

Denmark as a Zone of Conflict¹

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There has been a tendency to view cultural intellectuals in reductive terms, as epiphenomena of political or economic developments, especially since they form a tiny minority of a population, but politics in eighteenth and much of nineteenth century Europe was highly elitist and intellectuals could have a substantial impact. The historical sociologist Anthony D. Smith maintained in *Ethno-symbolism and Nationalism* that the symbolic world of culture (which is at least part-created by such intellectuals) should be considered 'as much part of social reality as material and organizational factors'.² The art historian Robert Rosenblum, moreover, in his study of the shift from rococo hedonism to the *exemplum virtutis* of stoic public sacrifice in late eighteenth century art, argued that neoclassical painters such as J.L. David had significance as anticipators (rather than as reflectors) of a wider moral crisis in French society that culminated in the Revolution.³ The chapters in this rich volume in similar terms demonstrate the importance of humanist intellectuals (historians philosophers, painters, writers, and philologists) as initiators of ideas and institutions through which they sought to form Danish national and related Scandinavian identities, identities that were always being contested from the eighteenth century onwards.

A national 'revival' can be detected in Denmark during and after the Napoleonic wars, in which literary historians, philologists, and folklorists were prominent. A key figure was Rasmus Nyerup (1759-1829) who with Rasmus Rask (1787-1832) published a Danish translation of the *Prose Edda* in 1808. With collaborators like Jens Edvard Kraft (1784-1853), Knud Lyne Rahbek (1760-1830) and Werner Abrahamson (1744-1812), he also produced a general literary history of Denmark, Norway and Iceland (1818/9) and a volume of folk songs from the Middle Ages. It is worth placing the Danish experience within a broader context, since forms of nationalism pervaded the arts in Europe during this period. From the 1780s onward, cultural societies sprang up across Europe: The Russian Academy in 1783, the Royal Irish Academy in 1785, the Welsh *Eisteddfod* in 1789, the Royal Bohemian Society of Sciences in 1794, the Magyar National Museum in 1807, and the Finnish Literary Society in 1831.

From such beginnings, historical scholars, philologists and artists during the nineteenth century established a network of learned academies, literary and language societies, theatres and publishing houses, and choral and athletic clubs to 'revive' their respective nations. In *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*,⁴ I studied a series of national 'revivals' led by historians and artists in modern Ireland, seeking to explain why they emerged when they did and the circumstances under which they became politically salient. I argued that the rise of what I called a cultural nationalism was **one** response to a European-wide crisis of identity and legitimacy arising from the erosive impact of a 'scientific' state on traditional religious cosmologies and institutions. The 'solution' to this crisis was to embed individuals in the unique life-force of their nation, which individualised them and endowed them with a drive for realisation. One of the earliest formulators of this pantheistic vision was the German philosopher, Johann Gottfried von Herder, who portrayed humanity as essentially diverse, and world progress as a result of the mutual interactions of nations.

Central to cultural nationalists was the idea that the nation was in decline and required moral regeneration. A recurring theme was the necessity of recovering its deep history, through which one discovered its identity, creative power and collective destiny, located, above all, in its golden age, which would provide inspiration and models for the present. This stimulated the rise of archaeology, philology, folklore and comparative religion. A second motif was a sacralisation of homeland, informed by the conviction that each people inhabited a land of unique properties that was shaped by their collective personality and in turn formed them. It was essential to know all aspects of one's homeland - its localities, historic sites, and peoples - and this resulted in the 'discovery' of areas, remote from the artifice of the city, which because of their distinctive properties of natural beauty or cultural significance became sacred focal points of the national spirit, to which people made pilgrimages. A third theme, was that national culture must be vernacularised: this went beyond a revival of popular languages to a general recovery of the *volksgeist* of the nation that expressed the unique creative energies of the nation, the memory of which had been lost to sophisticated society. Here, the artist was given a key task, to capture with verisimilitude this creative force, expressed in ancient myths and legends, in epic literature, folk poetry, in the spirit of the land, and to give it new expression with the aim of transforming the consciousness of a rising generation. A fourth theme was that nation was a living community of heroes that had to be continuously renewed from within. Each generation had a duty to

throw off the outmoded tradition and the hegemony of foreign ways and reconstruct the nation in the spirit of its heroic past, even at the sacrifice of their own lives.

The typical early leaders of what cultural historian Joep Leerssen calls the ‘cultivation of culture’,⁵ were wide-ranging intellectuals: literary writers, painters, and musicians, who were also recorders of folk culture, dabblers in mystical cults, founders of a loose network of cultural institutions (theatres, opera houses, schools of art), and active supporters of the reformation of everyday life. It was, above all, directed to and attracted a new educated generation, who felt arbitrarily excluded from power and status. These established newspapers and journals, agricultural and credit co-operatives, reading societies, arts and crafts clubs, and sporting organisations often in the form of a communitarian self-help movement to regenerate the nation from within. This, in extreme circumstances, could inspire revolutionary action.

Although it is tempting to see the rise of national identities, influenced by such activities, in linear terms, this was by no means the case. For instance, the three major revivals in Ireland articulated different themes and defined themselves against their predecessors. Each crystallised at a time of crisis and faded with a return to normality. It is true for all revivals that they are afflicted by divisions over symbols and conceptions of national culture as well as often finding themselves at odds with the major political nationalist movements of their day. Moreover, nationalism is never uncontested—cultural nationalists faced competition from those attracted to religious or cosmopolitan ideas. Even artists who join nationalist movements are nationalist only some of the time and as creative beings have generally resisted having their work being narrowed to fit a nationalist formula.

