

ABSTRACT

Per Pippin Aspaas

2nd Nordic Conference in Eighteenth-Century Studies

Uppsala 12 – 14 October 2017

A Gary Larson of the 1750s? Niels Krog Bredal's Dreamworld

In March 1753, a curious Latin text, titled “ONEIPO-KOΣMOΣ. Id est Mundus in Somnio, Poëma Philosophico-Heroicum” [The Dreamworld, a Philosophical-Heroic Poem] appeared in the prestigious Copenhagen weekly, *Nye Tidender om Lærde og Curieuse Sager*. In a mixture of dactylic hexameters and prose, it deals with a world that the poet has “visited” during his sleep, or rather, in a state of ecstasis, when he was neither asleep nor awake. The hero of the ecstasis suddenly finds himself in a world whose inhabitants speak an unintelligible language. Despite initial complications, he manages to befriend them and study their society as well as the natural history of their planet. Upon waking up, the author interprets his own dream as proof that humanity is not the only lifeform to have souls.

The author, Niels Krog Bredal, was only 19 at the time; the satiric “Dreamworld” was his debut. Replete with irony and self-mockery, it may not be taken too seriously. Nevertheless, like the cartoons of Gary Larson, Bredal’s “Dreamworld” contains grotesque elements that are clearly meant not only to evoke laughter, but also to undermine established ways of thinking about, and dealing with, our fellow beings. It may therefore merit a place in the history of philosophical debates on the superiority of humankind over other species. In my presentation, I will first discuss the “Dream Genre” in early modern literature, then present the contents of Bredal’s text in some detail, and finally analyze it as an example of the “Conte Philosophique”, a genre made popular by the likes of Voltaire.

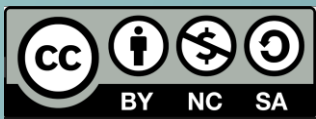
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A Gary Larson of the 1750s? Niels Krog Bredal's Dreamworld

Per Pippin Aspaas
University of Tromsø – The Arctic University of Norway
per.pippin.aspaas@uit.no

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Aims and scope of this presentation

- Introduce Niels Krog Bredal
- His debut poem, the Oneiro-Kosmos («Dreamworld»)
- Discuss models / inspirations / aspirations
- Corollaries :
 - 1) The multilingual & multidisciplinary challenge
 - 2) Latin poetry a vehicle for Enlightenment ideology?
 - 3) Dream framework & fantasy softens serious critique?

Niels Krog Bredal (1733 – 1778)

- Born in Trondheim
- Studies in Copenhagen
- Literary debut 1753
- Cand. iur. 1755
- Playwright career late 1750s
- Mayor in Trondheim 1761–70
- Playwright career in Copenh. 1770s
- Scandal «Tronfølgjen i Sidon» 1771
- Initiates *Det Norske Selskab* 1772
- Promotes young Norwegian authors in Copenhagen
- Dies 1778



Image credits: Municipal Archives of Trondheim

Niels Krog Bredal (1733 – 1778)

Not well known as a Latin poet

Not well known as a 'savant'

*Not well known as a promoter
of Enlightenment ideology*

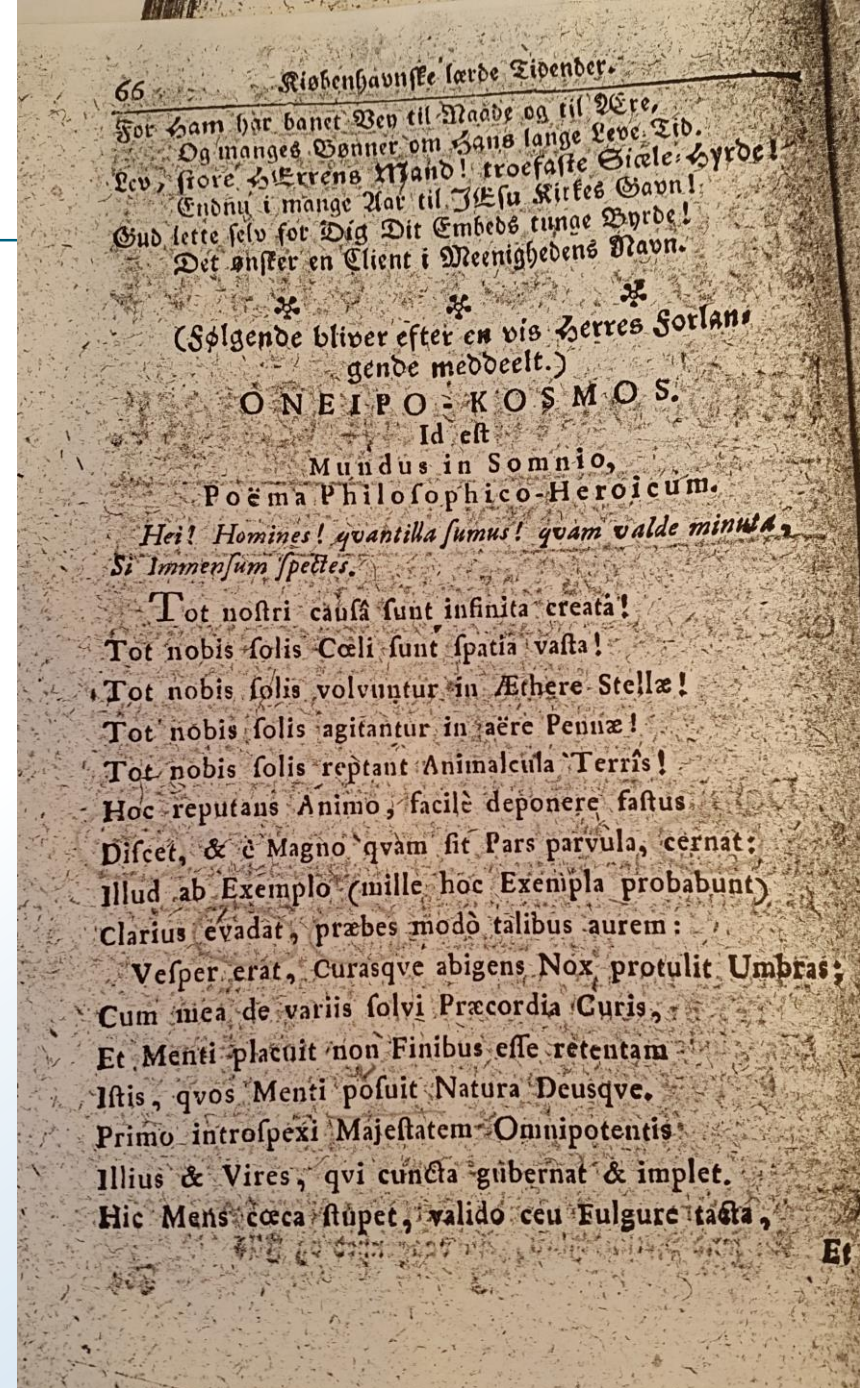


- 1750s
- 1761–70
- 1770s
- 1771

Oneiro-Kosmos (The Dreamworld)

