

Writing on the Wall

The Language of Advertising in Knut Hamsun's *Sult*

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HERE IS AN OPENING SCENE: the unnamed main character of *Sult* [*Hunger*] awakens in his rented room. He hears the bells outside ringing six o'clock and people beginning to walk up and down the stairs. The walls of his room, papered with old issues of the newspaper *Morgenbladet*, provide him with his first reading material as he comes to consciousness. He notices in order, over by the door, "en bekjendtgjørelse fra fyrdirektøren" [an announcement from the lighthouse director] and then "et fett, bugnende avertissement fra baker Fabian Olsen om nybakt brød" [a fat, bulging advertisement from Baker Fabian Olsen for newly baked bread] and finally, as it grows lighter and lighter in the room, he sees "de magre, grinende bokstaver om 'Liksvop hos jomfru Andersen, tilhøire i porten'" (τ) [the lean, grimacing letters of "Burial shrouds at Miss Andersen's, through the gate to the right"]. He continues reading these advertisements—for two whole hours, we are left to conclude from the fact that the bells soon ring eight o'clock.

The scene, of course, comes at the first shift to present-tense narration after the narrator's famous retrospective opening statement, "Det var i den tid jeg gik omkring og sultet i Kristiania, denne forunderlige by som ingen forlater før han har fåt mærker av den..." (τ) [It was back when I went around starving in Christiania, that strange city that no one leaves before being branded by it ...]. The first page of the novel moves between the world of literature and the world of advertisements,

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between *merker* [brands, marks] and *varemerker* [brand names]. In this attic room, wallpapered with words and images from old newspapers, the novel's protagonist comes into being and enters into language. As Atle Kittang has put it, "*Sult*-heltens medvit konstituerer seg med andre ord som eit medvit om språk, i denne overgangen frå ikkje-være til være" (§8) [The consciousness of *Hunger*'s protagonist constitutes itself in other words as a consciousness of language, in this transition from non-being to being]. I would revise Kittang's important insight slightly: this is not simply entry into language in the abstract—since that is never the case—but into a specific language system, with historical dimensions and social horizons: here, the discourse of advertising.

This will turn out to be a crucial shift of emphasis, since if one leaves language in the abstract, as Kittang does, one will be more inclined to draw conclusions of a broadly literary or psychoanalytic nature. In Kittang's reading, *Sult* is thus ultimately about the possibilities of the novel as a genre, about modernist literary consciousness, and about narcissism. The perspective I am proposing here is that the language system surrounding the narrator in this opening scene is also a quite particular one, a *kind* of language. The subject that enters this particular language system is in important ways *not* the same as every other subject that enters into language, precisely because he is called into being by a late-nineteenth century advertisement. Although his "hunger" has important literary and linguistic dimensions, the opening scene of *Sult* begins not with a literary reader, but a newspaper reader, and the model of writing, reading, and consumption developed throughout the novel should take that into account. This famously subjective novel, this novel about the inner world, the whisper of the blood, and small psychic tremors begins with a prominently placed description of a newspaper, where the private world of the reader intersects with the public world of news, economy, and advertising.

Theoretical approaches to Hamsun's novel have tended to emphasize the former; that is, its subjectivity as a form of private literary expression. When linked to the concerns of European literary modernism, its possible relationship to a cultural-historical setting does indeed drop out fairly quickly. It becomes a "timeless" novel, allowing Hamsun biographer Robert Ferguson, for instance, to characterize *Sult* enthusiastically as "eerily and thrillingly undated" (112). Interestingly, it sometimes becomes "spaceless" as well as "timeless" in standard literary histories. Literary scholars eager to overcome Hamsun's exclusion from

the literary modernist mainstream are perhaps most willing to sacrifice the Norwegian cultural setting as too "small" for such a great novel and quickly promote Christiania to the ranks of interchangeable European metropolises. It is the *idea* of the city that is at stake, they might claim, not the Norwegian capital itself.

Scholars may just be following Hamsun's lead in this regard; after all, when *Sult* came out, he himself wrote to Scandinavian critics like Georg Brandes of his disdain for social novels: "Jeg har gjort et Forsøg paa at skrive — ikke en Roman, men en Bog, uden Giftermaal, Landture og Bal hos Grossererene, en Bog om en omtaalig Menneskesjæls fine Svingninger, det sæere, ejendommelige Sindsliv, Nervernes Mysterier in en udsultet Krop" (*Knut Hamsuns Brev* 161–2) [I have made an attempt to write not a novel, but a book—without marriages, trips to the countryside, and dances at the merchant's house—a book about a sensitive human soul's delicate oscillations, the peculiar, strange life of the mind, the mysteries of the nerves in a starved body]. And while working on the first fragment of *Sult*, he also wrote this to Brandes's brother Edvard:

Den Bog, jeg arbejder paa, er desperat lidet norsk, og jeg er ikke ligegyldig for dens Skjæbne. Jeg havde ikke villet skrive for Nordmænd — der er ikke et Stednavn i den hele Bog — jeg har villet skrive for Mennesker hvorsomhelst de fandtes. (Brev 81, original emphasis)

(The book I am working on is desperately un-Norwegian, and I am not disinterested in its fate. I didn't want to write for Norwegians — there is not a place name in the whole book — I have wanted to write for *human beings* wherever they might be found.)

Even a casual reader of *Sult* might smile about this last claim — as is often remarked, the finished novel is on the contrary full of place names and urban geographic detail. Now one might simply claim, as does Einar Eggen in his well-known article from 1966, that the book's geography is a bit of a sham, that it does not lead anywhere and is only in the novel to be discredited (71–2). Peter Kirkegaard makes a similar point:

Med stor nøjagtighed registrerer han gadenavne og steder, og man kan mere sig med at finde hans 'vællingsruter' på et Kristianiakort, men blot for der ved at konstatere, at denne præcision er uden betydning. Forf. vandrer de samme veje igen og igen, men stedsfestelsen er arbitrar, ikke tilknyttet ham på andet end negativ absurdistisk måde; han går i kredse, i en labryrint. (154)

(With great precision he makes note of street names and places, and one can have fun finding his "favorite routes" on a map of Christiania, but only in order to prove that this precision is meaningless. The author wanders the same paths over and over again, but the spatial location is arbitrary, not linked to him except in a negative, absurdist way; he walks in circles, in a labyrinth.)

Even if absurd in effect, the geographic specificity of the novel seems to be part of a strategy, a system of reference to time and place that seems all the more deliberate since Hamsun apparently played up the geographic specificity as the project progressed. *Sult* does have a relationship to its historical setting. What *kind* of relationship is what needs sorting out.

I emphasize this because my own interest in the novel is decidedly cultural historical. This is not to say that the literary-theoretical and the socio-historical aspects of Hamsun's work are necessarily at odds. Part of the intention here is in fact to demonstrate their intimate connection by examining Hamsun's novel together with historical developments in the practice of advertising. The argument will be that the discourse of advertising and the discourse of Hamsun's novel are part of the same cultural production of space at the end of the nineteenth century. The relevant term of the relationship is the intersection between *modernity*—the social conditions of the turn of the twentieth century—and *modernism*--the literary and artistic movement of the same period.

THIS SPACE FOR HIRE

The treatment of advertising space here will draw on two urban geographies: that of the capital city, Christiania, since Hamsun's novel is set there, but also that of Chicago, where Hamsun had perhaps his most modern, urban experience the year before he began writing the novel. In part, the aim is to outline the historical horizon of advertising to show its potential meanings in these two late nineteenth-century cities, especially as they meet in the personal experience of Knut Hamsun. Closely tied to that, however, is a particular theoretical interest in advertising space, especially the changing relationship between language and place as played out in cityscapes of the 1880s and '90s. This theoretical interest, in other words, is also historical since it explores a moment of transition in a representational system and cultural since it depends on comparative trajectories in two different cultural spheres.