In a subsequent volume, *Nations as Zones of Conflict*, I further explored the recurring character of such revivals, showing that the very attempt to create a singular national culture generated intense contestation because of the multiple versions of the past, some formed around intense ‘memories’ of deep division produced by civil war, religious division, and national defeat that were carried into the present.⁶ Although one might be dominant for a time, it was never unquestioned, and at times of disaster an alternative conception might re-emerge ready to challenge the established ideal. In Russia, competition between Slavophiles and Westerners, the former defenders of Russia's distinctive Orthodox traditions and the latter looking to Western European models, originated in the early nineteenth century and continues into the present. In France, the struggle between Republicans, and clerico-

legitimists in France since the French revolution recurs in various forms, most visibly in the campaigns of Le Pen's National Front against the Fifth Republic. Such differences may go back to traumatic historical episodes such as Peter the Great's assault on Orthodoxy, or the legacy of revolutionary civil war, but, whatever their origins, these divisions, which often erupt into 'cultural wars', can offer radically different views of the structure of politics, the status of social groups, relations between regions, the countryside and the city, economic and social policies and foreign policy. They persist since they reflect the diverse heritages of populations whose geo-political setting continues to expose them to unpredictable impacts from several directions.

I argued nationalism forms and reforms because of the unpredictability of the modern world and is concerned as much with the construction of meaning as with state power. It is true that once nationalists establish a nation state, they see it as their task to nationalise their populations, often around a single version, and are often able to routinize national values in the society via control of dominant institutions (e.g. parliaments, law courts, schools, armies). However, such routinization and homogenisation regularly breaks down in the face of unexpected shocks. This generates nationalist 'revivals' that seek systematically to redefine national goals and redraw boundaries in a totalizing fashion as well as political programmes.

Nationalism, then, is necessarily an *episodic* phenomenon that waxes and wanes over time. At crisis points, nationalists look to a national past offering cognitive maps, meanings and inspiration. Throughout the modern period, states, whether they were long established empires or indeed avowedly nation-states, periodically were shaken or even destroyed by unforeseen exogenous events that cut across their boundaries, such as the various factors we have mentioned: dramatic economic changes, ideological movements, wars, and migrations and demographic shifts. States have been regularly destabilised by ideological movements arising from the heritage of the enlightenment and religious counter challenges, transmitted through transnational institutions such as churches, revolutionary internationals, diaspora groups, and printed media. This has set up intense conflicts between socio-political projects each of which turned to the past for legitimacy, which fed into rival national visions. The French revolution bred liberal, radical and socialist challenges to the existing social order that periodically erupted in the nineteenth century in the 1820s, 1830s, 1848 and the commune of 1871. In France, this produced a fierce anti-republican (religious and monarchist) reaction and both republicans and their opponents sought to ground their cause in a national medieval

history, claiming the legacy of Joan of Arc, who had expelled English invaders from French soil.⁷

Dramatic economic changes, inaugurated by the industrial revolution, meant that the mobility of goods, capital, ideas and people regularly overflowed state borders. In late-nineteenth-century Europe, international financial speculations contributed to large-scale economic crisis in traditional national sectors and provoked a racial, anti-semitic nationalism that blamed Jews, prominent in banking and traditional ethnic scapegoats. Commodity prices collapsed with the emerging world agrarian market, made possible by speedier communications, and shook the European landed order, symbolically central to national identity, and caused mass migration from the country to the cities. Although capital cities expanded their influence over the country, such influence when allied to migration could lead to ethnic competition and tensions, as in the Habsburg Empire.⁸

As I argued in *Nationalism and War*, wars in the modern period have often been powerful intensifiers of national identities.⁹ Victorious wars, especially those associated with the birth or liberation of the nation, have generally reinforced the legitimacy of an existing leadership or ruling regime. Wars, especially recurring conflicts against neighbouring others, have created we-they stereotypes that have helped socially institutionalise national identities. Above all, in the nineteenth century, the period of large-scale conflict beginning with the French Revolution generated commemorations of the national dead. While such commemorations served many purposes, they can be seen as a means of overcoming the anguish of mass death in a period of growing secularisation, by promising the 'fallen' a form of immortality by being remembered for ever. Moreover, as cultural historian George Mosse and Anthony Smith argued, they also had the capacity of binding survivors to the values for which the dead supposedly fought, thereby contributing to the formation of a cohesive community.¹⁰

However, wars have also periodically upset existing political and territorial frameworks by threatening the overthrow of states, foreign occupation, political revolution, the radical redrawing of boundaries, and the forced redistribution of populations between states. The tensions between states and nations, activated by the fortunes of war, have been one of the recurring triggers of nationalism. In liminal moments, when the existing order is threatened with dissolution, heightened debates erupt about how to redefine who constitute the people (should they be defined by ethnic or civic criteria?), where the homeland is located

and on what basis a national state can be reconstituted. This can become a prolonged process in which rival intellectuals from different nations as well as competing protagonists from within nations become involved. The German annexation of Alsace and Lorraine in 1871 inspired the famous debate between German and French intellectuals (between Theodor Mommsen and Ernest Renan) about how membership of the nation should be decided, whether by the ‘subjective’ choice of its inhabitants or by ‘objective’ criteria such as language.

Overwhelming defeat and the loss of peoples and territories are often seen as traumatic moments that operate as critical junctures in the perceptions of populations, overturning past conceptions and regimes, and creating a demand for new beginnings. In an age of nationalism, defeat could be construed not just as a failure of a governing elite but rather of a weakness in the people itself. One of the consequences was a search for scapegoats on the part of the rival protagonists in the internal debates within the defeated nation. Shattering defeats and conquests have inspired programmes of regeneration and irredentist campaigns for lost territories that can last for generations. Even the two most powerful European states, France and Germany, were subject to such instability and to extended debates about their identity. The territory of France was subject to occupation wholly or in part by foreign powers several times, in 1814, in 1870, and in the First and Second World Wars. The wars also generated a prolonged struggle among competing ideas of French nationalism—republican, Imperial-Bonapartist and Catholic-traditionalist—whose rise and fall was triggered by episodes of defeat.

