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Engendering a Memorable Place: Holger Drachmann as Travel-Writer.

Henk van der Liet

It is no longer the presence of the past that speaks to us, but its pastness.
(David Lowenthal: *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 1985)

Travel, transportation and border crossings play important roles in the life and work of the Danish author Holger Drachmann (1846-1908). Not only did he travel extensively, at home and abroad, but he also wrote a number of travelogues and essayistic accounts about his travels and journeys. One of the most remarkable of these works is *Derovre fra Grænsen* (From Across the Border), first published in 1877. The book soon became popular and was reprinted many times, even twice in the twentieth century.¹

This essay begins with a brief introduction to Drachmann and his work. Subsequently it deals with a few early travels which Drachmann undertook in the period around 1871, which is a significant year in Scandinavian literary history (Ingwersen 1992:261ff). Some comments will be made too about the ways in which these journeys are reflected in Drachmann's early works. Finally, attention will be drawn to one specific travel book, the above-mentioned *Derovre fra Grænsen*, because it offers an insight into the way Drachmann mapped out and constructed one particular geographical and mental 'place', the battlefield of Dybbøl in Southern Jutland. This memorable place has since the publication of *Derovre fra Grænsen* been increasingly recognised as a symbolic site of national history, and today it is primarily known for the historical meaning it represents (Adriansen 2003:253).

It is the investigation into the relationship between a text and its defining and constructing of a symbolic and mental topography, which is the implicit goal of this essay. Therefore, some theoretical considerations on the processing of travel experiences, the concept of border crossing in Drachmann's literary work, and what this means for the engendering of collective memory, will also be discussed.

Drachmann's oeuvre

Drachmann made his official debut as a writer in 1872 and was very productive right up until his death in 1908. During most of this period his contemporaries regarded him – as he himself did – as the national Danish poet *par excellence* (Liet 2004a:144). Drachmann's renown was undisputed and lasted until his death. In the decades following his death though, an irreversible decline in his popularity has taken place. Nevertheless, Drachmann's name still has a familiar ring to most Danes. This is to some extent due to his affiliation with the literary movement around the critic Georg Brandes (1842-1927), and the so-called *Modern Breakthrough* in Scandinavian literature. Another reason why Drachmann is still remembered today, and still appeals to the imagination of many contemporary Danes, is his once much-discussed, notoriously bohemian life-style and his tempestuous love life. In the eyes of the public at large, he still is perceived as the modern bohemian poet of his time.

Despite appearances, Drachmann was not just a profligate. His oeuvre is actually one of the most voluminous in all of Danish nineteenth-century literature. Some sixty books and innumerable smaller publications appeared during his lifetime, covering a wide range of genres: poetry, drama, novels, stories, essays, travelogues, journalism, translations, and more.² Furthermore, Drachmann was a highly productive visual artist as well. He was a skilful painter, who often illustrated his own works, and in his note- and sketchbooks, words and images are intertwined, often appearing in hybrid generic forms. It is also worth noting, that Drachmann started his career as a painter, and not as a writer. He took his first steps in the literary arena as a journalist, or – more precisely – as a travel writer and chronicler.

Holger Drachmann grew up in the inner city of Copenhagen, in a family distinguished by liberal attitudes and social mobility. Through the activities of his father, who among other things was a ship's doctor, and by rummaging the harbour just around the corner from the parental home, Drachmann, became familiar with ships, sailors, and life at sea from an early age. Later, these themes became the cornerstones of his oeuvre, particularly in his travel writing, and poetry.

After finishing primary school in 1865, Drachmann was enrolled in the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, where he specialized in marine painting (Weilbach 1896:208). He turned out to be a promising young artist, and when his first paintings were exhibited in public in 1869 his talent was immediately recognized and appreciated. The two paintings that were shown at that first exhibition³ were the result of the first substantial journeys Drachmann undertook: two trips to the island of Bornholm in the summers of

1866 and 1868, and a European grand tour-like sea voyage to Scotland, Gibraltar, Sicily and back home to Denmark over land from Genoa in early 1867. In 1871 Drachmann visited the United Kingdom where especially the deprived existence of the working class in London made a deep and lasting impression on the sensitive young artist.

On these early trips to Britain Drachmann's writings became more serious, taking root in two radically different sources of inspiration which both originated from these early travel experiences: the sea and modern urban life. Both are thematic complexes that are characterized by instability and movement, by 'flux', to use Stephen Kern's expression (Kern 1998:20). At the same time these topoi are firmly rooted in the fundamental dichotomy between man and nature. In Drachmann's artistic world the iterative, ageless movement of the sea, and the agitated restlessness of contemporary industrial and urban life, are closely related to each other. In London in particular he experienced how huge the cultural and ethical divide between modern industrial society, and the traditional values of his own, rather provincial, Danish frame of reference, actually was.

