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Sing Your Ethnicity Aloud! Grundtvigian Danes at the Intersection of Denmark and America

by
Tina Langholm Larsen

Introduction

Most people familiar with Danish American history have encountered a narrative about the allegedly quick and unproblematic assimilation of Danish immigrants in the US, as presented here on the website of the Museum of Danish America: “Danes assimilated quickly, aided by the fact that they were white, northern European, and Protestant. Furthermore, Danes are practical and believed that assimilating into American society promised greater rewards than hanging onto their Danish identity and traditional ways.”¹ Even though this master narrative does, to some extent, capture the larger trajectory of the Danish immigrant experience, it disregards those Danish immigrants who played a pivotal role in creating and preserving a Danish American cultural heritage in the US. The fortieth anniversary conference of the Danish American Heritage Society held in Schaumburg, Illinois in October 2017 proved that this heritage is still alive and vibrant today. The divergence between the master narrative’s emphasis on Danes’ rapid assimilation and the still-existing Danish American heritage raises several questions: How was the Danish culture transmitted to the US? How did a distinct Danish American cultural heritage evolve? Who created and preserved this heritage? How has it influenced the lives of Danish Americans through succeeding generations?

As Henrik Bredmose Simonsen has convincingly demonstrated in his book *Kampen om Danskheden* (The fight over Danish identity),² it was especially the Danish American Grundtvigians who advocated for the preservation of the Danish cultural heritage in the US. Though hesitant, these Grundtvigians did eventually assimilate into the American mainstream; this assimilation is a topic that has been investigated by Danish American scholars such as Paul Nyholm³ and Enok Mortensen⁴, just as the history of both Danish migration and

the Danish church in America constitute well-established fields of research. However, little attention has been paid to the Danish People's Society, a highly controversial Grundtvigian organization that had preservation of the Danish cultural heritage in the US as its chief aim. Rarely have any Danes so explicitly expressed and preserved their Danish ethnicity outside the borders of Denmark as the members of the Danish People's Society did. This group of Danish Americans were very aware of the fact that they were writing a new chapter of Danish American history, and they made several attempts to record their unique history. Even so, the Danish People's Society's contributions to the preservation and evolution of a Danish American cultural identity have only peripherally been subject to scholarly research.⁵

To nuance the prevailing master narrative of Danish American immigration history, this paper takes the songbook published by the Danish People's Society as its point of departure, in order to examine how the Danish People's Society, through its songbook, facilitated cultural transmission between Denmark and the US and thereby contributed to developing and preserving a distinct Danish American cultural heritage in the US. In accordance with the Danish People's Society's aim of cultural preservation, culture is here broadly defined as a set of shared customs, artifacts, language, religious beliefs, practices, values, and ideology that characterizes a group. The fact that a specifically Danish American cultural heritage has been maintained and passed on through generations draws attention to the link between cultural preservation and cultural integration (or the lack thereof). Accordingly, this paper adopts insights from two contemporary research fields—the study of religion and assimilation studies—in order to adequately explain the intricate relationship between sustained cultural heritage and integration. An introduction of these research fields and reflections on the paper's methodology is provided in the first section of the paper. Subsequently, the history of the Danish People's Society is briefly outlined, reducing the above-mentioned gap of knowledge in Danish American history. By examining the songbook in the third and final section, this paper aims to demonstrate how the transmission and preservation of Danish heritage might have affected various dimensions of the integration of Danish immigrants in the US. In or-

der to conduct such an analysis, a nuanced understanding of “integration” is required, which is the subject of the following section.

