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*The Bridge* and the *Newsletter* are semi-annual publications of the Society. Manuscripts dealing with the Danish immigrant experience in North America are invited. Address submissions to Peter L. Petersen, Editor of *The Bridge*, 1407 Twenty-Sixth Street, Canyon, TX 79015. E-mail repete71@hotmail.com

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Preface

by Birgit Flemming Larsen and Linda M. Chimenti
Editors

This volume is a compilation of thirty-four of the forty-five papers and essays presented at the conference Danish Culture, Past and Present: The Last Two Hundred Years held in Des Moines, Iowa October 13–16, 2005. The conference was organized by The Danish American Heritage Society in cooperation with Grand View College, Dana College, The Danish Immigrant Museum, and The Danish American Archive-Dana College.

The papers and essays cover a wide range of topics, both scholarly and personal, and we wish to take this opportunity to thank the authors for their cooperation during the editorial process, not least their quick answers to our many questions and requests along the way.

Our thanks and appreciation also is extended to Dr. James Iversen, Dr. Peter L. Petersen, Dr. Helle Mathiasen, and Ms. Carol Bamford for their assistance in the preparation of this work.

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Foreword

by Helle Mathiasen, Conference Chair

Since its founding in 1977, the Danish American Heritage Society (DAHS) has encouraged and supported efforts to research and preserve our ethnic heritage in Canada and the United States. The Society believes in the intrinsic value of building bridges between ideas and people on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. An additional goal is the promotion of fellowship among those with an interest in events relating to Danish life, culture, and history.

In 2006, the Society took an important step in this direction by sponsoring an international conference, “Danish Culture, Past and Present: The Last Two Hundred Years,” held at Embassy Suites Hotel and Grand View College in Des Moines, Iowa. This Conference was under the protection of His Royal Highness The Prince Consort of Denmark, and by the Governor of the State of Iowa. Co-sponsors for the Conference were Grand View College, Iowa; Dana College, Nebraska; the Danish Immigrant Museum, Iowa; and the Danish Immigrant Archive–Dana College, Nebraska. The event was attended by 420 individuals representing 30 of the United States, and Denmark.

This was the third and largest conference promoted by the DAHS, and a commemoration of the bicentennial of Hans Christian Andersen’s birth and the 150th anniversary of the birth of Kristian Østergaard and the death of Søren Kierkegaard. The program consisted of a broad survey of important facets of Danish and Danish-American culture during the last two hundred years as well as a number of social events. The wide-ranging topics included scholarly analyses of literary lions, great philosophers and theologians, immigration issues, and Danish technology, music, art, and film. Speakers included invited scholars from China, Denmark, and the United States as well as specialists in the various areas. Live happenings embraced song, a piano recital, poetry reading, storytelling, and a show of costumed child actors from Odense illustrating characters from Andersen’s fairy tales. Among the
scheduled presenters were historians and librarians, a documentary filmmaker, a photographer, museum curators, literary scholars, writers and composers, a storyteller, an agronomist, and a pianist. A Doctor of Medicine and two graduate students (University of California, Berkeley, and Indiana University, Bloomington) presented papers.

As was the case with the Society’s 2002 conference in Omaha, Nebraska, all speakers were invited to submit their papers for publication in the Conference Proceedings. The thirty-three submissions in this volume, many of them illustrated, have been expertly selected and edited by Birgit Flemming Larsen and Linda M. Chimenti. All the major program categories are represented, offering abundant evidence of the variety and depth of the presenters’ learning. The fourteen topic sequences follow the Conference program: Karen Blixen (Isak Dinesen), Danish Immigration, Danish-American History, Søren Kierkegaard, Danish and American Communities, Danish Technology and Global Community, N.F. S. Grundtvig, Danish Literature, Danish Musical Culture around the Globe, Hans Christian Andersen, Danish Painting and Sculpture, Danish-American Literature (the largest section), Danish Film Then and Now, and Danish Song and Storytelling.

The Danish American Heritage Society is pleased to offer this volume as a chapter of its history.
Opening Remarks
by James Iversen

Ladies and gentlemen, as president of the Danish American Heritage Society (DAHS), it is my great pleasure and privilege to bid all of you a very sincere velkommen to this, the third international conference on Danish Immigration to North America. There are approximately 420 people registered for this conference, representing 31 of the 50 United States, plus Washington, D.C., and Denmark. I think one of the remarkable aspects of this conference is that so many people are here from different sections of the country and also from Denmark who have not met each other before, so it is a wonderful opportunity for us to make new acquaintances and to exchange new ideas.

Just as we did three years ago at our conference in Omaha, we have a number of anniversaries to celebrate, and this time those anniversaries form the theme and the content of our conference. The 200th anniversary of the birth of the great storyteller Hans Christian Andersen is the primary anniversary we are celebrating, but it is also the 200th anniversary of the birth of Danish ballet master August Bournonville, and the 150th anniversaries of the birth of Danish American poet Kristian Østergaard and the death of the great philosopher Søren Kirkegaard, and we will hear about those and others as the conference progresses.

We are very glad you came, and we hope you have a great experience while you are here in Central Iowa. The Midwest area was a most important destination for many of the early immigrants from Denmark in the latter half of the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th, and many of their descendants continue to call the Midwest their home. Therefore, of course, we thus have a number of very important Danish American institutions here in Iowa and the adjacent states.

The DAHS publishes The Bridge, a journal of Danish American history and culture, and a Newsletter, each twice yearly. The Society was started 28 years ago—in 1977—by Arnold Bodtker and his
associates in Junction City, Oregon. We celebrate Arnold Bodtker's legacy with the Edith and Arnold Bodtker Grant for Research or Internship. Thus far, we have granted fellowship funds to six graduate students from various institutions: Aalborg University, the University of Southern Denmark, the University of Copenhagen, and the University of California, Berkeley. The first international conference of this sort took place 10 years ago. That was the Marcus Lee Hansen Immigration Conference held at the Danish Emigration Archive in Aalborg, Denmark in June and July, 1992.

We started planning for this conference more than two years ago, and it was about two years ago that Dr. Helle Mathiasen, a DAHS board members and professor at the University of Arizona, agreed to serve as the conference chairperson, and Vice President Carol Bamford at Grand View College agreed to be the vice-chair of the conference. I am happy to report that these two talented people have turned those two years of extreme hard work, diligence, and concern into what I am sure will be a great event these next couple of days.

I would like to recognize the leaders of the institutions which are co-sponsoring this conference: Janet Philipp, the President of Dana College, in Blair, Nebraska, founded by Danish Immigrants in 1884; Kent Henning, the President of Grand View College in Des Moines, Iowa, founded by Danish immigrants in 1896; John W. Nielsen, the leader of the Danish Immigrant Archive at Dana College; and John Mark Nielsen, the Executive Director of the Danish Immigrant Museum, founded in 1983 in Elk Horn, Iowa.

It is now my pleasure to introduce Minister Counselor Lene Balleby from the Danish Embassy in Washington, D.C., for her opening remarks.
Conference Opening Remarks

by Lene Balleby

When I first heard about this year’s conference, it was being launched as a celebration and recognition of two of Denmark’s most famous sons: Hans Christian Andersen and Søren Kirkegaard. But looking at the extensive program for the upcoming days, it is clear that this program is also meant to present a much wider picture of the richness and scope of Danish culture and that it will indeed live up to its title: “Danish Culture, Past and Present.”

Tonight I would like to start off with the present and some areas of new relations where Denmark has also lately experienced extensive media coverage. It is always well and good to remember and revere the old, established icons of culture, but it is also good to see the tremendous American interest in the new and coming arts and artists. These must be nurtured and helped along so that Denmark can continue to inspire and enlighten through great art and cultural events. For a small country like Denmark it is absolutely vital that we keep giving priority to these “softer” values and keep creating the right environment for artists to work and thrive in. It is vital not only in order for people like you to have new and exciting subjects to work with, show off, and spread the word about, but also because it is an integral part of keeping our roots healthy and strong for future generations.

Denmark has so much to offer in the cultural fields today and I would like to briefly focus on the world of design. The New York Times two weeks ago proclaimed Copenhagen to be the European Hot Spot for design. I can personally vouch for the fact that Danish industrial design is doing better than ever. With the recent scoop that resulted in Danish furniture exclusively adorning the reopened Museum Of Modern Art in New York and a major exhibit in Washington, D.C. in 2004 that featured several Danish women designers, there really is an almost unprecedented focus on Danish design in the United States at this time. This fall, Copenhagen is
also the host city of INDEX 2005—a world event for design and innovation set to take place every four years in Copenhagen. This is the first year of this event and yet more proof of just how thriving a cultural industry Danish design is.

Speaking of what I like to term “cultural industries,” I’d also like to draw your attention to another area where Denmark is making great strides on the international stage, and that is within fashion. Danish fashion is rapidly becoming a major trendsetter and is on the absolute forefront when it comes to mixing the “artistic” and innovative with what is also commercially viable.

Other vibrant areas of Danish culture include the more classical branches such as film, dance, and music, but in present company there is probably not much I could tell you about these “flagship” areas. Allow me, though, to briefly mention the brand new opera house in Copenhagen that has garnered rave reviews throughout the world for both its architecture and its superb performances. In connection with this new opera, it is worth mentioning that the famous Danish composer Poul Ruders was recently honored by the extremely prestigious Koussevitzky Music Foundation with a commission for his Symphony No. 3, and the work likely will have its world premier at this unique Copenhagen venue. The Koussevitsky Foundation works under the auspices of the United States Library of Congress and is thus right at the very heart of one of the most important cultural institutions in this great country.

So there is much to be proud of and to look forward to in coming years, and I hope that Denmark can keep counting on people like you, and on your enthusiasm, to keep spreading the word about Denmark and all her wonderful qualities!

But as with most things in life there is always room for improvement and when it comes to spreading the word about Denmark and Danish arts and culture here in the United States, more can always be done. Since we are all gathered here, I would like to seize this opportunity to direct an appeal to you.

At the present time, Denmark has two official representatives, I and my colleague in New York, Irene Krarup, who, on a daily basis, work with promoting Danish culture here in the United States. Needless to say, there is only so much we can do, and this is where
my appeal to you comes in. Irene and I would like to organize a much more efficient and strong cultural network. Of course we both already have a network to draw on, but it could be so much stronger if it had even more representation from around the country. When we are approached by Danish artists who want to perform here in the United States, we often can’t set up anything for them in either New York or Washington, and we have to tell them that there’s nothing we can do for them. But just because an event can’t happen on the east coast shouldn’t mean that it can’t happen somewhere else!

What I would like is—in the course of this conference—is for anyone interested in joining a list of “cultural frontrunners” to get in touch with either me or Irene and give us your contact information so that we can send information on to you about some of these adventurous and capable artists. This year’s many Hans Christian Andersen events have proved to me that so much can be done by people such as you—the grassroots—out across the country. Because you are the people who have the knowledge about your communities and know precisely how and what is possible in your neck of the woods.

I hope this message hasn’t fallen too much outside the norm for opening remarks. I simply couldn’t let this glorious opportunity to “enlist” some cultural foot soldiers slip by! Let me now thank you for all the work you are already doing and for the dedication you show when it comes to maintaining and nurturing vital and vibrant links—both past and present—to Denmark. Thanks to all of you who every day, year in and year out, help citizens of the United States learn more about Denmark and thereby help to strengthen the already strong ties between our two countries. May the Danish-American relations continue to flourish for many years to come.

I wish you all an enjoyable conference.
Picturing Karen Blixen—Artist, Charlatan, Heretic, and Iconoclast: European Storyteller in the American Marketplace

by Marianne Stecher-Hansen

In one of her stories, published in 1942 at a midpoint in her literary career, Karen Blixen addresses the difficult relationship of the artist to the public:

All human relationships have in them something monstrous and cruel. But the relation of the artist to the public is amongst the most monstrous. Yes, it is as terrible as marriage. (*Winter’s Tales* 291)

These words are spoken by a character named Charlie Despard (whose initials mimic the maiden name of the author, Karen Christenze Dinesen) in the collection entitled *Winter’s Tales* (*Vinter-Eventyr*).1 Charlie portrays the figure of a writer in crisis in two tales that frame the American edition of *Winter’s Tales*, “The Young Man with the Carnation” and “The Consolatory Tale.” In the final tale, Charlie laments to his friend, Æneas, that,

We are, the artist and the public, much against our own will, dependent upon one another for our very existence.... Where there is no work of art to look at, or to listen to, there can be no public either (*Winter’s Tales* 291-292)

Charlie and Æneas go on to discuss the “merciless” relationship between the artist and his public. Karen Blixen stated in an interview with *Berlingske Aftenavis* on 21 September 1941, that life required courage: “Mod er Menneskets svar på livets kår” [Courage is humanity’s answer to the conditions of life] (*Samtaler med Karen Blixen* 93). *Mod* (courage) also describes her strategy in relationship to a “merciless” public. *Mod er Svaret* [Courage is the Answer] by Grethe F. Rostbøll also is the title of the most recent Danish study dealing with Karen Blixen’s authorship, specifically, the reception of her work in the United States and England.
The intent of this paper is to explore Danish writer Karen Blixen’s relationship to her public, particularly her Anglo-American public, and to demonstrate how the author constructed artistic personae in order to market her fiction in the world marketplace. Readers know of Blixen’s willingness to strike poses and play roles. The idea here is to take a closer look at photographic representations of the author in order to understand how Blixen utilized media to craft an effective and enigmatic public image. In her fiction Blixen attributed divine freedoms to her artistic and aristocratic literary characters. A study of photographs of the author, however, reveals that there is little that is free or spontaneous in the scrupulously staged self-representations as artist-writer. Blixen is the strong guiding hand behind her public image and critical reception; her success in England and America may be attributed in great part to her deliberate and consistent work behind the scenes as promoter and, to a great extent, producer of her public image.

An analysis of a series of images, particularly those that were used for American public relations, reveals a writer who exhibits a “merciless” loyalty to particular artistic ideals throughout her career. As the narrator of her celebrated tale “The Blank Page” remarks:

Where the story-teller is loyal, eternally and unswervingly loyal to the story, there, in the end, silence will speak. Where the story has been betrayed, silence is but emptiness.” (Last Tales 100)

Blixen understood the danger of giving up the bluff, of betraying the story, of relaxing the pose. She recognized the risks involved in positioning oneself as spectacle in relationship to the spectator. She acknowledged the fact that her performance as artist was at the mercy of an unforgiving public and identified the precariously thin line between an artistic posture and a humiliating caricature, acknowledging that, in the end, the power to make the determination between bluff and art lay with the public. As Charlie Despard explains in the concluding Winter’s tale, “A Consolatory Tale”:

Yes in short and in truth, every work of art is both the idealization and the perversion, the caricature of itself. And
the public has power to make it, for good or evil, the one or
the other. (Winter’s Tales 293).

In the following analysis, I will delineate four distinct phases or
figurative “snap-shots” in the literary career of Karen Blixen, each
illustrated by the accompanying reproductions: first, Blixen’s debut
under the pseudonym “Isak Dinesen,” the author of Seven Gothic
Tales (1934; Syv fantastiske Fortællinger, 1935); second, Blixen during
World War II when she published Gengældens Veje (1944; The
Angellic Avengers, 1946) under the pseudonym “Pierre Andrézel”;
third, Baroness Blixen during the mid-1950s, when she fashioned
herself as an intellectual “heretic” and radio-persona; fourth, in 1959
when Blixen visited the United States and made her first and only
public performances for American audiences.

In the earliest professional
photographs of Karen Blixen, it is
not difficult to identify the
construction of an artistic-
identity. Blixen uses the
photographic medium to convey
an artistic vision as well as to
dramatize the roles which are
played by literary characters in
her fiction. First, consider the
1934 photo by Kehlet (Figure 1),
the photograph that was the
American public’s first view of
the mysterious author of Seven
Gothic Tales and was utilized in
the launching of the book in the
United States in early April 1934.
The aloof and slender figure, with
her hips thrust forward, poses as both artist and seductress, a figure
frequently celebrated in her fiction and associated with the seductive
strategies of storytelling (usually a clever female who can pull the
wool over the eyes of an enchanted male listener). For example, in
the posthumously published Ehrengard (1963) the author explores
Kierkegaardian notions about the aesthetic existence. In this text,
Herr Cazotte articulates the idea in a letter to Ehrengard that,
You call an artist a seducer and are not aware that you are paying him the highest of compliments. The whole attitude of the artist towards the Universe is that of a seducer.
(Ehrengard 219)

Consider also in this context two important and well-known photographs (Figures 2 and 3), taken by Danish photographer Rie Nissen in 1935, the year that Seven Gothic Tales appeared in Denmark in Blixen’s own Danish re-composition as Syv fantastiske Fortællinger. With these stylized photographs Karen Blixen established her pseudonymous identity as “Isak Dinesen.” Forty-nine years old at her debut, Karen Blixen might be considered a late-born writer; “Isak,” meaning laughter in Hebrew, evokes the Biblical Isak, the late-born son of Abraham and Sarah and points to the role of a harsh and whimsical divinity in her fiction. Further, the choice of the maiden name, “Dinesen,” underscores that author’s strong affinity with her father, Wilhelm Dinesen, the soldier, adventurer, and writer, as well as suggesting an affinity with the Greek god Dionysus. The viewer notes in these close-ups the Kohl-lined eyes, the effort at a seductive gaze and an enigmatic grin that hints at repressed laughter. In the turban-framed face (Figure 2), the viewer
is caught by the mischievous and ironic demeanor of the storyteller. The Oriental turban alludes to the archetypal female storyteller of ancient Arabian and European storytelling traditions, evoking the figure of Scheherazade, the princess of the frame story of the *Arabian Nights*; Scheherazade circumvents death at the hands of her jealous husband, the Sultan Schahrijar, by telling stories throughout a thousand and one nights. Each morning at dawn the princess quietly falls silent without betraying the story; thus, she stays her own death and leaves her listener (the murderous husband) waiting for the story to resume. The central female figure in “The Deluge at Norderney” of *Seven Gothic Tales*, Miss Malin Nat-og-Dag, directly alludes to Scheherazade in a final, cryptic remark uttered in French at the very conclusion of the tale: “À ce moment de sa narration,” she said, “Scheherazade vit paraître le matin, et, discrète, se tut” [At that moment of her narration, Scheherazade saw morning coming and discreetly became quiet] (*Seven Gothic Tales* 79).

The fourth photograph from this period (Figure 4) is Karen Blixen costumed as “Pierrot,” also taken by Rie Nissen (actually this particular photograph dates to 1954, when a second series of “Pierrot” pictures was taken by Rie Nissen, twenty years after the original series from the author’s debut). Here again Blixen dramatizes a literary archetype well-known in the European dramatic tradition. Popularized by the *Italian commedia dell’arte* (Danes know him from the Tivoli adaptation), Pierrot is the clown, fool, and joker; he is a tragic-comic figure who suffers from his unrequited love for Columbine. Perhaps he is related to the figure of a joker and charlatan central to Blixen’s fiction? Kasparson, for example, who figures as an imposter of the Cardinal in “The Deluge at Norderney,” is one of the greatest charlatans of Dinesen’s tales. 

![Figure 4](image-url)
“There never was a great artist who was not a bit of a charlatan; nor a great king, nor a god,” he states (Seven Gothic Tales 58-59). Readers of Blixen will remember the oft-quoted line from “The Deluge at Norderney,” the conversation between the Cardinal (actually, Kasparson) and Miss Malin Nat-og-Dag in which she voices the opinion that:

Truth is for tailors and shoemakers, My Lord. I, on the contrary, have always held that the Lord has a penchant for masquerades. (Seven Gothic Tales 24)

More directly—perhaps Pierrot is, after all, not a charlatan—Pierrot figures as a character in Blixen’s posthumously published tale, “Carnival” (1975) in which the characters are gathered in a Copenhagen villa following a masquerade ball. The ways in which Blixen “costumed” herself in various guises as an old world European storyteller is certainly related to her successful international reception. In North America and in England, Blixen found a public who appreciated this performance of a cultured, refined continental European who seemed to predate the World Wars and modern movements in art. The introduction to the original American edition of Seven Gothic Tales, published in early April 1934, was written by American writer Dorothy Canfield Fischer (1879–1958), an enthusiastic supporter of Dinesen who had served as her liaison to Robert Haas of Random House. In her introduction to this first edition, Canfield Fischer plays along with Blixen’s choice of a male pseudonym and her desire for anonymity, by writing: “The author is a Continental European, writing in English although that is not native to his pen” (Canfield, vi). In a critical review published in The Nation on 18 April 1934, a contemporary American critic praised Blixen’s linguistic talent in particular:

Here is a linguistic triumph for which there is probably no precedent. Barring a few slips from idiom which are so attractive as to seem premeditated, the English of the book is such as I for one have never seen written by a foreigner to the language . . . If, as rumor has it, the author is a Danish woman who never wrote a book before . . . we have a phenomenon so astonishing as to be incredible . . . I am
willing to believe any miracle. (Mark Von Doren, *The Nation*)
The review concludes enthusiastically with a discussion of Isak Dinesen's untimely characters, “May there be a moment...for these utterly graceful and outrageous people of Isak Dinesen. It is possible that we shall never see their like again.”

Across the Atlantic, the distinguished Constant Huntington of Putnam Press in London wrote to Blixen on 18 July 1934 regarding the impending publication of the British edition of *Seven Gothic Tales*:

To my mind Seven Gothic Tales is the most important work in literature that has appeared in the English language this century....Such a work as yours is indeed rare and I am sure it will be greeted with enthusiastic appreciation by the English intellectual world. It has universal quality and if it made a success in America, it should make ten times greater success in England where its details and allusions are near and more familiar. (*Breve* 1: 157)

Unlike Blixen’s Danish countrymen, the Americans and the English reading public recognized and appreciated her parodic use of the Gothic genre and conventions. In April 1934, *Seven Gothic Tales* was voted “Book-of-the Month” in New York and became an American best-seller.

In light of this discussion of Blixen’s public image and reception history, I might mention some of the author’s own comments regarding her feelings toward America. In July 1932, the year following her return from Africa, Blixen wrote in a letter to her friend Gustav Mohr that “Jeg holder ikke af Europa, og kommer aldrig til det mere” [I do not like Europe and will never again come to hold it dear] (*Breve* 1: 89). She anticipated the troubling political climate in Europe and the growing clouds of war, predicting that “Det er vel rimeligt at Syndfloden kommer over os alle snart” [It is reasonable that the Flood or Deluge will soon be upon us] (*Breve* 1: 89). In July 1938, following the very successful publication of *Seven Gothic Tales* and *Out of Africa*, Karen Blixen wrote to Robert Haas in New York: “I have a strong feeling that there is a renovation of our civilization for which we must look to America. It has struck me when I have read American Books or met with Americans. I should like to settle down in the States for a year or two” (*Breve* 1: 281).
The second phase or “snapshot” of Blixen’s international literary career is represented by the fifth photograph (Figure 5); it is taken during the German Occupation (1940–1945), a period during which the author wrote and published a parodic Gothic novel, *Gengældelsens Veje* (1944), first published in English following World War II as *The Angelic Avengers* (the British edition in 1946 and the American edition in 1947). This photograph by Olaf Kjelstrup captures Blixen at work in the Spring of 1943 in *Ewalds Stue* (Ewald’s study, named for the Danish poet Johannes Ewald who resided at Rungstedlund in 1775), the study facing east toward the Sound where the author often sat and worked at her father’s desk. The viewer might imagine that the typescript at hand is *Gengældelsens Veje*. Unlike the staged photographs of “Isak Dinesen,” here Blixen is revealed as an unglamorous and homely middle-aged writer consumed by her work.

The publication of *Gengældelsens Veje* in Denmark in September 1944 was a carefully staged event, under the pen name “Pierre Andrézel.” The title page of the original Danish edition fictitiously presents the novel as a translation, “Paa dansk ved Clara Svendsen” (In Danish by Clara Svendsen [Blixen’s personal secretary]) and the back cover hints that the manuscript was written by a mysterious Frenchman, stating that “Han menes at være født o. 1915 i Rouen” (He is believed to have been born in ca. 1915 in Rouen). When Blixen launched the advertising campaign in 1946 for the American edition of the work, she insisted that the pseudonym “Pierre Andrézel” be maintained and sent the publisher a photograph of her youngest brother Anders Dinesen (1894–1976) that was to be used to portray the mysterious French author.
The melodramatic plot of *The Angelic Avengers*, set in the 1840s, concerns two innocent girls who are held captive by a sinister Scottish Pastor and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Penhallow. The Protestant couple pose as kind philanthropists while engaging in a “white slave-trade” of innocent young women. The novel was immediately interpreted by Danish critics as anti-Nazi allegory that depicted the plight of the naïve Danes at the mercy of the diabolical Germans, although the author consistently denied (once her identity had been discovered) that such a political allegory had been intended. Blixen was continually annoyed by critics who attached moral and political implications to this Gothic parody and insisted in a letter dated 24 April 1946 to Dorothy Canfield Fischer that she had simply written the novel “to keep alive within the bleak, dumb prison-air of the time, I felt that I must have a little bit of fun or I should die!” (*Breve* 1: 443). To Karen Blixen’s dismay and chagrin, *The Angelic Avengers* was nominated as “Book-of-the-Month” in the United States. Although Blixen initially strongly resisted the nomination of the novel, she eventually agreed to this distinction.

Despite her reluctance toward “Book-of-the-Month-Club” status for this light-hearted work, Karen Blixen served as the strong guiding hand behind the positive critical reception of this work in America. In an interview with the *Paris Review* in 1956, Blixen finally publicly acknowledged her authorship of this novel, which she referred to as her “illegitimate child” (quoted in Langbaum 197). Already in March of 1946 she had written to her publisher, Robert Haas:

> As to the ‘implications’ in the book...they hang together with the situation here in Denmark at the time when the book was published, when the German Censorship was at its most severe, and also with Winston Churchill’s little joke about the Danes, when he referred to us as ‘the Gangster’s canary birds.’ It might possibly be mentioned in an advertising campaign that the book had been published in Denmark at such a time. (*Breve* 1: 435)

Blixen’s reference to Winston Churchill’s satirical remark about the Danes as the “gangster’s pet canary,” a reference to Occupied
Denmark’s status as “a model protectorate” in Hitler’s Third Reich must, in fact, have been an idea employed in the construction of the novel. Churchill’s infamous metaphor is directly evoked in a dialogue between the two central characters, the captive girls, Zosine and Lucan:

Is it not a degrading, a sickening knowledge that we two are safe from them? We are their two little canary birds in a neat little cage. They give us birdseed, water and clean sand with great care, and never for a day neglect their task. Who shall dare, when they see the little birds hopping from perch to perch and singing out their happiness and gratitude, to call their master cruel and inhuman? (The Angelic Avengers 175–176)

It is not difficult to appreciate that critics and readers quickly found in The Angelic Avengers a political allegory that addressed the pressing concerns of the day, despite the author’s feigned protestations to the contrary.

Following the staging of “Pierre Andrézel” and the immediate postwar period, Karen Blixen cultivated yet another public persona during the mid-1950s. The next figurative “snap-shot” of Blixen (Figure 6) is a professional photograph taken in Rome in May 1956. The author is elegantly poised, dressed in black, and seated against the backdrop of a Roman room; she captivates the spectator with a direct gaze into the camera. Although cross-legged, her body is positioned openly to invite the reciprocal gaze of the onlooker. Similar to the 1935 photographs by Rie Nissen, the repressed smile suggests a hidden joke or secret. I propose that in this self-representation from 1956 Blixen positions herself as an intellectual “heretic” and self-proclaimed witch (during the Middle Ages witches were, after all, persecuted as heretics by the Church). In radio talks and essays
from this period, Blixen countered some of the dominant intellectual tendencies of the postwar period. In Danish intellectual life, she played the role of matriarchal mentor for the literary journal Heretica (published 1948–1954) and cultivated close relationships with young Danish intellectuals and writers, such as Aage Henriksen, Thorkild Bjørnvig, Knud W. Jensen, and Ole Wivel. Many will recall the well-known photograph of the hooded Blixen, witch-like in appearance, holding a small dog, standing next to the young poet Thorkild Bjørnvig.

In order to understand the visual evocation of the unholy witch, the reader is well advised to consider Blixen’s essay, En Baaltale med 14 Aars Forsinkelse (1953; translated as “Oration at a Bonfire, Fourteen Years Late,” 1979). The oration was originally delivered at Nathalie Zahle’s teacher’s seminary in October 1952, and later as a radio address in January 1953. In this controversial essay, the author stages herself as a heretical witch ready to throw herself upon a flaming pyre. Blixen was likely thinking of herself as Joan of Arc whom she describes with admiration in her fiction as a “white hot angel.” Her views on women in this context are particularly interesting, as “Feminism” must have represented for Blixen another one of the dogmatic ideologies of the twentieth century, which threatened to confine her artistically and philosophically.

In another essay from this period, “Daguerrotypier” (1951; translated as “Daguerreotypes,” 1979) delivered as a radio address in January of 1951, Blixen identifies the witch as a powerfully subversive figure of female independence:

Men der var en Kvinde som, længe inden Ordet “Kvindeemancipation” blev brugt, eksisterede uafhængig af Manden og havde sit Tyngdepunkt i sig selv. Det var Heksen. (“Daguerreotypier” 39)

[But there was a woman who long before the words “emancipation of women” came into use, existed independently of a man and had her own center of gravity. She was the witch.] (Daguerreotypes 33)

In the same essay, Blixen also clearly identifies the witch as a heretic:

Man maa tro at Sagen for de fleste Mænd staar saaledes, at en Kvinde, som kan undvære Manden, givetvis ogsaa kan
The idea that women should be viewed by men as engaged in an alliance with demonic powers was appealing to Blixen. Such an alliance implies that women, comfortable with the Manichean belief “that God and the Devil are one,” as Blixen writes, fearlessly court the darker powers (Out of Africa 19). The reader also might recall the remark of Boris von Schreckenstein in the tale “The Monkey” who regards his Aunt Catinka, and thinks to himself:

Women...When they are old enough to have done with the business of being women, and can let loose their strength, must be the most powerful creatures in the whole world. (Seven Gothic Tales 119)

In assuming the guise of an archetypal female figure, Blixen again deliberately distances her public persona from the progressive movements of the modern era. In the introduction to the essay, En Baaltale med 14 Aars Forsinkelse, Blixen muses that, although the original invitation to speak at an International Women’s Congress in Copenhagen in 1939 may have been given “under forkerte Forudsætninger” [on mistaken assumptions], the feminists “[har] maaske alligevel ubevidst kaldt paa som de kunde bruge” [may nevertheless have evoked from me something of which they may make use] (En Baaltale 8). In her speech of 1953, fourteen years later, Blixen relates that she had informed the chair of the committee Mrs. Estrid Hein that, “jeg er ikke Kvindesagskvinde” [I am not a feminist]. In reaction to this statement, the leading feminist had responded: “Er Du da imod Kvindesagen?” [Are you against the women’s movement?] Blixen claims that she replied ambiguously “det kan jeg heller ikke sige at jeg er” [I can’t say that I’m that either] (En Baaltale 9). I would argue that in En Baaltale, Blixen’s comments on the women’s movement of the past hundred years offer evidence
of an aesthetic a-feminist vision. To be sure, Blixen is not ungrateful toward her foremothers, acknowledging a debt of gratitude to the early nineteenth-century partisans of feminism: “Jeg ved, i hvad Gæld jeg staar til de gamle Kvindesagskvinder i deres Grav” [I know in what debt I stand to the older women of the women’s movement now in their graves] (En Baaltale 26). But it becomes apparent that she celebrates their “charlantry” far more than their progressive gains:

The early women of the women’s movement were not only just, courageous, and unswervingly loyal—they were also sly!...they adapted themselves as in their time the Achaeans did in Troy, by going within the walls in a wooden horse. That is, they made their entry in disguise, in a costume which intellectually or psychologically represented a male. (Daguerreotypes 80)

These pioneer feminists, cross-dressed as males, attract attention in Blixen’s text for their sly and subversive strategies and for their male mimicry. Here, the heretical Blixen celebrates the subversive strategies of nineteenth-century women far more than their progressive goals.

With regard to Blixen’s persona as intellectual heretic in the 1950s, I would argue that her commentary on the state of the women’s movement evidences a static conception of gender questions. Her statements imply that the mission has been accomplished:

But today it is over a hundred years since the concept of feminism first arose and since the grand old women struck
the first blow for us. I wonder whether they would not themselves look upon it as a triumph, as a demonstration of the victory they have won, that we today can lay down the weapons they took up?] (Daguerreotypes 79–80)

Blixen ventures that woman can now “frejdigt kan opslaa sin Ridderhjelm og vise Verden, at hun er Kvinde og ingen formummet Skælm” [confidently open her visor and show the world that she is a woman and no disguised rogue] (En Baaltale 27).3 Perhaps this statement may be read as a call for women to reject both imitation and protest and to turn to the female experience as an autonomous source of art.4 Quoting the nineteenth-century Danish writer Meïr Goldschmidt (1819–1887), Blixen implies that women have much to teach men regarding the art of living:

Kvinden er i visse Maader fuldkomnere end Manden. Ved Synet af hende spørger man ikke om Navn, Stand eller Bedrift, thi hun er sig selv, Kvinden, og indeslutter i sig alt væsentligt [Woman is in many ways more perfect than man. Seeing her, one does not ask her name, class, or profession, for she is herself woman and has within herself all that is essential.] (En Baaltale 33)

But, following this statement, Blixen then shifts again the emphasis from gender to the individual, making an Existentialist plea for the importance of being over doing. And, she concludes her essay with an entirely gender-neutral vision concerning Art and Existence. Thus, the Bonfire Oration represents Blixen’s heretical stance toward the women’s movement, past and present.

The final image of Karen Blixen (Figure 7) represents a fourth era in her international literary career. It was taken in 1959, the year she made her only American
tour. The famous photograph of Blixen was taken in New York City by the English photographer Cecil Beaton (1904–1980). In profile, the face is partially obscured by the dark, turban-like hat, so that the subject appears as a striking silhouette. Facial features in this photographic image appear with Cubist-like simplicity; the portrait conveys a flattened plane with angular eyes, nose, and mouth reduced to striking geometric shapes. The body is erect and dark, almost monolithic. With this artistic photograph, Karen Blixen’s image becomes an icon representing the distilled image of her various public personae. She is here witch and crone, artist and intellectual, storyteller and static symbol.

When Karen Blixen made her maiden journey to the United States in 1959, she was nearing the end of her career. (She died in her home at Rungstedlund in 1962.) In terms of her health, documentary film footage of her public appearances revealed her as an extremely physically frail woman (she spent several weeks hospitalized in New York); nevertheless, she exuded a powerful magnetism and radiance in her public performances. Her public image was that of a sagacious crone and ancient European storyteller. On 28 January 1959, when she addressed the American Academy of Arts and Letters, which had nominated her as an Honorary Member, she delighted the audience with the opening:

I belong to an ancient, idle, wild and useless tribe, perhaps I am even one of the last members of it, who, for many thousands of years, in all countries and parts of the world, has now and again, stayed for a time among the hard-working honest people in real life, and sometimes has thus been fortunate enough to create another sort of reality for them, which in some way or another, has satisfied them. I am a storyteller.

In this address to her postwar American readers, it must have seemed that her deep and accented voice represented another world, an ancient past, or perhaps even a lost paradise. As demonstrated in the preceding discussion, one might consider Karen Blixen’s self-representations not only as clever marketing strategies for selling her fiction to an American (and even international) readership, but also as visual performances of her own iconoclastic artistic principles.
that empowered her to enact, to challenge, and to reinvent various cultural and literary archetypes.

1 For the ease of the readership, the author of this article has chosen to use the English language editions of Karen Blixen’s literary works whenever possible. These quotations are not translations from Danish, but Blixen’s own original compositions in English. Blixen wrote and published all of her major literary works in English as well as in her native Danish, thus there exist two “originals” of her works. An exception to this practice of writing is Gengældelsens Veje (1944), which she wrote first in Danish, and later in English as The Angelic Avengers (1946). Blixen’s Essays, which are utilized in the later half of this article, were written and published only in Danish; hence, the quotations from Blixen’s essays appear here first in the original Danish, followed the published English translations by P. M. Mitchell and W. D. Paden.

2 In “The Somali Women,” a chapter in Out of Africa, Blixen offers a description of women’s lives inside the confines of the Muslim world of Farah Aden’s home; the house is described as a “small High-school of White Magic, and the three young girls, -- were like three young witches” (Out of Africa 172).

3 This vivid image of a disguised and helmeted knight is likely a direct allusion to B.S. Ingemann’s historical novels about the medieval Danish King Erik Glipping (1259-1286). The Danish legend about King Erik’s murder by the subversive nobleman Marsk Stig Andersen and his disguised vassals is the background for Blixen’s tale, “The Fish” in Winter’s Tales (1942).

4 In the context of Blixen’s “Bonfire Oration,” it is useful to consider Elaine Showalter’s definition of three distinct phases in women’s literature: the “feminine” phase from 1840-1880, during which women attempted “to equal the intellectual achievements of the male culture”; the “feminist” phase from 1880-1920, or the suffrage movement, during which “women are historically enabled to reject the accommodating postures of femininity”; and the “female” phase since 1920, during which “women reject both imitation and protest—and turn instead to the female experience as the source of an autonomous art.” It seems that Blixen’s “Oration at a Bonfire” illustrates well this “third phase” of the feminist consciousness. See Elaine Showalter, “Toward a new Feminist Poetics,” The New Feminist Criticism, ed. Showalter (London: Virago Press, 1986), 137-39.
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Karen Blixen: The Quintessential Dane

by Linda G. Donelson

The year 2005 marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Hans Christian Andersen and the 150th anniversary of the death of Søren Kierkegaard. It also is the 120th anniversary of Karen Blixen’s birth in 1885, and it is appropriate to talk about her at this conference. For the millions of Americans who have seen the movie *Out of Africa*, she may be the most famous Dane of all. We often imagine Karen Blixen as personified by Meryl Streep in the movie. But if you have read the book *Out of Africa*, you may rather think of Karen Blixen simply as a Danish settler in Kenya in the turn of the 1900s. She also is well remembered as the celebrated author who visited New York City in 1959, where she caused a stir as such a frail yet vigorous storyteller.

Many portraits depict her in later years, when she was wrinkled and emaciated, dying not from anorexia or from syphilis, as some have claimed, but from complications of surgery for an ulcer. The last photos of her obscure her vibrant personality as a younger woman. In a certain way, those who die young have an advantage, because we remember them at their best. Princess Diana, for example, will be remembered at her most gorgeous. I think Karen Blixen would prefer us to remember her at age 43 in Kenya in 1928—the happiest year of her life—when Denys Finch Hatton was living with her, the Prince of Wales was soon to arrive, and the bushbuck Lulu was showing off.
fawns on her lawn. In her most appealing photo, Karen Blixen sits outside on the steps wearing a checked cotton sundress with a fashionable Somali shawl. She is radiant with good health.

Because Karen Blixen wrote in English, it has been easy to ignore the fact that she was a Dane. No scholarly papers, even in Denmark, have examined Karen Blixen’s stories to see how her writing was influenced by her Danish upbringing.

It is said that Scandinavians bear three important characteristics: you are fiercely principled, you are loyal to your families to an extraordinary degree, and you are nostalgic for home no matter where you are. Your principles are fabled in stories of the ancient Vikings. Your family loyalty has been noted by historians for 2,000 years. And your sexual freedoms are admired around the world.

The literary historian Bertha Philpotts makes an interesting observation about the people of the north. She studied the great migrations, which began around 400 A.D., when many so-called Germanic tribes moved south into Italy, west into the British Isles, and as far east as Turkey. Historians have placed the original homes of several of these tribes in Scandinavia. The Ostrogoths toppled the Roman Empire and the Anglo-Saxons changed the course of history in Britain. The great Anglo-Saxon saga *Beowulf* is built upon the genealogy of Danes and events in Denmark. This era could be compared to a similar epoch when settlers came to the United States or when Danish settlers, among others, invaded places such as Kenya, the Virgin Islands, and Greenland. The earlier migrations, including those of the Angles and the Jutes from Denmark to
England, are often referred to as the invasions of the barbarians. Philpotts has some pithy things to say about the northern character:

Few peoples have had as spectacular successes as those who took part in the national migrations. They swept across Europe: they founded kingdoms from the Black Sea to Spain, from Africa to England. Yet what their poets remember is always connected with failure, defeat, disaster. They have utterly forgotten Alaric and the sack of Rome, but Gunnar, who was defeated by the Huns not much later, is remembered for eight centuries or more, and sung of from Austria to Greenland. So too with Ermanaric under who the Gothic people were subdued by the Huns. The Anglo-Saxons have left us no word in poetry of the victories they gained over the Britons, but they still remember the defeat and death of Hygelac in Friesland.¹

This quote brings to mind a much later literary masterpiece that concerns a similar theme, namely, Karen Blixen’s Out of Africa, a great work of literature that deals with a series of failures, defeats, and disasters: the loss of her farm in East Africa after fire, drought and multiple fatal accidents; the death of her great friend Denys Finch Hatton; and the defeat of her aspirations to be a deliverer to her African workers. Scandinavians know how to create great art from defeat. Kierkegaard failed to develop his love for the famous young Regine, failed to communicate with his father, failed to become a cleric as his family wanted him to be. He turned these defeats into great writing and works of literature that will last through the ages. Hans Christian Andersen, a boy from an impoverished home, whose parents bequeathed him little physical attractiveness, conjured his inadequacies into great art and a reputation that will last forever.

From the beginning, Karen Blixen, like Kierkegaard and Andersen, was forced to overcome personal defeats. She was not homely, but not particularly beautiful. Her father had committed suicide when she was ten years old, and her mother was left with a farm but few other resources. The Dinesens lived in the countryside and were never part of society. It was difficult to succeed in Denmark without connections, and women were at a disadvantage.
because society did not think it necessary for a woman to have a profession. The young Karen Dinesen received the greater part of her education at home from the women of her family. She spent her adolescence languishing over her love for a distant relative, Hans Blixen. He was a talented rider, who would win a medal for horsemanship in the Olympics of 1912. But he married someone else.

Eventually Karen Dinesen coped with this defeat by doing the same thing your ancestors did, by emigrating. In her case, she married Hans Blixen’s twin brother, Bror, and emigrated to East Africa to start a coffee farm. But unlike your ancestors, Karen Blixen eventually went back to Denmark, when the Depression came and coffee prices defeated her efforts to farm in Kenya. In her letters, she talked from time to time of continuing her writing in Africa, of opening a restaurant, of marrying someone else, earning a different living or finding a new partner, as other settlers did. Her final decision to return to Denmark is fascinating. Look into your own Danish hearts, and see if you understand why Karen Blixen would leave Kenya, a place of gorgeous beauty, with plains filled with magnificent game; with fascinating people like the Masai, the Ndorobo, and the Kikuyu; with an inspiring climate never graduating to extremes of cold or heat; with mountains on the horizon, trout in the streams, and friends and the comforts of a colonial power. Why did Karen Blixen leave all this to return to Denmark, to return to her mother’s bosom, to return to the very house and farm where she would die as she had been born?

The Nordic scholar Kevin Crossley-Holland, in his wonderful book *The Norse Myths*, talks about the essential characteristics of the ancient Vikings. He says they were, above all, loyal to family. They were brave, so brave that they would rush into battle naked to scare the enemy, which gives us the wonderful word “berserk.” But the Vikings possessed one surprising vulnerability: they were always homesick. In *Njal’s Saga*, Gunnar is banished on pain of death not to return to Iceland. What happens? He is about to leave, but his horse stumbles and Gunnar has an opportunity to look back at his farm. And he is struck by such love for his homeland that it is impossible
for him to leave. He turns his horse around and he declares, “I will ride home and never leave it!” And so he seals his doom.

Karen Blixen’s return to Denmark from Africa hardly sealed her doom; it opened an entirely new future for her. But it resembled to a striking extent the behavior of her father in the previous generation. He, too, had tried to emigrate. He settled in the United States in a cabin in Wisconsin. You can still see that cabin today at Mole Lake, near Rhinelander. Wilhelm Dinesen’s homestead “stake” today lies within a Native American reserve. On old plat maps of Wisconsin, it is listed as *Frydenlund* (Land of Joy). But Wilhelm Dinesen lasted only eighteen months in America. When the lure of his homeland proved too great, he went back to Denmark.

Karen Blixen could have been writing about her father or herself when, in a story called *Sorgagre* (Sorrow-acre), she talks about the character, Adam: “He was back in Denmark, no longer a child...with tales of other countries to tell, and still a true son of his own land, and enchanted by its loveliness as he had never been before.” Karen Blixen had lived in Africa for sixteen years when she wrote to her mother in the midst of a quarrel with Denys Finch Hatton, “I find myself longing for Denmark, with dew on the grass, cowslips, and waves from the Sound, in a way that sends me completely wild.”

At the beginning of her trip to Africa in 1913, the young Karen Dinesen hated saying goodbye to her mother and sister, who had gone with her all the way to the boat dock in Naples. She was
twenty-eight years old and had never been away from home for a lengthy time and had never traveled without another member of her family. Concerning the northern tribes, the Roman historian Tacitus says:

Cloistered circumstances strengthen the importance of the family unit...a man is bound to take up the feuds as well as the friendships of father or kinsmen... This is much to the advantage of the community.³

Throughout her seventeen years in Africa, Karen Blixen was never far from ties that bound her to her family. Her angel and nemesis was her uncle, Aage Westenholz, her mother’s brother and chairman of the family corporation that owned her coffee farm. He was a crusty figure, with a dry typically Scandinavian wit. He traveled to Africa in 1921 at the age of 62 to inspect his investment. Excerpts from his letters can make you laugh out loud. In relation to how to pay off the debts on the farm, he says, “Bror, of course, made some very helpful suggestions; it is frightening to think what he can come up with.”⁴ Concerning the society of the medieval Vikings, it is said that, even in ancient times, one special relationship existed within the family: a maternal uncle was especially responsible for the welfare of his nephew,⁵ or, in this case, his niece. Karen Blixen was dependent on Uncle Aage for her monthly allowances, and also for his affection when all else failed her. Scandinavians take family loyalty for granted, and they may run into conflict with those who have little sense of its importance.

In the film Out of Africa, toward the end, Karen Blixen has a falling out with Denys Finch Hatton. Of course in real life circumstances did not happen as in the movie. But there really was a falling out between them, and all evidence suggests that it was for this reason: Denys Finch Hatton, an Englishman, saw the world differently than the very Danish Karen Blixen. The problem was his understanding of loyalty, which was not the same as hers. The falling out began in 1928, three years before Karen Blixen left Kenya for good. The quarrel was not about jealousy, as claimed in the Hollywood version. Nor did Denys Finch Hatton have an affair with Beryl Markham, as some have assumed. Such claims do not come from Beryl Markham, but from those who never met Denys
Finch Hatton. Markham, author of the admired memoir about Kenya, *West with the Night*, told the biographer Mary Lovell that Denys was homosexual. His greatest friend was Berkeley Cole, who, according to his relatives in England, was also homosexual. When Denys died at the age of forty-four, he had never been linked with any woman other than Karen Blixen. His ashes were delivered to her for burial.

The rift between Denys Finch Hatton and Karen Blixen concerned two visits to Kenya of the Prince of Wales, the later Duke of Windsor. In *Shadows on the Grass*, Karen Blixen describes the sumptuous meal and gala evening of African dances the Prince attended at her farm in 1928. She says, “I felt that this was an opportunity of bringing the cause of the Natives, in the matter of their taxation, before the Prince.” Unfortunately, the Prince’s travels in Kenya eventually led to a shattering quarrel between her and Denys.

“Denys is in absolute despair, because he has been asked to take the Prince of Wales, who is coming out here in October, on safari,” Karen Blixen wrote to her mother. “I laughed at him for taking it so hard, but he says that I don’t know what English royalties are like, or the ‘fuss’ that is made about them.” Denys’s experience as a commercial safari guide, his reputation as one of the best white hunters in East Africa, and his friendship with the royal family had placed him in an embarrassing position. He hated ceremony, and he knew the trip would involve an entire entourage, not just the Prince’s staff, but also a crowd of prominent colonials, who would want to go along as hosts. He finally agreed to lead the hunt, but he was forced to look around for help. He had known Bror Blixen for several years and was confident that Bror would make a good second guide. Bror himself was running an influential safari business. However, Finch Hatton’s invitation to Bror to help him with the safari dismissed the fact that Bror had divorced Karen Blixen only a few years earlier. The divorce meant that she could not go along on the hunt. A new, and different, Baroness Blixen would go along.

It is clear that Denys’s plan presented a conflict of friendship, one might even say, of mythic proportions: Finch Hatton, who had been
sharing Karen Blixen’s home, had proffered an invitation to her divorced husband whom she regarded as an enemy. By consorting with Bror, Finch Hatton had broken the tenets of loyalty so important in the Norse tradition. In Viking times, a person stood by his family to the death. A friend would gladly kill his friend’s enemy and would be dishonored if he consorted with him. Finch Hatton’s invitation to Bror was a betrayal to an ideal that Karen Blixen took for granted. She could not understand Denys’s casual view of friendship; his siding with Bror was intolerable to her. He had become a traitor. She was very angry and told him so, and wrote to her mother that she made a terrible scene.8

Denys Finch Hatton was not sympathetic to Karen Blixen’s censorship of his decision. He was the favorite of his family, and he was not used to criticism, let alone anger. In his English family, anger was not quite an acceptable emotion. Karen Blixen had been divorced from Bror for four years and, from his viewpoint, she should have by this time dismissed Bror from her mind. Denys could not be diverted from regarding the safari for the Prince of Wales in a practical way. The hunt went ahead as planned, and Bror Blixen was invited on a second safari with Finch Hatton and the Prince of Wales two years later. These actions by Denys created a breach between him and Karen Blixen that, one can see from her letters, never healed. From this time, though they continued their friendship, she talks of him in a more distant way, at one point characterizing him as heartless.9 He continues to disappoint her, failing to come through on a promised loan of money, joining forces with Bror a second time with the Prince of Wales, and, as she notes in Out of Africa, showing little sympathy for her loss of the farm and her plans to return to Denmark. At the very last, he takes back the ring that he had given her. And there are unusual gaps in her published letters, suggesting that some of her comments about Denys have been left out, hidden or erased.

Her response to the quarrel, however, showed just how Scandinavian Karen Blixen was. Repeatedly in her writings, she points out that laughter has to be one’s ultimate reaction to fate. In the Norse myths, one finds—time and again—that humor solves the most fateful and dreaded circumstances. Do you remember, in Norse
mythology, when Thor’s battleaxe is stolen by a mean bully of a giant named Thrym? It is essential for Thor to get back the magical weapon. Eventually, Loke and the other gods devise an elaborate plan to dress up the burly, bearded Thor as a bride and get him to seduce the giant. And this elaborate practical joke succeeds.

Karen Blixen refers to fate as the famous “ha-ha” of the universe. She chose her pen name, Isak Dinesen, because Isak means in Hebrew: the one who laughs. You remember that the naked Viking Berserks would rush into battle with maniacal laughter, the so-called *ridens moriar* in Latin, or laughter at death. So, Karen Blixen says in a letter to her mother, even after she has been so angry with Denys Finch Hatton, she ends up laughing. One might say that even Denys’s death and her loss of the farm gave her the last laugh, because she created great literature from these terrible events.

Humor is an aspect of Karen Blixen’s works that few have written about. I hope you will read her stories again and notice how frequently she uses humorous irony. Both of her famous countrymen, Kierkegaard and Andersen, make plentiful use of wit in their stories, and, I believe, you will find that the greatest literature survives because of its humor.

I think of Danes as people who, no matter how serious the circumstances, can still come up with a joke. If you read, or see the film of Karen Blixen’s story, *Babette’s Feast*, you will see how, by means of humor, she turns the sour outlook on life of a congregation of Christian pietists into a great feast of celebration. The dour church-goers agree to eat Babette’s fabulous food, out of politeness, but they make a secret pact not to really enjoy anything on the table. Of course, the joke plays out that they become a little tipsy and, once they have loosened up, have a wonderful meal. Danes are not the only ones to use humor in their literature, but it seems particularly Danish to me that Danes are able to endure very tragic events, such as the ones in *Out of Africa*, and still find some ironic good in them.

A recent film documentary, *Karen Blixen: Out of this World*, shows how she continued laughing even in death. And it also shows the profound importance of family loyalty unto the end. Her nephew Tore Dinesen relates an anecdote about her funeral. Karen Blixen had requested to be buried beside the grave of her dog Pasop,
because the funeral pyres of great Viking chieftains always included their favorite dog. But the minister insisted that such a burial would be sacrilegious and not permissible. Tore Dinesen says, “A few days after the funeral my father [Thomas Dinesen] said to me, ‘Come. We have a little digging to do.’ And so we went back to the old spreading beech tree and reunited her with her beloved Pasop.’”11

An overview of Karen Blixen's life shows that her greatest decisions were made according to her Scandinavian ideals. She clung tenaciously to family loyalty and to an almost inbred love for her Danish homeland. Her writing style was influenced by her northern view that life is a series of defeats that can be knit together to make a story. It can be argued that her Scandinavian laughter gives her writing its greatness. She subscribed to the age-old belief of the northern peoples that you must make your reputation on earth in order to achieve immortality. *Havamal* (the bible of the pagan Scandinavian cosmos) says:

> Cattle die, kinsmen die,
> 
> I myself shall die,
> 
> but there is one thing I know never dies:
> 
> the reputation we leave behind at our death.

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5 Crossley-Holland, p. xviii
8 Letters from Africa, p. 407
9 Letters from Africa, p. 413
10 Letters from Africa, p. 407
11 Karen Blixen: Out of this World. Film directed by Marcus Mandal and Anna von Lowzow, 2005
This presentation poses the challenge of emigrating versus that of staying home, exemplified by a Southern Jutlander who stayed home during the years of Prussian rule between 1864 and 1920 and one who left for America during those years. It begs the larger question of who endures more, those who leave or those who stay behind, a salient issue underlying all emigration and any significant parting. Put in classical terms: Who faces the greater challenge—Odysseus or Penelope? He endures any number of dangers on his way back from Troy; she stays by her loom and keeps home intact for her returning husband and the inheritance of their son, Telemachus. Whom does Homer privilege? Neither, it would seem. Penelope asks the riddle of their marriage bed and Odysseus answers. She upholds and protects the history of home and generations. In that process she demonstrates her determination to remain faithful and to have faith in the seriousness of her endeavor, which is lent significance by Odysseus’s struggles to return home. Those are the themes of myth as they illustrate our individual and collective needs to find home, to protect home, and, in the effort, to maintain our personal dignity.

We all know about the waves of emigration from Scandinavia in the 1840s and forward in search of land that for hard work would yield a living and a home where everyone was free of religious, political, social, and domestic oppression. As Wilhelm Moberg puts it in his novel The Emigrants, Karl Oscar left to seek land where his work would sustain him and his family; his wife, Kristina, went along because where Karl went was home for her as well. Robert Nilsson wanted to be master in his own house, and Andreason emigrated because he wanted to “confess the god of the twelve apostles” in the land God would show him. Jonas Peter went because the home he knew had become intolerable; he could no longer endure cohabitation with Brita-Stafva. These early emigrants
led the way for those who came after. They felt displaced in the homes they knew and went in pursuit of new ones, literally and metaphorically. Many would spend the majority of their lives agonizing—both before they went and for ever after—over the rights and wrongs of that decision.

So it was for my grandfather, a Southern Jutland farmer. He had been displaced after the Danes lost the war to Bismarck’s troops and ambition in 1864, a war that resulted in Denmark ceding her duchies of Schleswig Holstein to the burgeoning German Confederation. For him, as for every man and woman, the question arose whether to stay behind—defend their land, their culture, and their language—or leave an increasingly oppressive situation and seek a home in the new world. The stakes were high: They ventured an ancient claim to the land that had born them and held out the promise for a life with family and friends—home—in other words. Severe consequences were involved in either alternative.

History shows that the catalyst precipitating the massive emigration from North and South Schleswig between 1866 and 1888 was Prussian insistence on the draft. At war’s end in 1864, the conquered Danes had been given the choice either to accept German citizenship as members of the German Confederation, or to “opt” for continued Danish citizenship with the right to either move to Denmark or elsewhere, leaving their untended farms behind, or to stay and, as it turned out, gradually be deprived of the civil rights accorded German citizens. In sum, all were presented with three unpalatable options: (1) leaving the country for Denmark or elsewhere, (2) staying on as “alien” citizens with increasingly fewer rights of participation in community life, or (3) seeking German citizenship and taking the oath of allegiance to the German Kaiser, an oath exacted not only from soldiers but from teachers and clergymen as well. Three options; two basic alternatives: staying or leaving.

The literature of the time shows how they debated those options: Should they stay, opt to remain Danish citizens and farm, teach, preach, write newspapers, or practice law and suffer the gradual loss of civil liberties, all in order to uphold what they considered rightfully theirs and worth their efforts to stem German integration.
and influence? Should they venture personal integrity in accommodation with increasingly severe German strictures, such as teachers and ministers would do whenever they opened their mouths, and risk expulsion at twenty-four hours notice? Or, should they leave with their integrity intact but, in departing, leave behind an open door inviting Germans or German-minded Schleswigers to occupy land, pulpits, and classrooms and, in the process, wield their influence in favor of general Germanization of the region? Or, should they acquire German citizenship, which would guarantee their rights to stay and their rights to participate in community life and decisions, but which also would demand their submission to the Prussian draft?

Those who left during these years did so, by and large, to avoid the draft or to preserve their self respect, their sense of personal dignity. Some went across the border to Denmark; others went across the sea to America. Some tried first one place, then the other. If they were unable to make a livelihood in Denmark, they would follow the lead of those who had gone before them and whose letters had encouraged their coming.

Denmark would be the gentler place of exile for at least two reasons: proximity and a shared language. Proximity was crucial if they were going to maintain their farms in their absence. They could sneak across the border to plough and harvest, keeping a sharp eye out for the spiked helmet announcing the arrival of the Prussian gendarme on his way to arrest them. Occasionally they would even cross the border to attend family occasions. A story went around of seven sons who came across to bury their father and who, at the end of the service, dispersed like the autumn leaves, hotly pursued by the helmet. Another story tells of a man returning briefly one second Christmas day to godfather his nephew; he escaped in the crowd of church goers who shielded his exit.

This coming and going across the border and the tendency to choose Denmark first as a place of exile make further sense if we remember that these men and women considered their exile strictly temporary. For the first two years after the war, life under joint Austrian/Prussian rule was tolerable. At the peace treaty discussions in Prague, however, the Prussians—who had won out
over the Austrians in a battle for supremacy in the forming German Reich—insisted that the dukedoms of Schleswig and Holstein be annexed to Germany. They granted only—at the insistence of Napoleon III of France—that despite the Danish surrender of those provinces two years earlier, “the population in the northern districts of Schleswig should be ceded to Denmark later if a plebiscite vote demonstrated their desire to be reunited with Denmark.” There was no mention of exactly when that opportunity might arise, nor was it clear which “northern districts” would be included.

Optimists construed the missing dateline as “immediately,” and Danish flags were moved to the top layer from bottoms of drawers and chests where they had come to rest in 1864. Yet when the “patent of January 12, 1867” incorporated the Danish dukedoms into the German state with no regard for Paragraph 5, the Prussian eagle sharpened its claws on the frontier between Northern and Southern Jutland, and the spiked helmet, emblematic of the Prussian military and symbolic of Prussian might, made its entry wherever a group of Danes were gathered. The draft was enforced and new rules governed. Ministers and teachers as well as soldiers had to take the oath of loyalty to the Kaiser. For a few years, Danish ministers, whose integrity and patriotism prevented their taking the oath and who therefore moved across the border to Denmark, would on occasion return to hold services in people’s houses and to christen children; but by 1875, even such visits were terminated. Still, the Southern Jutlanders maintained their faith in Paragraph 5. Why not, went their reasoning, try to keep the farms going with occasional stealthy trips across the border; and why not, thought some clergymen and teachers, leave temporarily a calling to church or school that demanded an oath of allegiance to their enemy rulers; and why, thought the young men, honor the Prussian draft when it was only a matter of time before they would be reclaimed by their Danish king.

The thinking of themselves as temporarily misplaced was put an end to in 1878 when Paragraph 5 was stricken from the record by imperial command. In that year they perceived—clearly or dimly—that they were in it for the long haul; 1878 became a turning point. Everyone realized that no longer could they survive as a nation
depleted of young men leaving to avoid the call to arms and of young women who followed in their wake. The generation growing up had to join ranks with those who had stayed behind. The hemorrhage of emigration was stanched; the bloodletting slowed to a dribble. From the 1880s on, most people stayed, aware of the conditions but as yet unable to foresee the direst consequence of that choice: their participation on the enemy side in the Great War of 1914 to 1918. The cessation of mass emigration notwithstanding, the alternatives of leaving and staying remained alive in Danish-minded citizens long after 1878 and was given new impetus during the war years of 1914 to 1918, when many chose to desert rather than return to the trenches.

At some level, my grandfather and his countrymen—individually and collectively—debated the pros and cons of remaining home or emigrating all their lives. One grief they shared, those who stayed and those who left: the gradual loss of their language in daily parlance, a soul wrenching and never-quite-assuaged loss, no matter how fluent one becomes. Only at home could they speak and keep alive the language of their hearts. Emigrants knew, and experienced on arrival, that English was the language of their chosen land, and they felt the pressure to learn the language of their new home. They agonized at their divided loyalty to the language they knew and loved and to the new language their chosen reality demanded they acquire. Their children attended schools in which English was taught and spoken. English became their language, and it would gradually replace Danish in liturgy and sermons, even among Danish congregations. It did not come about without pain and hurtful disagreement among parishioners, but it did come about, as in retrospect we can see it had to.

Such was not the case for the Schleswigers who stayed home. When a decree went out on Christmas morning of 1888 that henceforth all education would be conducted in German, with the exception of a couple of weekly Bible classes, they recognized again the struggle they faced to maintain their language in and for their children. Little by little, German would be the language of church as well, and they knew that from then on, it would be entirely up to individual homes to keep Danish alive. Many stories and anecdotes
are told about adult determination—and children’s imitations of such determination—to maintain the language they considered theirs. One story has it that H.P. Hanssen, the leader and spokesman for the Southen Jutlanders, on his way home one night offered a lift to a young boy who was on his way to the farm where he was in service.

He asks the boy, “Do you write letters to your parents?”
“Oh, yes,” the boy answers, “often.”
“I suppose you write in German?”
“Nooo, I can’t really write German and my parents can’t read it.”
“But haven’t you learned German in school?”
“Well yes, but not enough to write a letter.”
“But where have you learned to write Danish?”
“I learned that at home of course.”
“At home?”
“Yes. Mother had the most time, so she read with us children every day and taught us Danish songs. Dad went to work every day, but when he came home in the evening he taught us to write because he was better at that than mother. He said we had to learn to write a letter which he and mother could read because no one could know where in the world we might have to earn our bread. And he also said that when our teacher says that Danish is a good for nothing language, it is a lie. Our language is a right good language. It is much better than German and it has been spoken and written here where we live since ancient times. We should work hard to learn to write it and we must never forget it.”

To instill such loyalty to a cause in children, adults must have taken an uncompromising existential stance, which, in turn, was reflected in their children’s pranks. Singing quietly, they would change the words of German songs “Ich bin ein Preusse, will ein Preusse sein” to “Ich bin kein Preusse, will kein Preusse sein,” or coming from the braver ones, “Ich bin ein Däne, will ein Däne sein.” Punishment resulted only if they raised their voices too loudly for even the most Danish-minded teacher to drown them out.
Sometimes rewards might accompany punishment, as in the case of one boy handing another a penny from his father to commend him on his good singing voice.

Myth, furthermore, sustained the children’s minds. As they learned about the progressive illness of the Kaiser and they knew the crown prince was seriously ill as well, they knew that when two German emperors died and a third ascended the throne in the course of a year, Southern Jutland would be returned to Denmark. That was prophesy and it was about to be fulfilled. Whoever had conjured up that story, no one knew, but the children believed it implicitly.

This loyalty and commitment to keeping alive the known and loved at one level or another was something emigrants brought with them across the sea. Some were more conscious of it than others. But no first-generation emigrant settled with an undivided heart. They would fight to establish homes in which they could remember the life and land they had left behind but at the same time realize the necessity to turn toward a future in their new surroundings. And therein lies a significant difference. The Southern Jutlanders wanted to go back to the life they had had in Denmark, and they wanted their children to be granted that life. Emigrants could hope for no such return, nor did their children want it. The growing emotional distance between parents and children—second-generation Americans—may be said to be the bitterest loss the old emigrant had to experience. Parents could hope to induce in their children respect for the old country and its ways, but hardly the love of place we reserve for the land we knew first. With the third generation, the loss became null and void. They might remember certain dishes or holiday celebrations and honor those. But in no way would those remembrances register in them the emotional impact they held for their grandparents.

The luckiest among emigrants settled in communities of countrymen who could lend physical and emotional support. The Danish American writer Sophus Winther paints a graphic picture of Danish families on the Nebraska prairies in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Males were expected to be dominant and enterprising, and Winther depicts their struggles as waged against
external forces, such as weather, interest payments, and investments that might or might not pan out. A farmer’s success or failure was measured in socio-economic values. His lands and wealth might increase and grant him status in his chosen community, or his efforts might fail and his failure make him a nonentity. Women bore the practical consequences of temporary or enduring external challenges. They washed and cooked and knitted and sewed and bore children in total or partial social and geographic isolation. Judging from Scandinavian immigrant novels, women suffered the greater emotional stress. Their enforced isolation gave time for contemplation of divided loyalties and the distancing of their children as they turned toward the culture of the country that would be theirs. Of that belonging to the new world and the promise it held, both parents and children held assurance, dearly bought and not to be relinquished. Examples show how widows, even those who could afford the return to the old country, would choose to stay, based on their faith in a better life for their children in America than their returning home could afford them.

Even so, returning home remained for many a dream, a desirable alternative, which some could realize and others could not, as it depended on their economic and social prowess. Scandinavian chroniclers show how many failed to benefit from the grand opportunities reported in letters home to induce family members to come west and assuage the loneliness that was common among first-generation settlers. Most immigrant literature depicts life among farmers, but Enok Mortensen’s stories in My People show the disappointment of Danes moving to cities and struggling to make a livelihood as laborers or clerks. Victims of socio-economic forces supporting material gain at the expense of individual health and happiness, they succumb to poverty and grinding work. And yet, even though the elusive American dream of material success seems unobtainable, the protagonist of Mortensen’s later novels, Niels, maintains his faith in the “indomitable optimism and lust for life that still floated in the air….Longing still lived in the human spirit and it was longing that had made America.”

All the same, those first-generation emigrants “mortgaged their hearts” as Sophus Winther puts it. He shows how their struggle and
hard labor gnawed away at their doubts regarding the wisdom of leaving kin and country and blunted the agony of that seemingly irrevocable decision, which otherwise would dominate their consciousness. In that way, the tension between the necessity to assume a new identity and the loyalty to the identity forged by the old country is, to a degree, sublimated though not forgotten in their struggle to obtain a living.

The telling differences between the two groups, then—those who stayed and those who left—may be measured more significantly in psychological than in physical terms. Hard physical work was the norm for both sets; but a difference may be observed between the divided, “mortgaged” heart of the emigrant and the uncompromising loyalty to one cause in the hearts of those who stayed. The latter is a rarer existential position than the former and in its own way corresponds with Kierkegaard’s edict, “purity of heart is to will one thing.” Voting themselves home had become the “good,” the grail, for those Southern Jutlanders.

Divided and undivided hearts notwithstanding, those who stayed and those who left developed similar means of coping. Both sought the companionship of one another in the churches they built for worship and the grange or meeting halls they erected for social gatherings. In the new as well as in the old country, sparks would fly from debates regarding general values as well as specific issues, such as assimilation to a new culture, or, in the old country, whether or not to take the oath. Inner Mission adherents promoted assimilation and renouncement of values left behind and insisted on the necessity to become Americanized. Grundtvigians, on the other hand, had a less pragmatic approach. They granted the necessity to learn English by and by, but never at the expense of their own language, Danish, which for Danes was the best. Church leaders concerned with the division between its members strove toward establishment of a mother church, the Danish Evangelical Church, which would embrace their divergent views. For them, time proved the greatest aligner. As generation followed generation, the connection to the motherland lost its pull, and gradually the church language became English. Their example shows that, most likely, had the reunification with Denmark not happened when it did,
German would eventually have replaced Danish in Southern Jutland as well.

That it is almost impossible to maintain two different languages in daily living unless husband and wife speak the same language, literally and metaphorically, is a lesson learned by most old and new first-generation immigrants to this country. Danes who marry Americans will in most cases be speaking English with their children. In my own case, our daughter Lis was sent home to learn Danish when she was little and still remembers what she learned. By the time our son Christopher came along nine years later, he was not sent home to learn. My parents had grown old by then, and our lives had become emerged in the daily business of living them, which makes attempted communication in two languages increasingly stressful.

Nor do new immigrants seem to seek one another out the way the old did. They perceive less of a physical need certainly, and perhaps they feel that no amount of socializing can assuage the loss of language in daily parlance or the feeling of never being fully and completely on one side or the other of the Atlantic, no matter how often they go. For unlike the old emigrants, whose choice to leave was in most cases irreversible, made so by economics as well as the hardships of crossing the ocean, new emigrants in most cases came on their own volition and may be granted many trips back to the old country. Yet examples have shown that it remains difficult for a Dane to return to Denmark and be content there where once again he must undergo the adaptation process and where he cannot expect the natives to understand his double perspective and divided heart. Some things do not change: new as well as old immigrants “mortgage” their hearts no matter what may be their reasons for leaving.
Introduction: “The Third Enemy”

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, over 22,000 Scandinavians joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter referred to as the church or the LDS church) and migrated to Utah. Well over half of these Scandinavians, 12,350 (not including children age 12 and under), were Danes.

