Jens Peter Jacobsen (1847-1885)

Jens Peter Jacobsen (7 April 1847 – 30 April 1885) was a Danish novelist, poet, and scientist, in Denmark often just written as "J. P. Jacobsen" and pronounced "I. P. Jacobsen". He began the naturalist movement in Danish literature and was a part of the Modern Breakthrough.

Jacobsen was born in Thisted in Jutland, the eldest of the five children of a prosperous merchant. He went to school in Copenhagen and was a student at the University of Copenhagen in 1868. As a boy, he showed a remarkable talent for science, in particular botany. In 1870, although he was already secretly writing poetry, Jacobsen adopted botany as a profession. He was sent by a scientific body in Copenhagen to report on the flora of the islands of Anholt and Læsø.

Around this time, the discoveries of Charles Darwin began to fascinate him. Realizing that the work of Darwin was not well known in Denmark, he translated The Origin of Species and The Descent of Man into Danish.

When still young, Jacobsen was struck by tuberculosis which eventually ended his life. His illness prompted travels to southern Europe.

Literary works

Jacobsen's canon consists of two novels, seven short stories, and one posthumous volume of poetry - small, but enough to place him as one of the most influential Danish writers.

Prose

The historical novel Fru Marie Grubbe (1876, Eng. transl.: Marie Grubbe. A Lady of the Seventeenth Century 1917) is the first Danish treatment of a woman as a sexual creature. Based upon the life of an authentic 17th century Danish noblewoman, it charts her downfall from a member of the royal family to the wife of a ferryman, as a result of her desire for an independent and satisfying erotic life. In many ways the books anticipates the themes of D. H. Lawrence.

Jacobsen's second novel Niels Lyhne (1880, English translation 1919) traces the fate of an atheist in a merciless world: his lack of faith is "tested" by tragedies and personal crises until he dies in war, disillusioned but unrepentant.

Jacobsen's short stories are collected in Mogens og andre Noveller (1882,
translated as Mogens and Other Tales, 1921, and Mogens and Other Stories, 1994). Among them must be mentioned Mogens (1872 - his official debut), the tale of a young dreamer and his maturing during love, sorrow and new hope of love. Et Skud i Taagen (A Shot in the Fog) is a Poe-inspired tale of the sterility of hatred and revenge. Pesten i Bergamo (The Plague of Bergamo) shows people clinging to religion even when tempted to be "free men". Fru Fønss (1882) is a sad story about a widow's tragic break with her egoistic children when she wants to remarry.

Mogens og andre Noveller and Niels Lyhne were both highly praised by Rainer Maria Rilke in his letters to Franz Xaver Kappus, translated as Letters to a Young Poet.

Poetry

The poems of Jacobsen are more influenced by late romanticism than his prose. Many of them are wistful, dreamy and melancholic but also naturalistic. Most important is the great obscure poem Arabesque to a Hand-drawing by Michel Angelo (about 1875) the idea of which seems to be that art is going to replace immortality as the meaning of life. They significantly inspired the Danish symbolist poetry of the 1890s.

Legacy

Unlike many of his colleagues Jacobsen did not take much interest in politics, his main interests being science and psychology. He is primarily an artist: his ability to create "paintings" and arabesque-like scenes both in his prose and his poetry (which has sometimes been criticized as "mannered") is one of the secrets of his art. It has been said that his novels are a presentation of various snapshots rather than tales of action.

In spite of his not very extensive oeuvre Jacobsen's international influence has been quite strong. In Germany both his novels and poems were widely read and they are known to have influenced Thomas Mann, as well as the Englishman D. H. Lawrence. Jacobsen's works also greatly inspired Rainer Maria Rilke's prose: in Rilke's Letters to a Young Poet, he claims that he always has two books with him - the Bible and the collected works of Jacobsen. Jacobsen also influenced many other authors of the turn of the 20th century, including Henrik Ibsen, Sigmund Freud, Hermann Hesse, Stefan Zweig, and T. E. Lawrence, who all commented on his work.

He also had a musical influence: Frederick Delius's Fennimore and Gerda and
Arnold Schönberg's Gurre-Lieder are based upon themes from Jacobsen's book.
Afsted Min Baad!

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Alle De Voksende Skygger

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Alle Smaablomster Trip, Trip, Trip

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Arabesk. Til En Haandtegning Af Michel Angelo

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Asali [i]

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Asali [ii]

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Asali [iii]

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Asali [vi]

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Asalis Have

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Begejstring

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Bryllupssang

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Der Hjælper Ej Drømme

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Det Bødes Der For

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Det Er Stævnemødets Time

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Digterliv

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Drøm!

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Drømmeidealet

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Du Kalder Mig Tavs Og Melankolsk

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Efteraar

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Ellen [i]

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Ellen [ii]

Jens Peter Jacobsen
En Arabesk

Jens Peter Jacobsen
En Bøn

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Evig Og Uden Forandring

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Farer Hen, I Tomme Drømme!

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Farvel!

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Fjern

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Forbi

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Fred

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Frostsne

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Genrebillede

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Grækenland

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Gud, Frels Mig Dog!

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Har Dagen Sanket Al Sin Sorg

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Hververts Død

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Hjemad

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Hvad Brød Jeg Mig Vel

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Hvi Gjækker Mig Livet Stedse!

Jens Peter Jacobsen
I Drømmenes Land

Jens Peter Jacobsen
I Serailllets Have

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Irmelin Rose

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Jeg Kan Ej Sidde Lig En Heldig Fisker

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Jeg Vil Ej Dø

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Kveld

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Lad Mig Ej Dø!

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Lad Vaaren Komme, Mens Den Vil

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Landskab [en Vidtstrakt Hede Med Mossede Sten]

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Landskab [stille, Du Elskede Kvinde! ]

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Løft De Klingre Glaspokaler

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Lys Over Landet

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Marine

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Med Store Tanker Har Jeg Levet

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Min Lykkes Borg

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Mod Dæmring

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Monomanie

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Motto

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Naar En Gang

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Nævner Min Tanke Dig

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Nat

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Polka

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Rim

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Saa Er Nu Da Jorden En Kobbertyr

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Saa Standsed

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Sejerssang

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Signe

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Silkesko Over Gylden Læst

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Solnedgang [ren Og Klar Stod Himlens Hvalte Bue]

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Solnedgang [signe, Sig Mig Hvorfor Skuer]

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Solnedgang [svømmende Skyer, Dejlige Cyclader]

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Stemninger I

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Stemninger Ii

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Straaler, Mine Drømmesale!

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Taarnvægtersang

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Til Asali [i]

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Til Asali [ii]

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Til Asali [iii]

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Til Asali [iv]

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Til Asali [v]

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Til Klitten

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Til Min Moder

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Til Strengelegen

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Vaar

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Ved Asalis Grav

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Viger Bort!

Jens Peter Jacobsen
Vil Du

Jens Peter Jacobsen