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Literature and the construction of Scandinavian peoples in relation to Scandinavianism

Bakgrund/Frågeställning

Literature and cultural journals were essential to the spread of pan-national ideas – in Scandinavia as well as in pan-national movements elsewhere in Europe. Contrary to some pan-national movements at the end of the nineteenth century that represented a stage following nation-state nationalism, such as pan-Latinism, Scandinavianism was promoted as an alternative scale of national identity. In fact, since all Scandinavian nationalist movements at the beginning of the nineteenth century acknowledged Old Norse literature as a source of a national identity *and* as a common “national” heritage, the Scandinavian peoples were construed in a tense and shifting relation to pan-national ideas to begin with.

In my paper, I will distinguish between four different ways in which the construction of the nationally defined people in nineteenth-century literature related to ideas of a Scandinavian cultural community. The examples will be drawn from mid-nineteenth-century literature, in different ways keys to the formation of national identities, by the Finnish Johan Ludvig Runeberg (1804–1877), the Danish Mathilde Fibiger (1830–1872), the Norwegians Camilla Collett (1813–1895), Henrik Wergeland (1808–1845), and Johan Sebastian Welhaven (1807–1873), and the Swedes Fredrika Bremer (1801–1865) and C.J.L. Almqvist (1793–1866). Finally, I will draw attention to Selma Lagerlöf (1858–1940), the Swedish Nobel laureate, as a bridge into the Nordism of the twentieth century. The relation to Scandinavianist ideas of different kinds could be explicit, dismissed, unacknowledged, or implicit. Two themes will be focused: women’s emancipation and poverty as a national character. The three major emancipation novels of Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish literature respectively were all issued in the 1850s within a period of five years: Mathilde Fibiger’s *Clara Raphael. Tolv Breve* (1851), Camilla Collett’s *Amtmandens Døttre* (1854–1855), and Fredrika Bremer’s *Hertha* (1856). In order to articulate women’s contribution to the nation as citizens, they all consciously created a nationally defined people, though in strikingly different ways in terms of the relation to wider pan-national ideas.

Metod och Resultat

Konklusion