Reflections on Theory and Methodology: Cultural integration

Throughout this paper, the concept of “integration” — rather than “assimilation,” which is more frequently used by American than European scholars — is used to describe the Danish immigrants’ experience of adapting to American society. Whereas “assimilation” can be defined as a homogenizing process operating to absorb a minority culture into a majority culture, “integration” encompasses a reciprocal process of interaction between groups that allows cultural preservation to some extent within the minority culture. Since the 1990s, historians and sociologists such as Richard Alba, Victor Nee, and Rogers Brubaker have advocated a reassessment of the concept of assimilation.⁶ In contrast to earlier definitions of the concept, these scholars regard assimilation as neither unavoidable nor irreversible, but as a potential outcome of choices and actions performed on the level of individuals and primary groups while larger structures on institutional levels can also affect adaptation processes. Hence, they redefine the concept of assimilation as a multi-dimensional process that unfolds in various paces, domains, and directions. By further emphasizing that cultural adaptation and cultural preservation constitute two of the primary forces that may occur in assimilation processes, these scholars have brought the concept of assimilation closer to the definition of integration. Despite the renaissance that the concept of assimilation is currently experiencing, I will use “integration” in this study to avoid confusion.

A key argument in the research on integration outlined above is that individual and group agency should be viewed as constituent elements of integration processes. These scholars claim that integration is not solely a process concerning individual feelings of belonging and self-identification or determining external structures, but that integration is also something agents do. Agents act according to their self-interests, which have been shaped by cultural beliefs such as customs, social norms, ideology, and religion. The argument that religion causes practical actions echoes a criticism that has been raised in the field of the study of religion — and especially studies of Christianity —

within the last decade. Several scholars have pointed to the fact that belief has often been privileged as the guiding concept in the existing research on religion, which has reduced the study of religion to merely being concerned with cognitive processes and meaning.⁷ In addition to belief, these scholars stress the importance of including practices and material objects as integral parts of the study of religion. This criticism is highly relevant when studying a Christian movement like Grundtvigianism that comprised an assemblage of several cultural elements, including religious belief, ethnic practices, and material objects.

Drawing upon these insights, this paper argues that both material culture and practices performed by individual or primary groups should be included as supplementary analytical frameworks in order to comprehend the relationship between Grundtvigianism and integration. As a consequence of this methodological stance, the function of the songbook is doubled in the following analysis: while the textual content of the included songs is examined as expressions of Grundtvigian culture, the songbook is also treated as a piece of material culture that facilitated a particular practice, interacting as a non-human actor with its Danish American users. I will elaborate on this below after a short introduction to the Danish People's Society. In spite of this chosen focus, the paper also acknowledges that external forces such as national politics can have distorted the picture painted here.

The Danish People's Society

In 1887, Frederik Lange Grundtvig (1854-1903), the youngest son of the Danish theologian N. F. S. Grundtvig (1783-1872), founded the Danish People's Society (most often referred to as "Dansk Folkesamfund") in Clinton, Iowa. Six years earlier, F. L. Grundtvig had immigrated to the US in an attempt to escape the shadow of his influential father. In America, he wished to live a quiet life with his wife as newlyweds. However, because of his paternal heritage and charismatic personality, he soon became a leading figure in the Grundtvigian milieu. In 1883 he became an ordained pastor in the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.⁸ As a devoted Grundtvigian, he continuously emphasized the importance of both the religious and human aspects of life, whereas a religious life centered around a more

pietistic belief was the main focus among the other significant Danish religious movement within the Danish church in the US, the pietistic Inner Mission. While Grundtvigianism had played a decisive and formative role in the religious landscape of Denmark, it was a minority religion in the US. In this new setting, Grundtvigianism differed from both the American mainstream Protestantism and the Danish Inner Mission by being a religious and ethnic movement. Several disputes between the Grundtvigians and the Inner Mission, which were both part of the Danish church until 1894, on the importance of worldly matters and sustained ethnic heritage led to the establishment of the Danish People's Society.

Like his father, F. L. Grundtvig was convinced that the Danish population constituted an ethnic unity characterized by a distinct peoplehood ("folkelighed") formed by the Danish language, culture, and history. He considered the US a heterogeneous nation destined by God to become a "meeting place of nations" ("Folkestævnets Land"). In this country, Grundtvig believed, God planned to gather people from all around the world to cooperate and exchange the best parts of their peoplehood, rather than assimilating into the majority culture, thereby optimizing each people and benefiting the society of nations.⁹ This idea of cultural and spiritual exchange originated from N. F. S. Grundtvig, who expressed similar ideological thoughts as early as 1855.¹⁰

