

Mogens Klitgaard

**God Tempers
the Wind to the
Shorn Lamb**

Translated and
with an Introduction and Notes
by Marc Linder

With the Assistance of
Gitte Gaarsvig Sørensen

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Translated from the first edition of Mogens Klitgaard, *Gud mildner luften for de klippede faar* (Copenhagen: Povl Branner, 1938).

The cover image is one of the friezes adorning the lobby of the Danish Parliament, which were painted by Rasmus Larsen between 1918 and 1921. Courtesy of Folketinget.

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Introduction¹

A . . . sturdy vagabond . . . shall at the first time be whipped, and sent to the place where he was born or last dwelled . . . , there to get his living; and if he continue his roguish life, he shall have the upper part of the gristle of his right ear cut off; and if after that he be taken wandering in idleness, or doth not apply to his labour, or is not in service with any master, he shall be adjudged and executed as a felon.²

This tale of a young Dane's life as a vagabond in post-World War I Europe is, more or less, the true story of Mogens Klitgaard from the age of sixteen to his mid-twenties. Ironically, the laudatory review of the Danish original in the *Times Literary Supplement* failed to understand its autobiographical character; instead, the anonymous reviewer mistakenly believed that the book focused on a "tramp, whom the author meets . . . and whose confidence he wins by standing him a meal."³ In fact, the author is the tramp and the man who buys him coffee merely a stage prop.

The prehistory of Klitgaard's vagabondage during the 1920s is an interesting story in its own right. Perhaps the most signifi-

¹In addition to new material, this Introduction includes an abbreviated and revised version of Marc Linder, "Introduction," in Mogens Klitgaard, *There's a Man Sitting on a Trolley* vii-xxxviii (Marc Linder tr.; Iowa City: Fānpihuà, 2001).

²28 Henry VIII ch. 25 § 3 (1535), in *The Statutes at Large from the First Year of King Richard III. to the Thirty-First Year of King Henry VIII. inclusive*, vol. V:387, 388 (Danby Pickering ed.; Cambridge: Bentham, 1763).

³"The Problem Child: A New Novelist from the Faroes," *Times Literary Supplement*, Foreign Books Section, Quarterly Survey, No. 3, Mar. 1939, at v. Though brief, the review praised Klitgaard for telling a "good, convincing story in an excellent style"

Introduction

cant departure from autobiographical reality was that Klitgaard's real father was not a parish deacon. Klitgaard was born into a middle-class family in Valby, an industrializing village that had been incorporated into Copenhagen five years before his birth in 1906. His father, Emanuel Klitgaard, was a department head of the umbrella organization of the Danish consumer co-operative stores and conductor of its amateur orchestra. Emanuel Klitgaard appears to have been a good burgher and religiously oriented, but whether he had institutionalized church connections is, given the dearth of source materials, unknown. Mogens Klitgaard's secure childhood began to crumble in 1913 at the age of six when his mother died of cancer; three years later he had become an orphan when his father also died of cancer. After briefly living with his stepmother—his father had married the family's maid the year after his wife's death—who had never shown any interest in him or his older sister, he moved in with his aunt and uncle. Though fond of him, the childless couple did not feel equal to the task of being parents and in 1917 they placed him in the Royal Orphanage in Copenhagen.⁴

This harsh and highly structured total institution, which enforced obedience, punctuality, and order by corporal punishment and detention, thus preventing Klitgaard from spending weekends with his aunt and uncle and brother and sister, imbued this wilful child, known as an "escape artist" since the age of four,

⁴B[ertel Bing], "Ligefremt Interview: Virkelig Romantik i Hverdagslivet," *Nationaltidende*, June 10, 1937; *Dansk biografisk leksikon* 8:41 (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1981); Leon Jaurnow, "Drømmen om noget andet—portræt af Mogens Klitgaard i anledning af 50-året for hans død," in *Magasin fra Det kongelige bibliotek* 10:3-14 at 4 (1995); Leon Jaurnow, "Efterskrift," in Mogens Klitgaard, *Der sidder en mand i en sporvogn* 193-209 at 202 (N.p.: Dansk Lærerforeningen, 1997); Leon Jaurnow, *Den lyse vagabond: Mogens Klitgaards liv og forfatter-skab* 8-11 (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 2002 [forthcoming]); telephone interview with Inga Klitgaard (May 25, 2001).

