

Bibliotekarstudentens nettleksikon om litteratur og medier

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Versroman

En roman eller romanlignende tekst skrevet på vers, uten direkte å tilhøre epos-tradisjonen.

“In a verse novel, character development and plot are considerably more important than language or poetry formalities. Verse novels are considered mostly a story, and the poetry aspect is cream. Verse novels can also be just partially in verse, as the poetry form does not need to carry completely through. The verse novel only needs to be a continuous story with a real character arc, expressed to some degree in verse.” (K.C. Hill i <https://greatstorybook.com/wtheck-verse-novel/>; lesedato 28.01.22)

“Verse-novels are self-conscious crossbreeds that flaunt their genre. A great many of them showcase their hybridity in subtitles such as “A Verse Novel” or “A Novel in Verse.” [...] A verse-novel must be both verse and novel; it is dependent on the viability of both genres for existence.” (Catherine Addison i https://watermark.silverchair.com/style_53_3_326.pdf; lesedato 17.02.22)

“Each word in a verse novel speaks doubly – first telling the story, second helping the reader feel it. [...] A verse novelist communicates with language, but she also speaks to the reader through line breaks, stanza breaks, and the placement of words on a page.” (Caroline Starr Rose i <https://www.thechildrensbookreview.com/2015/03/the-art-of-writing-and-reading-the-verse-novel>; lesedato 21.09.21)

Versromanen *Alexander* fra middelalderen ga navn til versemålet aleksandriner (Lanson og Tuffrau 1953 s. 21).

Det er i mange tilfeller vanskelig å bestemme om noe er en diktsyklus med fortellerende innslag eller en versroman. Det gjelder for eksempel *Århundredets kärlekssaga* (1978) av finske Märta Tikkanen. Distinksjonene er uklare mellom sjangrer som blander poesi/lyrikk og narrativ.

Eksempler på versromaner fra 1900-tallet og senere:

Jens August Schade: *Sjov i Danmark, eller som man ser det: Satirisk sangværk* (1929) – om oppveksten til personen Sjov

Philip Toynbee: *Pantaloone or the Valediction* (1961)

John Fuller: *The Illusionists* (1980)

Vikram Seth: *The Golden Gate* (1986) – består av nesten 600 sonetter

Les Murray: *Fredy Neptune* (1998; på norsk 2008)

Anne Carson: *Autobiography of Red: A Novel in Verse* (1998)

Henry Reymond Fitzwalter Keating: *Jack: The Lady Killer* (1999)

Robert Sullivan: *Captain Cook in the Underworld* (2002)

Derek Walcott: *The Prodigal* (2004)

Peter Adolphsen og Ejler Nyhavn: *Katalognien: En versroman* (2009)

“A large number of modern American long poems are best defined as forming part of a new poetic genre, the verse novel. In terms of length, the work must have a sustained duration and intensity of reading experience with line length a contributing but not determining factor of this. In terms of structure, it may have a variety of structural shapes from continuous narrative to fragmented sequence of units of varying lengths, but it must have an underlying plotted narrative involving characters and events occurring in time. [...] Frederick Turner claims that his long poem, *The New World* [1985], is an epic, but given that it is set in the future, I would have to call it a particular kind of monological verse novel, one employing the mode of science fiction and the subject of romantic heroism.” (Patrick D. Murphy i <http://www.valkyrie22.com/stuff/documents/The%20Verse%20Novel.pdf>; lesedato 18.02.14)

“[T]he verse novel is not an entirely new phenomenon, dating back at least to Anna Seward’s *Louisa: A Poetical Novel*, published in 1784. According to Dino Felluga (171-73), the verse novel had its heyday in England in the later nineteenth century, when the longer works of Arthur Hugh Clough, the Brownings and Tennyson were published [...] even in the nineteenth century, when poetry enjoyed a considerably larger following than it does today, the appearance of verse novels may have been an attempt by poets to attract the novelists’ readers” (Addison 2009).

Aurora Leigh er en “novel in blank verse by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, published in 1857. The first-person narrative, which comprises some 11,000 lines, tells of the heroine’s childhood and youth in Italy and England, her self-education in her father’s hidden library, and her successful pursuit of a literary career. Initially resisting a marriage proposal by the philanthropist Romney Leigh, Aurora later

surrenders her independence and weds her faithful suitor, whose own idealism has also since been tempered by experience. Aurora's career, Romney's social theories, and a melodramatic subplot concerning forced prostitution elicit the author's vivid observations on the importance of poetry, the individual's responsibility to society, and the victimization of women. Although it was a great popular success, *Aurora Leigh* was not admired by critics." (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Aurora-Leigh>; lesedato 18.02.21)