This influx of people who spoke a language other than English and came from a cultural background different from that of the original Anglo-American settlers of Utah presented some perplexing challenges. Even Brigham Young, the territorial governor and LDS church president, found them difficult to resolve. According to local folklore, he once said, “Twenty-eight wagons and all Danish! That language! Everything they say comes out upside down or inside out.”

For many decades, Young and other government and church leaders wrestled with linguistic issues in their efforts to help the Danes integrate into Utah society.

For the Danish immigrants themselves, language issues were also problematic. Johnson asserts that once these Scandinavians arrived, they faced three enemies. The first two—the wicked, unpredictable climate of the Great Basin and the unfriendly Native Americans—are widely recognized. However, the third enemy that Johnson mentions is less well known. In fact, most people would never guess that it was the English language. Nevertheless, for the early Danish immigrants in Utah, English was just as forbidding as the hostile Native Americans and harsh climate. Gaining proficiency in this new language was difficult—especially for the older Danes—and “language barriers hindered full participation by many bright and capable Danish immigrants in Utah society.”

Because of language-
learning difficulties and in spite of pressure and support for learning English, many immigrants continued to use Danish—not just for a few months or even a few years, but for decades.

**Research Focus and Outline**

Our research has focused on the struggles that early Danish immigrants to Utah had with this “third enemy,” and on the efforts of Utah government and church leaders to deal with the related linguistic issues of the time. Our investigations have concentrated on the Danish pioneers’ difficulties and successes with English language learning, as well as the government and church support that was provided to help them in this effort. In addition, we have examined the immigrants’ efforts to maintain their ancestral tongue in order to communicate with each other and preserve cultural ties with their homeland.

The time period on which our research focused was from 1850 to 1930. Brigham Young and the Mormon pioneers arrived in Utah in 1847, but the Danish migration to Utah did not commence until a few years later, “on January 31, 1852, when a group of nine Mormons left Copenhagen… continued by steamer to England, and eventually sailed from Liverpool with nineteen additional Danes who joined them there under the leadership of Erastus Snow.” In what has been called one of “the first waves of Danish emigration” to the United States, over the next four decades, many thousands of their countrymen followed. By 1890, this flood had peaked, and by 1930, most of the first generation of Danish immigrants, as well as the programs that had been instituted to help them learn English or to maintain the Danish language and culture, had died.

Our paper first presents demographic information on Danish immigrants to Utah in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, including data on Danish settlement patterns in pioneer Utah. Then, it explains language policies, programs, and publications—in Denmark and in pioneer Utah—designed to help the Danes learn English, as well as to allow them to continue using their mother tongue. Finally, it discusses some social factors that encouraged or discouraged these processes.
Settlement Patterns of Danish Immigrants to Utah

In 1850, there were only 35 Scandinavians living in the Utah territory and only two of them were Danes. In the decade between 1850 and 1860, however, there was a dramatic population shift resulting from a combination of “push” and “pull” factors. The year before, on June 5, 1849, Denmark’s new constitution was signed and the absolute monarchy was overthrown. Among other things, this new, liberal constitution provided for freedom of religion. Later, in the early 1860s, when “tensions in Europe were reaching a boiling point over Denmark’s attempted annexation of Schleswig,” many Danes emigrated “to avoid becoming cannon fodder in Denmark’s armed conflict…with Prussia and Austria.” Once mighty Denmark was on its way to being “reduced to one of Europe’s smallest nations,” and the Danes’ feelings ran from “paralysis” to “bitterness.” During this period, poor economic conditions in Denmark were yet another “push” factor, while America’s relative attractiveness was an important “pull” factor. About the same time, Brigham Young sent Latter-day Saint missionaries to the Scandinavian countries. These missionaries began in Denmark, and were very successful. Between 1850 and 1905 there were 46,000 Scandinavian converts to Mormonism. Of this number, 50% were Danes. At that time, LDS church policy encouraged the “gathering of the faithful.” In fact, “Brigham Young declared in 1860 that emigration ‘upon the first feasible opportunity, directly follows obedience to the first principles of the gospel we have embraced.’”

For all these reasons, by 1860, the Danish population in the Utah territory had jumped from two to 1,824, or 4.53 percent of the total population. These “Danish Latter-day Saints were in the vanguard of emigration from Denmark to the United States.” In fact, in 1860, the Danish population in the remote Utah territory was 18.3%, almost one-fifth, of the total Danish population in the United States (30,107). As Figure 1 shows, by 1870, Utah had 4,957 Danish-born residents, constituting 5.7% of the state’s population, and the total kept growing for several more decades. In 1890, “10 percent of the state’s population…either were born in Denmark or had at least one parent born in Denmark.” Utah’s Danish population reached a peak of 9,132 in 1900. Thereafter, it declined, as immigration to
Utah from Denmark diminished, and the immigrant generation began to die off.

Figure 1. Scandinavians in Utah, 1850-1930. (Jensen, Immigration to Utah).

When the Danish immigrants arrived in Utah, they usually went to one of three general areas: the Sanpete/Sevier County area or the Cache/Box Elder County area, both of which were mostly rural in nature, or the Salt Lake/Utah County area, Utah’s urban center. The first reason immigrants congregated to these areas was that they were assigned to settle in certain communities. As leader of the Mormon immigration movement, Brigham Young solved the problem of large numbers of new Scandinavian arrivals by dividing them up and “sending half of them to help settle in Cache County on the north and the others south to the Manti settlement [in Sanpete county] . . . .” Even after Brigham Young stopped assigning new arrivals to communities, however, the pattern of migration to these communities persisted. In a common pattern known as “chain migration,” many immigrants went to areas populated by those of the same ethnic background—especially friends and family members who had immigrated earlier. They went to where they felt comfortable, where they could fit in and be a part of society, and where they could communicate in a familiar language and get the help they needed to succeed in the new land. Later, however, for
economic reasons, many arriving Danes either remained in Salt Lake County or moved back to Salt Lake County from where they had been sent before.

As the graphs in Figure 1 illustrate, although Scandinavian immigrants to Utah included Swedes and Norwegians, there was a noticeable Danish cultural and linguistic dominance. In 1860, for instance, there were almost 2,000 Danes, compared to a combined total of only 355 Norwegians and Swedes. Although more Norwegians and Swedes came later, the Danes continued to dominate. For this reason, several towns (Ephraim, Spring City, Mantua, Levan, etc.) in different parts of Utah or certain parts of larger cities were known as either “Little Denmark” or “Little Copenhagen,” but there were no places called “Little Stockholm” or “Little Oslo.” This pattern persisted for many years. “At a conference in Ephraim about the year 1900, a speaker asked all the Danish people in the audience to please stand up, and about 75% rose to their feet.” It is worth noting that because of this dominance many Utahns lumped all Scandinavians into one category—Dane. One Scandinavian immigrant in Utah wrote back to his family in Norway saying, “Jeg kan ikke opregne alle De Danske der er her som I kjender for der er saa mange gode Danske, Svenske, Norske og Bornholmere, disse kalder de alle Danske her. . .” [I cannot count up all the Danes there are here whom you know because there are so many good Danes, Swedes, Norwegians, and people from Bornholm All these they call Danes here].

**Policy and Programs Supporting the Learning of English**

Because of the above mentioned demographic and linguistic circumstances of the time, Brigham Young became highly involved in language matters. Initially, his approach was simple and straightforward. He and other leaders in pioneer Utah strongly encouraged the new arrivals to learn the English language. William Dixon, an author and traveler in the West, once heard a speech given by Brigham Young to newly arrived immigrants in which he said the following:

You are faint and weary from your march. Rest, then, for a day, for a second day, should you need it; then rise up, and
see how you will live....Be of good cheer. Look about this valley into which you have been called. Your first duty is to learn how to grow a cabbage, and along with this cabbage an onion, a tomato, a sweet potato; then how to feed a pig, to build a house, to plant a garden, to rear cattle, and to bake bread; in one word, your first duty is to live. The next duty,—for those who, being Danes, French, and Swiss, cannot speak it now—is to learn English....These things you must do first; the rest will be added to you in proper season.

Other church leaders expressed similar sentiments. For instance, in 1868 George A. Smith (an LDS apostle and counselor to Brigham Young) proclaimed:

It is very desirable that all of our brethren who are not acquainted with the English language should learn it. . . . We want them all—men and woman, old and young—to learn the English language so perfectly that they will be able to thoroughly understand for themselves the teachings and instructions and the published works of the Church, as well as the laws of the country. . . . We hope the bishops and teachers will make every reasonable exertion to stir up the minds of the brethren and sisters who do not thoroughly understand English to the importance of this counsel.

Once they arrived in the United States, some Danes were willing to abandon all things Danish. Nils Grahn, a market researcher for the *Utah Posten* in the late 1800s, talked about how some fellow Danes made the remarkable claim that “they would never permit a Danish paper or book to come into their home.” They were in the New World now. “Their mother tongue should be locked up. All should be English!” Then he added, “which I think they never learn.”

Some nineteenth-century Mormon Danes studied English individually even before immigrating, as an entry from Niels Nielsen’s 1856 journal illustrates: “[Jeg opholdt] mig dels jemme [sic] og i Kjøbenhavn. Jeg øvede mig i Det Engelske Sprog” [I stayed part of the time at home and part of the time in Copenhagen. I also studied and practiced the English language]. In support of the Danish converts’ efforts to learn English, the church provided English classes and materials for them—even before the immigrants
made their way to the United States. Many English classes were taught—including some by a youthful Anthon Lund, who later became a counselor in the church’s “first presidency” (its highest governing council) in Utah. Typically, these classes were held in people’s homes in the evenings. John August Olsen, an LDS convert from Norway, was in Copenhagen in 1894 and recorded having seen 75 people in just one English class there.

One important figure in the establishment of English classes in Scandinavia, H.C. Haight, was an American who converted to the LDS church in the United States and then was sent on a mission to England. There he was made mission president over Scandinavia. Once he got to Denmark, he organized many English classes. Haight recorded in his journal that some Danish members of the church had started to create “a Book for the benefit of the Saints in their learning of the English Language.” Under his direction, Reading Exercises in the English Language for Newbeginners [or Læseøvelser i det engelske Sprog for Begyndere] (see Figure 2) was published.

The book included vocabulary lists organized categorically, long lists of phrases, short stories with translations both in English and Danish, and instructions on how to make the trek to Utah. Using this book, Danish immigrants learned functional English—how they
could ask about buying wagons, buying supplies, and making their way to the United States and then on to Utah.\textsuperscript{39} This book appeared in print only ten years after Friibert published [in 1847] the first guidebook to America written by a Dane\textsuperscript{40} and was apparently one of many such publications. Even in the \textit{Skandinaviens Stjerne}, the newsletter published in the LDS Scandinavian mission, there was one issue in which directions to get to Utah were published.\textsuperscript{41}

After arriving in Utah, Danes also engaged in English study. English classes were made available in many communities where there were large numbers of Scandinavians, and some high-profile church and community leaders helped to teach them. Peter O. Hansen, well known for being one of the first LDS missionaries to Denmark, was one of these teachers.\textsuperscript{42} C.C.A. Christensen, a famous Danish artist and community leader in Sanpete County,\textsuperscript{43} also helped teach English classes.\textsuperscript{44}

Later on, the church became involved on a grander scale. Brigham Young, the church president, was very concerned about the challenges that the inconsistent English orthographic (i.e., spelling) system presented to English language learners. According to one report, an experience that served as a catalyst for Brigham Young’s later actions in this regard occurred when he heard his daughter teaching a young Danish girl to read. The Danish girl read the word \textit{throw} as in \textit{to throw a ball} and pronounced it \textit{throw}, like \textit{cow}. When his daughter corrected the Danish girl and said it had a long \textit{o} sound as in \textit{go}, the Danish girl asked why it wasn’t spelled \textit{t-h-r-o} instead of \textit{t-h-r-o-w}. Supposedly, this experience started Brigham Young thinking about how he could reform English letters and spelling.\textsuperscript{45}

The result of his thinking along these lines was the Deseret Alphabet, a new orthographic system for writing English. The Deseret Alphabet was developed mostly by George Watt, a British convert to Mormonism who had been a student of Sir Isaac Pitman, a famous British educator and spelling reformer, the founder of The Phonetic Institute in Bath, England, and the creator of Pitman shorthand.\textsuperscript{46} When Watt came to Utah, he used the principles of Pitman’s “phonography” (phonetics and shorthand) to design the Deseret Alphabet. In this effort, he was assisted by a committee of
well known and respected LDS leaders—Parley P. Pratt, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt, Wilford Woodruff, and Robert C. Campbell.47

Brigham Young was enthusiastic about the new writing system and the benefits it promised to English speakers and English learners alike:

The advantages of this alphabet will soon be realized, especially by foreigners. Brethren who come here knowing nothing of the English language will find its acquisition greatly facilitated by means of this alphabet, by which all the sounds of the language can be represented and expressed with the greatest ease. As this is the grand difficulty foreigners experience in learning the English language, they will find a knowledge of this alphabet will greatly facilitate their efforts in acquiring at least a partial English education.48

An editorial in Salt Lake City’s Deseret News was equally enthusiastic about the many advantages of the new alphabet:

By this means, strangers cannot only acquire a knowledge of our language much more readily, but a practiced reporter can also report a strange tongue so that the strange language when spoken can be legible by one conversant with the tongue.49

The principles upon which the Deseret Alphabet was based were in harmony with the best linguistic science of the day. Isaac Pitman was only one of numerous nineteenth-century advocates of reforming English spelling according to phonetic principles. Others included Noah Webster and George Bernard Shaw.50 In terms of the principles of phonetic consistency on which its 38 symbols were based, the Deseret Alphabet was a precursor to the widely used International Phonetic Alphabet that was later developed by the International Phonetic Association, which was founded in Paris in 1886 and whose members included such linguistic luminaries as Henry Sweet (England), Otto Jespersen (Denmark), and Wilhelm Viëtor (Germany).51

In Utah, the Deseret Alphabet received official support from President/Governor Brigham Young, as well as other church and government leaders, and was promoted widely. At considerable
expense, readers like *The Deseret First Book* \(^{52}\) were published. “The *Deseret News* featured translations from the Gospel of St. Matthew for about one and a half years....store signs were painted...tombstones made—all in the unusual characters of the Deseret Alphabet....Church records were recorded...for a period of a year. Six gold coins were minted between 1849 and 1860...in the Deseret Alphabet.” \(^{53}\) Some Utahns used the Deseret Alphabet to write in their journals. \(^{54}\) The new orthography was even used for keeping minutes in church meetings, \(^{55}\) and an edition of *The Book of Mormon* was published in the Deseret Alphabet. \(^{56}\)

Historical records show that the Deseret Alphabet also was used in some of the English classes that were organized for Danes. One immigrant, O.N. Liljenqvist, wrote in a letter included in a Scandinavian newsletter, “Her findes to Skoler foruden en Søndagsskole og en Aftenskole, i hvilken vi øve os i at læse og skrive Deseret Alphabet” [Here are found two schools in addition to a Sunday school and an evening school where we practice reading and writing the Deseret Alphabet]. \(^{57}\)

These reported uses notwithstanding, the Deseret Alphabet was never adopted widely—especially after the railroad arrived in 1869, making it easy to transport books printed in the traditional English orthography to Utah. After Brigham Young’s death in 1877, the already dying Deseret Alphabet movement was largely abandoned. Nevertheless, this “noble linguistic experiment” by the church “in the midst of its pioneer labors” \(^{58}\) reflected the great concern that Brigham Young and other church and community leaders in Utah had for helping the Danes and other immigrants learn English.

**Danish Language Maintenance in Utah**

Despite this strong counsel and substantial support for learning English, the linguistic “street” ran both ways in pioneer Utah; there was no “English Only” policy. On the contrary, allowances were made for the Scandinavian languages to be spoken. Brigham Young himself, although he strongly desired the immigrants to learn English, was understanding of their need to use their native languages, as a letter written in 1869 to Mssrs. Monson and Sholdebrand, illustrates: “Yours of recent date has been received. I
have no objection to your getting up a little Theatre at Christmas for the Scandinavians of this city, as it will tend to the gratification of your compatriots who do not understand the English language.” But notice he also emphasizes, “I would also be pleased to have you study & familiarize yourselves with the English language so that you can lend assistance at our Theatre if agreeable. Your brother in the Gospel. Brigham Young.”

Under Brigham Young’s direction, Scandinavian-language congregations were organized for members of the LDS church who could not speak English. The first known of these congregations was established in Sanpete County. On September 30, 1853, Hans Dinesen, a Danish immigrant, wrote in his journal, “I reached Salt Lake City. . .” Two weeks later, on the 14th of October, his company started for Sanpete, and on the 15th “reached ‘Little Denmark,’ (now Spring City)” where “the first Danish meeting was held in a little log house, owned by Hans Chr. Hansen, a brother of Peter O. Hansen.” Soon thereafter, Dinesen and the other residents of “Little Denmark” had serious difficulties with the weather and the native Americans, the first two “enemies,” but they got some help with the third “enemy.” As Dinesen’s journal records, on Friday, December 16th:

The snow fell one foot deep; we packed up everything that could be moved and started for Manti, through the deep snow and severe cold weather. We had no sooner started than the Indians swooped down on what was left and set fire to the houses, hay stacks, etc., and burned up everything that was left. And in the midst of this trouble and hardship, Erastus Snow, then an apostle, came to us. . . . He had instructions from Prest. Young to “organize the Scandinavian meetings,” and he said “this should last as long as the Scandinavian emigration should continue.”

This “Scandinavian meeting” was only the first of many such language-based congregations. In fact, in some Utah communities they continued for many decades. Leaders were sensitive to the linguistic challenges immigrants faced:

It is quite natural that the Saints who come from foreign lands have some difficulty to adjust themselves to the customs and traditions of new land. The worst obstacle with
which they are confronted is probably the language which as a rule they do not understand or speak. The leaders of the Church have been aware of this situation on a large scale. For this reason organizations for the foreign-speaking people have been set up to assist these brothers and sisters in the process of adjustment. . . .

Worthy of special note were “the elderly immigrants who will never learn the new language sufficiently well to speak it with ease.” One account illustrates this point:

David og Mette Marie Madsen, som i 1880 . . . emigrerede, bosatte sig i Utah i Sevier County i en lille by ved navn Elsinore. Da de ankom, var 92% af indbyggerne danske. De talte dansk indbyrdes, og mindst til 1915 foregik gudstjenesterne også på dansk. Mette Marie lærte aldrig at tale engelsk. [David and Mette Marie Madsen, who in 1880 . . . emigrated, settled in Utah in Sevier County in a little town by the name of Elsinore. When they arrived, 92% of the residents were Danes. They spoke Danish mutually, and worship services were carried out in Danish until at least 1915. Mette Marie never learned to speak English.]

Even today, the folklore of Sanpete County is peppered with amusing anecdotes about the Danes’ struggles with English. One such story about a “Danish Meeting” illustrates their difficulties. It recounts, “One of the brethren was called upon to say the prayer at the beginning of the meeting. He prayed in English. After he had prayed for a while, Mormon Preacher (Andrew Christian Neilson), who always pulled his chair up close to the stove shouted out, ‘Pray in Danish.’ The frustrated man exclaimed, ‘Oh, Yah, yah, yah!’ He then started his prayer all over again, praying in Danish.”

Other churches in Utah also offered Danish-language services. Not too long after the Mormons arrived in the territory, Presbyterian and Methodist missions were set up, and they conducted their meetings in Danish. Danish Lutheran minister F.W. Blohm was commissioned and financed by the Presbyterian Church to start a mission in Utah. The United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church also established a “mission among the Mormons in Utah.” The Danish Lutheran Church worked to maintain the immigrants’
cultural ties with Denmark. Nevertheless, in 191, with the bombing of the *Lusitania*, the national mood changed, America started preparing for World War I, a new wave of nationalistic patriotism swept the United States, and even the Danish church started to shift toward using the English language in its meetings.\(^68\) This shift, of course, was preceded by many years of debate in the Danish Lutheran Church in the United States between the “happy Danes” and the “holy Danes.”\(^69\) The former “maintained that Danish immigrants should strive to learn English while, at the same time, preserving their Danish” and the latter worked toward being “as little Danish as possible” and “as American as we can to the best of our ability.”\(^70\)

In nineteenth-century Utah, businesses and other organizations also responded to the linguistic needs of Danish immigrants. Speaking of one of the “Little Denmark” communities in Sanpete County, Brigham Young is purported (in local folklore) to have complained, “You can’t buy or sell a cow in Ephraim unless you do it in Danish!”\(^71\) Even in larger towns where English dominated, store windows had signs announcing, “De Skandinaviske Sprog Tales” [The Scandinavian languages are spoken here] to attract Scandinavian customers.\(^72\) Advertisements in local newspapers also proclaimed, “De Skandinaviske Sprog Tales.” In order to reach the Danish clientele and increase sales, ads that appeared in *Bikuben* [The Beehive]\(^73\) and the six other Scandinavian-language newspapers published in Utah included a lot more Danish. The businesses that employed the Danish language in this way were not just Scandinavian companies; many Anglo-American businesses did the same thing. In the town of Mt. Pleasant (in Sanpete County), the local ZCMI department store even employed one clerk who spoke English and a second clerk who spoke Danish to help the Scandinavian customers.\(^74\) In examining advertisements in *Bikuben*, we saw Danish-language ads for companies such as Peerless Laundry, The OK Shoe Company, and The Felt Radio Company. We even found one that boasted, “Der er intet Universitet i Bjergstaterne, der staar højere end Brigham Young Universitet” [There is no university in the mountain states that stands taller than Brigham Young University].\(^75\)
In many parts of Utah, social gatherings for Danish immigrants proliferated. Scandinavian choirs were very popular, too. Other types of Scandinavian social opportunities included brass bands, political groups, literary clubs, and genealogical societies. Some Scandinavians worked to get others politically involved. One 1898 announcement (entirely in Swedish) of a political meeting sponsored by the Scandinavian Republican Club was surely designed to encourage and influence the Scandinavian vote.

Danish was used not only in efforts to reach out to the immigrants, but also in attempts to preserve their cultural and linguistic heritage. In later years, as the immigrant generation saw this heritage slipping away, many worked to preserve it. C.C.A. Christensen, a community leader in Sanpete County, was one of these. He had always been proud of being Danish. In fact, reporting in his journal about his arrival in the Salt Lake valley, Christensen wrote, “Vi naaede omsider vort Maal, Salt Lake City, d. 13de Septbr. 1857, med det danske Flag vajende fra min Haandkærre” [We finally reached our goal, Salt Lake City, September 13, 1857, with the Danish flag waving from my handcart] [italics added]. C.C.A. loved det Danske Sprog [the Danish language] and took every opportunity to make the immigrant feel proud of it. He had only scorn for those who hid all Old World books and bric-a-brac and tried to conceal their foreignness. He wrote poetry to make fellow immigrants proud of their heritage language, and he was a frequent contributor to the Danish-language newspaper, Bikuben. In one poem titled “Rimbrev,” Christensen wrote of his love for Danish while describing how he and his fellow Danes waited for their cherished newspaper to arrive:

Man utaalmodig venter paa,  
Aviser eller Brev at faa,  
Men helst hver Fredag er man der  
Bikuben for at faa især.  
Den har vi Danske jo saa kær,  
Thi Sproget ligger Hjertet nær  
[italics added].

[We wait impatiently  
To get newspapers or letters,  
But we prefer to be there every Friday  
In order to get the Bikuben.  
We Danes are so fond of it,  
For its language is so close to our hearts] [italics added].
In our research, we utilized the hundreds of issues of *Bikuben* that span nearly six decades, as a major data source. Because the paper targeted Scandinavians who had difficulty learning English, we looked through old *Bikuben* issues to see if we could find any kind of encouragement to learn English or any advertisements for English classes. To our surprise, we found absolutely nothing encouraging the readers of this paper to learn English. On the contrary, it was used specifically for communicating with those who spoke Scandinavian languages, and it was often used to promote Danish language maintenance. For example, the following lines from one poem titled “Det Skandinaviske Sprog” [*The Scandinavian Language*] in the first issue of *Bikuben* talked about pride in the mother tongue:

Kom Nordens Sönner, Dötreyd
Og gamle, Unge stemmer i
I Modersmaal hvis Toneklang
Og Ord staaer altid Tanken bi.

We are not ashamed of the language of the North
In which our fathers gave
Us final counsel: – a covenant book –
Forever dear – like yonder grave.
And when we meet them again –
Perhaps they will speak to us affectionately
In old Danish and Norwegian and Swedish…

Social Factors that Encouraged English and Discouraged Danish in Utah
In the end, however, despite the immigrants’ efforts to preserve the use of their beloved Danish, and despite their difficulties learning
the English language, Danish eventually stopped being spoken among the Danes and their descendants in Utah, and English replaced it. Although the older, immigrant generation continued to use Danish for a few more decades, in most Utah homes, the use of Danish came to an end in the early 1900s. “With few exceptions, relatively little sense of ethnic community survived beyond the generation of immigrants themselves.” In fact, “most descendants of the immigrants who served as missionaries to ancestral lands had to learn the native language during their service.”

According to the sociolinguistic research literature on language shift for immigrants in America, the move from ancestral language to English typically takes three generations. Members of the first (arriving) generation learn as much of the new language as they can, becoming “simple” bilinguals, with some proficiency in English but certainly not mastery. Their children, however, grow up being predominantly exposed to both English (in school, on the playground, and elsewhere outside the home) and their ancestral tongue (in home and family contexts). As a result, they become complex, English-based bilinguals. They speak unaccented English while still maintaining some proficiency in the ancestral tongue, which they may or may not use with their parents at home. The third generation, the grandchildren of the immigrants, typically are English monolinguals, as are their children. In their homes and lives, the ancestral tongue is no longer used.

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<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>62.0%</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>59.6%</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
<td>45.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. Rate of mother-tongue retention by second-generation Scandinavians in the United States, by ancestral nationality and in selected states (1940 data)*

For Danes in Utah, this three-generation shift was a common pattern, although in many cases the shift occurred even more
quickly because of the factors we will discuss later in this paper. Table 1\textsuperscript{87} shows the rates of mother-tongue retention by second-generation Scandinavians in various states. In the United States as a whole, 31\% of second-generation Danes still spoke Danish, 43\% of second-generation Swedes still spoke Swedish, and 52\% of Norwegians spoke Norwegian. In most states where there were large concentrations of Scandinavians—like Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa—the retention rates were even higher. In Utah, however, only 23\% of second-generation Danes spoke Danish, and the mother-tongue retention rate was also unusually low for Swedish (24\%) and Norwegian (16.7\%). It is apparent that cultural assimilation and learning of English took place faster in Utah than it did in other parts of the United States.\textsuperscript{88} “While the 1980 census estimated that...137,941 Utahns had at least one Danish ancestor,”\textsuperscript{89} very few of these modern-day Utahns of Danish ancestry were able to speak Danish.

In addition to the policies, programs, and publications discussed in earlier sections of this paper, several important social factors brought about this linguistic state of affairs. Sociolinguists specializing in language maintenance and shift have identified a variety of psychological, social, and cultural factors that help explain why linguistic assimilation does or does not occur among immigrant groups.\textsuperscript{90} These individual, group, intra-group, inter-group, and community factors include immigrants’ native language, cultural attitudes, numerical strength, place of residence (rural vs. urban), isolation, social class, and many others. In this paper, we focus on just a few of the most salient of these factors.

First and foremost, in our estimation, comes respect for and acceptance of the Danes by the English-speaking majority in Utah. In the United States generally, “dense Dane” and “dumb Swede” stereotypes were common, and Scandinavian immigrants were sometimes socially ostracized. For instance, in 1887, an article in The \textit{New York Times} claimed that the reason why the Mormon missionaries were having so much success in Scandinavia was because the Scandinavians were vulnerable because of their “inferior mental capabilities.”\textsuperscript{91} “The Scandinavians were looked down on as being dirty, filthy, and undesirable.”\textsuperscript{92}
In Utah, things were different. While the assimilation of the new immigrants did not take place without incident—in some communities there were ethnic divisions, and linguistic differences led to “language wars”\(^93\)—the Danish immigrants were generally accepted and respected. One reason for this acceptance and respect was because at that time almost all Utahns from different backgrounds shared the same religious views and saw each other as brothers and sisters. In many communities, Anglo-Americans, Danes, and other immigrants went to church meetings together. This church-related, acceptance factor resulted in “mixed nationality neighborhoods” and “greater willingness to accept and incorporate Scandinavians.”\(^94\)

In addition, leaders of the LDS church encouraged an attitude of accepting the immigrants as brothers and sisters. They sometimes even celebrated the ethno-linguistic diversity of Utah. Brigham Young is reported to have bragged, “We have French, we have Italians, we have Danes, we have Norwegians, we have Germans, we have Welch, we have all these different people from different countries and cultures, living in harmony in Utah.”\(^95\) An 1853 editorial in Salt Lake City’s *Deseret News* discussed the topic of language and cultural tolerance as the first Danes were arriving. One paragraph reads, “To see a people gathered from a multitude of nations…and those who gather being one in faith, fellowship, feeling, and acts, is an anomaly on the earth.”\(^96\) However, the ideal of brotherhood was not universally practiced, and some native speakers of English were apparently looking down on the new, non-English-speaking immigrants. For this reason, the author of this editorial went on to warn of potential friction between the cultures.

We have referred to these things to put the saints on their guard, and prevent any root of bitterness from springing up among them; gathered from the four winds, not only in the shops but in neighborhoods, where those of different languages are located, it would be strange indeed if among the hundred different tongues spoke in Utah, little misunderstandings and difficulties should not arise, if all are not on their guard, but by watchfulness and care, all these difficulties may be avoided; and in process of time, not yet,
the Lord will restore a pure language, and then who will have reason to boast that he can talk an impure language better than his neighbor?97

Linguistic and social prestige is another factor affecting language maintenance or shift. In late nineteenth-century Utah, Danes and Danish in Utah enjoyed considerable prestige because there were many well known church leaders in positions of authority who spoke Scandinavian languages, and/or were Scandinavian born. At the highest levels of church leadership these included Erastus Snow, Peter O. Hansen, Anthon H. Lund, John A. Widtsoe, and Christian Daniel Fjeldsted. 98 Danes also filled many other, lower-level leadership positions in the LDS church, constituting 8 percent of the total number of bishops and presiding elders between 1848 and 1890.99 When their own people were put in positions of leadership and authority in this way, Danish immigrants in Utah naturally felt like their culture was respected and accepted.100 This encouraged their integration and assimilation in society.

Furthermore, a number of famous Scandinavians paid visits to Utah while doing tours of the United States. These included Jenny Lind the Swedish Nightingale,101 violinist Ole Bull, poet Kristofer Janson, singer Olivia Dahl, polar explorer Roald Amundson, and Erling Bjørnson, son of dramatist Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson. 102 Their talents and accomplishments undoubtedly lent prestige to the local Scandinavian community. At the same time, these prestigious Scandinavians helped Anglo-American Mormons overcome the prevailing negative stereotypes of Scandinavians.

Ironically, the social acceptance of, and respect for, Danes in Utah actually encouraged the shift to English. As Grosjean103 point out, when “minority groups do not feel threatened,” they “do not react by overdefending their language and culture. This lack of opposition leads to easier assimilation.”

Additionally, increased levels of respect and acceptance naturally led to greater social interaction, and greater interaction also led to English learning among the Danes in Utah. In contrast, high degrees of “enclosure” (when speakers of a minority language live in isolated communities) typically result in native-language maintenance. 104 This is what happened in many “Scandinavian
enclaves” in other parts of the United States\textsuperscript{105} and to some degree in heavily Scandinavian-populated Sanpete County in Utah, although due to church and economic factors the Danes there were never really isolated from English speakers. In Sanpete County, an interesting example of how social interaction (quite apart from formal instruction) led to language learning involves not English but Indian languages. In an 1856 letter, Christian Nielsen, a Danish immigrant, wrote:

Vi maa nu lære det engelske Sprog, som falder lidt besværligt for de Ældre; Børn lære det strax. De fleste af de danske Børn og unge Folk tale temmelig godt Engelsk og Indiansk. Fritz holder engelsk Skole for nogle Danske. Vi kan ligesaa snart lære det Indianske, da vi komer oftere til at tale med dem end der gives Leilighed til at tale med Amerikanerne. Vi kan begynde at tale lidt af begge Slags, vores Børn taler bestandig Engelsk eller Indiansk. [We must now learn the English language, which comes with a bit of difficulty to the elderly. Children learn it right away. Most Danish children and youth speak rather good English and Indian. Fritz is holding English classes for some Danes. We can just as soon speak Indian (Southern Paiute) since we speak with them more often than we have the opportunity to speak with the Americans. We are able to speak a bit of both. Our children speak English or Indian constantly.\textsuperscript{106}]

Equally interesting is the report that when the Indians learned English from interacting with the Scandinavians, “some Indians learned to speak English with a Scandinavian accent.”\textsuperscript{107}

Respect and acceptance by the Anglo-American majority and increased interaction with them were, of course, welcomed by the Danes in Utah—especially in Salt Lake and Utah counties where they were clearly in the minority. Notwithstanding the prestige accorded to Danes and their language, however, English still had greater social prestige—especially for the younger generation. Consequently, in a pattern that can be found in many other minority-language communities in the United States, while the older people continued to use their native language, their children and grandchildren abandoned it in favor of English. For the new, born-
in-America generation, Danish was a language for old people. Many of the second generation wished to disassociate themselves from their Danish identities. They thought that it was “simple” to be of Scandinavian origin, felt alienated from other Americans, and wished to blend in with the other people around them. Semmingsen notes that the children of Norwegian immigrants elsewhere in America followed the same pattern. They were “concerned about speaking English without the accent that would reveal their ‘foreign’ origin.” When their parents would speak to them in the ancestral tongue, they would reply in English. Haugen provides a parallel explanation of how this happened among Norwegian immigrants in Wisconsin and Minnesota: “The children succeeded in limiting the sphere within which Norwegian was spoken. They spoke it only to one or a few older members of the family, usually a grandparent, while they spoke English to all others. If their position was exceptionally strong, they succeeded in evading the speaking entirely, even to their parents. This bilingual situation was highly typical, with parents speaking Norwegian and children answering in English.” In discussing English and minority-language use in modern American homes, Veltman describes a twentieth-century scenario that seems to also have been common with Danish families in Utah a hundred years ago. Once the children went to school, their English skills developed rapidly, their linguistic values changed, and they no longer wished to speak the minority language at home. The parents either did not resist this movement or, if they did, eventually “abandon[ed] the conflict at some point in time as relatively fruitless.”

Of course, the ultimate form of acceptance and social interaction is marriage, and intermarriage is one of the factors identified as affecting language shift. In Utah, the many mixed nationality neighborhoods, the high level of social acceptance of Danes by Anglo-Americans, and the shared religious background led to many mixed marriages—especially in the second generation. Armstrong reports a dramatic (nearly five-fold) increase in the number of marriages between Scandinavians and Anglo-Americans in one Utah community between 1880 and 1900. In his discussion of “linguistic emigration,” Veltman notes that in the United States, “persons [of
different language backgrounds] who intermarry are likely to adopt the English language as the principle language of use.” This is what normally happened in Utah with these mixed linguistic background couples. There was usually no question about which language they used at home. It was English, and the children did not learn Danish.

Conclusion
Although a large proportion of Danish surnames and some Danish cultural traits live on in modern-day Utah, this sociolinguistic history of the Danish language in the state ends with the demise of the danske sprog so beloved by the pioneer immigrants. As it has done with many other native and immigrant languages since then, and will undoubtedly continue doing, the United States became the “language graveyard”\textsuperscript{115} for Danish—at least in Utah. Nevertheless, this history illuminates a largely forgotten aspect of Western and Danish-American life. Along with the oft-told tales of Western settlers’ struggles with the mountain desert climate and the pioneers’ battles with the Indians, the stories of their struggles with, and eventual dominance of the “third enemy” (English) convey an important part of our Danish ancestors’ lives and our heritage.

Acknowledgements: The authors wish to express special thanks to the Utah Humanities Council for providing funding in the form of a Delmont R. Oswald fellowship that helped make this research possible. They also wish to thank the Danish American Heritage Society for providing grant money that enabled George Bailey to travel to Iowa in order to attend the DAHS conference and present this paper.

\textsuperscript{1} William Mulder, \textit{Homeward to Zion: The Mormon migration from Scandinavia} (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1957), 107.

\textsuperscript{2} Erik Helmer Pedersen, “An outline of the historiography of Danish emigration to America,” \textit{Danish emigration to the U.S.A.} (pp. 190-6), eds. Birgit Flemming Larsen and Henning Bender (Aalborg, Denmark: Danes Worldwide Archives, 1992), 192.
3 Grace Johnson, Brodders and sisters: Being the early life and times of the Mormon town of Ephraim, Sanpete County, Utah and including, to be sure, the famous “Ephraim stories.” (Manti, UT: Messenger-Enterprise, 1973), 25.

4 Ibid., 10-11.


6 For instance, “Frederik Ferdinand Samuelsen (1865-1929) emigrated to Utah after serving as a member of the Danish parliament….Samuelsen was deeply disappointed that his lack of fluency in English precluded his further involvement in public life.” Richard L. Jensen, Danish immigration and life in Utah, Utah History Encyclopedia (n.d.): http://www.media.utah.edu/UHE/d/DANISHIMM.html (accessed October 31, 2003)

7 Ibid.


10 Ibid.


13 Jensen, Danish immigration and life in Utah; see also Lauring 1995, 222-31.

14 Lauring 1995, 231.


16 Erastus Fairbanks Snow, One year in Scandinavia: Results of the gospel in Denmark and Sweden – Sketches and observations on the country and people – remarkable events – Late persecutions and present aspect of affairs (Liverpool, England: F. D. Richards, 1851), Harold B. Lee Library, Special Collections, Brigham Young University.

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20 Mulder 1957, 104; Richard L. Jensen, *Immigration to Utah*.

21 Richard L. Jensen, *Danish immigration and life in Utah*.


23 Jensen, *Danish immigration and life in Utah*.

24 Jensen, *Immigration to Utah*.


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27 Armstrong 1999, 117.

and Travel, 2005); George C. Whitlock, “The choice people who came to settle Sanpete,” A Danish saga: Vol. 1. A selection of writings about Danish people who came to America and settled in Sanpete County (pp. 26-31), eds. Eleanor P. Madsen et al. (Ephraim, UT: Sanpete Historical Writing Committee, 1997), 26.

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38 Hector Caleb Haight, Læseøvelser i det engelske sprog for begyndere [Reading exercises in the English language for newbeginners]. (Copenhagen, Denmark: Hector Caleb Haight and F. E. Bording, 1857), Harold B. Lee Library, Special Collections, Brigham Young University.

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40 Christianson 2004, 16.

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Interestingly, “partly because of the central place the Scandinavian LDS Meetings held among the immigrant community, such organizations as Dansk Broderskab (Danish Brotherhood) enjoyed only limited participation in Utah.” Jensen, *Danish immigration*.

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(1876-1935)
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Johannes Bohn, “Det skandinaviske sprog” [The Scandinavian language], Bikuben [The beehive], 1 August 1876, Harold B. Lee Library, Special Collections, Brigham Young University.


Haugen 1969, 284-5.
88 Mulder 1957, 346.
89 Jensen, Danish immigration.
92 Ibid., 122.
93 Olsen 2000, 60.
96 “To the Saints,” Deseret News, 5 February 1853, microfilm, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.
97 Ibid.
100 Armstrong 1999, 123.
101 Seamons 1997, 32.
102 Arrangementskomiteen 1914, 10.
103 Grosjean 1982, 111-12.
104 Ibid., 108; Clyne and Kipp 1999, 7.
105 Armstrong 1999, 118.
106 Nielsen, 27 April 1856, as cited in Schmidt 1965, 67; printed in Bikuben, 19 December 1912.
107 Mulder 1957, 249.
108 Mulder (1957, p. 272) reports that at a gathering for some of the older generation, C.C.A. Christensen once read a poem titled “Før og nu” [Before and now] in which he “satirized the attitude of the younger ‘enlightened’ generation in their belittling of everything associated with the past.”
110 Haugen 1969, 234-5.
111 Veltman 1983, 36.
113 Armstrong 1999, 124-5.
Matie begins her diary, “I think I will begin a diary of this my most exciting year, so I will not forget a small thing. But for now I must hurry to my stateroom and pack my luggage.” That was September 7, 1900, on a ship headed for Cuxhaven, Germany, her ultimate destination being the island of Als, Denmark, where her father’s relatives lived. Matie had been given this year-long trip as a gift from her parents for helping to raise her eight brothers and sisters, younger than she, and for teaching them to read and write English, as Danish was the language of her home.

At this time in history and until 1918, the southern end of Jutland, Denmark was in German possession. Matie tells of several unpleasant incidents, as well as happy times with the occupiers. The Danes were not to hold any meetings without the German presence, but she attended one secret meeting of Danes, which was exciting for her. The German balls and theater were fun experiences for a young girl 20 years of age. However, one particularly nasty incident occurred when she went to buy stamps: the young German Assistant Postmaster insulted her because she did not speak German, threw her mail back to her and closed the window in her face. Her uncle had to buy the stamps and mail her letters to the United States.

The modes of travel that she experienced included catching the mail wagon for 10 cents, riding the “little train,” the sleigh from the country, the steamers, and rented horse and buggies, but mostly walking, walking, and more walking, using lanterns in the night to see.

September 10 she writes,

“Tante Trine, my mother’s sister and Uncle Otto Otsen have made me feel so much at home with them in their house on Storegade in Nordborg. They have three delightful children; Georg, who is a big boy; Mette, five years old and Lille Lene, three years old and a darling little individual. Uncle has a printing business in the addition to the house. Tante wants me to meet all her friends. So, this afternoon,
Tante and I took the train to Oksbøl. There we visited Old Bolling, whose daughter has just come home to keep house for him. He has recently lost his wife of fifty-nine years and is almost inconsolable. He showed us his valued pictures and we tried to comfort him a little; then we turned our footsteps over to Mrs. Butzan’s widowed sister, who was so happy to see me and hear from America. She made coffee for us and later took us to visit her sister and husband. When we came to the door, it was locked but she knew where the key was hidden and we went in. The rain began to pour down and lucky for us, someone found the widow. As we waited, we ate apples. We were invited to the evening meal—chicken and potatoes with milk and gravy and parsley. At ten o’clock we sauntered down to the station where we had to wait almost an hour for the train. Finally the little train came chugging into the station and we rolled away to Nordborg.”

Her accounts of celebrations, their Danish holidays, and their coffee drinking episodes are most descriptive and quaint. One can enjoy reading about her year in Denmark whether or not one is interested in Danish culture, the history of 1900, or the adventures of an attractive, very poised, young single woman who stated, “I don’t know why I should be afraid—I am twenty years old and my dear father and mother have taught me to trust in God and be a good girl.”

Matie was born Matie Eliva Petersen on February 4, 1878 in Marionette, Wisconsin and died December 2, 1958 in Bakersfield, California. She had two daughters, educated at Iowa State Teacher’s College as she herself was, before she made the trip to Denmark. She said of her father, “I have the most wonderful father a girl could ever wish for. He is a shoemaker. He has stitched shoes for half of the people in Marionette, and when the children were poor and could not pay, he mended their shoes anyway. My father loves children and has been Sunday School Superintendent for many years. My mother and father had nine children and I,
being the eldest, took care of them all. That is why my father has somehow saved the money and given me this breathtaking, thank-you trip to Denmark where he was born and lived in his youth.”

**Preface**

Matie’s year-long visit to Denmark in 1900 took her to southern Jutland, a territory that had been overrun by Germany for years. The southern-most area called Schleswig Holstein was the first to be occupied in 1481. One Danish king said this was the 700-year war. The fighting continued sporadically for years, and although the Danes fought back from time to time, they were eventually unable to contain the Germans who inevitably moved north to Flensburg in 1850. The bombing of the mill in Dybbøl on the southwestern coast of Jutland in 1852 was a decided blow to the Danish troops, made up primarily of peasants who had been called into service. Militarily, the defense of Dybbøl had been hopeless. The Germans had won the day even though Denmark was stronger at sea. Victory at sea could not make up for defeat on land.

The European politics of that period were entwined with marriages throughout Europe. The English were the controlling power of Europe. The many children of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were intermarried with royalty from nearly all the European countries and Russia, and Victoria’s loyalty to her children was always foremost in her mind for them:

1. Victoria, Princess Royal m. Friedrich III, Kaiser of Germany
2. Edward VII, m. Princess Alexandra, daughter of King Christian IX and Princess Louise of Denmark.
3. Alice m. Ludwig IV, Grand Duke of Hesse, duchy of Germany
4. Alfred m. Grand Duchess Maria Alexandrovna of Russia, daughter of Tsar of Russia
5. Helena m. Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein-Augustenburg
6. Louise m. John Campbell, 9” Duke of Arill (only child who married British aristocracy)
7. Arthur married Louise Margarete of Prussia
8. Leopold married Princess Helen of Waldeck (Holland)
9. Princess Beatrice married Prince Heinrich of Battenberg, daughter became Queen of Spain
It is obvious that Queen Victoria’s England could not take sides without insulting some part of her own family. So neither Denmark nor Germany could have England’s assistance or support in this struggle.

An armistice soon followed in 1852, but negotiations broke down due to the pro-Danish feeling of the people living in Schleswig-Holstein and Flensburg. War broke out afresh. In June 1852, the Prussians crossed into the island of Als, off the southwest coast of Jutland. The battle was bitter and many were killed. There spread a deep desire for peace in the region, an end to the fight. Peace talks resumed. The terms were harsh as the Danish representative conceded to the Germans much more than either the Danish Royalty or the people intended. The armistice was negotiated in Vienna. The southern part of Jutland was ceded to Germany all the way north to the Ribe River and Foldingbro. But before the treaty with Germany could be signed, King Frederick VII died. The young king hesitated for three whole days before making up his mind to endorse the new act, known as the “November Constitution,” giving up a 1,000-year-old border. In the meantime, Otto von Bismarck, who had just become Prussia’s Minister of State, saw his chance to make a name for himself. Denmark was presented with a carefully calculated ultimatum. Bismarck wanted a chance to try out his new army. In light of these events, the Danish army immediately withdrew. Under Bismarck, the German Empire rose to be the victorious warlike and ambitious Great Power of the European mainland.

It proved difficult for Danish soldiers to be conscripted into WWI under the German command and fight the Allies. Many defected but could not return to their homeland. A German prince expressed in a speech at Sønderborg, “What the German eagle gets its claws into, it never releases.” Yet more than half of the population of the occupied territory were Danish-speaking and Danish-minded, a fact that lay beyond the extent of German administrative interest.

The province was poor and Germany took little interest in this out-of-the-way corner of their country. During the occupation,
Danish meetings and gatherings were prevented or forbidden and fines were imposed if people painted their houses using the colors red and white, the colors of the Danish flag. This maliciousness kept the Danish Nationalism alive. Schleswigians attended the Danish folk schools with their children and came back with an even greater concept of Danish culture and mentality.

Youths began to emigrate into Denmark proper, but the Danish government checked this movement saying that if allowed, the Danish would have lost the fight. So the young did their German military service in order to retain their position and civil rights in the province. When WWI ended, Schleswigian leaders went to Copenhagen and, as a result, the Danish government approached the nations assembled at Versailles requesting the right of self-determination for the Schleswig-Holstein provinces. A vote was permitted and taken in the provinces. More than half the population voted to return to Denmark, and the provinces were returned.

Matie visited in southwestern Jutland before WWI and before the territory was returned to Denmark. In 1900, when she was there, Schleswig-Holstein was still occupied by Germany. This area was losing their menfolk to take care of the farms because they were being conscripted into the German army. The area was becoming backward, new farms and roads were needed. Soon, five thousand Schleswigians were to lose their lives in the war.

My hope is that this brief synopsis of history helps you to better understand the environment in which Matie spent her one-year vacation in Denmark.

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1 Translated from Danish by her daughter, Ardis Larsen-Cooper-Clark. Edited by her grandniece, Avis Knudsen-Jorgensen.
Danish Churches and Congregations  
In Indianapolis, 1868-1885  

by Barbara R. George

Demographic Context

A look at the population make-up of Indianapolis and Indiana during the time period from the end of the Civil War (approximately 1865) until the 1880s shows that the Danes had little impact in the relatively small Indiana immigration picture. Indiana was less influenced by foreign born than any other northern state. Although ranking ninth in the number of German-born residents in 1880, Indiana ranked thirteenth in the number of foreign born, and was sixth in total population. As a state it was not particularly aggressive in promoting itself as a viable destination for immigrants, and ranked only in front of Delaware in the number of foreign born in relation to the total population. Some other destinations of the Old Northwest—Wisconsin, Michigan, and Illinois—ended up with much larger concentrations of Danish immigrants.

According to census records there were only about 4,000 persons living in Indiana who listed a Scandinavian country as their place of birth in 1880, which was a great increase from the 44 listed in the 1850 census. In *Indiana in the Civil War Era 1850-1880*, Emma Lou Thornbrough notes that in 1870, among the total Indianapolis population of 75,000, the majority of the 48,244 immigrant nationals were German (as were 80,765, or 55%, of the total state population); the Irish were in second place (with about 17% of the state total). The reality of being a very small group within a larger group of foreign-born people was, perhaps, another incentive to form a close unit of affiliation. The fewer than 300 Danes in Indianapolis, most having points of origin very close together in Denmark, shared more than most immigrants who only shared a country in common. Of the original 42 charter members of the group who formed the Danish Lutheran Church in 1869 (5 of whom were children), most came from Falster (13) and Møn (12), islands that were within “spitting distance” of each other. For the years 1868 to 1872, the membership...
rolls of First Trinity Church (“First”) indicate that up to 50 of the people came from Fanefjord, Møn and Aastrup and Maglebraendo (Magleby), Falster. No doubt their common patterns of living as well as their beliefs were very similar, especially when considering the larger life and group space they were now occupying.

Ms. Thornbrough brings out another interesting item in regard to the Danish existence within the larger German immigration population in Indianapolis. This was the effort of the Germans “to support European peoples who were struggling to establish free governments” (551). Since most of the German immigrants were of Prussian origin in this area of the city, their similar language and close cultural and religious values surely would have created more synergy with the Danish immigrants. While perhaps the two groups were divided in their mother countries, here in the New World they may have been able to overcome their differences more readily.

The Churches
Brief mention has been made of the Danish Lutheran Church, Indianapolis, later called First Trinity (Danish) Evangelical Lutheran Church, in the history of the formation of the Norwegian-Danish Lutheran and Danish Lutheran Churches in America. Even less has been noted in the records regarding the split of this particular congregation and the formation of a second congregational group meeting. In conducting a search, such a historical tracing has been found. This presentation is intended to look at the concurring histories of both groups and present a broader picture of the lasting experience and importance of the small group of Danish Americans during this time frame in Indianapolis.

Surgrove’s History of Indianapolis and Marion County (1884) makes note of a First Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church, southeast corner of McCarty and Beaty, later renamed Noble, Streets, and Second Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church, east side of New Jersey Street, south of Merrill. The author goes on to mention the existence of a small Danish mission church on South Missouri Street, below Merrill during 1880–1883. As my study took me deeper into the shrouded history of the Danish immigrants and their religious paths in Indianapolis, I found it conceivable that the Surgrove’s Second
Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church and the small Danish mission church are one in the same, at different times in their brief life span.

Researching the Indianapolis City Directories for the period of the formation of the Danish Lutheran Church in Indianapolis in 1868 until the year 1884, I found mention for approximately ten years of the existence and location of “another” Danish Lutheran Church, but no First or Second notations were made. There was no mention of the Danish mission church. This information was also replicated in Cline & McHaffie’s (1874) *The People’s Guide: Business, Political & Religious Directory of Marion Co., Indiana.*

Pastors were noted in the City Directory listing during the specified period. Niels Thomsen, credited with being the first Danish pastor in America to serve a Danish Lutheran Church in America congregation, was listed as pastor of the “First” Danish Church from the years 1873-1874 and as pastor of the “Second” Danish Church in 1874. The standing designations, i.e., First and Second, are mine and are made in regard to the initial time of listing in the City Directory and the location being the reported church building, est. 1872. Eskild P. Jensen is listed as pastor of the “First” Church for the year 1872, the date of the dedication of the actual building structure, and also for the years 1874 and 1875 during the congregational split. The “Second” Church has pastors listed for 1874-1876, and again in 1884, when C.J. Moen takes the reins. Note that Pastor Moen is listed in the 1885 Directory as pastoring the “First” Church, but no mention is made that year of the “Second” Church. It appears that the two congregations may have reunited. The “Second” Church is mentioned in the Directory in the ensuing years between 1875 and 1884, pastored by Olav Kirkeberg in 1875 and 1876. The location is shown as being on the east side of New Jersey, south of Merrill, N. of McCarty. This area becomes the site of St. Paul’s German Lutheran Church in the period from 1883 to 1884. I am speculating that the small Danish mission church mentioned in Surgrove’s book might be the remaining members of the “Second” Church after St. Paul’s acquired, or re-acquired, the land on New Jersey north of McCarty.

Investigation into the listings of pastors who were members of the Norwegian Synod and the separate Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, also known as the Danish Mission Society which
originally looked to be an arm of the State (Lutheran) Church in Denmark, reveal that the two Danish Lutheran churches in Indianapolis were serving different congregations of Danish immigrants.

The Norwegian Synod with its strength in Wisconsin, which by this time had partnered with the Missouri Synod, a German Lutheran group who originally emigrated from Saxony and settled in the St. Louis area forming Concordia Seminary academy, was the training ground and affiliation of the original pastor in Indianapolis, Markus Fredrik Wiese. Pastor Wiese, much as Pastor C.L. Clausen and others after him, was a Dane who became a pastor of the Norwegian Synod.

The Pastors
Markus Fredrik Wiese was born May 11 in 1842 in Gjeddesby Sogn, Falster, Denmark. After a year at Jelling Seminary, he emigrated to the United States in 1863. After a brief period in Chicago, he became associated with the Rev. J.A. Ottesen and the Rev. H.A. Preus in Wisconsin. From there, he traveled to St. Louis in 1866 to study at Concordia Seminary until 1869. During this time he organized the Danish Lutheran Church in Indianapolis and became its pastor upon his graduation in 1869, remaining at the helm until 1870. He died in December 1933 in Cambridge, Wisconsin, after serving many years as a viable contributor to the Synod. (It is interesting to note that Markus Wiese’s wife, Cecilie Olsen, whom he married in 1865, had a sister, Annette Olsen, who became the wife of Eskild Peter Jensen, the next listed minister for the Indianapolis “First” Danish Church.)

Eskild P. Jensen was also of Danish birth, born December 30, 1843 at Halby, Hee Sogn, Ringkjøbing, Jutland, Denmark. His schooling in Denmark was at Copenhagen Latin School (?-1863) and at Copenhagen University (1863-1864). During 1864, he served as a soldier in the Danish-German War and spent 1864-1865 as a Union soldier in the American Civil War. The years 1869-1871, he spent as a student at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. It is reasonable to assume that he was an acquaintance of Markus Wiese’s during some of this time considering their attendance at the same seminary, their
Danish background, and their pastoring pathways—all of which may have led to Pastor Jensen’s acquaintance and marriage in 1873 to the sister of Pastor Wiese’s wife.

Pastor E.P. Jensen became the second Danish-born, Norwegian-affiliated pastor of the “First” Danish Church in Indianapolis in 1871, and according to Norwegian Synodical records, he remained at that post until 1875. The church records note that Pastor Jensen’s “vigorous ministry” was the time of the formal dedication of a new brick church on September 22, 1872. (An interesting note is that the island of Møn also has brick churches and is known for its clay and pottery, and family stories tell of the Olsens’ making the bricks for the church.) In the summer of 1875, Pastor Jensen’s health forced his resignation and a pastoral vacancy that lasted for 18 months, until Stener Svennungsen’s arrival. Pastor Jensen died in 1905.

The joining of the congregation with the Norwegian Synod may have been one catalyst for the division of the community. “First” Church histories written to celebrate First Trinity’s Anniversary Celebrations make note of this and talk of the remaining 21 members continuing on and even acquiring property at the corner of McCarty and Noble Street on which to build their church. In the early years of meetings, the location had been at the store owned by Hans Peder Weis on S. East Street south of McCarty. Weis, born on July 31, 1840 in Damme, Fanefjord, Møn, Denmark, moved from Cleveland in 1861 with Rasmus Rasmussen to help build St. Paul’s and was an original founder of the “First” Church; Weis went back to Denmark in 1865 and returned with 40 of his friends and family to increase the size of the community.

History tells us that it was also at this time that the Lutherans from the Norwegian Synod were in “attack mode” against those of Danish birth who seemed to them to be of Grundtvigian persuasion. Such accusations were leveled at the first Danish pastor called to Indianapolis, Niels Thomsen, although he was considered to be more of “old Church” leanings of the First Four who founded the Church Mission Society in 1872.

Niels Thomsen was born on August 5, 1842 at Aunslev, Fyn, Denmark. After attending training school in Denmark conducted by the Danish Mission Society, he served as a missionary in India in
1865. He was ordained by J.C. Ochs in Pattambakam, India. After returning to Denmark for health reasons, he emigrated to the United States in 1870, spending time with his brothers on a Kansas farm. A Dane in Indianapolis, John Thompson, wrote a letter requesting a minister who was not affiliated with any synodical organizations, an action that is recorded in John M. Jensen’s book, *The United Evangelical Lutheran Church: An Interpretation*. Note that there is no listing for John Thompson in the membership records of the “First” Danish Church, which was already in existence in Indianapolis and being led by Pastor E.P. Jensen at that time. Niels Thomsen answered the letter and became the leader of the Danish Mission Society, also known as The Danish Church in America (“Second”) in Indianapolis in 1871. During his tenure, Thomsen, like others of the Danish Mission Society, was attacked for being non-Lutheran in his ministry. Niels Thomsen spent much of his time while in Indianapolis as a traveling pastor. He left in 1874 and moved to Wisconsin and Michigan, taking a larger role in the leadership of the Danish Church. He became editor of *Kirkelig Samler*; the “missionary” of the Synod, and he was the first, although short lived, “traveling preacher.”

While many of the histories of the Danish Church in America cite Pastor Thomsen as serving the Danish Lutheran congregation organized in Indianapolis in 1868, there is considerable confusion about which community he did, in fact, serve. During this time, confusion reigned among the Scandinavian Lutherans. There had been little support from the Mother Church in Denmark for her emigrants in the New World. The Norwegian churches, especially those Danish pastors of the synod, were of much support to the spiritual-seeking Danes. There seemed to be much conflict regarding what was to be considered “Lutheran.” Therefore, I do not hold the publishers of the Indianapolis City Directory responsible for any mismatching they may have done in regard to which church group Niels Thomsen was serving in 1873. (Also, not being well versed in the conflicted and confusing Lutheran Church history myself, I ask the reader’s forgiveness for any errors I may allege. It is not my desire to sort out what was going on, but rather
to acknowledge the accomplishments of all the Danish-Americans in Indianapolis during this time.)

In 1872, the “First” Church in Indianapolis recorded Articles and Constitution, followed by an entire Constitution and By-Laws in 1873. That document stated emphatically that this church, hereafter called the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Trinity Congregation of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, was to be based upon the Holy Word of God revealed in the canonical Books of the Old and New Testaments as their one source, rule, and guide for the faith, doctrine, and life of the congregation. This document seems to support the conservative and Inner Mission stance of the “First” Church in Indianapolis. Although the group had been holding religious meetings since Easter Sunday, April 17, 1868, it was on September 22, 1872 that they dedicated their own church building on the corner of McCarty and Noble, a building that had been built with their own bricks and their own hands.

During this time of split, the “Second” congregation met at a location that may have been owned by St. Paul’s German Lutheran Church, not more than a few blocks from the area where the “First” church met. Later, when this location was needed by the St. Paul’s congregation to build a new church to replace one that had burned down, the group met at a structure located farther west on the banks of Pogue’s Creek. This building flooded out in the 1880s, and there is speculation that this may have been one factor for the possible integration of the congregations around 1884, an action that may be indicated by listings in the City Directory. To date, no evidence has been found by the author to prove, or disprove, this speculation.

The 1875 directory listing shows the Rev. Olav Kirkeberg as pastor of the “Second” Danish Church and the Rev. E.P. Jensen as pastor of the “First” Danish Evangelical Lutheran Trinity Church. Olav (Ole) Larson Kirkeberg was born on October 11, 1849 at Valdres, Norway. Before attending seminary at Askov Folk School from 1871 to 1874, he had been a teacher for several years. The commission which had become active in Denmark to further the evangelical beliefs and teachings among Danes in America, sent him to the United States in 1874 to take over the church when the Rev. Thomsen was on his way to Neenah to become editor of the newspaper. The Rev. Kirkeberg’s
ordination took place June 25, 1874 in the United Church Synod. This is certainly a switch: a Norwegian being a pastor of the Danish Church Synod. Pastor Kirkeberg seemed to have been of the Grundtvig persuasion, as he went on to found the Danish Folk School in Elk Horn, Iowa in 1876 and was involved in not only Danish Church activities but also education endeavors until he resigned the Danish Church and joined a Norwegian synod around 1900. Thus, his inclusion in Who’s Who in the Norwegian Lutheran Synod in America, 1843-1928.

On July 26, 1876, S.H. Madsen and Jens Danielsen were ordained in Indianapolis by Pastor A. S. Nielsen. Madsen was the replacement for Olav Kirkeberg in the Indianapolis location. S.H. Madsen was born on September 29, 1842 in Barde, Denmark and attended Missionskolen Copenhagen from 1867 to 1869. After immigrating to the United States in 1869, he became a parochial teacher in Racine, Wisconsin. He had been active in the work of the Danish Mission Society but had returned to Denmark in 1870, some say due to ill health. He continued his studies at Hammerum Folk School at Herning under the leadership of Pastor Tesch in Gjellerup. The Select Committee sent him to lead the congregation in Indianapolis upon Pastor Kirkeberg’s departure in 1876. After departing Indianapolis in 1877—this short period perhaps being the reason his name was not listed in the City Directory—he headed west and has been given credit for building the first Danish Lutheran Church on the Pacific Coast in Chualar, California in 1890. He died in 1911 after serving many other posts in the church.

In regard to the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church, Stener Svennungsen, born on February 16, 1843 at Saude, Nedre Telemarken, Norway, held the pastorship during the years 1876-1878. Pastor Svennungsen had attended Concordia Seminary from 1866 to 1869 and was ordained in 1869. Information in church records is sparse concerning his years in office, and when he left in 1878, another vacancy was experienced for a period of three years, until the arrival of Carl Moen.

Carl Johanson Moen, who, it seems, also became known as Carl Moore, was born on June 28, 1855 at Kongsberg, Norway. Emigrating in 1856, he attended Luther College from 1873 to 1877
and Luther Seminary from 1878 to 1881; he became pastor in Indianapolis in 1881. During his pastorship, the first parsonage was built adjacent to the church; that building became a parish hall in 1938. Little is currently known of Pastor Moen’s six years in Indianapolis, although church history does indicate that there was another dispute among the members after his departure, sometime during Pastor N. M. Minne’s two year stint, 1887-1889. At this same time, a rift also is noted in the history of the Norwegian Lutheran Synod as occurring in the larger church body.

The Present
Being unable to track down the records of The Danish Church in America (aka The Mission Society “Second”), I was unable to go into depth regarding any activity with this mission congregation. I have an idea that Niels Thomsen’s letters and records, which are located in the ELCA Archives in Elk Grove, Illinois, might be of some assistance in tracking the early formation and growth of this small, dedicated community. Additional information also might be found among the works and writings of Pastor Vig covering this period of Danish-American immigrant activity. However, I have been too intrigued up to this point by the aspects of the two congregations and the larger setting in which they resided to have looked further.

The everyday life of this small band of brothers and sisters from the islands of Falster and Møn in that little country of Denmark has yet to unfold completely. There are indications that Hans Weis was not the only store owner, but that Lars Jorgensen and Peter Hansen started a grocery store in the commercial area of South East Street. And several of the Olsens worked at the gas company, according to their family historian, Kristin Law, as well as playing the organ that their family had donated to the Church. And then there were the tradesmen, the Danes who worked as artisans in the building trades during the rapid development of Indianapolis in the years following the Civil War and the growth of the railroads, in the city known as the Crossroads of America.

In 1984, the area housing the Danish Church along with Holy Rosary Catholic Church received National Historical Registry designation. In the application packet, which is held in the files of
the Indianapolis Historical Preservation Commission and the
Indiana State Society for Historical Preservation, Indianapolis, the
Danish church is noted as a simplified Gothic Revival church. Still
standing, although no longer housing a Lutheran congregation, this
brick structure, made by the hands of dedicated Danes, still speaks
to the public at large of its origins. According to Dr. James Divita,
former history professor at Marian College and accepted historian of
the Indianapolis and Marion County churches, the inscriptions on
the stone tablets above the windows flanking the entrance on
McCarty Street are the only existing Danish language inscriptions in
the state of Indiana. The east panel reads Dansk Evang. Luth.
Trefoldigheds Kirke [Danish Evangelical Lutheran Trinity Church],
and to the west we can read MGH Organ. 1868 Kirken Bygget 1872
[Congregation Organized 1868 Church Built 1872]. And so, even
after almost 130 years, they speak to us still in the language of their
mother land.

Notes
This information was abstracted from the microfilm of the
Indianapolis City Directory located in the Indiana State Library,
Indianapolis, IN, in 2005. The listings are as they are in the
Directory. Some directory listing confusion has been noted, such as
the 1874 listing of the “Second” Church indicating that it is the
Evangelical Danish Lutheran Congregation. This is in accordance
with this name being taken by the Danish Church of America also
know as The Mission Society at their meeting in June of 1874.
However, this was the official name used by the “First” Church in
incorporation papers filed 29 March 1872. This resulted in a naming
conflict, which might be the reason for the addition of Trinity in the
name of the “First” Church. The listing of Rev. N. Thomsen under
the “First” church in 1873 conflicts with Norwegian synod records
indicating that Eskild P. Jensen was pastor of “First” church
continuously during this time and Danish Church records indicating
that Pastor Thomsen served The Danish Mission Society in
Indianapolis (“Second” church). Pastor S. H. Madsen has not been
shown as leading the “Second” church after Pastor O. Kirkeberg’s
departure. I was unable to find any reference to Pastor N. N. Aas
serving the Norwegian synod or Danish Church at the time indicated. It appeared that Pastor C.J. Moen (Moore) was always associated with the “First” church, an incorrect listing in the 1884 Directory. It can readily be understood that those who published the Directory might not have the correct information, and the author also has found this investigation to be confusing at times.

References
The references in this list do not include those works by Pastors Enok Mortensen; Peter Sorensen Vig; Peder Kjølhede, and Ivar Marius Hansen which are the historically related standards in the field of Danish Lutheran Church history. These works also helped to inform me in the preparation of this presentation.


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When Professor C.K.F. Molbech was asked the year after Kierkegaard’s death to sketch a biographical portrait for a planned German translation of Either/Or, he went to his friend, the philosopher Hans Brøchner, for advice and suggestions. Brøchner, who knew the deceased personally, pondered it and then replied:

When one restricts oneself to external events, there is of course very little to say about his life at all: he was born May 5, 1813, he was a student at the University in 1830, took his degree in theology in 1840, he submitted his doctoral thesis in 1841, and he died in 1855. These are more or less all the external facts of a biographical nature that can be provided, and they are not interesting.¹

In this way one can write a very slender biography—and as Brøchner anticipates, it would not be “interesting.” The reason why I nevertheless have found occasion to cite Brøchner is because he represents a dominant tendency in the biographical approach to Kierkegaard, an approach, which—only slightly caricatured—could be summarized by the following alternatives: Either he becomes the very paradigm of an existential philosopher, a transparent subject who from an invisible point beyond the authorship distributes his knowledge among a host of pseudonymous authors and their perspectives of the world; or he becomes a needless little appendix to a masterful and basically autonomous work, an absent and inaccessible figure whose private affairs only an unessential reader could ever care about.
As if it were, however, only to complicate the life of his future biographer, Kierkegaard himself has intensified this animosity. More than anyone else, he has—both personally and pseudonymously—forbidden others to look over his shoulder, and he promises every imaginable plague upon those who try.

What has been written, then, is mine, he announces, but only insofar as I, by means of audible lines, have placed the life-view of the creating, poetically actual individuality in his mouth, for my relation is even more remote than that of a poet, who poetizes characters and yet in the preface is himself the author. That is, I am impersonally or personally in the third person, a souffleur, who has poetically produced the authors, whose prefaces in turn are their productions, as their names are also. Thus in the pseudonymous books there is not a single word by me. I have no opinion about them except as a third party, no knowledge of their meaning except as a reader. 2

A more passionate protest against biographical readings can hardly be imagined, but regardless of how solemnly Kierkegaard asks us not to take an interest in his insignificant person, he is fortunately human enough to be quite inconsistent. Thus, he can be quite forward when he openly announces that his “existence” is the “most interesting ever led by an author in Denmark,” and this is why he will be “read and studied in the future.” Or, as he writes with a rather un-Danish self-consciousness in November, 1847:

And this is why the time will come when not only my writings but my life, the intriguing secret of the whole machinery, will be studied and studied. 4

For that reason Kierkegaard in his journals did not talk only to reveal but also to conceal.

