

Facing the Black Death: Sigrid Undset's Kristin Lavransdatter in Times of Pandemics

SISSEL FURUSETH

Abstract. At the end of Sigrid Undset's medieval trilogy *Kristin Lavransdatter* (1920–1922), the heroine encounters the bubonic plague that so violently hit Europe in the mid-fourteenth century. The aim of this paper is to explore the connections between the 20th century novel and the European tradition of plague literature from the broader perspective of environmental history. Furthermore, it discusses the historical novel's effect as a *distant mirror* for 20th and 21st century readers. An underlying argument is that the ethical imperative in *Kristin Lavransdatter* is affecting the way the protagonist encounters the plague, which may explain what distinguishes Undset from many of her contemporaries.

Keywords: pandemic fiction; plague; ethics; Sigrid Undset; *Kristin Lavransdatter*

When Sigrid Undset (1882–1949) received the 1928 Nobel Prize in Literature, she was praised for her deep historical knowledge and “powerful descriptions of Northern life during the Middle Ages” (Sigrid Undset – Biographical 2022). Undset's skills as a writer of epic historical realism seem to have lured many readers into the illusion that they were reading stories from the 14th century rather than 20th century fiction. The trilogy *Kristin Lavransdatter* (1920–1922), set in medieval Norway, has been translated to more than seventy languages worldwide (Bergusson 2004: 303). In an essay celebrating the centenary of *Kransen* (*The Wreath*, 1920; the first part of the trilogy), the British writer and critic Boyd Tonkin suggests that “the students of modern fiction who automatically find the likes of Proust, Joyce, Woolf and Kafka on their reading-lists would profit hugely from a knowledge of this unique outlier” (Tonkin 2020).

Undset's work is indeed demanding of the reader, but in a different way than the canon of European modernists. Not every reader embarking on the dramatic love story of the willful farmer's daughter Kristin and the chivalrous Erlend Nikulaussøn, in the first volume, has been equally engaged by the spiritual conversations, political intrigues, trivialities of housekeeping and worries of motherhood, depicted in *Husfrue* (*The Wife*, 1921), or Kristin's pilgrimage

and final convent life, described in *Korset* (*The Cross*, 1922). But those loyal readers accompanying Kristin to the very end have been rewarded.¹ The closure of Undset's medieval trilogy contains one of the most vivid and remarkable portrayals of moments of death in world literature, notably so because of its disastrous pandemic context and the far-reaching effect on the human–nature relationship.

In this paper, I will explore the connections between the 20th century novel *Kristin Lavransdatter* and the European tradition of plague literature and discuss Undset's achievements within the genre of historical fiction. While the German historian and author Lion Feuchtwanger argued that historical fiction is always some kind of commentary on contemporary issues, a distant mirror, David Cowart has suggested that a discussion of historical fiction should be organised under the four rubrics of, 1) The Way It Was, 2) The Way It Will Be, 3) The Turning Point, and 4) The Distant Mirror (Cowart 1989: 8–9). The third category ranks the most important in Cowart's schema because turning point fiction directly address the question: "When and how did the present become the present?" (Cowart 1989: 10). Folklorist Olav Solberg argues that all these categories, except 2), are relevant for the interpretation of *Kristin Lavransdatter* (Solberg 1997: 26). Undset's trilogy is not only a detailed portrait of early 14th century Norway, but also a kind of fiction the author of which seeks "to pinpoint the precise historical moment when the modern age or some prominent feature of it came into existence" (Cowart 1989: 8). Solberg accentuates how the Black Death marked both the end of a golden age in Norwegian political history as well as the arrival of *angst* in the cultural psychology, as witnessed by legends and popular ballads (Solberg 1997: 32). Simply put, *Kristin Lavransdatter* is a trilogy describing the turning point from medieval collectivism to modern individualism. In this paper, however, I will argue that Undset's scholarly loyalty to *the way it was*, especially regarding her exceptional sense of detail, also makes *Kristin Lavransdatter* valuable even for the field of environmental history.

