



The Nobel Library of the Swedish Academy

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The Nobel Library was founded in 1901 to assist the Swedish Academy in its task of selecting the Nobel laureate in Literature. It is a modern research library with a private, autonomous status, established primarily for the Swedish Academy and its Nobel Committee, although its collections are also open to the public. It is housed in one of Stockholm's most beautiful 18th century buildings. Within its field it is the largest in Scandinavia, containing collections of more than 200,000 volumes, with works of literary criticism and modern literature as its speciality. Since its foundation the history of the library has been intimately linked with the Nobel Prize. Its sphere of literary interests has, however,

expanded considerably with the years. In this article an account will be given of the special criteria on which the Academy bases its work on the Nobel Prize and which apply to the library's acquisitions. It describes the storm of protest that greeted the first award for literature in 1901, when Tolstoy was rejected in favour of Sully Prudhomme, the interpretation of the wording "the most outstanding work in an ideal direction" in Nobel's will, Sartre's famous "refusal" in 1964 and the impossible task of covering the literature of the whole world. It concludes with some comments on Alfred Nobel's own philosophical and literary interests.

Introduction

The Nobel Library in Stockholm is a remarkable library, mainly perhaps for its special, if not to say impossible, assignment – to cover the literature of the world, or more specifically, that of the highest quality. (1)

The Library was founded in 1901 to assist the Swedish Academy in its task of selecting the Nobel laureate in Literature. In the words of Alfred Nobel's will, the Academy is to honour "the person who shall have produced in the field of literature the most outstanding work in an ideal direction". During the first twenty years of its existence the Library had at its disposal a large apartment in the headquarters of the Swedish Trades Union Congress on the square called *Norra Bantorget*. Since 1921 it has been housed in the Swedish Academy's premises in the Stock Exchange Building (see Figure 1), one of Stockholm's

most beautiful 18th century buildings, in the Old Town. (2)

In character, it is a modern research library, although private in the sense that it receives no state grants, but is financed entirely by the Nobel Foundation and the Swedish Academy. Neither the government nor any other authority has any say about its activities, a precondition for the library's autonomy. Within its field it is the largest library in Scandinavia with collections of more than 200,000 volumes. It specialises in works of literary criticism and modern literature in the original language.

The prime function of the Library is to serve the Swedish Academy and its Nobel Committee, which consists of three to five Academicians. Each year this Committee invites former laureates and a large number of literary institutions and experts all over the world to nominate candidates for the Nobel Prize. The Committee examines the year's candidates, draws up an an-

Figure: The Nobel Prize with the profile of its benefactor, Alfred Nobel

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notated list, commissions expert opinions and after study and deliberation prepares the report on which the Academy bases its final decision. The role of the library in this connection is to supply the required background material.

Since its foundation, the Nobel Library has been open to the public, in particular for those who need access to modern fiction or scholarly works for professional reasons – writers, critics and others involved with literature. It offers, in other words, a rich lode that can be mined by those interested in contemporary and emerging writers – and also those seeking gems in its collections of journals. The library is linked to the inter-urban loan system, and most of the foreign titles in its collections are registered in LIBRIS, the national library database. With the exception of reference works, rare books and periodicals, the library's collections may be borrowed on personal guarantee.

The fundamental task of the Library is to create representative collections of current literary works, and works of literary criticism and linguistics. The collections are not strictly limited to books needed for the work connected with the Nobel Prize. There is a well-stocked reference library and a substantial collection of classics. The main emphasis is, however, on contemporary literature, often in the original language but also in translation, mainly in English, French, German and Swedish.