Introduction

with an exceedingly intense desire for freedom.⁵

At the end of the summer of 1921, at the age of fourteen, he was placed out as a market-gardener's apprentice in Rødvig, a town about 40 miles south of Copenhagen, where he was supposed to work for five years. The choice had not been his: the orphanage and his brother Svend, who was ten years older and acted as a kind of guardian, had chosen the apprenticeship for him. He had never wished to become a gardener and never cared a bit for the "hard toil of an unskilled laborer from morning till evening"; but being an orphan, he had to go someplace where he would not be a burden to anyone. For his 12-hour workday the young Klitgaard received room and board and 10 crowns per month.⁶

In the spring of 1922 he engaged in his first act of "rebellion"—flight. One day he got into a dispute with the market-gardener, hopped on to a bicycle, and headed to Elsinore about 70 miles away; after stopping in Copenhagen to telephone his family to inform them of his decision, he bicycled up the Zealand coast and crossed over to Sweden, making his way north. Initially he made a living dealing in notions and working for a farmer.⁷ At the age of fifteen he had thus embarked on a vaga-

⁵Jurnow, *Den lyse vagabond* at 12-17.

⁶Mow., "Min Bog var for mig Knald eller Fald—siger Mogens Klitgaard," *Berlingske Aftenavis*, June 9, 1937; Christian Houmark, "Daarligt egnet til at møde Livet," *B.T.*, June 10, 1937; Mogens Klitgaard, "En Søndag for to Aar siden," *Berlingske Aftenavis*, Dec. 8, 1938 (quote); Jurnow, "Drømmen om noget andet" at 4, 6; Jurnow, *Den lyse vagabond* at 18-19, 27.

⁷Mow., "Min Bog var for mig Knald eller Fald—siger Mogens Klitgaard"; Houmark, "Daarligt egnet til at møde Livet"; Klitgaard, "En Søndag for to Aar siden"; Jurnow, "Drømmen om noget andet" at 4, 6; Jurnow, *Den lyse vagabond* at 22-23. According to Jurnow, "Efterskrift" at 204, Klitgaard stopped a few miles south of Elsinore at Humlebæk, sneaked on to a stolen boat and sailed to Sweden. Klitgaard

Introduction

bondage that would last a decade.

His “rebellion,” as Klitgaard explained to an interviewer after the appearance of his first novel, was against “the whole thing,” though not actually against “society.” On the one hand he was driven by a “longing to go abroad” to see and experience; on the other hand, his life was “extremely depressing” because he simply lacked the money to buy himself “anything new” and get out and about like the other young people.⁸

The opening line of *God Tempers the Wind to the Shorn Lamb* (p. 3) may have declared that he sometimes believed that chance occurrences do not determine our lives, but his own life would probably have followed a radically different course had his brother Svend, instead of giving him a one-way train ticket to Rødvig, helped him realize his wish of becoming a clerical trainee at the Copenhagen office of the East Asiatic Company (Denmark’s premier agent of colonial exploitation) with prospects of being stationed under the Orient’s green palms and baking sun.⁹

About Klitgaard’s decade-long vagabondage, which began in 1922, something is known from the entries in his diary, which dates from 1926 and is archived at the Royal Library in Copenhagen. Between 1922 and 1932 Klitgaard lived in Sweden, Norway, Germany, France, and England, working as a seaman, smuggler, counterman, waiter, dishwasher, office worker, farm worker, and “agitation leader in a revolutionary organization,” though he never held a permanent job and worked from one day to the next. In between he also returned for various periods of time to Copenhagen, where, for example, in 1923 he worked at

did not mention this boat theft in the aforementioned autobiographical accounts, but the narrator recounts the incident in *God Tempers the Wind to the Shorn Lamb*, p. 5.

⁸Houmark, “Daarligt egnet til at møde Livet.”

⁹Journow, *Den lyse vagabond* at 27.

