and the theoretical framework is based on theories of subjectivity in general, not obesity studies in particular

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■—»I WISH I HAD GONE ON A DIET«.

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novel The Mountain—■

■—INTRODUCTION—■

According to The National Board of Health (TNBOH),¹ overweight and obesity is a growing problem for public health in Denmark. Of the adult population, 47% is considered overweight (BMI ≥ 25) and about 13% of the population is considered obese (BMI ≥ 30).² According to TNBOH, there are »no easy solutions when it comes to slowing down this development – and the prevention and treatment of obesity should involve many parties.«³ In an effort to improve these statistics, TNBOH has over the last 10 years produced a number of campaigns intended to assist and guide overweight and obese citizens. However, on closer inspection these campaigns are not just about losing weight, but also about how overweight and obese welfare citizens in more general terms ought to transform themselves and become ideal citizens. To that extent, the campaigns tell us, more generally, what is expected of the citizen of the late welfare state.

I wish to point out which identification positions TNBOH produces in two campaigns about obesity: »Small steps to weight loss – that lasts« and »10 ways to lose weight«.⁴ Both campaigns were devised by the nutritional expert and health adviser Per Brændgaard, and they are strongly inspired by Japanese Kaizen philosophy.⁵ The fact that TNBOH makes use of a strategy that is typically connected with the efficiency of companies fits in well with the competitively oriented discourse of the campaigns.

Literature often questions hegemonic discourses, as can be seen in the second part of my article dealing with the Danish author Mads Brenøe's novel *Bjerget* (*The Mountain*) from the early days of the of the competition state. *Bjerget* becomes the center of my literary analysis in this article because the novel, in an exemplary manner, thematizes the ambivalences that the overweight citizen seem to be overwhelmed by, when facing the discourses of the competition state (as for instance campaign material from TNBOH). On the one hand the novel identifies and embraces the identification markers that is being set up for the overweight citizen (and the welfare citizen in general) and on the other hand the novel – in a radical, almost hysterical way – deconstructs hegemonic discourses on citizenship in the competition state.

The comparative strategy I am using in this article stages a dialogue between these very different types of texts; texts that in this context come to represent a dialogue between the welfare state and the welfare citizen.

The two texts speak different languages and use divergent strategies to attract and, as it were, convert the reader. On a structural level the campaign material becomes the voice of the welfare state, a voice who addresses the singular citizen and who intends to move the citizen from one position to another (at least that is the explicit agenda). The campaign material intends to create and stimulate a specific desire, and moreover, the campaigns tend to promise to satisfy this specific desire (the desire already created in the text), the desire to become an ideal citizen who is respected and happy. This requires *uniformity* and *simplicity*, very much like the structure we know from commercial advertising campaigns, that at the same time creates desire and promises to satisfy this desire, already knowing that this is in fact impossible. In many significant ways, the campaign material imitates this structure. The literary text on the other hand *behaves like the interpellated citizen*, who can be understood as *a hysterical subject*, partly accepting and integrating the interpellation, partly avoiding it or even revolting against it. The Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek explains it thus:

— The status of the subject as such is hysterical; the subject does always maintain a minimal of »inner distance« towards the apparatuses and rituals in which ideology acquires material existence – his attitude towards this externality is always an »I am not that« (my true self does not hinge on this stupid mechanism); ideological identification is always, as it were, an identification with fingers crossed [...].⁶

You could say that this is how the literary text relates to the interpellation, with its fingers crossed.

The literary text does not promise the reader anything, does not promise catharsis or salvation. This does not mean that the literary text is not fixated on the same structural positions: a subject (protagonist) and its narrative path towards something else. In the case of the novel, though, this path is more complex and ambivalent, as I will illustrate in my comparative analysis.

The methodological background for my comparison is poststructuralism. My interest does not lie with the obvious differences between an aesthetic product and a piece of campaign material.⁷ What I am trying to bring out is a structural similarity and a comparable dynamics concerning the subject and its projects. The literary text and the campaign text have a similar actantial structure and they are both strongly con-

cerned with the development and/or the deconstruction of the subject. Running counter to the respective narratives that this structure generates we find a number of conflicting narratives. The dynamics between the explicit and the more implicit narratives elicit an oscillation between a narcissistic omnipotent position and a castrated unworthy position.

The goal of this article is, in other words, to identify a dialogue between two different types of text who come to represent respectively the welfare state and the citizen. Although the campaign text and the literary text use different means to different ends, it is the same *subject* that is negotiated within a similar complex structure.

— CITIZENSHIP IN THE COMPETITION STATE

In my analysis of the concept of citizenship in the late welfare state, I identify different discourses which seem to influence the way in which we understand and construct subjectivity and citizenship today. The notion of citizenship is currently dominated by two issues that mutually seem to keep each other in check. One is a biopolitical preoccupation with the body, the other is an orientation towards citizens' overall ability to direct themselves towards happiness and to compete not only with others but also with themselves. As its point of departure, the article takes the predominant present-day conception that the Scandinavian welfare state has undergone important transformations of values since the nineteen nineties – from welfare state to competition state – and that these patterns of development have had a fundamental influence on the conceptions of subjectivity and citizenship in the welfare state. The Danish political scientist Ove K. Pedersen makes an overall general distinction in *Konkurrencestaten* (The competition state)⁸ between a welfare state prior to the nineteen nineties (1950–1990) and a competitive state after the early nineteen nineties – a development that cannot be isolated to a Danish context, since the development of the competition state must be seen as a result of globalization and its increased focus on the competitiveness of nations. The shift in values resulting from the welfare state's transition to a competition state is linked to the changed relation between the state and the market. While the welfare state used to strive to protect the population from the cynicism of the market,⁹ the competition state is more interested in mobilizing the population on market premises that emphasize competition. One can thus say that the welfare state that was established in the nineteen fifties as a cultural and educative institution has developed into an economy-organizing institution that is expected to ensure national competitiveness. This development has had a massive influence on the conception of citizenship in the welfare state. In connection to

this, Pedersen speaks of a transition from »*the existential person*« (the welfare state) to »*the opportunistic person*« (the competition state), two types of subjectivity he gleans from the changed basic values of the Danish public schools.