Investigation into this intriguing machinery with all its secrets was prepared by Kierkegaard himself who, very early on, began to edit his papers and to write consciously as if future readers stood and looked over his shoulder. Kierkegaard himself was the first person to edit his journals and thus did almost everything in order to meet his future biographer in a carefully calculated posture. From the very moment he put his pen to paper, he made a free, fictionalized style his favorite form. “Sheet removed from the journal,” one reads in
dramatic italics where Kierkegaard has used a knife to perform a physical operation on his journal; that is, he has removed one or more pages because, one might suspect, they did not perpetuate Kierkegaard the myth but instead delivered Kierkegaard the man. Multifarious interventions in the form of crossed out lines and words, or whole pages covered by tight ink-loops expose the never-resting diligence with which Kierkegaard planned his own posthumous rebirth. If it is any consolation, Kierkegaard is not an isolated example when it comes to such things. The biographer Leon Edel, who was in the process of writing on the great tease Henry James, tells how he, with pounding heart, approached James’s writing desk. The deceased had told that valuable materials were hidden in a secret drawer, but when Edel at last found the drawer, it turned out to contain nothing other than a completely meaningless old requisition for a pair of new glasses! Edel writes that he could almost hear a chuckling, infernal laughter where he stood.\(^5\)

Kierkegaard’s mystifying practice induces Henning Fenger to call him a graceless myth maniac who leads the reader astray. Fenger claims that as a historian, “one must have deep underlying misgivings about the numerous journals after 1846.” But also, he says, the early journal material is infested with Kierkegaard’s falsifications: “A great deal of effort went into the presentation of the riddles which posterity was not supposed to be able to solve and into the interpretation it was supposed to accept.”\(^6\) Fenger has a good eye for Kierkegaard’s poetic activity and therefore collects analyses of the frequently occurring literary elements in Kierkegaard’s text and self-representation. But at the same time, Fenger does not take into account that the term “the real Kierkegaard” might be a deceptive one, a sort of artificial construction, established by a forceful reduction of the complexity of Kierkegaard’s journals, whose discontinuous and often fragmentary character cannot be separated from the “character” of their author. Only rarely do the records inscribe their author into a historical context. Kierkegaard did not remember, he recollected; and from this angle his diary perhaps could best be described by those words that the publisher of The Seducer’s Diary resorted to when he wanted to give a kind of genre-definition to the many papers that fate and
mischief had dealt into his hands. “His diary is not historically accurate,” concedes the publisher, “or strictly narrative; it is not indicative but subjunctive.”

Kierkegaard’s entries are usually short, loosely or often not at all thematically connected; the interest in a screaming fishwife may follow immediately upon the dogma of the Incarnation. These verbal mini-monuments break with the traditional understanding of the journal as the site of confidentiality or intimate narrations. Not even the biographical culmination points are straightforwardly accessible. The relationship to Regine is represented only in a highly fragmentary way during the time of the engagement, and in reality, one must go all the way to the end of August, 1849 before Kierkegaard presents posterity with his “Relationship to ‘Her,’” (as it is so matter-of-factly called, even now). But the prompting addition he makes in his Journal, “Something Poetic,” makes it clear that this representation should not be taken as an empirical report either. Likewise, his deeply ambivalent relationship to his father is hardly mentioned in the earliest journals. Kierkegaard’s relationship to his mother can be treated differently: he simply fails to mention her, even in a whisper!

**Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography**

Kierkegaard’s consistent reference to himself as a “poet” is confirmed in the journals, almost in excess. It is with an explicit sensitivity for his own post-mortem importance that he depicts his future biographer as being something as demanding as a congenial “poet.” Thus, Kierkegaard writes in an undated entry from 1846:

> It is precisely in recollection, poetic recollection, that my writings show to advantage, and no doubt the time will come when maidens will blush with excitement as a poet recounts the whole design of my life.

Maidens no longer blush like they once did, and I am no poet, but with my biography on Kierkegaard I have attempted to rehabilitate a historical-biographical reading that moves beyond the ideological-polemical biographies. I have tried to narrate the man’s life, or to develop his life as narrative, if you will. Here one could quote Paul
Ricoeur who so nicely frames the biographical complex by the following:

He has been able, like no one else, to transpose his own biography into a kind of personal myth. By his identification with Abraham, Job, Ahasuerus [the Wandering Jew], and other invented persons, he prepares a kind of fictive personality which completely hides and shields his actual existence….Kierkegaard cannot be found by help from his own categories. One must imagine the extraordinary conjunction of irony, melancholy, purity of heart, and a biting rhetoric, and then add a mocking comedian, and as the crowning point of the work introduce the element of religious aestheticism and martyrdom....

To what degree a perspective like Ricoeur’s can be converted to narrative form and grafted into biographical material is an open question, but the perspective in itself is a beneficial and provocative corrective to the ideological posture and heroic attitude, which have characterized so many biographies. In my eyes, at least, it is obvious that the pragmatic alternative to source critical nitpicking is a biographical reading that not only demonstrates how, but also explains why, Kierkegaard devoted himself to fictions, masks, mystifications—devices that are neither pure fiction nor its exact opposite, but rather such as occupy a place somewhere in between. Alongside my goal of creating a portrait of Kierkegaard, I have sought to reinsert him into his own time, to contextualize him, so he does not become “that individual” who we stare at through the keyhole of one of the gates of Copenhagen, but who once begins to walk among those who also were present in the city at that time. In other words, I have tried to let his contemporaries regain some of their historical proportions and perhaps thereby receive their share of the aura of genius for which Kierkegaard has otherwise been given the global patent.

When I began to incise my way into the monstrous material, it was my constant aim to coax the narrative elements forth, so that the fates and figures I had in my care could become integrated into a coherent story with a pulse and drive. Without improving on the facts, the biography has thus attempted to make the distance
between a true story and a good story as short as possible. Just as much anti-biographical literature has wanted to exterminate the “real” man from his work, so have many biographers drastically reduced the unknown number of “unreal” men within the work. In a conscious countermove, I have tried to avoid creating an unambiguous Kierkegaard figure who is well understood by page 18, is predictable by page 42, and is trivial by page 81. Instead, I have tried to keep the figure open and, to the greatest extent possible, tried to keep the man and author in motion so that he could develop and change himself in all his complexity and maybe even disappear in front of the reader’s eyes. In the final and decisive analysis, then, it is the reader who completes the figure and gives “Kierkegaard” direction or destiny, if you will, through his or her own interpretive power and psychological capacity.

In all this is implied that a biography on Kierkegaard is not simply a reconstruction of Kierkegaard’s life. On the contrary, a biography is only made possible by a very personal cooperation of the biographer who constantly has to mobilize his or her own biography, that is, his or her own existential capacity, knowledge, and experience by which the historical data, so to speak, are reborn. And the idea of an objective biography on Kierkegaard, who is almost the incarnation of subjectivity, can hardly be in anyone’s interest—at least not Kierkegaard’s.

Let me mention in relation to this that the biography also is an attempt to document or to portray what you might call the joy of Kierkegaard who, in my eyes, is not primarily a pale, introverted Dane who constantly occupies himself with a depressing dossier of existentialistic items. Posterity has very much focused on the Kierkegaard who concentrated on his melancholia and wrote page upon page about his unspeakable sufferings, his vita ante acta (previous life), the thorn in the flesh, the wound that would never heal, the traumatic experiences of childhood, or rather, the traumatic lack of a childhood. But in all this it has often been forgotten that Kierkegaard’s unhappiness, his sorrow, and his despair also interested him, and he was rarely so depressed that he did not feel like writing about it. There are no signs of depression in the abnormal, clinical sense of the term, which would have left large
chronological gaps in the journals. On the contrary, the perseverance that characterizes the entire literary enterprise is evidence of an enormous energy surplus, a sort of mental health despite everything, which is why the diagnosis of manic-depressive—which people suggest now and then for want of anything better—seems quite mistaken.

What connects Kierkegaard with his works, the edifying discourses as well as the pseudonymous works, is his typical style. Thus, he can describe how he can “sit for hours in love with the sound of language,” just like “a flutist who entertains himself with his flute.” He can comment on his punctuation and invite the reader to read aloud, so that he can feel “the rhetorical” and “the rhythm.” He can even commit himself, some time in eternity, to read aloud his *Three Discourses* from 1847 and triumphantly add that he is “assured that they will be heard with delight.” Not less impassioned, he writes to his only true friend, Emil Boesen, in a letter from his second trip to Berlin in 1843:

> I have never worked as hard as now. During the morning I go out for a little while. Then I come back and sit in my room without any interruption until about three o'clock. I can hardly see out of my eyes. Then I shuffle by the aid of my cane to the restaurant, but I am so weak that I believe if anyone were to call my name aloud, I should fall over dead. Then I go home and begin again. During the past month I have been pumping up a real shower bath, now I have pulled the cord. The ideas stream down upon me—healthy, happy, powerful, merry, blessed children, easily brought to birth, yet all of them bearing the birthmarks of my personality.

Of course, this does not mean that Kierkegaard's texts are without epistemological depth, but it is undeniable that there is a long way to Hegel. If Hegel's thinking is marked by the fact that he finds himself on such a high level of abstraction that association and fantasy must come to the reader's rescue when he is about to expire under the strain of the concept, almost the opposite is true of Kierkegaard. The discourse is dialogical and exerts its force via dynamic reversals between concept and image. Hardly has the
reader been introduced to a complicated, dialectical operation before he is sent off to relax in a text that can broaden itself expressively, in an almost illuminating way. And as it were a kind of inner philosophical necessity that pure conceptuality must in this way be turned into pure lucidity, so can the distance from hell-raising and audacity to the sublimely and minuet-like sensitive be covered in the space of a page, a sentence, or even less.

When Kierkegaard began publishing books at a great rate in the 1840s he employed a copyist, Israel Levin, to help him prepare his manuscripts for the printer. What struck Levin most was the almost demonic power of Kierkegaard’s imagination. Levin writes:

The conception was enough for him. He could poeticize himself any existence; thus for a week he lived only to think and feel like a beggar ....Once he admitted that he had an enormous desire to commit a real theft, then live with his bad conscience, in fear of being found out. Thus he unburdened himself in dreams and poetic pictures and with his articulateness and his almost demonic imagination, it was surprising the effects he could produce....We talked about Andersen one evening in Frederiksberg Gardens: ‘Andersen has no idea what fairy tales are.’ And then he produced in an instant six or seven fairy tales, so that I became almost uncomfortable. So vivid was his imagination, it was as if the pictures were before his eyes. It was as if he lived in a spirit world.15

Kierkegaard himself seemed to be occasionally aware that he was injecting fantasy into the confessions and self-descriptions. Thus in 1853 he confessed:

In all that I wrote about myself in the journals for ’48 and ’49, something of the literary (poetically) often slipped in. It is not so easy to keep that sort of things segregated when one is poetically productive to the extent that I am. Strangely enough, deep inside I understand myself clearly. But as soon as I go to write it down, I immediately become ‘productive’.16

The city of Copenhagen is a metaphor for Kierkegaard’s work as an author, and it could take almost no time to move from the light-
filled, elegantly beveled neoclassical plazas to the cacophony of the dark alleys. So when Kierkegaard moved about in the streets of Copenhagen, his strutting was connected with his writing, he was everywhere and nowhere, walking this way and that, conversing intimately with everyone, but at the same time distant and alien. Or, in Georg Brandes’s precise and paradoxical formulation, he was “the self-enclosed man whom everyone knew.”

Bishop Martensen did not grasp this and took offense. Professor Heiberg wondered at it and looked the other way. But for Kierkegaard, the body, in all its capricious lopsidedness, was a vital, communicative point. The man emerged from behind the works, thereby surrendering any claim to the authority people would unconsciously have granted him had he never shown himself on the street:

An author who is essentially educated by Socrates and the Greeks, who grasps the ironic and begins an enormous undertaking as a writer—he is quite specifically opposed to becoming an authority, and to that end he rightly sees that by continually walking in the streets he must necessarily undermine the impression he makes.

As the years passed, what had begun as a carefree stroll out of Nørreport “with four shillings in his pocket and a slender walking stick in his hand” thus became a demonstrative act with which Kierkegaard opposed the snobbish aloofness from the concrete and ordinary world he noted among the intellectuals of his day:

Yes, of course, I am an aristocrat (and so is everyone who is truly conscious of willing the Good, because they are always few in number), but I want to stand right on the street, in the midst of the people, where there is danger and opposition. I do not want (like Martensen, Heiberg, etc.) to live in cowardly and prissy fashion at an aristocratic remove, in select circles protected by an illusion (that the masses seldom see them and therefore imagine them to be Somebody).

Kierkegaard sought his exemplars in Socrates and in Christ, both of whom withdrew from established institutions and took to the streets. Socrates had his Sophists to battle against, Christ took aim at the Pharisees; Kierkegaard thus had Martensen and Heiberg, in
whom equal portions of Sophism and Pharisaism had fused into a fussy refinement. It cannot be denied that a certain self-assertion gradually crept into this gesture, with Kierkegaard emphasizing the unselfishness of his peripatetic praxis, his wandering activism; but he did remain true to his principle, right up to the end: “Quite literally to make ordinary daily life into one’s stage, to go out and teach in the streets.” And this was exactly what constituted his aristocratic radicalism.

The Pseudonymous Autobiography
It is hardly an overstatement to say that Kierkegaard’s life in the years following his break with Regine in the profoundest way was his writing and thus, also, functions as a kind of therapy, as Kierkegaard himself fully testifies:

Only when I am producing do I feel well, he wrote in 1846, then I forget all life’s discomforts, all suffering, then I am absorbed in my thought and happy. If I leave my work for a couple of days I immediately become ill, overwhelmed, troubled, my head heavy and burdened.

Reading Kierkegaard one will observe that the borders separating the pseudonymous works from the Journals written in his own name become more and more fluid and that Kierkegaard often has lifted texts directly from the latter to the former. And the further on in time Kierkegaard moves, the more open the borders become. This is the case in “Two Short Ethical-Religious Essays” and to such a degree that it becomes doubtful if it makes sense to speak of a border any longer. “Fear and Trembling actually reproduced my own life,” Kierkegaard honestly states in 1849, but could he not have said the same thing about Repetition, where his own love life is the story transparent substratum, and in whose composition Regine played a decisive role? One could also mention Guilty? Not Guilty? which the critic P.L. Møller reviewed as an autobiographical work and treated so maliciously that Kierkegaard in his rejoinder to Møller activated the disastrous Corsair Affair in 1846. As Josiah Thompson puts it:

He implores that we forget about him and pay attention to his characters. But he is his character in so many ways. His
ironic glance is theirs. His rasping voice, his isolation in the midst of bustle, his hyperconsciousness—all are theirs. It is almost as if his own life had been refracted by a powerful prism into a multitude of different images.¹⁹

Kierkegaard’s entries in his Journals impose a sort of paradox to the biographical reader. What one does not get access to in the journals—because Kierkegaard is here writing in his own name—is more directly accessible in the pseudonymous works. Thanks to the pseudonymous signature, Kierkegaard has been able to distance himself from his text and thus allow himself a distinctive openness. His indignant reaction to critical reviews is not only due to bruised vanity, but likewise to the fact that his writings also have, although not exclusively of course, the self-exposing character of confessional literature.

The Authorship as the Author’s Autobiography?
As the first in a series of his biographers, Kierkegaard himself reflects on the transaction between life and writing. It happens frequently in the journals, but is thematized comprehensively in The Point of View of My Work as an Author. Here Kierkegaard goes to great lengths to form chapters and to supervise events in a story that posterity not only should accept, but also repeat and retell. At the same time, the Point of View is supposedly the closest Kierkegaard comes to writing an autobiography that is unique in the sense that when Kierkegaard looks back on his life, he does not see life, but writing.

Somewhere toward the middle of this writing, Kierkegaard also willingly confesses that for a long time, “I had done nothing other than practice dialectical movements fortified with imagination, experimenting with my spirit like one who tunes an instrument; but I was not really living.”²⁰ If it is not utterly obvious which “I” has not lived, it is in any case clear that this “I” must give way to the writing. Viewed from its perspective, the writing has utilized its author in the service of a higher cause. This means, Kierkegaard reasons, that as a matter of fact he has not been the real author of the authorship. Rather, he has functioned as a co-author or as a kind of “ghost writer” so that he cannot authoritatively comment on the inner
Kierkegaard has had an experience that he found difficult to express in language, precisely because it concerned the very conditions of language itself. He ardently wonders about “the foreign contribution” to the authorship, but he does not arrive at the conclusion that the text’s semantic surplus value might have its origin in language. Of course language is always greater than its author and by virtue of its grammatical rules alone, it keeps the writer on particular tracks writing alongside the writer, as it were, perhaps even sending the writer in a given direction. Kierkegaard never read his Wittgenstein. Nor does it occur to him that the writing process itself can activate unconscious powers in the writer which, to his surprise, touch on issues that are normally effectively repressed. Kierkegaard never read his Freud, either. Kierkegaard, by contrast, interprets his experience religiously and designates the foreign influence in the authorship as the influence of divine “Governance.” “As categorically defined as possible,” he explains, “it is Governance that has brought me up, and the upbringing is reflected in the writing process.”

The idea of the influence of “Governance” is not a piece of rampant megalomania, but rather the opposite: an admission of limited autonomy. Kierkegaard was not only the person who did the writing; he was also the person who—and it was precisely here that he could not hit upon the words he needed—was written. Behind Kierkegaard’s declared distance to the pseudonyms there
might lie the concrete experience that, within the process of writing, something can be produced that surprises the producer of the writing. Passion does not move only from the man to the work, but also from the work to the man. And thereby the authorship, in addition to so many other things, becomes a personal process of becoming, a kind of “Bildungsroman” whereby the writing itself has an inspiring and redeeming—a maieutic—relationship to its writer. Kierkegaard can then look back at his production as his own “upbringing” and “development,” as he calls it, using two of the most emblematic terms from the Bildungsroman. Kierkegaard is not only a child of his age, as is so often claimed, he is, in my view, also a child of his works. In constructing his texts, Kierkegaard is likewise constructed by them. In this perspective, the authorship can be read as Kierkegaard’s journey to selfhood.

Accompanied by a mild, breezy irony, Kierkegaard seems to find himself in almost the same situation with which he entertained himself as a theology student. In an entry from 1837, he writes: “Someone would like to write a novel in which one of the characters goes mad; as he is working on it, he himself goes mad, and the novel ends in the first person.”

It is not important here whether Kierkegaard goes mad or not, the important thing is the dialogue between the writer and his writing. The important point is that Kierkegaard both writes and is written—which is why every reading of Kierkegaard, unavoidably but often unconsciously, is and becomes biographical.

Notes
* Parts of this paper are based on previous papers translated by Stacey E. Ake, Kent Brian Soderquist, and Bruce H. Kirmmse.


4 *Pap.* VII 1 A 424.


7 *KW* III, p. 304.


9 *Pap.* VII 1 A 117.

10 »At filosofere efter Kierkegaard« [»To Philosophize after Kierkegaard«], in: *Filosofiens kilder [Philosophy’s Sources]*, selected and introduced by Peter Kemp, Copenhagen, 1967, p. 33f.

11 *Pap.* XI 1 A 214.

12 *Pap.* VIII 1 A 33.

13 *Pap.* VIII 1 A 16, p. 12.

14 *Breve og Aktstykker vedrørende Søren Kierkegaard [Letters and Documents Pertaining to Søren Kierkegaard]*. Edited by Niels Thulstrup, 2 vols, Copenhagen, Munksgaard, 1953-54, pp. 120-121.

15 *Encounters with Kierkegaard*, pp. 207-208.

16 *Pap.* X 5 A 146.


18 *Pap.* X 2 A 15.


20 *Søren Kierkegaard The Point of View for My Work as an Author: A Report to History*, (hereafter *The Point of View*) ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1998, p. 82.

21 *The Point of View*, p. 77

22 *Pap.* X 5 B 168, p. 362.
23 Pap. VII B 80,2.
24 The Point of View, p. 73.
25 Pap. IV A 85.
Three Tales of Two Towns:
How Fanø Entered the Golden Age of Sail

by Anne Ipsen

Fanø is a magical island off the west coast of Denmark, justly famous for its endless white beach along the North Sea. Towering dunes, whose slopes are covered in lyme grass, ring the center of the island where the heath is home to an abundance of creatures and plants. The colors of the sky and water, the heather and grass change in rhythm with the seasons. The solid houses of the two towns, Nordby to the north and Sønderho at the southern tip, bear witness to the wealth brought home from the seven seas by generations of seamen sailing their tall wooden ships. Over a period of two hundred and fifty years, these staunch people launched a thousand ships, building them on the sand and using only tradition to guide their hands.

Today, Fanø has preserved the beauty of its abundant nature and its history in its houses, paintings, costumes, dances, and songs. But it was not always like this and this historical account [en historie], tells how the Fannikers of the northern town of Nordby and the
Sønderhonings of the smaller southern village bought their freedom and the right to build and sail their ships.

Fanø is but one of the many Danish islands. Driving due west from København, across Sjælland and the new bridge-tunnel over Store Bælt to Fyn, we pass H.C. Andersen’s Odense. The suspension bridge over Lille Belt brings us to the Jylland mainland. Continuing west until we can drive no further, we arrive in Esbjerg. This important harbor town for the steamship trade with England was not founded until 1865, over a hundred years after the period of this story. A 15-minute car ferry takes us to Nordby. Going down to the southern tip and through Sønderho, we travel back in time, to the end of the world, where there is nothing but sand and sea and sky, as when it all began.

In the beginning there was only the sea and the sky. Then the sand rose out of the sea, and the wind and the waves formed the dunes. And it was good and the island was called Fanø—Fan Island.

Animals came and man followed. They built their houses and lived off the treasures of the sea: fishing the waters, collecting the amber, and using the wind. But they had no right to live there.

Three centuries ago in Sønderho, starts our first tale. In those days, Fanø belonged to the King, as did all land that was not part of
a lord’s estate or a free-town. Fannikers [people from Fanø] and Sønderhonings [people from Sønderho] were, therefore, only squatters on the land and were not allowed to build or own ships. Rights to mill and rights to trade belonged to the market town of Ribe, eight miles from Sønderho, across the water. The people either starved as fishermen or sailed to Holland in their leaky tubs to sign onto smelly whalers or miserable slavers. The grist mills and saw mills were illegal because they would not pay the king or Ribe for a license.

Early in the 1700s, the pastor of Sønderho finally bought a mill license and all in the town were required to bring their grain to his mill for grinding. He was a miserly man whom no one liked, and they were outraged by the fees he charged. “God gave us the wind,” they said. “We need no man’s permission to use His gift.” Loading a wagon with grain, they snuck by the parsonage early in the morning. The grouchy pastor heard the rumble of wheels on the road and leapt out of bed. With nightshirt flapping around his legs and fist shaking, he chased the wagon along the sandy ruts towards the mill in Nordby. The following Sunday, Pastor climbed the pulpit, cassock flapping around his bony legs. Shaking his fist at the
congregation he thundered at the offending farmers, “Hell-fire and
damnation awaits all liars and thieves!”

This war between town and pastor continued for years. Finally,
when the grouchy pastor died, Sonnich Jensen of Sønderho bought
the mill and the license. Remember this Sonnich, because he is
important and leads to the next tale. Kings always need money, and
Christian VI was no exception. A rumor reached the two towns that
he planned to auction off the useless island to the highest bidder. A
rich lord expressed interest in buying it for his private hunting
preserve, a fate worse than the benign neglect of the king.

The two towns have always been like brothers who constantly
fight; but in this time of need, they remembered that they are family
and the elders of Sønderho and the elders of Nordby met.

“Perhaps,” Sonnich said, “if we pool our money, we can bid in the
auction.” They put all their coins into a coffer, but the silver barely
covered even one corner of the bottom. So, for years everyone
scrimped and saved, and for twenty years they hoarded their silver.
The men went to sea each spring as soon as the ice was off the beach
and every rigsdaler¹ that could be spared was proudly added to the
freedom chest. The women went to the Ribe hiring fair and worked
for the rich farmers of Slesvig. They patched their skirts and
mended their hose and every fall they, too, added their share to the
chest. In summer, the sheep grew fat on the inland meadows, and in
winter, every family spun wool and everyone knit socks to sell to the
Ribe burghers. Still, the coins barely covered the bottom of the chest
and there was not enough.

After many years, the auction was set for the tenth of July, 1741.
Everyone knew the wealthy lord who wanted to buy the island and
everyone knew they would be outbid. But Sonnich Jensen of
Sønderho and Niels Sørensen of Nordby had a plan. The morning of
the auction, they picked the two prettiest Fanø girls. Loading them
and the treasure chest onto Sonnich’s boat, they raised the sails of the
Karen and let God’s wind carry them towards the towers of Ribe
cathedral. They sailed across the Wading-Sea, twisted along the
turns of the Nipsaa River, and tied up at the dock below Shipsbridge. Walking up the street, they found the auctioneer in
Weiss’s Stue [room], eating his dinner. The Fanø girls sat down on
either side of the auctioneer, entertaining him with their jokes and their stories and making sure that his plate and mug were well filled.

Soon the man became drowsy and went to his room for his accustomed nap. Before retiring, he gave instructions to be awakened in time for the auction. Meanwhile, behind the kitchen door, Sonnich and Niels put a few coins in the barmaid’s outstretched hand. Then, crossing the square, they bribed the watchman to move the hands of the clock in the auction hall. Well before the appointed time, the bribed maid shook the auctioneer awake and urged him to hurry lest he be late. The man, befuddled by sleep and beer, stumbled to the almost empty hall and started the proceedings by the clock. Soon the sale of Fanø had been gavelled to the only bidders. Sonnich and Niels poured every one of their precious rigsdaler onto the auctioneer’s table, counting the coins one by one until they had paid 6,523 rigsdaler and 24 skilling² for Nordby and 1,698 daler³ and 49 skilling for Sønderho.

No sooner had they finished before, "Bong," "Bong," "Bong," the cathedral clock struck three o’clock outside in the square. In stepped the buyer for the wealthy lord and sat down, waiting for the proceedings to start. “What do you mean, the island’s been sold?” he protested, outraged at having been outsmarted by the clever Sonnich and the wily Niels. But the auctioneer, not wanting to admit that he had made a mistake, declared the sale legal and accomplished. The Fannikers and Sønderhonings sailed home, each to their own town, well satisfied with what they had done.

There is one more tale in this story, because the two towns still had to divide their ill-gotten gains. The week after the auction, the elders met to establish the border between the parishes, about a third of the way north of Sønderho. We all know that no meeting of Danes can take place without eating, and they had agreed that Nordby would supply the food and Sønderho the drink. The Sønderhonings, making sure that their neighbors did not suffer thirst after their longer walk, kept the tankards filled while carefully nursing their own beer. After many toasts to the successful partnership, the border was finally fixed, slightly to the north of where Nordby had planned. The Sønderhonings went home triumphant that, once again, they had won by their wit.
At least, so they tell the story in Sønderho. If you check with a Fanniker from Nordby, he may ask you where you heard such a wild tale. Laughing, he will say, “What does a Køwenhavner [a man from Copenhagen] know about Fanø?” But the facts of the purchase are in the court records and the seamen of Fanø still go down to the sea in ships, fish the waters, and harvest the wind.

At the edge of town where a dirt road winds north, a tall windmill stands on top of a dune, a landmark eagerly sighted by travelers. You might think that you are in Iowa, but this silhouette against the white clouds and blue sky is imprinted on the soul of every Sønderhoning. Every July, Sønderhonings in the south and Fannikers in Nordby celebrate their freedom with costumes and parades, singing and dancing—each on their own day and in their own way. Thus, the two towns still keep their separate ways; but should the need ever come, they’ll remember that they are brothers from one small island called Fanø.

1 Old Danish coin.
2 Old Danish coin.
3 Old Danish coin.
Culture for Sale in Solvang, California: A Little Bit of Denmark, Disney, or Something Else?

by Hanne Pico Larsen

Danish educators coming from a Danish settlement in the Midwest founded Solvang in 1911. During the first 20 years or so, Solvang looked like an average Pacific Coast American town—but underneath lurked Danish, Grundtvigian values and philosophy. Little by little, the picture changed. After World War II, many original buildings representing these Danish values, such as a Folk High School and an assembly hall, even if not particularly Danish looking, were demolished in order to provide space for new “Danish-style” buildings in the commercial center of town. A Danish-style architecture was introduced and since then, the town became “hyper-Danish” in form and “typically American” in content.

In 1947, Solvang was discovered nationwide as “Little Denmark” by The Saturday Evening Post. The discovery resulted in a romantic article about the little, overlooked town and thereby roused the curiosity of many travelers. The article was jazzed up with postcard-like pictures showing blond children and adults in folk costumes; the church; a baker in action; the head master of the High School wearing a Danish outfit, smoking a pipe, and proudly displaying the guestbook; and people folk-dancing in the grove. Beneath one of the pictures was written: “Near-by Hollywood could not have created a more exquisite setting than the founders of ‘Little Denmark’ chose for themselves, in the lush Santa Ynez Valley against a backdrop of mountains.” It was not a tourist advertisement per se, but it had the same effect.

Solvang decided to use the newfound national attention to “stage” the annual festival, Danish Days, with an open invitation to the outside world. The outside world indeed accepted the invitation, and soon local merchants and civic leaders sensed the commercial value of emphasizing Danish traditions. It is interesting that the first
attention Solvang received from the outside world so obviously played off the theatricality issue by mentioning the Hollywood set. It is also worth noting that although the journalist sees it all as a Hollywood set, it is done in an admiring way, not out of indignation at the deception.

Today, Solvang has its distinguished architecture and a busy season all year round during which 1.5 million tourists visit annually. Solvang still hosts the annual Danish festival, has quiet tree-lined streets, horse-drawn wagons, a Hans Christian Andersen Park, windmills, Danish pastries, and dozens of quaint shops to explore. The commercial center of the town consists of hotels, restaurants, and shops; not far away one can find a fine golf course, wine tours, and visits to Arabian and miniature horse-breeding farms. Nearby there is a casino, Michael Jackson’s famous Neverland ranch, and Santa Barbara. This is a small “Danish” town living off of other people’s leisure. It looks like a theme park and fits well the tourist landscape of California, as described by Umberto Eco after his travel in Hyper reality in the 1970s.²

Solvang was carefully constructed and built up by an architect who also helped create the Bavarian Village of Leavenworth in the state of Washington, as well as by a carpenter who came from Hollywood, where he had built film sets. The same carpenter also helped to construct The Madonna Inn and to restore the Hearst Castle. Both men went to Europe several times on fieldtrips so that they could come back to Solvang and build the perfect fakes. Both entrepreneurs are American with Danish surnames: Jepsen and Petersen.

The Ideas of Heritage, Environment, and Tourism
When pondering the terms “heritage” and “environment” or “cultural landscape” before coming to Solvang, I came to the same conclusion as Clifford Geertz regarding the somewhat similar concept of place, namely that “cultural landscape makes a poor abstraction. Separated from its materializations it has little meaning.”³

When I first began researching Solvang, I wanted to take a look at the Danish community of Solvang, which also represents a themed
space and a popular tourist destination, in order to investigate whether or not Solvang really offers for sale “A little bit of Denmark” to the hordes of tourists who visit every year. The questions I posed were the following:

- Are the marks on the land really Danish?
- Is it an emotional/cultural landscape to the inhabitants and the tourists?
- Is it a purely Disneyfied heritage theme park?
- Is it a bit of Denmark frozen in time?
- What is the sense and meaning of the place for those living there, and for those just visiting?

These questions are still legitimate, and I will answer them during the next couple of years. While writing this article, however, I was more interested in the visible cultural landscape, the iconographic architecture such as the fake windmills. Plunging into the Danish town for research purposes, I came to realize that my thesis could be deepened. I found two cultural landscapes: a visible cultural landscape, which I call “the tourist landscape,” and an invisible cultural landscape. And the phenomenon turned out to be even more complex when I saw that the two cultural landscapes can coexist without problems and even reinforce one another.

Investigating first the visible landscape, the tourist landscape, I took a glider over the town, hoping to get a glimpse of an absurd, “Danish-looking” environment in the middle of a California landscape. I was disappointed because all I saw from the silence up there was a pretty normal American-looking town. I was hoping for an image of something slightly bizarre, but this did not happen. I also collected street signs written in Danish, as well as Danish words on menus, benches, and other places, and I clapped my hands every time I found misspellings and mispronunciations—just see, the roots are not going that deep! It would have been so easy if I could have shown that Solvang is just a constructed stage, which I actually can claim to some extent. However, at the same time, I had come to realize that Solvang was resting on deep feelings, pride of history, retail practices, and local politics. Whereas I had expected to get a
simplified picture of a town that makes its money selling heritage, I forgot to recognize that maybe Solvang was created because of the tourist demand, as Don Lago claims,

It isn’t just genuine pride that makes it unfair to accuse Solvang of selling its heritage for profit. It’s also the fact that no one can manipulate a million people a year into going out of their way to pay a town hundreds of millions of dollars to act Danish. It is the tourists who have created Solvang and not vice versa, and they have demanded that Solvang exists because of what was lacking elsewhere. I am sure it is not a coincidence that Solvang happened in the shadow of Los Angeles.4

Perhaps I had forgotten to consider Solvang as a special “Danish” location and not just a rather American folkloristic creation placed in a Danish colony. The combination of the Old Danish settlement and the modern tendency of selling folklore for profit is an intriguing one. The discussion about the American relation to “reals” and “fakes” is not a new one, and its essence can be summed up in the

“I took a glider over the town, hoping to get a glimpse of an absurd, ‘Danish’ looking environment in the middle of a Californian landscape. I was disappointed, because all I saw from the silent up there was a pretty normal American looking town.” This and following photos by the author.
following quotations. Miles Orvell, speaking about America and “the real thing,” says, “During the last 25 years Americans have not merely tolerated the facsimile representation with grudging good humor. They have loved it.” And as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett pointed out, creating replicas and recreations of foreign destinations “…is for many not a substitute, but even more compelling than the destinations it recreates. The simulation offers its own pleasure, the eeriness of the hyper-real.”

It remains to authenticate the history of the place. Is the fact that the Danish people dress up, sell Danish goods, and respond in Danish, if required, of any importance? Is the Danish representation in Solvang authoritative because of the presence of some Danes or some Danishness? Or, is the idea about the putative origin of Solvang—Denmark—irrelevant?

In this way the cultural landscape of Solvang turned out to be rather confusing to me after having been let in on the thoughts of the Chamber of Commerce versus the local store owners, versus the not-local store owners, versus everybody else, because Solvang might look like Disneyland, but Solvang also is just another city where people live and work. Or, as Huell Houser, a famous tourist guide on TV, puts it, “I got some information in the mail that let me know that this place not only is a great place for tourists to visit, but this is a real town with real people living here, and more importantly it is a town with a very rich history.”

The problem of cultural landscapes is getting more and more complex. Solvang is a cultural landscape within a tourist landscape,
and it is hard to distinguish what is what. Also, whereas a cultural landscape “speaks” as a unified entity, the landscape is really the opposite; it is telling us about an enormous diversity of multiple opinions, multiple ways of using the space, and multiple perceptions of it.

People create and even recreate places, and Danish immigrants created Solvang twice: first for themselves, and then for the tourists. What also makes the landscape idea a challenge to work with is that whereas most vegetation and other marks on the land are visible, no one can see the roots. Therefore, it can be hard for us to see what is there in Solvang, because, as one local journalist puts it: For many visitors, Solvang’s Danish roots are like real roots. They don’t see them at all. It could be an interesting task to look at the tourist perception of Solvang: Are the tourists really taken in by the fake architecture, or do they pretend in order to avoid the feeling of disappointment? However, I will linger on the roots that nobody sees, because that is in fact of importance as well.

The different cultural landscapes of Solvang can coexist without problems and even reinforce each other.
The Danish Roots That Tourists Do Not See

Most tourists spend the day or the weekend eating their way through Solvang, trying out the various Danish delicacies such as Danish sausage and *Aebleskiver* (little pancake-like balls), Danish open-faced sandwiches advertised under the Swedish name of *Smorgasbord*, Danish chocolate, and other foods. They might end up buying Dutch blue-and-white Delft-like porcelain and calling Solvang a “cute little Swedish town.” The most ambitious of them will visit the local museum and maybe go on the heritage walk, but they are still confused or maybe even indifferent about the Danishness of Solvang. Neither the heritage walk nor the locals show the tourists the invisible Danish landscape consisting of, for example, the Danish cemetery full of Danish names and histories of people emigrating from Denmark to the “Land of Opportunity” back in the 1900s. Only a few tourists take time to go to the Danish Church, where the organist was Danish up until 2005 and where non-Danish members of the congregation feel they have a hard time fitting in, exactly because of their lack of Danish background, and where the choir can actually sing Danish hymns if they have their arms twisted. Nobody knows about the Danish Lutheran Home where American Danes come from afar to retire. And they are not invited to participate in the meetings of either *The Danish Sisterhood* or *The Danish Brotherhood*. They do not know that behind the choosing of the Danish Maid for the Danish Festival 2004 was a battle about heritage. They are never really given the chance to feel the sense of a Danish place, which actually is there.

The most important point to make about the tourist experience may be to question if that is what the tourists really want? What would they do at a Danish Brotherhood meeting? They would be so out of place. And that is the point: they are not “locals,” they are tourists. One needs to create a glossy-sweet externality if tourists are to return, and that has been done in Solvang. The tourists do not really want to participate in this behind-the-scenes Danishness. I know that I am going against most theories on the tourist experience, as well as simplifying the various kinds of tourist demands. Tourists just want to be tourists, they do not want to see the invisible cultural landscape. They want to play golf in quaint
surroundings. If the tourists really wanted to go back-stage, places like Disney World and other fantasy-driven cultural phenomena would not work. Tourists have, by definition, the monopoly on the suspension of disbelief. Of course the tourists would not visit the cemetery in Solvang, because it does not give them the experience of a Disney-like horror-tour, it would just be a less glossy story of Danish immigrants living and dying like everybody else, and they would leave without the chill that locals feel when they see the tombstone with the surnames such as Jensen, Madsen, or Petersen on it.

Conclusion
I wanted to look at the face of Solvang, the iconographic architecture that is part of the staging, exhibiting, and promotion of the Danishness offered as “a little bit of Denmark,” or a Den-market. I wanted to survey whether or not Solvang is a “Disney-fied” heritage, “dis-danified” in the process? I had not expected to find anything Danish, whatsoever, in Solvang; I had expected Solvang to be a fenced-in theme park where tickets are required and funny trinkets sold, and in many ways it is. Shop owners turn off the lights at 6 p.m., leave town to go home to the nearby non-Danish cities; the restaurant owners follow at 9 p.m. at the latest, leaving the tourists alone on the stage.

I may have spent more time raising problems about the cultural landscape of Solvang than answering all my own questions, but in my pondering I did find two very interesting landscapes, intertwined, but nevertheless coexisting: the remnants of a Danish colony—a cultural landscape—and a temporary American tourist trap—a tourist landscape. Regarding the latter, one Solvang local said, “it [Solvang] is kind of a blend now, I guess; to sum it up, it is like condensing all the stereotypes about any Danish town and then putting it kind of in one place.”10 And according to Don Lago,

Even if Solvang isn’t authentically old or Danish, it still feels more authentic than Franchise America. People come here to feel, if only for a day, if only unconsciously, a sense of roots and community they can’t find in Los Angeles. Even when they try to take home a bit of Solvang in the form of a
cheap Dutch souvenir, there is still some authentic in this impulse.\textsuperscript{11}

I am not saying that communities do not exist in Los Angeles, but in Solvang it is just small, quaint, “clean,” and more manageable.

As for the unattainable cultural landscape, even if it proves to be an invisible landscape, we have seen that it is there, and it is important that it exists in organizations such as The Danish Sisterhood. The Danish immigrant cultural landscape was there from Solvang’s founding in 1911, and it still is in some form. The iconographic tourist landscape might even reinforce a sense of Danishness for the local Danes. The symbolic markers such as the windmills, the Danish flags fluttering in the wind, the storks on the roofs, the church, and the half-timbered houses might serve as a base for national identification for Danish Americans, a base where they feel a connection to Denmark and hence “at home.”\textsuperscript{12} Solvang may be a cultural site rather than a cultural landscape, an \textit{Oneiric Home}, to evoke the idea and term for the place where we can store our dreams and memories and feel at home, as formulated by Gaston Bachelard.\textsuperscript{13} The Danish peasant utopia is being realized in California, hence it is a fiction, a multilayered hyper-reality, neither dream nor reality—or maybe exactly both. Solvang is serving as a local community with real people living in it, and at the same time it functions as a theme park for tourists.

The idea about landscapes as applied to the Danish town of Solvang is, therefore, a rather complex one. Solvang was once a Danish society, then a reconstructed Danish peasant society functioning as a theme park that, with its iconographic markers on the land, gives new food for thought and reinforces emotions in the Danish American Society! Solvang is a little bit of Denmark, Disney, and something else!

\begin{itemize}
\item[1] Jennings, Dean 1947: “Little Denmark”. \textit{The Saturday Evening Post}, January 18\textsuperscript{th}.
\end{itemize}
8 Huell Howser, Road trip #113 (Solvang), 2002.
9 Etling, William 2003:“It’s Danish Days In Solvang”. Santa Barbara Newspress Sept.15.
Between Patrons and Populace: Danish-American Sculptor Carl Rohl-Smith and the Iowa Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument in Des Moines

by Aase Bak

Carl Rohl-Smith (1848-1900) received one of his most important commissions in America with the “Iowa Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument” (completed 1897). But his position became difficult as he had to navigate between the different interests of patrons and general public.

“A Danish artist cannot imagine the hardships that being an artist in a foreign land entails. Most of the decisions concerning art are made by the populace.” Thus wrote Danish journalist Henrik Cavling (1858-1933) in his travel book Fra Amerika (From America) from 1897.1 He was talking about the Danish-American sculptor Carl Rohl-Smith and the problems he encountered when he worked on the Iowa Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument outside the State Capitol in Des Moines, Iowa. And Cavling continued:

Can you believe that the inhabitants of Iowa decided that Rohl-Smith had to model the muse of History from a famous senator’s skinny, flat-chested wife, and that the boy standing next to her should represent Lincoln’s grandson, a boy of eight with crooked legs and the head of an onion? Rohl-Smith said No, but the people said Yes – and threatened to fire him. 2

Henrik Cavling liked a good story—he was the founder of modern journalism in Denmark— and the plot probably got an extra twist. But there is no denying that the construction of the Iowa Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument suffered an unusual number of obstacles. It had been planned in the late 1880s in honor of the 70,000 Iowans who fought in the Civil War (1861–65), or the “War of the Rebellion” as it also was called. But problems ensued and disagreements abounded, and it was not until another war, World War II, had made national sentiments in America flourish yet again, that the monument was
inaugurated. This happened in 1945, although construction had ended in 1897.

The 22nd General Assembly of the Iowa Legislature had appointed a Monument Commission in 1888, and subsequently a competition took place. A design by local Iowa artist Harriet A. Ketcham (b. 1846) was chosen. It was rather amateurish, and the artist was asked to remodel it completely.3 But that was only the first of several difficulties that the committee had to tackle. In 1890, a most serious problem arose when Harriet A. Ketcham died unexpectedly. Following a new competition in 1894, the Danish-American sculptor Carl Rohl-Smith, who had made a name for himself in Chicago, was chosen to complete the monument. He inherited the main layout of Ketcham’s second proposal, but he chose to rethink parts of the sculptural details. The main reason for the ensuing conflicts was the fact that the monument was a democratic art project executed by an artist trained in Europe. The fine arts and the opinion of the people—or the populace, as Cavling would have it—do not always go well together. As a matter of fact, they rarely do.

No doubt the conflict came as a surprise to Carl Rohl-Smith who had received great accolades when he worked in Louisville, Kentucky from 1889-1891. There, he was praised for raising a taste for “the highest forms of plastic art” in the city, and for changing “the idea of the public and private monuments from mere angular piles....to a realization of the actual office of sculpture.” 4 In Chicago, where the artist still lived while working on the Des Moines monument, he had made a sculpture group for train car millionaire George Pullman representing The Fort Dearborn Massacre, 1892-93. That sculpture also received rave reviews (although it later became an embarrassment to the Chicago City Council because of its portrayal of Native Americans). It was said that George Pullman had recommended the artist for the job in Iowa.

Another guess would be that Carl Rohl-Smith got the commission because he gave the lowest bid. According to papers in The State Archives of Iowa, his bid of $21,500 was just $500 below that of renowned American sculptor Lorado Taft, while other prominent artists like R.W. Bock and H.A. McNeil, who also had been in the competition, were much more expensive. In the end Rohl-Smith
received $18,000 for his work, while the project as a whole had a budget of $147,000. The majority of the amount went for construction works of the base and casting in bronze. Lorado Taft in his *History of American Sculpture* from 1903, claimed that the monument was “poorly paid” and that the “gravely grotesque design...was dictated to him [Rohl-Smith] by a committee, and his share in it was a long-drawn-out martyrdom, unfortunately perpetuated in bronze.” 5 Talk about “sour grapes”—Taft was the one who had been outbid by $500.

For his $18,000 Rohl-Smith modeled a female figure representing *Victory* for the top of the monument’s tall column (the monument stands 140 feet tall), four mounted generals, some 36 portrait medallions, two pieces of relief showing scenes from the war, four larger-than-life soldiers from each of the military services, a statue representing Iowa, and the aforementioned Muse of History.

Rohl-Smith had a talent for creating statuary on a monumental scale, and each of his four mounted generals could have carried a monument on their own. But since the layout of the monument was a given, the artist fought an uphill battle to accommodate the figures to the larger structure, where the coaches had to balance precariously at the corners of the plinth, some 40 feet up. Rohl-Smith also had a definite knack of installing likeness in his portraits. It is therefore ironic that these sculptures, which are portraits of real life generals Marcellus M. Crocker, Grenville M. Dodge, Samuel R. Curtis, and John M. Corse, were placed where it is impossible to recognize them. The four soldiers placed at the base of the monument fare better. They also were modeled after real life
soldiers: infantryman Shelby Norman, 18 (died in action); artilleryman Captain Henry H. Griffiths; cavalryman Lt. James Horton; and ensign William H.C. Michael, the latter a teacher turned sailor, and therefore a symbol of the efforts and sacrifices of ordinary Americans.

“Likeness” is one artistic quality usually cherished by laymen. Carl Rohl-Smith had received ample proof of this when he modeled a portrait of a Mr. Watterson in Louisville. The Louisville Commercial reported that the bust was “so lifelike as to cause one near-sighted visitor [at an exhibition] to speak to it for Mr. Watterson himself . . . .” 6 And in 1886, when Rohl-Smith made a portrait medallion of Samuel F. Clemens (aka Mark Twain), the author wrote to him, “Dear Sir, Mrs. Clemens says that your profile medallion of me is exact to the life. From what I know of my front-face, I think this is true: from what I know of my wife’s steady veracity, I can go further to say: I know it is. Very truly yours, S.L. Clemens.” 7

But in Iowa, “likeness” was not necessarily seen as a blessing—not in this connection anyway. In 1896, for instance, the 26th General Assembly that had the superior responsibility for the project was presented with a motion that there should be placed “… no image or medallion portrait of any man, living or dead, upon said monument or append thereto any figures other than such that are typical, as such special recognition exalts one soldier above another of equal or more deserving record.” 8 Another motion suggested that “…the commission…[is] direct[ed] to remove the figure on the top thereof and erect in its place a typical soldier in full dress uniform in the position of right shoulder shift arms with rifle in his hand faced toward the Capitol building.” 9 It also was suggested that 600 ballots be sent to veteran soldiers so they could vote on the subject. 10 A last motion summed up the criticism: The monument is “unsatisfactory in many of its proposed features, and is unfavorably received by the people of the state as the expression of their sentiments … [it] will result in dissatisfaction, complaint and constant mortification of the old soldiers, their friends and to the state generally….” 11 Obviously, nothing came of the objections, since there is a monument, a Victory on top of it, and plenty of portrait medallions.
But there had been other telling disagreements between patrons, public, and artist. In presenting the allegorical sculptures Iowa – Mother of the Nation and The Muse of History, Rohl-Smith picked up on ideas already in the original concept by Harriet A. Ketcham, but he elaborated on the themes in ways that diverged considerably from the original design. It caused heated debate when it dawned upon people that *Iowa* was to appear naked.

“The people of Iowa”, said one of the commissioners, expressing a typical sentiment, “know how beautiful Iowa is without exposing her charms to the vulgar and irreverent gaze of strangers from other states.”\(^{12}\) Rohl-Smith’s idea was to present an allegory of the bounty of Iowa, as emphasized in the sentence cut into the granite above the figure: IOWA – HER AFFECTIONS LIKE THE RIVERS OF HER BORDERS FLOW TO AN INSEPARABLE UNION. It was a common practice in the Old World to couch ideas in pictorial language such as this. Iowa’s nurturing breasts were meant to represent the two rivers, Missouri and Mississippi, that border the state to the east and the west and are the sources of Iowa’s fertility and bounty. The rivers flowed together “in inseparable union” (in St. Louis), just as America was again one “inseparable union”
following the contribution of the Iowa soldiers and sailors in the Civil War. Layer upon layer of meaning.

Iowans were not prepared for this puzzle. All they saw was the nakedness. Thus, the Monument Commission went to Chicago in 1895 to see the model, and afterwards Rohl-Smith explained his position in a letter, now in the Iowa State Archives:

The question was treated by some members as being exclusively a question of nudity or not nudity. In this case it is a question of Sculpture’s capability of representing the nude chaste. The nude figure has, from the earliest time in History, been an important factor in the educational life of the Nations...there are few among those knowing the development of Art through the ages, who would question its moral significance...I am happy to be among the pioneers to introduce purity in nude form in our country and to be able to emphasize the chastity in the nude so strongly that our women and children shall not blush, and men learn that there is more to a woman’s body than filthiness, which must be draped. 13

The case received widespread attention, also outside the state. The Minneapolis Tribune, for instance, was highly amused and brought a cartoon to suggest a proper dress for Iowa, corset and all.

The critics had a point, though. It was easy to argue for “spirituality” and “moral superiority” in a classicistic sculpture with its “timeless” features and sleek surface, as had been done some fifty years earlier in a famous incident in American art history. Then, the nuditys of Hiram Powers’s statue The Greek Slave was explained to Puritans and other skeptics as being a moral statement; it was the soul of the slave, not her body, that had been exposed. Rohl-Smith’s Iowa, however, was modeled in the realistic Beaux-arts-style that the artist had picked up in Paris, and she was clearly a woman of her own time. Her hair and body type was distinctly late 19th century. She could have been the neighbor’s daughter. In addition, her proud stance and provocative attitude had obvious erotic overtones. The Monument Commission only half-heartedly bought the artist’s argument, and approved the statue under protest.
Iowa finally got its imposing monument with all its flaws, and Carl Rohl-Smith went on to even greater tasks. In 1896, he had won the competition for a monument for General William Tecumseh Sherman for Washington, D.C. That monument is placed at one of the most visible spots in the United States, next to the White House and in front of the Treasury Building. And it became controversial for different reasons. Rohl-Smith’s ambition had been to be accepted as an American artist, and he tried to act the naturalized American. He involved himself in American projects while talking of “our” country. But he was perceived as a stranger, and other American sculptors found it hard to accept that a “foreigner” took their jobs. In a letter to the well-known Danish artist J.F. Willumsen (1863-1958) who had sought his advice before emigrating to America, Rohl-Smith expressed the unfriendly sentiments with these bitter words:

…in the past couple of years I have won a few competitions and executed some important public monuments whereby I have trespassed into one of the areas where their [the American artists’] greed and national vanity will not tolerate foreigners, and artists’ circles have become hostile towards me, and they do not hesitate to use dirty tricks to stop me. 14

Rohl-Smith died unexpectedly in 1900 during a visit to Denmark, only 52 years old. His widow Sara took it upon herself to complete the Sherman monument with the help of imported Danish sculptors. American sculptors declined to participate.

Carl Rohl-Smith did not have close relations with Danish American groups. But the Danes in America reveled in the light of their famous countryman, as expressed by the author Clemens Petersen (1834-1918) in the magazine Norden at the unveiling of the Sherman monument in 1903, “…among ourselves it evokes a mutual sense of home and community…which means so much when you live as a stranger in a foreign country.” 15
It is therefore interesting to note that a number of Rohl-Smith’s original plaster sculptures have experienced something of an afterlife in Danish America. The artist’s widow brought all his original plaster models back to Denmark in the early 1900s, but after several misfortunes—among them a shipwreck—they ended up in the attic of the Danish Parliament at Christianborg Castle in Copenhagen during World War II. They were still there in the early 1980s, not really missed by anyone. The sculptures legally belong to the Trapholt Museum in Kolding (formerly Kolding Kunstforening), but with the approval of the Statens Museumsnævn (The Danish State Council for Museums) they were transferred to The Danish Immigrant Museum in Elk Horn, Iowa, as a long-term loan, in 1992. There they are still awaiting exhibition space. When, and if, they are put on exhibition they will attest to one of the more interesting and complex stories of cultural clashes experienced by Danish immigrants in America.

1 Henrik Cavling *Fra Amerika I-II*. København: Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag, 1897, Part II, p. 134 f. Translation by Hanne E. Jørgensen and Daniel H. McCarthy
2 Ibid. Author’s translation
3 The story of the competition is told by Louise Rosenfield Noun in her article “The Iowa Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument” in *The Palimpsest*, published by State Historical Society of Iowa, May-June 1986, pp. 80-93. Also see Cora Chaplin Weed *Hand Book for Iowa Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument*, Iowa 1898
4 *The Courier Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky, February 2, 1890
5 Lorado Taft *The History of American Sculpture*, 1903, p. 467
6 *Louisville Commercial*, Louisville, Kentucky, February 12, 1890
7 Letter to Carl Rohl-Smith from Samuel F. Clemens (Mark Twain), dated December 31, 1886, in Carl Rohl-Smith’s scrapbook in The Danish Emigration Archives, Aalborg, Danmark
8 Minutes of the 26th Iowa General Assembly, 1896, p. 92
9 Ibid., p. 153
10 Ibid., p. 248
11 Ibid., p. 590
12 *The Chicago Times*, December 22, 1894
Letter from Carl Rohl-Smith to the Monument Commission, dated December 9, 1895. Iowa State Archives, Des Moines, Iowa, File “Soldiers Sailors Monument”

Letter from Carl-Rohl Smith to J.F. Willumsen, dated February 19, 1900, in J.F. Willumsens Museum, Frederikssund, Danmark. Author’s translation

Clemens Petersen in *Norden*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (July 1903), p. 51. Author’s translation
What Can We Learn from Danish Farmers?

by Palle Pedersen

During the past 100 years, Danish agriculture has developed its position and ability to compete on international markets. Since Denmark joined the European Economic Community in 1973, productivity in Danish agriculture has increased considerably; and, with a food production sufficient for 15 million people and a population of only 5.2 million, Denmark exports two-thirds of its agricultural production to more than 180 countries. Overall, Denmark is the largest food exporter in the world relative to its population.1

Individual farms in Denmark have undergone rigorous change in structure toward greater and more specialized units. Manufacturing plants in the meat and dairy sectors are among the most modern and effective in Europe. This progression has been made possible by the agricultural-industrial sector, continually addressing the needs of farmers and companies for technology and auxiliaries.

Denmark’s agricultural law serves as a constitution for farmers. The purpose of the law is to protect fulltime-based farming and maintain soil quality, as well as to impose regulations ensuring that cultivation, ownership, tenancy, the environment, and other aspects are all managed in the best possible way. Normally, farms are acquired through a sale. In order to buy a farm larger than 75 acres, the farmer is required to have undergone five years of formal training—theory and practice—preparing him for responsible management. Given that Danish environmental regulations require a harmonious relationship between the number of animals and the acreage of a production unit, very large farms do not exist. Specific legislation and approval procedures for farms with a large animal production seek to avoid industrialization of the farming sector.

Danish agriculture has been on the forefront of agricultural development and productivity in Europe. The bulk of agricultural profits in Denmark come from animal production, with a total of 64 percent of gross earnings in Danish farming, taken as a whole. The
most predominant crop is small grain, covering 60% of the farmland. Winter wheat and spring barley are the most important crops. During the 1980s, winter crops were increasingly cultivated, in part due to Danish environmental legislation that obliges farmers to cultivate at least 65% of farmland during the winter season in order to reduce nitrogen leasing. Canola, sugar beets, grass seed, potatoes, corn, and various specialized crops also are grown. Denmark is the largest grass seed producer in Europe and the largest exporter of grass seed and clover seed in the world.

The large amount of grain produced is primarily used in hog production. Denmark is the largest pork exporter in the world; 23 million pigs are produced in Denmark each year, three-quarters of these for export. This amount constitutes 7 percent of Denmark’s total annual exports.

In Denmark, the public, the authorities, the farmers, and the media all are interested in issues related to the environment. This debate has not decreased in recent years. There is an ongoing dialogue between politicians and farmers on the environment, the latter striving for the highest possible degree of openness to production methods. When new environmental initiatives are evaluated, the discussion between farmers and politicians often focuses on the costs involved in implementing these measures, and how agriculture will be able to sustain its international competitiveness. In Denmark, the law determines many environmental regulations concerning agriculture.

The common agricultural policy of the EU (European Union) is faced with great challenges that will lead to new reforms in years to come. This is mainly due to the World Trade Organization negotiations and the enlarged participation of the Eastern European countries. Despite the above issues, the economy has been good for the farmers because they receive subsidies from the EU. After the introduction of the East European countries into the EU, however, the subsidy program will be changed. The problem for Danish farmers is that their production costs are getting so high that it will be very difficult for them to stay competitive in the future. New production systems are therefore underway. Farmers in the United States may be able to learn from the Danish farmers because U.S.
farmers also face a lot of competition, not so much from Eastern Europe, but from South America.

1 This and other information about Denmark and Danish agriculture can be found at <www.agriculture.dk> and <www.landbrugsraadet.dk>.
The History of Wind Technology in Denmark

by James D. Iversen

Introduction

Wind—a phenomenon we do not always understand or pay much attention to, perhaps because we cannot see it, only its effects. And its effects can be devastating, such as the terrible destruction due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in the United States in August and September, 2005. As a member of the American Association for Wind Engineering, I am aware of that organization’s attempts to influence local government agencies in the southeastern coastal areas of the United States in the improvement of building codes so that buildings can better withstand the destructive power of the wind.

My interest in wind and its effects began when I was a young engineering faculty member at Iowa State University (ISU) in the mid-1960s. The opportunity arose to test in the ISU wind tunnel a scale model of an architectural design for the proposed coliseum to be built on campus. The first step was a visit to the ISU library to see if anyone else had ever done such a thing, and to my surprise, I discovered that most of the literature on the subject was from Denmark, some in the Danish language and some important enough to have been translated into English.

Upon some reflection, perhaps it is not too surprising that the early pioneers in the field now called “Wind Engineering” were Danes. At times, Denmark can be a windy place. The Jutland peninsula and accompanying islands protrude out into the North Sea from the north coast of mainland Europe to meet the wind, which sweeps across the sea unchecked by any natural obstacles such as a mountain range or broad forest expanse.

Wind is an important factor in the lives of the people of Denmark. Because of the effects of wind on climate, vegetation, and man-made structures, and its potential for the generation of energy, the wind has long been a subject of study by scientists and engineers in Denmark. Although damaging wind storms are not as frequent
there as the hurricanes and tornadoes that we experience in the United States, there can be such storms, and one of the most destructive occurred just a few years ago on December 3, 1999, when wind gusts of up to 137 mph were measured on the westward island of Rømø, just off the coast of southern Jutland. Seven people were killed in Denmark during that one storm and insurance claims totaled 8.5 billion Danish kroner (approx. 1 billion $US).

There are significant geological features in Denmark that are due to the wind. For example, there are many square miles of sand dunes along the west coast of Denmark, including the large features of Rubjerg Knude and Råbjerg Mile in the northern part of Jutland. A recent interesting account of the effects of wind erosion control (or the lack thereof) documents the recent changes that have occurred at Rubjerg Knude. One of the noteworthy landmarks is the church that was buried by sand in the nineteenth century (Den tilsandede kirke), near the northern tip of Jutland at Skagen. There also are several inland dune fields or landscapes influenced by drifting sand in Jutland, in addition to the coastal dunes. Recent research on climate evolution indicates that there have been several dune-building periods during the Pleistocene.

Because of the presence of the wind, the utilization of the wind for the production of energy has a long history in Denmark. The first mention in print of the windmill in Denmark is a reference to a postmill [stubbemølle] in the year 1260. The first Dutch-type windmill (for which only top of the mill is turned into the wind) was introduced into Denmark by King Christian IV.

**Technological Advances in the Nineteenth Century**

It is just a little more than 100 years since the Wright Brothers made their epic flight over the sand dunes at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. Most of the preliminary achievements prior to their flight occurred in the nineteenth century: for example, the invention of the internal combustion engine and the contributions by others before the Wright brothers, such as Otto Lilienthal and Octave Chanute. What is not generally known is that some people at the time blamed the great mathematician Sir Isaac Newton for a delay in the advent of flight. As part of his work in the application of mathematics to the
solution of physical problems, he had attempted to predict the forces on an object as it travels through the air. In this particular case, he made an assumption about the flow of air about an obstacle, which was later proved to be incorrect, and the result of this assumption is that he predicted a much smaller lift force on a wing than actually occurs.

The Danish engineer and mathematician Henrik Christian Vogt (1848-1928) became interested in bird flight during a trip around the world in 1877, as he watched the birds soaring around the ship on which he was a passenger. He worked for a time in England before returning to Denmark and becoming a member of the English Aeronautics Club. He worked on the theory of lift on a wing, and he became convinced that Newton was wrong. He wrote to the Smithsonian’s Samuel Langley, for example, and Langley answered back that such a great mathematician as Newton couldn’t be wrong. Vogt became well enough known that he was invited to the Aeronautical Congress in Chicago in 1893.

Vogt finally decided that he needed to perform an experiment in order to prove his theory, so he enlisted the assistance of his friend, Johannes O.V. Irminger (1848-1938), who was director of the Eastern Gas Works in Copenhagen. The Eastern Gas Works had a very large chimney, into the side of which Irminger cut an opening and built on to it his first wind tunnel. The year was 1893, eight years before the Wright brothers built their wind tunnel. This was not the world’s first wind tunnel, however. Francis Wenham (in the year 1871) and H.F. Phillips (in the 1880s) had built wind tunnels in England, but Irminger’s was the first in Denmark, and he started a long history of wind tunnel testing in Denmark that continues to this day. It was Phillips, in fact, who had suggested to Vogt that he prove his theory by testing an airfoil in a wind tunnel.

Irminger’s wind tunnel consisted of a horizontal rectangular tube, 40 inches long and with a 9 inch by 4.5 inch cross section. Powered by the draft of the chimney, it was capable of wind speeds up to about 33 mph. Irminger quickly learned how to measure the pressure distribution on the surface of a wind tunnel model. He built a model of a wing to Vogt’s specifications and became the first in the world to measure the pressure distribution on an airfoil,
proving in the process that Vogt was right, and Newton was wrong. Irminger published his work in English in 1894.⁴

**Technological Advances in the Twentieth Century**

Some years after retiring from his job at the Eastern Gas Works, Irminger built his second wind tunnel in the 1920s. It was much larger than the first, and he enlisted the assistance of Professor Christian Nøkkentved of the Danish Technical College. Irminger had become interested in the pressure distribution on buildings in the presence of wind, and he and Professor Nøkkentved went on to publish the results of the first comprehensive sets of wind experiments on buildings in the 1930s.⁵ Irminger continued to work on building aerodynamics until just a few months before his death in 1938 at the age of 90.

It is interesting to note the close relationships among the people who were advancing the state of the technological art that is now known as “wind engineering.” Henrik C. Vogt was responsible for getting J.O.V. Irminger interested in aerodynamics in the 1890s. Irminger, in turn, started working with Professor Christian Nøkkentved in the 1920s, and that collaboration lasted throughout most of the 1930s. Nøkkentved started working with the aerodynamics of snow fences and shelter belts in the late 1930s, and he enlisted the help during that time of engineering student Martin Jensen.

Martin Jensen (1914-1991) became an extremely clever and capable scientist-engineer, and his contributions are so significant and well known that he became known worldwide as the “Father of Wind Engineering.” The work by Nøkkentved and Jensen was interrupted by the occupation of Denmark by the Nazis in World War II, but immediately after the war, Jensen started work on a long series of experiments, both in nature and in the wind tunnel. He recognized very early the need to duplicate the characteristics of the natural wind when working at small scale in the wind tunnel laboratory, and he eventually discovered that the way to do this was to build a very long wind tunnel and then model the surface roughness to scale as far upwind of the model as possible. The
model can represent a snow fence or building or some other obstruction to the wind.

**Modern Wind Engineering**

Martin Jensen’s work forms the basis for a number of laboratories around the world today (including several in North America), which specialize in modeling the atmospheric boundary layer (wind and turbulent layer nearest the surface). The primary laboratory for this work in Scandinavia today is the wind engineering research laboratory of the Danish Maritime Institute, located in the northern Copenhagen suburb of Lyngby. This laboratory uses three wind tunnels (1. cross-section 0.8 m x 0.8 m, 80 m/s; 2. cross-section 2.6 m x 1.8 m, 25 m/s; 3. cross-section 13 m x 1.7 m, 8 m/s). (The first of these wind tunnels was the only one in existence when this writer spent a very enjoyable eight months on sabbatical at the laboratory.) Jensen assisted in the design of the new Little Belt Bridge (Den ny Lillebæltsbro), completed in 1971.

The effect of the wind is extremely important in the design of suspension bridges. The newest suspension bridge in Denmark, the Great Belt Bridge (Storebæltsbroen), and the bridge across the Sound between Denmark and Sweden (Øresundsbroen), were each tested extensively in both the second and third wind tunnels at the Danish Maritime Institute. Allan Larsen was one of the primary aerodynamicists who contributed to the design of the two newest bridges. Bridges built or being built in other countries also are being tested in this laboratory.

The meteorological study of the atmospheric boundary layer is today called micrometeorology, and there is a large research group at the Risø National Laboratory, which has studied the boundary layer for many years. Niels Busch and Niels Otto Jensen are two of the better-known people in this area.

**Wind-blown Sand and Soil**

The soil in the western two-thirds of the Jutland Peninsula is very sandy and subject to considerable wind erosion, even in the damp Danish climate. Reclamation of the heath land in western Jutland intensified after the war of 1864, because of the loss of the Duchies of
Schleswig and Holstein. The resultant problem of wind erosion was, of course, the motivation for the wind tunnel experiments of Nøkkentved\textsuperscript{11} and Martin Jensen\textsuperscript{12} who studied the aerodynamics of shelter. More recently, interest in the physics of sand and soil movement has been led by a group of scientists at the University of Aarhus in Denmark led by geologists Jens Tyge Møller\textsuperscript{13} and Keld Rømer Rasmussen. The writer has been fortunate enough to work with these people, primarily with Rasmussen.\textsuperscript{14} Keld Rasmussen invented and built a tilting wind tunnel, the only one of its kind, and some significant research has been conducted in this wind tunnel on the effect of slope on sand transport.\textsuperscript{15} Rasmussen and Michael Sørensen of the University of Copenhagen are continuing a collaborative effort combining the effects of theory and experiment to further understand and predict the effects of wind on sand movement and soil erosion.\textsuperscript{16}

**Wind Energy**

Poul la Cour (1846-1908) was one of the first scientists to tackle the problem of extracting electrical energy from the wind. Born in Aarhus, he was educated in meteorology, and after some time in that field, in 1878 he was hired to become a teacher of science at Askov Folkehøjskol. He was one of the few Danes who was interested in the work of Vogt and Irminger, and he began to study the wind turbine from a technical standpoint. He was an inventor, and his work with early electrical instruments earned him the unofficial title as “Denmark’s Edison.” His first electricity-generating windmill was finished in 1891, and in 1897 he built the world’s first wind tunnel designed for the purpose of testing windmill designs.\textsuperscript{17} He is known by some as “The Father of Wind Energy.” Mostly because of his work, wind generators became fairly common in Denmark in the early part of the twentieth century. One of his students, Johannes Juul, was the designer of the world’s first AC (alternating current) wind turbine at Vester Egesborg in the 1950s. Juul designed the 200 kW wind turbine at Gedser, which was built in 1956-7. This turbine was later refurbished in 1975 at the request of NASA, which wanted test results for the U.S. wind energy program. That wind turbine is now on display at the Electricity Museum at Bjerringbro, Denmark.\textsuperscript{18}
Denmark today is one of the world’s primary producers of wind energy and wind energy devices. In the year 2000, there were approximately 6,000 electrical generating wind turbines in Denmark. The Danish wind energy industry is among the world’s largest. A significant portion of the present global total of almost 40,000 MW wind energy capacity has been provided by the Danish wind energy companies Vestas and NEG Micon. The efforts of those early pioneers in wind technology—i.e., Vogt, Irminger, la Cour, Nøkkentved, Jensen, and others—have certainly reaped dividends for Denmark and the Danes.

8 Iversen, J.D. and V. Jensen, "Wind Transportation of Dust from Coal Piles" Skibsteknisk Laboratorium, Report 81054, 1981


Olsen, K. Private communication, 2005.

Note: In addition to the numbered endnotes, the author cites the following: Anon. Article in honor of Christian Nøkkentved’s 50th birthday anniversary, *Politken*, December 3, 1942, presented to the author by Nøkkentved’s grandson, Nikolai Schousboe.
Whose Memory Is It After All?

by Inger M. Olsen

The EU (European Union) constitution was issued May 2005 and its preamble states that the writers have “let themselves be inspired by Europe’s cultural, religious and humanistic inheritance which is the foundation for the development of the universal values: the individual human being’s inviolable and inalienable rights as well as freedom, equality and constitutional state”1 2 The preamble goes on to mention the painful experiences that Europe has undergone and the fact that Europe is once again united. The final note states that Europe “wishes to develop further the public life’s democratic and open character and work for peace, justice and solidarity in the world”3

The fact that the issue of past and present events is so close to the surface is thought provoking, especially when one considers that when it comes to mental health, it is best that a person forgets as much as possible. It is therefore interesting to observe how much is written about the issue of memory and remembrance. Every week, newspapers, books, and magazines have articles on the issue of what we remember and how we remember it. Not much space is devoted to why we remember or what it is we ought to remember.

