

The Literary Journalism of Moa Martinson (1890–1964)

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Abstract

This thesis brings to the fore the little-known journalism of the Swedish novelist Moa Martinson (1890–1964). Using a sample of 253 articles, spanning the years 1922–1960, it explores Martinson's use of her class-based knowledge to expound her political and social ideas through her journalism. The articles, mainly published in syndicalist, anarchist, socialist and feminist newspapers, are analysed using close reading. Placing Martinson within her social and historical contexts, this study argues that Martinson's work is literary journalism, a field where women, working-class writers (Roberts, 2012) and the Scandinavian countries (Tulloch and Keeble, 2012) are all underrepresented. In doing so, it highlights her narrative and descriptive skills, and in particular her distinctive journalistic voice.

The thesis draws attention to two key aspects where the study of Martinson's work may contribute to the theory of literary journalism. Firstly, in her deployment of the oral tradition she shows the potential for literary journalism to incorporate many of orality's techniques as authenticating and reader-engagement approaches. Secondly, she exhibits an unusual, but powerful, attitude to literary journalism's strategy of immersion. She writes from a world in which she has been submerged since birth: in doing so, personal experience becomes a form of immersion and her primary source of authority. In her hands, life events become a rhetorical tool to provide authority for her both as a writer and as a political activist. To illustrate these points, the thesis focuses on several major themes in Martinson's journalism: the importance of maternal love and authority; a rejection of corporal punishment; and a damning indictment of the practice of charity, complemented by a belief in solidarity and mutual aid.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

[...] we shouldn't overlook other, less elite sources – where we may find not the 'usual suspects' (Truman Capote, Tom Wolfe, Joan Didion, et al.) but others with original visions of literary journalism and the requisite abilities to realise them. Who knows how our historical understanding of literary journalism might evolve, when we uncover such voices and study them? (Roberts, 2012, 82)

This thesis discusses the literary journalism of the Swedish 'proletarian' writer Moa Martinson (1890–1964). Although she wrote over 250 articles, Martinson's journalism is relatively unstudied in Sweden, and is unknown in the English-speaking world. In posing the question 'how did Martinson use her literary journalism to articulate her political ideas?', this thesis sets Martinson's work within literary journalism, where it has not previously been considered. Martinson's voice deserves to be heard for several reasons, not least of all because of whom she was. Swedish, working class and a woman – all categories severely underrepresented in journalism and literary journalism studies; through Martinson, we gain an insight into lives rarely heard from in the first person. Martinson also deserves recognition for her influence on subsequent Swedish writers leading up to the present day. Proletarian fiction is part of the literary canon in Sweden, and, as she is often the sole female representative within this, her impact should not be underestimated.¹ In this way, the thesis aims to contribute to the more inclusive history of literary journalism in the early 20th century, called for by Roberts above. Once women such as Martinson are taken into account, the result will be, as Roberts points out, 'a different history of literary journalism, one much more nuanced than we know now' (ibid., 91). This will include new outlooks on the world and its problems, and new stylistic dimensions to literary journalism.

¹ Martinson has received acknowledgment from the labour movement in the form the annual Moa Martinson prize, which is awarded to those who, in the view of Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund (the Swedish Workers' Educational Association) and the literary society Moas Vänner (Moa's Friends), write 'in the spirit of' Martinson.

This thesis argues that Martinson contributes fresh perspectives to the field of literary journalism in the form of her particular authorial voice, with its deployment of the oral tradition and the rhetorical use of personal experience (particularly in relation to motherhood), both of which provided authority in her work when countering political arguments. By bringing theoretical issues down to a practical level with examples from everyday life, Martinson employed her own experiences, and those of her friends' and neighbours, to illustrate the veracity of her arguments, thus melding the personal and the political. Lived experience here became a form of 'immersion', a concept integral to literary journalism but rarely seen in the mode adopted by Martinson.

This study examines Martinson's 'factual' journalism, but draws on her fiction, both articles and books, at times to shed further light on her journalism. It adopts a critical empathetic approach using close reading and contextual analysis. Previous work on Martinson has had a primarily feminist outlook, and, whilst acknowledging the importance of this viewpoint, this thesis does not offer an in-depth feminist analysis nor one of class analysis. Martinson's use of personal experience in her writing as an overarching trope means that the practical details of her life, and the socio-economic and political context within which she lived and worked, are of particular importance to readers. As she is, in addition, little known to English speakers, this introductory chapter sets out her background, before her writing is discussed in detail in subsequent chapters. Firstly, however, the Introduction takes a closer look at the relevance of studying Martinson's work today, but with the aspects pertaining to the theory of literary journalism being primarily discussed in the literature review.

Why is Martinson's literary journalism of importance?

Firstly, and most importantly, Martinson's newspaper work is (mostly) a joy to read and merits reaching a broader audience – including non-Swedish speakers, for whom her articles are currently inaccessible. Almost a century since its publication, her writing is often funny,

empathetic, gripping and principled, despite, at times, also being contradictory, erratic in quality and lacking in nuance. Appearing predominately in the radical media, Martinson's work managed to be both highly political and eminently readable, with an informal and commonsensical manner that made her a controversial, but popular figure.²

Secondly, there has been no study, longer than a chapter, on Martinson in English at all and no recognition of her as a literary journalist in any language. In Sweden, Martinson's 15 novels have been studied, but her journalism has primarily been perceived as a stepping stone to her fiction and has been examined, when at all, predominantly in this context. As is often the case with journalism, Martinson's writing in newspapers and magazines has been considered the less developed precursor to her fiction and has not been identified as literary journalism. The latter is a hitherto nascent area of research in Sweden. Consequently, this thesis is the first to recognise parts of Martinson's writing as literary journalism and to focus on it, and her journalism as a whole, as a significant body of work in itself. It also explores themes within her writing that either have been noted but left undeveloped in other studies or are completely new. The latter include Martinson's objections to charity and her defence of the 'outsider'.

For the purposes of this study, journalism is identified as non-fiction writing published in newspapers and magazines. The definition of literary journalism is discussed in the following two chapters; however, as a working explanation for this introduction, it can be said to be a branch of journalism where as much attention is paid to how one writes as to the subject matter. The text is not only factual but also uses tropes commonly associated with literature to engage the reader, most importantly narrative and description. For Greenberg, 'If there is a single thing that distinguishes literary journalism from other forms of reporting it is the use of narrative rather than expository prose' (Greenberg, 2014, 517). The journalist Gay Talese

² Radical media is defined by John D. H. Downing as 'generally small-scale and in many different forms, that express an alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities, and perspectives' (Downing, 2001, v).

calls this ‘the literature of reality’ (Talese, 1996, 4). Max Weber puts it succinctly as ‘literary non-fiction’ (Weber, 1980, 1). Another of many alternative, and telling, labels is therefore ‘creative non-fiction’.

In establishing much of Martinson’s writing in newspapers and magazines as literary journalism attention is drawn, in this thesis, to her use of the first person and acknowledged subjectivity, her descriptive language, her narrative techniques, and her use of details and dialogue – all signs of literary journalism, as is discussed in the next chapter. These were not serendipitous flourishes: Martinson was well read and particularly enjoyed the work of Fyodor Dostoevsky, George Sand and William Somerset Maugham. The breadth of her reading is evident in one 1942 article alone, in which she references Zoroaster, Catullus, Homer, the Phoenicians, Brueghel, Dostoevsky, St Francis, Timon of Athens, Spinoza and Einstein (Martinson, 1942). In so doing she is claiming a literary status for journalism, just as the current day literary journalist Svetlana Alexievich does with her ‘unremitting’ (Hartsock, 2016, 89) literary references in *Boys in Zinc* (2017). Notwithstanding her literary influences Martinson’s press articles and novels also show the impact of oral sources, which she acknowledged several times. Many of the tropes of literary journalism are also those of preliterate storytelling, and Chapters 2 and 3 explore the overlap between the two.

Thirdly, Martinson’s work is of importance in that it gives a voice and sheds light on the thought processes and life of a Swedish working-class woman, albeit an exceptional one, in the first half of the 20th century. Women are underrepresented, of course, in many areas, but not least in journalism and literary journalism. Martinson’s gender made her unusual enough in this area without her socio-economic status, but working-class women have, in particular, ‘left such a meagre body of literary material about themselves’ (Tebbutt, 1995, 26) that to hear such a literary voice is rare indeed.

The North American writer and activist Tillie Olsen is at present the literary journalist who comes closest to Martinson in both word and deed. For Olsen, Martinson is ‘a writer of international stature and significance – in her life as well as her work’ (Olsen, n.d.). A generation younger than the Swede Olsen was instrumental in the publication of the English translations of two of Martinson’s novels through the Feminist Press in New York, the first in 1973. In her commendation for the second, *Women and Apple Trees* (Martinson, 1985), Olsen argues for the importance of Martinson as a chronicler of this hidden world.

There is little to help us imagine the vanished work and lives of the women before us who did not have literacy, circumstances, to pen their own. Moa Martinson, whose life this was for years, illumines, rounds them for us with such profound understanding, love, art, that they become indelibly our own. (Olsen, n.d.)

Although it is unlikely that Olsen was aware of Martinson’s journalism, her statement can also be applied to it. There is then the risk, however, of viewing Martinson simply as a purveyor of period detail, which becomes problematic when it is seen as her greatest contribution. Yet, in her journalism, as in her novels, Martinson goes beyond this, giving an intimate view of daily life and her own mindset, which has long been considered part of literary journalism. As Edwin Ford explains in ‘The Art and Craft of the Literary Journalist’, ‘If the news reporter writes a record of reality, the literary journalist may be said to give a pattern to reality through the medium of his imagination’ (Ford, 1950, 309). Six decades on, this remains a foundation stone of literary journalism, with the addition that so many more records have been added to the collection. It is precisely because of this that literary journalism may be seen to provide a potentially, valuable historical record. Martinson’s class, gender, political activism and nationality, as well as her talent, mean that she is able to contribute new aspects to the corpus.

Like many working-class writers and, in particular, women, Martinson sees herself as a representative for her class and gender. Lived experience is employed in her work to express commonality, as opposed to her own uniqueness, an attitude that has its background in the oral tradition. At times, Martinson places herself in the role commonly consigned to women by the labour movement, and highlighted by Eric Hobsbawm, that of being a figure ‘of suffering and endurance’ (Hobsbawm, 1978, 127). She enters enthusiastically into this part, writing, for example, that ‘my fate was that of millions of other women. Marriage, poverty, children, sickness’ (Martinson, 1987, 12). Self-imposed or not, this persona influenced the interpretation of Martinson’s work and still does. A recent drama documentary (Wechselmann, 2019) on Martinson takes the trauma of her personal life as its starting point. Martinson is important for a fourth reason: although she is both historically and within literary journalism studies very unusual, there are current generations of Swedish female working-class writers who refer back to Martinson as an inspiration and identify themselves as continuing in her tradition. The author most frequently compared to Martinson (Jordahl, 2006, 53) is Elsie Johansson, who in 1996, at the age of 65, published her semi-autobiographical novel *Glasfåglarna* about a sawmill worker’s daughter, Nancy, growing up in rural Sweden in the 1940s. She has since written several novels portraying the struggle of working-class women to achieve a life encompassing literature and art. Following in Martinson’s footsteps, the books about Nancy are narrated in the first person in a vernacular that comes into its own when read aloud.

Martinson’s influence continues in a younger cohort of working-class writers: Majgull Axelsson, Anneli Jordahl, Åsa Linderborg, Anna Jörgensdotter and Susanna Alakoski – all novelists who began as journalists and continue with this in parallel with their fiction and autobiographical work. Their books frequently debate class, domestic violence and female sexuality, for whilst life has become materially easier for women in Sweden, the subjects that

Moa Martinson wrote about 80 years ago have not gone away. All except Linderborg have received the annual Moa Martinson prize.

Martinson's life until 1922 – setting the foundation for her writing

Martinson's journalism, both in its politics and rhetorical strategies, draws extensively on her personal experience. She is also little known outside Sweden. Consequently, the following sections discuss her personal history and the social and political factors that affected it.

Martinson was born Helga Maria Swartz, the illegitimate child of a 19-year-old servant, Kristina. The name 'Moa' was a pseudonym she adopted in 1927, and the surname 'Martinson' was the result of her second marriage in 1929. To avoid confusion, she is referred to throughout this thesis – except in article references – as 'Moa Martinson'.³ In 1890, the year of Martinson's birth, Sweden was still a predominantly agricultural society. Poverty was widespread, leading to mass emigration; some 1.5 million people left the country between 1850 and 1930 (Nilsson, 2004, 7). The overwhelming majority travelled to the United States of America (USA); the population of Swedes in Chicago was second only to Stockholm (Pehrson, 2014, 48). This left its mark in both Swedish literature – Vilhelm Moberg, Lars Widding and Sven Deblanc are amongst those who wrote multiple books based on this emigration – and day-to-day life. According to Martinson, 'We who in our childhood had almost all our aunts, uncles, cousins, fathers in America, or at sea. We were given longing, the huge, all-consuming longing which made daily life a little easier, strange as that may seem' (Martinson, 1942, 24). It also entailed an 'Americanisation' of rural areas in Sweden (Pehrson, 2015, 18) and a close interest in US affairs. Within the labour movement, this meant among other things, widespread active participation in the defence campaign of Italian anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, who were sentenced to death in the USA for a crime they were widely perceived not to have committed. It also led to exposure to the

³ Martinson signed articles variously as H. J., Helga, Helga Johnsson, Helga Martinson, Moa and Moa Martinson.

ideas of the international labour union, Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, or Wobblies), and a regard for the writer Upton Sinclair, shared by Martinson (Helga, 1923d). Through Sinclair's novels, Swedish workers came to know both their American counterparts and the social conditions in the factories there (Ambjörnsson, 1991, 157).

Martinson's mother made the move from the countryside not to America but to the industrial town of Norrköping, where she became a weaver. Kristina's wage, Martinson said later, 'was below all criticism. Our living standard was also below all criticism.' (Martinson, cited in Stiernstedt, 1946, 512) Martinson established that her strong political opinions, and consequently her written work, were explicitly bound up in her life experiences, when she wrote the following in 1923 to the Danish author Martin Andersen Nexø:

I am a syndicalist, I became one in the womb, my mother worked in a factory and lived on coffee and bread, you become a syndicalist if you have had that sustenance already in the womb and later until one is 12, and is called 'child of a whore' by a moralistic pharisaical society. (Martinson, cited in Boman, 1978, 25)

Although in later years she argued for tolerance (Martinson, 1957), Martinson's anger at the way she and others had been treated spilled over into her journalism for many years. Her mother, she stated, had no chance to buy even a metre of 'the warm, valuable woollen cloth' that she created on her loom. 'She did not have the means to buy new cloth at all' (Martinson, cited in Stiernstedt, 1946, 512). Nor did Kristina have the resources to keep her child with her. Until Martinson was six, she boarded first with her grandparents and then with a series of inadequate foster carers – an experience she utilised in her writing into her seventh decade. It was not until Kristina married – an event that formed the basis of Martinson's fourth novel, the autobiographical 1936 *Mor gifter sig* (*My Mother Gets Married*) – that her mother was able to provide a home for her. Martinson's stepfather, Alfred Karlsson, an agricultural labourer, was alcohol dependent. The issues surrounding this, as well as his trade union

activity, meant that the family were regularly forced to move home. Kristina ensured the family's survival despite the meagre resources available to her and constant pregnancies, miscarriages and infant deaths. Through this, she earned her daughter's perpetual admiration for both her and other working-class mothers – something that is reflected in Martinson's writing. Although her stepfather's alcohol use blighted both her childhood and her mother's life, Martinson credited Karlsson with introducing her to proletarian fiction by buying her the book *Fabriksstaden (The Factory Town)* by Martin Landahl (1905). 'Finally', she discovered, here was 'someone who wrote about working-class people, factory workers in my own country. Wrote about their life, love, hate and happiness' (Martinson, cited in Engman, 2004, 31). The realisation that such literature existed had a lasting effect on her.

After only four complete years (due to the family's itinerant lifestyle) of schooling, Martinson was granted a scholarship to train as a specialised restaurant worker, a sought-after career. However, she left this trade at the age of 19 to live in a common-law marriage with the well-builder Karl Johansson in a small, wooden house in the forest, south of Stockholm. At first sharing the cottage with Johansson's father and a lodger, and later her children, Martinson remained there for the rest of her life. Martinson's husband was frequently away, either working or in search of employment, for months at a time, and he neither earned nor retained – he also struggled with alcohol – enough of his earnings to support his family adequately (Stiernstedt, 1946, 512–513). Martinson's family grew rapidly, and by the time she was 25 she had five sons. In anticipation of the birth of her final child, Martinson harvested potatoes at the local manor to earn enough money to pay for the midwife. She hid the money until the day she gave it to her husband to fetch the nurse from town. Johansson did not return for two days after having spent the money on spirits (Ottesen-Jensen, 1986, 142). Martinson was left to give birth alone: an experience she immortalised in her first novel *Kvinnor och äppelträd* (1933) (*Women and Apple Trees*), after which the legend became part of her public persona.

Much as her mother had done, Martinson was forced to be inventive in order to support her family. In 1928, she wrote a humorous article, 'Lura räv' ('How to trick a fox') (Helga, 1928a), on the subject of how to acquire money if one had none and lived in the countryside. Her conclusion was that this was impossible. She also wrote an article about the difficulties of asking for poor relief from the council when one was a member of the poor board oneself. Martinson was politically active for most of her life. Her neighbours noted her left-leaning sympathies, calling her 'the Bolshevik' after agricultural workers began holding political meetings in her cottage in 1917 (Wernström 1978, 209). Towards the end of 1922, Martinson's activism burgeoned and with it her writing. In the autumn and winter of that year, she stood successfully in the council elections; was instrumental in founding a local section of the anarcho-syndicalist union Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation (Central Organisation of the Workers of Sweden, also known as SAC); and had her first piece of political writing, a letter, published in the union's newspaper.

SAC, Martinson and the anarcho-syndicalist press

The syndicalist movement suited Martinson both temperamentally and politically. SAC was formed in 1910 as a reaction to the perceived failure of the reformism of the Social Democrat Party (SAP) and its affiliated trade union council Landsorganisationen (LO). SAC's founders argued that revolutionary action was needed to bring about change and therefore called for greater 'ruthlessness' in the workers' struggle 'through an energetic expansion of direct action' (SAC, 1927). This included strikes, blockades and sabotage. Their stated enemies were 'the Sword, the Throne, the Altar and the Moneybag' (Wicksell, 1909).

LO focused on the 'aristocracy of the working class' – those who had previously made up the membership of workers' guilds. Meanwhile, SAC enrolled 'the underclass of the underclass' – those who did heavy or 'unskilled' labour, such as road and railway builders, lumberjacks and miners (Sjöö, 2011, 98). This group of, predominantly, men included Martinson's

stepfather and husband. When Martinson joined the organisation in 1922, SAC was experiencing one of its moments of highest popularity with 30,832 members (Persson, 1993, 140), from a Swedish population of just under six million (Statistiska centralbyrån, 2018). It reached its peak in 1933 with 40,000 members (Sjöö, 2011, 194).⁴

The social democrats and LO came to see SAC as inherently dangerous to the ‘corporate’ structure they were developing (Sassoon, 1996, 44) and during the 1920s and 1930s spent a considerable amount of energy combatting the syndicalists. This occurred not least through the propagation of an ideal of the Swedish worker as a moderate, conscientious person (man) who in industrial disputes valued consensus above class struggles.⁵ Jenny Jansson argues that this entailed a ‘re-formation of working-class consciousness [...] impressed upon the members through popular education programmes’ by the LO leadership (Jansson, 2012, 22). It was a consciousness that Martinson actively struggled against. In articles, she celebrates the uncouth and the outsider who refuse to conform to accepted norms.

The Swedish syndicalist movement was internationalist and predominantly influenced by the French trade union confederation *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT), as well as by the IWW in the USA. Martinson attended at least one of the latter’s meetings in Stockholm (Engman, 2004, 102). The latter, she said, was ‘an organisation, much like the Swedish syndicalists, but a little more radical and more, I might say, determined. I argued that we should organise ourselves as IWWs, but wasn’t listened to’ (Martinson, 1960). She later wrote that she was ‘overjoyed’ when she heard that Sinclair was a member of the Wobblies in the US. The syndicalists also drew inspiration from the anarchist writers Pierre-Joseph Proudhon,

⁴ For more on SAC, see: Boréus, K., Ighe, A., Karlsson, M. and Warlenius, R. (2012) *Ett sekel av syndikalism. Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation 1910-2010*. Stockholm: Federativs Förlag; Persson, L. K. (1993) *Syndikalismen i Sverige 1903-1922*. Stockholm: Federativs; Sjöö, I. (2011) *Fackliga Fribrytare*. Stockholm: Federativs Förlag.

⁵ For further information on the ‘conscientious worker’, see Ambjörnsson, R. (1991) *Den Skötsamme Arbetaren*. Stockholm: Carlsson Bokförlag.

Mikhail Bakunin and the Russian philosopher and scientist Peter Kropotkin.⁶ The influence of Kropotkin on Martinson is explored in Chapters 6 and 7. His standing within the Swedish labour movement was considerable (Sandberg, 1965), especially in the anarcho-syndicalist newspapers for which Martinson wrote.

Martinson only served for one term on the local council, from autumn 1922 to 1926. She resigned her seat, despite the syndicalists – who had asked her to stand on behalf of the SAP – feeling that she could ‘be of some use’ (Martinson, 1940). ‘But’, Martinson told her friend, anarchist journalist Albert Jensen, ‘I didn’t think one could be of any use. I’m more useful to the council, by not being part of it and by keeping my thumb in their eye instead’ (ibid.). Martinson, felt, as she told Jensen, that she had enough knowledge of class struggles – historic, current and international – to have little time for parliamentary politics. ‘I despise these shallow, tame bourgeois types, both in the real bourgeois circles, and those that show themselves amongst the workers’ (ibid.). Instead, Martinson focused on her writing. Her first published letter in the newspaper *Arbetaren* (*The Worker*) in November 1922 would change her life. She subsequently wrote over 250 contributions to newspapers and magazines, over 150 of these to *Arbetaren* and its sister paper *Brand* (*Fire*).

Arbetaren was SAC’s daily newspaper (founded in January the same year), with the aim of reaching a broad audience. *Arbetaren*’s remit included trade union and national news and book reviews, as well as international subjects spanning from the Trades Union Congress’ conference in Hull to the emancipation of Indian women. Education was considered vital within the labour movement, and *Arbetaren* was no exception, publishing long reviews of German literature and serialising political books, such as Sergei Mikhailovich Stepniak’s *The Career of a Nihilist* (1889). It championed new writing and published radical modern authors

⁶ See Joll, J. (1979) *The Anarchists*. London: Methuen, for a very readable exposition on anarchism and prominent anarchists. Also Woodcock, G. (1992) *Anarchism and Anarchists*. Kingston, Ont.: Quarry Press; Marshall, P. (2008) *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*. London: Harper Collins. Guérin, D. (1970) *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice*. London: Monthly Review Press.

not necessarily associated with anarcho-syndicalism. These included authors from the proletarian school, as well as Stig Dagerman, Nils Ferlin, Vilhelm Moberg and Per Wästberg (a current member of the Swedish Academy).

Two weeks before Martinson's first contribution, the paper introduced a weekly women's page, 'Kvinnan och hemmet' ('Woman and the home'). This was edited by 'Ottar', the Norwegian women and workers' rights activist Elise Ottesen-Jensen. Ottar went on to found Sweden's family planning organisation, as well as becoming Martinson's mentor and friend. Early on, Ottesen-Jensen had been disappointed to discover that when it came to women's rights, 'the morals of the [male] workers were no better than those of the bourgeoisie' (Ottesen-Jensen, 1986, 141).⁷ 'The syndicalist movement to which *Arbetaren* belonged', she writes, 'was a studiedly male movement' (ibid., 140). Women's activism and their newspaper page were denigrated. Martinson was, however, said Ottar, a strong support in this situation and 'a breath of fresh air in the newspaper's columns' (ibid., 141). Martinson penned around 60 articles for *Arbetaren* before the male editors wearied of what they felt to be the militantly feminist tone of the women's page and requested, in October 1924, that it 'cover subjects relating to the page's title' (Ottar, 1924b). Henceforth, the page was censored. This led to both Martinson's and Ottesen-Jensen's resignations.

Swedish labour movement newspapers enjoyed a 'golden age', in terms of numbers of publications and readers, in the interwar years (Brink Pinto, 2011, 68). Martinson quickly went on to write for the anarchist newspaper *Brand*. During the 1920s, her most prolific era in terms of journalism, she also contributed to the syndicalist *Arbetare-Kuriren*, her local paper *Nynäshamns Posten*, the temperance paper *Templarkuriren* and the feminist *Vi kvinnor* (We

⁷ This was not limited to SAC: Stearns (1990, 99) writes of how in Europe and the USA, 'popular protest was unprecedentedly masculinized [sic] during the nineteenth century' and women were consciously excluded. Le Sueur and Olsen also discovered this in the 1930s when they wrote for the publications of the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA), an organisation where "'proletarian" and "manly" were nearly synonymous' (Coiner, 1995, 6).

Women). Martinson's work in *Vi kvinnor* is explored in Chapter 4, and work from the other papers is examined throughout this thesis. In 1927, Martinson began writing for the radical, liberal feminist magazine *Tidevarvet* (*Turn of Time*).⁸ The philosophy of the women behind *Tidevarvet* influenced her deeply, and it was here that she first used the pseudonym Moa, the name taken from the mother figure in Johannes V. Jensen's novel *Jökeln* (1908) (*The Glacier*). Martinson's contributions to the magazine were valued and frequently advertised on the front page. *Tidevarvet*, which was influential both politically, in its feminism, and artistically, in championing modernism, also published the new young poets of the proletarian school, such as Erik Askelund and Harry Martinson.⁹ It was here that Martinson did some of her most experimental work, including much fiction. Ebba Witt-Brattström argues that the magazine saw a change in Martinson's writing where she became 'focused on becoming an author' (Witt-Brattström, 1989, 46), and she has analysed Martinson's articles in *Tidevarvet* in this context. Martinson's *Tidevarvet* work is not discussed in depth in this thesis; instead, the emphasis is on her articles in the labour movement press, where she utilises literary tropes and her personal experiences to convey her political ideas. The focus is upon Martinson as a political activist, rather than her route to authorship.

Martinson's life was dogged by tragedy. In April 1925, two of her sons, eight and ten years old, died falling through the ice of a frozen lake; in January 1928, Martinson's husband, suffering from a breakdown in mental health, committed suicide by lighting a stick of dynamite in his mouth. After suffering a breakdown herself, Martinson continued to write and remained politically active. In summer 1928, the young poet Harry Martinson moved in with

⁸ For more on *Tidevarvet*, see Bohlin, A. (2014) Husmodern – en listig bedragare. *Tidevarvet* och K. J. In: A. Nordenstam (ed.) *Nya röster – Svenska kvinnotidskrifter under 150 år*. Möklinta: Gidlunds Förlag, 89–105.

⁹ It has been argued that *Tidevarvet* was based on the British magazine *Time and Tide*, founded in 1920, to which it bears similarities (Wistrand, 2009, 121).

her; they married and experienced a fruitful writing partnership. However, his subsequent infidelity and abandonment of Martinson led to their divorce in 1941.

Following the publication of her first novel in 1933, Martinson wrote less frequently for the press, focusing instead on writing 20 books between then and 1959. It was not until 1950 that she began writing regularly for a magazine again. When she did so, it was for the column 'Moas stugfönster' ('Moa's cottage window') in the social democratic magazine *Folket i bild* (*The People in Pictures*). She published almost 40 of these articles, as well as half a dozen other sketches, poems and reminiscences. By the 1950s, Martinson's work had become more polished and coherent than in her early years as an author, yet she retained a familiar chatty tone, drawing, as she did in her earliest articles, on country proverbs and anecdotes from her own life and the lives of her friends and neighbours.

Proletarian literature in Sweden

Martinson's novels can be broadly divided into the semi-autobiographical – depicting the lives of working-class women and their children – and historical epics that draw on a tradition of oral storytelling and include elements of magical realism. She also published a book of poetry, three collections of recollections/memoirs, had plays performed on the radio and in later years was a popular public speaker. Although Martinson's position as a modernist writer has now been established (Witt-Brattström, 1989), in Sweden, she has traditionally been seen as a member of the proletarian or workers' school of literature (Furuland and Munkhammar, 1997; Runnquist, 1952). Study of this genre is included in the Swedish school curriculum and is part of the national cultural discussion in relation to works published today, as well as historical literature.¹⁰

¹⁰ There is a considerable body of work relating to Swedish 'workers' literature'. For a discussion of its definition see Nilsson, M. (2017) *The Making of Swedish Working-Class Literature*. In: Lennon, J. and Nilsson, M. (eds.) *Working-Class Literature(s)*. Stockholm: Stockholm University Press. For other recent studies, see Jonsson, B., Nilsson, M., Sjöberg, B. and Vulovic, J. (eds.) (2011) *Från Nexø till Alakoski: Aspekter på nordisk arbetarlitteratur*. Lund: Lunds Universitet; Jonsson, B., Nilsson, M.,

Although earlier writers, such as Maria Sandel and Karl Östman, are included in the canon, perceptions of the proletarian school have focused on its 'golden age' (Nilsson, 2017, 103) which followed the emergence of a group of young male writers at the end of the 1920s, all from poor backgrounds and lacking formal education. They were apostles of the 'the new life spirit', which they considered an international phenomenon that included D. H. Lawrence's eroticism, Italian futurism and Germany's new raw food, nature and naturism movements. These young autodidacts published poetry, novels and travel writing glorifying nature, sexuality and industrialism and, for the first time, substantively bringing to the fore the experiences of Sweden's working-class men. Their depictions of women, however, featuring comparisons to fields of wheat and the sea, have been the subject of much subsequent criticism (Witt-Brattström, 1989).

When Martinson published *Women and Apple Trees* in 1933, she was considered a natural member of the proletarian school. However, she was conspicuous as the only woman in the group and had little patience with many of the young men's ideas. Martinson did not receive the same plaudits or even indulgence enjoyed by her male colleagues. As one of the few positive reviews of her book wrote: 'Big strong men have flinched back appalled at the realism of Moa Martinson's proletarian novel' (Berg 1933, 54). Many of the autodidacts published autobiographical works depicting their childhoods, and Martinson perceived her novel *Mor gifter sig* (1956) (*My Mother Gets Married*), first published in 1936, as being in 'parallel to these' (Witt-Brattström). As Witt-Brattström points out, Martinson set out provide the female perspective lacking in the male proletarian writers' books. She felt it was imperative that a broader section of working-class people's experiences be heard and this belief also formed the basis for her journalism (Helga, 1924u).

Sjöberg, B. and Vulovic, J. (eds.) (2014) *Från Bruket till Yarden: Nordiska perspektiv på arbetarlitteratur*. Lund: Lunds Universitet; Nilsson, M. (2015) *Literature and Class*. Berlin: Nordeuropa-Institut der Humboldt-Universität.

A writer of her time

Martinson's life and work cover a period of huge social upheaval in Sweden. Despite its neutrality, the nation was affected by the First World War, and there was a strong sense of horror amongst intellectuals and activists in relation to the conflict. Echoes of this can be found in Martinson's work, especially as she began her writing career in the desperately poor period following the war.¹¹ People then were so destitute that Martinson's friend Ottesen-Jensen wrote in 1965 that her current travels in third-world countries reminded her of Sweden in the 1920s and early 1930s. 'The same ragged, runny nosed, hollow eyed children, the same worn out mothers' (Ottesen-Jensen, 1986, 144). This pre-welfare state period corresponds with Martinson's most prolific period, which contains some of her most impassioned political pieces, and this thesis focuses primarily, though not solely, on these.

Although her later life and work is beyond the scope of the thesis, Martinson lived until 1965 and the social democratic 'folkhem' ('people's home'), when Sweden's economy was booming and it appeared to be a country of equality and justice. It was a time when, Donald Sassoon writes:

The welfare state was the new goal; nationalization and class conflict had been dropped; democracy was valued for itself rather than as a tactic; the national road, based on a relatively insulated national economy, had come to prevail over internationalism. The Swedish model had come into being. (Sassoon, 1996, 46)

This later period was a climate particularly favourable to Martinson as a writer. The literacy of the working class was a priority for the social democrats. Books became cheaper, and, in particular, those published by the party's own publishing house, Folket i Bild, sold in unparalleled large editions from 1940 onwards. These cheap books, written by and for the working class, were quickly bought up by readers who had previously been confined to

¹¹ For more information about this period, see the chapter 'I Omvälvningarnas tid' in Hirdman, Y., Lundberg, U. and Björkman, J. (2012) *Sveriges Historia 1920-1965*. Stockholm: Nordstedts; Nyström, H. (1994) *Hungerupproret 1917*. Ludvika: Zelos.

borrowing the books from libraries. Martinson was one of *Folket i Bild*'s best sellers, and her novel *Livets Fest* (Martinson, 1949) was chosen to represent the publishing house as its 100th book and reprinted in 100,000 copies. Martinson said this made her feel 'extremely honoured and genuinely happy' (Martinson, 1952, 7). It was this democratisation of the book market that finally gave Martinson 'a room of her own'. Knowing she had such a large readership ready to buy her books, 'together with a better income', Martinson wrote in *Folket i Bild* magazine, gave her both 'peace to work and self-confidence' (Martinson, 1950c).

With the popularisation of proletarian literature, Martinson became the whole country's 'Moa': the writer who could see happiness in the greyest of squalor. Her novels were serialised in newspapers, and she could be heard all over the country on the radio or on her countless lecture tours, drawing on her considerable verbal storytelling skills. However, whilst the male proletarian writers took their place in Sweden's literary pantheon, including the Swedish Academy, Martinson's literary achievements were neglected, and she remained an outsider, albeit a *fêted* one.

One of several reasons for the disregard of Martinson may have been elitism. With the long reign of the SAP – which was in government from 1932 to 1976 – the term 'klassresa' ('class journey'), denoting generally upward social mobility, became an everyday term. Martinson refused to make such a journey. On the radio, she played the accordion and sang *The Internationale*, causing an outcry. She was loud and crude and remained in her small cottage in the woods – building a porch was her one form of gentrification. As she failed to conform to the required societal narrative, she could be, and was (Mattsson, 2011, 121), treated both as a figure of fun, a non-serious writer, and castigated for expounding what was perceived as an extreme ideology (Bird and Dardenne, 1988).

Witt-Brattström has pointed out that in the semi-autobiographical books written by the male autodidacts, 'the boys that the men depicted were all on their way away from their humble

roots' (Witt-Brattström). Martinson, on the other hand, stayed within her class, and in her novels, as well as in her journalism, people who betray their roots are doomed. Martinson remains unusual in this respect. Even Olsen moved into the middle class by dint of her intellectual and professional aspirations. Constance Coiner argues that, despite this, Olsen's 'personal and emotional identification remained, profoundly, with the class of her birth. [...] [However] how to live in both worlds remained her insoluble riddle' (ibid.). Martinson, however, makes a persistent claim to a working-class identity throughout her writing. It was not until the late 1970s and 1980s with the re-evaluation of women's literature and the appreciation of the oral tradition, combined with the publication of Witt-Brattström's groundbreaking feminist study, *Moa Martinson – Skrift och drift på 30-talet (Moa Martinson – Text and Desire in the Thirties)* (Witt-Brattström, 1989), that Martinson began to be taken seriously as a novelist. Whilst she is far from a household name, she has achieved some vindication with this and with the rise of a new school of proletarian literature spearheaded by women.

Martinson's philosophy

Martinson wrote that 'without ethics people cannot live' (Martinson, 1957, 525). Her interest in how we should act towards our fellow human beings is a thread that runs throughout her writing and hence this thesis as well. Her political beliefs were filtered through her personal experience of working-class life, but she was also influenced by her reading of theoretical works by philosophers such as Ellen Key and Kropotkin. Martinson was an idealist: she believed in the abstract concepts of 'love', 'solidarity' and 'the revolution', but her convictions were grounded in the reality of the day-to-day. She wrote that 'One area hasn't been discussed in the experts' debate, that is to say life. The immense, complicated, nuanced and irrational life' (Martinson, 1951b). The link between a writer's life and their work was irrefutable in her eyes. When two of her sons were killed in an accident, the tragedy altered

her perception of existence, as well as her writing. ‘The romance that had grabbed me, despite the hard years in the cottage, a sort of mystic belief in nature [...] seemed to have left me on the day my children died’ (Martinson, 1976, 214). It was not, she argued, possible to be a good writer, or indeed a whole person, without knowing terrible torment. ‘It was the innermost, deepest suffering. That gave clarity’ (ibid., 224). Linked to suffering was love, for Martinson, love was all-powerful: a person who had once possessed it could ‘never be truly poor in their soul, however great the disappointment and pain caused by the same’ (Martinson, 1952). This seemingly most personal of emotions was also an important factor in a writer’s work. ‘An account of human life that does not include love’, Martinson wrote, ‘is false and dead’ (ibid.). It was, she claimed the only thing, together with ‘working[-class] people’, that she felt was worth writing about (Martinson, 1942), and both were recurring themes in her work throughout her life.

Breakdown of subsequent chapters

Chapter 2: ‘Locating Martinson: Archives and Translation’ – consists of a discussion of the study’s methodology, which perforce includes aspects of translation, as well as the sources available for this study.

Chapter 3: ‘Literature Review: Oral Traditions, Literary Journalism and Martinson’s Recovery’ examines the definition of literary journalism, as well as Martinson’s place in literature and literary journalism, expanding on some of the themes already discussed in the introduction. The chapter ends by exploring the ways in which literary journalism can draw on and incorporate techniques from the oral tradition, in particular in relation to ‘voice’ and authenticity.

Chapter 4: ‘Martinson’s Voice, Persona and the Use of Experience’ is the first chapter of data analysis and explores Martinson’s creation of an authoritative female working-class voice in her work, and it observes how she turned perceived weaknesses into strengths. This

section expands the discussion of the oral tradition and literary journalism in the previous chapter. Following the establishment of this vital aspect of Martinson's writing, the focus of the thesis moves to discussing her political and philosophical beliefs within specific areas whilst acknowledging the social and historical contexts surrounding these.

Chapter 5: 'Martinson's Use of Maternal Identity in the Political Struggle' examines Martinson's employment of her role as a mother to give herself authority in day-to-day political struggles. It also demonstrates that her view of motherly love drew on the work of Key to go beyond biological constraints to extend into a communal concept of solidarity and concern for others. Anger, conventionally seen as a non-feminine emotion, becomes legitimised in her writing both through her extension of motherhood and class solidarity. It then becomes an acceptable way to defend those most vulnerable in society, as in the case of Sacco and Vanzetti towards whose international defence campaign Martinson contributed.

Chapter 6: 'Martinson's rejection of corporal punishment by the use of practical example' builds on the previous chapter by further analysing Martinson's conception of the maternal role on both personal and societal levels, this time in relation to the punishment of persons by individuals and the state. Practical examples ground her political arguments, which are based on the philosophical influences of Key and Kropotkin. Martinson draws on her experiences as a mother to conclude that compassion, mutual respect and support in the treatment of both children and adults are more useful to society than punitive treatment.

Chapter 7: "'Real People Hate Philanthropy'" – Martinson's rejection of charity in favour of mutual aid' discusses how, in essence, much of Martinson's work argues how we should treat our fellow human beings, on both on an individual and state level. In her reaction to charity she is explicit in her condemnation, detailing the harm it does to both the giver and the receiver. Drawing on inspiration from Kropotkin, but firmly based in her own experiences, she argues vehemently against philanthropy and for mutual aid and solidarity. As discussed

across the chapters, Martinson brings theoretical issues down to a practical level with examples from everyday life to illustrate the veracity of her arguments as she melds the personal and the political.

Chapter 8: Conclusion – This thesis concludes that Robert's is correct in her claim that, when we venture beyond the canon of literary journalism to 'other, less elite sources' (Roberts, 2012, 82), we may recover writers with 'original visions of literary journalism and the requisite abilities to realise them' (ibid.). In answering the research question: how did Moa Martinson use her literary journalism to articulate her political beliefs? it establishes that Martinson provides new areas of study in literary journalism.

Chapter 2: Locating Martinson: Archives and Translation

This chapter discusses three aspects of the methodology used in this thesis. Firstly, close reading is considered, despite a problematic history, as the most appropriate method for revealing the nuances of Martinson's language and style. Secondly, the gathering of primary sources is reviewed. Martinson's legacy is still under recovery and most of the publications she wrote for have, as yet, not been digitalised. It is therefore not possible to provide an exhaustive account, or collation, of her work. However, due to her prolificacy and the themes under review in this thesis, it is argued that a complete collection of her articles is not necessary for this study. Thirdly, the translation of these sources and the issues surrounding this, including debates on subject of dialect are discussed.

Close reading: an expanded view

The primary method used in this thesis is close reading. As will be discussed in the context of literary journalism, there are numerous and, at times, conflicting definitions of what this entails. Indeed, the editors of the anthology *Shakespeare Up Close: Reading Early Modern Texts*, a text that relies on close reading, elect to avoid such 'an impossible formulation' as a definition (McDonald et al., 2012, xix) and feel instead that it is 'tempting' to reduce the practice to 'something like "pay attention"' (ibid.). Paula Moya puts it slightly less succinctly: 'By close reading, I mean the kind of intensive reading and re-reading that calls for a heightened attention to literary language and form, considering both as semantic structures that mediate authors' and readers' perceptions of the social world' (Moya, 2016, 9).

This thesis uses Moya's definition, understanding it to mean a careful interpretation of specific texts, emphasising aspects such as syntax, sentence construction, vocabulary and the utilisation of themes and imagery. This includes features that contribute to Martinson's individual style or voice: figures of speech and tone; items such as irony, sarcasm and puns;

and rhetorical devices. Close reading examines how these – ‘the smallest distinguishable elements of a literary work – form interdependent links with the overall context. [...] It denotes the meticulous analysis of these elementary features, which mirror larger structures of a text’ (Klarer, 2004, 86). Through close reading, the text is ‘unpacked’ (Jasinski, 2001, n.p., n.p). Moya’s definition also stresses the importance of ‘the social world’ and the place of writing within it – something that is particularly relevant to the study of Martinson.

New Criticism, from which close reading largely derives, has in the past been accused of actively ignoring the social and historical contexts in which a work was produced and focusing solely on the formal features of language, to the detriment of a full understanding of the writing in question. That the New Critics should argue for this was perhaps a natural reaction to the excessive use of historical biography by their predecessors. However, as McDonald et al. (2012, xix) point out, it was not a practice they themselves always adhered to. Stephen Booth (2000), for example, provides plenty of pertinent context in his commentary on Shakespeare’s sonnets.

In literary journalism context cannot be ignored. In Louis Menand’s words: ‘Texts’ – in which he includes political journalism – ‘are always packed, by the reader’s prior knowledge and expectations, before they are unpacked’ (Menand, cited in New Yorker, 2015). That we engage with a text differently when we have more knowledge of its context is undeniable.

Sims argues strongly that reading the text is not enough in the study of literary journalism:

‘We react differently, however – or I do – depending on what we know. I felt differently about George Orwell when I heard that perhaps he never shot an elephant’ (Sims, 2009, 9).

As Moya maintains, and as this thesis strives to do, effective close reading must not neglect the social, historical, economic, political and cultural contexts from which a text emerges’ (Moya, 2015, 9–10).

Close reading requires a sifting of Martinson's language and is thus the most effective way to establish the literary journalism tropes within her writing. Similarly, it provides a link with the oral tradition, which is so important to Martinson's work. Francine Prose contends that:

We all begin as close readers. Even before we learn to read, the process of being read aloud to, and of listening, is one in which we are taking in one word after another, one phrase at a time, in which we are paying attention to whatever each word or phrase is transmitting. (Prose, 2006, x)

As will be explored in subsequent chapters, Martinson's work often benefits from being read aloud: there is a rhythm present and an emphasis on certain words that is not evident without systematic or vocalised reading.

Collecting data from Swedish archives

The basis of this study is a data sample of 253 articles written by Martinson between 1922 and her death in 1964. It is likely that this includes the majority of articles written by Martinson during her lifetime, but not all. Martinson wrote not only prolifically but also eclectically and under different pseudonyms. Her work spanned the labour movement press, temperance society and feminist publications, as well as local and national newspapers and magazines. It is, as her bibliographer Frida Andersson describes it, 'a jungle' (Andersson, 2000, 5) for researchers.

Andersson's work submitted in partial fulfilment of her Master's degree on Martinson's publications is invaluable when negotiating this otherwise uncharted area, but it is incomplete, as she herself acknowledges (Andersson, 2000, 4). A definitive record of Martinson's writing would require a substantial amount of time to collate. This thesis addresses some articles not included in Andersson's bibliography. In addition to Andersson's bibliography, the works of Witt-Brattström (1989, 1990, 2010, 2012) and Kerstin Engman (1990, 2004) are used to source Martinson's writing. For the purposes of my largely

qualitative analysis, a complete collection of all of Martinson's writing is not essential. After the first few tumultuous months, when she was known to contradict herself within the space of a few sentences, her fundamental sociological and political beliefs and her writing style evolved relatively slowly. During the very early stages of Martinson's career, she wrote almost exclusively for the newspaper *Arbetaren*, and it has been possible to go through every issue of the paper from this period. Single missing articles after this time are unlikely to show a radical divergence of thought or style.

The newspapers for which Martinson primarily wrote – the labour and temperance movement publications and the feminist *Vi kvinnor*, as well as local press – have not been digitalised. The exception is *Tidevarvet*, put online as part of the Women's Collection (KvinnSam) at Gothenburg University, though, as mentioned in the introduction, these articles have not been cited more than once or twice in this study, due to their greater fictional content. Several of the newspapers in which Martinson published are only available on microfilm at the Royal Library (Kungliga Biblioteket) in Stockholm, or as paper copies at the Swedish State Library Depot (Statens biblioteksdepå), which lies in a forest, a local train and bus journey northwest of Stockholm.

Arbetaren, the newspaper in which Martinson was first published, also exists on microfilm at the Swedish Labour Movement's Archive and Library (Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek) in Stockholm. The newspaper *Brand* is there in hardcopy, as are many of her private papers, in addition to the archives of her local syndicalist organisation. *Arbetaren* is also available on microfilm at Gothenburg University Library. With the exception of the 34 press publications, which include articles, poems and short stories, featured in Engman and Witt-Brattström's (1990) anthology, *Moa Martinson i egen sak* (*Moa Martinson in Her Own Words*), Martinson's journalistic work is only available through archives and not at all in English. This

thesis thus contributes to recovering her journalism in Sweden in addition to making it accessible to an international audience for the first time.