Introduction

a dairy, and sometimes lived on public assistance and ate at the people's kitchen, where his alter ego tells his tale to a stranger in the novel.¹⁰ At the end of 1923 he travelled to Sweden again, but returned to Copenhagen in the following years, where he worked as a delivery boy and also lived on public assistance again. In 1927-28 he was in Marseille, Nice, and Paris, washing dishes and pretending to be a globetrotter. By 1929 he was back in Copenhagen working at a billiard parlor and suffering from tuberculosis.¹¹

His "greatest experience" as a vagabond was to lie on his back by the roadside, "just staring up into the air, being completely free and independent, completely without responsibility, without obligations. Freer than the birds, which have a nest and mate and chicks and all that stuff" (p. 36). It was an attitude that reappeared in other novels too. Even in his posthumously published science-fiction novel written in 1932-33, Klitgaard called "lying by the roadside staring up at the blue sky with the drifting clouds . . . paradise on earth."¹²

The problem, however, was that Klitgaard soon discovered that gazing at the sky from a horizontal position was not possible that often—even for a vagabond. Not only did the danger of getting work lurk everywhere, but life as a vagabond became just as monotonous as work in a factory or office. That routine reached its absurdist high point when Klitgaard wound up running a bureaucratically organized cigarette smuggling business on the northern Norwegian-Swedish border—an activity that came to an end in November 1924 when the Swedish police arrested and

¹⁰Mow., "Min Bog var for mig Knald eller Fald—siger Mogens Klitgaard"; Klitgaard, "En Søndag for to Aar siden"; Ebbe Neergaard, *Mogens Klitgaard 5* (Copenhagen: Carit Andersen, 1941); Jaurnow, *Den lyse vagabond* at 23.

¹¹Jaurnow, *Den lyse vagabond* at 22-40.

¹²Mogens Klitgaard, *de sindssyges klode* 68 (Copenhagen: Carit Andersen, 1968).

Introduction

deported him to Copenhagen for being unable to support himself. He was just as unable to support himself in Denmark delivering groceries, but at least he was not subject to deportation and could obtain public assistance.¹³

Klitgaard's involuntary relapses into work—which the vagabond in *God Tempers the Wind to the Shorn Lamb* attributes to the lingering influence of his petty-bourgeois upbringing—points up how Klitgaard straddled the borders marking off vagabonds, hobos, and tramps. Because the term “vagabond,” as the standard U.S. legal dictionary observes, “became archaic” during the course of the twentieth century—“as vagrants won the right not to be forcibly removed from cities,” vagabonds in the 1980s and 1990s “came to be known as street people and homeless people, or the homeless”¹⁴—vagabondage must be seen in its historical context.

True to its roots in the Latin verb “to wander,” the word “vagabond” has come to mean one with a “carefree fondness for a roaming life.” In contrast, the late-nineteenth-century western American word “hobo” “sometimes implies a willingness to work, sometimes suggests travel by freight trains, and is often applied to a migratory worker who follows seasonal occupations.” Finally, a “tramp” “lives by wandering whether in search of transient work or engaged in begging or petty thievery.”¹⁵ Like the vagabondizing Klitgaard himself, the word “vagabond” in the *Oxford English Dictionary* partakes of all these dimen-

¹³Mogens Klitgaard, “Teddy-Smugleren,” in Mogens Klitgaard, *Hverdagens musik: Udvalgte noveller og skitser* at 27-34 (Sven Møller Kristensen ed.; n.p. [Copenhagen]: Fremad, 1989); Jaurnow, *Den lyse vagabond* at 30.

¹⁴*Black's Law Dictionary* 1547 (Bryan Garner ed.; St. Paul: West, 1999).

¹⁵*Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged* 2528, col. 1 (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1993) (s.v. “vagabond”).

Introduction

sions too: “itinerant beggar, idle loafer, or tramp; vagrant.”¹⁶

These definitions, subtle as they may be, neglect the socio-historical background and brutal suppression of vagabondage over the course of centuries. In Karl Marx’s searing indictment, the dissolution of feudal retainers and the violent expulsion from the land by expropriation turned the expellees whom the rising manufactures could not absorb into a proletariat. Those who were unable to accommodate the discipline required by the new conditions were massively transformed into “beggars, robbers, vagabonds, in part from inclination, in most cases by the force of circumstances. Hence at the end of the 15th and during the whole of the 16th century in all of Western Europe a bloody legislation against vagabondage.” These laws treated them as “‘voluntary’ criminals” and assumed that whether they kept on “working under the old conditions that no longer existed” depended on “their good will.”¹⁷