At the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study conference in Wisconsin in 1999, Uffe Østergaard gave a talk on the Danish national amnesia after 1864. We do not remember, and thus cannot recall, our history from the time before the loss of Slesvig-Holsten, he said. He used as an example the universities established by Danes on Danish soil; nobody remembers that the fourth university on Danish territory was established in India.4

Thy in northern Jutland is not in many peoples’ view a place where Denmark, Danish, and Danes are typed, but in an article in the Danish newspaper Weekendavisen, August 20-26, 2004, Poul Houe wrote about a subject which is touched upon by many at this period of time. He called it the “presence” and “absence” phenomenon, which one also finds in historical context in as much as Aggersborg 5
is located in Thy. Other people, Jaques Blum and Eva Bøggild, have written a book titled *Auschwitz – an Introduction*, in which they attempt to remind, to use the words of the reviewer, about the fact “There is that which one does not know and that which one does not know that one does not know”; therein lies the catch. There has been the case concerning Ole Wivel’s and Knud W. Jensen’s flirtation with Nazism when they were young and their absolute stubborn silence and, according to some people, their irresponsible refusal to speak about it.

There is a lot of talk about what Danes and Denmark did during the Second World War and especially what people ought to have done, all viewed with glasses and binoculars from around the year 2000. But we have a worldview, said Bo Bjørnvig. He wrote in *Weekendavisen*, September 10-16, 2004,

Danskerne har en fabelagtig evne til at meddele verden, at den ikke er som den burde være, og at vi derfor ikke vil spille med. Vi er så dygtige til det, at det faktisk ofte lykkes for os at overbevise den onde verden om, at vi har ret. [The Danes have a fabulous ability to inform the world that it is not as it ought to be and that we, therefore, will not play along with it. We are so clever at it that we actually often succeed in convincing the wicked world that we are right.]

In a review of Monica Papazus’ book *Det hvileløse Hjerte* [The Restless Heart] in *Weekendavisen*, September 17-23, 2004, Anders Ehlers pointed to her question, “What is culture?” Her answer was that culture is historical memory. Historical consciousness is, on the other hand, “Angsten for irrationelitet og destruktive kræfter.” [The fear of the irrational and destructive forces.]

A discussion on a more personal level took place in *Weekendavisen*, when David Gress defended his parents’ remaining on the island of Møn in housing conditions that were below reasonable standards even though other people considered it free housing. He remembers one aspect, and other people remember another. The memory of either party was voiced in a newspaper. But who remembers that his maternal grandfather was a permanent fixture at the University of Copenhagen in the sixties? Henrik Stangerup has called him “Danmarks berømteste evighedsstudent.” [Denmark’s most famous
perpetual student.] He died in 1965, the year his daughter Elsa Gress published the first volume of her memoirs, Mine mange Hjem [My Many Homes].

Where does it all lead? One could ask what has that to do with Denmark, Danish, and Danes and the EU? It is not only Danes who are occupied by the subject. It is quite simply an issue of history—and in this case Denmark’s history. The subject of history suffers in many countries and in Denmark from cutbacks. The schools teach social studies, which corresponds to skating across several subjects: history, geography, and civics.

In the October 2004 issue of National Geographic there was an ad that read, “Learn OUR Past. Change OUR Future.” One can continue with, “Those who do not study history are doomed to repeat it.” A maxim that gains weight if one read a review in The New York Review of Books, October 7, 2004, (volume LI, number 15). The title was “How do you remember the war while forgetting the dead of the war, the untold atrocities, the single shot?” The remark is from a review of Colm Toibin’s book, Return to Catalonia. Toibin has devoted himself to the subjects of memory and oblivion. In this case, he writes about the memories of the participants in the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939).

The next question could be: Who is responsible for keeping the memories on track?

In Suzanne Brøgger’s book Brøg [Brew], published in 1980, there is a segment about Jørgen Gustava Brandt from 1972 with the title “Hvad er en digter?” [What is a poet?] In this piece the thought is expressed that “digtningens funktion er vel at formulere en nødvendig fælles bevidsthed, som de fleste måske ikke har lyst til at gøre sig bevidst.” [The function of poetry is most likely to formulate a necessary common consciousness which most people perhaps do not feel like becoming conscious.]

In the book Sejd [Magic Potion], published in 2000, Brøgger wrote quoting Milan Kundera (1929-),

Den måde vi skriver nutiedshistorien på, siger Kundera, svarer til en kæmpekonzert, hvor man præsenterede Beethovenens 138 værker, men udelukkende ved at spille de første otte takter af hver....Om tyve år vil al Beethoven's
musik kunne opsommenes i én eneste lang, skarp, skinger
tone, som kunne minde om den komponisten hørte den dag,
han blev døv. [This way in which we write the history of the
present, Kundera states, corresponds to a gigantic concert
which introduced Beethoven’s 138 works by solely playing
the first eight beats from each. In twenty years all of
Beethoven’s music can be summarized in one single long
sharp, shrill note which would be reminiscent of what the
composer heard the day he became deaf.]8

We are on our way!

Poets have occupied themselves with the notion of remembering
Danish history and the Danish language. To begin with the latter,
Søren Kierkegaard wrote at the end of Stadier på Livets Vej, [Stages on
the Road of Life.]

Nogle af mine landsmænd mene, at Modersmaalet ikke
skulde være dygtigt til at udtrykke vanskelige Tanker. Dette
synes mig en besynderlig og utaknemlig Mening, ...Jeg føler
mig lykkelig ved at være bunden til mit Modersmaal,
bunden som maaske kun Faan er det, bunden som Adam til
Eva, fordi der ingen anden Quinde var, bunden fordi det har
været mig en Umulighed at lære noget andet Sprog og
derved en Umulighed at fristes til at lade stolt og fornemt
om det medfødte, men også glad ved at være bunden til et
Modersmaal, der er riigt i indre Oprindelighed, ...et
Modersmaal, der ikke stønner forfangent i den vanskelige
Tanke, ...et Modersmaal, der ikke puster og lyder anstrænt,
naar det staar for det Uudsigelige, men sysler dermed i Spøg
og i Alvor indtil det er udsagt” [Some of my countrymen are
of the opinion that our mother's tongue should not be clever
enough to express difficult thoughts. This seems to me a
strange and ungrateful opinion,...I am happy to be tied to
my mother's tongue, tied as perhaps but few people are, tied
like Adam to Eve, because there was no other woman, tied
because it has been an impossibility for me to learn any
other language and thereby an impossibility to become
tempted to act proud and highborn about that which is
inborn, but also happy to be tied to a mother's tongue which
is rich in inner originality...a mother's tongue which does not pant and strain in the difficult thought...a mother's tongue which does not gasp and sound strained when confronted with the indescribable but works with it in joke and seriousness until it is spoken.\(^9\)

Other writers, such as Johannes V. Jensen (1873-1950) in his book *Den lange Rejse* [The Long Journey] and Ebbe Kløvedal Reich (1940-2005) in his work *Fæ og Frænde* [Beast and Friend], have concerned themselves with the past; to be specific, with Cimbrettoget [The Cimbrians’ Treck] mentioned by Tacitus (ca. 56-ca.120). Kløvedal Reich went so far as to say that we have forgotten why we are Danes. Adam Oehlenschläger (1779-1850), more than one hundred years before, stated that we need the foreigner in order to find out who we are and to remind us that *nationality* means as opposed to others, and *nationalism* means that we are just as good as others in contrast to better than.

The present absence we probably find in the Egtved girl\(^10\) and in the other ancient skeletons which were found in Roskilde in 2004. Scientists have used and will continue to use the DNA method to find out who we Danes are. The people from earlier times can be useful in the process of explaining to the Danes that they perhaps are not at all the original inhabitants of Denmark. That is how the papers write on the issue of the Roskilde skeletons.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that in 1802 Knud Lyhne Rahbek wrote the first textbook in stylistics in Denmark in Danish, for Danish students, in “Den Lærde Skole”\(^11\) using Danish examples. (NyViden, November 2003, no 11, 12-14.) In other words, it is not the first time people in Denmark have had many discussions about who and what we Danes are. What is new is the fact that memory has been called in to become part of the discussion.

Sometimes we get concrete examples of what we once were. *Politiken Weekly* (nr. 37, August 9, 2004) had a photo of a reconstructed Viking ship on its front page. That was one of the ships found in the Roskilde Fjord in 1962. The original ship was built in 1042 in Dublin. In 2007, the replica of this ship is going on a trip to that city, provided the hull is sufficiently seaworthy. It is generally thought that 200 to 300 Viking ships took part in the raids
on England, but have we placed those ships sufficiently tightly in our memory to keep it going? Through those ships our past gets a face and we can be reminded that we have a long past.

But what about the future? What is it we erect in the shape of sleek modern buildings, which do not signify any sense of belonging? Skyscrapers and other sleek buildings are found in any big city the world over. They will not tell about or remind our descendants of where we lived in the world.

In contrast to “nationalromantikerne, som forestillede sig oldtiden og middelalderen som en gylden tid, en guldalder” [the National Romantics who imagined the Antiquity and the Middle Ages as one golden period, a golden age] there seems today to be a movement or group of people who are of the opinion that Danes ought as quickly as possible to forget everything about the past. All that people have built upon the last couple of hundred years has to go; but it is far between the suggestions concerning a new philosophy and a new foundation upon which people can build the future. It is not only about the material aspects of society. It is also about the spiritual foundation of the Danish society. The historical novel can attempt to right this disparity in as much as Richard Humphrey has written the following,

The Historical novel...is potentially two things—past experience and later knowledge: past experience for the characters, later knowledge for their author and reader.

Another writer, Allessandro Manzoni, maintained in his book On the Historical Novel that the historical novel

is focused on a national past, its new interest in material conditions of life, and its frequent choice of protagonists from the middle and even lower classes, the historical novel easily became a vehicle for strong political and social statements. At the same time, the picturesque detail that characterized works of this kind helped ensure their appeal to a broad reading public.

Good historical novels are no assurance that history as such will be learned and that this learning will be used to assure us that we will not repeat mistakes from the past.
It is thought provoking that the last five hundred years have started with wars of various sizes. If history could be used for something from which people would or could learn, we could perhaps avoid yet another century with war upon war. But does memory stretch that far? Manzoni voiced the following opinion,

If historical narrative is no more than a variant on the imaginary then reality is not represented. Effects of the real are but linguistic by-products. What is then the distinctive feature of historical narrative? Nothing more than the particular sleight of hand by which language creates the illusion that an external reality is being represented....Instead of reflecting facts as Manzoni believed, historical narrative creates them. The rhetorical tables are completely turned.\(^{15}\)

Because, according to Manzoni, “To align history and invention and a single rhetorical plane is to remove the very heterogeneity within the historical novel” that started Manzoni off on his inquiry in the first place, “doing so turns moot all problems particular to the genre, ethical no less than aesthetic.” However, Manzoni makes clear in a variety of essays—and particularly in *On the Historical Novel*—his concern with history has long ethical as well as philosophical dimensions. He would strive to communicate fully and truthfully in order to effect social, perhaps even political, change.\(^{16}\)

When it comes to Denmark and the attitude to Danish history, it would seem there is a possibility that a segment of the intellectuals in the press who state that Danes ought to forget their past and only focus on the future have a political goal. Denmark has to go along with the EU not as an old country of culture but as a remote area, which will be enriched through interaction with “real” cultural countries.

Both Henrik Stangerup (1937-1998) and his sister Helle Stangerup (1939-) have voiced the opinion that Denmark got cut off from the “real” history when Denmark joined the Reformation. Culturally, people got separated from the real centers of culture in 1536.

It is true that association with other cultures inspires people, but at the same time, people sometimes avoid revolutions by keeping to
the background. One can point to one example, the farming reforms in Denmark at the end of the nineteenth century. Those reforms were carried through in sober Danish fashion without any great fuss.

Today the capital of Denmark undergoes a reshaping without consultation with the citizenry because that seems to be the way it is done abroad. The reshaping of Copenhagen illustrates the point. First, a large black shed was erected on the Town Hall Square. Nobody has as yet managed to get that removed. Then, the waterfront was built upon so tightly that the pretty old towers have disappeared behind the colossi. At one point building of high-rises were contemplated even though it meant setting aside an old rule that states that no high-rises are to be built in the inner core of the city. The citizens protested and, for now, this idea has been shelved.

Just like the city is reshaped, the municipal map of Denmark has been revamped and attempts have been made to reshape the population’s attitude to things foreign. People have been told they are “sticks-in-the-mud” and that they do not understand that societies now have to be fluid. The border stations have been closed, but people forget the borders have not been abolished; hence, both newcomers and old-timers get in a pinch. The former get no firm ground under their feet and the latter are made out to be racists if they protest and say “Wait a minute before you send us any more people.” And those who send the people are other Danes who travel around the world inviting people to Denmark because there is a shortage of laborers, so they say.

If one takes a couple of steps backwards and look at the whole picture, one can only, in my view, say that there is a screaming lack of dialogue between those who seem to think they know what is best for Denmark and those who have to live with the result of this know-all attitude. If both parties knew their history, they could perhaps communicate, but Kundera’s remark about Beethoven and the shrill note seems to have taken over in all respects.

Works Cited and Consulted


1 Unless otherwise indicated all translations are by the author.


3 Ibid

4 The British Baptist mission had established a college in the Danish colony in India at Frederiksnagore in 1818. This college was elevated to university status by Frederik the 6th in 1827.

5 A Viking monument.

6 Henrik Stangerup: *Den Kvarte Sandhed*, 41.


10 The body of a young girl from the Bronze Age found in Storhøj by Egtved south west of Vejle in Jutland.

11 Learned School, i.e. the grammar school, i.e. high school.


15 Ibid., pp. 51-52.

16 Ibid., p. 52.
A perennial concern of Christian social ethics is the attempt to discern the best paradigm for relating the Christian faith and life to wider culture. H. Richard Niebuhr’s typology of how Christ relates to culture, i.e., “Christ against culture” (sectarian), “Christ above culture” (Roman Catholic), “Christ transforming culture” (Reformed), “Christ of culture” (liberal Protestant), and “Christ and culture in paradox” (Lutheran) continues to provide a helpful framework in which to understand the role of the Christian ethos in public life. One important interpretation of this latter type, “Christ and culture in paradox” is that of the nineteenth century Danish church leader and scholar Nicolaj F. S. Grundtvig (1783-1872), who in a poem once expressed his mature perspective on the relationship between faith and culture as “Human first and then a Christian” [Menneske først og Kristen så]. For Grundtvig, this phrase encapsulates the proper relationship between the Christian life and social ethics. He believes that the development of one’s humanity is a crucial prerequisite for the task of Christian discipleship and that due to this truth, Christians should strive to advance human self-awareness in the public realm. This thesis implies three important ramifications: (1) Grundtvig’s Irenaeus-inspired perspective on the gospel as powerfully life-affirming is capable of unleashing potential for the development of human social welfare, (2) Grundtvig’s emphases on the person as an individual-in-community can offer a corrective to the excessive individualism that plagues contemporary American life, and (3) Grundtvig’s perspective on civic responsibility might lead us to position ethical issues as often questions of how to promote the best stewardship of human life and not only as questions of justice. Grundtvig’s mature reflection on civic responsibility is intertwined with his intellectual and churchly career, his views on Christian authority, divine revelation, and
community, and his view on how Christianity interrelates with his view of culture or, in his word, “folk life” [folkelighed].

Grundtvig’s Intellectual and Churchly Career
Several distinctive spiritual and intellectual movements of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries influenced the young Grundtvig, including Pietism, Rationalism, and Romanticism. Grundtvig’s father, a dedicated Danish priest, was a pietistic, “penitential” Lutheran whose ministry in the village of Udby focused on preaching a message of repentance and conversion, godly living, and honoring God in public worship. While Grundtvig’s father inculcated this form of piety in his children, he also allowed the child Nicolaj access to his library and with that the opportunity to investigate the wider world. Later, as a young intellectual, Grundtvig’s childhood faith was shattered by Rationalism’s criticism of biblical miracles and the Bible as an inerrant, historically accurate text. More importantly, Romanticism’s affirmation of national identity, the human spirit, the gamut of human emotions, the heritages of medieval and pre-Christian Europe, as Grundtvig learned it through his scholarly cousin Henrik Steffens, helped Grundtvig chart his intellectual career as a linguist, poet, and historian. After passing his University examinations in theology in 1803, he began an extensive study of Old Norse and Icelandic that would serve as an intellectual focus for the rest of his life. The early results of this study appeared in 1808 with his book on Norse mythology, Nordens Mytologi.

The young Grundtvig was beginning to blossom intellectually; however, his aging father was unable to fully fulfill his pastoral duties at Udby and both Grundtvig’s parents were urging him to assist his father in his need. With some hesitancy Grundtvig sought ordination. Grundtvig’s trial sermon, preached in March of 1810 and which the university examiner passed with high marks, was published under the title “Why has the Lord’s word disappeared from his house?” Grundtvig’s sermon passionately denounced the clergy of Copenhagen for their inability to preach the gospel effectively. Leading churchmen were offended with Grundtvig’s attack, and they successfully sought to marginalize his ministry for
several years. The prospects of ordination forced the issue of where Grundtvig himself stood religiously. He was troubled by the rationalistic criticisms of orthodox Christian faith. The anticipation of returning to his childhood home, symbolizing the conservative pietistic faith in which he was raised, aggravated his need to define and to establish his own faith stance. By New Year 1811, Grundtvig was suffering what many today would call a nervous breakdown. Grundtvig’s pietistic father would recognize his symptoms as that of Anfægtelser, turmoil over one’s sins and the recognition that one needs to receive salvation. The outcome of Grundtvig’s inner struggle was conversion, the conviction that he could not live without Christ; thus the prodigal returned to the pietistic faith of his father.

After his father’s death in 1813, Grundtvig returned to Copenhagen and pursued a literary career. Naturally, Grundtvig’s return to conservative Christianity influenced his studies. As a Christian intellectual confronting an increasingly secular outlook among educated Northern Europeans, he took up the mantle of an apologist. As a historian he saw history as a field that testifies to God’s work in the world. In 1812, 1814, and 1817 he published his World Chronicles, a unified, but not wholly objective, presentation of European history as the theater of God’s activity. This attempt at an overt defense of Christianity on historical grounds barred him from university history appointments, which he sought. Although not well received as a historian, the young Grundtvig succeeded as a linguist. He translated three major texts between 1815 and 1821: (1) Beowulf, (2) Saxo Grammaticus’ The Chronicles of Denmark, and (3) Snorri Sturluson’s The Chronicles of the Kings of Norway.

In 1822, he was appointed to the prestigious position of assistant pastor at the Church of Our Savior [Vor Frelsers] in Copenhagen. Here Grundtvig’s work as a Christian apologist came to a head. Grundtvig wanted a Christianity that was grounded in apostolic faith and life. As much as Grundtvig treasured the Bible, he recognized that the Bible might not serve as the best basis for securing the apostolic faith of the church since historical critics were relentlessly challenging the Bible’s historical accuracy. Grundtvig’s study of the ancient church, particularly the thought of the early
bishop Irenaeus of Lyons (c.130 – c.200) suggested that apostolic faith could thrive in the church by means of the oral tradition, independent of the Bible as we now understand it. The church existed and succeeded for several hundred years prior to the official canonization of writings known as the New Testament.

Grundtvig’s religious insight of the importance of the Christian oral tradition as establishing a sense of churchly identity and spiritual vision for early Christians was paralleled by his studies of Scandinavian myths, stories, and early history that likewise provided an identity for the ancient peoples of the North. Both his studies in Irenaeus and linguistics led Grundtvig to his “matchless discovery” [Mageløse Opdagelse] that the truth of the Gospel is grounded in the oral tradition of the communal life of the Christian fellowship itself, as it has come from the instruction of the resurrected Jesus Christ himself, and not—as the apologist would have it—on the external discernment of God’s work outside the church in secular history or in a defense of the Bible on purely historical or literary terms. For the mature Grundtvig, the truth of the Christian faith is expressed in the church by means of the apostolic confession of faith, which is itself a response to the resurrected, living Jesus Christ who himself builds up his community of faith by means of the sacraments of baptism and communion.

In 1825, Grundtvig tested his new outlook on scripture and the church in a polemic with the young theological professor H. N. Clausen, who, as a disciple of Schleiermacher, had written a book on the differences between Protestantism and Catholicism. Grundtvig discerned a rationalistic perspective on the Bible underlying Clausen’s outlook on Protestantism. In his response “The Church’s Rejoinder” [Kirkens Gienmæle] Grundtvig harshly condemned Clausen’s views by arguing that it is not the Bible but Christ who speaks “the living word” [det levende Ord] that establishes the faith and confession of the church. Clausen sought legal retaliation against Grundtvig because of the harshness of Grundtvig’s polemic. The outcome was that Grundtvig was under censure until 1837. The emotional challenges of dealing with this conflict also led Grundtvig to resign his pastorate in 1826.
While this conflict and Grundtvig’s resignation from his pastorate were tragic moments in his career, they opened an opportunity for him to do research that would fuel his future calling as a social prophet and renewer of society. Although Grundtvig consistently failed to bond with the Danish ecclesiastical hierarchy, he had the approval of the Danish royal family. The king offered Grundtvig a royal stipend to finance his study of ancient Anglo-Saxon manuscripts in 1829, 1830, and 1831. While this study of ancient Anglo-Saxon manuscripts was valuable in and of itself, Grundtvig’s outlook on life was radically altered by exposure to the social, industrial, educational, and governmental changes that modern Britain was undergoing. It would lead Grundtvig to develop a perspective on the importance of general adult education for the Danish peasantry and a democratic outlook for both temporal and ecclesiastical government.8 In 1832, Grundtvig was appointed an evening preacher at Christianshavn. But it was his appointment as chaplain at an old people’s home, Vartov, in Copenhagen in 1839 that would serve as the spiritual and literary base for his prophetic, reformist ideas.

In 1832, Grundtvig published a new edition of his *Nordens Mytologi* in which he argued for a renewal of civic life by establishing a folk high school that would provide general education for the masses, and thus raise their self-awareness of their responsibilities as a people.9 Gone was the crusading and apologetic ideal of Grundtvig’s youth. It was replaced with the proposal that Christians should work with non-Christians of good will when they both are seeking a better world for all people. In 1833, Grundtvig began to rework his *Universal History* by deleting its apologetic stance and rationale. Instead, Grundtvig’s historical work was now written, as he phrased it, for the school and not the church. Throughout the late 1830s and 1840s, Grundtvig promoted the concept of folk high schools to awaken the common people to their humanity, community identity and responsibility, and overall physical, emotional, and spiritual well being. Disciples of Grundtvig, such as Christen Kold (1816-1870),10 helped organize these schools, which continue to invigorate Danish social life as well as the social life of other countries.11 On the anniversary of his fiftieth
year of ordination he was made an honorary bishop by the Danish king, and in 1848 he was honored by his nation, whose government was in the process of becoming a constitutional monarchy, by being elected to government office. Grundtvig worked and ministered to the day before his death at 89 years old.

Grundtvig’s Views on Authority, Revelation, and Community
As is clear, Grundtvig was not a professional theologian; however, he was a scholar and churchman who was deeply committed to the renewal of the Christian faith in Denmark. His quest to help renew Danish church life focuses on the questions of theological authority, divine revelation, and the nature of the Christian congregation itself. Although throughout his career Grundtvig was concerned with theorizing about revelation, authority, and the church with an eye to Luther, it is clear that other than the Bible itself, Irenaeus—particularly his anti-gnostic stance—has had the most important impact on Grundtvig’s religious thinking. For Irenaeus, Christ experiences or recapitulates each stage of human life and thereby transfigures or sanctifies each stage in the human life cycle. Irenaeus also, like the author(s) of Ephesians and Colossians offers a cosmic, earthly, communal, and churchly scope to God the Father’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The upshot of Irenaeus’ down-to-earth and corporate spirituality for Grundtvig, according to Arthur Allchin, is that eternity transfigures time and that time gives feeling to eternity—eternity is not empty of time. For Grundtvig, eternity and time can be seen to interrelate in the liturgy. Hence, Allchin also notes the importance of “liturgical realism” for Grundtvig. Jesus Christ is present to his congregation in the living words embodied in baptism and board (the Lord’s Supper), the apostolic confession of faith, hymns, and the sermon. The church as a congregation, then, is not an impersonal collectivity, but a communion of persons made free in the Holy Spirit. Salvation, for Grundtvig, is unquestionably a communal experience, personal, but not private. Our Christian identities are marked by the baptismal cross of Christ and are relationally joined to the destinies of one another. Unlike the current North American ideology of individualism, particularly in its “utilitarian” form (you can lift
yourself up by your own boot straps) and “expressivist” form (nothing is ever as important as your own individual self-expression, provided you do not hurt anyone else), Grundtvig’s view of ecclesial humanity is such that one’s identity qua Christian is defined in relation to the Holy Trinity and the assembled fellowship of those baptized in the triune name.

The anti-gnostic dimension of Grundtvig’s approach to the gospel provides a life-affirming response to the life-denying, super-spirituality of penitential Scandinavian Lutheran pietism. Due to his work on Irenaeus, Grundtvig was no longer the pietist of his youth. While the young Grundtvig was sympathetic with the pietists in their quest to live frugal, pure, and zealous lives of holiness and prayer, his mature, Irenaean approach to the gospel was inclined to view this form of Christian discipleship as a flight from the world, a rejection of much that God has made in the creation, including our bodies and our familial and social bonds. Grundtvig’s affirmation “Human first and then a Christian” is a reaction against all earth-denying, world-rejecting approaches to the Christian faith. Grundtvig, following Irenaeus, sees the gospel of the incarnation, in which Christ sanctifies all the stages of human life, as the best medicine for a misguided, super-spiritual approach to the gospel.

More seriously, the implication of Grundtvig’s adoption of Irenaeus’s perspective leads one to conclude that Grundtvig disagrees with a stance that would claim that original sin eradicates the inherent goodness of human nature. Here his thought parallels that of Luther for whom the human will as bound by sin expresses itself as the refusal to be natural, in harmony with God’s good creation so that one can pretend to be one’s own god for oneself. Grundtvig, not a professional theologian, does not document his similarities and differences from Luther. His tendency, usually, is to see himself as advancing Luther’s theology; and, in many respects his perspectives do not so much seem to contradict the Lutheran tradition as to lead it into new areas of theological and social reflection. Clearly, Luther’s view of the gospel as a living voice (viva vox evangeli) and Grundtvig’s view of the Christian oral tradition as a “living word” presuppose language as dynamic and life framing. However, for Grundtvig, particularly in his youth, God
is evident in history. He has no notion, unlike Luther, of a *deus absconditus*. Furthermore, unlike Luther, for whom redeemed humanity is recreated from the nothingness of sin and death, Grundtvig thinks that it is the fall that is repeated for humanity over and over again, and not creation. The creation is a secure foundation for the affirmation of humanity’s primordial and abiding goodness, because for Grundtvig the image of God (*imago Dei*) abides in humanity. The fall by no means can annihilate it.

For Grundtvig, the point of contact between God and humanity is not a shared reason, but a human word, a “living word” (*det levende Ord*), which is capable of corresponding to the divine word. For both Luther and Grundtvig, only Christ can save humanity from sin and death and proffer new life. Grundtvig is no pelagian. However, there is a sense for Grundtvig that what Luther calls God’s “left hand,” God’s work in the world apart from the church, is not merely to restrain sin, but to encourage the instinct for life as present in various cultural manifestations as valid in its own right. Indeed, for Grundtvig, it is not merely humanity that reflects God’s image, but also the entire earth. Hence, Grundtvig’s view of God’s action in the creation is cosmic in scope and not merely limited to the human realm. When Grundtvig affirms “Human first and then a Christian,” he means that one must be able to become aware of one’s natural, native, or created life-instinct before it is any good to tell someone about eternal life. Grundtvig is not suggesting that human life on its own is self-sufficient and not in need of eternal life. Rather, he is simply unpacking his supposition that humanity is a “divine experiment” [*Guddommeligt Experiment*], a combination of spirit and matter, and that one must become conscious of this truth before one can benefit from the eternal life of the gospel. For Grundtvig, then, those who belong to God by means of a new relationship with God constitute the church by faith. The human, by contrast, is constituted by the fellowship of those who are created in God’s image, whether they acknowledge this truth or not. In Ernest D. Nielsen’s words, Grundtvig believes that humans must find themselves before they can find God.

For Grundtvig, the church’s authority is grounded in the oral tradition of faith in Jesus Christ, itself received from the “mouth of
the Lord” [Herrens Mund]. Originally, Grundtvig conceived this oral tradition as best codified in the Apostles’ Creed, and he even toyed with the theory that the resurrected Jesus himself produced this Creed and taught it to the disciples prior to his Ascension. Later he was to affirm that even if the Apostles’ Creed did not come directly from Jesus himself, its importance is that it genuinely expresses the apostolic confession of faith as based on the experience of the first disciples’ fellowship with the risen Lord. The Lord continues to develop his body of disciples by means of this “living word” as it is embodied in the church’s confession of faith and her sacraments. By means of this oral tradition, the church is anamnestic—that is, the past is alive and speaks in the present as the sacramental means of grace connects it to the present. The Spirit’s agency in the church is to continue this diachronic dimension of the oral tradition, which as Ernest Nielsen sees it, is a “linear” (through time), not a “punctiliar” (all at once) experience that allows eternity to transfigure time in the liturgical life of the congregation. Ecclesial experience for Grundtvig is decidedly embodied, dynamic, corporate, and simultaneously traditioned by the past and transformed in light of the future. Most importantly, for the mature Grundtvig, ecclesial experience does not exorcise common human experience, but instead builds on it, affirms it, and furthers it.

**Grundtvig’s View of Culture and Civic Responsibility**

Based in his anti-gnostic, pro-human spirituality, his sense of the person’s identity as grounded in community, as well as his profound respect for the indigenous cultural identity of a people as it is expressed in its folk life, the mature Grundtvig (after 1832) was prepared to argue that the distinctive Christian social ethic is to find ways to aid humanity in its quest for genuine self-affirmation and advancement. Undoubtedly, contemporary anthropology would question whether or not Grundtvig’s notion of folk life has an adequate empirical basis as understood by current scientific standards. For our purposes, it can serve as an important notion by which to decipher Grundtvig’s notion of civic responsibility. By “folk life” Grundtvig means the heritage of a people, that which gives substance to a common identity, or a living bond, which
defines a people. With his work in ancient and medieval Scandinavian linguistics, mythology, and history, Grundtvig had been studying the folk life of the Danish people since his early twenties. Grundtvig’s notion of folk life, however, as influenced by the German Idealist philosopher Friederich W. J. von Schelling, carries powerful Romantic overtones of nationalism, which was and is widespread among nineteenth and twentieth century Europeans. Grundtvig’s notion of folk life entails a theory of “spirit” [Ånd], not to be confused with the Holy Spirit [Helligånd], as the life force immanent and emergent in one’s cultural identity, a “universal-historical” development of a people. In a sense, folk life is the medium that clothes and embodies this spirit. In Grundtvig’s theory, language is the means by which spirit expresses itself in folk life. Ideally, an individual ought to be able to specify an awareness of himself or herself in spirit. This is not so that one can then control the fortunes of spirit, but so that one might be able to align oneself with the directions of spirit and thus fulfill one’s personal destiny.

The fact that Grundtvig favored oral over written communication perhaps can be understood in light of this theory of spirit. Oral communication is immediately one with spirit, while a text seeks to mediate a truth of spirit, and is thus one step removed from spirit’s immediacy. We can see how this theory would coalesce with Grundtvig’s preference of the gospel’s truth as found in the oral tradition of the church and not the written text of the scriptures. Spirit is expressed in and through individuals who are corporately bound in a common identity not by means of consent, as the Anglo-American tradition of political liberalism suggests, but by means of destiny. Hence, for Grundtvig, the peoples of the North have a vital role to play in world history, and their awakening by means of a folk high school education should ensure this calling. Grundtvig sees each specific folk life as expressing a certain outlook on life or Anskuelse. Grundtvig’s anthropology thus identifies humanity as a “divine experiment,” an expression of spirit which for any given people is mediated by a folk life whose language and mythology offer a specific Anskuelse.

While we might appraise Grundtvig’s notion of spirit as excessively vitalistic and perhaps empirically unwarranted, it can
serve as a bridge by which to understand how the Christian outlook on life (Anskuelse) ought to relate to one’s cultural identity. The mature Grundtvig, with typical nineteenth century optimism, affirmed that when the North awakens to its distinctive, spiritual role in world history it would hearken to the “Mosaic-Christian” Anskuelse. Indeed, in his first public call for a folk high school in 1832, he acknowledges that the purpose of such a “civic and noble academy” would be to enable the common people to relate to the nation’s cultural heritage by addressing the pressing needs for literacy, good communication skills, and social identity and responsibility. Grundtvig envisioned the folk school as a place primarily geared for self-awareness or cultural perspective, “consciousness-raising” as we might express it, and not for academic or even vocational training.

When criticized that he conflated the goals of a distinctively Christian mission with that of developing folk identity, Grundtvig responded that given the fact that human nature is inescapably packaged in a cultural identity of folk life, Christians must either presuppose folk life, and thus build on it, or in fact create it by awakening it within the common people, stirring its power for social transformation and responsibility. Indeed, one could not hope for the maturation of Christians apart from seeking to build up mature human beings. At heart, Grundtvig’s notion of folk life as the common identity that individuals share suggests a reciprocal ethic of responsibility: I am not free if you are not free. Not only one’s identity in Christ rules out individualism, but also built into the very fabric of one’s cultural identity is the ontological and ethical truth of reciprocity between human beings. For Grundtvig, then, there can be no dichotomy between Christian living and human living. I suspect that Grundtvig would agree that biological humanity is a presupposition of spiritually self-aware, “enlightened” humanity in which one recognizes one’s calling in the light of one’s given folk life. Conversely, this latter state is the presupposition of Christian identity. The Christian’s social responsibility, then, is to further human self-awareness in the context of one’s social, cultural, and linguistic setting.
Conclusion
After Grundtvig’s conversion in early 1811 his spirituality would always be anti-rationalistic and be influenced at least to some degree by pietism, particularly in his sermons. It was, however, his study of Irenaeus as anti-gnostic and profoundly pro-human that would expand his view of “Bible Christianity” and evolve his mature religious outlook into a powerful, life-affirming spirituality. When combined with his linguistic and historical research and his newfound quest in the early 1830s for the amelioration of the Danish peasantry and working class, this spirituality would lead him to affirm the Christian’s civic responsibility as promoting human well-being as it is grounded in folk life. Early in his intellectual career, Grundtvig was an apologist, seeking to defend Christian truth in the face of the threat of secularism. By 1832, Grundtvig was convinced that the primary Christian duty is not to aim to convert secularists but to work with them when their goals are focused on social welfare, as Christians’ goals should likewise be.

In light of H. Richard Niebuhr’s categories, Grundtvig moved from a “Christ transforming culture” position (as an apologist) to that of a “Christ and culture in paradox” position. The early Grundtvig sought to christianize culture in service of the gospel. The later Grundtvig accepted culture as a structure of God’s created order for humans, a form of life that can complement the Christian message, despite the fact that sometimes tensions exist between culture and faith. From his own perspective, Grundtvig never turns away from apostolic Christianity. Rather, he expands apostolic Christianity’s potential, as based on Irenaeus, to affirm human life for its own sake. The Christian should honor the world for its own sake, and work to make it better where it can be improved. Grundtvig would see this task of one of endeavoring to establish and further good stewardship of the resources, both human and natural, that are given us. His work antedates the Hegelian-Marxist tendency to habitually translate issues of social inequities into justice issues, struggles between “haves” and “have nots,” a position that has so markedly influenced the liberation ethics of much of contemporary Christian social ethics. Of course, this does not mean that Grundtvigians would or must reject the Marxist outlook. It
does mean, however, that the Grundtvigian perspective on the goal of civic responsibility as maximizing effective stewardship of human resources might somehow be able to serve as a less polarizing, more inclusive and contextual way of addressing some issues of social inequity.

Grundtvig’s spirituality suggests that the distinctively Christian promise of a new humanity does not mean that the old humanity is worthless but is instead worthwhile and precious and that it can be transfigured by means of the Christian gospel. The Christian’s civic responsibility, in light of this truth, is to advance the good structures that further human life in society and creation and to cooperate with those non-Christian social forces that likewise seek to empower people. 36

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4 The cognate German word is Anfechtung
Grundtvig’s style as an anti-rationalist apologist during this decade can quickly be discerned in his What Constitutes Authentic Christianity?

Grundtvig was studying Irenaeus’ Adversus Haereses at this time.

See Selected Writings, 11-19.


See “Introduction to Nordic Mythology” in Selected Writings, 26-27.

For a study of the Folk School movement among the Danes in North America see Enok Mortensen’s Schools for Life: A Danish-American Experiment in Adult Education (Askov, Minnesota: The Danish-American Heritage Society, 1977

See Allchin, Grundtvig: An Introduction, 55, 141, and Thaning, Grundtvig, 42-43. While the Gnostic cults of the ancient world are long dead, several cultural critics, notably Harold Bloom and Philip J. Lee, argue persuasively that Gnostic motifs dominate modern American religion which tends to see the divine as the staying power at the very heart of the self, somehow one with the self, that is able to help secure the fragile self as an individual. See Bloom’s The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1992), 26-27 and Lee’s Against the Protestant Gnostics (New York: Oxford, 1987).


Allchin, Grundtvig: An Introduction, 17.

While Grundtvig is well known for developing a “glad Christianity” he was not blind to the public and private face of evil. Indeed, he was ever mindful of the importance of rejecting evil. Hence, he always retained the Renunciation in corporate worship; see Ernest D. Nielsen, Grundtvig: An American Study, 108.

See Thaning, Grundtvig, 15.


For a discussion of the similarities and differences between Grundtvig and Luther see Johannes Knudsen’s article “Grundtvig and Mythology” in Lutheran Quarterly 54 (November 1955): 299-309.  


21See Allchin, Grundtvig: An Introduction, chapter 9 and Thaning, Grundtvig, 26.  

22See Hal Koch, Grundtvig, 158.  

23 “Introduction to Nordic Mythology” in Selected Writings, 26. There is a striking parallel between Grundtvig’s metaphor of “divine experiment” for human nature and Luther’s metaphor of humanity as the creature on whom God is “doing construction.” See Eberhard Jüngel, The Freedom of a Christian: Luther’s Significance for Contemporary Theology, trans. Roy A. Harrisville (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 46.  


26See Thorvald Hansen, Church Divided: Lutheranism Among the Danish Immigrants (Des Moines: Grand View College Press, 1992), 64.  

27See Johannes Knudsen’s “Introduction” to Selected Writings, 2.  

28“Introduction to Nordic Mythology” in Selected Writings, 20.  

29“Introduction to Nordic Mythology” in Selected Writings, 32-36; Ernest Nielsen, 2; and Hal Koch, 122-123.  

30“Introduction to Nordic Mythology” in Selected Writings, 26.  

31 The German cognate word is Anschauung.  

32“Introduction to Nordic Mythology” in Selected Writings, 21, 23.  

33“Introduction to Nordic Mythology” in Selected Writings, 26-27.  

34See “About Folk Life and Dr. Rudelbach” in Selected Writings, 44-48.  

35See Allchin, Grundtvig: An Introduction, 161.
Grundtvigianism in America,
Yesterday and Today

by Thorvald Hansen

It has been said, “In Denmark, everyone is a Grundtvigian whether he knows it or not.” This certainly is not the case in America. Indeed, there are very few Grundtvigians in this country, and the prospects for increasing that number are very slight. This is not because the followers of Grundtvig have been “hiding their light under a bushel,” but because the vast majority has not accepted it as light.

Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783-1872) was a Danish clergyman whose interests ranged far beyond the church. Nordic mythology, educational philosophy, and political activism were but some of his many interests. He was a voracious reader and an equally voracious writer. During his 89 years, he wrote many books as well as some 1500 hymns. Some of his positions were an offense to the ecclesiastical hierarchy with the result that he was relegated to the position of chaplain at Vartov, a home for elderly women in Copenhagen. Here his preaching attracted many aside from the residents of Vartov. However, this is neither the time nor the place to present a biographical sketch of the life of N.F.S. Grundtvig, interesting as that might be. Rather, the intent here is to consider the impact of Grundtvigianism in America.

Grundtvigianism
It is neither possible nor necessary to give a complete description here of what it is that constitutes Grundtvigianism. It is enough to say something about his theological position and to present the basis for his educational view. Grundtvig saw the church not as an institution that has grown out of the Bible, but rather the reverse. He viewed it as a fellowship of believers, and, as such, its covenant of baptism and the Apostle’s Creed took precedence over the Bible as the word of God. Unlike many of his opponents, who put the emphasis on Jesus as savior, he stressed all three articles of the
confession of faith. He saw God as the creator, Christ as the savior, and the Holy Spirit as the power of God at work in His people.

His recognition of God as the creator caused Grundtvig to see man in a different way. In a statement widely misunderstood, he said, “human first and then Christian.” By that he meant, in the words of Johannes Knudsen, “That the humanity of individual living and of the indigenous life of a people, created in the image of God, has a primary influence upon Christian experience and fellowship. Basically there can be no dichotomy of human living and Christian living.”¹ A Danish theologian elaborates further on the importance of Christianity for human life, saying, “Christianity exists for the salvation of human life: its purpose being not to liberate man from life, but for life.”² Another Dane, Hal Koch, differentiates Grundtvigian Christianity this way:

Christianity is neither the correct opinions—which both orthodoxy and rationalism were prone to stress—or correct moral assumptions—which basically was the view of both the pietists and the rationalists—or the proper experiences and feelings—as the pietists believed—but the acts of God.³

Grundtvig’s educational view ushered in the establishment of the Folk School in Denmark. Education should not be the exclusive domain of the elite. A democratically organized state required that the people have a broad general knowledge. Out of this thinking grew the Folk School as a means for the education of the people. Through such schools the general population was to be made familiar with the history, language, and literature of the country. Such schools were to be open to all and they were to be residential.

Though Grundtvig himself was a prolific writer, he put much emphasis upon what he called “the living word.” The living word, the spoken word, was important in the life of the church and the school. “It was the words that men actually spoke, the words that came from their lips, that revealed and constituted the essence of their being.”⁴

Theological Manifestations in America

Strangely enough, the first occurrence of Grundtvig’s theological thoughts in America came among the Norwegians. Claus L. Clausen
was a Dane who worked among the Norwegian immigrants in America. As a young man he had often heard Grundtvig speak and he had been impressed by what he had heard. Of Grundtvig’s preaching he wrote: “It was food for the development of a true Christian life, which in truth could be called healthful, unerring milk for newborn babes, but also solid food for adults.” For reasons of health, Clausen had gone to Norway; from there, he was persuaded to go to America as a teacher. This suggestion met with his approval and, accordingly, he and his wife arrived in Wisconsin in 1843. Within a short time, he was examined and ordained by a German pastor and began his work among the Norwegian immigrants.

Like Clausen, some of the Norwegians who came to serve as pastors also were impressed by Grundtvig’s views, particularly his view of the Church. He saw the Church, rather than the individual, as being at the center of Christian life. One who came was J.W.C. Dietrichson, the first pastor among the Norwegian immigrants to have been ordained by a bishop in Norway. By the time of his coming, there were a few scattered Norwegian preaching places, but Dietrichson was an organizer. For his group in eastern Wisconsin he prepared a constitution that expressly referred to the revelation which had come in “God’s Holy Word through our baptismal convenant.” This was an unmistakable Grundtvigian statement. By 1851, Dietrichson had succeeded in organizing a synod. A constitution was adopted in January of that year, and the congregations were to act on it in May, but they failed to do so. There is no indication that the doctrinal statement repelled them, but they feared there was an element of clerical control in the constitution. Clausen was to serve as superintendent of the New Norwegian Lutheran Church in America.

It was not simply the presence of Clausen and Dietrichson that accounted for a Grundtvigian statement being incorporated into the constitution. For a number of years Grundtvig had been looked upon favorably in Norway. His churchly view and his belief that the Scriptures must be understood in the light of the Apostle’s Creed gained a following in Norway. The chief exponent of Grundtvig in Norway was a pastor in Oslo named Wilhelm Andreas Wexels. He never worked out a theology, but, for at least a generation,
Grundtvigianism did become a stimulus to the religious life in Norway.

Three new pastors came to America from Norway in 1851. These men had been trained by professors who were shaped by Lutheran Confessionalism. They made a determined effort to eliminate the Grundtvigian influence by removing the offending phrase, *in our baptismal covenant*, from the constitution. All except Clausen voted for the elimination. Thus, the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America did not become Grundtvigian, though it had come close to being such.

**Grundtvigianism Among the Danes**

By 1871, a group on the island of Funen, in Denmark, sought to learn what need there might be for Danish pastors in America. They sent three men, none of whom were Grundtvigians, under the leadership of A.L.C. Grove-Rasmussen, a North Schleswig pastor. Grove-Rasmussen was to investigate conditions and report back to the group in Denmark. He met with many Danes and traveled as far west as Grand Island, Nebraska. The two other men were within a short time ordained by Norwegian pastors and remained to work among the Danes in America.

Grove-Rasmussen returned to Denmark and wrote a 54-page report. He established the need for Danish pastors, but he learned that Lutherans in America were deeply divided. He also learned of a Norwegian-Danish Conference, but noted that its doctrinal statement contained a reference to the Bible as the only source of Christian faith and life. He felt that it would not be wise for Danish pastors to join that group because, “Scarcely any pastor in the Danish Church would be able to subscribe to such a statement in all honesty due to the understanding that has arisen among us as to the relationship between the Word and the written Scriptures.”

Concerning Grundtvigianism, he wrote of the Grundtvig phobia [Grundtvig skræk] he had encountered in America, “At times one could both laugh and cry concerning the Grundtvig phobia that one could run up against there.”

Claus Clausen also had been well aware of this. Though he knew pastors influenced by Grundtvig to be competent and zealous, he
believed that, “All things considered, they will do better to remain in Denmark than to come here.” Some laymen also were aware of the Grundtvig phobia that existed in America. One, from Milwaukee, who described himself as a Grundtvigian, wrote to Clausen that although he would wish to have a Grundtvigian pastor come, “I can nevertheless see that they would have many special difficulties to fight against.” Another, from Luck, Wisconsin, expressed similar views.

The problem was by no means confined to Scandinavian immigrant pastors. The theological climate in nineteenth century America was decidedly conservative. The noted immigration historian Marcus Lee Hansen has written of what he calls “spontaneous immigrant Puritanism” and that “The immigrant Church was started on a career of Puritanism....” Americans tended to judge immigrant churches on a Puritanical basis.

Nevertheless, Danish pastors did come. A few were avowedly Grundtvigian; most were not. The Danish Church was seen as opposed to a Bible-based theology, however, and the Grundtvig phobia was applied to them also. In spite of this, four men who had come by 1872 organized the Church Mission Society [Kirkelig Missionsforening] and proceeded with missionary activity. They were aware of the existence of the Norwegian-Danish Conference but preferred to remain independent. A year later the Church Mission Society was renamed the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. It was loosely organized, and it was not until 1879 that it gained a constitution. Within that Church could be found pastors and lay people with an Inner Mission, or very conservative, background. Others might have a Grundtvigian background, as well as those who had not been affiliated with either group. The Danish Church, as it will be referred to hereinafter, was a kind of umbrella church, sheltering all who had nothing more than a Danish origin in common. In retrospect, one can easily see that in a very conservative theological climate, such a church was headed for trouble.

And, trouble did come! For more than 20 years, marked by feuding and dissenting, the Danish Church existed as one body. Finally, in 1894, a division in the church came, with the Inner
Mission group withdrawing and forming their own church body. Two years later they merged with other like-minded Danes to form the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church. The Danish Church, now the smaller of the two churches, remained to shelter Grundtvigians and others who, for whatever reason, preferred that Church. Though it was by no means exclusively or officially Grundtvigian, it continued to emphasize the primacy of the Church. Yet the Danish Church was often scorned by other Lutherans. As late as 1933, Abdel Ross Wentz, in his history of Lutheranism in America, suggests that the division of the church in 1894 came about because of the “False doctrine and state church ideas…”12 of the Danish Church.

In spite of its critics and rather small membership, the Danish Church, the name of which was changed to the American Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1954, continued to exist until 1963 when, as a result of merger with three other Lutheran groups, it became a part of the Lutheran Church in America. Another merger in 1988 relegated it still further into the past.

Today, among the remnants of the Danish Church there are still many individuals in whom Grundtvigianism continues to exist. During the 1980s, three Grundtvig Conferences were held at Grand View College, with speakers from Denmark. The Archives at Grand View houses a collection of literature by and about N.F. S. Grundtvig, a collection that is perhaps the largest and best in this country. Meanwhile, men such as Dr. Johannes Knudsen, Professor Axel Kildegaard, Dr. Ernest Nielsen, and Pastor Enok Mortensen, all of whom are now deceased, have written extensively about Grundtvig. Their writings have aroused the curiosity of some of their professional colleagues to the extent that there is a distinct interest yet today.

Folk Schools
Though Grundtvig never established one, he is credited with the origin of the Folk School in Denmark; today, there are approximately 100 scattered throughout the kingdom. Folk Schools are generally privately owned, though they do receive some subsidy from the state. They are open to young people in their teens and twenties and
there are no entrance qualifications. A few schools specialize, but most emphasize liberal arts. The favored method of presentation is the lecture and there are no examinations or other factors associated with the traditional school.

Grundtvigian Danes who came to America were familiar with these schools and many had attended such. It was almost inevitable, therefore, that they should want to establish Folk Schools in the New World. The first such school was established at Elk Horn, Iowa in 1878. In rather rapid succession similar schools were begun at Ashland, Michigan; West Denmark, Wisconsin; Nysted, Nebraska; Tyler, Minnesota; and, in the twentieth century, at Solvang, California and Dalum, Alberta, Canada. Some of these institutions died rather quickly, but others, notably those at Nysted and Tyler continued until the 1930s.

One may well wonder why these schools, which seem to have been rather successful in Denmark, largely failed in this country. The reason usually given is economic; that is, without some government support, which they do receive in Denmark, such schools could not long continue. In my view there is another, and perhaps more fundamental reason: it is the fact that potential students in this country seek a degree, or at least a diploma, some evidence that they have received and absorbed some knowledge. Knowledge alone is not enough, and so potential students have shunned the Folk Schools.

**Grundtvig and the Folk School Spirit Today**

If such schools have not succeeded in America, the Folk School spirit, which embodies an awakening through enlightenment and inspiration to an awareness of and involvement in the fullness of life, is not entirely dead. That same spirit pervades the annual gatherings at the Danebod Folk School in Tyler and the lecture series at Solvang. The Pacific Northwest Danes gather annually at Menucha, in Oregon, for similar reasons. So, too, do attendees at the Family Camp, which is held each year at West Denmark. Moreover, the annual recreation labs at Tyler, which attract a somewhat younger group, are an outgrowth of the same spirit. These rec labs,
as they are called, have now grown so large that three must be held each summer.

During the 1980s, three Grundtvig Conferences were held at Grand View College. For each, the major speaker was someone from Denmark who was a recognized authority on some aspect of Grundtvigianism. These meetings were fairly well attended by the Danish community, but few people came from outside that community. These meetings are no longer held for a variety of reasons.

In 2003, a Grundtvig Conference was scheduled to be held at the Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia. However, this conference was later postponed and, to date, no new time has been set.

Not least, the monthly publication *Church and Life*, begun as the Danish *Kirke og Folk*, is a continuation of papers launched by the Danish Lutheran Church in America. Those papers were started and continue in the spirit of Grundtvig. Most of the readers have an ancestry that places them among the Grundtvigian Danes.

**Conclusion**

It will be seen, then, that Grundtvigianism has a checkered history in America. It has faced strong opposition from many quarters, and it has never been institutionalized. Books have been written about it. One of the best in the English language was written in 1997 by Canon A.M. Allchin, in England, although there is still a very limited literature on Grundtvig in the English language. To my knowledge, Grundtvig has never been taught in America, but the spirit of Grundtvigianism has been caught. This accounts for the meetings and camps that are held by the descendants of the immigrants to this day and which one may reasonably expect to continue in the foreseeable future. Grundtvigianism has never had a great effect on American thought, and it probably never will. Unlike Danes, most Americans know they are not Grundtvigians, but the remaining few who are, take pride in the heritage that has come to them from N.F.S. Grundtvig.
5 Claus L. Clausen, Diary, cited in Rasmus Andersen, *Pastor Claus Lauritz Clausen*, Blair, NE, 1921, p. 40.
8 *ibid.*, p. 34.
13 See announcement in *Church and Life*, March 15, 2003, p. 2.
Grundtvig’s Relevance Today: The Current Debate

by Henrik Wiegh Poulsen

Hardly any individual has meant more to Denmark and the Danes than Grundtvig. But lately he has suffered a fall from grace in public opinion. Why is this and what does it mean to Grundtvig and to Danish society?

First I must say that it is an honor and a pleasure for me to have been invited to the Danish American Heritage Conference at Grand View College to address this very distinguished audience about Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig. The Danish poet, pastor, educationalist, and politician who has meant a lot to this particular place. And who, no matter what, has meant more to Denmark and the Danish than both his contemporaries—in these days, the most celebrated H. C. Andersen and Søren Kierkegaard—ever did.

I am fully aware that this might be a rather provocative way to put it, and that it might stir some irritation among members of the honored audience, but so be it. One of Grundtvig’s important contributions to our culture is the recognition that discussion and disagreement can be very productive indeed, when it comes to reaching new insights and a better understanding of your own position.

So in this truly grundtvigian respect, the aim of my provocation is wholly constructive, and I intend in no way, whatsoever, to diminish the importance of Andersen and Kierkegaard, these two great geniuses of Danish and European culture. I am also painfully aware that in a recent poll in one of the leading Danish newspapers, Andersen was elected the greatest Dane of all times—and this almost without competition—followed by Niels Bohr, A.P. Møller, Søren Kierkegaard, H.C. Ørsted, and as number six, Grundtvig. A fall from grace, I must say. Ten or twenty years ago he would have been the undisputed number one. I have no doubt about that, whatsoever.
But nevertheless, Grundtvig has put his own distinguished mark upon us Danes, as individuals and as a people. He has in various, strange, and not always traceable ways touched upon our lives, even before we became conscious of him being present in our common history. And I believe that some of you might agree with me in this: he has done it in such a way that in order to understand Denmark and the Danish, you will have to understand N.F.S. Grundtvig. Or perhaps this is too ambitious a way to put it, because many Danes have never really understood Grundtvig. They have heard about him—well, most have. They know the picture of him, or rather the icon, of this huge, old man with a great white beard, the sacrosanct granddaddy of the people, you might say, sitting solemnly and thoughtful in his chair. But ask them, ask the common Dane, “Who was Grundtvig, what did he say, what did he write, what has he meant to you?” and they will give you a lot of different answers, if any at all.

In many ways, the first description of Grundtvig made by a visitor to Denmark from abroad—in this case the English traveller Edmund Gosse in 1872—still seems to correspond to the mental picture of him shared by the average Dane today. Gosse witnessed Grundtvig’s last service in the small church of Vartov in Copenhagen and was completely overcome by awe and astonishment. “He looked like some troll from some cavern in Norway,” he writes. “He might have been centuries old.” When he spoke it was like someone “talking in the cellar below our feet. From the vast orb of his bald head, very long strings of silky hair fell over his shoulders and mingled with a long and loose white beard.”

And it was not only the Englishman Gosse who did not have a clue what old man Grundtvig was talking about. A lot of his Danish-speaking contemporaries seemed to have had the same problem. H. C. Andersen found him mostly loud and amusing; Kierkegaard regarded him as a talking head, a booming beer barrel. And others found that this general lack of understanding was to the general benefit of his many followers. They always seemed to hear
something supporting their different points of view. But in spite of his somewhat obscured rhetoric and awesome prophetic appearance, many of Grundtvig’s contemporaries regarded him—and many of his present-day fellow countrymen still regard him in many ways—as an unquestionable authority to be called upon in very different matters.

For example, when Danish politicians or debaters want to be listened to or agreed with in cultural, churchly, or educational matters, they ask rhetorically, “What would old Grundtvig have said about this?” Not that many of their listeners will know what Grundtvig actually would have said, but, nevertheless, they do agree. And when, most recently, leading debaters and politicians called for more effective learning in Danish schools and a means of controlling the quality of this learning, Grundtvig’s name popped up almost per instinct, as a kind of mantra, giving weight to a critique of these thoughts. But why is not always easy to explain.

The apparent ignorance about what this otherwise well known historic and influential person did or did not say may, indeed, explain something about the character of his overall influence. A modern Danish writer has compared Grundtvig and his impact on Denmark and the Danish people to a hidden water current—a current watering the roots of our society and common culture, but running so deep that words or definitions to describe it might be difficult to find.

As such, Grundtvig often is used as a symbol or a metaphor of everything genuinely, indisputably, and positively Danish—something including true democracy, freedom, social equality, dialogue, quality in education, and so on. Grundtvig is the one to turn to in times of change and crisis. Just mentioning his name seems to bestow upon many Danes a sense of consolation, a sense of belonging, a sense of regaining an otherwise endangered identity as a people. Accordingly, it should be asked: Why is this? How has his influence succeeded in seeping through all these layers of history to become this deep, subterranean current, an influence short of exact definitions, a national gene-code? To answer these questions we must turn briefly to Grundtvig’s biography and here seek to trace
the both historical and theological preconditions for his peculiar weight upon the Danish mind.

The early Danish nineteenth century was enriched by a lot of great writers, thinkers, and artists. Notable among them, of course, were Grundtvig, Kierkegaard, and H.C. Andersen, as well as writers such as Oehlenschläger and Ingemann and artists such as Thorvaldsen, Lundbye, Købke, and Skovgaard. All these romantic geniuses, who lived in the relatively small, dirty, and unpretentious capital city of Copenhagen, were in different ways related to what has been called the Danish Golden Age, a visionary epoch in which Danish values were strongly heralded and the country’s past became a source of inspiration for a time—a golden time—to come.

Born two hundred and twenty two years ago, in 1783, Grundtvig was a witness to the aftermath of the French revolution and the enormous impact it had upon the European way of thinking, but also, in a more direct sense, a witness to the Napoleonic wars and their threat to Denmark as a stable, absolutist monarchy. It has often been said that Grundtvig was born as a part of the old Europe, but became a part of the new Europe with its many new political and social institutions, as well. He lived on the brink of modernity—this state of mind we since have struggled to grow accustomed to.

After taking his degrees in theology, the young Grundtvig became a teacher at a Manor House on island of Langeland, where he came to consider himself a true romantic poet. Being faithful to that role he fell hopelessly in love with the young lady of the manor and returned to Copenhagen, where he became a fulltime writer from 1808. As a writer, he was obsessed with the old ways of the people, frantically calling his fellow men to join him in his exploration of a better and richer past. In this way, Grundtvig regarded himself—and so did many European poets of the time—as a prophet, a seer and a visionary, leading the people on the right path towards salvation. Grundtvig’s main source of inspiration, though, was in these early years not the Bible, but Norse mythology. The ancient myths, he felt, were pointing toward our present and linked the Danish people with their ancient forebears.

In 1810, Grundtvig’s old father urged him to become a curate in his native parish, Udby, in the southern part of Zealand, and, as a
consequence of this, Grundtvig experienced a spiritual crisis. He had other ambitions and aspirations, and he started to doubt whether he was a true Christian. After going through a spiritual crisis, Christian faith became an existential reality and a necessity to him; it became, so to speak, the firm and solid ground under his feet. From then on he was both a writer and a preacher, both a national revivalist reformer and a clergyman with strong, outspoken biblical views. But, we must ask: How could he, in any way, combine these two very different ways of looking upon the world and his fellow man? How could he, at the same time, be both a fundamentalist—openly confronting the tidal waves of change that in those days came to shake all European institutions—and a reformer engaging in new habits of thinking?

A solution to this problem dawned upon Grundtvig as a sudden recognition in the beginning of the 1820s. Whereas he had previously regarded the Bible as being the foundation of the church, he now arrived at the view that the apostolic confession at baptism is the true basis of Christian faith. It is the door through which we enter the church, and so it has always been. The Christian congregation, therefore, is not something of the past only, but a present and living reality. It has been there since before the Bible was written. As such, Christianity is not something to be scrutinized by scribes or zealously guarded by the clerics. It is there, accessible for every one, infants as well as illiterates. This recognition of the true foundation of the church was important to Grundtvig for several reasons.

First, he experienced a great relief. It was not, he saw, his task to turn people into devout Christians or to force them into the church. As baptized members of the Christian congregation they were already there, and as such he could address them as his fellow countrymen and enlighten them about their historic inheritance. He could, in other words, start to distinguish more clearly between faith and philosophy.

Second, Grundtvig expressed his opinion on these matters in a publication called “The Church’s Reply,” which consisted mainly of a violent attack on a professor Clausen in theology, whom he accused of being a false teacher, making the Bible the foundation of
Christianity. Clausen, in return brought an action for libel against Grundtvig, and Grundtvig was fired and placed under censorship until further notice. This meant that he became a strong and zealous advocate for freedom in matters of belief, and he became a symbol of such in his own time and until our present day.

Third, Grundtvig’s so-called “unparalleled discovery” also made him increasingly aware of the tradition of the church. This, among other things, resulted in intense readings of the old Greek church father, Irenæus. From Irenæus, he took up the belief that man is made in the image of God, and that this image, in spite of the fall, is never completely lost. Therefore we can look upon and speak about the world, and man who inhabits it, in much more optimistic terms than the orthodox Lutherans had ever done. This notion brings a peculiar hope-filled ring to Grundtvig’s thoughts and writings. Man, as he saw it, is created in the image of God and will therefore grow in understanding and will, through time, reach fulfilment. In spite of the fall, God in Christ fulfils the destiny of man through history.

All in all, Grundtvig had gained both a sense of homecoming—a homecoming to the true foundation of the church with the creed—and, at the same time, a growing will to engage himself in his own time and together with former adversaries, to struggle for freedom and the enlightenment of his countrymen.

Three times between the years 1829-31, Grundtvig went to England on a grant from the king to study old Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. On each visit he gained some very strong impressions of the civil and literary life of England. He was specially impressed by the active civic life he witnessed, and he regarded it as the result of the personal freedom of the British society.

This recognition, he claimed, was like another homecoming. Not to the church this time, but to his own present time. What he had searched for in history was alive and kicking out in the noisy and industrious streets of London. The Nordic spirit was active, right here, right now. He had been asleep, now he was awake.

Grundtvig describes what you might call this second conversion in his book *Norse Mythology* from 1832 and in a series of lectures called *Mands Minde [In Living Memory]* in 1838. The book as well as
the lectures gained widespread attention. Now people actually started reading and listening to him. After many years of having been the laughing stock by large parts of the Danish public, he was now, you might say, officially regarded as a prophet. People came from all around to attend his services or his lectures.

One of Grundtvig’s main ideas was that we, at this very important time in the history of Denmark and of Europe, with all the revolutions and democratic upheavals going on, must collaborate both with Christians and with naturalists (by naturalist, he meant those who don’t partake in the Christian faith but who regard man as a spiritual being). We must work together on a renewal, a Nordic Christian renewal of culture, which should build on the Bible, the Norse and Greek mythologies, and the history of the people, but, at the same time, incorporate every skillful endeavor from mathematics to poetry.

This indeed was the starting point for the later people’s folk high school, which in the name of Grundtvig gained immense popularity and was one of the main pillars in the building of modern Danish society. But Grundtvig’s aim was political as well as educational. As he saw it, the political development must lead to greater popular participation in the governmental decisions. He was anxious that new leaders to come could gain far too much power, unless the people were given to such a degree of democratic education that its voice might speak freely and strongly. In a democratic high school, people would be able to participate in the democratic constitution that was about to come.

Consequently, Grundtvig’s thinking—in its theological, educational, and political aspects—gained widespread appeal in a time of change and transformation, the nineteenth century, as well as in the twentieth century, an era where Danish politics came to be dominated by the social democratic party and the construction of the welfare state. Grundtvig’s appeal to the people, to the civil society, was now in accordance with the overall aims of a new generation of politicians seeking an ideological foundation for their state-building. His ideas of freedom, of civil participation, of equality in learning, and a church capable of holding together different opinions in matters of belief, all contributed to his later overall influence. And it
contributed eventually to the overwhelming kind of popularity that, as mentioned, turned him into a symbol, a national icon, an unparalleled authority, and a hidden water current.

But as seen so often before, defeat was lurking close behind this seemingly total victory. Grundtvig’s undisputed status, combined with a still more superficial knowledge about him and what he actually represents, has recently made him and the influence he has had upon us vulnerable to harsh and not always fair criticism. Thus, I believe, came about his falling from grace in the newspaper poll that I mentioned in the beginning of this paper. So where we once tended to attribute to Grundtvig all that was good and fair in Denmark and Danish culture, church, school, and politics, some debaters have now begun to consider him and his influence as the root of many evils, notably among them a happy amateurism, a self-sufficient nationalism, and a xenophobia, all in all a general reaction toward globalization and the general changes in the society of present day.

But this discussion also has something to do with a recent change of the political climate in Denmark, and as a consequence of this, an outbreak of the so-called culture war, known also in the United States. In the Danish culture war, Grundtvig, for obvious reasons, often surfaces in the discussions and often is used to justify various points of view: A scoundrel to those who welcome modernization and globalization, and a hero to those who decidedly do not. Of course, this oversimplification of Grundtvig’s thinking does not contribute to a proper debate about him and the influence he has had upon us. Polarization and a certain kind of Grundtvig-fatigue seem to be the outcome.

Furthermore, Danish society—as a consequence of the culture war—is going through a period in which the market, or the people, is constantly challenging the traditional ways of the state. The old institutions are questioned and scrutinized. The welfare system, the educational system, the common cultural heritage, the people’s church, all these traditional institutions are no longer undisputed certainties one can take for granted. On the contrary, they are subjects of discussion. Gradually they are forced into a more vulnerable and unstable position where traditional aims and values
are to be reconsidered, formulated, and, in this process, made clear and outspoken.

Why do we value these ways of learning? Do we not want our children to be better readers and writers? Which works of art and literature do we want them to learn about? Should we still cling to our traditional ways of helping the poor and supporting the unemployed? Should we not expect the priests to believe in God and give voice to their faith in a way everybody should be able to understand? All these basic questions are surfacing in Denmark in these years, provoking ordinary people as well as politicians to make clearer statements about their basic values.

As you might imagine, it is not easy when things you valued and took for granted are brought into the clear daylight, in order to be criticized or to be subjected to inept simplifications. Something will inevitably be lost when you force what hitherto was a hidden current into clear daylight.

Consequently, the inherited legacy from Grundtvig, which has lived its own unspoken life in the heart of many Danes, is now to be reconsidered, and hence becomes a target for both criticism and redefinition. In the old days of the people’s folk high schools, the old grundtvigians say, we did not discuss Grundtvig and grundtvigianism, we just did it, we lived it. But as today’s Danish generations are confronted with new religions, new values, and new ways of thinking, things just cannot be lived and hinted at, they have to be spoken about and declared.

So grundtvigianism, Grundtvig’s ideas, and the hitherto unspoken grundtvigian values have to be spoken out, talked about, and clearly defined. This means that some people now openly reject him. Former grundtvigian schools call him a fundamentalist, a nationalist without relevance to modern Danish society. Debaters accuse him, as mentioned earlier, of being a man who seriously belongs to the past. Others, however, have actually begun reading him, trying in different ways to make him relevant to our present situation. Whether this succeeds or not will determine the future destiny of Grundtvig, and of Denmark.

Will he survive another century then?, it is asked. Will his thinking endure for another generation? I do believe so, even
though it is hard for me to say how and where. In many ways we are back to basics. I can only say that in an era in which we constantly are called back to foundations—in political, educational, and theological matters—Grundtvig always is urging us not to forget the wider scope. As god-created beings we must be on the move, constantly guarding both our freedom and common responsibility for our fellow man.

That is one of the funny things about Grundtvig. Every time you think that nothing more can be said about him and his influence, he suddenly emerges in new and unexpected places, ever so ready to strike back. We will just have to wait and see.
A Tale of Two Geniuses—with Opposing Views of Tales—and an Ingenious Critic of Both: H.C. Andersen, Søren Kierkegaard, and Georg Brandes

by Poul Houe

I

The year 2005 marks the 200th anniversary of Hans Christian Andersen’s birth and the 150th anniversary of Søren Kierkegaard’s death. Kierkegaard’s critique of Andersen as a novelist was merciless, and Andersen’s relation to Kierkegaard the man and the thinker was not easygoing either. Both of these towering nineteenth century Golden Age Danes were first portrayed in a big way by the same Danish critic, Georg Brandes, himself a pivotal figure in nineteenth century European criticism. I thought it appropriate, therefore, to focus my paper on Andersen, Kierkegaard, and Brandes as three cornerstones of nineteenth century Danish culture.

More specifically, I wish to consider how their appropriation of (fairy) tales—from different, if not opposing viewpoints—situates this genre as a burning glass for three ingeniously powerful aesthetic, intellectual, and existential worldviews. What are Andersen’s and Kierkegaard’s conflicting views of fairy tales, and how are these views embedded in Brandes’s treatments of the two authors? Has he cast either one or both of them in his own fairy tale paradigm? And is there an over-arching fairy tale to be told that encapsulates the entire trio in its “message”?

Why look to fairy tales for a common denominator for our three writers? For one thing, they all looked to this genre themselves for a better understanding of themselves—or of each other. And secondly, this angle of incidence is particularly relevant today, when fairy tales seem to enjoy a renaissance,¹ as they did in the Romantic era, in which—and against which—Andersen and Kierkegaard wrote their works, and to which even Brandes in many ways was indebted.
“That’s what I like so much about fairy tales. Fairy tales contain a lot of cruelty and suffering, but there’s almost always a liberating element at the end. Maybe that’s the task of literature, I don’t know,” says Annika Idström, a modern Finnish novelist. Her words speak for many contemporary writers at the same time as they capture a shared endeavor behind the lives and works of Andersen, Kierkegaard, and Brandes. The question, however, is what “liberating” means in each of these three cases.