The best way to begin this discussion is perhaps in terms of circulation. Crudely put, the claim is that the processes of modernity and urbanization involved an ungrounding of space.¹ Not in any absolute sense—the world was not simply “rooted” before nor wholly “mobile” after—but as an effect of acceleration, which encouraged those experiencing rapid social change to view the traditional world left behind as stable and unchanging. Shifts in everyday experience required new conceptualizations of space, especially in relation to the objects of labor and consumption that are so crucial to redefining social life in the latter part of the century. The movement of people and goods made possible by new forms of transportation, for example, meant that work and home could be farther apart. So could the sites of production and consumption, since both goods and people began to travel in ever-widening circuits. And accompanying the actual circulation of physical objects and bodies was the proliferation and movement of images that came with the revolutions in technologies of visual reproduction.

Jorunn Veiteberg and Einar Økland claim that this multiplication and mobility was actually a necessity given new modes of factory production for consumer goods. They begin their history of Norwegian advertising images by describing a pre-modern stage of advertising that was closely tied to the tradition of the simple shop sign:

Likevel er dette uskuldige kunngjeringsformer som berre skulle gjere folk merksame på dei varer og tenester som fanst i eit distrikt, og få dei omsett. Det var reklame til bruk i nærmiljøet. Lokale produsentar søkte kontakt med lokale kundar. Det var klare grenser for kor mykje ein kunne vone å få omsett, liksom det var grenser for kor mykje ein kunne produsere. (8)

(At the same time, these are innocent forms of notification that were only intended to make people aware of the goods and services that could be found in a single district and to get them sold. It was advertising for local use. Local producers sought contact with local customers. There were clear limits to how much one could hope to sell, just as there were limits to how much one could produce.)

If this local form of advertising was “innocent,” then the “fallen” state of advertising, one can assume, would be when the advertising sign leaves the proximity of its referent. Veiteberg and Økland link this development to the factory mass-production of goods, which introduced both

¹ For a book-length treatment of modernity’s transformations of the perception of time and space, see Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880–1918*.

the ability and the need to reach a larger group of consumers. Products needed to circulate more widely in order to find an audience that corresponded in size to the expanding potential for rapid production, and advertising helped that process along by establishing new patterns of circulation.

The idea of the advertising sign contains this tension between stasis and movement. Today, of course, the advertising sign can be found anywhere, far away from the product it promotes, because the paths back to the product are so extensively developed: highways, telephones, electronic media, and the postal service. When one saw an advertising sign in the mid-nineteenth century or before, however, the assumption would likely have been exactly the opposite, namely that the sign's referent would be found in the immediate vicinity. Especially if traditional shop signs are understood as an early form of advertising, the starting point for the development of modern advertising would involve a necessarily close connection between place, name, and product. The street sign was in other words strongly indexical—it said, in effect, “*Here* is where you will find both the baker and his bread.”

Not so, once advertising became more common in the print medium—an early development in the US and Britain, but delayed until the 1870s and '80s in Norway. The advertising sign began to circulate and did so in multiple copies. An advertisement could now go wherever a newspaper might go, even into private spaces. To choose a particularly relevant example, one might even read about Baker Fabian Olsen and his bread on the wallpaper of an attic room, as does Hamsun's narrator. This mobility meant a shift in the semiotic status of advertising: now it referred not to what was present, but what was absent. To find the bread and the baker one had to make one's way through the city streets until the sign and the place came back together.

An even more radical change came with the advent of brand-name, factory-made products, which with the explosive growth of the patent-medicine industry had become widespread in America and England by the 1880s, but not in Scandinavia until the end of the century.² A brand-name advertisement did not need to mention the name of Baker Fabian Olsen at all, because the product was no longer connected either to a personal producer or to a particular place. Factory-made products could

² For a discussion of early Norwegian brand-name products around the turn of the century, see Jorstad, *Reklamebyen Bergen*, 18–20.

float throughout the city in identical copies, and one store became as good as the next for buying it. (Interestingly, the development of brand-name products was a spatial consideration from the start, since it was motivated initially by the export business, and its need to keep proprietary control of products that entered into very wide circulation abroad.)³

Historians generally locate the first important stage of modern advertising in the period between 1880 and 1920, when the concentration on the product made existing goods available to ever-expanding groups of consumers. Gunhild Agger's analysis of advertising historiography claims the general consensus to be that advertising language before 1880 was straightforwardly informative, not persuasive in intent. The important implication here is that before advertising became a rhetorical project, it was essentially geographic: one of the initial goals was to conquer spatial barriers that made buying a local activity and hindered the development of a mass market. It involved getting that information to the expanding number of middle-class consumers and getting them in turn transported to the store. This problem could be solved on the one hand with the help of new technologies of visual representation and the proliferating print media, especially the newspaper, and on the other by systems of public transportation that gave consumers greater geographic range.

America and England led the way in most of these developments, especially in the aggressivity of their advertising culture. By the 1870s, outdoor advertising in both countries had become so extensive that it began to attract notice. One example is this trade card for the New York Advertising Sign Co. (fig. 1), which as shown also had affiliates in Philadelphia, Chicago, and San Francisco. Along the left side of the card is the claim, "Signs Painted Anywhere," with the joke at the bottom ("our artist at Niagara Falls") making the tongue-in-cheek claim that they could even paint a sign on a waterfall if paid to do so (fig. 1a). The free-ranging American advertising sign was promoted as radically dissociated from its referent already by the mid-1870s. It could potentially show up anywhere.⁴

³ Veireberg and Okland make this point about the sardine industry's use of labels, 14.

⁴ Margolin, et al. give this description of the American advertising landscape: "Patent medicine manufacturers were the greatest despoilers of the landscape. From the 1860s to the 1880s, painted letters from six inches to two feet high advertised home remedies on rocks and cliffs, barns, abandoned structures, and any other available service" (36).



For most of the nineteenth century, the Scandinavian cityscapes were relatively "clean" of advertising in comparison to Chicago, New York, or London, a fact that emerged when Scandinavians traveled to those destinations. Danish satirist and illustrator Storm P. emphasized the contrast in 1901 in this excerpt from his travel diary during a trip to Newcastle, here quoted by Søholm:

Reklamen er overordentlig fremtrædende og storstilet i England—overalt hvor man sender Øjet ser man Plakater og Skilte—paa Gavl—Plankværker—Skorstene—Vogne osv. osv.—Plakaterne ere tit saa store at en enkelt optager en hel Husgavl—og de ere alle kunstnerisk udførte—smagfulde saa vel i Stil—som i Farve—den overvejende Del er dog Humoristiske—ja man kan more sig en hel Dag—blot med at iagttage hele den Mængde af brogede Billeder som dækker enhver bar Plet i Newcastle. (15, original emphasis; also cited in Agger 132)

(Advertising is unusually conspicuous and large-scale in England—everywhere one sends one's eyes one sees posters and signs—on gables—wooden fences—chimneys—carriages, etc. etc. The posters are often so large that a single one takes up the whole gable of a house—and they are all artistically done—tasteful in style and color—the great majority of them are humorous—yes, one can amuse oneself for an entire day—just by observing the whole mass of motley pictures that cover every bare spot in Newcastle.)

Perhaps because he was a humorist, Storm P. finds great appeal in the advertising-dominated cityscape. He likes the idea that the modern city is one that can be read, one that is decorated visually with words, signs, and pictures.

The gap between the advertising practices in American and Scandinavian cityscapes at the end of the nineteenth century was of course destined to narrow with time, and with the professionalization of advertising internationally in the 1920s, the two systems increasingly converged. For this reason, while looking at Christiania photographs of the 1880s and '90s, one gets the impression that one is seeing the moment before the flood. The *date* is late enough in the century that many photographic documents are available, but the *place*, Christiania, still lags enough behind the developments in other European and American metropolises that only the first hints of what we might call modern advertising's system of displacement are apparent. More common in these photographs is a relatively grounded system of reference—those with a secure link between name, place, and product.