The barbarity of the English legislation is exemplified with all imaginable clarity in “An act for the punishing of vagabonds” from 1547, which declared that “idleness and vagabondry is the mother and root of all thefts, robberies, and all evil acts . . . and the multitude of people given thereto hath always, been here within this realm very great, and more in number . . . than in other regions, to the great impoverishment of the realm and danger of the King’s highness subjects” Because previous legislation had failed to repress them, “idle and vagabond persons being unprofitable members, or rather enemies of the common wealth, have been suffered to remain and increase, and yet so do, whom if they should be punished by death, whipping, imprison-

¹⁶*Oxford English Dictionary* 19:393, col. 1 (2d ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

¹⁷Karl Marx, *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Oekonomie*. Erster Band: Buch I: *Der Produktionsprozess des Kapitals* 719 (Hamburg: Meissner, 1867).

Introduction

ment, and with other corporal pain, it were not without their deserts, for the example of others . . . , yet if they could be brought to be made profitable, and do service, it were much to be wished and desired.” To this beneficial end the act then provided:

If any person shall bring to two justices of peace, any runagate servant, or any other which liveth idly and loiteringly . . . the said justices shall cause the said . . . vagabond, to be marked with an hot iron on the breast, with the mark of *V* . . . and adjudge him to be slave to the same person . . . to have to him . . . for two years after, who shall take the said slave, and give him bread, water, or small drink, and refuse meat, and cause him to work, by beating, chaining or otherwise . . . : and if such slave absent himself from his said master . . . by the space of fourteen days, then he shall be adjudged by two justices of peace to be marked on the forehead, or the ball of the cheek, with an hot iron, with the sign of an *S* and further shall be adjudged to be slave to his said master for ever: . . . and if the said slave shall run away the second time, he shall be adjudged a felon.¹⁸

Into the early nineteenth century the British Parliament insisted on the deterrent value of publicly whipping vagrants until their backs were bloody, although some justices of the peace had refused to carry out this “intolerable barbarity.”¹⁹ Klitgaard’s alter ego was imprisoned in England in the 1920s under the Vagrancy Act of 1824, which was still in effect,²⁰ and late into the twentieth century state penal codes in the United States contin-

¹⁸An act for the punishing of vagabonds, and for the relief of the poor and impotent persons, 1 Edward VI, ch. 3 (1547), in *The Statutes at Large, From the Thirty-Second Year of King Henry VIII. to the Seventh Year of King Edward VI. inclusive*, vol. V:246 (Danby Pickering ed.; Cambridge: Bentham, 1763).

¹⁹Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, *English Local Government: English Poor Law History, Part I: The Old Poor Law 373-83* (quote at 375) (London: Longmans, Green, 1927).

²⁰See below p. 141 (note to p. 84).

Introduction

ued to impose up to six months of hard labor on those doing precisely what Klitgaard had been doing in the 1920s—“wandering about and lodging in barns . . . and having no visible calling or business to maintain themselves” or “begging in public places or from house to house.”²¹ And even in Klitgaard’s Danish welfare state, hundreds of work-shy inmates were incarcerated in the 1920s and 1930s at Sundholm, Copenhagen’s workhouse (*Arbejdsanstalt*) for younger able-bodied persons with a tendency to vagabondage and alcohol abuse.²²

If Klitgaard’s vagabondage, which resulted as much from inclination as rebellion, was, from a socio-economic perspective, “voluntary,” his decision to leave the lumpenproletariat—which Marx defined as composed of vagabonds, criminals, and prostitutes²³—was forced on him by his poor health. A turning point in his life took place in 1929, when he got a job as a scorekeeper-pinsetter at a billiard parlor in Copenhagen, his 70- to 84-hour workweek being compensated at a mere 30 crowns. That same year his failing health led to his rejection as a soldier, and after having lived outdoors for a decade, he was even more vulnerable to the smoky indoor air. On New Year’s Eve 1932 he was admitted on an emergency basis to the tuberculosis ward of a Copenhagen municipal hospital; in March he was transferred to the tuberculosis sanatorium at Boserup near Roskilde, where he remained a patient for five months.²⁴

²¹Iowa Code, §§ 746.1.3-.4. and 746.15 (1975). The legislature repealed this provision in 1976.

²²For data and sources, see the annotation in Klitgaard, *There’s a Man Sitting on a Trolley* at 180-81.