II

It’s no longer a matter of controversy that Andersen wrote his fairy tales for children and adults, and did so in such a way that the child per se would be liberated from adult repression while the child within the adult would be stimulated in a deeper sense. A shared humanity would gather around Andersen’s storytelling, and the sharp division between righteous grown-ups and inferior little ones would temporarily be dispensed with.

And not surprisingly so, for the adult Hans Christian Andersen harbored a most vivid child within himself and refused to “grow up” or be a “grown-up” at the expense of this priceless existential and artistic resource at the bottom of his heart and soul. Human spirit, by his experience and faith, was ultimately childlike, open-minded, and open-ended. Hence, the fairy tale about the ugly duckling that after going through so much suffering finally is recognized as the beautiful swan it always had been inside, became the foundational myth about Andersen’s own life, thanks in part to his biographers, in part to his own autobiographies. Georg Brandes, for one, read Andersen’s text as the expression “of the very essence of its author’s personal character.”

Nevertheless, the tale is, and remains, a myth in the sense that it seeks to apply the harmonious model of Bildung in nineteenth century thinking and novels to a story about escape and flight that doesn’t end up reconciled with its point of departure, and that isn’t teleologically bound to affirm that the world is, after all, an orderly cosmos. Indeed, reality is purely accidental; it just happens to be part of the accident that it looks as though it were not an accident!
Still, if the so-called duckling was born a swan, its recognition, by itself and others, as the being it had been since birth, has the character of a rebirth. And the desire, or the drive, towards this rebirth is as fundamental as any archetypical or religious longing: a bondage and a liberating force in one gesture, to refer once again to Johan de Mylius, whom I cited before, and whose most recent book concludes on the note that the drive in question is both personal and artistic and thus unifies the author with his tales, or at least blurs the boundary between fiction and person.6

One might say that Andersen’s life was a tale insofar as he invested himself in his fairy tale writing; but it was not the sentimental tale he envisioned when, unbound by artistic strictures, he portrayed himself as deserving of tenderness and pity, and even superimposed this self-perception on his works of art.7

Presumably, the discrepancy between his genuine artistic tale(s) about his own life, and his private sentimentalization of his life—its predicaments as well as its good fortunes—is indicative of Andersen’s incomplete self-realization. If true fairy tales are narratives about the coming into being of selfhood, then these artistic tales also give authentic testimony to the actual shortcomings of this process. Conversely, the sentimental tales constructed outside artistic perimeters confirm said shortcomings by merely postulating an accomplished integration. Their inadvertent contradictions evidence what their artistic counterparts deliberately say about a conflict-ridden life.

III
If Andersen only gradually came to realize that his lasting fame as a writer for better or worse rested upon his production of fairy tales, Søren Kierkegaard was always quite a “fairy tale freak.” The expression is coined by Jens Andersen, whose new and large Hans Christian Andersen biography contains a rather satisfactory account—to which I am beholden here—of the relation between the two men and the difference between their fairy tale conceptions.8

Kierkegaard’s enduring critique of Andersen was initially aimed at one of his novels, but it somewhat pertains to his fairy tales as well. While the two authors shared—among other things—an
interest in childhood and a delight in fairy tales, then precisely those character traits I just mentioned as typical of the ugly duckling myth appeared in Kierkegaard’s spectacles to be those of a spineless, wimpy, and unmanly individual named Hans Christian Andersen. As someone thriving in head wind, Kierkegaard was contemptuous of someone like Andersen who always pleaded for tail wind. From Kierkegaard’s standpoint, Andersen’s was sorely lacking a coherent worldview, or outlook, and so his fairy tales were naïve, and not at all the rough-and-ready refreshments and stimulants for adults that Kierkegaard preferred.

In short, it was the ambiguity, open-endedness, and decenteredness in Andersen’s personality and tales—the very features that foregrounded modernism in this body of literature—that so offended his philosophical counterpart and his demand for existential responsibility and integrity. Of his attack on Andersen, Kierkegaard himself said it was an effort “to vouchsafe Andersen’s clustered and motley poetic existence in all its curvings, twinnings, turnings, twistings, and grimacings.” He wanted to straighten out the irregular poet.

In Kierkegaard’s view, a disharmonious person like Andersen was not the right one to tell fairy tales to children. For he was not an adult who had a harmonious enough childhood behind him to tell them about; rather, he was a childish individual whose stories would but confuse and discourage children from fully growing up. Children needed fairy tales to purify and work through the angst that even they experienced as part of the human condition—an idea much in the vein of Bruno Bettelheim’s later uses of fairy tale enchantment, but quite at odds with everything Andersen stood for, personally and artistically. And for all his astuteness, Kierkegaard failed to appreciate Andersen’s radical vitalization of the child, be it within the adult or outside adult confines.

IV
Whereas Andersen called his principal autobiography The Fairy Tale of My Life, and mythologized the role of his fairy tale heroes in order to articulate his self-understanding, Kierkegaard viewed fairy tales not as metaphors or symbols of his journey of life and work, but
rather as insightful and illustrative companion pieces to his various writings—and to the respective existential and religious stages he went through and interpreted in the course of his journey.

Jens Andersen, in his outline of Kierkegaard’s fairy tale conception, seems to rely quite heavily on Grethe Kjær’s book from 1991 on the world of the fairy tale in Kierkegaard’s oeuvre. Permit me, in the following five paragraphs, to extract from her well-documented discussion some of the most central observations and conclusions.¹⁰

When fairy tales were not simply being read for relaxation from personal problems (16), Kierkegaard considered them, whether they be folk tales or myths, as valuable expositions of life and existence (20). He compared them to “hypothetical sentences in the indicative,” grasping the eternal in temporal forms (18). He found their irony of life positive, as opposed to the negative irony of the Romantics (13-14)—and found their description of human development as pertinent to the single individual as to human kind as a whole. Historical periods with a dominant interest in myths and tales must correspond to a time in a particular child’s life when a similar susceptibility prevails; indeed, Kierkegaard increasingly turns from the ethnological study of tales and their role within mankind’s development in general to the relevance of this art form for the single individual’s development seen in the light of psychology and from an ethico-religious standpoint (27-30, 109).

To the extent Kierkegaard distinguishes between myths and tales, he finds the latter more universal, at once down to earth and supernatural (34). Their world is an other world—to be taken seriously (30) because tales may lead to individuation, or self-realization, which in turn will enable the individual to choose itself as the individual that God posited it to be (35, 36, 39). Again the anthropological stages for human development reflect the individual human being’s search for selfhood (51), which in its deepest sense means a movement of resignation from this world into a deeper awareness of the eternal (56).

At this point Kierkegaard’s philosophy of life collides with the fairy tale’s anthropology, for the self-realization afforded here is insufficient compared to his demands. While the tale seeks justice
and eternity by moving reality toward ideality, Kierkegaard’s ethico-religious move went in the opposite direction, so as to bring ideality into the real world (82, 90). Humans are composite beings, and fairy tales are important means to the end of realizing this fact as part of the human condition; only through self-realization and the freedom it entails, does angst, the reality of sin and of not always choosing the good, come to mind (82).

Whenever Kierkegaard leaves the aesthetical for the religious stage, fairy tales tend to recede from his discourse. They resonate well with the Socratic notion of man’s ability to find the truth within, unlike man the sinner who is beholden to god’s truth; but as god enters time as truth, man is compelled to realize his or her own untruth (85-86). Even this transition calls for fairy tale accompaniment, though, but now on Kierkegaard’s own terms. Hence the nexus between the god’s entrance into the temporal and man’s actual angst about his precarious condition. Angst as spirit bound in corporeal form holds the promise of both freedom and perdition. But in order for it to bear on freedom and to fulfill its spiritual promise, angst must be learned the right way, and fairy tales leading the individual towards selfhood have—since the Grimm Brothers—been considered roadmaps serving this retrograde goal (93, 95, 96, 102).

There is no denying that Kierkegaard’s use of fairy tales mirrors his intellectual development overall. His reading of these tales in the context of aesthetical-ethical concerns is clearly for self-identification. Like Scheherezade, who kept herself alive by telling stories to the sultan that were important to his life, Kierkegaard’s fairy tale connection hits both ways. It serves his reader with means to identify his or her deeper self, while it saves Kierkegaard’s own life by committing him to his authorship (102, 104, 111-14). And like Scheherezade, Kierkegaard at the religious stage enables his listener and reader to give and receive love (114).

We began comparing Kierkegaard and Andersen with respect to their notions of tales and the like; now, let’s come full circle and compare their Agnete and the Merman works to which both writers have devoted serious attention. Andersen’s drama by this name was by far his most daring investment for the stage, and the female
protagonist named in its title was supposed to be his own inquiring spirit. Yet her indecisive male counterpart was precisely the anathema Kierkegaard loathed in Andersen. The male and the female were innocently, undramatically, and sentimentally positioned on the same stem, like certain flowers.

In Kierkegaard’s, or his pseudonym Johannes de Silentio’s, merman (in Fear and Trembling), striving is resolutely directed towards otherness, as the author preferred it. This Agnete is not innocent, and when the merman approaches her humbly, to make her save his soul, she rather reignites his passion; and never has it raged so demonically as it does together with this supposedly saving female grace. The merman signifies a human who cannot be saved by another human, and he belongs to a traditional tale devoid of remedies. Only through faith, by dint of the absurd, may he arrive at a new beginning, a new innocence.

Agnete and the Merman may be the title of one of Kierkegaard’s better, and one of Andersen’s worse, artistic products; yet comparing the two is telling. It tells quite a bit about Andersen’s and Kierkegaard’s understanding and approprition of tales, and about the affinity between this genre and the two authors’ respective existential and authorial personas. And it draws a demarcation line between them as adversarial administrators of the fairy tale corpus.

V

Georg Brandes’ groundbreaking work on Andersen consists primarily of three consecutive articles from 1869, followed by a retrospective introduction to the so-called world edition of his tales and stories from 1900, and by a shorter feature article on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Andersen’s birth (in 1905). The entire material is collated by Elias Bredsdorff in his H.C. Andersen og Georg Brandes (1994). Brandes’s work on Kierkegaard, on the other hand, is one seminal book, Søren Kierkegaard (1877), amended in 1880 with a postscript on Kierkegaard’s posthumous papers.

In both instances, considerable admiration and rebuke have been heaped on the author over time. Controversy has always surrounded Brandes’s activities, and arguments pro et contra the man and his work have been leveled from various directions to this
day. While I will not review this massive body of reactions here, it is possible, I believe, to center the major criticisms against Brandes on the fairy tale template that he encountered in Andersen and came to apply broadly in his own criticism.

To illustrate the point, let me cite the final lines of a critical revaluation of the entire modern breakthrough ushered in by Brandes. Taken from a plenary paper delivered by Sven H. Rossel at a 1986 Gothenburg conference on “The Modern Breakthrough,” the quote resonates with many a past and present criticism of Brandes. “Georg Brandes,” says Rossel, “sought to draw a picture of himself as the grand lonesome intellectual, once again ahead of his time and therefore once again misunderstood and persecuted—yet another myth in the history of Brandesianism that awaits its destruction.”

Without deciding about the validity of the point made—it is clearly polemical, but not without foundation in Brandes’s writings—it takes no rocket science to identify the nature of Rossel’s claim. He simply states that Brandes has employed the ugly duckling myth to characterize his—Brandes’s—own development. Had he—Rossel—made the additional point (which he hasn’t!) that such a myth is marred with inner contradictions, he might have substituted deconstruction for destruction [“aflivning”].

If Brandes, as many have argued, has molded a myth about himself on a fairy tale template, his deception is not simply aimed at typecasting a much more nuanced and contradictory reality in his own favor; no, the range of his alleged misrepresentation is such that even his critics have been misled by its mythical form to overlook the mythical content. To prevent myths, which are not untruths but partial truths, from perpetuating themselves, they must indeed be deconstructed, not destructed.

Reading Rossel’s critical lines into the context of the ugly duckling myth, by the way, was no intrusion on my part. Johan de Mylius, in the book I cited earlier, more than once reminds us of Brandes’s objection to Andersen’s conclusion to “The Ugly Duckling.” Instead of ending up as the tame and hand-fed creature in the manor house’s pond, the young swan should have expressed an heroic and defiant individualism by flying away in solitude and proud, exclusive
suffering. What Brandes is obviously missing in the text, as in so many texts by Andersen, is a firm philosophy of life that could keep under lid a disquieting lack of continuity and personality, standpoints and engagement, as Mylius puts it.

If the ugly duckling myth superficially served to reinforce the supposedly modern critic Georg Brandes’s view of himself as someone in possession of the qualities just mentioned, then its deeper significance lies in revealing Brandes’s uneasiness about ambiguousness and atomistic lack of central perspective, his restless receptivity to impressions of change—in Andersen—that happened to be far more central to the modern agenda than any of the character traits Brandes himself laid claim to.

VI

I have argued elsewhere in some detail that what appears to be a critical construction of Andersen by Brandes is rather a reconstruction and deconstruction of received notions of the poet and storyteller, both of which interventions prove indispensable for Brandes’s critical construction of himself. So, instead of belaboring this point I simply pose a question to Brandes’s overt pronouncements about Andersen’s lability: Where did we hear something like this before? Correct—from Kierkegaard, who repeatedly objected to Andersen’s “lack of an outlook.” Mylius rightly calls Brandes’s critique of Andersen a “sort of a naturalistic match to Kierkegaard’s Bildung’s-idealistic critique.” So it is, but it is also a match to the fairy tale template—as Kierkegaard stamped it.

At the Gothenburg conference where Sven Rossel took issue with Brandes’s allegedly mythological self-portrait on the basis of a variety of texts, Finn Hauberg Mortensen discussed persuasively Brandes’s 1877 book on Kierkegaard. Where Rossel queried whether The Modern Breakthrough (but essentially Brandes himself) was truly “modern,” Mortensen puts the same question directly to one of Brandes’s pivotal texts. But unlike Rossel, Mortensen answers both yes and no—and, in addition, he explains the connection between the two.

On the one hand, Brandes adopts both Kirkegaard’s critical passion and passionate language and his demand for personal truth
to which The Modern Breakthrough itself was strongly committed. On the other hand, Brandes decouples these loans from their contextual meaning in Kierkegaard’s oeuvre. Kierkegaard’s philosophy of personality and religiosity are conveniently passed over in silence, and the antithetical trope that the younger critic has also imported from his precursor basically serves him to distinguish himself, as the mouthpiece of modernity, from Kierkegaard’s anachronism.

Even so, it turns out that Brandes’s bourgeois affiliations were far more centered on the idea of a unified personality than was the period of split and doubled personalities to which Kierkegaard’s generation belonged. By adopting Kierkegaard selectively, so as to warn The Modern Breakthrough against his paradoxical and religious temptations, Brandes simplified, for instance, Kierkegaard’s concept of personality to fit his modern audience; but the complexity that he merely dispensed with, and didn’t deal with, in his Kierkegaardian source of inspiration, would later come back to haunt its censor as an integral part of the modernism to which he—Brandes—had even fewer attachments than Kierkegaard had.

The road to freedom thus turned out to be much less straightforward than Brandes had anticipated. As Mortensen notes, Brandes already in his Kierkegaard book finds people unexpectedly impersonal and mass-oriented, and himself driven to thinking and acting in lofty solitude. His personal twisting of the ugly duckling myth is back in force.

But, strictly speaking, so is Kierkegaard’s take on the fairy tale. Tales as search engines serving the ultimate search for selfhood were precisely the driving forces Brandes could translate from the philosopher-poet into his own modern breakthrough without breaking the latter. Such orderly tales were comforting, unlike Andersen’s confusing multifariousness, but comforting only to the point where divine intervention rendered the tales’ self-realization insufficient and where the course of the tales had to be altered by Kierkegaard’s own creation in order for their characters to meet their creator.

At this point Brandes disembarks his reading—of Kierkegaard as well as of Andersen—as no longer instrumental for his self-
realization, and chooses instead self-imposition on his source of inspiration as a shortcut to self-identification. And he does so at his critical peril.

VII
The lesson to be learned from Georg Brandes’s tales about Andersen and Kierkegaard is this: even someone with a critical genius for personality nuance both profits and suffers from casting his observations in a totalizing view. While the art fairy tale at first glance lends itself strongly to such a view—deep in its insight, integrated in its worldview and attitude—it also holds an abundance of secrets that are relevant to the self-realization process despite the surface impression this process may leave of an orderly cosmos. Both Andersen and Kierkegaard realized as much and sought to draw each their consequences thereof. For both of them, tales were either liberating or had to be liberated.

Brandes, by contrast, believed he could enclose his liberal individualism and psychological observation within the rationalist and positivist dogmas of his time without having to pay the price for the enclosure, i.e., without acknowledging that his pursuit of truth must at some point be at the expense of the received order and knowledge he also relished. Ignoring the conditions of possibility for his critical endeavor, he increasingly substituted a mythical fortification of insights he already possessed for the more risky fairy tale mode of truth-seeking. This is not the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about Brandes. But it is an important part of it: that he rose like an open-ended fairy tale and set like a self-affirming myth.

It’s a pitfall that awaits us all.

3 Johan de Mylius, Forvandlingens pris—H.C. Andersen og hans eventyr (Høst & Søn, Cph., 2005), 26-27.
4 Ibid., 65-66; tr. mine.
5 Ibid., 63-72
6 Ibid., 358-59.
8 Ibid., Vol. 1, 387-411.
9 Ibid., 401; tr. mine.
12 Ibid., 396.
16 Mylius, *Forvandlingens pris*, op. cit., 64 and 180.
17 Ibid., 357.
18 Ibid., 358.
22 Ibid., 294.
Religion, Philosophy, and Art are related. Sometimes more than other. They are so much in family, in fact, that they are able to become one. This may even happen without being intended or even realized, but we also have, in Western civilization, instances where the artist very clearly meant his work to represent a unity of Religion, Philosophy, and Art. The greatest known instance of this is, of course, Dante Alighieri’s poem *La Divina Commedia* (ca. 1307-1320), the story of his wandering through Purgatory, down to Hell, and up to Paradise where his ideal love for Beatrice allows him to unite with God. If you are the reader Dante intended you to be, you will at the end of *The Divine Comedy* be convinced that Religion, Philosophy, and Art are very much in family and certainly able to become one.

We are talking in this paper about the three Danish poets who received the Nobel Prize in literature, the most prestigious crowning of a poet in our world. They are Karl Gjellerup, Henrik Pontoppidan, and Johannes V. Jensen. All three lived and accomplished some of their major work around the year 1900. Karl and Henrik shared the prize in 1917; Johannes received it by himself in 1944. On the Internet, you will get many hits if you ask Google about Johannes V. Jensen. Or, if you find time, you should try the Nobel Prize homepage at www.nobelprize.org where you will find photos of the three men along with the original presentation by the Nobel Committee giving the published grounds for the awarding of the prize. Also you will find their autobiographies and other texts. But take this warning seriously: there is a lot of baloney, misinformation, and bad faith in circulation; if you get seriously interested in any subject, you will want to know the truth about it—and that is not always easy.

If you want to know what a poet has written, you will have to read him yourself. And if you want to understand what your poet has
written, you may sometimes have to stick to the job for a lifetime. In many cases, in the end you will have to decide for yourself what the meaning could be, almost as in religion and philosophy.

In the following sections, you will find a four-liner by each of our three great poets, the Nobel Laureates of the years 1917 and 1944, respectively. Let us try to understand those three poems. They have all been written, and/or published, and/or used by their authors as complete texts—finished, self-contained, and to be read as they appear here. The translations are perhaps helpful, not poetry.¹

**Karl Gjellerup**

Let us begin with Karl Gjellerup. He is not a poet that I think much of. It has been quite an experience trying to get to know him on my way to talking about him here. Gjellerup lived in Denmark from 1857 to 1892, thirty-five stormy years. From 1892 until his death in 1919, he lived with his German wife in Dresden, a great city of art in Germany. He published many books in both countries and in both languages. None of his works are in print today, and only professionals read him. His books remain practically untouched in libraries and with antiquarians. Booksellers in Denmark and Germany do not even know his name.

As a candidate for the Nobel Prize in Literature, however, he was recommended and repeatedly supported by important people, the most important perhaps being professor Vilhelm Andersen of Copenhagen University. It was Andersen who, in the end, suggested to the Nobel Prize Committee that the prize might well be shared by Gjellerup (the idealist) and Pontoppidan (the realist). They shared it then, but Andersen lived long enough to think that Gjellerup was a bad choice. Many people thought so and said so when he was nominated in 1917, and better choices were named—for instance, the critic Georg Brandes and the novelist Martin Andersen Nexø, both men of world renown. Gjellerup got the prize because influential people thought that his literary work fitted well with Alfred Nobel's will calling for poetry of "an idealistic tendency." The idealism in Gjellerup’s prosaic, dramatic, and lyrical texts is a late echo of great German poetry, religion, and philosophy. Since the German classical and romantic tradition still had its

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¹ The translations are perhaps helpful, not poetry.
supporters in Denmark as well as in Sweden, and also celebrated an apparently great afterlife in the Germany of Richard Wagner, the road was paved for Gjellerup. But he never wrote great literature, and almost anybody trying to read him now will know. His best work may be the four-liner that is presented here. There is, of course, much more to say about Gjellerup and about his very interesting position between the ages, but let us take a look at the idealistic poem of his, "Et Par" ["A Couple"].

Et Par
Tag den hele Verden fra os –
Giv os evig Nat til Ly –
Jeg er Eros, du er Chaos,
Verden hæver sig paany.

A Couple
Take the whole world from us –
Give us eternal night for shelter –
I am Eros, you are Chaos,
The world arises anew.²

"Et Par" is rhymed a-b-a-b and the rhythm is obvious and regular. What the poem says is this: The world and we shall be reborn forever, eternally, as long as we, Eros and Chaos, meet. This may be strange stuff to our modern ears. However, in ways of thinking that were current in his time and explicitly supported by Gjellerup in other contexts, the message is explainable as an eclectic mixture of Greek and Indian, Platonic and Buddhist thought. "Et Par" is a religious and philosophical mix of known ideas in the shape of a memorable rhyme. Eros is then the essential male principle of highly organized, creative longing for union with the female, and Chaos is the essential female nature of unordered matter. If you delve any further into this, you will encounter the writings of Otto Weininger, first published in Germany in 1903 and immediately translated into Danish by Karl Gjellerup in 1905. You will meet Christianity—not least in the well-known shape of fear of the female—and you will have a hard time with loathsome, quite idealistic fantasies.

Henrik Pontoppidan
Henrik Pontoppidan knew very well what he thought of Gjellerup and obviously was not amused at sharing anything with that man in Dresden. But he graciously did not say so, and I am glad to say that Henrik Pontoppidan is a great writer. His works are in print, and
he is read and discussed. All libraries complain these days that new media are taking attention away from good books. I believe they are right. I see it in my own family. Having three boys of thirteen, eleven, and eight years of age means that we talk a lot of PlayStations and personal computers, and not too much of books. Henrik Pontoppidan is not being read and discussed in a way that threatens the new media.

Like Karl Gjellerup, Henrik Pontoppidan was the son of a minister. Unlike Gjellerup, however, Pontoppidan decided not to study theology; he chose engineering, but broke off his studies shortly before graduating. He had decided to become a full-time writer. And he did. His three great novels in several volumes each are, as he says in his autobiography for the Nobel Foundation, a trilogy in which he has attempted to give a continuous picture of Denmark of his time through descriptions of human minds and human fates that reflect the social, religious, and political struggles of the time. Lykke-Per [Lucky Per] is the centerpiece, unforgettable. Having read that trilogy you will be asking yourself the fundamental existential questions—and no end.

Pontoppidan, like Gjellerup and Johannes V. Jensen, took up his vocation under the influence of Henrik Ibsen’s critical realism, Darwin’s evolutionary theories, the march of liberalism, democracy, industrial capitalism and socialism, Kierkegaard’s critique of the Church in Denmark, German historical criticism of the Bible and Nietzsche’s critique of Christianity. But perhaps the most urgent question in the minds of all three men—as in many, many others after the Prussian-Austrian victory over Denmark in 1864—remained the national Angst, the fear that Denmark could not survive. This is reflected in Gjellerup’s departure for Dresden and his choice of German idealism, and it is reflected in Pontoppidan’s preoccupation with the deepest question in his trilogy: Who are we, and who am I from here to eternity? Perhaps you see it in his verse without much comment.

Vi ejer Skatte nok af Sølv og Guld,
men lever oftest dog paa Laan og Leje. –
Kun hvad vi pløjer op af egen Muld,
beholder vi til evig Arv og Eje.

We own treasures enough of silver and gold,
but yet live most often from loan and lease. –
Only what we plough up from our own soil,
we keep as eternal heritage and possession.3

The dash after the second line indicates that the general truth of
the first part of the four-liner has a parallel in the second half of the
poem, where the rhyme (Guld/Muld = gold/mould, transl. gold/soil)
lets you remember the two great golden horns of old, found in
Danish farmland and stolen from the museum by a German
goldsmith, a loss which in Danish poetry was made venerable by
Adam Oehlenschläger in his romantic, idealistic memento that we
shall not prefer the value of gold to the value of spiritual, religious,
national truth. It may be unfair to our great writer of epic existential
prose to let him be represented here by openly didactic verse, but he
gave it to accompany his portrait, and the meaning of this poem is
not far from the epicenter of his oeuvre.

**Johannes V. Jensen**

As for Johannes V. Jensen, I must admit in advance that I consider
him to be not only the greatest poet and writer of the three Nobel
laureates, but also second to none in Danish literature. This is not as
self-evident in Denmark today as it used to be, although his early
novel *Kongens Fald* [*The Fall of the King*], 1900-1901, was chosen as the
best Danish novel of the last century by the majority of readers of the
two principal Copenhagen dailies in the year 2000. Johannes V.
Jensen himself much preferred his six-volume sequence of
evolutionary myths under the title of *Den lange Rejse* [*The Long Trail*],
1908-1922. That work tells the story of mankind from the beginnings
a million years ago to the arrival in America of Christopher
Columbus, the great seafarer of Danish extraction (as Grundtvig
supposed, and Jensen suggested)—along with the Spanish.
Johannes V. Jensen writes in his autobiography for the Nobel
Foundation that he attempted with his work to turn his readers’
attention from French aesthetics to Anglo-American fact, to the real world around us, from Baudelaire to Frank Norris as I see it, and from local defeat to our expansion in history and positive action now. “With Darwin for Denmark,” so to speak. There is, however, at the center of almost everything written by this magician of Danish language—who said that he preferred journalism to fiction, that he wrote in order to let poetry be surpassed by reality—there is a lesson of death. He wished to let the apparently disappearing influence of Christianity and Church continue to disappear and, if possible, to accelerate its disappearance. But he did not propagate against religion, for he understood the terrible importance of metaphysical panic. This panic is the shocking subject in his two novels about life in America. There is a criminal quasi-fascist dictator called Cancer underway in those novels, building with terror and sex appeal on the existing ruins of religion his empire over the souls of men in Chicago and the States. Jensen also immediately sensed the danger when Hitler began his ascent in the early twenties. He wrote against totalitarianism of any kind, but perhaps most important, he never missed a chance to remind us that life is short, and we must be prepared to die without hope of any permanence in anything. This sort of social therapy is much needed in our time, he felt, if we shall overcome fear and yet live without giving in to metaphysical and political humbug and seduction.

He has written wonderful poems and songs. His early poems (in his *Digte,[Poems] 1906*) are often considered most important. As late as 1945, he himself said that his poetry in general was the essence of his oeuvre.

Alting forgaar.       Everything dies.
Alting forgaar.       Everything dies.
Elsker du mig?       Do you love me?
Jeg elsker dig.      I do love you.  

This four-liner by Johannes V. Jensen I consider the quintessence of all he wrote. It is written as a text to accompany the sound of the town hall bells in Copenhagen, a melody by Thomas Laub played by those bells every hour on the hour since 1905, and still transmitted
by the Danish public service radio every day of the year at noon. I wish you could hear it now, as it was heard at the conference in Des Moines. Do you understand the poem?

**Bibliography**


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1 All translations are by Erik M. Christensen.
2 Karl Gjellerup, in his poems *Min Kjærligheds Bog*, 1889 [Book of My Love].
3 Henrik Pontoppidan, in the periodical *Juleroser*, 1903 [Christmas Flowers] under his own portrait by Johan Rohde.
4 Johannes V. Jensen, in his prose myth "Den gamle Trold" [The Old Troll], *Nye Myter*, 1908 [New Myths].
Karin Michaëlis:
Famous Danish Novelist and Humanitarian
Rebel With a Cause

by Merete von Eyben

Consider the following question: Which Danish author was not only one of the most famous European authors in the early part of the twentieth century, but also one of the most widely read female ones; had all of her books translated into German and some of them into as many as 30 other languages; wrote the most notorious bestseller of that period; celebrated her 60th birthday at a banquet hosted by Austrian PEN in Vienna where she was awarded both an Austrian and a Czechoslovakian medal and honored by the German language papers as Europe’s Conscience; had her books banned by Hitler because of her outspoken criticism of him and her aid to German refugees, among them Bertolt Brecht and his family; was forced to spend the second World War as a refugee in the United States, suffering economic hardship and a devastating heart ailment, but was made an honorary member of the German-American Writers Association and had her 70th birthday celebrated with a banquet in New York City, sponsored by the community of German expatriots; came back to Denmark in 1946 and was awarded King Christian X’s “Frihedsmedalje” [Medal of Freedom]; but died, virtually forgotten, at a boarding house in Copenhagen in 1950, after having had to sell her Thurø properties, a victim of the postwar housing shortage.

The answer is one Katharina Marie Bech Brøndum, born 1872 in Randers and later known as Karin Michaëlis, her new name courtesy of her first husband, the author Sophus Michaëlis. Her famous/infamous seminal novel about menopause and older women’s sexuality, Den farlige Alder [The Dangerous Age] from 1910, about the 42-year-old protagonist’s infatuation with a younger man for whose sake she divorces her husband, whereupon both her would-be lover and her ex-husband marry much younger women, leaving her single and an outcast from the wealthy, upper class
society where she used to be the queen of beauty and decorum. This subversive narrative violated most of the taboos of that time and cemented her place on the international literary map.

She had already had one critical and one popular international breakthrough with the two novels *Barnet* [*The Child*] and *Lillemor* [*Little Mother*], both from 1902, but the steady stream of novels and stories she produced after *The Dangerous Age* were often panned by Danish critics and dismissed as “damelitteratur” (romance literature or “chick lit” for the mature reader), whereas her popularity in the German-speaking countries remained constant. In her memoir *Little Troll*, first published in 1946 in the United States in collaboration with the American author and translator Lenore Sorsby and later published in German as *Der kleine Kobolt*, she mentions that she received a letter from her favorite author Colette in which she told Karin Michaëlis what a great inspiration *The Dangerous Age* had been. And in his book *Notice à Chéri*, the French critic Claude Pichois quotes Colette as saying that without it, one of her most famous novels, *Chéri*, would never have been written.

It was not until the publication of her five-volume fictionalized memoir *Træet paa Godt og Ondt* [The Tree for better or for Worse] (1924-1930) that the Danish critics finally recognized her as the author of an unsurpassed masterpiece. Her last international success was the seven *Bibi*-books, the first of which, *Bibi: A Little Danish Girl*, was published in English by Doubleday before it was published in Denmark and was originally been intended as an introduction to life in Denmark for American children. Published between 1927 and 1939, the seven books were translated into at least 30 languages and were devoured by children all over Europe. The author of the *Pippi Longstocking* books, Astrid Lindgren, has stated unequivocally that she was greatly inspired by the *Bibi*-books.

Unlike the books of her two contemporaries Agnes Henningsen and Thit Jensen, very few of Karin Michaëlis’s books have been reprinted in Denmark. When Gyldendal finally published a new edition of *Den farlige Alder* in 1987, the less-than-enthusiastic review by May Schack in *Politiken*, the major daily newspaper in which Karin Michaëlis published so many articles, concluded that although it was interesting from a historical point of view it did not hold up as
a literary text. In the United States, however, a new translation of *The Dangerous Age*, with a perceptive introduction by Phyllis Lassner, was published in 1991 and is alive and well on Amazon, as are many of the *Bibi*-books. She is still revered in the German-speaking countries where scholarly papers and popular radio programs are regularly devoted to her life and works. She was an icon there in her lifetime, both because of the popularity of her books and because of her many fearless and controversial speeches on the lecture circuit advocating peace efforts, equality for women including a pro-choice stand on abortion, animal rights, and her tireless humanitarian help to the civilian victims of war.

Those of us who are members of what I think of as the unofficial Karin Michaëlis “task force” are beginning to take heart, though. Three scholarly books about her life and works were published in 2002 and 2003. The first was Birgit S. Nielsen’s *Karin Michaëlis. En europeisk Humanist* [*Karin Michaëlis. A European Humanist*] consisting of an overview of her life and a detailed analysis of *Den grønne Ø* [*The Green Island*], a utopian children’s book that was published in Germany in 1933 and in Denmark in 1937. In 2003, Beverley Driver Eddy’s definitive biography, *Karin Michaëlis. Kaleidoskop des Herzens. Eine Biographie*, [*Karin Michaëlis. Kaleidoscope of the Heart. A Biography*] was published in a German translation by Edition Praesens, after having been turned down by Gyldendal. That year my book, *Karin Michaëlis: Incest as Metaphor and the Illusion of Romantic Love*, a textual analysis of selected works by her, was published by Peter Lang USA. And in the fall of 2006, the Danish progressive press Tiderne Skifter will publish my next book about her, covering both her life and her works, for which I am greatly indebted to the pioneering research done by Nielsen and Driver Eddy. My publisher Claus Clausen and my friend and co-editor Bente Clod, who pitched the project to him with the authority of an award winning novelist and writing teacher, are now honorary members of the task force.

Other members also have been hard at work reviving Karin Michaëlis’ legacy. Henning Høeg Hansen, a Danish writer living in Hong Kong, has edited a collection of 30 letters written to Karin Michaëlis by Agnes Smedley, the author of *Daughter of Earth* (1929).
And already in 1978 Danish literary icon Suzanne Brøgger, another honorary member of the task force and lifelong Karin Michaëlis lover, wrote a column for the Danish women’s weekly ALT for damerne entitled “En meget modig dame – Karin Michaëlis var forfatter og krigskorrespondent under 1. verdenskrig. Og den første, der skrev om overgangsalder.” [A very brave lady – Karin Michaëlis was an author and war correspondent during WW II. And the first person to write about menopause.] Even Weekendavisen’s enfant terrible, Lars Bukdahl, waxed poetic about her epistolatory novel Syv Søstre Sad [Seven Sisters Sitting] (1923) quite recently: “...[den]...kan jeg bare blive nødt til at score hurtigst muligt.” [I just gotta have it ASAP]. Elisabeth Møller Jensen and other Danish feminist scholars have argued passionately for her inclusion in the official Danish core canon, which at present has only one female member, Karen Blixen. And in an article in Politiken in 2004 noted Danish-American scholar Poul Houe recommended reading her to gain a better understanding of why so many abused women keep returning to their abuser, emphasizing that her treatment of this problem in so many of her books still offers a much needed, and perceptive, antidote to the smug blame-the-victim attitude that is still so prevalent. “Men måske fiktionslitteraturen kan være god for et kvalificeret bud? I hvert fald har vi en dansk forfatter(inde)...som i store dele af sit forfatterskab har syslet med den art kvindeproblemer...som først i de senere år er begyndt at få den opmærksomhed, de fortjener.” [But perhaps we may find some useful answers in works of fiction?...We actually have a Danish writer whose works often deal with this type of women’s issues...who has only recently begun to receive the kind of attention she deserves.]

Works such as Træet paa Godt og Ondt, [The Tree for Better or for Worse] Lillemor, [Little Mother] Bogen om Kærlighed  [The Book of Love] (1912), 30 Dages Laan [The 30-Day Loan] (1920), and Justine (1931) all describe the way in which women collude in their own oppression by masochistically responding to abusive husbands/father figures and/or their mothers with the hiding-the-head-in-the-sand denial that they have learned. Lillemor’s female protagonist, Marthe, is the ultimate example of this strategy, and the
text is one long subversive and complex narrative denouement. The story consists of 16-year-old Marthe’s letters to her cold and abusive mother after she has been married off to her 64-year-old uncle who had hoped to marry her mother, his childhood sweetheart and first cousin. At first glance, Marthe’s letters appear to be written by a loving and dutiful daughter. But their descriptions of life with her unfeeling, abrasive, and controlling husband, her brutal sexual initiation resulting in two stillborn babies, and her responses to her mother’s letters, which we never see, form a subtext that consistently contradicts the dominant text’s reiteration of her gratitude towards her husband, her belief that her mother has always had her best interests at heart, and the way in which she berates herself for her unhappiness. Her suicide is a catharsis and the only way in which she is able to assert herself, at the same time that it emphasizes the destructiveness that such extreme masochism may cause.

Justine, written 29 years after Lillemor, uses a number of incestuous relationships to demonstrate the same disastrous interaction between women’s lack of self understanding, and the destructive forces of a patriarchal culture. The plot is a dizzyingly convoluted construction of narrative voices intersecting and contradicting each other in a complex puzzle of subplots and subtexts, told by a supremely unreliable narrator. It centers on the incestuous attraction between Justine and her son, offset by her affair with her childhood sweetheart and her marriage of convenience to a country doctor. The story ends with Justine killing her lover, pledging her eternal love to her son, and committing suicide, in keeping with Constance Hill Hall’s tenet that “Almost invariably...incest in literature denotes disaster; catastrophe follows in its wake.” Justine was panned by contemporary Danish critics as a disastrous example of undigested Freudianism, but so many years later it looks more like a postmodern comment on the human condition, combining psychology, transgressive sexual behavior, social commentary, and the style of popular literature to form a scathing indictment of the destructive interaction between oppressor and oppressed, and the tacit collusion between them.

Træet paa Godt og Ondt is less strident and edgy, but covers the same territory and communicates the same message. At the time it
was considered a reliable account of Karin Michaëlis’ life, as was her “real” memoir, Little Troll. But as Beverley Driver Eddy points out, Karin Michaëlis would not be Karin Michaëlis if she did not add or subtract from the fabric of her own life, interweaving her own experiences with fiction to the point where she feels compelled to admonish the readers in an afterword in volume four of Træet paa Godt og Ondt that the protagonist Gunhild is a completely separate person from the author.

Gunhild er nu vokset til – ja, er blevet saa stor, at det efterhaanden vil blive temmelig kompromitterende for mig, hvis man fortsætter med som hidtil at identificere hendes og hendes tossede og kloge Gerninger med mig og mine. Min Følelse for Gunhild er naturligvis uafhængig af, hvorledes hendes Væsen udfolder sig i de forskellige Livsfaser, jeg holder af hende, som hun er med hendes Dyder og Fejl. Men hun er ikke mig, og hendes Liv er ikke mit. [Gunhild is now grown up—so much so that it is becoming somewhat of an embarrassment if she and her crazy and clever actions continue to be identified as mine. Needless to say, my feelings for Gunhild are not affected by the way in which she expresses her personality during the various phases of her life. I love her the way she is with her virtues and faults. But she is not me and her life is not mine.]

Karin Michaëlis’ life is the stuff that fairy tales are made of: the little cross-eyed ugly duckling who married a famous author and then outshone him by writing one of the ultimate best sellers of prewar Europe; being befriended by such luminaries as Albert Einstein, Bertolt Brecht, Helene Weigel, Emma Goldman, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Johannes V. Jensen, Lewis Sinclair, Genia Schwarzwald—the list is a veritable Who’s Who of that time; and though she devoted so much time and spent most of her income on humanitarian causes, she still found time to produce more than 70 works of both fiction and nonfiction, many of them unsurpassed masterpieces. So far, however, her life has elicited far more scholarly attention than her books. But revisiting them is an opportunity to understand why they were so popular in her time, to appreciate their timeless qualities, and to realize how far ahead of
her time she was, both as a storyteller, in her daring stylistic experiments, and in her choice of subject matter. So many of her stories are covert treatises on the abusiveness inherent in a patriarchal power structure, the precarious relationships between mothers and daughters, and the way in which patriarchal and incestuous abuse intersect. But they also are so readable and colorful that the disturbing messages embedded in her texts are digested as if they had been dipped in chocolate—life-saving medicine without the bitter aftertaste. By getting past the “damelitteratur/romance novel” label and analyzing her works as the serious texts they are, celebrating their unique mixture of a plot-driven format with a serious philosophical and social message, written with her trademark fluency and stylistic flair, we as readers can ensure that her legacy endures and that she finally finds her rightful place in the Danish literary canon. As Poul Houe said in his article, the Karin Michaëlis renaissance, which is so long overdue, may finally be happening.

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Gunnar Johansen: The Gentlemanly Dane

by Solon Pierce

It is about three score and five years ago now since a certain Dane came to Dane County, Wisconsin—a decisive step, he later recounted on many occasions, “that I have never regretted.” To this native Midwestern observer, it was a perfect fit. There was something homespun and authentic in the nature of the man—a sense that he was cut from the same cloth.

Gunnar Johansen (1906–1991) remains the most remarkable man I have ever met. I got to know Johansen in the final decade of his most remarkable life. My parents had clipped an article out of the Wisconsin State Journal in 1976 when Gunnar retired from the faculty of the University of Wisconsin, and several years later they had the temerity to call him up and ask if they could bring their two sons out to play for him. Of course Gunnar assented, and so we went, from Mt. Horeb out to his house in the woods just beyond the county line, in the unassuming burg known as Blue Mounds.

The enormous two-keyboard Steinway in Gunnar’s living room genuinely scared me when I learned that I was about to play on it. “I think I’ll just use one keyboard...” is how I remember nervously prefacing what seems now a rather unmemorable version of Chopin’s Polonaise Militaire.

Today I’m going to talk a little about Johansen, in addition to playing some of his music, primarily because he himself loved to talk and was as much known for his affable and spontaneous commentary during his concerts as his voluble “holding forth” on topics as diverse as alternative energy (hydrogen power, nuclear fusion), hypersonic aeronautics, or cancer research. These serious interests led him to found what he called The Leonardo Academy after the original Renaissance man Leonardo da Vinci, to integrate and concentrate human knowledge to deal with some of mankind’s greatest present day challenges.

Johansen was born on January 21, 1906 in Frederiksberg, outside of Copenhagen. Although 2005 is undoubtedly H.C. Andersen’s year, 2006 will be Johansen’s centenary, and thus a singularly apt time to
remember and reflect on his legacy and achievements. Johansen’s mother, Signe Christensen, was from Jutland, a nurse in a religious calling who had a great deal of influence in laying a spiritual groundwork for Gunnar’s developing consciousness. Johansen’s father, Lars, was a violinist in Copenhagen who also taught piano, and it was he who gave the young Gunnar his first piano lessons. Johansen started out on violin but switched to piano at age 10. Lars Johansen was at that time a violin pupil of Borge Rosenbaum’s father. Borge Rosenbaum in later years would turn out to be another immigrant to the United States, who eventually went by the name of Victor Borge. The Hindsberg grand piano he played in his youth reposes today at the Danish Immigrant Museum in Elk Horn, Iowa.

Victor Borge became Johansen’s lifelong friend, but strangely enough they did not meet in Denmark (they met in Los Angeles in 1941) even though they had studied with the same teachers both in Denmark and Berlin: Victor Schiøler, who was a pupil of the great Polish pianist Ignaz Friedman; Frederic Lamond, a Scottish pupil of Franz Liszt; and Egon Petri, the foremost pupil of Ferruccio Busoni. Johansen’s pianistic lineage was thus thoroughly conducive to the musical and intellectual path he would earnestly forge and ultimately follow for the rest of his life.

In the 1920s, Johansen gave approximately 30 performances in the Odd Fellow Palace in Copenhagen, the main concert hall in the city at that time. Just glancing at the breadth and depth of Johansen’s printed programs (e.g., see Figure 1) during these formative years would be enough for one to conclude that he must have gone through music like a knife through butter. Johansen became close to a bona fide musical star in the Danish press during the 1920s. Even after he left Denmark in 1929, when he returned on concert tours during the 1930’s he certainly provided “good copy,” and his image—naturally photogenic—was splashed over the papers giving endorsements for Hindsberg pianos and in announcements of his marriage to a young American lady who was a model for toothpaste ads.

Before he left Denmark, Johansen made some striking recordings for Danish Columbia in 1928 (see Figure 2), including some of his own arrangements of Danish folk songs. One is a combined setting of two melodies, Jeg gik mig ud en sommerdag (text by Grundtvig) and I skovens dybe, stille ro (text by Fritz Andersen).
Figure 1
And so he came to America, crossing the Atlantic on the liner *Oscar II*, composing music aboard ship. A brief paragraph in the *New York Times* from April, 1929 mentions simply: “Danish Pianist-Composer Arrives.” America’s shores beckoned, and Johansen’s interest in things mechanical, motorcycles, airplanes, and automobiles undoubtedly had something to do with why the wide open spaces offered by America held such an extraordinary appeal to him: “Once I had seen the sun setting over the Pacific, I don’t think I ever really thought of going back to live in Denmark.”¹

Though he arrived in New York and intended to perform there, the oncoming Great Depression undermined his efforts to get sponsorship and it was to be almost 20 years later that he would make his “official” New York debut, in Town Hall in 1947. Undaunted, he headed for the opposite shore—California—and settled in the San Francisco Bay area, destination for many Scandinavian immigrants. There he met with and enjoyed great success, beginning with what was his U.S. debut, in San Francisco’s Scottish Rite Hall. In the language of the time, Redfern Mason of the *San Francisco Examiner* described what he saw and heard:

> The little land which gave the world Hans Christian Andersen, Ohlenschlager, and the story of Hamlet sent us the pianist, Gunnar Johansen, who gave a recital last night in Scottish Rite Hall. To neighbor this lad of some 20-odd summers with a world figure like Andersen may seem to be going too far; but those who heard him play will back me up, I think, in saying that he is one of the pianistic elect[...]. The Dane is an artist, a great artist. Last night’s recital was his first in America; it will not be his last.²

After Johansen’s performance of the six Paganini-Liszt Caprices in 1935 in Palo Alto, the staff reviewer of the *Palo Alto Times* colorfully appropriated some regionalistic California dialect to convey her point: Mr. Johansen does not seem to be among those who dismiss Liszt with a sneer as a mere juggler of gilt balls; there was gold in them thar trills and musical substance in the marching phrases.³

Though California did not turn out to be Johansen’s final destination in the United States, he did maintain an old farmhouse he purchased north of San Francisco in the Mendocino County town of Anchor Bay, where he spent many summers in remote splendor, largely
undistracted by the conveniences of the modern world. The prominent American composer Harry Partch was Johansen’s guest there for extended periods of time.

Johansen gave weekly broadcast concerts on NBC radio in the Bay Area and stayed in California until 1939, when an offer came his way for a pioneering post as the first musical artist-in-residence at an American university—the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Johansen also received a similar offer at about the same time from Cornell University where his teacher Egon Petri was on the faculty for a time. One wonders, of course, in retrospect if Johansen had landed in upstate New York instead of the Midwest how it might have affected his subsequent life and work. Undoubtedly, he was happy to eventually find an old stone house in the woods just outside the idyllic hamlet of Blue Mounds, where he kept fit by chain sawing and reveling in the serene Wisconsin countryside where he could do his best work. Here he truly settled down: he wed Lorraine Johnson in 1943, his third marriage, which did turn out to be a charm for him, and the most productive time of Johansen’s life began.

Continuing the radio work he had begun at NBC in California, after the end of the War in 1945 he commenced various weekly broadcast series, going through complete cycles of composers’ works on the University’s radio station WHA: in 1945, evolution of the piano sonata through history; 1946, Beethoven’s complete piano works; 1947, Mozart’s piano sonatas; 1948, Schubert’s piano sonatas; and 1949, Chopin’s piano works.

Major anniversary years were Johansen’s impetus for huge projects: for example, 1950 was the bicentennial of Bach’s passing, and Johansen took the occasion not only to perform the whole of Bach’s keyboard output on the radio—which took three years, from 1950–1953—but also to set down a permanent record for posterity. For the first time in history, he recorded Bach’s complete keyboard works on 44 LP records, which he completed in 1961.

In 1961, another anniversary called him: it was the sesquicentennial of the birth of Franz Liszt. The result was another 53 LP records of most of Liszt’s keyboard music, a truly pioneering venture of scholarship and performance. He finished the project in 1976, the year he officially retired from his duties at the University. At the 100th
anniversary of Liszt’s death in 1986, Johansen gave all-Liszt programs that were among his final major public performances.

Johansen had begun composing as a teenager in Denmark and continued even while he crossed the Atlantic, but his most productive time as a composer was his years in Wisconsin, where from 1939 until virtually his final days in 1991 his output included 31 notated piano sonatas, 2 piano concertos, choral works and songs, and perhaps over 500 improvised sonatas captured by microphone, which he called “tape tapestries.”

And so we arrive at 2006 and a timely reappraisal of Johansen himself on the occasion of his centenary. This coming fall the University of Wisconsin will honor Johansen’s legacy in a 3-day celebration tentatively scheduled for September 15–17, to be held in Madison.

Gunnar’s art, like his life, was as rough-hewn as the firewood he loved to chop, made of stern and uncompromising headlong momentum, driving endlessly forward. *Forward*, just by chance, is the state motto of Wisconsin.

One commentator, in trying to put a finger on what made Johansen’s pioneering cycle of Liszt recordings unique, wrote:

Johansen is less concerned with where he is than where he is headed. His technique is not of the superhuman variety...but in the end, that only adds to the power of the performances...There is an adventurous virtuosity here, an attempt to transcend human limits.4

For me, the essence of Johansen’s achievements rests not only in the tangible legacy he left in his work, but within the timeless example of his supreme humanism and unfailing generosity. He took up the mantle of Liszt’s *genie oblige*—with genius comes obligation—in earnest, and he raised it to a new level. His optimism on all fronts was contagious: he was ever the gentlemanly Dane, in any case, never a melancholy one. Perhaps that, in the end, is what will always stay with me about Gunnar: he helped me to realize that life’s proper posture is one of gratitude, generosity, and grace—one that he consistently upheld from the start of his life in Denmark to the very end of his days and perhaps even beyond. Although his spirit may now be at rest, it is yet always moving, like Wisconsin, his adopted home in America—forward.
2 Redfern Mason, “Scandinavian Acclaimed as Piano Genius,” San Francisco Examiner, 14 June 1929
3 Dorothy Nichols, “Johansen Reveals Greatness in Final Recital of Series,” Palo Alto Times, 12 March 1935
Those of us who work in two cultures are fascinated by the peculiar demands and limitations of translating the sensual and intellectual qualities of one language to those of another, and by the challenges of transferring ideas from one historical time to another. A similar challenge exists for today’s composers who set out to transform a text into music, but this is a process that also involves other considerations, for music has the additional potential to project multidimensional time and space. H.C. Andersen was no stranger to musical renditions of his work during his lifetime. In fact, because of his early experience as a singer, dancer, and actor, he wrote librettos for vaudeville and opera; however, many of those endeavors resulted in works that were not very compelling. More interesting were the musical scores for which his texts were chosen by his contemporaries. Today’s musical response to Andersen is the subject of this study—and it is motivated by a bold new initiative.

In 2003, the Society for the Publication of Danish Music [Samfundet til udgivelsen af Dansk Musik], a private nonprofit organization founded in 1871 for the express purpose of publishing the music of Danish composers, announced a project designed to attract worldwide attention to a selected number of Danish composers by commissioning ten works, each one to begin with an Andersen tale as the springboard. These works were to be ready for performance in 2005, the “Andersen Year,” at which time the Society would offer them to all extant orchestras in the anticipation that Hans Christian Andersen would resound around the world in the 200th year after his birth. The guidelines for the commissions were simple: the basic ensemble should be an orchestra, but the work could use a narrator, soloists, chorus, children’s choir, and any number of other ancillary elements. The composers chosen for the project were all proven artists who represented a reasonably broad range in age and experience. (No female composers—but that’s another story.)
The originator of the idea, Klaus Ib Jørgensen, himself a composer, noted that beyond the two or three well-known and standard works (Prokofiev’s Peter and the Wolf, Britten’s Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra, Haydn’s “Toy Symphony”), many orchestras lack choice repertory for their concerts designed to entertain children with an eye to developing an audience for symphonic music. Because these series are a normal part of many outreach programs and often try to involve children as participants, Jørgensen reasoned that they would welcome new material, and whereas most Danish composers are not world-figures, H.C. Andersen is. His tales are known and loved everywhere. And so this ambitious project, Symphonic Fairy Tales, was launched to start early in 2005 and end in December of that year.

Included in the ten final works were two symphonic poems, Jesper Koch’s Snedronningen [The Snow Queen] for orchestra, and Sven Erik Werner’s FABLIAU d’après Andersen, with references Den lille pige med Svøløstikkere [The Little Matchgirl], Grantræet [The Fir Tree], Skyggen [The Shadow], and Historien om en Moder [The story of a mother].

The works by Morton Olsen and Fuzzy (Jens Wilhelm Pedersen), Bent Lorentzen, and Ib Nørholm maintain the more traditional, or basic, form for children’s works and call for a narrator and orchestra. Olsen’s Den lille pige med svøløstikkerner og andre eventyr [The Little Matchstick Girl and other stories], which includes The Ugly Duckling and The Tinderbox, calls for a narrator only in the introduction, but Fuzzy’s Rejsekammeraten [The Travelling Companion] exploits a close interaction between the narrator and orchestra all the way through. Bent Lorentzen includes a narrator but adds a chorus with his setting of Fyrtøjet [The Tinderbox]. Ib Nørholm’s Klokken [The Bell] requires a soprano soloist and a narrator for his treatment of the tale, which was co-commissioned by his principal publisher, Kontrapunkt.

The composers of the remaining four works—each of which is different from the others—call for diverse and expanded forces. Svend Nielsen in his Svinedrengen [The Swineherd] wants a narrator, a soprano soloist, and a four-part (SATB) chorus. For his six-movement “symphonic fairy tale” on Tommelise [Thumbelina], Svend
Hvidtfelt Nielsen requires a narrator, soprano and alto soloists, a three-part children’s choir, and a SATB choir, and John Frandsen calls for a narrator, tenor and baritone soloists, a children’s choir, a SATB choir, and mimes in his response to Skyggen [The Shadow]. Per Nørgård, basing his work on Lygtemændene tager til byen [The Will-o-the-Wisps Are In Town] composed an explosive and elaborate work, a “Cantata,” for narrator, mezzo-soprano (the marsh witch), soprano (the woman), tenor (the man), children’s and girls choirs (in masks), and a four-part SATB chorus. His work was co-commissioned by his publisher, Edition Wilhelm Hansen.¹

The scores and idea of Symphonic Fairy Tales attracted attention from a number of orchestras. The first performances were given in March, 2005 in locations as distinct from each other as Basle, Switzerland and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Thus far works have been heard in Chile, England, Spain, Poland, Portugal, Egypt, and in the Nordic countries, specifically Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. As of this writing, negotiations are in progress for an entire program of Andersen works in Sydney, Australia in spring, 2006. To our loss, no American orchestra has yet participated.

This was not the only musical project in this Andersen year, but it was the most ambitious one, and for its efforts the Society was awarded the Bolero Prize from the Danish Radio as the project that most affected the Danish public. It was featured on the cover of the major Danish music journal, Dansk Musiktidsskrift for the first issue of 2005/2006, its 80th year of publication.

How would today’s composers translate Andersen’s words and thoughts? To what degree would they be able to convert Andersen into contemporary terms? How might they need to change the tales to achieve such a purpose? For many who know Andersen's simpler stories, he would seem too gentle, too mild for what is needed in a text for today’s world. How to translate the more subtle points with musical equivalents? Formally, several responses are possible, and among these works are two symphonic poems; the rest more generally explore the narrative thread of the story. What is more diverse in the overall approach is the choice of text and the interpretation given by the composer working in today’s musical idioms. There is little sense that the reference is limited to Denmark.
Rather, like Andersen, each composer’s musical idiom is one that can be understood globally and one that easily accommodates the narration of the text in whatever language the performers and audiences normally use.

Jesper Koch’s symphonic poem relies on the strong imagery in the *Snow Queen* to stir the listener’s imagination and their recognition of “Lo ere a rose lay blooming” to call to mind Gerda’s roses and her trust in Kay’s return. This full-blown symphonic poem is the one work among the ten that most likely presents a challenge for young audiences and would require—I imagine even in Denmark—some sort of presentation and guiding imagery to be successful with them.

Sven Erik Werner’s makes a point of choosing some of Andersen’s less positive stories. Werner’s preface quotes the philosopher and author Villy Sørensen, who writes:

One has here [in Denmark] to almost the same degree as abroad, gotten used to the idea of Andersen as a harmless author of children’s fairy tales, that he not only used a naive form, but was himself naive. And one overlooks all too easily that he, right from the beginning...possessed an unusual intellectual power and an sense of irony that not the least was keen to detect ‘what was wrong about something’.

The irony in Werner’s work (irony is admittedly hard to express in music), comprises a musical presentation of the bitter, disillusioned side of Andersen, for he chooses *The Little Matchstick Girl*, *The Story of a Mother*, and *The Shadow*, and to this adds a musical quote from Gade’s romantic setting of a Christmas song with a text by Andersen, “Barn Jesus I en krybbe lå” [“Child Jesus in the Manger”]. While this is neither ironic nor pessimistic, it strives for a deeper understanding, or experience, of “childhood” than found in, say, popular musical versions of Andersen stories.

A more direct approach to updating Andersen is taken by John Frandsen in his version of *The Shadow*, which requires two mimes. One represents the man (alias Andersen) and the other his shadow, the embodiment of superficiality, who gets the better of his master, and, in the end, triumphs completely over him. Modernizing the text sung by the youth choir, Frandsen stresses the satirical aspects of the story and criticizes school systems that teach children to be
automatons, lampoons the domination of the public by today’s mindless media, and dwells on the thoroughly unsavory nature of a world that uncritically celebrates the acquisition of wealth and position by hopelessly superficial figures of power. The targets are universal (repeated complaints about the perpetually cold and grey weather in the northern countries, notwithstanding) and may appeal to ensembles everywhere.

Two composers successfully bring Andersen to life with more traditional, one might say “child-friendly,” settings of their chosen stories. With *The Tinderbox* by Bent Lorentzen and *The Traveling Companion* by Jens Wilhelm Pedersen, better known as “Fuzzy,” we have two notable examples of a classic narrated tale that works in tandem with a musical accompaniment. Fuzzy’s work requires nothing more than a narrator (albeit a good one who can negotiate the quick exchanges between the speaker and the orchestra); Lorentzen’s work requires a clever narrator, a men’s chorus, and a children’s choir.

The marching music follows right on the opening fanfare in Lorentzen’s *Tinderbox* is well calculated to get things off to a good start and introduces the brave soldier on his way home from war. This march serves throughout the work as the soldier traverses various adventures—eventually marching right to the gallows as he is mocked by the children of the town (sung by a children’s choir, of course). But, on the way there have been encounters, wondrous magical moments (accompanied by strings and wind chimes) with visions of the unimaginable: glistening gold!; a lovely and real princess; barroom conviviality in the inn; and some rough treatment—full of childish satisfaction—for the stubborn, old-fashioned royalty, King Bim and Queen Bam, who are taught a lesson by the three huge dogs summoned by the tinder-box.

By contrast, Fuzzy, who deals with a more tender subject—little Johannes in *Traveling Companion*—opens his work with a prelude that conveys two contrasting expressions. At the beginning we hear a hectic, intense passage that foreshadows the trials late in the story in which Johannes is challenged to answer riddles by the bewitched princess—on pain of losing his head. Then the music turns tender with a sorrowful tone, followed by bells tolling for the dying father
that immediately transports us right to the moment of the opening text. Little Johannes eventually meets up with a kindly fellow and the two stride along through the story to traveling music made all the more amiable with its pleasant, rolling asymmetrical meter, 3+2+2 (counted: one-two-three, one-two, one-two). Of course there have to be other elements to make these musical renderings into a real fairy tale: for this purpose I chose examples of classic elements from these two works to show how well adapted the music is, and because they are charming. I liked especially the music for the definitive and final argument with the witch whose head is summarily chopped off and for Johannes’s first venture that takes him through a terrible storm, which he survives without harm because he is so innocent. Subsequently, we encounter a nice old king who answers his own door and dances happily when Johannes answers the riddle correctly. More high points are captured in the story when the Traveling Companion ventures out at night to the trolls’ cave and sees them dance to clacking xylophones—with a dash of Grieg’s *Marching Dwarfs*. Finally, after all the trials are overcome and spells are broken, everyone celebrates with a festive happy ending, the triumph of the soldier caught up in the climactic finish by the narrator and orchestra.

Both Lorentzen and Fuzzy have broad experience in composing for the theater (Fuzzy, in particular, for children’s theater) and are true to these traditions; they have invented immediate musical characterizations for the stories and the principal personalities. These works should become classics in the genre of works for children.

If the *Symphonic Fairy Tales* had produced only the above-mentioned works and perhaps five others, the project could have been declared a success: nine new compositions, all designated to fit a particular niche in the orchestral repertoire for an international audience that would eventually become acquainted with living Danish composers. However, one work stands out from the others: *The Will-O-The-Wisps Have Gone To Town* by Denmark’s reigning composer, Per Nørgård, which was premiered in an English translation by the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in England, and was performed again in Copenhagen in September, 2005 as the
featured work on the first concert of the season of the Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra. Here we find everything that such a project could possibly hope to coax from a composer, a masterwork that “speaks” on the same level as Andersen himself—without any gimmicks—located in another time, at another place. It calls to mind the observation made by the insightful critic Georg Brandes, who, in a well-known, still relevant essay on Andersen, pointed out that when Andersen tells an apparently simple tale and speaks directly to children in their language, he is deeper and his observations are more perceptive than when he is moralistic or philosophical. Nørgård’s work, too, is child-friendly without being childish; it evokes today’s difficulties without preaching and communicates on many levels at once with its multi-layered dimensions of reference. It is funny, charming, and yet dead serious. It rises effortlessly above facile postmodernism, and it avoids sycophant pandering and oversimplification.

Designated a cantata, the work is longer and more extensive than any of the others in the project, and it requires more varied forces: a children’s choir for the will-o-the-wisps, a mezzo-soprano for the marsh witch, a narrator (a man, Andersen’s alter ego), soprano and tenor soloists, and a mixed choir of townspeople—plus a small drum corps. By all appearances the work is infectious for participants. In the first performance in Birmingham, the children seemed transformed, delighted and jumping, ready for their roles as wicked creatures to be loosed on human kind to create havoc where they could in order to get the promised reward: to become front runners for the devil’s stage coach.

Nørgård was personally drawn by certain aspects of Andersen’s tale, Lygtemænden tager til byen. Immediately captivated by the will-o-the-wisps, he thought of them as children. He also took to the dual (perhaps even triple) nature of the story teller—clearly Andersen himself—who tells about himself, a man who is telling a story. And he was enticed by the story’s mythic characters, creatures of the bogs: the earthy marsh witch who brews her beer and sees all, the glow-worms, jack-o-lanterns, and the will-o-the-wisps, who, being born at the right moment and in the right place, have 365 days to make humans do evil deeds, each and every day. Lastly, Nørgård
was drawn to the fact that the story stops before it ends: Andersen does not say what happens—whether or not the little mischievous creatures are successful. All he says is that he would not be believed if he tried to warn the townspeople; they would only think he is trying to tell them a story.

Not fancying himself an author commensurate with the task, Nørgård called on one of the best-known writers and debaters in modern-day Denmark, Suzanne Brøgger, and asked her to help him complete the tale. Suzanne Brøgger (whose name appears together with Nørgård’s on the cover of the Dansk Musik Tidsskrift), had the ingenious idea of having the will-o-the-wisps reappear in our time and try their mischief in today’s world. In the cantata, the words of the narrator and most of the marsh witch’s words—especially when she is conversing with the narrator—are right out of Andersen; the texts for the townspeople and for the will-o-the-wisps were written by Brøgger. As the recitation of recognizable, up-to-date aspects of this world’s moral decay, ecological disasters, theological smokescreens, and such accumulates, it becomes clear that the little old nineteenth-century devils are having a hard time making any headway in our world with their old-fashioned dirty tricks. After a countdown and the 365 days are up, the eager, dancing little jack-o-lanterns have to admit defeat and apologize profusely for the failure.

The relatively long overture begins gently but somewhat uneasily, then grows more and more restless. It climbs higher and higher, with persistent pounding in the xylophones, then screaming sirens intervene and bring it to an abrupt end. These were “hard times” in 1865. Denmark had lost a third of its territory, storks and swallows returned home to burned-out nests, and enemy horses roamed on the graves. The man—a storyteller who is now without any stories—goes looking for some: down past the graveyard and gardens denuded of flowers (“night violets,” the soloist sings) for they have all been woven into funeral wreaths to put into caskets, and on down to the meadow. But he finds nothing, only six four-leaved clovers, which he pockets.

That evening, in the red glow of the setting sun, the marsh witch, who takes a break from her brewing, comes to visit. To the
accompaniment of a rather wicked-sounding dance she invites him to come with her to the bogs after midnight. There in the light of the will-o-the-wisps, he can drink poetry from a bottle (“seductive waters”) and experience a virtual reality where jack-o-lanterns shimmer. There is everything the heart desires, a fairy tale life with love and mineral water in a bottle and (here Brøgger chimes in) “SCANDALS” (referring no doubt to folks like the CEOs from Enron) where the rich get richer until, overnight, they become paupers! When the marsh witch intones, “AND THEY REACH THE BOT-TOM!,” the crowd yells, “Glad it’s not me!”

All of a sudden, she realizes that the will-o-the-wisps are not only loose, they are on the town: “Be on your guard!” But too late! They are already at work, gleefully anticipating their conquests: 365 humans to lead astray, one each day. Day-by-day they work their mischief, but find with only 65 days left that they are losing—“it’s so much worse than we expected.” They are up against tough conditions: today’s morality is sunk so low that mothers care nothing for their children who “sleep in the gutter while the mothers wallow in butter.”

The marsh witch (alias Brøgger) wraps it up with a list of the ultimate degradation—a “run-down” of abject outcomes of several of Andersen’s own tales! Today (she says) they would read like this: “The princess could not feel the pea at all; she just gives up the whole mess thinking it’s all ‘too damned hard’!” “The mermaid would rather keep her tail than charm the prince and learn to talk.” “Clod-Hans can only mutter the worst nonsense.” “The tinder-box is damp and cannot light the match at all.” “The dogs are much too fat to run anywhere.” “The ugly duckling got uglier and uglier, never became a swan, and in the end looked more like a stuffed hen.” AND, “the witch cut the head off the soldier, and so finally got her revenge!”

But this is not the end. Nørgård, for whom optimism is never framed by official success stories, never loses his faith in alternative wisdom, is on a search for unity behind diversity. The poet Pia Tafdrup, whose penetrating account of the experience of having her poem, Mythic Morning, translated to music by the composer, writes that Nørgård’s procedure may be likened to a search for the place
“beyond words, where music takes over and thoughts end, where its vibrations reach the innermost, most elementary parts of our beings, areas that are vital but elude definition by words.” 3 It is this aspect of Nørgård’s work that transcends the ordinary and that serves to bring his response to Andersen’s thought to a level or place that resonates marvelously with the spirit of the text.

Responding to the need for an ending to the story, Nørgård introduced a new, but familiar, element. But first, the marsh witch departs the stage, and there is a knock at the door. The narrator goes to see who is there—“Could it be a fairy tale?”—and he leaves the stage as the chorus of townspeople begin, tentatively, to sing: “There is something that knocks, a song we can’t quite understand; it’s in fairy tale language.” Then the drumming joins in. Next, sopranos chime in with “Bim bam, just like a song” and the chorus begins to soar until eventually, in a clear reference to one of the most eloquent of Andersen’s tales, The Bell or Klokken, a bell begins to ring. Then two. And finally, many bells “ring” from the forest’s innermost regions. Chimes sound everywhere: “Hear the sound of the bell deep in the forest—‘skovklokkeklang’ [the fairy tale].” Ever so slowly the tones spread through the chorus and orchestra, and just as slowly they come together; the work ends in one long, drawn-out tone. Fairy tale, childish openness, spiritual intuition, and musical sensitivity all join hands.

1I wish to thank the Society and the co-commissioning publishers Edition Wilhelm Hansen and Kontrapunkt for providing scores of all the works for this study.

2An excellent translation to English by Svend Ravnkilde captures the homey qualities of the texts and elegantly facilitates performances abroad.

The Jean Hersholt Collection of Anderseniana
at the Library of Congress

by Kristi Johnson and Taru Spiegel

Introduction

Hans Christian Andersen was already well known in the United States during his lifetime. Though he wanted to meet his American admirers, fear of accidents at sea kept Andersen from crossing the Atlantic. Three quarters of a century after the author’s death, another Dane ensured that a part of Andersen’s legacy would remain permanently in America. The Danish American actor, author, and humanitarian, Jean Hersholt, together with his Danish-born wife, Via, donated a treasure trove of Anderseniana to the Library of Congress in 1951. The Library’s preeminent collection of Scandinavian materials is often overlooked amidst the institution’s 130 million items in more than 400 languages. Andersen scholars in the United States, however, may want to explore the American Hersholt riches before venturing overseas for their research.

The Hersholt Collection contains original manuscripts, letters, first editions, and other items of note, each illustrating significant aspects of Andersen’s life. It is not surprising that Hersholt should have collected Andersen materials with such sensitivity and understanding. Like Andersen (1805-1875), Jean Hersholt (1886-1956) was multitalented. Both men could write, act, draw, and converse in several languages. Neither took their remarkable success in life for granted.

Born in Denmark to a well-known Danish show business family, Hersholt had his first silent film role in 1906 at the age of 20. The young actor held jobs on various transatlantic ships as an entertainer, was discovered, and was offered work in the United States where he settled in 1913. After a period of playing movie villains, Hersholt achieved success with his character, “Dr. Christian.” As this kindly healer, the actor starred in a popular radio series as well as on screen between 1937 and 1953. Hersholt claimed to have appeared in over 400 films. His deep study and appreciation
of Andersen prompted him to translate more than 160 of the author’s stories into English. A caring and generous individual who wanted to help those less fortunate, Hersholt was President of the Motion Picture Relief Fund. He established the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award given in connection with the Academy Awards to honor those who help the acting profession. Jean Hersholt received Honorary Oscars in 1940 and 1950. He was knighted by the King of Denmark in 1946. Hersholt was married and had one son, also an actor.