In 1871, while Drachmann was visiting London, the critic Georg Brandes was attracting huge public attention through a series of lectures on European literature at Copenhagen University. Accidentally, Brandes came across some of Drachmann's essays (Brandes 1907:75) and he felt that they shared the same ideas and hopes for the future. After Drachmann had returned to Copenhagen Brandes went to see him and suggested to him that he should take up writing instead of pursuing a career as a painter (Brandes 1907:76). Drachmann followed Brandes' advice and officially made his literary debut in 1872 with a book of brisk short stories entitled *Med Kul og Kridt* (With Charcoal and Chalk).

These prose-sketches are lively, impressionistic fragments about 'interesting' and picturesque people and milieus the author had encountered on his travels. Sometimes they are mere vehicles for folkloristic interests, using 'exotic' islands such as Sicily and Bornholm as backdrop and local colour. In the context of Drachmann's oeuvre as a whole, they may be seen as the first proofs of his vivid style which characterized his prose throughout his career and, not unimportantly, these early pieces also show the importance of travel as an essential source of inspiration for his writing as such.

Drachmann's real breakthrough as a writer came a few months after his prose debut *Med Kul og Kridt*, with the collection of poetry *Digte* (Poems, 1872). The best known poems in *Digte* were inspired by the experiences Drachmann had during his early journeys abroad, especially to Scotland and London. Among them are poems that are still famous – like 'Engelske Socialister' (English socialists) and 'King mob'. Already in his first collection

of poems, some of the themes appear that recur in all of Drachmann's work: a bacchanalian lust for life and natural beauty, a heartfelt sympathy for ordinary people and a romantic awareness of the radical metamorphosis of contemporary culture and society. With the appearance of *Digte*, Drachmann was immediately recognised as the main poet of the Modern Breakthrough.

As mentioned above, Drachmann was also a prolific essayist and chronicler, and his first polemic collection of impressionistic essays, *Derovre fra Grænsen* (1877), is one of the best examples of his work in this genre. *Derovre fra Grænsen* is based on a tour in the Danish-German borderland where the Danish-Prussian war had been fought, and lost, by the Danish forces in 1864. The outcome of the war still cast dark shadows over Danish society in the 1870's, and at the time of its publication the subject-matter of *Derovre fra Grænsen* was still politically highly delicate (Frandsen 1994:87-129). The mere fact that Drachmann dared to touch upon the conflict in his travel account was perceived as a provocation to the liberal political forces, including the Brandesianists. As a result, the more than friendly relations between Drachmann and the supporters of the Brandes brothers began to cool off.

Although patriotism and a barely concealed conservative political agenda pervade the entire text, *Derovre fra Grænsen* also clearly demonstrates Drachmann's artistic skills in depicting the lives of ordinary people in a passionate and original way. This ability is in some way related to his 'discovery' in 1871 of the little fishing hamlet of Skagen, on the northernmost tip of the Jutland peninsula. Here, in a rather remote corner of Denmark, he encountered peasants, fishermen and sailors, groups of people whom he felt were still unaffected by industrialisation and modernity. Soon after Drachmann's 'discovery', numerous artists from all over Scandinavia began visiting picturesque Skagen and some settled there permanently (Svanholm 2001:9-12). Skagen became a highly appreciated refuge for artists and Drachmann often returned to the town.⁴

In addition to making innumerable journeys in his home country, Drachmann undertook dozens of trips all over Europe, and in 1898 he crossed the ocean and went to the United States where he lived for nearly two years.⁵ Shortly after returning to Denmark Drachmann married the Norwegian artiste Soffi Lasson (1873-1917), but died in hospital in a seaside resort north of Copenhagen in 1908. His ashes were brought by steamer to the port of Frederikshavn and then transported over land to Skagen.⁶ There he found his last resting place in a monumental burial mound, by the sea, due north of the town, where it can still be found (Liet 2004a:151).

Drachmann lived in a period of fundamental change in modern Danish history. In comparison to Britain, Denmark, by and large, was still a pre-industrial society (Jespersen 1994:61-72). The modernisation of Danish

society had been slowed down by the consequences of the Danish-Prussian war of 1864 and the persistent power of the dominant conservative political and ecclesiastical elites. During this era of change – roughly from 1870 to 1900 – the political opposition was still frail and badly organised, and the democratisation of society depended heavily on intellectuals. Progressive forces increasingly gained influence through the expanding new media, primarily newspapers and journals, which effectively disseminated their political views on issues such as general suffrage and equal rights for both sexes. Modern newspapers were established in this period, and writers played a crucial role in the process of emancipating journalism, as well as in the overall modernisation of Danish society (Stangerup 1946).⁷ It is within this context, i.e.: the rise of new journalistic means in the public arena on the one hand, and the still powerful conservative political elite on the other, that *Derovre fra Grænsen* must be seen. Incidentally, the book became one of Drachmann's greatest successes, also commercially speaking.⁸

From Across the Border

Derovre fra Grænsen was published in the autumn of 1877, and it has the significant subtitle *Strejftog over det danske Thermopylae (Als-Dybbøl). 1 April Maaned 1877* (Forays into the Danish Thermopylae (Als-Dybbøl) in the month of April of 1877). The book contains a handful of more or less journalistic impressions from a journey Drachmann made in the spring of 1877, to the Danish-German borderland in southern Jutland, i.e. the battleground of the 1864 war against Prussia. This particular part of Denmark had been the object of intense dispute, and the defeat in 1864 had led to deep resentment in the Danish middle class and the bourgeoisie of Copenhagen.