Figure 2. “Grounded” signs. *Karl Johan’s gate*, seen from *Jernbanetorvet*, c. 1866. Photographer: Holmsen, reproduction from unknown original. Photo courtesy of National Library of Norway, Oslo Division, Picture Collection.

Christiania in 1880s was for the most part apparently still a city with secure signs.

Other photographs of the city also illustrate this point. The first is a photograph from the late 1860s, a view from the railway station up Karl Johan gate (fig. 2).⁵ This relatively cluttered streetscape, which is actually unusual for photographs from that early date, nevertheless show what Veiteberg and Økland would call “innocent” advertising (in my analysis, “grounded” signs). Each shows the name of the shop, and the goods mentioned in lettering on the walls and windows are described generally, not by brand name. More typical

⁵The dating of photographs in the following analysis is in some cases a best guess based on visual clues within the photographs and a comparison of shop signs with the entries in the Christiania address books for the years in question. In this case, for example, there is only one year’s address book (1866) in which all of the shopkeeper names visible in this photograph are listed together in the same part of the city.



Figure 3. Karl Johan's gate, early 1890s. Photographer: Wilse, from an original by Axel Lindahl. Photo courtesy of National Library of Norway, Oslo Division, Picture Collection.

of Christiania streets before the turn of the century is this photograph of Karl Johans gate in the early 1890s taken by the renowned Swedish photographer Axel Lindahl (fig. 3).⁶ The street is relatively free of signs but the signs that can be seen show the names of hotels and restaurants. Even in newspaper advertisements from the period, this sense of grounding was invoked by some advertisements that showed pictures not of the product, but of the factory where it was produced or the store in which it could be purchased (fig. 4), as one sees in this advertising page from *Ny Illustreret Tidende* in 1888.

When outdoor advertising signs begin to “drift” in Christiania toward the end of the century, it is interesting that it does so in connection with expanding circuits of transportation. One of the earliest examples

⁶ My choice of which photographs to emphasize out of the hundreds available at the Oslo City Museum and the University Library cannot help but be arbitrary, but I have tried to choose photos that are representative of the available street images, or to give some indication of how they compare to other photographs.

216

NY ILLUSTRERET TIDENDE.

S. Amundsen & Co.s Færvhandel Grønsden No. 4, Kunst- & Poreelainsfarver.

Hansen & Christensen's
Handske-, Paraply- & Galogeforretning



Christiania.
Carl Johans Gade (ved Siden af Bager Brun).

TIVOLI
Haven er saaben fra Kl. 9 Form. med Fri Entré.
I Haven, der er betydelig udvidet og fuldstændig om-
gjærdet, samt omgivet af blomstret, frembringer især den terrasse-
formede Dægt til det nye, hvide, kugleformede Sommer-
theater samt det originale Schweizer- i Forholdet med
omliggende Blomstret og italienske Bodega, Schweizer-
rest og Skøjtebane saaben fra Kl. 10 Form. til 12 Aften.
I1 Publikum (underholdning) fortoldes et Paratvold-
spil og et Revolvervildt.
Kl. 7 1/2 begynder Concerten under Anførelse af Kapel-
mester Adolf Hansen og saa Sommertheater vil optræde
den aften: **Den svæske Dameskifte**
under Direction af Herr Ludv. Brønsen.
Genes Balletskole (11 Damer og 1 Herre).
Især Høns, herhos eksisterende Engler og Jæghavt.
Flisemærket hvide Møbler, der spises, stikker og 1728
Gjæve på den gamle af et. K. H. H. H.
fra Kl. 9 Gæst til det nye, 12. Et. for den aften 11 Aar.
Tivoli Kasse: Abonnements for Damer udleveres hos den Hoved-
kassens af en anden Herre.

Blomsterforretning
12, Øvre Slotsgade 12
Thonas Gaard.
Kransse, Buketter m. m.
eller
nyeste Mode.
Maren Clemetson,
12, Øvre Slotsgade 12.

Optiske Artikler
— til langt under Butikpriser. —
Martin Viig.

G. Nyquist,
Dyrlæge,
Kjøb og salg af heste.
Heste modtages til opstaldning.
Bestagsmede. Sygestald.
Udveje af elegant ekvipage.
Telefon No. 290.

Mødums Kuranstalt og Sanatorium
og
Sandefjords Svovl- og Søbad.

O. Jakobsons
Maskinværktøjs
og
Maskinruller
af 17 væsentlig be-
læst Construction.
Vridemaskiner &
Valsemuller.

Frognerkiøns Fabrik
Postadresse: Bygde St.
Agerbrugeredskaber.
Elektrisk Lys.

Kuranstalt i Juni-31 Aug. Prospæktus over Badene udleveres gratis hos alle Staden Boghandere.
Mødums (St. Olaf Bad) & Tjørn ved Jernbanen i Vest for Christiania; paa et ca. 200 M. langt Skjærplads med søn og omkring Naalef, Jærnkilder, Jerngrube, Fælde, Mælk, Høstet (Kæseværk Kaffe eller Papir), Mineralvande, Forsølgapparat; — Jern, Færnsel, Esben, Jerngrube (Mørkade), Luft- og elektriske Færdvæde; Koldvæde; Mødums pneumomaskine Apparat; Nalocse for Færnsel, Thynd- og Soolmæser samt for Selvstræ-
kulationen efter Mødums Princip; Massage og Elektricitet osv. — Med Sygehusene i Blod- og Hjernevævet, alle Svøkketilstande; pro-
niseret Udvalgt, Sygehus i Udvalgt, Hjerne, Hjerne og Hypochon-
dri, **Kæstværk i Svovl og Brygget**, kroniske Bronchier og Lungelidelse, Spidskærfør, Thering i tidligere Stadier osv. osv.
Familier eller enkelte Personer, der ønsker at banyte en Del af Eftermiddagen til et Ophold paa Landet under Forhold, der byder mere Comfort og færr Sævn end Badergærdene i Almindelighed formår at give, kan fra August Maanedt Begynde modtage ved Badet uden at indskrives som Kurgjæster.

Løge R. Werring
Carl Johans Gade
særa øverste
Jernbanepotheket.

Fru Russ's
Privat-Hotel,
1ste Classen
16, Skjerve, N. af Carl Johans
Christiania.

Oversigt: Dr. Fredrichs. Adr. for Dadelen: Amme i Mødums.
Sandefjord & Tjørn ved Jernbanen i Spil for Christiania;
overvæds omk Billedet, senere Søvnad, Lædes længe be-
kjendte, stærke Svøkketider og Hævede; udvalgt Baderkiste for Svovl, Opie, Færnsel og elektriske Færdvæde; en Klamme lig-
nende **Sættelse** og en ny **svovlsalt Jærnkilde, 1/2 Rommede**
i 10,000 D. Vand 1/2 fæste Bestandt. med 1/2 Jærnsalt, 1/2 Svovl
Oxyd og 1/2 Svovl. Lægt — Kalk — Magnesia — Natron — Kali
Oxyd — Romedy i 1/2 fæste Bestandt. med 1/2 Svovl, Jærnsalt og 1/2
Lægt) — Mineralvande, Kæstværk: Andelen og Manerter; Massage
og Elektricitet osv. — Med Ogs: Rheumatisme, Skerter, Abdominal-,
Hud- og Nervesygdomme, Lænder, kron. Sygde, Obstruction, kron.
Kæstværk i Mæven, Tærnkærlin, Svølg og Respirationssygdomme
osv. osv.
Oversigt: Dr. Knutzen. Adr. for Baderen: Christiania.

DÖFVA.
En person, som i 23 Aar har været
døf, og som efter 14 Aarsens undervisning
for døvne bliver kunde gennem et
størrelse enkelt sprog, ønsker på be-
gæret betydelig dæstere gratis til
hvore og om den danske. Men
betydende sig til: R. NICHOLSON,
14, Sølvstræde Gæde, Stockholm.

Amalie Jensens
Lisem- og Sjortefabrik
1, Nedre Slotsgade 19,
Christiania.

