

## Editorial

### On Scandinavia's Visibility and Dreams in Bags

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The visibility of Scandinavia is manifested in various forms. We were well aware that Denmark was one of the world's happiest countries, featuring in first place in the *World Happiness Report* for years (even though it has since been topped by Norway), but last year was Sweden's turn for special visibility – although not under the sign of the *hygge* or *lagom* cult, of contentment or of happiness, but rather in connection with the government crisis, the scandal surrounding the Swedish Academy, large-scale forest fires – that is to say, various crisis scenarios.

Last year's editorial appealed for a feminist reappraisal of the tendency to sanitise the image of the North, after the previous year's discussion of words of the year and how they »crystallise [...] dominant discourses«. Hashtags and (solidarity) symbols can also be such crystallisation points, and Sweden in particular released several of them into the world last year. The *#knytblus* (tie-neck blouse), a sartorial expression of solidarity with Sara Danius and her resignation announcement on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2018 in response to the crisis at the Swedish Academy, was one of the hashtags that went viral in a transnational *#MeToo* debate that drew great attention internationally. To see traditionally august institutions such as the Swedish Academy and the Nobel Prize in Literature suddenly embroiled in corrupt machinations and sexual transgressions provoked widespread outrage. Then, in the latter part of the year, the hype around the Swedish Academy crisis was gradually eclipsed by the *#klimatstrejk* (climate strike) hashtag, with which the schoolgirl Greta Thunberg, now aged 16, is rallying global attention and has found imitators and supporters among schoolchildren throughout (and beyond) Europe; the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* called her the »Galionsfigur der Klimabewegung« (figurehead of the climate movement) while the *Spiegel* referred to the Thunberg effect. In her home country, Greta has since been proclaimed Woman of the Year. For all the heterogeneity of these hashtags, their commonality is that they name crises and are associated with strong and visible female ›agency‹, which perhaps also helps to remedy the German proclivity towards retro and idyll in its view of the North, complained about in last year's editorial, with a contrasting image of Scandinavia. The presence of solidarity as an important factor kindles some hope that the challenges of the crisis-afflicted present, which have

placed Scandinavia and its European neighbours »i svindlens og klimaets tegn«<sup>1</sup> (under the signs of deception and the climate), can be handled productively and creatively.

Meanwhile, Norway has been sending us a weekly poem, because aside from political symbols and hashtags, another way of generating visibility is through literature and verbal art, particularly with all eyes on Norway at this year's Frankfurt Book Fair. Norway is guest of honour for 2019 and seems to be preparing for the role so frenetically that Norwegian author Jan Kjærstad, in an *Aftenposten* newspaper article, brandished phrases such as »Forføngelighetens fyrverkeri« (a firework display of vanity), »stormannsgalskap« (delusions of grandeur) and »en orgie i skryt« (a bragging orgy).<sup>2</sup> While Kjærstad warned against an uncritical tidal wave of publications to the detriment of literary quality, the Norwegian book trade sees investing in quantity as its best chance of procuring lasting visibility and greater international significance for Norway – and has spent 52 million Norwegian kroner on over 130 new translations into German, roundly cranking up productivity in the diffusion of literature. When Norway was announced as the 2019 guest country at last year's Frankfurt Book Fair, cloth bags were handed out bearing the motto »The dream we carry« (after a poem by Olav H. Hauge), prompting the editor of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Andrea Diener, to ruminate on »Träume in Tüten«<sup>3</sup> (dreams in bags) – a poetic or a questionable image for the Norwegian ambitions? One argument for choosing Norway had been the country's »number-one ranking in matters of press freedom and gender justice«<sup>4</sup>. It remains to be seen which authors and books are selected as representatives and which thematic focuses are chosen. The literature programme was officially announced on March 21<sup>st</sup>.

All these are topics that will certainly be raised at this year's *Arbeitstagung der Skandinavistik* (ATdS), the German-speaking Study Conference of Scandinavian Studies, which is taking place between 24.–26.9.2019 in Erlangen, Germany.<sup>5</sup> The spectrum of themes for the plenary lectures and study groups ranges from »Canon, Hegemony and Deconstruction in Old Norse Studies«, »Reconfigurations of Icelandic Storytelling in the Premodern Era«, »Scandinavian Linguistics« and »Inflection Classes from the Historical Linguistics Viewpoint«, through »100 Years of Swedish Suffrage«, »The Resistance of the Religious«, »Other Literature/Others in Literature« and literature »Under the Lens of the Cautionary Utopia«, to the »Nordic #MeToo Revolution of 2018«.<sup>6</sup> We encourage the conference participants to submit these new and varied papers to NORDEUROPAforum for publication, be they in the form of single articles or compilations of articles for a special thematic focus.

<sup>1</sup> [www.koncentrat.dk](http://www.koncentrat.dk)

<sup>2</sup> Jan Kjærstad in *Aftenposten*, 24.5.2018

<sup>3</sup> FAZ Literaturblog: 11 October 2018 by Andrea Diener: »Träume in Tüten: Norwegen 2019«, <https://blogs.faz.net/buchmesse/2018/10/11/traeume-in-tueten-norwegen-2019-1764/>

<sup>4</sup> »Platz 1 in Sachen Pressefreiheit und Geschlechtergerechtigkeit«, *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.atds2019.phil.fau.de/>

»Kanon, Hegemonie und Dekonstruktion in der Altnordistik«, »Rekonfigurationen isländischen Erzählens in der Vormoderne«, »Skandinavistische Sprachwissenschaft«, »Flexionsklassen aus sprachhistorischer Sicht«, »100 Jahre schwedisches Wahlrecht«, »die Resistenz des Religiösen«, »Andere (in der) Literatur«, »im Zeichen der Warnutopie«, and the »Nordische MeToo-Revolution 2018«.

## HANNA EGLINGER

So the NORDEUROPAforum team will not only have the Book Fair in its sights, but also anticipates the addition of inspiring new Scandinavian research papers and thematic focuses on contemporary literature, on (popular) culture, on the North European region in the Middle Ages and other illuminating angles on the North. Regarding our journal's Open Access status, from 2019 this will be underlined by incorporating the CC BY 4.0 standard licence into the textual content and metadata of our publications.

While there are no drastic changes to report since the last editorial, we are fortunate to have gained Paul Greiner and Frederike Richter (Berlin), Merle Weßel (Oldenburg) and Antje Wischmann (Vienna) as additions to our Editorial Team, and Michael Schuler as our IT consultant – a warm welcome to you all!

Erlangen, March 2019



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