From a semantic point of view *Derovre fra Grænsen* is a very interesting title, because it deals with the ambiguous concept of 'border' in many ways: the text is about borders, mentions numerous borders, border posts, border police (*gendarmer*), custom-house officers, etc. The text also deals with cultural boundaries and borders that either are being established (through political Germanification of the population) or borders that have to be strengthened and reinforced (to keep Danish patriotism alive under foreign rule). Furthermore, the text itself is in a way a border, and in that respect the paratextual information, the layout, cover design and illustrations, are vital elements.⁹

Intriguingly the title indicates that something – a message? a cry for help? – from the other side of the border urges the reader to respond. The reader of *Derovre fra Grænsen* is initially guided into Drachmann's text by means of a non-textual medium, namely a drawing. It introduces some of the main

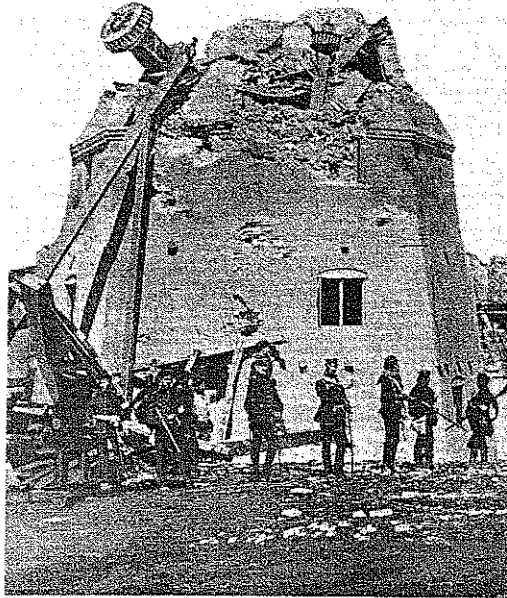
ingredients of the following text: in the scarce light of sunset we see a slope with a windmill and a kind of obelisk on top, while a steamboat is sailing into a harbour where some masts are sticking up and a large building dominates the foreground. The heavy clair-obscur contours of the clouds in the sky, emphasise the drama of the scenery. The drawing is presumably made by Drachmann himself, as it shows his initials, and this is also the case with the drawing at the end of Chapter 2, which shows the windmill and the buildings surrounding it in more detail. These are the only two illustrations, apart from the vignettes, in the book itself: situated at the very beginning and in the middle. A cover illustration is absent. The drawing, which is placed before the text, is followed by the title of chapter 1, 'Onboard the "Hertha"', and the date: 18 April 1877. For every Dane, this date is crucial information, as it refers to the final assault by the Prussians on exactly that day in 1864. Thus, it can be ascertained that the picture shows the slopes of the Dybbøl battlefield, with the Dybbøl windmill, the Prussian victory monument on top and the castle of Sønderborg in front.¹⁰

The drawing of a steamboat heading for the coast, the title of the first chapter, the date, the poem that follows and finally the transgression into a third medium or genre, that of the prose narrative itself, are all expressions of the crossing of borders: between natural elements, temporal borders, genre, and between media, etc. The crossing of media borders is finally brought to an end – significantly enough right at the very beginning of the prose text, following the opening poem, and emphasised by a kind of ritualised surfacing of the narrator – by the author telling us *in medias res* that he now has stopped(!) writing: 'Og da jeg var kommen saa vidt, lagde jeg Pennen og gik op paa Dækket' (p. 8; And once I had come so far [i.e. writing these words], I laid down my pen and went up on deck). Does this mean that the text produces itself? Or is it written by history itself?

It is evident that the continuous awareness of transgressing and crossing of borders is vital for a proper understanding of the semiotics at play in *Derovre fra Grænsen*. By elaborating this metaphor and expressing it on a number of levels in the text, Drachmann establishes a parallel to the experiences of immigrants, refugees and – in the case of the inhabitants of the southern provinces of Jutland highly relevant – of people living under foreign rule. For all of these categories of people, the physical crossing of factual borders is often easier than crossing cultural boundaries and the complexity of adjusting to new – culturally unfamiliar – surroundings (Schimanski 2006:42). A number of portraits in *Derovre fra Grænsen*, show that cultural border crossing often is a complicated, time consuming and traumatic process. The reluctance of many Danes in Northern Schleswig to adjust to post 1864 reality, i.e. to accept the fact that they are living in a part of

Germany, is explained as an expression of their patriotism and nurturing of their identity.