²³Marx, *Das Kapital* at 630.

²⁴Mow., “Min Bog var for mig Knald eller Fald—siger Mogens Klitgaard” (70 hours); Klitgaard, “En Søndag for to Aar siden” (84 hours); Jaurnow, *Den lyse vagabond* at 40, 44, 57. According to Klitgaard’s own account, he began working as a scorekeeper in 1932, but his biographer insists that Klitgaard’s own diary notes show that his

Introduction

While there he became an avid and voracious reader, especially fascinated by the American novelists Dos Passos, Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald, in addition to Ilya Ehrenburg, Erich Kästner, B. Traven, Hans Kirk, and Martin Andersen Nexø.²⁵ During his stay at the sanatorium he also wrote his first book, the aforementioned socialist science-fiction novel (*The Globe of the Insane*) about a scientific expedition to another planet. Through a common friend in left-wing cultural circles, Klitgaard sent the manuscript to Hans Kirk, who in 1928 had published his first novel, *The Fishermen*, to critical acclaim, and was already a critic of note. On July 2, 1934, Kirk replied to the friend: “There’s no doubt that he has talent.” Although the book was “handsomely and sensibly” constructed, Kirk had two crucial objections: Klitgaard’s language was academically dry and stiff and his dialogs old-fashionedly bookish, and the psychological conflict too slight and uninteresting. The decisive point for Kirk was whether Klitgaard could train his psychological sense. In addition to vigilantly observing himself and others, he advised Klitgaard to “study modern psychology—Freud.”²⁶

Klitgaard respected Kirk’s opinion so highly that he put the manuscript away, never showed it to anyone, and never published it.²⁷ As its posthumous publication in 1968 revealed, Kirk and Klitgaard were right: though the novel was not uninteresting, its scarcely veiled indirect critique of conditions on Earth was

memory later failed him. Email from Leon Jurnow (June 1, 2001).

²⁵Poul Carit Andersen, “Mogens Klitgaard,” in Klitgaard, *de sindssyges klode* 5-28 at 13; Jurnow, “Drømmen om noget andet” at 8, 10.

²⁶Letter from Hans Kirk to Helge Andersen (July 2, 1934), in Mogens Klitgaard’s papers, Det kongelige Bibliotek (Copenhagen), NKS 2839, 2 (copy furnished by Leon Jurnow).

²⁷This account is based on the forthcoming biography of Klitgaard by Leon Jurnow, who has studied Klitgaard’s papers at the Royal Library in Copenhagen.

Introduction

tediously heavy-handed.²⁸ None of Klitgaard's published novels ever displayed such flaws.

After he was discharged from the sanatorium in 1933, Klitgaard's health was no longer robust enough to permit him to resume his vagabondage. But he returned to his old job as billiard scorekeeper,²⁹ where he met an interesting cross-section of the Copenhagen populace, who provided him with rich material for his first published novel. He also became involved in left-wing political organizations and the Danish Communist Party's Red Aid (which assisted communist refugees), of which he became secretary. Klitgaard, however, never joined the party itself because he wished to retain his independence.³⁰

How Klitgaard became a novelist is bound up with his vagabondage. According to accounts he gave in 1937 and 1938, on turning 30 in 1936 he "felt a beginning self-contempt"³¹ in taking a quick survey of the insignificant way his life had passed until then: "the course of events painted a picture of a weak person, a person who was seeking freedom, but who'd never been so far removed from freedom as now." But he "actually couldn't see where the mistake lay, on which occasion or occasions he should have behaved differently." Though people do do things which in their consequences turn out to have been wrong, "taking into account the situation, taking into account my nature, my upbringing, and my morality, I couldn't perceive the great, decisive mistake I must have committed." The fear and agitation un-

²⁸Klitgaard, *de sindssyges klode*. For a different view, see *Dansk litteraturhistorie*, vol. 7: *Demokrati og kulturkamp 1901-45*, at 436 (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1984) (chapter written by Ib Bondebjerg).

²⁹Mow., "Min Bog var for mig Knald eller Fald—siger Mogens Klitgaard"; Jurnow, "Efterskrift" at 206.

³⁰Carit Andersen, "Mogens Klitgaard" at 14; Jurnow, *Den lyse vagabond* at 59-63; telephone interviews with Inga Klitgaard and Leon Jurnow (May 25, 2001).