Acquisition policy is governed to a great extent by the Academy's work on the Nobel Prize. All evaluations are based on the Academicians' own reading. This may be supplemented by the librarians' knowledge. The task is, therefore, not only to acquire the works currently required, but also those that may be called for within the next 10–15 years, which presupposes that the librarians are endowed with some form of literary "perfect pitch". It is important to identify young, promising writers early in their careers so that if, one day, they are nominated, their works will be represented. The collections increase by about 2,500 works every year. Assessment of literary value is based on reviews in specialized journals, interviews and analyses. The library subscribes to approximately 160 periodicals, the majority from abroad. Close contacts with publishers, bookshops, writers, scholars and talent scouts

Figure 1: The Stock Exchange Building, Stockholm, Sweden, home to the Swedish Academy and The Nobel Library.

throughout the world at large provide indispensable assistance in deciding what to acquire. Here, modern information technology must not be forgotten. It is not unusual for a book to be needed from Paris, Madrid, Reykjavik or Rome at short notice.

New tasks

In addition to the Nobel Prize, in recent years the Academy has also undertaken to award a number of new prizes and scholarships, which, *mutatis mutandis*, has extended the library's sphere of interest considerably. Among these more recent prizes, mention can be made of The Nordic Prize, established in connection with the Academy's second centenary in 1986.

One recurring task for the Chief Librarian is to produce, simultaneously with the announcement of the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature is, a bio-bibliographical presentation of the laureate. For a number of years, I have also taken it upon myself to publish a literary "sample" of one or two pages from the works of the most recent laureate on the Internet. (3)

One particularly stimulating aspect in the library's work consists of the meetings with the members of the Academy and with eminent guests from near and far, often well known foreign writers, scholars and literary critics. "Nobel week" marks the beginning of a particularly festive time of the year: on December 7 the laureate in literature gives a lecture, three days later the award ceremony takes place followed by the

grand annual banquet (Nobel died on December 10, 1896), and the Annual Grand Ceremony of the Academy is held on December 20.

“The most outstanding work in an ideal direction”

As has already been mentioned, Alfred Nobel’s will appointed the Swedish Academy to select and honour “the person who shall have produced in the field of literature the most outstanding work in an ideal direction”. The history leading up to this is interesting. To begin with, the Academy had expressed hesitation about the responsibility entrusted to it in the will, as its prime task, according to the statutes laid down by Gustaf III in 1786, was to foster the Swedish language and its literature. Awarding such an international prize was felt to be incompatible with the Academy’s role. And the question was raised of whether the Academy possessed “powers commensurate with the responsibility of scrutinising and assessing the annual literary production of the whole world or – if it come to that – merely of the European cultures”; was it really ready “to expose itself to all the distress, all the pressures, intrigues, disappointment and slander that would undoubtedly ensue from such a role”. Was it at all advisable to allow the Academy to transform itself “from a Swedish Academy to a cosmopolitan literary tribunal”? In his will in 1895, Nobel had, after all, stipulated that the five prizes “shall be annually distributed [---] to those who [---] shall have conferred the greatest benefit on mankind. [---] It is my express wish that in awarding the prizes no consideration whatever shall be given to the nationality of the candidates, but that the most worthy shall receive the prize, whether he be a Scandinavian or not.”

The discussion in the Academy and its reluctance are easily understood. Language and literature were strongly linked to national identity, and honours in both fields had traditionally been considered a strictly national concern. In deed and in disposition, Nobel was cosmopolitan, and what was new about his prize for literature was above all its *international* aim, then an almost shockingly unknown phenomenon incompatible with the Academy’s original role. The intervention of King Oscar II,

who tried to have the will declared invalid because it was “unpatriotic” did not simplify matters.

A storm of discontent

The strongest advocate of the prize within the Academy was Carl David af Wirsén, its Permanent Secretary at the turn of the century. Conservative on other issues, here Wirsén displayed admirable breadth of mind, even if beneath his eagerness lay the more immediate motive of wanting to divert public attention from current criticism of the Academy and its controversial secretary. “Should the Swedish Academy decline this role”, he argued, “the donation intended for the prize in literature will lapse in every way, and this will deprive the major continental writers of the prospect of enjoying the exceptional pre-eminence and exceptional rewards for their long and brilliant literary endeavours that Nobel intended. A storm will arise, a storm of discontent.” The Academy would now, and for the whole of its future, lay itself open to censure, were it merely “for the sake of convenience to eschew a position of influence in the literature of the world.” Perhaps the most cogent argument in his advocacy was his claim that “without real knowledge of what is outstanding in foreign literature, the Academy cannot and should not sit in judgement over the literature of its own country”.