All this is relevant to the Danish case of a composite dynastic state that since the seventeenth century had been in a state of contraction through a series of military defeats, and which, in a period of revolutionary nationalism, would suffer the further loss of Norway and its largely German-speaking population in the Duchies.¹¹ But the subsequent small nation state did not just emerge from subtraction. As this book collection shows, Danish intellectuals of various kinds, historians, archaeologists, artists, novelists, musicians and journalists, though a tiny elite, were important. In particular, Danish politics were between 1848 and 1864 dominated by the National Liberals, who could be dubbed “the party of the professors”. They were wellversed in poetry, literature and art, socialised with the artists and were patrons of the arts. In short, the inner world of the intellectuals was important because they dominated Danish politics. These intellectuals were seminal in proposing alternatives to existing belief systems and institutions in crisis and developing the symbolic repertoire

through which a nation could be visualised and felt. Danish nationalists identified two golden ages: a Pan-Scandinavian that drew on Norse mythology and the Vikings and the poetry of Adam Oehlenschläger in the first years of the nineteenth century, and a purely Danish golden age that evoked the ages of the Valdemars (1157-1241), where Denmark arose from internal turmoil to a place of regional greatness. This model is best seen in the literary works of B.S. Ingemann in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars.¹²

This development of a modern Danish national identity was neither linear nor uncontested and took place in a constantly changing geo-political environment of nation-state rivalries that directly impinged on Danish political autonomy. It emerged from the late eighteenth century out of a series of disruptive events, internal and external. These crises, which were multiple and overlapping, generated what was subsequently known as Denmark's (modern) 'golden age', one marked by competing ideas of how to remodel Danish culture and the body politic that in turn shaped the emerging modern Danish nation and nation-state.

First was the destabilising impact of enlightenment ideas on the established Lutheran Church, which was a core support of the monarchical state and the social order. As in other European countries, this produced a moral crisis engendering rival responses amongst the intellectuals, expressed in 1842 by the future Primate of Denmark, Hans Martensen. In an article entitled 'The Present Religious Crisis', Martensen argued the State Church was threatened by right-wing Anabaptists who wished the Church to sever itself from a corrupt world and by left Anabaptists who argued for the replacement of Christianity by cult of humanity.¹³ This crisis could feed into an early nationalism. Deeply critical of the Lutheran authorities, pastor N.F.S Grundtvig led a religious reform movement that attempted to create a living congregationalist Danish Christianity. He was one of many who combined a respect for Norse mythology, a pantheist love of the land, and radical educational programme with the aim of creating a patriotic independent peasantry.

A second long-term shock came from the political impact of the enlightenment, most radically expressed in the French Revolution whose doctrines of popular sovereignty and citizenship equality would set off a series of challenges to royal absolutism and the composite state that subverted the older dynastic concept of fatherland. Before this, a middle-class 'patriot' movement had emerged directed against German influence in the royal court and the upper classes that found expression in the 1776 Law of Indigenous Rights, whereby official positions were restricted to those born in the state. State modernisation had also led to

reforms of landholding in 1784, the introduction of primary education, and a periodic lifting of censorship in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Although important reforms were delayed during the struggle against Napoleon, the heritage of revolution generated a long-running struggle beginning in the 1830s and becoming intense in the 1840s between conservative supporters of fatherland and a composite state that could contain Germans and Danes, and liberal nationalists, seeking a constitutional monarchy. Increasingly, in liberal eyes rule by the people turned from constitutional design to the demand that a particular people, characterised by language and culture, should rule. This produced two varieties of a National Liberalism, one in the Danish state threatening to redraw the existing state on ethnic lines, uniting with Schleswig but jettisoning the German-speaking Holstein, the second seeking a united Schleswig-Holstein that would enter into a personal union with Denmark. The outcome was civil war. But this national turn did not go unquestioned by more internationalist and socialist ideologies.

A third set of cleavages was created by the three major wars of the nineteenth century. In response to the disasters of the Napoleonic war: the British seizure of the Danish fleet, the bombardment of Copenhagen, state bankruptcy and the loss of Norway, Grundtvig called for a moral rearmament of Danes. Using as a symbol of Danish resistance to foreign invaders the ancient fortifications of the Danevirke in Schleswig, he argued that the equivalent defence today had to be found in a strong linguistic and cultural consciousness. As we shall see, the extensive mobilisation in the first war of Schleswig-Holstein was a catalyst for the crystallisation of a popular nationalisation of Danish and German populations of the kingdom. Victory seemed to canonise an exclusive ethnic conception of Danishness over the older multi-ethnic conception of the unitary state, at the expense of its German minorities. In contrast, the shattering defeat in 1864, during which Danes had to abandon the fabled Danevirke that had been refortified, with the loss of one third of the state territory, produced a prolonged moral reflection that redefined Danish conceptions of themselves and their place in Europe. Voices critical of ethnocentrism became stronger with demands that Danish culture needed to be internationalised and modernised.

