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## Johan Ludvig Heiberg's "Literary Winter Crops" and Kierkegaard's Polemic

**Abstract:** This article provides an English translation of Johan Ludvig Heiberg's "Literary Winter Crops" from 1843. The young Kierkegaard cultivated a positive relationship with Heiberg, who was the most powerful cultural figure in Denmark at the time. Heiberg published Kierkegaard's first articles in his literary journal *Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post*, and in Kierkegaard's early works such as *From the Papers of One Still Living* and *The Concept of Irony*, there are clear signs that he continued to court Heiberg's favor. Heiberg's dismissive book review of *Either/Or* in "Literary Winter Crops" definitively ended the relationship. Deeply offended, Kierkegaard from this point on waged a polemical war with Heiberg. Heiberg's short review played a large and negative role not just in their personal relationship but also in Kierkegaard's development generally. This work appears here for the first time in a complete English translation.

Kierkegaard's relation to Johan Ludvig Heiberg is complex. While Heiberg is the butt of many of Kierkegaard's anti-Hegelian jokes and the main object of satire in the book *Prefaces*, the relation actually began amicably. The young Kierkegaard looked up to Heiberg and admired his expertise in matters of aesthetics and literary criticism. The key moment in the relation came on March 1, 1843, when Heiberg published a book review of *Either/Or* in his journal *Intelligensblade*.<sup>1</sup> For Kierkegaard, this changed everything. As a young author, he had great expectations with *Either/Or*, which was his first major work after his dissertation, *The Concept of Irony*. When Heiberg, the leading voice in criticism at the time, more or less panned the book, this was something that Kierkegaard could never forgive, and from that moment on, he never missed an opportunity to get in a critical dig at Heiberg. One might wonder what it was that Heiberg wrote that was so completely unforgivable. I will attempt to set the context for the Heiberg-

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This work was produced at the Institute of Philosophy, Slovak Academy of Sciences. It was supported by the Agency VEGA under the project *Synergy and Conflict as Sources of Cultural Identity*, No. 2/0025/20.

1 Johan Ludvig Heiberg, "Litterær Vintersæd," *Intelligensblade*, vol. 2, no. 24, 1 March 1843, pp. 285–292.

Kierkegaard relation, and then in what follows I provide an English translation of Heiberg's review, which will allow Anglophone readers to evaluate his criticism of Kierkegaard's book for themselves first-hand.

## I Kierkegaard's Relation to Heiberg before the Review

In *Prefaces* Kierkegaard has Nicolaus Notabene write, "any younger person would feel flattered by the mere thought of the literary prestige of having the honor of being a contributor to Prof. Heiberg's journal, which no young person understands better than I, who still am often reminded of how once at the time the youthful mind felt intoxicated by daring to believe that a contribution would not be rejected."<sup>2</sup> Although this passage is written under the guise of a pseudonym, it is difficult to resist the temptation to see it as a genuine autobiographical reflection by Kierkegaard himself. He made his literary debut in Heiberg's journal, *Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post*, with the articles, "Another Defense of Woman's Great Abilities," "The Morning Observations in *Kjøbenhavnsposten* no. 43," "On the Polemic of *Fædrelandet*," and "To Mr. Orla Lehmann."<sup>3</sup> These articles seemed to establish the young Kierkegaard as a member of the Heiberg school, which used *Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post* as its organ of publication. Without a doubt, these initial publications meant a lot to the young Kierkegaard and associated him with Heiberg on the Danish cultural scene.

When Heiberg discontinued *Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post*, he hit upon the idea of a new journal that would better reflect his interests in Hegel's philosophy. Thus, in 1837 he published the first issue of *Perseus, Journal for the Speculative Idea*. One might be tempted to think that this undertaking would have been repellent to the young Kierkegaard, given his reservations about Hegel's philosophy. But, on the contrary, he was keen to publish in Heiberg's new journal and even to support his Hegelian line. The text that we know as the book *From the Papers of One Still Living* was initially submitted as a book review

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<sup>2</sup> SKS 4, 508f. / P, 47.