The Jean Hersholt Collection and Catalog

Though Hersholt’s initial donation was made in 1951, he bestowed additional gifts during his lifetime. He further enhanced the bequest by interpreting the works in a number of essays. The donation from Jean and Via Hersholt, offered as “a small token of gratitude and love” toward the country of their adoption, was thirty years in the making. Today, the Hersholt materials at the Library of Congress form the largest single collection of Anderseniana in the United States. This unique offering is housed in the Rare Book and Special Collections Division and is available to interested persons. Additional information about access to the materials may be found at www.loc.gov/rr/rarebook.

The collection is best approached first through the ninety-seven page Catalog of the Jean Hersholt Collection of Hans Christian Andersen. The work features descriptions of original manuscripts of Andersen’s tales, an original scrapbook, letters, works printed outside of Denmark in English, French, German, Russian, Spanish, Icelandic, and Swedish, plus presentation copies to notable individuals, and Danish editions published posthumously. While valuable as a set of material objects, the true worth of the collection lies in its power to evoke Andersen’s world.
Highlights of Andersen’s Life and Representative Pieces from the Collection

Highlighting aspects of Andersen’s life through several pieces from the Hersholt Collection, it is important to note that prior to 1819, Andersen’s life experiences centered in Odense—mostly around his family, neighbors, acquaintances, school companions, and teachers. Andersen was not a sheltered child. His father expanded Andersen’s world through literature, puppetry imagination, and story telling. Andersen’s interaction with other family members and neighbors led to an interest in books, reading, thinking, and expanding his mind. In addition, Andersen showed signs of some musical talent. He had a singing voice that was known to the community. Before leaving Odense in 1819, Andersen played a small role in a visiting Royal Theater production. So it can easily be said that Andersen had a varied life as a young lad.

Once he reached Copenhagen in 1819, Andersen moved into circles of individuals who were educated, professional, and even aristocratic. Many were actively interested in ballet, music, literature, and theater. In August 1822, at the tender age of seventeen, Andersen first published in the magazine Harpen (The Harp). This issue, containing a scene from the author’s dramatic poem, Røverne i Vissenbjerg på Fyn (The Robbers in Vissenbjerg on Funen), is quite rare, and thus among the most valuable items in the Hersholt Collection. Better known is Andersen’s first book, Ungdoms-Forsøg (Youthful Attempts), published pseudonymously by “William Christian Walter” in September 1822. The name William was borrowed from William Shakespeare, and the name Walter from Sir Walter Scott. Only a few copies were sold. Even though it was not a literary success, this work represents an early example of Andersen’s writing, and Hersholt was able to obtain this valuable copy for his personal collection.

Thanks to the encouragement that the Jonas Collin Family gave Andersen, he became a serious published author in the early 1830s. Jonas and his son Edvard were both influential in Andersen’s career path. It was Jonas who supported Andersen’s attendance at a Latin School in Slagelse. Although he eventually matriculated and was eligible to attend the university, Andersen chose not to; instead, he
embarked on a lifetime of writing, traveling, and circulating in the company of learned and colorful individuals.

In 1835 Andersen’s first major literary accomplishment, *The Improvisatore*, was published. At this same time, Andersen was traveling in Europe, mostly in Paris, Switzerland, and Italy. He continued to enjoy the company of Edvard Collin. One of the pieces that Hersholt has in his collection is *Eduard og Kunigunde* (Edward and Kunigunde); Andersen wrote this work, it is believed, between 1833 and 1836. (Catalog, page 18.) This unpublished manuscript is a “burlesque about two young lovers and a heartless father who sends Kunigunde to a cloister. Both she and her lover grieve themselves to death, and when the father learns of this he softens and erects a monument on their grave.” (Catalog, page 18.) The manuscript suggests music and stage direction for additional enhancement to the literary text.

**Hersholt’s Letter Collection**

The Hersholt Collection contains numerous letters including those of correspondence with Richard Bentley, Henrietta Wulff, Jonas Collin, Mathilde Ørsted, and Horace Scudder. The donation to the Library of Congress contains ten letters to Richard Bentley from 1846 to 1848. Bentley was the British publisher for Charles Dickens until they had a falling out. Bentley and Andersen had a more positive relationship: Bentley published Andersen’s works, and they had considerable correspondence with one another.

Other correspondence in Hersholt’s collection includes the one with Henrietta Wulff. Henrietta was the daughter of Captain and Mrs. Wulff, another family who befriended Andersen. In all, Hersholt collected eleven letters from Andersen to Miss Henrietta Wulff from 1833 to 1858. The two were clearly endear to one another. But tragically, Miss Wulff died in 1858 in a fire aboard the ship on which she was traveling to the United States. Miss Wulff’s death had a profound impact on Andersen. So much so that Andersen might have traveled to the United States had it not been for his fear of sailing aboard an ocean liner with the possibility of a similar experience.
Another valuable letter that Hersholt acquired was written to Jonas Collin in 1855. (Catalog pages 11 and 12.) A friendly letter, there is considerable value in this piece as it was written to a person who influenced Andersen and who offered him educational, professional, and personal opportunities throughout his life. Jonas Collin was responsible not only for Andersen’s years of formal schooling, but also for financial support on occasions when Andersen needed assistance for continued success in his literary career.

Another single letter of importance is a thank-you letter Andersen wrote in 1868 to Mathilde Ørsted. (Catalog page 12.) Another of Andersen’s female friends, Miss Ørsted was the daughter of the Danish physicist Hans Christian Ørsted, who made Andersen welcome in his home and with his family.

Between 1868 and 1874, Andersen wrote thirty-five letters addressed to Horace E. Scudder. Among other accomplishments, Scudder was editor for The Atlantic Monthly and The Riverside Magazine for Young People. As Andersen’s American editor, Scudder corresponded regularly with Andersen about mutual literary interests.

Figure 2. A page from Andersen’s Picture Book, prepared for Jonas Drewsen.
The Picture Book
One of the most unusual pieces acquired by Hersholt was an original “picture book” put together by Andersen and his friend Adolph Drewsen. Dated 1862, this scrapbook includes hand-colored newspaper pictures as well as other newspaper illustrations and clippings from American, German, and English newspapers. (Catalog, Pages 16-18.) Andersen produced many similar scrapbooks in his lifetime. He enjoyed illustrating, writing poetry connected to specific illustrations, clipping silhouettes (Catalog, p. 15), and most of all scissor clippings based on his fairy tales. The 1862 scrapbook was specifically arranged and designed for Drewsen’s grandson, Jonas Drewsen; thus, a reference to “Jonas and the Whale.” Other pages in the scrapbook include a map of Manhattan; a reference to Hyattstown, Maryland, during the Civil War; a reference to the Virginia War; a menu from a Royal celebration; and an image of a Norwegian Stave Church.

An Original Manuscript and A Presentation Copy of Andersen’s Tales
Finally, two additional pieces in the collection are from a period at the end of Andersen’s life. In 1871, Andersen began writing *Auntie Toothache*, (Tante Tandpine). Autobiographical in nature, Andersen expresses some of the difficulties he had in his later years, namely insomnia and problems with his teeth. (Wullschlager, Page 428.) This original manuscript of *Auntie Toothache* in the Hersholt Collection was dictated by Andersen to a secretary, but includes Andersen’s signature from 1872. (Catalog, page 2.)

In 1873, Andersen presented an illustrated copy of his fairy tales and stories to Her Royal Highness The Grand Duchess Maria Feodorovna, born Princess Dagmar of Denmark. Andersen inscribed the work: “With all humility I ask you to accept these tales of your childhood home. With sincere gratitude and the very deepest respect. H. C. Andersen.” (Catalog, page 35.) Dagmar was the daughter of Christian IX of Denmark. Married to Czar Alexander III of Russia, she was the mother of Czar Nicholas II.
Additional Treasures from the Hersholt Collection
The Hersholt Collection of Hans Christian Andersen treasures includes other items such as photographs, a sketch of Andersen by Hersholt, and other miscellanea. All in all, the contents illuminate Andersen’s life from beginning to end. Representative pieces show Andersen as active and involved with people who shared his interest in the arts. Each piece, filled with remembrances that linger on, can be found in the Rare Book Room at the Library of Congress today thanks to Jean and Via Hersholt.

Figure 3. Pencil drawing of H. C. Andersen by Jean Hersholt.

Note: Three additional illustrations may be found in the color photo section.

References

Christian Petersen:  
From Denmark to the New Deal to Campus Sculptor  

by Lea Rosson DeLong

Christian Petersen (1885-1961) was a Danish-American sculptor (Figure 1) whose accomplishment and importance in the history of American art is being increasingly understood and recognized. The first goal in this presentation is to present a small portion of his work and to discuss why his reputation is growing and, at the same time, weave in aspects of his Danish background.

Figure 1. Christian Petersen at work on The Gentle Doctor, c.1936
In regard to his significance, three main accomplishments should be mentioned. Petersen has the distinction of being the first artist-in-residence in an American college. John Steuart Curry’s appointment as artist-in-residence at the University of Wisconsin in 1936 is well known, but Petersen’s appointment at Iowa State College (now University) came two years earlier in 1934. It should be noted that this appointment was made in one of the worst years of the Great Depression when the college’s budget had been slashed by nearly a million dollars, or almost 30%, since 1930. For the college to find room to add a sculptor to its staff leaves a certain impression of both the college and the sculptor.

Secondly, Iowa State University today has the largest collection of public art of any college in America, and Petersen helped to establish this collection and contributed to it more prolifically than any other artist. If you visit the campus today, you will find examples of his work throughout, both small relief plaques and portrait busts to large-scale outdoor works. A third point in understanding his significance is his art itself, which is one of the few examples we have of sculpture expressive of the Midwestern Regionalist philosophy of art. That philosophy or movement is best known through the work of Grant Wood and holds that artists should respond to their own environments and not go elsewhere for inspiration. It applied specifically to American artists who had been, for two centuries, inclined to seek inspiration from Europe. Regionalism, in part, comes out of the perception, common until after World War II, that America was culturally dependent on Europe. In the 1930s, many American artists, especially Wood and Petersen, encouraged Americans to examine their own indigenous cultures.

Petersen was born near Dybbøl, in the Schleswig area of Denmark, in 1885, on a 160-acre farm. Old photographs in the Christian Petersen Papers in the Archives of Iowa State University show a handsome farmhouse and inhabitants, all of which suggest a certain level of prosperity. A terrible battle between the Danes and the Prussians had been fought near the farm in 1864, within the memory of his parents. Thereafter, the area was ruled by the Prussians until 1920, and during that time, Danish men often were conscripted into
the Prussian military. The oppressive presence of Prussian rule and concern that their two sons would be drafted into their army were probably factors in the Petersens’ decision to emigrate.

In the 1890s, the Petersen family emigrated from their Danish farm and came to the United States. At first they moved to a farm near Paxton, Illinois, but according to August Bang, who wrote about Petersen for the magazine, *Julegranen*, the family (especially the mother, Helene) disliked being so far from the sea. So they settled in New Jersey, where the artist received his earliest formal training in art, with study in New York at the Art Students League.

The family brought with them a strong Danish connection that continued through Petersen’s life. There were many affects of his Danish roots, but the one that seems most important in terms of his art was his strong anti-war position. There is no reason to believe that he was a pacifist. But he did regard war with horror and he seems, especially during World War II when so many of his students were fighting, to have agonized over it. Several important sculptures relate to both World Wars, as will be mentioned later.

As expected, Petersen’s first inclination toward art emerged while he was still a child in Denmark. He recalled that he had been fascinated by tools, especially the carving tools in his grandfather’s workshop.

“This was in Denmark,” he remembered, “after my grandfather retired from active work as a carpenter and pattern maker....I did not know what sculpture was but...I made boat after boat [from pieces of wood], then took them down to the seashore, which came right up to our farm....The love of carving has been with me ever since.”

Like his grandfather, Petersen began as a craftsman. He would have liked to go directly into sculpture, but he married early, began a family, and needed to earn a living. He was a die-cutter for several companies in New Jersey and Massachusetts, engraving small, intricately designed patterns into metal. He sandwiched in further training as he could and took on fine arts commissions whenever possible. Throughout the 1910s and 1920s, Petersen worked in the northeast, gradually building up a reputation for sculpture, most of which was in the academic, neo-classical, beaux-arts style that was
current in American sculpture of the time. His 1923 *Spanish-American War Memorial* for a park in Newport, Rhode Island is typical of his early style (Figure 2). He was always a realist, but the trend of his art was toward greater simplification. Despite his dislike of “ultra-modern” sculptors such as Brancusi or Gabo, it is clear that Petersen was affected by modernism.

In 1928, when he was 43 years old, Petersen abandoned his industrial and commercial design jobs, divorced his wife, left the east coast and moved to Chicago to pursue a career of full-time sculpting. He could hardly have picked a worse time to embark on a fine arts career since the following year, 1929, found the country plunged into the Great Depression. Needless to say, sculpture commissions vanished. Petersen, like many artists of the time, was poverty-stricken, and like so many Americans of the time, he was desperate. Help came with the art programs of Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal.

In the early 1920s, Petersen had executed several small commissions, mainly for portraits, for citizens of Des Moines, gradually building up a number of contacts there. Friends in Des Moines notified Grant Wood, who had been appointed to head the first of the government’s art programs, the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP), of Petersen’s situation. Wood hired him as a sculptor on the Project at $25.00 per week. An overjoyed Petersen wrote to Wood after hearing the news:

Thanks heaps...You are right. I am broke—else I’d be there today—have to raise a loan for traveling expenses....Rarin’ to go.6

![Figure 2. Spanish-American War Memorial, Newport, Rhode Island, 1923](image)
He was indeed “rarin’ to go,” and he embarked on a series of sculptures that would be the most important of his career.

The funding of the PWAP ran out in about six months, long before many of the paintings and sculptures begun could be finished. Under Wood’s direction, the painters employed by the PWAP produced several panels for the mural cycle When Tillage Begins, Other Arts Follow, Wood’s most extensive murals and the only ones still completely extant and in the place for which Wood designed them: the Iowa State University library. The other major accomplishment of the PWAP was the relief-sculpted mural cycle for the Dairy Industry Building at Iowa State (Figures 3 and 4). As was the case for Wood’s paintings, the funding shortfall was largely picked up by the college. The president of Iowa State, Raymond M. Hughes, brought Petersen to the college, arranged with his faculty to finish and install Petersen’s sculpture cycle, and then added him to the staff as sculptor-in-residence. At that time, as for most of his career, Petersen was the lowest-paid member of the staff. But he had a studio, a creative working environment, and opportunities to

Figure 3. Petersen working on the Public Works of Art Project, Iowa City, Iowa. Behind him is a model for one panel of The History of Dairying, 1934

Figure 4. The History of Dairying, Iowa State University, 1934-35, detail of panel
take on commissions outside the college. Petersen seems to have been content at Iowa State and certainly formed a large circle of admiring friends, patrons, colleagues, and students. He was placed on the faculty of the Home Economics college in the department of Applied Arts. Because his classes were in that college, his students were exclusively women until 1939, when men were finally allowed to enroll in art classes.

It is clear that Petersen changed his style considerably while working with Grant Wood on the PWAP. To what extent this change of style was voluntary cannot be determined. Perhaps the sculptor was influenced by Wood’s highly simplified, nearly abstract style of design. But the relief sculptures for the Dairy cycle show a clean, studied, deliberate line; an elimination of much detail; a shallow, flattened concept of space; and an overall simplification of form that is nearly geometric in places and approaches abstraction throughout. For these panels in particular, there is a stability and calmness that also suggests that Petersen, in forging this new style, may have recalled the restrained classicism of the Danish sculptor, Bertel Thorwaldsen (1770-1844), one of the major neoclassical sculptors of the late 18th/early 19th centuries.

He continued this style in an equally distinctive and extensive relief for the Veterinary Medicine School of Iowa State (Figure 5). Both of these large sculptural reliefs were carried out in the 1930s and show Petersen employing the subject matter embraced by

Regionalism: scenes from life in the Midwest, interpreted in a straightforward, realist style. For the rest of his career, Petersen continued to create sculptures on the Iowa State College campus, to teach, and to carry out private commissions.
As suggested earlier, some of his most moving works were ones that dealt with the subject of war. He sketched and proposed a number of memorials related to World War II, but unfortunately none of them were ever realized. But the sketches he left show how deeply he felt about the catastrophe of the war that had overtaken the world. He did, however, create two sculptures during World War II, both of which convey his response to the conflict. *Men of Two Wars* (Figure 6) shows a World War II G.I. crouching beside a fallen World War I dough boy, as if to take up an unfinished cause. *The Price of Victory* (Figure 7) depicts the moment of death for a combat soldier. The sculpture was displayed in Iowa State’s student union after the war, but it was so affecting to those who had experienced the war or lost loved ones that it was taken off display. In reaction to that decision, Petersen commented that “it was the greatest compliment ever paid to my work.”

Petersen was a sculptor primarily, but his abilities as a designer were employed by the Danish-American magazine, *Julegranen*. For several years, Petersen provided the covers for the December issues, and his career was often followed in the pages of the magazine. It was clear that Petersen prized his Danish heritage. He continued his father’s friendship with the Danish-born landscape designer Jens Jensen, and he produced a lively portrait bust of the man who, in addition to his work in the Chicago area, also planned aspects of the Iowa State campus. Petersen also enjoyed a long friendship with
August Bang, editor of *Julegranen* and a spokesman for the Danish-American community.

Among the many anecdotes from his hundreds of students over the years, a number mention his strong connection to his Danish background. One of the most revealing is recorded in Patricia Lounsbury Bliss’s book, *Christian Petersen Remembered* of 1985, the first major publication on Petersen. Glen Jensen, a landscape architecture graduate of Iowa State, recalling his teacher's strong connection to Denmark, began by saying that Petersen could make each student feel special:

In my case, the emphasis was on the Danish connection. This began on the first day of class when he looked over the roster and read aloud only three names—Feddersen, Jensen, and another obviously Danish name. Then he said, "Well, I see we have three 'A' students.”

The professor told Jensen that he was from Dybbøl, the same town as the famous landscape architect, Jens Jensen. When the young man mentioned that it would be helpful if he were related to the successful Jensen, Petersen told him, “Don't you know, Glen, that all of us Danes are related?”

Those Danish associations also extended to other faculty members who came from a Danish background, such as Martin Mortensen, the head of the Dairy Industry Department where Petersen had placed his first major sculpture at Iowa State, and Joanne Hansen, the head of the Applied Arts Department in which Petersen taught. These and other aspects of Christian Petersen's life suggest that the link to Denmark was never very far from him. The boy who had carved boats in his grandfather’s workshop in Denmark developed into a significant sculptor, especially of Regionalist subjects, in America.

Certainly his legacy endures through his sculpture which distinguishes the Iowa State University campus. Through the efforts of Lynette Pohlman, the current Director of the University Museums, several works which Petersen had never been able to cast in bronze have now been cast and placed into important museums, including the Smithsonian American Art Museum. *Cornhusker*, one of the newly-cast sculptures, is an example of the Regionalist subject
matter with which Petersen worked for many years (Figure 8). The newest museum at Iowa State will be named for him and will feature his work as well as exhibitions on art, both contemporary and historical. Never a self-promoter, Petersen did not market his work, and for many years, it was little known outside of the Iowa State community. But the achievement of this Danish-American artist is being recognized increasingly, his reputation is expanding, and his place in American art is being affirmed.

**Note:** All photographs courtesy of University Museums, Iowa State University of Science and Technology. With the exception of Figure 2, all works are in the collection of the University Museums, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, Ames.

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1 The major repository for Petersen’s work is the Brunnier Art Museum at Iowa State University in Ames. In 2000, the Brunnier published a biography of Petersen that included a catalogue raisonné. DeLong, Lea Rosson, *Christian Petersen, Sculptor*, with contributions by Patricia Lounsbury Bliss, Charles C. Eldredge, Dana L. Michels, Linda Merk-Gould and Lynette L. Pohlman. In 2006, the University Museums will open the Christian Petersen Museum in the renovated historic building, Morrill Hall, and will publish then an addendum to the catalogue raisonné.

2 Hughes, Raymond, "Financial Readjustment in a Land Grant College," manuscript, c.1934. Hughes Papers, RS 2/8, University Archives, Iowa State University Library. The appropriation for Iowa State College in 1930-31 was $3,482,460; for 1933-34 it was $2,470,918. From 1932-33 to 1933-34 alone, the budget was reduced by just over $704,000.

3 Much of the author’s information and understanding of Petersen’s Danish background came through John Robert Christianson of the History Department at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. Dr. Christianson's review
of Christian Petersen, Sculptor included information and photographs related to Petersen’s family and their background, and it discussed more directly the conditions that may have encouraged the family’s emigration from Denmark. The Bridge, vol.24, no.1, 2001, 75-99. The photographs are found in the Christian Petersen Papers, University Archives, Iowa State University Library.

4 The exact date of the emigration is unclear. Christianson (in his book review in The Bridge; see note 3), says it was 1898 (p.88) while Patricia Lounsbury Bliss, Petersen’s first biographer, gives it as 1894, when Christian was nine years old: Christian Petersen Remembered, Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1986, 3.


6 Copy of letter from Petersen to Wood, Petersen Papers.

7 Wood’s murals at the Iowa State University Library are the subject of an exhibition at the Brunnier Art Museum (September 13 - November 27, 2006) and its accompanying publication, When Tillage Begins, Other Arts Follow: The Dawn of a Campus Tradition.

8 Quoted in Bliss, 114. Men of Two Wars is sometimes seen with the title Carry On, and The Price of Victory is sometimes entitled Fallen Soldier.

9 Bliss, 130-131.
Gyde-Petersen, A Skagen Artist in America

by John Robert Christianson

Mankato, Minnesota, was thrilled. A famous artist had come to town with his palette, easel, and painter’s smock, and people noticed. The Mankato Free Press ran a story under a bold headline:

SIR GYDE PEDERSEN, ARTIST OF DENMARK

The reporter gushed away for two columns on the delight of having in their midst a European artist who had been knighted by a king.¹

The year was 1924. My mother was a teen-aged college student at the time, and she came from Mankato. She told me that her “Uncle Gyde’s” English skills were rudimentary. When curious residents peered over his shoulder, looked at the painting on the easel, and complemented the artist, he replied, in a friendly tone, “I can’t stand you.” What he meant to say was “I can’t understand you.” In any case, he was allowed to continue his painting in peace.

Nearly two decades later, when Gyde-Petersen died in a Copenhagen suburb in 1943, one of the newspapers ran a long obituary that referred to him as “the last of the Skagen Golden Age artists.”² In order to understand what it meant to be a “Skagen artist,” and how this affected Gyde-Petersen’s view of America, we need to go back to the northern tip of Jutland a century ago, when he was still young.

The Skagen Art Colony

Perhaps no other artists’ colony in Scandinavia has ever equaled the renown of the group of painters, sculptors, poets, and bon vivants who spent their summers in the tiny fishing village of Skagen at the northern tip of Jutland during the last three decades of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth.³

Among the many artists of Skagen, two stand out.⁴ One was Anna Ancher (1859-1935), a native of Skagen who grew up among the
artists staying in her family’s hotel. She and her husband, the painter, Michael Ancher (1849-1927), later attracted other artist friends, who came to spend summers in Skagen. As an artist, Anna Ancher was a painter of quiet domesticity and sun-lit interiors. Her palette was refined, sensitive, and bathed in color. The other outstanding artist of the Skagen colony was Peter Severin Krøyer (1851-1909). He painted fabulous portraits, group scenes bursting with conviviality, and wide landscapes full of blue waters, white beaches, and romance. Trained in the traditions of the Danish Golden Age at the Royal Academy of Art in Copenhagen, Krøyer went on to study in Paris and helped to introduce French naturalism and, later, impressionism to Skagen. In general, Danish painters were open to using a wide range of styles and did not get involved in polemics over how to paint.5

Between these two masters, Anna Ancher and P. S. Krøyer, was a wide range of creative individuals who flocked to Skagen from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Germany, and England. They spent their summers painting in the open air, trying to capture the luminous sunlight of Skagen. They congregated in Brøndum’s Hotel on rainy days to smoke, talk, and sketch.

Today, if you visit Skagens Museum, you can see the famous paneled room decorated by the artists. There, you will see Krøyer’s painting of the artists at lunch. All around the room, just below the ceiling, is a frieze of portraits showing those who spent their summers at Skagen.6 Among them, you will find the subject of this paper, Hans Gyde-Petersen, painted by P. S. Krøyer in 1907.

Gyde-Petersen’s Early Career
I cannot say precisely when Hans Gyde-Petersen came to Skagen for the first time, but I can report that he was born on the farm of Aastgaard in Lindeballe parish, west of Vejle, on 7 November 1862, and baptized Hans Gyde Pedersen after his maternal grandfather.7 He got his first drawing set and watercolors at the age of ten, came to Copenhagen as a student of art at eighteen, entered the Royal
Academy of Art at twenty, and graduated as a sculptor at twenty-five in 1888. An extant, signed ink wash drawing from his student days at the Royal Academy is dated 1885. He also painted *plein air* oil landscapes from nature during these years. A surviving, small but vibrant 1890 oil sketch from the Deer Park, north of Copenhagen, is reminiscent of the Danish Golden Age and was painted from the lower end of the plain between the Sound and Eremitagen, with the eighteenth-century hunting lodge included as a distant historical reference.

![Hans Gyde-Petersen Perspective Drawing 1885](image)

It was as a sculptor, however, that Gyde-Petersen quickly achieved prominence in Danish artistic circles. In 1891, he won the Minor Gold Medal of the Royal Academy, which was rarely granted in that era. In 1892, he failed to win the Major Gold Medal by only eight votes. His sculpture went into all the major Danish public collections, and his colossal statue of Adam and Eve stood right inside the entrance to Statens Museum for Kunst when that museum opened in 1897. His sculpture won him a grant to study in Italy for three years from 1897-99. During these years in Italy, he turned his
back on a promising career as a sculptor and returned to his first love of landscape painting.\textsuperscript{11}

In 1904, Gyde-Petersen had his first one-man exhibit of paintings. The same year, his nine-year marriage to Ingeborg Balling ended in divorce. That summer, he went to Skagen to be among friends.

\textbf{Skagen}

The image of the artists’ life in Skagen was one of endless sunshine and festivity, but the reality was often less idyllic. Jealousies and rivalries were rampant. P. S. Krøyer had begun to suffer the effects of a manic-depressive psychosis and had to be committed repeatedly to mental institutions after 1900.\textsuperscript{12} During the summer of 1904 in Skagen, Krøyer invited Gyde-Petersen to stay for the winter, and Gyde accepted.\textsuperscript{13} He spent the next two winters with Krøyer and gradually took over many personal affairs that Krøyer could no longer handle. When Krøyer’s divorce became official in 1905, Krøyer was given custody of his ten-year-old daughter, Vibeke. Krøyer, Gyde, and Vibeke lived with a cook and maid in a picturesque, half-timbered house in the midst of Skagen’s only woods, with a studio that had an immense south window.

During the winters of 1904-05 and 1905-06, Krøyer began to give Gyde-Petersen painting lessons in that studio, while Gyde instructed Krøyer in sculpting.

“Landscapes are culture before they are nature,” said the art historian, Simon Schama, “constructs of the imagination projected on to wood and water and rock.”\textsuperscript{14} Krøyer’s landscape culture had evolved through many stages by 1904, and all his years of experience went into the instruction he gave to Gyde-Petersen during those winter sessions at Skagen. Gyde never did learn to paint with Krøyer’s tremendous energy and appeal—but who really could? Krøyer did teach him to emphasize light and shadow, color hues and values, and use pure colors to capture light in a rapid, \textit{plein air} manner. Some of Gyde-Petersen’s Skagen paintings are open seascapes; others are intimate garden scenes, echoing similar paintings by Krøyer.\textsuperscript{15}

In the summer of 1907, Krøyer and Gyde-Petersen took a whirlwind, three-week trip through Germany to Italy, across to
Spain, and home again by way of Paris. Later that summer, back in Skagen, Gyde-Petersen modeled a bust of Krøyer and Krøyer painted Gyde’s portrait for the frieze of artists at the hotel, while another friend, Laurits Tuxen (1853-1927), modeled a life-sized double statue of Krøyer and Michael Ancher.

Krøyer’s health was declining rapidly. Gyde-Petersen painted again in Skagen during the summer of 1909. Krøyer died on 21 November 1909 in his Skagen home.

Dyrehaven
Gyde-Petersen was in Copenhagen at that time, working on a full-length, standing statue of the late King Christian IX. King Frederik VIII and Queen Louise attended the unveiling of the statue in 1910, and on that day, Hans Gyde-Petersen was dubbed a Knight of the Royal Danish Order of Dannebrog. The statue was his last major sculptural commission.

By this time, Gyde had become a painter. He painted a few landscapes by St. Jørgens Lake between Copenhagen and the suburb of Frederiksberg, where he lived for a number of years with the family of Laurits Tuxen in their villa at Vodrofsvej 10. Perhaps it was Tuxen’s influence that led him to emphasize foreground details in several of these lakeside paintings.
However, Gyde’s favorite landscape venue soon became the varied terrain of Jægersborg Dyrehaven, the Deer Park on the northern edge of Copenhagen. He painted from nature in the open air, all year round, spring, summer, fall, and winter. His landscapes sometimes included herds of red deer in beech forests and oak-lined meadows, or a distant person or two was seen walking or riding through the park. These oils were painted rather loosely to be viewed from a distance, and always in a subjective manner that aimed to draw the viewer into the scene. Gyde-Petersen’s Dyrehaven landscapes resonated with Danish cultural values and found a ready market among middle-class customers. In 1924, the artist reckoned that he had painted 1200 landscapes. By then, he lived in a house on the very edge of Dyrehaven, and he painted there for the rest of his life.

**America**

On his trips to Jutland, Gyde-Petersen often visited his sister, ”Stine,” (Maren Kirstine), her husband, Jesper Munkholm, and their two sons, Homo and Herluf, at the farm of Munkholmgaaard near Farre. Gyde painted landscapes of fields, moors, and farms in the vicinity of his home area.

Gyde and Stine had three brothers and one sister in America. Out of their family correspondence grew Gyde-Petersen’s plan to travel to America. He wanted to visit his siblings and experience the landscapes of the New World. On 11 March 1924, he held a large sale of oil paintings and studies at Anton Hansen’s auction house in Copenhagen in order to cover expenses for a long trip.

His sister and all three brothers had married Danish Americans, and all four were comfortably situated in the new world. John was the proprietor of a general store in Randall, Iowa, north of Story City. He was married to a daughter of the town’s founder, and his brother-in-law was a leading businessman in the area. Christen Peder, now Dr. C. P. Peterson, had completed his professional education in America and was a dentist in Mankato, Minnesota. He was married to a sister of John’s wife. Mathilde was married to a banker named Joe S. Peterson in Ringsted, Iowa. The youngest brother, Hans, lived in the vicinity of Reedley near Fresno,
California, where he was a grape and fruit rancher. Each of them had five or six children.

In order to understand the light that Gyde-Petersen’s experience throws on Danish-American life, we need to examine how he saw America, and how America saw him. Gyde-Petersen did not seek out the grand tourist sites of North America like his predecessor, the Danish landscapist, Ferdinand Richardt (1819-95), who had painted Niagara Falls, the Mississippi River, Yosemite, and San Francisco. Instead, Gyde simply painted in the vicinity of the homes of his siblings, choosing his subjects close at hand in the tradition of the Danish Golden Age. He could not avoid sharing his siblings’ vision of America, because he stayed with them, and they were his point of contact with American life. They were all well-integrated into American society and better-off financially than many immigrants of the era. So, he came from a middle-class Denmark into a middle-class America, and his American paintings reflect middle-class values, just as his Danish paintings do.

If landscapes are “culture before they are nature,” then the cultural matrix that Gyde-Petersen imposed upon the landscapes of America was an approach to landscape painting in the Danish tradition, learned in the Royal Academy of Art in Copenhagen and developed through years of interaction with Krøyer, Tuxen, and other artists, first in Skagen, later in Copenhagen and especially, in his later years, among the painters who congregated at Peter Lieps Hus in Dyrehaven and at Munkebjerg Spa Hotel near Vejle. A crucial part of this culture was the artist’s insistence upon immediate confrontation with the living landscape by setting up his easel out-of-doors and painting a composition directly from nature itself.

Minnesota

An interview published in the Mankato Free Press on 13 November 1924 reported that Gyde-Petersen had been painting in the Mankato area for ten days. The interviewer regarded him not so much as a Dane, but rather, as a celebrity artist. “To have been knighted by a king would turn the head of almost any artist,” wrote the reporter, “but not so with this one.” ”The painter whom Mankato is honored to have in its midst is Sir Gyde Pedersen of Denmark, who is here as
a guest of his brother, Dr. C. P. Petersen... He is so enthusiastic over
the scenery in and about Mankato.”23 The journalist was blithely
unaware of the fact that Knights of Dannebrog do not have a title.

Eight of Gyde-Petersen’s landscapes from the Mankato area were
already drying when the interview took place. Eight paintings in ten
days! “There is a wonderful blending of harmonious colorings of
sapphire, amethyst, beryl and topaz,” wrote the reporter. “Some of
the pictures are landscapes almost hid behind a veil of mist, another
seems to tell a story of exquisite day break, where everything seems
perfumed with the first breath of dawn. The meadows, the dales,
hills and half shut-in landscape of tall trees with their branches
mingling, just as nature’s hand has painted them and transferred to
canvas, is a feast, a delight to look upon. Only one canvas contains a
house or two portrayed in setting of old forest trees for a
background.”

Four of these Mankato landscapes give a good impression of how
Gyde-Petersen saw America. They show scenes along the Minnesota
River and two of its tributaries, the LeSueur River and Minneopa
Creek, and they vary in scale according to the size of the water they
depict.

Image 2 [See the photo section]

The valley of the Minnesota River is no Grand Canyon or
Yosemite, but still, the river is larger than any stream in Denmark,
and its bluffs and limestone cliffs seemed awesome compared to the
gentle slopes of Denmark. Gyde-Petersen depicted it on a large
canvas, roughly sixty by forty inches, looking upriver, towards the
setting sun. The composition builds on contrasts: Massive, cubistic
blocks of stone and dense background vegetation on the right
balanced against shining sky and water on the left side, a dynamic,
cloud-filled sky hovering over placid waters.

Along the LeSueur River, Gyde-Petersen composed a smaller
landscape, thirty-two by twenty-four inches, using atmospheric
perspective to lay an autumnal haze over the scene, while reflections
of colorful foliage in the placid river gave the painting vitality. He
left this painting with his brother, Chris, but one of his nieces
wanted a copy, and she got one that follows the original composition very closely, though not exactly. The distant peak now reveals its true nature as a tree-topped bluff, and the palette of autumnal foliage and reflections in the water are brightened. The artist may have painted this second picture more rapidly in the studio, simplifying the palette and treating the central peak more realistically, but the overall character, as well as details like later fall colors and the more realistic rendering of the peak, makes one wonder whether it was finished directly from nature.

Images 3 and 4 [See the photo section ]

The fourth autumn landscape, only seventeen by fifteen-and-a-half inches, shows Minneopa Creek winding through the lower right corner and a wooded slope sweeping down from the upper left. In the distance, a steam engine chugs into view under clear skies. This is a tiny corner of untamed American landscape into which the railroad intrudes as the bearer of change.

Image 5 [See the photo section ]

These Minnesota landscapes capture the changing light of a Midwestern autumn along waters of varying scale. As Gyde-Petersen represented America in these paintings, it was an unspoiled land of grand tranquility, broad waters, and majestic stone formations, but also of wild beauty in the process of giving way to modernization.

Images 6 and 7 [See the photo section ]

In addition to these landscapes, Gyde-Petersen also expressed his reaction to life among his Minnesota relatives in two portraits and a still-life. An oil portrait of Irene Peterson, the artist’s youngest Mankato niece, shows a blonde, blue-eyed subject whose face is typically Danish, but her bobbed hair, confident expression, and colorful blouse make it an American portrait. A charcoal sketch of
Irene’s brother, George, shows a dapper young man looking straight outward and engaging the viewer directly. Both portraits place the children of Danish immigrants in an American middle-class context.

Gyde-Petersen’s final Minnesota painting was a still-life with a California inspiration. It shows the contents of a box of fruit that arrived from the California ranch of the artist’s brother, Hans. Simple geometrical shapes and warm fruit colors glow against an icy bowl and blue tablecloth. A half-peeled lemon adds foreground focus, drawing the viewer into the picture, perhaps to squeeze the lemon or pick up a piece of fruit and taste it. This still-life conveys another aspect of American plenty.

Before he left Mankato, the Art History Club sponsored an exhibit of paintings by “Sir Gyde Petersen” at the Mankato Public Library, including landscapes from the Mankato area and from Denmark. The exuberant tone of the coverage in the Mankato Free Press indicates clearly that this visit of a European artist was seen as a great cultural event in the life of the small Minnesota city.

Image 8 [See the photo section]

Iowa
I do not know when Gyde-Petersen visited his brother and sister in Iowa. Maybe he went there before he came to Minnesota. No Iowa paintings surfaced during this investigation, although a fine 1937 landscape that looks like the artist’s home region in Jutland is owned by a descendant of John Peterson of Randall, Iowa.

California
Three canvases are known from Gyde-Petersen’s visit to his brother, Hans, near Reedley, California: a small oil study, a larger painting in a grove along a brook, and a large painting of a river flowing through the mountains. Other paintings in the possession of Hans Peterson’s heirs were not available for this project.

Image 9 [See the photo section]
The family motored into the Sierras with their Danish uncle, and there, he painted the great trees, but he was also able to find subjects for his canvases quite close to Hans Peterson’s fruit ranch near Reedley. In some cases, he packed up his easel and paint box and rode a bicycle to the site where he painted.25

The small oil study, eighteen by thirteen inches, is of a sunlit glade among the giant sequoias of Grant Grove in Kings Canyon National Park. The painting captures bright American sunshine filtering among towering trees and shows how different the light among California conifers was from the diffused light among the beeches of Denmark.

Image 10 [See the photo section]

Hans Peterson also owned a painting of a grove of massive, old trees along a quiet brook. The painting is very similar to some of Gyde-Petersen’s landscapes from Dyrehaven, and the trees look very much like the beeches of Dyrehaven. It may have been painted in Denmark. However, Hans Peterson’s descendants, who still live in the Fresno area and know it well, think that it may have been painted in California. The date of 1924 is the same as the artist’s other American paintings.

Image 11 [See the photo section]

The third painting from California is a large prospect, fifty by forty inches, of the Kings River. The composition is weighted to the left, like the large Minnesota valley scene. Bright, cloudless sunlight shapes the rocks, cliffs, trees, and mountains with cubist clarity. This painting is quite different from the artist’s Minnesota landscapes in mood, showing another aspect of Gyde-Petersen’s vision of America’s serene, unspoiled, and majestic landscape.

Conclusion
Gyde-Petersen’s paintings conveyed his view of America as a place of majesty, serenity, abundance, and rapid acculturation. His contribution to the Danish-American experience grew out of a
Danish tradition of landscape painting in the *plein air*. Gyde-Petersen’s American pictures reveal that careful study of nature allowed a painter in this tradition to capture the individuality of new landscapes in a fresh, direct manner.

After his American visit, Gyde-Petersen returned home to Denmark and remained in Klampenborg for the rest of his days, making his way into the Deer Park in fair weather and foul, setting up his easel to paint pastoral landscapes in the open air. When he was interviewed by a reporter from *Politiken* on his eightieth birthday, 7 November 1942, he told colorful stories about his Skagen days with Krøyer. The interview took place at his bedside in Gentofte hospital. Two months later, on 9 January 1943, he died in a suburban retirement home.

In the year 2004, Gyde-Petersen’s paintings were featured in two exhibitions, one in Rome and the other in his home area in Denmark. The Roman exhibition, “Pittori Danesi a Roma nell’Ottocento” (Danish Pictures of Rome in the Nineteenth Century) featured Danish artists who worked in the Eternal City. The Danish exhibition, ”En Skagens Maler i Give: Hans Gyde Petersen” (A Skagen Painter in Give: Hans Gyde Petersen) at Give-Egnens Museum contained two of Gyde-Petersen’s portrait busts and fifty-six of his landscapes and other paintings from Italy, Skagen, Dyrehaven, Munkebjerg, the vicinity of Give and Munkholmgaard, and America.

Though it would be an exaggeration to speak of a Gyde-Petersen revival, it is clear that the “last of the Skagen painters” is not completely forgotten in the twenty-first century.


6 All of them are identified in a pamphlet by Knud Voss 1980, Den Brøndum’ske Malerisal på Skagens Museum (Holbæk: Forlaget Hamlet).

7 Lindeballe ministerial record, <www.arkivalieronline.dk> 19 September 2005. He was baptized Hans Gyde Pedersen in Lindeballe church on 26 December 1862. Later, he hyphenated his name and changed the spelling from Pedersen to Petersen.


10 “Gyde Petersen 80 Aar,” Politiken, 7 November 1942.

11 When he was interviewed again in 1902, however, presumably by Jeanjean, he was working on another large sculptural group, “Adam and Eve by Abel’s Grave,” which won the Eibeschütz Award and was purchased by Aarhus museum, see “I Gyde-Petersens Atelier,” [Vort Land], clipping.


15 In March of 1907, Gyde-Petersen had a one-man exhibit in Winkel & Magnussen’s art gallery in Copenhagen that was the subject of a long,


17 Tuxen’s villa at Vodroffsvej 10, Frederiksberg, was built in 1865, a studio was added in 1882, and since 1980, the villa and grounds have been on the official list of protected (*fredet*) historical sites.


19 Interviews in 1897 and 1902 indicate that Gyde-Petersen’s studio, and presumably also his residence, was in an old villa in Læssøegade, on Sortedams Lake, not far from where the family of the painter, Christen Købke (1810-48), had lived earlier in the nineteenth century. *Kraks Blaa Bog* listed Gyde-Petersen’s address as Strandvejen 22-24 in 1910, Vodroffsvej 10 in 1911-18, Dronninggaards Allé in Holte 1919-20 (during his brief, second marriage with Margrethe (Grethe) Carla Gyde Petersen), Smallegade 16 in Frederiksberg 1922, Vitus Berings Allé 14 in Klampenborg 1923-26, Dyrehavevej 40 in Klampenborg 1927, and Dyrehavevej 2 from 1928-43.

20 V. Hedegaard Thomsen, “En berømt Vejle-maler: I hundredaaret for Hans Gyde Petersens død,” *Vejle Amts Folkeblad*, 10 November 1962. Brian Nielsen of Give, who owns a large private collection of paintings by Hans Gyde-Petersen, was involved in putting on the Gyde-Petersen exhibition at Give-Egnens Museum in 2004, and on 19 June 2005, he kindly showed the author his own collection and those of the museum and several other private collectors in the Give area.

21 All the standard Danish reference works say that he visited America in 1925-26, but several of his American paintings are clearly dated 1924, as is the newspaper clipping cited above, so the visit must have been in 1924-25.


25 Carrie Peterson of Fresno identified these locations in two emails to the author dated 19 and 21 October 2005.


The Reception of Danish Science Fiction in the United States

by Kristine J. Anderson

Science fiction is a distinctly American genre. Although scholars have traced its origins back as far as the Latin writer Lucian of Samosata, it was Hugo Gernsback, a publisher of pulp magazines in the United States, who first gave the genre its name in the June 1929 issue of Wonder Stories. Gernsback had been serializing the scientific romances of such writers as Jules Verne and H.G. Wells, emphasizing their treatment of technology and putting them forth as models for other budding writers to imitate. The magazines that Gernsback initiated became very popular, spawning more from other publishers. Groups of aficionados sprang up around them, provided with a forum by Gernsback’s letters columns, where they happily exchanged opinions and found addresses with which to contact one another outside the magazine. In this way Gernsback also gave birth to science fiction fandom, which then went on to produce successful authors from its own ranks to write for all the science fiction magazines then pouring off the presses. Soon American science fiction was translated into other languages and published abroad, becoming a worldwide phenomenon and a significant subgenre in numerous other nations.

The American science fiction tradition has become so hegemonic that it is easy to forget about the myriad writers toiling in their own languages to produce works of great originality but accessible to only a few. Authors living in Denmark and composing in their native Danish are prime examples of this. Danish scholar Niels Dalgaard wrote about them in the third edition of Neil Barron’s Anatomy of Wonder, and, more recently, in the Encyclopedia of Science Fiction. Hans Henrik Løyche also has written a brief survey article found in the online journal Phantazm. Dalgaard’s own Danish reference work, Guide til fantastisk litteratur, published in 2001, identifies approximately 100 Danish authors who have produced at
least one Science Fiction novel, and Løythe claims this number approaches 250.

Reception of a national literature in another linguistic culture requires go-betweens who understand both languages and can represent the foreign literature in the target culture, be that in the form of summaries, critical articles, reviews, or translations. In the United States, this role is largely assumed by bilingual scholars writing articles for reference books, reviews, literary criticism, or translations of foreign works. Dalgaard, when he wrote his article on Danish sf for the foreign language section of *The Anatomy of Wonder*, played this role. In this paper I will focus on works of sf written in Danish and translated into English, with reference to how they were presented by reviewers and literary critics.

To identify these, I went through Dalgaard’s *Guide*, picked out the sf books written in Danish, and checked their titles in *WorldCat* for English translations. To identify translated short stories, I checked the list of Dalgaard’s authors in the fan-published *Locus Index to Science Fiction*. Adding other titles from other sources, I came up with a grand total of 12 novels and an excerpt from another, 3 short stories, and two plays. I do not claim, however, to have the definitive list.

It is not surprising that the translations of Danish sf are few. The lack of a market for any kind of translation has long been lamented by educators and translators. The main audiences for writings identified as Danish are professors and scholars of Scandinavian literature and lay people of Scandinavian descent. In the United States, the major scholarly organ is *Scandinavian Studies*, which regularly publishes articles on Danish writers. *World Literature Today* regularly publishes reviews of contemporary untranslated Danish literature and occasional articles about Danish writers, but because it is trying to cover the whole world, its dedication to things Danish is necessarily slight. None of these publish fiction, although they do review it. A few literary reviews occasionally have a special issue devoted to the literature of a particular country, which may include both articles on writers and their writings. *The Literary Review* and the *Review of Contemporary Fiction* both have had special issues devoted to Danish literature. For lay people of Scandinavian
heritage there is the *Scandinavian Review*, which, among other topics, publishes both articles on writers and their writings. Any *sf* or, more likely, fantasy that may slip into any of the aforementioned venues generally is not labeled as such, however.

As for the *sf* part of the equation, there have been sporadic attempts to educate Anglophone *sf* fans and readers about *sf* in other countries over the years. Several editors from the *sf* community have diligently collected stories from around the world and published them in anthologies. Some of these have included Danish stories. The scholarly journal *Science Fiction Studies*, usually very good at reviewing international *sf* and its criticism, including small countries like Czechoslovakia and Romania, has surprisingly little on Danish *sf*: a scan through the table of contents for the whole run yielded only a review of *Vølve: Scandinavian Views on Science Fiction: Selected Papers From the Scandinavian Science-Fiction Festival of 1997* edited by Cay Dollerup.

These are the major venues in the U.S. for Danish short fiction, poetry, and reviews of novels in English. The *sf* novels themselves have been marketed to a general audience and only occasionally labeled as such, more often in reviews than in the books’ own packaging. In the following sections, I shall discuss the Danish *sf* works that have been translated into English in chronological order, decade by decade.

The identification of pre-twentieth century *sf* is a kind of back-formation. First Gernsback coined the term “science fiction,” replacing earlier terms such as “scientific romance,” “scientific fiction,” or Gernsback’s own “scientifiction” for the same phenomenon. After a substantial body of this literature had come into existence, scholars began to study it and formulate definitions. Brian Stableford, John Clute, and Peter Nicholls devote 3 pages in the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* to a survey of such definitions, concluding “There is really no good reason to expect that a workable definition of *sf* will ever be established” (314). Nevertheless, such definitions are then used to survey earlier literature for works that may fit. Kingsley Amis, in *New Maps of Hell*, offered this one in 1960: “Science fiction is that class of prose narrative treating of a situation that could not arise in the world we know, but which is
hypothesized on the basis of some innovation in science or technology, or pseudo-science or pseudo-technology, whether human or extra-terrestrial in origin” (18). Also frequently cited is Darko Suvin’s more complex later definition of science fiction as “the literature of cognitive estrangement.” A crucial element, according to Suvin, is the “novum” or new thing—something that renders the fictional world strange to the real world. Although fantasy also includes the novum, in sf it must conform to natural law. As Nicholls and Clute point out, academic definitions such as Suvin’s tend to err on the prescriptive side, neglecting the description of what sf habitually does, and “what kinds of things tend to accumulate under the label” (313), like stories about space exploration, time travel, utopian/dystopian societies, etc.

The term “science fiction” did not actually begin to penetrate Denmark until the 1950s with *Planetmagasinet*, a short-lived version of the American magazine *Astounding*. Nevertheless, works of sf were available long before this in Denmark. Jules Verne was widely translated and read throughout Scandinavia, inspiring the deeply conservative, pro-nazi, and highly prolific Danish Niels Meyn, who wrote science fictional adventures for children in the 1920s and 1930s under numerous pseudonyms.

Going even further back, Dalgaard also has identified several satirical and fantastical sf-like works from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including, most notably, Ludwig Holberg’s *Nicolai Klimii iter subteranneum*, published in 1741. This book is widely recognized as the first work of Danish sf, although it is not in Danish, but in Latin, and Holberg can be legitimately claimed by both Norway and Denmark. It was first published in English in 1742, under the title *The Journey of Niels Klim to the World Underground*, translator unknown. In the United States it is largely known in the translation by James Ignatius McNelis who claims, however, to have made only minimal changes to the 1742 English translation. Holberg’s satire about the University of Copenhagen graduate who falls down a hole into a subterranean solar system and proceeds to go from place to place, encountering both utopias and dystopias along the way, was an international bestseller in its time and has attracted the interest of scholars ever since, most recently
Peter Fitting, who is fascinated by the notion of subterranean worlds and has not only written an essay on this aspect of *Niels Klim* for *Utopian Studies*, but included an excerpt from it in a collection he has edited of such works.

The only writer of Danish sf to have been translated into English from the nineteenth century is Hans Christian Andersen, several of whose stories have been identified as sf. In her article, “Science Fiction in the Age of Romanticism: Hans Christian Andersen’s Futuristic Tales,” Marianne Stecher-Hansen uses a definition of science fiction similar to Amis’s: “a genre of fantasy with a basis either in scientific fact or in a plausible kind of pseudo-science” (74). According to her, Andersen was inspired by the work of his friend Hans Christian Ørsted, a natural scientist, to envision the scientific advances of the future. She identifies the following as science fiction: *Den store søslange* [The Great Sea-Serpent], *Bispen paa Børglum og hans Frænde* [The Bishop of Boerglum and his Kinsman], *Om Aartusinder* [In a Thousand Year’s Time], and *Dryaden* [The Wood-Nymph]. In addition, remarks in some of Andersen’s travel essays, like “Poesiens Californien” [“Poetry’s California”], reveal his progressive views. English translations of all these can be found in various collections if one looks hard enough.5

Sven Rossel and Patricia Conroy’s 1980 translation of *Tales and Stories by Hans Christian Andersen* also identifies two of Andersen’s stories as sf. In addition to “In a Thousand Year’s Time,” which features tourism in an airship, they include “The Drop of Water,” a sort of parable comparing the violent world that can be seen in a drop of water under a magnifying glass with human cities like Copenhagen. Andersen’s visionary tales are not at all what we would call sf today, although some of them contain technological innovations. The Danish critics Dalgaard and Løycche both consider these only "sf-like," rather than true sf, finding only “Om Aartusinder” of any interest.

Translations of Holberg and Andersen are the sum of pre-twentieth century Danish sf in English. The practice of applying definitions of sf to twentieth century works is complicated by a prestige factor characterized by the contrast expressed in Danish between *trivialliteratur* and *skönlitteratur*. The equivalent distinction
exists in English as well, between “popular” literature and “serious” literature, or belles lettres. In both Denmark and America, sf has been relegated to the non-serious or “trivial” side of literature, largely due to its origins in the American pulp magazines and its early emphasis on whiz-bang technology. In Det gode gamle fremtid, Dalgaard points out another factor: because American sf was read by fans who also wrote it and freely borrowed each other’s gadgets and concepts, the consequent intertextuality gave rise to a special language he terms “genre-internal.” In other words, a lot of shorthand is used in these novels to refer to things like “ansibles” and “FTL” that would need to be explained to the uninitiated. The other kind of sf, represented by authors such as Thomas Huxley and George Orwell, is “genre-external,” does not take the reader’s specialized knowledge for granted, and spends more time and effort in explaining the strangeness of the futuristic or alien universe. Thus the “ghettoization” of sf within sf fandom, which functioned as a hot house where ideas could germinate and be nurtured, also promoted a kind of exclusive society in which a special language was used, thereby contributing to its marginalization as literature. A consequence of this is that sf often is seen as aimed at a very specialized audience and many writers emphatically reject the label in order to maximize sales of their works and be taken seriously by the literati. Arguments frequently arise between sf authors, who insist they are not writing sf, and sf reviewers, who tend to use more encompassing definitions.

Despite the intention of many Danish sf authors to contribute to what Dalgaard calls the genre-internal type of sf—an international sf that could or does take place in some sector of outer space light years away without any reference whatsoever to Denmark or the Danes—it is not, in fact, this kind of sf that usually gets translated. Glancing over the few twentieth century translations of Danish sf works that exist, we find them dominated by works with literary pretensions. The next author on our chronological list is a prime example of this: the Nobel Prize Winner Johannes V. Jensen, who has possibly never been identified as a sf writer outside of The Anatomy of Wonder. This reference work classifies The Long Journey: Fire and Ice and The Cimbrians, as “a classic prehistoric fantasy” and
compares it with the best works of J. Rosny aîné and William Golding’s *The Inheritors*. Jensen’s use of Darwin’s evolutionary theory to imagine the long development of the human race certainly seems to qualify it for inclusion in the genre.

The next Danish sf book to be translated into English is *The Olympic Hope* by Knud Lundberg, published in 1958 in London by Stanley Paul. Lundberg was a sports journalist; this was his only work of sf. Like many Danish dystopias, it is written about the near future, making it strange to read today because the future it predicted is already past. The first-person narrator is writing from 2004, telling about the 1996 Olympics, the only one in which a Dane has won the 800 meter race. Lundberg describes the various experiments performed by each country to give its own athletes the competitive edge. In America, genetics and hormones are employed under the auspices of various foundations established by rich men. In Germany, drugs are used, although the ideal of German superiority and the pressure on the athlete to commit suicide if he does not come in first also play a role. Russia has only recently ceased the bizarre experiment of amputating the athletes’ arms just above the elbow. Only Erling, the Danish contender, is truly the amateur. This very interesting short book has proved somewhat prescient in regard to the drug scandals currently plaguing the Olympics, although these practices have not advanced as far as Lundberg predicted they might in the area of social approbation. I did not find any reviews listed for this book, however, and it seems only to have been published in England.

The utopian/dystopian theme continues into the 1960s with Hans Jørgen Lembourn’s updating of Voltaire’s *Candide*, titled *Grev Frederik* in Danish but *The Best of All Worlds; or, What Voltaire Never Knew* in Evelyn Ramsden’s translation. Lembourn’s novel has a Candide figure in Count Frederik and a Pangloss figure in his Marxist tutor, Engelson. It follows Voltaire’s plot closely, using it to satirize the socialistic leanings of Lembourn’s own Danish society. This is Lembourn’s only work of sf. He was better known in America for his *Diary of a Lover of Marilyn Monroe*, in which he recounts a brief 40-day affair he claimed to have had with the actress, a book that was reviewed in *The New York Times Book Review*.
and the Washington Post. The Best of All Worlds, however, got no reviews at all.

In 1969, Sven Holm’s Termush appeared in English translation from Faber and Faber in London. Written as a diary by a nameless narrator who has paid in advance for a room in a luxury hotel supplied with a fallout shelter in the event of nuclear war, it addresses an anxiety familiar to the time. It focuses on the social and psychological states of those who paradoxically feel both guilt and a sense of entitlement for having the means and the foresight to make arrangements in advance. This novel, which appeared early in his career, is the only one of Holm’s translated into English, although there are a handful of his short stories in literary magazines, some fantastic like “The Poet,” and “The Wonderful Instrument.” Termush received three reviews in British publications and had good company in its TLS review, where it was discussed along with John Brunner’s Stand on Zanzibar, Philip K. Dick’s Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep, and Robert Silverberg’s Anvil of Time, all three also sf novels, two by Americans.

In 1971, Johannes Allen’s Data for Death, and Anders Bodelsen’s Freezing Down were both published, Allen’s book only in England, however. In Data for Death, actuarial science has advanced so far with the aid of computers that it can actually predict the exact day and hour of a person’s death. Werner Carlson, the protagonist, becomes the unwilling participant in an experiment to determine what effect such knowledge will have on an individual’s behavior. Learning the exact time of his acquaintances’ deaths is enough to push Werner over the edge. Again this novel is somewhat prescient, for the basis of actuarial science’s new accuracy is the collection of all kinds of data on human beings whether they will it or not, an issue of great concern today as well. This novel was never reviewed in the major U.S. reviewing media, however.

On the other hand, Bodelsen’s Freezing Down (or Freezing Point in its British edition) was quite well known to audiences of both mainstream and sf. In Denmark, Bodelsen was one of those modernist authors of skønlitteratur who, according to Dalgaard and Loyche, was severely rebuked for his experiments with the genres of trivialliteratur by the Danish literary establishment. Freezing Down
was his only sf work in English, although several of his detective novels also were translated. The science fictional novum in *Freezing Down* is cryogenics, and at the time of the book's publication, the possibility of one day being able to quick-freeze an ill person until the time a cure was discovered for the disease that would otherwise have killed him was much discussed in the news. Walt Disney was even rumored to have willed this done to his own remains. Bodelsen presents a protagonist named Bruno, stricken with a rare form of cancer, who agrees to this procedure. The novel relates what happens to him and how he feels each time he is resurrected to a society even more obsessed with immortality than it was previously. *Freezing Down* received a number of reviews, both in major media reviewing organs as well as in fan magazines. In general it was well received, most often compared with Orwell’s 1984. *Freezing Down* also has been discussed in a Scandinavian Studies article by Frank Hugus titled “Three Danish Authors Examine the Welfare State: Finn Soeborg, Leif Panduro, and Anders Bodelsen.”

Two anthologies of European sf translated into English also appeared during the 1970s. *View from Another Shore: European Science Fiction* edited by Franz Rottensteiner in 1973 included “The Ring” by Svend Aage Madsen, a sort of alternate worlds fable in which a man is given the choice of which world he will live in. The other European anthology, *The Best From the Rest of the World*, edited by Donald A. Wollheim for DAW books contained “Planet for Sale” by Neil E. Neilsen. Neilsen’s story, which features an international crew on a spaceship, is not overtly “Danish.” Instead, it is an exemplar of what Dalgaard calls genre-internal sf. Yet its tale of the capture of a tiny, yet living and technologically sophisticated planet the crew instantly nicknames “Lilliput” is reminiscent of Andersen at his most pessimistic.

Two more dystopias were translated in the 1980s. Henrik Stangerup’s *The Man Who Wanted to Be Guilty* published by Marion Boyars in both the United Kingdom and the United States deals with a man who kills his wife in a drunken rage and then is confronted by nothing but kindness and understanding everywhere he turns when what he really wants is to be punished and expiate his crime. Like Bodelsen, Stangerup was compared to Orwell in the American
reviews. In contrast, Kate Cruise O'Brien writing for the British publication *The Listener* represents a more European point of view: “If guilt has been abolished in this authoritarian, socialist state, so has poverty, hunger, fear and greed. In Ireland we are not exactly stifled by the social services, and my response to Torben's dilemma is rather like that of a rather poor person contemplating the social problems of a very rich one, a mixture of envy and disbelief.”

Klaus Rifbjerg's *De hellige aber*, translated by Steve Murray as *Witness to the Future* in 1987, uses the device of time travel to make its point. Two boys from 1940, living in the country away from World War II raging somewhere else, go exploring in a cave and end up in a dystopian and unfriendly 1981 on the verge of a nuclear war. This is Rifbjerg's only work of sf and one of only three works out of this author's prolific Danish output that has been translated into English. The review in *Publisher’s Weekly* called the book an “allegory of the chaos and emptiness of modern times that conveys admiration for a simpler past,” a judgment with which Charlotte Schiander Gray concurs in her review for *Scandinavian Studies*, in which she compares this work with the movie “Back to the Future.” In another article, “Klaus Rifbjerg, Patron of the Literary Arts,” Gray speculates that Rifbjerg “fits into the nostalgia for the fifties” (69) and calls *The Holy Apes*/*Witness to the Future* a “kind of science fiction story” (68).

Ulla Ryum’s radio drama “And the Birds are Singing Again,” translated by Per Brask appeared in 1989 in an issue of *DramaContemporary* dedicated to Scandinavia. This play is “set in a future which is probably not too distant” (102) and relates the investigation by a group of young soldiers of the former site of Bakken, the amusement park north of Copenhagen which in the play was “cleaned out ten years ago” (105). The soldiers' dialogue alternates with a tape recording made on the site just before it was destroyed, thus creatively contrasting a moment from the miserable but free present with a moment from a totalitarian but peaceful future.

The major development in the publication of Danish sf in the 1990s was the appearance of *Virtue and Vice in the Middle Time*, James M. Ogier's translation of Svend Åge Madsen's 1976 novel *Tugt og
Utugt i Mellemtiden by Garland in 1992. Madsen belongs to that group of modernist authors whose work Dalgaard has called sf-like and not really sf, since he uses sf tropes for his own complex purposes rather than trying to follow genre conventions. Yet Madsen himself does not disdain the label “science fiction,” and his novel written by a writer from a far future in which novels no longer exist about a man unjustly imprisoned for a crime he did not commit can be seen as taking sf in new and exciting directions. Despite the book’s importance from a literary standpoint, however, this translation seems to have fallen on deaf ears, receiving not a single review—negative or positive—anywhere, although the Danish language original did receive one review in World Literature Today when it was first published. It should also be pointed out here that another of Madsen’s works also saw publication during the nineties: his short story “Mnemosyne’s Children” in James Gunn’s mammoth anthology, The Road to Science Fiction. The subtitle of Volume 6 is “Around the World,” and in it a short section is dedicated to Scandinavia and Finland, containing, however, only Madsen’s story and one from Sweden. The editor, James Gunn, an American scientist and popular sf writer in his own right, singles out three major Danish sf writers for mention: Anders Bodelsen, Svend Åge Madsen, and Inge Eriksen, the third of whom has never been translated into English. Gunn does not indicate any awareness of Ogier’s translation of Tugt og Utugt I Mellemtiden.

The Review of Contemporary Fiction published an anthology of “New Danish Fiction” in its Spring 1995 issue, where a number of the authors Dalgaard lists as having published sf are represented. The excerpt from Ulla Ryum’s novel Jeg er den I tror, translated as I am the one you think, is the only sf work, however. It is set in the year 2038 and, like her earlier play, counterpoints voices from the character’s past with her future.

The position of celebrated Danish author of the nineties was endowed on Peter Høeg. I mention him here only because two of his books, Smilla’s Sense of Snow and The Woman and the Ape, have been listed in Locus, which characterizes The Woman and the Ape “as a literary sf love story.” Høeg is not one of the authors Dalgaard singles out as a sf writer, or even sf-like, although several of his
books clearly belong to the fantasy genre. *Smilla’s Sense of Snow*, his international best seller, falls neatly into another American subgenre, the hardboiled feminist detective novel. Smilla is a scientist of sorts who uses her scholarly knowledge of ice and snow to draw certain conclusions contrary to those that people in authority want her to have. The science fictional novum is not introduced until the very end, where it becomes the solution to the mystery Smilla has been trying to solve throughout the 400-odd pages that preceded this discovery. Høeg often uses science in some original ways, but whether this can truly be called sf is debatable. In *The Woman and the Ape*, the sf novum is an exotic ape who turns the tables on humans, proving himself to be a step up the evolutionary ladder from them. All of Høeg’s books have garnered their share of rave reviews in the U.S. media.9

As we come to a close of the first half of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the slow but steady trickle of Danish sf into English seems to be drying up. Another sf play by Ulla Ryum, *Face of the Hunter*, was published in Per Brask’s translation by a Canadian publisher, Adler and Ringe, in 2000 along with one of her non-sf plays in a volume titled simply *Two*. Other than that, nothing. Part of the problem is the introversion of Americans, who seem only interested in reading works written in the United States and do not support the translation industry. Part of the problem is with the sf genre, whose best-sellers now are to be found in the endless series of Star Wars and Star Trek spin-offs. Fans with more discriminating tastes who try to defend a higher standard have noticed the melding of genres for at least a decade, as recorded in fanzines such as *Locus*. And now even National Public Radio has noticed the penetration of sf themes and motifs into the mainstream in a piece they did recently titled “Sci Fi Themes Invade the Literary World,” in which they once again document literary authors’ reluctance to be identified as sf writers. Still, as we have seen, Danish sf has always fitted itself into the publishing mainstream and only identified as sf incidentally.

Nevertheless, a visit to the Science Fiction Cirklen website reveals quite bit of sf still being produced in Danish, and Dalgaard’s *Guide* lists a wealth of sf writers who have never been translated. The
solution for the true Danish sf aficionado, obviously, is to read them in the original Danish.

1 Syrian Greek writer, c120-180. Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, 739.
2 For a brief account of Gernsback and his contribution to science fiction, see Moskowitz, 225-242.
3 sf is the accepted abbreviation for science fiction among scholars and fans.
4 The third edition of The Anatomy of Wonder is the last to have a foreign language section
5 See examples in the Bibliography below.
6 An exception to this rule is Neil E. Neilsen’s short story “Planet for Sale.”
7 Jensen does not appear in Dalgaard’s Guide til fantastisk litteratur, however.
8 Schiander here uses “The Holy Apes,” a literal translation of Rifbjerg’s “De hellige aber” instead of the title used by Steve Murray for his translation.
9 I have only cited a small sample of these in the Bibliography section.

Bibliography


Ingwersen, Niels. Rev. of *Tugt og utugt I mellemtiden* by Svend Aage


346-47.
Anton Kvist was born in 1878 in a small village in the northern part of Jutland in Denmark. In his home at Valsted there was a large group of ten siblings, and already as a six year old boy Anton had to work as a shepherd boy at the same time as he started to go to school. His father was a bricklayer, and so were a few of his brothers. At the age of sixteen he followed the family tradition and became a bricklayer’s apprentice. In 1898 he came to Copenhagen to work as a bricklayer. Here in 1900 far away from his family and the familiar surroundings he wrote his first poem, dedicated to his mother.

The same year he started his military service at the Kronborg Castle in Elsinore. Apparently he did not like the hard military life. He wrote an article for the Copenhagen newspaper Social-Demokraten – the Social Democrat in which he complained of the abusive treatment of the drafted soldiers. That cost him a three week stay in prison. ¹ After having finished his service the “America Fever” struck him, and he decided to immigrate to America together with his friend and colleague Johannes.

They landed in Boston in 1902 and proceeded to New York. Kvist had a difficult time. Because of an attack of malaria he was not able to work, and he spent many nights on benches in the parks of New York. Luckily he had the address of a Danish friend in Nebraska who was willing to help him and sent him a train ticket to Omaha. He spent the next three years in the Midwest and earned his living by among other things building chimneys for the wooden houses of the pioneers in Nebraska. He also found time for poetry writing, and in 1903 he experienced to see one of his poems on print in Revyen, a Danish weekly newspaper in Chicago. (Jeg savner noget denne vaar) (I am longing for something this spring).

Many years later he said in a newspaper-interview in Denmark – about 20 years ago my first poem appeared in “Revyen” in Chicago. I was
thrilled to see this little modest lyric product on print. I felt like a happy suitor who finally had got a Yes from the mouth of his beloved.

The winter of 1905-1906 he enrolled at Grand View College as a student. Here he met Benedikt Nordentoft and Carl Peter Højbjerg who were professors at the college at that time. Both of them prompted him to continue his writings. After his winter at Grandview Kvist decided to move to Chicago, and here he met his wife to be, Laurette Røgelhede, a Danish-born girl from Aalborg who quite recently had immigrated to the US. Laurette worked as an organist in the Danish St. Stephen’s Church, where the Danish author and pastor, Adam Dan, served as a minister.

In these years the Danish settlement in Chicago on the Northwest Side in the area called Humboldt Park was thriving. The Dania Club built their new headquarters here in 1912; the Danish St. Ansgar’s Lutheran Church was founded here, as were several other Danish churches and organizations. It was a golden age for the Danish Chicago colony, and the North Avenue became known as the “Danish Broadway.”

Enok Mortensen, the Danish-American author, gave the following description of Chicago in one of his novels:

Half of the store signs on North Avenue displayed Danish names. There were more than a dozen Danish bakers; there were banks which changed crowns; there were restaurants which served open-faced sandwiches; there were food stores which sold liverwurst and pork sausage and Danish cheese. And there were saloons where one could curse in his mother tongue and drink himself to a thumping good hangover in Aalborg Aquavit. In the neighborhood were located all the Danes’ meeting places. Seven of the ten Danish churches in town were there. In this area lay also all the club rooms, several secret societies, the lodge “Denmark”, the Scandinavian Social Democrats’ Sick Insurance Society of 1895, the Youth Club, the Gymnastic Club, and the choral societies, in all a good fifty organizations of widely different types. ²

Laurette and Anton had met each other in the Youth Club where Anton lived in his first Chicago year. They soon got married and
stayed in Chicago for the rest of their lives. It was easy for Kvist to find a job as a bricklayer in the rapidly growing city, and from 1917 to 1929 he had his own business in Chicago. In between he worked as an editor of the Danish-American Newspaper *Dansk Tidende*.