Drachmann makes quite a point of emphasising that he is a neutral observer – he even speaks of his head as a ‘photographic device’ (p. 9). He maintains that he simply wants to be a journalist, who registers things. But the text soon shifts to the present tense, and the narrator is found sitting on the deck of the ‘Hertha’, pondering the fruitless political quibbling in the (Copenhagen) newspapers, the future of parliament, the constitution and national defence, etc. Drachmann compares the newspapers to batteries of artillery and the political parties to military units, and for more than an entire page he elaborates on these martial metaphors in great detail. Furthermore, he stresses the fact that he is an outsider, a non-combatant, by taking his position on deck – and in between the elements – literally: ‘Jeg har i dette Øjeblik ikke de fjerneste berøringspunkter med Land’ (p. 12: At this moment I do not have any point of contact with (the main) Land). By doing so he puts two of his main themes in place: the turning of his back on the political quarrels in Copenhagen (the shelling and bombarding of opponents in parliament and in the press), and the taking of a ‘neutral’ position as a reporter. The latter is immediately rendered questionable though, because of his deeply negative and biased description of the Prussian flag blowing from the ship’s stern. His neutrality is undermined even further when he juxtaposes the ship’s entering of these foreign waters, with the appearance of thick clouds of sooty smoke from the ship’s engine, which cast dark shadows over the water. The narrator does not beat about the bush as he makes it crystal clear that he is entering the realm of darkness, coming from ‘det klare, friske Vand her mellem de rige, smilende Øer’ (p. 15: this clear and fresh water, between these rich and smiling islands). This is far from an unbiased way of reporting. Nevertheless Drachmann keeps referring to himself as a journalist: ‘Jeg har taget min Pen og Papir med, som en anden Korrespondent, der gaar til en Krigsskueplads. Jeg er min egen Korrespondent, mit eget Blad, min egen Opinion. Jeg gaar til en tavs og øde Krigsskueplads i et fremmed Land’ (p. 29: I have taken my pen and paper with me, like any correspondent who visits a theatre of war. I am my own correspondent, my own paper, my own opinion. I am off to a silent and deserted theatre of war in a foreign country). By combining the discourse of war with the position of the journalist, time and time again, Drachmann stages himself in the intermediary position of a ‘Krigskorrespondent’ (p. 29: war correspondent). Because the theatre of operations¹¹ now is ‘silent and deserted’, he claims that his special literary talent guarantees him the perfect position to ‘opfange hele Stemningens højtidelige Alvor’ (p. 25: grasp the solemn gravity of the entire atmosphere), even though it is fourteen years since the real battle took place. This shows how important the notion of



Dybbøl Mølle efter Stormen

Figure 1: Black and white photograph showing the Dybbøl windmill immediately after the assault in April 1864. (Courtesy of the Historical Centre at Dybbøl Banke.)

‘atmosphere’ is in Drachmann’s mission as a poet/journalist. It is through ‘atmosphere’ that reality presents itself to him in a romantic – dualistic or idealistic – way, dividing the world on two epistemological levels. One level is the reality of aesthetics and natural beauty, while the other is the product of human history – i.e. the sedimentation of time, which establishes various layers of memories, souvenirs, etc. The latter is the dominant level for Drachmann because: ‘Ingen kan se Naturskønhederne i en Egn, de er fuld af historiske Minder’ (p. 27: Nobody is able to see the beauty of nature in a region so full of historical memories).

The meaning of the word ‘memory’ in *Derovre fra Grænsen* differs fundamentally from its colloquial usage. For Drachmann memories are not

connected to individual experiences, but to collective, involuntary or intuitive understandings of the past. Although it is his first visit to the battlefield and its surroundings, he nevertheless speaks of 'memories'. This visionary element in the author's attitude shows Drachmann's strong affinity with the romantic tradition, but it is also an attempt to define an intermediate stance between the poet-insider (who focuses on subjectivity and introspection) and the journalist-outsider (who deals with objectivity and the outside world). It is remarkable though that Drachmann is fully aware of the fact that these 'memories' actually are mental constructions and forms of representation.

Especially the second chapter of *Derovre fra Grænsen*, 'After sunset', contains detailed descriptions of the landscape around Dybbøl as a theatre of military operations, with trenches, fortifications and troops engaged in different stages of the battle itself, etc. The chapter starts, just like the previous chapter, with a poem. This time the poem describes a battle scene from the 1864 war: a battalion crossing a pontoon bridge, heading for the enemy. The present day poet/journalist Holger Drachmann crosses the same bridge and – in a way – also meets the 'enemy', a group of foreign custom-house officers (p. 31). The text has now changed to prose again, and the first word he hears is significantly enough the 'thundering' German word 'Brückengeld!' (p. 32: bridge toll!). Once he has crossed the bridge, and has entered 'foreign' territory, he notices that many people speak Danish – just as at home – and he is lodged in a 'Danish hotel' (p. 31). Although the narrator now is in a foreign land, he still is at home, primarily because of the language.