The Library issue

Wirsén was also far-sighted enough to raise the issue of a library. He emphasised that if the Academy were to be able to “keep up with, compare and judge what was happening in world literature” it would need access to a library that was well provided with books and periodicals. The Library’s first head librarian, Professor Karl Warburg, was therefore empowered in 1888 to travel abroad to purchase books and establish contacts with publishers, booksellers and antiquarian bookshops, in Germany in particular, but also in London, Paris, Avignon, Barcelona, Zagreb, Belgrade and Budapest. He paid visits to the major scholarly libraries in Copenhagen, Berlin, Munich, Leipzig, Paris, Venice and Leiden. It was largely due to these initiatives – not least to Warburg’s feeling

for books and his organisational abilities – that the library was able to evolve into the significant instrument it was soon to become in the routines associated with the choice of the laureate.

Some of the reactions and events surrounding two controversial awards of the Nobel Prize, to Sully Prudhomme in 1901 and to Jean-Paul Sartre in 1964, deserve a brief presentation here.

Sully Prudhomme versus Tolstoy

When the first award was made in 1901, at the Academy of Music, in his speech Wirsén stated that “many excellent proposals” had been received. This was not completely true, because when the time allotted for nominations ended on February 1, only 25 proposals had been submitted, most of them and the most significant from the French Academy. No authors writing in English, Scandinavian languages or Russian had been nominated. In any event, the final choice was between two French writers, the Provençal Frédéric Mistral and Sully Prudhomme, a member of the French Academy. The nomination of the latter was supported by many of his fellow academicians, and Wirsén had hopes that “with such weighty commendation” the choice would “at least in a very large part of the civilised world be greeted with justifiable acclaim”. The motivation for the award, worded rather ponderously, read: “in special recognition of his poetic composition, which gives evidence of lofty idealism, artistic perfection and a rare combination of the qualities of both heart and intellect”. (4)

The reaction was in no way what had been expected. The Academy’s choice gave rise to a storm of protests and bitterness. The *Berliner Tageblatt* commented that it would have been preferable “to see the prize intended to crown the greatest of contemporary writers awarded to a mightier genius instead, such as Tolstoy.” Cultural Sweden experienced the choice as “a national insult”. An address to Tolstoy was signed by 42 Swedish writers, critics and artists which maintained that it was he, “the revered patriarch of contemporary literature”, who should have been the first to be considered when awarding the prize for the first time. This address, which was published in the press without delay, also contained scathing criticism

Figure 2: Tolstoy’s February 4, 1902 letter to Oscar Levertin.

of the Academy: “We feel even the more obliged to address these words to you, because we consider that the institution which decides on the award of this prize, as a result of its current composition, expresses the opinion of neither artists nor the general public. Other countries must not be allowed to form the opinion that the art that embodies freedom of thought and freedom of creativity is not esteemed as superior and above all other things enduring, even by those of us who live in such a remote country.” It comes as no surprise to find that those who signed this protest included Verner von Heidenstam, Selma Lagerlöf, August Strindberg, Oscar Levertin, Hjalmar Söderberg, Carl Larsson, Ellen Key, Albert Engström, Anders Zorn (Gierow 1965).