The Researcher's Perspective

As the eldest daughter of archaeologist Ingvald Undset, Sigrid was from early on encouraged to become a scholar herself. Growing up in an academic home,

¹ As Per Hallström, Chairman of the Nobel Committee of the Swedish Academy, put it in his speech on December 10, 1928: "when Kristin Lavransdatter has fought to the end the battle of her life, no one complains of the length of the course which accumulated so overwhelming a depth and profundity in her destiny. In the poetry of all times, there are few scenes of comparable excellence". (Hallström 1928)

surrounded by books, medieval documents and antiquities from all over Europe, she acquired an almost physical knowledge of history, and her life-long interest in botany shows that her intellectual curiosity reached far beyond the Humanities. In Sigrid Undset autobiographical novel *Elleve aar* (1934; trans. *The Longest Years*, 1935) the narrator reflects on how the terminally ill father encouraged the eleven-year-old girl Ingvild to read aloud from the Icelandic *Flateyjarbók* and the popular science journal *Naturen* (Undset 1934: 322).

Whereas Undset scholars have been attentive to the Old Norse influence in her fiction, they have taken little interest in the articles the young Ingvild (Sigrid) might have come across in *Naturen*. A closer look at the journal, edited by botanist Jørgen Brunchorst, reveals a diversity of contributions from all branches of science. As Ingvald Undset passed away on 3 December 1893, after a couple of years of severe illness (probably because of an earlier bout of malaria), the 1892 and 1893 volumes are of particular interest to us. The 1892 volume includes medical essays on cholera and flu, geological papers on the volcano Etna and circumpolar climate during the Ice Age, as well as meteorological studies from the last expeditions to Greenland and the effect of forests on air temperature. The 1893 volume contains articles on immunity, the development of the solar system, and on how the tree line has lowered gradually as a consequence of extractive logging, upheaval and climate change, among other topics.²

Sigrid Undset's informal education in the sciences and the humanities was rich and diverse. Her detailed knowledge of any aspect of medieval Norway seeps into *Kristin Lavransdatter* on every page, such as in the opening chapter where the omniscient third-person narrator lets the 20th century reader know that "there was forest over all of Høvringsvang at that time" (Undset 2005: 13).³ Today, Høvringen at the Rondane National Park, located 1,000 meters above sea level at the northern end of Gudbrandsdalen, is bare mountain. This example shows how the historical novel might be useful with regard to narrating the slow violence of climate change and destruction of nature.

Another example of how environmental history is made visible in the novel can be seen in the story of the crop failure affecting the Jørundgård farm in the long months Kristin and Erlend are waiting for Lavrans' approval of their future marriage. Kristin's father cannot offer a grand banquet at the betrothal celebration "because the previous year had been so bad in the valley" (Undset 2005: 246). The crop failure in Gudbrandsdalen coincides with the great

² Cf. *Naturen*, 1893, <https://www.nb.no/items/e1fc51de1b2ea907759f7678a9a596ea?page=7&searchText=>.

³ Translated from Norwegian by Tiina Nunnally.

European famine of 1315–1321, related to what modern geophysicists call the Dantean anomaly because it ended the same year as the famous poet passed away (Brown 2001: 251). The summers of 1315–1317 were particularly wet and cold all over Europe, presumably reflected in the sixth song of *The Vision of Hell* in Dante's *La divina commedia*: "In the third circle I arrive, of show'rs/ Ceaseless, accursed, heavy, and cold, unchang'd" (Dante 2004).⁴

Whereas literary scholars of the 20th century tended to focus on the psychological, social and ideological/religious aspects of literature, and viewed nature more or less as a neutral background setting for the principal relational dramas, the *ecocritical turn* of the last couple of decades has made scholars more attentive to nature as agent. To be sure, the knowledge of nature being an agent of history is not new, nor have the denials of nature been evenly distributed across geographical regions or social classes, but as historians are about to rediscover earlier premodern pluralities (Collet and Schuh 208: 7), literary scholars have also recently become more attuned to the entanglement of nature and society. In literary scholarship, in general, and in the predominantly catholic Undset reception, in particular, it is high time to put nature to the fore. Dominant assumptions about plague literature might need an update as well.

