

The translation of the four narratives is idiomatic and accurate. This reviewer is especially impressed with the manner in which Andersson successfully tackled the enormously difficult preface to *Hungrvaka*. Fortunately for Andersson, most of the texts are written in preterite tense, so the tense of verbs required few adjustments on his part, but when the historical present tense occurs in the Old Norse-Icelandic texts, it has been replaced by the preterite tense, which makes the texts more readable. As for proper names, the Old Norse-Icelandic forms have been retained. The only real deviation from the narratives is Andersson's own chapter headings.

A bibliography of works cited (primary and secondary), an index of personal names, and an index of place names round off the volume.

It is wonderful to finally have English translations of these texts. Both the translations and Andersson's extraordinarily informative and authoritative introduction to the narratives will no doubt encourage further research on the bishops' sagas. The general editors of the Viking Society Texts (Alison Finlay and Carl Phepsted) are to be complimented as well for publishing such a fine volume at a very affordable price.

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■ Rasmus Glenthøj and Morten Nordhagen Ottosen. *Union eller undergang: Kampen for et forent Skandinavia*. Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press/Spartacus Forlag AS, 2021. Pp. 632.

A movement called Scandinavism, also called Scandinavianism, arose in Scandinavia in the nineteenth century, and during the last 20 years, there has been much new research on the topic. Mainly in the subject of history, but also in literary studies, completely new aspects of Scandinavism have been brought to light and have made clear that the cultural part of the movement was a great success. It even affects Nordic society today, with active cooperation among the Nordic countries. But this new research has focused very little on the other part of Scandinavism, the work for a union between Norway, Sweden, and Denmark.

We all know how it ended: the dream of a Scandinavian union failed and died in the war of 1864 when Denmark lost large land areas to Germany. In *Union eller undergang: Kampen for et forent Skandinavia* (Union or Destruction: The Fight for a United Scandinavia), Rasmus Glenthøj and Morten Nordhagen Ottosen examine the political branch of Scandinavism and the interpretation of the events that has been accepted since the nineteenth century. Their work adds another chapter to the research on Scandinavism, a very exciting chapter.

Although the authors write about political Scandinavism and cultural Scandinavism, it does not mean that they consider cultural expressions to be apolitical; it simply means that it was possible to be an eager Scandinavian without working for a political union. Glenthøj and Ottosen also use the term Ultra-Scandinavians, a useful label for the most eager Scandinavians who wanted a political union.

One might worry that the book would be uninteresting because the result is already known: Scandinavia was never united in a union. But it is frequently exciting for several reasons. On the one hand, the authors make use of many new sources and materials, and on the other hand, they explain how close Denmark, Sweden, and Norway came to becoming a union. Even though we know how the war in 1864 ended, this book reveals that the work for a union was constantly present for a very long time, particularly among those in power. In addition, the work for a union continued for a few years after 1864. According to the authors, it is 1866 that is the final year. Another factor that improves the book is the number of illustrations.

The main purpose of the book is to rewrite the basic story of political Scandinavism: it was not just a crazy idea that was exclusively supported by fanatics and drunk students. Perhaps the most important tool for changing this narrative is the comparison with events in Europe; during the same period, both Italy and Germany were united from several smaller states. This outlook makes it clear to the reader that the chance of succeeding in forming a Scandinavian union was about as likely as the formation of Italy and Germany. An important factor behind the work for a union was the idea of the threshold principle: the notion that a state must be of a certain size to survive. The safest protection for small states was to unite. After reading the book, one of the remaining questions might be: How could Denmark survive as an independent state at all? The doom the title mentions was close. Another point that the book presents is the view of war. In the nineteenth century, war did not have to be exclusively a problem; a Scandinavian “samlingskrig” (war of unification) might have been a solution instead, and a tool for uniting several small states, which happened for Italy in 1861. A common enemy is an efficient way of creating a unified group identity. But the most powerful countries in Europe would have prevented the formation of a Scandinavian union . . . or would they? According to Glenthøj and Ottosen, it is not at all certain that this would have been the case; Bismarck was, for example, for a period of time, positively minded toward a Scandinavian union.