In this period, the intellectuals had importance, in spite of being a tiny minority, in providing a framework to understand current problems and proposals for overcoming them. In particular, the arts played an important role in the creation of the symbolic repertoire through which the idea of the nation could be imagined and expressed. In his classic study, *The Nationalisation of the Masses*, George Mosse declared the core of the nationalism project

lay in the construction of new myths and symbols, idealised social types (the authentic national man and woman), of sacred spaces around monuments, and the creation of rituals and public festivals through which a political community formed.¹⁴

In Denmark it would seem, as in Germany, nationalists, under the influence of romanticism, blended idealised models initially drawn from classical antiquity with national archetypes, incarnated as the free peasant. Anthony Smith has argued that painters, sculptors and monument builders help populations visualise the nation, whereas composers and musicians help people feel it, using evocative material from folk songs and providing stirring music for ceremonial occasions around which a community formed.¹⁵ In painting, historical and mythological genres were prominent, notably depictions of the Nordic gods and Viking heroes and of the ‘heroic age’ of the Valdemars (1157-1241). Central also to this national romanticism was a pantheist reverence for the national landscape as an expression of a distinctive timeless and infinite life force, through which members of the nation would discover themselves. As with many other nationalists, Danish romantics imbued that which was most remote and ‘exotic’ as the source of the distinct national life-spirit.

In this volume, Nico Anklam describes the impact of the discovery of the wildness of the Jutland peninsula in northern Denmark, a remote sandy area largely unknown to most Danes. As late as 1820, this was considered by the Copenhagen elite as the Danish Siberia. This was powerfully depicted in Frederik Vermehren’s painting *Shepherd on the Heath* (1855). Through a dolmen, Vermehren links the shepherd, his sheep and the land under his feet to ancient, pre-Christian, neolithic burial sites. In creating such images, artists used the discoveries of archaeologists whose excavations revealed the history and culture embedded in the land, in the form of burial mounds and their artefacts, such as the lur. I have mentioned as particularly resonant the ancient fortifications of the Danevirke in Schleswig, presented as the ultimate defence of Danish nationality in a continuous struggle against German settlement and conquest. This was popularised by newspapers and journals such as the *Dansk Folkeblad* as well as N.F.S Grundtvig’s journal *Dannevirke*, which he edited in 1816-9.

As Claus Møller Jørgensen demonstrates, in his analysis of such initiatives as ‘Society for the Proper Use of the Freedom of Speech’ (1835-48), these intellectuals then did not just react to events. Eliciting support at an elite level from both conservative supporters of a dynastic patriotism and liberal nationalists, this had the aim of encouraging a responsible public debate. However, as the latter assumed dominance, the society evolved in the 1840s

into a project to turn materialist peasants into nationalist Danes in tandem with the increase of Danish-German tensions in the Duchies. It helped pioneer a national symbolic repertoire – drawing on Norse mythologies, historical chronicles, folk songs and customs, and archaeological discoveries. It published historians’ attempts to construct a continuous national saga. All this provided the material by which painters, novelists, musicians and monumental sculptors could portray in dramatic terms the nation as a concrete living community. As part of this educational mission, the Society founded the publication of a weekly paper, *Dansk Folkeblad* (Danish People’s Press), for schools and libraries. In its lifetime it had at first limited success in reaching the rural populations, but, as the chapters in this volume suggest, this and other initiatives contributed to a steady thickening of images of the nation. Among the important developments were the ‘discoveries’ of remote regions and their rural peoples in Jutland, which became sacred repositories of a timeless Danishness, which Danes could be mobilised to protect. These ideas, narratives and images took on a popular emotional significance in the crisis of the First Schleswig-Holstein War of 1848-51.

Nonetheless, there were possible alternatives to the ethno-cultural construal of Danishness. The dominant reconstruction of Denmark as a small nation state occurred through an occlusion of its status as an imperial power throughout much of its existence. Danish possessions had stretched from Norway, Iceland and the Faro Islands to colonies in India, Africa, and the Caribbean, though it would appear that Danes did not identify with this imperial dimension. The Danish golden age of culture, Nico Anklam suggests, was built on a dunghill, on the wealth generated by the eighteenth century Caribbean slave trade, and he notes the absence of visual images of the colonies in Copenhagen. Bart Pushaw examines one of the rare examples, Wilhelm Marstrand’s 1857 canvas ‘Portrait of Otto Marstrand’s Two Daughters and their West Indian Nanny, Justina, in Frederiksberg,’ which he argues ‘promotes the Danish nation as an imperial enterprise, while concealing its inherent violence, ensuring the country’s commitment to upholding racial hierarchies of power.’ Although the slave trade had been abolished by Denmark in 1792, slavery itself was not ended in the Danish West Indies until 1848, following a slave revolt.

The liberal Danish nationalism of the middle classes did not appear before the 1830s, becoming a force only in the 1840s. Even then it did not go unchallenged. In his chapter, Bertel Nygaard explores the radical internationalist ideas presented in the weekly *Corsaren*, founded in 1840 by a Jewish intellectual, Meïr Goldschmidt. Nygaard argues that this contributed to a broader Danish popular consciousness through the vivid images of its

cartoons that made it the most widely-read organ in the kingdom. Inspired by Henry Mayhew's *Punch*, Charles Philipon's *La Caricature* and *Le Charivari*, Goldschmidt satirised mercilessly the bourgeois hypocrisy of the National Liberals who claimed to speak for the people but who glossed over the conditions of poverty in Denmark. To Goldschmidt, the core of the people was not the bourgeoisie, but rather the common people. It marks, Nygaard suggests, the entry of more radical voices into politics, inspired by the social ferment spreading across Europe. At the same time, Goldschmidt was very much a minority voice. The main threat to the National Liberals came from the conservatives. Moreover, his politics were incoherent. If he valorised the people, he was critical of its capacities to act: Denmark, he claimed, was always dependent on outside pressures. He veered widely across the political spectrum, even embracing anti-German nationalist positions.