³¹Houmark, "Daarligt egnet til at møde Livet."

Introduction

leashed by his thirtieth birthday suddenly came over him as he was sitting in Kongens Nytorv—one of Copenhagen's most popular squares—one Sunday afternoon in the late summer of 1936. Klitgaard imagined that in “semi-elegant and awfully boring” Kongens Nytorv the frayed edges on his pants were the most conspicuous ones there to the “boring middle-class people whose sole ambition was to rise to a higher social level.” It was not the frayed edges per se he cared about, but only as an expression of the unfreedom in which he found himself at a time when he still suffered from the illusion that people who wandered the roads were free, although in fact no one was more dependent on his surroundings than a beggar. Sitting there, he recalled one morning in the 1920s when, penniless in Paris, he had been on the way to sign up for the Foreign Legion; by sheer coincidence he ran into a Dane who lent him 100 francs and persuaded him not to join. Realizing that his whole life had consisted of lucky and unlucky coincidences, he left Kongens Nytorv, went home, and began writing *There's a Man Sitting on a Trolley*³²—a satirical yet sympathetic account of the pathetically absurd efforts of a bankrupt Copenhagen dry-goods storekeeper to maintain his middle-class aspirations by working as a door-to-door bill collector during the Great Depression.

He began work on the novel in November 1936 and, despite the time-consuming demands of his job and having only enough money to buy 25 sheets of paper at a time, he was able to complete it by January 1937. After hand-delivering it to a publishing house, he went home, and impatiently waited for a response, especially since a turn for the worse in his health had forced him to work half-time at a wage that failed to cover even his modest needs. The manuscript was accepted and the book appeared in June 1937.³³

³²Klitgaard, “En Søndag for to Aar siden.”

³³Mow., “Min Bog var for mig Knald eller Fald—siger Mogens

Introduction

Publication of the book, Klitgaard told an interviewer, meant more to him than anyone imagined. Writing it had not been driven by “literary ambition”; rather it was “make or break” for his life.³⁴ Critics “unanimously praised”³⁵ the novel as a “brilliant debut.” It became “the book of the year,” receiving “the most laudatory reviews” of any debut novel in “many years” and going through four printings in three or four months.³⁶ Klitgaard was able to give notice at the billiard parlor. Soon he was asked to give readings and excerpts from the novel were read on Danish state radio.³⁷

The following year Klitgaard published *God Tempers the Wind to the Shorn Lamb*, which Hans Kirk’s review in the communist paper *Arbejderbladet* praised as an “artistic triumph.” Here Kirk drew out the dichotomous political consequences of the petty-bourgeois upbringing that forms the novel’s centerpiece: “Bourgeoisness or anarchism. Parish deacon or vagabond.” Kirk ultimately agreed with Klitgaard, whom he called “talented, funny and full of feeling, smart and controlled,” that, when petty-bourgeois morality bursts, people who, like the vagabond, had been trapped in it without developing a broader view of society, run the risk of ending up in emotional anarchy.³⁸

In a second review of *God Tempers the Wind to the Shorn*

Klitgaard”; Klitgaard, “En Søndag for to Aar siden”; Carit Andersen, “Mogens Klitgaard” at 17; Neergaard, *Mogens Klitgaard* at 8.

³⁴Mow., “Min Bog var for mig Knald eller Fald—siger Mogens Klitgaard.”

³⁵Mow., “Min Bog var for mig Knald eller Fald—siger Mogens Klitgaard.”

³⁶Carit Andersen, “Mogens Klitgaard” at 18, 5; Jaurnow, *Den lyse vagabond* at 77.

³⁷Jaurnow, *Den lyse vagabond* at 78-79, 83.

³⁸Hans Kirk, “Opgør med Borgerligheden,” in Hans Kirk, *Litteratur og tendens: Essays og artikler 107-11* at 107, 109 (Børge Houmann ed.; Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1974 [Oct. 30, 1938]).