«Woe! Humans! How small we are!
How utterly minuscule, if you consider
the whole»

*Hei! Homines! quantilla sumus! quam
valde minuta, si immensum spectes.*



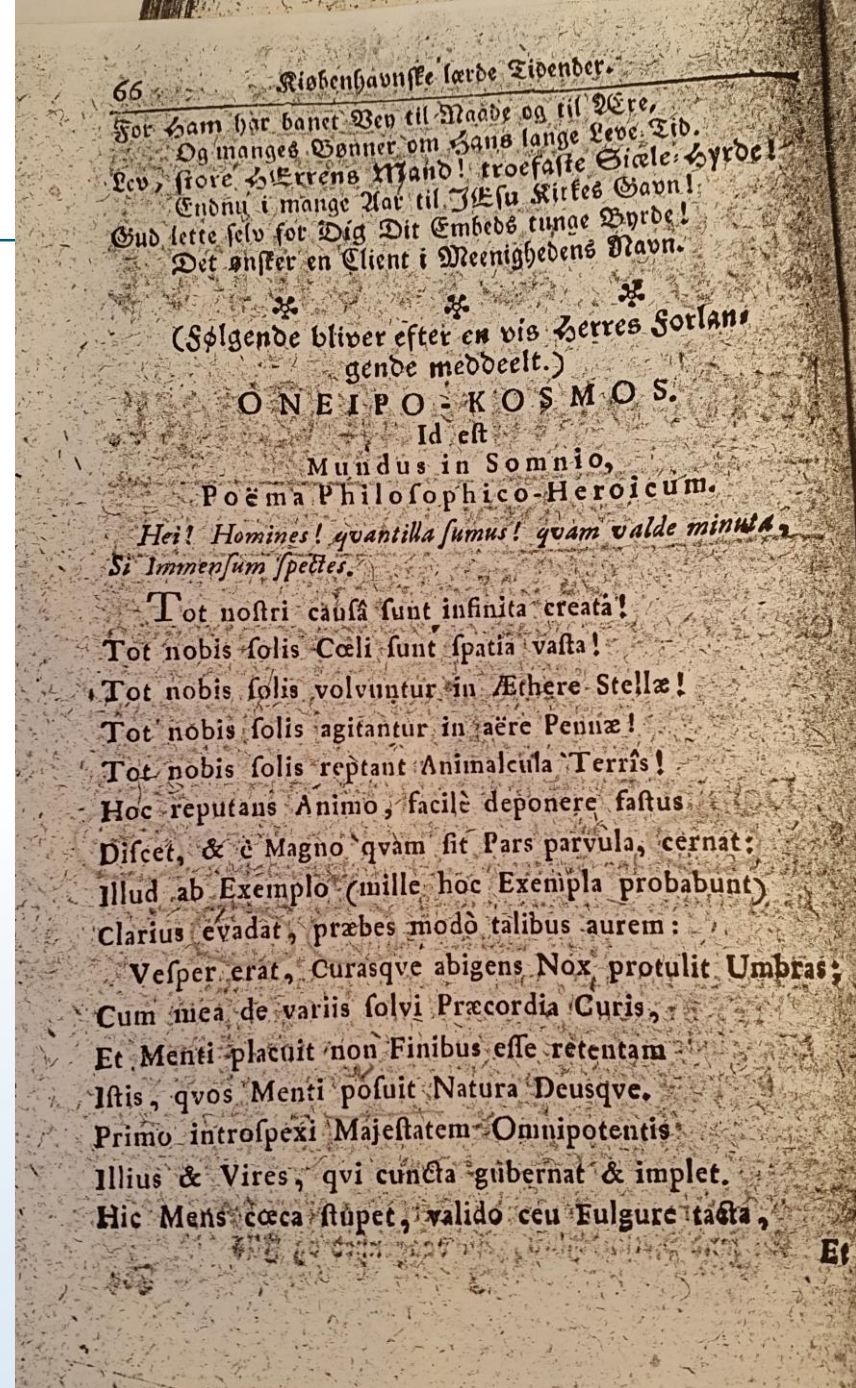
Oneiro-Kosmos (The Dreamworld)

«Woe! Humans! How small we are!
How utterly minuscule, if you consider
the whole»

*Hei! Homines! quantilla sumus! quam
valde minuta, si immensum spectes.*

«O! Human! You who falsely believed that
everything was created for your sake,
Get rid of that Hybris! For, if you think of
the whole,
You can hardly be considered as a spot,
not even an insect»

*O! Homo! qui vanè tibi cuncta creata putabas,
Pone istos Fastus; nam si immenso referaris,
Vix potes ut Punctum, vix Insectum reputari.*



Models for the Oneiro-Kosmos (Dreamworld)

- Latin language, travels to a foreign world, irony = Ludvig Holberg
- Oneiric Framework = Neo-Latin Menippean satires (Justus Lipsius et al.)
- Great and small beings = Jonathan Swift
- Reflections on the insignificance of man, challenging theological maxims

= Voltaire

Models for the Oneiro-Kosmos (Dreamworld)