A possible alternative to a nationalist romanticism was to be found in an exotic urban-based cosmopolitanism, drawing on a long historical experience of global trade and empire. Danes were susceptible, like their European counterparts, to a romanticism, distinct from a Herderian populism, that derived from a fascination with a magical Orient, associated with Persia and the Ottoman Empire. As Elisabeth Oxfeldt states, this left a lasting mark on Copenhagen exteriors, as well as the interiors of the homes and castles of the bourgeoisie, nobility and royalty, and, notably, the Copenhagen amusement park, Tivoli. This had a long-term impact in fostering a modern consumerist disposition among Danes. Nico Anklam suggests that this exoticism could be combined with Herderian images of the land, speaking of 'a similar zeitgeist that forms a double-narrative of Danish National Romanticism and Danish Orientalism', and of Vermehren's imagining of Jutland as 'a transcendental Danish desert'. In similar terms, Adam Oehlenschläger, was an early enthusiast of Norse mythology, but Oxfeldt considers his poetic drama *Aladdin or the Magic Lamp* (1805) crucial in fostering an Orientalist consumerism. It portrays Aladdin as the archetypal happy-go-lucky Dane able to outsmart the foreigner. But, in presenting a dream of infinite desires it also conveyed a warning about the dangers of the alien. There was, hence, a darker side to this romanticism in the anti-semitic portrayals of Jews and, in other contexts, racist depictions of the Caribbean.

This is a reminder that, as with most nationalisms, Danes defined their identity not just by reference to their history but also in relation, both positively and negatively, to significant others. In this regard, Danes' most intense relationships were with Germans/Germany, and this persisted for most of the 20th century. Many of the contributions

that follow show how German literature and culture permeated Danish life. In the late eighteenth century this concern was strongest amongst the Danish professional classes reacting against the privileged position of Germans in the Danish administration, the status of the German language in the court, army and aristocratic society, and the threat of Germanisation from the largely German-speaking population living in the Duchies (Holstein was wholly German-speaking.) In the nineteenth century Danish nationalists who wished to transform the composite, imperial, monarchical state into a nation state were confronted with internal threats of secession from the Duchies and external challenges from Prussia (sometimes allied with Austria) which made irredentist claims on its territories in the name of Pan-German nationalism. Indeed, Pan-German nationalists (and Prussia) argued in the 1840s that Denmark ought to be the 'admiral state' within the German federation. The fear of being annihilated as a nation by the Germans is vital in understanding Danish nationalism and Pan-Scandinavism.

The intellectual reaction to the rise of Germany was complex, for German culture was an inspiration as well as a threat. The German ethno-cultural model, articulated by Herder, Schiller and the Schlegel brothers, provided a template for cultural nationalists everywhere, including Denmark, but this opened Danish artists to the charge of inauthenticity. Martin Djupdræt illustrates this point with reference to the Danish artist Lorenz Frølich. In the 1840s, Frølich, in his illustrations of Norse antiquity, helped create one of the iconic images of Danish and Scandinavian identity, that of the Viking in horned helmet, while working and studying with the great German history painter Wilhelm von Kaulbach, in Munich. But one of his early depictions was denounced by Danish art historian Niels Laurits Høyen (1798-1870) as neurotic, a veiled reference to Kaulbach's studies of the mentally ill.

German models were by no means solely ethno-cultural. German culture could be represented in many different ways. After the defeat of France by Prussia and its confederate allies, German culture and military power could, for some, represent the future, while Denmark was stuck in decline. Anna Sandberg examines the deep ambivalence of Danes to Germany in her study of the influential cultural critic, Georg Brandes, leader of the 'modern breakthrough', who sent newspaper reports from Berlin between 1877 and 1882. While wishing to advance Danish and Scandinavian culture in Europe, Brandes also wished Danes to escape from an ethnic fossilisation by engaging with French and German cultural developments. Benedikte Brincker, in investigating Danish composers and classical musical institutions, argues that German influence remained pre-eminent: the Austro-German

traditions from Mozart onwards were presented as the universal language from which national traditions deviated. A large number of musicians therefore chose to study in German cities. Such was the prestige of this tradition, that any attempt to establish a distinctively Danish tradition as 'the six' achieved for Russia was smothered: only Carl Nielsen stood out as a major voice.

This raises questions for further exploration: which areas of cultural life were the main carriers of a Danish national consciousness and which remained resistant to nationalising projects? Clearly, the visual arts, as well as the Danish language, history and education were chosen out by nationalists for cultivation, and with some success, in contrast to classical music. Why should this be the case in the visual arts: because of past achievements, recognised internationally, in this field?

In general, Danes, of course, were not limited to a claustrophobic relationship with things German, as various authors observe. Many could find common cause with fellow Scandinavian countries (Pan-Scandinavianism), while others sought alternatives in the rivals of Germany, notably France which suffered a similar traumatic defeat at the hands of the German confederation in 1871. Many painters belonging to the 'modern breakthrough' were trained in France. The result was a series of continuously evolving debates as Danish intellectuals embraced aspects of or differentiated themselves from Germany and at the same time engaged in internal disputes about the future of Danish national culture: should it be ethnocentric or internationalist in orientation.

This, of course, could not be a dichotomous choice, for national projects, as Joep Leerssen has argued, have formed, particularly in their early years, within a transnational context. Danes were exposed to and participated in the great currents of the Enlightenment and Romanticism that cut across state borders, French and German had been in the eighteenth century the languages of court and the upper classes, (though there was a shift from German beginning in the 1760s) and many of the significant Danish intellectuals circulated in metropolises of Europe, London, Paris and Berlin. Throughout this period, Paris and Berlin and to a lesser extent London remained reference points for Danish intellectuals, who were concerned about the status of Danish culture in the eyes of fellow Europeans.

