

8

LITERATURE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF SCANDINAVIAN PEOPLES IN RELATION TO SCANDINAVIANISM

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Literature was of pivotal importance in the construction of national characteristics in the nineteenth century; criteria for inclusion in a nationally defined people were negotiated in fiction. Expanding literary markets and reading circuits allowed literature to reach different strata of the population and to have a real impact on identity formation.¹ Likewise, literature and cultural journals were essential to the spread of pan-national ideas – in Scandinavia as well as elsewhere in Europe.² In fact, the modern literary markets, slowly establishing in the Nordic countries, were too small and often had to rely on transnational co-operations to reach a sufficiently large audience to gain a profit. This economic incentive for transnational enterprises was used for ideological reasons, and books specifically targeting a transnational readership were issued with the aim to create a common Scandinavian identity.³

Contrary to the pan-Latinism of the 1870s and onwards, the Scandinavian pan-national movement did not follow nation-state nationalism as a second stage but was a product of the earlier period of liberal nationalism.⁴ Scandinavianism appeared as an alternative scale of national identity.⁵ In fact, all Scandinavian nationalist movements at the beginning of the nineteenth century acknowledged Old Norse literature as a source of a national identity and as a common “national” heritage. In that sense, pan-nationalism was the very foundation for the different Scandinavian nationalisms, although the term “Scandinavianism” for the political movement was not used until 1843.⁶ The imagining of a Scandinavian cultural community and the movement to strengthen that sense of belonging, not necessarily aiming at statehood, fuelled the nineteenth-century nation-building processes.⁷ Thus, the Scandinavian nationalisms bore an intrinsic, although tense and shifting, relation to pan-nationalism.

This chapter will distinguish between three different ways in which the construction of the nationally defined people in nineteenth-century literature related

to ideas of a Scandinavian cultural community. As the examples will show, the relation to Scandinavianist ideas of different kinds could be explicit, dismissed or unacknowledged. By “dismissed” in this context I do not mean what Alexander Maxwell has called a “pejorative usage” of pan-nationalism.⁸ Pejorative usages of “Scandinavianism” were indeed abundant in public debate during the mid-nineteenth century, especially in Norway.⁹ However, my aim is to highlight how the defining criteria for “the people” might invoke other kinds of transnational comparisons. Given the strong impetus to relate to a Scandinavian community, neglecting to do so stands out as a dismissal. In the following, I will discuss literature of the mid-nineteenth century, in different ways keys to the formation of national identities, by the Finnish J.L. Runeberg (1804–77); the Danish Mathilde Fibiger (1830–72); the Norwegians Camilla Collett (1813–95), Henrik Wergeland (1808–45), and J.S. Welhaven (1807–73); and the Swedes Fredrika Bremer (1801–65) and C.J.L. Almqvist (1793–1866). Three themes will be focused on: women’s emancipation, the re-use of Old Norse myth and poverty as a national characteristic.

The three major emancipation novels of Swedish, Norwegian and Danish literature respectively were all issued in the 1850s within a period of five years: Mathilde Fibiger’s *Clara Raphael. Tolv Breve* (1851, *Clara Raphael: Twelve Letters*), Camilla Collett’s *Amtmandens Døtre* (1854–55, *The District Governor’s Daughters*) and Fredrika Bremer’s *Hertha, eller En själs historia* (1856, *Hertha*). In order to articulate women’s contribution to the nation as citizens, they all consciously created a nationally defined people, though in strikingly different ways in terms of the relation to wider pan-Scandinavian ideas.¹⁰ These novels are all considered to be the forerunners of the women’s movements in Sweden, Norway and Denmark respectively, and as such, they had a profound impact on national identity formation for politically active women in the late nineteenth century. Fibiger’s novel started the very first – and a very fierce – public debate on women’s emancipation in Denmark, and Collett’s novel was certainly the talk of the day in Norway, although not met with such vehement reactions.¹¹

The analysis will start out with Bremer’s authorship since she most explicitly related to Scandinavianist ideas, especially in a novel that predated *Hertha* in exploring female citizenship, aptly named *Syskonlif* (1848, *Brothers and Sisters*). At the time, Bremer was the most famous of the three, widely read across three continents. *Hertha* was published the same year (1856) in Sweden, Britain, the USA, France and Germany, whereas the translations into Dutch and Danish would follow the next year, and into Spanish in 1865–66.¹² Collett’s *The District Governor’s Daughters* makes for a different take on Scandinavian fellowship, whereas pan-nationalism is conspicuously absent from Fibiger’s novel. Fibiger’s tacit dismissal of Scandinavianism in her construction of the Danish people will then be compared to the Norwegian J.S. Welhaven’s prose sketch “Billeder fra Bergenskysten” (1842, “Sketches from Norway”), before finally moving on to the three examples of what I call an “unacknowledged” relation to pan-national identity. Poverty was promoted as a characteristic of the

Finnish people in J.L. Runeberg's "Julqvällen" (1841, "Christmas Eve"), of the Swedish people in C.J.L. Almqvist's "Svenska Fattigdomens betydelse" (1838, "The Importance of Swedish Poverty") and of the Norwegian people in numerous publications by Henrik Wergeland. I will discuss the unacknowledged transnational links behind the representation of poverty as a national virtue.