First published March 1752

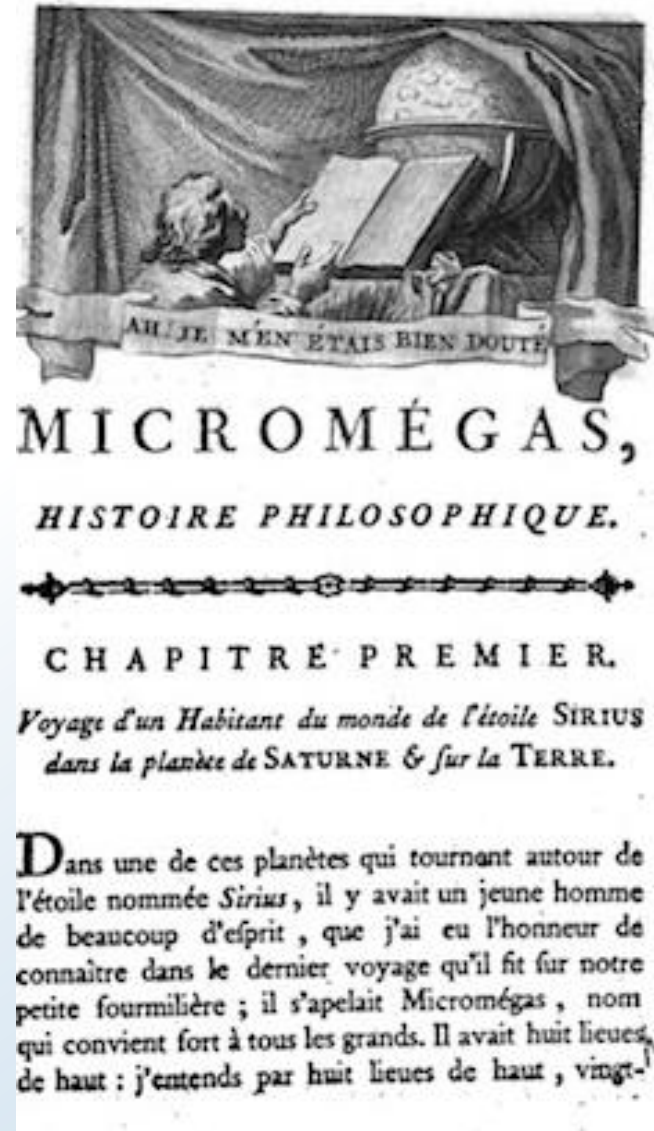
One of Voltaire's main works

Contains play on great and small beings

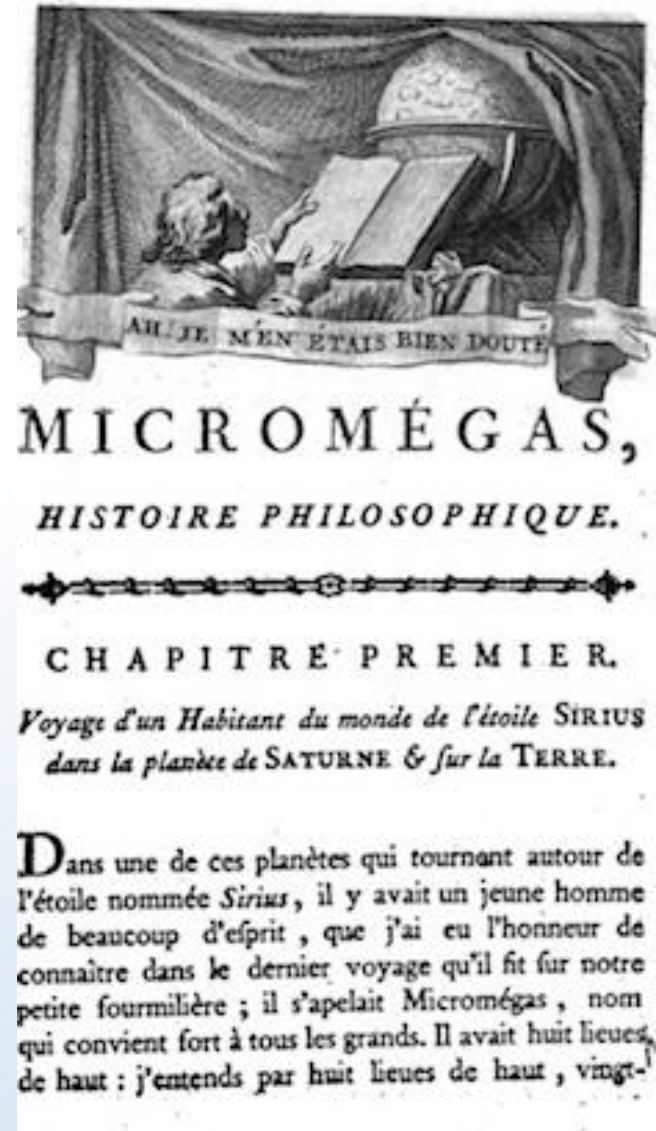
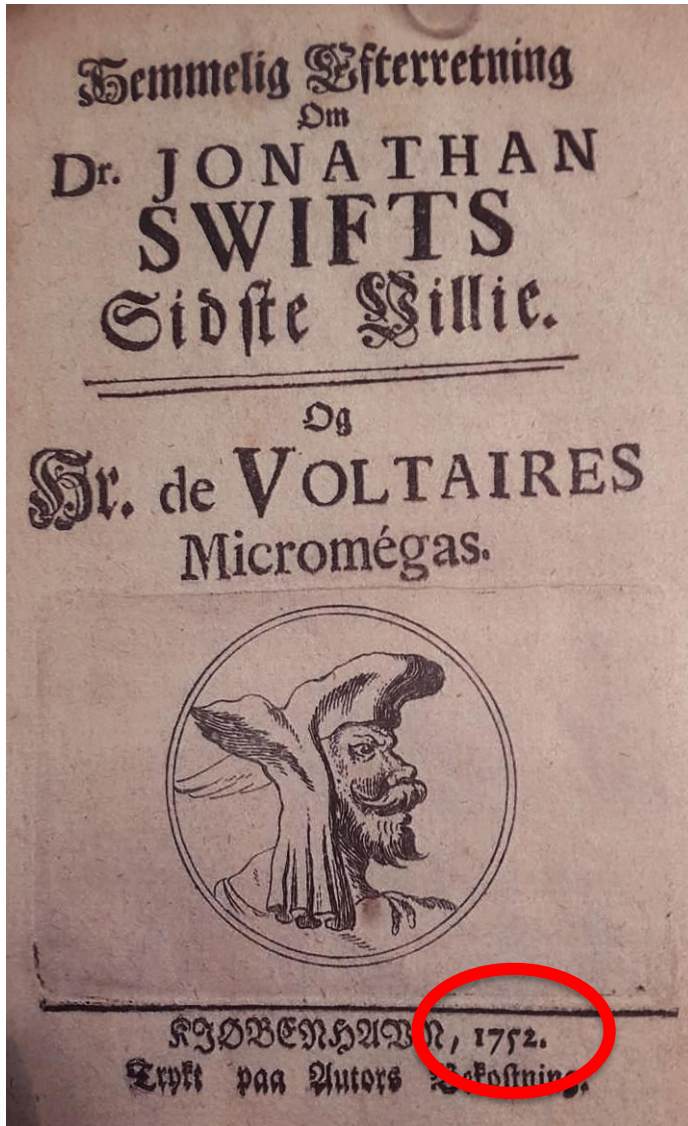
Giants from space visit Earth; our civilization and hybris becomes a laughing stock

Overall message seemingly similar to Bredal's «how small we are, how utterly minuscule...»