It is a matter of history that Tolstoy never received the Nobel Prize for literature, something that has long been considered one of the Academy’s greatest sins of omission. The reasons adduced by the Academy for not selecting Tolstoy were his anarchism, hostility to culture, and his criticism of state, church and ownership. It so

happens as well that Tolstoy, in an article published in *Stockholms Dagblad* on October 16 1897, had already made it clear that he had no wish to be considered as a potential laureate. Why, then, thrust upon him a prize and money that he did not want? This article naturally added to the Academicians' irresolution. Tolstoy took the issue up once more in a letter to Oscar Levertin on February 4, 1902 (see facsimile in Figure 2), in which he responded to the address (which he had read in French):

Chers et honorés confrères,

J'ai été très content de ce que le prix Nobel ne m'a pas été décerné. Primo, cela m'a délié d'un grand embarras – celui de disposer de cet argent qui, comme l'argent en général, d'après ma conviction ne peut produire que du mal et, secondo, cela m'a procuré l'honneur et le grand plaisir de recevoir l'expression de sentiments sympathiques de la part de tant de gens hautement estimés quoique personnellement inconnus.

Recevez, chers confrères, l'assurance de ma sincère reconnaissance ainsi que de mes meilleurs sentiments.

Leon Tolstoy

An edition of the collected works of Tolstoy in Russian is to be found in Alfred Nobel's private library, which contains a large number of classics. (5) The author of *War and Peace* was one of his favourite writers.

Since 1901, the Academy and the Nobel Library have become a great deal more experienced and methodical in awarding the prize. While the Academy may have relied at the beginning of the century on the nominations submitted by the established foreign academies, today it acts with considerably greater independence.

Let us return for a moment to Nobel's will in which was stipulated that the award was to go to "the person who shall have produced in the field of literature the most outstanding work in an ideal direction". The members of the Academy have long agreed that "the most outstanding" should be taken to mean of exceptionally high quality. There is no disagreement either that this should be the most important criterion in making the assessment. But what did Nobel mean by "in an ideal direction"? This has not always been self-evident, and interpretations have varied with the years. How-

ever, in his philological monograph, *Topping Shakespeare*, the Academy's former Permanent Secretary, Professor Sture Allén, has established that Nobel's "ideal" is a classifying adjective meaning "referring to an ideal", and that the expression *in an ideal direction* consequently means "in a direction towards an ideal". Allén adds: "The sphere of the ideal is in turn indicated by the fundamental criterion for all Nobel Prizes, namely that they are to be awarded to those who "shall have conferred the greatest benefit on mankind." However, Wirsén's conservative academy had read the will in the light of nineteenth century idealistic aesthetic beliefs, advocated by the Swedish philosopher Boström and by Vischer in Germany (Allén 1997). This was a classicizing aesthetic, which could easily turn into support for the traditional ethical values represented by the crown, the altar and the sword (Espmark 1991).

For Strindberg, Argus-eyed, it soon became clear, however, that Wirsén's academy had "simplified" idealist to idealistic, which, he remarks, is "something else", and that the omnipotent secretary had transgressed the law and awarded the prize "in breach of statute and the will" (Allén 1997). Strindberg did not hesitate either to abuse the Academy and its permanent secretary as "idealist strumpets".

Nobel's private correspondence, his literary drafts and "philosophical letters" (6) make it clear that he adopted a highly critical, often humorously mocking stance to the sacrosanct systems represented by the church, monarchy and other social institutions imposed from above.

We must assume that in using "in an ideal direction" he deliberately sought a wording that could not be circumscribed by narrow, coetaneous definitions or interpretations that were incompatible with the general spirit of his will or its fundamental intentions. This means that it is relatively evident what *cannot* be considered compatible with the will's spirit and intentions. (7) It is also evident that the difference between Nobel's and Wirsén's idealism, insofar as it is reflected in their outlook on life, could hardly have been greater. If Nobel was a radical idealist, Wirsén was a conservative one.

Nobel possessed a Swedish dictionary (Dalin, *Svensk handordbok*, 1868) which defines the noun *ideal* as "the concept of perfection that surpasses

all experience” and accordingly defines the adjective *idealisk* (ideal in English) as “that which belongs to or has the characteristics of the ideal”, “that merely exists in thought or conception, imagined.”