Several of these authors – Almqvist, Bremer, Welhaven – were keen advocates of the Scandinavianist movement; the Scandinavianist student meetings were an important meeting-ground for Welhaven.¹³ However, their main goal was to strengthen the cultural integration between the Scandinavian nations rather than to form one state, that is, they embraced to varying degrees Scandinavianism as a "low-political" rather than a "high-political" project.¹⁴ As many of their contemporaries, Bremer and Almqvist used the concept of the nation to refer to a province, a realm or the entire Scandinavia interchangeably.¹⁵ All of them (except possibly Mathilde Fibiger) belonged to Scandinavian networks, providing support, help to promote their works, new contacts – and pan-nationalist ideas. Camilla Collett, J.S. Welhaven, C.J.L. Almqvist and Fredrika Bremer all stayed in Copenhagen for long periods of time, and Bremer lived mainly in Norway for several years in the late 1830s. She also laid claim to a Finnish identity because she was born in Turku (Swe. Åbo). During her stay in Norway, she corresponded with Wergeland, who dedicated one of his main literary works, *Jan van Huysums Blomsterstykke* (1840, *Jan van Huysum's Floral Painting*), to her. The Finnish national author Zacharias Topelius (1818–98) was likewise among her many correspondents, whereas Runeberg had an intense correspondence with Almqvist, who sent Runeberg several of his manuscripts before publishing.¹⁶ Runeberg's and Topelius' works were issued by both Finnish and Swedish publishing houses and were as popular in Sweden as they were in Finland – as Finnish scholars have pointed out, largely due to a blatant misreading. The Finnish authors did indeed celebrate Finland's common history with Sweden in their historical poems, short stories and novels, but they did so in order to distinguish an exclusively Finnish history and to create a Finnish people. Swedish readers generally missed that last point.¹⁷ The intentions were thus decidedly *not* transnational, but the readings were. Runeberg's and Topelius' works unintentionally contributed to the creation of two nationally defined peoples on different sides of the Baltic Sea.

Explicit relation to pan-nationalism

Among the three Scandinavian emancipation novels, Fredrika Bremer's *Hertha* (1856) stands out as most outspoken in the commitment to Scandinavianist ideas. Her novel *Brothers and Sisters*, issued in the year of revolutions 1848 and concerned with the discussion on citizenship, even more conspicuously created a Swedish people on an explicit pan-national foundation. Actually, Scandinavianist motifs and ideas structure the novel in several ways. Criteria for citizenship are clearly at stake: minority groups, such as Sámi people and Jews, appear in side-stories

with no other narrative function than to attest to their fitness for citizenship and inclusion into the Swedish people on account of a God-fearing moral. The same criteria apply to the poor and to ex-criminals.¹⁸ The Scandinavian fellowship is explicitly targeted on at least three levels of the narrative. Firstly: the depiction of the characters.

The chief characters are nine siblings, who together with their uncle, the General, will end up building a model society. An Icelandic-Danish sculptor, Lagertha Knutson, is invited to be a part of the family; the title *Brothers and Sisters* refers not only to the main characters but also to the Scandinavian nations.¹⁹ Mats Wickström has shown that the idea of kinship between the Nordic peoples still guides the legislation on privileges for citizens of other Nordic countries in naturalisation policies, albeit with some variations.²⁰ The representation of nations as personifications was indeed established early on in the nineteenth century, but that idea was elaborated and literally fleshed out in the nineteenth-century novel.²¹ In Bremer's *Brothers and Sisters*, several Nordic countries are actually combined in one single person, as Lagertha turns out to be raised in Iceland as the daughter of a Danish father and a Swedish mother, and trained to become an artist in Copenhagen.²² This transnational heritage will also prove to be an inspiration to the siblings, particularly to the development of ideas on female citizenship.

Secondly, a commitment to the Scandinavianist movement is explicitly pointed out. The political disagreement between one of the siblings with Communist ideas on the one hand and the General's old fashion patriotic and paternalistic ideals on the other is soothed by the common celebration of Scandinavianism. The General exclaims:

Children, we must drink to the health of our fair guest and her native land, – the brother land of a thousand bullets! We are Scandinavians, and we will drink to all Scandinavians and Scandinavianism. I am heart and soul with it; it is a thought which God the Father first conceived, and afterwards we.²³

The General is here also referring to eschatological pan-nationalism that united many mid-nineteenth-century nationalist thinkers such as Bremer and Almqvist: the nation was considered to be a step in God's plan to ultimately unite humankind.²⁴ Giladi suggests that pan-nationalism "proposed a different final step, in which nation-states would merge into larger units, macro-nations."²⁵ However, to these mid-nineteenth-century Scandinavianists, pan-nationalism was not the final step, only yet another step to move closer to God's Kingdom on Earth.

Thirdly, Old Norse literature as the common Scandinavian "national" heritage is presented as a key source of inspiration for the future society. Lagertha is commissioned to create a decoration for a fountain with a motif from Old Norse mythology for the ideal society, New Birka. She chooses the Norns by the Urda fountain, or more specifically, the Norns as interpreted by the Danish N.F.S.

Grundtvig in his ground-breaking work *Nordens Mythologi* (*Northern Mythology* 1808, 2nd ed. 1832). Lagertha states that she reads Eddic poetry, Snorre's *Heimskringla* (*Sagas of the Kings*) and Grundtvig's work every day for inspiration from "the genius of the north."²⁶ Grundtvig holds that the Old Norse myths must be interpreted in a historical-poetical manner; they provided an imagery for representing "the truth about the great Struggle for Eternity."²⁷ The three Norns should properly be understood as a poetic representation of a Nordic idea of "Destiny and Providence": Prophecy, Combat and Harmony.²⁸ This idea is enthusiastically paraphrased in Bremer's novel and executed in Lagertha's sculpture.²⁹ The sculpture has a profound impact on one of the novel's sisters, Gerda. She recognises herself in the Norns, an experience that generates a recognition of her need for freedom: "I know that there is a life beyond that of housekeeping, even for women, a life, an activity for thought, as noble, as beneficial as the other."³⁰ The Norns have brought forth Gerda's sense of citizenship.