IMAGE CREDIT: BLOGPOST ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE 20TH VOL. OF THE *ŒUVRES COMPLÈTES DE VOLTAIRE* (OXFORD, 2017)

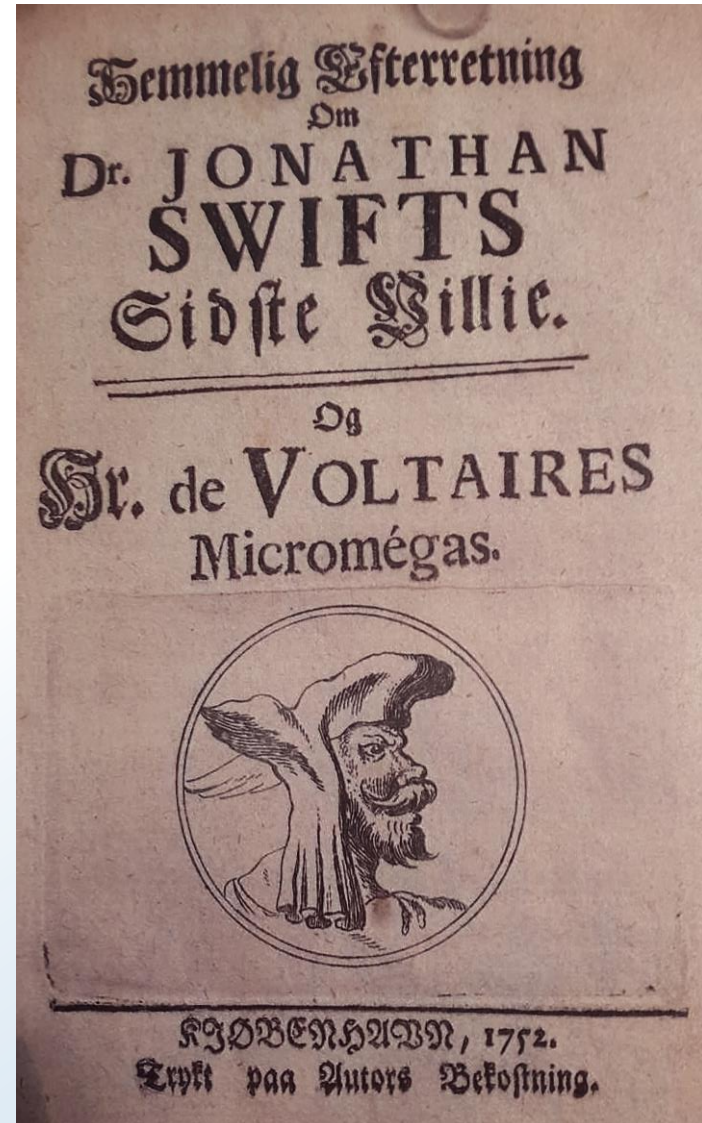


Models for the Oneiro-Kosmos (Dreamworld)



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- Danish translation of Micromégas
- Anonymous publ. by Michael Fosie
- Preface includes phrases like:



Models for the Oneiro-Kosmos (Dreamworld)

- Danish translation of Micromégas
- Anonymous publ. by Michael Fosie
- Preface includes phrases like:
 - «Han [Voltaire] søger at bestride de farligste Tilbøyeligheder, som findes hos Menniskene, som ere en fordervet Egenkierlighed, en barenagtig Indbildning, et hovmodigt Sind. Vi ophøye os over alle andre Skabninger, og vi troe, at al Ting, endog de allerlængst fraværende Stierne ere skabte allene for at forlyste os. Vi gjøre os til af vor Fornuft, der er sat inden saa snevre Grendser, ligesom vi havde opdaget Naturens forborgneste Hemmeligheder. Vi meene, at vi veed alle Ting, men vi lære her [i Micromégas], at just derved viise vi, at vi ey veed det nødvendigste, som er at kiende os selv.»
- Fosie even quotes Plautus: «*Hui! Homunculi, quanti estis!*»

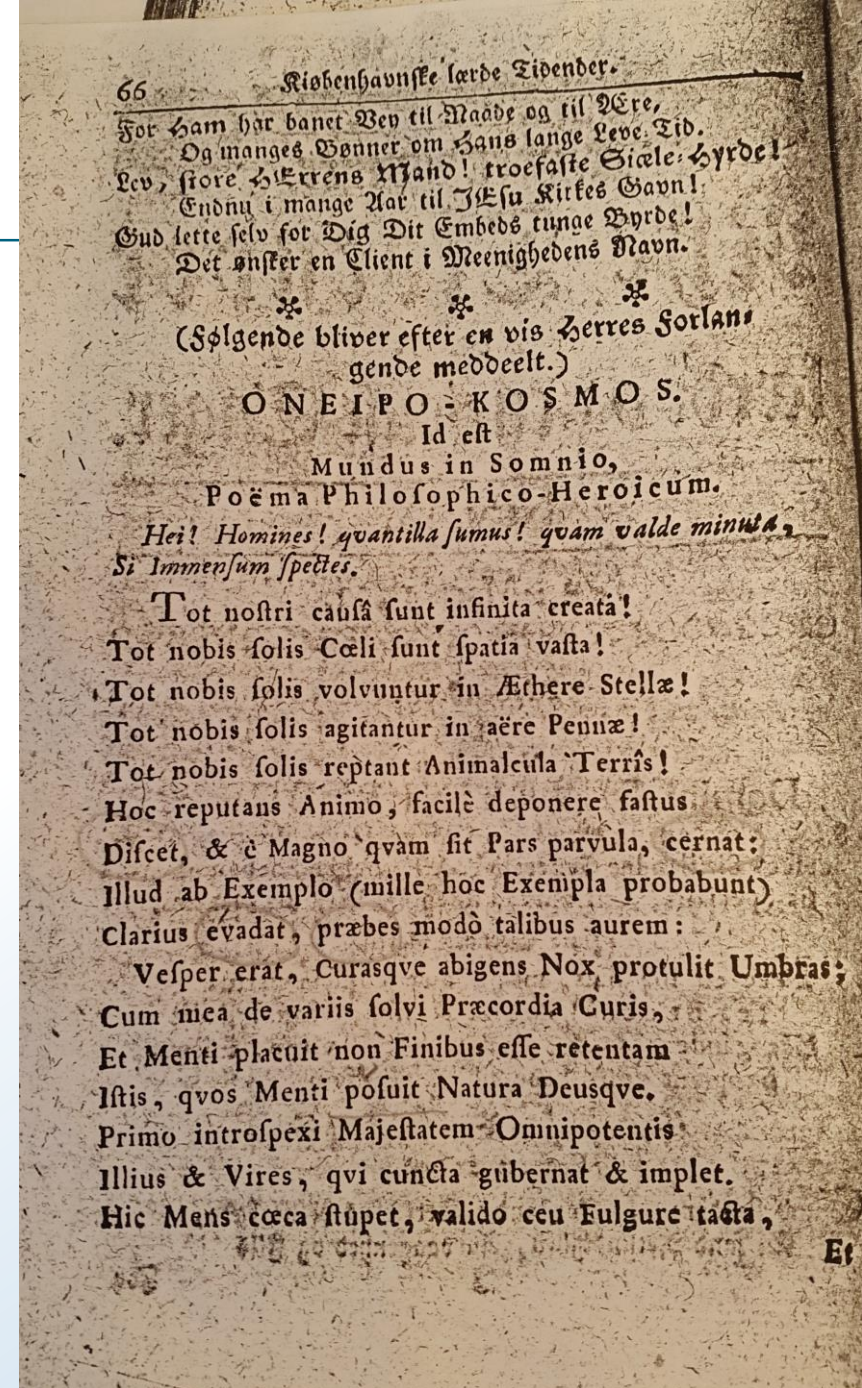
Oneiro-Kosmos (The Dreamworld)