Yet another indication of what Nobel intended by literature “in an ideal direction” can be found in the authors he himself valued, and who were well represented in his library. As a young man he read Pushkin, Shelley and Byron, “his favourite poet”, and an echo of this utopian or romantic idealism can be found in the long poem Nobel wrote in his youth called *You say I am a Riddle*. He knew and admired Victor Hugo, the pacifist and idealist, who had such strong sympathies with the outcasts of society. On Victor Hugo’s 83rd birthday, February 22, 1885, Nobel sent a telegram to “the Master,” with hopes for a long life so that he could continue to “enchant the world and propagate his great ideas about universal love of mankind.” (See Figure 3 for a facsimile.)

*Victor Hugo
Paris*

*Vive et vive de longues années le grand Maître pour
charmer le monde et propager ses grandes idées de
charité universelle*

A Nobel

The Swedish writer he rated most highly was Viktor Rydberg, the liberal humanist, whose work he described as “bearing witness to nobility of soul and comeliness of form”. In one of his letters he characterized himself facetiously with the words “I am a misanthrope, but exceedingly benevolent; I am very cranky, and a super-idealist, an untalented Rydberg, I can digest philosophy better than food.” He does not, however, appear to have shared Rydberg’s metaphysical idealism, his admiration for Kant

or his profound scepticism about technological development. Among Norwegian writers he preferred Ibsen and Bjørnson (Nobel Prize 1903). One of his favourite Danish writers was the storyteller H.C. Andersen.

Professor Kjell Espmark, the chairman of the Nobel Committee, has made a close study of the principles underlying the selection of the laureates which reveals a series of criteria that were predominant during discussions of the prize at different times. “Indeed, the history of the Literature Prize is in some way a series of attempts to interpret an imprecisely worded will,” writes Espmark (1991). A schematized presentation of these underlying criteria would look roughly as follows:

- The first decade – “a lofty and sound idealism” (which excluded both naturalism and symbolism).
- World War I – “literary neutralism” (which favoured Scandinavian writers).
- The 1920s – “the great style” (based on the Goethean ideal).
- The 1930s – a literature of universal interest (as opposed to national preoccupations).
- The post-war period – “the innovators” or “the pioneers”.
- Recent decades – “a pragmatic attitude”. The true purpose of the prize, it was said, was to “direct attention to an *œuvre* or a literary genre that has not received sufficient attention.”

However, a study of the Academy’s official motivations reveals that arguments of a somewhat different nature recur – sometimes there are references to a certain work, not infrequently to the writer’s native country or continent, and in recent years the writer’s portrayal of the conditions and vulnerability of mankind (Allén 1997).

Sartre 1964

In 1996, to commemorate the centenary of Nobel’s death, I had the opportunity to organize an exhibition at the Centre Culturel Suédois in Paris on the theme of “Alfred Nobel and literature”. One exhibit in particular aroused a great deal of curiosity in Paris: Sartre’s letter of refusal. In 1964, Sartre was awarded the prize for literature with the motivation “for his work which, rich in ideas and filled with the spirit of freedom and

Figure 3: Nobel’s birthday telegram to Victor Hugo, February 22, 1895.