Plague as Metaphor and Reality

In his seminal essay "The Plague in Literature and Myth", Rene Girard claims that in literature the medical plague has become a metaphor for social disintegration, referring to Raskolnikov's dream at the end of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, among other examples. The closure of *Kristin Lavransdatter* might be interpreted in line with such a Dostoevskian idea that plague represents human megalomania and apocalyptic collapse of the entire society, but regardless of the suggestive qualities of Girard's interpretation of plague literature through the lens of structural anthropology, his lack of interest in the physical realities of plague is disturbing. From a Covid-19 point of view, it is impossible to subscribe to his characterisation of the modern world as a "world where the plague and epidemics in general have disappeared almost altogether" (Girard 1974: 835). Rather, the reason that plague is such a vital motif in literature is probably that the fear of the bodily and medical aspects of epidemics are quite essential to Dostoevsky as well as to Shakespeare, Artaud and other authors.

⁴ Sigrid Undset let Kristin (1302–1349) live simultaneously even with Petrarca (1304–1374), Boccaccio (1313–1375) and Chaucer (1343–1400).

In our context, it is worth noting that Sigrid Undset had first-hand knowledge of epidemics: as a child, she had to flee from Kristiania (Oslo) together with her family because of outbreak of diphtheria in the city, and in 1918, she lost her good friend Emma Münster to the Spanish flu (Slapgard 2007: 197). Therefore, an ecocritical revisiting of the plague narrative in Sigrid Undset's *Kristin Lavransdatter* should note Greg Garrard's wise reminder: "The challenge for ecocritics is to keep one eye on the ways in which 'nature' is always in some ways culturally constructed, and the other on the fact that nature really exists, both the object and, albeit distantly, the origin of our discourse" (Garrard 2012: 10). Undset's at times hyper-realistic descriptions of human–nature entanglements are cases in point, showing indeed that "nature really exists".

Nevertheless, plague is definitely also a cultural issue in her work. In the 1921 volume of the scholarly journal *Edda*, Sigrid Undset published an article on Scandinavian medieval ballads in which she exposes how she reasons about the historical impact of the Black Death on the nation. She is in line with leading Norwegian historian Peter Andreas Munch, among others, when she explains how the plague decimated the people and destroyed its economic foundation, already weakened by a series of bad years and the Hanseatic League's trade war (Undset 1921: 31). In the complex interplay of natural and cultural forces, she particularly emphasises how the plague affected the culture-bearing clergy to such an extent that the Norwegian Catholic Church never again reached its High Middle Ages level (Undset 1921: 32). Thus, she is emphasising how cultural forces were dependent on natural forces in this fateful turning point in history, which is also a hint as to why she chose the early 14th century as the temporal framing of *Kristin Lavransdatter*. (After Kristin comes the '400-year night', cf. Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, referring to the Union joining the three kingdoms of Denmark, Norway and Sweden under a single monarch.)

Regarding the historical novel as a *distant mirror* projecting the present into the past, historians and literary critics have disagreed on to what extent this category is explanatory in the case of Undset. While historian Edvard Bull criticised *Kristin Lavransdatter* for reflecting the grumpy mind of a 20th century city woman rather than the sentiments of the daughter of a medieval farmer from Gudbrandsdalen (Bull 1927: 204), Solberg acknowledges that the historical novel in its priorities, language and notions of human behaviour necessarily is coloured by the time of writing (Solberg 1997: 36). He maintains, though, that Undset's portrayal of 14th century thinking and behaviour is supported by medieval legends and other historical sources, concluding that *Kristin Lavransdatter* for the most part is true to the way it was. Art historian Kristin Bliksrud Aavitsland finds Undset's fictional reconstruction of medieval Norway, in which "all aspects of human life are set in a medieval scene",

powerful and convincing (Aavitsland 2006: 48). We might add “natural life” to the list, or rather natural life as perceived through the mind of a 20th century medievalist and novelist. In the following, we will take a closer look at how this multidimensional life unfolds in the last chapter of the trilogy.