Figure 4. Extract from the advertising page of Ny Illustreret Tidende (7 July 1888).

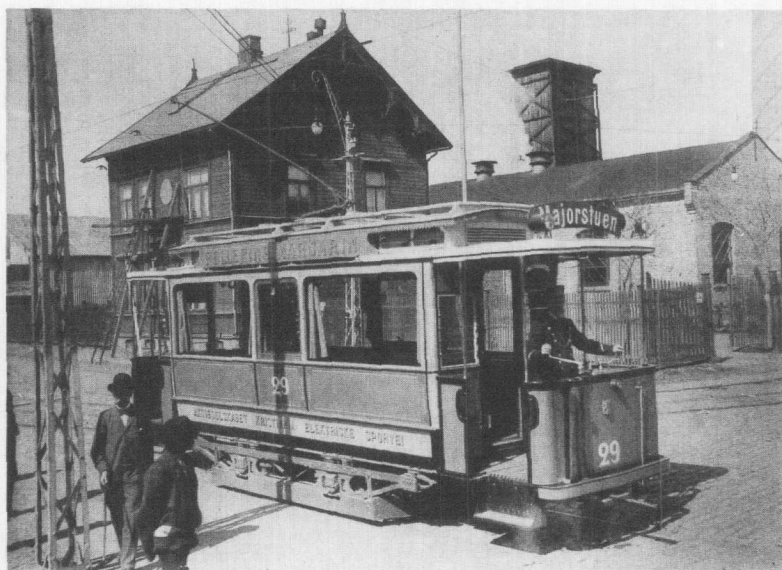


Figure 5. Brand name (Pellegrins Margarin) on a new electric streetcar at the *Majorstuen* station on *Slemdalsveien*, 1899. Photographer unknown. Photo courtesy of Oslo City Museum

(1899) of brand-name advertising in the Christiania street photographs, for instance, is found on a streetcar (fig. 5).⁷ The product is Pellerins Margarin, one of the few trademarks with any visual presence in Christiania before the turn of the century. By attaching the advertisement to the system of transportation itself, the sign, like the streetcar, becomes unmoored and without place. We might take this for granted today, since public transportation has become one of the most typical advertising spaces. But here in the historical moment of the 1890s, we can catch the shift toward greater advertising mobility just as it begins to happen.

Another streetcar photograph from around 1910 shows what must have been one of the most “decorated” Norwegian buildings from the turn of the century (fig. 6).⁸ This is the administration building for

⁷The given date is that deduced by historian Thorlief Strandholt, based on when this particular car (nr. 29) was entered into service. See Strandholt 15.

⁸Again, the date of this and an earlier picture of the same building come from Strandholt’s history, 14, 22.

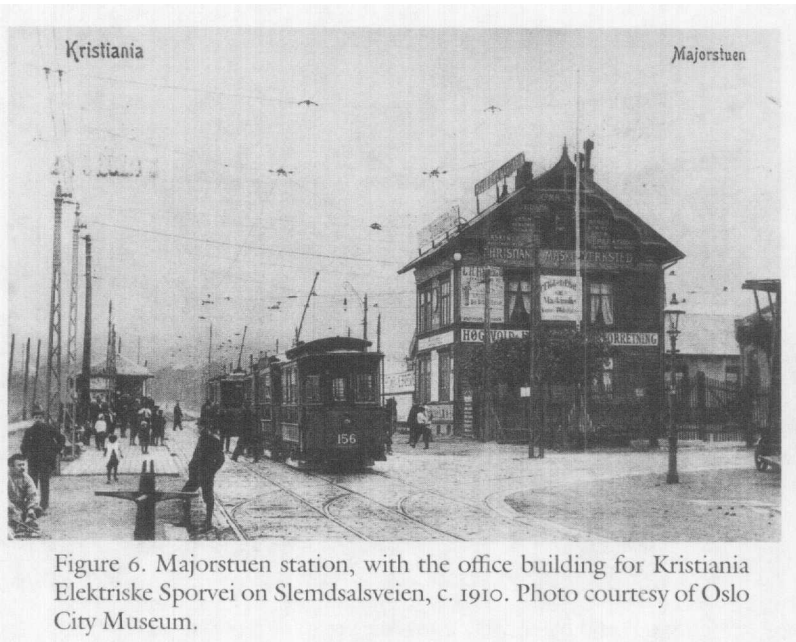


Figure 6. Majorstuen station, with the office building for Kristiania Elektriske Sporvei on Slemdsalsveien, c. 1910. Photo courtesy of Oslo City Museum.

Christiania Elektriske Sporvei, which introduced the first electric streetcar line to the city in the 1890s. Located at the Majorstuen station, somewhat outside the city center, this building had as early as 1898 become a magnet for the kind of advertising shown here (even though this particular photo is of later date). A close look at the same building's advertisements in other photographs taken from different angles further reveals some crucial shifts in advertising practice. For one, there is a brand-name sign for Pellerins Margarin on the roof of the station and an advertisement for *Morgenbladet* on the building's façade, another obvious choice since the newspaper, like the streetcar and the brand name, could circulate freely throughout the city. Finally, there are ads for two stores, one selling sporting goods and the other machine oil, stores located on Kirkegaten and Toldbodgaten down in the historical city center. At that time, this would have been perceived as some distance from Majorstuen, where the ads were found. Interestingly, the advertisement on the right also includes a telephone number beneath the address. These "ungrounded" ads are in other words made possible by new technologies of circulation—the telephone that can carry the voice across spatial barriers and the streetcar that can take the consumer directly from Majorstuen to the city center.

The newspaper advertisement was an especially mobile form of signage and had been growing in prominence in the Norwegian press since the 1860, when *Aftenposten* was founded with an advertising-friendly editorial board, and 1861, when a free newspaper devoted exclusively to advertisements and announcements, *Christiania Avertisements-Blad*, made its debut in the capital.⁹ An examination of the ten to fifteen daily Christiania newspapers in the latter part of the century, however, reveals that the real impact of advertisements was not felt generally in the press until the 1880s, when nearly all of the newspapers had begun to feature regular advertising, typically on the last page of a four-page edition (fig. 7). The illustrated weeklies, such as *Ny Illustreret Tidende*, may have had more sophisticated graphics at their disposal than the dailies (fig. 4), but by the 1880s even the newspaper advertisements were beginning to leave behind the modest, small-font advertisements in favor of more eye-catching formats. If the cityscape in Christiania was relatively free of outdoor advertising at this time, then the newspapers made up for it by giving advertising an increasingly conspicuous place. Gunhild Agger mentions that in Denmark too, advertising before the turn of the century developed mainly in the printed press, and not on the streets (134).

Although the scale of both the Christiania press and the urbanization process it documents was certainly modest compared to other European capitals, Peter Fritzsche's recent observations about the intimate connection between the newspaper and the idea of the metropolis are nonetheless helpful: the late nineteenth-century press reported on the city, oriented newcomers on how to use the city, and through announcements and advertisements was instrumental in assembling the crowds of spectators and shoppers that made urban experience possible. As he puts it succinctly, "Not to read the newspaper was to risk losing orientation" (20). In a city like Berlin after the turn of the century, the sprawl of confusing new urban space made the newspaper essential to developing the kind of geographic competency that could lead workers from home to workplace or consumers to the goods they desired. In Christiania of the 1880s, the newspaper culture is certainly less frenetic than that described by Fritzsche, but one gets a sense of being on the verge of similar developments, and the advertising that makes its way into the newspapers is an early indication of what is to come.

⁹ For an historical overview of Norwegian newspapers, see Gunnar Christie Wasberg, *Norsk presse i hundre år: 1820-1920*.