In the emergent phase of the welfare state, the idea was cultivated that the public school was to strengthen the personality of the individual in relation to intellectual, moral and cultural values; it was not just to prepare children for working life but was to »promote all possibilities for children to grow up as harmonious, happy and good people«. ¹⁰ One of the key perspectives was the idea that citizens were not to be disciplined into being citizens, but on the contrary should be involved in their own development and become personally able to make the right decisions. The existential person is seen as someone who is self-aware in relation to the community. In the competition state, the existential person is replaced by the opportunistic person, someone who is not anything in himself or herself, but only becomes someone by virtue of personal skills and competences. The point of departure is that the citizen is initially empty:

— The person can be called an »empty signifier«, a word that is necessary for the argument, but that otherwise has no built-in content or any built-in meaning and therefore has no other task than to be a word that is waiting for content. ¹¹

In both the welfare state and the competition state, the concept of equality plays a key role. However, while equality in the welfare state was perceived as the equal uniqueness or value of each individual, equality in the competition state is seen as the equal opportunity to realize one's own self-interest.

Another central aspect of citizenship in the competition state is the idea and dream of happiness (the happy life). The citizen is in general situated in a discursive pattern where *development* and *empowerment* in an almost manic way seem to affect all aspects of life, creating a society where we constantly need to be prepared for optimization. This optimization strategy is simultaneously articulated as an ability to limit oneself (reduce food intake, alcohol intake etc.) and as an ability to desire, to desire changes and improvements. We have to be able to desire in order for us to mobilize development.

On several occasions Denmark has been acclaimed as the happiest land in the world, an assessment that has attracted massive attention both within Denmark and outside its borders. ¹² The idea of – and fantasies about – happiness seem to be a central part of national competitiveness and self-identity. As a result of this, the view of the welfare citizen in the competition state includes a kind of obligation to be happy, or at

least to chase happiness – an aspect of late-modern identity that the feminist affect theorist Sara Ahmed also identifies in *The Promise of Happiness*.¹³

A central aspect of citizenship in the competition state is that it is primarily biological. The British social scientist Nikolas Rose talks about a biological citizenship, one where the citizen is obliged to personally ensure that his body is healthy and functional, and where the state is also obliged to care for and treat the body of the population.¹⁴ Rose acknowledges, as does the French philosopher Michel Foucault,¹⁵ that this health discourse has been predominant since at least the nineteenth century, and that an interest in the biological processes and the obligation to optimize the body has increasingly become part of the notion of citizenship.

—THE SUCCESSFUL PERSONALITY AND THE SOMATIC SUBJECT—

I myself distinguish between the idea of *the successful personality* and *the somatic subject*. I suggest the concept of the somatic subject because, in addition to my observations of a mutually binding biological citizenship (Rose), this somatic form of subjectivity links up with the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben's more radical conception of »the naked life«,¹⁶ a life that, in its simplest form, is reduced to physiological processes, one that solely consists in its organic form and does not have any real purpose except to sustain itself. In other words, I suggest – as I will briefly demonstrate – that the somatic subject of the competition state is made up of various ideas regarding biological citizenship. I do not identify citizenship in the competition state as *only* »naked life«, I identify »naked life« as a part of a more complex ideal of citizenship in the late welfare state. In the concept of the successful personality, I connect Pedersen's idea of the wilfulness and opportunism (the opportunistic person) of the citizen of the competition state with the citizen's constantly increasing expectation of absolute success, omnipotence and happiness – a horizon of expectation that is structured as a kind of ideological fantasy.¹⁷

Slavoj Žižek's concept of ideological fantasy revamps the Marxian formula »they do not know it, but they are doing it«. Žižek emphasizes that when the single subjects (or the state for that matter) follow ideology, for instance the idea of happiness, they know very well that they are chasing an illusion but they are doing it anyway. In the social activity they pretend to believe and they actually enjoy this illusion. In other words, they act as fetishists in practice but not in theory. They know very well how things truly are but act as if they do not.

My concepts *the successful personality* and *the somatic subject* are based on different ideas and theories about ideo-

logy, subjectivity and citizenship, and with these new concepts I try to connect and merge these ideas.

The two campaigns »Small steps to weight loss – that lasts« and »10 ways to lose weight« from, respectively, 2009 and 2011 both target overweight citizens (defined as those with a BMI over 25 and waist measurements of over 80–88 cm for women and 94–102 cm for men).¹⁸ They both offer lifestyle changes (»small steps«/»10 ways«) that are expected to improve the quality of life of overweight citizens. The overall premise of the campaign is that overweight citizens, because of their weight, are or must be unhappy. Furthermore that these persons – in keeping with the happiness imperative of the competition state – wish to achieve the happiness that *the other citizens* are conversely assumed to (and according to the statistics do) possess:

— Weight loss means that you feel better physically and mentally. You have *a lot of extra energy*, your mood gets *a lift* and your body *functions better*.¹⁹

— Physical activity increases your weight loss, and makes you healthier and *happier*.²⁰

In this way, happiness becomes an effect of weight loss and is considered to be one of the main »gains« of taking the »small steps«. In keeping with the capital-oriented outlook of the competition state, the happiness imperative of the campaigns is linked to such expressions as »health account« and »gains«. Ahmed notes in *The Promise of Happiness* that the stigmatized subject is initially »judged to be unhappy« and:

— Happiness is what would come after. Given this, happiness is directed toward certain objects, which point toward that which is not present. When we follow things, we aim for happiness, as if happiness is what we get if we reach certain points.«²¹

The citizen is, in other words, interpellated to follow things and aim for things and thereby be mobile and adaptable to whatever goal is set for them.

In relation to the happiness statistic, it is also interesting that, according to TNBOH, no less than 47 % of the population is defined as overweight and thereby as citizens with a *deficiency* of happiness (*lacking extra energy, non-functioning, less happy*).

The overweight citizen is initially defined by his or her biology and can be identified as a somatic subject. The body is consistently the benchmark for self-understanding, and the subject is to understand himself or herself in the light of a Cartesian logic where the body is the centre of identity and at the same time is

disapproved of and placed under massive control. In the campaign material, this is illustrated, for example, by reducing the citizen to »old, ingrained habits« or by presenting the biological body as automated and mechanical (»robots«), something that can be »switched on« and that we can »keep going«. ²² One of the more extreme examples is from »10 ways to lose weight«, where the citizen is explicitly compared to a car:

— Your body has an inner »food gauge«. Your inner food gauge tells you when and how much you are to eat. This is your sensation of hunger. It functions like the petrol gauge in a car. It shows you when the tank is suitably empty and it is time to tank up. If you were a car, would you tank up when the petrol gauge tells you that you already have a full tank? ²³

Via the campaign material, TNBOH attempts to convince overweight citizens that they ought (for their own sake) to regulate their weight and thereby pursue happiness, but at the same time it is assumed that such citizens will *already*, before reading, have identified their »overweight and unhappy« situation as intolerable, and the welfare citizens are therefore presupposed to have the same interests and motivations as TNBOH: »Small steps are changes to your present habits – changes that you personally wish to carry out.« ²⁴