As the chapters by Thor J. Mednick and Karina Lykke Grand and by Sine Krogh demonstrate, avowedly nationalist and cosmopolitan intellectuals may have had more in common than it seemed on the surface when they supported the entry of Danish artists onto

the European stage, to participate in international exhibitions. In the mid-nineteenth century, N. L. Høyen was Denmark's most influential art historian, defining in Herderian terms the task of a national school of art, founding *Kunstforeningen* (the Art Society) in Copenhagen, and he was the founding co-curator of the Royal Collection of Fine Art (eventually, Statens Museum for Kunst). But Høyen was persuaded also to organise the selection of Danish paintings for the French Exposition Universelle, in 1855. Knut Ljøgodt also points to his enthusiasm for Scandinavianism. On the other hand, Høyen's legacy was opposed by the supposedly cosmopolitan Georg Brandes, like Goldschmidt of Jewish background. Brandes was the leader of what was called the 'modern breakthrough' which repudiated the older generation, represented by Høyen, and which advocated a return to realism and naturalism in the arts. But Brandes also viewed a rooted nationality as a prerequisite for participation in modern Europe. To Danish chagrin, as Krogh shows, their fellow Europeans were unable to distinguish easily between Danish painters following an ethnocultural script from those of a more 'cosmopolitan' orientation in these international exhibitions. There was no easy answer to the question what made an artist or musician Danish. As Brincker suggests, this depended less on the intentions of the creative artist than how he/she was perceived by fellow nationals.

In the late eighteenth century, transnationality was in evidence at a regional level as nationalism in the Danish case developed in close conjunction with a larger Scandinavian consciousness. Scandinavianism intensified with the shift from composite to more national state units in the nineteenth century arising from the separation of Norway from Denmark and Finland from Sweden. As Knut Ljøgodt outlines, Danes, Norwegians, Icelanders and Swedes became aware, with the 'rediscovery' of the Sagas in the eighteenth century, that they drank from a common Norse pool of myths and legends. Danes asserted that Iceland was merely the last repository of what had been originally integral to their culture. The sagas allowed Scandinavians to claim that far from being a backward periphery, they, like the classical Greeks, were heirs to one of the oldest heroic societies. Indeed, Norse mythological and historical began to oust classical themes, providing a rich set of images and stories for first literary writers and visual artists to explore. This produced rival claims to ownership (just as Irish and Scots competed over the ownership of the Ossianic Lays) which could lead to mutual differentiation between Danes and their neighbours. Jørgensen states that as a theme in Danish golden age painting North mythology was secondary to that of landscape, nonetheless, for Grundtvig and Høyen a Danish revival went hand in hand with a Scandinavianism taking inspiration from the saga literature. A sense of common heritage,

encouraged Herderian notions of linked families of nations in the minds of intelligentsia aware of the vulnerability of their countries, to threats from multiple directions. Ruth Hemstad discusses the establishment of literary societies and newspapers by the 1830s in Copenhagen and Uppsala to order to promote cultural and political unity.

Transnationality generated a fluidity at an individual level, as we see from Peter Fjågesund's discussion of the philosopher and novelist Henrich Steffens, a Norwegian-born son of a Danish mother and a German father from Holstein, and cousin of N.F.S. Grundtvig. He was long resident in Germany, where he developed a close association with the leading German romantics, Fichte, Schelling and the Schiller brothers, and a friendship with Goethe, and he was influenced by French revolutionary ideas. Steffens, however, maintained a deep identification as Norwegian. He exported a German philosophy to the Nordic countries, while creating in Germany a fascination with Norway, transforming its image. Steffens presented Norway, previously seen as a country on the European periphery, in romantic terms as a society combining a heroic aristocratic with an egalitarian ethos that was closely related to the Germans themselves. It might seem ironic that this sense of transnationality extended to the German 'enemy', as Richard Wagner amongst others appropriated the Norse heritage as part of the German patrimony, but from early on painters from the German as well as from the Danish regions of the kingdom were prominent depicitors of the Viking heritage. From a Danish perspective, however, this cultural 'appropriation' was dangerous, as Scandinavians were seen as a branch on a Germanic tree (that could become a part of Germany).

A sense of transnationality, however, was always likely to exist in increasing tension with a strengthening international system, as nationalising states intensified their control over their populations during the nineteenth century. At a geo-political level, Danes were acutely aware of their precariousness as a relatively small power in the European order, tossed between the great powers: during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars between Britain, which bombarded Copenhagen, France, which insisted on its incorporation in its Continental system, and Sweden, which seized Norway. The emergence of a Pan-Scandinavian movement from the 1830s also had a political and a cultural resonance: to Danes, arising from the threat posed by Pan-Germanism and German unification, and to Swedes, the fear of Russia that had seized Finland. Hemstad describes two waves of Scandinavianism: first, in 1864, in response to the German seizure of Danish territories; and second, around 1900, in answer to renewed German and Russian threats against the southern and eastern borderlands of the Nordic region. According to traditional historiography, it would appear that pan-

Scandinavianism was a force strongest in the diaspora and suffered from systemic problems, undercut by language differences, by memories of historic rivalries (the Northern wars), and by Norwegian resentments at their two overlords, Denmark and Sweden.