<sup>3</sup> Kierkegaard, "Another Defense of Woman's Great Abilities," SKS 14, 9–10 / EPW, 3–5 (originally in *Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post*, no. 34, December 17, 1834); "The Morning Observations in *Kjøbenhavnsposten* no. 43," SKS 14, 13–16 / EPW, 6–11 (*Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post*, no. 76, February 18, 1836); "On the Polemic of *Fædrelandet*," SKS 14, 19–16 / EPW, 12–23 (*Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post*, nos. 82–83, March 12–15, 1836); "To Mr. Orla Lehmann," SKS 14, 29–35 / EPW, 24–34 (*Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post*, no. 87, April 10, 1836).

for publication in Heiberg's *Perseus*.<sup>4</sup> Only after Heiberg rejected it due to stylistic considerations did Kierkegaard decide to publish it on his own as an independent monograph. One might also think that this rebuff by Heiberg would have changed Kierkegaard's relation to him, but this is not the case. He apparently regarded this as only a minor setback and continued to curry Heiberg's favor.

In his next work, *The Concept of Irony*, published in the fall of 1841, Kierkegaard makes extensive use of Hegel, which could be taken to be evidence of a continued alliance with Heiberg. In addition, Kierkegaard also refers to Heiberg's play *The Elves* in the book.<sup>5</sup> Most importantly, however, he discusses Heiberg at the end of the study when he presents his own proposal for the appropriate form of irony, which he calls "controlled irony."<sup>6</sup> Although the details about Heiberg's precise role here are a matter of academic debate, scholars have pointed to Kierkegaard's use of him as an illustrative model for his concept of controlled irony.<sup>7</sup>

After his dissertation, Kierkegaard published an article on June 12, 1842, entitled "Public Confession."<sup>8</sup> This work is usually taken as a criticism of the contemporary Danish Hegelians, and here one would expect that he would also have Heiberg in his crosshairs since Heiberg was clearly the most prominent figure in Denmark advocating Hegel's philosophy as the solution to the cultural problems of the day. However, Kierkegaard refrains from criticizing Heiberg here and confines himself to venting at the Danish followers of Hegel in his own generation, namely, Rasmus Nielsen, Peter Michael Stilling, and Andreas Frederik Beck. Once again, while he had a perfect opportunity to criticize Heiberg's Hegelianism—something that he would later do repeatedly—here he seems to have no objection to Heiberg's Hegelian campaign. His positive

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4 See Johnny Kondrup, "Tekstredgørelse" to *Af en endnu Levendes Papirer*, in SKS K1, 68–72.  
5 SKS 1, 88 / CI, 26.

6 SKS 1, 354 / CI, 325.

7 See K. Brian Söderquist, "Kierkegaard's Contribution to the Danish Discussion of 'Irony,'" in *Kierkegaard and his Contemporaries: The Culture of Golden Age Denmark*, ed. by Jon Stewart, Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter 2003 (*Kierkegaard Studies Monograph Series*, vol. 10), pp. 78–105. See also his *The Isolated Self: Truth and Untruth in Søren Kierkegaard's "On the Concept of Irony."* Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 2007 (*Danish Golden Age Studies*, vol. 1), pp. 176–188. Jon Stewart, "Chapter 8. Heiberg's Speculative Poetry as a Model for Kierkegaard's Concept of Controlled Irony," in *The Cultural Crisis of the Danish Golden Age: Heiberg, Martensen and Kierkegaard*, Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press 2015 (*Danish Golden Age Studies*, vol. 9), pp. 195–213.

8 SKS 14, 41–46 / COR, 3–12 (originally in *Fædrelandet*, no. 904, June 12, 1842, columns 7245–7252).

disposition to Heiberg in this article is confirmed by Kierkegaard himself, who reflects on the matter in a journal entry from many years later: “As early as the article ‘Public Confession’ there was a signal shot...suggesting that Professor Heiberg was the literary figure I wanted to protect; he and Mynster both were mentioned there and as unmistakably as possible.”<sup>9</sup> Kierkegaard refers to his defense of Heiberg vis-à-vis Georg Johan Bernhard Carstensen (1812–57), who, he implies, has unfortunately won a great popularity due to the intellectual confusion and degradation of the day. By contrast, he notes that Heiberg’s influence has fallen, and his ironic point is that this is a shame and yet another a sign of the sad state of culture in Denmark.<sup>10</sup>

Kierkegaard refers here to an ongoing polemic between Heiberg and Carstensen that was triggered by an article by Heiberg.<sup>11</sup> Again reflecting on the situation many years after the fact, Kierkegaard recalls, “I was once offered 100 rix-dollars per sheet by Carstensen, when he had *Figaro* or *Portfeuilleen*, for an article against Heiberg.”<sup>12</sup> Kierkegaard seems retrospectively to praise himself for refusing to take up Carstensen on his offer. Once again, the point is that he demonstrated unwavering loyalty to Heiberg, even when he was under attack.