The Norns by the Urda fountain also have a central function in the emancipation novel *Hertha* (1856). In a dream at the beginning of the novel, the title character experiences the oppression of women worldwide. The Norns in the dream acquaint her with the curse on womankind, present the challenge to fight it and foretell her victory; in that respect, the Norns are the personifications of women's emancipation.³¹ Grundtvig's *Northern Mythology* is indeed part of the reading-list for the girl school that Hertha organises in the end of the novel.³² Hertha herself is repeatedly compared to the Norse goddess Iduna and Swedish conditions are in the novel often referred to in a Nordic frame.³³ Nevertheless, Old Norse mythology is not the only ancient myth engendering female citizenship in Bremer's work.

Bremer's brand of pan-nationalism certainly included Finland, and *Kalevala* (1835) is portrayed as the main source of internal strength for the head character Sofia in Bremer's first novel specifically targeting female citizenship: *En dagbok* (1843, *A Diary*, Engl. transl. 1844). Sofia has been raised in a Finnish landscape, or in Bremer's words: in "the home of the magic arts, Finland."³⁴ She knows "PRIMEVAL WORDS" ("*ursprungords*") from *Kalevala*, and has an inner heathen troll, which accounts for her crave for freedom and ultimately makes her fit for citizenship.³⁵ Finland is also explicitly included in the Scandinavian family of *Brothers and Sisters*. The most important side-story is an account of the separation of Finland from Sweden in 1809, recounted by the Finnish-born General, who has been separated from his beloved half-brother in a conflict over how to conceive of the nation. The half-brother perceives the Fatherland in terms of the territory and stays on to cultivate the land and the people of his father's estate. The General, on the other hand, cannot forgive what he considers to be a treachery to the Fatherland in terms of the state and government. The novel thus, once again, treats a political conflict as a family business. The reconciliation of the two brothers may be read as an emotional manual on how to re-forged bonds of fellowship in acknowledging, what initially is represented as a split identity, as two different national identities.³⁶

Bremer's emancipation novel *Hertha* was preceded by what is considered to be the first emancipation novels of Norwegian and Danish literature respectively: Camilla Collett's *The District Governor's Daughters* in 1854–55 and Mathilde Fibiger's *Clara Raphael* in 1851. At least Collett's novel does refer to pan-nationalism, though in a different manner. The Norns are indeed mentioned, but only in passing and as the dark forces of destiny denying human happiness and keeping the lovers apart.³⁷ In this case, Old Norse myth is certainly not the foundation for a pan-national identity, nor for women's emancipation. Collett was quite literally placed at the core of the famous Norwegian battle over the construction of the nation in the 1830s and 1840s towards Danish cultural (and Swedish political) domination. She was the sister of one of the chief opponents, Henrik Wergeland, and had an unfulfilled love relationship with the other, J.S. Welhaven. Although the political content of the battle has been exaggerated, most of all by the opponents themselves, there was indeed a conflict over how to relate to the common history with Denmark (until 1814) in constructing a Norwegian nation. Historian Anne-Lise Seip emphasises that different concepts of freedom lay at the bottom of that conflict.³⁸ Whereas Wergeland believed that political freedom should come first and engender cultural progress, Welhaven followed Friedrich Schiller's *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (1795) in arguing that true political freedom must be the result of *Bildung*. Inner freedom cultivated by aesthetic taste, harmony and beauty was a prerequisite for successful political reforms. In that respect Collett sided with Welhaven.

Collett's novel has received a lot of scholarly attention, but only recently has a critical examination of the construction of the Norwegian people in this proto-feminist novel been carried out.³⁹ The construction of the nationally defined people in *The District Governor's Daughters* does indeed take the Norwegian landscape, the peasantry and folklore as its point of departure, but canalised through the bourgeois female main character, Sophie, the Governor's daughter. Through her, the landscape and the peasant culture will contribute to nation-building and future societal developments.⁴⁰ However, for Collett the immediate response to the national nature was not enough to create a nation. She relied on the old bonds with Danish cosmopolitan culture for the, in her view, necessary aesthetic education of her ideal national woman in several ways.

Firstly, the relation between Denmark and Norway is explicitly discussed by the main characters. Secondly, Sophie is sent to Copenhagen to educate her singing voice and her sense of aesthetic judgement, making her fit to exercise societal power. The years of training in the Danish capital, however, are not directly represented in the novel, only related retrospectively and by means of letters. The novel stays in Norway. Still, the last part of the novel, where an ideal society is built, is set in a transnationally defined place: in the reverend Rein's parsonage, originally a manor house built in a "Danish" style. The novel is quite explicit on this matter and offers a thorough overview of the interior and of architectural details: "The arched, rigidly ornamented stucco ceilings and door mantels still survived as reminders of former aristocratic days."⁴¹ Nevertheless, the building

marked by the aristocracy is filled with a new meaning; Collett emphasises that the library, formerly used only by the master of the house, was available to anyone. The description ends:

Everything the visitors saw bore the mark of solid, unostentatious prosperity, combined with a sense of beauty and comfort. Where it is still possible to find such homes in our country, they represent either the last, dwindling remains of a foreign, imported culture, or the happy beginnings of an emerging native one.⁴²

Two temporalities meet in this conception of the national home, signifying two different cultures: the remains of an old, “foreign,” aristocratic culture and the new, happy beginnings of a “native one.” The final decision on how to interpret the manor house, harbouring the ideal society, is left open, which allows for the different temporalities to mingle. The old, beautiful, comfortable Danish culture is indeed the frame for the growth of the Norwegian, national culture.