By examining the photographic material alongside copies of the newspapers from the 1870s and '80s, a rough sketch can be made of the historical horizon for advertising in Christiania of 1889, which can be summarized as follows: first, the idea of "advertisement" in the social discourse of that time and place was still primarily about the relation between the name of the shopkeeper and the product he or she sells. It was mainly to be found in the newspaper, not on the street, where the newspaper ad represented the first hint of a mobile system of advertisement that threatened the spatial stability of the advertising sign. In Christiania, the expansion of public transportation and the proliferation of advertising that accompanied it were about to take place when *Sult* was written, but were not yet a reality. There were relatively few forms of street advertising, hardly any brand-name goods, and only a fledgling telephone network. The real transformations in advertising practice happened in the two decades that followed. Compared to the advertising systems that could be found elsewhere in Europe or America, Christiania's was only on the verge of becoming modern.

"THE SPIRIT OF ADVERTISING"

Hamsun's experience with advertising was not, however, confined to that which was available in Norway's capital city. In fact, Hamsun apparently gave quite a bit of thought to advertising during his second trip to America between 1886–88, which took him to some of America's most urban space—in Chicago—and its most rural—in North Dakota. Few details are known about the nine months he spent in Chicago, aside from the very provocative fact that Hamsun worked part of the time as a streetcar conductor. Lars Frode Larsen, in his recent dissertation on Hamsun's early years, gives the most thorough biographical account of the period. He estimates the actual time employed to have been only a few months, contradicting Hamsun's own mythologizing references to his job on the streetcar line (242–6). The city that Hamsun experienced in September of 1886 was already a dynamic American metropolis approaching a million inhabitants, thus, roughly the size of Berlin. It already had heavy traffic and an expanding economy, since it was positioned as the merchandising and agricultural center of America's rapidly growing Midwest. The contrast with Christiania must have been striking.

Working as a streetcar conductor, Hamsun would have experienced urban life as few other modern writers have. The stroll of Baudelaire's *flâneur* through the crowd is one thing; spending one's days in constant flow through the city on a streetcar is another. The only surviving Hamsun letter from the Chicago period contains an interesting detail that shows Hamsun's interest in the idea of modern traffic. In a letter to his friend Erik Frydenlund in Valdres, he describes his amazement at the fact that streetcars in Chicago are not pulled by horses: "Her moder man Sporvogne i Gaderne, der gaar af sig selv; ingen Heste, ingen Damp; man sér bare disse Rækker af Vogne komme en imode, og ingen kan sé, hvad der driver dem fremad" (*Brev* 70) [Here one meets cable cars in the streets that move by themselves; no horses, no steam; you just see these rows of cars coming toward you, and nobody can see what drives them forward]. He goes on to explain that the streetcars were pulled by cables hidden underground, but the striking image here is that of the uncanny streetcar that seems to move by itself through the city streets. Incidentally, the introduction of electric streetcars to Christiania elicited something of the same reaction; historian Thorleif Strandholt describes a debate in the newspaper *Dagbladet* in this way: "Til å begynne med var hestene blitt oppskremt av disse 'hesteløse monstre,' og innsendere til bladet foreslo tilogmed å sette en utstoppet hest foran kjøredoninger. Men hestene vendte seg ført til en eventuell passering av disse vogner som gikk av seg selv uten hest" (14) [To begin with, the horses had been frightened by these "horseless monsters," and readers even wrote in to suggest putting a stuffed horse in front of the carriages. But the horses became accustomed quickly to the chance passing of these wagons that drove themselves without a horse.] In light of the streetcar's important role in disseminating brand-name advertisement through the city, this image of the "horseless monster" is quite interesting. Like the streetcar, the advertised product might seem to have acquired a means of self-propulsion when it was no longer identified in relation to a place and the name of a shop-owner.

This streetcar with no visible means of locomotion is apparently where Hamsun spent at least some of his nine months in Chicago. He mentioned this job fondly on several later occasions, and many anecdotes, some probably encouraged by Hamsun himself, have circulated about how he read classic literature while driving the streetcars or how his notoriously bad geographic sense led him to confidently call out the wrong street names and let people off at the wrong stops. It is also said

that in order to stay warm in the winter, Hamsun would wear newspapers between his skin and his worn-out clothes to keep out the cold wind (Ferguson 83; Næss 62). Although there is some reason to question the validity of these anecdotes, according to Harald Næss (59), their imaginative power is reminiscent of issues raised in the novel *Sult*, such as the narrator's "lostness" in city, or the way the newspaper wallpaper in the opening scene also serves as kind of verbal membrane between the protagonist and the outside world.

The importance of the Chicago experience for Hamsun's thinking about both advertising and his new novel can be surmised from another bit of biographical information. When Knut Hamsun returned to Copenhagen in 1888, the first thing he wrote was the fragment of *Sult* that was published in the journal *Ny Jord*. The second thing he wrote, though, was not the rest of the novel, but a series of scathing lectures on life in America, which appeared in book form in 1889 with what must surely have been intended as an ironic title, *Fra det Moderne Amerikas Aandsliv* [From the Intellectual Life of Modern America]. In his opening remarks, Hamsun discusses his impressions of the typical American character in this way:

Amerikanerne er et meget averterende Folk. Selv den store Støj, de gør, det vilde Hastværk, hvormed de arbejder, er i videste Forstand Avertissementer; mindre averterende Folk udretter akkurat de samme Ting med langt ringere Larm og færre store Armbeneqelser. Støjen er et Træk i Amerikanernes Karakter, den er Vingesuset af Reklamens Aand. (25)

(Americans are a truly advertising people. Even the great noise they make, the wild rush with which they work, are in the broadest sense advertisements; a less advertising people accomplishes exactly the same things with far less racket and fewer big gestures. Noise is an aspect of the American character, it is the whirring of wings from the spirit of advertising.)

"The whirring of wings from the spirit of advertising" is a phrase worth emphasizing. Hamsun goes on to condemn American journalism for its sensationalism and aggressive marketing. He again brings up the question of advertising in his hilarious description of the covert ads that try to pass themselves off as announcements in the "locals" section of American newspapers (41-5). This, for Hamsun, was the essence of American advertising: patent-medicine quackery, crass Yankee materialism, and cultural boasting. He continues:

Buldret derfra, det rasende, éntonige Reklamebulder, overvælder En engang. Naar man Aar ud og Aar ind ikke hører om andet fra et Land, end kun om de gigantiske Ting med det vide Omrids og den enorme Pengesværdi, saa ligger det nær at falde i Staver tilsidst over Vælden hos det Folk, som har frembragt dem. Man spørger ikke efter de smaa, de indre ting: Kolossen er den populæreste Reklame paa Jorden. (246, original emphasis)

(The roar of it, the furious monotone roar of advertising is overwhelming at times. When, year in and year out, one does not hear anything else from a country but of the gigantic things of vast scope and enormous monetary value, it is easy to be amazed at the power of the people that has produced it. One does not ask about the small, the "inner things": the colossus is the most popular advertising on earth.)

To sum up, Hamsun's view of advertising upon returning to Copenhagen in 1888 was that advertising was exaggeration: loud, big, materialistic, and American. It serves as a metaphor for his larger argument in this very polemical book, in which everything European is intellectual, politically engaged, aristocratic, and modern in an inner psychological sense, and everything American is anti-intellectual, unrefined, ignorant, and modern in an externally oriented, materialistic way. Europe was modernism, America modernity. But Hamsun had clearly understood advertising to be a key to understanding his American experience. Biographer Robert Ferguson depicts the writing of the America book as a frustrating interruption in Hamsun's composition of *Sult*, something that "kept him from his real work" (104). But I find it noteworthy that when he returns to writing the first, third, and fourth sections of his book in November of 1889, he gives such a prominent position to the opening scene about the advertisements, suggesting more lines of continuity between these two projects than is usually assumed. Advertising seemed to have been on Hamsun's mind back in Europe as he began digesting his experiences in America.