In the campaign material from TNBOH there is frequent mention of the citizen's right and obligation to »make choices«: »There is a considerable degree of freedom. You learn how to discover your own completely personal small steps [...]«; ²⁵ »What choices do I have right now? / [...] If you make a habit of asking yourself this question many times in the course of a day, you will realize that you have the freedom to choose [...]« ²⁶ But in the quotation »Small steps are changes to your present habits – changes that you personally wish to carry out« it becomes very clear that in principle *choice* is an illusion. The choice is reduced to what Žižek refers to as »the enforced choice of freedom«:

— In the subject's relation to the community to which he belongs, there will always be such a paradoxical moment of *choix forcé* – one where the community says to the subject: the choice is yours, provided you choose the right thing [...] If you make the wrong choice, you lose the right to choose freely. ²⁷

In other words, overweight welfare citizens are interpellated as being dutiful citizens, but individuals who, it should be noted, do not know that they are performing their duty when practising what they »personally wish to carry out«. Rose likewise

identifies this hidden disciplining consensus of opinion between state and citizen in *Powers of Freedom*: »In the new modes of regulating health, individuals are addressed on the assumption that they want to be healthy, and enjoined to freely seek out the ways of living most likely to promote their own health.«²⁸

In the TNBOH campaigns, the overweight citizen is considered to be potentially successful citizens but consequently also a citizen who is initially incompetent and castrated (»lacks an overview«), an over-exuberant child who does not know its own limitations, and who is defined by *lacks*, a lack of »adult competences« such as determination stamina and self-discipline – competences that the citizen is promised he or she can acquire via the »small steps«. The symbolism of the small steps arouses associations with small children learning to walk and who, in their repeated attempts (»good intentions«), must be expected to get a few knocks along the way (make mistakes):

— The idea of the small steps is also to keep moving and all the time be doing small things better and better. In that way, what previously seemed to be a large, insuperable step now becomes a small step when you introduce the change slowly and take one small step at a time.²⁹

This representation of the welfare citizen as a childlike novice is linked to the idealization of wilfulness and opportunism of the welfare citizen mentioned earlier. Overweight citizens, like children, have potential rewards dangled in front of them and are inscribed in a neoliberal logic of desire and maximization: »You learn how to discover your own absolutely personal small steps, where you get maximum effect from minimum effort.«³⁰

The overweight »child« is expected in some mysterious way to be able to transform itself into what I refer to as *the successful personality*. Such a personality is characterized by the individual's ability to independently establish and maintain a successful life. In keeping with the innermost logic of the competition state, »success« (like happiness) is not a state but an ability or a competence that the individual citizen can potentially acquire: »People who have had success in achieving lasting weight loss have employed precisely the changes of habits that have been good for them.«³¹ The interpellation of the overweight citizen might be interpreted as a variant of the concept of *empowerment* which is of course linked to the values of the competition state.

The successful life is linked to the idea of the good life,³² but it is much more desire-oriented and focuses on the individual's needs: »You're the one who is the expert here«;³³ »You're the only one who can know what will work for you. You're the expert.«³⁴ The successful life is thus not something that is established via the community (as in the traditional welfare

state discourse) but something the individual subjects in their own cohesive, self-assertive and well-demarcated narcissistic mirror image create for themselves. And they become empowered by the campaigns to do so. The idea of the successful life functions as a powerful fantasy that raises citizens above their somatic castration and makes them omnipotent. The successful personality is at the same time driven by a personal obscene desire: »Everything is allowed«; »[E]verything gives you something good«; »[A]ccept your desire«.³⁵

Looking back at campaign material from the beginning of the nineties,³⁶ before the rise of the competition state, it is significant how interpellation strategies seemed much more focused on the education of the citizen towards a variety of communities. In the campaign material from the beginning of the nineties the citizen has to learn how to be a good citizen among other citizens and true happiness comes from enriching inter-subjective relationships. The object of desire created in these campaigns is based on phenomenological or existentialist ideals of »being who you are« rather than on being »successful« and omnipotent, as in this example from *Debut*: »If you are able to be who you are without having to perform or score, you do not have to feel lonely, even in periods when you may be alone.«³⁷

In accordance with the ideas of Slavoj Žižek concerning the eternal to-and-froing of neoliberal citizenship between desire and duty, the welfare citizen is split between the superego's obscene demand for pleasure and the ego's disciplining and castrating practice. These are two entities which, according to Žižek, cannot be separated because the law needs its obscene supplement. The law is sustained by it.³⁸ Citizenship in the competition society thus seems to alternate between omnipotence (the successful personality) and impotence (the somatic subject), since the idea and dream of the insuperable and successful personality constantly swings over into its contrasting position, that of the non-autonomous, castrated and inadequate child: »But do not let yourself be overwhelmed by too great ambitions«; »Most people put on weight again, because they cannot keep a grip on the new habits«, that is, »[y]ou cannot use a dream as a springboard.«³⁹

The resulting paradox is that the characteristics which define citizenship in the competition state (wilfulness, desire, biological citizenship and happiness orientation) are already presumed to be a basic springboard for the personality, at the same time as they are something which the individual citizen refines through weight loss. The citizen is thus defined as someone who lacks form (the inadequate child), while at the same time the citizen, because of his or her focus on weight loss, biological citizenship and pleasure, already possesses form. The citizen is thus interpellated as becoming something

other than what he or she is, while also being expected to become something he or she is *already* assumed to be.

This paradox illustrates the cyclic composition of the ideology, that »the ideology does not serve any other purpose than itself« just like desire (*object petit a*) itself does not serve any other purpose than itself, or that there seems to be no other goal than *the repeated attempts* to reach the goal. »The idea is not for you to reach your goals today or tomorrow. The most important thing is that you keep on 'moving forward'.«⁴⁰ The path to change is not linear but cyclic, since the change remains a phantasm that never manifests itself. The interpellation of the almighty, indulgent citizen is inextricably intertwined with the interpellation of the prohibition-stricken, impotent citizen, and together they interweave an image of the overweight citizen as an initially unhappy but happiness-seeking citizen who, in the pursuit of happiness and success is transformed into a self-torturing, somatic citizen who, in a perpetual cyclical rotation, tries time after time to overcome guilt by once more seeking happiness and satisfaction. As Žižek puts it:

— What characterizes modernity is no longer the standard figure of the believer who secretly harbours doubts about his belief and engages in transgressive fantasies: today we have, on the contrary, a subject who presents himself as a tolerant hedonist dedicated to the pursuit of happiness, and whose unconscious is the site of prohibitions: what is repressed is not the illicit desires or pleasures, but prohibitions themselves.⁴¹

Looking at the campaign material from the beginning of the nineties, representing the period of the welfare state, it is interesting that this cyclical rotation turns up again, which indicates that the ideological power contains a structural paradox, which is not limited to either the welfare state or the competition state.