The construction of the Norwegian nation in Collett’s novel is thus an example of explicit pan-nationalism in the sense that the relation to Denmark is targeted, firstly in terms of a discussion of the implications of the shared history for the sense of national belonging; secondly as inspiration for the aesthetic cultivation necessary to develop true political freedom; and thirdly as the symbolic, transnational location for the ideal national society. The transnational relation required for Norwegian nation-building, according to Collett, was a new way to make sense of the old Danish–Norwegian relation.

Dismissed relation to pan-nationalism

Before publishing *The District Governor’s Daughters*, Collett reached out to the Danish author and leading literary critic, Johan Ludvig Heiberg (1791–1860), to ask for his advice. Collett knew him from her years in Copenhagen, but she was presumably also guided by the fact that he had protected the publication of the first Danish emancipation novel a few years earlier: Mathilde Fibiger’s epistolary novel *Clara Raphael*. Heiberg wrote a peculiar preface, recommending the novel and simultaneously making excuses for the young author’s ideas on women’s calling and the institution of marriage, quoting from their correspondence regarding the manuscript. Grundtvig was among Fibiger’s friends who welcomed the nationalism of the novel, but for a twenty-first-century reader, the explicit connection between women’s emancipation and militant nationalism is hard to digest.⁴³

Clara Raphael in Mathilde Fibiger’s eponymous novel formulates her simultaneous religious and nationalist awakening in terms of family relations:

God is my Father, Denmark my Mother; all human beings my siblings. This is the great family life, wherein I am rooted. I am not alone!⁴⁴

Fibiger echoes Grundtvig, who according to Jes Fabricius Møller had three fatherlands, “Denmark, Norden and the Heavenly Fatherland,” only Fibiger leaves Norden out.⁴⁵ That is worth noting, given that Grundtvig not only defended Fibiger’s cause in public debate but also together with his wife opened their home as a refuge for Fibiger, when she was under attack after the publication of *Clara Raphael* for being too radical – or not radical enough.⁴⁶ Although she expressed a continuum in the quotation above, from the nation to humankind, and included all people in her family, the reader quickly loses sight of any other except Danes; or rather, the reference to humankind is submerged in her overlayering of Christian faith with nationalism and feminism. Just like in Bremer’s authorship, female citizenship is to Fibiger an example of vocational nationalism: she understands her commitment to nationalism to be God-willed.⁴⁷ However, nationalism in Fibiger’s case lacks the pan-nationalist element. It is restricted to Denmark, more specifically in connection to the First Schleswig War (1848–51).

The construction of the nationally defined people in *Clara Raphael* is framed by the war in more than one sense. The temporal frame of the narrative coincided roughly with the duration of the war, and the war is awarded a pivotal importance in Clara’s development of her feminist calling together with her nationalist sense of belonging. Even though the novel does contain references to Old Norse literature, Fibiger presents it as stories about Danish heroes and Danish history. Raised on historical tales of the Danish people, the breakout of the war allows her for the first time to perceive the contemporary Danish people. Meeting soldiers going to war and watching the national colours initiate a new life for Clara:

On the 21st of March, a new life arose for me. I saw the Danish people, whom I only knew from legends and songs, I heard words spoken, that reverberated deep in my soul.⁴⁸

The event in Fibiger’s account that renders the Danish people visible, that “makes the nation real,” is the war on Germany.⁴⁹ It is Denmark’s “significant Other” that makes the nation appear in Clara’s mind; she suddenly “sees” the Danish people. The transnational relation required to construct the Danish people in *Clara Raphael* is thus the defining external difference to the enemy, the German people.

Nevertheless, Fibiger attributes a special significance to the German Friedrich Schiller’s drama *Die Jungfrau von Orléans* (1801). More importantly with reference to Scandinavianism, there is a quotation from the Swedish poet Esaias Tegnér’s poem “Till en yngling” (“To a Young Man”).⁵⁰ The Tegnér quote is placed next to a quote from Adam Oehlenschläger, whom Tegnér had awarded a laurel in 1829 – usually considered to be the start of Scandinavianist thought. Still, Fibiger fails to make that connection explicit. That failure may be read as a statement. The relation to Scandinavianism is dismissed in Fibiger’s emancipation novel, and interestingly, the same is true of the construction of the national people in Welhaven’s prose sketch “Sketches from Norway.” However, in Welhaven’s

case, the transnational relation replacing Scandinavianism is very different from Fibiger's use of the significant Other.

Welhaven joined enthusiastically in the Scandinavianist student meetings, had extensive contacts in Denmark, where he also stayed for long periods of time for research purposes, and most importantly, loudly promoted the benefits from the old connection with Denmark in the debate over the construction of the Norwegian people.⁵¹ He also had powerful friends in the literary public sphere in Sweden, although "Sketches from Norway" remained one of the few literary works by Welhaven that were translated into Swedish (in 1860).⁵² In fact, this prose sketch was the only text by Welhaven that was published in Britain and America during his lifetime, with a significant change of the title from the literal "Pictures from the Bergen coast" to "Sketches from Norway."⁵³ Initially a poet, a literary critic and a literary historian, Welhaven turned in "Sketches from Norway" to a more realistic representation of the Norwegian landscape and the peasantry. He was also an important promoter of Norwegian art, and his poetry, in return, inspired the artists – one example is Adolph Tidemand (1814–76) and Hans Fredrik Gude's (1825–1903) famous painting *Bridal Procession on the Hardangerfjord* (1848), which is more or less a depiction of a scene from "Sketches from Norway."⁵⁴ As such, this prose sketch would contribute to the visual culture of Norwegian nationalism.