Methods of translation

As discussed in the literature review below, literary journalism as a discipline is still in the early stages of discovering writers in languages other than English and in translation.

Martinson herself is little known outside the Nordic countries: only two of her novels have been translated into English, and none of her journalism. Although there are many reasons for this – leaving aside the major issues surrounding journalism and translation – there is the rarity of Swedish-to-English translation prior to the popularity of ‘Scandi Noir’ crime thrillers, as well as Martinson’s gender, class and the era in which she wrote, all combining against the likelihood of her writing gaining exposure.

There is also the argument that Martinson’s writing does not always translate well. At times, the wit and spontaneity, so clear in Swedish, become weighed down and clumsy in English. The book *Kvinnor och äppelträd* (Martinson, 1933), which enchants in Swedish, becomes unimpressively leaden in English as *Women and Apple Trees* (Martinson, 1987). This is despite the translator of the novel, and that of the subsequent *My Mother Gets Married*, Margaret S. Lacy, striving to ‘catch the sing-song rhythm of spoken Swedish, in order to make it congenial with the mood, tone and visualized experience of the original’ (Lacy, 1987, 211).

Lacy’s description of Martinson’s work corresponds to that of poetry, and literary journalism also shares similarities with verse in the attention it pays to the cadence of words. Some of Wolfe’s titles bear this out: *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* (2005), for example. Martinson’s language, owing as it does so much to the oral tradition, has even closer links to verse. Writing about the work of the Italian poet Giuseppe Gioachino Belli, Anthony Burgess observed that ‘the only way to translate a sonnet is to write what looks like a new

sonnet' (Burgess, 2017), and it may be that it is impossible to give a complete sense of Martinson's voice in another language. The fluidity of her writing cannot be replicated without changing it to the extent that it becomes almost unrecognisable, and in doing so losing the idiosyncratic style that defines her. Magnus Linton points out that Swedish is a language in which it is very easy to give a text 'personality' by the use of words that do not yet exist in a dictionary or in people's consciousness but that nevertheless in the right context are instantly understandable (Linton, 2019, 53–54). Much like German, Swedish words can be bent, added to and subtracted from to create whole new words. This is present in Martinson's work. Her meaning is clear, but finding the exact word in translation is impossible. In a similar manner, she also plays with punctuation, and, as Greenberg says, 'we can understand punctuation as a way of giving the text rhythm and "voice"' (Greenberg, 2018, 84).

Fredrik Hertzberg claims, in relation to the poems of Gunnar Björling, that all aspects of a poem, including the phonetics, need to be taken into consideration during translation. 'The resonance or charge does not lie beyond the words, but builds on them, but without being localised in them' (Hertzberg, 1999, 83). The whole of a poem is more than the sum of its parts, and 'Björling's language is, in other words, not in the actual words, but in the language, in the sequences of the words, in the continuity of language' (ibid., 87). Hertzberg argues that the unusual syntax and breaks in Björling's poems are essential to understanding and translating his poems. 'A normalised syntax explicitly reduces the power of the words' (ibid., 91). Vivian Gornick also writes of the importance of syntax to creating a writing persona in her own autobiographical work; she realises that, for the voice that she wants to project, her everyday syntax must be changed (Gornick, 2002, 21–22). Because syntax is such an important part of 'voice', the decision has been made in this thesis to retain Martinson's syntax, with its idiosyncratic punctuation, in order to preserve the rhythm of her language.

There is almost always a tension within literary translation between seeing translation as a linguistic problem and viewing it as the transference of a message (Leonardi, 2000, 1). This is epitomised in Eugene Nida and Charles Taber's definition of different types of 'equivalence' in translation. Formal equivalence, or formal correspondence, involves potentially literal translation, using the closest equivalent word in order to focus attention on 'the message itself in both form and content' (Nida, 1964, 159). This they contend 'typically', distorts 'the grammatical and stylistic patterns of the receptor language, and hence distorts the message, so as to cause the receptor to misunderstand or to labor unduly hard' (Nida and Taber, 2003, 201).

Conversely, dynamic equivalence works on 'the principle of equivalent effect' (Nida, 1964, 159); the wording and form of the original text may change, but as long as the translation follows rules of consistency and accuracy, 'the message is preserved and the translation is faithful' (Nida and Taber, 2003, 200). The aim is that the wording of the translation will 'trigger the same impact' on the new audience as the original wording did in the source language (Leonardi, 2000, 4). With this method, culturally specific concepts will be replaced with those well known in the target language. Paul Kussmaul gives the example of the Lord's Prayer, where, in Eskimo language, 'Give us our daily bread' becomes 'Give us our daily fish' (Kussmaul, 1995, 67).¹² At times, translators choose to change the names of characters and places in order to focus attention on the narrative and avoid a jarring sensation. In contrast, Lawrence Venuti argues that there is violence in this form of translation: 'the reconstitution of the foreign text in accordance with values, beliefs and representations that pre-exist it in the target language, always configured in hierarchies of dominance and marginality, always determining the production, circulation, and reception of texts' (Venuti,

¹² For more on the changes wrought on texts in order to translate them culturally, see Kussmaul, P. (1995) *Training the Translator*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 65-72. 65-72.

1999, 18). He advocates, instead, as an ethical stance, for a form of ‘foreignizing translation’ where ‘linguistic and cultural differences’ are signalled instead of being repressed (ibid., 41). In this study, a little of all the above is employed. Fortunately, cultural differences are easier explained in an academic thesis, with the potential for footnotes, than in a novel or poem. Dynamic equivalence is primarily used here in an attempt to communicate the meaning of Martinson’s work. However, Martinson was an autodidact whose writing can sometimes appear idiosyncratic even to a native Swedish speaker; her writing style is unusual and often colloquial. In attempting to represent this, non-conventional grammar and spelling have been retained in the translations made for this study. The sense of ‘Swedishness’ and working-class idioms are an integral part of her writing; consequently, the translations in this thesis have not attempted to achieve complete dynamic equivalence.¹³

There is an argument within translation studies that some work should simply not be translated: the loss of integrity is too much. However, the depletion to world literature and to our personal perspectives that would result if we were confined to reading work written only in languages in which we are proficient, however flawed the translations, would be great. To not translate Martinson would be to deny her exposure in the English-speaking world, where she is of value not only for literary journalism but also for historical, class and gender issues, as well as her unusual political outlook.

If nothing else, the insight into a working-class woman’s life that Martinson provides would be a sufficient argument for translation of her work, but literary journalism is also about the beauty and the transportive effects of the written word, and it is therefore hoped that some of the sense of this in her writing comes across in these translations. As Sims argues, we are ‘impoverished’ (2009, 10) by our lack of access to literary journalism in languages that we do

¹³ For more on the complications of translating in a culturally sensitive manner, see Ingo, R. (2007) *Kulturen – en mångfasetterad situationell faktor vid översättning*. In: O. Eriksson (ed.) *Översättning och kultur: föredrag från ett symposium vid Växjö universitet 17-18 november 2006*. Växjö: Växjö University Press, 98–111.

not speak and that have not been translated. Translating the articles for this thesis therefore involves a challenge: a desire not to sell Martinson short.

Conveying Swedish dialects to English-speaking readers

The decision whether or not to attempt to convey dialectal speech has been the most challenging aspect of the translations. Martinson's writing was influenced by the local dialects where she was born and lived: firstly, industrial Norrköping, and later rural Sorunda in the county of Södermanland, where she spent the majority of her life. The regional aspects become most marked when Martinson creates dialogue (her non-dialogue conformed increasingly to received pronunciation as the years passed). Her fictional columnist Madam Andersson is given the, relatively light, dialect of an inhabitant of Södermanland. Since Madam Andersson is a significant constituent of Martinson's literary journalism and is used as a case study in Chapter 4, the issue of translating dialect merits consideration.

‘[A] basic working definition of a dialect is that it is a kind of language used by a specific group at a specific time in a specific location’ (Epstein, 2012, 198). In literature, dialect is used to aid in the characterisation of a character, either placing the person within a regional or social group or providing contrast (Englund, 124), identifying them as a noteworthy individual (Page, 1988, 55) in a particular place and time. Particularly relevant to Martinson is that dialects not only denote location but also class (Bourdieu, 1991). The standard form of a language, in the case of Britain ‘received pronunciation’ (RP) or ‘Queen’s English’, is that of ‘power and prestige’ (Crystal, 2005, 6), whilst dialect is commonly seen as ‘a substandard, low status, often rustic form of language, generally associated with the peasantry, the working class, or other groups lacking in prestige’ (Chambers and Trudgill, 1998, 3). Accents and dialects are still now subject to judgements on their social status (Haslett, 1990; Bourdieu, 1991; Giles and Powesland, 1975), but during the period when Martinson was writing, this tendency was even more pronounced. Spelling, style and grammar all form part of our

cultural capital – something Martinson was well aware of and had a conflicted attitude towards. This corresponds with Labov's observation that 'Individuals who had the highest frequency of non-standard usage in their own speech were most sensitive to use of those features by others' (Labov, cited in Haslett, 1990, 331). There are, however, also positives to dialect. In studies, speakers with regional accents have been rated higher than RP speakers in terms of 'personal integrity and social attractiveness' (Montgomery, 2008). Martinson utilises this effect in her creation of the speech pattern of Madam Andersson.

Use of dialect in translation

Due to its social significance, as referred to above, it is difficult to justify discarding dialect when translating a work. However, there are several arguments for this course of action, and these have prevailed. It is simply not possible to reproduce a particular dialect in another language, so it is not worth attempting, according to Landers. As Halliday (1990, 169) points out, 'We cannot translate different dialects: we can only mimic dialect variation.' To simply transpose one language's dialect for another language's does not work if one is attempting accuracy – the culture, geography and language connotations will always be too specific. Some countries, such as Iceland, simply do not have significant regional accents or dialects, which presents problems when characterisation is strongly based upon this feature (Ingo, 2007, 98). B. J. Epstein also argues that, in particular, 'translating socioeconomically', unless the countries are very similar, 'can create difficulties' (Epstein, 2012, 204).

As a consequence of these issues, there is a tendency amongst translators either to completely delete references to dialect or to 'replace them with markers of colloquial language' (Englund Dimitrova, cited in Epstein, 2012, 197), which may not reflect the inferences of the original language (Epstein, 2012, 197). Therefore, the language in translated works tends to be 'more normative than original works' (Englund Dimitrova, cited in Epstein, 2012) – another manifestation of the inherent violence in translation (Venuti, 1999). An additional problem

with translating dialect is that even if an equivalent dialect is available, ‘dialects normally do not have a codified, accepted way of being written, and accepted “dialect orthography”’ (Englund Dimitrova, 204, 123). Nor is it assured that the translator would be on familiar terms with the dialect that is most appropriate.

The choice made then is often not to translate dialect. When he was deciding how to translate the dialect-rich poetry of Belli, Burgess wrote:

The only answer was compromise [...] I had to translate Belli into the English of London – or the BBC or Oxford and Cambridge and Buckingham Palace – but hope that the reader might try to audialize the phonemes and rhythms into whatever town or rural dialect he knew best, if he knew one at all. But the situation is false. (Burgess, 2017)

This has also been the decision here. The combination of the problems outlined above determined the decision not to attempt translation of Madam Andersson’s dialect. A particular issue was the amount of time needed in order to learn a dialect that might be considered somewhat equivalent to that of Martinson’s character, in order to use it in the translation. This was considered prohibitive. It is hoped instead that the context and subject matter of the columns, in combination with the attempt to replicate Martinson’s and Madam Andersson’s voices in other ways, such as by the retention of unusual grammar, will be enough to provide sufficient class and character connotations that would otherwise have been augmented by the use of dialect.

The next chapter discusses the concept of literary journalism and provides a review of relevant literature within the field, as well as an overview of the study of Moa Martinson’s work. In addition, it investigates a crossover between literary journalism and the oral tradition. The latter section provides the foundation for the discussion in the first findings-

based chapter (Chapter 4) and the exploration of Martinson's voice in her writing and her incorporation of orality within it.

Chapter 3: Literature review: Oral traditions, Literary Journalism, and Martinson's Recovery

Literary journalism is an expanding and contested field of study. This chapter is necessarily extensive in order to cover five primary areas. The first of these explores the sphere of Martinson scholarship and the place of this thesis within it. When this is concluded the chapter moves on to the subject of literary journalism. The borders of the topics overlap within this and so do not appear in orderly succession, but the sequence is roughly as follows. Firstly, the origins and many forms of literary journalism are briefly reviewed. Secondly, Hartsock is identified as a key theorist and his definition of literary journalism explored. This discussion also serves as a structure for the examination of key concepts within studies of literary journalism, particularly drawing on the work of, not only Hartsock, but also Greenberg, and Booth, that illuminate Martinson's writing and approach. Existing critical debates within the field will be outlined in order to establish in subsequent chapters how Martinson's work contributes to these conversations regarding the form, in particular discussions of voice. Thirdly, it situates Martinson as a historical, Swedish, working-class, female and non-professional journalist within the discipline. Fourthly, this chapter establishes a definition of literary journalism for the thesis and explores the influence of the oral tradition within this.

Martinson scholarship: critical responses to her work

This thesis is the first to study Martinson's journalism as a body of work in its own right. As is often the case with journalism, at the time of writing and for many decades afterwards, Martinson's articles were considered ephemeral and were not the subject of any critical appraisal. It was not until Witt-Brattström used them in 1989 to explore Martinson's development as a novelist that there was any awareness of this side of Martinson's work. Witt-Brattström's work on Martinson will be surveyed further below, but to establish the

context of how Martinson as a writer has been judged and also became the subject of academic study, it is first useful to look at how her novels were received.

Martinson's novels were famously undervalued by literary critics during and after her lifetime. Initially, her work inspired anger in those who could not imagine that the poverty she described existed and who believed that women's lives (in particular their sexuality) should not be discussed in such realistic detail. Over the decades, the works of her male colleagues in the proletarian school were reprinted in anthologies; two of these colleagues, one of whom was her ex-husband, Harry, shared the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1974. Any literary merit that Martinson's work might be seen to possess was attributed to Harry's influence (Thorgren, 2011, 278). This is ironic because, as has recently been established through the study of the couple's manuscripts, the influence was not only reciprocal but Martinson also provided more editorial support for Harry than he did for her (Witt-Brattström, 2016).

Martinson's status as a writer has also been reflected in the space provided for her in histories of Swedish literature.¹⁴ As a bestselling author, as well as the only woman of the proletarian school, she could not be excluded from studies. However, the reference to her was often a token one and emphasis was placed, to a far greater extent than in relation to her male colleagues, on her biography. This is illustrated by Gunnar Brandell's history of Swedish literature, which in 1967 dealt with Martinson and her work in half a page. Those closest to her in literary theme, Ivar Lo-Johansson and Jan Fridegård, received the more measured consideration of four and three and a half pages, respectively; Harry achieved 11 pages (Brandell, 1967). Thirty-two years later, the situation was unchanged: *A History of Swedish Literature* (1989) granted Martinson 11 lines, whilst Harry received four and a half pages (Forsås Scott, 1997, 132).

¹⁴ Anna Williams provides a detailed analysis of this and of the way Martinson's writing was perceived (gendered) in Williams, A. (1997) *Stjärnor utan stjärnbilder*. Stockholm: Gidlund. See also, Witt-Brattström, Ebba (1988) *Moa Martinson – Skrift och drift i trettioalet*. Göteborg: Norstedts.

Literary critical praise was rare for Martinson, as even those who were well disposed towards her books did so from a stance that infantilised their author and did not credit her work with being serious literature. Knut Jaensson from the politically radical cultural group Verdandi appeared to perceive Martinson as some form of *idiot savant*: ‘Moa Martinson is one of the most typical examples of what is called “a natural”. She writes as it comes, apparently without a plan or preliminary study’, he wrote in Verdandi’s publication on modern writers in 1941 (46). With such a ‘minimal degree of artistic calculation’, Martinson was, in his eyes, a proletarian writer in their purest form.¹⁵

Martinson’s ‘naturalness’ was a running theme amongst critics and academics. Two and a half decades later, Brandell, in the brief space that he dealt with her, also perceived Martinson’s novels as ‘artless and often chaotic’ (Brandell, 1967, 225). Martinson’s work became conflated with her person; when her admirer Jaensson (1941, 46) wrote ‘She is temperamental, bold and uninhibited’, he drew no distinction between the two. This narrative has been long-lived. In 1994, the textbook for the national course on Swedish literature for college students, 30 years after her death, emphasised Martinson’s ‘flowing narrative zest and hot temperament’ (Jansson and Levander, 1994, 398). In 2002, Sweden’s Radio, the equivalent of the BBC, continued the decades-long tradition of treating Martinson as an interesting ‘character’, as opposed to a respected author. A short clip of Martinson singing was described with the words ‘The song is like Moa: it is simple and romantic, and also a tad brash and uppity at the same time’ (Sveriges Radio, 2002).

Martinson was a ‘natural storyteller’ but was not credited with technical ability. Her novels were said to contain a ‘special charm’ and ‘small details that create a sense of cosiness in the

¹⁵Maya Angelou has suffered from the same misapprehension. ‘I try to pull the language in to such a sharpness that it jumps off the page. It must look easy, but it takes me forever to get it to look so easy. Of course, there are those critics – New York critics as a rule – who say, Well, Maya Angelou has a new book out and of course it’s good but then she’s a natural writer. Those are the ones I want to grab by the throat and wrestle to the floor because it takes me forever to get it to sing. I work at the language’ (Angelou, cited in Greenberg, 2018, 39).

midst of squalor' (Witt-Brattström, 1989, 107). She was the 'happy poetess of misery' and 'the patch of colour in 1930s realism' (Thorgren, 2011, 278). This belittlement is not an uncommon response to female writers. Henry James dismissed Jane Austen as an 'instinctive and charming' person whose work emerged from 'part of her unconsciousness' (James, cited in Booth, 1983, 242–243). Witt-Brattström (1989, 107) points out that, as for many female writers, Martinson's work is seen to be biologically determined. Descriptions of her work by critics are therefore often 'characterised by expressions relating to the reproductive sphere; [...] "primeval teat", "a pregnant woman's meaty luxuriant fantasy", "womb mentality"' (ibid., 111).¹⁶ Her books are 'birthed' or 'woven together' (ibid.). She was, as so many female writers are, subject to the sexual analogy noted by Mary Ellman, where 'criticism embarks, at its happiest upon an intellectual measuring of bust and hips' (Ellman, 1979, 29).¹⁷ Martinson's novels were confused with her person to such an extent that it was impossible to regard either dispassionately.

A partial re-evaluation of Martinson's work

Second-wave feminism and the rise of 'protest literature' (1965–1975) in Sweden brought about a reassessment of Martinson's work, albeit solely of her novels and within limited boundaries. The reportage genre emphasised working-class, autobiographical narratives, and book groups sprang up to discuss feminist and socialist literature. Feminist literary historian Maria Bergom-Larsson, writing in 1976, sought to rescue Martinson from her detractors, yet she also imposed limitations on her success. She did this by placing Martinson's novels primarily within women's oral traditions (thereby explaining away any stylistic issues) and judged them of value because they provided a record of women's hidden history. This was

¹⁶ See also Witt-Brattström, E. (2010) Livets egen runsten - kvinnokroppen som skrift. In: Å. Arpling and A. Nordenstam (eds.) *Genusvetenskapliga litteraturanalyser*: Studentlitteratur, 355–373.

¹⁷ Martinson's contemporary, the 1940s modernist writer Rut Hillarp, was reviewed in a similar way (Bränström Öhman, 1998).

also Witt-Brattström's stance at the time (1981, 47), as she later admitted in an essay on the subject (2010, 361).

Despite their rejection of the male critics' gaze, these scholars still conflated Martinson's life with her work and gave her little agency. Bergom-Larsson claimed that 'reading Moa Martinson is like listening to an older sister' (Bergom-Larsson, 1976, 72). The new feminists familiarly referred to their subject as 'Moa' – some still do (Sveriges Radio, 2002; Strandberg, 2013, 56). She was there to be rescued, a 'primordial, oppressed and almost illiterate proletarian mother' (Witt-Brattström, 2010, 363). Martinson was considered 'a great artist not only despite her long hard work and lonely heavy responsibility for a large family, but also because of it' (Munckhammar, 1986). Bergom-Larsson (1991) does, however, provide interesting observations on the influence of orality within Martinson's fiction – comments that may also be applied to her journalism – as does Eva Adolfsson (1991, 2003).

The focus on Martinson's life

The new feminists' focus on Martinson's value as a chronicler of women's history was not completely new. She had previously been given credit for her documentation of working-class lives: 'Almost nowhere in the many depictions of the Swedish proletariat from the 1930s do we get such an insight into living conditions and daily life as we do in this novel [*My Mother Gets Married*]' (Jaensson, 1941, 48). This, combined with the strong autobiographical elements in Martinson's novels and the tendency to equate female writers' lives with their work, as well as her particularly dramatic life, has meant that there has been an unusual focus on the facts of Martinson's biography within literary criticism. Even in later years, her biography has often literally (in the number of lines or pages devoted to it) dominated the critical commentary on her work (e.g. Furuland and Munkhammar, 1997; Furuland and Svedjedal, 2006, 200–204). Jansson and Levander argue that it was Martinson's own actions, through her cultivation of a public persona, that meant she 'risked overshadowing' her own

work (Jansson and Levander, 1994, 398) – a somewhat large burden perhaps to place on an author who died in 1964. A contributing reason for the focus on Martinson's personal life may instead have to do with class and gender in relation to literary journalism and to a greater extent than previously described.

A new perspective on Martinson's novels and recognition of her journalism

The feminist, and often Marxist, Swedish literary historians of the 1970s and early 1980s did not question Martinson's place in the autodidacts' school of writing – as a chronicler of working-class life – and their analyses usually focused on Martinson's depictions of motherhood, poverty and women's suffering. This was challenged in 1988 with the publication of Witt-Brattström's thesis. Taking a French psycholinguistic approach, Witt-Brattström provides a complete re-evaluation of Martinson's work and places her within the pantheon of 1930s Swedish modernists. She establishes that Martinson had a deeply conscious literary skill and refinement and that her accomplished depictions of complex female characters and perspectives challenged the male hegemony within proletarian modernist fiction. The majority of her study is focused on Martinson's novels and their reception. However, Witt-Brattström also traces and analyses the emergence and development of the novelist through a selection of Martinson's early journalism. She identifies five personas created by Martinson during this period of her journalism, which ultimately coalesced into the authorial voice of the novels (Witt-Brattström, 1988, 35–42). Witt-Brattström also notes embryonic book characters that first appeared in Martinson's short pieces of fiction published in newspapers.

In subsequent work on Martinson, Witt-Brattström (2010) has continued to re-analyse her own attitude towards Martinson, as well as the attitudes of the literary world towards the author. In addition, together with Kerstin Engman, she jointly edited a collection of Martinson's articles, letters and short stories (Engman and Martinson, 1990). The book

contains 12 non-fiction articles but does not provide an analysis of these. In her biography of Martinson, Engman (1990) also made use of Martinson's journalism to fill in missing autobiographical details. She does not conduct a literary analysis of the journalism.

Work on Martinson outside Sweden

Work on Martinson published in English is restricted to Margaret S. Lacy's afterword – similar to Swedish feminist perspectives on Martinson during the same period – in her translation of *Women and Apple Trees* (1987); a translation of an article by Witt-Brattström (2012); Helena Forsås Scott's overview of Martinson's life and novels in *Swedish Women's Writing 1850-1995*; and three chapters in anthologies on literary journalism by the author of this thesis (Hoyles, 2012; 2019; 2021 (forthcoming)). In 2015, Lise Froger Olsson published her thesis on the works of four Swedish women: Maria Sandel, Martinson, Key and Wägner, on the themes of the woman and her body, the woman and syndicalism, the woman and alcoholism, and the actions of women in the field of pacifism. This exists only in French. This thesis therefore both recovers Martinson's articles within a Swedish context and introduces them to an English-speaking readership, as well as to literary journalism for the first time (with the exception of Hoyles). The rest of the chapter will now focus on a discussion of literary journalism

Definitions of literary journalism

There are no universally accepted, all-encompassing definitions of literary journalism beyond very broad ones relating to its narrative structure, such as that of 'journalism that would read like a novel' or 'short story' (Wolfe, 1972), and even these have been questioned (Hartsock, 2016). According to John S. Bak (2011, 17), there can currently be no single definition, and Hartsock (2016, 4) is not confident that there ever will be. This is because 'literary journalism can have different meanings to different people and different meanings in different parts of the world' (ibid.). A relatively new area for academic study, literary journalism is perpetually

evolving and, as one of its main proponents, Norman Sims, suggests, it ‘resists narrow definitions’ (Sims, 1995, 9).¹⁸ This does not, however, prevent frequent attempts at classification.¹⁹

Whilst Hartsock (2000) traces the roots of literary journalism back to Plato, for a long time, it was the New Journalism of the 1960s and 1970s that prepared the standard for the current academic field of study.²⁰ Wolfe’s codification of the term and his manifesto published in the anthology *The New Journalism* (Johnson and Wolfe, 1990) in 1973 proved highly influential. His contention that the novel was dead and that literary excellence was now to be found within journalism and, in particular, New Journalism, together with criteria for what constituted New Journalism, meant that he set the bar for subsequent practitioners and scholars. For Wolfe, New Journalism entailed recreating scenes for the reader that the journalist had experienced first-hand, the use of dialogue to show the journalist’s accuracy and to establish characters, the employment of the third person (treating subjects as characters in a novel) and the utilisation of status details to establish character. These are all aspects that can be found in Martinson’s work but at the time were exemplified by the journalists featured in Wolfe and E.W. Johnson’s (1990) anthology, such as Hunter S. Thompson and Truman Capote. These two writers have remained amongst the most ubiquitous examples in studies of literary journalism, even if Capote has come to be questioned.

Sims’ expansion and revision of Wolfe’s criteria in his own anthologies, incorporating New Journalism into literary journalism (Sims, 1984, 1995), have held benchmark status for

¹⁸ For a succinct overview of current literary journalism studies, see Roberts, N. L. (2018) Literary Journalism Past and Future: A Journey of Many Miles in Intriguing Directions. *Literary Journalism Studies*, 10(2) 59–67. Also Maguire, M. (2015) Literary Journalism: Journalism Aspiring to be Literature. In: D. Abrahamson and M. R. Prior-Miller (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Magazine Research*. Abingdon: Routledge, 362–374.

¹⁹ For more-recent debates, see Lemann, N. (2015) The Journalism in Literary Journalism: Keynote Address, 2015. *Literary Journalism Studies*, 7(2), 50–59 and Josh Roiland’s response in the same issue, 60–89.

²⁰ See also Applegate, E. (1996) *Literary Journalism: A Biographical Dictionary of Writers and Editors*. London: Greenwood Press.

several decades. According to Sims (1984, 2), literary journalism ‘draws on immersion, voice, accuracy, and symbolism as essential forces’. A decade later, he added that ‘Writers I’ve spoken to more recently have wanted to add to the list a personal involvement with their materials and an artistic creativity not often associated with nonfiction’ (Sims, 1995, 9). Despite, or perhaps because of, this personal involvement, objectivity and disengagement are also seen to be key (Kramer, 1995).

The definitions above well encapsulate the work these editors included in their anthologies and are pertinent to the styles of the most frequently cited literary journalists. These are those whom Roberts (2012, 82) calls ‘the usual suspects’, such as Wolfe, Capote and Didion. However, they also limit the range of literary journalism. Immersion, disengagement and objectivity all presuppose that the writer is coming to a situation as an outsider and is a professional journalist. Amy Mattson Lauters (2007, 3), in fact, sees the latter as essential, but none of this is true of Martinson’s writing, nor does it necessarily apply to activist literary journalists.

Journalists themselves do not always embrace the label of literary journalist. Although some, such as Talese, do identify as such – or use a similar phrase, for example, writer of ‘the literature of reality’ (Talese, 1996, 4) – at times it appears that academics wish to assert boundaries that journalists themselves do not feel exist. When asked what she preferred her writing be called, Barbara Ehrenreich stated ‘I have no idea. [...] it’s not something I’ve really thought about. [...] I don’t actually think in those terms’ (Ehrenreich, cited in Dow and Flis, 2015, 149–150). Ron Rosenbaum is actively uncomfortable with the epithet: ‘It sounds self-consciously highfalutin’ (Rosenbaum, cited in Boynton, 2005, 339).²¹

It is perhaps natural that writers do not suffer from a necessity to strictly define what they do.

Unlike the inverted pyramid of news reporting, there is no template to follow with literary

²¹ For an Australian practitioner’s reaction to the definition of literary journalism, read Joseph, S. (2015) Preferring “Dirty” to “Literary” Journalism: In Australia, Margaret Simons Challenges the Jargon While Producing the Texts. *Literary Journalism Studies*, 7(1), 100–117.

journalism. The need felt by researchers to set tight perimeters may come from a sense of marginality in scholarship, something Hartsock puts down precisely to literary journalism being ‘so difficult to define, crossing as it does the fuzzy gray area both between fact and fiction’ (Hartsock, 2000). It is also something that is particular to North American scholars, who often appear to favour a strict delineation, close to that of New Journalism. Academics outside North America frequently have a far more ‘elastic’ (Hartsock, 2011, 23) definition, and it is acknowledged by US scholars that ‘Comparisons using American standards or definitions alone limit our perspective on how nations have acquired literary journalism and how their environments have shaped its production and reception over the course of time’ (Bak, 2011, 10). Sims agrees, adding that we should not assume that ‘all literary journalism descended from the New Journalism of the sixties’ (Sims, 2009, 10). Where Bak, Sims and, in earlier works, Hartsock speak frequently of ‘international’ literary journalism in this context, scholars outside the US freely draw from a heterogeneous base whilst labelling it simply ‘literary journalism’.

Hartsock’s narra-descriptive journalism

Hartsock’s work *Literary Journalism and the Aesthetics of Experience* (2016) finds a middle, and at times, wholly new ground in this discussion. He neither fully accepts nor rejects the stricter, primarily North American, definitions influenced by New Journalism or the, at times, all-embracing European tradition. Unlike some, Hartsock does not provide a detailed checklist of criteria for what constitutes literary journalism. He does, however, disagree with the most commonly used shorthand for literary journalism, that of reading ‘like a novel’ or ‘short story’ (Wolfe, 1972). This definition, he argues, is based on the erroneous assumption that the tropes we label literary are solely associated with fiction, when in fact such methods have been used in ‘narrative documentary forms’ since Ancient Greece. He also discounts the novel/short story description on the basis of quality: ‘few would dispute that there are

examples of journalistic narrative out there that are the equivalent of the potboilers and bodice rippers we find in conventional fiction, yet they aspire to read like a novel or short story' (Hartsock, 2016, 6). As there can be no one definition of literary journalism, Hartsock asserts (2016, 4), he posits a 'supra-narrative', which he labels 'narra-descriptive journalism'. This is, unsurprisingly, distinguished by its narrative and descriptive components, but also by its emphasis on a specific time and space or, as Wolfe says, its 'scene by scene construction'. Another equally valid term, Hartsock argues, would therefore be 'chronotopic journalism' (Hartsock, 2016, 149).

Within Hartsock's supra-narrative, there are no absolutes. All journalism is characterised by what it emphasises, such as narrative and description. It 'works on a spectrum or continuum that, if taken to the extremes, results in either an increasingly alienated objectified world on the one hand or, on the other, a solipsistic subjectivity in the most personal of memoirs' (Hartsock, 2016, 3). He is not alone in this fluidity; other scholars also point out that all their criteria for literary journalism will not be met in a single article (Harrington, 1997, xxii).

Objectivity versus subjectivity?

We will return to Hartsock's definition shortly, but the above opens up an issue that emerges whenever literary journalism is discussed: the perceived binaries of objectivity and subjectivity. As a genre, literary journalism is both praised and pilloried for being 'subjective'. Inferred in this is a comparison with the idealised (or not) 'objectivity' of conventional news reporting. There is also, often the negative assumption that subjectivity is analogous with emotion and this, in turn, with sensationalism (Greenberg, 2018, 208). As will be explored below, neither 'subjectivity' nor 'objectivity' has a single, uncomplicated meaning, nor are they mutually exclusive.

In this thesis, however, whenever Martinson's writing is compared to journalism that is labelled 'conventional' or 'objective', what is meant is the almost Platonic ideal of news

journalism. This is journalism that practises the ‘rhetorical strategy’ of objectivity through ‘factuality, fairness, non-bias, independence, non-interpretation, neutrality and detachment’ (Peters, 2011, 301). This approach finds its personification in the paragraph summary lead and inverted pyramid article structure. It is the 20th-century tradition of perceiving journalism almost as a science, endeavouring to follow the right formula in order to be above reproach (Schudson, 1978, 7; Ward, 2015, 219).

There are plenty of good reasons why reporting developed in this way. Of course, we want journalism that can be held to account, that is transparent and where the writer is incontrovertibly not in the pay of commercial interests. We need the briefer, solely expository form – it would be tiresome if every news report or feature were obliged to contain local colour and personal involvement. Linton complains that, all too often, long-form texts fall flat because the journalist has over-ambitiously, ‘in the spirit of Tom Wolfe’, added scenes, narrative and description to what is in actuality something rather dull and not served by endless extraneous detail (Linton, 2019, 126). We cannot engage with everything and sometimes basic facts are all we need.

The problem arises when the method becomes the end. Formulaic, unreflective ‘objectivity’ where the journalist appears to take all information at face value becomes ‘false objectivity’ and allows the imposition of untruths upon the readership (Davis, 1996, 175; Peters, 2011, 299). They too often ignore the possibility that objectivity may be compatible with impure facts and non-absolute standards’ (Ward, 2015, 111). At times, objectivity can also become an excuse for moral disengagement (Weber, 1980, 25). As Ward argues many people ‘still incorrectly assume objectivity entails the unrealistic norms of neutrality, severe detachment, and “just the facts”’ (ibid.).

This is partly due to a misunderstanding about what objectivity is. As Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel point out: ‘Being impartial or neutral is not a core principle of journalism’ (Kovach

and Rosenstiel, 2007). It is not the journalist (who must constantly make judgements in relation to the material) but the methods that are objective.

When the concept of objectivity originally evolved, it did not imply that journalists were free of bias. It called, rather, for a consistent method of testing information – a transparent approach to evidence – precisely so that personal and cultural biases would not undermine the accuracy of the work. [...] Seeking out multiple witnesses, disclosing as much as possible about sources, or asking various sides for comment, all signal such standards. (ibid.)

When this definition is used then literary journalism may also be objective, and this is of course partly what is meant by Kramer, Sims and others in relation to professional literary journalism. There are, however, alternate ways of reflecting on objectivity and subjectivity, which go beyond news journalism and encompass fiction, which will be discussed further below.

The objective correlative

Following the First World War, in a similar manner to conventional news journalism, the movement of New Criticism also strove for a form of scientific, neutral objectivity within writing, but in this case within poetry and fiction. The persona of the author was to be expunged and their role was to be one of impersonal neutrality. The writer wouldn't tell the reader what to think or feel but would instead find an objective correlative:

in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked. (Eliot, 1921, para 7)

Since deliberate communication between the writer and the reader would be rhetoric, and not art, the reader must instead be shown and not told what to think. In Eliot's view, the text itself was enough, even if this meant that very few readers would be able to understand its merit.

There are of course limitations to this model. It presumes that there is a particular formula for evoking a specific emotion when, as Booth points out, literature is not a natural science that will always produce the same results. It is instead reliant on many things, including current cultural norms. The effect, for example, on a reader, of a female character lighting a cigarette in a novel in 1860 will not be the same as in 1960 (Booth, 1983, 113), or indeed in 2020. How we relate to the present is also highly reliant on our past personal experiences.

There is also no way of expunging the author from their own work. Booth (1983) argues against the existence of 'objectivity' (in the sense of neutrality) within fiction, which can also be applied to journalism. If an author is truly writing for themselves without paying attention to the effect they are producing on their readership, they may purify their work to meaninglessness. The objectivity in the objective correlative lies in being relatable to others; 'only if the details are made to tell, only if they are weighted with a significance for the lives shown, will they be tolerable' (ibid., 114). Every literary fact, however bland, he contends, is 'highly charged by the meanings of the author, whatever his pretensions to objectivity' (ibid., 112). Booth (1983) contends that all narrative is rhetoric, whether the author intends it or not, and there is no truly neutral work. Because no person is truly nonaligned to all values, the mindset of the author is always present in their writing and the question is only how this will be revealed and how the reader will interpret it.

Creating a voice in non-fiction: subjectivity and immersion

In stark contrast to conventional news journalism, within literary journalism the subjective 'voice' is, seen as integral. The conscious use of an 'I', the deliberate presence of the author in literary journalism is a key difference between it and news journalism. In the latter, the 'I'

is instead sublimated as a requirement for perceived objectivity – that of ‘third-person narration, with its illusion of omniscience’ (Klein, 2005, 60) thereby creating a distance between author and reader. In literary journalism, even when the presence of the writer is implicit, as with the use of the third-person objective voice, it is not denied.

Within literary journalism the first-person narrator provides authority (Kramer, 1995, 29) and this is primarily earned through immersion. This is key to the role of the literary journalist and for Sims, it, in its simplest form, ‘means time spent on the job’ (Sims, 1984, 9). Literary journalists can spend months, or even years, on a project in order to gain an insight into the private world of their subjects and to seek ‘deep truths about human behavior’ (Pauly, 2014, 590). The submersion is vital, since ‘the dramatic details yield only to persistent, competent, sympathetic reporters’ (Sims, 1984, 2). It is in this ‘journalism of everyday life’ (Sims, 1984, 11) that the journalist gains the knowledge to enable them to portray the ‘scenes, extensive dialogue, status life and emotional life’ (Wolfe, cited in Walters, 2017) of the genre. Kramer emphasises the importance of accuracy, achieved through immersion, in his own work: ‘I don’t want to lose authority. I don’t want to get a single detail wrong’ (cited in Sims, 1984, 16). The knowledge and authority a journalist acquires from such work may be invaluable, but it is also costly, in that few publications can afford to pay for such long-term projects. For Martinson the situation was different; she exemplifies a distinct form of immersion, that of personal experience. Martinson’s primary subject area was a topic on which she was already a specialist: the lives of herself and peers. For her, immersion in her own community went beyond proving expertise as a journalist: it meant demonstrating authority over her own life. It enabled a confidence in her, both as a writer and as political activist, and she used it as a rhetorical tool in her work. Through this mode of immersion Martinson was able to easily utilise what she might otherwise, as literary journalist had to take great pains to achieve (Kramer, 1995). However, it also put her at a disadvantage in relation to, what Kramer argues

is vital, that of simultaneous disengagement from the subject matter, something she did not always achieve. This may have been exacerbated by Martinson's affinity with the oral tradition. Within the tradition the only 'distancing' is through formulaic phrases: 'the individual's reaction is not expressed as simply individual or "subjective" but rather as encased in the communal reaction, the communal "soul"' (Ong, 1993, 45–46). The teller is so immersed in the story that they become part of it.

Irrespective of the oral tradition Martinson is not alone in her lack of distance and there is a danger in believing that the truth now lies solely in acknowledging our subjectivity. Indeed, Greenberg argues that: 'we need the new diagnosis of alienated subjectivity to describe circumstances when the narrator fails to engage with an objectified self' (Greenberg, 2018, 206). She takes as an example blogs, and other forms of social media, as well as the tabloid press, where the demand for authenticity has become a genre convention 'and can feel just as false as any other' (ibid., 208). The necessity to have a point of view may lead to the fabrication of an opinion, one that is no truer than a feigned objectivity (ibid., 207).

Greenberg contends that if one accepts that there can be no purely neutral work, there is still a form of objectivity of an author stepping 'backwards from a specific, acknowledged point of subjectivity in order to see the bigger picture' (Greenberg, 2018, 206). When writing her memoir *Fierce Attachments* (1988), about her complex and fraught relationship with her mother, Gornick deemed her own habitual voice unsatisfactory: 'it whined, it grated, it accused; above all, it accused' (Gornick, 2002, 21). It was not until she managed to 'pull back' from the situations she was describing, changed her customary syntax and created 'a narrator who was me and not me at the same time' (ibid., 22) that she was successful. Gornick (2002) maintains that in non-fiction, a writer, limited by the narrative of real life, must instead create a dynamic in their work by using themselves. To do this well, the author must go beyond a confessional to conduct a self-investigation: 'To see one's own part in the situation—

that is, one's own frightened or cowardly or self-deceived part—is to create the dynamic' (ibid., 35–36). In order to do this, the writer must 'know who they are at the moment of writing' and know they are there on the page to make a particular point (ibid., 30).

There will be occasions when the writer may not be aware of who this person is, or they may know but will not be in a position to envisage the reader's perspective adequately, as Louise Doughty points out.

Sometimes you can tell when someone has written down the thoughts in their head, unmediated, on the page [...it] can be seen in the sentence word order. Or they've written a piece of work that's rambling [...] the person who's written it knows full well what's going on, but the reader is not going to have any idea [...] Spotting that is all about going back over the work and looking at it as a reader, and not as the person who wrote in the first place. (Doughty, cited in Greenberg, 2015, 107-8)

For Martinson, this appears to be an issue, especially in her early writing, which is, at times, confused and contradictory – giving the, probably truthful, impression that she is writing down the thoughts as they come. Yet, although there were complaints about her inconsistencies to the extent that she was viewed as incomprehensible, her readers also embraced this aspect of her work. One of the reasons Ottar picked out to praise Martinson was that her writing was 'unaffected' and 'fresh'. Martinson began and continued as someone who was known to 'speak her mind', apparently without any mediation. This, together with the orality of her writing, meant that Martinson's authenticity was brought to the fore. Just as blog writers today are seen 'to be impressionistic, telegraphic, raw, honest, individualistic, highly opinionated and passionate' (Lasica, cited in Greenberg, 2018, 205), and are prized for these reasons, so too was Martinson. There are surprising similarities between bloggers of today and Martinson. Several of the newspapers she wrote for were daily and the postal service was more frequent than it is today, consequently a reply to an article could be

published in the next day's edition. Martinson utilised this by taking part in fiery debates, but also at times at the expense of a more nuanced role, of 'stepping back' and gathering her thoughts and formulating a stance that was not simply reactionary.

The alienated objectivity of conventional newspaper reporting

This section now returns to the opposite end of the spectrum, the issues surrounding that of taking a too detached view in 'objective' news journalism. For irrespective of the quality of the objectivity, even the best journalism that adheres to a formulaic structure has inherent drawbacks. For Walter Benjamin the way that journalistic information is presented, that is to say: the brevity, the style, the clarity, the lack of connection between news items, and the page layout (Benjamin, 2003, 316), is part of a deliberate strategy of alienation. The purpose is 'to isolate events from the realm in which they could affect the experience of the reader' (ibid., 315-16) and in doing so the latter's imagination becomes paralysed (ibid., 316).

One of the reasons for this paralysis, elaborates Hartsock, is that the summary form in an article is constative. The first paragraph of a news story will typically tell us all the basic facts about an event, including its conclusion, the narrative is over as soon as it has begun. As this 'spoiler' occurs so early on, there is nowhere for our imagination to take hold, no process to follow, and we consequently fail to engage with the story. The narrative is closed and we have not participated in its process. This aspect is further increased by the use of 'myths' within conventional journalism. Time and space are short, there is no room for ambiguity, and therefore journalists resort to existing frameworks of 'good' and 'evil'. These reward the 'normal' and punish that which is 'different' by either making it a figure of fun or marking it out as bad (Bird and Dardenne, 1988).

We expect journalism to be clear, transparent and unequivocal, and the problem is that life is not at all like this, as Martinson herself contended (Martinson, 1951b). She felt writing should reflect the complexities of life. To not acknowledge these creates a false sense of omniscience

and a hegemony of ‘common sense’, which can go against our best interests. We can become too attached to a particular story and resist information that does not fit, creating a false view of the world (Greenberg, 2018, 69; Linton, 2019, 216-17). Hartsock therefore maintains that narrative literary journalism has more critical integrity than conventionally ‘objective’ journalism because it acknowledges its limitations and denies spurious omniscience (Hartsock, 2016, 23).

The power of narrative

Narrative is one of the defining features of literary journalism (Greenberg, 2014, 517) and it also appears to be the form to which we as humans are naturally more suited. Studies have shown that we accept and comprehend facts and ideas better if we encounter them in the shape of a narrative (Hsu, 2008; Graesser et al., 2002) and are simultaneously more easily persuaded by them in this mode (Slater, 2002). In the USA, narrative writing style throughout newspapers is perceived as more accessible by readers (Hartsock, 2016, 20).

The power of narrative may lie in the fact that it corresponds more closely to everyday experiences and oral discourse than other genres, or because it conjures up more-vivid images (Graesser et al., 2002). Barbara Hardy argues that narrative is a ‘primary act of mind’:

For we dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative. In order really to live, we make up stories about ourselves and others, about the personal as well as the social past and future. (Hardy, 1968, 5)

In other words, narrative is far from being an artificial construct, but is instead built into the very fabric of our beings (ibid.).

The importance of narrative is recognised outside of literary journalism. The American Society of News Editors (ASNE) contends that in order to stem the drop in circulation numbers suffered by newspapers, the media need to engage readers better. This ‘includes such

things as having media spark your emotions, reflect your beliefs and values, or be surprising’ (ASNE, cited in Hartsock, 2016, 20). Hartsock points out that ‘Sparkling emotions, of course, points to the inherent nature of a narra-descriptive journalism, namely, that it is a more subjective form that elicits sympathy’ (Hartsock, 2016, 20). Feature stories often already recognise the power of this, by beginning with a ‘nut graf’, a paragraph that puts the point of the article ‘in a nutshell’, explaining what the story is about and why we should care. Frequently this is in the form of an anecdote or descriptive passage. This acts as ‘rhetorical bait’ suggesting to the reader that the article will be driven by storytelling techniques, as opposed to the actuality, that of exposition (Hartsock, 2016, 13). It is not seldom that a nut graf is designed to appeal to our emotions and attract our empathy before ‘drier’ facts are delivered. For Harrington feature stories become ‘humanized’ by the inclusion of ‘examples and quotes from real people’ (Harrington, 1997, xxiii). For example, an article on the effects of climate change, may begin not with statistics, but with a description of the morning routine in the school of a community affected by rising sea levels (Sheppard, 2014). Gornick also argues for empathy in writing non-fiction, not because it is the right thing to do but because ‘an absence of sympathy shuts down the mind’ (Gornick, 2002, 35). Without empathetic understanding, we cannot engage in the subject, and the work is poorer and narrower. Others go further, early advocate of citizen journalism, Jay Rosen, argues that in order to do as the ASNE advises, journalists must, among other things, ‘be open about their own role and values’ and ‘address people as citizens, potential participants in public affairs, rather than victims or spectators’ (Rosen, 1999, 44) enabling them to actively deal with political problems rather than just reading about them. When interviewed in 1974, the feminist Gloria Steinem described her ideal newspaper of the future and saw a similar role for journalists as Rosen envisages. Her ideal journalism is subjective and engaged in dialogue with the

readership, rejecting, what she sees as the false objectivity of the inverted pyramid form. She would like it replaced with:

[...] some kind of human mind's work trying to make sense of all this stuff, and questioning what the President says and not just reporting, not just accepting the State Department news releases. But then, inside the paper I'd like to see more community emphasis with people, reporters who live in the community and cover that exclusively, and who are visible to the community, so they have to be responsible. You know, they're living there, right? So even if they do something really inaccurate or opinionated, they're going to be told about it. (Steinem, cited in Weber, 1974, 78)

Steinem's ideal is remarkably similar to Martinson's method of working, in particular when the latter wrote for her local newspaper. But even when local issues are not at stake it is precisely this: 'To get the public to participate is to better engage their subjectivities and elicit an empathetic response, which is central to what a narra-descriptive journalism attempts to do' argues Hartsock (2016, 23). How literary journalists have made practical use of this empathetic response is explored later in this chapter.