With the foundation of the Danish People's Society, F. L. Grundtvig and his followers wished to reunite the Danish people in America in order to accomplish God's plan. To achieve this goal, F. L. Grundtvig considered the maintenance of each people's ethnic identity and heritage a decisive factor, since it was his firm belief that the Danish immigrants would be the best possible American citizens if they remained Danish. Even so, the aim of the organization was not ethnic seclusion or isolation. Instead, F. L. Grundtvig encouraged the Danish immigrants to preserve their ethnic identity and cultural heritage while also becoming loyal, dutiful American citizens. The contradicting nature of these goals of integration reflects how F. L. Grundtvig distinguished between an ethnic and a national sense of belonging. Although the Danish People's Society was founded on this Grundtvigian ideology, the organization initially claimed not to be affiliated

with any church or religious movement; its members merely had to be “in a friendly relationship to the Christian Church.”¹¹ This requirement made the organization immensely unpopular, especially among members of the Danish Inner Mission, who considered the Danish People’s Society a Grundtvigian faction within the Danish Church in America, occupied with worldly and secular matters.

In the official invitation to join the Danish People’s Society, F. L. Grundtvig stated that the aim of the organization was to transplant, promote, and preserve the Danish cultural and spiritual heritage in America. In order to achieve this—and to prevent assimilation—the Danish People’s Society launched several practical initiatives, e.g. the formation of Danish settlements; the establishment of Danish institutions such as youth homes, schools, and libraries; and the publication of Danish books and local newspapers. A sister organization was established in Denmark in 1888 to connect the Danish people on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. The purpose of this sibling branch was to keep the American division updated on Danish trends and matters, to support and supply the American division with material culture, e.g. Danish periodicals and textbooks for the Danish schools in the US; to provide economic aid; and to organize Danish American folk rallies on Danish soil. The Danish People’s Society was soon supported by thousands of Danes in Denmark and the US. During its lifespan of seventy-seven years, although it was primarily based in the Midwest, the organization branched throughout America—local chapters were formed from California in the west to New York in the east, from Texas in the south to Minnesota in the north. Through the years, external structures as national politics, nativism, immigration laws, a decreasing inflow of Danish immigrants, and gradual assimilation of Danish Americans challenged the existence of the organization that ultimately had too few members to continue its work.

The Danish People’s Society constitutes an interesting case to study, as it represents one of the most explicit attempts to not just transmit, promote, and preserve Danish cultural heritage in the US, but also to continuously exchange their distinct peoplehood—this is the “Danishness” and Grundtvigianism—with people from foreign countries. The Grundtvigian ideology that emphasized the importance of pledging allegiance to the Danish language, culture, history,

and population was able to affect the religious as well as cultural, social, political, and material aspects of the lives of the Grundtvigian Danish Americans, which makes the Danish People's Society a fruitful point of departure when approaching the relationship between sustained cultural heritage and integration. This paper cannot provide a comprehensive review of all of these aspects, but it will touch upon some of them by taking the songbook published by the Danish People's Society as an example.

In the following section, I aim to illustrate how the society's songbook offers a useful lens through which to study aspects of cultural integration. By drawing attention to the content of the songbook, the unifying practice of singing that it facilitated, and the songbook's ability to interact with its users, the paper will show how both the Danish immigrants and the Grundtvigian cultural heritage adapted themselves to the new American context. The scope of this study is limited by the absence of source material attesting to how the usage of the songbook affected the individual user, however. As F. L. Grundtvig was the person who initiated the foundation of the Danish People's Society, formulated the aims of the organization, and edited and published the songbook, all within the same year, I regard these initiatives as expressions of the Grundtvigian ideology outlined above.

Cultural Transmission: The Songbook

In May 1888, F. L. Grundtvig published the first edition of the *Sangbog for det danske Folk i America* (Songbook for the Danish people in America). Community singing was—and still is—an essential element of most Grundtvigian gatherings, including the various meetings in Danish People's Society's local chapters, which often took place in parish halls, schools, churches, homes, or in nature in both Denmark and the US. During the period 1888–1949, seven editions of the songbook were published—the last six of them by the Danish People's Society, which acquired the rights to the songbook a few months after the publication of the first edition. Thousands of copies were sold over the years, which makes the songbook one of the organization's greatest successes.