The sketch was originally published in 1842 as a series of articles in the newspaper *Den Constitutionelle* (subsequently published in *Reisebilleder og Digter*, 1851). The aim was clearly to celebrate the Norwegian people and to display the present-day peasantry of the islands off the Bergen coast as a channel to the past glory of the Norwegian Golden Age: the Medieval, independent kingdom of Norway. To claim the position as part of European cultural history, Welhaven repeatedly compares Norwegian landscape, folklore and traditions to that of other nations. Apparently, Scandinavianism is of no help to Welhaven in this quest. The relation to other Scandinavian nations is practically obliterated and replaced with transnational comparisons. The islands off the Bergen coast represent a "Norway on a small scale," Welhaven writes, and the people who live there, "a race called the Striles," has kept the old ways as nobody else among the Norwegian peasantry.⁵⁵ A "strange nation," Welhaven calls them.⁵⁶ This is prototype Norway, lost to modernity, which now should not only be incorporated into the nation but guide the conception of the nationally defined people.

The very size of the islands, "Sartor [nowadays Sotra], the Ask Isle, the Holsen Isle and the Rad Isle" is specified by comparisons – in the original with the Isle of Wight, Malta, Ithaca and the Danish island Langeland, although the English translation settles for the first two.⁵⁷ After having zoomed in on Sotra, Welhaven describes the bottomless lake in the middle of the island and presents the magic creature that resides in the water as superior to other legendary beasts:

The tale is stranger than what is told of the sea-serpent and the Krake; for those have the wide ocean for their playground, whereas the leviathan of

the Sartor Isle is confined within a prison, where the rocks stand around as sentinels.⁵⁸

Sea-serpents are present in various mythologies; the Kraken in Nordic folklore is indeed one of them, but Welhaven quickly exchanges the Nordic beast for the Biblical leviathan. The picturesque close-up of the Strile himself reminds the narrator of Rembrandt: “yonder old sea-Strile, you will say, seated under the vent-hole, with the daylight streaming down upon his uncouth dress, and his long grey beard, is a figure unmatched in all the paintings of Rembrandt.”⁵⁹ The bridal procession, that supposedly has kept traditions and costumes more or less intact since the Viking Age, ends with a dance that “has all the marked action and passionate fling of the Tarantella,” while funerals are attended by professional weeping-women who, in Welhaven’s words, “form a Christian choir of Choephoraë, that gives the burial scene a wild dramatic effect.”⁶⁰ “Sketches from Norway” is no more than ten pages long, but to construe the people of the miniature Norway on equal terms with the ancient cultures of southern Europe, Welhaven manages to gather references from the Bible, Classical Antiquity as well as from more modern-day European cultural history. The Scandinavian nations are only hinted at as part of a broader European community. In “Sketches from Norway” as well as in *Clara Raphael*, Scandinavianist ideas are dismissed and replaced either by transnational comparisons with a wider European community or, conversely, by a “significant Other.”

Unacknowledged relation to pan-nationalism

The representation of poverty as a national characteristic in Norwegian, Finnish and Swedish mid-nineteenth-century literature points to a third possibility of articulating the relation to pan-national ideas. Poverty certainly was hard to ignore in Scandinavia during the nineteenth century with recurring years of bad crops and famine.⁶¹ Starvation was indeed the immediate impetus for Almqvist’s “The Importance of Swedish Poverty” (1838) and for Runeberg’s poem, “Bonden Pavo” (1830, “Paavo the Peasant”); Runeberg was famously inspired by his first-hand experience in Saarijärvi of the people’s patience in their suffering. Paavo’s wife thinks that bad crops year after year means that they have been forsaken by God, but Paavo maintains like the Biblical Job: “God but tries us, he does not forsake us.”⁶² Obviously, scarcity had to be taken into account in Scandinavian nationalist ideology, but there is no self-evident way of how that should be done. Runeberg, Wergeland and Almqvist all celebrated poverty as a national virtue, or more to the point: the ability to cope in hard circumstances as a moral asset granting freedom. That definition of poverty as morality is a clear example of the trade in national identity.⁶³

Admittedly, the idea that the harsh climate of northern countries fosters liberty is ancient; Joep Leerssen traces it back to Hippocrates and Aristotle, and follows the north–south-opposition to the present day via Tacitus, Montesquieu’s

climate theory and Romantic nationalism.⁶⁴ Swedish patriotism had indeed made ample use of that thought already in the seventeenth century, when poverty and freedom (in terms of political sovereignty and the Protestant faith) were claimed as a characteristic of the Swedish people.⁶⁵ Romantic nationalism would rephrase this set of ideas to a national culture of inner feeling and identity.⁶⁶

Henrik Wergeland's appropriation of poverty as a Norwegian national characteristic was framed in opposition to the riches of Denmark: to value freedom over the comforts of life. The moral attitude to poverty – “poverty with honour” – was elaborated in his many efforts to educate the nation.⁶⁷ He edited, or more or less single-handedly wrote, two subsequent journals that specifically targeted the common people: *For Almuen* (*For the Common People*, 8 volumes 1830–34) and *For Arbeidsklassen* (*For the Working Class*, 2 volumes every month from December 1839–44). Actually, *For the Working Class* was initially called *For Fattigmand* (*For the Poor Man*), but that name was quickly changed. This second publication in particular was issued in impressively large numbers and had an impact on the Poor Laws issued in 1845.⁶⁸ Wergeland actually translated Runeberg's “Paavo the Peasant” for publication in *For the Working Class* in 1844, though that remains the only evidence of contact.⁶⁹ Historian Odd Arvid Storsveen stresses that Wergeland's main objective with *For the Common People* was to spread the ideas of national liberty and virtues among the peasantry, in a vein reminiscent of Enlightenment patriotic citizenship ideals, although Romantic nationalism informed his conception of the Norwegian people as intrinsically sovereign even in times of subjection.⁷⁰ The later publication, *For the Working Class*, still kept that thought, but distinguished between different elements of the common people; the poor had not fulfilled Wergeland's high hopes and he now concentrated on more practical advice.⁷¹ Wergeland was indeed known for wearing “vadelmel,” that is rough, homespun woollen cloth, typically used by the peasantry, manifesting in his own appearance that poverty was a virtue to be adopted also by the educated classes.⁷² Still, his attitude in the publications aimed at the poor people was more paternalistic than celebratory. The idealist conception of poverty featuring the poor people as role models for the upper classes was even more pronounced in Runeberg's and Almqvist's works.