The aesthetics of experience

For Hartsock the empathy induced by literary journalism stems from its appeal to 'our shared sensate experiences' or, as he labels them, 'the aesthetics of experience' (Hartsock, 2016, 17). These provide common ground that we do not find in other areas. We may have differing ideas about what constitutes an abstract emotion, but we generally share an approximate evocation if we read an imaginative description of a physical sensation. It is this 'common sense appeal of the shared common senses' that may make a text accessible and readable 70 years from now (ibid., 146). Indeed, Martinson's work includes descriptions of the everyday that bring her reality to life 100 years on. Although at first appearing to be a very subjective form of writing, 'the aesthetics of experience' is in fact, argues Hartsock, a way of literary

journalism remaining objective in its subjectivity. In describing physical details, as close as it is possible to come to objective correlatives, the writer allows the reader to draw their own conclusions. These will always, however, remain open-ended, because we can never know every detail of real life, the picture will always remain inconclusive.

It is, Hartsock acknowledges, not a new idea, Wolfe (1990) makes a similar point with his emphasis on 'scene-by-scene construction'. For both it is the importance of the concrete, a real event in a specific time and place, that distinguishes literary journalism from both fiction and conventional news journalism. What is described in literary journalism is the uniqueness of reality and therefore cannot easily be dismissed. This is something Martinson instinctively recognises. In her writing she is at pains to point out the truth of events by claiming for them a specific time and place, such as 'At the central station hall last week a working boy sat and slept when a doorman and a policeman marched up, woke him and demanded to see a ticket' (1928c). She also provides a witness, herself as in this case, or a friend. This is important as she is claiming an injustice and wants us to know it truly happened.

In contrast, within the chronotope of conventional journalism, although time and space establish that a real event has occurred, they still serve to illustrate an abstract claim (Hartsock, 2016, 29) which consequently has no hold over our emotions. In comparison to literary journalism, Hartsock contends, fiction can, also, always be set aside in the knowledge that it is not describing true events. It can therefore only move us so far, in contrast, literary journalism forces us to revise our ideas when it clashes with our world view.

Hartsock is, of course, drawing the argument to its extreme. We can and do find ourselves deeply moved by fiction and not everyone will change their ideas simply because there is factual evidence against them. Arguably we find a text more compelling if we know that it is based on reality, but it needn't always be more than that. *The Grapes of Wrath* (Steinbeck, 1939), for instance, achieves its author's ambition of 'rip[ping] a reader's nerves to rags'

(Steinbeck, 2017), partly because we know that real people experienced many of the terrible hardships undergone by the Joads. In consequence the book caused a heated national debate when it was published; yet, it remains fiction. Similarly, in her semi-autobiographical novels Martinson emphasises the specificities of time and place in order to establish the veracity of her writing, despite fictionalising other aspects.

The ‘inconclusive present’

Conventional news journalism can also give a false sense of closure, the fire has been doused, the terrorist has been caught, the election won, when in reality there is rarely a conclusive ending to anything. All these events will continue to have repercussions for many people and we will never have a complete picture of the consequences. Unlike such journalism and also fiction, which works with allegory and so can provide resolution literary journalism, according to Hartsock, leaves the narrative open when it has to. Capote failed in this when he invented a meeting between two of his interviewees in order to provide a narratively satisfying conclusion for *In Cold Blood* (1966). It is this open-endedness, or ‘inconclusive present’, that for Hartsock is a defining feature of narrative literary journalism. He sees the latter as a form of the novel as articulated by Mikhail Bakhtin (Hartsock, 2016, 56). For Bakhtin, writing in the 1930s, the novel is a ‘young’ genre; because it is still developing, it can reflect the unfolding of reality in a way that old genres, such as the epic, cannot. The epic is static and closed off in a mythical past that never existed; there can be no new interpretations or personal understanding, whereas the novel (which Hartsock aligns with literary journalism) is free and flexible. There is ‘an indeterminacy, a certain semantic open-endedness, a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality (the open-ended present)’ (Bakhtin, 1981, 7) about the novel.

The novel, as Bakhtin (ibid.) perceives it, shares many traits with literary narrative journalism, and these contrast with the epic and with conventional news journalism, argues

Hartsock (2016). Both of the former use layers of literary language, and value dialogue, humour and irony. They question accepted norms of society and draw our attention to communal blind spots. Simultaneously, they intrigue us with the carnivalesque open-endedness of their narrative construction and character representation. The hero of a novel, or an individual in literary journalism, is someone who evolves, develops, learns from life and has positive and negative features; in contrast, the hero of an epic (or a conventional news story) is an archetype. They are simply 'heroic' through their actions and remain so throughout, unaltered by events (ibid., 10).

It is with the concept of the 'open-ended' or 'inconclusive present' that Hartsock draws a strict dividing line between different forms of journalism. Whilst always emphasising that works should be examined 'according to the emphasis or degree of their modalities' (ibid., 14) Hartsock nevertheless firmly rejects that reportage writing by journalists, such as Anna Politkovskaya, is literary journalism. The definition of reportage as 'situated between journalism and literature. It has in common with journalism its relation to actuality' (*Lettre Ulysses*) fits literary journalism very well and much reportage has been studied as such, especially outside the US, as will be discussed later in this chapter. Not all reportage can be considered literary journalism, however: there is some, for example, that includes very little narrative or description. Hartsock's issue with it goes further, encompassing work that others have viewed as literary journalism. He contends that because much reportage is political, it is often didactic and lacks open-endedness. He finds this fault in Politkovskaya, winner of the *Lettre Ulysses* Award 2003, the issue, he reasons, is a lack of ambiguity.

[S]he is fundamentally an investigative journalist engaged in digressive reflection, expository and argumentative by nature. We detect this in her unambiguous polemics, in which she makes no attempt to conceal at times her vituperative outrage, which she weaves through her text' (Hartsock, 2016, 93).

The same difference is to be found in the writing of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Hartsock maintains. Solzhenitsyn's narra-descriptive writing, he feels, is marred by the writer's polemic tone, such as in the description of the execution of six collective farmers: 'Even if Stalin had killed no others, I believe he deserved to be drawn and quartered just for the lives of those six Tsarskoye Selo peasants!' (Solzhenitsyn, cited in Hartsock, 2016, 120). There is no objective correlative here, no ambiguity, no inconclusive present, the reader is given no choice in what to think. Hartsock questions the 'literariness' of such closed work and argues that to ignore the difference between it and 'open-ended work', 'would be to suggest that all such works are qualitatively the same. Clearly they are not.' (Hartsock, 2016, 151). Therefore he excludes Solzhenitsyn and Politkovskaya's work from the category of literary journalism. Linton contends that such obvious signposting by the writer ruins the relationship with the reader: the latter is left feeling foolish, as though the author lacks confidence in their erudition (Linton, 2019, 86). Martinson's work suffers at times from this, she is at her least effective when she shoehorns political points into her prose and these parts of her writing are the poorest in quality. Yet, there may be passages in the same article that are beautifully written and embrace other aspects of narrative and description, time and place.

This thesis argues for a more inclusive approach than Hartsock's. Carnavalesque open-endedness is after all only one definition of many concerning what is 'literary'. Work can be, and is, marred by such forceful rejoinders as Solzhenitsyn's, but there are few writers who do not at times write badly and we do not exclude them, or indeed entire poorly written books, from the realm of literature, a novel is still a novel, whether 'potboiler' (Hartsock, 2016) or not. Neither are all polemics written with a heavy hand, writing may be done well even when it is instrumental. It is also a matter of taste, perception and tradition: Hartsock finds the Austrian Czechoslovak, Communist writer Egon Kisch problematic due to his 'tendentious' writing (Hartsock, 2016, 44), while others have no issue with this and instead celebrate Kisch

as a literary journalist. Roberta Maguire, meanwhile, argues that we need to retain an awareness of the ‘differing trajectories and purposes’ of journalism and remember that the ‘mid-twentieth century insistence in mainstream publications on objectivity has never been so prized in the black press’ (Maguire, 2015, 21). Excluding writers, such as Kisch, or potentially Martinson and African American journalists who write in a different tradition, has repercussions for representation within literary journalism. When obviously political or less nuanced work is excluded then better educated and more established writers are overly favoured, and we are left again with a disproportionately white, male and middle-class canon, just as we also are if we only include, as Lauters (2007, 3) suggests, professional journalists.

Moving beyond British and US journalism

Having addressed theoretical and conceptual debates within the studies of literary journalism, the chapter will now turn to the ways in which the critical discussion and definitions of the form have been shaped by a focus on particular historical periods and national contexts, and limited by narrowness in terms of gender and class. In reality, the boundaries are looser than they first appear. There is historical work within the USA that does not meet present-day standards, regarding veracity, or not using composite characters and Sims argues that this work should be judged within the culture and context of the time that it was produced and not our own. ‘[W]e should’, he says, ‘base the history of literary journalism on a broad time frame’ (Sims, 2009, 10). This includes writing such as Sinclair’s novel *The Jungle* (1906) – regardless of it not being labelled ‘journalism’ – and Capote’s *In Cold Blood* (1966) – despite the fact that ‘some scholars might deny’ the latter is literary journalism ‘because he made up a few scenes (or more)’ (ibid., 11).²² Instead, Sims says, we should focus on Capote’s ‘reporting, ambitions, literary skill, and innovations’, which are ‘important to the development of the form within the standards of the sixties’ (ibid.). When the writing of the

²² For more on this, see Plimpton, G. (1997) Capote’s long ride. *The New Yorker* (Oct 13), 62–71; Helliker, K. (2013) Capote classic *In Cold Blood* tainted by long-lost files. *The Wall Street Journal Eastern Edition*, Feb 9.

past, with its perceived flaws (such as amalgamation of characters), is accepted, then Dickens, Mark Twain, Henry Mayhew and Orwell, recognised even by Wolfe (1990, 60) as ‘not half-bad candidates’ for the title of ‘New Journalists’, as well as Mary Wollstonecraft, William Hazlitt, Daniel Defoe, W. T. Stead, Rheta Childe Dorr, Jack London and other muckrakers, not to mention other writers in the 1920s and 1930s, become literary journalists.

The early identification of Defoe, Hazlitt, Dickens and Twain as the forefathers of literary journalism, combined with the natural propensity of scholars to study their own cultures, meant that the roots of literary journalism were at first commonly seen to be cemented in the United Kingdom (UK) and the USA (Bak, 2011, 1; Soares, 2011, 18). At the 2015 International Association for Literary Journalism Studies (IALJS) conference, a textual analysis of literary journalism studies showed that 53.73 per cent of article authors were from the USA (Ricketson and Joseph, 2015, 6). There are undoubtedly clear examples of the impacts of British and American writers globally. Dickens is ubiquitous in his reach (Hartsock, 2011, 26; Wolfe, 1990), Sinclair and Edgar Snow inspired, amongst others, journalists in China (Chen, 2011) and New Zealand in the 1930s (Hessell, 2011, 211). Later, New Journalism was welcomed and assimilated by writers in Finland (Lassila-Merisalo, 2011, 185), Australia (McDonald, 2011, 272), Spain (Parratt, 2011, 139) and Brazil (Pereira Lima, 2011).

However, this, it has subsequently emerged, is not the whole story. Portugal, for example, had an indigenous tradition of literary journalism during the 19th century (Soares, 2011), as did other countries, but this was overshadowed by writing from the anglophone nations during the following century (Bak, 2011, 1). Prior to New Journalism, China had its own variety of literary journalism in the 1930s and 1940s: a form of social realism called ‘Bao Gao Wen Xue’ (Chen, 2011). In Finland, as early as the Second World War, Veikko Ennala used techniques – including scene-by-scene construction, a third-person point of view and dialogue

– that Wolfe would later claim for New Journalism (Lassila-Merisalo, 2011, 194). In the 1950s and 1960s, Slovene journalists, with no access to anglophone work, developed their own style of literary journalism based on socialist realist writing (Merljak Zdovc, 2011, 238). Influences also travelled back to North America. During the early 1900s, the *New Masses* newspaper drew inspiration from the work of the Kisch (Hartsock, 2011, 32). He also had a formative influence on many writers beyond his homelands, from China (ibid.) to Slovenia (Merljak Zdovc, 2011) and Sweden (Lindén, 2016, 81, 83). Later, the Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuściński proved an inspiration for the Finland-Swedish literary journalist Jörn Donner (ibid.).

Naturally, considering the tradition, ‘the great bulk’ of literary journalism scholarship focuses on American journalists (Roberts Forde, 2012, 108), but there is ongoing work to modify the balance. *The Journalistic Imagination* (Keeble and Wheeler, 2007), *Literary Journalism Across the Globe* (Bak and Reynolds, 2011), *Global Literary Journalism* (Keeble and Tullock, 2012), *Pleasures of the Prose* (Keeble and Swick, 2015) and special issues of *Literary Journalism Studies*, such as the francophone (fall 2016, Vol. 8, No. 2) and Norwegian (spring 2013, Vol. 5, No. 1) editions, have contributed to this. Even so, as Leonora Flis acknowledges in her introduction to the edition of *Literary Journalism Studies* focusing on women writers, it remains difficult to escape US dominance (2015, 9). The issue contains an article each on a journalist from France, Germany, Australia, Argentina and Britain / former Rhodesia, but includes three writers from North America. This is not to say that there are no other studies of non-US or British female literary journalists, even if they remain rare. Jane Chapman, for example, has written on the work of both the French author Sand (2007a, 2007b) and the Indian author Arundhati Roy (2012, 2015).

A further cause for reflection is that literary journalism does frequently exist in other places but has simply not been acknowledged or studied there yet. Sonja Merljak Zdovc laments that

this is the case in Slovenia. Despite the popularity of what were, in effect, literary journalists during the 1960s, ‘Slovene literary journalism remains largely unknown and unexamined in the scholarship, both at home and abroad’ (Merljak Zdovc, 2011, 239). This and the historical emphasis on the UK and USA as the homes of literary journalism are not the only reasons for the anglophone bias within the field – there is also a lack of translation. As Sims points out, ‘The strictly English speakers among us are impoverished by our lack of access to works of literary journalism from China, Russia, Portugal, Brazil and other parts of Latin America, Africa and Eastern Europe. It is hard enough to get fiction translated, let alone journalism’ (Sims, 2009, 10). It is also far more common for work to be translated from English into other languages than the reverse. The translation of Martinson’s writing from Swedish to English is therefore timely.

Literary journalism in Sweden

In Sweden, the concept of ‘literary journalism’ is still relatively rare. Instead, as Swedish member of the IALJS Kristina Lundgren (2014, 12) points out, the term ‘narrative journalism’ is used, although even this is unusual. It was not until 2013 that the first Swedish PhD on the subject of narrative and journalism was submitted (Jungstrand, 2013). However, in a country still influenced by its social democratic past, the often politically coloured reportage is a common form of writing. Frequently published in book form, primarily travelogues or sociological studies, reportage rose to popularity during the politically radical ‘red decades’ of the 1960s and 1970s, reflecting the sentiments of the time (Thygesen, 1971, 3). It was then understood as part of a tradition stretching back to the botanist and travel writer Carl Linnaeus and the feminist novelist and journalist Fredrika Bremer (Gustafsson, 1969). Reportage books have also seen an ongoing resurgence since the beginning of this millennium (Lindén, 2016, 79).

The situation is similar in the neighbouring countries of Norway and Finland. As noted above, Finland had its own form of literary-journalism-style reportage early on (Lassila-Merisalo, 2011, 184), although the actual term ‘literary journalism’ is little known. In Norway, Åsne Seierstad’s *Bokhandleren i Kabul* (2002) (*The Bookseller of Kabul*) is credited with bringing about a greater interest in the subject of reportage, as it likewise did in Sweden (Lindén, 2016, 79).²³ *The Bookseller of Kabul* is the most commonly cited title in terms of literary journalism in these countries and appeared in the special edition of *Literary Journalism Studies* on Norwegian writing (spring 2013, Vol. 5, Issue 1). These Nordic neighbours are also of interest in the Swedish context due to the countries’ shared history. Previously occupied by Sweden, both Norway and Finland trace their reportage or literary journalism roots back to a shared ancestor: a Swedish travelogue written in 1801, entitled *Resebeskrifning öfver Finland af en Stockholmsbo* (*A Description of Travels in Finland by a Native of Stockholm*) (Lassila-Merisalo, 2011, 185²⁴).

A typical case of Swedish literary journalism is the work of Jan Olof Olsson, ‘Jolo’, which appeared as reportage books, as well as newspaper columns (Hedin and Erséus, 2014; Leth, 2007). Of course, not all Swedish reportage is literary journalism either; even when the issue of instrumentality and a lack of awareness of the ‘inconclusive present’ is put aside (Hartsock, 2016) the necessary narra-descriptive elements may be absent. Jan Myrdal’s *Rapport från en kinesisk by* (1963) (*Report from a Chinese Village*), though translated into many languages and praised by, amongst others, Edgar Snow and Claude Lévi-Strauss, is too ‘objective and accountant-like’ (Lindén, 2016, 83) to be classed as such, lacking literary tropes. In stark

²³ For more on *The Bookseller of Kabul* as literary journalism, as well as an exploration of the ethical debate surrounding the book, see Brandal, S. (2016) *Bokhandleren i Kabul av Åsne Seierstad. Litterær journalistikk, etikk og kvinnesak*. PhD. University of Oslo.

²⁴ For early examples of Norwegian reportage, see Bech-Karlsen, J. (2013) Between Journalism and Fiction: Three Founders of Modern Norwegian Literary Reportage. *Literary Journalism Studies*, 5(1) 11-25.

contrast to the work of both these men is Maja Ekelöf's *Rapport från en skurhink* (1971) (*Report from a Mop Bucket*).

Based on Ekelöf's diary, *Report from a Mop Bucket* chronicles everyday events in her life as a cleaner, mother of several young adults, avid reader of both fact and fiction and follower of political events. Ekelöf's book has many traits of literary journalism, including an emphasis on the personal. Her belief that 'in the historical process it is of great importance how the normal person reacts' (Ekelöf, 1971, xx) resembles that of Richard Goldstein, who, reporting on the counterculture at the time that Ekelöf was writing, subsequently stated that the 'central premise of New Journalism' was that 'the individual is the true register of events' (Goldstein, 1989, xxi).

The 1960s and 1970s saw the publication of several books, often autobiographical fiction, in Sweden by older working-class women, such as Anni Blomqvist, Helga Bergvall, Linnéa Fjällstedt, Ingrid Andersson and Mary Andersson.²⁵ The radical zeitgeist meant that for the first time, 'That which had previously been their handicap – that they were women and belonged to the working-class – suddenly became interesting' (Juncker, 2011). For a brief period, 'They were hailed as the heroines of forgotten history and daily drudgery, and the whole literary establishment rallied around them' (ibid.). It is, however, only Ekelöf who remains a well-known name.

Both anger and feminism have surfaced in generations subsequent to Ekelöf – Majgull Axelsson and Susanna Alakoski not only lend novelists' perspectives to their journalistic writing but are, as working-class women writing on social issues, following in the footsteps of Martinson and Ekelöf. Alakoski, in particular, has written in a very similar style to Ekelöf and

²⁵ For more see: Lundgren, K. and Melberg, E. (1981) Visioner vid diskbänken. In: E. Adolfsson, T. M. Forselius, K. Lundgren, E. Melberg and E. Witt-Brattström (eds.) *Vardagsslit och drömmarsspråk*. Enskede: Hammarström och Åberg, Enskede, 179–222.

Martinson in her book *Oktober i fattigsverige* (2012) (*October in Poverty Sweden*). There is, however, as yet little or no scholarship on the literary journalism aspect of their works. The neglect of working-class, in particular working-class women's, journalism in academia will be discussed further below.

The invisibility of female writers

Analyses of the works of female journalists, let alone literary journalists in Sweden or elsewhere, are rare, although a little less so than previously. For decades, Margaret Berger's books *Fruar och damer: Kvinnoroller i veckopress* (1974) (*Women and Ladies: Women's Roles in the Weekly Press*) and *Pennskaft* (1977), as well as her thesis *Äntligen ord från qwinnohopen!* (1984) (*At last, words also from the women!*), were the only substantial works of scholarship on the subject in Sweden. The project 'Pennskaft blir reporter' (1995–2000) at Södertörn University, involving Kristina Lundgren and Birgitta Ney, was a welcome addition to the field. Their book, *Tidningskvinnor* (Lundgren and Ney, 2011) (*Newspaper Women*), originally published in 2000, contains brief overviews of Swedish female journalists throughout the last two centuries, with extracts from their publications. Anna Nordenstam's anthology, *Nya röster – Svenska kvinnotidskrifter under 150 år* (2014) (*New Voices – 150 Years of Swedish Women's Journals*) followed, containing chapters on a rich assortment of journals. Many of the women in *Tidningskvinnor*, and in Ami Lönnroth's book on Swedish female journalists *Empati och engagemang: En kvinnolinje i svensk journalistik* (2008) (*Empathy and Engagement: A Women's Path in Swedish Journalism*), show elements of literary journalism in their writing. This as yet unexplored aspect of the works of Elin Wägner, Barbro Alving, Ester Blenda Nordström, Wendela Hebbe and Fredrika Bremer has exciting research potential.

Literary journalism scholarship, partly because of its concentration on New Journalism, has long been dominated by studies of the works of white, English-speaking males. Only two out

of the 23 contributors to Wolfe's (1990) anthology in 1973 were women; over two decades later, the situation was very similar in Talese and Barbara Lounsberry's anthology *The Literature of Reality* (1996), where only three of the 29 writers were female. Subsequent anthologies and studies (Bak and Reynolds, 2011; Hoffmann, 2015; Whitt, 2008a, 2008b) have addressed this balance somewhat. However, women are still severely underrepresented, as is frequently acknowledged (Flis, 2015, 8; Gillespie, 2011, 60; Whitt, 2008a, xi; Whitt, 2008b, xv, 87; Klein, 2005, 61).

The lack of female presence is not only due to the bias within New Journalism but also the hidden aspect of women in journalism in general, where throughout time women's contributions have been unacknowledged (Whitt, 2008b, xvi). Lundgren and Ney point out that although there have historically been fewer women than men in journalism, 'they have been neither as few nor as marginalised [at the time] as previously thought' (Lundgren and Ney, 2011, 6). This is also true in anglophone countries, as Charlotte Nekola and Paula Rabinowitz discovered when they compiled their anthology of Depression-era American women writers, 1930–1940 (a period similar to that of Martinson's). There was, they found, 'a wealth of material to choose from', and they were 'fascinated by the almost complete silence in literary history about the existence of these works' (Nekola and Rabinowitz, 1987, xi). Similarly invisible, until relatively recently, has been the work of women editors who ran many popular magazines in the USA during the 1890s and 1900s (Greenberg, 2018, 103). Carolyn Kitch reflects upon this discrepancy in our view of the past:

So much scholarship in our field begins with the 'common sense' premise that a particular era (the 1850s, the 1920s, the 1950s or whenever) was a terrible time for women, that women weren't active or respected, and that there were hardly any women really doing anything serious. And then our research says: Look! We have found the exception! We have found the female war correspondent, or the women's

magazine that praised working women, or the newsroom where women were in management 50 years ago. And then this exceptional woman or media phenomenon becomes the ‘news’ of our research, our contribution to literature. But what if we rethink our finding? What if we say, wait a minute: If we’ve found this exception, might there be others? Might there be a *lot* of others? Might common sense be wrong? (Kitch, 2009, 162)

It is insufficient then to expand the list of journalists with a few more ‘exceptional’ women. The ‘add women and stir’ approach, as Friedman et al. (2009) title it (that is, simply adding some more women to the image we have of the past (Beasley, 2001, 210)), is not sufficient and does not provide historical accuracy.

The issue is not only that women’s contributions are not being seen – although this is often the case (e.g. Willa Cather and Margaret Mitchell are two prominent literary journalists who were overlooked for many years) – but also that what is considered journalism needs rethinking in the light of their inclusion. For example, as Mattson Lauters points out, ‘women’s magazines have historically been devalued as media forms’ (Mattson Lauters, 2007). Maurine Beasley argues that we need a broader definition of journalism than ‘the traditional one that involves reporting and commenting on conflicts and controversies mainly of interest to a male-run world’ (Beasley, 2001, 208). This has to, she argues, include a broader range of informative material in order to be ‘more appropriate to women’s experience’ (ibid.). Both Beasley and Jan Whitt contend that ‘All women who have made use of journalistic techniques [...] have a claim to be studied as journalists, regardless of whether their primary mission has been to advocate, report, comment or entertain’ (ibid., 217). This includes women who have contributed to the alternative press, as well as women’s pages (Whitt, 2008b, 3).

Whitt argues for inclusivity within literary journalism, as does Roberts, who goes one step further, maintaining that it is time for literary journalism to incorporate ‘less elite sources [...] the equivalent of material folk culture’ (Roberts, 2012, 82). This includes ‘letters, memoirs, and diaries; epistolary journalism; religious tracts; travel writing; and social movement [periodicals]’ (ibid.). Many of these are areas where women – having been regulated to ‘devalued’ arenas for their work – have excelled. Roberts’ new categories call for an expansion of the criteria for literary journalism. This has already been taken to heart, not only by Mattson Lauters in her writing on female correspondents to farming journals in the period 1910–1960 (Mattson Lauters, 2007) and in her book *The Rediscovered Writings of Rose Wilder Lane, Literary Journalist* (Mattson Lauters, 2009) but also by Mary Heng (1998) in her study of Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Short Residence in Sweden* (2005), from 1796, which she persuasively identifies as literary journalism.

Beasley welcomes women’s journalistic contributions receiving greater acknowledgement. This will, she believes, bring journalism history closer to social history, in contrast to its current form, which narrates stories of business and media empires. Instead, when individuals are studied, there may be ‘sympathetic analyses which attempt to integrate personal motivational factors and the external social environment’ (Gordon et al., 1976, 83, cited in Beasley, 2001, 213). Naturally, this viewpoint is particularly pertinent to Martinson with her strong political views, but it is also significant in literary journalism as a whole.

Literary journalism on the side of the oppressed

It has been noted (Bak, 2011, 14; Connery, 1995, 211; Roberts, 2012, 87) that both traditional journalism and literary journalism thrive in times of crisis, whether this is a military conflict, such as the Spanish Civil War or the Sino-Japanese Wars (Sims, 2009, 9), or a domestic calamity, for instance the poverty during the Victorian era or the Great Depression. Roberts has explored this in her work on the literary journalists Dorothy Day (Roberts, 1984, 2015)

and Meridel Le Sueur (Roberts, 2015), whilst Nekola and Rabinowitz (1987) provide many examples in their anthology of women writers during the Depression. In her studies of Day and Le Sueur, Roberts draws attention to ‘an exclusively feminine perspective on oppression and poverty’ – a ‘literary journalism of advocacy’ that ‘not only exposes the poor and the tormented but also often puts its central focus on women’ (Roberts, cited in Flis, 2015, 10). This standpoint is replicated in the work of Martha Gellhorn, Gerda Taro and Andrée Viollis (Meuret, 2015), as well as Rheta Childe Dorr (Hooper Gottlieb, 1995). Lönnroth also felt that this trend was so strong amongst women journalists as a whole – from Wendela Hebbe in the 1840s until the present – that she titled her 2008 historical anthology of female journalists’ writing *Empathy and Engagement*. Many of the early Swedish female journalists, she argues, used empathy as their ‘lodestar’ (Lönnroth, 2008, 8). According to Lönnroth, the individual journalist utilised the tools available to her: she employed ‘her pen and her storytelling talent to create awareness around vulnerable people and sometimes persuade the readers to provide both concrete and material support’ (ibid.). Similarly, Day believed that journalism could be used as an instrument ‘to move the heart, stir the will to action; to arouse pity, compassion; to awaken the conscience’ (Day, cited in Roberts, 1984).

Day used ‘a variety of fiction techniques, including description and scene-setting, the juxtaposition of contrasting images, and characterization, to a degree not usually found in journalism’ (Roberts, 1984, 179–180). One such device was ‘to paint a picture with contrasts’; it was, Day said, ‘an emotional way of making a point’ (Day, cited in ibid.). This was also a strategy used by Martinson. In the article ‘Compassion’ from 1926, discussed in Chapter 7, for example, she contrasts a rich young woman in her bison fur coat with a poor, snot-encrusted boy.

This perspective is not solely the preserve of women. Although Wolfe was said to have the ‘social conscience of an ant’ (Newfield, 1974, 61) and not have ‘an activist bone in his body’

(Boynton, 2005, xiv), he also wrote approvingly of New Journalism empowering socialist realist writing in the USA (Merljak Zdovc, 2011, 238). Literary journalism has frequently also been used by men as a weapon in the battle for social justice. This can be perceived amongst current literary journalists – those whom Boynton calls ‘New New Journalists’, many of whose work contains ‘an activist dimension’ (Boynton, 2005, xv) – as well as amongst New Journalists (Newfield, 1974, 61) and the generations before them. Such has been the emphasis on liberal, or left of centre ideals, within literary journalism that deviation from this outlook is considered significant. An article on the German journalist Rolf Brandt finds it particularly noteworthy that his writing ‘had an unmistakably conservative nationalist perspective, thus suggesting that it is *possible* to have a conservative form of literary journalism’ [italics added] (Paddock, 2019, 61).

The use of literary journalism to aid social reform is also evident if we take a broader historical perspective. According to Kevin Kerrane, for Victorian literary journalists such as Dickens and Mayhew, ‘Their literary touches came less from artistic design than from the writers’ sense of moral or political urgency: a determination to dramatize the reality of poverty, prostitution, and prejudice’ (Kerrane, 2007, 17). Sims adds that literary journalism outside the USA often puts ‘more stress on social usefulness than on artistry’ (Sims, 2009, 10) and Hartsock (2016), of course has grave reservations in this area.²⁶ For Martinson, during her early years of writing for the press, style and subject were deeply related to one another. However, words transcended their use as political tools for her. She resisted attempts by both newspaper and book editors to standardise her grammar and spelling when she felt this detracted from the aesthetic of her writing.

²⁶ David Abrahamson, however, has a different perspective: instead of US literary journalism versus ‘international’ literary journalism, he sees a Northern, or industrialised Western, perspective contrasting with that in writing from Southern, or developing, countries. Literary journalists in the former are, he argues, often progressive and secular, whereas those from ‘the South’ tend towards conservatism and traditionalist ideas. Abrahamson (2011) calls this the ‘counter-Coriolis effect’.

Bak claims that raising ‘our socio-political awareness about a disenfranchised or underprivileged people’ (Bak, 2011, 1) is a ‘controversial’ aspect of ‘international’ literary journalism.²⁷ However, it might be fairer to speak of literary journalism as a whole, in this case. There is a plentiful supply of early US literary journalists who placed themselves on the side of the oppressed – in addition to James Agee (Dow, 2011, 15), London and Sinclair, as well as the women and men mentioned earlier. William Dow argues that American literary journalism studies need to be expanded to include work that is more ‘interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, and international’ (Dow, 2016). He says: ‘We need to bring historically separate fields together, theoretically and culturally, to form an interdisciplinary entity that would variously reflect the contributions of literary journalism to American culture and letters from the eighteenth century to our contemporary moment’ (ibid.). In doing so, US scholars might recognise that what they currently term ‘international’ is also ‘American’.

In more-recent years, literary journalism has had a special role in authoritarian states, such as in the Soviet Union and China. The Slovenian journalist Valentin Ovechkin, for example, used literary techniques in his writing. He found that literary journalism was ‘potentially more effective as a sociological weapon than the adoption of more traditional journalistic techniques, since it is precisely its literary quality that helps to deliver the truth while contributing a certain amount of beauty to the piece’ (Bak, 2011, 6). Literary journalism has also been a form of protection. In Poland under communism, journalists used its various tropes to report on reality whilst avoiding censorship (Greenberg, 2012). In allowing ‘for more invention than its Western counterpart’, the Chinese *Bao Gao Wen Xue*, in the hands of writers such as Liu Binyan from the 1950s onwards, was able to partly ‘shield subjects from government retaliation’ (Mustain, 2011, v). It was also ‘considered by most Chinese literary critics as the best genre to expose social evils, and to call for people to take actions against

²⁷ He also identifies a second contentious point: the ‘emphasis on authorial voice’ that ‘jeopardizes our faith in its claims of accuracy’ (Bak, 2011, 1). See Chapter 4 for a further discussion on authorial voice and literary journalism.

social evils’ (Sims, 2009, 9), and it flourished in the 1930s. In Romania in the 1920s and 1930s, literary journalists were motivated by concerns for social justice (Bak, 2011, 6), as was Robin Hyde in Australia during the same period (Hessell, 2011). In the following two decades, Brazilian writers also explored literary social realism (Pereira Lima, 2011, 170). This bears out Kramer’s claim that ‘there is something intrinsically political – and strongly democratic – about literary journalism, something pluralistic, pro-individual, anti-cant, and anti-elite’ (Kramer, 1995, 34). The use of literary techniques to create an effect on the reader may be calculated, but the reasoning behind it is emotional and/or political. For Hartsock, literary journalism ‘attempts to engage in an exchange of “subjectivities,” or at least tries to narrow the distance between subject and object in an empathetic engagement’ (Hartsock, 2016, 36). Such engagement is rare in journalism as a whole, although there are exceptions, especially within literary journalism.

A lone working-class voice

Clearly, Martinson is not alone in producing work conforming to Kramer’s statement, nor as a writer whose ‘social activism defined her journalism’, as Michael Dennis (2017, 858) portrays the writer Ella Winter. Yet, in one respect, Martinson is particularly unusual: she describes the situation in which she lives. Miriam deFord, Emily Joseph, Winter, Day, Le Sueur and Rheta Childe Dorr all identified with and wrote in support of the poor. Ester Blenda Nordström worked undercover for a month as a dairymaid, in order to expose the terrible working conditions of women in the countryside in her articles and subsequent book *En piga bland pigor* (1914) (*A Servant Amongst Servants*).²⁸ Day and Le Sueur voluntarily shared the lives of their subjects, living in poverty themselves. Yet, where Martinson is distinguished is in her personal perspective as a working-class woman. There are a few recognised working-class literary journalist men, such as Theodore Dreiser (Whitt, 2008a, 30–31), Željko Kozinc

²⁸ For more on Nordström, see Bremmer, F. (2018) *Ett Jävla solskén*. Stockholm: Forum.

and his colleagues in Slovenia (Merljak Zdovc, 2011, 245), and Pete Hamill (Newfield, 1972, 61), but almost no known working-class literary journalist women. Olsen and Martinson are the current notable exceptions.²⁹

As will be discussed throughout this thesis, evidence of historical working-class voices in any form is uncommon. Much of what we do have has been filtered through middle- and upper-class observers and so is defined by their interests, however well-meaning. Alternatively, the information comes from the archives of various institutions, such as the courts, where the usefulness is limited by the formal context, as well as class and gender barriers (Davin, 1977, vii). The paucity of working-class women's own writing is illustrated by Anna Davin's reaction to *Life As We Have Known It*, a collection of works by members of the British Co-operative Women's Guild, first published in 1931, with an 'Introductory letter' by Virginia Woolf. As Davin says, the anthology 'has exceptional value as providing accounts by "*us*" rather than "*them*", and as dealing not just with the generalities of working class life, but with the specific experience of women, as they *chose* to tell them' [italics added] (Davin, 1977, vii).

The absence of working-class women within journalism is not well documented, as Betty Houchin Winfield notes: 'Class or employment would be useful concepts to explore and understand women in mass media history' (Houchin Winfield, 2009, 172). Although Sweden has a strong tradition of working-class literature and its study, there are no working-class female journalists in *Empati och Engagemang* (Lönnroth, 2008), *Tidningskvinnor* (Lundgren and Ney, 2011) or *Fruar och Damer* (Berger, 1974). This may not simply be an oversight. Even today, as Ehrenreich points out, 'it's all white guys, older white guys' who have the monopoly on commentary. As in the past, say Dow and Flis:

²⁹ Arguably, Martinson's contemporary and literary rival Ivar Lo-Johansson belongs amongst the working-class male literary journalists, although no book-length study has been conducted solely on this aspect of his work. See the collection of his journalism Lo-Johansson, I. (1989) *Skriva för livet*. Stockholm: Ordfronts Förlag.

The kind of people who can do the writing are those who can afford it – unless there are some wildly overpaid examples left from the earlier days. But the kind of information we get on class, poverty and race, in relation to reporting, is confined to the relatively affluent. (Dow and Flis, 2015, 148)³⁰

When working-class women have published writing, it has been predominantly in the area of autobiography, for example the Swedish women in the 1970s, and this has been a topic that was previously ‘given short shrift by the literary establishment’ (Merylyn, 1996, 89). ‘It occupies a low place in the hierarchy of genres, so that it offered working-class women a form which did not involve claims to high artistic aspiration’ (Bonner et al., 1992, 1). The implications this had for the reception of Martinson’s work, with its strong autobiographical, working-class themes, are discussed further below. This also raises the question whether working-class women have written more than previously thought but had their work ignored, just as in the case of journalism, as lacking in literary merit.

This also holds true of fiction. Martinson’s novels were invisible in literary circles for decades. In 1974, a schoolchild was not permitted to write her Swedish literature essay on the subject of Martinson because the writer was considered ‘not a real author’ (Wernström, 1978). In reporting this, Wernström makes the point that ‘Culture is as class bound as everything else in our society’ (ibid.). Writing in 2013, Kristina Sandberg draws the same conclusion, although she also adds the factor of Martinson’s gender. Asked to give a seminar at the Gothenburg Book Fair about her favourite author, she is embarrassed to choose Martinson, as though she hears voices asking ‘can this middle-aged working-class woman with all those children, write – really?’ (Sandberg, 2013, 57). Even today, she argues, gender and class barriers remain, preventing recognition of Martinson’s literary worth (ibid.).

³⁰ To counteract this, Ehrenreich has started the Economic Hardship Reporting Project, which raises money so that people on a low income can report on the issues that affect them. See <http://economichardship.org/>

It is noteworthy that those who do write on the subject of working-class female authors do so in the spirit of uncovering that which has been lost or hidden, and the timescale between studies is long. Coiner, in her work on Olsen and Day, writes of contributing ‘to a retrieving and revisioning of the 1930s American Left as well as to efforts to promote working-class writing as a legitimate category of literary analysis’ (Coiner, 1995, 3). Despite the passing of over two decades since Merylyn and Coiner’s studies, class itself is still an under-documented area within literature and journalism studies in the UK and the USA (Coles and Zandy 2007, xix; Dow, 2009; Mazurek, 2017, 437). Both Dow and R. A. Mazurek argue that whilst race and gender are now ‘given the status of automatic concern and legitimacy’ (Dow, 2009, 1), ‘class is ghettoized as a category that is rarely examined in detail or explicitly discussed’ (Mazurek, 2017, 438). That Martinson described the realities of her life in her journalism and novels made her both popular with her readers and unpopular with critics.

Moa Martinson and the definition of literary journalism

This penultimate section of the literary review identifies the key concepts within literary journalism which will be used in subsequent analysis. Drawing on the work of scholars discussed throughout this chapter, but also bearing in mind the need for diversifying voices, such as Martinson’s, who will contribute new areas, the thesis takes the below as its working definition:

Literary journalism is factual, it deals with real life. It is strongly visual. Description therefore plays an important part, this engages the reader’s imagination, placing them at a unique time and place. This not only draws the reader into the writing, it also serves as a veracity check, there is reassurance that the event actually occurred. Factual accuracy is therefore important, this can be gained from personal experience or from immersion in other people’s lives.

Narrative is a major aspect of literary journalism and this is facilitated by detailed scene setting, often with multiple scenes created. Dialogue, which literary journalism favours above

extirpated quotes, also contributes to the narrative, as does an often clearly expressed perspective on events. Literary journalism is written from a specific point of view or views. This, as well as sometimes treating its subjects as characters – by the use of the third person – in addition to description, dialogue and scene setting, are all ways in which literary journalism draws on tropes previously, primarily, seen as belonging to fiction. Symbolism, also commonly associated with fiction, plays a prominent role in literary journalism, not least in relation to social status and its markers. Thus literary journalism is often subversive in some form. In summation, all of the above serve to engage the reader's imagination and empathy, sparking their emotions and encouraging them to engage with the writing. This is in contrast to what literary journalism is not, that is distanced, neutral and objectifying. If a work is also 'open-ended', embracing the 'inconclusive present' (Hartsock, 2016), this is a positive as it allows greater engagement by the reader and often denotes a higher quality of writing, but it is not a criterion for inclusion. By including the hitherto unheard voice of Martinson, this thesis posits that the relationship between literary journalism and the oral tradition also needs to be examined in this context.

The oral tradition and literary journalism

This is a previously unexplored area and one brought into focus by the influence of orality upon Martinson's work. Throughout this thesis, Martinson's term 'the oral tradition' (Martinson, 1940) is used to encompass the majority of oral narratives, from local gossip to Homer's epics. Martinson's use of the oral tradition in her novels has been much discussed (Adolfsson, 1991, 2003; Bergom-Larsson, 1976, 91–94; Furuland and Munkhammar, 1997, 133; Jordahl, 2006, 54–55; Witt-Brattström, 1989; Witt-Brattström, 1990, 376), though, with the exception of Adolfsson (1991, 2003), not in great detail. Martinson herself maintained that *Women and Apple Trees* (1933) was 'as so many other of my novels based on old oral tradition, in addition to personal experiences' (Martinson, 1949). She repeated this claim,

further emphasising her reliance on oral sources, in her introduction to her later novel *Livets Fest* (Martinson, 1952, 7). It is also present from the first in her journalism. Her early articles read as though she is having a conversation with the reader: the style is naturalistic, and she revises her opinion as she progresses – not uncommon in literary journalism, or in the oral tradition.

A fitting description of a good proportion of Martinson's work is found in the definition of the oral tradition provided by Morrow and Schneider (1995, 6, n1), in which they are described as '*personal* stories generated from the experiences of the teller as well as accounts that have been passed on from generation to generation, often referred to as myth, folktale, and legend' [italics added]. As discussed, literary journalism often provides a way into an issue by narrowing it down to its human implications; physical detail and human emotions are vital aspects of the writing (Harrington, 1997, xx) and these generate sympathy in the reader (Hartsock, 2016). Oral cultures also rely on facts gleaned from human or quasi-human activity because such societies cannot use abstract categories – they need to use 'stories of human action to store, organize, and communicate much of what they know' (Ong, 1993, 140). As is shown throughout this thesis, Martinson perpetually uses her own experiences and those of her friends, neighbours and indeed ancestors to close the gap between theory and the reader and thus illuminate political points. This immersion in her community is a strategy to imbue Martinson with authority and this is also the case within the oral tradition where the teller becomes as one with their story.

The voice, so important in literary journalism, is also vital to the oral tradition. The narrator is attempting to establish the veracity of their tale with themselves as guarantor. For Sims, 'a mandate for accuracy pervades literary journalism' (Sims, 1984, 15). Yet the concept of 'truth' can be a discursive subject within literary journalism, with a stricter standard being applied to work after the Second World War. Within the oral tradition, truth is vital, even if it

is ambiguous, with tropes available to the storyteller to establish it. Personal experience (or that of friends or family) is used to establish the veracity of the story one is about to tell.

Benjamin (2003) argues that 'objective news journalism' is very different from earlier forms of information transmission which was conducted orally. In the latter, instead of the clinical transmission of news, a trace of the storyteller would always be embedded in the chronicling, as they would pass the information on as experience (ibid.). Today, the news is isolated and does not enter the communal 'tradition' (ibid.).

This is echoed in Martinson's work. By beginning her novel *My Mother gets Married* with the words 'I remember so well the day my mother got married' (Martinson, 1956, 9), Martinson is using a typical oral storyteller's technique (Adolfsson, 1991, 65). Equally, in literary journalism, details are often given in order to establish the presence of the author (Garner, 2016, 288; Keeble, 2012, 240). The importance of the narrator affirming that 'All this is as true as that I see you and you see me' (Lagerlöf, 1995, 51) cannot be overestimated in the oral tradition, but equally so in literary journalism.

In consonance with this, Martinson makes no attempt at objectivity. Eric A. Havelock, whose work influenced both Walter J. Ong (1967) and Marshall McLuhan (1970), argues that this is also symptomatic of the oral tradition. When seeking to understand how Homer's lengthy epics could be recalled by audiences and performers, he realised that:

To identify with the performance as an actor does with his lines was the only way it could be done. You threw yourself into the situation of Achilles, you identified with his grief or his anger. You yourself became Achilles and so did the reciter to whom you listened. Thirty years later you could automatically quote what Achilles had said or what the poet had said about him. Such enormous powers of poetic memorisation could be purchased only at the cost of total loss of objectivity. (Havelock, 1963, 45)

This points to a radical difference between an oral and a literate culture. For the former, 'learning or knowing means achieving close, empathetic, communal identification with the known' (Ong, 1993, 45). For the latter, the opposite is true: 'Writing', says Ong, 'separates the knower from the known and thus sets up conditions for "objectivity", in the sense of personal disengagement or distancing' (ibid., 46), much as Benjamin argues that news journalism does (Benjamin, 2003, 315-16). Literary journalism, with its stigma of subjectivity, of being 'in the borderland' (Whitt, 2008, 2), is therefore perhaps closer to an oral culture than to many other forms of writing today.

There are other similarities between literary journalism and the oral tradition. Literary journalism revels in its creative use of language, including metaphor and irony. Within the oral tradition, repetition and the use of phrases that the audience will recognise are important. These include proverbs, which are an oral culture's equivalent of literary flourishes and a recurring motif in Martinson's work. These are, argues James Obelkevich, 'primarily an oral genre, and an often witty and artful one at that, employing a wide range of poetic and rhetorical resources within their limited compass. Metaphor, rhythm, alliteration, assonance, binary construction' (Obelkevich, 1987, 44). Within oral cultures, proverbs are not only stored knowledge 'but rhetorical devices used strategically in interaction' (Weigle, 1998, 303).