"Elizabeth Barrett Browning's epic poem *Aurora Leigh* presents a viable feminist ideal. Its heroine, Aurora Leigh, ultimately resolves the dilemma of having to deny love for the sake of her work or vice versa by developing a new concept of the female artist. [...] Resisting the traditional role patterns from the beginning, Aurora strictly separates her "quickening inner life" (I. 1027) from the influences of the outside world. This enables her to remain immune to attempts at forcing her to conform to traditional ideals; she keeps "the life, thrust on me, on the outside/ Of the inner life [...]/ Inviolable by conventions [...]" (I. 477-480). However, this is not simply a matter of choice but of survival to Aurora, as the suppression of her creative powers appears to threaten her mental as well as her physical health (cf. I. 482-498). In order to protect her identity, she keeps the artist's side of her nature hidden, "singing at a work apart/ Behind the wall of sense, [...]" (I. 1053f.). The need to assert her own identity as an artist leads Aurora to reject love in order to stay true to her calling as a poet. The only form of love that is available to her as a woman is one that denies an essential part of her nature. This traditional concept is represented in *Aurora Leigh* by Aurora's cousin Romney, who denigrates women's capacity for serious work in general and her vocation as a poet in particular, saying that "[women] as you are,/ Mere women, personal and passionate,/ You give us doating mothers, and chaste wives,/ Sublime Madonnas, and enduring saints!/ We get no Christ from you, – and verily/ we shall not get a poet in my mind" (II. 220-225). While admitting women's importance in the realm of love, Romney assigns to them an inferior role in the realm of work. Aurora points out Romney's fundamental misunderstanding of a woman's nature" (Katharina E. Thomas i <https://www.grin.com/document/172963>; lesedato 18.02.21).

Den franske eksperimentelle forfatteren Raymond Roussel skrev noen versromaner, bl.a. *Klesfôret* (1897; fransk tittel *La Doublure*). "*La Doublure* (which means "the lining" or "the understudy"), composed in Alexandrine couplets, begins as a tale of a failed actor but digresses into a lengthy description of a carnival in Nice – approximately two thirds of the poem, some 4,600 lines, were devoted to cataloging the various floats and masks of the parade. The book was published at the author's expense, and unsurprisingly because of its difficulty and obscurity, the literary public responded with almost complete indifference." (<http://idiommag.com/2012/02/self-made-enigma-raymond-roussel/>; lesedato 19.04.18)

Britiske May Sinclair skrev en lang rekke romaner. "What May Sinclair showed in her underrated and overlooked verse-novel of 1924, *The Dark Night*, was that the

mode and techniques of Imagism could be co-opted for a longer, book-length work, and need not be confined to one-page meditations on the moon or a rock-pool. One could write using the *vers libre* of much Imagist verse and yet cover the romance, plot-twists, and soul-searching one tends to find in a full novel. This is what Sinclair gives us in *The Dark Night*. [...] Sinclair's fiction often looks for new ways of depicting character with a greater emphasis on interiority, on the vagaries of psychological perception. [...] *The Dark Night* is narrated by Elizabeth, a young woman who falls in love with a poet named Victor, whom she subsequently marries. The poem charts her troubled marriage to him (he has an affair with Monica, Elizabeth's young ward) and her relationship with God." (Oliver Tearle i <https://interestingliterature.com/2017/07/may-sinclairs-the-dark-night-the-imagist-verse-novel/>; lesedato 28.01.21)

Den indiske forfatteren Vikram Seths versroman *The Golden Gate* (1986) "includes three pre-story sonnets, entitled Dedication, Acknowledgments and Table of Contents. The narrative portion consists of 590 sonnets in 13 parts. [...] Seth begins his work with authorial nods to both the inspirational muse and to his reader, to both tradition and form, while already playing with the toy-box of sonnet-meaning tools, and his own intentions." (June E. Thjømøe i <https://www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/25549/JuneThjomoeThesis.pdf>; lesedato 18.08.17) "While the idea of a novel in verse may be initially off-putting, readers of this tour de force are in for a treat. Using the sonnet form throughout, and varying his language from lyrical elegance to timely vernacular [...] The bard does not hesitate to interrupt his story from time to time, to explain a change in the course of events or to comment upon the structure of his narration, as he defends himself against critics who would accuse him of folly in writing an entire novel in the sonnet form." (<https://www.amazon.com/Golden-Gate-Vikram-Seth/dp/0679734570>; lesedato 25.01.18)

Den australske dikteren Les Murrays *Fredy Neptune: A Novel in Verse* (1998) handler om en mann som får superkrefter samtidig som han mister evnen til å føle fysisk smerte. På en reise rundt i verden observerer han menneskenes ondskap og mange varianter av grusomhet. *Fredy Neptune* består av ca. 10.000 verselinjer. Tysk-australske Fredy fører selv ordet i fortellingen. På grunn av grusomme opplevelser mister han evnen til å føle kroppslig smerte. Og han har enorm fysisk kraft i seg (han kan bøye en tjukk jernstang, og får derfor jobb som sirkusartist). Han blir en globetrotter som er innom Hollywood, Berlin, Buenos Aires, Malta, Konstantinopel, Rotterdam og flere andre steder. Overalt hjelper han andre, uansett hva det måtte koste, mens han underveis tar arbeid som sjømann, statist (i Hollywood), livvakt og annet. Boka har noen likhetstrekk med pikareskromaner.