In her book *The Story of Den Røde*,¹² Marianne Stølen compares all seven editions of the songbook and shows how it became increas-

ingly American through the years. While Stølen dissects the seven songbooks and traces their history, authors, and uses today, I propose that the very creation of the songbook and its continuous existence comprises a highly interesting case in a study of cultural integration. As I will demonstrate below, the songbook not only provides insights into the Danish immigrants' process of adaptation and integration, but also reveals how material culture and ethnic practices may have contributed to shaping the immigrant experience and consequently could have led to a (re)negotiation of identity and ethnic sense of belonging in the new American context. In the following paragraphs, I will point out the different functions of the songbook that are related or mutually reinforced each other.

A glance through the pages of the first edition of the songbook reveals that it was carefully organized by F. L. Grundtvig. As a whole, the songbook included songs and hymns written by both Danish and Danish American authors, and a broad repertoire of themes were represented. Before the foundation of the Danish People's Society, F. L. Grundtvig had publicly voiced a need for a songbook through which Danish youth in America could absorb and express their future aims and hopes.¹³ This purpose of the songbook reveals F. L. Grundtvig's realistic approach to the future lives of the Danish immigrants in America; by providing emotional support, the songbook should encourage Danish Americans who had adapted to their host society to reflect on and remain in contact with their Danish roots and heritage.

To be included in the songbook, the songs had to meet certain standards, of which the most important was their relevance and applicability to the Danish immigrants and subsequent generations of Danish Americans. Most songs written by Danish American authors expressed feelings and attitudes towards past and present events and thereby met this standard,¹⁴ whereas a direct transplantation of pre-existing Danish songs, of which a majority were highly treasured in Denmark, to the American environment was not sufficient in this case. Instead, the songs had to mirror the life of the Grundtvigian immigrants in the US. To ensure such relevance, F. L. Grundtvig took the liberty of replacing Danish geographical and historical references in some texts with American ones.¹⁵ In other words, he tailored the Danish songs to fit the lives of Danish American immigrants. The original

songs written in Denmark portrayed the Danish nation, population, nature, past, and future, whereas the songs edited by F. L. Grundtvig or written by Danish American authors reflected the immigrant experience and accounted for contemporary American conditions, thus making the songs of the songbook historical sources of Danish American immigration history. An example of F. L. Grundtvig's song adaptations can be found in the popular song "Welcome in the Green Grove" ("Velkommen i den grønne Lund"). In the original version by N. F. S. Grundtvig from 1843 the sentence "Our King is our faithful Friend" ("Vor Konge er vor fuldtro Ven") refers to the relationship between the Danish people and their monarch. F. L. Grundtvig seems to have found this sentence inappropriate for the Danish immigrants living in the federal republic of the US, and consequently replaced it with the phrase "and the spirit of the fathers is a friend of the people" ("Og Fædres Aand er Folkets Ven"), referring to the relationship between the spiritual heritage of the Danish pioneers in the US and the Danish American Danes.¹⁶ The content of the original Danish songs was solidly fixed in their Danish place of origin, which reduced their portability.¹⁷ The songs were simply not transferable to American soil, as they were embedded in a specifically Danish geographical area and in a specific historical period, making them increasingly irrelevant to the lives of Danish Americans. F. L. Grundtvig acknowledged this transmission problem and—in opposition to his father—poetically stated that: "Spirit is not tied to places on Earth; the Spirit of the North can live in the West" ("Aand er ej bundet til Steder paa Jorden; Leve i Vesten kan Aanden fra Norden").¹⁸ As he replaced Danish references with American ones, he sought to detach this firmly rooted cultural heritage from the Danish soil while preserving its essence—an editing process that strengthened the portability and relevance of the songs. As a consequence, he not only made the songs transferable; by adding American references, he also, as a by-product, made the songs Danish *American*. Paradoxically, he Americanized the Danish song heritage as part of his attempt to transplant and preserve it. Despite such textual changes, the songs were treasured by Danish Americans, who still considered them mainly Danish, as they were written in the Danish language. F. L. Grundtvig's efforts to tailor and compile the songbook illustrates that the transatlantic transmission of the Danish cultural

heritage from Denmark to the US was not a simple matter of direct transfer.