Of course the protagonist wants to visit 'Kærnepunktet' (p. 43: the cardinal point) of his journey before nightfall. When he has reached this point – the slopes of Dybbøl hill with the windmill on top – some of the most interesting passages in *Derovre fra Grænsen* follow, containing detailed descriptions of the Prussian monument, an obelisk shaped pillar, which was erected in the vicinity of the Dybbøl windmill to commemorate the Prussian victory over the Danes in 1864 (pp. 51-57). The lyrical and allegorical depictions of the mill and the battlegrounds around it cover approximately twenty pages, in which the mill is personified and the narrator even writes that the windmill 'speaks' to him, while it raises its dark wings to heaven in a dramatic gesture (pp. 60-61). When the Danish 'monument' and its German counterpart are compared with each other, the German pillar is consequently described in negative terms. The shape reminds the narrator of the spike on a German helmet, and the ornamentation is unflatteringly compared to the design of a 'Raubritterburg' (p. 52: a robber baron's castle).

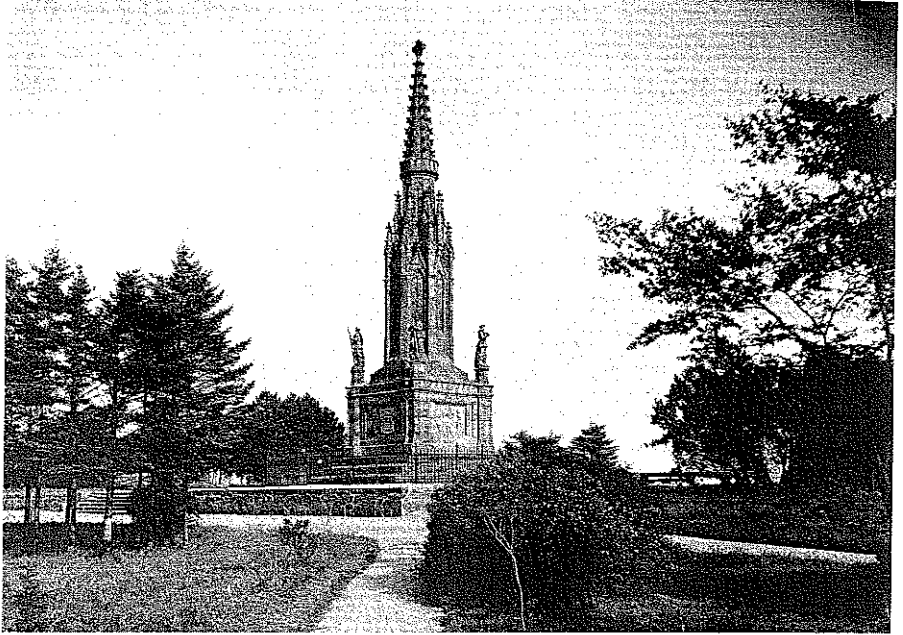


Figure 2: Photograph by Th. Thomsen of the Prussian monument commemorating the defeat of the Danish troops at Dybbøl in 1864. The structure was erected in 1871-1872 on the highest point at Dybbøl and close to the windmill. It was demolished immediately after the end of World War II in May 1945. (By courtesy of the Historical Centre at Dybbøl Banke.)

In the course of the text it becomes increasingly clear that Drachmann is strongly in favour of the erection of a Danish war memorial at Dybbøl too. His text implicitly aims at temporarily supplying such a ‘monument’, in the sense that as long as a real patriotic war memorial does not yet exist – meaning that as long as Dybbøl is in enemy hands – this text, in its own way, can act as its substitute. Many years later, after the demolition of the German memorial pillar in 1945, and the inauguration of the present ‘Historiecenter’ in 1992, Drachmann’s wishes were finally met.¹²

Judging from the rest of the chapters in *Derovre fra Grænsen*, Drachmann’s ‘political’ mission was to report on the Prussian cultural ‘yoke’ under which the Danish speaking population suffered. He makes notes of the life stories of the people he meets, and especially the third chapter is designed as an extensive interview, literally with ‘the man in the street’ e.g. a chimneysweep he meets on the road. These dialogues also offer Drachmann the opportunity to pass on eyewitness reports from the actual fighting in the area in 1864. But his main goal clearly is to draw attention to the fact that many compatriots live under foreign rule. Drachmann makes it clear that the

only solution to bring this to an end is to re-establish the pre-war situation, which in some way or other, implies bringing lost territory under Danish authority again. Drachmann does not indicate how this must be brought about, but his textual strategy is to cross the 'real' 1864 border, and to challenge the tenability of the status of a wide range of different borders, both textual and non-textual ones.