Historic capital cities have often been formative in the shift from dynastic polity into a centralised, national, territorial identity. Such cities have exerted an authority over a territory in part through acquiring a 'sacred aura' associated with royal courts, cathedrals, law courts and universities, and their customs and forms of language were adopted by aspiring men and women. But capital cities can have an ambiguous, even conflictual, relationship with national formation, since their elites have been conscious of belonging to an international, even cosmopolitan society, reflected, for example, in European-wide neoclassical and historicist styles of architecture. Copenhagen could draw ire as unnational, and such metropolises can be sites of conflict, during the later eighteenth century, between aspirant Danish professional classes and a German-dominated court elite. In the modern period, their power of capitals tended to increase, as they became the apex of education, the centres of mass media, and the gateways to the vastly expanded career opportunities in government bureaucracies, the professions and in businesses. Danish nationalists sought to appropriate and transform this source of symbolic power (purifying it of German influence) and then diffuse it to the whole territory. Several contributors emphasise the dominant role of Copenhagen, which itself became a symbol of Danish resilience through the rebuilding of its central districts after the British bombardment in the Napoleonic wars. Claus Møller Jørgensen shows how with the relaxation of censorship, a vigorous public sphere developed there among the relatively small literate class in the early nineteenth century, one that the 'Society for the Proper Use of the Freedom of Speech' sought to guide. Although directed at the education of the peasantry feared to be mired in materialist grievances, the membership of this society was dominated by the networks of a Copenhagen intelligentsia. Copenhagen was at the centre of everything: in its political associations and literary, art and musical institutions while its major newspapers, including the radical republican *Corsaren*, diffused visual images of Danishness to the country at large. If anything, this dominance increased in the course of the nineteenth century with rapid urbanisation and movement of populations from the countryside intensifying divisions between a rural, populist nationalism on the one hand and a more hedonistic culture of urbanism represented by the pleasure grounds of the Parisian-influenced Tivoli gardens. Against urban luxury and cosmopolitan ideologies, nationalists could portray as the essential Denmark remote regions, such as Jutland, and their

peoples. Grundtvig's movement and later political parties such as Venstre idealised a countryside of free peasantry.

Perhaps, the theme that rises most strongly from these pages is the role of war in shaping Danish national identity. As a result of prolonged conflicts, Denmark had shrunk by the beginning of this period from a medium-sized great power to a much smaller state. Warfare also profoundly shaped emerging Danish nationalism. The Napoleonic wars, in revealing the vulnerability of Denmark and resulting in the loss of Norway and the destruction of some of central Copenhagen, inspired a general movement of national regeneration.

The development of a constitution in 1849 was crucial for the definition of a modern Danish state. However, the Danish nation remained an abstraction for much of the population. As Rasmus Kjørboe shows in a fascinating discussion, the triumphant First Schleswig-Holstein War was crucial for the popular substantiation of a Danish nation. During general mobilisation, a popular nationalism found expression through the symbols and songs created by earlier cultural nationalists. Even more significant was the struggle between competing elites to memorialise and represent the military sacrifice. Conservative supporters of the dynastic composite state in alliance with the army and church sought to depoliticise the sacrifice, by presenting it in religious terms and advocating local memorials that played down the ethnic aspect. In contrast, National Liberals led by N. L. Høyen saw it as means to construct a popular Danish nation, forged, as they believed, in a triumphant struggle against a German enemy. In celebration, they made repeated appeals directly to the people to fund a statue of 'The Brave Militia Man after the Victory' in Fredericia, a military town in the Jutland peninsula. Kjørboe appears to support George Mosse's contention of a resultant iconographical revolution, in which a traditional allegorical depiction of heroism in antique dress gave way to a 'realistic' representation of the common soldier in the guise of a free peasant. This, together with that of the *Isted Lion*, placed in Flensborg/Flensburg cemetery on the Danish-German linguistic border in Schleswig, became an iconic commemorative image in Danish popular culture. As Kjørboe states, this was not just a symbolic struggle but also one over resources and networks, in which repeated funding appeals to the people at large became a proxy for democratic elections and generated political channels which later nationalists could exploit. Through this competitive process, he maintains, a national consciousness formed.

This, however, was only a brief triumphant moment in a history of decline whose most shattering moment was the disastrous war of 1864, which ended with the loss of one third of the territories of the Danish state. This can well be described as ‘a’ (if not *the*) critical juncture in the history of modern Denmark. Rasmus Glenthøj argues that the idea of a traumatic moment has also obscured continuities in Danish history and that even today historians have absorbed a partisan interpretation of its significance without realising it. He outlines powerfully how the war of 1864 not only led to an overturning of the Danish political system but has framed Danish identity, including their conception of their place in the world. His discussion confirms the cultural historian Wolfgang Schivelbusch’s analysis of defeated nations such as France after 1870, which plunged into a deep contested search for an explanation and for scapegoats.¹⁶ The question was how far Danes themselves (or their National Liberal leaders) were responsible for the defeat and how far they, as a small people, were victims of an international system, dominated by *realpolitik*. Glenthøj maintains that this debate was transformed into an instrument used in a constitutional struggle, in a culture war, and in arguments over Danish foreign and defence policy.

Although the political system changed after 1864 as liberals and conservatives coalesced in response to the entry of new parties such as *Venstre* and the Social Democrats, Glenthøj states that the competing explanatory frameworks arising from the debacle, though modified, substantially remained. He links political struggles to parallel conflicts in the arts and historiographical debates in the later nineteenth century. Initially, a national romantic strain persisted in the aftermath of defeat, now framed as a moral victory against a superior power. This was supported both by a reformed alliance of conservatives and national liberals who believed that only through creating a mythology of heroic sacrifice, represented, for example, in the paintings in the Museum of National History, could Danes recover from this disaster. These sentiments were also shared by the Grundtvigian Folk High Schools movement. However, as one would expect from the experience of other countries, the catastrophe discredited the dominant ideology of nationalist exceptionalism in favour of a critical internationalist perspective. Articulated by Georg Brandes in the 1870s, this demanded an ossified Denmark join the European vanguard. Brandes’s demands for realism were embraced by the radical younger generation of artists and found a home in the academic and urban supporters of later organisations such as the *Radikale Venstre* and the Danish Workers’ Movement.

Commented [SK1]: We are wondering if you mean Radikale Venstre instead of Venstre?

