

The shepherd's horn and norwegian romantic nationalism assignment



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Scandinavian Studies The Shepherd's Horn and Norwegian Romantic

Nationalism The concept of romantic nationalism is defined as a " form of nationalism in which the state derives its political legitimacy as an organic consequence of the unity of those it governs. " In the context of Maurits Hansen's short story " The Shepherd's Horn", romantic nationalism was a movement in Norway between 1840 and 1867 in art, literature, and popular culture that " emphasized the aesthetics of Norwegian nature and the uniqueness of the Norwegian national identity. Throughout this text, representations of both the concerns and the ideals of Norwegian Romantic Nationalism make themselves known through descriptions of the Norwegian scenery and the country's loyal inhabitants. The overarching purpose of this analysis is to point these concerns and ideals and reveal why these might have been in place at this critical point in history.

From the outset of this story, the story teller, who goes by the name Carl Mohlmann, lays out an idealistic description of the Norwegian country-side that draws the reader in: I could have the desire, dear friend, to date this letter from the true Norway, for no other district has struck me as being so genuinely Scandinavian, - so proud and yet so mild. Why should we continually admire those Swiss vistas anyway? Why do we never adorn our walls with views of our fatherland? This district seems to me to be able to measure up to the most beautiful landscape.

One isn't struck by wildly roaring waterfalls ??? or by sheer vertical cliffs ??? or by dizzyingly deep abysses; - but the whole, my friend ??? the tone, - as you painters call it, - is so high, so indescribably lovely. Emphasis on such phrases as " the true Norway", " the whole", and " the tone" paint vivid

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pictures in the readers' mind and provide a glimpse of the true patriotism that is running through the blood of its citizens. The excerpt points out how they should no longer admire the mountains of their Swiss neighbors or the landscape of their German friends due to the fact that Norway has all of the same offerings and more.

The sense of beauty in the region is accentuated when a stream, a bird, and a group of cows are described in greater detail than one would expect. The snippet, " The brooks' babbling, the birds' song, and the grazing cows' bells all sang harmoniously in my receptive ear," suggest togetherness and unity of all things within the country, both living and natural. Although completely separate, the brook, the bird, and the cows are brought together through some time of song that can only be found in nature.

Beyond description of scenery alone, the story teller goes on to praise the quality of the region's human inhabitants several times over. Passages such as "...while I meanwhile pause...in this charming valley amongst its gracious inhabitants..." and " I no sooner stood in the valley, before a middle-aged man from the valley in fine national costume came up to me, and extended his hand" reveal that those who occupy the land are especially pleasing and hospitable all people, even strangers and unknown travelers.

The story teller is immediately accepted by what is assumed to be an unknown family, but this does not create a problem, as the following passage will reveal. "' Welcome countryman! Please accept what I can offer you! ' he said in his direct, genuine dialect..." This greeting offered by Thord, the father of the household, immediately upon the stranger's arrival is

followed up by an act of pure generosity when the story teller is "...shown to the seat of honor..." for a time of feasting and relaxation after his arduous travels.

After sitting down at his designated seat, Carl, the story teller, began to realize the how amazing a household this was in all its simplicity as "...his [Thord's] beautiful wife put out a lovely evening meal of flour porridge, thin bread, and eggs, I got time to observe the pure simplicity and modest affluence, that came together in the spacious cottage. " Even after filling himself with an ample amount of food, the story teller was able to further observe the physical features of his gracious hosts in much greater detail. Thord, that was my host's name, was a tall broad-shouldered man with a remarkable face that, I do not know how, seemed to me to resemble the antique woodcuts of our Norwegian kings. " Very important here was the mentioning of " our Norwegian kings" as this were a source of pride and a mentioning of history that showed how deep the patriotism for the country was running at this time. As Thord's daughter, Ragnhild, entered the room later on in the story, Carl vividly observes her striking characteristics, " A tall, poised build, - a pale, meaningful face, - swimming, blue eyes, and gold, freely waving hair met my eye immediately. So dashing were her features, the story teller was taken aback at what he saw. Describing something, or in this case someone, in such detail pushes the reader to note how uniquely beautiful this individual is and creates the feeling that all those within Norway or within this countryside are similar in appearance and beauty. Again, after the story teller has returned from a tour of the cottage, Thord shows the utmost respect for his guest as he " awaited me with a beer mug

in his hand. Short, but meaningful passages such as this further the theme of the story and continually stress how great a people reside in Norway at this time in history. The loyalty and true citizenship of Thord and his family are revealed when the story teller eventually took note of his surroundings within the cabin: ...I became aware of some books on the shelf, and it pleased me to find our Snorre among them. I entered into conversation with Thord about the old history ??? and was surprised at his familiarity with the same.