*Either/Or* then appeared on February 20, 1843. There are frequent references to Heiberg in the work.<sup>13</sup> These show that Kierkegaard is particularly interested in Heiberg’s views on aesthetics. Perhaps most significant is the treatment that Kierkegaard gives of the French playwright Augustin Eugène Scribe (1791–1861) in Part One of the work.<sup>14</sup> He has his aesthetic author analyze Scribe’s comedy, *The First Love*. Heiberg was an avid fan of Scribe’s dramas, and he had translated this work for the Royal Theater in Copenhagen.<sup>15</sup> The piece was a great success, seeing more than 100 performances. Kierkegaard’s use of this work can be seen as a demonstration of his agreement with Heiberg’s tastes in drama and even a support of Heiberg’s campaign to promote Scribe in Denmark.

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**9** SKS 21, 17, NB6:16 / KJN 5, 14. See also *Pap. X-6 B 171*, p. 261 / JP 6, 6748, p. 395.

**10** SKS 14, 44 / COR, 7f. (*Fædrelandet*, no. 904, June 12, 1842, columns 7248f.).

**11** Johan Ludvig Heiberg, “Smaa Skjermydsler,” *Intelligensblade*, vol. 1, no. 9, July 15, 1842, pp. 224–228.

**12** SKS 23, 287, NB18:52 / KJN 7, 291.

**13** SKS 2, 108–109 / EO1, 105. SKS 2, 112 / EO1, 109. SKS 2, 113 / EO1, 110. SKS 2, 132 / EO1, 130. SKS 3, 69 / EO2, 63.

**14** SKS 2, 225–270 / EO1, 231–279.

**15** Augustin Eugène Scribe, *Den første Kjærlighed, Lystspil i een Act af Scribe*, trans. by Johan Ludvig Heiberg, Copenhagen: Jens Holstrup Schultz 1832. For an English translation see *First Love: A Comedy in One Act*, trans. by L.J. Hollenius, Chicago: The Dramatic Publishing Company [no year given].

Given all of this positive support from Kierkegaard's side, one can easily imagine that he was expecting some form of reciprocation from Heiberg, when the latter came to review *Either/Or*. But then when Heiberg's review was in fact negative, indeed, dismissive, it is understandable why Kierkegaard perceived this as a personal betrayal.

## II Heiberg's Review

Heiberg begins his review by explaining his somewhat odd title. He notes that there have appeared a number of works in the course of the winter, which can be regarded as seeds which will develop more fully in the spring, when their reception becomes clearer. He thus uses the term "Literary Winter Crops" metaphorically to refer to these works, which include Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, which, as noted, was published in February. Heiberg mentions very briefly a few new works by well-known authors and merely notes that it would be interesting to return to them for further analysis. But then he turns to *Either/Or*, which is the only book to which he dedicates a more extended treatment.

Heiberg wastes no time and begins his satirical criticism right from the very start when he introduces the work. He writes,

Further, in recent days, like a lightning bolt from a clear sky, a monster of a book has fallen suddenly down into our reading public; I mean the work consisting of two large and thick volumes or of fifty-four large sheets with small print, *Either/Or* by Victor Eremita. It is therefore almost with respect to its volume that the book must be called a monster, for it is already impressive in its size before one yet knows what spirit lives in it, and I do not doubt that if the author wanted to let it be exhibited for money, he would take in just as much as by letting it be read for money.<sup>16</sup>

Although Heiberg observes the use of the pseudonym, this presumably did little to soften the blow for Kierkegaard. The charge that the book is too long is one that runs throughout the review.

Heiberg frames his remarks as a description of the reader's encounter with the book. At first, the potential reader might wonder if her or she really has the time to invest in such a long work. Then once the reader finally decides to throw himself into it, he struggles to see the organization of the work and quickly grows impatient with the reading, wanting to move ahead more quickly. Heiberg describes this as follows:

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<sup>16</sup> Johan Ludvig Heiberg, "Litterær Vintersæd," p. 288.