«Woe! Humans! How small we are!
How utterly minuscule, if you consider
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*Hei! Homines! quantilla sumus! quam
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FOSIE'S PREFACE TO MICROMÉGAS

Hui! Homunculi! Quanti estis!



Bredal's aspirations

- To become known as a promoter of Enlightenment ideas
- Avoid censorship thanks to Latin language and quasi-anonymity ?
(the poem is signed *N.K.B.* only)
- Prove his skills in erudition as well as artistry (Latin hexameters and scientific deliberations – *ecstasis* theory, use of microscope, anatomy of human beings compared to trees, insects etc.)
- Pose as a *philosophe* and an *homme de lettres*

Corollaries, 1:

The multilingual & multidisciplinary challenge

- We should stop thinking of Latin texts as backward-looking, sterile imitations of classical models
- We should stop thinking of heroes within our literary canons as representatives of *belles lettres* alone
- We should start considering the multilingual competence of 18th-cent. intellectuals: fluency in Latin, German, and French was required alongside Danish/Swedish
- *Will this be hard ?* - YES
- *Will this require interdisciplinary approaches ?* - INDEED

Corollaries, 2: Latin poetry a vehicle for Enlightenment ideology?

- YES

A Gary Larson of the 1750s?

- Gary Larson (1950–)
- *The Far Side*
- Cartoon, 1980–95

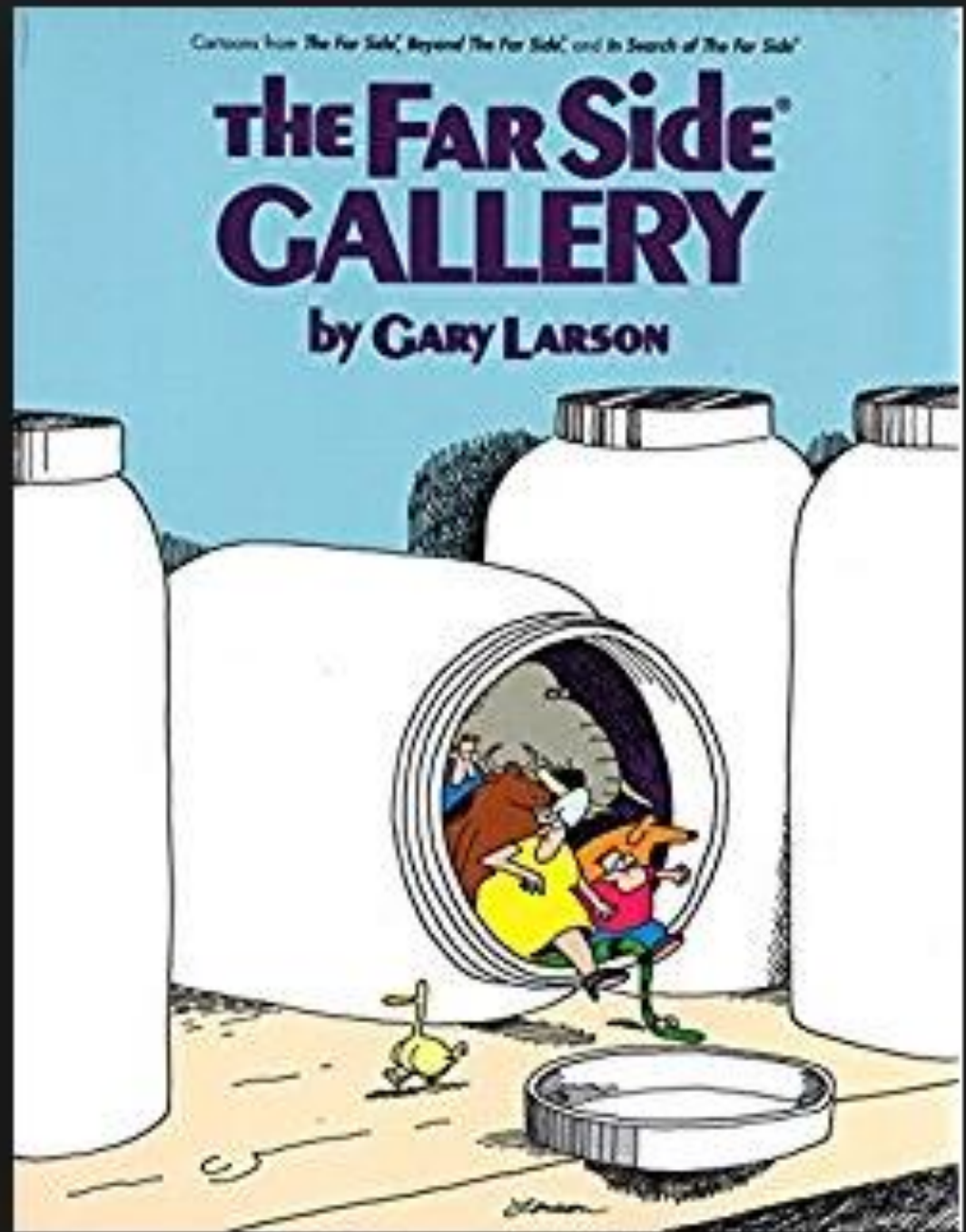


IMAGE CREDIT: dubious internet site(s), please do not re-use, buy the cartoon instead!

A Gary Larson of the 1750s?