In Runeberg's authorship, poverty as a national virtue is most explicitly celebrated in the epic poem “Christmas Eve”, which is often recognised as a turning-point in his authorship.⁷³ The literary historian Johan Wrede points out that the depiction of poverty as a national virtue was influenced by Runeberg's favourite author, Almqvist, and especially the representation of poverty in “The Importance of Swedish Poverty.” Wrede stresses that the idea of poverty as beneficial for moral education was indeed widespread, and admittedly the Finnish people was described in similar terms in Runeberg's earlier works. Still, there is evidence to suggest that Runeberg had access to an unpublished version of “The Importance of Swedish Poverty” when he started to work on “Christmas Eve” in 1838, and the depiction of poverty as a factor for nationalist identification and solidarity, cutting across social classes, is strikingly similar, Wrede contends.⁷⁴

The pivotal section, in Wrede's words "the Evangelical foundational text of national Finnish patriotism," constructing the Finnish people as poor, patient and honourable is induced by a meeting between two old soldiers.⁷⁵ The Major is proud to hear his old brother-in-arms, Pistol, reject the idea of being supported by his wealthier friend. As long as he can take his livelihood from the forest and the lake, Pistol will not be dependent. The Major gazes "transfigured and manly" at the soldier with a heart growing larger in his swelling bosom and responds with a tacit celebration of the Finnish nation:

Finland stood for his soul, that bleak, hidden and poverty-stricken, sacrosanct native land, and the gray cohort from Lake Saimaa's shores, the delight of his life, the pride of his lifetime, once more appeared to him [...].⁷⁶

The poor soldier Pistol reminds the Major not only of the army but of the "sacrosanct native land" itself, characterised by poverty. The poor, independent man represents Finland in Runeberg's poem, "humble, curt, and calm, with an iron-fast pride deep inside him."⁷⁷ The verse in the original is hexameter, which was far from an innocent or politically neutral matter at the time.⁷⁸ The Finnish historian Matti Klinge has stressed that Runeberg's background as a scholar of Classical Antiquity is shown not only in his expertise of the antique verse but also in the national virtues he ascribed to the Finnish people. The virtues of Runeberg's nationally defined people are in fact the cardinal virtues of stoicism: bravery, privation, silence, calm and above all *constantia*.⁷⁹ Still, the virtuous endurance of poverty is indeed a common Scandinavian trait.

Almqvist's essay "The Importance of Swedish Poverty," that inspired Runeberg in "Christmas Eve," appropriates poverty as a specifically Swedish characteristic. It is possibly the most re-issued text in Almqvist's authorship and had an impact on the construction of the Swedish people that extended well into the twentieth century.⁸⁰ In fact, poverty in Almqvist's account is the God-given purpose of the Swedish nation: "However, one thing – and a great thing – distinguishes the Swede from all others in Europe: the Swede is destined for *poverty*."⁸¹ He elaborates on this thought, claiming that poverty is a virtue in the sense "to *be able* to be poor. To be able do it right, with perfect freedom, soundness and independence."⁸² Whereas the rich become dependent on wealth, the poor are autonomous. To be sure, this characteristic chimes with older kinds of ethnotypes as well as with earlier climatological theories.⁸³ The difference is that these moral characteristics in Almqvist's work, in accordance with nineteenth-century Romantic nationalism, was understood as an inner feeling of national belonging that the upper classes must learn to appreciate from the poor people.⁸⁴

The construction of nationally defined peoples in Wergeland's, Runeberg's and Almqvist's authorships foregrounded poverty as a national virtue specific to each nation even though they clearly are defined by common Nordic circumstances. First of all, it's unlikely that anyone would claim poverty as a national

characteristic unaware of the transnational conditions, especially given the long tradition of poverty defining the idea of the north. Secondly, there are links connecting these representations other than harsh climate and years of bad crops. Although Wergeland was probably not aware of Almqvist's work, Runeberg and Almqvist were indeed friends and inspired one another's construction of their respective people.⁸⁵ Wergeland's, Runeberg's and Almqvist's works are all seeking to carve out a national identity, to establish criteria for the Norwegian, Finnish and Swedish peoples respectively, and these texts were all pivotal in that nation-building process. The relation to common pan-national ideas in these cases is clearly a defining feature of the construction of different Scandinavian peoples, though it remains unacknowledged. They knowingly built on earlier ethnotypes of the north and freely traded characteristics between each other, but still claimed these very same characteristics to be uniquely Norwegian, Finnish or Swedish.