Corrupted Air

Before the plague hits the people at the Rein Convent outside Nidaros (Trondheim) where Kristin spends her last couple of years as a lay sister, she observes that the weather around the fjord is anomalously sultry for September that far north:

This strange weather had already lasted for several days: no wind, a thick haze with a peculiar leaden blue color that could be seen out over the sea and toward the mountains whenever it lifted enough so that a little of the countryside became visible. Now and then it would grow denser, becoming a downpour; now and then it would disperse so much that a whitish patch would appear where the sun hovered amid the shrouded peaks. But an odd heavy bath-house heat hung on, quite unusual for that region down by the fjord and particularly at that time of year. It was two days before the Feast of the Birth of Mary. Everyone was talking about the weather and wondering what it could mean. (Undset 2005: 1093)

The third-person omniscient narrator delegates the observations to the protagonist, and in line with Undset’s historical realism Kristin is allowed to interpret the signs of nature as a 14th century woman would have done. In this medieval universe, it makes perfect sense that omens of nature portend future dramatic events. Later, we read about seabirds suddenly disappearing, another evil omen; in their place come ravens and crows in unheard-of numbers. People are scared when pious nuns suffer and nature does not behave as it usually does.

One by one the sisters succumbed and died. Night and day the bells for the dead rang from the convent church and from the parish church in the heavy air, for the unnatural fog hung on; there seemed to be a secret bond between the haze and the pestilence. Sometimes it became a frosty mist, drizzling down needles of ice and half-frozen sleet, covering the fields with rime. Then the mild weather would set in, and the fog returned. (Undset 2005: 1106)

Undset seems to follow many of the 14th century chroniclers in these descriptions. Even though modern scholarship does not acknowledge omens and providentialism and has rejected the medieval theory that plague was transmitted

through corrupted air, historians today have become more aware of the connections between climate and disease. As the British historian Bruce Campbell has emphasised, the fact that the miasmatic theory of disease has been discredited, does not automatically invalidate the 14th century descriptions of weather anomalies along with plague, “especially when they are consistent with independent historical and environmental evidence” (Campbell 2010: 306). For instance, ice-core samples and dendrochronology have confirmed that “the Black Death operated in concert with physical climatic hazards” (305). In *The Great Transition*, Campbell presents an extended argument for the interaction between climate and plague: “Although an intrinsically biological event, plague emerged from a specific climatic and ecological context at a tipping point in global atmospheric circulation patterns” (Campbell 2016: 329).

Modern scientific methods seem to support many of the medieval written sources that Undset based her work on, and she would have attested to Campbell’s admission that, “Modern economic historians may live in a less superstitious and more scientific and theoretically informed age, but on the power of humans relative to that of Nature our medieval and early modern forebears may have been wiser” (Campbell 2010: 310). For 14th century humans, nature was definitely a powerful protagonist.

As an author of historical novels, Sigrid Undset had to build on medieval knowledge, based on diplomas, chronicles, laws, and legends. For instance, according to medieval folklore, the plague is an anthropomorphic figure: “the plague and death began wandering naked through the land” (Undset 2005: 1104). Andreas Faye’s *Norske Sagn*, Theodor Kittelsens *Svartedauen* – and even Boccaccio’s *Il Decameron* – are echoed in passages like this, but the sense of detail is unmistakably Undset’s:

Fourteen days later Kristin saw for the first time someone who was ill with plague. Rumors had reached Rissa that the scourge was laying waste to Nidaros and had spread to the countryside; how this had happened was difficult to say, for everyone was staying inside, and anyone who saw an unknown wayfarer on the road would flee into the woods or thickets. No one opened the door to strangers. But one morning two fishermen came up to the convent, carrying between them a man in a sail. ...