"Fred journeys from Australia to the Holy Land and North Africa, survives Australia in the impoverished 1920's, America during Prohibition and the Depression, Germany in the 30's, the Far East in World War II, and finally makes it back home. His story begins, and continues, in well-meaning muddle. [...] After subsequent cruelties, national and personal – soldiers shooting hobos during the

Depression, men chained to blazing tanks, the Nazi horrors, Japanese murders of civilians on Pacific islands – he understands that all nations are capable of infinite cruelty. [...] In Nazi Germany, he helps an elderly Jew forced to scrub the sidewalk with his beard, and nearly gets killed.” (Ruth Padel i <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/05/16/books/odysseus-of-the-outback.html>; lesedato 09.03.21)

Fredy Neptune “is told by its larger than life narrator, Friedrich Boettcher – one of whose many alternate names is Fredy Neptune. An Australian seaman, his family German immigrants, he finds himself witness to the Turkish horrors perpetrated against the Armenians around the time of the First World War. He sees a group of women torched alive and it is literally the shock of his life. Afflicted with some leprosy-like illness, he finds that he no longer has any sensation – he can no longer feel, completely numbed by the horrors he has witnessed. Fredy tries to return to Australia, but it is wartime, and travel is almost impossible. Unable to feel pain he finds he is capable of great feats of strength, a talent that will frequently serve him well. Though he can be (and frequently is) physically injured, he also experiences no discomfort and heals quickly. Here and later Fredy travels the world, meeting the famous (Lawrence of Arabia and Marlene Dietrich, for example) and the common man. His German background is held against him and his family back in Australia, and he hardly has a home to return to. He tries to live a normal life, but these are not normal times and he is no average man. [...] He is forced to go to America to kidnap a man, and he winds up in Hollywood, a bit actor in films such as *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Fredy goes to Germany and saves a retarded man from forced sterilization at the hands of the Nazis, taking him back to Australia to his patient wife. Fredy’s feats of strength earn him some money and occasional fame over the years. He moves in circles high and low, among hobos and among elites, hailed as a German hero then disappearing into oblivion again. His varied name (Friedrich Boettcher, F. T. Bircher, Beecher, Butcher, Fredy Neptune) fits one who never really finds his place. [...] A moral tale, Murray takes a lot upon himself. The very human Fredy is an interesting and exceptionally well drawn figure, thrust into history largely against his will, fighting against it until he is finally released. The novel is fast-paced, but never overly hurried, a fascinating cascade of events. Murray relates Fredy’s adventures exceptionally well in this verse form – and shows great inventiveness in what he puts Fredy through.” (<http://www.complete-review.com/reviews/murrayl/fredy.htm>; lesedato 02.01.20)

Den kanadiske forfatteren Anne Carson var professor i klassiske språk, men skrev også skjønnlitteratur. “*Autobiography of Red* [1998], like most of what Anne Carson writes, is a shape-shifter. It’s a blending of modern and archaic, mythic and mundane: part queer coming-of-age novel, part reimagined fragmentary poem by the Greek poet Stesichorus. The original poem, *Geryoneis*, followed the life of the monster Geryon leading up to his death at the hands of Hercules. In Carson’s telling, Geryon becomes a sensitive and artistic boy of our own time, marked out by his family and peers as being monstrously non-normal. Hercules (Herakles, in Carson’s precise transliteration from the Greek) is, naturally, still rough with

people, but doesn't break Geryon's skull – instead, he breaks his heart. [...] *Autobiography of Red* moves through Geryon's coming-of-age in fluid verse, using a third-person narration that is almost always at a close psychic distance and which transitions from innocent narcissism to the capacity to speak beyond itself. [...] the very frame of the book: autobiography via mythic metaphor. This spreading of consciousness allows Geryon to see himself as a part of history and myth.” (Amelia Brown i <https://blog.pshares.org/shifting-perspective-in-anne-carsons-autobiography-of-red/>; lesedato 24.09.21)

“An explosion of new books subtitled themselves “verse novels” or “novels in verse” has followed the success of Vikram Seth's 1986 *The Golden Gate*. [...] Australia may seem a world leader in the form, with the groundbreaking work of figures such as Dorothy Porter (*Akhenaten* [1992], *The Monkey's Mask* [1997], *Wild Surmise* [2002]), Les Murray (*The Boys Who Stole the Funeral* [1980], *Fredy Neptune* [1998]) and Alan Wearne (*The Nightmarkets* [1986], *The Lovemakers* [2004]) [...] They also appear unrestricted as to subject matter, which includes science fiction, for example Frederick Turner's *The New World* [1985], Frederick Pollaek's *Happiness* [1998] and John Barnie's *Ice* [2001]; stories based on classical myth, such as Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red* [1998] and Porter's *Akhenaten*; community and family histories, either real or fictional, as in *History: The Home Movie* [1994] by Craig Raine, *Darlington's Fall* [2002] by Brad Leithauser, *Judevine* [1991] by David Budbill, *Byrne* [1995] by Anthony Burgess, and *Dark Rooms* [2002] by Siddharth Katragadda.” (Addison 2009) Parkers *The Monkey's Mask* er en krimhistorie der en lesbisk detektiv prøver å finne en forsvunnet student, som viser seg å være myrdet.

“Some are picaresque, such as Ana Castillo's *Watercolor Women/Opaque Men* [2005] and Bernadine Evaristo's *The Emperor's Babe* [2001]; others trace internal journeys in which psychological healing or recognition takes place, as in Mary Rakow's *The Memory Room* [2002] and Diane Brown's *8 Stages of Grace* [2002]. Porter's *The Monkey's Mask* [1997], Martha Grimes's *Send Bygraves* [1989] and H R F Keating's *Jack the Lady Killer* [1989] are murder mysteries. Many verse novels, including *Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons* [1986] by Marilyn Hacker and *The Beauty of the Husband* [2001] by Carson, are love stories. Jordie Albiston's *The Hanging of Jean Lee* [1998] is a sort of documentary. Texts for children and young adults abound, some popular examples being Virginia Euwer Wolff's *Make Lemonade* [1993], Steven Herrick's *Love, Ghosts & Nose Hair* [1996] and Juan Felipe Herrera's *Crashboomlove* [1999]. Interestingly, these texts seem equally unrestricted as to prosody, the majority being composed in a wide variety of free verse forms” (Addison 2009).