All of this suggests the value of reading the activities of the novel's protagonist as a response to advertising and the relationship between language and space that it invokes. And if the ideas about advertising seem more complex than those reflected in Christiania's streets and newspapers, or even to anticipate developments that were not yet widespread there, it would be helpful to remember that advertising was a cross-cultural issue for Hamsun, a mixture of impressions from America, a culture saturated with advertising, and Christiania, a city hardly touched by it. What I am, thus, suggesting is that when we read

“Christiania,” we think both of Norway’s capital city and Chicago, and that when we read “advertisement,” we think of its cultural function both in Norway as well as abroad. The novel *Sult*, I will claim, like the book *Fra det Moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, was in part an attempt to come to terms with “the spirit of advertising.” Perhaps the more advanced state of advertising in Chicago is the “whirring of wings” heard in the background of this novel.

“A FINGER POINTING FROM ON HIGH”?

I turn now more specifically to *Sult*. I will concentrate on the issue of language and its diminishing sense of place, but will also suggest in closing some other ways in which thinking historically about advertising might cast light on the novel. A suggestive essay on *Sult* and the city by Julie Cease, published in *Edda* in 1992, is perhaps a good place to start this discussion. In Cease’s reading of the novel, the newspaper and its advertisements in the opening scene represent the established social grid of the city and its fixed patterns of economic exchange, “a collage of containment and disguise” (139). In her reading, the central question of the novel is whether this social network will defeat the protagonist. She asks, “Will this ‘jeg’ ever escape the powerful process of representation set up by the images enacted in this tiny room?” (139). At stake in this duel with the modern economic system is the protagonist’s modernist subjectivity, which Cease obviously prizes. In her reading, the opening scene’s advertisements provide the challenge that sets the duel in motion, a duel not concluded until the final scene, when the protagonist sails away from Christiania with his modernist subjectivity intact. The novel in her reading is thus about the successful defiance of the social order implied by the advertisements.

If I see the protagonist’s relationship to advertising in less oppositional terms than does Cease, that is in part because I see Hamsun’s conceptualization of the advertising phenomenon as both ambiguous and cross-cultural. Even in *Fra det Moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, it is not *only* Yankee materialism that is at stake. In fact, there is reason to think that Hamsun recognized a kind of modernity in American advertising’s powerful effects of subliminal suggestion and in its deceptive

referentiality. As much as Hamsun criticized P.T. Barnum-style advertising, he also appreciated its effects of random juxtaposition and the violence of its claims, as is evident in his general conclusions about journalism in the America book: "Trods dens dybe Mangler, er den amerikanske Journalistik alligevel den ejendommeligeste og kraftigste Aandsyttring i det amerikanske Folk; ved sin Dristighed, sin realistiske Voldsomhed, er den, literært set, den moderneste" (51-2) [In spite of its deep deficiencies, American journalism is even so the most peculiar and powerful expression of intellect by the American people; with its daring, its realistic violence, it is, from a literary perspective, the most modern]. Modern, in *literary* terms, he says.

This modernity, one might well argue, is of a different sort than Hamsun's own psychological "whisper of the blood." Modern, perhaps, but not modernist. Hamsun would likely want to reserve the latter term for the sophisticated treatment of a demanding subtle interior psychology. Modernism as a literary mode, I think it fair to say, would for Hamsun have to come from a European mind. The modernity of American journalism that he begrudgingly admires here—its daring juxtapositions and rawness of expression—is naive and unwilling, an accidental effect that a more discriminating mind like Hamsun's can use more strategically. American journalism may be the "most modern" of the various expressions of American intellectual life, but given the tone of *Fra det Moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, that is clearly not saying much.

The interrelationship between modernity and modernist writing can be teased out of another passage, placed just after the *Sult* protagonist's famous hallucinatory encounter with his shoe. That mystical moment of elevated awareness is interrupted by a little old man who comes and sits down on the same bench. Irritated, Hamsun's protagonist assesses his new bench-partner with a critical eye, zeroing in on the small but significant detail of the newspaper he is holding in his hand:

Hvad angik han mig, denne lille mand? Intet, ikke det ringeste! Bare at han holdt en avis i handen, et gammelt nummer med avertissementssiden ut og hvori det syntes å ligge en eller anden ting indpakket. Jeg blev nysgjerrig og kunde ikke få mine øine bort fra den avis; jeg fik den ravnvittige idé at det kunde være en mærkelig avis, enestående i sit slags; min nysgjerrighet steg og jeg begyndte å flytte mig frem og tilbake på benken. Det kunde være dokumenter, farlige aktsykker stjålet fra et arkiv. Og det foresværet mig noget om en hemmelig traktat, en sammensvergelse. (20)

(What did he concern me, this little man? Not at all, not in the slightest! It was just that he was holding a newspaper in his hand, an old issue with the advertising page facing out, and inside which there seemed to be something or other wrapped up. I became curious and could not pull my eyes away from the newspaper; I got the crazy idea that it could be a remarkable newspaper, unique in its kind; my curiosity rose and I began to move back and forth on the bench. It might be documents, dangerous papers stolen from an archive. And I got a vague notion of a secret plot, a conspiracy.)

The detail that sets his suspicion in motion here is that the newspaper is wrapped around something with the final advertising page facing outward. This strikes the protagonist as strange indeed: "Hvorfor bar han ikke sin avis som ethvert andet menneske bar en avis, med titlen ut? Hvad var det for slags underfundigheter?" (20) [Why didn't he carry his paper like every other person carried a paper, with the title facing out? What kind of mischief was this?]. By turning the newspaper inside out, the old man has made advertising the headline.

Foregrounded in this way, the advertisements then begin to do their work on the protagonist's consciousness. If they are signs, to what do they refer? *Not* to the diverse locations of shops and services elsewhere in the city, at least here in the mind of the protagonist-turned-detective. He is more interested in the relationship between the inverted advertisement page and the contents *inside* the package. But of all the possible contents, Hamsun's protagonist comes up with this unexpected hypothesis: that the newspaper bundle might contain secret archive documents. Throughout the following conversation with the old man, he returns doggedly to a line of questioning about this "remarkable newspaper," and in the process discovers that his interlocutor is blind, and could not possibly know that the advertisements are inside-out. He notices a further clue—grease stains on the package—and when he leaves the park after frightening the old man away with his agitated inquiries, the mystery finds a banal solution in his final glance of the blind man: "Den mystiske avispakke lå opslået ved siden av ham på bænken fuld av mat av forskjellige sorter som han sat og bet av" (25) [The mysterious newspaper package lay opened up at his side on the bench full of various kinds of food that he sat taking bites of].

In this strange fascination with the newspaper-covered bundle, the advertisement's paradoxical system of reference is laid bare. In a geographically grounded system of advertising, the sign leads directly to an

object in close proximity; the sign on the outside of a store points reliably to the goods inside on its shelves. The increased spatial range of the newspaper, however, means that the advertising sign can show up in unexpected places and be given unexpected uses, such as wallpaper or wrapping for a package. In the latter case, it has the ability to conceal as well as reveal, to point to something hidden and absent from view. In what is perhaps the most subversive aspect of the protagonist's hypothesis, the advertisements are assumed to point to texts (the stolen documents he imagines), not objects.

When he discovers that the ads "refer" instead to the contents of a quite ordinary pack lunch, he is disgusted. Perhaps he had hoped the advertisements would lead to something more interesting and subtle than the materiality of the actual contents? The intrigue plot he constructs here has all of the possibilities of literary modernism, depending as it does on advertising text turned inside-out, concealing (not revealing) stolen texts. The reality that intrudes upon his creative hypothesis, by contrast, is the *modernity* of materialism and unrestrained consumption of goods: "hans mat støtte mig tilbake; de gamle fingrer som så ut som ti rynkede klør klemte motbydelig om de fete smorogbrød" (26) [his food repulsed me; the old fingers, which looked like ten wrinkled claws, pinched disgustingly around the greasy sandwiches]. Advertising's *potential* challenge to referentiality disappoints all the more when the protagonist discovers that in this case, it really is about objects, not texts.