The plague patient sat bolt upright, for he was about to choke on the bloody vomit he coughed up with every spasm. Sister Agata had strapped him up with harness across his gaunt, sallow red-haired chest; his head hung limply, and his face was a leaden grayish blue. All of a sudden he would start shaking with cold. But sister Agata sat calmly, saying her prayers. When the fits of coughing seized hold of him, she would stand up, put one arm around his head, and hold a cup under his mouth. The ill man bellowed with pain, rolling his eyes terribly, and

finally thrust a blackened tongue all the way out of his mouth as his terrible cries ended in a pitiful groan. The nun emptied the cup into the fire. (Undset 2005: 1102–1103)

As treatment, again according to medieval knowledge, Kristin and the nuns use ginger, pepper, saffron, vinegar, theriac and calamus root when nursing the sick, and “when the spices were gone, people had to chew on juniper berries and pine needles against the sickness” (Undset 2005: 1106). These modest spices were their weapons in the fight against the plague.

The Distant Mirror

Revisiting the historical *Kristin Lavransdatter* trilogy in the time of Covid-19, actualises David Cowart’s *distant mirror* category in a different way than initially intended, not only with regard to historical novels but to plague fiction in particular: as company and identification for contemporary readers during quarantine and lockdown. When the pandemic hit the global society with full strength in the spring 2020, many readers turned to books such as Albert Camus’ *La Peste* (1947), Thomas Mann’s *Der Tod in Venedig* (1912) and Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Il Decameron* (1353) to put the misery in perspective. So did Ingunn Økland, the leading critic at the Oslo newspaper *Aftenposten*, who had noticed how decadent partying was obviously an important ingredient in plague fiction of all times (Økland 2020). Struck by the vitality in the plague classics, she compares the frame tale in Boccaccio’s masterpiece with today’s reality TV series *Paradise Hotel*, suggesting that fictional descriptions of wild excesses of sex, dancing and drinking are necessary outlets for frustrations resulting from the restrictions that real-life epidemics cause. Økland touches on descriptions of carousing in Undset’s *The Cross*, as well, in which Kristin Lavransdatter eventually receives the news from Nidaros that her son Skule “had cast himself into a wild life” (Undset 2005: 1107). Once again, we can hear the echo of Boccaccio.

From the convent by the fjord, Kristin hears only rumours from the city of Nidaros, and she reasons that her son must be acting out of despair, just as many other young people are. After all, the members of his ship crew had either died or fled.

They said that whoever was afraid would be sure to die, and so they blunted their fear with carousing and drinking, playing cards, dancing, and carrying on with women. Even the wives of honorable townsmen and young daughters

from the best of families ran off from their homes during these evil times. (Undset 2005: 1107)

Undset is presenting the decadence of plague at a distant and from her protagonist's clearly Christian point of view, which is illustrated in sentences like "God forgive them, thought Kristin, but she felt as if her heart was too weary to grieve over these things properly" (Undset 2005: 1107). Nevertheless, the historical novel makes use of anything that can fill in the picture making the epidemic setting as rich and complex as possible. In the scene above, *Kristin Lavransdatter* is echoing both *The Decameron* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. While reflecting 14th century experience of plague in different ways, Boccaccio as well as Chaucer express medieval apocalyptic notions of plague as consequence of sinful life. The causal relationship between sin and plague is also evident for Kristin. This insight, not death as such, is the great moral drama of the novel.

Kristin tried to conquer the ghastly horror she felt. She had seen people die a more difficult death. But it was all in vain. This was the plague – God's punishment for the secret hardheartedness of every human being, which only God the Almighty could see. (Undset 2005: 1103)

In an essay about pilgrims, written for the yearbook of The Norwegian Trekking Association, Sigrid Undset vividly re-narrates Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, using the tales to argue that the medieval understanding of all humans being united – across professions, gender and class – lives on today in our cultural memory through pilgrimage. The awareness of death is crucial for the pilgrims feeling of community; we are all fellow travellers on an adventurous trip towards death (Undset 1930: 71). In the essay, the plague is not specifically mentioned, but as *Kristin Lavransdatter* ends with the heroine's pilgrimage to St. Olav's shrine in Nidaros followed by her encountering the plague that hits the region shortly after, it is difficult not to think of Undset's reflections on Chaucer when reading the last chapters of the novel. Before she reaches Nidaros, she walks in company with a diverse group of people, seemingly partly inspired by *The Canterbury Tales*.