This paradox is to be understood as a consistent and polemical distance between the understanding of the citizen as a happy and autonomous sovereign (the imaginary personality) and the notion of the citizen as impotent and castrated (the symbolic subject), and the distance and the connection between the two levels must be regarded as the dynamic core of the ideological interpellation in both kinds of state.

— CITIZENSHIP AND SUBJECTIVITY IN BJERGET —

I now intend to look at how the citizenship interpellation of the competition state becomes an issue in the literary work *Bjerget* (*The Mountain*, 2001) by the Danish author Mads Brenøe. To

make the comparative basis as compatible as possible I have chosen a novel from the same period of time as the TNBOH campaigns used above, and a novel that focuses specifically on the subject's self-relation and how this sense of subjectivity is linked to food, body and weight. Mads Brenøe debuted in 1993 with a controversial collection of short stories: *Så megen vrede* (*So much anger*). The debut takes its point of departure in the description of different states of unwanted emotions and affects such as, hate, anger, loneliness and psychopathy and portrays different protagonists who all feel isolated and who seems unable to establish contact with the outside world. The debut was considered controversial due to the graphic descriptions of aestheticized torture, violence and death, no doubt inspired by Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* from 1991. The novel *Bjerget* from 2001 also deals with a lonely isolated and odd protagonist who is desperately trying to reach out to people around him.

In *Bjerget* we meet the 29-year-old grossly overweight and lonely protagonist Jens. At the beginning of the novel he decides to invite his former classmates to a reunion on his 33th birthday. He sets out from his address in Copenhagen on a rather long journey through Denmark in order to invite his guests personally, and during this trip the reader becomes acquainted with the experiences of isolation and loneliness that Jens knew as a child as well as with the stigmatization that obesity provokes in his adult life. The novel never the less ends happily back in Copenhagen. Jens throws his party and the old classmates carry him around on their shoulders, like a king. The ending seems to propose some sort of redemption for the stigmatized obese protagonist Jens. He seems to be transformed from »a somatic (unhappy) subject« to a »successful (happy) personality« but as the following reading will suggest, the entire trip might just be a dream or a phantasm and not something the protagonist actually experiences.

The novel uses first-person, present tense narration, and the plot moves straight forward towards the birthday party, the climax of the novel, but incorporates several flash backs from the narrator's childhood on the way. However, by the end of the novel it is revealed to the reader by several uses of past tense that the narrator is not relating the events as they take place. He is, in fact, looking back on past events retrospectively, *or* might he be making it up in his mind?

This suspicion is sustained by an intense sense of unreliability in the narrator's description of the events and the emotions he goes through. On various occasions the narrator even reveals to the reader that he is lying (and that he enjoys the process of lying), that he withholds the truth or that he simply does not remember. All this make him the epitome of an unreliable narrator: »I knew, of course, that this was sort

of a lie, that I deluded myself, but I deluded myself with the greatest pleasure.«⁴²

The narrator enjoys the illusion he is creating in his mind, which can be linked to the ideological process Žižek identifies as »the ideological fantasy«: »[T]hey know that, in their activity, they are following an illusion, but still, they are doing it.« Or: »They know very well how things really are, but still they are doing it as if they did not know. The illusion is therefore double: it consists in overlooking the illusion which is structuring our real, effective relationship to reality.«⁴³

If we look at the narrator's understanding of himself throughout the novel, he seems to reflect the ambivalent citizen ideal of the competition state. He more or less blindly obeys the kind of interpellation that I have observed in the campaign material from TNBOH, while at the same time distancing himself from the expectations he meets as an overweight citizen. One could say that he assumes the position of Žižek's hysterical subject, since he partly adheres to and partly opposes the subjectivization mechanisms of the competition state. This distance towards the expectations he meets, which actually imitate the expectations of the reader, also seems to be provoked by the general lack of credibility of the narrative situation. In the following, I will argue for the presence of this double and highly ambivalent position of the subject.

The narrator is very aware of the fact that he is supposed to see himself as a complete failure. He knows that because of his obesity he must inevitably be unhappy, lonely and all wrong: »Perhaps I'm just unhappy.«⁴⁴. At the same time, being »all wrong« is a condition he is ashamed of: »Yes, I'm ashamed of being fat, I'm ashamed of myself and ashamed of my deformity, this mountain of a body I have to heave around.«⁴⁵ Jens is ashamed of his physical »deformity«, »this mountain of a body«, and he primarily conceives the self – in keeping with the ideal of the competition state – as a biological representation, a somatic subject that is inadequate and abortive. As in the material from TNBOH, physical functionality is compared with a car, which has value only as long as it is functional:

— I listen to the overexerted thumping of my heart and wonder when I am going to die, for I'm pretty sure that it will be my heart that kills me, and that's what it sounds like too. Overexerted. Just like old cars: you can always hear from a car engine when it's almost ready for the car graveyard, the scrap dealer.⁴⁶

— I always go all mechanical once I am in a kitchen. My brain maps the menu, automatically finding the shortest and best route through the ingredients.⁴⁷

Jens perceives himself as a castrated and unworthy citizen. This is emphasized in the novel, among other things, by Jens referring to himself as an »I« in italics,⁴⁸ an *I* that shamefully has to recognize the fact that he does not possess the ability to set goals for himself, to orient himself towards change – that he lacks the ability to »exercise his will« as he puts it. In other words, he is not able to fulfil the demands of the competition state, a state that demands mobility and adaptability. His obesity makes him physically immobile and his mind is not able to produce any goals: »I wish I had gone on a diet. I wish I would have wanted something or I at least just 'wanted to want', as I called it, but I really wanted nothing. I was about as independent as a tray of French fries«.⁴⁹

Despite this, he still dreams of »happiness« just as all other obese and non-obese citizens are expected to dream of happiness: »[...] for that's how it is to be fat, you would rather be someplace else, at some other point in time – yes, actually be on some other planet.«⁵⁰ He has incorporated a conception of the happy life to which he is at the same time denied access because of his excess weight: »I haven't always been fat. Once – in a different world – I was thin like everybody else. I was a child, and the child played at the roadside surrounded by green and sunshine.«⁵¹

In this quote the narrator perceives himself from a distance and narrates himself in the third person: »[T]he child played«. This indicates that not only he but all children are supposed to be happy, just as all obese citizens, and as the narrator later on suggest; all grown-ups are supposed to be unhappy and »fat«,⁵² due to the process of subjectivization that they have been through. In *Bjerget*, »happiness« functions as a pre-symbolic state that can be found in the retrospective composition of memory (in childhood), where everything seems to be covered in »freshly prepared candyfloss«⁵³ and in fantasies about a future happiness. »Happiness« – as in the TNBOH campaigns – is thereby linked to the urge to acquire an unattainable, sublime object that in itself is nothing more than the framework around the phantasm of happiness.