“According to Catherine Addison, Professor of English at the University of Zululand and a leading critic of the verse novel, although the verse novel is certainly not restricted to any specific country or location, ‘Australia may seem a world leader in the form’. Since the 1980s, poets such as Jordie Albiston, Les

Murray, Geoff Page, Dorothy Porter, John Tranter, and Alan Wearne have all written celebrated works that may be categorised as ‘verse novels’ or ‘narratives in verse’. Recent publications such as Ali Cobby Eckermann’s *Ruby Moonlight* (2012), Lisa Jacobson’s *The Sunlit Zone* (2012), Lesley Lebkowicz’s *The Petrov Poems* (2013) and Omar Musa’s *Here Come the Dogs* (2014) reveal promising possibilities for the form.” (Royal Jessen i <http://cordite.org.au/reviews/royal-jessen/>; lesedato 21.03.22)

The Marlowe Papers (2012) “is a novel in verse by the poet Ros Barber, who wrote the book as part of a PhD and has also published academic papers on Christopher Marlowe. Its main fictional contention is that the playwright was not killed “in a tavern brawl” in Deptford, but spirited away by colleagues in the secret service (with which he was undoubtedly involved), lived sometimes abroad and sometimes in England, took the name William Shakespeare and wrote the plays we (or most of us) always thought were produced by the Swan of Avon. [...] From one point of view it appears enormously ambitious, narratively fascinating, ingenious and impossible to ignore. From another it seems overstretched, ludicrously conjectural, pointlessly elaborate and interesting only as an oddity. [...] Barber has set herself a peculiar problem: if the poetry is good but the research is bad or implausible, the creative element is made to seem pointless. And if the poetry is bad but the research good, the reader will wonder why on earth the content wasn’t delivered in a more orthodox manner. [...] most of it is written in a relaxed version of iambic pentameter, punctuated here and there by more formal episodes, usually sonnets. [...] readers are likely to feel that if they can’t trust the poetry, they’re less willing to trust the story. [...] the fancy-loving form she’s chosen has a distinctly destabilising effect on “hard facts” ” (Andrew Motion i <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/jun/15/marlowe-papers-ros-barber-review>; lesedato 14.03.22).

Citizen: An American Lyric (2014) av amerikanske Claudia Rankine er “a book-length poem about race and the imagination. Rankine has called it an attempt to “pull the lyric back into its realities.” Those realities include the acts of everyday racism – remarks, glances, implied judgments – that flourish in an environment where more explicit acts of discrimination have been outlawed. [...] a weave of artfully juxtaposed intensities, a quarrel within form about form. [...] “Citizen” is part documentary, part lyric procedural, submitting to its painstaking frame-by-frame analysis everything from J. M. W. Turner’s painting “The Slave Ship” to Zinedine Zidane’s head-butt during the 2006 World Cup final. The extensive list of works that Rankine has drawn on, ranging from James Baldwin to Homi Bhabha to Robert Lowell, makes “Citizen” (like Whitman’s “Song of Myself,” a clear antecedent) one of those American art works that equip us to do without it. It teaches us to “no longer take things at second and third hand,” as Whitman wrote, to “listen to all sides and filter them from your self.” [...] “Citizen” begins by recounting, in the second person, a string of racist incidents experienced by Rankine and friends of hers, the kind of insidious did-that-really-just-happen affronts that startle in the moment and later expand, poisonously, in the mind. [...]

“Citizen” opens with a powering-down of all the “devices” – the buzzing phones and glaring screens that distract the self from its own scrutiny – to buy some bandwidth for reflection [...] Rankine includes a long meditation on Serena Williams, the tennis star: like Rankine, a black woman playing what many still insist on thinking of as a white man’s game. What gives these passages such power is a fan’s zeal, which, among many other things, reminds us of what a magnificent athlete is in our midst. Rankine watches tennis with the sound off, she tells us, to soothe herself: “a clean displacement,” she writes, “of effort, will, and disappointment.” You could say the same of poetry, and there is something special about tennis, as poets have noticed, that feels poetic – the marked rectangle within which all the action happens, the quick back and forth of the ball like a line breaking and returning to the left-hand margin.” (Dan Chiasson i <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/10/27/color-codes>; lesedato 21.09.21)