One finds oneself thus for the first in *Either*, and here one does not find oneself for the first very well, for one notices that one has not nearly as much time as the author. It is an unpleasant, awkward walk when one constantly has the feeling of wanting to be ahead of the one who is holding one under the arm.<sup>17</sup>

Despite this, Heiberg does acknowledge that the work has flashes of insight. But he complains these are undermined by the lack of organization:

One comes across many piquant reflections; some of them are perhaps even profound; one does not know for certain, for when one believes one has seen a point (which the author calls a “*point*”), one once again becomes disoriented. One becomes impatient about the fact that the author’s uncommon brilliance, learning and stylistic ability is not united with an ability for organization, which could let the ideas spring plastically forward.<sup>18</sup>

Heiberg reserves his final criticism for the most famous part of the work, “The Seducer’s Diary.” His critique now moves from the stylistic to the moral sphere. He writes,

One now hastens to “The Seducer’s Diary,” for already the title implies that this production must be more creative than critical. And in a sense one is not disappointed in this expectation, but one is disgusted, one is nauseated, one is revolted, and one asks oneself not whether it is possible for a person to be like this seducer but whether it is possible that an author can be so constituted that he finds pleasure in setting himself into a character of this kind and in working out this character in his quiet thoughts.<sup>19</sup>

Heiberg seems to imply that only a somewhat perverse mind could have produced such a work, thus associating Kierkegaard’s own personality with that of Johannes the seducer.

Heiberg completes his description of the reader’s encounter with the book by exclaiming “Enough! I have enough of *Either*, and I’ll not have any *Or*.”<sup>20</sup> Heiberg was the master of literary polemics, and he knew how to belittle authors in refined ways. He seems to have had no regard for what Kierkegaard would think of this. He had, after all, stated explicitly his reservations about Kierkegaard’s style in *From the Papers of One Still Living*, and the young Kierkegaard did not seem to mind all that much. But now some years later with *Either/Or* this was a different matter altogether, and Kierkegaard, no longer a young student, was not disposed to sit back and take this public criticism passively.

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 289.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 289 f.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 290 f.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 290.

### III Kierkegaard's Response to Heiberg's Review

There is overwhelming evidence that Heiberg's book review was decisive for Kierkegaard's change in demeanor. Perhaps the most clear-cut testimony comes from Hans Brøchner's well-known recollections of Kierkegaard. Brøchner recalls Kierkegaard's initial respect for Heiberg, saying that Kierkegaard "spoke with warmth of his [Heiberg's] importance as an aesthetician and as the aesthetic educator of his generation in our country. K[ierkegaard] ranked H[eiberg] above all the contemporary aestheticians in Germany."<sup>21</sup> But then Brøchner comes to Heiberg's review:

Later, after *Either/Or* had appeared and Heiberg had written his well-known review of it, S.K. once spoke to me about him and made no secret of his displeasure at H[eiberg's] behavior. He recognized Heiberg's importance as an aesthetician, but now also emphatically emphasized his limitations. "I could name a whole series of aesthetic problems about which H[eiberg] hasn't a clue."<sup>22</sup>

Although Kierkegaard had once revered Heiberg for his aesthetic taste and literary criticism, when he found himself on the receiving end of Heiberg's polemical pen, he changed his opinion. Now all of Heiberg's intellectual program was called into question and made the object of Kierkegaard's criticism.

One of Kierkegaard's friends from youth, Hans Peter Holst (1811–93), sheds some light on this that confirms Brøchner's account. In his response to H.P. Barfod's request for biographical information about Kierkegaard, Holst writes that Kierkegaard complained of not being respected by Heiberg. Holst writes, Kierkegaard "was quite depressed by the fact that Heiberg would never really involve himself with his [Kierkegaard's] writings or recognize him as a philosopher."<sup>23</sup> Although there is no mention of Heiberg's book review here, it is clear that Heiberg's complete failure to see anything of philosophical interest in *Either/Or* must have seriously irritated Kierkegaard.

Kierkegaard himself reflects on the development of his relation to Heiberg and points to the book review as the key event. He writes,

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<sup>21</sup> Hans Brøchner, "Erindringer om Søren Kierkegaard," *Det Nittende Aarhundrede, Maanedsskrift for Literatur og Kritik*, vol. 5, March 1877, § 11. English translation cited from *Encounters with Kierkegaard: A Life as Seen by His Contemporaries*, ed. and trans. by Bruce H. Kirmmse, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1996, p. 231.