The dream of happiness in the novel, as in the weight loss campaigns, is connected with a somewhat infantile dream of narcissistic omnipotence and thus with a fantasy of overcoming the castration that debilitates the overweight citizen. As suggested earlier, the entire novel could be read as an infantile dream of narcissistic omnipotence since the narrator on many occasions indicates that he is making things up. The ending, where Jens becomes an omnipotent king of the classroom, seems to support this interpretation. In keeping with the citizenship ideal of the competition state, Jens is thus pre-occupied with becoming »the successful personality« or »the expert of his own life«, which is expressed in fantasies about

becoming a saint, emperor or king: »It was good to sit and lean heavily back in the chair – I had these fantasies of imperial power and royal gravity – a short attack of delusions of grandeur can feel great ...«⁵⁴ This narcissistic position of the subject is also – as in the campaign material – obscene, since the obligation to desire and indulge seems to be dominant:

— For a whole evening I was an adult male, with adult men's emotions and adult men's movements. My shoulders were broad, my arms embraced everything. I could do things that only real men are otherwise able to do. I could speak with authority in my voice at large gatherings. I could control the flock. I was Martin Luther King. I had a dream. My prick was the size of a motorway, and it stretched out as far as the horizon.⁵⁵

This fantasy about unreserved potency and power, which here is identified as a fantasy or an illusion, imitates the fairy tale ending of the novel where the narrator is being carried around on a throne by his classmates and thereby come to represent the omnipotent big Other. He thus lives up to the two-sided interpellation of citizenship in the competition state. He inscribes himself in a narrative out of which he identifies himself as an unhappy, failed somatic citizen (the somatic subject) who, however, in wilful and covetous fashion, orients himself towards a happiness imperative (the successful personality) and in the end, like in traditional fairy tales, actually overcomes his castration. The paradox seems to be that he both sees himself as a subject who is unable to muster mobility and willingness towards the illusion (happiness) and yet the entire novel seems to represent a structural movement towards happiness.

A look at a couple of significant novels from the beginning of the nineties⁵⁶ dealing with subjectivity, reveals that what the protagonists in these novels fantasize about is not so much, as in the period of the competition state, being successful and superior. The protagonists long for intimacy, and though they do take this longing to sometimes grotesque extremes, the basic striving for intimacy is similar to what we find articulated in the campaign materials from the same period.

— TO BE AND NOT TO BE AN OBEDIENT
CITIZEN IN THE COMPETITION STATE —————

But Jens also appears as what Žižek, as mentioned earlier, calls a hysterical subject that conversely opposes or seeks to resist his interpellation. In *Bjerget* this distance from or resistance to the ideological interpellation assumes various forms. It appears as an outright deconstruction of the happiness phantasm of the competition state or the fairy tale composition that the narrator paradoxically enough creates, and also as a

transcendental phantasm. He is in other words identifying with the narratives and discourses of the competition state with his fingers crossed since he at the same time seems to deconstruct the exact same affiliation. At the same time, he is and he is not an obedient citizen.

The above-mentioned resistance to the happiness phantasm occurs at various points in the novel. The dream of a better and a more happy life is described as »a pale yellow inflammation seeping out under the skirting boards«. ⁵⁷ As Lauren Berlant stresses in *Cruel Optimism*, the subject is worn out by these continuous efforts to dream the dream of a better life. In the following quotation from *Bjerget*, this is demonstrated very precisely:

— Everyone's fat, everyone's overweight. It just so happens with me you can see it. I move badly. I'm always out of breath. I smell of sweat in that special way one does when the sweat stagnates in one's plumber's crack [...] Sisyphus, whose punishment was to push his rock up the side of a mountain for eternity, never had any stone. He was just overweight like all the rest of us. He fought his way to the top, but once there he naturally didn't have the strength to stay put. He fell over and tumbled like a jelly all the way down again. And so it went on. Eternity had begun. So yes, thin people look thin, but they're also out of breath from all their hauling, they stink of sweat too. Thin people sit there lonely in small flats and look forward to the caretaker ringing to check that they are still alive [...] I can lose weight from now until eternity, and I'll still be fat, I'll still sweat like a donkey in the desert, and I'll still die just as lonely as that donkey, and feel I'm just as stupid and abandoned. Being fat has never – I repeat *never* – been an option. We're fat no matter what [...] Go on a diet!!? Am I to make a fool of myself twice over?⁵⁸

In the quotation, Jens identifies a dichotomous relation between »the fat« and »the thin« citizen, and these concepts are inscribed into a more general system of values, since the fat person becomes synonymous with what is evil, unhappy, lonely and pathetic, whereas the thin person becomes synonymous with what is good, happy and successful. This hegemonic polarity, which I also observed in the campaign material but here without the cynical distance, is at the same time deconstructed when Jens states that »[e]veryone's fat« and »[w]e're fat no matter what.« But what does it mean that »[e]veryone's fat« and »[w]e're fat no matter what«? The point seems to be that every citizen feels »fat« (in the sense of being castrated, discontent, not good enough) and that every citizen like Sisyphus seems to hold on to dreams about a better and more satisfying life (here

»the stone« is encapsulated in the dream of the successful diet). This process, that seems to maintain a destructive and impossible desire, is what Berlant calls »cruel optimism«:

— Any object of optimism promises to guarantee the endurance of something, the survival of something, the flourishing of something, and above all the protection of the desire that made this object or scene powerful enough to have magnetized an attachment to it.⁵⁹

When the narrator repeats that he is not willing to go on a diet because it would make him look like a fool »twice over«, he is trying to deconstruct the overall desire towards the sublime and unobtainable object. The paradox of the novel, of course, is that the narrator himself creates such a *cruel optimism* with his happy end.

Jens, however, also expresses a distance from the interpellation by going beyond the built-in codes of subjectivity. He is constantly fuelled by a structural desire to dissolve, phase out and expand his subjectivity, a desire I refer to in my thesis as the transcendence phantasm, since going beyond (like the happiness phantasm) also functions as a shield against symbolic order and does not represent a real break with this.⁶⁰ The phantasm of transcendence, which in the case of Jens mainly is connected to a grotesque and carnival-like ingestion of food, is therefore linked to a paradoxical antagonism, since it has its origin in both a desperate wish to be seen and thereby to be recognized as a subject and a wish to disappear into thin air, to become invisible and even to die: »I closed my eyes and died a quiet, a completely wonderful quiet, quiet, death.«⁶¹ The desire to be seen and yet be invisible can be compared with the ambivalent need of the hunger artist to be looked at and subjectivized in the repeated attempts to sort himself or herself out.