Britten Glyn Maxwells *Time’s Fool* (2000) “is an ambitious tale in verse, nearly four-hundred pages long, covering (basically in seven year intervals – though not entirely chronologically) the span from 1970 to 2019. [...] There are nine chapters, each prefaced by a prose introduction and summary. Each chapter is further divided into five sections; the verse throughout consists of terza rima (three-lined, ABA, then BCB, etc.-rhymed stanzas (more or less)) – with the concluding lines of each section a rhymed couplet. The poetry fairly bounces along, the language (and structure) never overly complex. [...] The fool of the title is Edmund Lea, his fate a Flying Dutchman-like existence aboard a train, travelling endlessly to nowhere while remaining always the same age: seventeen. His only respite is a break every seven years, on Christmas Eve, when he returns to his hometown of Hartisle. Most of the books focusses on Edmund’s brief visits back home, as he tries to escape his terrible fate and as he watches the lives of all he knew advance away from him. The poem begins in 1984, when Edmund has already been travelling for fourteen years. [...] Two friends, Polly and Wasgood, remain closest to him over the years, though occasionally also using him for there own ends. Edmund, largely isolated for the long intervals between his brief appearances, remains above the fray most of the time, but he is easily led during his visits to Hartisle, desperate for release. During his long voyaging Edmund tries to record his experiences – to write and draw. He is most successful with the poetry that he can keep in his head; everything he sets down on paper is gone the next day” (<https://www.complete-review.com/reviews/maxwellg/timesfool.htm>; lesedato 11.03.22).

Maxwell har også skrevet *The Sugar Mile* (2005). “In September 2001, at an Irish pub in Manhattan, the poet meets a friendly bartender, Raul, and a sleepy old former Londoner, Joey, who delivered newspapers during the blitz. Most of the poems that follow are framed as Joey’s recollections, and most use the voices of Londoners – children and adults, a grandmother, an air-raid warden – during September 1941. Joey gradually reveals the secrets that explain why he left London; Raul is given space to describe the life of the pub and hint that he will die

in the Twin Towers attacks.” (<https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-618-56243-5>; lesedato 18.03.22)

Den amerikanske dikteren Brad Leithauser's *Darlington's Fall* (2002) “tells the story of Russel Darlington. The first chapter introduces him in childhood: motherless, seven years old, living in Storey, Indiana – and already clearly “a born professor”. The natural world, rather than that of fantasy, is what appeals to him. He prefers to read non-fiction even at a young age: “Fact is good enough when the world’s miraculous.” Russel is fascinated by butterflies, and his life is changed when his father takes him to his old alma mater, the regional university in Remington, “some thirty miles distant”, to get an expert to identify one of his specimens. John Darlington is friends with the dean, and he in turn is glad to introduce the boy to Professor Schrock, a disfigured Austrian who is a leading man in his field (and would go on to become “the world’s preeminent / Expert on lepidopteran parasites”). Schrock goes on to become Russel’s mentor, as the boy devotes himself from then on to the study of lepidoptery. Academic success comes easily to Russ, and though he could attend the fanciest Ivy League colleges he decides to study under Schrock, closer to home. College is a new experience, but one he also masters. He even finds love. Russ’ professional ambition then leads him to want to make his mark, and he ventures far afield in search of undiscovered butterflies. It is here he takes a crippling fall, changing his life. Ambition is thwarted, the future looks grimmer. He returns back home, he and his wife go their separate ways. Russ does find a purpose again when he is commissioned to undertake a great survey, *Life’s Kingdoms*, a textbook that will keep him busy for years. It is the “touchingly / Mislaid confidence of his” that allows Russ to present life as simply divided into two kingdoms – a view soon superseded by the advances in biology, as the world proves to be far more complex. But Russ lives happily enough with his world-view. His father leaves money for a large museum of natural sciences to be built at the university, and it is here Russ comes into contact with an artist, commissioned to paint a “four-part mural-cum-cyclorama” showing the “Progress of Life”. Fantasy and reality again clash, and Russ finds himself intrigued by both the artist and his art. Russ himself also continues to work away. As the years pass he suffers losses, but eventually he also finds love again. An added dimension in the book comes from the unexpected appearance of the author in the text, explaining why this story is being told – and recounting some of his own efforts to follow in Russ’ footsteps. [...] Mark Leithauser’s exceptional drawings are also a plus: a neat complement to the text.” (<https://www.complete-review.com/reviews/popus/leithab.htm>; lesedato 17.02.22)

Amerikaneren Alice Notleys *Culture of One* (2011) har blitt kalt en “dust-devil swirl of scenes set in a busted-down town in the Southwest [...] a dream realm, an American hell that just might, for a few fierce souls, be salvageable. Notley’s renegade is Marie, a scavenger living at the dump out in the desert, who may or may not have lost her baby when a drifter, who may or may not exist, burned down her shack. Marie is collaging a book called “The Codex” out of junk. In her book –

Notley's book, the book of culture – other characters emerge: Eve Love, a methamphetamine-addicted rocker-demiurge; a cohort of mean girls who kill Marie's dog; a melancholic named Leroy who owns the Buy-Rite; Leroy's dead wife, Ruby; a Satanist chick with good intentions; and the goddess of Mercy. Notley moves hallucinogenically among these guises, in short poems strung continuously across page breaks rather than sequestered in their own allotments of white space. Common to nearly every piece is an autobiographical "I" who orchestrates the other personae. [...] *Culture of One* evokes a love for the ballad form and a rage against patriarchal violence [...] Notley's hardscrabble poem-story expands toward Blakean epic." (Frances Richard i <https://www.bookforum.com/print/1801/alice-notley-s-culture-of-one-7338>; lesedato 17.02.22)