<sup>22</sup> Brøchner, "Erindringer om Søren Kierkegaard," § 11. *Encounters with Kierkegaard*, p. 231.

<sup>23</sup> "H.P. Holst to H.P. Barfod," September 13, 1869. Quoted from *Encounters with Kierkegaard*, p. 13.

Then in the spring of 1843 came *Either/Or*. I had steadfastly expressed nothing but respectful devotion to Prof. Heiberg and had also received proofs of his favor; there is surely not one single syllable in the whole book *Either/Or* which can affront him, but there certainly are good words expressed for him, and yet Prof. H. could not resist a compulsion to make himself (falsely) important (in the *Intelligentsblade*), trying to make it ridiculous, saying it was such a big book, etc.; the whole thing was only a tap, but one for which he perhaps has paid and will continue to pay dearly.<sup>24</sup>

In the final sentence we can see a spiteful, vindictive side of Kierkegaard's character. He seems to relish the idea of getting back at Heiberg for this offense, and this is presumably what he perceives himself to be doing in the many polemical passages directed at Heiberg in his subsequent works.

His initial response to Heiberg came in the form of a sarcastic article published on March 5, 1843: "A Word of Thanks to Professor Heiberg."<sup>25</sup> The article was published under the name of Victor Eremita, who feigns a praise of Heiberg, while at the same time implying that he never really made any careful study of the work that he was so hasty to dismiss. Kierkegaard also mocks Heiberg's style by mimicking his constant use of the impersonal pronoun "one" to describe the experience of the reluctant and hesitant reader of *Either/Or*. Kierkegaard returns to this criticism again in his full-scale attack on Heiberg in *Prefaces*.<sup>26</sup>

Heiberg's intellectual program was large and included many different aspects, for example, drama, literary criticism, aesthetics and philosophy. When Kierkegaard turned against him, he also turned against a number of different elements in this program. Perhaps the most obvious example of this is Heiberg's Hegelian campaign, which he had pursued for many years. Up to and including *Either/Or* Kierkegaard makes active use of different aspects of Hegel's thought as they are relevant for his own writings. There is, for example, Hegel's account of Socratic irony and his criticism of Romantic irony that Kierkegaard uses so extensively in his dissertation. Mention can also be made of Hegel's famous analysis of Sophocles' *Antigone*, which Kierkegaard makes use of in *Either/Or*. Now all of this changes, and the time immediately following Heiberg's review can be seen as Kierkegaard's most virulent period of Hegel critique. After this period he never makes any renewed study of Hegel's primary texts or uses them in a productive manner again.<sup>27</sup> Given the chronology of this

<sup>24</sup> *Pap.* X-6 B 171, p. 261 / *JP* 6, 6748, p. 395. Translation slightly modified.

<sup>25</sup> *SKS* 14, 55–57 / *COR*, 17–21 (originally in *Fædrelandet*, no. 1168, March 5, 1843, columns 9373–9376).

<sup>26</sup> *SKS* 4, 486–487 / *P*, 24.

<sup>27</sup> I have argued for this periodization in my *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, New York: Cambridge University Press 2003, pp. 33–34, pp. 597–615.



development, it cannot be an accident that this corresponds exactly to the chronology of the development of his relation with Heiberg.

Along the same lines, we might also mention Kierkegaard's shifting relation to Goethe, another of Heiberg's favorites.<sup>28</sup> In *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age*, Heiberg hails Goethe and Hegel as the two greatest minds of the age, who point the way towards the future development of European culture.<sup>29</sup> Here a similar line of development is discernible. The early Kierkegaard is clearly receptive to different ideas from Goethe's writings, which he makes use of in his own works. His early journals are full of reflections on Goethe's *Faust*, and in *Either/Or* he makes extensive use of *Clavigo* and *Elective Affinities*. However, as was the case with Hegel, Kierkegaard's relation turns critical after the exchange with Heiberg, and in later works such as *Stages on Life's Way*, Goethe is made the object of critique. The parallel is supported by comments by Kierkegaard in *The Point of View*, where he explicitly associates Hegel and Goethe with Heiberg.<sup>30</sup>

From this it is clear that the shifting relation to Heiberg had important implications for Kierkegaard's subsequent development. The personal element clearly played its role, and Kierkegaard does not hold himself back from *ad hominem* remarks, but more importantly Kierkegaard's own academic agenda seems to have shifted due to his alienation with Heiberg. Given this, Heiberg's review of *Either/Or* takes on great importance in our attempts to understand Kierkegaard's complex authorship.