The songs of the first and second editions of the songbooks were selected by F. L. Grundtvig in order to accomplish the greater ideological purpose of the songbook. The spiritual and universally human aspects of his father's work were, for instance, more pronounced and evident in F. L. Grundtvig's songbook than in the Danish folk high school songbook.¹⁹ It seems as if F. L. Grundtvig were intentionally compiling a new type of Danish American cultural heritage. As Rodney Harrison states when outlining the politics of heritage studies, the selection of which cultural elements to preserve is by no means neutral: "Heritage is not a passive process of simply preserving things from the past that remain, but an active process of assembling a series of objects, places and practices that we choose to hold up as a mirror to the present, associated with a particular set of values that we wish to take with us into the future."²⁰ In its totality, the songbook represented an assemblage of songs expressing Grundtvigian values that F. L. Grundtvig and the Danish People's Society wished to pass on to generations of Danish Americans. But by transmitting and transplanting the original Danish cultural heritage in the American soil, a new and uniquely Danish American culture, molded to affect the future of Danish Americans, emerged.

Different Generations, Different Functions

Because of F. L. Grundtvig's tailoring, the songs did not just appeal to first-generation immigrants, but also to second-generation and subsequent generations of Danish Americans. For the first-generation immigrants who were born and bred in Denmark and knew of the original Danish songs, the new and altered songs bridged the gap between their native country and their new life abroad. Particularly treasured among the members of the Danish People's Society was the song "Away we sailed from the land of our fathers" ("Bort vi stævned fra Fædres Land"), written by F. L. Grundtvig in the US. That song, because of its references to both their Danish past and their American future, provided the first-generation immigrants with a strategy for living in America as Danish immigrants. The second stanza of the song goes:

Lad da Øjet kun dugges tit
ved mindet om Danmarks Strande,
Hoved løfter vi kjækt og frit
som Danske i Vesterlande,
Hjærtebaand af Aand og Ord
rækker hid mod Højenord
sødt i Modermaalet.

(So just let your eyes mist up at times
when remembering Denmark's beaches.
We raise our heads unafraid and free
as Danes in the Land of the West;
strings from the heart of spirit and words
reach us from the mighty North,
the sweet sounds of the native language.)²¹

The dual orientation of this song exemplifies how the songbook, in some cases, promoted a bicultural sense of belonging. This type of song was transnational in the most literary sense of the word. They reflected the immigrants' liminal and intermediate position in between two nations—an intermediate position that mirrored the contradicting nature of the integration goals promoted by F. L. Grundtvig: to maintain the Danish identity and cultural heritage while simultaneously integrating as loyal American citizens.

For the second and subsequent generations of Danish Americans, who had little or no personal acquaintance of either Denmark or the original Danish song heritage, the content of the songs had a pedagogical function. F. L. Grundtvig was convinced that the songbook could educate this group of Danish Americans in both the Danish language and the Grundtvigian values promoted by the Danish People's Society. Accordingly, the content of several of the songs suggested how to integrate, feel, and live as Danish Americans. Such a normative and even uncompromising tone is particularly evident in "What we want" ("Hvad vi vil") by F. L. Grundtvig himself:

Vi vil elske den Jord,
hvor vi bygger og bor,
vi vil agte det Sprog, som er Folkenes Tolk,

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vi vil kæmpe en Dag
under Stjernernes Flag,
men vi vil være Danske, og leve som Folk.

(We shall love the soil,
on which we live and build,
we shall respect the language, which is the people's
interpreter
we shall fight one day under the starry banner,
but we will remain Danish and live as Danish people.)²²

This song clearly mirrored the ideological basis of the Danish People's Society and left only little room for interpretation. As this song illustrates, F. L. Grundtvig understood each song as a medium: he hoped that the Danish American youth would be able to both internalize the content of the songs and express their future aims and hopes through the songs.²³ Thereby, the songs became vehicles for education.