The Wherewithal (2014) av amerikaneren Philip Schultz er en kompleks fortelling: "The sheer number of plot lines in *The Wherewithal* is extraordinary. There is the central story of the Jedwabne massacre during the Holocaust in Poland, and the heroic tale of one Catholic woman who for two and a half years hid seven Jews – the only Jewish survivors of this village – in a hole that she dug underneath her barn. There is the story of her family's later immigration to Chicago, the growing up in that city of her son Henryk (who was a toddler in Jedwabne), of his (probably, but not definitely) accidental killing of his high school friend Rossy, who is the son of a survivor of Treblinka. There is the story of twenty-something Henryk's adventures in San Francisco during the late '60s dodging the draft, living on food stamps and the meager earnings from a position as "Head Clerk of Closed Files" in the basement office of a welfare building that is graphically illustrated throughout the book with Piranesi's haunting eighteenth century depictions of "Imaginary Prisons," of endless claustrophobic chambers and dungeons and hallways leading nowhere, which becomes Schultz's extended metaphor for modern America's horrific neglect of the poor. We also learn about Henryk's colorful predecessors in his job, including Arthur P. Swigge, whose "Notes of a Know Nothing" Henryk reads in his basement office, where his main energy is focused on translating the diaries that his mother kept about the massacres that she witnessed in Jedwabne and about hiding the Jews literally in a hole in the ground. Those diaries, which are a poetic invention of Schultz's rather than an historical reality, take a significant turn when, as an older woman with Alzheimer's in a nursing home, she is tortured by being unable to forget the nightmare: "Her dementia discloses / rather than obscures the horror." And there are the many love stories. Before Henryk comes to San Francisco, while doing a Ph.D. on Wittgenstein, he is pursued by the wife of his department chair, who in response to her husband running off with his secretary, falls desperately in love with Henryk and eventually follows him to San Francisco, where Henryk has already fallen in love with "a zonked out hippie hillbilly lioness" whose "go-go dancer's moniker" was "Butterfly." To say nothing of the heartbreakingly complex relationship between Henryk and his mother, whose courage and heroism he admires, whose tenderness is sustained through the trials of her dementia, but whom at some level he still resents for having put him in harm's way all those years she was hiding the

Jews, and even shooting his beloved dog Buddy “because he wouldn’t stop barking / at the hole people.” ” (Ronald A. Sharp i <https://kenyonreview.org/kr-online-issue/2014-summer/selections/the-wherewithal-by-on-philip-schultz-738439/>; lesedato 17.02.22)

“The challenge Schultz faces in writing this poem is not simply the narrative task of weaving so many disparate stories together but how to do so without trivializing the unspeakable horror of Jedwabne, a story first documented by the historian Jan T. Gross in his 2001 book *Neighbors*, which examines how it is that a Polish village in which for centuries Jews and non-Jews had coexisted peacefully and mingled freely suddenly could become one of the most horrific killing fields of the Holocaust, with Jews being hacked and pitchforked and 1600 of them rounded up and thrown into a barn that was then set on fire. [...] Schultz has found a way not only to make these many narratives inform each other but to do so in the service of what becomes the lyric celebration of the possibility of love and beauty and heroic action in the face of ultimate darkness. Far from trivializing the Holocaust, Schultz expands our understanding of it not only by confronting it head on but also by seeing its surprising relationships to certain brutalities of poverty. What is so remarkable about this poem is its symphonic orchestration of conflicting tones – of outrage and anger, passion and compassion, guilt and longing; its pitch-perfect depiction of both ultimate horror and the possibilities for moral triumph and human connection. Like much great tragic art, *The Wherewithal* finds its deepest affirmations not beyond the scope of human suffering but in the very pitch of it. At the end of the poem Henryk says of his mother:

She didn’t turn away, but stood there,
Eyes wide open, seeing everything.

How his mother summoned the “wherewithal,” to borrow the poem’s title, not only to see clearly the unfolding nightmare but also to take courageous action against it, at massive risk to her self and family, is one crucial aspect of the title’s significance. The other half concerns Henryk’s challenge, which constitutes the poem’s central quest, to do the same: to confront the horror unflinchingly and to summon the wherewithal not only to see it clearly but to act heroically despite the horror. “At age two,” he says,

I went to our barn
with Mother to feed our Jews.
A memory insists it can still smell
their filthy clothes, the rot between
their toes that they tried to wash off
in the pig trough every other Tuesday.

This memory, he continues,

insists it can see, in the dawn's light,
their eyes startled out of sleep,
gazing up into mine, then quickly
looking away, as if to spare me
the shame of their wretchedness.

Schultz gives full play to the many factors (both tragic and comic) that complicate our ability to retrieve a clear vision of the past, whether in the private recollections of an individual or the collective apprehensions of historical memory. But a central component of the wherewithal that both Henryk and his mother muster is a faith that one can indeed distinguish good and evil, justice and injustice, exploitation and compassion, however difficult the task, and that the prerequisite to such judgment is the willingness to accept the pain that inevitably comes from unblinkingly seeing what is in front of us. If Piranesi functions in the poem as Schultz's version of Virgil guiding Dante through hell, the poem's final entrance into the burning barn, the epicenter of the Jedwabne massacre, functions as the climactic descent into the fiery underworld in which human beings are enacting the ancient iconography of hell that defines so much of the Holocaust: of literally burning other human beings alive. Summoning the combination of strength and intelligence to undertake such a painful and dangerous act of vision is not only a metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical challenge; it is also an aesthetic challenge" (Ronald A. Sharp i <https://kenyonreview.org/kr-online-issue/2014-summer/selections/the-where-withal-by-on-philip-schultz-738439/>; lesedato 17.02.22).