Proverbs can also be seen as counter-hegemonic with their 'bleak realism, their irony, and their rebellious temper' (Holbek, 1980, 237), especially as they have long been dismissed by educated classes as outdated and irrelevant (Obelkevich, 1987, 43). They are therefore the perfect tool for Martinson and her alter ego Madam Andersson. As Madam Andersson, Martinson revels in colloquialisms, and the charwoman's columns are freely strewn with unusual, sometimes incomprehensible, proverbs, such as 'the old woman curtsied to the pillory'; 'like as like said the fox'; 'I am not like the old woman who thought God had cursed

all grass lawns'; and 'women are a species of their own' (Andersson, 1925b; 1925b; 1925c; 1925d).

Oral structure is also additive and repetitive, a prime example being the Bible, which is full of 'begats' and 'ands', as opposed to alternating synonyms. Gossip is also rich in recurring 'formulaic epithets and cliché ridden sayings' (Tebbutt, 1995, 5). The priority here is making the narrative easy to recall for the speaker, in contrast to cultivating semantic flair.

Martinson's journalism frequently shows traces of this: she repeats 'and' or 'then' to an unusual degree. It is similarly repetitive in other ways. In Martinson's article 'Philanthropy' (Helga, 1928f) she repeats the word 'noble' six times and the phrase 'real people' thrice in a manner that begs to be read aloud. In a similar way, the oral tradition often uses poetic formulas, echoing folk songs (Adolfsson, 1991, 75). Martinson herself utilised Swedish folk songs to the extent that she rewrote them and quoted them at the beginning of her novels (Martinson, 1956). Whilst literary journalism does not necessarily draw on folk songs, the emphasis on individual voice and the pleasure in language are similar.

Dialogue is important both in literary journalism (Wolfe, 1990) and in providing realistic detail within the oral tradition, as in Selma Lagerlöf's work, where 'interruptions, pauses, and audience reactions are realistically detailed' (Danielsson, 1975, 192). Martinson does this frequently, for example in her dialogue 'En moders problem' ('A mother's problem') (Helga, 1924t). Martinson's fondness for the spoken word meant frequent use of conversation and dialogue in her work. A recalled conversation with a stranger on the train may form the bulk of an article pointing to a societal problem (ibid.; Helga, 1924q). Some of Martinson's articles have dialogues flanked by explanatory text, whilst on other occasions the entire piece is a conversation relayed verbatim without an introduction. These articles are almost like overhearing a conversation on public transport: instantly gripping despite the protagonists not being introduced to us, or perhaps because of this. Such platonic dialogues are an accessible

and effective way to argue on different political issues, also utilised by Sand (Chapman, 2007b). Through the use of these in her articles, Martinson conveys her political views, when as through a conversation with her son, it becomes clear that she is discouraging him from accepting the nationalist ideals he is being taught at school (Helga, 1923).

Particularly interesting is that symbolism, an integral part of literary journalism (Hartsock, 2016; Sims, 1984, 2; Wolfe, 1990), is also a strong component within oral narratives (Nagy, 1992). Martinson availed herself of this trope in her journalism primarily in relation to wealth. The privileged and out-of-touch position of a young woman in the article ‘Compassion’ (Helga, 1926) is, for example, symbolised by her expensive car and fur coat. ‘Compassion’ also begins *in medias res*, a common technique amongst literary journalists, where the article begins at one of the most interesting points in the story and the background is filled in later. This too is used by oral storytellers (Ong, 1993, 144), who favour relating episodes as opposed to linear narratives.

The intention of the discussion above has been to illuminate some of the hitherto unexplored similarities between the oral tradition and literary journalism in order to better position Martinson’s work. Martinson saw the oral tradition as being an essential part of herself, writing to Albert Jensen that ‘I also have a not contemptible oral tradition to base what I write on, a tradition that rests on my maternal side [...] from the 1500s’ (Martinson, 1940). This orality was one of the aspects expressed in Martinson’s distinctive writing voice, particularly in her alter ego Madam Andersson, as examined in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Martinson's Voice, Persona, and the Use of Experience

This chapter explores Martinson's creation of an authoritative, explicitly working-class and female voice in her work, focusing primarily on the early years of her writing. Martinson's authorial voice was an important factor in her popularity, as Ottesen-Jensen made clear as early as 1925: 'Her distinctive, unaffected way of writing, her fearless assertion of her, often quite unusual, ideas, her freshness and the richness of her imagination have earned her many admirers' (Ottar, 1925g). Martinson utilised her social class and her life experiences, including her exposure to the oral tradition, as tools to reclaim power and authority in her writing and to counter arguments from both outside and inside the labour movement.

Like Gornick (2002, 22), Martinson was able to locate a narrator that was both her and not her – a persona she employed as her own voice and who appears partially disguised in her alter ego Madam Andersson. The powerful influence of orality can be seen throughout Martinson's work, but especially in the creation of the Madam Andersson columns, with their emphasis on the everyday and the rambling anecdotal. Her deliberate employment of the oral tradition, in particular accentuating the communal, coupled with her deliberate rejection of the denigrated feminine mode of gossip, has both class and gender connotations and is an example of Roberts' 'less elite sources' (Roberts, 2012, 82) being heard.

The fictional Madam Andersson, who appeared in a series of columns for *Vi kvinnor*, was a character with a strong political ethos who showed an irreverence towards both the political left and right, along with a desire to communicate the working-class woman's perspective on events. She spoke her mind in public, despite being hampered by her class and gender, and often expressed a disquiet about gossip whilst also drawing on a well of communal information. Clearly, Madam Andersson shared many similarities with her author. Certainly, Ottesen-Jensen did not differentiate between the two: 'She [Martinson] has the healthy

disrespect for belief in authority and grovelling, that we all recognise from her Madam Andersson articles' (Ottar, 1925g).

Martinson also reacted in her own voice, during the 1920s, to what she identified as condescension, or plain stupidity, not only from what she deemed the 'bourgeois' press but also from leaders of the labour and feminist movements. The attitude of the literary editor of *Arbetaren*, Ragnar Casparsson, as well as the inherent sexism within the syndicalist organisation, SAC, meant that both Martinson and Ottesen-Jensen (Ottar) faced discrimination as political, writing women. However, even Ottar could sometimes lapse into a tone that Martinson objected to as being patronising and unrealistic, and which she which she was able to counteract by utilising an authority born of experience.

Martinson's distinctive voice remains one of the most noticeable aspects of Martinson's writing – her personality imbues her texts. As Bruce Gillespie notes of the literary journalist Edna Staebler, at times, Martinson's 'use of her own authorial voice expands until it becomes a full-fledged character in her own story' (Gillespie, 2015, 69). Just as Michel de Montaigne's essays may, as noted by Booth (1983, 226), be enjoyed as much for his voice as for his philosophy, so too may Martinson's persona, which is such a part of her journalism that we read her work more for her than the political points she is making. After all, others also wrote on the same issues – Ottar frequently threw topics out for debate on the women's page and many answered – but it was Martinson's voice that became well loved.

This persona is evident from Martinson's first letter to *Arbetaren*, where she identifies herself as part of the collective of working-class women – 'we workers' wives' (Helga, 1922) – who share common experiences of suffering. This is not unreflectively done, Martinson is setting out a persona from the beginning, just as when writing to Nexø, she set out her proletarian credentials. Yet, even whilst claiming and accentuating the communal, Martinson sets herself apart from the crowd with her vibrant, indignant prose. Almost despite herself, she quickly

risers above the persona of ‘suffering and endurance’ even though she returns to it many times in the early years. That she already stood out, is clear from the published postscript to the letter, where her editor Ottesen-Jensen writes: ‘we only wish that there were more women in the movement like this comrade’ (Ottesen-Jensen, 1922). This individuality became noticeable in the most mundane of her texts. Even when composing a statement on the parish of Sorunda Co-operative Society’s annual general meeting for the local paper, Martinson’s voice is unmistakable. The potentially dry report becomes a chatty informal account, where she ironises the reaction of the chair to remarks made by the members: he ‘certainly did not take it well’ (Helga, 1927).

Despite Martinson’s popularity amongst the readership, in October 1924, the editors of *Arbetaren* expressed their dissatisfaction with Ottesen-Jensen’s editorship of the women’s page. One of the reasons they gave was her championing of Martinson, whose ‘illiterate’ writing they ‘did not see the worth of’ (Redaktionssekreteraren, 1924). The sub-editors had tired of correcting Ottesen-Jensen’s Norwegian-influenced Swedish and Martinson’s spelling mistakes, they claimed (ibid.). Martinson was clearly stung by this. She wrote a furious reply and demanded that it be published without corrections, which it was, including the misspelling of the editor’s name.

Casparson [sic] says that the women’s page has sometimes put forward pure falsificationhoods [sic] (show us some quotes Casparson [sic]) the only time to my knowledge that I’ve been unreliable, was when I stated that Digoenes [sic] was a Roman – he wasn’t he was a Greek a mistake like that – has hapend [sic] to learneded [sic] people than me. (Helga, 1924)

The situation was, in reality, to do with other issues unconnected with the grammatical correctness of Martinson’s and Ottar’s journalism (see Chapter 6), but this and the perceived chaos of Martinson’s writing provided a convenient excuse to get rid of them.

Writing of ‘loose and varying quality’

Martinson’s inconsistencies were well known in the labour papers during the early 1920s. Her first forays into political writing were at times confused. It was when she ceased endeavouring to make her own views correspond with accepted beliefs within the labour movement and became more confident in her independence that she gained coherence. In becoming more ‘open-ended’, i.e. less didactic and more nuanced, in her approach, her writing improved. Her views on women’s rights coalesced over a year and a half to a staunchly feminist perspective from a less convinced beginning. Her first letter to *Arbetaren*, for example, appears to both reject and support equal pay for men and women (Helga, 1922). By June 1924, however, she was utterly in favour of the concept, stating ‘Equal pay for man and woman? I have to agree with Ottar – it is depressing that such a question even needs to be asked. What are socially enlightened men and women working for? Is it for the social revolution, or what?’ (Helga, 1924).

Another such conflicted issue was that of contraception and abortion (both illegal at the time). To begin with, Martinson clearly could not reconcile her knowledge that women were being worn out by childbearing with the fear, common within some parts of the left at the time, of contraception being used to wipe out the ‘thinking’ working class. It was thought that the upper sections of the working class would use their knowledge of contraception in order to limit their offspring, who would then be absorbed into the middle class, whilst the lower sections of the working class would never make use of the information and so would produce an ‘endless’ and ‘deficient’ proletariat (Levin, 1997, 20). A reply by ‘Hilda’ to an article by Martinson (then still known as Helga) on abortion sums up the confusion felt by her readers:

It looks like Helga views the current social system as unbearable for the poor proletarian woman with many children. But, at the same time she believes that it is best to leave it as it is. She means, therefore that it is the proletarian woman’s duty to

give birth to children and fill up the earth, she the weakest and poorest of all. Have I understood this correctly? I can't explain it in any other way, when she says that: "It is not acceptable to spread among all women the knowledge of how to avoid children." [...] Is it not time now that we women, began to look after our own interests? Should we always trust men? (Hilda, 1923)

That Martinson would be in need of such a reproof might come as a surprise for subsequent Swedish readers, who know her for her strong female characters, such as Hedvig in the autobiographical *Kyrkbröllop* (1949), who asks the rhetorical question: 'Trust a man? One deserves a beating for that' (Martinson, 1949, 74).³¹ However, Martinson's contradictions are not necessarily negative. For Ron Rosenbaum, within literary journalism, 'Putting your cards on the table as the narrator – your doubts, your hesitations, your conflicting thoughts and impressions – is often more honest than third-person writing' (Rosenbaum, cited in Boynton, 2005, 339). Indeed, Martinson's sincerity is never in question, and her habit of appearing to think aloud through her writing allows for unparalleled immediacy and vitality, which are not found in the work of more-measured contributors.

Much of the time, Martinson's inconsistencies do come across as being the result of her ideas developing as she writes. Her writing evolves before our eyes, embodying Tom Paulin's definition of journalism as something that is:

[...] written in the moment. It aims to be instant, excited, spontaneous, concentrated – like theatre, or like a letter dashed off quickly before breakfast [...] There is something provisional, off-hand, spontaneous, risky in this volatile mindset – it seeks but never finds definitive judgements. It is in dialogue or argument with the world, and is closely related to the diary and the familiar letter. (Paulin, 1996, xii)

³¹ Now available as a slogan on a magnet: <http://www.moamartinson.se/produkter-fran-moas-vanner/>

The latter also coincides with Martinson's method of writing. At times, her work is literally a letter or a piece of writing that in its intimacy and detail of her daily life resembles a diary. Even more than professional journalism, it has an affinity with the blog; this is less groundbreakingly modern than it first appears, as blogs also share a past with the US pre-Civil War journalistic ideal celebrating the amateur writer. There is also a crossover here between the areas of literary journalism and autobiography. Just as Nancy L. Roberts has argued for a widening of the definition of literary journalism to include areas where marginalised groups have practised and not previously been included in the canon (Roberts, 2012), so too has the field of autobiography already expanded, particularly through the work of feminist scholars, to incorporate women's letters, diaries and memoirs within the discipline (Marcus, 1994, 81, 231).³²

Another reason for the 'unstructured' aspect of Martinson's writing is her use of the oral tradition. When Martinson's novels were first published, they received a high level of censure both for their depictions of female sexuality – which, in its emulation of the subject matter of folk songs, can be seen as evidence of the oral tradition in Martinson's writing (Adolfsson, 1991, 97) – and for their portrayal of the living conditions of some of the poorest in Swedish society. Martinson had exposed a level of destitution that the reviewers refused to believe even existed. Just as in journalism, her style and ability to write were also called into question and compared unfavourably to those of her husband. Martinson's style, it seemed, was of 'loose and varying quality' (Runnquist 1952, 135).

There were several reasons for this dismissal of her abilities, gender bias not being the least. Another was the unconventional structure of *Women and Apple Trees* (Martinson, 1933) – the way that 'scenes change with the speed of lightning, the reader's concentration is snatched

³² For a more detailed discussion of the expansion of the autobiographical canon due to the work of feminist scholars, see Smith, S. and Watson, J. (eds.) (1998) *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press; Cosslett, T., Lurie, C. and Summerfield, P. (eds.) (2000) *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories, Methods*. London: Routledge.

from one person to another, from slums to suburbs, from railway men's barracks to villages and hovels' (Berg, 1933, 54). In this, her first published novel, Martinson was almost replicating her journalism, not just in themes (politics, single mothers, birth control, nature, childcare and the arrogance of the rich) but also in style. Instead of a conventional narrative structure, it is at times as though short stories, political pieces, occasional whimsy and the Madam Andersson columns are combined together into a very readable, if unusual, blend. Critics saw the 'chaotic' nature of Martinson's writing as a lack of authorial skill. Although this was far from the case, John Foley admits that 'one of the most salient and consistent features of the oral tradition is their lack of textual tidiness' and that this 'can initially be unnerving' (Foley, 1998, 4). In Marshall McLuhan's view, this absence of structure extends into pre-/non-literate societies as a whole, with negative connotations: 'Until WRITING was invented, we lived in acoustic space, where all backward peoples still live: boundless, directionless, horizonless' (McLuhan, 1970, 13). For Martinson, however, this pattern of writing was a conscious and positive decision, albeit one that she refined and decreased over the years.

In her later books, just as in her journalism, Martinson was more structured, but she defended the composition of her first book, *Women and Apple Trees* (Martinson, 1933), as being in tune with the natural order of life: 'Nothing happens in sequence for humans. In conversation, as in life, we jump backwards and forwards, from high to low, from seriousness to comedy, without a transition' (Martinson, cited in Engman 2004, 258). In this, she foreshadowed the words of Walter J. Ong, who, in his influential *Orality and Literacy* (1993, 143), also pointed out that 'You do not find climactic linear plots ready-formed in people's lives'. In addition, Martinson shares similarities with the Swedish Nobel Prize winner Selma Lagerlöf and has been described as her 'proletarian counterpart' (Backberger, 1981, 378). Lagerlöf drew heavily on the oral tradition and described her own bestselling debut novel, *Gösta Berlings*

saga (Lagerlöf, 1956), as ‘giddy and wild and undisciplined and [...] the different parts still had their old inclination to wander off, each in its own way’ (Lagerlöf, 1908, 16).

The communal is an inherent part of the oral tradition: from Homer – whose epics were passed down and simultaneously developed by generations for thousands of years – to Selma Lagerlöf and Moa Martinson in the forests of Sweden.³³ When describing the process of writing her first novel and the story/ies it was based on, Lagerlöf emphasised the communal aspects involved in its production: ‘Many had been part of creating it through their extraordinary acts, others had done their bit by again and again telling of these acts’ (Lagerlöf, 1908, 5). Martinson also drew attention to this aspect, writing the following of her novel *Livets Fest*, first published in 1949: ‘The book is a piece of a cultural epoch and the sources are, bar exact dates, completely oral – stories that have gone from kin to kin, from close relatives and from outsiders’ (Martinson, 1952, 7).

Adolfsson, in her study of Moa Martinson and the ‘proletarian’ writer Maj Hirdman, contends that they both drew their creativity from old oral traditions and created a new form of writing by merging these practices with modern methods (Adolfsson, 2003, 90). She also argues that they used this form of writing as a weapon.

From the old oral world the author heads out to fight for *her* words in a world dominated by print, out in a hostile and in many ways dubious world. Her most important weapon is to, as far as possible, take the old world with her, her sort of speech. To, so to speak, create something new: a piece of writing that contains traces of the oral ‘mothertongue’, in tone, in ‘voice’, in the fiction about the storyteller. (Adolfsson, 2003, 90)

³³ For a very readable exposition of the study of the oral tradition with reference to Homer, see Nicolson, A. (2015) *The Mighty Dead: Why Homer Matters*. London: William Collins; for the classic scholarly publication on the same theme, see Lord, A.B. (1971) *The Singer of Tales*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Anneli Jordahl also sees the oral tradition in the work of Elsie Johansson, who has been described as the new Moa Martinson, including by Jordahl (2006, 53), but she worries that there is a danger in calling attention to this – that it is a form of denigration of the writers (ibid., 55). The oral tradition has long suffered from being viewed as a lesser form of culture compared to the written word (Fielding, 1998, 5), particularly due to its association with women (ibid., 1998, 3). Literacy, in contrast, has historically been ‘limited to those already possessing economic, political, race, and gender status’ (Adkins, 2017, 52). Jordahl therefore asks: ‘Is there not a danger in this? [...] Giving the impression that someone is talented, but unconscious of the means of expression she is using?’ (Jordahl, 2006, 55). Adolfsson makes a similar point when she says that ‘one often talks’ of Martinson “‘drawing on oral sources” [...] as though it were a question of easily exposing something that is already there’ (Adolfsson, 2003, 94). As discussed in the literature review, this attitude was prevalent even amongst Martinson’s supporters in the 1970s and 1980s (Witt-Brattström, 2010).

Adolfsson points out that the oral tradition is far from an easy creative form to master (Adolfsson, 2003, 94). Lagerlöf concurs, likening a story that has emerged through the oral tradition to a ‘formless haze of adventures, that drifted to and fro like a swarm of lost bees, who don’t know where to find somebody who can gather them up into a hive’ (Lagerlöf, 1908, 5). Martinson was, as her statement about her novel shows, conscious and proud of her use of the oral tradition.³⁴

Another aspect of Martinson’s voice common in both the oral tradition and literary journalism is her inclusion of herself in her writing. For scholars of literary journalism, the first-person narrator is a positive aspect, supplying ‘immediacy, intimacy and spontaneity in the pursuit of truth-telling’ (Tulloch, 2014, x), and these are factors that come across in Martinson’s

³⁴ The literary journalist Zora Neale Hurston also had a great interest in the oral tradition and collected hundreds of African American folktales during her travels in the 1920s (Hurston, 2001). For more on Hurston as a literary journalist, see Maguire, R. S. (2015) From Fiction to Fact: Zora Neale Hurston and the Ruby McCollum Trial. *Literary Journalism Studies*, 7(1), 16–36.

journalism. Immediacy is of course a prerequisite for most journalism, yet by incorporating the narrator, literary journalism is able to take an additional step towards achieving this. This is immediacy in the sense of both the intimacy in the writing and the timescale.

Sand used journalism when she wanted to respond quickly to political events (Chapman, 2007a, 49). The labour movement newspapers thrived on rapid reader interaction, and much of Martinson's early work was in reply to an article or letter she had read in the newspaper. In 1923, for example, she responded to a request from Ottesen-Jensen with her own opinions, introducing her contribution with the words: "What do our readers say about this?" asks Ottar in an article about communism and marriage. For my part I would like to say, that the hell many workers' wives live in makes what Lenin writes about terribly tempting' (Helga, 1923). Martinson's words make it clear that she is replying to a request from Ottesen-Jensen and also revisiting a favourite subject: that of the suffering of 'workers' wives'.

During the early years, Martinson also increased the sensation of intimacy in her work by turning to her readers for advice, at first apparently from self-doubt. In her first letter, she emphasises, albeit jokingly, that she is 'just a simple housewife' and open to correction. 'If there is anyone on the newspaper who would like to give me a good hiding – I mean an answer to my letter, I would be grateful' (Helga, 1922). Using humour to disarm any critics, Martinson is not yet comfortable with giving her own opinions. She also seems unwilling to trust her own turn of phrase and so tacks on revolutionary sentiments, such as: 'May men and women unite in the struggle for syndicalism's ideas without internal bickering! Long live syndicalism!' (ibid.). These obtrude the general flow of her writing.

When Martinson is wrong, there is also the feeling that, perhaps as an autodidact, but more importantly as somebody who views writing almost as verbal communication, she does not necessarily have comprehensive background knowledge on the subject. There is no deliberate attempt to obfuscate. Martinson often admitted to her mistakes, at least after a period of

reflection, and outwardly appeared to do so cheerfully. For example, when minuting a SAC meeting, she refers to herself as ‘the undersigned who [...] mixed up dirt and pancakes, was given a severe talking to and hereby admit my fault’ (Martinson, cited in Engman, 2004, 66). Such mistakes lessened over time. In later years, criticism was often based on ideological rather than factual issues, such as her praise for the USSR.

However, Martinson still struggled with a sense of inadequacy – which perhaps also fuelled her anger towards the editor at *Arbetaren*, Casparsson – through much of her writing life. In 1942, by then an established author, she wrote the following in the magazine *Horisont*:

I have always read scientific popular papers with great distaste. However interesting and gripping and informative they may have been, I have all the time at the back of my mind: ‘this has been simplified for you, you don’t understand any better, there is a deeper wisdom that you don’t comprehend.’ [...] I’ve had this feeling my whole life of having been tricked out of something. Maybe all people have this feeling and autodidacts to a greater extent than others. (Martinson, 1942, 16–17)

She equated this feeling of having been cheated with her class experience, yet the latter was also her greatest strength and gave her the prerogative to argue against even, eventually, the prime minister (Martinson, 1953).

Although her authority was acknowledged in many parts of the labour movement press, Martinson found that in the outside world, class distinctions operated even in the area of autobiography, where the expertise of proletarian writers was ignored. She was angered by the lack of respect paid to these authors when depicting their own experiences. In the article ‘Autodidakter och akademiker’ (‘Autodidacts and academics’), published in 1938, Martinson counters the reactions of the literary elite to the ‘autodidact literature’ that emerged in the 1930s. She protests against the attitude that the middle and upper classes were considered capable of writing about the lives of the poor: ‘To claim that the lives of the propertyless and

anonymous masses are so simple in aspect that anybody who has gone to college or taken a bit of interest in their maid's life story must know all there is to know about poor folk, is to deny the proletariat their own tradition' (Martinson, 1938, 33–34).

To add insult to injury, the working class, she notes, are only considered capable of writing about their own lives, and badly at that. As an example, she uses 'one of the best books about the agricultural proletariat': *En natt i juli* (*A Night in July*) by Jan Fridegård (1933). When the novel was published, the critic Vera von Kraemer (not of the proletariat herself) 'destroyed' the book. 'How much she knew about agricultural labourers', Martinson writes bitinglly, 'was shown by her review' (Martinson, 1933). However, even the leaders of the labour movement lacked insight, she felt, into the real lives of the working class.

Martinson herself suffered from the disparagement of working-class autobiography by critics. When her books were praised, it was for the detail they provided about working-class lives – with the subtext that this was all they were good for. Yet, this gave Martinson her power as a writer. In literary journalism, the first-person narrator provides authority (Kramer, 1995, 29), and this must be earned. Mark Kramer emphasises the importance of accuracy in his own work: 'I don't want to lose authority. I don't want to get a single detail wrong' (cited in Sims, 1984, 16). To ensure this, he immerses himself in the world he is reporting on and asks the relevant people, such as surgeons or farmers, to read his book before it is published.

Martinson had no need to adopt this strategy. She wrote about an area she was already a specialist on: her own and her neighbours' lives. During her first few decades of writing, she frequently called attention to this expertise.

Despite the denigration, there is strength in autobiography, albeit one that has been recognised after Martinson's death. Working-class women who have written about their lives have overcome much in order to do so and thus, Valerie Smith argues, are actively taking a form of power (Smith, 1987, 2). This corresponds with Julia Swindells' contention that 'There is the

opportunity for autobiography to be the text of the oppressed and the culturally displaced, forging a right to speak both for and beyond the individual [...] via the assertion of “personal” voice, which speaks beyond itself” (Swindells, 1995, 7). Ann Miller argues that identity is created in the autobiographical process (Miller, 2007, 216). Through her articles, Martinson forms her character as, above all, a working-class woman and in doing so imbues herself with power.

In the last three decades, new scholarly attention to the voices of women, the working class and other marginalised groups within autobiography has also led to a different focus – the uniqueness of the autobiographical subject is no longer the main theme. Autobiography is not used solely to analyse the individual’s own feelings or actions; instead, the collective is brought to the fore – the ‘important unit is [...] never the isolated being’ (Friedman, cited in Miller, 2007, 231). Like so many other writing women, Martinson used herself as an exemplar of a wider group. She self-identified as a member of several collectives, including mothers, working-class wives and political activists. When Martinson speaks, it is with the authority of being part of the collective of working-class women. Writing in *Arbetaren* and addressing the social democratic women’s organisation – which had, according to Martinson, agreed a resolution to ‘demand the humane treatment of our sons and husbands during military service’ – she took it upon herself to speak for the masses when she wrote: ‘But I and a thousand workers’ wives with me, would like to tell you that we do not thank you at all for such motions’ (Helga, 1924). In fact, she was disgusted with them for acquiescing to military service.

Whilst women have often been excluded from collective working-class activity (Ambjörnsson, 1998), there has been another communal sphere open to them, although one that has been equally denigrated.

[T]he politicization of the oral has become a means of re-examining literary and textual histories. [...] it seeks to draw attention to already marginalised groups whose textual experiences have been suppressed by gender repression, or colonialism, or the capitalism of textual production: 'oral history' invades the territories previously reserved for an official, written variety. (Fielding, 1996, 2)

The power appropriated by those women who have used autobiography can also be perceived in working-class women's use of the oral tradition. Without the possibility of extensive reading or writing themselves, 'story telling was a natural art of working women' (Richardson et al., 1996, 90). In her book *Silences*, Olsen reflects on the many unheard voices during the history of humanity: 'those whose waking hours are all struggle for existence; the barely educated; the illiterate; women' (Olsen, 1994, 10). Martinson defended her right to portray what she saw and how she saw it. The working class have their own traditions and history, Martinson asserted, and 'should have the right to depict the environment we come from in our own way, without being branded liars' (Martinson, 1952). This included the manner in which they chose to represent it.

'Writing as I speak'

In her acknowledgement that *Women and Apple Trees* (Martinson, 1933) is out of sequence, Martinson could also equally be describing her own press articles, not least the Madam Andersson columns, in which her writing frequently meanders. In these cases, she follows neither the concise pattern of a newspaper column nor 'Freytag's pyramid', with its dramatic arc of rising and falling tension, of conventional linear fictional plot construction. Engman (2004, 258) and Witt-Brattström (1989, 28) argue that this oral tradition can be seen from the very beginning in Martinson's articles for *Arbetaren*, which indeed benefit from being read aloud. In this way, as Witt-Brattström points out, 'an effective rhythmic syntax emerges'

(Witt-Brattström, 1989, 28) – one of the main signifiers of an oral influence (Ong, 1993, 34) and a valuable method of creating a distinctive voice (Gornick, 2002, 21-22).³⁵

It is arguably with Malla Andersson that Martinson found her feet as a writer and started on the road to literary success (Engman, 1990, 8). Madam Andersson was Martinson's first published character to have a continuing and developing narrative. Whilst less sophisticated than her creator, Madam Andersson nonetheless shared many of her character traits and experiences. Both Martinson and Madam Andersson had a habit of wandering far from their original topic in a series of agreeable digressions. This alter ego can be said to epitomise the spirit of Martinson during the 1920s and is pivotal to understanding her use of literary journalism.

With the persona of Madam Andersson, Martinson turned her style of writing into a positive, both developing and defending it. When the first Madam Andersson column appeared in the fourth issue of *Vi kvinnor*, it was ostensibly authored by Malla Andersson, a woman of all work who scrubbed, baked, laundered and milked cows. She almost immediately drew attention to her mode of writing and went on to defend it: 'There is definitely something wrong with the spelling...But by all means – if the editors think it's quicker and looks better if I write as I speak, that's fine by me' (Andersson, 1925b). In her third column, reacting against disparaging remarks amongst her neighbours, Madam Andersson writes: 'I am going to show the old wives that I can write' (Andersson, 1925c). Madam Andersson has, in

³⁵ There is of course no absolutely oral, nor totally literate, work. For a discussion of the intermingling of oral and written traditions and the oral nature of the internet, see Foley, J.M. (1998) Introduction: An Audience for Oral Tradition. In: J. M. Foley (ed.) *Teaching Oral Traditions*. New York: The Modern Language Association, 1-9; Foley, J.M. (2010) Verbal Marketplaces and the Oral-Literate Continuum. In: S. Ranković, Leidulf Melve and Else Mundal (eds.) *Along the oral-written continuum: types of texts, relations, and their implications*. Turnhout: Brepols, 17-37 and Ranković, S. (2010) The Oral-Literate Continuum as a Space. In: S. Ranković, Leidulf Melve and Else Mundal (eds.) *Along the oral-written continuum: types of texts, relations, and their implications*. Turnhout: Brepols, 39-71. For aspects on the internet read also, Pettitt, T. (2007) Before the Gutenberg Parenthesis: Elizabethan-American Compatibilities. In: "*Creativity, Ownership and Collaboration in the Digital Age*", *Media in Transition 5, Communications Forum*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, 27-29 April, 2007, 1-13.

common with her creator, a garrulous, easy tone that addresses the reader intimately – a trope of literary journalism. Like Martinson, Madam Andersson occasionally claims to be unsure of herself. She rambles, halfway through her column professing: ‘Well, I’ll be blown, that I can’t get out what I want to say. Don’t know how to start, you see!’ (Andersson, 1925a). In her second column, where she also mentions the spelling, she observes: ‘to think that little piece I wrote got into the paper’ (Andersson, 1925b). This self-effacement at first appears to be a coquettish affectation in both Martinson and Andersson, even if this was not always the case in the former, as both at other times radiate self-confidence.

Martinson’s use of the vernacular in the character of Madam Andersson can be placed in a tradition of literary journalism. Sand, whose novels Martinson admired, used colloquial speech to express the viewpoints of the peasant personas she adopted in her journalism, thus exemplifying ‘a broader nineteenth-century trend towards the democratisation of language’ (Chapman, 2007, 492). According to Joyce, there was between 1840 and 1920 in Britain (and in France) ‘the belief that it was only in the people’s own tongue’, that of dialect, that working-class lives could be adequately depicted (Joyce, 1991, 154). Le Sueur, closer in time and subject matter to Martinson, tells in her powerful, albeit fictional, story ‘Sequel to love’ (Le Sueur, 1987) of institutionalised violence through a first-person narrator whose voice is ‘credibly vernacular in speech and style’ (Roberts, 2015, 55).

As the column progressed, it became clear that Madam Andersson lived with her bricklayer husband, known only as Andersson, in the countryside. Andersson was essentially a good husband but unsupportive when it came to his wife engaging in politics or composing her columns. The fictional Andersson’s response to his wife’s writing is conceivably based on autobiographical fact, as Martinson also suffered her husband’s disapproval of her work. This places her in a long tradition of proletarian female, or indeed simply female, authors who became free to write only when their families were grown up and their husbands estranged or

deceased, with ‘a room of one’s own’ in any form being inconceivable for these women until then. Flora Thompson, for example, was not able to publish her first novel until she was 63, after raising her children and combatting her husband’s dislike of her writing. She also blamed her economic circumstances, saying ‘To be born in poverty is a terrible handicap to a writer. I often say to myself that it has taken one lifetime for me to prepare to make a start’ (cited in Richardson et al., 1988, 89–90).

Both Woolf (1994) and Olsen (1994, 16) reflect that it has historically been rare for successful female authors to have been mothers. Martinson, of course, had five children, but her journalism did not begin until her youngest son started school. Her work then primarily took the form of short pieces that could be written in snatched moments of time. Her first novel was not published until her first husband and two children had died and her other sons were away working. Martinson, however, had a predilection for referring to herself as a mother and placed a strong emphasis on motherly love, as discussed in the next chapter. *Vi kvinnor* also focused on women’s roles as mothers. The fact that it is only mentioned in passing once that the Anderssons have children is a striking contrast to both contemporary magazines and Martinson’s other writing.

In her first column, Malla declares: ‘We’ve come so far now and any old person can write almost anything in the papers, and so I will give it a go, even though I wear both a petticoat and woollen socks’ (Andersson, 1925a). This sartorial remark can be seen as a metaphor denoting both her gender (the petticoat) and her class (the woollen socks). She begins her first column by constructing a link from her own stockings to her opinion of modern clothes and complains that the garments women wear these days are completely inadequate for the weather. ‘In fact, I was invited to the cinema the other evening by Fina (she’s so scared of the dark in the evenings) and there was a woman who was basically wearing her navel as a brooch, that’s how little cloth there was in her bodice’ (Andersson, 1925a). Through this, she

has already established a gossipy, somewhat judgemental tone and introduced another character of the column, her friend Fina. This also serves as an example of the fact that Madam Andersson was not simply a mouthpiece for Martinson's own views. Malla had her own persona that diverged from her author occasionally through her expression of less than completely enlightened opinions.

As 'herself', Martinson, in at least two articles, rejects criticisms of women's choice of dress or hairstyle by male comrades who are patronisingly anxious to see their 'sisters' arrayed in more-practical or -economical fashions. For example, as part of a debate in *Arbetaren*, in response to a letter by 'E. Albán', claiming that female comrades should appear in trousers and short hair, Martinson takes a light-hearted tone. By utilising humour in a manner corresponding to Orwell's definition of it 'as dignity sitting on a tin-tack' (Orwell, 1945), she refuses to honour Albán's complaint with serious argumentation. Instead, she teases him by pretending that:

I do believe that spring has gone to your head and that you've fallen in love [...] You are in love with a little jazz girl with shingled hair and knee length trousers – and you're so taken with the little cutie that you want all your comrades' beloveds to be just as adorable. (Helga, 1924)

However, her readers are left in no doubt that she believes Albán is 'drivelling' and that 'we women shall dress as we please: absolutely!' (Helga, 1924).

Three years later, Martinson portrayed a similar attitude in men outside the labour movement. In 'Olika synpunkter på arbetslöshetsproblemet' ('Different points of view on the problem of unemployment'), Martinson situates a scene on a train, where she enters into a discussion with a group of men on the subject of unemployment benefits. Both the scene-setting and the development of the story through dialogue denote literary journalism. Two of the men blame

the lack of jobs on ‘the immoral young women of today’, the first using the same phrase as Madam Andersson.

‘They wear their navels as brooches, the terrible hussies, they show everything they’ve got’ said the older man and looked excited. [...] ‘They shave under their arms so they won’t have to wear sleeves.’ ‘There’s no need for cloth anymore, you can’t sell a piece of it’, shouted the other man incensed. ‘How can you as a woman, let others carry on like this? Don’t you understand that it causes poverty and unemployment?’ (Helga, 1928)

Despite their more extreme, prurient misogyny, and the class prejudice they subsequently exhibit when talking about the unemployed, the men on the train share the attitude of the syndicalist men above, believing that they have a legitimate cause for concern in women’s choice of clothes. In the article, Martinson quickly disabuses them of this notion and paints herself as the voice of calm and reason amongst bigotry.

Martinson’s use of the same phrase ‘navel as a brooch’ three years after Madam Andersson’s sartorial musings allows us to see that as an early or proto-literary journalist, ‘truth-telling’ and ‘accuracy’, two of Sims’ and Wolfe’s (1990) criteria for inclusion in the field of literary journalism, are not always a priority for her. Perhaps a larger ‘truth’ is at stake, so ‘details’ such as the accurate relaying of conversations are less significant. It may also give her an opportunity to rework earlier opinions and creates an openness.

The oral tradition is ‘rarely accurate with the precision of those who keep written records’, as Rosenberg (1987, 79) points out, but this is, he argues ‘one of its strengths’ (ibid.). Likewise, Garner asserts that truth is more than facts: ‘the truth of the narratives often resides in the emotional trauma of women’ (Garner, 2016, 273). This is the case with Garner’s example, Marie de France, but also arguably with Martinson.

Madam Andersson's political commentary

In her columns, Madam Andersson, like Martinson herself, quickly changes topics. From discussing clothes, she moves to politics and the lockout that is taking place. As Witt-Brattström points out, many of the Madam Andersson articles follow the same principle. 'Firstly, little me is going to speak and then a zig zagging between different subjects' (Witt-Brattström, 1999, 24). Both Madam Andersson's and Martinson's articles become more cohesive as time goes on. Malla's final three columns consist of a single coherent narrative, as opposed to the careening between subjects of the previous articles.

As discussed in the introduction, the political and social context in which Martinson lived is bound up with her writing. No author produces work in a vacuum (Darnton, 1990, 111), but Martinson's immediacy and social commentary mean that context is paramount to understanding her work. Strikes and lockouts are a significant part of this background, as Martinson first became politically aware as a teenager during the strikes of 1908–9. These culminated in the General Strike of 1909 and, following the failure of this, the founding of SAC.

Martinson followed events in the papers, including *Brand*, assiduously and interested herself in the syndicalist activity of her stepfather, Alfred (Engman, 1990, 31). The years 1917 and 1918 also saw strikes and hunger protests in Sweden, some spearheaded by women, which Madam Andersson mentions in a later column (Andersson, 1925d). The industrial unrest continued into the 1920s. These phenomena were not limited to Sweden – all of Europe was in flux (Persson, 1989) – but the large number of strikes, as well as the prominence of the syndicalists at the forefront of the protests, made Sweden unusual (ibid.).

Vi kvinnor was anxious to ensure that its readers, or their relatives, would not break a strike and printed two articles on the shame of 'scabbing'. In 'The strikebreaker's mother' ('Strejkbrytarens mor'), Ottar warned mothers that if they did not raise their children to be

class conscious, they might suffer the great shame of having a ‘scab’ in the family (Ottar, 1925c). This was followed in the next issue by a somewhat melodramatic article entitled ‘The lockout is coming’. Addressing the ‘Dear worker’s wife’, Ottar informed her that the employers were so callous that they did not care if her children were malnourished, or she herself died in childbirth. It was up to her to emulate the Danish ‘worker’s wife’ who, it was reported, during a major strike:

[...] accustomed to self denial for her husband and children’s sake, used to with a happy smile, conjuring up food from the least possible, accustomed to suffering and sacrifice for her children’s futures, used to taking any job available, accustomed to keeping up the men’s courage during times of adversity [...] conquered the employers. (Ottar, 1925d)

In contrast to the earnestness and high-minded expectations of Ottesen-Jensen’s articles, Madam Andersson’s view of the lockout is down to earth and gently entertaining. She says, with faux naïveté, that she does not understand the lockout any more than the skimpy clothes, but then goes on to disprove herself: ‘I don’t understand much about the lockout either, although I do know it’s not the same as a strike. And that the employers will happily starve us out, I know that too’ (Andersson, 1925a)

After expressing this radical political sentiment, Madam Andersson, much as Martinson might have done herself, takes a personal perspective. Her friend Fina’s husband is in difficulty because of the industrial unrest. Having left his job as an agricultural worker, he was promised employment on the wharf, but then a strike began ‘and obviously he couldn’t stay with the blackleg scum’ (Andersson, 1925a). Compelled to move on, he signed up to a ship, but ill health led to a stay in hospital: ‘And that’s going to be expensive because you don’t cure rheumatism that easily’ (ibid.). The litany of misfortunes rouses the reader’s sympathy and solidarity, yet the tone is easy and humorous, and the sense of righteous

indignation present in Ottar's articles is absent. Strike-breakers are 'scum' but not worth dwelling on.

After the digression into industrial relations and the health of Fina's husband, Madam Andersson, following the episodic pattern of work in the oral tradition, establishes that she had intended to write about a totally different subject. It emerges that she had planned to say something about her neighbours' alcoholic and abusive husbands. She cannot understand why the women tolerate the men and, even worse, pander to them when they are hungover and feeling sorry for themselves. She states: 'As all of you who have got drunken men know [...] it's when they are weak the morning after that you should tell them a few home truths' (ibid.). Madam Andersson also expresses concern for the women and suggests 'we could all' subscribe to a house for women to go when their men come home drunk (Andersson, 1925a). Again, Madam Andersson's (and Martinson's) attitude is practical: a women's refuge is needed and can be achieved. As Witt-Brattström points out, this feminist demand came 'as early as 1925!' (Witt-Brattström, 1999, 39). This conflicts with the dominant, fatalistic narrative in *Vi kvinnor* that alcoholism is a tragedy caused by capitalism, avoidable only in the long term through class-based struggle.

Martinson's own voice at times slips into a similar mode to *Vi kvinnor*'s, and in the temperance newspaper *Templarkuriren*, she published a sentimental series of vignettes on the horrors of alcohol. Ultimately, however, her attitude on the issue was practical here too. In 1922, the Swedish government, having previously introduced alcohol rationing in 1919, held a referendum on whether to apply a complete ban on the sale of alcohol. The result, a narrow victory for the side against prohibition, caused soul-searching amongst the left. It was felt that more workers, and above all women, should have voted in favour of a ban. Martinson, however, disagreed:

I am a woman and have lived in the shadow of the hell of alcohol my whole life, but I can see no salvation in prohibition under current circumstances. If one country allows the manufacture of spirits in unlimited quantities and in the neighbouring country it is forbidden, what then will be the consequences? Besides man's inventiveness is great when he desires something. (Helga, 1923)

Her voice here is as practical as Madam Andersson's, but, written two years earlier, it is not yet as succinct.

Gossip, sexual morality and the oral tradition

Gossip is a reoccurring motif within Martinson's work. Gossip as a form is part of the oral tradition, it can be about forging communal and collective identities through oral exchange, but it can also be punitive and exclusionary and is a denigrated form of feminised speech.

Martinson consistently presents it as a negative force – rather than a form of intimate speech that fosters connection – in contrast to her adoption and celebration of oral traditions elsewhere.

The topic of gossip emerges from the first in the Madam Andersson columns; as they progress, it becomes clear that, however much distress drunkards cause to society, it is the village's teetotaller that upsets Madam Andersson the most. The first column finishes on a tantalisingly gossipy note whilst referring back and linking to the perceived mollycoddling of men when they have hangovers.

If I get to see this in print, then my word, I'm going to tell you about how awful Johanna in Vångby was when my husband was there bricklaying for her. Men are, of course, an affliction, but sometimes it seems that they would be nicer if we were less nice. (Andersson, 1925a)

Johanna in Vångby is an unmarried Pentecostalist who can speak 'foreign'. The latter is a cause of chagrin for Malla, for she is unable to do so, and her husband claims that a 'good'

article needs to contain non-Swedish words. Johanna is Madam Andersson's *bête noire* for the entire series of articles. As a character, she is there to provide a very human side to the washerwoman. She also furnishes Martinson with scope to ridicule the church and pompous sanctimonious characters, as well as allows her an additional form of defence of her own writing.

A whole column is devoted to the time that Johanna finds out that Madam Andersson is a published writer. From then on, Johanna excludes Malla from her coffee parties, where she mocks her compositions in front of the other neighbours, maintaining that her own poem, on the subject of 'heaven and harps', is by contrast a true work of art. She insultingly adds that 'at least' Andersson, Malla's husband, appreciates an 'educated woman' – meaning herself. Unfortunately, the neighbours agree with Johanna's literary judgement, and Madam Andersson is forced to defend her writing to her readers, finally conceding that 'Of course, Johanna may be right, my writing may not be posh, but that's not to say it can't be good anyway' (Andersson, 1925c). She cites a poem by the national romantic poet Erik Geijer, given to her by 'A fine lady, who is educated and writes novels' (ibid.), in which being independently minded is lauded. It is not too far a stretch to think that Martinson might be replying to her own critics, as well as Malla's fictitious neighbours.

Martinson's depiction of individual and group dynamics is very well drawn and frequently correlates with that of social histories. Her portrayal of the function of gossip – that it was perpetually used to 'maintain a sense of equality by checking any unprecedented rise in the prestige of others' (Almirol, cited in Tebbutt, 1995, 107) – is particularly striking. It is borne out by Melanie Tebbutt's (1995) study of the history of gossip, which explores the links between women's status, class and the oral tradition. Tebbutt points to a situation that both Martinson and her fictional character were accustomed to, where:

Any outward sign of a claim to be different, particularly a claim to be in any way superior, was looked down upon and would invite gossip and adverse comment. Phrases like ‘she’s got a nose above her mouth’ and ‘she’s getting above herself’ or derogatory words like ‘posh’, ‘la-di-da’ and the like could be savagely applied, bringing in their tow the social isolation which would make life impossible in a community which depended so much on mutual co-operation. (Tebbutt, 1995, 107)

Johanna conforms to the archetype of a ‘gadding gossip’ (Tebbutt, 1995, 22–23), and, despite her godly pretensions, her sexual morality leaves something to be desired. Madam Andersson is particularly upset that when her husband was at Johanna’s, building her a brick stove, the latter changed her apron and curled her hair every day. Naturally, the thought of Johanna makes Madam Andersson ‘tremble all over’ (Andersson, 1925b). Subsequently, however, when Johanna is the victim of her neighbours’ prurient conjecture, Malla shows her compassion, as she rejects the opportunity for gossip even when it concerns her worst enemy. In general, Madam Andersson also takes a less outraged tone on the subject of infidelity than much of *Vi kvinnor*, where sexual immorality is equated with class injustice. In addition to the stories depicting the fall of young working-class girls into prostitution, there is an article written for the magazine by Upton Sinclair, where he depicts at some length the depraved promiscuity of the upper classes, including orgies, wife swapping and the white slave trade (Sinclair, 1925c). Where Sinclair is apparently morally indignant, whilst providing prurient details, Madam Andersson is amusing when making the same point. She gives two examples. The first is when the summer guests come to her village. They are obviously richer than the locals are but are at pains to explain that they are just ‘normal workers’. One woman earns the charwoman’s scorn by not seeing the difference between a cow and a bull and then compounds her ignorance by asserting that her husband receives high wages, not through being in a union, as Madam Andersson presumes, but because ‘he’s just very good at his job’

(Andersson, 1925g). It transpires that her spouse is a factory doorman who registers the workers as they arrive for work and writes them up ““even if they’re only 3 minutes late. The managers are so pleased with him”” (ibid.). Madam Andersson is forced to walk away in disgust at this class betrayal. She later sees the wife kissing the local bookkeeper and the doorman out boating with Johanna and concludes that people who believe that it is acceptable to betray their fellow workers clearly do not have any other morals.