- Gary Larson (1950–)
- *The Far Side*
- Cartoon, 1980–95
- Often questions human superiority



"Oh hey! I just love these things!... Crunchy on the outside and a chewy center!"

IMAGE CREDIT: dubious internet site(s), please do not re-use, buy the cartoon instead!

A Gary Larson of the 1750s?

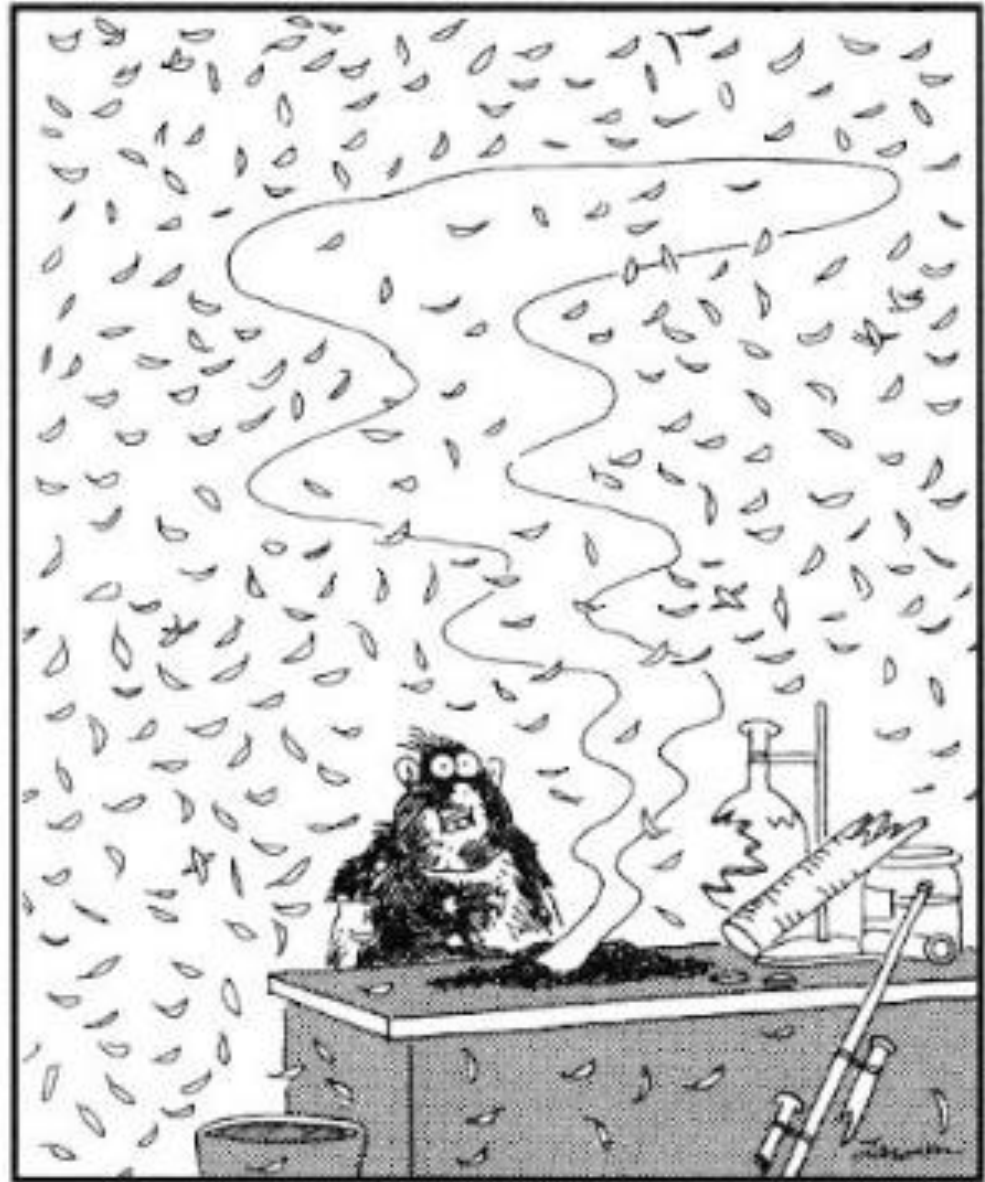
- Gary Larson (1950–)
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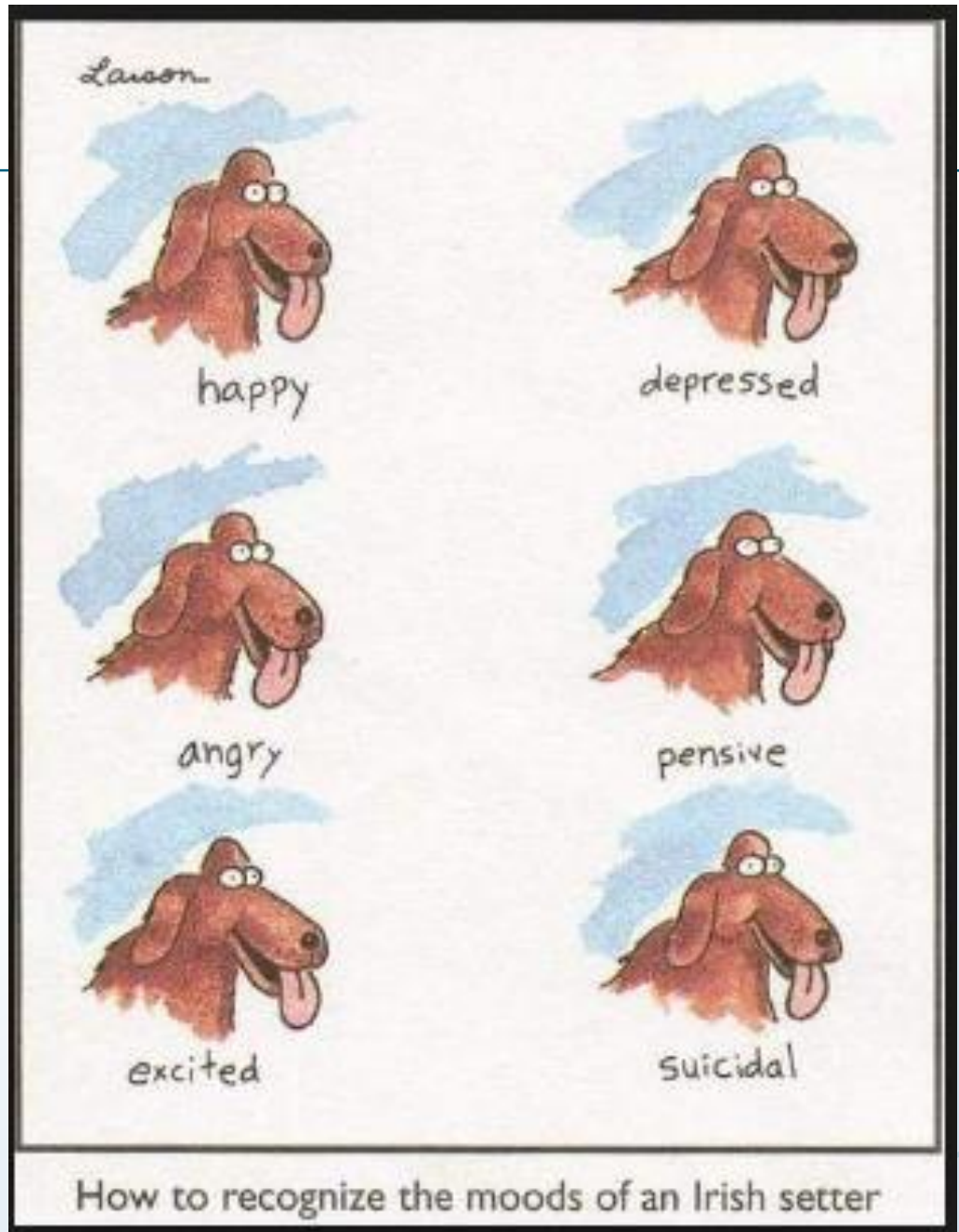
- Gary Larson (1950–)
- *The Far Side*
- Cartoon, 1980–95
- Often questions human superiority
- Places humans alongside animals
- Often blasphemous



