

VIEWES FROM MY GRANDMOTHERS KITCHEN

The Independent Performing Art's Festival – CPH-Stage 2016

SUMMARY

Scene 1 – The Coffee table in Southern Jutland:

Anette presents herself. As she is growing older, she feels a need to know more about her ancestors and their history. She thinks it is a growing trend. A need perhaps caused by a globalized world? Anette grew up in Southern Jutland, but left twenty years ago. Since then she has lived in fifteen different places and travelled in thirty-three different countries on four continents. Where does she belong? To adress this, she started researching the history of the Southern province of Jutland and their extensive traditional "Coffee Table". Through this research she learned that this tradition has its origins in the long national struggle after 1864, when the area came under German control – and anything Danish was banned. The German authorities would not allow the Danish Community Houses to serve liquor and thereby put a stop to the traditional "Coffee Punch" - a mixture of coffee and "snaps" (booze).

The Danish community answered back by instead bringing cakes to the meetings - the more the merrier. Fourteen to twenty-one different sorts of cakes were served, varying from the soft to the crispy, the rich an moist to the dry and meagre - tarts, biscuits etc. The buns were the basis – greased with plenty of butter. Anette's favourite is the prune tart, which Granny always made for her birthday.

Scene 2 – Grandmothers Kitchen:

Anette talks about Grandmother and Grandfathers house, which they build after they sold their farm. Anette has built a model of the kitchen, which was the heart of the house and Grannys favourite place. Beside that was a major living room, which was mostly closed of and chilly. The smaller TV lounge was where the grandchildren, at family gatherings, were allowed to sit and watch German entertainment programmes. Above it all was the attic, filled with old books and all sorts of nick-nacks – a heaven for children. Behind the house was a garden, with a prune tree in the middle and behind that a strawberry field on the other side of the road leading to their old farm.

Anette wonders what it means to have lived almost all your life in the same place, with roots in an area, where borders and nationality has constantly changed?

Granny lived until she was ninety-three. Her children wanted her to sell the house, but she was stubborn and insisted to stay until they had to carry her out. She was out of a german family and lived in Southern Jutland all her life. She only made one journey – to Italy - apart from the trip to Weimar, as a young student at the German *Volkshochschule*.

Granny used ink and paper, whereas Anette mainly writes on her laptop. And through the computer she can be in touch with people all over the world. But when we close our laptops, what do we really need? A place to stay, a bed, a table, people to be with, and... a view?

Granny materializes out of an old suitcase and takes over the role as the hostess.

Scene 3 – Childhood Home:

Granny and Anette reads aloud from an old notebook from Granny's time at the German *Volkshochschule* in the 30-thies, where she has written an essay about her family and childhood home. Along the way, Granny tells us about their farm and the fields, which was mostly heathland and moor, and about her mother's toil of taking care of the farm and the children, while their father was sent to France for four years under German service during WWI. At that time, the province was still part of Germany. Anette asks her questions about the wars, Granny is not very interested in answering her questions, but tells the story of her father, surviving the lack of food by stealing eggs from a french chicken farm. Granny tells us how she was taught to write nicely with gothic letters and how the girls would march in ranks at the German *Volkshochschule*.

CONTINUES ON THE BACK...

In 1920, the year Granny was born, the province again becomes a part of Denmark. In WWII, her brother chose to enlist on the German side and was sent to the Eastern Front in Russia. But their mother saw to that he was called back, as their father falls ill from blood poisoning and shortly after dies. The year is 1942. *God took one and let the other go.*

Upon all this talk about war Granny needs a nap and Anette tugs her in, while Granny lectures her how to take good care of the guests.

Scene 4 –Wars:

While Anette prepares the prune tart, she tells us that, as a basis for understanding the history of the area, you first have to look at its geography. The prune filling is used to represent the different people or nations passing and occupying the land - and then we just have to set it aside for a while and wait for it to sink in.

With both old and new maps, and a vast amount of plastic soldiers, Anette now tries to explain, both to herself and to us, the long and complicated history of Southern Jutland, full of wars and conflicts about the right to claim the land and where to draw the border. A war of territories and of souls, religions, marriages and commercial interests and it is going on and on through the centuries.

On top of it all the whipped cream is covering the ground as the forces of power. And in the end, the Danish king Christian the 1. inherit the last parts of the monarchy and claims the whole cake as one. *By grace of God, King of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, the Wends and Goths, Duke of Slesvig, Earl of Holstein, Stormarn and Oldenburg.*

It turns out to be a story of privileges of trade, economy and money flow - not of Danish qualities such as meatballs, grilled pork and parsley sauce - which they probably didn't even eat at that time. Perhaps they ate sauerkraut? That caused the death of thousands of people - not the sauerkraut of cause, but the wars.

Grandmother and Grandfather met at a ball during WWII. She was from a German family and he was from a Danish - both out of a line of farmers. The railway passed between their childhood farms, which were connected by an old church path. The path took the churchgoers direct across the courtyard of *Klemhest* (Squeeze-the-horse) - Grandfather's childhood home. The strange name is said to be due to the story, that the passage was so narrow that a horse could barely be squeezed through. Anette likes to imagine, that this is where they first met. They married in 1945 - at the end of the war. The original buildings no longer exist. But the church still stands.

Scene 5 –The earth, the land:

The sound of the church bells wakes Granny and now it is time for the prune tart, which we have all been waiting for. But the table is a mess - what has happened here? Anette must confess, we have "played war". Granny is not pleased – *war is not at game!* The table is being restored and the prune tart served. Granny is still not completely satisfied and Anette tries to explain. She just wants to understand the world and how to relate to all the problems of both then and today. She misses Granny and after she passed away, Anette feels lost and does not know where she belongs.

Granny consoles her - Anette is an actress - that is her job. And I'm right here am I not, she says, just put me back in your suitcase. I'll be comfortable there and always be with you.

Granny disappears into the suitcase and Anette tells the rest of her story. It is very much a story of land and earth - which we are fighting for and living from. On the brown tray Anette is mixing a small bag of earth from Southern Jutland with a small bag of earth from her own garden at Amager. Coffee grounds are good manure. A model of Granny's house, a prune tree. Some dead soldiers are put to rest. A flag? No. Grandmother and grandfather didn't want a flagpole.

Last time Anette saw her grandmother, she wanted to write her stories down on her laptop. But that day, Granny didn't want to tell stories. It would better wait for some other day. So they just sat there, looking out through the window, together.