It goes without saying that the 1877 situation 'across the border' was hard to accept for romanticists, like Drachmann. The deeply patriotic and conservative tendencies in the text may appear somewhat surprising, if we take into account that Drachmann was one of the advocates of modernity. The really important thing about this journey, and the book about it, is the fact that Drachmann established a new symbol for Danishness, which first in patriotic circles, but later also in Danish society as a whole, obtained general recognition and high status. That symbol is summarized in the name 'Dybbøl'. Today the battlefields and the windmill at Dybbøl are no less than national symbols, and a museum was established at the site in 1992 to commemorate the battle.¹³ This museum shows that Dybbøl, and especially the windmill, now part of the museum, has become a symbol of absolute national importance. Virtually every Dane is familiar with the symbolic meaning of Dybbøl. Just like the town of Skagen, it is merely a miniscule spot in the country's surveyable topography. At the same time Dybbøl – and for that matter Skagen too – are important points of reference in the mental and ideological landscape every Dane becomes acquainted with, and is socialised to understand the immanent symbolic importance of. It goes without saying that the pastures and meadows on the slopes of Dybbøl hill, as well as the fishing hamlet of Skagen, already existed long before they were 'discovered' and subsequently promoted as national icons. But how can the role of *Derovre fra Grænsen* in the engendering of the ideological meaning of Dybbøl be understood?

Locations of memory

The French historian Pierre Nora has pointed out some 130 places of crucial interest in French history. His idea was that places, landscapes and so on, in a way could incorporate, or become saturated, so to speak, with history and historical events and in a sense help to save and collectivise memories of the past. Nora looks at certain monuments, landscapes, places, buildings, statues, war memorials, tombs, cemeteries, etc, as places where historical events are symbolised, visualised and concretised. For Pierre Nora and others, these *lieux de mémoire* play a crucial role in the process of keeping the past alive and placing it in collective frameworks of memory.

These 'locations of memory' can also be institutions, certain books, banners, flags, etc. They are concentrated representations of historical events, and, so to speak, symbols that are charged with time and memory. In the introduction to a German work based on Nora's concept of history entitled *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte* (2001), the editors emphasise that 'location of memory' is a metaphor, which originates from classical mnemonics, i.e. from a non-narrative, spatial way of organising cognition, the so-called *loci memoriae* (François & Schulze 2001:18).

The battlefield, and the windmill of Dybbøl have today reached the status of what could be labelled as a *lieu de mémoire*. Furthermore, I think we can easily discern a handful of such 'locations', which play an important role, both in Drachmann's work, and in Danish 'collective memory' in a broader sense. Among them are at least: the village of Skagen (including the burial mound with Drachmann's ashes),¹⁴ the battlefields near Dybbøl (and especially the windmill overlooking the area) and the Danish beaches and seashores as places of reflection and poetical inspiration.¹⁵ In the present essay I only focus on the second 'location' of memory, Dybbøl, because I want to show what Drachmann's role was in the process of establishing this special national arena of commemoration and 'musealisation' of the past.

Drachmann's journey in the Danish-German borderland in April 1877 was a journey in a quasi-no-man's land, an awkward mixture between enemy territory and homeland, an area filled with suppressed history and national trauma. After the Treaty of Versailles (Jones 1970:130-133) it was decided to solve the dispute through a plebiscite in 1920, and as a result large parts of the area became part of Denmark again. Dybbøl has since been turned into a spot resembling a tourist attraction, giving the Danes the opportunity to celebrate their national and historical self-image by sharing a number of collective icons. The battlefields at Dybbøl, and the windmill on a nearby hilltop, are real visual objects, and over the years many trenches have been unearthed or reconstructed. It is nevertheless important to keep in mind that Dybbøl also is a mental construction, and Drachmann's text is one of the original instruments that helped to create it and supply it with ideological content and context (Adriansen 2003:258). Memorising the past implies making (narrative) constructions of the past and tying them to *loci memoriae*. In this case a battlefield and a mill have become locations that help us to understand the past by putting it in a collective ideological framework, and thereby producing identity and a sense of continuity (François & Schulze 2001:14).

The social historian Inge Adriansen correctly asserts in her monumental two-volume work on Danish national symbols that Drachmann's literary image of Dybbøl helped to establish the 'myth' of Dybbøl as the Danish version of the heroic battle at Thermopylae in ancient times, where the

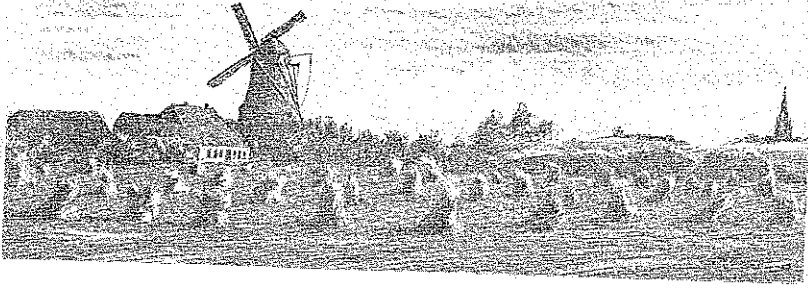


Figure 3: Xylography by N. V. Dorph showing the Dybbøl windmill and the Prussian monument seen from the village of Sundeved. This far less dramatic picture differs fundamentally from the most common iconography. It is the opening illustration of Erik Skram's essay 'Hinsides Grænsen. Nogle Erindringer', published in 1887 in a two-volume anthology edited by M. Galschiøt, *Danmark: Skildringer og Billeder af danske Forfattere og Kunstnere*, Vol. 1, p. 511-569. In 1888 it was reissued as a separate book, entitled *Hinsides Grænsen. Erindringer fra Sønderjylland efter 1864*, but the illustration by Dorph was not included.