Morality and ‘life wisdom’ are strong themes in the oral tradition (Adolfsson, 1991, 109) and recurrent ones in Martinson’s work. Three magazine issues later, she makes the same point, but this time skewering the hypocrisies of the wealthy and highlighting both gender and class inequalities. Madam Andersson tells of the day when, brought in to do the washing at the house of a railway director, she was working with his maid when the director himself came in and started shouting at and shaking the maid ‘until her hairpins fell out’(Andersson, 1925i). It transpired that he had lost his pipe and blamed her for tidying it away. It was later found in the governess’s room – ‘they went through governesses at a terrible rate in that house’ (ibid.). His wife retires to bed weeping, and the director comes down to the maid with a plate of strawberries by way of apology and is ‘as nice as pie’, but Madam Andersson is not fooled:

That’s the worst thing about the rich, you don’t know when to like them least, when they shout, or when they’re friendly. It’s like being a dog which gets kicked when people are in a bad mood and a bone (as dogs don’t particularly like strawberries) when they’re in a good mood and is then expected to sit up and beg and forget about the kick. (Andersson, 1925i)

We are invited to observe the power imbalance of the class system: the rich control the narrative in life and cannot be trusted. It is clear that we should censor the railway director – who follows his whims whilst his wife and the women who work for him suffer – and at first to also cordially dislike Johanna. Yet when Fina reveals to Madam Andersson that all the

neighbours believe that Johanna has ‘got herself in that way’ (Andersson, 1925h) and are guessing that the father is the doorman mentioned two issues before (Andersson, 1925g), Malla disappoints her friend. Despite having lured Fina over, by baking a cake, to discuss yet another coffee party to which she was not invited – ‘I’m no more than human, I wanted to know what they had said at Johanna’s’ (Andersson 1925h) – Madam Andersson declines to take gossipy pleasure in the details of her neighbour’s misfortune.

Here, Martinson is showing awareness of the currency of gossip, in which information is exchanged for profit or mutual benefit and ‘it’s the individual’s control of information that increases or decreases their social status, rather than social control of the group’ (Butterworth, 2009). Madam Andersson appears to conform to the rules of gossip but then rejects them:

‘Yes, but you have to feel sorry for her’, I said, ‘she feels sick, and there’s no father for the kid, if she actually has one, think what a child that will be. Poor Johanna, that’ll be her punishment. A puffed up fool of a father, who makes trouble for people who are a few minutes late and a gossip of a mother, who gets around, it would probably be better that he wasn’t born.’ (Andersson, 1925h)

Fina is disgusted by this response: “‘You’re so odd, Malla”, said Fina. “So that one can’t stand you, everybody says so” (ibid.). Again, Madam Andersson / Martinson rejects hyperbole and gossip, thereby denying the latter its role in contributing to ‘the mythical aspects of working-class motherhood’, since, as Tebbutt writes, ‘its dynamic was often to maintain the servicing, protective values of maternity and a narrow sexual morality’ (Tebbutt, 1995, 105). The punishment, through gossip and ostracization, inflicted on unmarried pregnant women by their local communities, could be severe (Tebbutt, 1995, 78–80). One can imagine what a different author in *Vi kvinnor* would have made of the story. Instead, Malla gives a down-to-earth and compassionate reaction. Although she still censors pomposity,

gossip and a lack of class consciousness, Madam Andersson (and Martinson) must perforce defend even an 'unheroic' single mother from scandalmongers.

In addition to the running narrative of Johanna, gossip is the focus of a separate story in Madam Andersson's writing. She expends a whole column on the case of Inga Blom, a feminist socialist whose drunken husband rejects her following neighbours' gossip.

Now Inga Blom is going to divorce her husband. Such scandalmongering there has been about her. Wherever you go, in the shop or in the market square, she's the subject talked about. No doubt they're finally happy, the gossips, now they've got her husband so mad he hits even when he's sober. (Andersson, 1925e)

The catalyst of the gossip is Blom allowing male trade union activists to spend the night on her kitchen floor whilst her husband is away. This is another case of Martinson using the autobiographical in her work, as she permitted syndicalists to meet at her house and suffered from the talk that resulted from this. The year before Madam Andersson's piece, Martinson wrote a strongly worded article for *Arbetaren* entitled 'Gossip sickness'. The tone is utterly subjective and the language is literary and, above all, metaphorical:

The gossip spreads pestilence wherever he goes. [...] The snake may have poison fangs but he is happy with giving a mortal bite and then the victim has the chance to retaliate. The lie-smith never offers a chance. He never gives an honest blow. He creeps [...] the gossip kills his fellow man's soul a piece at a time and laughs at his work and thinks himself clever. (Helga, 1924)

The violence of Martinson's language here is in striking contrast to the way she puts across the same argument in the Madam Andersson columns. 'Gossip sickness' is strident and rhetorical, whereas the Madam Andersson columns instead show us the negative effects of gossip. In 1924 Martinson was not yet able to 'pull back' (Gornick, 2002, 22), nor did she do so fully even in 1925. *Vi kvinnor* also contains her somewhat unsubtle short story 'Kerstin'

(Helga, 1925), where the subject of gossip is an unmarried mother, Maja, who is both beautiful and hardworking. The persona that Martinson inhabits as Madam Andersson is more nuanced and less strident than when she is writing in her own voice.

The theme of gossip reappears in Martinson's novels, including *Women and Apple Trees* (Martinson, 1949), by which time she has become more subtle in her characterization, her heroines are no longer closed archetypes. Her debut novel begins with a description of Mother Sofie's bath night. A mother of ten, her one luxury is to take a bath, together with her best friend, once a week. Her unusual habit of cleanliness, however, precipitates village gossip, and spurious accusations of sexual impropriety are made in the local free church.

The zeal was strong, one felt oneself superior even to the vicar himself, who was lax in his pastoral care.

One cried and prayed and sang and depicted the sinful women, their baths, their orgies with men [...]. (Martinson, 1949, 21)

That there is no basis in reality for these claims is beside the point: the women are condemned, and Mother Sofie commits suicide. All these examples from Martinson's work point to women being punished for infringing societal norms, whether through their sexual conduct, political activism or writing. In almost all the cases, the punishment consists of impugning their sexual characters. Martinson was dogged by gossip throughout her life.

When her children died, it was said in her village that it served 'the Bolshevik' right (Wernström, 1978). Her relationship (both personal and professional) with the much younger Harry Martinson was the subject of much conjecture, and this did not cease after their divorce in 1940. The novelist and feminist historian Alice Lyttkens, who was a close friend of Martinson's, includes in her memoirs a bitter letter from the author written in 1943 on the subject of gossip. She writes that she had suffered from pneumonia: 'I almost pegged out, at least then the blabbermouths in Stockholm would have been forced to keep their mouths shut'

(Lyttkens, 1980, 148). Lyttkens felt Martinson's bitterness came from her seeing the majority of her old comrades side with Harry in their divorce of 1940. Martinson claimed it was jealousy that had caused this gossip: 'Apparently, the cause of their [the gossips'] anger about me is that I'm not the cow herd they've painted me out to be, no disrespect to cow herds – also that it wasn't Harry Martinson that wrote my books' (Martinson, cited in Lyttkens, 1980, 149). Although Martinson told Lyttkens that she had decided to 'Not give a damn about any of it [the gossip]' (Martinson cited in Lyttkens, 1980, 148), clearly she did.

Martinson hated the concept of gossip, yet much of her work is based on interpersonal relationships sustained by what is, in fact, benign gossip. Gossip has a significant role to play in the oral tradition, where it has not always been viewed as negative.³⁶ It has instead served a function for marginalised groups who have not had access to literacy (Roberts, 1974, 43), or 'because the intimacy and shared context of its participants means that participants can speak more freely than in more formal settings' (Adkins, 2017, 52). It is also associated with women.

Tebbutt argues that the denigration of gossip has class and gender connotations and 'can be seen as part of the ideological undermining of working-class culture which encouraged working-class people, and women especially, to undervalue themselves and their activities' (Tebbutt, 1995, 11). In criticising women for gossiping on the street, social investigators and philanthropists were, argues Jane Lewis, 'often attacking the sources of neighbourly communication and mutual aid' (Lewis, 1984, 54). However, equally, as Martinson felt, gossip can be poisonous and destructive (Adkins, 2017, 10).

In creating Madam Andersson and her 'own' voice, Martinson was working within the conventions of the oral tradition, where strong characters were (and are) essential. 'For', as Tebbutt writes, "colorless personalities" could not survive "oral mnemonics", which

³⁶ One of the arguments for the Gutenberg Parenthesis (see Pettitt, 2007) is the dissemination of gossip on the internet (Garber, 2010).

concentrated on the dramatic and unusual as a means of expressing and perpetuating important collective lessons' (Tebbutt, 1995, 5). Martinson also followed this rule in her projection of herself as a 'larger than life' character, with her controversial politics, taste in music (accordion tunes and *The Internationale*) and refusal to smooth away her rough edges. In 1962, she gave an infamous radio interview where she gave her views on modern food, in particular pizza. Not only was this food for the upper classes but the name, she said, also sounded distressingly like 'to piss' (Sveriges Radio, 2007).

Martinson was not alone amongst radical female authors in creating a witty first-person columnist or epistolarian published in a periodical. Sand created a cast of peasant characters (Chapman, 2007a, 2007b) who reacted to news in a manner that made it accessible, using similar tropes to those that Martinson would subsequently use with Madam Andersson.

Gandhi did likewise (Chapman, 2014). In *Hospital Sketches* (1869), Louisa M. Alcott's alter ego, Tribulations Periwinkle, uses humour, as well as pathos, to communicate, mostly from Alcott's personal experiences, the situation of the nurses and wounded soldiers in the American Civil War, as well as the author's abolitionist views. In Sweden, 14 years prior to Madam Andersson, Wägner published 'Mrs Hillevi's diary' ('Fru Hillevis dagbok'). This appeared as 16 columns in the women's magazine *Idun* and purported to be the diary of a newly married, young upper-class woman in the women's suffrage movement. Again, humour and semi-autobiographical aspects are used to transmit a political message. The use of humour as a campaigning tool by social movements has been documented; the Wobblies, in particular, used humour to make political lessons accessible and to provide entertainment, thus attracting readers to their political newspapers (Chapman et al., 2015).

Madam Andersson is unusual, however, in that she is a working-class persona created by a writer from the same social grouping. Although at times a humorous character, she is not a figure of fun: we are meant to take her opinions seriously. Both with Madam Andersson and

when speaking in her own voice, Martinson's work shows Kramer's 'defining mark' of literary journalism, where the 'whole, candid person [... speaks] simply in his or her own right' (Kramer, 1995, 29). In doing so, she also reinforces his claim that literary journalism is 'pro-individual, anti-cant, and anti-elite' (ibid., 34). She continued to do this in articles critical of the labour movement.

Protesting against attitudes within the labour movement

In her articles for *Arbetaren* and *Brand* Martinson used her personal experience and gender and class identity for a political purpose. She did this not only in responding to accepted topics of debate, but also in more complex ways, exploring the dangers of condescension and challenging the criticism and censorship from male editors. From Ottesen-Jensen's resignation letter, it was clear that the conflict over the women's page had little to do with her and Martinson's less than perfect Swedish. In the letter, Ottar claimed that she had been told by Casparsson to alter the feminist tone of the women's page and 'cover subjects relating to the page's title' or be subject to censorship (Ottar, 1924b). Ottesen-Jensen stated that this would mean that 'cooking and stain removal etc would become the important subjects of the page and the social issues would receive a subordinate position' (ibid.). This was a change she was not prepared to make.

Although Casparsson also had a personal reason for his antipathy towards Ottar, *Arbetaren's* editors were not unusual in their insistence on domestic subject matter. As Maurine Beasley points out, during the same period in the USA, it was often the case that 'male editors limited the women's pages to a trite formula of fashion, beauty hints, and domestic chitchat' (Beasley and Gibbons). It seemed that in the syndicalist newspaper, the women's pages served the same purpose as in conservative publications: drawing in a female readership in order to 'capitalize on department store advertising aimed at housewives', with 'the image of an idyllic home and hearth as a woman's main priority' (ibid.). A perhaps surprising number of

businesses did choose to advertise within *Arbetaren*'s pages, and not just the co-operative stores (*Arbetaren*, 1925). Crisp bread and knitting machines (*Arbetaren*, 1924) were amongst the products advertised on the 'Woman and the home' page, whilst advertisements for everything from cafés and clothes to fishmongers and wallpaper appeared throughout the paper, especially on pages focusing on particular geographical areas. Readers were urged to 'Support our advertisers!' (*Arbetaren*, 1926). If this was the main reason for having a women's page, then articles ignoring domesticity would have been particularly unwelcome. To ensure that the women's page kept to the new guidelines, Ottesen-Jensen was told that her page would be checked by the male editors before going to print. Ottesen-Jensen preferred instead to resign, as did Martinson, who joined her in writing for the anarchist publication *Brand*. Casparsson never forgave Martinson for her actions, describing her in his memoirs almost four decades later as:

[...] a completely furious being. She was a poor worker's wife from Ösmo, constantly in opposition and as aggressive as a cobra. She wrote angry letters and abused the editorial committee. As the most outwardly visible representative for this committee, I was often in the firing line for this sprayer of poison. (Thorgren, 2011, 192)

Martinson's anger and aggression often appeared to shock men – her expression of these emotions is discussed further in following chapters – but these were also people to whom, as representatives of the status quo, Martinson presented a threat. In their political discussions on the women's page, Ottesen-Jensen, Martinson and the other contributors were challenging a triumvirate of escalating prejudice. Firstly, as Tebbutt points out:

[...] women's talk has traditionally been disparaged as an inferior form of conversation, lacking the significance of men's words, although their use of language has often been one of the few ways in which women could assert themselves, and for this reason has been a constant source of comment and prohibition. (Tebbutt, 1995, 7)

Ottar et al. were women expressing their opinions, attempting to carve out more space in a predominately male organisation on topics that were considered the prerogative of men, and they reaped the consequences of this. Secondly, they were women discussing politics – something that Toni Morrison, in her foreword to an anthology of women’s radical writing of the 1930s, recognises as the subject of ‘an uneasy history’ (Morrison, 1987, ix) and liable for punishment. ‘From Antigone to Angela Davis, patriarchal reactions to that participation have been to trivialize, to rage, to dismiss, or bury’ (ibid.). This is a strikingly accurate portrayal of the responses that Martinson and Ottesen-Jensen met when they dared to discuss women’s active participation in the syndicalist movement. Thirdly, they were women discussing politics in a *newspaper*. As Beasley points out, in the USA, ‘Despite their role in the newspaper organization, women’s pages were barely tolerated by male journalists’; they were kept away from the main newsroom and put in areas labelled such things as ‘the hen coop’ (Beasley, 86). At *Arbetaren*, ‘Woman and the home’ was referred to as ‘the womb page’ (Ottesen-Jensen, 1986, 140). It was perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that Martinson and Ottesen-Jensen found themselves unwelcome at *Arbetaren*, especially when the former’s forthright manner was taken into account.

Martinson did not restrict her criticism to men inside the labour movement; Ottesen-Jensen was a feminist and later a close friend to Martinson, but this did not preclude the latter’s denunciation of her condescension. Ottesen-Jensen was the daughter of an ‘aristocratic’ (Thorgren, 2011, 9) Norwegian vicar, and although she dedicated her life to the working-class cause, her writing sometimes had, as Martinson and others perceived it, a patronising quality. In her resignation letter to *Arbetaren*, Ottar stated that she had been accused by the editor of writing in a ‘Salvation Army tone’ (Ottar, 1924b). It was this attitude that Martinson objected to when she wrote her first contribution to the newspaper in November 1922 in response to comments the previous week by Ottesen-Jensen. In the offending article, Ottar thanked

women for their efforts in supporting *Arbetaren*. However, the gratitude was equivocal, with the impression that Ottesen-Jensen thought little of the intellectual capacity of her female readers.

Maybe this sacrifice has not always been made with understanding for and love of the great idea that syndicalism and *Arbetaren* work for, that of freedom, happiness and wellbeing for all. Maybe it was often made with a sigh and a lack of understanding, or because the husband represented the ‘brain’ of the house and her belief in him was so great, that his cause became hers. (Ottar, 1922)

Ottesen-Jensen also claimed that working-class women needed educating and that their class-conscious sons might one day come to despise them for their negativity towards the class struggle (ibid., 15).

In her response, ‘Kvinnan och syndikalismen’ (‘Woman and syndicalism’) (1922), Martinson retorted that the article was ‘sentimental and unctuous’ and that women were described as though they were ‘idiots or Sunday school children’. She protested, she said, ‘as a woman against that tone of paternal indulgence of our weaknesses’, and if women were to have an educative page, then so should men (H. J., 1922). ‘Woman and syndicalism’ was indicative of what was to come in Martinson’s journalism – it was full of indignation, intelligence and a volley of different ideas. Despite the criticism in Martinson’s first contribution, Ottesen-Jensen immediately recognised her talent, writing that she hoped they would be hearing more from her, and became an ally and mentor to Martinson. In return, she felt that Martinson was a strong support and ‘a breath of fresh air in the newspaper’s columns’ (Ottesen-Jensen, 1986, 141). Ottar’s own patronising tone, however, resurfaced, especially at times in *Vi kvinnor*.

***Vi kvinnor*: Martinson countering theoretical advice with practical experience**

Martinson was a frequent contributor to *Vi kvinnor*, which appeared fortnightly for only 16 issues before it was forced to close due to a lack of funds. Her writing was evidently popular;

the final issue of *Vi kvinnor* contained the interview ‘Who is Helga?’, conducted by Ottar (1925e) and published due, she said, to the many requests she had received from comrades across the country for more information on Martinson.

Vi kvinnor was undoubtedly an appropriate home for Martinson, as its objective was to ‘push aside the bourgeois women’s magazines with their teaching of contentedness and belief in authority’ (Unknown, 1925). This goal would be reached through education, especially on the subjects of sexual health and contraception. Ottar was a pioneer within sexual health and went on to found the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU) in 1933. ‘Every issue included an interview with a doctor or social worker who had contact with the sexual problems and realised the importance of changing the laws [those banning abortion and the distribution of contraceptives]’ (Ottesen-Jensen 1986, 144).

Vi kvinnor also covered a varied selection of other subjects, from genetics, prostitution in Japan and evolution to household hints and knitting patterns. There were fables for children with revolutionary messages³⁷ and similarly edifying stories for adults. In the latter, young working-class women with noble natures regularly died in garrets after being driven to prostitution by a capitalist society, and the fathers of young families succumbed to drink for the same reason.³⁸ As in British socialist novels, ‘a common device was for the hero or heroine to convert to socialism through romance’ (Smith, 1978, 41).

Writers that are still well known today were represented. Extracts from Kropotkin’s work were published (Kropotkin, 1925b; 1925c), as were contributions from Key (1925) and

³⁷ In ‘The hare and the lion’ (*Haren och lejonet*), an oppressive lion is tricked by a hare into jumping down a well. The story concludes with the slogan: ‘Courage and knowledge will defeat the old tyrants! May the oppressed understand this!’ (Unknown (1925) *Haren och lejonet*, *Vi kvinnor*, No. 5, p. 9).

³⁸ In ‘Unemployed’ (‘Arbetslös’), Arne loses his job and, since his wife and children are starving, is forced to resort to begging. The rich all cruelly turn him away, and he is full of despair until he meets a member of his own class who miraculously offers him food, money and the prospect of a job. Arne joyfully runs home and tells his wife that in future he is going to spend his spare time working for the trade union to ensure that capitalism is abolished, the workers take over the means of production and everyone is happy (Unknown (1925) *Arbetslös*, *Vi kvinnor*, No. 16, pp. 2, 19).

Sinclair. The latter wrote on the subjects of starvation cures (1925b), marriage (1925a) and the sexual depravity of the wealthy (1925c). William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890) appeared in instalments, albeit with a less than enthusiastic introduction from Ottar:

'Everybody must read this serial. It may be that the first chapter is not that exciting, but you must read it anyway' (Ottar, 1925f).

The readership of *Vi kvinnor* was mixed, but the magazine contained many articles where Ottar specifically targeted an audience of working-class women. These articles were clearly intended to inspire the readership to political or personal action, yet at times the simplistic message, similar to that of the fiction, lent a condescending tone to the articles. It was implied that working-class women did not appreciate the importance of political organisation and that they should strive harder for political enlightenment. Whilst it was extremely forward-thinking in many areas, the paper could not escape being a child of its time. For the 1 May edition of *Vi kvinnor*, Ottar's husband, Albert Jensen, wrote a historical article on the women's bread march to Versailles and claimed that '*even* women have influenced history in a major way' [italics added] (Jensen, 1925). Still more incongruous in their misogyny, to the extent that they appeared to be in the wrong publication, were the aphorisms published on *Vi kvinnor*'s page for knitting patterns and jokey asides. 'The natural consolation for a woman who has lost an admirer appears to be to take a new admirer from a friend'; 'By marrying women seek happiness, while men risk theirs'; and 'Women treat men as humanity treats its gods. They worship them but torment them at the same time in order that they do as much as possible for them' (Unknown, 1925).

It is unfair to single out Ottesen-Jensen and *Vi kvinnor* for their tone, as they were unusual only in their radical political ideas. Margaret Berger (1974) identifies a very similar attitude in the Swedish women's paper *Idun* under the editorship of Eva (Nyblom-)Höckerberg. From 1928 until 1962, Berger (1972, 12) writes, *Idun* was a newspaper that 'primarily listened to an

intellectual elite of good social standing'. The writers espoused ideas they felt to be more advanced than those of their readers and therefore spoke 'at or about them – in a teacherlike manner, with the wish to stimulate and guide' (ibid.).

The interviews in *Idun* were always with prominent women: “the ordinary woman's” situation, problems etc. were dealt with collectively, or with reference to anonymous individuals – for example, ‘how does the clerk live?’ (ibid.). This was much like *Vi kvinnor*, with the exception that *Idun*, in the first decades of Hökerberg's editorship, was critical of readers' letters and published only very few. In contrast, *Vi kvinnor* encouraged contributions from its readers, as did *Arbetaren*, which, in the manner of socialist newspapers worldwide (Vulovic, 2011, 61), fostered a lively correspondence with them. Without the encouragement of this democratic and economical (Brink Pinto, 2011, 69) format, perhaps Martinson would never have become a published author.

There was also, Ami Lönnroth (2008, 96) argues, an educative purpose prevalent in most other women's magazines in Sweden during this time and up until the 1950s. In the 1920s and 1930s, efficiency began to be prized to an even greater extent than before in households; new designs, such as the Frankfurt kitchen in 1926, encouraged this. Housewives were expected to be rational, and this was reflected in their magazines. This was primarily limited to a plethora of guidance on how to run a household, which included weekly menus. As Lönnroth (2008) points out, occasionally, the envisaged household's budget vastly exceeded what one might expect their readers' reality to be. In 1924, for example, *Bonniers Veckotidning* (*Bonniers Weekly Paper*) gave suggestions on how to prepare for an ‘elegant’ dinner with 24 guests (cited in ibid., 96).

There are indications that such dinners were not to be taken seriously by the readers and were simply to be read as an aspirational form of entertainment (Berger, 1974, 26). *Vi kvinnor* was never so impractical, although Martinson took it to task for its weekly page ‘Vårt dagliga

bröd' ('Our daily bread'). The model menus had been concocted by Stockholm's housekeeping schools to feed working-class families of four and were unrealistic on several levels, not least in their expectation of only two children per household. To do so she adopted an ironic and incisive tone.

Do they think [she asked] that the *preventivlag* [the law forbidding contraception] has already been abolished? [...] For most of us workers these menus are, under present circumstances, of no use whatsoever. [...] My household is made up of seven people with healthy appetites and never a problem with their stomachs. Our food consists, very varyingly, of pickled herring, cheap pickled herring, dried cod, potatoes and porridge. (Helga 1925b)

Martinson expressed her doubts that the upper-class women and housekeeping teachers who provided the advice could, given the same conditions, feed a family and concluded that she would prefer it if the upper and middle classes would keep their ideas to themselves and not try to compile menus for the poor. She also declined the opportunity to write a menu herself, claiming that not only would it be a pointless task, when the basis for such a menu would be so meagre, but also that to do so would be hypocritical (a class betrayal) and possibly demeaning. 'It would only be to proclaim oneself a paragon of economy and maybe receive a medal for it from well-meaning wives of the bourgeoisie whilst hunger screamed in both my gut and that of my family' (Helga, 1925b). To adopt such a persona would have been inauthentic to her experience. Instead, it was a matter of pride to Martinson that, as she wrote in 1951, 'I have written about many problems in different papers, but I have never written about food or published a recipe' (Martinson, 1951a). She then proceeded, as an exception to this rule, to provide a recipe to cure 'spring sickness' and guidance on keeping one's stomach healthy (a Swedish preoccupation). This included eating plenty of fish, although she did not make the mistake of 'bourgeois wives' in being unrealistic about the purses of her readers.

She remained class conscious and kept in mind that ‘fresh fish is expensive’ but that herring was attainable.

Ottar and the contributors to *Vi kvinnor* were not the only comrades Martinson found to be impractical. Also the subject of criticism by Martinson were Alexandra Kollontai’s thoughts on free love. They were, Martinson argued, ‘like a bubble, they burst at the first contact with life’s realities’ (Helga, 1923). Her reaction to Kollontai is acerbic, though humorous, practical and class conscious.

We should worship love, says Mrs Kollontai, and move to a hotel in order to avoid doing the dishes and laundry, but who will do the dishes then? Will the cat lick them clean or will there, even in her communist society, exist individuals who are considered to be good for nothing except labour? (ibid.)

When Lenin’s views on marriage are debated in *Arbetaren*, they are not to her liking either. The Russian literary journalist Teffi, who knew both Kollontai and Lenin, wrote of the latter’s pragmatic and passionless disregard for anyone or anything that did not serve his cause. ‘Anyone harmful or even just inconvenient could be done away with – and this would be carried out calmly and sensibly, without malice’ (Teffi, 2016, 107). He also totally disregarded culture and beauty (ibid., 103, 105). Martinson recognises these aspects of Lenin and draws the line at his communal kitchens and rational childcare. She prefers the individualism and humanity of the anarchists, even if it means more housework.

It just so happens that humankind, luckily, is not a collection of machines which can all be lumped together, as some great reformers seem to think. We are instead a group of contradictory individuals with as many different tastes and ideas as there are people. Of course, one should make sacrifices for a good cause, but to offer up human individuality in order to solve problems around food and housework, is a sacrifice not worth making. (Helga, 1923)

To illustrate her point, Martinson gives an example from daily life: childbirth. She personalises the issue, ‘injecting’ (Talese, 1971, vii) herself into her political argument and thus making it stronger. She contrasts what is considered ‘best’ by a rational society – that of keeping mother and child isolated from germs, but thereby also human contact, feeding them medicine and the mother strictly healthy food – with what she knows in practice to be beneficial. Speaking in the first person, she argues that if her friend should give birth, more important than all the prescribed actions would be human interaction. She would visit the friend and hold and admire her baby, and Martinson and her friend would gossip and drink ‘the forbidden cup of coffee’ (Helga, 1923g). Through practical first-hand knowledge, Martinson challenges Lenin’s theories.

Conclusion

In establishing an authoritative (female) voice, Martinson utilised her own experiences and the oral tradition – with its focus on the communal and everyday – whilst deliberately rejecting the aligned, yet stigmatized, mode of gossip. The attractiveness of Martinson’s writing was enhanced by its immediacy – a combined effect of journalism and the oral tradition – bearing a resemblance to the blogs of today. Ideas took form as she wrote, and she was known for her authenticity and outspokenness. This could, however, also be problematic, especially in the early years, as Martinson’s writing could be confused and contradictory. This was assuaged by the creation of her alter ego, Madam Andersson. In Malla, she was able to take a step back and construct a persona who had the same concerns as Martinson herself, such as the effects of poverty and gossip, but who was free to express her opinions on them with humour and without the bitterness that Martinson felt in real life. This voice was also free, often through jokiness, to admit weakness and yet remain confident. The humour and the narrative form of the articles also helped to put across political ideas. So successful was

Martinson in this creation that, even during the brief life of *Vi kvinnor*, readers craved more information about her.

Over the years, Martinson's themes remained the same, and she self-identified as part of the collective of working-class women whilst simultaneously embracing the individuality that made her famous. Her voice matured over the years: by the 1950s it had settled, with a steady rhythm and calm that had been missing from her earlier work. Less didactic than in the 1920s, her writing became more nuanced, though not to the degree that the reader was left in any doubt as to what to think on the issues she presented.

As a self-educated woman, Martinson took the tools she had to hand (her gendered and class-based experiences), together with her knowledge of the oral tradition, and created a distinctive voice that dared to challenge everyone from her local councillors to the leaders of the Soviet Union. By employing orality within her writing, Martinson generated a hitherto unexplored place for this culture within literary journalism. The next chapter explores how Martinson utilised a particular aspect of her experience, maternity, to provide a distinct form of authority.

Chapter 5: Martinson's use of Maternal Identity in the Political Struggle

The importance of motherhood in Martinson's work

This chapter focuses on maternal identity and the role of the mother within Martinson's writing. The concept of motherhood, with its accompanying responsibilities and feelings of deep love, imbues Martinson's work. It is the primary theme of 27 of her articles and is referred to in passing in many more. These are her strongest pieces of journalism from an autobiographical perspective. Motherhood emerges as both a communal role – mothers of the world are called upon as a collective, of which Martinson is part, to prevent war and bring about socialism (Helga, 1929) – and as an individual responsibility. In particular, maternity is seen as a source of authority. Martinson employs her experience of motherhood as a weapon in a political battle for ideas. Interior discovery, through her distinct form of immersion, is Martinson's primary inspiration, but she also draws on exterior sources. The actions of friends and neighbours, but above all Key's unspoken influence, can be gleaned from her work.

Inspired by the latter, Martinson shows the motherly role to be open to all women, irrespective of biological motherhood, with maternal concern extending beyond the immediate family into a form of universal motherly love. Martinson's focus on motherhood is perhaps the most studied aspect of her writing, and the beginning of this chapter builds and expands upon the studies of Witt-Brattström (1989, 1990) who has discussed the role of the mother within her work. Where Witt-Brattström has explored the maternal symbolism in her writing, in this thesis Martinson's practical use of motherhood is highlighted.

Martinson's pride in her parental role is a constant in her journalistic work, but motherhood as a theme also permeates her books. In Martinson's autobiographical novels, motherhood is shown from the perspectives of both a parent and a daughter. Her early married life and the births of her children are portrayed in the 'Betty series' (Martinson, 1943, 1952, 1957, 1959),

whereas her close bond with her mother when growing up is depicted in one of her most popular novels: *Mor gifter sig* (1936) (*My Mother Gets Married*). In the latter, the ostensible protagonist is Martinson's alter ego, the little girl Mia, illegitimate daughter of Hedvig, but, as Martinson claimed in the preface of the second edition, 'the main character in this book is my mother' (Martinson, 1956).

Motherhood as a working-class identity

In Martinson's novels, fertility is depicted as a virtue; as a consequence, unsympathetic characters, particularly upper- and middle-class characters, are often symbolically sterile.³⁹ For the purposes of this metaphor, she portrays the working class as robust stock who will people the earth, whereas at other times she finds it more expedient to portray them as weakened by poverty and hard labour. Martinson's assessment of the value of childbearing is based on class factors. In her analysis of working-class communities from 1880 to 1960, Melanie Tebbutt refers to the fact that in Britain, 'in the poorest areas [...] there was an extent to which fecundity remained the measure of women's power' (Tebbutt, 1995, 104). Other Swedish proletarian writers also recognised this and used working-class female fertility as an analogy in their work, for example Ivar Lo-Johansson in his novel *Godnatt, jord* (1933). With this came an appreciation for the role of the mother, in both reality and fiction. Pride in, and admiration for, motherhood has been identified as a common denominator amongst Swedish working-class women in sociological studies from both the 1970s (Norberg, 1979) and more recently (Wennerström, 2003). It appears in histories of working-class men, such as Ella Johansson's work on the lumberjacks of northern Sweden during the period 1850–1950 (Johansson, 1989, 202), as well as in Tebbutt's UK study, which notes the devotion towards mothers generated in working-class communities (Tebbutt, 1995, 102, 109).

³⁹ See, for example, *Mor gifter sig* (1956, 15).

As Anneli Jordahl points out, motherly love also runs like a thread through many working-class female writers' work (Jordahl, 2006, 60). In this regard, as well as Martinson, she references the Swedish Elsie Johansson (2003) and Herta Wirén (1983), in addition to the French and New Zealand writers (respectively) Annie Ernaux (1993) and Janet Frame (1984) (Jordahl, 2006, 60). In Sweden, such authors have often been inspired to write 'panegyrics' in honour of their mothers and so highlight their hidden labour and suffering (Lundgren and Melberg, 1981, 185). Witt-Brattström notes that, in both her journalism and her books, Martinson 'defends and heroises working-class mothers' (Witt-Brattström, 1989, 35); it is a constant refrain in her newspaper articles. In her very first letter to *Arbetaren*, Martinson writes of self-sacrificing, in Witt-Brattström's eyes 'masochistic' (ibid., 27), working-class mothers who 'like the mother bird pluck the down from our own breasts in order to protect our young' (Helga, 1922). Tebbutt also notes the 'stress on the "self-sacrifice" of motherhood' amongst working-class communities (Tebbutt, 1995, 102) and argues that, although such acknowledgement of women's work and influence is welcome, it is not always helpful. When the praise is limited to mothers, to the extent of placing them on a pedestal, and not extended to working-class wives, the scope for female identity becomes very limited (ibid., 102). Nor is such a 'masochistic' attitude necessarily very healthy, and it is one that Martinson later turned against.

The importance of the mother in forming embryonic citizens and, by default, a future society was emphasised in societal discourse in the first decades of the 20th century (Tornbjør, 2002; Hjordt-Vetlesen, 2011), but middle-class women were able to reject this trope to a greater extent, as is clear from the class differentiation in the objectification of maternity. As Tebbutt points out, where motherhood 'was a powerful motif within working-class communities', this was 'in contradistinction to the critical observations of many middle-class observers' (Tebbutt, 1995, 109). The contrast is also marked in the responses of middle-class writers to

the subject, as Nancy K. Miller (1991) establishes. In the works of Sand, Simone de Beauvoir and Colette, motherhood is not of primary importance. In fact, for these authors, ‘the secondariness of maternity was itself a form of cultural resistance’ (Miller, 1991, 127) – a revolt that was not open to working-class women.

The ‘cult’ of motherhood in the women’s press and the fetishization of suffering

This class difference was also directly reflected in Swedish women’s magazines of the 1920s and 1930s, where the self-sacrificing mother was lauded by the majority until the 1940s. After this, a different role was encouraged, as women were needed in the workplace (Tornbjær, 2002, 104). When Martinson began writing for Ottar’s *Vi Kvinnor* in 1925, she was a rarity amongst the middle- and upper-class contributors. The readers, however, were expected to be working-class and to be in need of political education. In *Vi Kvinnor*, motherhood was not solely a societal issue: it was considered women’s main point of reference. Even an educative article on mental health, ‘Nervousness and hysteria’ (‘Nervositet och hysteri’), puts its subject matter into context by making it clear that ‘This is of course not the sort of nervousness a mother feels, when she is worried that her children have not come home in time, or when her children are asked difficult questions in exams’ (Unknown, 1925c). In their primary capacity as mothers, the readers were frequently urged to take maternal responsibility for preventing war, for raising their children not to cross picket lines and for achieving political enlightenment (Pettersson, 1925). Martinson’s choice to make Madam Andersson’s role as a mother insignificant is therefore all the more unusual, although she rectified this with several very different articles in *Vi Kvinnor* that emphasised the maternal viewpoint. In her contribution to their ‘Our daily bread’ page (Helga, 1925b), discussed in the previous chapter, Martinson makes it clear that she is coming from an unassailable position of personal experience and knowledge as a working-class mother and housewife and uses this authority to counter the attitude of the middle-class contributors.

Vi Kvinnor was not alone in its focus on maternity. Margaret Berger (1974) highlights the ‘cult’ of motherhood that existed in the women’s magazine *Husmodern* (*The Housewife*). On the cover of issues from 1930, for example, mothers and children are a ubiquitous presence. A special Mother’s Day edition shows children collecting flowers for their parent, whilst a sentimental poem within admonishes the reader to keep their mother’s letters close at hand (ibid., 65).⁴⁰ Readers with large families are regularly celebrated in *Husmodern*. Mrs Lenell, with her 105 living descendants, was awarded *Husmodern*’s gift of a ‘luxury bible’ (ibid., 68). ‘At home’ articles almost invariably depict a woman who is both a diligent housewife and a prolific childbearer. ‘It seems as though the magazine deliberately tries to find women with the most children. The more children, the more praise and the better headlines’ (ibid., 68). A woman who lives alone with her 15 offspring on their own island whilst her husband, a skipper, is constantly at sea is ‘first and foremost a mother, in the deepest meaning of the word. How calmly, kindly and warmly she guides her boys and girls’ (cited in ibid., 68). The role of mother in these articles is symbolic in the extreme.

The readership of *Husmodern* was predominately working and lower middle class. *Idun*, the magazine directed at middle- and upper-class women, took a partially different approach to maternity. The journal had advocated for women’s suffrage since the turn of the century, and the radical Elin Wägner had previously held an editorial post there. Consequently, the magazine’s profiles of successful women in 1930 did not include a single prominent ‘mother’. Clearly, the readership had a broader range of choices in life. They were able to heed the words of the former leading suffragette, historian and author Lydia Wahlström when she warned of the following in its pages: ‘we must not in the manner of Topelius so idealise motherhood in itself that we, in all the romanticism of the home, forget that motherhood is simply a physiological function, which is what we make of it’ (Wahlström, cited in Berger,

⁴⁰ For a study of attitudes in British women’s periodicals, see White, C. (1970) *Women’s Magazines, 1693-1968*. London: Joseph.

1974, 64–65).⁴¹ *Idun* did not, however, completely eschew maternal celebration; feminists did after all welcome a greater appreciation of the maternal role (Riemer and Fout, 1983, 163). Its Mother's Day issue of 1926 rivalled *Husmodern*'s with its depictions of mothers, children and maternal sacrifice.

In the context of *Husmodern* and *Idun*, *Vi Kvinnor* was a mixture of tradition and radicalism. The magazine celebrated motherhood to a sentimental degree. It could do little else: motherhood was one of the few meaningful roles available to working-class women. An added reason for the focus on motherhood by the labour movement in the first decades of the 20th century, one that Ottar was mindful of, was the threat that women were perceived to pose to strikes by their apparent lack of political awareness and their potential to place their families' short-term well-being above the workers' cause (see Stearns, 1990, 102). For *Vi Kvinnor*, maternal responsibility therefore involved self-education. The well-being of the family, and the socialist cause, was reliant on mothers having an interest in politics and societal advances, including the knowledge to actively limit the sizes of their families. By doing this, *Vi Kvinnor* recognised a much larger scope for maternity than magazines such as *Husmodern* did.

As *Vi Kvinnor* shows, motherhood was as lauded within radical left groups as it was elsewhere. In socialist newspapers, there was again a strong sense of motherhood being a font of 'suffering and endurance' (Hobsbawm, 1978, 127). The women in the stories and poems are forever sending their children to be consumed by capitalist forces such as war, factories

⁴¹ The nationalist poet Zacharias Topelius was the author of the poem 'My Mother', a tribute to his late parent, written in 1868. It included the verse:
Where is the love, that unto death,
Remains changeless, in the face of fate
Like God's angel, over us watching
Asks for nothing, but sacrifices all,
On this earth there is only one,
A mother's love is this alone. (Topelius, 1922, 291)
A great success, the ode was a staple of the Swedish school reader between 1911 and 1951, where it was described as 'the most beautiful memorial a son could raise over his mother' (Gagner, 1922, 294).

and the white slave trade. However, the suffering of mothers was not confined to the labour movement literature. During the 1920s, there was also copious use of tragic mothers, often with religious connotations, in conservative and other literature aimed at encouraging morality. Vita Bandet (*The White Ribbon*), the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, was particularly strong on this point, but popular magazines also contributed stories to a narrative where the death of either the mother or the (adult) child brought about absolution (Tornbjør, 2002, 96–99). 'The mother was, of course, an earthly being, but in the same way as God, the mother always forgave, no matter how badly the child had behaved' (ibid., 99). Martinson herself wrote similar stories in the temperance newspaper *Templarkuriren*. The difference between the socialist and conservative accounts appears to have been the causes of suffering for mothers. For the former, it was capitalism; for the latter, it was a lack of personal morality, in either the mother or her child. In the labour movement stories, there also tended to be a greater emphasis on the, albeit fruitless, physical striving of working-class women for their children's well-being, whereas in the other tales, mothers passively waited at home to provide comfort when their children returned to them. Both types, however, embraced the discourse of tragedy, one that encourages passivity and acceptance (Jacobs, 2002, 220).

Although Martinson, at times, wholeheartedly embraced this discourse as part of her trope of suffering, she could also mock it. In 1942 she assumed an ironic tone when she wrote about how, in the 1920s, she had borrowed *The Brothers Karamazov* (Dostojevski, 1918) from the library:

[...] and read for a moment every evening, while the joints ached from potato picking, the ears pounded from the clamour of the threshing machine and the stomach rumbled from lack of food. I saw the kids become thinner and paler, but I suddenly found it to be perfectly in order. Humanity should suffer, the men should drink until everything was gone, women and children die of starvation after they'd given their last coin to

light a candle for the Madonna. [...] To withstand suffering, hunger and sickness oneself, that is one thing, but to see your own children slowly starve to death and simultaneously to have a sense of responsibility which made itself felt every minute, well, I soon came out of the somnolent state that the Russian writer had placed me in. (Martinson, 1942)

The article succeeds in its evocation of Martinson's physical sensations (Hartsock, 2016); we are able to empathise with her aching joints, pounding ears and rumbling stomach even if never having been exposed to heavy agricultural work. More importantly, in this article Martinson actively chooses to reject the closed determinacy of the 'absolute past' (Bakhtin, 1981, 15) both in a literary and in a political sense, rejecting the passivity of suffering in favour of action. She explicitly does so again in an unpublished article from the early 1930s.

Sometimes I have wanted to shake one or another contented woman who has sat with her hands folded in her lap, amongst rags and dirt and with a crowd of children around her, and sighed that 'God will no doubt help me'. While, all the time, the children stood around looking hungry and hollow eyed. It's not a novel, it's reality. (Martinson, cited in Witt-Brattström, 1999, 128)

For Martinson, suffering was to be used as a rallying call for political action, not something to be stoically borne. In an article from 1927, she inverts the traditional role of the mother, telling women not to sacrifice themselves so that they may, by some miracle, manage to bring their children up in a material standard similar to the bourgeoisie, for example 'eating until they are full at every meal' (Helga, 1927c). She contends that this will give the children a false view of the world and class struggle and they may become thieves or join the armed forces simply to retain this false standard of living. Such individualism will also impact badly on the collective, as such 'one sided motherly concern, may raise scourges for the backs of

their class comrades' (ibid.). Instead, Martinson argues for communal class action to bring about social justice.

This rejection of the suffering motherhood trope did not become widespread in both conventional magazines – where mothers were suddenly possessed of agency – and in the labour movement until the mid-1930s. In 1935 in the USA, Le Sueur wrote about the suffering of women during the American Depression but faced criticism from communist editors for her 'defeatist attitude' and 'nonrevolutionary spirit' (Hedges, 1990, 11). Elaine Hedges argues that Le Sueur 'saw suffering, not as negative and passive, but as a source of solidarity' (ibid.), and this attitude is reflected in Martinson's work where, when she does depict suffering it is intended to galvanise the reader into action by sparking emotion, often anger.

Martinson's rejection of negative class and gender stereotypes

That Martinson and working-class communities did so readily support the sanctification of motherhood was not simply due to its emotional appeal, or to it providing one of the few positive roles available to them; it was also a reaction to negative stereotypes. In her writing, Martinson challenges the dominant narrative in Swedish society that depicted working-class women, and in particular unmarried mothers, as feckless and lacking in morality or, more rarely, as solely tragic victims, as in the moral tales of suffering above. This attitude towards women is shown clearly in Gita Weiner's (1995) study of the activities between 1900 and 1940 of the Child Welfare Bureau and the Goutte de Lait (Mjölkdroppen) in Solna – a municipality of Stockholm, only 35 miles from Martinson's home. 'A lack of responsibility' was perceived as a 'characteristic' of working-class mothers by both medical journals and the management of Mjölkdroppen (ibid., 107). Single mothers were judged most harshly. During the early 20th century, in the northern city of Gävle, widows could expect to receive poor relief in order to stay in their own homes with their children. For unmarried mothers,

however, the situation was very different: if they were unable to manage financially, they were sent to the poor house, and their children were put into foster care (Gröndahl, 1990, 31–52).⁴² The mortality rate was also much higher for illegitimate children (ibid., 31).