Even so, the very next episode in *Sult* insists on a connection between advertising and the kind of writing that both Hamsun and his narrator practice. The scene describes the second time the protagonist awakens in the novel—the next day, again early in the morning. This time, instead of reading his way into consciousness, as in the opening, he writes himself awake:

Jeg vilde legge mig til å sove igjen, men kunde ikke mere falde i søvn, jeg blev mere og mere våken og lå og tenkte på tusen ting. Pludselig falder det mig ind en eller to gode sætninger til bruk for en skisse, en føljeton, fine sproglige lykketref som jeg aldrig hadde fundet make til. (26)

(I tried to fall asleep again, but could not fall asleep any more; I became more and more awake and lay thinking about a thousand things. Suddenly one or two good sentences pop into my mind that could be used in a sketch or a serial, refined linguistic strokes of luck unlike anything I had found before.)

These bits and pieces of newspaper-like collage, these word coincidences, assemble themselves into a narrative, which quickly floods out to fill twenty pages: "Det var som en åre var sprunget i mig" (26) [It was as if an artery had burst in me]. As Kittang points out, this is in fact the only truly successful writing experience in the series of dismal failures depicted in the novel (50).

In many ways, this second awakening is an inversion of the book's opening scene. Here the narrator *writes* for the newspaper instead of simply reading it, and just to strengthen the connection, he repeats the reference to the advertisements. First he says, "Det lysner mere og mere, jeg kan halvveis skjælne fyrdirektørens bekendtgjørelse nede ved døren, og ved vinduet er det allerede så lyst at jeg til nød kunde se å skrive" (27) [It gets gradually lighter, I can half-way make out the lighthouse director's announcement down by the door, and at the window it is already so light that in a pinch I could see enough to write]. Two things stand out in this passage: first, that the legibility of the advertisements is, as in the first scene, once again used to measure progression through the stages of visibility and consciousness. Second, that the novel's most successful writing experience has apparently taken place in the dark, since only after he is done can he "halfway make out" the ads on the wall, and "in a pinch" ("til nød") could see enough to write if he sat over by the window, he says. As it gets lighter, the narrator switches roles again, turning back from writer into reader as he reviews what he has written: "Jeg steiler overrasket foran den ene gode ting efter den andre og sier til mig selv at det var det bedste jeg nogensinde hadde læst" (27) [I was startled by one good thing after the other and say to myself that it was the best thing I had ever read]—*read*, not written. As he estimates the article's value, he mentions again offhandedly, "det blev lysere og lysere i værelset, jeg kastet et blik ned mot døren og kunde uden synderlig møie læse de fine, skeletagtrige bokstaver om jomfru Andersens liksvøp tilhøre i porten" (27) [It got lighter and lighter in the room; I cast a glance down at the door and could without much effort read the delicate skeleton-like typeface about Miss Andersen's burial shrouds, through the gate to the right]. That same morning, he leaves the rented room for good, but not before he bows in front of both advertisements as he leaves (28).

There are elements of automatic writing in this episode quite similar in kind to the one Hamsun describes in the essay "Fra det ubevidste sjæleliv" (From the unconscious life of the soul), which he wrote for the journal *Samtiden* later in 1890. There Hamsun describes how suggestions picked

up from reading a newspaper article make their way into his unconscious and resurface in two short sketches that he apparently writes in his sleep and then tries to decipher the next morning. The stylistic characteristics of the narrator's successful newspaper piece in *Sult* are left unspecified, but if it is anything like the strange, absurdist stories produced by the automatic writing in "Fra det ubevidste sjæleliv," then the model of writing produced in this second morning scene is very modern indeed.

Most striking is the way the protagonist keeps checking in with the advertisements as the scene progresses, returning to notice them at different stages of waking as he writes and reads. The ads almost seem to be involved in the production of writing, as if the miscellaneous juxtaposition of an announcement from the lighthouse director, the ad for Baker Olsen's bread, and funeral shrouds together suggest the form of the written text that emerges from the narrator's hand. Like the subliminal suggestion of the newspaper article read half-consciously, the ads are linked to both reading and writing in these two morning scenes. Reading and writing are shown to be part of the same process. I should emphasize again that for me the ads ask to be read for their form rather than their content—not necessarily for thematic clues, but for the kind of writing they imply. In other words, they may "mean" *miscellany* and *juxtaposition*, as much as they do *bureaucracy*, *food*, and *death*, as Kittang has suggested (38). Like the journalistic sketch the narrator produces half consciously, the ads gather themselves into a whole—such as that of the newspaper's advertising page—by "fine, sproglige lykketræf?"

It might be useful here to make a link to the episode in the jail cell when the protagonist invents his new word, *kuboå*. He says, "Med de mest forunderlige spring i min tankegang søker jeg å utgranske betydningen av det nye ord. Det behøvet ikke å bety hverken Gud eller tivoli, og hvem hade sagt at det skulde bety dyrskue?" (50) [With the most amazing jumps in thought I try to examine the meaning of the new word. It did not necessarily mean God or tivoli, and who says that it should mean animal show?]. As he continues through the list of things the word should *not* mean, there emerges an effect of radically random juxtaposition such as one might encounter in a newspaper, between its various articles and its advertising pages: *Gud*, *tivoli*, *dyrskue*, *hengelås*, *soloppgang*, *emigration*, *tobakksfabrikk*, *strikkegarn* [God, amusement park, padlock, sunrise, emigration, tobacco factory, knitting yarn]. He rejects all of these because he wants the new word to mean

Kristiania, Lørdag Aften Side 11. Nr. 1889.

<p>Bragt Billedstoffer til Kjøbenhavn og København Routebefordring til Kjøbenhavn og Stettin Dampsk. "H. & K." Meddelser</p>	<p>Søtøndergaard, Søndag 12 Søtøndergaard, Søndag 12 Søtøndergaard, Søndag 12</p>	<p>Salgsmand, Søndag 12 Salgsmand, Søndag 12 Salgsmand, Søndag 12</p>	<p>Salgsmand, Søndag 12 Salgsmand, Søndag 12 Salgsmand, Søndag 12</p>	<p>Salgsmand, Søndag 12 Salgsmand, Søndag 12 Salgsmand, Søndag 12</p>	<p>Salgsmand, Søndag 12 Salgsmand, Søndag 12 Salgsmand, Søndag 12</p>
<p>Salgsmand, Søndag 12 Salgsmand, Søndag 12 Salgsmand, Søndag 12</p>	<p>Salgsmand, Søndag 12 Salgsmand, Søndag 12 Salgsmand, Søndag 12</p>	<p>Salgsmand, Søndag 12 Salgsmand, Søndag 12 Salgsmand, Søndag 12</p>	<p>Salgsmand, Søndag 12 Salgsmand, Søndag 12 Salgsmand, Søndag 12</p>	<p>Salgsmand, Søndag 12 Salgsmand, Søndag 12 Salgsmand, Søndag 12</p>	<p>Salgsmand, Søndag 12 Salgsmand, Søndag 12 Salgsmand, Søndag 12</p>
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Kjøkkenudstyr
Kulboxe
Søtøndergaard, Søndag 12
Salgsmand, Søndag 12

Kjøkkenudstyr
Kulboxe
Søtøndergaard, Søndag 12
Salgsmand, Søndag 12

Kjøkkenudstyr
Kulboxe
Søtøndergaard, Søndag 12
Salgsmand, Søndag 12

Kjøkkenudstyr
Kulboxe
Søtøndergaard, Søndag 12
Salgsmand, Søndag 12

Figure 7. Advertising page from *Aftenposten* (31 October 1889). "It did not necessarily mean God or tivoli, and who says that it should mean animal show?"

something more refined: "Nei egentlig var ordet egnet til å bety noget *sjælelig*, en følelse, en tilstand" (51, original emphasis) [No, actually the word was suited to mean something *spiritual*, a feeling, a condition]. Here again we might observe a dialectic between modernity and literary modernism with the rejected meanings for *kuboå* together forming a collage of sensory impressions from modern life and the elusive, sought-after meaning ("something spiritual"), the literary modernist transformation of those impressions. In other words, the newspaper's form may again be complimentary to the writing project conducted by both Hamsun and his narrator, providing the principle of juxtaposition that becomes the key to a new writing style.