Spartans were outnumbered, and notwithstanding their actual loss in battle, became the moral victors because of their heroic resistance against a superior enemy (Adriansen, 2003:251-260). But apart from the text of *Derovre fra Grænsen* itself, and the iconographic effectiveness of the two images in the book of the Dybbøl windmill at dusk, the real reason for the immense success of Drachmann's text may well be the immense popularity of one single poem embedded in the last chapter (pp. 129-130).

This poem is often referred to as 'De sønderjyske Piger' (The girls from North Schleswig) or by its opening line 'De vog dem, vi grov dem' (They slew them, we buried them). The text sings the praise of the northern Schleswig girls who have shown their patriotic disposition by burying fallen Danish soldiers in their gardens and looking devotedly after these graves over the years. These young women personify patriotism and historical continuity. Because they take care of the dead, they are continuously confronted with the past, which also makes them extra motivated not to fraternise with Germans. Soon after the publication of *Derovre fra Grænsen* the poem was set to music by the composer Henrik Hennings (1848-1923). The score and the text were published in the popular journal *Ude og Hjemme* on 14 April 1878, and shortly after the song was republished by the music publisher Oscar Risom in Copenhagen and became widely popular in its own right.¹⁶

Holger Drachmann was a unique lyrical talent, and some of his verse is among the most beloved by his countrymen. In Drachmann's poetic idiom, everything is in motion. The absence of stability and clear contours in his art reflects the fact that the best of his prose and poetry was written in moods of imminent change and moments of transgression. Thus, it is not surprising that Drachmann also was a frequent – and in some ways obsessive – traveller, looking for new inspirations and thrills all the time. He and many of his colleagues were restless, possibly due to the nervous atmosphere of the era they lived in. Being on the move, and crossing borders, among others social ones, was also specific for fin de siècle literary life, and perhaps we should understand the era's textual heritage within the framework of what Johan Schimanski labels a 'border poetics'.¹⁷

Drachmann was one of the first artists to 'discover' the fishing hamlet of Skagen, but also as one of the prime promoters of 'Dybbøl' as the national symbol. Today both Dybbøl and Skagen have become places of national interest, with museums dedicated to them, and both places are popular destination for holidaymakers too. Drachmann played a crucial role in the radical metamorphosis of both communities and the way they are perceived by the public at large. Last but not least, Drachmann wrote a number of texts that today are at the very core of the national Danish self-image. These are, apart from *Derovre fra Grænsen*, also the midsummer's song 'Vi elsker vort Land' (We love our country), and the still popular fairytale play *Der var en gang* (Once upon a time) from 1885. In this sense he was one of the main actors in the process of engendering modern 'Danishness', i.e. Danish identity as an element in the nation-building process in the decades after the traumatic defeat in the Danish-Prussian War of 1864. As Per Thomas Andersen recently pointed out again, working with the notion of 'identity' presupposes that we understand it as a narrative (Andersen 2006:8), and Drachmann's *Derovre fra Grænsen* functions precisely as such a narrative gateway to a collective frame of reference on many different levels – textual, paratextual (visual) and even re-contextualised, through the remedialisation of the embedded poem as a song text. Finally, as a travelogue, it continuously crosses and permeates borders whereby it establishes itself as a text and a 'space in-between' in it's own right.

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Notes

1. *Derovre fra Grænsen* appeared on 30 November 1877, and within a month a second edition was issued. The book became so popular, that within the first twelve months, seven editions were published. The two most recent printings, in 1919 and 1966, are quite remarkable from a bibliographical and philological point of view. For more details see note 9.
I would like to thank Marieke Berkhout and Pim van Harten for advice and helpful suggestions on earlier versions of this essay.
2. For comprehensive bibliographies see Ursin 1956 and, in English, van der Liet 2004a:142-144.
3. The titles of these paintings are: 'The beach north of the fishing hamlet Aarsdale on Bornholm', and 'The coast at Granton near Leith'. Both paintings depict coastal scenes – waves, lots of sky, rugged coastlines, in short: the never fixed contact zone between sea and land.
4. Drachmann also often used the locals as models in his work, as for example in the novelette *Lars Kruse* (1879), in the play *Strandbyfolk* (Shoreville People) (1883, revised in 1897) and in dozens of stories.
5. See Sigmund (1993)
6. The funeral procession was attended by thousands of people and immortalised in a series of large oil paintings by Aksel Jørgensen (1883-1957).
7. Among the most influential papers of the day were *Social-Demokraten* (founded 1874) and *Politiken* (founded 1884). *Politiken* became one of the vital mouthpieces of the cultural avant-garde, in which Drachmann's cousin, the influential politician Viggo Hørup (1841-1902), and Drachmann's former schoolmate, the equally prominent writer-politician Edvard Brandes (1847-1931), were two of the most powerful figures. Ironically Drachmann was banned from the columns of the newspaper, and declared *persona non grata*. Neither his name nor his writings appeared in the newspaper until 1890 (Petersen 2005:118).
8. For publication details see Ursin 1956:17-18.