Thor Mednick and Karina Grand explore further this generational struggle in the artistic community during the early twentieth century that only ended with the Versailles Peace Treaty, which restored the northern part of Schleswig to Denmark. They show that the national romantic tradition of Høyen, although under attack from such modernist-oriented painters as Vilhelm Groth, still had its advocates in a group around the painter, Agnes Slott-Møller, who espoused an ethnic internationalism, in the form of Scandinavianism, against what she saw as a demoralising internationalism of leftist ideologies. What sustained this older romanticism was in the authors's words a sense of 'filio-cultural responsibility' to the Danish population of the annexed Schleswig who were subjected to a coercive Germanisation by the authorities. But this nationalism was already old fashioned. Slott-Møller had assembled an artistic collection to encourage the renationalisation of Schleswig Danes after their re-unification with Denmark. Although this was initially greeted with enthusiasm in Schleswig, this quickly faded. Although the authors provide several reasons for this apathy, they suggest the version of Denmark presented was of an older generation of artists (some already dead) that now seemed outmoded amidst the carnage of war.

In nationalist ideology the golden age of the nation is a time of moral integration and social harmony. Nothing could be further from the truth with respect to the period labelled retrospectively (in the late nineteenth century) the 'Danish golden age'. It was, indeed, one of great cultural achievement in many fields – including architecture, literature, philosophy, and science as well as the visual arts.¹⁷ Nonetheless, as the present collection makes clear, it was also a time of fierce cultural conflict that erupted into war and civil war and resulted in the truncation of the Danish state. These chapters also show that if nationalism became the dominant ideology, it was fiercely challenged by religious and internationalist outlooks, though these tend to be circumscribed by a Danish consciousness as we saw in the example of Brandes. Nationalists themselves came in several varieties that jostled for dominance. Supporters of a traditional dynastic patriotism, identifying with a multi-national composite state, struggled against organic national liberals who themselves became criticised by more cosmopolitan nationalists. This competition of ideas came about from a combination of internal factors, including the rise of new social actors and generational change, and external events, arising from ever changing geo-political setting, some of which struck Denmark like a series of earthquakes. The backdrop to this cultural revival was of a former middle-sized imperial power in continuous contraction and increasingly vulnerable to more powerful

nation states. Attempts to find refuge in a Scandinavian alliance vied with a sense of helplessness in international politics.

As several chapters indicate, the conflicts of this period and the events associated with them, had a long term significance for the definition of Danish national character, as protagonists argued whether Denmark should see itself as unique and follow its own path or should position itself within a broader European context. The disastrous year 1864, Glenthøj attests, remains potent in Danish cultural memory, from which many draw contrasting explanations of everything ‘from Denmark’s nation-building to its cooperative movement, its cultural wars, its constitutional struggles, its form of welfare state and its relationship to Germany and the EU.’ The message of these chapters is that there is and can be no final resolution to such questions of what is Denmark or what is Dane and that the many debates inaugurated in the early nineteenth century are still with us.

¹ I would like to express my gratitude to the editors and to Rasmus Glenthøj for their comments on this chapter.

² Smith A. D. (2009). *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism*. London: Routledge, 1-2, 24-5.

³ Rosenblum, R. (1969) *Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press.

⁴ Hutchinson, J. (1987) *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation-State*. London: Allen & Unwin.

⁵ Leerssen, Joep (2006) ‘Nationalism and the cultivation of culture’, *Nations and Nationalism*, 12, no. 4, 559-78

⁶ Hutchinson, J. (2004), *Nations as Zones of Conflict*, London: Sage Publications 2004

⁷ On France, see Gildea, R. (1994) *The Past in French History*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

⁸ Roberts, M. (1967) *Europe, 1880-1945*, London: Longmans, 67; also Woodruff, W (1973) ‘The Emergence of an International Economy, 1700-1914’ in C. Cipolla (ed.) *The Fontana Economic History of Europe: The emergence of an Industrial Society, Part 2*, London: Harper Collins

⁹ Hutchinson, J. (2017) *Nationalism and War*. Oxford: Oxford University, ch. 2. The following two paragraphs draw on the chapter of this book.

¹⁰ Mosse, G.L. (1990) *Fallen Soldiers* Oxford: Oxford University Press, ch. 1; .Smith, A.D. (2003) *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹¹ Brincker, B (2003) A “Small Great National State”: An Analysis of the Cultural and Political Factors that shaped Danish Nationalism 1760–1870, *Journal of Historical Sociology* Vol. 16 No. 4, 407-31.

¹² For these points and an important overview of the period, see Glenthøj, Rasmus: *1864 – sønner af de slagne*, Gads forlag: Copenhagen 2014.

¹³ Thompson, C.L. (2020) The Crisis of Cultus in Christian Religion and Cultural Religion: 1842 and 2017’ in Stewart, J. and Kramer, N. (eds) (2020) *The Crisis of the Danish Golden Age and its Modern Resonance*, Copenhagen, Museum Tusulanum Press, 95-109.

¹⁴ Mosse, G.L. (1975), *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements from the Napoleonic Wars Through the Third Reich* (New York, H.Fertig 1975). See Hutchinson, J. (forthcoming) ‘The continuing relevance of George L. Mosse to the Study of Nationalism’, *Journal of Contemporary History*.

¹⁵ Smith, A. D. (2013) *The Nation Made Real: Art and National Identity in Western Europe 1600-1850*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.; Riley, M. and Smith, A. D. (2016). *Nation and Classical Music: From Handel to Copland*. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer.

¹⁶ Schivelbusch, W. (2004) *The Culture of Defeat*. London: Granta Books

¹⁷ See the recent, Stewart, J. and Kramer, N. (eds) (2020) *The Crisis of the Danish Golden Age and its Modern Resonance*, Copenhagen, Museum Tusulanum Press.