Later, in the convent at Rein, the forty-seven-year-old Kristin has to take care of starving orphans and fellow sisters becoming infected, barely having time to think of her own family: "Now it almost seemed as if all people were equally close and distant to each other in this time of great need" (Undset 2005: 1107). The time of crisis requires solidarity and self-sacrifice. This is the moral ecology of *Kristin Lavransdatter*.

Purifying Sacrifice

The sacrificial element stands out as typical in the thematic cluster of plague literature and myth from *Exodus* and *Oedipus the King* onwards, according to Rene Girard, who points out how “the entire responsibility for the crisis is collectively transferred upon the scapegoat” (Girard 1974: 843). The closing chapter of *Kristin Lavransdatter* addresses such a sacrificial element at two levels as the heroine puts her own life in danger when rescuing the orphan Tore from being sacrificed in a heathen ritual. At this point in the plot, three months after the first outbreak in Nidaros, the plague is seemingly waning throughout the region, and the old Sister Torunn thanks Mary, the Mother of God, for never withdrawing her mercy from her children for long. But a little girl replies: “No, it’s not the Virgin Mary, Sister Torunn. It’s Hel. She’ll leave the parish, taking her rakes and brooms, when they sacrifice an innocent man at the gate of the cemetery. By tomorrow she’ll be far away” (Undset 2005: 1108).

As it turns out, the children taken care of by the nuns have been out at the parish church spying on a group of men making plans to capture the fatherless beggar boy Tore, son of the sick prostitute Steinunn, and sacrifice him to the plague giantess Hel. This information fuels Kristin with anger, and immediately she takes charge of the monastic action against the planned sacrificial ritual at the cemetery.

She pushed aside several shadowy men’s backs, stumbled on piles of shoveled dirt, and came to the edge of the open grave. She fell to her knees, bent down, and pulled out the little boy who was standing in the bottom, still complaining because there was earth on the good piece of *lefse* he had been given for sitting still in the pit. (Undset 2005: 1110)

After rescuing the boy, she finds out that his mother has died alone in her hovel by the shore, which upsets her even more. Together with her old friend Ulf Halvorsøn, Kristin fights her way on in the dark to make sure that the deceased will have a decent burial in consecrated ground. After this deed, Kristin notices that she has become infected herself. Shortly after, the heroine is fighting her last fight – against death itself. The red fog that heralded the plague at the beginning of the chapter is back, now accompanying Kristin in her last hours: “everything disappeared in a dark red haze and a roar, which at first grew fearfully loud, but then the din gradually died away” (Undset 2005: 1123). The leitmotif of the haze has shifted from exterior weather observations to Kristin’s bodily experience of dying.

Conclusion

In the essay “The Plague in Literature and Myth”, Rene Girard is struck by the “strange uniformity to the various treatments of the plague” (Girard 1974: 833), an observation that is partly confirmed by the last chapter of *Kristin Lavransdatter*. Intertextuality is one reason for this, the nature of plague itself another, but what makes Sigrid Undset’s novel a “unique outlier” in 20th century European literature, to use Boyd Tonkin’s words, is partly the large-scale historical format and partly what Annesley Moore-Jumonville has labelled Undset’s “sacramental realism” (Moore-Jumonville 2018). Both aspects may appear to today’s readers as “unfashionable” (cf. Reinert 1999), but as ecocriticism often calls for perspectives that can help to bridge the gap between nature and culture, the profound relationship between the natural and the spiritual in *Kristin Lavransdatter* exactly refutes the claim that such dimensions are opposed. When rescuing a poor orphan boy from being sacrificed to Hel, Kristin ends up sacrificing herself for the plague victims she has cared for. However, Undset’s ending does not necessarily support Girard’s conclusion that plague is both disease and cure. In *Kristin Lavransdatter*, “the black plague” is first and foremost a deadly disease.