9. From a paratextual and editorial perspective it is important to know which text we have in front of us. The first nine editions were identical, but the last but one edition, the 10th, the so-called 're-union' edition of 1919, which appeared in concurrence with the coming plebiscite the next spring, leading to the final establishing of the present Danish-German borderline, later in 1920, differs from all earlier versions. This 10th edition was issued by the same publishing house as all the previous editions had been, Gyldendal. An interesting difference though was the fact that this edition did not contain any of the illustrations or vignettes of the previous editions. Furthermore a cameo-like drawing on the cover of the book is a clear reference to the cover illustration of Erik Skram's *Hinsides Grønsen* (1888). The 10th edition differs also from all other editions, because it has a preface by the author's son, Povl Drachmann (1887-1941), who was a – modestly popular – novelist in his own right and a member of the Danish Parliament for the Conservative Party in the late 1920s. The most recent edition is again an entirely different printing: it was published by the print shop of a local newspaper in Southern Jutland, Dybbøl-Postens Bogtrykkeri, in 1966.
10. The reason these drawings or etchings are noteworthy is that the central image of the windmill, later became one of the strongest and enduring icons of the patriotism connected to the 1864 war. The image of the Dybbøl windmill appeared on memorabilia, souvenirs, special commemoration stamps for veteran organisations, etc., etc. Images of the mill – very similar to Drachmann's drawing – became widely used on the cover of books about the historical events that took place in the area. One of those books actually was Erik Skram's *Hinsides Grønsen*, i.e. the 1888 book publication. The image appeared also on the cover of the 1919 version of *Derovre fra Grønsen*, see note 9.
11. In this case a very appropriate metaphor, because Drachmann – while strolling on the battlegrounds of Dybbøl – reminisces a childhood memory about his first experiences as a theatregoer, *Derovre fra Grønsen*, p. 44.
12. The German triumphal pillar no longer exists; it was destroyed shortly after the end of World War II. See for more information about the German monument, and a picture of it, Inge Adriansen's booklet *Dybbøl Mølle. Monument & museum*, 1997, pp. 12-15 and p. 29. See also: Adriansen (2003:257). The people who blew up the German monumental obelisk actually did precisely what Drachmann had predicted in *Derovre fra Grønsen*: 'i [...] Genoprejsningens Stund vil Mindesmærket blive omstyrtet' (p. 36; in the hour of rehabilitation the monument will be overthrown).
13. I am indebted to the founder and former head of the Centre, Hans-Ole Hansen, for helping me with some of the illustrations for this article.
14. Actually Drachmann himself points at Skagen as a place of national interest, see *Derovre fra Grønsen*, p. 50.
15. With respect to the latter 'location of memory' I would like to add that, although the beach at first may look like a mere literary theme or motive, the floating borderline between sea, sky and land, in combination with Drachmann's famous midsummer night song 'Vi elsker vort Land' (We love our country) is so intensely charged with collective memory, that it justifies to be labelled a *lieu de mémoire*.
16. 'Melodi af Henrik Hennings til Sangen "De sønderjyske Piger"', in *Ude og Hjemme*, no. 28, 14 April 1878, pp. 297-270, the second edition, as a book, was '*De sønderjyske Piger' Vexelsang af Holger Drachmann's 'Derovre fra Grønsen' sat i musik af Henrik Hennings'*, Copenhagen: Oscar Risom, 1878 [OR118]. A few years later, in 1885, Drachmann tried to 'capitalise' on the enormous success of *Derovre fra Grønsen* and the popularity of the embedded song 'De sønderjyske Piger', by writing a sequel, entitled *Danmark leve! Blade fra en Rejse paa begge Sider af Grønsen* (Long live Denmark! Pages from a journey on both sides of the border). Clearly Drachmann aimed at rekindling the mood of 'De

- sønderjyske Piger', but the trick did not work and *Danmark leve!* was no success at all.
17. This is a critical tool, which he defines 'as any approach to texts which connect borders on the levels of *histoire*, the word the text presents to the reader, and of *récit*, the text itself, a weave of rhetorical figures and narrative structures' (Schimanski 2006:51).
 18. Just for the sake of perspective: Holger Drachmann was not the first to recognise the symbolic importance of the Dybbøl windmill, but he was surely responsible for the effective dispersion of it. After the first Danish-Prussian war, the so-called three-year war (1848-1850), the windmill already had gained some iconographic status, i.e. as a Danish monument of victory!