Introduction

Lamb, which he praised for being “witty, elegant, and charming” and a “humoristic elegiac” treatment of the lifelong consequences of petty-bourgeois upbringing, Kirk went so far as to speculate that “if Klitgaard had seized the opportunity, he would have become the favorite of reactionary criticism.”³⁹ As a later literary historian formulated it: “If conservative, social-democratic, and communist critics of the ’30s could not agree on anything else, in any case they could all see that Mogens Klitgaard was an unusual author, who deserved much praise.”⁴⁰

In quick succession, Klitgaard in 1940 went on to publish two anti-heroic, social-historical novels focusing on the lives of ordinary everyday people. *Ballade paa Nytorv* (*Hullabaloo in Nytorv*), takes place in Copenhagen about the time of Frederik V’s death in 1766, while *De røde Fjer* (*The Red Feathers*), is set in 1807, at the time of the British bombardment of Copenhagen during the Napoleonic wars. Both novels required significant original research and were designed to shed light on contemporary Danish life.⁴¹ In 1941 he published *Elly Petersen*, the first novel ever commissioned to be read on Danish state radio (and which was made into a film in 1944), a story, inspired by his wife’s own life, about a young woman’s move from the provinces to Copenhagen to seek her luck.⁴² Klitgaard published his last novel in 1942, *Den guddommelige Hverdag* (*The Divine Weekday*), a kaleidoscopic, experimental novel with documentary montages of actual newspaper articles and advertisements

³⁹Hans Kirk, “Af Efteraarets Literatur,” *Kulturkampen* 5(1):14-15 at 15 (1939).

⁴⁰Hans Rømeling, “Den lille mand” i *30’ernes litteratur belyst gennem udvalgte værker* 100 (Copenhagen: Studenterrådet, 1974).

⁴¹Mogens Klitgaard, *De røde Fjer* (Copenhagen: Povl Branner, 1940); Mogens Klitgaard, *Ballade paa Nytorv* (Copenhagen: Povl Branner, 1940); Jaurnow, *Den lyse vagabond* at 100.

⁴²Mogens Klitgaard, *Elly Petersen* (Copenhagen: Carit Andersen, n.d. [1967?] [1941]); Jaurnow, *Den lyse vagabond* at 119-20, 124.

Introduction

about Copenhagen during the German occupation.⁴³

On August 29, 1943, the day on which Nazi Germany, which had occupied Denmark on April 9, 1940, dissolved the Danish government, Klitgaard, who had been in the limelight as former secretary of *Røde Hjælp* and a member of the board of directors of the newly formed authors organization *Forfatterforbundet*, was in North Zealand; instead of returning to Copenhagen, he fled to Sweden, thus avoiding the fate of other board members who were interned by the Gestapo. He lived there, joined half a year later by his wife and young son, until the liberation of Denmark in May 1945. His decade of vagabondage, however, had taken its toll: after a year's illness in Sweden, the recurrence of tuberculosis led to the removal of one of his kidneys; he died of tuberculosis of the heart on December 23, 1945, at the age of thirty-nine.⁴⁴

The death of such an energetic young author might prompt regret for all the novels that were lost to the world. But Klitgaard might never have written any more books anyway: on his return to Denmark he concluded that there were more important things to do than write or even read novels about a world that had been totally turned upside down and had silenced him. He imagined becoming a journalist travelling around Europe, meeting people, understanding their problems, and contributing to the discussion about reconstruction.⁴⁵

To be sure, in his obituary Hans Kirk expressed the belief that it was just as certain that Klitgaard would have returned to literature, "where he belonged. It was the vagabond in him that

⁴³Mogens Klitgaard, *Den guddommelige hverdag* (Copenhagen: Carit Andersen, 1975 [1942]).

⁴⁴"Noter," *Politiken*, Dec. 24, 1945 (attached to the obituary by Tom Kristensen, "Den lyse Vagabond, Mogens Klitgaard død"); Jaurnow, *Den lyse vagabond* at 154-55.

⁴⁵Neergaard, "Mogens Klitgaards Død"; Carit Andersen, "Mogens Klitgaard" at 26-27; Jaurnow, *Den lyse vagabond* at 152-54.

Introduction

longed for freedom after the war's long confinement." Kirk also suggested that Klitgaard, who "had never let go of his revolutionary Marxist convictions," had the talent, linguistic artistry, and breadth of social view to have written "a novel of European stature."⁴⁶

In his six years as a novelist during a very brief life, Mogens Klitgaard had in fact succeeded in writing six books that made him one of Denmark's most interesting social-critical realist and historical novelists of the interwar period. He has rightfully been called "[t]he central representative of the period's ironic-elegant everyday realism"⁴⁷ and "one of Danish realism's classics."⁴⁸

⁴⁶Kirk, "Mogens Klitgaard."