We should therefore take the plans for a union seriously. The authors emphasize that several kings in Scandinavia had very positive attitudes toward a union, over several generations. But did it really matter what

they came up with during a dinner party that included lots of alcohol? There are moments when the story of drunk students has seemingly been replaced by the story of drunk kings, as shown in the picture on page 541. Nevertheless, politicians from both Denmark and Sweden/Norway were apparently concerned about what might have been promised or, even worse, written down during these occasions. It is all very entertaining, but the substance of the story is that there were plans to trigger a revolution in Denmark and that, for example, in the Autumn of 1863, plans existed to kidnap the Danish royal family to pave the way for the Swedish royal family Bernadotte. It sounds completely unrealistic, but seen in the context of historical events, it suddenly does not seem so unlikely. In February 1864, this happened in Copenhagen:

Folk strømmet mot Det Gule Palæ, der kongefamilien bodde. Det var ikke bare . . . arbeiderne . . . men også studenter, borgerskapet og soldater. Folk ropte hurra for Karl XV, Hall og Lehmann. Landsforræderen Christian IX og hans tyske følge skulle derimot myrdes. (p. 445)

(People flocked to the Yellow Palace, where the royal family lived. It was not only . . . workers . . . but also students, the bourgeoisie, and soldiers. People shouted cheers for Karl XV, Hall and Lehmann. The traitor Christian IX and his German entourage, on the other hand, were to be murdered.)

According to one of the sources the authors have found, the Danish Chamberlain Casper Castenschiold, the royal family had considered leaving the country “av frykt for en skandinavisk revolusjon” (p. 445) [out of fear of a Scandinavian revolution].

The whole story of Denmark’s relationship with the duchies of Holstein, Schleswig, and Lauenburg, of which only Schleswig had a large Danish population, is extremely complicated. This book manages to account for even more complicated stories by carefully sorting out all the different communications at several different levels. The source material is overwhelming and convincing. There is official correspondence, there is private correspondence, there are accounts in diaries of secret conversations, there is a crinkly note with Scandinavian revolution plans found in Karl XV’s archives, there is a letter that is thrown into a fireplace—but someone already read it. . . . There are also secret private diplomats. And all the time, union plans are the main story line. In this comprehensive and impressive work, full concentration is required to keep track of who is who. Although many of the names are familiar, it would be helpful if there was a small register with the names of the main characters and what role they had.

Why, then, was there no union? According to the authors, there were several different “mulighetenes vinduer” (p. 528) [windows of opportunity] during the period when a union could have been formed. Sometimes dynastic plans were central, with adoptions of princes here and there (perhaps not the most realistic solution). When a Scandinavian event of that kind actually occurred, namely, the wedding in 1869 between Crown Prince Frederik in Denmark (later Frederik IX) and Princess Lovisa, Karl XV’s daughter, it was too late. One of the probable explanations for why no such “windows” were used to form a union seems in part to be the lack of a Cavour (Italian politician), that is, a politician with an overview (and power) who seizes the moment.

Have historians conveyed a misconception of political Scandinavism? The answer must be yes—or at least a simplified and distorted version. But why did historians in the past choose to tell the story of the union in this way? There are some explanations in *Union eller undergang*, but there is not one primary explanation. The most important might be that the history of political Scandinavism was written by those who were strongly against a union, “anti-skandinavister.” Glenthøj and Ottosen emphasize how the present deeply affects the writing of history, which means that rewritings are needed from time to time. The authors also point out that there is much left to discover in the archives for even more exciting Scandinavian research, which apparently fits into our time and strengthens the impression that Scandinavism is a lively and active area of research.

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■ Magnús Pálsson. *Gapassipi*. Reykjavik: Mumbling Eye, 2021. Pp. 40.

What might the Nordic countries sound like? How have Nordic experimental musicians used sound to evoke Nordic ways of being? What role do Nordic languages, landscapes, and livelihoods play in these sonic exhibitions? Mumbling Eye, founded in 2021 by Adam Buffington and Tumi Magnússon, is one of a number of institutions that seeks to promote Nordic art music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries among audiences, both within and beyond the Nordic countries. Following similar initiatives in the Nordic countries that issue out-of-print or unreleased sound-based works by experimental musicians and Fluxus artists—such as the Institut for Dansk Lydarkæologi (Institute for Danish Sound Archaeology) and the Henning Christensen Archive—Mumbling Eye is an archival record label dedicated to advancing Icelandic sound art and artists. While scholars and practitioners have readily approached