— Self-starvation is above all a performance. Like Hamlet's mousetrap, it is staged too trick the conscience of its viewers, forcing them to recognize that they are implicated in the spectacle that they behold. Anorectics are »starving for attention«: they are making a spectacle of themselves, in every sense. And because their exhibitionism cannot be content with any lesser nakedness than disenfleshment, they starve until their skeletons are scarcely »clad with skin« [...] Even though the anorectic body seems to represent a radical negation of the other, it still depends upon the other as spectator in order to be read as representative of anything at all.⁶²

The obsessive bulimic ingestion of food that Jens practises in both the private and the public space can be seen as a wish to

be seen and recognized, but also as a wish to expand to such an extent that in his somatic grotesqueness he will merge with the world. He wants to become a subject through the eyes of the other but he also – at the same time- simply wants to blend in, to disappear – »avoid yourself, walk around without all the heavy weight«⁶³ – and to become an object like all other objects: »What I wish, is to be a Spanish melon or a tray of Italian grapes and the taxi would then be the container ship that carries me up North, in order for me to end in the vegetable department in a northern European supermarket.«⁶⁴

Jens is an artist of eating who, by virtue of his ever increasing weight, maintains his subjectivity while also expanding and merging with the surrounding world, and thereby he continually allows himself to dissolve. As the psychoanalyst Maud Ellmann puts it:

— In eating we consume the flesh of others; in telepathy, we eat their thoughts. Thus telepathy subverts the privacy of minds, eating the privacy of bodies; for both reveal the presence of the other in the haunted house of subjectivity. If our thoughts are not our own, nor is our flesh, because our bodies are composed of what we eat, and what we eat is foreign to ourselves. Eating, then, confounds the limits between self and other.⁶⁵

Bjerget consists of 26 chapters. Every chapter begins with a recipe and all of these are fattening recipes containing a lot of butter, cheese and cream. The recipes have different functions both formally and thematically. First of all, they frame or hold the novel together the same way food seems to frame the narrator. When it comes to the question of genre the novel somehow becomes a weird mixture between novel and cookbook and it constantly encourages the reader to prepare and eat fat food but it also encourages the reader to literally consume the book, and thereby maybe consume its narrator all together.

To Jens, food and meals symbolizes something more than just food. Food has an intersubjective link; it is, as Maud Ellmann stresses, something that goes on between subjects, the same way words are something that goes on between people and bind them together:

— Therefore, I read my newspaper, therefore, I ate the good sausages and the good marmalade. Not because I did not care about Mikkel, but because he was *not* indifferent to me. I sat there. On the other side of the table. I was present. I consoled. Not with words but by eating, and in that way try to sustain the illusion that the world still hung together.⁶⁶

Food in general but particularly well-prepared meals support and surround the narrator and his relationships to other people. In *Bjerget* food is being compared to women's corset or stockings, something that holds together the sense of subjectivity. In that way Jens thoughts and feelings are constantly linked to food or held together by food.

In *Bjerget*, the grotesque position is particularly obvious in the passages where Jens appears in public with his excessive eating, and where he achieves orgiastic satisfaction by being transfixed by angry looks. On a number of occasions Jens refers with loathing to stigmatizing looks, looks that »slide off like water«, but when he himself in a carnival-like way attracts what the American gender researcher Rosemarie Garland-Thomsen identifies as baroque looks, the looks, in contrast, have an aspect of recognition. According to Garland-Thomsen, the stigmatizing looks perform an active denial of acknowledgement: »Stigmatizing is a social process that hurdles a body from the safe shadows of ordinariness into the bull's-eye of judgment.«⁶⁷ The baroque look on the other hand is a bizarre and gaping look that is based on spontaneous curiosity, amazement and/or indignation. The baroque look has a built-in social orientation (as opposed to the stigmatizing look, which rejects the social), since it opens up for an alternating dynamic between the observer and the person observed: »Unconcerned with rationality, mastery, or coherence, baroque staring blatantly announces the states of being wonderstruck and confounded. It is gaping-mouthed, unapologetic staring.«⁶⁸ Jens's subjectivity is recognized at the same time as he, via his artistic ingestion of food, expands the interior towards the exterior and dissolves as a subject – just like the hunger artist.

In Conclusion, *Bjerget* in general points out how it is to be a subject in the late welfare state. It points out how the sense of subjectivity seems to oscillate heavily between a narcissistic omnipotent position (Jens as a *king* or an *emperor*) and a castrated unworthy position (Jens as an unworthy *potbellied pig*). The reading of *Bjerget* makes it clear that this ideological cycle is impossible to avoid since even the cynical narrator who tries to deconstruct this, fails to dodge this coercive system. The ideological cycle actually, as manifested both in the campaigns and in the novel, only seems to serve its own purpose, the retention of desire to set new goals and there seems to be no other goal than *the repeated attempts* to reach the goal, the endless efforts to push the rock up the side of a mountain.

I would emphasize that the discursive alternation regarding citizenship – and the conceptions of subjectivity I here observe between the campaign material of TNBOH and the literary novel *Bjerget* – must be viewed more generally in the light of the new ideals of subjectivity in the competition state, meaning that this outline does not only concern obese citizens, as the

narrator in *Bjerget* also stresses in the long quotation above. At the same time, however, I would underline that the more general structural connection between the ideal or the phantasm (happiness, success) and the more symbolic practice (somatic, functionality) must be seen as comprising dynamics that also, at a more general level, characterize the ideological structure *par excellence* and thus as an active antagonistic structure that can also be found in other ideological contexts. What changes from the welfare state to the competition state is thus not the structural elaboration of the ideology or the contrasting dynamics of citizenship, but rather the values that are active in the built-in tension between the fantasies and a more cynical practice. ■

■ — E N D N O T E S —

— Mads Brenøe: *Bjerget [The Mountain]* (Copenhagen, 2001). This article is written on the basis of my dissertation *Sund og usund subjektivitet i velfærdsstaten: En poststrukturalistisk undersøgelse af Sundhedsstyrelsens og skønlitteraturens tematisering af subjektivitet og borgerskab (1990–2012)* [*Healthy and Unhealthy Subjectivity in the Welfare State. A Poststructuralist Investigation of the National Board of Health and Literature's Thematization of Subjectivity and Citizenship (1990–2012)*] (diss. Syddansk universitet. Odense, 2013). All translations from Danish are mine.

1 Sundhedsstyrelsen/TNBOH represents the highest health authority in Denmark and, in cooperation with parliamentary decision-makers, it creates the frameworks for prophylactic measures, the promotion of health and treatment in Denmark.