Closely related to this idea is the spatial aspect of new advertising media in the 1880s and '90s, especially in Norway. Juxtaposition, that is, implies the adjacency of things that do not seem naturally to belong together, things that have been willfully taken from their expected contexts and put arbitrarily side by side in a new one (fig. 7). The typical advertising page of a newspaper would certainly fulfill that definition, with its references to stores and goods from all over the city, all brought together in the advertising page, a context lacking any single spatial referent. Especially when one considers that the advertising page in Norwegian newspapers had only recently become a standard feature in the 1880s and that the means of shop signage prior to that development had been strongly rooted to geographic place, the juxtaposition of advertisements raises important questions about the ability of language to point reliably to a location.

As noted earlier, several commentators in the Hamsun criticism have discussed the loss of a secure geography in *Sult*—the addresses lead nowhere, the people he tries to visit are not home, he himself wanders aimlessly through the city following small hunches that rarely pan out. The narrator is not so much tormented by this geographic non-referentiality as he is complicit in it. Think for example of the episode in which he hires the coachman, even though he has no money, to drive him wildly from false address to false address in search of the fictional Kjerulf. "Ullevålsveien nummer 37," he calls out first, then "Tomtegaten nummer 11." (91–2). He even goes in to find the man he knows is not there and is amused when the coachman contributes to the fictional development of this invented character by asking about details of his personal appearance. This *gatespill*, if we want to call it that, suggests that the possession of an address is no guarantee of a successful search.

The connection of the search with new systems of advertising is made at the end of this episode and is worth careful attention. After abandoning the coachman without an explanation, Hamsun's protagonist makes his way through the courtyard, a hallway, and then emerges out onto the street on the next block—Vognmandsgaten [Coachman Street]—an appropriate name, as it turns out, given who has been left waiting for him a block away. The name of the building itself is significant: "Jeg ser opover huset som jeg just har passert igjennem og læser over døren: Beværtning & logi for reisende" (93) [I look up at the building I have just passed through and read over the door: Food and Lodging for travelers]. The condition of constant motion is the one that he has just acted out with the coachman, the journey with only a fictional hope of a destination.

He then sits on a bench and takes stock of his physical condition, noticing especially the skeleton-like effect of his hands: "Jeg føler mig ved synet av mine magre fingrer råt påvirket, jeg hater hele mit slunkne legeme og gysrer ved å bære på det, føle det om mig" (94) [The sight of my emaciated fingers has a raw effect on me, I hate my whole collapsed body and shudder to have to carry it, to feel it around me]. At that moment, he stands up and reads another bit of writing on the wall:

Underveis kom jeg forbi en port hvor det stod følgende å lese: "Liksvop hos jomfru Andersen, tilhøre i porten."—Gamle minder! sa jeg og busket mit forrige rum på Hammersborg, den lille gyngestol, avisbetrakket nede ved døren, fyrdirektørens avertissement og baker Fabian Olsens nybakte brød. (94)

(On the way, I passed a gate where the following could be read: "Burial shrouds at Miss Andersen's, through the gate to the right."—Old memories! I said and remembered my previous room at Hammersborg, the little rocking chair, the newspaper wallpaper near the door, the lighthouse director's announcement and Baker Fabian Olsen's newly-baked bread.)

The entire episode of the chase after Joachim Kjerulf is full of these "linguistic strokes of luck": the name of the street referring coincidentally back to the waiting coachman, the name of the building referring similarly to the wandering protagonist, and Jomfru Andersen's "magre, grinende bokstaver" [lean, grinning letters] mirroring the skeleton-like fingers of the protagonist. But the play with urban geography in this passage seems intent on building up to the moment when the advertisement from the apartment's wallpaper and its referent come together

again. The distance between the wandering advertising sign and its referent is now so great that the original sign is now only "et gammelt minde" [an old memory]. Not only that, but the system of reference is reversed: now the *place* refers back to the advertisement, which has semiotic priority because it has been introduced first in the novel. The effect seems not so much emphatic of a connection between sign and physical place, as it is of the enormous psychological distance between them—such a chasm, that to find that the shop-owner referred to previously in the ad (*the Miss Andersen!*) actually has a real referent in a physical location has an uncanny effect.

Furthermore, the insistent indexicality of the Andersen ad ("through the gate to the right") invokes an adjacency that only now gets a physical context, one referred to but literally out of place in the newspaper format. A similar effect occurs at another moment in the text, one that I will juxtapose with a final Christiania photograph. The episode comes at one of the many moments when the protagonist is desperate for food and ransacks the possibilities that lie open to him. Suddenly he hits on something:

Det var nu for eksempel musikhandler Cisler, ham hadde jeg slet ikke været hos. Der blev nok en råd.... Således gik jeg og talte til jeg igjen fik mig selv til å gråte av rørelse. Bare ikke bli anholdt! Cisler? Var det kanskje et høiere fingerpek? Hans navn hadde faldt mig ind uten grund og han bodde så langt borte; men jeg vilde dog opsøke ham, gå sakte og hvile iblandt. Jeg kjente stedet, jeg hadde været der ofte, kjøpt litt noter i de gode dager: (66)

(There was for example the music-seller Cisler, I had not been to see him. That was an idea. . . . In this way I went around talking until I once again got myself to cry with emotion. Just do not get arrested! Cisler? Was that perhaps a finger pointing from on high? His name had occurred to me for no reason and he lived so far away; but I wanted to look him up anyway, go slowly and rest in between. I knew the place, I had been there often, purchased a bit of music in better days.)

After making his way there, he asks for money, but Cisler turns him down without explanation. He searches his mind for an explanation: "Hvorfor skulde netop hans navn falde mig ind da jeg stod langt nede i Vaterland?" (67) [Why would precisely his name occur to me when I stood far away down in Vaterland]. Why indeed, unless perhaps that the spatial effects of advertising are beginning to make that kind of long-distance suggestion more common. Or to use an earlier example from one of the photographs, why would the name of a sporting goods store



Figure 8. "A finger pointing from on high?": Stortorvet as seen from Grændsen nr. 1, probably from mid-1890s. Photo courtesy of Riksantikvaren, The Directorate for Cultural Heritage, Norway.

in Kirkeveien suddenly occur to a person boarding a streetcar out at Majorstuen? Was that perhaps a finger pointing from on high?

One of the most common graphic icons of late nineteenth-century advertising was of course the pointing finger, so common internationally that in some senses it could be said to "mean" advertising in general. It could be found in newspapers (fig. 7), as it is to the right of the *Aftenposten* page shown earlier, where a series of such fingers point to both a name (Jensen and Co.) and an address (5a Torvgaden). The pointing finger was an icon that could be found adorning the sides of buildings as well, increasingly common in the visual cityscapes of both Christiania and Chicago before the turn of the century. Here, for example, is one of those fingers pointing insistently to an underwear shop on Stortorvet around the turn of the century (fig. 8). In this

photograph the icon makes an insistent claim of physical reference: *here* is where you will find the shop, the owner, and the advertised goods. Was *that* perhaps a finger pointing from on high?

As should be evident from the preceding discussion, nothing could be more complicated than this pointing finger. It implies both a secure system of reference and its undoing. Perhaps because of his position between cultures in the late 1880s, Hamsun experiences that pointing finger mainly as a tease: it is both the finger of God and the mocking finger of media advertising, which leads and misleads at the same time. The "finger pointing from on high" in his novel holds no guarantee of special meaning, nor of finding the promised goods. When *Sult's* protagonist follows the pointing finger, it sends him on a path of circulation as meaningless as the one that leads the coachman in search of Joachim Kjerulf. Perhaps it turns out that after all, the pointing finger of the new advertising points not to place, but only to more text.

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