On this subject, during her first years as a writer, Martinson's customary caustic wit was absent, and she wrote almost cloying short stories featuring single mothers who were intelligent, beautiful and good. This includes the milkmaid Maja in the short story 'Kerstin' (Helga, 1925) in *Vi Kvinnor*, but the ultimate example of these women is the selfless paragon of virtue, Klara, a 'flower of humanity', in Martinson's first novel, the serialised *Pigmamma* (*Servant Mother*) (1928-1929). It is here that Hartsock's (2016) evocation of Bakhtin's 'open-endedness' is most pertinent to Martinson's writing. Her early portrayals of single mothers feature women who are 'heroic' in the epic manner, exhibiting only positive attributes; the women's characters are complete and unchanging (Bakhtin, 1981, 10). Even when describing real women the idealisation remains in place, as in an article from 1927 where she approvingly recounts meeting 'a beautiful young girl' on the bus with her baby and how the (unmarried) mother is determined to keep the child and work as hard as she can.' (Helga, 1927d). It was not until Hedvig in *Mor gifter sig* (1936) that Martinson rejected such closed images and managed to create a mother figure as a fully rounded human being (Witt-Brattström, 1989) who evolved throughout the narrative.

Early on in her writing Martinson drew attention to gender inequality. She identified the difference in the attitude towards working-class women when they were viewed as wives, rather than adulated as mothers, and the nonchalance of men towards women's unpaid labour. When SAC debated the membership of women in the organisation and differentiated between those who were 'working' and those who were 'married', Martinson was scathing when she pointed out in *Arbetaren* that the only difference between the work done by an unmarried

⁴² Similar moral judgements were made in the UK (Lewis, 1984, 11).

woman in a factory and a married one at home was that the latter did not get paid (Helga 1924o). She then attacked the men in the syndicalist movement:

When a man and woman wed it is said it will be for better or worse. When a woman marries a worker she knows that, under current circumstances, it will mainly be for the worse. It will be a life and death struggle where the woman will die – spiritually die – earlier than the husband because she has been given the heaviest burden to carry. You should be ashamed, male comrade, to talk to your female comrade about your prerogative as a husband, master and a home provider! When have you ever lightened her burden rather than added to it? (Helga 1924o)

By addressing the men directly and as comrades, she creates immediacy in the text. This is added to by the strong language: ‘life and death struggle’, ‘will die’ and ‘burden’. Words that might otherwise have been deployed in the socialist newspaper about the working class in relation to capitalism are used here by Martinson to describe the relationship between men and women. Martinson’s complaint is upheld by Weiner’s study. This demonstrates that in early 20th century Solna a man who did not over-consume alcohol was considered praiseworthy, and little else was expected of him (Weiner, 1995, 213), while a wife, who was ‘very sick’ and had a husband who was healthy, was blamed solely for the poor condition of their house (ibid., 212).⁴³ This latter double standard was also identified by Martinson in her article ‘Det obevekliga’ (‘The inexorable’), published in the temperance paper *Templarkuriren* in December 1928. In the fictional ‘sketch’, a young woman is physically abused by her husband. She is unable to afford food or clothing for their children and is reduced to requesting poor relief to buy them shoes. Despite this, the woman receives little sympathy from her neighbours, who gossip that ‘it’s not surprising he hits her when she can’t

⁴³ For more on gender and child welfare, see Lundström, T. and Sallnäs, M. (2003) Klass, kön och etnicitet i den sociala barnvården. *Socialvetenskaplig Tidskrift*, 2–3, 193–213.

keep her house clean' (Moa, 1928). Martinson concludes that it is clearly considered worse to be temperate and live with a drinker than to drink oneself.

Templarkuriren occasionally paid for articles, and Martinson credited the editor of the newspaper with 'saving me a couple of times from – well who knows' (Martinson, 1976, 213) by sending her five or ten kronor. Martinson's work for *Templarkuriren* was at times clichéd, portraying hard, mendacious men and noble, suffering women. It was ostensibly written for a particular audience – perhaps one less sophisticated in their reading taste, politically and morally, than the readers of *Arbetaren*, *Brand* and *Vi Kvinnor*. This was despite the fact that the temperance and labour movements frequently overlapped (Ambjörnson, 1998, 54–64). It may also be that Martinson was simply writing quickly and found it easier to engage with static, 'mythic' (in the sense of Bird and Dardenne's (1988) research) characters than those more developed. Yet, even such a seemingly simplistic tale as 'Det obevekliga' contains more realism than may first be perceived. There are strong autobiographical elements – to the extent that it may have been directly drawn from personal experience – showing the constant mix of reality and imagination in Martinson's work. Martinson's first husband also spent his wages on alcohol, leaving her to petition the council for children's shoes, and the gossip of Martinson's neighbours caused her much distress. In another instance of Martinson recycling life events several times in her work, the story also bears similarities to the one told by Madam Andersson about Inga Blom, who is gossiped about and blamed for her husband's shortcomings when she decides to divorce him.

The new science of motherhood

Further demands were placed upon mothers in the 1920s as they were expected to keep up with the new science of childhood, which saw major developments at this time. Physical childcare was now an area governed by experts, to whom mothers should defer when it came to the food, medical needs and exercise of their children. The first academic article pertaining

to the psychological development of children in a Swedish medical journal was published as early as 1923 (Gadelius, 1923).⁴⁴ By the 1930s, this mindset had reached women's magazines (Tornbjør, 2002, 103). *Husmodern*, for example, published a series of articles on childcare that recommended that expectant mothers take a course in childcare, or at least invest in 'a modern little book' on the subject (cited in Berger, 1974, 63). This professionalisation of motherhood, Weiner (1995, 121) contends, led to a moralising attitude towards women, placing the onus on them to follow the advice of doctors and ignoring the economic and social issues that might prevent this.

By the 1930s, child psychology had been added to physical health as being of crucial importance, and the well-being of children was seen as a vital component of the social democratic state. This was partly due to falling birth-rates, which was viewed as a threat to Swedish production and standards of living, as Alva and Gunnar Myrdal's report *Kris i befolkningsfrågan* (1934) (*Crisis in the Population Question*) established. The authors recommended substantial welfare changes, including free healthcare and school dinners, improved housing, and family allowances to encourage the birth of more children. A key aspect of the report was also the assumption that both parents would work outside the home. The children would be placed in nurseries to be cared for by professionals, which was not only a more efficient use of societal and financial resources but also developmentally better for the children. The result of this would also be that gender roles would change. By the end of the 1930s, roles had indeed altered, as the portrayal of mothers in women's magazines shows. From primarily 'Madonna and child' depictions, where the mother is passive and focused on her child, the pictures show that women had acquired agency and were able to laugh, play with their children and focus on the outside world (Tornbjør, 2002, 104).

⁴⁴ This had occurred a couple of decades earlier in the UK (Cunningham, 1991, 199) and with similar pressure exerted upon mothers (Riemer and Fout, 1983, 157).

Martinson did not directly comment on *Crisis in the Population Question* (Myrdal and Myrdal, 1934). The year before, she had published her debut novel, and she continued to produce at least one book annually until 1944, so she had little time for political journalism. However, both prior and subsequent to this, she did engage with the new era of scientific childcare. In her earlier work, she seems to have been torn between a belief in the authority of writers and doctors and a rejection of it. She did not hesitate to use a perceived expert when it suited her but could, more usually, dismiss their claims on the basis of her lived experience. An example of the former, and of Martinson's sometimes contradictory opinions, is a topical article opposing the decision of the state medical board to support the compulsory vaccination of children (Helga, 1923a). This is a case in point, Martinson states, of where 'belief in authority' can take you. She then, apparently unironically, bases her entire article on evidence from what she claims is 'the best book there is' (ibid.): Henrik Berg's *Läkarebok* (1919) (*Doctor's Book*). Although this is an example of her using exterior influences to make her argument she, as always, adds a personal and dramatic angle: 'I have not been vaccinated and will not vaccinate my children. I would rather go to prison' (Helga, 1923a).

A second contribution on the subject of the state and children spanned over a quarter of a century and illustrates Martinson's belief in the validity of experience and the importance of recognising the ambiguity of life. In 1925, Martinson asked *Vi Kvinnor*'s readers for advice. As a councillor on the Child Welfare Board, she wanted to discover 'whether it would be better to establish within the district a children's home with hygienic care for the children born outside of marriage, or who have been orphaned, or if it would be better to put the little ones out to private homes' (Helga, 1925c). She was unsure whether 'within the framework of our current society' the excellence of children's homes could be guaranteed. She received one published reply, recommending the institutional solution (Kerstin, 1925), before the magazine folded. Martinson returned to the question 26 years later when there was again a public debate

about the merits of children's homes versus fostering. She was now decisively for children's homes and against fostering:

In the debate about adopted children and foster children in the daily press and other organs [...] That I should come up with anything new that the experts haven't is out of the question. What I can add is only that I have experience of being a foster child as well as an adult, being forced to step in every now and again to take care of situations that children, who have been boarded out, have fallen into. (Martinson, 1951b)

The statement is self-effacing and yet establishes an authority through lived experience that is at least equal to that of the experts. In 1923, when disputing Lenin's and Kollontai's ideas of a rationalised society, Martinson contended that humankind 'is not a collection of machines' (Helga, 1923g). She continued to assert that reality is messy and cannot be rationalised: '*One* area hasn't been discussed in the experts' debate, that is to say *life*. The immense, complicated, nuanced and irrational life, contra mother and child' (Martinson, 1951b). Using the storytelling trope 'an old maxim goes' (ibid.), Martinson reiterates the importance of mothers and shows an understanding of the effects of poverty and mental health issues – something that also influenced her attitude towards criminal offenders, discussed in the next chapter.

A mother, even if it is a bad mother, is better than a foster mother. What they now mean by 'bad'. I don't accept the concept bad. A mother is incapable of keeping her child due to sickness, physical, or of the soul – or due to poverty. The latter is an overwhelming reason (in other respects I am in complete agreement with the old phrase). (Martinson, 1951b)

She argues that it is society's role to find a way for a mother to keep her child and that this may even involve putting the child in a state-run home.

This is a problem that has been circled like a cat walking round hot porridge in the debate. [...] One of the reasons I support the children's homes is partly my own experience, partly that the children's home doesn't steal the child's love away from its mother – in addition children's homes can be regulated. One thing is sure, no alcoholics may enter and scare the life out of the children in a home. (ibid.)

Martinson's use of graphic imagery in the form of the cat proverb draws on her oral heritage, whilst her own experiences of alcohol, both as a child and as a mother, influence her belief in children's homes. She contends that adoption is often in the interests of the new parents, who want to own the child, whilst the child will always pine for their biological parents, irrespective of the new parents' fitness for the role. Controversially, Martinson claims that 'To adopt children should be forbidden' (ibid.). The short sentence imparts an air of cogent finality. She goes on to reiterate the point and acknowledges her use of her novels to impart her beliefs: 'But in addition to what I mentioned earlier (*not least in my books*)' (italics added), 'the mother – whatever she may be like – has a right to keep in contact with her child, if it is in a children's home. I have seen many examples of what *that* can mean for a, in particular, young mother who is perceived as "bad" by the moralists' (Martinson, 1951b). Again, Martinson is speaking of the unmarried mother and offering an alternative, sympathetic perspective. 'Hygiene is good, outer nourishment is good, but care when it comes to something as delicate and indefinable as the relationship between a visible or invisible mother is even more important' (ibid.). Here, Martinson prefigures the argument of Le Sueur in her short story 'Sequel to love', where a young, unmarried, impoverished woman has her baby taken away and is incarcerated 'in the place where they keep the feeble-minded' until

she agrees to be sterilised (Le Sueur, 1987, 36).⁴⁵ Martinson's final reasoning reverts back to her personal experience.

Until I was seven I had different foster homes, all the foster mothers wanted me to call them mamma from the first day. During those seven years I spent three weeks in an orphanage (Marme outside Norrköping). Those three weeks were my happiest time until mother married and I was allowed to move home to her. Home to poverty and all sorts of difficulties, but to mother. (Martinson, 1951b)

Here, Martinson includes checkable facts (for example, the location of the home) and uses her perspective and the authority of her life to close her argument. For Martinson the love between mother and child always conquers external influences.

Ellen Key and societal motherhood

In 1928, following the death of her husband, Martinson spent an educative fortnight at Fogelstad, the country estate of the liberal women's rights activist Elisabeth Tamm. Tamm was one of five women to be elected to parliament in the first election after female suffrage, in 1921. Together with four other prominent women, she established the Fogelstad group, which held courses, such as the one Martinson attended, to educate women on their new rights and responsibilities following gaining the vote. The group founded the journal, *Tidevarvet*, to which Martinson contributed. Although Tamm and fellow Fogelstad group founder Kerstin Hesselgren were liberal MPs, the associates of Fogelstad were diverse and included Kollontai and, as editor of *Tidevarvet*, Wägner.⁴⁶ A major inspiration for the members of Fogelstad was the philosopher Key (1849–1926) and her theories on maternalism and parenting. Key became world renowned following the publication of her book *Barnets*

⁴⁵ Both Le Sueur and Olsson utilised motherhood in their work despite the active discouragement of the CPUSA. Olsen was 'critical of all' the 1930s working-class literature because it 'left out a lot of mother content' (cited in Coiner, 1995, 167).

⁴⁶ For more on Fogelstad, see Eskilsson, L. (1991) *Drömmen om kamratsamhället. Kvinnliga medborgarskolan på Fogelstad 1925-35*. Stockholm: Carlssons; Knutson, U. (2004) *Kvinnor på gränsen till genombrott, gruppträff av Tidevarvets kvinnor*. Stockholm: Bonnier; Levin, H. (1997) *Kvinnorna på barrikaden*. Stockholm: Carlssons.

århundrade (*The Child's Century*) in 1900, in which she proclaimed a radical child-centred philosophy.⁴⁷ Prior to the publication of *The Child's Century*, however, her ideas on *samhällsmöderskap* (maternalism) had already made her well known.⁴⁸

Key had a strong following (with the exception of Alva Myrdal) amongst radical liberals and the left, primarily women, and was lauded in *Tidevarvet*.⁴⁹ Ideologically, Key was close to the SAP; in 1904, the first edition of *Morgonbris*, the journal of the party's women's organisation, carried an image of Key on the front cover. *Brand* also published her work, and Ottesen-Jensen was a strong, though not uncritical, supporter, also featuring Key in *Vi Kvinnor* (Key, 1925). On the occasion of Key's 75th birthday, Ottar (1924) penned a brief overview of her life's work. There, she praised Key for her work on pedagogy, relationships and peace but accused her of naivety on the question of class, citing Wägner's critique of Key's feminism. Wägner had particularly reacted against Key's incomprehension at the need for women's economic independence, especially when it came to being able to freely choose a partner (Wägner, 1926).⁵⁰ Ottar also wrote Key's obituary in *Brand* (Ottar, 1926).

Through the auspices of Fogelstad, as well as Ottesen-Jensen and articles in *Brand* and *Arbetaren*, Martinson came into contact with Key's ideas. The philosopher's effect on Martinson is oblique: she does not mention her by name, nor do Key's books appear in the (incomplete) list of Martinson's personal library (Holmqvist, 2013), yet the influence is undoubtedly there. Witt-Brattström demonstrates the presence of Key's philosophy in *Women and Apple Trees* (Martinson, 1949) but also how Martinson, as so often with her major

⁴⁷ When she died, processions were held in her honour in Japan, Korea and Germany.

⁴⁸ Key is also credited with being one of the founders of the 'Swedish style', together with her friends, the artists Karin and Carl Larsson. Key's pamphlet *Skönhet åt alla* (*Beauty for All*), together with the Larssons' house (and Carl Larsson's depictions of it), became the benchmark for Swedish homes.

⁴⁹ Outside radical circles, however, Key was subject to ridicule and the object of cartoons and pen portraits. August Strindberg viciously caricatured Key as Hanna Paj in *Svarta Fanor* (*Black Banners*) (1907). This did not stop Strindberg writing to Key to request a meeting where she could advise him on his children; Key refused.

⁵⁰ For more on this, see Clareus, I. (1981) *Ellen Key och Elin Wägner*. Strand: Ellen Keysällskapets skriftserie, 11. For a recent biography of Wägner, see Knutson, U. (2020) *Den besvärliga Elin Wägner*. Lund: Historiska Media.

influences, came to emancipate herself from these ideas and react against them (Witt-Brattström, 1999, 128–129). In the next chapter, Key's considerable work in the area of childrearing will be discussed, but here the focus is on her doctrine of *samhällsmotherskap* (maternalism). A direct translation of *samhällsmotherskap* is 'societal motherhood', which gives a stronger intimation of Key's meaning; communal motherhood is yet another interpretation.⁵¹ Key's feminism has come to be viewed as problematic, in even more ways than Wägner expected, but aspects of it were nonetheless groundbreaking. Key attested that motherhood was a calling, as any profession might be, and should be treated as 'a public work to be rewarded and controlled by society' (Key, cited in Lundell, 1984, 353). In effect, she suggested state wages for mothers, as 'every mother [has] the right to society's support, bearing as she does society's most important burden' (Key, 1911, 96). In her view, which would have appealed to Martinson, a child was legitimate if born from the love of two people; the marital status of the couple was of little consequence (*ibid.*, 118–119).⁵² Current culture, she contended, undervalued motherly qualities, such as love and other emotions, and suffered accordingly. She argued that once these attributes became legitimised in the public space and an accepted part of social legislation, women's status would improve and the world would become a happier, calmer place.

Maternalism was not Key's construct, as Ambjörnson (2012, 27), in his extensive work on the writer, points out. Within Sweden, it sprang from a liberalisation of the country's strict Lutheran faith, for the first time granting women a role, albeit limited, outside the home. In the mid-19th century, the progressive novelist Fredrika Bremer was thus able to write about woman's function as a 'caregiver' and 'spiritual mother' (Bremer, cited in *ibid.*). This 'extension of motherhood' (irrespective of biological maternity) allowed women to employ

⁵¹ For an overview of maternalism in other countries, see Koven, S. and Michel, S. (1990) Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, 1880-1920. *The American Historical Review*, 95(4), 1076–1108.

⁵² For an expansion of this, see Lundell, T. (1984) Ellen Key and Swedish Feminist Views on Motherhood. *Scandinavian Studies*, 56(4), 351–369.

themselves with charity and social work outside the home.⁵³ Ultimately, she hoped that womankind's innate goodness and motherliness would create peace and freedom in the world. Key, the 'ultimate maternalist' (Hobson, 1999, 174), drew on these ideas, as she based her theories on women's role in society and societal altruism on the relationship between mother and child (Key, 1981).⁵⁴ Emilia Fogelklou, a disciple of Key's, who referred to the philosopher as a 'prophet' (Johnselius Theodoru, 2003, 112), continued this theme. She also appeared in *Tidevarvet* and so would have been read by Martinson. Fogelklou saw maternalism as being for the general good and argued that by transferring family sentiment into the political arena, one would create a new form of solidarity in society (ibid. 116). Maternalism meant a 'non-egoistical universal motherhood caring for all and everyone', as opposed to the more 'egoistical' personal motherhood (ibid.). Whether consciously or unconsciously on Martinson's part, both Key's and Fogelklou's ideas can be seen in her thinking outlined below, in which she applies the concept of motherly love to her own surroundings and widens the scope to encompass labour politics.

The political extension of motherly love – Sacco and Vanzetti

Moa, Martinson's chosen name, means 'mother', and she saw herself primarily as such in relation to the surrounding world. Her self-imposed role expanded from the biological motherhood of the 1920s to encompass in later years that of 'folk mother', including the whole of the Swedish people in her maternal gaze (Witt-Brattström 1986, 185). This folk mother persona appears clearly in the columns she wrote in the 1950s for the magazine *Folket i bild*, where she gives advice on everything from childcare to candle-making and defends the juvenile delinquents of the day. However, as we have seen in her articles defending the morality of young women, this was a role she embraced early on.

⁵³ For a brief description of political maternalism from an international perspective, see Chapter 8 in LeGates, M. (2011) *In Their Time: A History of Feminism in Western Society*. London: Routledge.

⁵⁴ For a succinct overview in English of Key's work, see Lengborn, T. (1993) Ellen Key. *Prospects: The Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, XXIII(3/4), 825–837.

In Martinson's writing, motherly love extends, in the spirit of Key and Fogelklou, beyond her own children to include people living outside of societal norms in Sweden (this is discussed in relation to punishment and charity in the following chapters). For Martinson, motherhood (despite being the most normative thing a woman can do) is also a form of resistance against the prevailing hegemony. Universal motherhood becomes a type of socialism in which others are invited to participate: 'Every injustice committed against another must be reacted to as though it was an insult against your own beloved child. It is a mother's heroism, when she fights for the right of her child that we need in the social struggle' (Helga, 1927a).

Martinson's particular form of societal motherhood takes her beyond her immediate environs to include people on other continents, exceeding the political comradeship of the workers' movement and moving towards a form of intimate empathy and concern for those involved. Her international involvement was unusual in the Swedish labour movement, as, according to Ambjörnsson (1991), female members' solidarity usually encompassed issues close to home, for example voting for money to be allocated to a child's funeral costs or a summer camp. It was more common for men to take part in national or international actions, such as supporting strikes (ibid., 178).⁵⁵ This section explores Martinson's participation in one such international campaign: supporting the Italian anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti.

On 23 August 1927, after a six-year legal battle and despite widely being believed to be innocent, the two Italians were executed in the USA. Their case was a worldwide *cause célèbre*, and their deaths led to violent demonstrations in several countries. In Sweden, Martinson's union, SAC, together with the Communist Party and their youth organisations, established a Sacco and Vanzetti defence committee, mobilising beyond their own political groupings. A demonstration in Stockholm attracted 50,000 participants, and one in

⁵⁵ Interestingly, the local council, another area that Martinson participated in, was also usually considered a male sphere (Ambjörnsson, 1991, 178).

Gothenburg attracted 10,000 (Micheletti, 2003, 66). In the fortnight prior to the executions, workers at General Motors in Stockholm protested by going on strike for three days. Of the newspapers Martinson wrote for, *Arbetaren* reported the case from 1922, the year of its foundation and Martinson's debut there, whilst *Brand* publicised the men's plight from the time of their arrest. The latter kept up a steady supply of articles and other content on the subject, including a poem by Harry Martinson, and devoted whole editions to their cause, even after the anarchists' deaths. Following the executions, the defence committee issued a statement calling for a continued fight on behalf of Sacco and Vanzetti. It was hoped that this would bring about a reassessment of the sentences and expose American capitalism and its justice system as 'the real criminal[s] and murderer[s]' whilst 'simultaneously providing the international workers movement with a moral victory of great import' (Svenska Sacco-Vanzetti Försvarskommitten, 1927).

This aspiration was not confined to Sweden; in North America, the literary journalist John Dos Passos had been vociferous on behalf of the Italians. After their deaths, in November 1927, in a review of a book on the case, he wrote: 'Every detail must be told and retold. Sacco and Vanzetti must not have died in vain. [...] America must not be allowed to forget' (Dos Passos, 1927). Dos Passos also wrote 'An open letter to President Lowell'. In it, he directs anger at the president of Harvard University, who had just been party to denying Sacco and Vanzetti a new trial. Accusing Lowell of whitewashing, in this letter, Dos Passos claims:

The part into which you have forced Harvard University will make many a man ashamed of being one of its graduates [...] It is upon men of your class and position that will rest the inevitable decision as to whether the coming struggle for the reorganization of society shall be bloodless and fertile or inconceivably bloody and destructive. (Dos Passos, cited in Vanderveer Hamilton, 2001)

This is in contrast to the open letter by Martinson to Sacco's wife and Vanzetti's sister in *Brand's* Christmas issue of 1927. Although she was also incensed and her language is violent, the letter is nonetheless a move towards solidarity and communal action. In it, Martinson addresses the women as her peers and expresses anger on their behalf. The article begins with the author in a literary manner setting the scene, apparently in a conventional female (and thus passive) role.

Heavy and terrible will be Mrs Sacco and Luigia Vanzetti's Christmas. Their dearests' places are empty. Hearts, riven by pain and suffering without name will again begin to tremble due to the festival that in all Christian countries belongs to the family. (Helga, 1927f)

As in her articles on motherhood, her emphasis is on the family, a subject to spark the emotions and engage the empathy of most readers (Hartsock, 2016). Once she has established this voice, however, Martinson shifts the tone of the article to one of outrage.

The Christ child came to earth – of course. It comes with the message of peace every year. Your beloved relatives' executioner and judge celebrate Christmas in the name of the Christ child! "Witnesses"! to the murder of your dear ones celebrate Christmas in the name of the Christ child! The five heavysset guards, who led the small, emaciated Sacco and the mild, thoughtful Vanzetti to their last place of suffering. Maybe even these great knaves in their pitch-black darkness intend to celebrate Christmas in the name of Christ. A curse on such Christianity! (Helga, 1927f)

Martinson dramatically increases the tension by contrasting the calm religious wording of the family holiday of Christmas with the violent phraseology of the men's deaths, as well as using the rhetorical device of epimone. This emphasises the hypocrisy of those involved in the executions whilst also heightening the sense of anger, with the repetition giving the

impression of rapid speech. This ‘effective, rhythmic syntax’, taken from the oral tradition, is identified by Witt-Brattström (1989, 28) in other aspects of Martinson’s work.

Martinson plays upon the stereotype of suffering and endurance once again when she continues ‘Luigia Vanzetti and Mrs Sacco! Millions of women feel for you, cry with you and nothing more can *we* do for you [italics added]’ (Martinson, 1927f). More than ever, in this context, Martinson’s image of the suffering women draws on the religious iconography of the Mater Dolorosa (see Warner, 2016). However, in doing so, she incorporates the female Vanzetti and Sacco into a universal sisterhood of working-class women – a sorority in which, by using the word ‘we’, she includes herself. The anger is channelled into working-class female solidarity; now, seemingly aware of the passivity of the weeping woman stereotype, she subverts it, turning the women into figures of action imbued with a higher moral consciousness (emphasis added below).

Systems of butchery are not removed with tears! It is our duty, we worker women, to attack tyranny. [...] I swear to you Mrs Sacco, that wherever on earth that I meet the murderer of your children’s father and the executioner of Luigia’s brother, I will put him to death like a mangy dog or die myself.

No thinking, suffering woman of *our class* would have stood as a cowardly witness to the executioner’s murder of your dear ones – every one of us would have tried to strangle the executioner [...] Sacco and Vanzetti forgave their killers. If their deaths are not to have been in vain we who live on must cease forgiving executioners, we must exterminate them from the earth. I hail you female kinsfolk of the men we are all so proud emerged from our ranks. (Martinson, 1927f)

The anger is palpable, the language is violent and Martinson places herself within the writing, to the extent of claiming to be willing to commit murder.

Social motherhood expressed as anger and hatred

In her writing Martinson boldly expresses anger and even hatred, often inciting others to feel the same. In this, she is unusual, even subversive. Such strong negative sentiments have long been considered inappropriate for women, whilst Martinson seems to almost take pride in them. C. J. Björklund, the editor of *Brand*, writing about Martinson during the period of the Sacco and Vanzetti articles, paints a picture, of which she would no doubt have approved, of her as a consistently counter-hegemonic figure. ‘She has naturally opposed general opinion and bourgeois sensibilities both inside and outside the labour movement and because of this she is strong in love and in hate’ (Björklund, 1928).⁵⁶ Ivar Lo-Johansson, her detractor and fellow proletarian novelist, called her a ‘poet of hate’ (Lo-Johansson, 1958). Had she been a male writer her expression of such emotions might have been perceived differently, for example as an articulation of class consciousness.

Since the Enlightenment, rationality has come to be perceived as superior to emotion (Ost, 2004, 236), with calmness and self-control becoming, during the 1800s, the most sought-after characteristics in a person (Ekenstam, 2006, 54). The changes in disciplining children, discussed in the following chapter, were part of this and originated in the middle and upper classes (ibid., 48–49). Working-class culture came to be seen as the antithesis of these desirable qualities. Ost argues that this had structural reasons.

To be an elite is to feel secure enough in your privilege that you do not need to hate.

Elites can always appeal to rationality because whoever is on top is on top of a system whose rational workings support their continued power. Where outsiders feel

⁵⁶ The article intended to encourage readers to donate to a collection for Martinson and her family after her husband committed suicide. It was extremely successful, raising over a thousand kronor and enabling Martinson to purchase the cottage she had lived in since she was 19.

compelled to shout, elites prefer calm, reasoned discussion, for calmness encourages the maintenance of the status quo. (Ost, 2004, 236)

This is an argument that remains relevant. In a study of women in receipt of welfare in the USA, Sandra Morgen and Lisa Gonzales found that clients ‘learned, sometimes the hard way, to mute their feelings in the presence of authorities’ (Morgen and Gonzales, 2008, 232). Repressing their emotions at perceived injustices was necessary, as ‘expressing anger or indignation, or contesting policies or practices, could get one branded as a “troublemaker”’. It sometimes resulted in being mandated to attend anger management workshops or, in other ways, being on the losing end of worker discretion’ (ibid., 232). The authors comment that in this way, ‘hegemony works’ (ibid., 233), albeit with a very shaky foundation where emotions run high just beneath the surface.

In a similar vein, the philosophers Nancy and Strong argue that:

Anger is the political sentiment par excellence. It brings out the qualities of the inadmissible, the intolerable. It is a refusal and a resistance that with one step goes beyond all that can be accomplished reasonably – in order to open possible paths for a new negotiation of the reasonable but also paths of an uncompromising vigilance. Without anger, politics is accommodation and trade in influence. (Nancy and Strong, 1992, 375)

Yet protest movements suffer from this in that they are viewed as emotional and therefore irrational and are consequently marginalised within politics (Ost, 2004). There are parallels here with the perception of women as emotional, illogical beings contra-men. This was also apparent in critics’ treatment of Martinson’s subsequent novels, in comparison to those of her male contemporaries, as well as that of her own person.

Martinson chose to see open anger and passion in any form, even hatred, as the only valid recourse to injustice. Yet anger, despite its perceived illogicality, is not identified as a

traditionally female trait, unlike silent endurance. However, in Martinson's work, anger often becomes a form of maternalism – an emotion that is acceptable for women because it is on behalf of others. Her stance also receives support from Kropotkin, who, in *An Appeal to the Young* (1907), encouraged anger in women, albeit on behalf of others. The tone is encouraging, perhaps patronisingly so, as he tells women that he can see that they also have emotions on behalf of the struggle:

I know right well that your blood has boiled when you have heard that your husbands, after they entered on a strike, full of fire and determination, have ended by accepting, cap in hand, the conditions dictated by the bloated bourgeois in a tone of haughty contempt! And I am confident that your heart beats faster when you read how the women of the people in Paris gathered under a rain of shells to encourage 'their men' to heroic action. (Kropotkin, 1907)

In her memoirs, Martinson exhibits the righteous emotions, expected by Kropotkin, when she describes how she felt on being told of the whipping her step-grandfather, a *statare* (or serf), had received from his master before she was born. The story had an unusual ending because, in retaliation, Martinson's grandmother had herself beaten the landowner in his office. For Martinson 'Just the memory of grandmother's feat acted as a balm' (Martinson, 1976, 212). It was one instance, for her, where class injustice had not triumphed. The story also recalls the oral tradition of family and folk memory.

When her sons died, Martinson's anger at the unfairness of society and her need to formulate a resistance intensified. In her essay about her experiences in the year 1927, she wrote:

I hated, hated day and night. Was it meant that my sons and other women's sons should be born and raised to be slaves, to become rotting corpses in trenches and ruins? Was I to raise beggars, raise rattrap makers? [...] I saw my life as one of

unmitigated shame. I felt the whole of our existence had been an insult against us.

(Martinson, 1976, 212)

This gives the impression that the tragedy was a watershed moment in Martinson's perception of society. However, there is fury in her articles, influenced by her experiences on behalf of her class and on a personal level, including prior to her sons' deaths. Martinson's work as a whole does not show a sudden change of direction; instead, the theme is consistent from the very beginning of her writing, perhaps peaking with the Sacco and Vanzetti articles.

Interviewed by Marika Stiernstedt in 1939, Martinson claimed that from 1920 onward, she had written 'the most violent articles. [...] from despair over the hardness and nonchalance that was shown toward the unemployed and their families throughout Sweden' (Stiernstedt, 1939, 514). The anger showed itself in her descriptions of the charity that the unemployed were forced to accept, but also of how the poor were treated overall in society. One such example appeared in March 1923, where Martinson used her personal experience of being present at her neighbour's frequent complicated childbirths to attack the laws on contraception and the treatment of working-class women. Due to congenital defects, the babies always died at birth, and the woman could not be given anaesthetic due to a heart problem. 'Every time I met the mother's eyes, filled with fear and pain, while the doctor prepared his work with the unborn child and his instruments, I was filled with hatred. I could have strangled the doctor' (Helga, 1923b). She blamed the physician for refusing to help the woman with contraception or sterilisation. He was motivated, she believed, by the facts that it 'was an interesting case and the fee, despite the poverty, was good' (ibid.). The callous nonchalance of the doctor inspired a visceral reaction in her.

Martinson's anger is often directed specifically at men, such as the doctor. In the letter article to Sacco's and Vanzetti's relatives, although Martinson does not state it explicitly, it is primarily (or solely, if all the 'witnesses' are male) men who are to blame for the horror of

Sacco's and Vanzetti's deaths, whilst it is women she looks upon to avenge them. Here, the influence of Key – which is noticeable (if unspoken) in her writing – is subverted. Martinson offers violence at the hands of women, whereas Key hoped that the impact of maternalism on the world once women entered politics would lead to a decrease in violence and specifically war.⁵⁷ It was expected that women would not want to send their sons off to battle and would therefore act to prevent such conflict. Martinson uses this argument herself in a class context and in the Sacco and Vanzetti article, previously cited, in relation to capital punishment: 'It is we worker women who give birth to most of the victims of the executioner' (Helga, 1927f). It is therefore up to such women, including her, to stop the killing. Unlike Key, however, she enlists anger and hatred to this aim and does so unashamedly.

Despite being in the USA, Sacco's and Vanzetti's fate affected Martinson particularly deeply, perhaps by being so close in time to her sons', and then her husband's, deaths. The following year, when she was asked to contribute to a special issue of *Brand* to commemorate the executions, she again resorted to the terminology of anger. Rejecting that which can be 'accomplished reasonably' (Nancy, 1992, 375), she exhorts comrades not to turn the anniversary of the anarchists' deaths into an innocuous 'parade day' (Helga, 1928i); the capitalists could, after all, celebrate their victory every day. In this, she echoes and answers Dos Passos, who called for:

[...] writing so fiery and accurate that it will sear through the pall of numb imbecility that we are again swaddled in after the few moments of sane awakening that followed the shock of the executions. (Dos Passos, 1927)

For Martinson, 'the worker masses' hatred [...] should stretch to every day' (Helga, 1928i).

Martinson's contribution appeared alongside that of Zeth Höglund, one of the founders of the

⁵⁷ For a more contemporary exponent of the link between maternalism and pacifism, see Ruddick, S. (1990) *Maternal Thinking Towards a Politics of Peace*. London: Women's Press; for a critique of this, see Davion, V. (1990) Pacifism and care. *Hypatia*, 5(1) 90-100.

Swedish Communist Party, and Karin Boye, then a rising poet and today one of Sweden's most famous modernists. This reflected the fact that Martinson's opinions were now considered to be of value to the movement as a whole.

In the cinema – the personal and political combined

Martinson also addressed the issue of Sacco and Vanzetti in a third article, ostensibly in support of the campaign, but more notable for its description of the degeneracy of American film and the trials of individual motherhood. The piece was written at the 'urging' of *Brand*, in February 1928 when they dedicated a special issue to the boycott of American products declared in protest against the executions the year before. Of particular import was that 'Every worker must feel it is a moral duty not to frequent cinemas where American films are shown' (SAC, 1927). SAC claimed that films had been chosen as they provided a 'relatively easy' economic target. However, attacking them also conformed to a general condemnation of US culture by the Swedish labour movement. In the article (Helga, 1928b), Martinson's disapproval of US films overshadows for a time even her strength of feeling about Sacco and Vanzetti. She addresses the topic from a purely personal perspective, telling the reader that she has only been to the cinema five times in her life and two of the films she saw were American. One was a pirate story that she describes as being full of explicit violence, culminating in the hoisting of the Stars and Stripes, the second was called *Lust*. The latter film is far too sexually explicit for Martinson, something she discusses, while addressing the reader directly in an intimate personal voice (Kramer, 1995, 28–30). This voice echoes that of Madam Andersson, in particular the character's disapproval of other women's clothing choices, although Martinson also shows ironic awareness of how her criticism may be perceived. She writes of *Lust*: 'Well, that must have been good? One isn't really allowed to say anything else.' (Helga, 1928b). She then sets a scene of humorous symbolism: 'If one does one is immediately a moralistic spinster, a bourgeois old lady with framed quotations

from the scriptures and pictures of women in long skirts and headscarves in unpretentious frames decorating the walls.’ (ibid.) ‘Unpretentious frames’ is a particularly understated insult. Despite being an exculpation of US films, by disapproving of its sexualised content Martinson is also expressing the dissonance between her and some of the most vocal activists on the radical left. The anarchists surrounding *Brand* prided themselves on their openness on sexual matters. Hinke Bergegren, *Brand*’s former editor, was infamous for his promotion of free love, to the extent that the 1910 law forbidding propaganda in favour of contraception came to be referred to as ‘Lex Hinke’. *Brand* was also the first to, in the mid-1920s, publish the young proletarian writers, who glorified their own sexuality and the objectification of women. At times, this stretched to rape, as in the poem of Artur Lundkvist from 1928.⁵⁸ Martinson was clearly in a painful position. A strong advocate of sex education and women’s right to sexual desire, she despised the autodidacts’ attitude towards women in their writing. Later, when married to Harry Martinson, she also came to experience their mindset in reality, as they encouraged him to leave her for a younger woman. Acutely aware of their scorn, she described herself as a mother figure and an ‘old and ugly woman’ (cited in Witt-Brattström, 1988, 65).

This mindset is already apparent in her description of *Lust*, as the personal and the political collide and she is torn between being a political and radical writer and feeling like a ‘normal’ uncomfortable mother.

A working-class woman, what does she understand of life’s niceties that culminate in a naked female body, writhing in an epileptic struggle. The American art of film [...] should be called by its true title, it is the culture of dogs! But still what does a worker’s wife know about contemporary fine art? (Helga, 1928b)

⁵⁸ ‘Women – they betray, flee from us: oh, chase them, catch them, bend them, force them –!’ (Lundkvist, 1928, cited in Witt-Brattström, 1989, 95).

Using the knowing disingenuity that she also employs in other articles, the intended eroticism of the actions of the actor become, in Martinson's description, ungraceful and symptomatic of illness. At the time, Martinson's surviving sons were in their mid-teens. Setting the scene, another literary device (Wolfe, 1990), Martinson describes the situation of a 'working woman' (herself) sitting in the cinema with her 'half-grown sons', who were 'staring with curiosity and shame at the naked film diva's quite vile attempts to portray sensual lust' (Helga, 1928b). In the manner of literary journalism, the internal processes (Kramer, 1995, 43) of the mother are also described, as she sits in the cinema feeling that 'the woman on the white cloth is acting impolitely in front of her sons' (Helga, 1928b). The residual feeling after reading the article is of the awkwardness of the cinema outing. Martinson's own experiences of motherhood provide a stronger image than her political rhetoric, overshadowing the message of her work, the one that she had been asked to provide: 'for Sacco and Vanzetti's sake – don't give one penny to America's dog culture and its films'. (Helga, 1928b). The boycott failed after a few months, but Martinson's and the Swedish labour movement's censure of American culture re-emerged with renewed vigour in the 1950s when, as in many countries, US comics and cartoons were blamed for violence amongst the youth. Again, she used her role as a mother and now grandmother as a weapon against the USA.

Martinson's anger on behalf of her class is apparent in the Sacco and Vanzetti article. Given the passion with which she writes, it is often the passages of strong emotion that remain with the reader. However, in reality, Martinson preached love and tolerance far more often than hatred. This is particularly apparent in her later writing for *Folket i bild*, when she had mellowed into 'the whole country's Moa' (Wernström, 1978, 205), but is also noticeable early on, as when she wrote the following in 1923:

We have much to seek revenge for and sometimes the flames of hate are high. But hate is an emotion that blinds, that leads only to one goal: destruction and death. And

it is not this – the thought of revenge – that we should keep in our minds. We should work to become powerful, to build up, to practise justice in all areas, try and erase hatred from the earth! (Helga, 1923e)

Conclusion

For Martinson, the personal experience of motherhood provided authority above all other areas. Martinson embraced motherhood as a role, one of the few available and acceptable for working-class women, and actively utilised it. Even when relatively young, she took on the persona of an authoritative maternal figure. It validated her political ideas and became both a collective and an individual identity that could be used to defend herself and others. Motherly love is perhaps one of the least contentious sentiments available, yet Martinson weaponised it for the class struggle. The topics of motherhood and universal motherly love can be traced throughout Martinson's writing career. After first seizing upon the traditional role of maternal masochistic suffering, available to women in the labour and non-radical press alike, she rejected its limitations. She did this in both the style of her writing – allowing characters to develop beyond the closed contours of stereotypes – and in its themes, choosing to use suffering as a source of righteous anger (validated by motherly love) and as a fount of solidarity. Yet she still used the 'mythic' persona of an angelic maternal figure for her own ends to counter the stigma of unwed mothers. In her use of the intimacy of everyday biological motherhood, she was also able to spark emotion and thus understanding in her readers.

Drawing on the work of Key and Fogelklou, Martinson also encouraged a view of universal motherhood, in which all women could participate. In her international perspective on love and solidarity, Martinson went beyond the traditionally female areas of engagement in Swedish labour movement politics. In applying the personal to the international, such as the Sacco and Vanzetti case, and finding solidarity in suffering, Martinson extended maternal

love to those she had not even met. The next chapter follows on from this, studying how Martinson used issues of maternity, such as child education and corporal punishment, as a springboard to political topics and the role of punishment in a civil society, as well as highlighting the effects these had on individuals.

Chapter 6: Martinson's Rejection of Corporal Punishment by the Use of Practical Example

Placing Martinson in her social and historical context, this chapter explores how the writer used her particular form of immersion, the experiences of her own family, to substantiate her political arguments in the area of childrearing, again by using 'maternity as an authorial validation' (Kelly, 2001, 26). This subject is a natural progression from that of the previous chapter, where the importance of motherly love to Martinson, on a personal and societal level, was discussed. As established, Martinson narrowed issues down to their human implications (Harrington, 1997, xx), as she skilfully moved from the micro to the macro in her use of her practical experiences to demonstrate and validate political points. In this chapter, individual and societal motherly love, through the mediums of compassion and rationality, in both the upbringing of children and the treatment of fellow adults, are shown through example, as being instrumental in building a better society.

This chapter uses Martinson's stance on corporal punishment as a case study and analyses three of her articles in depth whilst also drawing on several more. It argues that Martinson went against the accepted norms of the day in child education and discipline and in doing so shows the influence of Key and Kropotkin, as well as other writers, in her reasoning. Through Martinson's work, the disciplining, or otherwise, of children on the very practical micro level of the family is shown to be of significance to a future ideal world. This is a previously underexplored area of Martinson's journalism. It is also contended that Martinson's frank depictions of her difficulties in bringing up her sons form an unusual first-hand insight into a working-class family, as most records of the period were written by middle- and upper-class outsiders, so she provides a rare perspective.

The importance of Key and Kropotkin

The views of Key on motherhood have been chosen for this analysis due to their clear (if unspoken) influence on Martinson. Key was of great significance to the Swedish women's labour movement, in particular to those close to Martinson, such as Ottesen-Jensen and the Fogelstad circle. Here her views on societal motherhood, but also on the upbringing of children, expressed in, the primary reference point for Key's work in this chapter, her book *The Child's Century* (1900), were highly valued. This was also the case abroad. In Germany, *The Child's Century* ran to 26 editions between 1902 and 1926 (Ambjörnsson, 2011, 9). It influenced the doctor and pedagogue Maria Montessori's philosophy on childcare and the United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Yet outside radical circles, Swedish interest in *The Child's Century* was 'lukewarm' (ibid., 206), and Key received harsh treatment from the critics. It did not merit a second edition in Sweden until 1911, nor a third until 1927. The extent to which Swedish authorities on childcare, including Alva Myrdal, refused to acknowledge Key's considerable influence was so pronounced that it has been termed a 'trauma' (Stafseng, 2001, 153).

Both Key and Kropotkin were amongst the most prolifically represented writers in the early 20th-century workers' library explored by Ronny Ambjörnsson (1991, 151). The workers of his study were predominantly social democrats, but Kropotkin was, as Hans Sandberg (1965) points out, the writer that many libertarian socialists in Sweden, such as Martinson, chose to follow above Marx. The Russian's significance to the Swedish revolutionary left may be gauged by the special 'Kropotkin issue' published by *Brand* in 1925 on the fourth anniversary of his death – the year Martinson began writing for the newspaper. The front cover of the special edition features short eulogies from four prominent writers: Key, K. G. Ossian Nilsson, Georg Brandes and H. M. Hyndman, illustrating the current intertwining of the literary world with the labour movement. The first to praise Kropotkin was Key. In her

bedroom, she had portraits of Christ and Kropotkin side by side, and in her tribute she compared the philosopher to both God's son and St Francis. Inside the newspaper, other literary and political persons were asked for their 'strongest impression of Kropotkin and his life's work'. Amongst those paying tribute to the philosopher in *Brand* were writers and activists of international renown. Emma Goldman described her experiences of Kropotkin's death and funeral (Goldman, 1925). Rudolf Rocker expounded the philosopher's theory of anarchism (Rocker, 1925), and Kropotkin himself did the same in the posthumously published article 'Ett nytt slags socialism' ('A new type of socialism') (Kropotkin, 1925a).

A striking number of contributors paid tribute to Kropotkin's nobility of spirit. In a movement where men were praised for their dedication to the cause and their ability to subsume their needs to the greater good, Kropotkin's position as an individual was unique. He appeared as a holy figure, not least in Oscar Wilde's 'De profundis', in which he is described as 'a man with a soul of that beautiful white Christ which seems coming out of Russia' (Wilde, 1995, 150); Wilde later claimed that Kropotkin had one of 'the most perfect lives I have come across' (ibid., 149). In turn Martinson wrote to her friend Karl Gerhard, that Wilde was 'The century's wisest person [...] I love Wilde' (Martinson, 1978, 79). She felt an affinity with the writer (ibid.), beyond their mutual admiration for Kropotkin, and shared his views on social justice, in particular in relation to charity. The importance of Kropotkin to the syndicalist and anarchist movement, both as a theorist and as an inspiration to its leaders, was thus substantial. In its editorial, explaining the motivation behind the special edition, *Brand* claimed to be the only newspaper in Sweden to 'champion the ideas for which Kropotkin fought' (Björklund, 1925, 5). This was disingenuous, however, as *Arbetaren* also revered the philosopher. This was unsurprising, as there was a fluid exchange of writers between the two newspapers.