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**28** See Katalin Nun and Jon Stewart, "Goethe: A German Classic Through the Filter of the Danish Golden Age," in *Kierkegaard and his German Contemporaries*, Tome III, *Literature and Aesthetics*, ed. by Jon Stewart, Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate 2008 (*Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, vol. 6), pp. 51–96.

**29** Johan Ludvig Heiberg, *Om Philosophiens Betydning for den nuværende Tid. Et Indbydelses-Skrift til en Række af filosofiske Forelæsninger*, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1833, p. 36. (In English in Heiberg's *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age and Other Texts*, ed. and trans. by Jon Stewart, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 2005 (*Texts from Golden Age Denmark*, vol. 1), p. 107.)

**30** SKS 16, 66n / PV, 88n.

### Literary Winter Crops

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The mass of books which is accustomed to appear here in Denmark in the intermediary space from the late fall until the New Year's time and—since there are many latecomers—in the first few months after New Year's is, so to speak, a winter crop, which only in spring will perceptibly sprout forth, insofar as it has had the strength for the still and imperceptible sprouting in the earth's womb, without which it chokes and never becomes green. The reading public is the soil in which the literary crops either sprout forth or perish. It is, indeed, rare that all voices right at the beginning are in agreement about the value and meaning of a new book, and even when they are, this is, however, more a prediction about its coming place in literature than its actually taking a secure place there. A thorough book review can often suddenly change the general opinion which in the beginning came forth with so much certainty. Also for books there is a trial period only after the end of which one can say what they are actually good for, and one will hardly find it too long when one fixes its term from New Year to spring. The literary spring then arrives for these productions | [286] simultaneously with the natural spring; just like the latter, it becomes the time of resurrection; only when spring has taken place do the literary seeds show themselves as actually fruitful for literature.

What in particular brings about this observation is the fact that the *Intelligensblade* with the present numbers close their second volume, without yet having discussed notable books which have come out in the period from fall until now. The editor must then ask the reader in this respect to regard the books as a winter crop, which will shoot up in the third volume of the *Intelligensblade*, which will begin with the same date as the first volume, and which the editor at least in thought or in hope wants to begin with the same words with which he one year ago actually began the first volume: "It is spring, the songbirds have come."

Books, which are from well-known and popular authors, moreover, do not need the quick recommendation which, indeed, must be the actual goal of a hurried book review. On the other hand, the later judgment, which first regards them as winter crops, can be a gift to them, also because of the fact that the judgment itself is more mature. The reviewer would also | [287] do well to familiarize himself with the previous, often mutually contradictory judgments, and when, finally, public opinion has become fairly firm and fixed, then he knows how he should meet it, whether he now wants to give that opinion his approbation or struggle against it.

Another advantage of the late book review is the convenience won thereby; for since it always happens that a not negligible part of the winter crop comes forth, a reviewer can, when he just gives himself time, thus spare himself much inconvenience, whereas, by all too great eagerness, he must often be angry later about having taken so much trouble by wanting to kill that which shortly afterward dies on its own. Thus, there is among our most recent New Year's products much which already in the gentlest manner has died a natural death, unnoticed and uncriticized by those who survived it. As the most shining example one ought to recall *Corsarens Nytaarsgave* which won such a great reputation before anyone knew it, and twenty-four hours after it appeared, hardly anyone talked about it.

Yet, it is not the already dead and forgotten which will be discussed in this journal. It is indeed just the advantage of the category of winter crops that one gets out of discussing the unfruitful seeds. But | [288] among those which one already dares to regard as fruitful, I want provisionally to name only Winther's *Digtninger*, Holst's *Ude og Hjemme* and Thiele's *Folkesagn*. In each of these books the *Intelligensblade* could find points of contact for the treatment of interesting aesthetic questions.

