

Tidlige brev-korrespondanse (Bjørn), Skip: Narvik.	
Dato	Forsendelser i lest rekkefølge
✓	04.06.1953 Horten (brev)
✓	12.06.1953 Portsmouth (brev på tynt papir)
✓	06.07.1953 New York (postkort)
✓	12.07.1953 Tå sjøs (brev) Sendt fra Norfolk Virginia
✓	13.07.1953 St. Johns/New Foundland
✓	13.08.1953 Bergen
✓	04.09.1953 Tå sjøs (nummerert av Greta som nr. 9)
✓	15.08.1953 Tå sjøs på vei til Harstad
✓	22.06.1953 Postkort nummerert 2 av Greta. Bilde fra Porto. Ankomst Azorene.
✓	19.08.1953 Brev nummerert 11 av Greta. Til sjøs. På vei fra Harstad.
✓	21.08.1953 Postkort fra Balestrand
✓	22.08.1953 Brev nummerert 13. Bergen
✓	11.09.1953 Brev nummerert 14. Horten (på veien til Stavanger)
✓	15.09.1953 Brev nummerert 15. Fra ovelsesfelt. Bursdags gratulasjoner Greta 21 år.
✓	20.09.1953 Brev nummerert 16. Bergen
✓	24.09.1953 Bergen. Omtaler flygere som «støffuglers helter»
✓	05.10.1953 Brev nummerert 18. Sjøkrigsskolen.
✓	10.10.1953 Brev nummerert 18a. Sjøkrigsskolen
✓	12.10.1953 Brev nummerert 18b. Sjøkrigsskolen
✓	21.10.1953 Brev nummerert 19. Sjøkrigsskolen
✓	26.11.1953 Brev nummerert 20. Sjøkrigsskolen
✓	27.10.1953 Brev nummerert 21. Sjøkrigsskolen på Sandaker
✓	31.10.1953 Brev nummerert 22. Sjøkrigsskolen.
✓	02.11.1953 Brev nummerert 23. Sjøkrigsskolen.
✓	03.11.1953 Brev nummerert 24. Sjøkrigsskolen. Piquethavende vaktstjef.
✓	06.11.1953 Brev nummerert 25. Sjøkrigsskolen. Streber og oppkøring.
✓	08.11.1953 Brev nummerert 26. Sjøkrigsskolen. «Ovelse saltvann III»
✓	12.11.1953 Brev nummerert 27. Sjøkrigsskolen. Tautrekking og oppklaringer, foretakelse.
✓	17.11.1953 Brev nummerert 28. Sjøkrigsskolen. ---
✓	18.11.1953 Brev nummerert 29. Sjøkrigsskolen. ---
✓	20.11.1953 Brev nummerert 30. Sjøkrigsskolen. ---
✓	22.11.1953 Brev nummerert 31. Sjøkrigsskolen. ---
✓	23.11.1953 Brev nummerert 32. Sjøkrigsskolen. Din gutt Bjørn
✓	24.11.1953 Brev nummerert 33. Sjøkrigsskolen. Det begynner å nærme seg.
✓	26.11.1953 Brev nummerert 34. Sjøkrigsskolen. Har ikke hørt fra henne på to dager.
✓	30.11.53 Brev nummerert 35. Sjøkrigsskolen. Hvis du virkelig er glad i mens så skjeper du resonansmat.
✓	02.12.1953 Brev nummerert 36. Sjøkrigsskolen.
✓	03.12.1953 Brev nummerert 38. Sjøkrigsskolen.
✓	07.12.1953 Brev nummerert 39. Sjøkrigsskolen. Tor var her og vasket tavlen. Slaps-Stav
✓	08.12.1953 Brev nummerert 40. Sjøkrigsskolen
✓	10.12.1953 Brev nummerert 41. Sjøkrigsskolen. Selfmade man
✓	12.12.1953 Brev nummerert 42. Sjøkrigsskolen
✓	16.12.1953 Brev nummerert 43. Sjøkrigsskolen. Eksamen, influensa.



Fig. 1—the photo at the top right is from a Polonaise at an cadet-ball in Tønsberg, at the Club in 1953. The two characters indicated by red dots will marry each other in the coming year. At this point she is 21 and he is 22 years. She would keep the letters from him, bundled with a red ribbon (she also numbered them). Left: the list of letters he wrote to her during a period of six months. The stamping relate to *public matters*: the Red Cross, the Blind- and Cancer Associations. A reminder on Xmas mail. Two military invitations to her.

As I was reading through 43 love-letters in an afternoon—Monday 26th February 2024 after a long lunch break with Lars Johnsen, Eivind Røssaak, Siv Frøydis Berg and Marius Wulfsberg—I tok two snapshots of the letter-bundles under study: one after lunch (Fig.2) featuring a the love-letter correspondence from the early/mid 1950s, another (Fig. 1) as I was closing up after my work-day at the NLN. Where the lunch had covered topics as Lacan’s ‘quarter turn’, desiring machines, programming language, Goethe’s *Faust* Part 2, and *Kvitleik* by Jon Fosse, my errand was rather simple.

I found that the bundles of letters that I have in my keep—working on a private archive, at my NLN residency—were *transformed*: in the morning they were a) *elements* of a sum [Fig. 2], in the afternoon b) a *sum* of elements [Fig. 1]. *What is the difference?* *What is the difference that makes the difference* between the two photos? The snapshot from the afternoon contains more information and more layers: the work supplied during the day became integrated into the collection; the work features in the composition. Where the photo provides an *overview*, the *work* is understated.



