

‘Gold, Ink, and bitter disappointment: Swedish Journalist Corfitz Cronqvist in Australasia, 1857-95’

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Amongst the thousands of non-British migrants who were drawn to Victoria between 1852 and 1857, not all saw the gold-rich soil of Ballarat and Bendigo in the same light. This article examines the endeavours of Swedish Journalist Corfitz Cronqvist (1833-95), who migrated to Australia in 1857 and established the first Scandinavian-Australian newspaper, Norden. An analysis of Cronqvist’s initial aspirations and spirit-breaking defeats argues that newly arrived migrants often underestimated the difficulties and realities of Australian colonial life. While the accuracy and honesty of his writing is called into question, Cronqvist is nonetheless incredibly valuable as an alternate viewpoint regarding migrant life, mining communities and newspaper history in colonial Victoria.

Throughout the 1840s and 1850s, Australian emigration literature attempted to persuade impoverished Europeans that ‘Australia was a land of opportunity, a paradise for the working man’.¹ But Australia was also promoted – rather honestly – as a harsh frontier landscape where that opportunity came at a cost to one’s own pursuit of social and intellectual gratification. In 1853, John Capper’s *Emigrants Guide to Australia* specifically noted that the colonies had ‘no room for pride and prejudice... no wits or society stars... [and was] no place for scientists or university men’.² It was not promoted as a popular location for writers, journalists, and intellectuals, for valid reasons:

Strong literary tastes are not an advantage in the bush, although it is an admirable resource to enjoy reading where books are to be had, and to refresh the mind by recalling past reading where they are not; but to always be longing for what is out of reach – for society, newspapers, new books – or to be dreaming and grumbling when you should be riding after cattle or closely superintending the important operation of sheep-shearing – is a terrible drawback.³

According to D. J. Golding, such guides clearly noted that success in the new country depended solely on those with strong hands and unbreakable spirits. ‘Again and again it stressed the hardships and difficulties that must be expected

¹ Jan Kociumbas, *The Oxford History of Australia, Volume 2: Possessions* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), 295.

² John Capper, cited in D.J. Golding, *The Emigrants Guide to Australia in the Eighteen Fifties* (Melbourne, Hawthorn Press, 1973), 18-19.

³ John Capper, *The Emigrants Guide to Australia* (Liverpool: George Philip & Son, 1853), 90.

and warned those who were not prepared for hard work and privations that they better stay home'.⁴

However, only four years after *The Emigrants Guide* had espoused these rugged virtues of colonial life, one Swedish migrant did just the opposite to what Capper suggested. In 1857, following the gold discoveries that had drawn so many of his fellow countrymen to the Victorian diggings, a young Swedish journalist arrived in Melbourne with the idea to make his fortune not through mining and backbreaking labour, but by bringing tailored news services to other Scandinavians on the diggings.⁵ Corfitz Cronqvist planned to start a Swedish-language newspaper and rally the 800 or so Scandinavian miners present to a united cause of community creation through their support of his newspaper and the recently established Ballarat Scandinavian Society. Both ventures lasted only a short time, yet are exceptional early attempts of non-British migrant community formation in Australia. His short-lived publication, *Norden [The North]*, was the first Scandinavian-Australian newspaper and the independently formed Scandinavian Society, which Cronqvist joined, was the first overseas Scandinavian society in the world.⁶

This article concerns itself with the remarkable character of Cronqvist – an elitist and naïve Northerner whose overwhelming sense of optimism caused him more grief than success. Through a discussion of his life and adventures, an understanding as to why Cronqvist thought a foreign-language migrant newspaper was a good idea within such a volatile landscape as the Victorian goldfields will be gained. While previous studies of Scandinavian migration to Australia have consistently relied upon Cronqvist's Swedish-language memoir *Vandringar i Australien åren 1857-1859* [Wanderings in Australia in the years 1857-1859]⁷ as a major source regarding immigrant life during the gold-mining period, only his early life in Australia has been well documented.⁸ With the discovery of new evidence regarding his dubious later exploits, Cronqvist's entire life story must be examined for factual accuracy and a greater understanding of the colonial immigrant experience. An analysis of his failings and the disreputable later years of his life demonstrate the extreme disillusionment and bitterness that Cronqvist experienced as his aspirational ventures collapsed, and call into question his honesty as a historical source. Lured to a new land where the rapid growth of 1850s Melbourne falsely advertised the boundless

⁴ Golding, *Emigrants Guide*, 2.

⁵ Miriam Gilson and Jerzy Zubrzycki, *The Foreign-language Press in Australia, 1848-1964* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1967), 13.

⁶ John Stanley Martin, 'The Scandinavian Press in Australia', in *The Ethnic Press in Australia*, ed. Abe (I.) W. Ata and Colin Ryan (Forest Hill: Academia Press, 1989), 70. The term 'Norden' is a synonym for the Scandinavian region, namely Sweden, Denmark, and Norway but also Iceland and Finland to some degree.