Conclusions

Scandinavian nationalisms bore an intrinsic relation to pan-nationalism, and yet the most important result of this investigation is the sheer variety in constructions of nationally defined Scandinavian people in relation to ideas of a Scandinavian cultural community. The three major emancipation novels of Swedish, Norwegian and Danish literature respectively – Mathilde Fibiger's *Clara Raphael*, Camilla Collett's *The District Governor's Daughters* and Fredrika Bremer's *Hertha* – all consciously created a nationally defined people, though in strikingly different ways in terms of the relation to wider pan-Scandinavian ideas. Bremer's commitment to pan-Scandinavian ideas is explicit throughout her authorship, and women's sense of citizenship is nourished by Old Norse literature, understood as a common Scandinavian heritage. The transnational relation required for nation-building in Norway, according to Collett on the other hand, was a new way to make sense of the old Danish-Norwegian relation. Old Norse myth for her only represented a gloomy, by-gone history with no potential for women's emancipation. Fibiger's novel points to a third use of Old Norse literature: she presents it as stories about Danish heroes and Danish history. In *Clara Raphael* as well as in Welhaven's "Sketches from Norway," Scandinavianist ideas are dismissed and replaced by other kinds of transnational connections. In Fibiger's account Denmark's "significant Other," Germany, makes the Danish people appear by means of the First Schleswig War. Welhaven's "Sketches from Norway" construe the people of the miniature Norway on equal terms with the ancient cultures of southern Europe by replacing Scandinavia in transnational comparisons with a wider European community.

The representation of poverty as a national characteristic in Norwegian, Finnish and Swedish mid-nineteenth-century literature points to a third possibility of articulating the relation to pan-national ideas. The construction of nationally defined peoples in Wergeland's, Runeberg's and Almqvist's authorships

foregrounded poverty as a national virtue specific to each nation even though they were defined by common Nordic circumstances. They knowingly built on earlier ethnotypes of the north and freely traded characteristics between each other, but still claimed these very same characteristics to be uniquely Norwegian, Finnish or Swedish. The relation to common pan-national ideas in these cases is clearly a defining feature of the construction of different Scandinavian peoples, though it remains unacknowledged.

Notes

- 1 Furuland, *Romanen som vardagsvara*; cf. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.
- 2 Haarder Ekman, "Mitt hems gränser vidgades"; Giladi, "Origins and Characteristics of Macro-Nationalism"; Maxwell, "Pan-Nationalism," 8–12.
- 3 Hemstad, "I 'Tidens Fylde'; Hansen, "Bøker og skandinavisk forbrødring"; Forssell, *Författaren, förläggarna och forskarna*.
- 4 Cf. Giladi, "Origins and Characteristics of Macro-Nationalism."
- 5 See e.g. van Gerven, *Scandinavism*, 386.
- 6 Hemstad, "'Skandinavismens' tilkomst."
- 7 See the Introduction to this volume.
- 8 Maxwell, "Pan-Nationalism," 6; see also the Introduction to this volume.
- 9 Hemstad "'Skandinavismens' tilkomst."
- 10 The criteria for citizenship were codified rather late in the nineteenth century, in Sweden, for example, as late as 1858. Debates over the meaning of the concept of citizenship and the criteria for inclusion took place not only in the Parliaments and in the press but also in literature. Active citizenship was considered to be reserved for men, but liberal authors – female and male – at the time disagreed: they promoted women's contributions to the nation and included women as citizens. Bohlin, "Female Citizenship." For a discussion of the moral conception of citizenship in nineteenth-century Norway, see Ulvund, *Religious Otherness and National Identity in Scandinavia*.
- 11 Wulfsberg, "Kvinnefrigjøring og offentlighet"; Aslaksen, "Romanens virkningskraft."
- 12 Arping and Furuland, "Inledning," XXVIII–XXIX.
- 13 Seip, *Demringstid*; Haarder Ekman, *Mitt hems gränser vidgades*; Hemstad, *Fra Indian summer til nordisk vinter*.
- 14 See the Introduction to this volume; Maxwell, "Pan-Nationalism."
- 15 Bohlin, "Den svenska 1840-talsromanen som nationell kartografi."
- 16 Wrede, *Världen enligt Runeberg*, 242.
- 17 Wrede, *Världen enligt Runeberg*, 19, 337; Klinge, *Idyll och hot*, 15; Forssell, *Författaren, förläggarna och forskarna*; Bohlin, "Neglect, Grief, Revenge."
- 18 Bohlin, "Neglect, Grief, Revenge"; Bohlin, "Fattigdom som svensk kvalitet"; cf. Ulvund, *Religious Otherness and National Identity in Scandinavia*.
- 19 Cf. Haarder Ekman, "Mitt hems gränser vidgades," 154–58.
- 20 Wickström, "Nordic brothers before strange others."
- 21 See e.g. Bohlin, "Neglect, Grief, Revenge."
- 22 Bremer, *Brothers and Sisters* II, 67.
- 23 Bremer, *Brothers and Sisters* I, 32.
- 24 See e.g. Bohlin, "Geography of the Soul – History of Humankind."
- 25 Giladi, "Origins and Characteristics of Macro-Nationalism," 258.
- 26 Bremer, *Brothers and Sisters* II, 51, 55.
- 27 Grundtvig, *Nordens Mythologi*, 212.
- 28 Grundtvig, *Nordens Mythologi*, III, XX, 1, 7, 212.
- 29 Bremer, *Brothers and Sisters* II, 53–54.