Fig. 2— The bundles of correspondence kept in store by the bride to be from 1953, throughout her life. The letters from her husband to be, wooing her.

Fig. 1 is in part the *same* as Fig. 2 (letter-bundles). But it also features *similar* elements (selected envelopes and invitations on display). The photo yields a *different* sort of information (photos are mentioned in some letters, but they are rare). And the smart-sheet with the list of letters is *other*: there is no mention of a letter-list in the collection, there are no lists to be found in the collection, and the kind of technology used to set up the list did not exist (or was not available) in 1953. Hence the paradox: where the elements of a sum can simply be bundled (the *collection* is then complete), but the *sum itself* is not complete. It is uninformed.

This is the paradox: we use the sum for *accountancy*, but we do *not* account for the sum. Or, we do not routinely/automatically account for the

sum. Or, the *impact* the sum has on the organisation of the elements. As long as what is being summed are *not* numbers they are ac/countable in a *variety* of ways: they are ac/countable in aspects that are *same*, *similar*, *different* and *other*. Which means that—in order to be informed—a sum has to be accounted for in terms of *sameness*, *similarity*, *difference* and *otherness*. Then the count is, in that sense, completed. Within a sum, a constraint: another level of accounting.

The approach attempted here is proposed out of *convenience*: instead of discussing what a *whole* might be—in relation to its *parts*—we can discuss *sums*. Sums that are worked out/informed, and sums that are summary/uninformed. As an alternative approach, it is free of a certain kind of pre-supposition: namely, that parts are somehow assumed to *precede* the whole. The price is a puzzle. Indeed, what is the nature of the whole adding to the parts, tops them with a ghostly organisation (*Gestalt*) and (as by a stroke of magic) makes the whole *tick* in a way that the parts cannot?

Indeed, in the light of the present, we might have a pseudo-problem revealed here (and, for that matter, a sensationally resilient one). How can one assert that the letters read, annotated, analysed and logged in the afternoon of February 26th, are 43 in number? We are already start to hesitate, since there are a couple of *postcards* in the collection. There are a variety of stamps from different places in the world—and in Norway—the stamping of the postal services, carry a variety of public messages, an occasional photo, a time-range with dates, from June 4th to December 16th 1953.

What exactly have we counted if sum does not result in anything *else* than a quantity of 43? But 43 of what? Letters, for sure! But surely the letters from 1953 surely cannot be swapped for letters from 1954, or 1955? So, we are not only talking about letters, but *these* letters—numbered by the addressee—into a sum *ordered* by date: not only a *sum*, but an *ordered* sum. This order ties up with one of the most difficult decisions that she made in her life: whether/not to *marry* (as she was in the middle of an education), and whether/not to marry *this* man who wrote so profusely to her.

After they married she wrote 71 diaries featuring the twists and turns of her life with him. The same question again: 71 of what? There are 71 elements lined up. The sum of 71 volumes imposing its weight on each one: they are the *same* in that they are numbered volumes with dated entries. They are *similar* in their day to day concern with the quotidian/mundane matters in the household of wife-and-husband team, on a diplomatic mission abroad in the service of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, living in 12 *different* places over a period from 1961-1999. Their binding/make is different.

They are *other*, in the sense that he—at one point—chose his own ambition over his love for her, in a matter of factly way, duly recorded in her diary (1986). After his retirement in 1999, he spent the rest of his life attempting to amend for a choice which he took to metaphysical proportions, as it was unavailable in her relationship to him. The 43 letters features the tangled promise that would bind them to each other in matrimony. 32 years later he would break that promise. In brief: on the

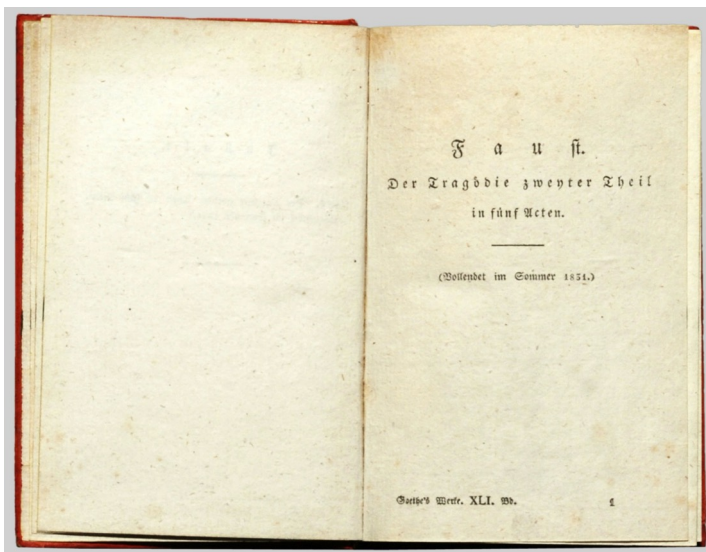


Fig. 3—Goethe's *Faust*, Part 2. Title page from the first edition in 1832. The year after his death.

horizon of a sum we find an accountancy of a different kind. It involves *human judgement*, and how it fares through the twists and turns of a lifetime.

In his love-letters he makes a number of attempts of providing an explanation for his own person. Growing up in what he saw as a rotten branch of an old family, he was bereft of a normal upbringing. He surrounded himself with a *shell*, and struggled in some sense to become, in his own words, fully human. He felt that she could help him to that end. His shell, however, would serve him in keeping his family safe. It would also provide him with excellent skills as a diplomat. The *sum* is a world unto itself that fictionally contains its own reality.