The Wherewithals "humor, which is extensive and often hilarious, is obviously one among many mechanisms employed to process and provide a buffer against such unrelentingly dark material. Schultz's use of Wittgenstein, of a very carefully if unobtrusively managed sixteen-part structure within each chapter for sustaining and interweaving the many narratives, of elaborate structures of imagery that run throughout the poem (hair being the most pervasive, complex, and moving) – all of these are important ingredients in developing the "wherewithal" to deal with this explosive material. Another technique is the extended analogy the poem develops between the treatment of Jews and the poor, both of which involve elaborate bureaucratic mechanisms for exploiting vulnerabilities, inflicting suffering, and degrading human dignity. Piranesi's images provide a visual counterpart to the poem's portrait of the pointlessness and hopelessness of the welfare system, with its endless lines of bewildered victims filling out countless forms that end up in basement file cabinets like the ones that surround Henryk in his underground office [...] Henryk's predecessor, observes that the poor

know their suffering sustains us,
validates our importance, that without
them our happiness is impossible.

But of all these many effective devices of providing distance and perspective, it is humor that figures most prominently in this poem. In a way that is characteristic of the entire body of Schultz's work over nearly forty years, it is his use of humor that simultaneously provides a clearer lens into the matter at hand and allows him to deal with the implications of what that lens brings into focus. It is humor that, unlikely as it might have seemed for a poem about the Holocaust, provides both a deeper way into the material and a mechanism for living with what is discovered." (Ronald A. Sharp i <https://kenyonreview.org/kr-online-issue/2014-summer/selections/the-where-withal-by-on-philip-schultz-738439/>; lesedato 17.02.22)

Ruby Moonlight (2012) av australske Ali Cobby-Eckermann har handling fra ca. år 1880. Boka består av "a verse sequence imagining a specific incident in mid-north South Australia, in the late nineteenth century. Through a series of interconnected poems we follow the story of a young girl, Ruby, who survives the massacre of her entire family; wandering through Ngadjuri land, 'she staggers to follow bird song' and trusts in nature to guide her to safety. Through a minimal style, absence of punctuation and deeply emotional yet understated and refined storytelling, *Ruby Moonlight* recounts an unforgettable series of experiences and illuminates parts of the Australian natural world that are often forgotten, ignored or altered. [...] Cobby-Eckermann writes the history of Ruby but also of Indigenous people who were victims of massacres around Australia during colonisation. The writing conjures up violence and loneliness, isolation and death, but within this darkness is a healing brightness that resides both in the descriptive power of the language and in Ruby's journey. The writing is not didactic or angry but generates discussion; it offers the reader a chance to understand more about this country's past and its impact on our present. In *Ruby Moonlight*, Ali Cobby-Eckermann has written a series of interconnected poems, a verse novel really, that describes first contact from an Indigenous point of view. [...] These innovative poems take up traditional narrative voices, bringing past conflicts vividly to life with short and agile lines that are lucid, refined and luminous. Colonialism and survival are set against the natural world, love and the desire for human engagement. The writing is delicate yet strong, the tone is pitched so well the reader is not distracted by the agile technique that carries the narrative forward." (<https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/awards/kenneth-slessor-prize-poetry/2013-winner-ruby-moonlight-ali-cobby-eckermann/>; lesedato 21.03.22)

Charlotte (2014) av den franske forfatteren David Foenkinos (boka er oversatt til engelsk av Sam Taylor) "is inspired by the life of German Jewish artist Charlotte Salomon, who was gassed in Auschwitz in 1943, with her unborn child. Her short tragic story was marked by Nazi persecution, a family riddled with suicides – including her mother's when Charlotte was eight – and also by extraordinary talent. Foenkinos writes arrestingly about Charlotte, masterfully imagining her interior life as well as charting his responses as he follows her to places "charged with terror". Overwhelmed by the material, he "felt the need to move to the next line in order to breathe", so each sentence is given its own separate line. So much space on the

page visually transforms each paragraph into a stanza, while lending the words a solemn weight and power. The note of hope in this beautiful, wretched story is in the survival of Charlotte's great work, *Life? or Theatre? A Song-play*, a lightly fictionalised memoir made up of hundreds of paintings, drawings, texts and musical annotations, created during the two years she spent in hiding." (Emily Rhodes i <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/jan/19/charlotte-david-foenkinos-review>; lesedato 11.03.22)

"Split into short stanzas, often sonnets in themselves, *Charlotte* seems to follow a Victorian model for the genre. But this belies the novel's modernity. Its subject matter is anything but Victorian, although it is essentially a tragic romance. [...] Despite Nazi efforts to minimise then eliminate her, her artistic talents were prodigious, and recognised by her teachers as such. [...] Foenkinos' main interest is not the individual tragedy of one girl, albeit deep and brutal. As he says, "not all tragedies can be screamed out loud". His focus is the struggle for artistic fulfilment, despite overwhelming odds. Charlotte's oeuvre is astonishing in its heartfelt passion. Colours are vibrant, movement is intense and characters are depicted with both realistic detail and expressionistic flourish. [...] Foenkinos' verses are highly unusual in that each line is end-stopped. This gives the work a restless energy, a sense of a truncated life, even of restraint against powerful forces." (Steve Walker i <https://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/books/103315159/review-charlotte-by-david-foenkinos>; lesedato 11.03.22)