2 Electronic resource [internet]: www.sundhedsstyrelsen.dk [2015-12-14].

3 Electronic resource [internet]: www.sundhedsstyrelsen.dk [2015-12-14].

4 TNBOH: *Små skridt til vægttab – der holder [Small steps to weight loss – that lasts]* (Copenhagen, 2009); TNBOH: *10 veje til vægttab [10 ways to lose weight]* (Copenhagen, 2011).

5 Kaizen literally means »continuous improvement« and is a philosophy that many American companies use, and that also has been used since the American/Japanese car manufacturer Toyota implemented it in their company strategy after the Second World War.

6 Slavoj Žižek: *The Indivisible Remainder. An essay on Schelling and Related Matters (Wo es war)* (London, 1996), 165–166.

7 The underlying model, facilitating the comparison, is a revamped version of Greimas' actantial model. Please see Schwartz: *Sund og usund subjektivitet* for a more detailed methodological account.

8 Ove K. Pedersen: *Konkurrencestaten* [*The Competition State*] (Copenhagen, 2012). Pedersen has borrowed the concept from the American economist Philip G. Cerny: »Paradoxes of the competition state. The dynamics of political globalization« in *Government and Opposition* 32:2 (1997), 251–274.

9 Gösta Esping Andersen: *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Cambridge, 1990).

10 Pedersen: *Konkurrencestaten*, 178.

11 »Man kan kalde personen en 'tom signifier', dvs. Et ord, der er nødvendigt for argumentationen, men I øvrigt ikke har noget eget indhold eller nogen egen betydning og derfor heller ikke har anden opgave end at være et ord, der venter på indhold.« (Pedersen: *Konkurrencestaten*, 192).

12 John Helliwell, Richard Layard & Jeffrey Sachs (eds.): *World Happiness Report* (New York, 2012).

13 Sara Ahmed: *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham, N.C., 2010).

14 Nikolas S. Rose: *The Politics of Life Itself. Biomedicine, Power and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century* (*Information series*. Princeton, 2009).

15 Michel Foucault: *Klinikkens fødsel* [*The Birth of the Clinic*] (Copenhagen, 1973).

16 Giorgio Agamben: *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, 1998).

17 Slavoj Žižek: *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London, 1989), 27–31.

18 According to TNBOH, 47% of the population is defined as overweight and 13% as obese (electronic resource [internet]: www.sundhedsstyrelsen.dk [2015-12-14]).

19 »Vægttab gør, at du får det *bedre* fysisk og psykisk. Du får *mere* overskud, dit humør får *et løft*, og din krop fungerer bedre [my italics].« (TNBOH: *Small steps*, 4.)

20 »Fysisk aktivitet øger dit vægttab, gør dig sundere og gladere.« (TNBOH: *Small steps*, 9.)

21 Ahmed: *The Promise of Happiness*, 34.

22 TNBOH: *Small steps*, 33.

23 »Din krop har en indre 'madmåler'. Din indre madmåler fortæller dig, hvornår og hvor meget det er godt at spise. Det er din sultfølelse. Den virker ligesom benzinmåleren i en bil. Den viser hvornår tanken er tilpas tom, og det er på tide at tanke op. Hvis du var en bil, ville du ikke tanke op, når benzinmåleren allerede er fuld.« (TNBOH: *10 ways*, 10.

24 »Små skridt er ændringer i dine nuværende vaner – ændringer som du selv har lyst til.« (TNBOH: *Small steps*, 2.)

25 »Der er meget stor frihed. Du lærer hvordan du finder frem til dine helt egne små skridt [...].« (TNBOH: *10 ways*, 9.)

26 »Hvilke valgmuligheder har jeg lige nu?«; »Hvis du gør det til en vane at stille dig selv dette spørgsmål mange gange i

løbet af dagen, bliver du opmærksom på, at du har friheden til at vælge.« (TNBOH: *Small steps*, 11.)

27 Žižek: *The sublime object of Ideology* (Verso Books 2009), 217.

28 Nikolas Rose: *Powers of Freedom. Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1999), 86.

29 »Ideen med små skridt er også at blive ved med at gå og hele tiden gøre små ting bedre og bedre. På den måde kan det, der før var et stort og uoverkommeligt skridt, blive til et lille skridt, når du indfører forandringen langsomt og tager et lille skridt af gangen.« (TNBOH: *Small steps*, 2.)

30 »Du lærer, hvordan du finder frem til dine helt egne små skridt, hvor du får maksimal virkning med minimal indsats.« (TNBOH: *10 ways*, 9.)

31 »Mennesker der har haft success med at opnå varigt væggtab, har brugt lige præcis de vaneændringer der har været gode for dem.« (TNBOH: *Small steps*, 8.)

32 The idea of »the good life« goes all the way back to Antiquity, where such virtues as self-control (*enkrateia*) and moderation (*sofrosyne*) were perceived as self-technologies that could maximize the individual's practice of »the good life«. These virtues were representatives of a generalized self-regulation that could not be isolated to a disciplining of the body but that also represented a fundamental forming of the »mind« and an understanding of man as a moral being. (Michel Foucault: *Brugen af nydelserne [The Use of Pleasure]* (Frederiksberg, 2004), 106.)

33 »Det er dig, der er eksperten her.« (TNBOH: *Small steps*, 2.)

34 »Det er kun dig, der ved, hvad der kan fungere for dig. Du er eksperten.« (TNBOH: *Small steps*, 18.)

35 »Alt er tilladt«; »Alt giver dig noget godt«; »Accepter din lyst.« (TNBOH: *Small steps*, 12.)

36 AIDS-campaigns and sexuality campaigns from 1991–1998. Sundhedsstyrelsen (TNBOH): *Kys, kram og kondomer* (Copenhagen, 1991); Sundhedsstyrelsen (TNBOH): *Værd at vide om HIV og AIDS* (Copenhagen, 1997); Sundhedsstyrelsen (TNBOH): *Debut* (Copenhagen, 1998); Sundhedsstyrelsen (TNBOH): *Oda og Ole* (Copenhagen, 1998). You can find a more developed analysis of these campaigns in Schwarz: *Sund og usund subjektivitet*.

37 »Hvis du er i stand til at være den, du er, uden at skulle præstere eller score, behøver du ikke føle dig ensom, heller ikke i perioder, hvor du måske er alene.« (Sundhedsstyrelsen (TNBOH): *Debut*, 18.)

38 Slavoj Žižek: *How to Read Lacan* (London, 2006), 84.

39 »Men lad dig ikke overvælde af for store ambitioner«; »De fleste tager nemlig på igen, fordi de ikke kan holde fast i de nye vaner«; »Du kan ikke tage afsæt i en drøm.« (TNBOH: *Small steps*, 13, 14, 34.)