Without bragging he told me in the course of the conversation, that he was descended from Harald Fairhair, and that his lineage had kept itself unmixed. Within this observation and conversation, there are several key elements that relate to Norway's romantic nationalism. First off, the mentioning of Snorre is important for the fact that this famous author was responsible for compiling Edda and many learned historical works. He also was responsible for writing a biography of St. Olaf of Norway, a former king, and several other Norwegian king figures.

The two then entered into conversation about the history of the country and its past leaders, which, as it happened, had family ties with Thord. Indeed, he had descended from, Harald Fairhair. Also important is the fact that Thord had kept his lineage unmixed. This was a great source of pride for Thord as well as his descendants and elders, as it meant that the family had been kept strictly Norwegian and of past king's blood for centuries on end. Even as impressive as this may have been to an outsider looking in, Thord still showed great humility in front of the story teller. I almost saw the long-decayed great Harald stand before me in his descendant. ??? My host <https://assignbuster.com/the-shepherds-horn-and-norwegian-romantic-nationalism-assignment/>

seemed to understand my feeling ??? and shyly turned the conversation to other things. " While being of the same lineage as a former Norwegian king would be a source of boastfulness for some, it was important to Thord to remain humble and honor his predecessors through conservativeness of emotion. This spoke volumes about the true character of this region's citizens, as it demonstrated how little recognition they needed for their impressive past even though everything about the way they carried themselves was of the ighest honor and respect. As the story develops further and Carl learns that the young girl, Ragnhild, has birthed a child with her childhood lover, Guttorm, without her parents knowing as much, he takes it upon himself to convince Thord to accept the couple and their offspring. While the concept of romantic nationalism had been a positive in many respects, it is shown that Thord's nationalism was the driving force behind Ragnhild and Guttorm not being together.

The statement "...no prayers, no tears had been able to convince Thord to permit his daughter's connection with a poor man from outside the family," shows Thord's unwillingness to mix his bloodline and accept an outsider, and especially an uneducated and poor outsider. Hearing of this, Carl sets out Thord's cottage once more to make his case for the couple, but he does so strategically as the following passage points out: As if by chance, I lead the conversation to the parents' harshness ??? and told Thord and his wife about Philip of Spain, about d'Agasseau and others. I ended by telling about Eginhard and Emma.

When their attention was awakened, I went closer ??? and made up a story myself, which almost in its entirety resembled Ragnhild's. Thord grew very
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attentive. Then I took Snorre and the Bible down from the shelf, laid them on the table and said: " There, Thord, is the book that teaches about your royal lineage; but here lies the word of the Lord, that teaches that we are all equal before God. It teaches humility and forgiveness, mercy and love, - and there (I ran out and was like an arrow back with the child) lies your daughter's child on a stranger's arm ??? and beseeches through me, that you will not disown your own blood. Thord and his wife were immediately shocked and surprised at what they had been told, but so strong was Carl's message that Thord immediately forgave his daughter and Guttorm, and accepted the couple and his new grandchild into the family with open arms. This was a very powerful occurrence, as it pushed Thord to consider the history of his ancestors versus the teachings of the Bible and realize how he could not forsake his own child and grandchild just because of tradition. Throughout this short story, representations of both the concerns and the ideals of Norwegian Romantic Nationalism make themselves known through descriptions of the Norwegian scenery and the country's loyal inhabitants. It is interesting to point out that although Thord violates the " traditional" display of romantic nationalism in accepting an outsider into his bloodline, he actually accepts a new form of the concept simultaneously. What is meant here is that he sides with the teachings of the Bible, shows mercy on Guttorm and Ragnhild, and refuses to forsake his own family. He may have mixed his bloodline, but at the same time grew as a person and made the ultimate sacrifice for his daughter's lover, who after all, was of Norwegian descent.

Also interesting to note are the reasons why these feelings of romantic nationalism were in place during this time. One of the largest factors contributing to these attitudes was the fact that Norway had gone almost 400 years as a Danish province and had begun to lose a lot of their original culture. It is true that most of the truly unique Norwegian culture that remained was found among farmers and peasants in rural areas of the country much like that of Thord's cottage.

After Norway gained partial independence in 1814, it became important to its countrymen to regain their unique identity and maintaining the original heritage of the country's past became a huge priority. Time and time again, this unique identity and heritage was demonstrated by Thord and described by the story teller, Carl. We can now see that this protectiveness over one's land was fully justified seeing as Norway's culture was threatened for so many centuries before finally gaining independence.