⁷ Corfitz Cronqvist, *Vandringar i Australien åren 1857-1859* [Wanderings in Australia in the years 1857-1859], (Gothenburg: Hedlund & Lindskog, 1859).

⁸ See for example: Ulf Beijbom and John Stanley Martin, *Vikings in the South: The Swedes in Australia Volume 1 – Colonial Australia, 1788-1900* (Carlton: River Seine Press, 1988), 39-41; Olavi Koivukangas, *Scandinavian Immigration and Settlement in Australia Before World War II* (Turku: Institute for Migration, 1974), 80-100; Olavi Koivukangas and John Stanley Martin, *The Scandinavians in Australia* (Melbourne, AE Press, 1986), 37-40; Martin, 'Scandinavian Press', 70-71; and Gilson and Zubrzycki, *Foreign-language Press*, 13-14.

opportunities available, idealistic migrants such as Cronqvist were given cause to strive for greatness, but in many cases failed spectacularly.

Gold, migration, and the Ballarat Scandinavian Society

The discovery of gold deposits in rural Victoria in 1851 was instrumental in reshaping Australian pastoral society. According to Jan Kociumbas, gold was ‘the catalyst for [Australian] colonization’, with immigrant arrivals in the new colony of Victoria soaring from around 11,000 in 1851 to over 90,000 per year in 1852 and 1853.⁹ This intake of extra migrants gave Australia the economic and labour boost it needed to drive development and prosperity. The gold discoveries and a developing wool trade also led to an increase in shipping into Port Phillip Bay, which from the 1850s began to include a growing number of Scandinavian ships and sailors.¹⁰ Importantly, this quick repositioning of Australia’s eastern colonies ‘from a hellish place of punishment and human degradation to the land of opportunity promised in the emigration literature’,¹¹ acted to pull not only new British settlers but also a rush of emigrants from other locales, including Scandinavia. As Graeme Davison writes, these new ‘free immigrants of the 1850s were a special stamp of self-helping men, possibly more skilled and ambitious than the ex-convicts and assisted immigrants of other colonies’.¹² Non-British migrants became increasingly common, and ‘it has been estimated that some 10,000 or 15,000 non-British Europeans, about half German, and about 10,000 North Americans visited the Victorian diggings in the five years from 1852’.¹³ Of these, approximately 2000 were of Scandinavian extraction, and some 800 were present in the Ballarat region by 1857.¹⁴

Attaining the actual proportion of Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians within this group is problematic.¹⁵ While Cronqvist claimed that there were some 2,500 Scandinavians present on the diggings in 1857, more than half of whom were Swedish, this may be somewhat an exaggeration.¹⁶ Olavi Koivukangas believes that while Cronqvist’s total estimate may have been close to the mark, the larger

⁹ Kociumbas, *Oxford History of Australia*, 304-305.

¹⁰ John Stanley Martin, *Ethnic Identity and Social Organisation in the Scandinavian Community in Melbourne, 1870-1910* (Parkville, Vic.: University of Melbourne, 1982), 3.

¹¹ Kociumbas, *Oxford History of Australia*, 302.

¹² Graeme Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004), 11.

¹³ Kociumbas, *Oxford History of Australia*, 304.

¹⁴ Olavi Koivukangas found that approximately 2000 Scandinavian settlers arrived in Victoria during the peak period of 1852-1857, with a total of 5000 permanent Scandinavians settlers arriving across the entire 1850s and 1860s. See: Koivukangas, *Scandinavian Immigration*, 87. Ulf Beijbom and John Stanley Martin state that the Ballarat region contained approximately 800 Scandinavian men in the later 1850s, a third of whom were Swedish. See: Beijbom and Martin, *Vikings in the South*, 39.

¹⁵ While naturalisation records give an idea of the numbers of permanent migrants to arrive during the 1850s, ‘it is impossible to estimate the number of those who for shorter or longer periods visited the goldfields’. See: Koivukangas, *Scandinavian Immigration*, 87. As not all deserted seamen were reported, it is very difficult to fully understand the scale of the Scandinavian gold-mining experience, especially in regards to the Norwegians. See: Koivukangas and Martin, *Scandinavians in Australia*, 38.

¹⁶ Gilson and Zubrzycki draw attention to the 1857 Census of Victoria, which list only 4976 persons from an aggregate group known as ‘Other Europe’ – Scandinavians grouped with all other Europeans in the entire state, bar French and German migrants. See: Gilson and Zubrzycki, *Foreign-language Press*, 13.

proportion of Danes in the naturalisation records indicates that half of the permanent settlers who arrived in the 1850s and 1860s were actually Danish, not Swedish.¹⁷ John Stanley Martin states that this ‘preponderance of Danes [w]as a result of the disbanding of the Danish Army after the First Slesvig War 1848-50’,¹⁸ as an already displaced group of young, unemployed Danes sought gold-mining opportunities overseas.

