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**CHRISTIAN BERRENBORG: “DOING LITERATURE” IN THE NORWEGIAN
LABOUR MOVEMENT AROUND 1900**

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This lecture is going to examine a literature which according to literary history scarcely existed: Norwegian proletarian literature in the early 20th century. By outlining the Norwegian proletarian literary debate it is shown that proletarian publicists, pedagogues and politicians endorsed a corpus of “good” literature featuring specific goals, activities and strong nonfictional tendencies. Thus literature in this context cannot be analysed by focusing only on the texts independently, but also – if not mainly – on the practices evoked by those texts. Norwegian proletarian literature can thereby be described as milieu-specific literary praxis.

My research has not focussed on Norwegian literary authors who identified themselves with the labour movement, mainly because most of what could be defined as “Norwegian proletarian literature” has been named in that way later on, primarily by literary scholars and historians in the 1970s and 1980s. Instead my paper focuses on what was said about literature, i.e. the literary debate, and what was done with literary texts: practices evoked by or instigative of those texts, such as proletarian theatre and study circles within the movement.

By using the term “folkelig” with all its nuances as a red line I will elaborate my definition of (Norwegian) proletarian literature, while presenting examples of such literary practices as for instance study circles and proletarian theatre.