Figure 4: J.P. Sartre's letter to the Swedish Academy, October 14, 1964.

the quest for truth, has exerted a far-reaching influence in our age." Sartre, as we know, declined to receive the prize. It is also common knowledge that Sartre's fixedness of principle and the integrity he displayed were greeted with respect and understanding by many of his fellow writers and intellectuals around the world. What is less well known is the wording of the letter that he wrote to the Swedish Academy just *before* the prize was announced (see Figure 4 for a facsimile):

*J P Sartre
222 Bd Raspail
Paris 14 octobre*

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*Monsieur le Secrétaire
D'après certaines informations dont j'ai eu
connaissance aujourd'hui, j'aurais, cette année,
quelques chances d'obtenir le Prix Nobel. Bien qu'il
soit présomptueux de décider d'un vote avant qu'il ait
eu lieu, je prends à l'instant la liberté de vous écrire
pour dissiper ou éviter un malentendu. Je vous assure
d'abord, Monsieur le Secrétaire, de ma profonde
estime pour l'Académie Suédoise et pour le prix dont*

*elle a honoré tant d'écrivains. Toutefois, pour des
raisons qui me sont personnelles et pour d'autres, plus
objectives, qu'il n'y a pas lieu de développer ici, je
désire ne pas figurer sur la liste des lauréats possibles
et je ne peux ni ne veux – ni en 1964 ni plus tard –
accepter cette distinction honorifique.*

*Je vous prie, Monsieur le Secrétaire d'accepter mes
excuses et de croire à ma très haute considération.*

J P Sartre

The Academy's response, which came at the prize ceremony on December 10, 1964, also evinces integrity. It said briefly and concisely: "The Laureate has informed us that he does not wish to receive this Prize, but the fact that he has declined the distinction of course does not at all alter the validity of the award."

The literature of the whole world

In the 1980s and 1990s we notice an ambition by the Academy to extend its area of scrutiny to new literary regions, a desire to cover "the literature of the whole world". This is reflected in the laureates of the last few decades: Gabriel García Márquez (Colombia), Octavio Paz (Mexico), Wole Soyinka (Nigeria), Naguib Mahfouz (Egypt), Nadine Gordimer (South Africa), Derek Walcott (The West Indies), Kenzaburo Oe (Japan), José Saramago (Portugal).

The Nobel Committee's work on the prize and the criteria on which it bases its assessment are also reflected in different ways in the library's acquisitions. When fortune smiles, the library's purchases of prizeworthy literature are one step ahead of the committee's needs, in other cases the library tries to follow as close on its heels as possible.

The proceedings of the Academy are subject to secrecy for a period of fifty years, and only at the end of that time do they become available to scholars. All six of the library's employees have signed an agreement not to disclose anything about the affairs of the Academy. It should perhaps be pointed out that we, the librarians, play a modest, subordinate role in this otherwise prestigious context. We can pride ourselves as professionals on discharging our impossible task as quickly and discreetly as possible.

At the moment, preparations are being made under the aegis of the Nobel Foundation and the

Figure 5: Kierkegaard's *Stadier par Livets vei* with Nobel's underlining.

Figure 6: Maupassant's *Le bonheur* as annotated by Alfred Nobel.

newly established Nobel Museum for an extensive jubilee exhibition in 2001, in connection with the centenary of the award of the first Nobel Prize. For this occasion, I have undertaken to present an account of Alfred Nobel's philosophical and literary interests. (8)

The humanities section of Nobel's library contains a number of classical works in the history of nineteenth century thought with the emphasis on the theory of evolution, liberalism and faith in progress. Among these are Buckle, *History of Civilization in England*; Comte, *Philosophie positiviste*; Darwin, *The Origin of Species*; Haeckel, *Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte*; Lewes, *History of Philosophy from Thales to Comte*; Schwegler, *Geschichte der Philosophie*; Spencer, *First Principles*. In several of these books we find sections that have been marked discreetly in pencil in the margin. Even if Nobel embraced the idea of progress, he was not unfamiliar with the dark concealed face of development. Bitter personal experiences had made him misanthropic. In one letter he describes himself as "an instrument of brooding reflection, alone in the world, burdened by thoughts heavier than could be imagined". His library also contains works by Schopenhauer, the great pessimist, and the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard, his soul mate where it came to loneliness, doubt and melancholy. In *Stadier paa Livets vei* ("Stages on Life's Way") Nobel has underlined the following passage:

Alas, why did 9 Months in my Mother's Womb suffice to make an old Man of me, alas why was I not swaddled in Joy, why was I born not only in Pain but for Pain, why did my eyes open not to Happiness but only to gaze in to the Realm of Sighs and to be unable to deliver myself from it! (9) (See facsimile in Figure 5)

There is a closely related passage, imbued with existential pessimism and a feeling of universal loneliness, that he has marked in Maupassant's short story *Le bonheur*, intensified by a "bien" in the margin:

Il semble que tout soit près de finir, l'existence et l'univers. On perçoit brusquement l'affreuse misère de la vie, l'isolement de tous, le néant de tout, et la noire solitude du cœur qui berce et se trompe lui-même par des rêves jusqu'à la mort. (Figure 6 is the facsimile)

But at times, at least, he had also found ways and means of keeping his heavy thought at bay. "A recluse without books and ink is a dead man before he dies", he noted. To remedy his feelings of loneliness during his youth in St. Petersburg, he read and wrote incessantly, a habit that continued all his life. If his real home was his work, books and writing came second. During the last year of his life he finished a tragedy, *Nemesis*, which was printed a few weeks after his death in a hundred copies, of which all but three were destroyed by order of his family. When he died, in 1896, he left behind an extensive private correspondence and a library of more than a thousand books: by Shakespeare, Voltaire, Goethe and the best English, French, German, Russian and Scandinavian writers of the 20th century, all in the original languages. It is in the wording of the prizes for peace and literature that Nobel's humanistic ideals manifest themselves most strongly. If technological inventions and scientific achievements were to enable humanity to progress, then, he seems to have believed, good literature was to play a dynamic, linking role "in

an ideal direction”.

Notes

1. Of the other institutions involved in the award of the Nobel Prize, only The Peace Prize at the Norwegian Nobel Institute in Oslo has a special library.
2. The Electronic Nobel Museum (ENM) offers a Virtual Tour of the Swedish Academy and the Nobel Library. <http://www.nobel.se/qtvr/svaka/>
3. These literary “samples”, in the original language and an English translation, can be found at The Electronic Nobel Museum: <http://www.nobel.se/laureates/literature-1995> (1996, 1997 etc.)
4. Motivations, Press Releases, Bio-bibliographies, Nobel Lectures etc. The Electronic Nobel Museum. <http://www.nobel.se/laureates/literature-1998.html>.
5. Nobel’s private library is now in the care of the Nobel Museum in Karlskoga in Sweden. A list of the titles can be found on The Electronic Museum: Erlandsson, Å., Alfred Nobel’s Private Library <http://www.nobel.se/nobels-library/index.html>.
6. The Alfred Nobel archive, Riksarkivet (The National Archives), Stockholm.
7. For example literature that fosters nationalism, violence, political or religious fanaticism. Apparently, Nobel also felt distaste for naturalism: “Zola sat on a pile of dung and spread a terrible stench”, he joked. However, he did appreciate the realism and psychological dissection in *Madame Bovary* by Flaubert and Maupassant’s sophisticated short stories. Flaubert’s and Maupassant’s pacificism certainly added to his appreciation of their work. They both depict the absurd heroism and terrors of war, as pointed out by Nobel’s friend and correspondent Bertha von Suttner in *Die Waffen nieder!* (1889).
8. An early version can be found at The Electronic Museum: Erlandsson, Å., Alfred Nobel and Literature. <http://www.nobel.se/alfred/index.html>.

9. In Danish: *Ak! hvorfor var 9 Maanader i Moders-Liv nok til at gjøre mig til et gammelt Menneske, ak! hvorfor svøbtes jeg ikke i Glæde, hvorfor blev jeg født ikke blot med Smerte men til Smerte, hvorfor aabnedes mit Øie ikke for det Lykkelige, men kun til at skue ind i hiint Sukkenes Rige, og til ikke at kunne løsrive mig derfra!*

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