About 25 years after his emigration Anton Kvist visited Denmark for the first time. He was invited to give a speech at the 4th of July Celebrations in Rebild about Thomas Jefferson. After his return to America he initiated his tours round the states to visit Danish settlements and Danish societies to tell about Denmark. His travels were encouraged and supported financially by Danish-American Dr. Max Henius, an enterprising businessman of Chicago and an important figure among the Chicago Danes. The purpose of the travels was to collect accounts of pioneers’ lives among the Danes he met.

These accounts were later published in the book *Den Gamle Pioner Fortæller*. The book was a great success, and it has become a classic among the publications about Danish-American emigration history.

The year 1930 brought Anton Kvist back to Denmark again. This time he spent several months there. He visited 65 Danish towns and gave lectures about Danes in America. Anton Kvist became a member of the Danish committee for the planned World’s Fair which was going to take place in Chicago in 1933, and he was a very efficient editor of the Danish World’s Fair Magazine.

Laurette and Anton Kvist had two children, the son Rune and the daughter Elva. Rune Kvist joined the forces during WW2 and died in 1949 of his injuries. Elva Kvist married an Irish-Scottish-American and moved to Wisconsin. Already in 1943 Anton Kvist lost his wife, but before that they could unite in joy over their Grandchildren.

The Danish National Committee in Chicago (an umbrella organization of the Danish societies in Chicago) donated a flight to Denmark to the Danish-American poet on the occasion of his 70th anniversary. This time Anton Kvist again was invited to speak on the 4th of July at Rebild, and this time the Danish-American Society in Aalborg Denmark made him a member of honor. Just before he left Chicago to fly to Denmark, Anton Kvist had been announced
Knight of Dannebrog by the King of Denmark as an appreciation of his great contribution among emigrated Danes.

In 1954 Anton Kvist visited his homeland for the last time to celebrate Christmas with his family in Denmark. In the 1960s The Danish National Committee in Chicago took the initiative to start a money collection among Danes in Chicago in cooperation with the Danish weekly *Den Danske Pioner* with the purpose of erecting a monument in Denmark in memory of Kvist. They succeeded in collecting the necessary money, and in July 1964 a bust was inaugurated in a park in Aalborg. The monument was made by the Danish-American artist Chr. Warthoe, a.o. known for his statue *The Islandic Girl* a copy of which should be at Grandview College. On the pediment of the Kvist monument a verse is engraved by the Danish-American author and librarian Jens Christian Bay in Chicago, who was one of Kvist’s very good friends. Anton Kvist could not himself be present at the unveiling ceremony. The poet was high up in his 80s, his eyesight had deteriorated, and he was almost blind, but members of the Danish Kvist family attended the ceremony, and the Mayor of Aalborg forwarded a telegram with greetings from those present to the Danish Home in Chicago where Kvist at that time lived. The telegram is still kept in the Anton Kvist files at the Home. Kvist had moved to The Danish Home in Chicago in 1959, and he spent the rest of his life there, until he died in 1965. The old poet is buried on Union Ridge Cemetery in Chicago.

**The works of Anton Kvist**
The earliest form of Danish-American literature is found in the letters written by Danish immigrants to family and friends in Denmark. Those letters often describes the immigrant’s loneliness and nostalgia. Some immigrants became writers of poetry as well as fiction using their own experiences as immigrants as themes for poems and short stories of a very diversified quality. Kvist was one of them. He had – as you have heard – never received much education and to make his living he had to work as a bricklayer most of his life. His writings were a spare-time activity, and his poetry is a dominating part of his works.
Was he a good poet??

*The leading Danish-American writer*

*The most significant poet among Danish Americans*

*The Grand Old Man of Danish-American Poetry*

These are terms used about Anton Kvist by contemporary critics and colleagues. Many of Kvist’s poems favor the themes of *homeland, homesickness, longing, sadness*. These poems have a fundamentally lyric tone and are very tradition bound and retrospective. He is often inspired by the history of Denmark, but also by memories and impressions of his childhood. He writes out of love to homeland and nature and he does it with sensitivity and a great sense of beauty.

Also longing and sadness were inspiration for his homeland poems. Maybe Kvist never had developed his gift for poetry, had he stayed in Denmark and not been placed in a situation calling for both longing and sadness. The experience of being a stranger in a new environment awakened love of the abandoned homeland in many hearts. 4 The homeland poems can vary very much. Some describe the generalized feelings of homesickness where the objects of longing are listed such as in this poem:

- Hail ancient Denmark
- Ancestors’ earth
- Heath and Sound
- Groves of beech
- Song of Larks
- Glistening Loam
- Stream of Memories
- Mother and Home

Learning to feel at home in the social setting of a new country is difficult, and homesickness is a prominent feeling that poets are able to express – not least Kvist. The theme of nostalgia pervaded the life of the immigrant in spite of pride in and gratitude for social betterment. One of Kvist’s poems describes the feeling of longing in this way:

- Tæres Du af længsel, følg Din længsels lyst
- Bort fra savn og længsel til en bedre kyst
Glem dog ej paa færden, mens Du stævner frem
Længsel ud I Verden, bliver til længsel hjem.

*If you are torn by longing, then follow the bent of your heart*
*Away from want and hardship to a better land apart.*
*But don’t forget on your journey, wherever you may roam,*
*Longing for far adventure turns into longing for home.*  

Anton Kvist has lived between two countries, not only in practice but also spiritually. He felt it was his special task to keep the contact with Denmark and make other Danish immigrants understand that if you did *not* erase your past, but let your past and present life interplay with each other, you would experience much bigger spiritual values.

But he certainly also writes poems where his deprivation is felt as personal and specific – where he longs to climb once more to the door of the cottage where his cradle stood to kiss and comfort his grey-haired mother.  

Kvist was very conscious of the intolerable conditions of the workers in the town and the tenant farmer in the countryside. He spoke out against oppression of any kind, against injustice and against unfairness with an ardent passion.  

Contemporary critics have compared him with the two Danish poets and writers Johan Skjoldborg and Jeppe Aakjær, and Kvist was a great admirer of both.

*Fyr og Flamme* (*Enthusiasm*) was the title of his first collection of poems to be printed in 1910. This collection holds mostly labor songs with social criticism. Here he writes out of veneration for those who make an endeavor to improve society and out of an empathic compassion for the unhappy and depressed.

Kvist was a member of the Scandinavian Workers in America during his first years in Chicago. The organization published a four-page weekly *Gaa Paa – Folkets Røst* (*Onward – Voice of the People*) which existed from 1903-1925. It was originally a socialist newspaper published by a Norwegian American.  

Anton Kvist wrote his first article for the newspaper in 1911.  

Furthermore he was a member of the Karl Marx club from 1908-1909.
Seven years later came the collection *Fred og Fejde (Peace and Strife)* which mostly holds poems about the homeland and political songs.

From 1910 to 1948 Kvist published five collections of poems, and his writings must have appealed to his audience, as they all sold very well.

Anton Kvist was often asked to write poems for specific celebrations and his homeland poems and his occasional songs and ballads were largely acknowledged by Danish Americans in Chicago. He wrote numerous poems for anniversaries, birthdays and other family occasions.

Why the success among his countrymen in Chicago? Maybe Kvist was inspired by the Danes’ diligent and almost devotional endeavor to maintain their Danishness in this golden age of the Danish Chicago colony where so many clustered together in the same neighborhood -and Kvist was able to express these feelings in verses.

Apart from the verses, the songs and the ballads Kvist also wrote many short stories, articles and tales to a variety of Danish-American newspapers and magazines. During his lifetime numerous writings by Kvist appeared in the Christmas Annuals that were so popular in the first quarter of the 20th century – not only in the Danish America but also in Denmark.

A great deal of his production has been set to music, and many of his songs were up until the sixties presented at the 4th of July celebrations in Denmark. In this specific year of 2005 when we celebrate the 200th anniversary of Hans Christian Andersen, it might be appropriate to mention that Anton Kvist in 1955 wrote a poem about Hans Christian Andersen. He actually wrote it sitting by the Hans Christian Andersen statue in Lincoln Park in Chicago. Kvist sent the poem to be published in a newspaper in Denmark. Unfortunately the poem was delayed; it did not arrive until after April 2 which was the birth date of Andersen. The newspaper returned the poem to Kvist, and it never was published.

**Conclusion**

Will the works of Anton Kvist appeal to modern readers?? Maybe and maybe not. Probably not. Of course there will be an interest in his writings from scholars dealing with the studies of ethnic
literature that expresses the double consciousness which is inherent in the immigrant situation.

For an individual, emigration and immigration mean changing homeland, natural and cultural environment, and language. Conflicts arise between preservation and integration or even assimilation. Immigrants regardless of time and place have a common experience of relating to two cultures simultaneously, and therefore they often live their lives with a double perspective. 11

It might be considered to compare and contrast the works of Danish-American emigrant poets and writers with the works of the emigrant writers among the recent immigrants to Europe. In spite of different historical frames of reference, there will be obvious similarities in the presentation. 12

1 Mogens Knudsen, “Anton Kvist: Danish Editor, Poet and Bricklayer in a Norwegian Milieu” paper presented for the Chicago History Committee of NAHA. 1985. NAHA archive material, P1243, Northfield, Minnesota.
2 Enok Mortensen, Saaledes blev jeg hjemløs. Holbæk, Denmark, 1943. p. 197.
3 Published in Denmark by Berlingske Forlag
6 Skårdaal, op.cit.,p. 268
8 Emanuel Nielsen in Den Danske Pioneer, October 22, 1953.
10 Anton Kvist, “Til de stridslystne” in Gaa Paa, September 30, 1911.
12 Ibid.

The Danish Emigration Archives in Aalborg holds the Anton Kvist collection with manuscripts, writings and a huge amount of correspondence. The Royal Library in Copenhagen holds a collection of 15 manuscripts and miscellaneous writings, some of which have been published in Danish-American magazines.
Enok Mortensen and the Immigrant Experience: A View from the Lower Class

by Rudolf Jensen

To begin with, I would like to cite several short quotations from Enok Mortensen’s fiction to show his primary themes as well as his writing style.

...for jer Emigranter er der aldrig noget, der er saa godt som det var i Danmark...altid skal I sammenligne...¹ [for you immigrants there is never anything as good as it was in Denmark...you always have to compare.]

...herover gik man med en underlig Uro i Sindet altid...bare et hundrede Dollars mere, eller Tusinde...eller Millionen...² [over here in America you are always restless...only a hundred dollars more, or a thousand, or a million.]

...I det gamle Land var alt ordnet og sikret...Sønnerne gik in Fændrenes Spor, men saa kom de som regel heller aldrig længere...her i amerika var Chancen, den gyldne Chance, der altid lokkede og ansporede, altid hidsede ens Sind, altid pressede paa i feberhed Spænding...³ [in the old country everything was orderly and secure...the sons followed in their fathers’ footsteps; but as a rule, they never moved up...here in America was opportunity—the golden chance that always tempted and excited—always fired you up...always pushed you to a feverish frenzy.]

...det var ikke blot muligheden af at skæppe nogle Penge sammen, der bandt ham til det adoptered Land, det var Retten til, at mandigt og ene, at staa paa egne Ben...⁴ [it wasn’t only the possibility of pulling enough money together that tied him to his adopted country; it was the right to stand alone and single-handedly succeed.]
...Jeg er Emigrant, det siger i Grunden det hele, deraf kommer ens splittede Sind, ens forbandede Rodløshed, ingen Steder er man Hjemme, ingen Steder i Ro...5 [I am an immigrant and that says it all. Because of this I have a divided heart. It’s my damned rootlessness; nowhere am at home; nowhere do I find peace.]

Enok Mortensen was born in 1902 in Copenhagen and emigrated to the United States in 1919. He was formally educated at Iowa State Teachers’ College, Cedar Falls, Iowa; Grand View Seminary, Des Moines, Iowa; the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota; and the Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, California. Mortensen taught at the following folk schools: Nysted, Nebraska; Danebod, Minnesota; and Atterdag, California. He married Nanna Rodholm in 1928.

Mortensen was ordained a minister in the American Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1929, after which he served congregations in Chicago (1929-1936), Salinas, California (1936-1943), Tyler, Minnesota (1943-1961), and Des Moines, Iowa (1961-1967). He was a U.S. State Department Lecturer in Denmark (1952) and a Fulbright Lecturer at Askov Folk High School in Denmark (1956-1957, 1967-1968). In 1954 he was awarded “The Knight of Dannebrog Cross” by King Frederik IX. Enok Mortensen retired to Solvang, California and died there in 1985.

Mortensen’s fictional publications include three prose works: Mit Folk (1932), Saaledes Blev Jeg Hjemløs (1934), Jeg Vælger et Land (1936), and one play, “Livets Lykke” (1933). His historical works are Danish-American Life and Letters: A Bibliography (1945), The Danish-American Emigrant (1950), Stories from Our Church (1952), Seventy-Five Years at Danebod (1961), The Danish-American Lutheran Church (1967), and Schools for Life: The Grundtvigian Folk Schools in America (1977).

With the exception of one story, “Hjalthrupgaard med Plus,” the protagonists in the nine short stories in Mit Folk are Danish immigrants who definitely are poor—often they are beggars or hoboes. All are first-generation Danish immigrants who came to America with the hope of quickly becoming rich and then expecting to return to their home district in the old country as a “local boy who made good.” Six stories are set in Chicago and three occur in rural Midwestern areas. The characters represent the following backgrounds and occupations: a “jydsk” farmhand, a cabinetmaker from Køge, a painter’s apprentice
from Kalundborg, a plasterer’s apprentice, a tailor, and a “husmand” (smallholder), the last three from northern Sjælland.

“En knusende Pæn Begravelse” is the ironic tale of a down-and-out unemployed painter, whose wife dies from malnutrition and overwork in a “nigger [sic] Laundry.” Yet, the husband, left with two young daughters, perceives a fleeting sense of elation at the funeral. “Firkloveren” portrays the cross-country hoboing of a Chicago factory worker dying from work-induced tuberculosis; “Farvel, Holbæk” depicts the death and tawdry funeral of an indigent alcoholic; and “Sne” pictures the physically marginal life of two Chicago beggars at Christmas time, one of whom dies. The stories “Retired” and “Bachelor’s Jul” describe the economically tenuous existence of Midwestern farmers during a period of wildly fluctuating crop prices and rampant land speculation.

In general, the nine stories in Mit Folk show the Danish immigrant between the years 1880 and 1920 to be a virtually powerless victim of socioeconomic forces in a land where material gain was the foremost goal and individual health and well-being were generally disregarded. Even the few organizations of Danish immigrants, i.e., the Church and The Danish Brotherhood, are represented as little more than institutions supportive of a mindless upperclass sociability.

The epic quest of Niels Nord, the protagonist in Saaledes Blev Jeg Hjemløs and Jeg Vælger et Land, is noticeably more optimistic both in its description of successful upward mobility for the immigrant and its portrayal of a successful search for identity among the first-generation immigrants. To those familiar with Danish literature, the title Saaledes Blev Jeg Hjemløs is known as a classic statement of Danish alienation made by Mikkel Thørgersen in Johs. V. Jensen’s Kongens Fald:

Jeg mistede mit Livs sande Foraar in Danmark af Længslen efter Lykke i det Fremmede; og derurde fandt jeg ingen Lykke, for jeg led overalt af Hjemve’ efter mit eget Land. Men da Alverden tillokkede mig forgæves, da var endelig ogsaa Danmark døet ud af mit Hjærte; saaledes blev jeg Hjemløs.6 [I missed my life’s true spring in Denmark in my search for happiness in other countries; and out there I found no happiness because I suffered from homesickness for my own country. Yet, as the world futilely seduced me, then Denmark also died in my heart. Thus, I became homeless.]
This theme is very clearly dominant as it is presented by Mortensen in the context of the Danish immigrant in America.

Niels Nord is distinctly different from other characters in Enok Mortensen’s fiction. He has completed his carpentry apprenticeship in Denmark and also is the only son of a comparatively wealthy landowning family in Sønderjylland. Initially, he looks upon his emigration from Denmark to Chicago as but a temporary stay of a couple of years, whereupon he will return to take over the family farm. Of further advantage to Niels is the fact that he can live with his mother’s brother who has made his fortune in city garbage collection. This uncle also finds Niels his first job on the assembly line of a window-frame manufacturer. Although Niels at first sees himself as a temporary visitor in Chicago, his experiences during his first year cause him to suspect on occasion that he is establishing strong ties to America.

Hvad er det ved Amerika, som griber of binder en med usynlige Baand?...Niels vidste nok, at det var mere en Jaget efter Dollar’en...snarere var det Eventyrerens ubændige Livlyst of Optimisme, der endnu laa i Luften of lagde et forklaret Skær over det Materialle og Prosaisk...endnu var der mennesker, der,...troede paa Amerika som det forjættede Land.7 [What was it about America that seizes and binds you with invisible ties? Niels surely knew it was more than the quest for money...rather it was the irrepressible love for life and the optimism that cast a lucid glow over the gross materialism and greed. Yet, there were still people who believed in America as the Promised Land.]

During his first two years in Chicago, almost all of Niels’s experiences and personal ties are with working-class people. It is also the working classes with whom his sympathies lie. In fact, he becomes an urban proletarian, subject to the cyclical patterns of employment and unemployment typical of this period in American history. Some of his friends are (1) an unemployable alcoholic Pole, Tom Litmisky (married to a Danish woman), who finally hangs himself rather than be an embarrassment to his daughter; (2) the daughter, Marie, who becomes a prostitute as the only viable means of supporting her siblings; (3) a carpenter, Marløv, who works only occasionally because of an insatiable drive to write the great “Danish-American novel”; (4) a
painter, Andersen, who dies of lead poisoning from exposure to leaded paint; (5) an alcoholic drifter, Johs. Olesen, who becomes a “born again” Christian; and (6) a carpenter, Felsen, a frustrated sculptor, who, because he is a socialist agitator, is unemployable.

The final chapters of Saaledes Blev Jeg Hjemløs are the love story of Niels and Thora Jensen. She is a school teacher born in America, and he is now the foreman of a “Jewish-owned” furniture factory. The novel ends with the outbreak of World War I (June 28, 1914) and Niels’s return to Denmark. He farms for about one year until he finally decides that he is neither a Dane nor a farmer.

Jeg Vælger et Land describes the married life of Niels Nord from around 1918 to 1929—the beginning of the Great Depression. The novel is primarily Niels’s quest to discover what it means to be a Danish-American. And while the mood is optimistic—reflecting Niels’s personal and economic success—significant themes include an intense and blind American chauvinism following the War; the language conflict for the second-generation Dane; the individual, economic, and social stress of private entrepreneurship; a continuing identity problem for the first generation; economic exploitation and speculation; political graft; an absence of class solidarity among the American proletariat; a correlative lack of class consciousness among all socio-economic strata; and finally, a pervasive sense of optimism among all immigrant groups for a better life—especially for their children—in a pluralistic but egalitarian country.

The gradual process of Americanization for Niels is represented by the following events: English language and home-building classes in night school, ownership of his own construction company, buying a car, becoming an American citizen, driving across the country with his family, building his own “mansion,” speculating in the stock market, voting for Hoover in 1928, and finally suffering economic ruin in the Wall Street crash of 1929. Yet, he retains his optimistic faith in America and philosophically concludes that although one can fall farther in this country, it is also easier to raise yourself both economically and socially.

The dominant theme in the fiction of Enok Mortensen is very clearly the identity problem faced by the first-generation immigrant in the United States. The majority of his characters and those for whom he shows the most understanding and sympathy are the lower classes.
The wealthy immigrants, except for Niels Nord, are shown to live a superficial existence in the ceaseless quest to make even more money. They spend their free time eating and drinking to excess either at home or at the Danish Brotherhood, i.e., in the life of conspicuous consumption.

The Danish Church is represented primarily as a social gathering place for one hour on Sunday, and even its potential role as a link to Denmark is undermined when it switches to English services in 1947.

The lower socioeconomic class—both employed and unemployed—might well be considered to be the collective protagonist in Mortensen’s writing. These people may lead a physically marginal existence, but they are also more conscious of the nature of the conflicts inherent in their situation as first-generation immigrants. Family life, especially as it involves their children, is the most important value in their lives. In conclusion, I think that Enok Mortensen’s fiction presents a composite picture of the nature of life in the United States for the first-generation immigrants—their struggles, their defeats, and their successes.

1 Enok Mortensen, *Saaledes Blev Jeg Hjemløs*, 1934, p. 211.
5 Ibid, p. 54.
The Veil between Fact and Fiction in the Novels of Kristian Østergaard

by John Mark Nielsen

The bicentennial of the births of Hans Christian Andersen and August de Bournonville and the 150th anniversary of the death of Søren Kierkegaard provide opportunity to reflect and celebrate how artists and philosophers interpret and express the complex network of values and ideas inherent in any culture. Great artists and thinkers are particularly successful in producing work that transcends a specific culture and achieves universality recognizable beyond the boundaries of that culture into which they were born. Certainly the works produced by Andersen, Bournonville, and Kierkegaard are not just Danish; their work engages and invites audiences to consider what it means to be human.

2005 also marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of the Danish-American teacher, pastor, novelist and poet, Kristian Østergaard. Though his creative work falls far short of Andersen’s, Bournonville’s, and Kierkegaard’s, scholars of Scandinavian-American fiction, among them Georg Strandvold and Dorothy Burton Skårdal, recognize him as an important voice for those who emigrated from Denmark in the 19th and early 20th centuries. In poetry and fiction he explored what it meant to be an immigrant and the problems of attempting to preserve an independent Danish identity in the face of powerful forces urging assimilation into American culture.

The immigrant experience and the process of assimilation that inevitably occurs are rich with narrative possibilities. Ole Rolvaag’s *Giants in the Earth*, a minor American literary classic in the eyes of many plows the fertile ground of the psychological turmoil caused by uprooting and resettling in a new land. Per Hansa and Beret are characters that come alive in their struggles to adapt to the new environment into which they have come. The yoking of two human types, one who is optimistic and a doer, the other reserved, cautious
and an observer, capture human responses to change that transcend the time, the place, and the people of the narrative.

In approaching the problems of immigration, assimilation, and identity, Kristian Østergaard reflects cultural, religious and social debates taking place in Denmark during the last half of the 19th century. At the same time, his experiences among Danish immigrants in the American Midwest tempered his youthful notion that Danes could retain an independent Danish identity or *folkelighed*, a concept essential to his understanding of what it meant to be human. Particularly in his five novels written between 1891 and 1927, Østergaard explores the evolving awareness that while immigration to the United States often provides opportunities for material success, the experience exacts a high price from the immigrant.

The first, *The Pioneers*, published in Copenhagen in 1891, describes the crude yet hopeful beginnings of a Danish community somewhere in central Nebraska on the hills overlooking the Platte River. *Anton Arden and the Miller’s Daughter Johanne* appeared in both Denmark and the United States in 1897 and was his most popular novel, eventually going to a third printing of 25,000 in 1911. It is the melodramatic story of a young immigrant who leaves his native Denmark to wander from New York to the Colorado Rockies, ultimately settling down in western Iowa after being reunited with his childhood sweetheart. Østergaard’s third novel, *A Merchants House*, published in 1909, is the first of a trilogy that loosely traces members of the Krogh family. They have come to Omaha from Korsør because the father, a businessman, had been forced into bankruptcy due to a weakness for gambling. Their hope is that in the burgeoning business climate of Omaha, they will earn enough to pay off the debts in Denmark and redeem the family name. Torn between the various factions of the saloon and fraternal society crowd and the church congregation, the family struggles to retain its dignity and identity. Subsequent novels, *The Valley Dwellers* published in 1913 and *Danby Folk* in 1927, follow the children of this family as they move westward, settling north of Grand Island, Nebraska, in what are today Howard and Hamilton Counties. These two novels describe the founding of Danby or “Danetown,” a town
modeled on the many Danish communities in the Midwest with which Østergaard was familiar: Dannebrog, Nysted, and Kronborg in Nebraska, Viborg in South Dakota, Ringsted in Iowa, and Tyler in southwestern Minnesota, the community to which Østergaard retired in 1916 and where he wrote his last novel. In the communal setting of Danby, Danes could maintain their Danish identity. By the end of the last novel, however, it is clear that this hope is but a dream. A few individuals will appreciate and preserve the cultural heritage of their parents and grandparents, but for most, the forces of assimilation are too powerful.

While the characters and events in Rolvaag’s *Giants in the Earth* transcend the novel and even to some extent their Norwegian identity to become prototypes of the immigrant pioneer spirit and consequently accessible to a wider audience, Østergaard’s characters and their central plots do not. There are several reasons for this. First his narratives are thinly veiled references to historical events in the Danish-American community and are constructed around events with which Østergaard was familiar. Second, his characters are for the most part two-dimensional and drawn from Østergaard’s understanding of *folkelighed*, that a person’s identity is defined by his or her language, culture and faith, and hence to assimilate is to lose identity; consequently successful characters rediscover their “Danishness.” Finally, Østergaard believed that literature should provide clear a moral lesson.

Several examples will suffice to suggest the thin veil between fact and fiction in Østergaard’s novels and their two-dimensional and moralistic quality. The first comes from his most popular novel, *Anton Arden and the*
Miller’s Daughter Johanne. The climax of the plot occurs when Anton is involved in a shoot-out in Elk Horn Grove, just south of present day Elk Horn. The reason for the shoot-out is that two men have robbed a bank in Polk City (or Des Moines), committed murder and stolen horses. Arriving east of present Kimballton, they had stolen a horse from a Danish farmer. This together with the fact that the men have committed murder prompts the Danes in the area to form a posse and attempt to capture the culprits. They surround the outlaws in Elk Horn Grove where Anton discovers they are none other than the two men Amos Coffin and Bill Fox who had swindled him in New York and stolen from him in Colorado. In the ensuing shootout one of the outlaws is killed and Anton Arden is gravely wounded. As he lies on what the rest of the Danes fear is his deathbed and because they don’t trust Yankee justice, they hatch a plan to break into the Shelby County Jail in Harlan and hang the surviving outlaw from the bridge over the Nishnabotna River. This they do. Anton does not die. Rather his childhood sweetheart whom he had left in Denmark and whom he thought had married the son of the local landowner appears. Her presence works miracles, he survives, they marry, and live happily ever after in Elk Horn, Iowa!
The historical events on which this narrative is based occurred on July 14, 1883, almost a year after Østergaard had left Iowa for Michigan, although he continued to own property in Elk Horn. The story was reported in the July 19th issue of the Shelby County Republican and documents a shootout in Elk Horn Grove, following a robbery and the murder of Postmaster C.L. Clinger of Polk City on the night of July 11th. The two who had allegedly committed the crime were surrounded and one was killed in the ensuing shootout. Mortally wounded was J.W. Maddy a prominent businessman from nearby Marne. Following Maddy’s death several hours later and despite the presence of sheriffs from Polk and Cass Counties who were taking the surviving outlaw into Harlan, the crowd became infuriated, overcame the sheriffs and hanged the surviving man from a bridge over Indian Creek between present day Elk Horn and Harlan.

A Merchant’s House, Østergaard’s third novel, is in many ways his most interesting novel for its treatment of ideas. This novel too is grounded in historical fact. Set in the early 1870s in Omaha, a major tension exists between Danish immigrants who gravitate towards the Danish Society, characterized by dancing, drinking and card playing, and those who are committed to founding a Danish Lutheran congregation in the growing city. All, however, read the local Danish newspaper, The Pioneer. Den Danske Pioneer the oldest and widest circulated Danish American newspaper was founded in Omaha in 1872 by Mark Hansen, a veteran of both the Dano-Prussian War and the American Civil War. He was later in 1882 to found the Danish Brotherhood in America, which for many years was headquartered in Omaha. The editor of the paper in Østergaard’s novel is Mads Harboe (note the same initials), and the positions he outlines in major speeches in the novel echo positions taken by Sophus Neble who purchased the paper in 1887.

The main plot of A Merchant’s House involves the only daughter of the Krogh family, Alma, who is a schoolteacher. She experiences this tension between the religious immigrants, one being her brother, Marius, who has pietistic tendencies, and the Danish Society where the Danish heritage is celebrated in singing and dancing. She is also drawn to a young reporter at The Pioneer by the name of
Grønager. The awakening sexual feelings and the temptations that he inspires makes Alma the most interesting and realistic of Østergaard’s characters. At the end of the novel, she and the rest of the Danish community learn that there has been embezzling at the newspaper, and when Grønager disappears, it is clear that he is guilty of the crime. Devastated by this news and dissatisfied with teaching the many different immigrant children in the public schools she decides to go west and settle in a Danish community where she can hear the Danish language spoken and be surrounded by that culture that is familiar to her.

The character and story of Grønager is based on the story of Hans Møller, a printer from Holstebro who worked at the offices of *Den Danske Pioneer* during its first year of existence and who evidently was a real “ladies man.” Even before coming to the United States, he had run afoul of the law, stealing 1,100 *rigsdalers* and then disappearing from Denmark. In the winter of 1873, there was a devastating storm flood on the west coast of Denmark. The Omaha newspaper launched a fund drive from its subscribers to assist victims of the storm flood. Møller pocketed these funds as well, and then disappeared. Østergaard drew upon events such as this to suggest that the city could be a place of temptation and that it was safer to surround oneself with others of like identity and heritage in rural communities.6

The final example comes from Østergaard’s fourth novel, *The Valley Dwellers*. Set in central Nebraska, in this novel Alma Krogh comes to the Danish community she has been looking for and there finds a husband worthy of her. His name, August Fjelde; he is the son of a wealthy landowner in Denmark who finds Danish society too restrictive, too safe for his creative instincts. Furthermore, he wants to realize a life that he, himself, makes, rather than being the recipient of privilege due to his birth. His restless and enterprising nature leads him to convince the railroad to locate its line through the Danish community, thereby enhancing the town’s economic foundation. His crowning achievement, however, is that, faced with a problem of finding a crop that will do well during the dry years on the plains, he disappears for a time, only to return with alfalfa. Here is a man worthy of Alma Krogh.

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August Fjelde’s journey and discovery are based on the life of Niels Ebbesen Hansen. Born in Denmark in 1866, he was brought to Des Moines as a child and later attended Iowa State College in Ames, receiving his degree in horticulture in 1887. After several years of working at commercial nurseries in Iowa, he was appointed to the faculty at Iowa State. Later, he moved to South Dakota State College in Brookings since that position also allowed him to work at the Agricultural Experimental Station there. In 1894, he embarked on the first of what were to be eight extended journeys, to Europe, Russia, China, and Mongolia. Throughout his travels, he was particularly interested in identifying and bringing back to the Northern Great Plains drought-resistant and winter hardy forage plants. While traveling in Turkestan and Siberia in 1897, he discovered a drought-resistant alfalfa that thrived on the Northern Great Plains. Accounts of his journeys and discoveries were popularized by William Paul Kirkwood in *The Romantic Story of a Scientist*, published in 1908. Kirkwood described Hansen “as a thinker, as a man who made quick decisions and took prompt action, a man who is self-reliant and courageous, and as a man who is philanthropic, reverent and patient… (he) seeks to discover the underlying philosophy of things and is not afraid to break with tradition when they do not fit the facts.” There is no better description of August Fjelde than this, suggesting that Hansen was the model for Østergaard’s character.

Østergaard’s technique of drawing upon historical events and characters has its genesis in his earliest major publications. On his return to Denmark in 1885, he was desperately in need of money. The hope of becoming a folk high school teacher proved challenging due to the fact that the conservative government then in power did not favor funding these institutions as they were seen as hotbeds of liberalism. Consequently, it was difficult to find a position, and when he finally did, founding the folk high school at Støvring in northern Jutland, there were so few students that he had to seek additional means of support. This came in the form of contracts to write biographies. Between 1885 and 1887, Østergaard completed biographies of Tecumseh (the great Native American chief), Oliver Cromwell, and George Washington. Since he had acquired English,
Østergaard’s method of research was to locate a good English biography and then loosely paraphrase the work in Danish. The title page of his Washington biography indicates that it was drawn from Edward Everett’s *Life of Washington*; his 1885 biography of Tecumseh only credits the fact that it was taken from Benjamin Drake’s 1855 biography in a footnote.

In his novels, Østergaard did not feel the same need to credit sources. A critical scene in *A Merchant’s House* occurs when the Danish community gathers for a Fourth of July picnic on the bluffs overlooking the Missouri River just north of Omaha. Hans Krogh, the oldest son who will gain success by marrying a banker’s daughter, is invited to tell a story. This he does, recounting stories he has heard of Chief Blackbird of the Omahas. Aside from several details that suggest Østergaard’s knowledge of Viking burial practices, a Romantic projection of cultural rituals, the story Hans tells is a direct translation from Washington Irving’s work *Astoria*. There are no footnotes crediting this source.⁹

Østergaard does convey elements of the immigrant experience in his novels, but his instinct to chronicle and to draw upon his experience to profess a belief system inhibits readers from participating in and discovering the deeper codes of cultural representation, transformation, and acculturation which is the mark of lasting artistic expression. Though his novels are important in documenting the Danish-American historical experience and can be appreciated as markers in the larger narrative of cultural exchange and assimilation occurring in the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, they do not achieve the universality that transcends the limited boundaries of the small immigrant group whose experiences they record.

**Kristian Østergaard (1855-1931)**
(Session handout prepared by John Mark Nielsen)

1855 (February 5) Born in Volstrup, North Jutland to Peder and Maren Østergaard.
1873 Attends Askov Folk High School.
1875-76 Teaches school in Ristinge, Langeland.
1876-77 Studies at Skovgaard High School north of Copenhagen.
1877  Completes his compulsory military service at Viborg in the north of Jutland.

1877-78  Returns to study at Askov Folk High School.

1878  Joins in founding Elk Horn Folk High School (Along with Olav Kirkeberg, the school’s founder, Østergaard is the other teacher. Askov Folk High School and the Danish-American Mission underwrite Østergaard’s position.)

1881  Marries Maren Kristine Svendsen, a young immigrant from Møen who was one of his students. This inspires much gossip in Elk Horn. They had six children.

1882  Participates in the founding of Ashland Folk High School in Ashland, Michigan.

1885  Returns to Denmark and founds Støvring Folk High School south of Ålborg.

1882  Participates in the founding of Ashland Folk High School in Ashland, Michigan.

1885  Returns to Denmark and founds Støvring Folk High School south of Ålborg.

1891  (March 13) Maren Kristine, Østergaard’s first wife dies.

1892  (April 12) Along with his six children and Kristine Hansen, a young woman and friend of his first wife, Østergaard sets out for the United States and the seminary at West Denmark, Wisconsin. In late August, he is assigned to the parish at Kronberg, near Marquette in Hamilton, County, Nebraska, and he marries Kristine Hansen.

1897  Serves parish in Ringsted, Iowa.

1906  Serves parish in Hetland, South Dakota.

1913  Serves parish in Sheffield, Illinois.

1916  Retires to Tyler, Minnesota.

1931  (October 9) Dies and is buried in Tyler, Minnesota.

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- *Ariman’s Tjener*, 1930 (dramatic poem)

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- *Vesterlide*, 1889
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*Nybyggere* (The Pioneers), 1891
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*Et Købmandshus* (A Merchant’s House), 1909
*Dalboerne,* (The Valley Dwellers), 1914
*Danby Folk,* 1927

Life Philosophy

*Højere Menneskeliv,* 1924

1 © 2005 by John Mark Nielsen, Executive Director, The Danish Immigrant Museum, Elk Horn, Iowa 51531 and Professor of English, Dana College, Blair, Nebraska 68008. All rights reserved. This paper was prepared for presentation to the international conference, “Danish Culture, Past and Present: The Last Two Hundred Years” in Des Moines, Iowa, on 13-15 October 2005.

2 In 1926 Kristian Østergaard wrote a forty-seven page, handwritten, autobiographical sketch entitled *Gøde Minder* (Pleasant Recollections). The original manuscript is part of the Østergaard collection at the Danish Immigrant Archive-Grand View College in Des Moines, Iowa (File #: DIA-GVC O#2 [9B-1]). For a more comprehensive study in Danish including commentary on Østergaard’s fiction and poetry, see Evald Kristensen, *Kristian Østergaard* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1955), 7-87. An overview in English of Kristian Østergaard’s life can be found in the critical introduction to John Mark Nielsen, *Kristian Østergaard’s A Merchant’s House: A Novel of Danish Immigrant Life in Early Omaha, Nebraska* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Dissertation Information Service, Order # 9004698), 1-114.


4 Kristian Østergaard’s concept of *folkelighed* was shaped by his exposure to the thought of Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783-1872) while attending Askov Folk High School in Denmark; Grundtvig’s thought informed Østergaard’s teaching at the folk high schools where he taught in Elk Horn, Iowa, Ashland, Michigan, and Støvring, Denmark. For extensive discussions of Grundtvig’s ideas concerning religion and education, see Enok Mortensen, *The Danish Lutheran Church in America* (Philadelphia: Board of Publications, Lutheran Church in America, 1967) and *Schools for Life: A Danish-American Experiment in Adult Education* (Askov, Minnesota: The Danish American Heritage Society, 1977).

5 The events surrounding the shoot-out in Elk Horn Grove and the newspaper reports documenting the story can be found in Edward S. White, *Past and Present in


The story that Hans tells about Blackbird and the Omahas is a close translation of various passages from Washington Irving’s Astoria. Østergaard chose, however, to leave out passages detailing how Blackbird came to power by using arsenic to poison his opponents since this did not fit the picture of the “noble savage” that Hans was describing in *A Merchant’s House*. For a carefully annotated edition of Irving’s Astoria, citing the likely sources Irving used in writing his work, see Washington Irving, *Astoria or Anecdotes of an Enterprise Beyond the Rocky Mountains*, ed. Edgeley W. Todd (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 161-165. According to Alice C. Fletcher and Frances La Flesche in *The Omaha Tribe*, Volume 1 (Washington, 1911; rpt. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 82-83, the account of Blackbird’s burial is an apocryphal story, recorded first in the journals of Lewis and Clark. For their account, see Elliott Coues, ed. *History of the Expedition under the Command of Lewis and Clark*, Volume 1 (New York, 1893; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1965), 71-72. While Østergaard makes use of Irving’s description of the burial, he embellishes it with the provisioning of the dead chief for his journey to the “happy hunting grounds” and a ceremony where Blackbird’s warriors place their painted handprints on the dead horse on which the chief is buried. These are details not found in other accounts.
Carl Hansen and Hans Christian Andersen demonstrate a number of similar characteristics as authors. Both wrote their stories with their respective readership in mind. Both authors strove to establish character and setting with as few words as possible. Both knew their audiences well and made use of scenes, places, and experiences that their readers recognized. Each man was also driven to become an author, albeit for slightly different reasons. Hans Christian
Andersen was, according to Sven H. Rossel, “single-minded in pursuit of art and recognition,”1 while Carl Hansen relates that “some five years before he emigrated to the United States he [had] caught the disease ‘digteritis,’ the nagging urge to write and be published.”2 They both demonstrate as well an understanding of the folkloric concepts of “quest” and “place.” The goal of this paper will be to show how they represent these concepts by comparing three short stories by Carl Hansen with three of Andersen's well-known tales.

“Bowlegged Joe,” by Carl Hansen, tells of a mill worker who has worked at a flour mill for fourteen years in a big city on the Mississippi River. A strike occurs and Joe is forced to leave his job and to stand on the picket line. Replacement workers are brought in, and in the resulting melee between the strikers and police, Bowlegged Joe is injured. By the time he recovers, he has lost his job loading flour sacks onto railroad cars to someone else. He falls into a deep depression and refuses to spend any money on anything, especially Christmas presents. He becomes so depressed that his wife goes and talks with the pastor, who in turn talks to a wealthy man whom he hopes to persuade to talk to the owners of the mill about either giving Bowlegged Joe his old job back, as a favor at Christmastime, or giving Joe a new job at the mill. The wealthy man agrees to the pastor’s request, Bowlegged Joe gets his job back, and is so happy that he promises to buy a Christmas tree, go to church on Christmas day, and go back to work the next day, when his old job starts up again. The story concludes as follows:

And Pastor Smith talked in his sermon about the joy of Christmas, which that person understood best, who had fought against sorrow, and Joe nodded. He understood it completely. And up in the rich millionaire’s house there was a Christmas tree with expensive Christmas gifts, diamonds and gold, but the old rich man sat in his chair and became lost in thought. “I brought Christmas joy to someone,” he thought. “All that he asked for was to be allowed to work.” And the old man folded his hands and prayed to the Lord of Christmas for permission to bring comfort and joy to all of
them, he found on his way, who would honestly work, while it was day.

In this story the sense of place can be seen through Bowlegged Joe’s attachment to his job and his workplace. He is so devoted to his simple task of loading flour sacks onto railroad cars that he imagines all of the various places around the world that have need of flour, to which the very sacks he was loading may very well be heading. He says to himself, “There must be more and more people coming into the world, for there is need for more flour, as the years go by.” The strike is devastating to him, not just because of his apparent lack of transferable job skills, but because, as Carl Hansen describes it, “the flour sacks and railroad cars had gradually grown together with him as a part of his life.” Bowlegged Joe succumbs to “an inexpressible hopelessness” and feels “so endlessly alone, so poor and abandoned.” He is unable to pursue or undertake his own quest to overcome this unexpected obstacle that life has thrown. It is his wife who takes up his quest on his behalf by going to visit their pastor. Although their three children all have jobs and are providing enough money to live on, there will be no Christmas celebration, but more importantly to her is her husband’s well being. She tells the pastor, “…[I]t is like this. The only thing there is in the world for Johannes is the mill, and he sits and broods over that and wanders about the floor at night because of that. It has been so sad, so sad, the whole time, Pastor Smith, and now—as–soon becomes Christmas—I am at my wit’s end. Unless you can help!” The pastor agrees and becomes Bowlegged Joe’s second helper, a type of magical or spiritual intermediary who appeals to the sense of good will toward all in the rich man to convince him not only to help Bowlegged Joe, but all people like Bowlegged Joe. Thus, through the quests of two helpers, Joe achieves his own unspoken quest of getting his job and his sense of place back, while at the same time a well-to-do man is prompted to undertake a quest of his own, which will presumably change and broaden his own sense of place for the betterment of himself and others.

It is difficult to find an exact literary match within Hans Christian Andersen’s body of work, but one tale that seemed to relate particularly well to this story is, “What the Whole Family Said.” This
tale begins by describing how excited young Maria is on her birthday and how great birthdays are, so much so that she says to her godfather, “It is lovely to live,” and her godfather replies that “life [is] the best of all fairy tales.” Her older brothers also conclude that life is pleasant, because of all of the great adventures awaiting them. Godfather replies, “Yes, life is the best fairy tale, for one is in it oneself.” A neighbor family lives above Maria and her brothers. They have older children who have just begun to make their way in the world and apparently have met with initial success, for they exclaim, “Advance! Tear down all the old walls so that one can get a view of the world! The world is good, Godfather is right, life is the best of all fairy tales!” Their parents, of course, know better, saying to themselves, “Everything won’t work out just as they want it to,” yet even they express similar optimism by adding, “but it is true that life is the most amazing fairy tale of all.” Godfather lives above this family, “a little nearer to heaven, as one might say.” His room is adorned with memories and memorabilia from all of his lifelong and worldwide travels. He has many books, one of which is the Bible, which he reads often. The tale concludes:

“Everything that has happened or will happen is written about in that book,” claimed Godfather. “So much in one book, that is worth thinking about! Everything that is worth praying for is laid down in the Lord’s Prayer, that is a pearl of comfort which God has given us. It is put inside the cradle, near the child’s heart. Don’t lose it when you grow up, for then you will never be alone on the changing roads that you will walk. It will glow inside you and you will never be lost.”

Godfather looked so happy as he spoke, and his eyes sparkled. Once long ago those eyes had shed their tears. “That was good too,” he said. “It was during my days of trial; and then I wept out the tears that were within me. The older you get the clearer you see that God is with you—both in adversity and when fortune shines upon you—and that life is the very best fairy tale, and it is He who has given it to us for all eternity.” “It is lovely to live,” said little Maria. To this everyone agreed: her brothers, her parents, the grownup boys, and most of all Godfather, who said: “Life is the best fairy tale
of all.” Godfather’s positive sentiment resembles Bowlegged Joe’s reaction to getting his old job back: “You can begin the day after tomorrow. The wages are naturally as before. Here is your old number.” Joe clutched his brass plate. It was as though he met a well-known and dear old friend. “Thank you! Thank you very much!” he said and turned to walk out. Then the proud, gray-bearded man nodded to him and said: “Merry Christmas!” He had to go to the warehouse and swing a flour sack in his arms just once. And he carried it as warmly and softly as though it were a baby.

The joy and gratitude expressed by Bowlegged Joe here resembles Godfather’s joy, the difference being that Godfather has known all his life that his journey has been that of a fairy tale, written, orchestrated, and narrated by God, whereas Joe needed some help from his wife and his pastor to be reminded of the true meaning of Christmas. For Godfather, his sense of quest and place in God have been the same throughout his life; for Bowlegged Joe, it took the temporary loss of his sense of place, and a helpful quest on his behalf by others, to be reminded that for him, as for all of us, God needs and wants to be an integral part of the sense of quest and place that he and we experience in life.

Carl Hansen takes a different approach in his short story, “Mother-Tongue.” In this story a man named Henrik Krog, who “was a graduate in law with the best grades and the owner of a beautiful little fortune,” decides to emigrate to America when the young woman with whom he is in love decides to marry a first lieutenant instead. Henrik Krog quickly makes his fortune, first as a land speculator and then as a banker and soon builds himself a small mansion and hires a housekeeper who “was even more silent and moody and sullen and taciturn than he was.” Unfortunately, “as Henrik Krog’s wealth grew, so did his sullenness and willfulness.” For example, a family near him with lots of children who made lots of noise are foreclosed upon and forced out of their home. Sometime later a man wants to rent this house but Henrik refuses, agreeing only after his housekeeper intercedes on behalf of the man, who is her relative. Henrik agrees because his housekeeper threatens to leave him if he doesn’t, but the man and his daughter are told not to have a dog and not to have any screaming children in
the house. But they do have a piano, which interrupts Henrik one
day and just as he is about to evict them, he recognizes the melody,
sung by the daughter, as that of an old, familiar song from Denmark.
The song makes him homesick for Denmark, while the daughter
reminds him of his former sweetheart who married the first
lieutenant. He is smitten with the daughter and becomes jealous
when the clerk at his bank starts dating the daughter. He fires the
clerk, but realizes that he has fired his most competent employee,
and while listening to the song, “Mother-Tongue,” he looks at
himself in the mirror and realizes that he is no longer young, that he
has grown older and gray and hard, and gives up his hope of the
daughter taking the place of his sweetheart from his past, promotes
the clerk he has fired to Head Teller, and decides to move back to
Denmark, but not before asking the young couple, the new Head
Teller and the daughter, to sing the song as a duet. The verses are:

Mother’s name has a blessed sound,
  Where ever the waves are flowing,
  Mother’s voice is a joy profound
    On every age bestowing
  Sweet in peace and sweet in strife,
  Sweet in death and sweet in life,
  Sweet in reputation.

In this story the sense of quest for Henrik Krog initially was to
marry the wholesaler’s daughter, but when she marries the first
lieutenant, he changes his quest to go to America and become
wealthy. He is successful in this quest, but loses his compassion for
others in the process. His sense of place becomes bound up in his
quest to become wealthy, which causes him to lose touch with the
outside world, until he is reminded of his past and his lost youth
and his lost humanity, by his housekeeper and her brother and
niece. Instead of losing himself, he saves himself by correcting his
wrongdoing, giving up all of his possessions, and returning to his
spiritual home, his newly found quest and sense of place prompted
by the memory of his sweetheart as personified by the daughter,
along with the memory of a well-known song from his youth.
Again, there is not an exact one-to-one correlation between this story and a tale by Hans Christian Andersen. But certainly there are elements that remind one of parts of tales. For example, the end of Andersen’s tale, “Something,” could have been in Henrik Krog’s (and Carl Hansen’s) mind. At the end of this tale a critic and a poor old woman are at the gates of Heaven. They both have died and have arrived at the gates together, “as is the custom.” The critic has just asked the poor old woman how she came to be here. She set fire to her house to get the attention of people who were having a party out on the frozen lake who were unaware of an approaching storm. Just as she finishes her story, the gates open.

Just at that moment the gates of heaven opened and an angel came out to lead the poor old woman inside. A straw from her bed, the one she had set fire to in order to save the people out on the ice, fell from her skirt. It was immediately changed into the purest gold; and the golden straw grew and became the prettiest piece of art work. “Look at what the poor woman brought,” said the angel to the critic. “What have you brought? I know you never have accomplished anything, you have never even made a brick. If you only could go back and fetch one, and then bring it as a gift. Oh, I know it would be badly made, but if you had done the best you could, it would at least be something. But you can’t return and I can’t do anything for you!” The poor old woman, Margrethe from the little house on the dike, pleaded for him. “His brother gave me all his broken bricks so that I could build my house. Those broken pieces meant an awful lot to me then. Can’t they count now as one whole brick, for his sake? It would be a merciful act and this is the home of mercy.”

“Your brother, the one whom you deemed the poorest among you,” said the angel, “he whose honest work you considered low, gives you now a beggar’s coin. You shall not be turned away, you shall be allowed to stand here outside and think about your life down on earth. But enter you cannot before you have done one good deed—at least something!”
“I could have expressed that better,” thought the critic, but he did not say it out loud and that was already something. Here we have the doing of a good deed, as in “Bowlegged Joe,” unselfishly for the sake of someone else, juxtaposed against a man who spent his life criticizing what others did. It seems that he has no chance to make it into heaven, yet in an extraordinary move, the poor old woman intercedes on his behalf because of what his brother once did for her. He is given a second chance, provided he does at least one good deed. Perhaps Henrik Krog is reminded of this, realizes how selfish his life has been, and decides to save his life by promoting the young man he had fired, getting out of the way of the young man’s desire to marry the daughter, providing his housekeeper with a generous pension, and selling all of his unneeded possessions.

In this story, the poor woman’s sense of place was her modest home on the dike by the lake, with her quest being that of saving the partygoers on the frozen lake who were threatened by an approaching storm, going so far in this quest that she sacrifices her home and her life for the sake of others. The critic, on the other hand, does not have a sense of place in his life, the quest of which has been to find fault with others. He is presented at the end, however, with a quest to do at least one good deed, but the reader is left in doubt as to whether he will undertake, let alone succeed, in this request, despite the faint glimmer of hope that he might, in fact, mend his ways.

This contrast between selfishness and selflessness and the potential and actual consequences of both, and what can happen to the unprivileged who are selfless and blameless versus the privileged who are selfish, can clearly be seen in a third story by Carl Hansen, which lends itself most readily to comparison with one of Hans Christian Andersen’s best known tales, The Little Match Girl.

Andersen’s tale, The Little Match Girl, is of sufficient brevity and poignancy that I will relate it here in its entirety. It was dreadfully cold, snowing, and turning dark. It was the last evening of the year, New Year’s Eve. In this cold and darkness walked a little girl. She was poor and both her head and feet were bare. Oh, she had had a pair of
slippers when she left home; but they had been too big for her—in truth, they had belonged to her mother. The little one had lost them while hurrying across the street to get out of the way of two carriages that had been driving along awfully fast. One of the slippers she could not find, and the other had been snatched by a boy who, laughingly, shouted that he would use it as a cradle when he had a child of his own.

Now the little girl walked barefoot through the streets. Her feet were swollen and red from the cold. She was carrying a little bundle of matches in her had and had more in her apron pocket. No one had bought any all day, or given her so much as a penny. Cold and hungry, she walked through the city; cowed life, the poor thing!

The snowflakes fell on her long yellow hair that curled so prettily at the neck, but to such things she never gave a thought. From every window of every house, light shone, and one could smell the geese roasting all the way out in the street. It was, after all, New Year's Eve; and this she did think about.

In a little recess between two houses she sat down and tucked her feet under her. But now she was even colder. She didn't dare go home because she had sold no matches and was frightened that her father might beat her. Besides, her home was almost as cold as the street. She lived in an attic, right under a tile roof. The wind whistled through it, even though they had tried to close the worst of the holes and cracks with straw and old rags.

Her little hands were numb from cold. If only she dared strike a match, she could warm them a little. She took one and struck it against the brick wall of the house; it lighted! Oh, how warm it was and how clearly it burned like a little candle. She held her hand around it. How strange! It seemed that the match had become a big iron stove with brass fixtures. Oh, how blessedly warm it was! She stretched out her legs so that they, too, could get warm, but
at that moment the stove disappeared and she was sitting alone with a burned-out match in her hand.

She struck another match. Its flame illuminated the wall and it became as transparent as a veil: she could see right into the house. She saw the table spread with a damask cloth and set with the finest porcelain. In the center, on a dish, lay a roasted goose stuffed with apples and prunes! But what was even more wonderful: the goose—although a fork and knife were stuck in its back—had jumped off the table and was waddling toward her. The little girl stretched out her arms and the match burned out. Her hands touched the cold, solid walls of the house.

She lit a third match. The flame flared up and she was sitting under a Christmas tree that was much larger and more beautifully decorated than the one she had seen through the glass doors at the rich merchant’s on Christmas Eve. Thousands of candles burned on its green branches, and colorful pictures like the ones you can see in store windows were looking down at her. She smiled up at them; but then the match burned itself out, and the candles of the Christmas tree became the stars in the sky. A shooting star drew a line of fire across the dark heavens.

“Someone is dying,” whispered the little girl. Her grandmother, who was dead, was the only person who had ever loved or been kind to the child; and she had told her that a shooting star was the soul of a human being traveling to God.

She struck yet another match against the wall and in its blaze she saw her grandmother, so sweet, so blessedly kind. “Grandmother!” shouted the little one. “Take me with you! I know you will disappear when the match goes out, just like the warm stove, the goose, and the beautiful Christmas tree.” Quickly, she lighted all the matches she had left in her hand, so that her grandmother could not leave. And the matches burned with such a clear, strong flame that the night became as light as day. Never had her grandmother looked so beautiful. She lifted the little girl in her arms and

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flew with her to where there is neither cold nor hunger nor fear: up to God.

In the cold morning the little girl was found. Her cheeks were red and she was smiling. She was dead. She had frozen to death on the last evening of the old year. The sun on New Year’s Day shone down on the little corpse; her lap was filled with burned-out matches.

“She had been trying to warm herself,” people said. And no one knew the sweet visions she had seen, or in what glory she and her grandmother had passed into a truly new year.


It had been two years since Hans Nielsen had arrived in America. His daughter and his son-in-law had written to him and sent him travel money. They thought it was shameful that in his last years he should wear himself out as a simple farmhand on the manor at Alsted. He must come to them: they had enough “worldly goods” so that over here he would want for nothing. Hans Nielsen thought the letter was a bit formal, but all the same, he believed it was best to accept the offer. In recent years, he had been badly plagued with rheumatism and asthma, and the hard physical labor on the manor farm had become difficult for him. Certainly too, his little room was lonely. So he sold his few belongings and set out on the long, difficult journey.

Father and daughter had not seen each other for sixteen years, and they were both glad to be reunited. The son-in-law had prospered and had a large farm in one of the Midwestern states. Hans Nielsen was given his own room, furnished with a rocking chair and carpet on the floor. When he looked through his window, he could survey most of his son-in-law’s holdings.

Out in the field grazed well-fed steers and sleek milk cows, pigs too numerous to count jostled against one another in
the pigpen behind the barn, and out in the farmyard, small chickens scurried among the long-legged, gobbling turkeys.

Hans Nielsen ought to be content. All his life he had enjoyed caring for animals though he had never been able to own so much as a pig; he had not lived on his son-in-law's farm for more than fourteen days before he knew every pig and every calf, knew when the hens were set and knew in the evenings when to fetch the ducklings home from the creek. He watered and fed; he gave suckling calves milk, the pigs corn and chickens grain; he planted and watered and became so occupied that he almost forgot both his asthma and his rheumatism.

But he was not yet content—not completely. First there were the children. He had eagerly anticipated talking with the three boys, taking them on his lap and playing with them. And three healthy, handsome, bright boys they were. But there was something about them which Hans Nielsen did not understand and could not fathom. There was something restless and jaunty about them, and when they played out in the yard, they shouted and screamed as though they had knives at their throats.

And besides, they spoke that foreign language which the old man could not understand. They could of course speak Danish; they spoke it for the most part when talking with their mother. But they spoke it as if forced to do so, and given the chance, they switched over into English.

The son-in-law was a thin, slight man, with a long, reddish beard and light matted hair. He was between thirty and forty years old, but he looked as though he were closer to sixty. When he walked, he slouched forward, moving his feet in an awkward clumsy, stumbling manner. He did not talk much and used many foreign words and expressions when he did at last say something. His daughter, who in Denmark had been a beautiful, slender girl was now stooped, gray in the face, and already had deep wrinkles around her eyes and mouth. To help on this large farm, a job which in Hans Nielsen's opinion required at least four
farmhands and two girls, the son-in-law had only a hired boy of about seventeen. Because of this, much was neglected and much went to waste.

The work never ended. There was not time to take a little nap after the noon meal, and the household chores dragged on until bedtime. And then there was the fact that his daughter has changed her faith. What the sect was that she and her husband belonged to Hans Nielsen never found out, but it ended in “-ists”, and it filled their lives with a peculiar morose surliness which could be seen in all their conduct and speech. For example, they never said, “We have a good harvest this year,” but rather, “The good Lord in Heaven has granted us a bountiful harvest.” If the husband were to go to town with a load of hogs, he would say, “On Thursday, the good Lord willing, I’ll take the hogs to town.” And the prayers he drawled at meals were lengthened by his sighing and moaning over the sinful world. When neighbors were discussed, a strict line was drawn between “the saved” and “the others.

This kind of Christianity offended Hans Nielsen. That one called himself “saved” and numbered himself among “the little flock” while at the same time frittering away his best years in a dour, sad state, neglecting his children’s upbringing and development, was beyond his understanding. He had always had a lively nature. The harvest festival on the manor at Alsted and the other holidays had each been a source of renewal in his life. He was disappointed then when fall came and no harvest festival was held at the son-in-law’s.

But it was worse when Christmas came. No baking or butchering, no excitement of anticipation, no festive spirit filled the air. And when he expressed his surprise, his daughter pointed out to him that the Lord’s birthday had been thought up by the pastors back in the old country. “The shepherds were out in the fields when the angel came,” she said, “and we all know they wouldn’t be out there in winter.” “There’s perhaps some truth in that,” replied old
Hans Nielsen, “but after all, there’s something beautiful about such a holiday.” “But there’s nothing about Christmas in God’s Word!” snapped the daughter, and she continued as though she read from a book, “For six days you shall do your work and on the seventh day you shall rest. It’s God’s word and commandment, and we know no other holidays in our house.”

Hans Nielsen carried the dispute no further. And when Christmas Eve came, he locked himself in his room, hummed a Psalm and went to bed. But he had to confess to himself that he was not satisfied with the conditions here in the new world. And as time passed, he began to yearn for the old ways.

He longed to dig ditches and to mow rye and to afterwards rest his weary bones with an after-dinner nap, or to enjoy the fellowship of the harvest festival. He longed for the thick bread and bacon drippings between meals and to afterwards enjoy the harvest festival dinner, the rice pudding, the rib roast with sweet cracklings, and the æbleskiver.

“There’s no pleasure taken in good living over here,” he thought. “Here, all one gets is meat and potatoes every day.” He loathed the long prayers, the constant lamenting over sin. He longed for the vaulted church at home and the old, white-haired, gentle country pastor.

His yearnings left him weak and faint. He lost pleasure in caring for the cattle and pigs, and he sat up in his room and looked out over the square, wide, flat fields. When Christmas again drew near, he was tired of the monotonous view out over the open prairie. He lay in bed and remembered. He remembered his childhood home with the little cast-iron stove and the rough, uneven earthen floor. His parents were poor people, and he had to go out and glean the fields, but when holidays came there was always money for roast pork and perhaps a few æbleskiver. It still thrilled him to think of the festive air that permeated the room at those mealtimes. And tears came to his eyes when he remembered how on those evenings, he and his brothers
and sisters had each in turn gone up to their father and mother and shook hands, thanking them for the evening meal. That memory carried him further.

He had earned his living on the manor as foreman of the farmhands. It was he who had gone in front with the scythe during the harvest time, and it was he who had lifted the heaviest sacks. But it was also he who led the singing when the toast was proposed to the master and mistress, and it was he who danced the first dance with the housemaid, Sofie, who later became his bride. Sofie! Yes, she had been a faithful wife. The times became hard; he had had to go off to war where he was wounded and only slowly recovered. On his return to the manor, he was only a hired hand, and they had difficulty making ends meet. But when the harvest festival evening came, Sofie spread a shining, white cloth on the table. And each Christmas Eve, after their daughter, their only child, was old enough, there had been a green bough in the room with some few candles on it and some hard candy wrapped in colored paper. Oh, how the little one beamed!

Yes, the years passed. Sofie was borne up to the church cemetery, and the daughter emigrated to America. But in his loneliness, he did not forget that holiest of evenings. A little of the Christmas spirit found its way into his poor room. His thoughts came to a standstill like a watch one has forgotten to wind. He sighed and looked out over the large barn. Yes, here was prosperity and plenty at each meal, but nothing to celebrate! The day before Christmas Eve, Hans Nielsen became very ill, and the Danish doctor was fetched. There was nothing he could do. “His life slips away,” he said gravely. “Nature will take her course.” And the warm-hearted doctor took the old man’s hand and looked him in the eyes. “Farvel, og glædelig jul!” [Goodbye and Happy Christmas] he said. Hans Nielsen smiled. It was the first time he had heard the familiar Danish Christmas greeting in this strange land. The whole next day he lay with a bright smile on his lips. “I can hear music,” he said.
And at twilight, when that hallowed and high evening began that is so full of the smiles and laughter of children, when the Lord of heaven and earth sent out the Christmas Angel to sound the bells and bring joy to people’s voices, old Hans Nielsen rose up and spread his arms as though he embraced one of his dear ones. He then lay back and closed his tired eyes. The darkness settled over the land. In town and in field, in forest and on prairie the lights were lit in people’s homes. And the Christmas Angel flew home to his Lord and Master. All were ready for the celebration—and Old Hans Nielsen was not forgotten.

One can clearly see the connection between Hans Nielsen’s remembering the happier times of his past, and the Little Match Girl remembering the happier time of her past with her grandmother. Both include a warm, cast-iron stove, a savory, traditional Danish holiday meal, and the overall festive atmosphere of Christmas, till, in the end, both Hans Nielsen and the Little Match Girl are both carried up to Heaven on Christmas Eve. It could be said here as well that both the Little Match Girl and Old Hans Nielsen have a quest. The Little Match Girl has more than one quest. She has the quest to sell matches to try and appease her abusive father and bring home what little money she can. She has a quest to try and keep warm, which, at face value, she tries to do by burning her matches, and she has a quest to find a happier place in life, which she does through the burning of her matches, which remind her of the happiness of her past. Old Hans Nielsen, it could be said, had a quest to reunite with his daughter and to see his grandchildren for the first time and to make himself useful on the farm and to forget his asthma and rheumatism, but the challenges of immigrant farm life combined with an oppressive religious atmosphere on the farm lead him to adopt a similar quest to that of the Little Match Girl, a quest for happiness, peace, and warmth through remembering the past.

In all three of the stories discussed, both Hans Christian Andersen and Carl Hansen do a remarkable job of creating a realistic setting to which their readers could instantly relate. With sparse language, the folkloric elements of quest and place, and elements of everyday experience common to the people of nineteenth century Denmark
and late nineteenth and early twentieth century Danish American immigrants, both authors created tales and stories that spoke of the harshness of life and the triumph of the human spirit, thereby leaving behind a literary legacy that is as vivid today as it was then.

**Bibliography**


4 Ibid.

5 Ibid. 1000.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.


9 Haugaard 544.

10 Haugaard 306-308.

Neither politics nor traditional history has ever spelled much interest to me. But then I read in Hilde Petra Brungot's dissertation¹ on Dorthea Dahl (1881-1958)² of this Lutheran Norwegian-American immigrant writer being an outspoken Republican.

Dorthea Dahl was born in Norway, but moved with her parents to South Dakota at the age of two. Her health was frail, so in 1903 the family moved to Idaho, where Dahl lived most of her life, working as a bookkeeper. The inspiration of her writing, often printed in church publications and written in the evening hours, with the lamp at home burning late at her tidy desk no doubt, comes from personal experiences within her family and the mostly immigrant local community.

The stories of her Fra hverdagslivet [From Everyday Life] and Returning Home as well as her only novel Byen paa berget [The City on the Hill] tell of a place where times were simpler. Once reading Kjærlighetsbudet [The Commandment of Love], on the challenges one may face trying to write a book or The Choir in Hancock, on how a town is not the same without a choir, a quiet happiness sets in.

From her stories, I could identify with Dorthea Dahl's everyday life and later read Brungot stating that:

Defining the "true America" as the land of opportunity and individual enterprise, Dorthea at the same time revealed little understanding for the problems of industrialization. Her political opinion remained consistent despite the rapid development that transformed America into an urbanized society during her lifetime.³

I am not sure this side of Dorthea Dahl can be dismissed so easily. Mankind has a way of moving too swiftly at times, and science often creates more problems than it solves. Dahl, engaged in congregations and ladies' aid societies, never found the time to come around and have writing be her primary line of work, at times to the
point of defiance; she may well simply have opposed the tremendous speed at which the industrial explosion of the melting pot moved along, and land did indeed become sparse in little time.

Ole Edvart Rølvaag (1876–1931) and Sophus Keith Winther (1893-1983) were only a generation apart. But while there was plenty of land in the former’s Giants in the Earth, the latter’s Take All to Nebraska is about rent farmers on the wide-open and at times merciless prairie of the southeastern part of this state. The men were explorers, while the women longed for the old country. And perhaps, with the later migration to the cities on the rise, their children were less conservative, at least more modern, than their immigrant parents; Winther certainly was.

Spirits were not high. The nation was in the depths of its worst depression following the stock market crash in 1929. Norwegian-American Dorthea Dahl on the other hand did not like the Democratic Roosevelt. He and Truman, she thought, "put an end to the true America." Dahl, to name two things, was for prohibition and condemned the lust for money, the corruption of new world materialism.

The Norwegian Rølvaag wrote in his Concerning Our Heritage from 1922:

But the strongest principle hastening the "transition" is the law of inertia itself. It is our spiritual laziness and apathy, the spiritual poverty amongst us. We are too intellectually lazy to remain a bilingual people. We don't even want to. It is so much easier - superficially at least - to have only one language to deal with.

The Danish Enok Mortensen (1902-1984) likewise had a character say the following in his Jeg vælger et Land [I Choose a Country] from 1936: "Good sandwiches and a cold mug in the shade of a beech tree-that's their dream of Denmark!" Was this, so soon after the turbulent mass emigration, once again already true for the Danish men? And what about the women that stood by their husbands? I looked for a female Danish-American author and found only one. Her name is Christiane Petersen; she lived about when Dahl did, and she wrote Adelheid og Bazaren i Beatrice [Adelheid and the Bazaar in Beatrice], which was published in 1912 in Blair, Nebraska. The
seventy pages of her book intertwine several storylines. One is about Pastor Holmstrup and his wife, whose congregation shares a church with nearby residents of a small town in the American Midwest. There is a large Catholic church and others as well, but no Danish church. Another storyline includes Mrs. Dahl (not Dorthea!), who is a Danish descendant of a German nobility family and moved to Beatrice sixteen years ago, later to become the mother of four daughters while earning a living being a private music teacher and providing lodging in her house for renters.

A third storyline presents Mathias Lund, the factory owner, who emigrated to America at an early age and had worked hard all his life. He has lost his relatives, but keeps on collecting money. Yet another storyline features Mrs. Dahl's youngest daughter, Adelheid, who is awkward, cannot sew and is a loner who likes to read and write, which she does well.

With these four storylines in place, the table is set and the plot takes off as the sudden excitement of a group of Danish youngsters focuses on the need for a Danish church. One is here reminded of Mrs. Holmstrup's early anticipation of good times to come and senses a happy ending in sight when the Danish community gathers around the practical affairs of the bazaar, whose purpose is to raise money for the church and of which Mrs. Dahl is left in charge.

Meanwhile, Adelheid is busy elsewhere. She overcomes the fearful side of the image of God that her mother has been hammering into her throughout her childhood. The conversion is an essential pietistic ingredient. Religiously better suited within, she moves ahead and provides a contribution that makes a difference to the church and to the pastor. She is no longer the ugly duckling, to the congregation or to her family.

I shall reveal no more than Adelheid and the Bazaar in Beatrice redeems a promise of this happy ending. In this tradition perhaps, or for non-festive religious reasons, Christiane Petersen steered clear of politics and did not use the Danish Constitution Day although Danish flags are present, unlike Dorthea Dahl in her The Seventeenth of May, first published in 1921 and whose "language question", and not just that, divides the congregation. Dahl, however, cleverly and with a good sense of humor finds the way to a happy ending.
Christiane Petersen was a Holy Dane, a pietist, an Inner Missioner, which Jacquelynn Sorensen points out in the last chapter on "The Effect of Grundtvigian and Inner Mission Philosophies on Danish-American Literature" of her dissertation entitled *Kierkegaard, Grundtvig, and Danish Literature on The Plains*.\(^{10}\) The focus is not the community, but personal rescue.

I would like to mention another female author, whose background is pietism too and whose last name is even Sorensen. Her first name is Virginia (1912-1991)\(^{11}\), she grew up in the Idaho that Dorthea Dahl knew well after moving there from the Midwest, and while the Danish descent is apparent in some of her books, this Mormon novelist is not viewed as an immigrant writer, in part because she was just born when Christiane Petersen's story was published. In short, I know of no female immigrant author among the Happy Danes of long ago, although women are certainly present in Grundtvigian immigrant novels.