⁴⁷*Dansk litteraturhistorie*, vol. 7: *Demokrati og kulturkamp 1901-45*, at 434.

⁴⁸Sven Møller Kristensen, "Indledning," in Klitgaard, *Hverdagens musik: Udvalgte noveller og skitser 7-11* at 7.

A Note on the Text

The translation follows the text of the first edition: Mogens Klitgaard, *Gud mildner Luften for de klippede Faar* (Copenhagen: Povl Branner, 1938). The novel was also reissued in 1956 and 1969 by Fremad and Carit Andersen, respectively.¹

Although several of Klitgaard's novels have been translated into German, French, Swedish, and Dutch,² *There's a Man Sitting on a Trolley* was the first to appear in English. The only other translation of *God Tempers the Wind to the Shorn Lamb* was published in German in 1950.³

Because non-Danish readers will not be familiar with many of the novel's cultural, geographic, historical, and institutional references, annotations are provided at the back of the book. An asterisk after the name, word, or phrase indicates that it is annotated.

¹The latter, paperback edition contains many typographical errors. Mogens Klitgaard, *Gud mildner luften for de klippede får* (Copenhagen: Carit Andersen, n.d. [1969]).

²*Dansk skønlitterært forfatterleksikon*, vol. II: 1900-1950, at 125 (Svend Dahl ed.; Copenhagen: Pedersen, 1960).

³Mogens Klitgaard, *Gott mildert die Luft für die geschorenen Schafe* (tr. Emil Charlet; [East] Berlin: Lied der Zeit, 1950). This translation is marred by numerous absurd mistakes and omissions of whole sentences.

A Note on the Cover

The cover image, which includes the Danish title of the book, is one of the ornamental friezes that the painter Rasmus Larsen (1867-1950) painted in the lobby of the Danish parliament between 1918 and 1921. The public in Denmark viewed Larsen as wishing to console the taxpayers.¹ The frieze is especially relevant because, according to Inga Klitgaard, the author's widow, it was from the parliament building that he was acquainted with the saying.²

Bente Pedersen of the Library, Archives, and Information Department of the Danish Parliament provided a copy of the cover image, which is in the public domain.

¹T. Vogel-Jørgensen *Bevingede ord* 342 (5th ed.; Copenhagen: Gad, 1975).

²Telephone interview with Inga Klitgaard (September 12, 2001).

Acknowledgments

Gitte Gaarsvig Sørensen's insistence on intensively involving herself in every phase of the translation more than justifies the appearance of her name on the title page—despite the absence of any solid evidence of her non-cyberspatial existence. Her unfailingly prompt and unstintingly attentive responses to hundreds of queries remain a monument to an unwonted kind of solidarity, the survival of which would surely please Mogens Klitgaard.

Inga Klitgaard provided information about the text. **Leon Jaurnow** made available his forthcoming biography of Klitgaard and his extensive knowledge of the text of the novel and its background. **Morten Thing** (Roskilde University) and **Prof. Hans Hertel** (Institute for Nordic Philology at Copenhagen University) answered questions about obscure Danish terms and institutions. **Jacob Wraae Nielsen** furnished a copy of his thesis on Klitgaard. **Eva Nancke** (Arbejderbevægelsens Bibliotek og Arkiv) sent hard-to-find materials about Danish history. **Mary Rumsey** (University of Minnesota Law Library) provided copies of Swedish and Danish statutes. **Ulla Sweedler** explained several Swedish terms. **Bob Ramsey** (University of Iowa) scanned in the cover illustration.

At the last minute, **Marjorie Rahe** mercilessly expunged uncolloquialisms. **Kristin Solli** (University of Iowa) explained some Norwegian customs, but, more importantly, also generously checked the entire translation against the Danish original, while poet **Jan Weissmiller** expeditiously edited the manuscript.

The publication of this annotated translation of an important interwar social novel coincides with and is part of the celebration of the ninetieth birthday of **Elias Bredsdorff**, the patron saint of English-language Danish-literature studies.

GOD TEMPERS THE WIND TO THE SHORN LAMB