According to Martin, ‘on the Australian goldfields Scandinavians would often form informal social networks. This clustering was facilitated by mutual linguistic comprehension as well as similar culture, history, religion, and traditions’.¹⁹ In April 1857, these migrants came together formally through the establishment of the Ballarat Scandinavian Society, a new venture which aimed to ‘help the Scandinavians in Ballarat as well as to cater for their social, cultural, educational and spiritual needs’.²⁰ In the interests of partisan cooperation that would be common in later pan-Scandinavian organisations, two Danes, C.A. Tuxen and L. E. Bruun, two Swedes, Oscar Skoglund and J.R. Löfvén, and two Norwegians, T. Asche and J. Börstun, were elected as an executive committee.²¹ A house was bought on Bridge Street to accommodate the Society, and a main priority was also the establishment of a Scandinavian church and congregation.²² As Cronqvist would later write, the Scandinavian Society’s goals were flawed in their ability to deliver the promised church, yet a unique experiment trialled by the Scandinavian miners:

The foundation idea was beautiful, but not viable in a country so minimally pious as Australia and with a Scandinavian population so small in religion as the one present: One wanted namely to create a Scandinavian Association and build a church hall – the idea was, as said, good, it was beautiful, high, but it was most of all *new*.²³

Corfitz Cronqvist’s arrival in Melbourne

Into this environment of rapid growth and ideas of Scandinavian community came Corfitz Cronqvist (1833-95), a young Swedish journalist who arrived in Melbourne in May 1857. Born in Malmö in southern Sweden in 1833, Cronqvist had followed his father, publisher and owner of *Malmö Nya Allehanda* [*Malmö New Journal*], Johan Cronqvist, into newspaper production, training as a typographer before being appointed foreman of the *Nya Wexjö-Bladet* [*New Wexjö Newspaper*] printing works at age nineteen.²⁴ Prior to emigrating, he was

¹⁷ Koivukangas, *Scandinavian Immigration*, 87.

¹⁸ Martin, *Ethnic Identity and Social Organisation*, 4.

¹⁹ Martin, ‘Scandinavian Press’, 70.

²⁰ Beijbom and Martin, *Vikings in the South*, 39.

²¹ Cronqvist, *Vandringar i Australien*, 41-42.

²² Koivukangas, *Scandinavian Immigration*, 95.

²³ Cronqvist, *Vandringar i Australien*, 41. My emphasis added.

²⁴ ‘Obituary of Anna Cristina Cronqvist’, *Kalmar*, 9 February 1893, 2; Beijbom and Martin *Vikings in the South*, 39. Beijbom and Martin have his year of birth as 1853, which is obviously a mistake. According to the Unassisted Inward Passenger lists, Cronqvist was 24 in 1857, thereby born in 1833. See: Public Records Office Victoria, *Index to Unassisted Inward Passenger Lists to Victoria 1852-1923*, accessed 15 January 2013, http://prov.vic.gov.au/search_results?searchid=23&format=freetext&FamilyName=cronquist

to one pound for a normal ten-hour day's work.....with that kind of pay we all risked delusions of grandeur.³⁰

This rapid growth and the possibility for success in Melbourne fed Cronqvist's belief that a Scandinavian newspaper could be viable there, even without proper research into the actual numbers or locations of his potential readership. His book detailed the costs for new and extravagant buildings that grew from unpaved streets, the rush to expand the city's services, even the exorbitant wages of the Mayor.³¹ Importantly, Cronqvist noted in 1859 the growth of Melbourne's newspaper industry, its rapid success in the boom town as another factor in his belief that his *Norden* could be viable:

Melbourne has three daily newspapers (the smallest is twice as large as *Aftonbladet*) with a publication of 8,000, 10,000, and 12,000 copies; in addition, 20 to 25 weekly newspapers. A German [newspaper] has survived for a year's time, but must close due to lack of support. There are over 40 book publishers, 5 of which are supplied with steam presses (one is worth £25,000) and works of great typographic elegance are produced from several of them.³²

As Cronqvist indicates, newspapers such as such as *The Herald* (Melbourne) (1840) *The Argus* (1846), and *The Age* (1854) had grown in response to the rapid growth of the city.³³ Furthermore, 'a country press began to spring up by the 1840s, and boosted by the gold-rushes and population increase, was extremely vigorous by the 1860s'.³⁴ In terms of other migrant publications, Cronqvist's retrospective mention of a failed German-language newspaper demonstrates the mood of journalistic experimentation and opportunity felt by other migrant communities, especially those intellectuals that would arrive in the wake of the 1848 revolutions.³⁵

Enamoured in what he called the Australian 'go-a-head system', Cronqvist's belief that his venture was warranted was strengthened by an elitist attitude that

³⁰ Claus Grønn, *Gold! Gold! Diary of Claus Grønn: A Dane on the Diggings*, ed. Cora McDougall and trans. Gullivi Ubbersen (Melbourne: Hill of Content Publishing Company 1981), 60-61.

³¹ Cronqvist, *Vandringar i Australien*, 7-8. He also details the fast establishment of public institutions to support Melbourne's development, noting churches, theatres, and public houses as part of the growing cityscape, and the somewhat cosmopolitan and pluralistic atmosphere the great gold migrations had created – 'over 25 different [religious] sects have their chapels and temples, including a German Lutheran Church'. See: Cronqvist, *Vandringar i Australien*, 9.