Sissel Furuseth

sissel.furuseth@iln.uio.no

University of Oslo

NORWAY

References

- Aavitsland, K. B. 2006. Middelalder og norsk identitet. Litterære og visuelle eksempler på norsk medievalisme. – *Konsthistorisk tidsskrift/Journal of Art History*, 1, 38–49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00233600500469719>
- Berguson, C. 2004. Sigrid Undset. – T. Thresher, ed., *Twentieth-Century Norwegian Writers. Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Vol. 297. Detroit: Gale, 295–306.
- Brown, N. 2001. *History and Climate Change: A Eurocentric Perspective*. London: Routledge.
- Bull, E. 1927. Kinck som historiker. – A. Harbitz, ed., *Hans E. Kinck: Et eftermæle*. Oslo: Aschehoug, 194–207.
- Campbell, B. 2010. Nature as historical protagonist: environment and society in pre-industrial England. – *Economic History Review*, 2, 281–314. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0289.2009.00492.x>
- Campbell, B. 2016. *The Great Transition: Climate, Disease and Society in the Late-Medieval World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Collet, D. & M. Schuh. 2018. Famines: At the Interface of Nature and Society. – D. Collet & M. Schuh, eds., *Famines During the 'Little Ice Age' (1300–1800): Socionatural Entanglements in Premodern Societies*. Cham: Springer, 3–16. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-54337-6_1
- Cowart, D. *History and the Contemporary Novel*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Dante Alighieri. 2004. *The Vision of Hell*. Project Gutenberg, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/8789/8789-h/8789-h.htm> (09.05.2022).
- Furuseth, S. 2020. Kristin Lavransdatter og svartedauden i miljøhistorisk perspektiv. – <https://www.bokselskap.no/boker/kransen/kristin-lavransdatter-og-svartedauden-i-miljohistorisk-perspektiv> (17.01.21).
- Garrard, G. 2012. *Ecocriticism*. London: Routledge.
- Girard, R. 1974. The Plague in Literature and Myth. – *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 5, 833–850.
- Hallström, P. 1928. = Award ceremony speech. – *NobelPrize.org. Nobel Prize Outreach AB 2022*, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1928/ceremony-speech/> (09.05.2022).
- Moore-Jumonville, A. 2018. Sigrid Undset's Sacramental Realism: The Body in Kristin Lavransdatter. – *Honors Projects*, 83. Seattle Pacific University.
- Reinert, O. 1999. Unfashionable *Kristin Lavransdatter*. – *Scandinavian Studies*, 1, 67–80.
- Sigrid Undset – Biographical. – *NobelPrize.org. Nobel Prize Outreach AB 2022*, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1928/undset/biographical/> (09.05.2022)
- Slapgard, S. 2007. *Dikterdronningen Sigrid Undset*. Oslo: Gyldendal.
- Solberg, O. 1997. *Tekst møter tekst: Kristin Lavransdatter og mellomalderen*. Oslo: Aschehoug.
- Tonkin, B. 2020. A Century of Kristin Lavransdatter: Love in the Time of Piety and Pandemics. – <https://norwegianarts.org.uk/a-century-of-kristin-lavransdatter-love-in-the-time-of-piety-and-pandemics/> (17.01.21).
- Undset, S. 1921. Nogen tanker om de nordiske folkeviser fra middelalderen. – *Edda*, 3, 1–39.
- Undset, S. 1922. *Kristin Lavransdatter. Korset*. Kristiania (Oslo): Aschehoug.
- Undset, S. 1930. Pilgrimmene. – *Den norske turistforenings årbok*, 62, 65–71.
- Undset, S. 2005. *Kristin Lavransdatter*. Transl. Tiina Nunnally. New York: Penguin Books.
- Økland, I. 2020. Paradise Hotel under svartedauden. – *Aftenposten Lørdag*, 4 April, 14–15.