Corporal punishment in *Arbetaren*

Both Key and Kropotkin influenced how Martinson felt day-to-day life should be lived. As previously noted, Martinson employed her maternal authority and experience as a weapon in the political battle for ideas. One such conflict, begun by Ottar, was fought with the deputy editor of *Arbetaren*, Ragnar Casparsson, in spring 1924. A particular criticism by the latter of Ottesen-Jensen's editorship of 'Kvinnan och hemmet' ('Woman and the home') was that the women's page had strayed from appropriate domestic topics to political issues (Ottar, 1924b). However, it was the introduction of the subject of the corporal punishment of children, arguably a 'suitable' topic for the women's page, that commenced events that would see both Ottar and Martinson forced out of *Arbetaren* by Casparsson (Thorgren, 2011, 167).

The catalyst was an article on 1 March 1924 in which Ottesen-Jensen attacks the physical punishment of children as being cruel, unnecessary and unsocialist, claiming 'There must be some corroboration between what we preach and how we live!' (Ottar, 1924a). To illustrate her point, Ottesen-Jensen uses the example of a child who had been made 'totally nervous and unsure of himself due to repeated and often completely unmotivated punishments of the most brutal nature' and yet whose father 'claims to be socialist' (ibid.). At the end of her article on corporal punishment, Ottar asks what her readers think – are theory and practice difficult to conjoin? (ibid.).

Casparsson, who subsequently left *Arbetaren* and syndicalism for a social democratic newspaper and career, rightly surmised that his parenting skills, as well as socialist credentials, were being criticised by Ottesen-Jensen. He wrote an angry response under the pseudonym 'Nila', in which he places a firm boundary between public and private life. 'Socialism', he states, 'has nothing to do with raising children [... it] is a movement for economic justice [...] A capitalist could raise a child equally well' (Nila, 1924). Despite the emphasis placed upon the moral character of Kropotkin – living as he taught, and his belief,

quoted in *Brand*, that ‘the moral personality is the bedrock of every organisation’ (cited in *Brand*, 1925, 5) the personal was not considered political amongst the Swedish syndicalists. There was a strict delineation between the private and the political sphere with which only a few, including Ottesen-Jensen and Martinson, publicly disagreed (Thorgren, 2011, 171).

Whilst SAC was ostensibly a counter-hegemonic organisation, its members and leaders retained many of the attitudes dominant in conventional society, such as those on gender. This is not unusual. John D. H. Downing (2001), who established a set of criteria to define radical media, to which *Brand* and *Arbetaren* conformed, points out that there is no pure radicalism. There is no tidy segregation into a ‘radical political reservation’ (ibid., 8), where all discrimination is eradicated. Instead, radical people, groupings and publications are products of their time (ibid., x) – something Martinson herself pointed out (Helga, 1924). Casparsson could therefore expect widespread support, especially from the male membership.

Indeed, following his rebuttal as Nila, Casparsson received only three replies, all from women, of which Martinson was one. Both Ottar (1924, cited in Thorgren, 2011, 170) and the correspondent ‘Irma’ (1924) give reasoned and heartfelt arguments for why Casparsson is wrong. Martinson’s, the third and shortest reply, although in essence agreeing with the others, stands out by being less articulate than these but also for the vividness of the prose. She is not interested in measured arguments but writes with immediacy and passion. She attacks Casparsson’s reductionist views of both socialism and childcare, making it clear that, in her opinion, a socialist upbringing and a capitalist upbringing are two very different things. In the article ‘Öppen fråga till Nila’ (‘Open question to Nila’) (1924j), Martinson sets out (exaggerated) formulas for how she perceives rich and poor ‘capitalists’ raise their children. In the first instance, and in an appropriation of language – using animal and plant metaphors more commonly used to describe and distance oneself from the poor (see Weiner, 1995, 165; Cunningham, 1991, 122) – Martinson describes the wealthy’s offspring as ‘spawn’,

surrounded by ‘governesses, tutors, priests and professors’ (Helga, 1924j). The label given to the children and the exaggerated number of educationalists combine to give the impression of a swarming pest. The rich child is further dehumanised by becoming an object: an ‘it’ that is fashioned into a ‘suitable rod for the socialists’ back’ (ibid.). In contrast, the poor reactionary’s child is referred to by the softer moniker of ‘kid’ (*unge*). Nonetheless, the consequences of the child’s upbringing are equally injurious. ‘Mr Block’,⁵⁹ as Martinson insultingly terms the father, will teach the child to ‘scrape and bow to employer and priest, and to silk and velvet. He will teach his offspring contempt for the blue blouse and for common sense, teach it to fear God and to shun the People’s Houses as worse than the devil!’;⁶⁰ ‘Is this’, she asks accusingly, ‘your method of upbringing Nila?’ (ibid.).

The picture Martinson paints is dramatic, heightened by her use of hyperbole and synecdoche (a literary trope – silk and velvet represent the rich, blue blouses the workers). The impersonality (no actual individual is described, only symbols, such as ‘the capitalist’ or ‘Mr Block’) and use of negative words (‘rod’, ‘fear’, ‘devil’ and ‘contempt’) when describing a capitalist upbringing contrast with Martinson’s softer, though metaphor-rich, second paragraph, in which she refers to her own family. Here, the impersonality of ‘the capitalist’ is contrasted with the humanity of her own home as she goes from the macro to the micro:

If I can teach my children to care for the *human being* – the human dressed in skirt or coat, the beggar or the well dressed – get them to forget or overcome the ball and chain of poverty and assert their human right, if I could teach them to see through the

⁵⁹ Mr Block was a comic strip character drawn by the Industrial Workers of the World member Ernest Riebe, originally published in the movement’s newspapers in the USA. Block’s fame quickly spread abroad, and his name became shorthand for the deluded worker who, suffering from false consciousness, believed his employer’s interests corresponded with his own (Chapman et al., 2015).

⁶⁰ ‘The People’s Houses’ (*Folkets Hus*) were similar to the community halls and subscription rooms in Britain built or hired for communal entertainment and education. In Sweden, these were strongly linked to the labour movement and initially were often the result of socialist groups being denied access to other buildings for their meetings.

glitter of silver and gold, palace and ornament into the hollow shell, well then I would feel satisfied with my child raising. (ibid.)

Modality (the use of 'if'), the repetition of the term 'human' and the inclusion of the personal all combine to soothe. They all, together with the further use of synecdoche, recall the oral tradition. However, Martinson then changes the tone again, claiming she cannot raise her children well, in the manner described above, 'without being a conscious socialist' and that even this may not be enough 'thanks to the enemies of human rights, whom society fattens and pays' (ibid.). In this first article, she thus concludes that the upbringing of children cannot be divorced from current society. Therefore, it can be inferred that the home and politics are indisputably intertwined. This is a reiteration of a point that appears repeatedly in her work. A week later, Martinson returned to the theme in a longer, more measured response to Casparsson's article: 'Är det rätt att aga sina barn?' ('Is it right to hit one's children?') (Helga, 1924k). There, she repeats her contention that socialism is about personal values and not simply the redistribution of wealth. She tells Casparsson: 'One thing Nila: if you are only an economic socialist it is best you soon as possible become one spiritually too' (ibid.). However, Martinson also addresses the main topic of Ottar's article: corporal punishment.

The debate on the disciplining of children

Martinson's article will be examined shortly, but first the context within which she was writing will be examined. In 1902, the first, very limited, child protection laws were passed in Sweden (SFS, 1902, 63; 1902, 67; 1902, 72). These had been engendered both by reports from inspectors, which raised awareness of the conditions that children were living under (Socialstyrelsen, 2013, 9) and their high mortality rate, and by a fear of the social and political consequences should the poor not be contained (Petersson, 1983). Both public and private initiatives arose to 'save' working-class children. Child-saving, also a popular phenomenon in the UK and USA, meant rescuing not only infants from starvation and disease but also older

children from delinquency.⁶¹ Both these discourses are reflected in Martinson's work from her uniquely working-class perspective. This is an inversion of most contemporary accounts, which even when sympathetic are written from a middle- or upper-class viewpoint. Weiner highlights the difficulty in reflecting the views of the clients of the Goutte de Lait (Mjölkdroppen) and the child protection agency in Solna (discussed in the previous chapter) due to the scant records available (Weiner, 1995, 98).

The paradigm shift that saw mothers' authority give way to that of medical experts in the 1920s and 1930s also encompassed a change in approach to how children should be disciplined. As Casparsson's response to Ottesen-Jensen shows, the physical punishment of children was an accepted form of discipline in all levels of society, even if it had begun to be questioned. The perception that a child should implicitly obey adults increased during the 19th century to reach its culmination in the first half of the 20th century (Alfredsson, 2014, 15). However, it was during this latter period, when the child's psyche became of interest, that greater emphasis was placed upon teaching the child self-discipline, as opposed to outer forces imposing that control (Ekenstam, 2006). This was also reflected in the penal system. In her work Martinson frequently refers to Hall (Helga, 1929, 1930b), a young offender institution about 20 miles northwest of her cottage. She had a personal relationship with the institution: received copies of the prisoners' self-published newsletter and donated money for their recreation (Martinson, 1978). In her articles the place acts as a synonym for borstal. It was at Hall that the language describing the inmates changed markedly during the 1930s to include notes on their psychological and spiritual development (Norburg, 2015, 161). The 'dressage method', as Ottesen-Jensen (1924, 10) described the use of the rod, was no longer sufficient. The child, and the youth, must also be taught moral understanding.

⁶¹ See Platt, A. M. (1969) *The Child Savers: The Invention of Delinquency*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press; Chapter 5 of Cunningham, H. (1991) *The Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood Since the Seventeenth Century*. Oxford: Blackwell.

The most prominent proponent of this latter viewpoint was Key, who outlined her views in *The Century of the Child*, drawing on her own distressing childhood experiences (Key, 1915, 375). In her work Key argues that parents should speak to their children with the respect they would accord adults and that there should be consistency in their methods: ‘an adult would go mad if playful titans treated her in the manner that she herself brings up her children for years’ (Key, 2011, 21). The children will thereby learn by example. Parents should ‘educate their children with their head instead of their hands’, and corporal punishment should be banned at home and at school (ibid., 26). In this she met much resistance; for example, the professor, and subsequent member of the Swedish Academy, Vitalis Norström informed Key that ‘starvation and beatings’ were not dangerous for children (ibid., 162). At a time when the children of the poor were the primary focus of pedagogues and medical professionals, as objects in need of salvation, Key contended that *all* classes needed to improve their methods of childrearing, also giving examples of the harm the rich did to their offspring (Key, 1915). Key drew on many outside influences in her work, several of which overlap with Martinson. Key’s primary inspiration on the subject of education was the British philosopher and sociologist Herbert Spencer, but she also greatly admired Rousseau, to whom she felt that Spencer was indebted (Lengborn, 1993, 3). There are strong similarities between Key’s principles of education in *The Century of the Child* and Rousseau’s *Émile* (Lengborn, 1993, 3). Considering Martinson’s breadth of reading, it is unlikely that she did not read *Emile*. Her library included Rousseau’s autobiographical *Confessions* (1977), first published in 1782, in which the author’s views on childrearing and punishment are also expressed. The library shows Martinson’s further intellectual interest in child development and psychology, containing books on these subjects by John Ruskin (1916), Heinrich Lhotzky (1921), Hans Zulliger (1930), Gustave Johansson (1955), Nils Bejerot (1954), Christine Weston (1959) and John Takman (1962). The latter was a personal friend of Martinson and in his dedication

showed his admiration for her and her methods.⁶² With these books, Martinson shows a further overlap of influences with Key, who also owned *Vad vi skola älska och vårda* (*What We Should Love and Protect*) (Ruskin, 1916), a compilation of different parts of Ruskin's work with a focus on raising children, and the German theologian Lhotzky's *Ditt barns själ* (1921) (*Your Child's Soul*). Similarly to Key (and Martinson), Lhotzky believed children were equal to adults and that corporal punishment degraded both them and the parent (Lhotzky, 1924, 52). While Martinson embraced much of Key's and Rousseau's philosophies, she did not do so uncritically. Both Key and, in particular, Rousseau blamed mothers for the faults of their children, whereas Martinson looked to societal causes.

Martinson's lifelong aversion to corporal punishment

Martinson returned to the subject of corporal punishment throughout her career, during which time her writing, although not the message, altered. In her early articles, she presented specific problems and sometimes asked for advice from her peers. In doing so, Martinson spoke to her readers 'woman to woman', as she also did in the articles discussed in the previous chapter, assuming understanding and identification based on shared experiences. In 1922, as a 'worker mother', she argued against the casual disciplining of children through the infliction of pain (H. J., 1922). Three decades later, in her role as 'folk mother', she maintained that 'children's brains are in their heads, not their bottoms [...] you cannot beat knowledge into them' (Martinson, 1950c). There are echoes here of *Barnets århundrade* (1900), in which Key argues that any apparent improvement in a child's learning due to the threat of physical punishment is not real knowledge. Such learning is forgotten as soon as the threat of violence has passed and consequently has no place in schools (Key, 2011, 29).

Corporal punishment was banned in Swedish schools in 1958, although Martinson had argued for this 30 years earlier. This occurred in reply to an open editorial, by the pseudonymous

⁶² 'To Moa who has said the best thing of all about upbringing: that there are parents who are so perfect that the children never get over it. And to Moa, beloved Moa, who has been, and is, such salt in this bloody, petty bourgeoisie Swedish dough' (Takman, cited in Holmqvist, 2013).

‘Urinvånare’ (‘Indigenous’), in her local paper. She and Urinvånare had, a little more than a month earlier, debated local politics from opposing sides (Urinvånare, 1928a; Helga, 1928j). In their conflicting attitudes towards corporal punishment, they continued this binary debate, with Martinson exhibiting a positive belief in the young of the future and Urinvånare demonstrating a conservative mindset (Svedin, 2015, 64) in calling for harsher punishments. Urinvånare, inverting Key’s hope of a child-friendly 20th century, bemoans the fact that ‘we are living in the Century of the Child’ (Urinvånare, 1928b). In a common complaint throughout the centuries, but especially of the 20th (Frykman, 1991, 109), Urinvånare argues that children are ‘being given more and more rights and fewer and fewer responsibilities.’ (Urinvånare, 1928b). Young people are running wild, especially in schools, where they threaten teachers. What is needed is ‘the old tried and tested method of beatings, the rod, whilst avoiding all niceties and panderings’ (ibid.). If this does not happen, Urinvånare concludes, there will be a serious threat to subsequent generations. In reply to the argument for an increase in corporal punishment, Martinson claims that ‘the pedagogue who puts his, or her, only hope in the museum’s birch’ has no business being a teacher (Helga, 1929). She also gives voice to the, at a time when explicit obedience was expected from a child (Weiner, 1995) rare opinion that ‘it is customary that both parties should be heard in a case, even when the class differences are as large as those between a student and a teacher’ (Helga, 1929). Key’s admonition to treat children with respect and the reminder of Lhotzky, whose book both she and Martinson owned, that ‘You are beings of equal worth, you and your child’ (Lhotzky, 1924, 48) resound here. Martinson, however, also adds the class dimension and then continues with the even more radical concept that ‘bad feeling between a teacher and a pupil, is never (in the lower school) the child’s fault, but that of parents, guardians and teachers not being in agreement’ (Helga, 1929). Martinson’s ideals would not be out of place

in a Swedish school today, although, as she admitted when writing to Casparsson again, it was not always easy to live up to her beliefs.

The second reply to Casparsson

In Martinson's second reply to Casparsson on corporal punishment, published a week after the first, she clearly aspires to Key's principles but is stymied by the realities of everyday life, admitting that her first instinct when disciplining her children is often 'a clip around the ear' (Helga, 1924k). This is, she says, because 'the humane theory is not always possible to follow under *current circumstances*' (ibid.) – a tired working-class mother cannot always be pedagogical. Martinson thereby initially appears to accept that it is only once a socialist society has been achieved that things will be better. She then immediately contradicts herself, addressing Nila (Casparsson) directly in a chatty authorial voice (a literary trope) and using her personal experience, not only as evidence, but also to narrow the issue down to its human implications. She asks:

Do you really think a four-year-old should be spanked because he filled his younger brother's mouth with soap when I left him alone with his curiosity? Do you think a four-year-old, be he ever so smart and quick to learn, can understand the consequences of his actions? No, it is the reasons that I have to leave the children alone that should be censured. (Helga, 1924k)

In writing this, Martinson rejects the prevailing attitude (Ekenstam, 2006; Weiner, 1995) that mothers were to be held solely accountable for their children's well-being. Although, she disagreed with Key and Rousseau in this respect, she also reflects their views with the argument that small children should not be disciplined for behaving in a way that they cannot help. For example, Key argues that a child who spoils her dress whilst out playing should, instead of being punished, be provided with 'simple, strong' clothes that can withstand childhood activities (Key, 2011, 21). A well-stuffed, 'modern' Swedish room, Key argues, is

a reprehensible setting for a child – full of objects that can harm and be harmed. Instead, sunny, colourful nurseries with simple, sturdy furniture are preferred (ibid., 20). Key’s ideas influenced the artists Karin and Carl Larsson, who had such a nursery in their ideal home, but Key’s precepts were not, as noted by Wägner, always practical for the working class.

Martinson was not in any position to provide such a room, and she goes on in the article to paint a forceful image, recreating a scene (Wolfe, 1990) where she has been forced to leave her ‘little ones’ alone (Helga, 1924k) in a place of hazards. She returns to find a room that ‘defies description’ (ibid.), although she then goes on to describe it: Ash over the floor; the water bucket, ‘despite all precautionary measures’, tipped out; and everything else soiled with ‘one thing or another’ (ibid.). With ‘common sense appeal of the shared common senses’ (Hartsock, 2016, 146), we can imagine the mess caused by the mix of ash and water, the scene becomes vivid.⁶³ Using the brutal word ‘*klå*’, the equivalent of ‘to beat’, she juxtaposes harshness with a piteous image of her children: ‘Maybe I should have beaten the five-year-old and the four-year-old, who sat in the midst of the devastation, trying to comfort the two youngest who were crying for mother who was taking so long’ (ibid.). The reference to herself in the third person as ‘mother’ adds to the pathos – what is sadder than children calling for their mother? After subtly implying that Nila would hit small weeping children – ‘No dear Nila [...] I had no desire to hit the little ones’ – Martinson uses a second example to reiterate the point that she does not beat her children: ‘Not even’, she says, ‘when the three-year-old tipped his youngest brother out of the cradle, very firmly explaining, that it was his own cradle, and no one else was allowed to use it’ (ibid.). As she says, ‘The little ones’ innocence disarmed me!’, and the humour injected into the sentence also disarms the reader, as the

⁶³ In this, and other descriptions of her rooms (these are developed even more fully in her semi-autobiographical novels, especially *Mor gifter sig* from 1936), Martinson is providing us with a rare insight into a working-class home. As Steedman points out, within autobiography, ‘voices *from* the working-class interior are an extraordinary rarity. All the descriptions we have are from observers’ (Steedman, 2001, 117).

authorial voice becomes intimate and succeeds in making an otherwise relatively violent event seem less so.

Martinson further analyses her use of punishment towards her children as they have grown older, concluding in the manner of Key that each child is an individual that reacts differently to corporal punishment but that in none of the cases is the ‘fault’ corrected by its use (Key, 2011, 18, 20, 29). The only things that help, she determines, are ‘my distain and my silence’ (Helga, 1924k) and shaming them in front of their peers. Martinson’s final example in her reply to Casparsson is a plea (the story she relates is similar to a parable) for understanding the reasons behind children’s and young adults’ actions. In it, she appears to follow Rousseau’s philosophy that a child ‘Wholly unmoral in his actions [...] can do nothing morally wrong, and he deserves neither punishment nor reproof’ (Rousseau, 2010) The example takes up almost a quarter of the article and is in the form of a dialogue – a trope of both literary journalism and the oral tradition. When Martinson’s son ruins her pen handle by sharpening the end, she restrains herself from slapping him after seeing his face: ‘it was so clear what he was thinking’ (Helga, 1924k). Through careful questioning, she comes to understand that her son thought he was helping her by creating a pencil/pen hybrid, and ‘Of course’, she humorously writes, ‘I couldn’t beat the little embryonic inventor’ (ibid.). When the boy offers to take the pen to school and swap it for his own, making light of the physical and mental punishment his teacher will inflict on him, ‘if only mother will stop being angry’, it is clear that we are meant to understand that there are better ways of disciplining children than violence.

Martinson’s rejection of corporal punishment can also be seen in a shift in middle-class thinking during this period. This change is illustrated by the different attitudes taken by the two women’s magazines *Husmodern* and *Idun*, during the late 1920s and early 1930s. In *Idun*, Vera von Kraemer argued for the importance of understanding children’s motives and the

dangers caused to young psyches by corporal punishment (Berger, 1974, 66), recommending other forms of censure. In contrast, *Husmodern* advocated birching children who misbehaved (ibid., 67). Ekenstam (2006), however, in his study of the history of the body in Sweden, sees the new methods simply as a more refined and innovative way to punish and keep control of children. ‘One can speak of innovations in the area of punishment techniques. For example, one consciously starts using the child’s fear of losing its parents’ love. [...] To make mother unhappy becomes one of the worst sins’ (Ekenstam, 2006, 75). Martinson’s (and also that of Rousseau and Key) approach of ‘distain’, ‘silence’ and ‘shaming’ (Helga, 1924k) becomes less enlightened in this context.

Anger at societal injustice

The prose pertaining to Martinson’s children entertains and flows easily, but when she moves away from the personal, into political rhetoric, Martinson’s writing is less fluid, recalling Hartsock’s criticism of writing that denies the ‘open-ended present’ (Hartsock, 2016, 120). Making a pun, she claims that after abjuring the need to hit her children, ‘The desire to strike remained within me, however, to beat the foundations of our societal structure in the middle of their hypocritical, convention [sic] leering faces. This system which forces thousands of mothers to leave their little ones on their own!’ (Helga, 1924k) Though clumsy and polemical, the writing is till vivid and, as in the previous chapter, Martinson’s anger is palpable. She is again using it as an activist to, in Nancy’s words, bring out ‘the qualities of the inadmissible, the intolerable’ as ‘a refusal and a resistance’ (Nancy, 1992, 375). Martinson had no wish to be ‘reasonable’, and her rage was well founded. Women were responsible by law for the well-being of their children, but society failed to provide the means by which they could achieve this. In order to be able to feed and clothe their infants, mothers were often forced, as

Martinson was, to leave them alone at home during the day.⁶⁴ It did not take a political activist to be angry about this. Weiner (1995) cites the records of a woman who left her children alone whilst she worked and who was consequently censored by the Child Welfare Bureau. She said: ‘she had not asked for help and if one wasn’t satisfied with what she herself could achieve, then one could give her the means to stay at home herself, or supply another person to look after the home while she was away’ (Weiner, 1995, 197).⁶⁵ This paradox arose, as the expert in Swedish gender and family history Ann-Sofie Ohlander writes, ‘from a denial that parenthood, childrearing and care are part of society, a denial of reproduction, or in other words the very corner stones of society’s continued existence’ (Ohlander, 1989, 171). This denial was challenged by many women both inside and outside the labour movement, including Martinson, whose demands it appeared were eventually at least partially met by the social democratic government of the 1930s and 1940s. Maternity benefit was first introduced in 1931 and child allowance in 1937. The success was not necessarily a feminist one, however; much of it only came after the Myrdals’ recommendations in *Kris I befolkningsfrågan* (1934) for improving Sweden’s birth rate.

For Martinson, the fault of the system lay not only in that it forced mothers to be separated from their children but also that it, at times, brutalised them. In an article published in summer 1924, she recounts the experiences of a ‘friend’ who had met such a woman. Martinson, the storyteller, draws on the communal oral tradition, as she asks the readers, as part of the collective of working-class women, what they think of the issue. This, as well as the conversational language, the setting of time and place, the physical details and the description

⁶⁴ In 1926, half the women who received support from the Barnavårdbyrån in Hagalund were engaged in paid employment outside the home (Weiner, 1995, 201), whilst others took work into the home. Anita Nyberg estimates that in 1930, about 40% of all married women in Sweden worked outside the home in some form (Nyberg, 1989, 164).

⁶⁵ Women in Britain faced similar circumstances: a ‘woman who kept a child home from school to mind the baby while she worked broke the law, and if she left the baby alone and it injured itself, she was also liable to prosecution’ (Lewis, 1984, 12).

of human emotions all conform to tropes within the oral tradition, but most can equally be related to those within literary journalism, as below.

The article, titled 'Ett problem' ('A problem'), begins thus: 'Last week, during a trip between S and N, I met a friend on the train. She had two of her children with her and had just been to visit her husband and mother' (Helga, 1924r). The language is naturalistic and the story is described from the perspective of Martinson and her friend. Martinson, in a literary manner, sets the scene for the story but also, by providing details, aims for journalistic veracity.

Indeed, she is specific, as she writes that it is only 'After some varied conversation and a pause in the conversation' (ibid.) that the friend told her of an unhappy event that she had just been party to. The rest of the story is told in the friend's voice, until the final paragraph – a literary rather than journalistic device. It transpires that whilst visiting his grandmother, her friend's son was slapped by a woman who erroneously thought that he had pushed her child. The punishment was witnessed by several neighbours, who were all furious at the unfairness of the action, as well as the lack of etiquette in punishing another woman's child. One onlooker took it upon herself to remonstrate angrily with the woman, but the friend paused:

Then I looked more closely at her, where she stood, white faced from emotion holding the hand of her crying boy. Her figure betrayed an early pregnancy, and do you know, there was something in her whole posture and expression that told of a nameless suffering. (Helga, 1924r)

The friend was so struck by the woman that she forgot the slap and instead felt such empathy for the woman that 'I wanted to cry. I suddenly felt that the whole of life was so meaningless, grey and terrible' (ibid.). Instead of berating the woman, she told her that she was sure that it was all a misunderstanding and that no harm was intended. The woman quietly went back indoors, and the friend found out that the woman was a single mother but had married a widower with three children in order to be able to keep her son, her pride and joy, with her.

As well as seeing to the children and the home, she milked at the ‘big house’ three times a day. The friend tried to explain to the other women and her mother, who were all angry with her, why she had failed to defend her son. ‘I said the boy wasn’t harmed by the slap, argued that the woman was unaccountable because she had so much to do, was pregnant and in addition had to fight against poverty and was so in love with that little boy’ (ibid.).

Nevertheless, nothing helped. The other women thought that she was ‘an unjust mother’, and her own mother ‘said I was worse than the woman, who gave my son a slap, because at least she looked out for her own child’ (ibid.). Martinson asked her friend: ‘So what did they want you to do?’ She replied: ‘They wanted me to attack her, pour abuse over her and get the last word’ (ibid.). Martinson ends the article, as she does others, by asking: ‘So, comrades, what do you think? Was my friend a lazy and unjust mother, who refused to obey the impulse “an eye for an eye” – or was she a human, who through her actions in this case gave her child something to think about?’ (ibid.). Although this is a leading question, Martinson does take, at least, a small step back in her narration and aims (even if she doesn’t totally succeed) to provide a form of objectivity (Greenberg, 2018, 206). The single mother she describes is suffering, but she is not unproblematic. In placing these facts before her readership Martinson begins to allow them to make up their own minds as to a solution to ‘the problem’.

The story is a moral one, encompassing many of Martinson’s key themes: single motherhood, poverty and the importance of compassion and understanding, especially in relation to the first two issues. As an anarchist, Martinson rejects the idea of retribution for injustices committed by individuals and argues instead for an understanding of the women’s behaviour based on their difficult circumstances. She also appears to condemn the ‘interfering’ neighbours. There is, however, a libertarian argument for ‘interference’, albeit perhaps not in this case, as Kropotkin called for the ‘Active intervention of friends, neighbours, passers-by’ in breaking up fights and assisting the weak, thus preventing many conflicts and the need for

a police force' (Kropotkin, 1948, 11). In 1950, Martinson espoused the same, calling for neighbourly intervention and blaming people's fear of interference for the continuance of some child abuse (Martinson, 1950a).

Although written in 1924, the article has a literary quality in its attention to detail, the scene-setting and the use of descriptive language – she listens 'greedily' to the woman's defence – as in an episode from one of her subsequent works of fiction, such as *My Mother Gets Married* (1956). In keeping with this, Martinson analyses the behaviour of her friend and the other women during the event and incidentally shines a light on the circumstances of agricultural labourer families (which also occurs in her novels). In the labourers' quarters is a daytime matriarchy, with a strict policing of cultural mores. Marrying has not brought the single mother social acceptance or happiness and has potentially been simply an economic transaction made in order to keep her child. Illustrating the links amongst Martinson's journalism, real-life events and her novels, this situation reappears in Martinson's debut novel *Women and Apple Trees* (1933). Mother Sofie, with whom the book opens, has married a farmer under the misguided apprehension that this will allow her to keep her illegitimate son. Her granddaughter Sally closes the novel by marrying a rich widower with children in order to provide economic security for her fatherless sons. The sacrifices made by these women are in vain. Sofie drowns herself in middle age following a campaign of gossip against her, and Sally dies in childbirth, despised by her sons for marrying for money. The woman with an illegitimate son in 'A Problem' (Helga, 1924r), has more in common with these characters in the novels, and is more at home in the 'inconclusive present' (Hartsock, 2016, 56), with her problematic actions and drawn countenance, than with the beautiful single mothers of Martinson's other early journalism.

She returned to the theme of slapping children, a quarter of a century later. Now in the guise of 'folk mother', Martinson no longer asks for advice, but makes a pronouncement. She

explains, but does not excuse, a woman she sees hit her child: ‘The young mother may have her own problems, maybe she is in a difficult situation, must needs hurry, but however hard things are we should not take it out on little children’ (Martinson, 1950a). In this she echoes Lhotzky, who writes, that slapping a child is a quick way to settle mischief but a mistake, albeit a pardonable one, in the long term, as it degrades the child and shows a loss of control (Lhotzky, 1924, 52). Without her customary conversational tone and a more personal example, that draws on interior rather than exterior discovery, Martinson’s exhortation loses power and becomes a somewhat bland statement.

Capitalism as the cause of crime and detrimental effects of punishment

From her very first letter to *Arbetaren* – ‘one does not raise children to become conscious citizens by [...] boxing their ears, which is many men’s tactic’ (H. J., 1922) – Martinson argues that, if nothing else, physical punishment is counterproductive for society, as well as the individual. She asks Nila/Casparsson in 1924, if he seriously believes that ‘if we are meticulous with our use of the rod, our children will be decent, law abiding citizens?’ (Helga, 1924j). And explains on a further occasion that children become good people despite the hardships they have been subject to and not, as some might believe, because of them (Martinson, 1929). In the two articles addressed to Casparsson/Nila (Helga, 1924j, 1924k), Martinson therefore, implicitly argues that there can be no distinction between the public and private spheres whilst the ‘societal system’ (i.e. capitalism) affects both.⁶⁶ Moving on from the subject of young children and punishment, she links the private sphere of the home with the public houses of correction, arguing that it is the same system that ‘forces thousands of mothers to leave their little ones on their own’ that also ‘sends our boys, made wild by suffering and poverty, to Hall and our daughters to the spinning house’ (Helga, 1924). Through this, Martinson blames crime on capitalism instead of accepting the hegemonic

⁶⁶ Not always consistent, she also at times argued against state interference in the private sphere, for example when reacting against Kollontai’s and Lenin’s ideas.

narrative of the working class being inherently morally inferior. The latter was a concept that stemmed from official reports into delinquency, in which anti-social behaviour was considered, until the 1920s, to be symptomatic of the lack of morality in the working class as a whole. Subsequently, the blame was laid on the degeneracy of individuals within the class (Lundström and Sallnäs, 2003). In her articles, Martinson argues instead that it is poverty itself – its boredom, hardship and lack of beauty – that makes people act badly. She believed, as Key did, that beauty was essential for the soul and that one of the cruellest aspects of industrialism, therefore, was that it deprived workers of the experience of nature (Helga, 1924s). Punishing miscreants is not only pointless but also counterproductive.

In 1930, Martinson wrote to *Brand* on the same subject. This was in reply to a letter by the pseudonymous ‘Former schoolboy’, arguing that there was not enough physical punishment in Swedish borstals, such as the one at Hall, and that being beaten as a child had caused him no harm (F.D. Skolpojke, 1930). Martinson found his article ‘despicable’ and hoped that the writer did not have any children. ‘That would be awful! They would surely end up in Hall before they were nine years old, for boys often fetch up at Hall due to their insufferable, criminally tyrannical parents’ (Helga, 1930b). Yet again, she could draw on her experiences to validate her opinions. In her reply to ‘Former schoolboy’, Martinson establishes her authority in this way by telling him: ‘I know a great deal about Hall, I’ve had some dealings with the committee there [...] One thing I can tell you: the boys get thrashed there, thrashed dreadfully often’ (Helga, 1930). In championing the young offenders at Hall, Martinson was ahead of her time. It was not until the late 1930s that a scandal about their physical mistreatment broke out and a public debate was held (Modig, 2009, 10), leading to the closure of Hall in 1939.

It is possible that Martinson’s interest in young offenders was piqued not only by her political beliefs but also by her children’s behaviour. Seven months after the debate with Casparsson,

Martinson wrote 'En moders problem' ('A mother's problem') (Helga, 1924t). As so often, she draws from the micro, the difficult situation of an individual mother, to symbolise a broader societal problem. Although the article is in the third person (the problems of a 'Mrs Ljung' are discussed), the problem is Martinson's own. At the time of writing, Martinson was experiencing difficulties with her son Manfred (Manne), the boy who had sharpened her pen handle. The ten-year-old was constantly running away from school and home, leading his teacher to recommend that Martinson consult a doctor (Engman, 2004, 56–57).⁶⁷ Martinson clearly felt she had very limited options available to her, as she discusses in the article. Just as in 'A problem' (Helga, 1924r) 'A mother's problem' (Helga, 1924t) primarily takes the form of a dialogue – again a technique common literary journalism and the oral tradition. This is initially between a mother, Mrs Ljung, and her neighbour, Mrs Vall, but a farmer subsequently joins the conversation. The mother is seeking advice on the subject of her son, who has yet again run away from home, as well as stolen money from her. She does not know where to find him or what to do with him when she does. Martinson builds the narrative by providing information only as the dialogue unfolds; it is not until the end of the article that we have all the salient details. In the beginning, we simply observe two women talking. The neighbour shows prurient curiosity, asking: 'how much has he stolen this time?' (Helga, 1924). She also appears to be somewhat judgemental and in favour of corporal punishment, reminding the mother that she failed to beat the boy the last time he behaved this way. Mrs Ljung admits this but says that when she asks for advice, one person advocates beatings and the other kindness, so 'it's very difficult to know what to do' (ibid.). The dialogue articulates Martinson's thought process. There are no neat questions and answers but instead a

⁶⁷ Ten seems very young for the state to apply punitive measures, but Weiner's study provides examples of 11-year-olds being tried by churches and school committees for running away from school, as well as for stealing and begging (Weiner, 1995, 48–49). The head of schools in Solna visited Hall personally in an attempt to have boys from his area incarcerated (ibid., 51).

naturalistic depiction of a mother's worries. The narrative remains open-ended, like life itself (Hartsock, 2016).

Mrs Ljung is at a loss in how she should react to her son and seeks advice. She admits that many have recommended that she send her child to Hall and asks: '[does] Mrs Vall, perhaps, think this is a good idea?'⁶⁸ (Helga, 1924). Mrs Vall appears to think it is, but then the women are joined by a local farmer, who has an alternative view. In reply to his question of what the problem is, the dialogue is again naturalistic: 'Well, Mrs Ljung's son has gone off again. And the question is whether they'll take him to Hall' (ibid.). The man dismissively replies 'Oh, talk' and then tells of the experiences of an agricultural hand he took from the borstal. The child had been so damaged by the harsh treatment at Hall that he had become filled with 'hatred for all people' and acted accordingly (ibid.). However, after a time of being treated with kindness by his employer, he became 'better tempered and more truthful' than most other boys (ibid.). The farmer tells Mrs Ljung not to let anyone take her son to Hall. Here, the farmer is expressing the anarchist perspective, and in particular the views of Kropotkin. Having first-hand knowledge of incarceration, Kropotkin came, after William Godwin, to offer the 'most cogent anarchist criticism of the law' (Marshall, 2008, 30) and, in particular, of crime and punishment. Kropotkin argued that, irrespective of any moral reservations one might have about the punishments inflicted on inmates, prisons themselves were simply counterproductive. They were '*the* nurseries for the most revolting category of breaches of moral law' (Kropotkin, 1887, 336). In agreement with Kropotkin, the farmer claims that treating the prisoners as 'numbered thing[s]' (ibid., 329) dehumanises them and produces people who by the time they leave prison have become manipulative and unfeeling and far less fit for society than when they went in, just as his agricultural worker had become.

⁶⁸ In Sweden, until the 'Du reform' ('you reform') in the late 1960s, unless the speaker was on very close terms with the person they were in conversation with, etiquette demanded that they address them in the third person, with the second-person plural pronoun (*Ni*) or by their title. Hence, in the dialogue above, Mrs Ljung addresses her neighbour as 'Mrs Vall' throughout.

Kropotkin argued that prisoners should be treated with humanity, as the farmer does in the dialogue, and offered more freedom, not less. They should also be given the ‘opportunity of exercising their good feelings’ (Kropotkin, 1887, 357), for example as assistants in the prison hospital. If this could be done, Kropotkin avowed, the prisoners would become kinder and gentler. How society in general should function could also be extrapolated from this, as Kropotkin saw prisons as microcosms of the state (ibid., 168). Kropotkin was imprisoned several times on political grounds and detailed his experiences of incarceration in his memoirs, as well as in the polemic *In Russian and French Prisons* (1887). As well as his personal knowledge and the study of treatises on the subject, Kropotkin drew on the literature of the time that dealt with issues of punishment and incarceration (Woodcock in Kropotkin, 1991/1906, x). He referenced and reviewed novels such as Chekhov’s *Sakhalin Island* (1893), Tolstoy’s *Resurrection* (1899) and Dostoevsky’s *House of the Dead* (1862). Key also felt that the latter book was of practical significance. Drawing the parallel between child punishment and adult punishment, as Martinson did, she recommended that all those who used beatings as a form of pedagogy should study Dostoevsky’s *House of the Dead*, where ‘the consequences of flogging criminals correspond to those of beating children’ (Key, 2011, 29). It is likely that Martinson was aware of this aspect of the book. She was an avid reader of Dostoevsky, writing in 1942 that ‘I read his books with the same breathless eagerness today as I did during the First World War’ (Martinson, 1942, 20). As well as borrowing *The Brothers Karamazov* (Dostojevski, 1918) from the library, her own book collection contained a selection of Dostoevsky’s essays, as well as *Raskolnikov* (Dostojevskij, 1944) a published draft extract of *Crime and Punishment*. Literature and philosophy here fed into each other and combined with Martinson’s life experiences to form her views on punishment.

Theoretical and practical examples of the effects of punishment

A further concern of Martinson, Kropotkin and anarchist movement as a whole was that punishment of adults, not just that of children. Through both personal experience and the use of literature, Kropotkin established that state punishment was simply legitimised vengeance and ‘we must ask ourselves’, he said, ‘what is the use of vengeance?’ (Kropotkin, 1948, 10). This was a message that Martinson also received from the anarchist newspapers. In 1909, for example, Erik Lindorm, the radical author and poet, who had served a month’s prison sentence for agitation, wrote in *Brand* that prisons were simply places of punishment where ‘vengeance is the primary motive’ (Lindorm, cited in Björklund, 1960, 39). The anarchists, including Martinson, called for an alternative.

The ‘remedy is not to flog’ the man who has committed a crime, wrote Kropotkin in 1886, nor to ‘chain him up, or to kill him on the scaffold or in prison, but to help him by the most brotherly care, by treatment based on equality, by the usages of life amongst honest men’ (Kropotkin, cited in Woodcock, 116). Martinson argued this throughout her writing career. This can be illustrated by the farmer’s example above and by the educative column for young socialists that she contributed to in *Brand*, ‘De ungas spalt’ (‘The young people’s column’), in May 1926.

Dismissing the possibility of religion and punishment as being redemptive forces, Martinson instead links brutalised boys’ rehabilitation to acceptance within the socialist movement as she tells the story of an orphaned youth she encountered. ‘Fostered’ by a farmer, the boy suffered an abusive childhood. He finally ran away from the farmer but was caught and sent to Hall. By the time he left the institution, Martinson avers, ‘his soul was’, as Kropotkin would have expected, ‘hard as a stone from hatred. His only desire was an eye for an eye’ (Helga, 1926c). As the victim of adults who beat him and then told him to pray to God, he developed a healthy distrust of religious people. Giving the boy’s story the stamp of veracity,

he is not simply a fictional device; Martinson introduces herself into the narrative. She informs the reader that she met him whilst in hospital and that she advised him to join the socialists fighting for a better world. In so doing – in other words, by learning, as Kropotkin argued, ‘the usages of life amongst honest men’ (Kropotkin, n.d.) – she told him that he would become ‘a whole person and a good man’ (Helga, 1926c).

Her actions are those of an activist, meant to change the opinions of her readers by appealing to their emotions and engendering empathy (Hartsock, 2016). She writes to be emulated and addresses herself to the reader of the column with a further message of compassion and acceptance. ‘Young comrade! You who have perhaps not had quite such a terrible life – do not reject the coarse comrade who effs and blinds. Bring him into the circle of comradeship and show him leniency and empathy’ (Helga, 1926c). Sacrificing grammar to better accentuate her strength of feeling, Martinson urges her audience to ‘Remember it is the Christian, hypocritical, disgustingly God worshipping loyal servants to the state that have made him the way he is!’ (ibid.). Her words are polemical and far from being open-ended, yet also striking.

Martinson repeated this message in different forms over the years (Helga, 1928d; Moa, 1929b). Her perspective is maternal, frequently holding adults responsible for the corruption of the youth, often physically by forcing the young to drink alcohol (Moa, 1929a). In the 1928 May Day special edition of *Brand*, she paints three scenarios where teenage boys suffer different forms of abuse, leading them to commit actions that are then condemned by society. She pleads: ‘Speak on behalf of the young proletarian this May Day. He has been turned into a wild, hunted animal. Speak for his cause – give him human dignity!’ (Helga, 1928d. In this and in her earlier addresses to the young, with her plea for the acceptance of ‘coarseness’ and her rejection of ‘hypocritical’ Christians, Martinson is not only entreating for tolerance: she is also implicitly allying herself with the unrespectable in opposition to the respectable. In the

year between these two articles, she did so explicitly, penning a paean to the misfit, where she argued that a person who gives themselves fully to the socialist struggle will be unable to sustain familial or fraternal ties and so will become a pariah, even amongst their comrades (Helga, 1927c). Even though she primarily addresses the problems of boys in these articles, when writing about this ultimate activist, she uses gender-neutral language.

The person who offers themselves for the sake of the masses must become hard and ruthless towards those closest to them, must rip off all ties, sacrifice their own wants and tastes. [...] sometimes even the ideological comrades will turn against this and claim that the martyr is a half criminal. (Helga, 1927c)

Within the labour movement, this rejection of societal norms was not a matter of course. Ronny Ambjörnsson's (1991) modern sociological classic *Den skötsamma arbetaren* (*The Conscientious Worker*) describes the *mentalité* – non-tangible attitudes of a section of society or from a period of time' (Chapman et al., 2015, 7) – of the organised Swedish working class that emerged in the early decades of the 20th century. Self-education, orderliness, diligence, sobriety and, above all, self-control combined to produce the ideal worker – a self-image that was consolidated by the time of the 'folk home' of the 1930s and 1940s (Ambjörnsson, 1991, 10). This tendency towards self-regulation was considerably stronger amongst the social democrats than amongst the anarchists. However, Martinson's denunciations of respectability, as well as her own disregard for convention in her personal life, point to the influence of the idea within the latter movement too.⁶⁹

Seeking communal solutions

In her article, 'A mother's problem', about the runaway boy, however, the farmer is clearly providing the more dominant anarchist perspective – one that she agrees with here – that

⁶⁹ The Swedish proletarian poet Ragnar Jändel also reacted against this tendency within the anarchist movement. When a Young Socialist (anarchist) group in Norway discussed the question 'Can persons with a bad reputation be admitted as members of the organisation?', Jändel indignantly argued that this was the 'height of Grundyism' and that a more fitting debate would have been whether 'people with *good* reputations may be admitted' (Björklund, 1960, 91).

punishment and incarceration are counterproductive. By placing the sentiment in the mouth of a representative of a relatively wealthy and conservative section of the agricultural community, Martinson gives the view added credence. The opinions of Mrs Vall are of less weight, despite their plenitude. She is quite possibly an amalgamation of Martinson's neighbours. In the same way that Martinson renders her three-year-old's actions humorous when she describes how he 'very firmly' explains that it is 'his' cradle, in her second reply to Nila, Mrs Vall is ever so slightly mocked as she persists in pointing out 'stubbornly' that 'Yes, but that's not up to the parents [whether a boy is sent to Hall] and that in this case it's probably only God that can help' (Helga, 1924t). Instead, Mrs Ljung, lacking faith in divine intervention, continues searching for her son.

The format of the article then changes from dialogue to a third-person stream of consciousness as the mother reflects on the situation – a literary journalistic trope. Mrs Ljung and her son's teacher understand why he acts as he does. His intelligence and lively imagination mean that 'the monotony and poverty' (ibid.) of his life are unbearable. This is again a sign of the autobiographical nature of the article; Manne's teacher had written to Martinson on the same subject. Mrs Ljung debates whether to beat her son and decides against it, instead deciding that she will explain to him that, unlike the rich farmers' children, they do not have the money to go to the cinema.

The article ends with an acknowledgement that the case was an actual one and that the boy had returned and promised improvement but within a week had disappeared again. As in the article 'A problem' (Helga, 1924r), Martinson asks, on behalf of Mrs Ljung, 'Is there anyone among "Woman and the home" readers who can give understanding advice, or who knows of a similar case where the outcome has been happy – without recourse to a corrective institution?' (Helga, 1924) Whilst confident, as Kropotkin teaches, that in an ideal world love is the only answer to misconduct, and that most of such behaviour would disappear in a just

society, Martinson is uncertain how to act in reality. The discursivity and openness of her writing reflects this, despite an overt expression of political views.

Attempting to resolve familial issues through her writing, Martinson spoke to her readers ‘woman to woman’ (Miller, 1991, 125), expecting to be received as a class sister. She was also reflecting the anarchist ideal that the whole community be involved in solving what current society views as personal problems. However, no advice from readers was published because the following week Ottesen-Jensen resigned from the ‘Kvinnan och hemmet’ page and a new editor took over. Tragically, Martinson did not find out whether her strategies with her son would have been successful over time, as, six months after the publication of the article, both Manne and his younger brother Knut died falling through the ice of a nearby lake. That her message remained a radical one when it came to corporal punishment is shown by the statistics. The year after she died, 1965, Martinson’s views were still in the minority, with 53 per cent of Swedish parents viewing corporal punishment as a positive measure (Socialstyrelsen, 2013, 24).⁷⁰ It was not banned until 1979.