³² *Ibid.*, 11. *Aftonbladet [Evening News]* is one of Sweden's oldest popular tabloid news services, founded in 1830 and still operating today.

³³ Henry Mayer, *The Press in Australia* (Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1968), 15.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Cronqvist most likely is referring to Hermann Puettmann's *Deutsche Monatschrift fuer Australien [German Monthly Magazine for Australia]* (1858) which became the *Melbourner Deutsche Zeitung [Melbourne German Newspaper]* in September 1859 and continued weekly until 1860. Gilson and Zubryzcki note that it became 'a lively newspaper which regularly published a digest of European news, feature articles on prominent German liberal thinkers, as well as news reports of German societies throughout Victoria', changing names several times before disappearing in July 1862. At his time of arrival and arranging *Norden*, Cronqvist would have been unaware of the German press' similar struggle to remain in business. See: Gilson and Zubryzcki, *Foreign-language Press*, 10-11.

likened Melbourners to civilised Parisians, Berliners, Stockholmers and Copenhageners, yet with their own half-English, half-American character.³⁶ Such a vibrant publishing scene across the Australian colonies, with circulation numbers that rivalled the established newspapers of Cronqvist's Sweden, the visible increase in Scandinavian migrant numbers in such a concentrated area as the Victorian goldfields, and extremely influential economic growth, were important factors in convincing Cronqvist that Melbourne was a cosmopolitan city of opportunity, and that his own Scandinavian-Australian newspaper could prosper there.

The establishment of Norden: Cronqvist sets to work

As Miriam Gilson and Jerzy Zubrzycki have noted, Cronqvist's early establishment of *Norden* in July 1857 meant that the Scandinavians were the second migrant group to establish a foreign-language press in Australia, following the German press of 1848 but ahead of the French in 1858.³⁷ In this respect, Cronqvist's goals were undoubtedly ground-breaking. Despite only landing in Victoria some two months prior to *Norden*'s establishment, Cronqvist attempted to make contact with potential readers outside of Melbourne, particularly to those Scandinavians on the Bendigo diggings. By July 1857, Cronqvist had become acquainted with Karl Van Damme, a Swede also from Malmö who had been prospecting in the Bendigo region for several years. Van Damme had arrived in Australia in 1852 at the age of twenty-two, and had gone straight to Bendigo where he had purchased a partnership in a tobacconist business while also working as a gold prospector.³⁸ While Cronqvist initially established the newspaper in Melbourne and desired to stay there as the base of operations, he arranged for Van Damme to be *Norden*'s agent on the gold-fields, particularly in the Bendigo region.³⁹

From the week beginning Saturday 18 July, news of *Norden*'s impending arrival was reported in the *Bendigo Advertiser* in an attempt to stir support for the fledgling newspaper and bring it to the attention of the Scandinavian mining community. Van Damme's position as agent for *Norden* was advertised in order to promote the first issue, which was to appear on Thursday 23 July. Described as a Swedish-Danish newspaper, Van Damme stated that the newspaper would largely be concerned with the important political news of the homeland nations, which would appeal to miners out of contact with their home states. *Norden* would, for example, 'contain original articles on Scandinavianism and the latest exchanges of notes between the Swedish and Danish Cabinets, King Oscar's abdication, the ministerial Crisis in Denmark, [as well as] Australian news'.⁴⁰ The advertisement was reprinted throughout the week, on 21, 23, 25 July, and by the 25 July, it had been moved to appear on the front page of the

³⁶ Cronqvist, *Vandringar i Australien*, 12.

³⁷ These newspapers were *Die Deutsche Post fuer die Australischen Kolonien* [*The German Post for the Australian Colonies*] (1848-1850) and *Le Journal de Melbourne* [*Journal of Melbourne*] (1858). See: Gilson and Zubrzycki, *Foreign-language Press*, 4-15.

³⁸ He was also noted as being a literary contributor to *The Argus* in his early days in Australia and later to *The Australasian* (1864), his literary leanings as well as his links to Malmö leading him into co-operation with Cronqvist. See: 'Obituary of Mr Karl Van Damme, J.P.', *Bendigonian*, 7 March 1918, 25.

³⁹ 'Scandinavia', *Bendigo Advertiser*, 18 July 1857, 4.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

broadsheet due to increased interest.⁴¹ The newspaper further noted that ‘K.V.D. ventures to hope that his Countrymen on the Goldfields will not be slow in supporting so patriotic and interesting an undertaking’.⁴² Cronqvist’s *Norden* was predominantly in Swedish and was printed on Thursdays, and sold for a shilling per copy.⁴³

Cronqvist and Van Damme’s activities did not go unnoticed by the local Victorian newspapers, which reported the establishment of *Norden* throughout the final week of July 1857. The *Bendigo Advertiser* wrote that the new weekly journal would be ‘for the especial benefit of the Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian residents of Victoria,’⁴⁴ marking it as not simply a Swedish publication but Scandinavian in scope. The Melbourne *Argus* gave further details of the scope of the new journal to its readers, which was then reprinted the week later in Sydney’s *Empire*:

Intelligence from the far North occupies a considerable portion of the columns of our young contemporary; who also furnishes his readers with a *feuilleton*, after the fashion of the journals of continental Europe. A list of unclaimed letters addressed to “hardy northmen” in the colony is given and the advertisements of Melbourne tradesmen appear in the first time in the language spoken by the “sea-kings” with whom so many of our own countrymen may claim affinity by descent. The *Norden* is very neatly printed; and the issue of a paper of this kind is an interesting occurrence in the history of colonial journalism.⁴⁵

Copies were also sent back to Sweden in August 1857, in the hope that the newspaper would be a valuable tool for families seeking news of their sons, and thereby gain transnational subscribers. Upon receiving the 6 August 1857 issue some three months later in October 1857, Swedish government newspaper *Post- och Inrikes Tidningar* [*Post and Domestic Times*] reported the details of the Australian venture, notably *Norden*’s provision of ‘a special detachment which includes submitted greetings from emigrants to friends in Scandinavia, with details of addresses, etc.’⁴⁶ It also listed the Swedish names present in advertisements, as well as Cronqvist’s growing list of agents, in order to give Swedish relatives some news of their loved ones. Listed among others were notable Ballarat Scandinavian Society committee members Oscar Skoglund and J.R. Löfvén, indicating *Norden*’s growing ties to the Ballarat community.⁴⁷

⁴¹ ‘Scandinavia’, *Bendigo Advertiser*, 25 July 1857, 1.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Jens Lyng, *The Scandinavians in Australia, New Zealand and the Western Pacific* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1939), 61.

⁴⁴ ‘Melbourne News (From the Papers)’, *Bendigo Advertiser*, 25 July 1857, 2.

⁴⁵ ‘Norden’, *The Argus*, 24 July 1857, 4. The fact that the article was reprinted the following week in Sydney’s *Empire* shows the perceived importance of the new journal across the colonies as a talking point, at least, for other locales with potential Scandinavian readers.

⁴⁶ ‘Scandinavian Newspaper in Australia’, *Post- och Inrikes Tidning* [*Post and Domestic Times*], 26 October 1857, 2.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

Norden's move to Ballarat

After the first few weeks of publishing *Norden* from Melbourne, Cronqvist became aware of the Scandinavian Society in Ballarat, and decided that he could benefit by being closer to his main concentration of potential readers. By the spring of 1857 he had relocated to the goldfields,⁴⁸ under the impression that the gold-rush was not a temporary occurrence and that the community of Scandinavian miners was stable enough to require similarly permanent news services. He was encouraged by the success of other regional newspapers such as *The Bendigo Advertiser*, which had grown to hold great sway over colonial affairs; 'a local journal of great influence and circulation ... a paper above clap-trap, and thoroughly identified with the digging and mining interests'.⁴⁹ If such newspapers could be assured their place on the diggings, Cronqvist certainly did not doubt his own ability to continue *Norden* from this new locale. The publication was to be linked to the Society as its informational vehicle and to promote Scandinavian cooperation in the colonies.⁵⁰ Through *Norden* and his involvement in the Society itself as secretary, Cronqvist attempted to cultivate an intellectual atmosphere capable of sparking greater interest in the newspaper and its fraternal goals of Scandinavian unity. He donated his collection of some 150 books to form the basis of a lending library, and gave public readings from them during Society meetings in the hope that this would strengthen Scandinavian community ties.⁵¹

Throughout September and October 1857 the Ballarat community continued to support Cronqvist's efforts; however the Society quickly proved to be a fractured and dissentious group incapable of cooperating for the good of his newspaper.⁵² One of the main reasons for the Society's creation – to establish a Scandinavian church to aid in the spiritual needs of the miners – caused divisions within the association regarding the nationality of the pastor, to a point where it was eventually decided not to continue with the church plans, even though they had acquired sufficient capital to build the chapel.⁵³ While approximately one hundred people had shown initial interest in the organisation and had contributed to a proposed church, the Society's numbers quickly receded until only a core of twenty active members remained.⁵⁴ Cronqvist sadly proclaimed that instead large numbers of Scandinavian miners preferred to meet and socialise over drinks at the two Norwegian owned hotels rather than visit their own Bridge Street Society.⁵⁵ Unable to arouse continued support, *Norden* could not locate a sufficiently interested market. The newspaper lasted for three months, with only fifteen issues printed, before Cronqvist was forced to abandon the venture.⁵⁶

⁴⁸ Beijbom and Martin, *Vikings in the South*, 39.

⁴⁹ William Kelly, *Life in Victoria, Volume II: Victoria in 1858* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1859), 206; John Capper had also mentioned that 'three newspapers are to be started at Bendigo and one of them in Melbourne, devoted to the digging interest', including the *Bendigo Advertiser*. See: Capper, cited in D.J. Golding, *Emigrants Guide*, 202.