40 »Det er ikke meningen, at du skal nå dine mål i dag eller i morgen. Det vigtigste er, at du bliver ved med at gå.« (TNBOH: *Small steps*, 18.)

41 Slavoj Žižek: *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, 2006), 93.

42 »Jeg vidste selvfølgelig, at det var en slags løgn, det her, at det var noget, jeg bildte mig selv ind, men jeg bildte mig det ind med den største fornøjelse.« (Brenøe: *Bjerget*, 214.)

43 Slavoj Žižek: *The sublime*, 30.

44 »Måske er jeg virkelig bare ulykkelig.« (Brenøe: *Bjerget*, 92.)

45 »Jo, jeg skammer mig over min fedme, jeg skammer mig over mig selv og jeg skammer mig over min deformitet, dette bjerg af en krop, jeg slæber rundt på.« (Brenøe: *Bjerget*, 40.)

46 »Jeg lytter til mit hjertes overanstrengte dunken, og spekulerer på, hvornår jeg skal dø, for jeg er temmelig sikker på, det bliver hjertet, der slår mig ihjel, og sådan lyder det også. Overanstrengt. Ligesom gamle biler; man kan altid høre på en motor, hvornår den nærmer sig bilkirkegården, skrot-handleren.« (Brenøe: *Bjerget*, 40.)

47 »Der går mekanik i mig som der altid gør, når først jeg står i et køkken. Min hjerne kortlægger menuen og finder automatisk den korteste og bedste rute gennem ingredienserne.« (Brenøe: *Bjerget*, 111.)

48 Brenøe: *Bjerget*, 26.

49 »Jeg ville ønske, jeg var gået på slankekur. Jeg ville ønske, jeg ville have villet et eller andet eller i det mindste blot 'villet ville', som jeg sagde, men jeg ville virkelig ingenting. Jeg var nogenlunde lige så selvstændig som en bakke pommefrites.« (Brenøe: *Bjerget*, 59.)

50 »[...] for sådan er det at være fed, man vil hellere være et andet sted, et andet tidspunkt, ja, helst befinde sig på en helt anden klode.« (Brenøe: *Bjerget*, 31.)

51 »Jeg har ikke altid været fed. Engang – i en anden verden – var jeg tynd som alle andre. Jeg var et barn og barnet legede i en grøftekant med grønt og sol omkring sig.« (Brenøe: *Bjerget*, 30.)

52 In the sense: without value, castrated.

53 »frisklavet candyfloss.« (Brenøe: *Bjerget*, 215.)

54 »Det var godt at side og læne mig tungt tilbage i stolen; fik fantasier om kejserlig vælde og kongelig pondus; kortvarige anfald af storhedsvanvid kan være en dejlig ting.« (Brenøe: *Bjerget*, 247.)

55 »En hel aften var jeg en voksen mand, med voksne mænds følelser og voksne mænds bevægelser. Mine skuldre var bredere, mine arme favnede alt. Jeg kunne gøre ting, som kun rigtige mænd ellers kunne. Jeg kunne tale med autoritet i stemmen i store forsamlinger. Jeg kunne styre flokken. Jeg var Martin Luther King. Jeg havde en drøm. Min pik var så stor som en motorvej, og den nåede helt ud i horisonten.« (Brenøe: *Bjerget*, 91.)

56 Christina Hesselholdt: *Det Skjulte. Roman [That which is hidden. Novel]* (Copenhagen, 1993) and Suzanne Brøgger:

Efter Orgiet. En tragedie [After the Orgy. A Tragedy] (Copenhagen, 1992). You can find a more developed analysis of these novels in Schwartz: *Sund og usund subjektivitet*.

57 »[E]n bleg gul betændelse, der siver ud under panelerne.« (Brenøe: *Bjerget*, 165.)

58 »Alle mennesker er fede, alle menneker er overvægtige. På mig kan man tilfældigvis se det. Jeg går dårligt. Jeg er altid forpustet. Jeg lugter af sved på den særlige måde, man lugter, når sveden ligger og bliver gammel mellem dellerne [...] Sisyfos, der blev dømt afguderne til at trille sin sten op ad klippesiden i al evighed, havde slet ikke nogen sten. Han var bare overvægtig som alle os andre. Han kæmpede sig op til toppen, men dér havde han selvfølgelig ikke kræfter til at blive stående. Han væltede omkuld og trilled blævrende ned igen. Og sådan fortsatte det. Evigheden var begyndt. Så jo, tynde mennesker ser tynde ud, men de er også forpustede af alt deres slæberi, de stinker også af sved. Tynde mennesker sidder ensomme i små lejligheder og glæder sig til viceværten ringer på for at tjekke om de stadig er i live [...] Jeg kan tabe mig herfra og ud i al fremtid, og jeg ville stadig være fed, jeg ville stadig svede som et æsel i ørkenen, og jeg ville stadig dø lige så ensom som det æsel, og føle mig nøjagtig lige så dum og forladt. At være fed har aldrig; gentager *aldrig*, været noget valg. Vi er fede lige meget hvad.« (Brenøe: *Bjerget*, 93–94.)

59 Lauren Berlant: *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, 2011), 48.

60 Schwartz: *Sund og usund subjektivitet*, 225–231.

61 »[...] jeg lukkede øjnene og døde en stille, en helt vidunderlig stille, stille, død« (Brenøe: *Bjerget*, 196.)

62 Maud Ellmann: *The Hunger Artists. Starving, Writing and Imprisonment* (London, 1993), 56.

63 »[U]ndgå sig selv; gå rundt uden al den vægt det er.« (Brenøe: *Bjerget*, 180.)

64 »Det, jeg ønsker er, at være en spansk melon eller en bakke italienske druer, og taxaen skulle så være dét container-skib, der fragter mig nordpå, så jeg kan ende i grønsagsafdelingen i et nordeuropærisk supermarked.« (Brenøe: *Bjerget*, 127.)

65 Ellmann: *The Hunger Artists*, 56.

66 »Derfor læste jeg min avis, og derfor spiste jeg de gode pølser og den gode marmelade. Ikke fordi, jeg var ligeglad med Mikkel, men fordi jeg *ikke* var ligeglad med ham. Jeg sad der. På den anden side af bordet. Jeg var til stede. Jeg trøstede. Ikke med ord, men ved at æde, og på den måde forsøge at oppebære illusionen om, at verden stadig hang sammen.« (Brenøe: *Bjerget*, 179.)

67 Rosemarie Garland-Thomson: *Staring. How We Look* (Oxford, 2009), 17.

68 Garland-Thomson: *Staring*, 50.