Conclusion

This chapter continued on the theme of motherhood and personal experience providing authorial authority and expanded into the area of punishment – on personal, societal and institutional levels. Key’s work in the area of childcare and discipline, as well as Kropotkin’s view on punishment, influenced Martinson heavily. She made use of their ideas on a personal level in seeking to understand her children and in broader political arguments for a more just and compassionate society. Often, they were intertwined as she was consistently able to provide examples from her daily life bring her arguments to life. Her depiction of her children’s reactions at being left alone sparks our emotions and comes to illustrate not only the wrongs of corporal punishment but also the injustice of society as a whole, as it forces

⁷⁰ For a brief overview of British attitudes towards corporal punishment over the past century, see Cunningham, H. (2006) *The Invention of Childhood*. London: BBC Books.

parents to leave their children on their own whilst they are at work. Anger but also humour emerge in her writing, attempting to stir readers to action whilst making her work accessible. Tropes from literary journalism, third person, dialogue, symbols and novelistic language are all present in her articles, as is an insight into working-class life. Whether dealing with children or adult offenders, Martinson's argument was that love and understanding were better for them and society as a whole than punitive treatment. In doing so, she defended those who 'eff and blind' – the non-respectable who even the labour movement had little time for. This discussion is continued in the next chapter, where Martinson is shown to defend the 'ungrateful poor' and to encourage everyone to forcibly reject misguided attempts of 'do-goodery'.

Chapter 7: ‘Real People Hate Philanthropy’ – Martinson’s Rejection of Charity in Favour of Mutual Aid

Martinson had a lifelong antipathy towards charity – ‘The damned public theatrical philanthropy, this the pastime of the rich, blinds people’ (Helga, 1923). This chapter establishes her objections to the practice, and the alternatives she offered, whilst highlighting the literary methods she used to put her ideas across. The concept of charity appears in 16 of the articles accessed for this thesis. A number of them are fictional; others relay, what Martinson claims are, true events. Some merely mention charity in passing, whilst others take it as their sole subject and have titles like ‘Philanthropy’ and ‘Compassion’. The earliest is from 1923 and the latest is from 1953. It is clear that ‘philanthropy’ (*filantropi*), which she used interchangeably with the words ‘compassion’ (*barmhärtighet*) and ‘charity’ (*välgörenhet*), was a subject about which Martinson felt consistently deeply. In Swedish, ‘philanthropy’ is synonymous with ‘charity’ and simply means ‘actions intended to unselfishly help people in need’ (Nationalencyklopedin, 1991, 226). ‘Compassion’, although it may be used in different ways and has a religious element, is also a synonym for ‘charity’. Consequently, all three words will be used interchangeably throughout this chapter.

How Martinson felt we should act towards our fellow human beings is a thread that runs throughout her writing and this thesis but is particularly present in the examples discussed in this chapter. Here, the thread emerges as part of her literary voice through her objections to philanthropy. Martinson’s own voice has, of course, been heard in her work discussed previously in this study, but it is in her reaction to charity, with its accompanying condescension, that it is at its clearest. In this context, Martinson expounds on political beliefs that have been filtered through class-based knowledge and explicitly states what can often only be surmised from her writing elsewhere. Her loathing of charity – ‘real people’, she

wrote in 1928, ‘hate philanthropy!’ (Helga 1928f) – was based on ‘practical experience’ (Martinson, 1953), as she once told Swedish Prime Minister Per Albin Hansson.

Martinson had many political reasons, both practical and philosophical, for her opposition to charity. As will be shown, her ideas corresponded with those of several prominent thinkers. This may be because she was an enthusiast of their work, such as that of Kropotkin and Wilde; read or had indirect access to their writing, for example through the anarchist press’s discussions of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin; or simply because charity was poorly regarded in the anarchist tradition as a whole. On the subject of philanthropy, she was perpetually theoretically consistent, yet she spoke from lived experience, so her reaction was simultaneously personal and emotional, as well as political. Martinson’s primary reaction here was anger – charity was ‘false’; ‘real’ people gave freely to one another.

The study of philanthropy and individual charity in Sweden has, in comparison with Britain and the USA, been neglected. Weiner argues that this is partly due to ideological reasons. ‘Philanthropy has been seen as a cul de sac’ (Weiner, 1995, 20) in Sweden, where the state has taken responsibility for meeting needs that in the former countries are still met through charity. Weiner suggests that gender bias has also contributed to the lack of scholarly interest; charitable work has traditionally been seen as a female-dominated area. Since Weiner’s study, however, there has been increased interest in the field (Plymoth, 2002; Lendahls Rosendahl, 2016), perhaps due to the cracks in the social democratic ideological hegemony in Swedish society during the past three decades.

Charity’s humiliation of the poor

The article ‘Prostinnans välgörenhet’ (‘The charity of the dean’s wife’) from 1924 establishes Martinson’s visceral dislike of charity early on in her writing career. In it, she combines her personal experience with her storytelling expertise to create a vivid piece of literary journalism, bringing to the fore the arrogance, humiliation and anger she connects with

philanthropy. In her first sentences, Martinson sets the scene by providing journalistic specifics, ensuring that we are aware of the veracity of the facts, but also the phenomenological details – we find out the weather and, to a certain degree, the date:

It was two days before Christmas Eve 192...The rain fell steadily and the snow was melting. I was in the most miserable mood for I had a heavy load on my kick-sled and mainly just gravel on the road, in addition to, the consciousness that the money fell far short of what was needed. I stepped into a shop in the station community to get something I had forgotten when I made the other simple Christmas purchases. (Helga, 1924i)

The paragraph is subjective, full of personal facts and written in an idiosyncratic manner, but it is effective. As Hartsock argues, the aesthetics of experience do make the text readable and relatable, even beyond his projected 70 years to in this case almost a hundred (Hartsock, 2016, 146). Many will recognise themselves in the depiction of being short of money, forgetting a purchase and having a heavy load to carry. For readers who have ever used a kick-sled (still common in Scandinavia), the portrayal of melted snow, gravel and a weighty burden on the sled is particularly evocative; trying to get home under those circumstances would be extremely trying.

We are explicitly told the author's mindset but are given enough information even without this to understand that she is not happy. It also provides a historical picture, giving us an insight into a life lived in the country, where the nearest shops are those that have sprung up around the rural station and where there is neither enough money for Christmas nor for adequate transportation. Inside the shop, Martinson finds a boy waiting to be served and a 'hyper-elegant' woman. Her opinion of the woman, the dean's wife, is apparent from the beginning:

The boy and I stood waiting for the lady to finish her countless purchases. Finally, the talking and the criticisms were at an end, but then it came to pass that madam had been given too many packages that ‘absolutely’ had to be taken home straightaway, and her eyes fell on the lad. (Helga, 1924i)

It is evident already, from the above paragraph, that the ‘hyper-elegant’ woman is wealthy and selfish. The word ‘madam’ denotes both her class status and her attitude; it becomes a derogatory word. She is charmingly patronising to the boy. As so often in her work, Martinson uses the literary trope of relaying the dialogue verbatim. The dean’s wife uses the diminutive ‘little friend’ as a noun for the boy and tells him that she will tip him if he helps to carry her packages home. The boy would clearly prefer not to but takes a couple of parcels. The woman gracefully protests that she has no wish to coerce him to assist her and will carry them herself. However, the shopkeeper intervenes, telling the boy to obey, and receives a gracious nod from the dean’s wife in return. The scene in the shop becomes a microcosm of the class system – the dean’s wife is, in this community, close to the summit of the pyramid of rank, whilst the boy, by virtue of his lack of wealth and age, is at the bottom. The shopkeeper facilitates the woman’s power and is himself reliant upon it. He aligns himself with her; Martinson identifies with the boy.

The article is not simply a class polemic: Martinson’s aim is also to provide a ‘good read’, and she injects humour and a historical reference into the article. When the boy is admonished by the shopkeeper, Martinson writes, he ‘stood there as a personification of Bishop Brask’s clause, “To this I have been forced and compelled”, took another couple of parcels and trudged outside’ (Helga, 1924i). Hans Brask was a popular historical figure who, according to legend, when forced to sign a decree with which he disagreed, hid a note under his seal distancing himself from the act. In comparing the little boy to Brask, one of the nation’s great

moral figures, Martinson is using incongruity humour – the disparity highlighted by the juxtaposition is so stark as to be absurd.

Once outside the shop, and the shopkeeper's hearing, the dean's wife becomes less charming towards the boy. Martinson justifies being able to recount this conversation word for word by telling us: 'Because of having to stop and tie something onto my kick-sled, I heard the following' (Helga, 1924i). By informing us of this, she ensures that we do not question her role in the story, nor the veracity of the dialogue. Martinson hears the dean's wife upbraiding the boy for 'showing temper' in the shop – a disappointment after all the times she has 'helped' his family. She asks if they have received their Christmas basket yet.

'Yes', said the boy in a low voice.

'Well then, you will have a little for Christmas then?'

'Yeees', said the boy equally quietly.

'You should say, "yes, thank you"', said the dean's wife, 'and you should raise your cap.' (Helga, 1924i)

This is too much for Martinson, who feels the humiliation of the boy as if to her own family. 'In a moment I had an inner vision of one of my own little ones standing humbly in front of some "fine" haughty dean's wife thanking her for alms' (Helga, 1924i). As when she recalled her grandfather being beaten by his employer, her anger resurfaces most quickly in association with class-based shame and when she makes the link with her own family.

The injustice of the boy's mortification is compounded by the fact that, as Martinson makes clear, he is from the 'respectable poor' – he was 'thin and blue with cold, but neat' (Helga, 1924). He comes from a large family, and 'the dean's wife knew as well as I did, that unemployment had made the distress of the family great' (ibid.). Martinson is making sure that there can be no ambivalence in our feelings for the boy. He is tidy despite his poverty,

and, due to the passive voice in its description, unemployment can be viewed as a natural disaster that has come upon his home, with no blame attached to his parents.

As a writer of the everyday, Martinson's position was unusual. She chronicled a world that was close to her and consequently knew facts a news journalist would not. In this piece, she is therefore able to recount that, despite the dean's wife implying that it is largely thanks to her that the family have not starved, in reality she has personally not given 'one penny, or one loaf of bread' (Helga, 1924i). The poor relief the family has received has been from the council. The knowledge of this makes her 'absolutely furious and as I mentioned I wasn't in the best of moods before' (ibid.). Here, Martinson establishes a connection with the beginning of the article; the situation is put into context once again and personalised. She storms up to the woman and shouts at her, asking her if she realises how tactless and cruel she is being.⁷¹ 'No, you don't do you?' Martinson asks rhetorically (ibid.). 'And you who are called educated and a dean's wife. I am glad to be called uneducated, if your behaviour is educated' (ibid.). Here, Martinson's weaknesses become her strengths: the shame she feels about her lack of schooling, the sense of having been robbed (Martinson, 1942, 16–17), dissipates in a context where experience and practical knowledge of the boy's situation are more important. The reaction to Martinson's tirade is nonverbal: 'The dean's wife waved her hands to fend off the accusations and drew in her breath, but did not say anything. The boy looked terrified' (Helga, 1924i). These are details we would not find in a conventional newspaper article but are literary 'scene-setters'. It is also clear that the boy and Martinson are acting as separate entities. There is no political idealisation of the situation; they have not united in the class struggle against the dean's wife, nor is the child grateful for Martinson's intervention. This does not prevent her becoming enraged.

⁷¹ This lack of tact by the givers of charity was not exclusive to Martinson's environs, or indeed Sweden. In Liverpool in 1855, for example, the Domestic Mission was forced to tell its members that 'courteous visiting will ensure a courteous reception', reminding them that 'they are in the house of another in the capacity of visitors' (cited in Williams, 1989, 47).

I wound myself up more and more. All the shabby, petty charity I had seen after the war, in a country where so much had been earned during the seven years! All this rubbish about compassion in order to make the masses thankful and soft, went to my head and made me hold a real doomsday sermon [...] I'm glad you're as tactless as you are. Remember that boy will become a man and you may be sure that no matter how old the boy becomes he will always remember that a dean's wife two days before Christmas forced him to thank her for the poor aid, which his parents were obliged to accept. This memory will make him have no love for the church! Therefore, Madam Dean, I am happy you behaved so boorishly. (Helga, 1924i)

The indignity of charity was a reality to Martinson, but she would also have been able to draw on the work of theorists she admired for confirmation of her own experiences. These included Friedrich Engels, who wrote of the systematic humiliation inflicted on the poor by:

[...] charity which treads the downtrodden still deeper in the dust, which demands that the degraded, the pariah cast out of society, shall first surrender the last that remains to him, his very claim to manhood, shall first beg for mercy before your mercy deigns to press, in the shape of an alms, the brand of degradation upon his brow. (Engels, 2005, 276–277)

Here, Engels sees the recipient of charity as male. In Engels' world, charity, so often connected with women as both givers and receivers, is emasculating for men. This endorses the sentiments of the labour movement as a whole, where 'Freedom and manhood were intricately intertwined' (Stearns, 1990, 101) and men rejected work or conditions because they were 'contrary to our manhood' (ibid.). Martinson, however, was often scrupulous to include both genders in her activist journalism.

On a lighter note, Martinson may have come across the experience of Mr Block – the foolish worker character she cites in relation to childrearing, as discussed in Chapter 6 – in particular,

the newspaper strip 'Mr Block: he becomes a victim of charity'. In the comic, the protagonist finds that the cost of accepting charity is unacceptably high. Offered breakfast by the Salvation Army, Mr Block discovers that he has to saw logs and partake in a religious meeting in return. The narrative voice asks the reader to 'please take notice of that knot [in the wood he is sawing] and then kindly remember, coffee and rolls in the morning, that's all' (Riebe, 1984). Mr Block, it is stated, is now a 'victim of charity'. That similar situations occurred in reality is borne out by historical studies, as Margaret Simey (1992), in her work on charity in 19th-century Liverpool, points out. The self-sacrifice of the philanthropists 'too often became a vested interest. This was particularly true of the women, who though they had much to give, expected much in return' (Simey, 1992, 142).

Almost 30 years after the publication of 'The charity of the dean's wife', the sense of injustice remained fresh for Martinson, as she made a similar point about charity to the SAP Prime Minister Per Albin Hansson in 1953. She told him that 'individual philanthropy where the delinquent has to stand and thank strangers for a hamper, or a five kronor piece, is something I am totally against' (Martinson, 1953). Hansson felt that if people wanted, and could afford, to give away money, that was their concern, but Martinson was sterner. 'I pointed out that it wasn't good for a person's character to take charity (state welfare is never charity)' (ibid.). In this she was echoing Wilde, who, after reading the works of Kropotkin, wrote a discourse on the merits of anarchism and a critique of charity, entitled *The Soul of Man under Socialism*, in which he argued that 'charity degrades and demoralises' (Wilde, 1995, 336).

Following her outburst towards the dean's wife, Martinson abruptly takes her sled and leaves, feeling 'a little embarrassed [...] but with a certain satisfaction nonetheless' (Helga, 1924). She finishes this section of the article with humour: 'The dean's wife must have called down the wrath of God upon me' (ibid.). She explains that she took the way home across the lake, forgetting that the ice had thawed due to the rain. She falls through a hole but climbs out

again, and her sled with all the Christmas packages is safe, ‘so perhaps God was fed up with silly prayers from conceited, Christian ladies’ (ibid.). This should be the end of the story.

With her political point, as an activist writer, made, Martinson’s humorous anecdote provides a rounded, but realistic, finish that places the piece of writing within the category of literary journalism. This, however, is only half the article.

The remaining section is a description of the end of an oral exam at the village school the following summer, where both Martinson and the dean’s wife are present. After describing the classroom, the teacher’s pedagogy and the children, Martinson quotes three verses of a poem by Carl Snoilsky, recited by a little girl at the event. In ‘The serving brother’ (‘Den tjänande brodern’), the poet emphasises the wealthy’s dependence on the working class for their quality of life. He recommends that they help the poor, not by putting coins in their hands but by seeing them as brothers. The anecdote of the schoolroom allows Martinson to introduce Snoilsky as an authority. She appears to quote from poets and novelists more readily than political ideologues, with whom she is often irritated. Snoilsky presents the anarchist argument of mutual aid, reinforcing and legitimising Martinson’s emotive response to charity. The poem also provides a denouement to the story. Addressing the little girl, Martinson asserts that her declamation affected everyone in the classroom; above all, however, ‘you had achieved redress for a little, poor, frozen boy, for I saw big tears roll down Madam Dean’s cheeks’ (Helga, 1924). Perhaps influenced by her reading of Dostoevsky, Martinson allows the dean’s wife redemption and makes her narrative a redemptive one, at the cost of diluting her own political point. In the article, Martinson not only draws attention to the injustices caused by poverty and the arguments against charity but also ‘posits a problem, dilemma or tension that will be resolved or relieved by the end of the story, with a resultant change – in our main subject or subjects’ (Harrington, 1997, xxi). As Martinson says, at the conclusion, the boy receives (moral) redress with the dean’s wife’s tears.

‘The charity of the dean’s wife’ highlights Martinson’s fondness for a satisfying narrative structure, but it also provides an insight into several of Martinson’s objections to charity. Firstly, as discussed, there is the humiliation of the receiver, which she feels on a deeply personal level – the boy reminds her of her own children. Secondly, there are political connotations – ‘All this rubbish about compassion in order to make the masses thankful and soft’ (Helga, 1924). Thirdly, there is the effect on the giver – the dean’s wife humiliates the boy and yet feels she has done something requiring thanks and repayment.

‘Making the masses thankful and soft’

In ‘The charity of the dean’s wife’ (Helga, 1924), Martinson refers to the poverty that existed following the Great War and the ‘petty’ charity and talk of compassion that she felt was being used as a sop to keep the masses quiet. The latter was an allegation also made by Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto* over 60 years earlier, where they include charity-givers as being part of the bourgeoisie that ‘is desirous of redressing social grievances in order to secure the continued existence of bourgeois society’ (Marx and Engels, 1996, 46).⁷² Thirty years before this, one of Marx’s influences, William Cobbett, also argued against the ‘consolation’ of the poor through charitable and other works. ‘The “comforting” system necessarily implies *interference* on one side, and *dependence* on the other’ (Cobbett, 1808, cited in Williams, 1968, 34) – both of which can be seen in the relationships between beneficiaries and benefactors in Martinson’s and Ottesen-Jensen’s works. Both Cobbett (1808) and, later, Wilde (1995) referred to workers being granted better working conditions, or charity, without the achievement of any rights as being similar to slaves being accorded concessions by kindly owners. Wilde also echoed *The Communist Manifesto* in stating that

⁷² ‘To this section belong economists, philanthropists, humanitarians, improvers of the condition of the working class, organisers of charity, members of societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, temperance fanatics, hole-and-corner reformers of every imaginable kind. This form of socialism has, moreover, been worked out into complete systems’ (Marx and Engels, 1996, 46).

the actions by charitable individuals ‘do not cure the disease: they merely prolong it. Indeed, their remedies are part of the disease’ (Wilde, 1995, 335)

In contrast, Kropotkin believed that philanthropy could be useful, in the sense that the injustice and suffering induced by poverty became even less bearable when ‘seasoned by humiliating charity’ (Kropotkin, 1992, 23), and this would cause people to rise up in revolt. Martinson and Wilde, despite their admiration for the philosopher, did not share this belief that charity would contribute to the ending of capitalism. Instead, to them, charity was primarily a method in which social injustice was made palatable to the poor and therefore a way of sustaining the status quo.

Martinson’s analogies on charity were not concerned with slave owners but were closer to home, in keeping with her journalism of the everyday. On this subject, she continued a thread in *Arbetaren* started by Ottar’s article titled ‘Några konfirmations betraktelser’ (‘Some confirmation reflections’) (Ottar, 1923). Ottesen-Jensen vehemently questioned why working-class mothers confirmed their children into the church. She contended that by doing so, they were not only spending a considerable amount of money that they could not afford but were also voluntarily bestowing power on the church – an institution they were otherwise, at best, indifferent to. There was sound reasoning behind Ottar’s fears. In the interwar years, the confirmation process was seen by the church as one of its strongest weapons in its struggle to remain an ‘authoritative source of normative behaviour’ (Frykman, 1991, 57).⁷³ Ottesen-Jensen suggested to her readers that:

[...] you stop this religious hypocrisy, that at least those of you who are not yourselves religious, assign to your children. Show them that you make use of the freedoms that already exist for the people. Show that you are not monkeys, but independently thinking and acting humans! (Ottar, 1923)

⁷³ The importance of dressing appropriately for religious occasions irrespective of one’s beliefs was not confined to working-class communities in Sweden. In the UK, ‘Failure to wear new clothes for Whitsun reflected not so much on the church as on the local community’ (Tebbutt, 1995, 80).

If, as in *Vi kvinnor*, Ottesen-Jensen's article above is somewhat highhanded and makes assumptions about her readers, in 'Further confirmation reflections' ('Flera konfirmationsbetraktelser') (Helga, 1923c), Martinson appears to be less admonishing whilst making similar points. She describes the situation from the circumstances she was familiar with and again provides an insight into working-class agricultural life. She explains that in the countryside, it is generally the vicar's wife who sees to it that the children of the poor become confirmed 'and the worker's wife thanks her, curtsies and accepts, overwhelmed by the kindness' (ibid.). This very limited beneficence, 'alms' or a 'discarded rag', combined with the 'honour' of being visited by a 'fine' lady or gentleman, she claims, quite goes to the recipient's head.

Yes, and a worker's wife or two has felt herself so exalted, after being spoken to in a familiar way by the grand lady (whose husband would love to pay his workers more, if only times weren't so bad!), that she has almost thought of breaking off her acquaintanceship with her common neighbours. (Helga, 1923c)

The humorous, slightly mocking voice foreshadows that which emerges with Madam Andersson two years later. She quotes the simple worker's wife, who asserts: "Yes, of course Kalle will be in the church – I get help towards some clothes for him and madam said that only Bolsheviks and robbers refuse to take communion" (Helga, 1923c).

Tinne Vammen argues that the semi-familial attitude of middle-class women towards their servants, and the women outside their homes on whom they bestowed such forms of charity, was a form of 'philanthropic maternalism' (Vammen, 1986, 128–130). In contrast to the maternalism espoused by Martinson – in effect a championing of unconditional love – 'philanthropic maternalism' appears to have a more educative and qualified aspect, akin to paternalism. The maternalistic aspect, however, according to Vammen, contributed to hiding

the hierarchical class connotations of such meetings – as in the example above, where the ‘worker’s wife’ suddenly feels more akin to the ‘grand lady’ than to her neighbours.

Through Martinson’s eyes, the simple gesture of a vicar or an employer’s wife providing support (as others would see it) for a child’s confirmation becomes a sinister co-option of the working-class woman. Engels saw charity in this way too, claiming, in 1845, that the English bourgeoisie regarded charity as ‘a business matter [...] a bargain with the poor’, where the bourgeoisie purchased the right to be left in peace (Engels, 2005, 277). In Engels’ example, the price was £20 for an infirmary; in the case of the worker’s wife, it is a castoff for her child. Her support is bought for very little and costs both the socialist cause and herself dearly. She is one of the poor who has, in Wilde’s words, ‘made private terms with the enemy, and sold their birth right for some very bad pottage’ (Wilde, 1995, 338). Martinson mourned that ‘Charity, this the wealthy’s pastime, has now for a few years celebrated triumphs, has pressed us workers’ wives into the dust’.

It was not solely confirmation clothes that were a problem. Writing in 1953, Martinson claimed: ‘I know a couple of instances where the recipient has been expected to change their political opinions and whole way of living just because they’ve been given a Christmas hamper’ (Martinson, 1953). Wilde also recognised this co-option, writing of how charity was ‘usually accompanied by some impertinent attempt on the part of the sentimentalist to tyrannise over their [the recipients’] private lives’ (Wilde, 1997, 338). In this, he comes very close to Mary Wollstonecraft, who in 1796 proclaimed herself to be ‘an enemy to what is termed charity’, partially on the grounds that it was practised by those ‘whose benevolence is merely tyranny in disguise; they assist the most worthless, because the most servile, and term them helpless only in proportion to their fawning’ (Wollstonecraft, 2005, 117).

Unlike Ottar, Martinson is able to position herself within the world of her article and address her readers as equals, speaking to them ‘woman to woman’:

I am a poor worker's wife. I have not christened my children and I doubt they will be confirmed either. They are doing well at school and nobody ever thinks about them not being christened. I have never had any unpleasantness because of it, nor has the vicar ever tried to persuade me that I am in error. (Martinson, 1923c)

Martinson is as harsh as Ottar when she tells the worker's wife 'you are a hypocrite. And your call for freedom from poverty and serfdom is not seriously meant' (Martinson, 1923), but she also tempers her words. Instead of simply officiously telling them to stop what they are doing, Martinson is able to allay the potential fears women might have about the outcome of not confirming their children by speaking from her own experience. She also uses humour:

[I]f we have highflying plans for our young, if we see in them potential ministers, generals, kings and so forth, then it's best to christen, vaccinate and confirm etc, the more times the better, and at the same time we workers give the current system a helpful hand and help the 'blackcoats' bring more sheep into the pen. (Martinson, 1923)

The charitable giving of clothes was clearly something Martinson often saw first-hand. In July the same year, she wrote in a similar vein about servants who, given their employers' castoffs in lieu of decent wages, become 'much stricter and stuck up than their masters' (Martinson, 1923). She argued that they allow themselves to forget 'that they are actually serving those who oppress and starve the people' (ibid.). Instead, they let themselves be bribed into 'obsequiousness and to allow all sorts of injustices and overbearing behaviour simply in order to be a "better class" of servant, and to strut around in the master's or mistress's – they may be male or female – castoff rags. It is that which denotes the soul of a lackey' (ibid.). It is clear from these words that such charity 'degrades and demoralises' (Wilde, 1995, 335–336). Martinson takes care to include both men and women in her criticism, although her most cutting remarks are reserved for those country girls who come home to visit wearing their

mistresses' castoffs and 'looking far more the unhappy women, who from different causes are forced to sell their bodies on the street, than they do a so called honest woman earning her own bread' (Martinson, 1923). Where Ottar is righteously indignant on what for her is a largely abstract political issue, Martinson has a more personal and emotional reaction to something that occurs in the lives of her neighbours.

Castoffs frequently feature as an example of the very worst form of charity in Martinson's articles. Perhaps this is due to the symbolism of the recipient having to be grateful for an item that has already been discarded by the giver. This issue is epitomised in Martinson's sketch "'Di där" och "Den där" samt "såna där"' ("Those", "That one" and "people like that"), which appeared in her local paper *Nynäshamns Posten* in May 1927. Here, she utilises her position as a working-class insider to write what Ottesen-Jensen could not. Using her sardonic wit, she lays bare the subtle divisions and hypocrisies within the class system. She skewers a 'Mrs Jansson' both for her act of charity, which is miserly and self-congratulatory, and for her myopic sense of social hierarchy.

Mrs Jansson is seen from the perspective of the woman she employs to do her laundry, a person she views as 'other', although 'the only difference was that that family had six children instead of two' (Helga, 1927b). Mrs Jansson forbids her son from playing with the children of her washerwoman because 'people like that' might have lice (ibid.). She has previously given the laundress an old coat, which was so moth-eaten it could not be worn, yet this does not stop Mrs Jansson telling all and sundry that she has been responsible for making the latter look 'respectable' (ibid.).

Whilst doing the laundry, the woman hears Mrs Jansson and her friends gossiping about other people: 'that kind of person' (ibid.). Yet washing at one of the friends' houses, she hears them discussing Mrs Jansson and implying that she drinks.

She felt sorry for Mrs Jansson, because she knew her friends lied to her, and she had at least been given a coat by her once, but what to do, when Mrs Jansson can't associate with 'people like that' and 'that person', then she has to keep company with 'those sort of people'. (Helga, 1927b)

This account subverts the lesson of the traditional morality tale where the better-off give to the poor from the goodness of their hearts and are rewarded with moral capital whilst the recipients are suitably and subserviently grateful. In this article, the protagonist washerwoman is not made 'thankful and soft' by the act of philanthropy. She is also shown to be the better woman, able to overlook the tawdriness of Mrs Jansson's actions – the moth-eaten coat and the snobbishness – and feel pity for her. Mrs Jansson is demonstrated to suffer from false consciousness and to foolishly prefer to associate with people who talk about her behind her back, rather than with the upright laundress. In her hands, charity is revealed as a method to inflate self-esteem and social standing, as opposed to a genuine wish to help. She is one of the people 'whose benevolence', as Mary Wollstonecraft argued, 'is merely tyranny in disguise' (Wollstonecraft, 2005, 117).

The anecdote is also different from Martinson's other accounts of donations of castoff clothes. The giver here suffers from false consciousness; she is in reality from the same class as the laundress. On other occasions, it is the recipients who are fooled and who are mocked for their pretensions. Mrs Jansson would have done better to see the woman who worked for her as a sister with whom she could show solidarity. As Martinson told the prime minister, it is the fact that the individual has to thank another for their charity that is the problem. She was quite in favour of a rich person giving a 'heap of money to research, hospitals and so forth' (Martinson, 1953) and of those in need being able to receive money from institutions, although she also pointed to the difficulties people faced in doing the latter.

Mutual aid, not castoffs

Castoffs were also a symbol of the worst aspects of charity, according to an article by Martinson published in *Brand* the week before the example of Mrs Jansson. The latter, published in the local paper *Nynäshamns Posten*, was an amusing observational piece, suitable for a non-political audience, who would hopefully then think about the message. The article in *Brand*, however, had a more radical agenda and was addressed: 'Till arbetets män och kvinnor!' ('To working men and women!'). In this piece of rhetoric, previously discussed in Chapter 5 in relation to maternal self-sacrifice, Martinson passionately entreats working-class mothers not to starve themselves or accept charity, in order to give their children things that they cannot afford, for example by allowing them to dress like bourgeois children. Such things, she argues, will give them a false sensibility and turn them away from their true class. Instead, Martinson addressing the 'Worker mother!' demands that she 'Throw the rich woman's castoffs back in her face!' (Martinson, 1927c). She was in essence insisting that they become Wilde's 'ungrateful poor' – 'ungrateful, unthrifty, discontented, and rebellious' (Wilde, 1995, 338). The rejection of charity should not, however, hinder a person from accepting help; there was a difference between philanthropy and solidarity. Therefore, she continued, 'take happily and freely when your equal shares with you the little she has!' (Martinson, 1927). Martinson was a contradictory person and did not always heed her own advice. When her husband died and a collection was made for her, she found it very difficult to accept the substantial sum of money offered (Engman, 2004, 119). However, when she did, it meant she was able to buy her council-owned cottage.

In encouraging the sharing of resources between equals, Martinson is advocating Kropotkin's notion of mutual aid. Kropotkin established this concept in his book *Conquest of Bread* in 1892 (which Martinson read at the age of 18 and which had a hugely formative effect on her)

and subsequently elaborated on it in *Mutual Aid* in 1902.⁷⁴ This model of solidarity was also promoted in the radical newspapers. Ottesen-Jensen, for example, used it in 1925 when she likened humanity to a huge family in which some of the most physically able lived off the labour of others. ‘When we have come so far that people are ashamed of this and the old and the poor may also eat at the table then the family will become happy’ (Ottar, 1925e). How soon this would happen, she claimed, was (as so often) reliant on how ‘you, dear worker wife’ brought up the children (ibid.).

Kropotkin put his thoughts across in scientific terms, following his studies of the animal kingdom where, he wrote, ‘I saw Mutual Aid and Mutual Support carried on to an extent which made me suspect in it a feature of the greatest importance for the maintenance of life, the preservation of each species and its further evolution’ (Kropotkin, 1987, 13). Reacting against Thomas Henry Huxley’s (1888) and Herbert Spencer’s (1876) interpretations of Darwin’s work, Kropotkin (1987) claimed that ‘survival of the fittest’ meant not the ability to fight for the means of subsistence but to share it, thus enabling ‘progressive evolution’. Mutual aid was the natural tendency towards co-operation amongst humans and other animals of the same species, leading them, as a matter of course, to want to help each other, as opposed to competing. It was this co-operation that had allowed the human race to evolve so successfully.

Despite the fact that Christianity and other religions had been founded on ‘an appeal to the broadly human feelings of mutual aid and sympathy’ (Kropotkin, 1987, 222), Kropotkin felt that this natural sentiment had then been hijacked by the church and state, with the church claiming that the desire to help your fellow man came from God and was absent in ‘heathens’. ‘[I]nstead of the *mutual aid* which every savage considers as due to his kinsman’, Kropotkin

⁷⁴ The concept of mutual aid in Martinson’s *Boken om Sally* (1945), is explored by Witt-Brattström, E. (1989) *Moa Martinson – Skrift och drift i trettioalet*. Göteborg: Norstedts.

wrote, ‘it [the church] has preached *charity* which bears a character of inspiration from above, and, accordingly, implies a certain superiority of the giver upon the receiver’ (ibid.)

This concept recurs in Martinson’s work, not only in the characters of the dean’s wife and Mrs Jansson but also in others, such as the farmer in the narrative ‘Du skall äta ditt bröd...’ (‘You will eat your bread...’) (Helga, 1927d). In the article, Martinson describes the travails of an unemployed migrant who asks to buy food at a farmhouse only to be refused by the wealthy farmer, who shouts bible maxims at him, telling him that bread needs to be earned by the sweat of his brow. The man is later fed by a poor family who interpret the Bible very differently and feel that it is natural to share what they have with a fellow in distress (ibid.). Martinson was not consistently anti-religious; she varied between stating her lack of belief and appearing to espouse a form of pantheism (Helga, 1924l, 1924s, 1925a, 1926d, 1930c). She could also write movingly about Christ (1924, 1928e), but the apparatus of the church was repugnant to her. There were established anarchist arguments for this, such as those espoused by Bakunin (1970) and Proudhon, who viewed the church as combining with capital and the government in an oppressive ‘trinity of absolutism’ (Nettlau, 1996, 43–44). However, as so often, Martinson’s views were also grounded in personal, and in this case very early, experience. When the unmarried Kristina became pregnant with Martinson, she lost her job and returned home to her parents. There, the local vicar exhorted them to eject her from their house and the parish.

Martinson also suffered at the hands of the church in her adult life. Although she assured readers that she had not christened her children (Helga, 1923c), she did in fact baptise her eldest son, although the event put her off her local church for good. She wrote about this experience in ‘Vidskepelse i tjugonde århundradet’ (‘Superstition in the 20th century’) (Helga, 1923h), where, as in ‘A mother’s problem’ (Helga, 1924t), the narrative is primarily dialogue led. The circumstances of the christening, the vicar’s attitude, the views of friends

and family and her own views are all revealed through the dialogue. The consensus is that the child (who is three months old) should have been christened long ago, but Martinson finds it all ‘distasteful [...] it’s as though I’d be taking my boy into some sort of magic circle, where magical water and prayers would immediately turn an innocent child into a blind believer’ (Helga, 1923h). Her words fall on deaf ears, however: ‘Everyone looked pityingly at me and an old aunt – made courageous by the others’ agreement – said: I would never have thought that the boy I’ve known from a child would take a wife that was a freethinker’ (ibid.)

In order to make the older family members happy, Martinson agrees to baptise her child, but the priest does not appear to take the ceremony as seriously as they do, and his behaviour is depicted in contrast to theirs. He has just finished dinner when they arrive and keeps the group waiting. Martinson wrote: ‘I felt like I was at the dentist just before the operation is about to begin and could see my husband wished he was far away. The vicar’s wife observed us covertly from behind her pince-nez and this together with the maid’s staring brought me to the edge of hysteria’ (ibid.). When the vicar eventually appears, he is disgruntled that the child had not been brought to him earlier and performs the ceremony casually and quickly, using a gravy boat in lieu of a font. ‘Finally it was over’, but then, to Martinson’s bemusement, he also performs the churching ceremony on her: ‘for the whole time it was as though my nerves were on the outside of my skin and someone was dragging rough straws over them’ (ibid.). Once outside the parsonage, she swears she will never go back should she have ‘twenty children’ (ibid.). The humiliation is akin to that of receiving charity.

Charity providing redemption for the giver

Martinson’s third point in ‘The charity of the dean’s wife’ (Helga, 1924) is a challenge to the reasoning behind the giving of charity. In an article ironically titled ‘Compassion’ (‘Barmhärtighet’), published in 1926, Martinson describes a very similar situation to that featuring the dean’s wife. However, the arrangement of this story is very different in the later

version. Martinson is not telling us a redemptive winter's tale, and she no longer expends space explaining how she came to be in the situation. Instead, from the introduction of the article, it is clear that the story is educative; as an activist literary journalist, Martinson had a purpose. In this polemic, she sets out her political points in several paragraphs and then substantiates them with an anecdote from her personal experience.

Martinson starts the article, as in the oral tradition, *in medias res* (Ong, 1993, 142): 'It is preached in millions of churches "be good to your fellow man" and the priest cries out loudly and passionately that "all people are our fellow humans, be good to all"' (Helga, 1926). This means, Martinson argues, that in the view of the church, for some people to reach heaven, millions of others must be 'made beggars, criminals or beasts of burden. For there would be no reason to preach goodness if humans had not first hurt each other' (ibid.). As she perceives it, in the eyes of the church and bourgeois society, the poor must suffer in order to provide salvation for the rich. Just as in Kollontai's communist heaven, some people must still do the dishes.

She takes this argument to its logical conclusion in a piece of short fiction, 'Syndaförlåtelsen för Råskina socken' ('Forgiveness of the sins of Råskina parish') (Helga, 1926), published the following month. In this two-column story, Martinson describes the tribulations of the vicar of Råskina parish. A conscientious man, he spends much time worrying that his parishioners will go to hell because, living in a wealthy area, they have no poor people to practise charity on.

Despite the brevity of this story, there are several pointers here to Martinson's future novel writing. The hero is the horse butcher Bure – a drunken and stinking but charming womaniser. He shares characteristics with Varg-Lasse in Martinson's novel *Rågvakt* (1935), written nine years after the article, and Vändel in *Vägen under Stjärnorna* (1940). According to Bure, the parish priest is too caught up in religious dogma. He should instead focus on the

cruelty of the local farmers, who adhere to the formalities of religion by attending midnight mass but then kill their horses by driving home drunk. The vicar, however, is concerned solely with the problem of charity. Finally, he feels the issue has been solved when he discovers that a large and needy family have moved to the village. Unfortunately, a neighbour has already caused the death of one child by feeding him, or her, schnapps. The priest is momentarily appalled. He asks his wife:

‘How many children did you say there were?’

‘Seven not counting the dead one.’

‘Oh, dear God’, prayed the vicar piously, ‘let the seven and the little one on its way, live, so that I may awake my parishioners to compassion, so that not all of my flock will lose eternal life.’ (Helga, 1926)

The story ends with Bure’s admonitions forgotten and the vicar content with the heavenly prospects for his parishioners. The dry humour of both Martinson’s factual journalism and her later novels is evident here, but the point she was making in the article ‘Compassion’ (Helga, 1926) is also apparent: the charity preached by the church is self-serving, practised by, in Wollstonecraft’s words, ‘timid bigots endeavouring thus to cover their sins’ (Wollstonecraft, 2005, 117).

Marx himself gave his view on charity several times, including in an outburst against a Prussian who averred, in 1847, that ‘If only those whose calling it is to develop the social principles of Christianity do so, the Communists will soon be put to silence’ (Marx, 1957, 82). In his rebuttal of this statement, Marx speeds through a list of the ills of Christianity, sounding curiously similar to Martinson at her most irate. The Prussian is told that ‘The social principles of Christianity preach cowardice, self-contempt, abasement, submission, dejection [...]’ (ibid., 83). In addition, one of the evils of the church, in Marx’s eyes, is that it preaches the necessity of a ruling class and perceives acts of oppression against the proletariat as either

just punishments or moral trials to be endured. In contrast, the only instruction the clergy have for the ruling class is that ‘the pious wish the former will be charitable’ (ibid., 82). The continued existence of the church is therefore of huge benefit to the wealthy.

Engels also wrote of the bourgeoisie buying themselves free of moral culpability for the poor through charity (Engels, 2005, 277). Lenin, whom Martinson read, not uncritically, put forward the same argument, contending that capitalists ‘are taught by religion to practise charity while on earth, thus offering them a very cheap way of justifying their entire existence as exploiters and selling them at a moderate price tickets to well-being in heaven’ (Lenin, 1965). Martinson repeated this view in an article in 1942, stating her belief that ‘It is almost as though the rich’ can buy their way into heaven (Martinson, 1942, 22). At the same time, despite her objections to Christianity, she argued Kropotkin’s point that ‘In real Christian ethics there is no philanthropy. Christian ethics are based on justice’ (ibid.). In the article ‘Compassion’ (Helga, 1926), Martinson recognises that sometimes people practise charity with genuinely noble motives. Her thoughts are similar to Wilde’s, who wrote that many people who practise philanthropy do so ‘with admirable, though misdirected intentions. [...] they very seriously and very sentimentally set themselves to the task of remedying the evils that they see’ (Wilde, 1995, 335). Martinson argues that though motivated by kindness, some people cannot but enjoy the opportunity to ‘play at being angels’ (Helga, 1926). Even with the best intentions, charity can never be ‘good’. Instead, it is cruel in its pretence of doing good, as she explains in ‘Compassion’: ‘When the priest preaches goodness, he means the giving of alms. There is a terrible mockery in all these missions of mercy and sermons. It is like first cutting holes in healthy living flesh and then pounding hydrochloric acid into the holes’ (ibid.). She holds the church and the educated responsible for this. They know that the law is in favour of the rich and that by preaching ‘goodness’, they are simply mocking the poor, for

there can be no real goodness whilst the world is as it is. She echoes Kropotkin, who explained the moral contradiction in the concept of charity.

It starts with the assertion of full equity and justice, or of full brotherhood, but then it hastens to add that we need not worry our minds with either. The one is unattainable. As to the brotherhood of men, which is the fundamental principle of all religions, it must not be taken literally. (Kropotkin, 1924)

This is affirmed by the actions of the vicar of Råskinna. For Martinson, charity is at best a futile gesture and an endeavour to put ‘a plaster on the problem’ (Helga, 1926a). It is such an attempt, she says in the article ‘Barmhärthighet (‘Compassion’) (ibid.), that she was ‘a short time ago, witness to’ (ibid.). She thus places the event in time and herself within it. The episode depicts the discomfort of the rich who know that they should practise charity but who do so without the equalising feeling of solidarity.

Martinson describes the scene: ‘A luxury car stood on a nice street and a beautiful young lady in a fur coat stood next to it [...] A boy of six, seven years circled the car with interest’ (ibid.). The boy is filthy, snotty and scab encrusted, but he has eyes like ‘shining stars’ (ibid.). The activist literary journalist Dorothy Day advocated painting a picture with contrasts as ‘an emotional way of making a point’ (Day, cited in Roberts, 1984, 179–180). Martinson does so here, juxtaposing the exquisite woman with the dirty boy, as well as the boy’s snot and scabs with his beautiful eyes. The eyes cause the young woman to buy him a sandwich, despite herself and on the condition that he blows his sore-covered nose. This causes him pain, but he does so. Upon receiving the sandwich, he attempts to shake his benefactor’s hand, as he has been taught. She refuses in disgust, and at this point Martinson walks past and comments snidely:

‘Watch out for the boy miss, you might get lice in your sable.’ ‘It’s not sable it’s bison’ she said calmly and nonchalantly. ‘Is it your boy? If so, go home and wash him

and don't stand here being insolent, it's as I've always said, one shouldn't bother being decent to rabble like you.' 'No, I agree with miss there, it's exactly why I feel like rubbing your nose with a serviette until it looked like the boy's here.' She didn't answer and I had to laugh because the boy said with force and vigour 'bloody cows' and ran off at top speed. I carried on my way... (Helga, 1926a)

The boy is unappreciative of both Martinson's and the young woman's actions, which Martinson feels is entirely correct. Like Wilde, she admires and actively admires the 'ungrateful poor' (see also Helga, 1928h) – those who believe charity to be 'a ridiculously inadequate mode of partial restitution, or a sentimental dole' for what they have had to endure (Wilde, 1995). Wilde argued that 'the best amongst the poor are never grateful' (ibid.) It is with a heartfelt plea that such characteristics in the ungrateful poor should be understood and that we should practise actual 'compassion' that Martinson ends her polemic:

You who give from the heart, who share your last coin with the poor, don't be surprised if one or two beggars spit in your face, but turn away quietly and wipe it away. How could the poor unhappy person know that your heart bled for him, that tears burned in your eye for him, how could he know after all the hypocritical sermons he's received, after all the legal thievery he's seen after all the parsimonious alms he's been handed after doing valuable work. He has made acquaintance with everything except goodness. It is every destitute person's right to spit the alms giver in the face. (Helga, 1926a)

As discussed in the previous chapter, Martinson identifies here with the outsider, going beyond superficialities, as she did with the uncouth comrade, and questioning the established norms surrounding the concept of charity. Throughout her writing career, Martinson put forward many ideological and practical arguments against the practice of charity. In doing so, she covered issues previously addressed by internationally renowned political thinkers, but by

utilising her own experiences and the tropes of literary journalism, she was able to add another dimension to their arguments. In her writing, the portrayals of the injustices of the class system and the humiliation reaped by those forced to accept charity make for a far more visceral read than bald facts could convey. Just as she refused to accept the prevailing view that poor women were to blame for not adequately meeting their children's needs, so too did Martinson disavow that charity could be a solution to poverty. In relation to philanthropy, she again encouraged her readers to reject current norms – to be Wilde's 'ungrateful poor' (Wilde, 1995, 338).

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This thesis demonstrates Robert's claim that, when we venture beyond the canon of literary journalism to 'other, less elite sources' (Roberts, 2012, 82), we may recover writers with 'original visions of literary journalism and the requisite abilities to realise them' (ibid.). In answering the research question: how did Moa Martinson use her literary journalism to articulate her political beliefs? the study draws on the work of Hartsock, Wolfe, Sims and Greenberg to establish Martinson as a literary journalist, but also to expand the perimeters of the field. It argues that Martinson provides new areas of study in literary journalism by her use of the oral tradition and linked to this, her personal form of immersion, an authority born of personal experience. By bringing theoretical issues down to a practical level with examples from everyday life, Martinson employed her own experiences, and those of her friends' and neighbours, to illustrate the veracity of her arguments, thus melding the personal and the political. If studies of literary journalism are to have true relevance, they need to include writers such as Martinson.

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