⁵⁰ Martin, 'Scandinavian Press', 70; Koivukangas and Martin, *Scandinavians in Australia*, 40.

⁵¹ Koivukangas and Martin, *Scandinavians in Australia*, 40

⁵² Gilson and Zubrzycki, *Foreign-language Press*, 14.

⁵³ Beijbom and Martin, *Vikings in the South*, 39.

⁵⁴ Koivukangas and Martin, *Scandinavians in Australia*, 39-40; Cronqvist, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁵⁵ Cronqvist, *Vandringar i Australien*, 44; Koivukangas, *Scandinavian Immigration*, 96.

⁵⁶ Koivukangas, *Scandinavian Immigration*, 96; Beijbom and Martin, *Vikings in the South*, 40.

The failings of an early newspaper

Ultimately, Cronqvist failed to take into account the constant movement of the local migrant population, and their real goals of being in Australia. The moment any Scandinavian miner acquired a sufficient fortune, or as Cronqvist wrote, acquired ‘*anything*, they turned their back quickly on the gold country, which with all its treasure was still very hard and difficult to work in’.⁵⁷ Furthermore, as Jens Lyng would write later, the gold-diggers ‘were widely scattered and had no fixed abode, [and] it may be assumed that Mr. Cronqvist [*sic*] had to cover a large area to “make tucker”, let alone keep a newspaper going’.⁵⁸ The lack of a semi-permanent community was certainly a setback for Cronqvist, as was his belief that the low social and educational level of his fellow Scandinavian miners was responsible for their disinterest in his journalistic and community building ventures.⁵⁹

Cronqvist was very harsh on his fellow Scandinavians’ educational standards, noting that ‘of [the some 2500 Scandinavians on the diggings] at the most 200 have received schooling – those that are able to write *something* more than their own name – and perhaps only 30 of these have theoretic and practical knowledge’.⁶⁰ The majority, according to Cronqvist, were tradesmen, farmers, and unskilled labourers, and it was this last group that, along with a large contingent of deserted sailors, were most common on the goldfields and also the least interested in his journalistic endeavours.⁶¹

However, despite Cronqvist’s insistence of low educational standards amongst the Scandinavian migrants, evidence suggests the contrary and undermines this as a strong excuse for his failings. Beijbom and Martin note in particular the ‘strong element on the Australian gold-fields of Swedish sons of middle-class and aristocratic homes [which] must have also set its mark on the Scandinavian Society of Ballarat’.⁶² Furthermore, Koivukangas writes that there was a mix of ‘doctors, lawyers, sea captains and businessmen together with criminals from the old countries’⁶³ on the diggings, and Claus Grønn is notable in his insistence that many Scandinavian miners he met were educated to some degree;⁶⁴ all of which cast doubts on this as a valid reason for Cronqvist’s failures. While the majority of Ballarat’s Scandinavians had expressed interest in united social activity, they were insufficiently determined – and too mobile – to form a lasting ethnic community capable of maintaining Cronqvist’s pan-Scandinavian journal.

As such, the first incarnation of *Norden* lasted only three months before Cronqvist realised the futility of his journalistic ventures, himself demonstrating

⁵⁷ Cronqvist, *Vandringar i Australien*, 41. My emphasis.

⁵⁸ Lyng, *The Scandinavians in Australia, New Zealand and the Western Pacific*, 61.

⁵⁹ Beijbom and Martin, *Vikings in the South*, 39.

⁶⁰ Cronqvist, *Vandringar i Australien*, 41. His emphasis.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Beijbom and Martin believe that Cronqvist made contacts and friends amongst these other Swedish sons, in particular those also hailing from Malmö, such as Karl and Peter Van Damme, Samuel Peter Mattsson, Jonas Angelin, Carl Johan Krumlinde, Christian Petter Kockum, Christian and Robert Ruhe, and Karl Oskar, Otto, and Konrad Treffenberg. See: Beijbom and Martin, *Vikings in the South*, 40.

⁶³ Koivukangas, *Scandinavian Immigration*, 93.

⁶⁴ *Norden*, 3 September 1904, 8.

the impermanent nature of the community by packing up and leaving Ballarat.⁶⁵ Despairingly, in 1859 he blamed self-complacency and egoism for the failure of Scandinavian migrant unity and, by proxy, his newspaper:

This was to have been a Society not bound by diplomatic strings but by the people themselves... One would have hoped that all Scandinavians in Australia, on hearing a call, would rush to give a hand to a brotherly association and stand under the Scandinavian flag. Where else do you need togetherness if not in a foreign country?.⁶⁶

Cronqvist's extreme bitterness and later life

The failure of the first Scandinavian-Australian newspaper had disastrous effects on the young journalist, whose initial optimism could not be sustained following his failure to rally the local Scandinavian expatriate community. He was also ill-suited to the bush lifestyle, as he found 'the climate of Ballarat especially unpleasant, with its constant change of weather, sudden flooding, searing summer winds and humidity'.⁶⁷ Following the collapse of *Norden*, a bitter Cronqvist moved back to Melbourne in early 1858, and after travelling extensively to the gold fields of Bendigo and McIvor during this time to gather material for a planned book – to salvage what good remained of his experiences and profit from its publication – he eventually gave up on the Australian gold fields entirely.⁶⁸