God as a kid tries to make a chicken in his room.

A Gary Larson of the 1750s?

- Gary Larson (1950–)
- *The Far Side*
- Cartoon, 1980–95
- Often questions human superiority
- Places humans alongside animals
- Often blasphemous
- Animals are worthy of our respect ... they are just hard to understand



NIELS KROG BREDAL'S DREAMWORLD

(ONEIPO-KOΣΜΟΣ. Id est Mundus in Somnio, Poëma Philosophico-Heroicum)

Key facts

Published in *Kiøbenhavnſke Nye Tidender om Lærde og Curieufe Sager (=Lærde Efterretninger)*, No. IX, 2 March 1753

6 printed pages = Title with motto + 105 hexameter verses + prose section (1 page) + 14 hexameter verses

Overall structure

Motto: «Woe! Humans! How small we are! How utterly minuscule, if you consider the whole»

Vv. 1-9: Problematizes the widespread (Christian) notion that the entire world and all its living creatures were created for the sake of Man

Vv. 10-19: The hero (1st pers. sg.) of the poem falls into a slumber

Vv. 20-26: An erudite excursion on the concept of *ecstasis*, i.e. being neither awake nor properly asleep

Vv. 27-33: The hero finds himself in an unknown yet strangely familiar world

Vv. 34-62: The hero becomes increasingly afraid. At first, he grudges being utterly alone; then, a crowd of foreigners shows up; he tries to communicate with them, but, although the foreigners are intelligent beings, they speak a totally different language; the crowd discusses what to do with him, and in the end takes him to their city, where the hero fears that he will become convicted and executed

Vv. 63-68: The hero realizes that his hosts have no evil plans; he begins to learn their language and customs

Vv. 69-79: An excursion regarding religious beliefs. There are two sects: the 'atheists' and the 'erudites'. The latter believe in a Divine Creator, «who bestows rewards upon the just, and punishes villains».

Vv. 80-87: The hero befriends an 'erudite' and starts to question him about all kinds of things. A curious phenomenon, a kind of regular, yet smooth, earthquake in the middle of the world is introduced.

Vv. 88-102: Rumours of a kind of volcano inspires the hero to embark upon an expedition. He visits the volcano and witnesses its spuming vapours and ill-boding roars. The inhabitants in the vicinity are constantly afraid that the ground underneath them opens and that they fall into the depths of the earth

Vv. 103-105: The hero is carried by a wind of spuming vapours and returns to his own world

Prose section: Here, the author offers his own interpretation of his dream. He argues that 'it is obvious' that he during a state of *ecstasis* has visited the body of a giant (i.e., a human?), whose body was inhabited by insects (lice or similar). The 'trees' he had seen were nothing but hair; the 'volcano' the man's mouth and the 'spuming vapour' his breath; the 'ill-boding roars' were coughing and sneezing. Finally, he excuses the lack of logic coherence in all details, but such is the nature of dreams, the author argues

Vv. 1-13: Returns to the opening motto and concludes that *Homo sapiens* is really not much more than an insect; other living creatures, including insects, have souls and feelings, virtues and vices, just like us. And no one can deny that they resemble us in the way they cling to life and fear death, «so why not in other respects as well?», he asks

V. 14: In the concluding verse, the author argues that philosophers should not neglect to investigate carefully what difference, if any, there exists between humans and other living creatures

NIELS KROG BREDAL

(* Trondheim, 1733 – † Copenhagen, 1778)

AN ECLECTIC BIBLIOGRAPHY

Curriculum Vitae

1733 Born, son of judge Thomas B. (a bishop's son) & Anne Dorothea née Krog (a bishop's daughter)

1747–55 Studies in Copenhagen (*cand. iur.* 1755)

1756–60 Playwright career in Copenhagen

1761–70 Mayor, residing in Trondheim

1770–78 Playwright career in Copenhagen

1778 Dies, unmarried

First Danish *Syngespil* (Singspiel) 1756; First Danish *Pastorelle* (Pastoral) 1757; Vice-mayor of Trondheim 1757 (full mayor from 1761); Secretary of the (Royal) Norwegian Society for Sciences and Letters in Trondheim 1762; Director of *Den Kongelige Danske Skueplads* (Royal Theater) in Copenhagen 1771 (removed from office 1772); Announces prize competition The First Original Danish Tragedy (won by Johan Nordal Brun) 1772; Initiates *Det Norske (Litteraire) Selskab* in Copenhagen 1772 (formal society from 1774); Composes a special cantata for Copenhagen University 1777

Bredal's printed works (based on Ehrencron-Müller 1925)

A- LATIN POETRY

ONEIPO-KOΣMOΣ. Id est Mundus in Somnio, Poëma Philosophico-Heroicum (*Nye Tidender om Lærde og Curieuse Sager*, 2 March 1753. Critical edition: Aspaas 2017b; Norwegian translation: Aspaas 2017a)