Gap (2014) av australske Rebecca Jessen "is voiced by the protagonist Ana, a young woman who has grown detached and isolated, an outcast now trying to raise and protect her teenage sister, Indie. Ana has come from a place of abuse and neglect, revealed in poems such as 'Mum did her best' (24), 'Mum always said' (26), and 'Get outta here' (27). Themes concerning family dysfunction and class are explored throughout the narrative, allowing for an insight into the ways in which these concepts may alienate individuals and render them incapable of conforming to the status quo. Ana is painfully aware of her disadvantaged position, 'flailing / in [her] own shadow' (15), yet desperately tries to create better circumstances for herself and Indie. Set in inner-city Brisbane, the verse novel opens with Ana embroiled in a crime of desperation, making her getaway from the scene:

Looking on the streets
for the hangers-on

never know
who's lurking round these parts

seen me leave his house
round the back

pale and sweaty
what have I done? (3)

Jessen's short and compressed free verse lines embrace the colloquial and allow for a representation of Ana's troubled yet laconic interior monologue. The narrative is constructed through a series of poems, each focussing on Ana's experiences as an outsider-turned-outlaw. All poems are titled by their opening line, which allows for a stream-of-consciousness effect [...] in Jessen's narrative the concept of concealment is overpowered by romantic desire [...] Jessen is undoubtedly a feminist writer and, by devoting poems to Ana's expression of lesbian sexuality, allows for a representation of female desire that has been oppressed [...] Paradoxically, 'gaps' strengthen the narrative of this verse novel, allowing for possible outcomes to become more potent and foreboding than any answerable question or concrete fact. During pivotal moment in the narrative, Ana asks herself: 'would / silence / fill those gaps / where words / couldn't?' (205). In this instance, the concept of 'silence' signifies these unknown risks, a place where no words can reinforce limitations or boundaries." (Royal Jessen i <http://cordite.org.au/reviews/royal-jessen/>; lesedato 21.03.22)

Amerikaneren David Mason ga i 2007 ut *Ludlow*. "The verse in this novel gives a sense of motion and sight to the story of the 1914 Ludlow massacre, drawing the reader into the hopelessness and fear surrounding life in the mines. Ludlow is a work of historical fiction, bringing to life the events which surrounded the 1913 strike of coal miners in Huerfano and Las Animas counties in Colorado and their eventual massacre by the Colorado state militia. Mason has interwoven historical characters and events with a narrative story about a fictional orphan, Luisa Mole. Luisa is the daughter of a Mexican mother and a Welsh dynamiter named John Mole. The story opens with the chapter "La Huerfana," the story of Luisa's daily life and the loss of her father in a mining accident. With beautiful economy, Mason gives a description of Mole's death. [...] The use of verse, the sheer beauty of the language, makes the story haunting and terribly real." (Maria O'Connell i <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/535286/pdf>; lesedato 17.02.22)

Inside the Whale (2012) av den amerikanske forfatteren Joseph Peterson "is a narrative poem that recounts the life of Irishman Jim O'Connor, a tragic figure who was born with a preternatural gift for poetry, that brought him early fame, but he is also an alcoholic who had his first blackout drunk at 12 years of age. The stanzas of the novel recount Jim's tragic exploits as he leaves a wake of dark destruction in his midst. The ghost of his ex-girlfriend Anne, killed in a car crash on a slick, snowy road with Jim driving after an acute drinking binge, haunt Jim to the end of his days." (<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/14062352-inside-the-whale>; lesedato 21.03.22)

The Lehman Trilogy (2019; italiensk originalversjon utgitt i 2016) av Stefano Massini "follows the epic rise and fall of three generations of that infamous family

and through them tells the story of American ambition and hubris. After leaving his native Bavaria, Henry Lehman arrives in America determined to make a better life. Sensing opportunity in the Deep South, he opens a textile shop in Alabama, laying the foundation for a dynasty that will come to dominate and define modern capitalism. Emanuel and his brother Mayer begin investing in anything and everything that will turn a profit, from cotton to coal to railroads to oil to airplanes – even at the expense of the very nation that forged them. Spanning three generations and 150 years, *The Lehman Trilogy* is a moving epic that dares to tell the story of modern capitalism through the saga of the Lehman brothers and their descendants.” (<https://www.harpercollins.com/products/the-lehman-trilogy-stefano-massini?variant=32275721388066>; lesedato 21.03.22)

Danskene Peter Adolphsen og Ejler Nyhavns *Katalognien: En versroman* (2009) “gør brug af alle tænkelige digtformer [...] finurlige fortællinger om forfatterens eventyr rundt omkring i København og den sære ø, Katalognien. [...] de to har endda udstyret bogen med et appendix. Nørdet, men helt vildt blæret og dejligt belejligt, når man lige har glemt, hvad en sonetkrans er for noget.” (<https://litteratursiden.dk/anmeldelser/katalognien-en-versroman-af-peter-adolphsen-ejler-nyhavn>; lesedato 20.09.21)

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