By March 1859, Cronqvist had moved to Sydney, where he completed *Wanderings in Australia* and was contemplating travelling to California to seek further fortunes.⁶⁹ In its pages, Cronqvist downplayed his role in the failed *Norden* and the Scandinavian Society – instead writing extensively about the Australian cities and gold-fields to produce his own emigrants guide for prospective Swedish gold-miners.⁷⁰ Cronqvist then disappeared from historical sources for some eight years, so he might indeed have made the voyage to 'visit the world's other large gold colony, California', and to try his luck afresh.⁷¹ Despite his presence in the Australian press, the Californian newspapers of the time fail to mention him. Only the fact that his book was self-published in California gives any indication that he made the journey to the United States for at least a time.⁷²

⁶⁵ Koivukangas and Martin, *Scandinavians in Australia*, 40.

⁶⁶ Cronqvist, *Vandringar i Australien*, 43-45; also cited in Gilson and Zubrzycki, *Foreign-language Press*, 14.

⁶⁷ Beijbom and Martin, *Vikings in the South*, 39.

⁶⁸ Cronqvist, *Vandringar i Australien*, 56, 65, 85, 106.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

⁷⁰ In May 1859, the Swedish newspaper *Norrköpingskuriren* [*Norrköping Courier*] drew attention to Cronqvist's 'interesting stories from Australia', which had been published in the *Göteborg Handelstidning* [*Gothenburg Trade Journal*]. *Norrköpingskuriren* specifically mentioned Cronqvist's intention 'to now take himself to California and from there to Utah, where he will be closer to learn of Mormon practices and industry'. See: *Norrköpingskuriren*, 24 May 1859, 2.

⁷¹ Cronqvist, *Vandringar i Australien*, 5.

⁷² Both Martin and Gilson and Zubrzycki believed that Cronqvist had returned to Sweden in 1859, possibly due to his book *Wanderings in Australia* being primarily published in

Instead, evidence suggests that he spent some of this time in a Sydney gaol, as his failing optimism gave way to despair and drink. Where he could not make a living through journalism or clerical work, a weary Cronqvist proceeded through petty crime, his disreputable exploits being sensationalised in the ensuing years by colonial newspapers:

Finding no scope in the mechanical application of “type snatching” for an exuberant intellect such as his, Corfitz determined to strike out another track, where [in Sydney] he was employed in the capacity of merchant’s clerk, but mistaking his master’s cash box for his trousers pocket, received two years as a reminder of his mistake.⁷³

Cronqvist reappeared in New Zealand in the late 1860s, lured there by new gold discoveries. In 1867, he passed through the Otago goldfields, giving public lectures on phrenology whilst charging for private consultations.⁷⁴ Cronqvist became somewhat a celebrity in the ensuing years, and can be found still proposing lectures in the Lawrence region two years later in March 1869.⁷⁵ However, Cronqvist’s phrenology tour was disrupted following the discovery of a spate of petty thefts, which sparked a period of constant movement across New Zealand and the Pacific for the troubled journalist. Arrested for forgery and passing valueless cheques in Dunedin, upon release from gaol he became proof-reader for *The Sun*, a newly established morning newspaper.⁷⁶ Losing this position due to a misprint that accidentally insulted a town official, he ‘left the office, but not till he had indulged his mania for petty larceny, stealing even the suppers of his fellow *employés*’.⁷⁷ Escaping New Zealand for Fiji, he found trouble by stealing a hotel owner’s cashbox.⁷⁸ After ‘several disreputable episodes, the authorities having no gaol, declared him a vagabond in the *Fiji Times*, whereupon he took sail to Sydney’.⁷⁹ While involved in his troubled sojourn, Cronqvist continued to write articles back to the Swedish press, and was reported as a news correspondent for the *Nerikes Allehanda [Närke Journal]* in 1871.⁸⁰ He had also been promoting himself at varying times as an agent and correspondent for the *Sydney Mail*, the *Town and Country Journal*, and the

Gothenburg. However, there is no evidence to substantiate this, with the work being completed in Sydney in 1859 and published in not only Gothenburg but also in Melbourne and self-published in California. His links to the Gothenburg Trade Journal strengthen the idea that he did not return home, instead publishing via his friends back in Sweden. See: Gilson and Zubrzycki, *Foreign-language Press*, 10; Martin, ‘Scandinavian Press’, 70-71.

⁷³ ‘Adventure and Vicissitude’, *Wellington Independent*, 26 May 1871, 3.

⁷⁴ ‘Lecture on Phrenology’, *The Oamaru Times and Waitaki Reporter*, 13 August 1867, 2;

‘Advertisements’, *The Oamaru Times and Waitaki Reporter*, 13 August 1867, 3.

⁷⁵ ‘Tuapeka districts’, *Bruce Herald*, 24 March 1869, 3.

⁷⁶ ‘An Accomplished Forger’, *Colonist*, 24 October 1882, 3.