It is at times like this when I wish I could step inside a time machine and by the mere push of a button go back to Beatrice, wander the hills and get a feel for the everyday life in the Danish corner of this town. In Jean and Edith Matteson's *Blossoms of the Prairie*,\(^{12}\) Beatrice is mentioned in conjunction with a few Danish priests, none of whom I know anything about. Looking into the history of Beatrice, I see that it was founded in 1857 by a group of pioneers from St. Louis, traveling by a steamer up the Missouri River to the new territory of Nebraska.

There had to be more to it. And maybe there is. In Thorvald Hansen's *Danish Immigrant Archival Listing*,\(^{13}\) there are two titles listed by a Christiane Petersen.\(^{14}\) The first we know. The second is *Frelst ved en Salme* [*Saved by Way of a Hymn*],\(^{15}\) a book of 96 pages published by *Danskeren* in 1895.\(^{16}\) *Danskeren*\(^{17}\) [*The Dane*], a weekly newspaper edited from a Christian point of view, began its publication in 1892 and moved from Neenah, Wisconsin to Blair, Nebraska by the end of the decade. In 1921, *Danskeren* and *Dansk Luthersk Kirkeblad* merged to form *Luthersk Ugeblad*.

I read Christiane Petersen's *Frelst ved en Salme* in issues 4 through 16 of the 1894 volume of *Danskeren*. The thirteen parts of the ongoing story published in the paper are not chapters, but fairly
even portions, on average close to two columns, set aside in Danskeren's section on page three entitled De Unges Afdeling, [For the Youngsters]. Kristiane Pedersen, as her name is spelled there, is indeed young. A recurring advertisement, which soon afterwards praises her book, refers to her as a young woman who arrived in America when she was only one year of age.18

The story begins as Mrs. Johnson, Bessie's mother, gets on her buggy to visit a sick friend five miles away for the night. She is worried about her daughter spending the time alone in the house. What if thieves come along? She has seen someone lurking around, and there are 300 dollars in savings in the house. Do not forget to lock the door and roll down the curtains, the mother exhorts. And after she has left following a goodbye kiss, Bessie at home quickly feels less confident than she had appeared before.

Mr. Johnson is a Danish-American immigrant, who came with his family to the new country when he was twelve, while Mrs. Johnson was born an American. She, like the mother in Adelheid og Bazaren i Beatrice, is a widow. Her husband died four years earlier following a work accident at a quarry, and her modest income has since come from the rent of a farm being leased out. She and Bessie much enjoy life in their small house including a beautiful garden with grass, flowers, and a water fountain. There are valley mountains to the north and south, while the Delaware river runs to the east and church towers and the Pennsylvania capital of Harrisburg can be seen in the west.

There once were four siblings, with Bessie being the only sister. While the parents were away attending a wedding sixteen years earlier, the oldest son was kidnapped at the age of four by a drunken Irishman, who could not keep his job at the Johnson farm. The two youngest children died when they were infants. In the presence of the lonely night, Bessie cannot seem to spend more than minutes on any given task. She likes to read books by authors such as Charles Dickens and to play the piano, and she attends to the hens and the cows as well as their dog named Pasop. She also reads Danish fluently.

The mother returns the next day, but sets out for a similar trip two months later, at which time she receives a surprise letter in the mail.
It is a major setback just when things are going well. Six years earlier, the Johnson father served at the guarantor of a loan of a friend, who later dies, the new owner eventually runs away with the money leaving his debt behind, now haunting the living Johnson family, who two months later loses both the farm and the house. They start from scratch, renting a small house with the help of a neighborhood family while working at sewing clothes and teaching the piano.

The following summer, a typhoid epidemic passes through the area and the mother dies, leaving Bessie alone in the world, with which she is unfamiliar. This setting, which undeniably calls for the pietistic faith, concludes the first three of the thirteen part series in Danskeren’s volume of 1894. But having been saved by believing has already taken place. We just do not know it yet and must, along with Bessie, return to her uncle’s Denmark, a trip so real and so rich in detail that the reader may forget that it could also, given the author’s young age, have been spun of her imagination, inspired by stories of her father’s childhood Denmark.

The deliverance is twofold united in one. Mr. Clementson, a relative to the Danish Johansen family, but now living in England, was once the young man lurking outside the Johnson house. What deterred him from stealing their savings was also what comforted Bessie in her night of loneliness. The song that she was playing on the piano was Jesus Han er Synderes Ven [Jesus He is a Friend of Sinners], which Mr. Clementson’s mother also once played when he was a child.

Returning to the young Adelheid’s conversion in Beatrice, her contribution was the story that she wrote. Is it likely that the two Christiane Petersens are one and the same? It is certainly possible, given the similarities in space and time. Could it be that the 1894 story just outside of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania forms somewhat of a backdrop to the 1912 novel taking place in the corner community of Beatrice, Nebraska?

Could it be that the former is the latter’s main character’s prize-winning story, that Christiane Petersen is the daughter in both books while at the same time the author has reached the age of the mother at the time of writing the latter? If Christiane Petersen were a mere
few years older than seventeen in 1894, then she was born around 1875 just slightly older than Dorthea Dahl, born in 1881. Sewing, embroidery and piano teaching are essential in both works, whose authors bear the same name. Still, the difference of eighteen years between 1894 and 1912 is less than the age of the oldest daughter in Adelheid; she was six when the family moved to Beatrice sixteen years earlier than the book’s present time. Given this, the early immigrant background of Mrs. Dahl is also not that of Mrs. Johnson; it is my guess that the former’s is simply less autobiographical than that of the latter. Nor is Adelheid identical to Bessie; in both cases are there four siblings, but Adelheid’s are all girls and all alive. Perhaps the story in Beatrice is an idealized Danish-American community version of how life would have been, if not for the hardship and lack of fellow countrymen outside of Harrisburg. Their conservative and religious immigrant backgrounds of the two women, Christiane Petersen and Dorthea Dahl, are in many ways similar. Their stories of congregational life present two women's perspective on the church, but they may never have heard of each other, given Dahl’s culturally isolated Idaho and Petersen’s quiet, pietistic Nebraska community. It is apparent that Danish women emigrating to America did not publish much literature.

A hundred years ago, Danish women, given their country’s growing city life, may well have been less conservative and more progressive than their Scandinavian counterparts, which explains why they devoted their efforts to reality rather than fiction. As for those who emigrated to America, there were relatively few Danish women, due to the shift in the late nineteenth century from families to individuals heading for America. In general, there were fewer Danes than Norwegians and Swedes too, and comparatively we left towns rather than rural areas. We even assimilated more easily and became more scattered, to which our relative carefree letting go of both religion and language testifies.

I am simply glad I have come to know a little of Christiane Petersen. For now, rare copies of her first book reside at Dana College, while a copy of her later book of life in a Nebraska immigrant community can be found at the nearby Grand View
College library, and that may very well be the only place anywhere at this time.

3 Hilde Petra Brungot, *Dorthea Dahl*, p. 35.
7 If the era of the immigrant literature is extended up to the middle of the twentieth century, the number of female Norwegian-American and Swedish-American authors becomes significant. The former offers Kathryn Forbes (1908-1966), Borghild Dahl, Margarethe Erdahl Shank, Agnes Roisdal and Lillian M. Gamble, while Anna Olsson, Lillian Budd and Skulda V. Baner belong to the latter.
8 Christiane Petersen, *Adelheid og Bazaren i Beatrice* [Adelheid and the Bazaar in Beatrice] (Blair, Nebraska: Danish Lutheran Publ. House, 1912). I thank the Grand View College Archivist Sheri Kleinwort, who made it possible for me to read the book.
9 One of several contributions by various Norwegian authors in *Sturdy Folks and Other Stories* (Minneapolis: K.C. Holter Publishing Company, 1927); the book does not list the year of publication.
10 Jacquelynn Sorensen, *Kierkegaard, Grundtvig, and Danish Literature on the Plains* (University of Nebraska at Lincoln: Ph.D., 1984).
14 Ibid., 3209 Petersen, Christiane, Adelheid og Bazaren i Beatrice. Blair, NE DLPH, 1912, 70 pages. Fiction. IA01, NE01, and 3210 Petersen, Christiane, Frelst ved en Salme. Neenah, WI Danskeren, 1985, 96 pages. Note: this is another spelling of the same author as in 3160 [3166]. NE01.; 3166 Pedersen, Kristiane, Frelst ved en Salme. Neenah, WI Danskeren, 1894. Note: this is another spelling for the same author as in 3120. DEN1. Thorvald Hansen on the other hand does not mention whether 3209 and 3210 are written by the same person; he does however include the following interesting entry. 3629 Sørensen, Virginia, House Next Door, The. New York, NY, 1954. Subject unknown. DEN1.
15 Author’s translation.
16 Thorvald Hansen, op.cit., entry 3120 indicates 1895 being the year of publication. The ad for the book mentioned in a later note started in Danskeren already by the end of 1894 however, No. 47, p. 3 – and kept running until at least 1895, No. 17, p. 3, including No. 1, p. 3, No. 2, p. 3, No. 4, p. 3, No. 14, p. 3, No. 15, p. 6, No. 16, p. 6.
18 Christiane Petersen was one year old at the time of her emigration, while Dorthea Dahl was two when she arrived in America. Another striking similarity is that Dahl was unmarried, while Christiane Petersen’s books feature widow mothers and unmarried daughters.
19 Jesus! what a Friend for sinners! comes to mind. Words: J. Wilbur Chapman, 1910. Music: Hyfrydol, Rowland H. Prichard, 1830. The 1910 lyrics may have been the occasion that triggered a reminder of the story of 1894 and prompted the writing of the 1912 novel. And as much as Christiane Petersen disapproves of adventurous fiction (see several references to Anne, the Johansen daughter, who reads such novels all day long), one has to wonder if Captain Mayne Reid’s Adela, eller (or), Frelst av en engel (Saved by an Angel; Chicago: Skandinavens boghandel, 1890; a translation of his Afloat in the forest; or, A voyage among the tree-tops (New York, John W. Lovell Company, 1889)) has been an inspiration for Petersen’s 1895 book.
The Danish poet, playwright and novelist Pia Tafdrup read from her work *Queen’s Gate* and presented some of her other poems at the session *Danish Poets Today*. With the author’s permission we are able to present one of the poems from *Queen’s Gate*.

*My Mother’s Hand*

Bathing in a drop’s quiet light  
I remember how I came into being:  
A pencil stuck in my hand,  
my mother’s cool hand around mine, it was warm.  
And then we wrote  
in and out between coral reefs,  
an undersea alphabet of arches and apexes  
of snail-shell spirals, of starfish points,  
of gesticulating octopus arms,  
of cave vaults and rock formations.  
Letters that vibrated and found their way,  
dizzy over the white.  
Words like flat fish that flapped  
and dug themselves into the sand  
or swaying sea anemones with hundreds of threads  
in quiet motion at the same time.  
Sentences like streams of fish  
that grew fins and rose,  
grew wings and moved in a rhythm,  
throbbing like my blood, that blindly  
beat stars against the heart’s night sky,  
when I saw that her hand had let mine go,  
that I had long ago written myself out of her grasp.


See also www.tafdrup.com
The controversy in 2004 over possible anti-Semitism in Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ* had precedents in earlier Jesus-films.\(^1\) Pier Paolo Pasolini’s *The Gospel According to Matthew* and Franco Zeffirelli’s *Jesus of Nazareth* have also been accused of anti-Semitism.\(^2\) Carl Theodor Dreyer (1889-1968) wanted to combat anti-Semitism, as he directly stated in his own essays attached to his *Jesus* screenplay, which since his death has been published in English, Danish, and French versions.\(^3\) Dreyer began the film project in 1949-1950 in Independence, Missouri, writing in English, and he worked on it until the end of his life. However, he was continually thwarted financially in his efforts to see it to the screen. The context of Dreyer’s desire to make a film about Jesus that would not be anti-Semitic, however, has not, as far as I can tell, been discussed in detail in the dozen or so books on the depiction of Christ in the cinema\(^4\) and in the even greater number of books published on Dreyer.\(^5\)

After Robert Wiene’s *I. N. R. I.* (1923), Cecil B. DeMille’s *King of Kings* (1927), and Philip Van Loan’s *Jesus of Nazareth* (1928) toward the end of the silent period, there were no new films about the life of Christ until Julian Duvivier made *Golgotha* in 1935. So if Dreyer’s film had been produced immediately after its conception, it would have been only the second major sound film on the life of Christ. However, *Day of Triumph* (1954), *King of Kings* (1961), *The Gospel According to Matthew* (1964), and *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965) were all completed while Dreyer was still trying to get funding for his project. Since then there have been even more films in this genre: *Jesus of Nazareth* (1977), *The Messiah* (1978), *Jesus* (1979), *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988), *Jesus* (1999), *The Gospel of John* (2003), and *The Passion of the Christ* (2004). None of these films takes Dreyer’s line about Pilate’s role as initial instigator of the Crucifixion, and only *Day of Triumph* and *King of Kings* (1961) are as concerned with depicting a
fierce anti-Roman armed resistance movement. Dreyer, who could sometimes indulge in ambiguity, was seeking clarity in the Jesus film, and, contrary to the Gospels, he took the unusual step of presenting Christ’s trial and Crucifixion as a plot hatched by the colonizing Romans, not as an act to which they passively acquiesced.

Dreyer, in his Jesus screenplay, is admirable because of his attempt to divorce anti-Semitism from the Jesus film genre, but in doing so he unfortunately takes what is essentially a personal view of Pilate’s instigation of Jesus’ execution and passes it off as historically probable, when it is not. Furthermore, his deployment of the revolutionaries as a foil to Jesus’ followers falls into the trap of the false dichotomy of the Jesus of peace and the Zealots of war, pointed out by the Biblical scholar Richard Horsley. Since Dreyer conceived of Judea as an occupied country like Denmark in World War II, one also wonders why Dreyer disapproved of the anti-Roman fighters, since, ultimately, Denmark and Europe were liberated by the Allied invasion—in other words, by war, not by peace.

First of all, Dreyer’s screenplay needs to be understood in relation to the film Golgotha. Whereas it might at first seem that the assistance given Danish Jews to escape to Sweden might provide the backdrop for Dreyer’s screenplay, I suggest instead that more likely he saw his project as a response to Duvivier’s Golgotha (1935). This film starred as Christ Robert Le Vigan, an actor who was a member of the virulently anti-Semitic group of people around Louis-Ferdinand Céline. Although Dreyer did not comment on Golgotha in print, as a Dane he could hardly have been oblivious to the flight of Le Vigan, Céline, and Celine’s wife Lucette from France to Berlin, to Sigmaringen, and then to Denmark. Furthermore, he would have known that the famous Jewish actor, Harry Bauer, who played Herod Antipas, in tour-de-force style in his one scene with Le Vigan, was tortured to death by the Gestapo, dying on April 8, 1943.

Duvivier was commissioned by a Catholic cleric, Chanoine Joseph Raymond (about whom little is known), who was the head of the Catholic Society of Films in France. A production company, Icthys films, was set up for this project. According to Pierre Billard, when Julien Duvivier made Golgotha he was still a believing Christian, although he later became more of an atheist (28).
Golgotha received very mixed reviews and was not a commercial success (Le Boterf 1995: 119). Nevertheless, it was a major event of the film season in France, and it received much notice on its premiere in April 1935 (Desrichard 185). Although at its premiere some critics, such as the novelist Pierre MacOrlan (Bonnefille 180) found the film very impressive, others, such as Henri Jeanson (Bonnefille 183) criticized it as too derivative of popular Paramount epics, presumably Cecil B. De Mille’s King of Kings and The Sign of the Cross. Somewhat surprisingly, both sides tended to fault the film for lacking a religious dimension or what they expected to be the religious dimension of such a Biblical film.

Golgotha’s critical reception in more recent years has not been good. Since on DVD it is only sometimes available in a Japanese release in a Zone 2 Pal format, I have decided to use the more accessible Sinister Cinema videotape of the dubbed version of the film released for an American audience on February 9, 1937 at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (see Bonnefille 184), which is the same length of 95 minutes. The film was made in the wake of the Stavisky affair, which brought down France’s leftist government and led to riots on February 6-7, 1934. It could well be that Duvivier was not trying to be anti-Semitic but rather superimposing on Biblical material his view of brutal French masses led by corrupt back-room officials in cahoots with swindlers like Serge Stavisky.

Duvivier’s view of the Crucifixion, which, in the words of Claude Beylie and André Bernard, is played out like a lynching (60) by a blood-thirsty mob, can easily be interpreted as anti-Semitic, since it makes both the Sanhedrin and the Jewish pilgrims in Jerusalem for Passover the villains, rather than the Romans. The most detailed summary of the reviews of the film, that of Yves Bonnefille, does not make any suggestion that the film was seen as anti-Semitic on its initial reception. This response may reflect the extent of French anti-Semitism of the time, where even Louis-Ferdinand Céline’s inflammatorily anti-Semitic Bagatelles pour un massacre was accepted on its publication in 1937 with moderate reviews. As Frédéric Vitoux, biographer of Céline (1894-1961), says, such acceptance of hate literature appears shocking to us today (321). He claims that then, “One could write against the Jews with impunity” (321). It set
the stage for the deportation and murder of French Jews in World War II.

Starring as Christ was Robert Le Vigan (1900-1972), a brilliantly intense actor but also a mentally ill drug addict and anti-Semite (see Le Boterf 1986 and Vandromme 1996, passim). Le Vigan, who later criticized Duvivier’s direction (Le Boterf 1986: 164) threw himself into the role (Baylie and Bernard 61). He became close friends with Céline in 1935, after the filming of Golgotha, and Céline always associated him with the role of Christ (Vendromme 68-69). During World War II, Le Vigan denounced his friends to the Gestapo (Vitoux 374). With the Célines he fled to Denmark in March 1945, where they were captured. Céline spent fourteen months in the prison Vestre Fængsel in Copenhagen, part of the time on Death Row.

Eventually, both Céline and Le Vigan regained their freedom. Céline immortalized Le Vigan in the role of a Grünwald-inspired Christ in his novel about their flight through Germany, Nord (1960). Although Le Vigan, an unrepentant fascist, was condemned in 1947 to ten years hard labor, he was freed in 1949 and moved to Argentina (Vitoux 463). He resumed his film career in 1951-1952, but then retired from the screen. Céline was exonerated by a military tribunal and returned to France in 1951, where he lived, worked, and wrote until his death. Because Céline did not actively collaborate with the Germans, he was eventually allowed back to France.

Despite the neglect of Golgotha it is actually an impressive film that would have interested a master like Dreyer, who had worked as a director in France. The shooting began on 16 September 1934 in Algiers and Fort-de l’Eau (Algeria) and was difficult because the desert was very cold at night. Duvivier had to overcome many difficulties, and he did. Golgotha remains notable for some great traveling shots; many impressively large sets; the stirring music by Jacques Ibert; the atmospheric filming in the Casbah of the way to the Cross; the special effects surrounding the Crucifixion, such as the earthquake and rending of the Temple Veil; the photographing of models as full-scale buildings; and the use of point-of-view shots to characterize Jesus’ view until we see him for the first time—more than twenty minutes into the film.
Since *Golgotha* deals only with the last week of Jesus’ life, almost all of the attention goes to the attempt of the Jewish religious leaders to capture him, Judas to betray him, and Pilate to avoid having to crucify him. Pilate is no match for Jewish machinations. Jesus, shown primarily as a healer and as the man who overturned the moneychangers in the Temple, is an enemy of powerful Jews and a scapegoat of the mob. We see the religious elders plotting against him, first to capture him, next to bully Pilate into giving Jesus a death sentence (by suggesting that Pilate will provoke the wrath of Tiberius if he lets Jesus free), and then by bribing men to call for the release of Barabbas and the death of Jesus. Pilate has no desire to kill Christ, and Herod Antipas, who tells him to call up Beelzebub, shows no designs on his life either.

However, the people of Jerusalem have no sympathy for Jesus, and in one memorable scene they stretch their hands out through a barred window when he is in Roman custody, as if they would like to tear him apart themselves. Caiaphas, a figure for whom Dreyer asked understanding in his own screenplay, is a particularly nasty character. There is no fleshing out of the Sanhedrin with sympathetic characters such as Gamaliel, Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea, as in Dreyer’s screenplay, and no sense that the Sanhedrin tries to get an orderly, democratic vote, as Dreyer would present it. Although Duvivier does show Judea as part of the Roman Empire and surrounds Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee, with Roman soldiers, the stress on Jesus as a danger to the religious establishment rather than to the Roman Empire is clear from the Temple leaders’ response to his entry into Jerusalem. It is not surprising that Dreyer’s version of Holy Week, to which he devotes the second half of his film treatment, should be so much different from Duvivier’s: his Jewish leaders are far more humane than Duvivier’s.

As we turn from *Golgotha* to Dreyer’s screenplay, we see that the key element in Dreyer’s philo-Semitic film treatment is the Crucifixion of Jesus as instigated by the Romans rather than by the Jewish religious authorities. Dreyer claimed that it made historical sense to do so. He fashions Jesus as a person who would not have antagonized Jewish leaders to seek his execution, and indeed he would not have provoked the Romans to such a point either if
revolutionaries had not mixed themselves with his followers at the beginning of Holy Week. However, as Preben Thomsen states, in his essay “Working with Dreyer,” there are problems with such a conception:

The question that remains is whether [. . .] he oversimplifies the problem of Jesus, making one person too absolutely the villain of the piece, namely, Pilate, representing the totalitarian state (299).

Thomsen states that he tried to show Dreyer the “intention of the New Testament authors to represent the whole gallery of people surrounding Jesus as guilty of His death” (299). In Dreyer’s film, if Rome had been less totalitarian, Jesus would not have died. However, it can be misleading and anachronistic to call Rome a totalitarian state and then consider it a stand-in for the Nazi Reich.

Dreyer’s Jesus screenplay at about 250 pages (41-292 in the 1972 English edition) is a long treatment that includes explanatory commentary which cannot actually be filmed. Like King of Kings, Dreyer’s project used oral narration, although it does not have anything like the long prologue to show Pompey’s destruction of Jerusalem, which Nicholas Ray’s film has. There are forty-six points at which the Narrator speaks, including the opening and closing lines of the film. If each section of the film treatment after a narration is considered a sequence, then there are 45 sequences, which vary a great deal in length. The first narration tells us that John the Baptist came to bear witness to the light (41), and the last narration tells us that Jesus’ message of “good tidings of love and charity foretold by the Jewish prophets of old” extended after his death (298). The narration does not insist on the divinity of Christ, and if one takes the position that Resurrection is crucial to Christ’s identity, then no judgment can easily be made, as the action stops before the burial.

Whereas some readers of the screenplay may feel that the noncommittal approach to Jesus’ divinity is crucial to the film, I feel instead that it is less important than the presentation of Jesus’ death as instigated by Pilate. Of course, the inclusion of the raising of Lazarus and the Transfiguration on the mountain may be taken by some viewers as an indication that the film shows Jesus’ divinity. Yet we should not forget that even in films that share an emphasis on
Jesus’ earthly message as compared to his divinity, there is a Resurrection. For example, in *King of Kings*, Ray shows Jesus reappearing to the fishermen of Galilee after the Crucifixion, and in *The Messiah*, Rossellini has Mary come to find an empty tomb at the end of the film.

Dreyer’s film covers the ministry of Jesus from his seeing John the Baptist at the Jordan to the Crucifixion. There is no material about either the Virgin Birth or Slaughter of the Innocents. Omitted are such set-pieces of Jesus films as Jesus’ Baptism, his Temptation in the Wilderness, Marriage at Cana, Sermon on the Mount, and Salome’s Dance. In contrast, particularly striking is the attention given to the parables. Dreyer chose to dramatize fully three of Jesus’ parables: the Prodigal Son, the Wise and Foolish Virgins, and the Good Samaritan. None of the other major films of the life of Jesus have used this approach, although Pasolini and Rossellini do stress Jesus as a teacher of parables. By no means is Dreyer’s Jesus an apocalyptic preacher. Nor does he seem to have a political message. The politics in the film move not from Christ’s message outward but rather from Roman power downward.

The content of Dreyer’s film becomes more interesting as it proceeds, and the last half of the film, beginning with the raising of Lazarus sequence (166-84) is certainly more controversial than the first half. In the first part of the film, Jesus appears primarily as a caller of disciples and healer of the sick. Over a half dozen scenes of Christ’s miracles in this capacity are presented. Meanwhile, the Pharisees are presented as more curious than self-serving, and the revolutionaries are introduced as a group trying to see if Jesus will fit into their plans for revolution.

It is not possible to understand Dreyer’s hostile portrait of Pilate and positive picture of the Jewish authorities unless we posit that he was making up for his own past cinematic errors. Dreyer in *Leaves from Satan’s Book* had presented Christ as betrayed by Satan in the form of a Pharisee, abetted by Judas and Caiaphas. The implicit assumption in this film from 1919 is that Christ has a divine nature, but more to the point is the anti-Semitic conception of Satan possessing a Pharisee and causing Christ’s death. Although in his three essays on the *Jesus* film Dreyer does not mention *Leaves from*
Satan’s Book, he could hardly have forgotten that his earlier film was at odds with his new one. In the Jesus screenplay, Jesus is a Jewish religious leader who is sacrificed by the Roman political machine, not by the Jews, and he never loses his self-identity as a Jew.

In Who Crucified Jesus? (1951), Dreyer explains his point of view: Some days after the Germans occupied Denmark, it struck me that such a situation as we Danes were in was similar to that of the Jews in Judea in the days of the Roman Empire. [...] It seemed to me that the capture, conviction, and death of Jesus was the result of a conflict between Jesus and the Romans. (Dreyer 1972: 41).

Dreyer adds,
I consider it possible that it was the Romans who demanded the arrest of Jesus, for the Romans, who commanded a well-organized ‘gestapo,’ were informed of all that went on in Judea, especially in Jerusalem during the Passover (45).

Dreyer is reasoning by shaky analogy from the present to the past.

Unfortunately, Dreyer never says how he put together his original theories, only how they were substantiated for him by recent historical events and by the work of one distinguished scholar. Dreyer writes in the same essay that soon after he came to the United States, he was struck by the similarity of his own ideas to those of Dr. Solomon Zeitlin, Professor of Rabbinical Studies at Dropsie College, Philadelphia, who had published in 1941 Who Crucified Jesus? Zeitlin claimed, “Jesus was crucified by the Romans for a political offense as the King of the Jews” (211).

Dreyer stresses the fact that the Jews had a facade of self-government similar to the Danes under the Nazi occupation. Zeitlin, Dreyer notes, calls attention to the fact that the political councils were only called after the arrest of a political criminal and did not meet regularly: “Dr. Zeitlin concludes that it is to this political council that Jesus was taken on the night of his capture. If so, then Jesus was considered a political criminal” (Dreyer 44). Because Jesus had allowed himself to be hailed as King of Israel (John 12: 13), he made the Romans suspicious that he was an accomplice of the revolutionary groups and thus a “direct challenge” to Roman authority (44). By casting out the money changers from the Temple
courtyard (Mark 11: 15), “the high priest was obligated to have Jesus arrested, interrogated in the presence of the political council, and then—when Jesus confessed that he regarded himself as Messiah—delivered to Pontius Pilate” (Dreyer 45).

Dreyer spoke to Zeitlin after completing his screenplay and they seemed to agree on all but one issue: “Dr. Zeitlin is harsh on Caiaphas whom he describes as a ‘quisling’” (45). Dreyer calls Caiaphas a collaborationist rather than a ‘quisling,” because he was a “conscientious man, who had the people’s welfare at heart” (45-46). Dreyer minimizes a greater difference between his view and Zeitlin’s. Behind the issue of collaboration and ‘quislings’ lies the question of the relationship of Caiaphas and Pilate. Zeitlin does not go so far as Dreyer, who has Pilate take the initiative to arrest Jesus. By acknowledging Caiaphas as a quisling, Zeitlin does not give Pilate so much agency (Zeitlin 157). Dreyer’s Pilate has been having Jesus watched for months. Pilate has a paper stating, “nothing is hidden for me and I am fully informed.” Jesus “must be put away before the feast; it is high time. I can run no more risks. Understood?” (240) When Nicodemus, Caiaphas, and the First Chief Priest, argue with Pilate, they are not able to dissuade him (340-41). Zeitlin (like Thomsen) is more generous to the Procurator, stating that “even upon Pilate alone the entire blame for the crucifixion of Jesus cannot be set, since ‘... [m]en are oftentimes the victims of their own systems,’ such as imperialism” (211).

Zeitlin remains a reputable scholar, but Dreyer’s own variation on Zeitlin’s view runs counter to the views of the large majority of Biblical scholars. As E. Mary Smallwood states in The Jews under Roman Rule, “Despite the very wide discrepancies between the four accounts of the trial of Jesus, a general picture of the proceedings emerges” (169). Smallwood made this point even before Raymond A. Brown showed a means of reconciling some of the seeming contradictions in the Gospels. She claims that

... Pilate showed his weakness, and an understandable desire to protect himself against possible Jewish delation, by yielding to the pressure thus brought to bear upon him and condemning to death a person whom he believed to be harmless (169).
Brown, perhaps the greatest expert on the Passion Narratives, notes in *The Death of The Messiah* (1994) that he does not feel that the Gospels are exculpating the Romans. He writes:

... I judge it lucidly clear that all the evangelists would identify those who plainly wanted Jesus dead as the chief priests and the Jewish populace who stood with them. But there is no exculpation of the Romans. All Gospels use *paradidonai* of Pilate, and so he joins the chain of those described by this verb: Judas gave Jesus over to Jewish authorities; the Jewish authorities gave Jesus over to Pilate; now Pilate gives Jesus over to be crucified. (854)

Brown, whose citations show that he has read Zeitlin, admits that this Jewish initiative presented in the Gospels, and which he believes to be historically true, does have disturbing implications (653-55). Thus it is no surprise that Dreyer, who apparently felt that the Gospels did exculpate the Romans, wanted to avoid these implications, and so he strongly connected the theme of purported revolutionary activity rather than religious blasphemy with the political sentencing of Jesus.

As a major element in the scenario, Dreyer included a group of Jewish revolutionaries. They attempt to co-opt Jesus’ peaceful movement and turn it to their own advantages. This motif runs into a different problem with Biblical scholarship because it is quite possible that there was no such organized Jewish revolutionary resistance as we find in Dreyer’s film and Nicholas Ray’s *King of Kings*. According to Richard A. Horsley in *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine* (1987), this kind of resistance did not develop until thirty years later. Horsley strongly holds that the earlier mistaken scholarly belief in such a Resistance at the time of Jesus’ death has confused thinking about Jesus’ message. It sets up a false dichotomy between violent revolution and the peaceful Jesus. Not everyone agrees with Horsley and, in addition, it would be unfair to judge Dreyer too harshly on the basis of research that has appeared long after his death. Nevertheless, since Dreyer clearly wanted his film to be true to the colonial situation in Palestine, it is not irrelevant to examine Dreyer’s
beliefs with respect to Horsley’s arguments about the reality of that time.

It is unlikely that Dreyer, if alive today, would agree with Horsley. Instead he would probably be drawn to the theories of S. G. F. Brandon in *Jesus and the Zealots: A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity* (1967). Brandon maintained that Jesus was executed because of his association with Zealots in his inner circle. Although I believe that Brandon is wrong and Horsley is right, Brandon’s picture of a Judea filled with revolutionary resistors has such relevance to Dreyer’s project that it makes a consideration of his ideas essential. Dreyer’s Narrator states:

**Narrator:** At the same hour revolutionaries from all over Palestine met secretly in the quarries of King Solomon. Tidings had spread that Jesus was about to make his entry into Jerusalem as the Messiah. The revolutionaries, who were constantly seeking a way to get rid of the Romans, were not disposed to let this opportunity slip out of their hands.

A hundred or more young men, fanatic revolutionaries, have gathered to learn the news that has just come from Bethany. (208)

For Horsley, these revolutionaries never existed: “[T]here is simply no evidence for an organized movement of violent resistance that agitated for armed revolt from 6 to 66 C.E.” In short, “Jewish reaction to Roman rule was far more complex that the old ‘Zealot’ concept allowed, and social unrest took a variety of social forms” (1987: x-xi).

Dreyer’s Jesus, with his healings and parables, is not like Horsley’s Jesus, who had a deep political commitment. Horsley claims that Jesus saw no place for society’s ruling institutions. His prophecies, omitted by Dreyer, are crucial to this view. In short, Horsley says of Jesus that he rejected the institutions of the priestly class: “The kingdom of God apparently had no need of either a mediating hierocracy of a temple system” (1987: 325). Dreyer, in contrast, defends the temple system as the worthy site or true resistance to Roman imperialism. His philo-Semitic position makes him sympathetic to the Sanhedrin and the Pharisees. Although Horsley and Dreyer would certainly agree that Jesus was not a violent social revolutionary, Horsley sees him as a catalyst for a social revolution (1987: 326) to a much greater degree.
In conclusion, Dreyer created a screenplay that reflected his search for a historical Jesus. He thought about the historical issues of the trial and tried to make sense out of them by using the material in all the Gospels. Like King of Kings, The Greatest Story Ever Told, and Jesus of Nazareth, for example, Jesus combines material from the four gospels. In so doing, choices have to be made, and the writer is open to all sorts of criticism. When Pasolini chose to film the gospel of Matthew and Philip Saville to film the gospel of John, they probably made a wiser choice. They made adaptations of a single Gospel and put across the point of view of that book. Saville is now going on to film The Gospel of Mark. When Dreyer was working on his screenplay, there was no such precedent, but he was overtaken four years before his death by Pasolini’s new approach. As more Jesus films are made, the need to film Dreyer’s scenario becomes less and less urgent. Instead, because of the amount of commentary that Dreyer includes in his script, Jesus can best be read for its provocative treatment of Pilate, Caiaphas, and the trial of Jesus, where it will serve to promote interesting debate on issues of responsibility as well as history and anti-Semitism.


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Songs of Denmark, Songs to Live By: Cultural Values Expressed in Traditional Danish Music

by Joy Ibsen

This past August [2005] we published Songs of Denmark [Sange for Danskere], Songs to Live By, the culmination of a project that began to take shape three years ago at the 2002 DAHS conference in Omaha, when I met Sisse Brimberg. During that meeting I shared with Sisse my desire to publish a new Danish American songbook with lyrics in both Danish and English, one with beautiful contemporary Danish photographs—a book that would appeal to the next generation. Sisse, a talented National Geographic photographer, was enthusiastic and agreed to provide access to her photographic files for the book.

There is great richness in traditional Danish music, considerable wisdom and also spiritual healing. Too often we sing hymns and other songs with little thought given to the meaning of the lyrics. Some of our Danish songs, however, are like psalms and bid for our attention. Other nonsense songs, “fun songs,” are just plain enjoyable to sing.

My Danish American roots are in the Grundtvigian tradition. While not all Danes are Grundtvigians, my experience on the museum board and in the many different Danish communities has shown me that regardless of our backgrounds, we Danes share many of the same values.

In the introduction to Songs of Denmark I quote Walter Capps’s description of four Grundtvigian principles from a lecture he gave at Danebod Folk School in Tyler, Minnesota in August, 1991. Walter Capps was a theologian and a professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, who became acquainted with, and then fascinated by, “what was going on in the Danish church in Solvang.” A man of Swedish background who became a U.S. Congressman, Capps unfortunately died of a heart attack shortly after going to Washington. His wife Lois Capps now represents California’s 23rd
Congressional District. During his lecture series, Capps said that he wished he could run as a Grundtvgian rather than a Republican or a Democrat.

The title of Capps’s series of lectures was “The Future of Grundtvgianism.” For me, hearing those lectures was a life-changing event. I had considered those of us who grew up in the Grundtvgian tradition in the United States to be an endangered species, a people from a rich and treasured past, whose ideas were now ignored and little understood. According to Capps the four principles of Grundtvgianism are: (1) Affirmation of Life, (2) Stay as Close to Nature as Possible, (3) The Goodness and Beauty of Ordinary Life, and (4) Lifelong Learning and Education.

After Capps’s presentation I began looking at N.F.S. Grundtvig in an entirely new light, as someone whose ideas were not only relevant but also necessary, who had refreshing approaches for meeting current and future challenges. While not all answers to today’s complex problems can be found in Grundtvgian philosophy, Capps pointed out significant relevance in Grundtvgian thought for addressing many major challenges in America as we approached the millennium. Unfortunately, today most of these problems are much worse than they were in the 1990s and must now be considered from a more global perspective.

The first principle, the basis for all the principles, as stated by Capps, is “Affirmation of Life.” Enjoy Life! This is a wonder-filled world. Accept and love the world as it is. Do not lose yourself in fabrications of what should be or could have been. Be realistic: do not hide your head in the sand. It is our world that is in need of transformation and we are in the business of transformation. Affirming life needs to occur within a spirit of humility. Humility is a long-established Danish virtue, one which is irksome because it manifests in a variety of negative ways ranging from self-effacement to hypocrisy. To clarify, I am using the definition of humility as not pretending to be more than you are, nor less than you are. A clear understanding of self and one’s capabilities is difficult, perhaps a life-long quest. Affirmation of life becomes increasingly possible when we know who and what we are. Also, while living in the present, we look to the future. Take the long view. A major reason
for humility is a deep awareness that one does not have the entire picture.

A wonderful example of this is found in Kristian Ostergaard’s “That Cause Can Never Be Lost or Stayed” [“Den Sag er Aldrig i Verden Tabt”; translated by J.C. Aaberg], 1892

That cause can never be lost or stay’d
Which takes the course of what God hath made,
And is not trusting in walls and towers,
But slowly growing from seed to flowers.

Though mighty tempest a branch may shear
What then if truly they cleanse the air!
The storms at harvest with fury blowing
But open the door for the new life growing.

Each noble service that men have wrought
Was first conceived as a fruitful thought.
Each worthy cause with a future glorious
By simply growing becomes victorious.

And winter, even so cold and white,
Is for the plants but a restful night,
When wrapped in mantles of snow securely
They waken anew in the spring most surely.

And thus itself like a tree it shows,
That high it reaches as deep it grows;
For when the storms are its branches shaking
It deeper root in the soil is taking.

Hold then no fear of the storms that blow,
The Lord may use them His seed to sow;
And if a tree by their might they shatter,
What then—if thousands of seed they scatter! ²

Affirmation of human life is a worldview that recognizes and celebrates the goodness of God’s creation within the context of a strong sense of community. In a personal letter Grundtvig wrote, “All our [Christian] endeavors are wasted unless the response in
people to human mirth and joy is reawakened; for of what worth is an eternal life, if we do not have a temporal life which we can joyfully anticipate as being eternal ...” This statement places the joyful acceptance of the present world and the earthly life which God has given against a pietistic other-worldliness.³

Central to the affirmation of life is what has become the summary statement of Grundtvig’s religious philosophy, “Human First, then Christian.” It is a statement that is often misunderstood. This is not simply a humanistic philosophy. Quite the opposite. Grundtvig had no illusions about human sinfulness and weaknesses. Grundtvig’s theology emerged out of a renunciation of rationalism as well as a protest against pietism. “Human First, then Christian” does not lessen commitment to Christ; one is not “less Christian.” Grundtvig believed strongly in the Apostles’ Creed as the basic expression of the Christian Faith, primarily because it was so easy to equivocate and interpret, (i.e., twist) the meaning of what is in the Bible. In contrast, the Apostles’ Creed is specific and clear. In Grundtvig’s feuds with rationalistic theologians, he had observed that the Bible was subject to interpretation...whereas the confession at baptism, the Apostolic Creed, was a “living word,” inviolable and above the shifting winds of doctrine.⁴ Christ was to be sought not in the past, but in the living community, through congregational life, baptism, communion, and the Apostles’ Creed.

Joseph Sittler described the Danish Lutherans as being different from other Lutherans in emphasizing the first article of the Apostles’ Creed (“I believe in God the Father, Creator of Heaven and Earth” over the second, “and in Jesus Christ his only son...”) “Human first” is not a matter of priority, of one article of the creed being more important than the other, but for Grundtvigians, it is rather a matter of separation. It is of utmost importance to separate the two, because Human First is the basis for recognizing and establishing freedom, equality, and dignity. As stated by Axel Kildegaard, “We have to work at becoming a human being. Christianity is a gift of grace.” ⁵

The Golden Rule is found in every religion—Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Confucian, Hindu, and some pagan religions.⁶ While the statement varies, all versions come down to this one
primary ethical concept: Treat others as you want to be treated—the universal basis for ethical behavior. All religions can be exploited, or misused, as rationale for violence and corruption. That is why “Human First” is so important, relating to one another on a Human Being to Human Being basis. Every war is a religious war. Christianity has been as guilty of making war under the banner of religion as have other religions. The way to address violence of all kinds is to live in a “human being to human being” mode. In doing so, we meet and celebrate one another.

It is said that one can feel “Grundtvigianism” when one crosses the border into Denmark; I hope that is still true. I believe the major reason that Denmark rose to the challenge, as a country, in rescuing 98% of its Jewish population during World War II is because the philosophy of “Human First” was at its very foundation, in the culture’s subconscious. Christians in many countries gave their lives to the cause of freedom, but Denmark was the only country that rose up as a whole culture, while Christians in many countries, including ecclesiastic heads of churches, crossed over to the other side of the road in order to avoid Samaritans. In Denmark, an occupied country, entire professions and institutions including the church, medical profession, and police disobeyed a direct order to turn the Jews over for exportation to prison camps, and as a result saved virtually its entire Jewish population (more than 7,000 people).

It is all too easy to say, “That person is different from me,” justifying all sorts of evils, especially with regard to race and religion. Denmark showed the world that it is necessary for all of us to consider our common humanity. We all have the same creator. We are all of one community. Community is made up of both women and men. The concept of Human First is without reference to gender. Women’s rights in this country came very late, long after the emancipation of slaves. Most of our grandmothers were denied the right to vote when they reached adulthood, a right we now take for granted, but which came only after a very hard-fought battle. While it is true that women can be as “me first” as any man, it does not invalidate women’s rights to freedom and equality. From a more global perspective, how many of the world’s difficulties today have an underlying agenda of suppressing women? Grundtvig was a
champion of the women’s movement, and pushed for reforms. He stated, “At worst, a woman could also stand on her own in society ‘without becoming nearly so dispirited, or vapid, as erudite, highly educated men.”

Grundtvig’s great contribution to Christianity is found in the concept of “The Living Word”:

1. In the beginning was the Word.
2. Christ is not found in a book or the past, but in the living community.
3. Matchless Discovery—the Church existed before the Bible was written. Christ speaks his living word to the community, the word that creates what it names.
4. We work at becoming human beings. Christianity is a gift.
(Translated by Axel Kildegaard)

Grundtvig emphasizes the Word, the Logos, “In the beginning was the Word.” It was not a book that had produced Christianity, it was the Christian Church, which had produced the Bible. Christ Himself, not a book, was the Word. Christ speaks his living word to the community, the medium for presentation is the “living, that is the spoken, word by men and women who were themselves spiritually alive....” The church existed even before the Bible was written. Grundtvig’s “matchless” or “great discovery” is that the congregation is constituted by what is alive—fellowship in sacraments. One is baptized into the faith, not into the Bible. Jesus did not found a reading club.

Grundtvig did not ignore the Bible, as evidenced by his volumes of poetry and almost 1,500 hymns and songs. A large number of his hymns are adaptations of Bible stories and texts. He possessed an exceptional ability to grasp the essential implications of a text and present it with great force in his sermons. J.C. Aaberg refers to Grundtvig as the “Singer of the Pentecost.” While Grundtvig does not resemble what we now associate with “Pentecostal religion,” this is an accurate description of Grundtvig’s contribution to the Church: the Living Word, a vital living community. “In emphasizing the true indwelling of Christ in the creed and sacraments, he visualized the
real presence of Him in the church and underscored the vital center of congregational worship with a realism that no theological dissertation can ever convey.”\textsuperscript{15}

In S.D. Rodholm’s beautiful hymn, “The Word,” we have a summary of Grundtvig’s thought regarding the Logos.\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{verbatim}
With the word all things began,
Life in ocean, life on land:
With the word were man and woman
Raised from dust, created human,
Prince of earth and child of God.
Prince of earth and child of God.

When the soul of man was stirred
By a breath divine, the word
Was in heart of man created;
This on earth inaugurated
Human life and history.
Human life and history.

Not the clever hand or brain
Can humanity explain
For its secret is the spirit;
Only in the word we hear it,
Self revealing, heaven born.
Self revealing, heaven born.

Only in the word ascends
Man beyond the life that ends:
In the word he breaks his prisons,
Soars aloft to higher visions.
Comprehends eternity.
Comprehends eternity.
\end{verbatim}

Environmental concerns are still being ignored, but with increasingly greater difficulty. It seems that we need the crises of hurricanes, oil shortages, or worse yet, the threat of a water shortage to give the environment the attention it needs. But eventually it will be too late, in spite of knee-jerk responses to crises. What we need is an entire shift of understanding about ourselves, what we are—a change in consciousness.

The second Grundtvigian principle, Stay as Close to Nature as Possible, is more than being attentive to the world we live in. This is not just about enjoying nature or even realizing that our survival is dependent on caring for planet earth. Again, it goes back to creation.
We are all made of the same “stuff.” Science is proving this to be true. We are made of stardust. It is for us to respect the world and care for it not only because it is in our best interests, but because of what we are, not just who we are: Human First—we are part of nature. In this lateral relationship, we can learn so much from the world around us. Many Danish folk songs and hymns relate what we learn from nature and celebrate our relationship. It is necessary for all of us to stay as close to nature as possible: Listen to what nature is teaching us. Connect with nature. Experience it. Be part of it. Go to the park. Take a walk. Experience the trees giving you blessings.

This past year I served as a member of Earthkeepers, an interfaith group in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. The group addressed environmental concerns as a spiritual problem all human beings share. We collected 46 tons of household toxic substances on Earth Day morning—more than the total collected in the 5 previous years.\textsuperscript{17} In preparing for that day, I was struck with the familiar Bible verse, “For God so loved the world ....” We would not have the second part of John 3:16, “that he gave his only begotten son,” without the rationale of the first part, “God loved the world....”

Love of nature is central to Danish music. Consider songs such as “Evening Star” [“Nattens Stjerne“] by Chr. Richardt, 1861, translated by S.D. Rodholm. Every aspect of nature teaches us something.

\begin{quote}
Evening star up yonder,  
Teach me, gentle flowers!  
Willing and obediently  
Teach me lonely heather,  
The path that God ordained  
Where songbirds nest together,  
for me!  
Though my life should seem unblest,  
Evening star up yonder!  
To keep a song within my breast!  
Teach me, lonely heather!  
Teach me, gentle flowers,  
Mighty ocean, teach me,  
To wait for springtime showers,  
To do the task that needs me,  
In this winter world to grow,  
Green and strong beneath the snow!  
\end{quote}
And reflect, as days depart,
Heaven’s peace within my heart!
Mighty ocean, teach me!

Shady lanes, refreshing,
Teach me to be a blessing
To some weary soul each day,
Friends or foes who pass my way!

Or the Christmas hymn, “Beauty Around Us,” by B.S. Ingemann, 1850, translated by S.D. Rodholm:

Beauty around us, glory above us,
Lovely are earth and the smiling skies,
Singing we pass along
Pilgrims upon our way
Thro’ these fair lands to Paradise!

Ages are coming, roll on and vanish,
Children shall follow where fathers passed.
Never our pilgrim song,
Joyful and heaven born,
Shall cease while time and mountains last.

First to the shepherds, sweetly the angels,
Sang it at midnight, a song of morn:
“Glory to God on high!”
Peace and good will to men,
Today is Christ, our Savior, born.”
Glory above us.

A Grundtvigian goal is to live a “plain and active, joyful life.” We are not about equipping and concentrating on a life of competition against others, one which is geared to putting others down. Life is not about beating the other person. We Danes have
been criticized for lack of killer instinct. Perhaps by the end of the Viking Age, we learned there were better ways. Greed and a consuming ego do not make for happiness. An abundant life is not full of *things*. This should not be interpreted as exalting a life of poverty or failure that are equally destructive to the human spirit. But we need to eliminate the stuff that crowds our lives, especially when things interfere with a life that is plain, active, and joyful.

There is great integrity in working with one’s hands. Engaging in such creativity is available to everyone. Every life is both ordinary and extraordinary. Religion, one’s world view, comes from life; life does not come from religion. Living is real, not something artificial. We are part of community. We find meaning and happiness in our relationships with one another and in what we are called to do in this world. Consider “The Tiller” by Mads Hansen, translated by J.C. Aaberg:


I am a tiller of the soil,  
A farmer frank and plain;  
I love my home, its life and toil,  
Its field and wooded lane.  
There countless flowers are growing  
In beauty rich and rare;  
Mine is the brooklet flowing,  
And mine the fragrant air.

When this song was written, 80 to 90% of Denmark was rural. Today, few of us make our living on farms. There are many more other paths in life now than when the song was written. But “The Tiller” can be a metaphor for understanding how to value ourselves and the work we do. We can achieve that same sense of who we are and what we do, both for and in our community and world. It all still fits. Consider some more modern renditions:


“I am an accountant in my firm.  
I add and I subtract.  
I balance books, I make forecasts …  
I sort the false from fact.”
Or

“I am a teacher in the school.
I have a hundred kids…”

In the introduction to *Songs of Denmark* I write that when Garrison Keillor spoke at Danebod, we sang “Happiness Never Depends on Success,” and he said, “Only the Danes would sing such a song.” Perhaps that is true, but if so, it is a wonderful compliment. The key word is “depends.” Certainly failure does not result in happiness. It takes a lot of ability to handle success. The point is simply that richness of soul means your happiness doesn’t depend on “winning.” We don’t leave our fate to having money or succeeding or in beating someone else. Our joy in life is not dependent on particular outcomes.

“Things” do not make us happy. Well, they might make us a somewhat happy, but that is down the scale from the kind of happiness that comes from relationships and from nature. This is a theme throughout much of the music. We do not depend on stuff or fame to be happy. This independence provides us with confidence, protects us from fear, makes for generosity of spirit, helps us see life as an adventure, and always with a sense of modesty, because we know we have only a piece of the picture. The Danish ideal for social existence is “that few shall have too much and fewer still too little.”

A great challenge today is handling the overwhelming materialism of our culture. Most of us don’t need more stuff. We need simplicity in our lives, and not *more* simplicity, because that too can keep us churning in the game of “more”—just plain simplicity. As we become older, the sparkle of materialism dims. We can no longer afford to dissipate energy or time by allowing stuff to get in the way of what is so much more valuable.

Finally, in the love of life, there is the fun of singing for the fun of singing. Singing is energizing. “The Danish Hiking Song” is literally correct: “If your strength gives out, lift your voice and shout. You will find your second wind in song.” Fun songs, we always call them, such as “The German Band, The Crafty Crow, etc.” Or “I
traveled over sea and land in sun and rain and dust and sand ...” (From “Travelogue”) are energizing.

All of us need to be constantly learning about our world, ourselves, our history, where we came from, and everything we can about the future. Education must be much more than making a living, important as that is. Grundtvig’s idea was to educate for the whole of human life; the high school was to be a school for all people. Grundtvig, the “Father of the Folk School”20 was the champion of the movement to raise the intellectual standards of the Danish people. At a time when force was the principle resource of governments in Europe against the growing threat of revolution, Grundtvig’s message was that of a “School for Life,” which offered the ordinary man the opportunity to educate himself in order to take over political and cultural power in a democratic society. The aim of such education was not to “mold the masses” but to challenge and assist people to grasp their own identity and look after their own affairs and interests.21

This was accomplished by the living interaction between students and teacher. After attending Grand View College, which then had a two-year program, I went to Shimer College, an experimental college based on the great books philosophy and discussion style education of Robert Maynard Hutchins. I learned from Walter Capps that Hutchins had studied Grundtvig, and I see the relationship. A successful class is an alive classroom, where together, students and teachers arrive at fresh insights.

The folk school curriculum was composed of storytelling, reading, writing, mathematics, singing, gymnastics, and lectures. Proceedings began and ended with singing. Students lived on campus. Great importance was attached to the constant discussion that took place involving both teachers and students. The folk school concept is anti-academic, anti-elitist. But knowledge of Danish history and the Danish language were necessary for a democratic state. It is interesting that Grundtvig was suspicious of sectarian folk schools; he had a somewhat ambivalent relationship to them. While happy to take the side of the peasant, he saw tendencies in these sectarianism efforts the opposite of what was “folkelig....” 22 Folk schools were to prepare students for life, not exams. A love of
learning replaced the cult of expertise. Obviously, there are situations in which we need and want experts. Our highly technological society depends on experts, but it also relies on the sound judgment of ordinary people who think, ask questions, and come to new understandings. While we need experts to operate on our bodies and build our bridges, our culture cries for a love of learning and a shared community experience.

Grundtvig was against imperialism of any kind; he espoused freedom—political, economic, educational, ecclesiastical, social, and cultural freedom! All human beings, by virtue of being human, not because they belong to one religion or another, can embrace justice, fairness, and decency. How can we build relational community in a world where there is great poverty, wide diversity, and ethnicity, a world that breaks down into acts of exploitation and even genocide? How do we learn to get along? We have learned we must not be naive. We must not allow our principles of freedom and regard for other human beings to be exploited by those who do not share a philosophy of respect for human beings, those who have total disregard for human freedom.

But how does one do that? The folk schools suggest some possibilities. It is significant that the folk schools were a crucial factor in the rise of a “conscious social class,” but not as the result of particular teachings. The schools talked more about happiness than indignation, more about what was wonderful in the world than what was reprehensible.23 What we can do, human being to human being, is to live in relational community. We can affirm Grundtvigian principles in our own lives. Putting good into the world has more effect than we will ever know.

To conclude, the Grundtvigian principles, once more, are:

1. Affirmation of life.
2. Stay close to nature.
3. The goodness and beauty of ordinary life.
4. Lifelong learning and education.

The presentation was followed by the audience singing songs that reflect those values. Some of the songs are included within the text.
Material attributed to Walter Capps was taken from audio tapes of his lecture series in 1991 at Danebod, Tyler, MN.

Ironically, Ostergaard wrote these words at a low point in his life following the closing of his folk school in Denmark due to lack of political land financial support, the death of his wife leaving him with 6 children, and his own impaired health. (World of Song, Biographical Data, Copyright 1958 by the American Evangelical Lutheran Youth Fellowship, Grand View College, Des Moines, Iowa.)


Ibid.

The resource for this paragraph is the audio tape of Axel Kildegaard’s lecture “Grundtvig Today,” August, 1998, Danebod Folk School, Tyler, MN.

A few examples follow: “For a state that is not pleasant or delightful to me must be to him also; and a state that is not pleasing or delightful to me, how could I inflict that upon another?” (Buddhism, Sumyutta Nikaya v. 353); “One going to take a pointed stick to pinch a baby bird should first try it on himself to feel how it hurts.” (Yoruba Proverb, Nigeria); “Not one of you is a believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.” (Islam, Forty Hadith of an-Nawawi 13); “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor; that is the whole Torah; all the rest of it is commentary; go and learn.” (Judaism. Talmud. Shabbat 31a); “You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Christianity, Matthew 22. 36-40).


For the complete text of this and other Danish songs not printed in their entirety, see “The World of Song” or “Songs of Denmark.”

The Mining Journal, Marquette: MI, Thursday, July 23, 2005, Page 7 A.

19 Ingeborg S. MacHaffie and Margaret A. Nielsen Of Danish Ways (Minneapolis, MN: Dillon Press), p. 70.


22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.
Hans Christian Andersen Stories

by Lisa Kramme

During her presentation at the international conference “Danish Culture, Past and Present: The Last Two Hundred Years,” Lisa Kramme shared the following stories by Hans Christian Andersen: “The Princess on the Pea,” “The Old Man Is Always Right,” and “The Little Match Girl.” She also shared several tales of the famous people of Mols, but passed them off as stories about her relatives in Denmark.

Hans Christian Andersen was born on April 2, 1805 in Odense, Denmark, which is on the island of Fyn. He was the son of a shoemaker, and since most shoes at that time were made out of wood, they tended not to wear out very quickly and people did not buy many shoes. As a result, Hans Christian Andersen’s family was quite poor. To make matters worse, Hans’s father died when Hans was only 11 years old.

After going to the school for poor children in Odense for awhile, Hans left his hometown at the age of 14 to attempt to find a career in Copenhagen, the Danish capital. He tried to earn a living as an actor, a singer, and a dancer, but he almost starved while trying. Fortunately, Hans met a wealthy benefactor who helped him obtain a royal scholarship, and he was able to finish his schooling.

In 1829, at the age of 24, Hans Christian Andersen began his writing career in Copenhagen. He began by writing mostly plays and novels, but in 1835, he wrote the first of what was to be his 168 fairy tales. Hans Christian Andersen is known around the world for these stories, ranging from folk tales, to stories based on his life, to tales that make fun of human faults.
Appendix A

Conference Program

Danish Culture, Past and Present: The Last Two Hundred Years

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13

Opening Reception, 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Performance by Grand View College Kantorei
Opening Remarks by Dr. James Iversen, President, DAHS
Remarks by Ms. Lene Balleby, Minister Counselor, Press, Information and Cultural Affairs, Royal Danish Embassy

Keynote Address, 7:30 p.m.
Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg and the Golden Age of Danish Painting
Philip Conisbee, Senior Curator of European Paintings, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. An illustrated presentation.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 14

Session A1, 8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

KAREN BLIXEN (ISAK DINESEN)

Karen Blixen: The Quintessential Dane
Linda Donelson, M.D., Iowa City, Iowa

Picturing Karen Blixen (Isak Dinesen): European Storyteller in the American Marketplace
Marianne Stecher-Hansen, Associate Professor, Department of Scandinavian Studies, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington
Session A2, 8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

DANISH IMMIGRATION

The Greater Challenge: Staying Home or Emigrating?
Inga Wiehl, Ph.D., Comparative Literature, University of Washington, Professor Emerita, Yakima Valley Community College, Yakima, Washington

The Danish Immigrant Project
Per Volquartz, Photographer, Pasadena, California

English-Language Learning and Native-Language Maintenance among Scandinavian Immigrants to Utah, 1850-1930
Dr. Lynn Henrichsen, Linguistics and English Language Department, Brigham Young University; George Bailey, Linguistics and English Language Department, Brigham Young University

Session A3, 8:30 a.m. – 10 a.m.

DANISH-AMERICAN HISTORY

Matie’s Dagbog (Diary)
Avis E. Jorgenson, Ed.D., Tucson, Arizona

The Lone Dane at the Alamo: Charles Zanco and the Design of the Flag of the Independent Republic of Texas
Gerald M. Haslam, Associate Professor of History, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah

A Small Tale: First Trinity Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church, Indianapolis IN
Barbara George, MLA, MSSW, Indianapolis, Indiana
Session B1, 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon

SØREN KIERKEGAARD

The Global Dane: Writing Søren Kierkegaard’s Biography
Joakim Garff, Ph.D., Associate Research Professor, University of Copenhagen,
Copenhagen, Denmark

Kierkegaard’s Concept of Mood
Gordon Marino, Director of the Hong Kierkegaard Library and Boldt Distinguished Professor in the Humanities, St. Olaf College,
Northfield, Minnesota

Session B2, 10:30 a.m. –12:00 noon

DANISH AND AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

Three Tales of Two Towns, How Fanø Entered the Golden Age of Tall Ships
Anne Ipsen, Ph.D., Minneapolis, Minnesota

Culture for Sale in Solvang, California
Hanne Pico Larsen, Ph.D. Candidate, Scandinavian Studies and Folklore, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, California

Between Patrons and Populace: Danish-American Sculptor Carl Rohl-Smith and the Iowa Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument in Des Moines
Aase Bak, Ph.D., Curator, Nordjyllands Kunstmuseum, Aalborg, Denmark
Session B3, 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon

DANISH TECHNOLOGY AND GLOBAL COMMUNITY

What Can We Learn from Danish Farmers?
Palle Pedersen, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Soybean Extension Agronomist,
Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa

History of Wind Technology in Denmark
James Iversen, Ph.D., President, Danish American Heritage Society,
Professor Emeritus,
Ames, Iowa

Whose Memory Is It, After All?
Inger M. Olsen, Adjunct Assistant Professor, Portland State University, Portland, Oregon

Session C1, 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

N.F.S. GRUNDTVIG

N.F.S. Grundtvig’s Approach to Christian Community and Civic Responsibility
Mark C. Mattes, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Philosophy and Religion, Grand View College, Des Moines, Iowa

Grundtvigianism in America
Thorvald Hansen, Editor, Church and Life, Des Moines, Iowa
(Paper read by John Mark Nielsen)

Grundtvig’s Relevance Today: The Current Debate
Henrik Wigh-Poulsen, Director of the Grundtvig Academy, Copenhagen, Denmark

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Session C2, 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

DANISH LITERATURE

A Tale of Two Geniuses—with Opposing Views of Tales—and an Ingenious Critic of Both: H.C. Andersen, Søren Kierkegaard, and Georg Brandes
Poul Houe, Professor, Center for Nordic Studies, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Danish Nobel Laureates in Literature with Special Emphasis on Johannes V. Jensen
Erik M. Christensen, Professor Emeritus, Dr. Phil., Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany

Karen Michaëlis: Famous Danish Novelist and Humanitarian Rebel With a Cause
Merete von Eyben, Ph.D., author, Instructor in English, College of the Canyons, Santa Clarita, California

Session C3, 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

DANISH MUSIC AND POETRY

Gunnar Johansen: Gentlemanly Dane
Piano recital, Solon Pierce, Ph.D., Saint Paul, Minnesota

Hans Christian Andersen in Musical Translation
Musical examples, Jean Christensen, Ph.D., University of Louisville, Kentucky
Session D, 7:00 p.m. – 10 p.m.

DANISH FILMS
Dessert reception following in the Charles S. Johnson Wellness Center Lobby

D1: The Danish Solution

“The Danish Solution”, narrated by Garrison Keillor; written, directed, and produced by Karen Cantor; introduced by Karen Cantor. How and why Jews escaped the Nazis' blueprint for their extermination in Denmark is the subject of this compelling documentary. Through the very human testimony of survivors, the story of the Danish rescue is told with clarity, empathy, and humor.

D2: Italian for Beginners

“Italian for Beginners,” directed by Lone Scherfig, introduced by Professor Mette Hjort. In this beautiful, understated film, every character possesses a naive, heartbreaking honesty and every line communicates the sweet simplicity of basic human longing. This film screened in September 2001 as part of the 39th New York Film Festival, organized by the Film Society of Lincoln Center in New York City.

D3: Young Andersen

“Young Andersen,” directed by Rumle Hammerich and co-produced by Nordisk Film and The Danish Broadcasting Corporation, deals with the birth of Andersen's authorship and lends entertaining and thought-provoking insights into the young, vulnerable soul later to become Denmark's greatest author. The cast includes Henning Jensen, Lars Brygmann, Puk Scharbau, Peter Steen and the 19-year-old debutant Simon Dahl Thaulow.
During Sessions D that took place at Grandview College, Des Moines, Iowa, the Danish Immigrant Archive–Grand View College, was open to attendees.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15

Session E1, 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

Celebrating Hans Christian Andersen 2005
Torben Grøngaard Jeppesen, Director, Ph.D., Odense Museums, Odense, Denmark

The Hersholt Collection of Anderseniana at the Library of Congress
Kristi Planck Johnson, Ph.D., Marymount University and Taru Spiegel, Ph.D., Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Hans Christian Andersen Awards and Other Fairy Tales
Benny Stig Nybo, member of the Hans Christian Andersen Award Committee and the City Council of Odense, Editor, Odense, Denmark

Session E2, 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

DANISH PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

Christian Petersen: From Denmark to the New Deal to Campus Sculptor
Lea Rosson DeLong, Independent Curator, Art Historian, Des Moines, Iowa
Nordjyllands Kunstmuseum, Aalborg, Denmark

A Concerto of Sunbeams: The Delicate and Troubling Interiors of Vilhelm Hammershøi (1864-1916)
Thor J. Mednick, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Fine Art, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana
Gyde-Petersen: A Skagen Artist in America
John R. Christianson, Research Professor of History, Luther College, Decorah, Iowa

Session E3, 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

DANISH-AMERICAN LITERATURE I

The Reception of Danish Science Fiction in the US
Kristine J. Anderson, English and American Theatre Bibliographer, Purdue University Libraries, West Lafayette, Indiana

The Danish-American Poet and Writer Anton Kvist from Chicago. His Life and His Works
Birgit Flemming Larsen, Archivist, ret., Aalborg, Denmark

The Danish-American Poet and Enok Mortensen
Rudolf Jensen, Ph.D., Professor of Scandinavian Studies, Grand View College, Des Moines, Iowa

Session F1, 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

DANISH POETS TODAY

Pia Tafdrup, poet, playwright and novelist, Copenhagen, Denmark

Session F2, 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

DANISH-AMERICAN LITERATURE II

The Veil between Fact and Fiction in the Novels of Kristian Østergaard
John Mark Nielsen, Ph.D., Executive Director, Danish Immigrant Museum, Professor of English, Dana College, Elkhorn, Iowa
Quest and Place in Carl Hansen and Hans Christian Andersen
David Iversen, Librarian, Minot State University, Minot, North Dakota

Of Two Women in Scandinavian-American Immigrant Literature
Mikael Hansen, Computer Programmer, University of California at Berkeley
Modern Day Danish Immigrant and Casual Writer, Berkeley, California

Session F3, 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

DANISH FILM THEN AND NOW

The Globalization of Danish Film
Mette Hjort, Ph.D., Professor and Director of Visual Studies, Lingnan University,
Hong Kong; Professor of Intercultural Studies, Aalborg University,
Aalborg, Denmark.

Revisiting Carl Theodor Dreyer’s Unfilmed Jesus Film Scenario
Peter G. Christensen, Associate Professor of English, Cardinal Stritch University,
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Session G1, 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

DANISH SONG AND STORYTELLING

Songs to Live By -- Danish Song and Culture
Joy Ibsen, writer, composer, Trout Creek, Michigan.

Hans Christian Andersen Stories
Lisa Kramme, storyteller, Fremont, Nebraska
Session G2, 1:15 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Following TOURS were available for the attendees

Tour A: Salisbury House and the Iowa Governor’s Mansion

The Salisbury House is a 42-room mansion modeled after the King's House in Salisbury, England. It has been called a national treasure by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and was featured on the national television series "America's Castles" on the A & E Cable Network and Home and Garden Television's "Christmas Castles." Admission fee of $5.00 is included in the tour registration fee.

The Iowa Governor’s Mansion, Terrace Hill, is an 18,000-square-foot home built in 1869 by Iowa's first millionaire that became the Governor’s residence in 1971. Designed by William Boyington, a popular Chicago architect of his time, Terrace Hill is open to the public and draws thousands of visitors each year.

Tour B: Valley Junction Shopping Tour

Visit more than 120 antique shops, boutiques, art galleries, and clothing stores in historic Valley Junction, the original railroad-stop town of the late 1800s, now a unique attraction in West Des Moines.

Tour C: Walking Tour of East Village, Iowa State Historical Building and Iowa State Capitol

Accompanied by a guide, you’ll visit unique galleries and shops in the revitalizing East Village, tour the Iowa State Historical Building, and see the Iowa State Capitol, with a monument by Danish artist Carl Rohl Smith on the grounds. This tour covers at least 3 miles, so bring your walking shoes.
GRAND BANQUET, 6:30 p.m.
Master of Ceremonies: John Mark Nielsen

The Hans Christian Andersen Fairy Tale Theatre
City of Odense, Denmark
Introduced by Rådmand Jørgen Lund

The Hans Christian Andersen Parade is very Danish and just like a fairy-tale come true. It is a troupe of young actors sponsored by the Hans Christian Andersen Museum in Odense, Denmark, who present tableaux of Hans Christian Andersen fairy tales.

Concluding Remarks
His Excellency Friis Arne Petersen, Denmark’s Ambassador the United States
Dr. James D. Iversen, President, Danish American Heritage Society

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16

TOUR OF DANISH IMMIGRANT MUSEUM, DANISH WINDMILL, AND ELK HORN, IOWA
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Appendix B.

Conference Committees

HONORARY COMMITTEE

Ms. Lene Balleby
Minister Counselor, Press, Information and Cultural Affairs, Royal Danish Embassy

Ms. Carol Bamford
Vice President, Marketing, Grand View College

Hon. Anker Boye
Mayor, City of Odense, Denmark

Mr. Rolf Buschardt Christensen
Federation of Danish Associations in Canada

Mr. Edward P. Gallagher
President, American Scandinavian Foundation

Mr. Kent Henning
President, Grand View College

Mr. Vern Hunter
President, The Danish Immigrant Museum

Ms. Joy Ibsen
Past President, The Danish Immigrant Museum

Dr. James D. Iversen
President, Danish American Heritage Society

Dr. Torben Grøngaard Jeppesen
Director, Odense Museums
Hon. Lowell B. Kramme  
Royal Danish Consul for Iowa

Hon. Bruce R. Lauritzen  
Royal Danish Consul for Nebraska

Dr. Helle Mathiasen  
Director, Program in Medical Humanities, University of Arizona

Mr. Harald Nielsen  
President, The Rebild National Park Society

Dr. John Mark Nielsen  
Director, The Danish Immigrant Museum

Dr. John W. Nielsen  
Director, Danish Immigrant Archive – Dana College

Hon. Karen E. Nielsen  
Royal Danish Consul for Kansas and the Greater Kansas City, Missouri Area

His Excellency Friis Arne Petersen  
Denmark’s Ambassador to the United States

Dr. Janet S. Philipp  
President, Dana College

Hon. Anelise Sawkins  
Royal Danish Consul for Minnesota, North and South Dakota

Hon. Nanna Nielsen Smith  
Royal Danish Consul for Colorado
PLANNING COMMITTEE

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