

# The broadcast book review between literary periodicals and mass media – from national ideologues to the young Karl Ove Knausgård

What has been the role of the book reviews broadcast in Norwegian radio in the relationship between a literary and a general public sphere? This paper presents and further develops work published in the history of the Norwegian book review 1870–2010 (Furuset, Thon, and Vassenden 2016), and in my PhD dissertation, on the history of literary criticism and literary dissemination in Norwegian radio in the period 1925–2000 (Jul-Larsen 2020).

The book review was a vital radio genre in most all of the period, an integral part of the efforts of the Norwegian broadcasting corporation (NRK) to inform and enlighten its audience. The broadcast book review sat at the intersection between two different projects: *Bildung*-oriented dissemination of literary knowledge rooted in academic nationalism, and critical literary evaluation. Although both these projects have been crucial, the shifting weight given to each of them during the 20<sup>th</sup> century underscores the changing role of the book review in the first medium with a truly national reach in Norway. The presentation will describe a selection of historical features of the broadcast book review and highlight some of its media-specific and institutional challenges in a Norwegian context. The overt hierarchisation of critical evaluation, as opposed to the non-verbalised appraisal of canonical dissemination, was considered problematic both as a function of the medium's forceful and accessible mode of communication and because of NRK's position as a state-owned institution.

The second part of the presentation will focus on the interaction between various literary periodicals and NRK's literary output. A significant number of the central critics and literary journalists in Norwegian radio have also been writers and editors of consequence in literary periodicals. The different factions involved in producing book reviews for Norwegian radio listeners reached a much wider audience than they would otherwise have been able to in print publications, including daily newspapers. The presentation will delineate how the interchange between periodicals and radio played out at three different points in time: In 1934 the NRK was established, its head of programming was professor Olav Midttun, editor of the periodical *Syn og Segn*. In 1959 the head of literature in NRK, Mentz Schulerud, became editor of the country's leading literary periodical *Vinduet*, he held these two positions until 1962. In 1990 the radio programme *Kritikertorget* – arguably the most progressive literary program in the history of the NRK – was established by the journalist Alf van der Hagen, who was also a leading figure in the young literary periodical *Vagant*. These three events provide compelling examples of the changing interaction between literary periodicals and radio, and the role of book reviews, during this period.

Works referenced:

Furuset, Sissel, Jahn Holljen Thon, and Eirik Vassenden, eds. 2016. *Norsk Litteraturkritikks Historie 1870–2010*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Jul-Larsen, Kristoffer. 2020. 'Vurderende Stemmer : Litteraturkritikk Og Litteraturformidling i Norsk Radio 1925–2000'. NTNU.

### Biography:

Kristoffer Jul-Larsen (b. 1981) is an assistant professor of Norwegian literature at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. He defended his PhD thesis on the history of literary criticism and literary dissemination in Norwegian radio in the period 1925–2000, in January 2020, and was a contributor to the history of the Norwegian book review 1870–2010, published in 2016. He is an art critic for *Kunstkritikk Nordic Art Review* and has published literary criticism and book reviews in several Norwegian newspapers and periodicals. He has also taught courses on the genres and formats of cultural criticism.