⁷⁷ ‘A Very Hot Member’, *Otago Witness*, 13 March 1875, 17.

⁷⁸ Cronqvist was reported to have stolen a cashbox from an inn, and found guilty. His punishment, due to a lack of gaol on Fiji, was the publication of his crime in the *Fiji Times*, which Cronqvist denounced as a ‘malicious, mean, and dastardly allegation’. See: ‘The Fiji Islands’, *South Australian Register*, 16 May 1871, 3.

⁷⁹ ‘Accomplished Forger’, 3.

⁸⁰ Beijbom and Martin *Vikings in the South*, 40.

Sydney Morning Herald, however his actual employment in these positions is unsure.⁸¹

By 1875, Cronqvist was reported back in Sydney, where he had been sentenced to three years imprisonment for stealing a five pound bank draft from a colleague after losing all his money whilst on a drinking spree.⁸² According to Cronqvist's self-defence, he:

had been on the "spree" and had spent £150 while on it; that while drunk he had missed his passage by the *Cyphrenes* to San Francisco, after having paid for it; that he had delirium tremens three times successively, and that in order to satisfy his craving for drink he had, when his own money was gone, stolen the draft in question from his "friend" Mr Blitz.⁸³

The New Zealand newspapers, which followed the ex-celebrity phrenologist closely, noted that 'by no means deficient in ability, and gifted with persuasive powers and a facility of speech of more than a common order, he seems possessed by a mania for thieving and defrauding'.⁸⁴ Upon release he wrote several articles concerning the prison system for the *Sydney Bulletin*, but was ironically caught forging the editor's name on a cheque and was promptly 'recommitted to his dungeon cell where he now pines. Such is part of the history of a confirmed criminal, although a well-educated man'.⁸⁵ Cronqvist's tragic later years marred his earlier endeavours, and his remarkable attempts to establish the first Scandinavian foreign-language publication in Australia. He died in Melbourne Hospital on 1 June 1895.⁸⁶

Unravelling the full life of an early Scandinavian-Australian journalist shows the immensely problematic nature of a migrant finding success in colonial Australia, let alone establishing a newspaper. Originally an optimistic and driven young man upon his arrival, Cronqvist's determination and desires to forge a new and successful journalistic life on the Australian gold-fields were shattered with the failings of the Scandinavian Society and his own newspaper. Bitter and disillusioned by the experience, his later life spiralled out of control as he was gripped by alcoholism and petty criminality; the sense of opportunity felt by Cronqvist upon his arrival and espoused by the much admired 'go-ahead system' was finally lost after countless setbacks. In this way, Cronqvist can be seen as an exemplar of the very type of migrant that John Capper attempted to dissuade from

⁸¹ Upon being arrested in 1875, Cronqvist was listed as being previously convicted for misrepresenting himself in Orange as an agent for the *Sydney Mail*. The court also doubted his connections to the *Town and Country Journal*, and his current position with the *Sydney Morning Herald*, where he was due to travel to California as special correspondent. See: 'A Very Hot Member' 17.

⁸² 'The Sequel of a "Spree"', *Westport Times*, 23 February 1875, 4.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ 'A Very Hot Member', 17.

⁸⁵ 'An Accomplished Forger', 3.

⁸⁶ 'No. 6365: Corfitz Cronqvist', *Deaths in the District of East Melbourne, 1895*, Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, 1895. Cronqvist is listed as 65 years, being overcome by Bright's disease and heart failure. Beijbom and Martin note him passing in a Melbourne hospice for the poor in 1895. See: Beijbom and Martin, *Vikings in the South*, 40.

coming to Australia – well educated and optimistic, yet wholly unsuited and ill-prepared for the trials to be faced here.

Cronqvist's later failings are important in showing how his account of early Scandinavian migrant developments cannot be taken as complete fact, which is startling when one perceives how much early knowledge of the Scandinavians in this period are built on his account alone. Lyng, Gilson and Zubrzycki, Koivukangas and Martin and Beijbom have all used Cronqvist's writings as a major source for the period, and developed their greatest opinions of his significance.⁸⁷ But underlying this history is a very troubled immigrant and his early optimism and validity as a source must be balanced with his later life. While continuing to be involved in journalism wherever possible, his weakened character and propensity for crime and dishonesty raise questions as to the accuracy of *Wanderings in Australia* and his description of his early endeavours. The over exaggeration of Scandinavian migrant life on the diggings, his thoughts over the Scandinavian Society, even his reasons for *Norden's* failings, must be considered as somewhat untrue given the clearly bitter and emotional Cronqvist, who attempted to blame everyone but himself for *Norden's* demise. While certainly a remarkable figure in Australian migrant press history, one cannot help but feel that his negative experiences were shared by countless other dreamers who, unlike Cronqvist, left no written trace of their shortcomings.

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⁸⁷ Koivukangas also points out how bitterness seems to discredit Cronqvist's account, yet the severity of the bitterness was not fully known at the time of writing. See: Koivukangas, *Scandinavian Immigration*, 94.

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