Further, in recent days, like a lightning bolt from a clear sky, a monster of a book has fallen suddenly down into our reading public; I mean the work consisting of two large and thick volumes or of fifty-four large sheets with small print, *Either/Or* by Victor Eremita. It is therefore almost with respect to its volume that the book must be called a monster, for it is already impressive in its size before one yet knows what spirit lives in it, and I do not doubt that if the author wanted to let it be exhibited for money, he would take in just as much as by letting it be read for money. This great mass is a temporary annoyance, which one must disregard. One thinks, "Do I have time to read a book like this, and what guarantee do I have that the sacrifice will be rewarded?" One feels strangely affected by the very title since one applies it to one's own relation to the book and asks oneself, "Should | [289] I either read it or leave it alone?" We no longer live in the Golden Age but, as it well known, in the Age of Iron [*Jern-Alderen*], and expressed more definitely in the Age of the Railroad [*Jernebane-Alderen*]; what kind of a curious anachronism is this then with such a *farrago* in an age, whose task it is to dominate the greatest distances in the shortest time? Finally, after all these reflections and preliminary curses one says, "One might as well jump into it as crawl in!" And now one really *jumps* into the book, reads a little here and a little there in order to get some taste which might either tempt one to a closer examination or move one to discontinue that already begun. Yet, as a benevolent reader, one indeed jumps

into the first volume before one jumps into the second; that means one scurries around in the *Either* before one scurries around in the *Or*.

One finds oneself thus for the first in *Either*, and here one does not find oneself for the first very well, for one notices that one has not nearly as much time as the author. It is an unpleasant, awkward walk when one constantly has the feeling of wanting to be ahead of the one who is holding one under the arm. One comes across many piquant reflections; some of them are perhaps even profound; one does not know for certain, | [290] for when one believes one has seen a point (which the author calls a "*point*"), one once again becomes disoriented. One becomes impatient about the fact that the author's uncommon brilliance, learning and stylistic ability is not united with an ability for organization, which could let the ideas spring plastically forward. Everything seems dreamlike, indeterminate and vanishing. In order, however, to have a positive point of departure in all this negativity, one throws oneself into the analysis of Scribe's comedy, *The First Love*, but one finds here that the author has changed the positive given into his own castle in the air. Out of a pretty, little triviality he wanted to make a masterpiece, and there is attached to this a tendency which is just the opposite of what Scribe obviously acknowledged. One now hastens to "The Seducer's Diary," for already the title implies that this production must be more creative than critical. And in a sense one is not disappointed in this expectation, but one is disgusted, one is nauseated, one is revolted, and one asks oneself not whether it is possible for a person to be like this seducer but whether it is possible that an author can be so constituted that he finds pleasure in setting himself into a character of this kind and in working out | [291] this character in his quiet thoughts. The eye falls on the book, and the possibility is realized. One closes the book and says, "Enough! I have enough of *Either*, and I will not have any *Or*." But after the first alarming, uncomfortable feelings are past, one gloats *anticipando* over the outcry and the formulations accusing of heresy, which soon will sound from every quarter, for such a dose like this has heretofore not yet been offered to our prudes, prigs and cowardly moralists. They will all make a face and raise a cackle, as if they were surprised *in puris naturalibus*. How often have they not in their philistine zeal been pleased by the curse on poetry, even when it yet only made use of its lawful freedom! Let them now get this powerful outburst. It could do them a great deal of good; it is nothing more than a deserved punishment.

He, whose manner of progress with the book I have described, is "one"; I might just as well have said "another." Certain *individuals* would, however, be curious to learn what kind of an *Or* the author contrasts to an *Either* of this kind, and they begin at least to leaf through the second volume. And since they now here at every point where the case leads them, come across such a

lightning bolt of thought which suddenly illuminates entire spheres | [292] of existence, they suppose that here there must be an organizing force which makes the whole an actual whole, and now, as careful and conscientious readers, they start over again with this *Or*, and they read the whole volume from beginning to end, from first to last. During this entire reading, they are so captivated by the book that they hardly can put it down, and they feel incessantly affected by a rare and highly gifted spirit, which, by a deep speculative flood, presents the most beautiful ethical view for their perusal and runs through the exposition with a stream of the most piquant jokes and humor. But what does the title of the book mean? The second volume is absolute, here there can be no question of an *Either/Or*, and the book, far from refuting the proposition that the law of contradiction is sublated (p. 176), on the contrary, is a proof more for its correctness.

But the aforementioned "individual" readers, who are not covered by "one" would, out of respect for the author who has written an *Or* of this kind, again take his *Either* on its own, and read it through carefully. Thereafter they will form a definite view of the meaning which belongs to the whole book, and finally perhaps one of the individuals will present this view to the public.