- 30 Bremer, *Brothers and Sisters* II, 59. See also Bohlin, "Female Citizenship."
- 31 Bremer, *Hertha*, 59.
- 32 Bremer, *Hertha*, 232.
- 33 See e.g. Bremer, *Hertha*, 109. See also Arping and Furuland, "Inledning"; von Schnurbein, "Norn, Vampire, Female Christ."
- 34 Bremer, *A Diary*, 32.
- 35 Bremer, *A Diary*, 89. See also Bohlin, "Magi och nation," 61.
- 36 See Bohlin, "Neglect, Grief, Revenge," 100; cf. Edgren, "Traumakonstruktionen"; Engman, *Ett långt farväl*; Sandström, "Sveriges 1809."
- 37 Collett, *The District Governor's Daughters*, 191.
- 38 Seip, *Demringstid*, 80–91.
- 39 Skår, "Den danske herregård."
- 40 Skår, "Den danske herregård."
- 41 Collett, *The District Governor's Daughters*, 224. See also Skår, "Den danske herregård," 74–77.
- 42 Collett, *The District Governor's Daughters*, 224.
- 43 Nun, *Women of the Danish Golden Age*, 99; Kølle Martinsen, "A Shieldmaiden Born to Fight and Love," 213–16.
- 44 Fibiger, *Clara Raphael*, 50. There is to my knowledge no English translation of Fibiger's novel; the translations of the quotations are therefore my own.
- 45 On Grundtvig's three "fatherlands," see Møller, "Grundtvig, Danmark og Norden," 105.
- 46 Kølle Martinsen, "A Shieldmaiden Born to Fight and Love," 214; on the debate, see Wulfsberg, "Kvinnefrigjøring og offentlighet."
- 47 On vocational nationalism, see e.g. Smith, *Chosen Peoples*; Thorkildsen, "For Norge, kjempers fødeland"; Bohlin, "Geography of the Soul – History of Humankind."
- 48 Fibiger, *Clara Raphael*, 6–7.
- 49 Cf. Smith, *The Nation Made Real*.
- 50 Fibiger, *Clara Raphael*, 74.
- 51 Seip, *Demringstid*.
- 52 Seip, *Demringstid*, 455; Lindberger, *Wergeland och Sverige*.
- 53 "Sketches from Norway" was translated by H. Ward and Augusta Plesner, and first published in *Temple Bar: A London Magazine for Town and Country Readers* vol. 22 (1868): 387–96, and subsequently in New York in *The Eclectic Magazine* vol. 70 (1868): 472–76. Halvorsen, *Norsk forfatter-lexikon*, 371; see also Seip, *Demringstid*, 455.
- 54 Seip, *Demringstid*, 263.
- 55 Welhaven, "Sketches from Norway," 387, 390.
- 56 The English translation has "this strange race" (Welhaven, "Sketches from Norway," 390), but the original has "nation": "denne mærkelige Nation." Welhaven, *Samlede verker*. IV, 12.
- 57 Welhaven, "Sketches from Norway," 387.
- 58 Welhaven, "Sketches from Norway," 389.
- 59 Welhaven, "Sketches from Norway," 393.
- 60 Welhaven, "Sketches from Norway," 395–96.
- 61 See Kjellen, *Sociala idéer och motiv*.
- 62 Runeberg, "from Idylls and Epigrams 1830," 53. Nordberg, "Kommentar." Rainer Knapas has drawn attention to that "Paavo the Peasant" was published in *Finland: An English Journal devoted to the Cause of the Finnish People* (1899) as part of a campaign to counteract the ongoing Russification in Finland. Knapas comments: "Runeberg's 'Paavo the Peasant' in English translation was a satisfactory literary expression for the unyielding, strenuous Finnish people." Knapas, *Idyll och hjältemod*, 68, my transl.
- 63 Thiesse, "National Identities."
- 64 Leerssen, "The North," 15–18.
- 65 Nordin, *Ett fattigt men fritt folk*, 179, 235–66.
- 66 Bohlin, "Fattigdom som svensk kvalitet."

- 67 Uthaug, *Et Verdensdyp av Frihet*, 255; Storsveen, *Mig selv*, 109.
- 68 Storsveen, *Mig selv*, 357–66.
- 69 Lindberger, *Wergeland och Sverige*, 39, 62–68.
- 70 Storsveen, *Mig selv*, 357–66.
- 71 Storsveen, *Mig selv*, 116–118, 360.
- 72 Uthaug, *Et Verdensdyp av Frihet*, 255; Stengrundet, “Vadmelsideologi.”
- 73 Wrede, *Världen enligt Runeberg*, 250.
- 74 Wrede, *Världen enligt Runeberg*, 218, 237–43, 246–53.
- 75 Wrede, *Världen enligt Runeberg*, 252, my transl.
- 76 Prose translation by Tore Wretö and Zelek S. Herman in Wretö, *J.L. Runeberg*, 60.
- 77 Prose translation by Tore Wretö and Zelek S. Herman in Wretö, *J.L. Runeberg*, 60.
- 78 In accordance with Schiller’s idea of naïve literature, Runeberg perceived hexameter as a more genuine metre, connected to nature and folk poetry. He slandered the Swedish poet Esaias Tegnér for using alexandrines in his nationalist poem “Svea” (1811). Klinge, *Den politiska Runeberg*, 154–55, 195; Wrede, *Världen enligt Runeberg*, 105–06. Every nineteenth-century nation required, in Anne-Marie Thiesse’s words, “un Homère à soi.” Thiesse, *La fabrique de l’écrivain national*, 33–59.
- 79 Klinge, *Den politiska Runeberg*, 385–87.
- 80 Bohlin, “Fattigdom som svensk kvalitet.”
- 81 Almqvist, “Svenska Fattigdomens betydelse,” 290. There is no English translation of Almqvist’s essay; the translations of the quotations are therefore my own.
- 82 Almqvist, “Svenska Fattigdomens betydelse,” 290.
- 83 Cf. Leerssen, “The North.”
- 84 Bohlin, “Fattigdom som svensk kvalitet.”
- 85 Lindberger, *Wergeland och Sverige*.

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