Ad amicos summo honore suspiciendos Dnos. Bugge & Aaskov, ad Nidrosiam, Veneris videndæ gratiâ, iter facientes per injuriam nebulosæ Athmosphæræ spe frustratos, inter otia has lineas posuit N. K. Bredal (*Kiøbenhavnns Adresse-Contoirs Efterretninger* 19 June 1761; revised in *Kiøbenhavnnske Nye Tidender om lærde Sager* 18 June 1761, Anhang. Critical edition and English translation: Aspaas 2016)

Elegia in diem 3 Junii 1769, qua cel. D. Kratzenstein, Professor Medicinæ Hafniensis & Astronomus exercitatissimus, suscepto periculoso maritimo itinere, observationes Transitus Veneris *Nidrosiæ* seu *Drontheimii*, caussa cœli nubibus obducti, privatus fuit (*Ephemerides Astronomicæ ad Meridianum Vindobonensem* Anni 1791, Appendix [Vienna 1790]. Critical edition and English translation: Aspaas 2016)

Ad Dominum *Maximilianum Hell*, Wardoehusio Nidrosiam (Drontheimium) obtenta feliciter observatione Transitus Veneris reducem (*Ephemerides Astronomicæ ad Meridianum Vindobonensem* Anni 1791, Appendix [Vienna 1790]. Critical edition and English translation: Aspaas 2016)

B- PLAYS

Gram og Signe, eller Kierligheds og Tapperheds Mesterstykker, et Synge-Spil i trende Optog (1756)

Eremiten, et nyt musicalsk Hyrde-Spil, indrættet som en Pastorelle (1757; 2nd edn. 1758)

Den lykkelige Hververe, et original danske Synge-Spil udi tvende Afhandlinger, indrettet som en Intermezzo (1758)

Den tvivlrådige Hyrde eller den vovelige Prøve, et original Synge-Spil i tvende Afhandlinger, indrettet som en Intermezzo (1758)

Det kræsne Val, en original dansk Pastorelle udi tvende Afhandlinger, indrettet som en Intermezzo (1758)

Beileren efter Moden eller den romanske Jomfrue, et original dansk Synge-Spil udi tvende Afhandlinger (1758)

Tronfølgen i Sidon, en original lyrisk Tragi-Comedie udi to Handlinger (1771)

Den dramatiske Journal eller Critik over Tronfølgen i Sidon. Et Efterstykke i een Handling (1771)

I Mangel af Bedre, en Epilogue til Comedien Mødrenes Skole (1776)

C- TRANSLATIONS

Ovid: Publii Ovidii Nasonis Metamorphoses oversatte i danske Vers med hosføyede Anmerkninger til at illustrere Mythologien (Liber I, 1752; Liber I-V, 1758)

A. Haller: Poetiske Tanker om det Ondes Oprindelse; oversat paa danske Vers [1757?]

J. A. Cramer: Afhandling om Smaae-Koppernes Indpodning eller Inoculationen ... paa Dansk oversat samt forøget (1762)

Ch. G. Falbaire: De tvende Giærrige, en lyrisk Comedie (1774)

C.h. S. Favart: Venskab paa Prøve. En lyrisk Comedie (1775); Bondepigen ved Hoffet. En lyrisk Comedie (1776)

G. F. Poullain de Saint-Foix: Deucalion og Pyrrha. Comedie [oversat af C. A. Thielo], med Arier forøget af N. K. Bredal (1776)

J. F. Marmontel: Skovbyggeren. En lyrisk Comoedie (1776); Vennen af Huuset. Lyrisk Comedie (1777); Zemire og Azor, en lyrisk Comedie (1777); Lucile eller den forbyttede Datter. Et Syngestykke (1778); Det foregivne Hexerie, en lyrisk Comedie (1781)

Sedaine: Deserteuren eller den rømmende Soldat. En lyrisk Tragi-Comedie (1775); Den forestilte Tvistighed. Et comisk Synge-Spil (1778)

N. E. Framery: Colonien eller den nye-bebyggede Øe, en lyrisk Comedie (1778)

D- FUNERAL ORATIONS (†) AND WEDDING POEMS (*)

Queen Louise of Denmark [† 19 Dec 1751, printed 1753]; city manager and poet Christian Brauman Tullin [† 3 Feb 1765]; parish priest Aage Schavland [†, held 16 May 1768]; senior district stipendiary Sti Tønsberg de Schøller [†, held 20 June 1769]

Pastor Chr. Fr. Hagerup & Anna Margaretha Cathrina Vesterman (* 20 Sept 1764); colonel Georg Friderich von Krogh & Margaretha Lerche (* 1765)

E- OTHER POETRY AND LYRICS

En musicalsk Prologus i Anledning af Kron-Prints Christians Fødelser-Fest den 29de Januar 1759, til den Kgl. Danske Skue-Pladses Brug forfattet (1759)

Ode til den fuldkomne Ima (1760)

Tanker om Videnskabers og Indsigters Erhvervelse, for saavidt samme kan misbruges, og bruges paa rette Maade (*Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskabs Skrifter* IV [1768])

Om Fornøielse og Fornøielighed (*Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskabs Skrifter* IV [1768])

Ephemeron, eller det gamle døende Insect (1771)

Passions-Oratorium, som i Fasten opføres af det musikalske Sælskab [1773?]

Musiksamlinger for Claveret og Syngestemmen. Vols. I-II (1776–77)

F- OTHER PROSE WRITINGS

Breve efter Rabeners Maade (1759)

Allerunderd. Taksigelse til Kong Friderich V, da han d. 27. Aug. 1760 benaadede det Asiatiske Compagnie med sin allerh. Nærværelse, udført i en Samtale imellem Irene og Mercurius [1760]

Tanker efter Niels Klims Maade, eller en opmærksom reysende Amerikaners Efterretning til en Borger i Maanen om et vist Land og Folk paa vores Jordkugle. Befordret til Trykken af Hans Mikkelsens Halvbroder (1767)

Den anden Tale holden samme Tid og Anledning (*Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskabs Skrifter* IV [1768]) [Deliberation on a quotation from Cicero: *Studia Adolescentiam alunt, Senectutem oblectant* etc.]

Preface to Niels Hansen: Musikens første Grundsætninger anvendte paa Syngekonsten i Særdeleshed (1777)

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— (2017a) «Niels Krog Bredals Oneiro-Kosmos (1753) oversatt til norsk, med en innledning og etterskrift», *Aigis* 17,1: 1-12

— (2017b) «Nicolai Krog Bredal *ONEIPO-KOΣMOΣ*. *Id est Mundus in Somnio, Poëma Philosophico-Heroicum*: Editio diplomatica, praefatione notisque instructa», *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 66 (forthcoming)

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