Singing Along: Social Aspects of Singing

The transmission of ethnic heritage entails an encounter between the newly arrived cultural elements and people, conditions, ideologies, and practices that were already in place. In transmission studies the process of re-embedding, or transplanting, an ethnic element into a new context has been described, variously, as translation, adaptation, appropriation, hybridization, syncretization, and acclimatization. As an alternative, the American sociologist Peggy Levitt suggests "vernacularization," as the aim is not merely to make an element understandable "translation," but moreover to make it locally relevant and applicable to a specific context.²⁴ Levitt's argument seems compelling, but while the term "vernacularization" primarily emphasizes the linguistic part of the process, which seems appropriate in regard to F. L. Grundtvig's textual editing of the songs, such a process of vernacularization also has social implications.

The practice of community singing—either in unison or rounds—was, as mentioned above, an integral part of the intangible Grundtvigian culture in both Denmark and the US that took place in almost every gathering organized by local chapters of the Danish People's So-

ciety. The songbook was not only used at festive events, though; it also included songs with themes such as work, being young, reminiscence of the native country, and homesickness, attuned to individual uses of the songbook. Just like other ethnic practices, e.g. folksy speeches in public gatherings and celebrations of the Danish constitution on June 5, the Grundtvigian song tradition could be practiced in most places. In the existing research on Grundtvigian customs,²⁵ community singing has been regarded as a cultural practice with the ability to facilitate solidarity, feelings of unity, and social cohesion among the involved individuals—a social function that F. L. Grundtvig himself described in his poem “Our Community.”²⁶ Even though this feeling of unity dissolved each time a gathering disbanded, it temporarily had the ability to constitute an ethnic community of Danish Americans, which was the actual aim of the Danish People’s Society. While the textual alterations of the songs clearly represent the linguistic aspect of the vernacularization process, the practice of singing as a part of everyday social life represents a social aspect of this process. Because of the social aspect of singing and the often catchy melodies, the songs were accessible for both Danish and American-born users—even those with poor Danish language skills.

Thus, in a study of cultural integration, the songbook demonstrates how immaterial cultural elements, such as the practice of community singing, also comprised constitutive elements of the Danish American cultural heritage. Since such practices potentially can create and maintain feelings of social cohesion, the social aspect of repetitive singing could have affected the social integration of Danish immigrants.

The Songbook as a Material Object

Given the fact that six editions of the songbook were published by the Danish People’s Society, the songbook communicated and gave material form to, or materialized, the Grundtvigian ideology of the organization. As part of the Grundtvigian material culture, the songbook functioned as the organization’s manifesto, a kind of holy scripture. The material features of the songbook strengthened its survivability and played a crucial role in the sustainment and transmission of the Grundtvigian ideology from one generation to another. Because

of this materiality, the songbook was able to outlive the Danes and Danish Americans who authored and published it—it even outlived the organization itself, as only the songbook and not the Danish People’s Society exists today.

Another function related to the material aspect of the songbook was its ability to interact with its users. Objects’ ability to affect, shape, and (re)define their surroundings is a main focus of actor-network theory (ANT), a social theory that emphasizes how human and non-human actors should be equally addressed as entities having agency in social situations and networks.²⁷ ANT scholars have argued that people and objects are imbedded in mutually constituting relations: individuals and their actions are affected by the objects they use and are surrounded by, just as these objects are formed by individuals. When applying this theoretical perspective to the present study, attention is drawn to the interactive relation between the songbook and its user. Because of its use of the Danish language, reading or singing from the songbook could maintain or even improve the user’s linguistic skills and moreover educate the user in the Grundtvigian ideology that it promoted. As a non-human actor, the songbook was by itself able to cause these effects when it was used. Language preservation was not just an aim of the Danish People’s Society per se, but also a necessity to both postponing the linguistic integration of Danish Americans and maintaining the transnational relation to Denmark. There is an upper limit to everything, though, and as time passed fewer and fewer Danish Americans were able to read and understand the Danish songs. The Danish People’s Society acknowledged this problem, resulting in an inclusion of both English-language songs and translated songs in the sixth and seventh editions of the songbook, which were published in 1931 and 1949, respectively. This decision reflects another level of vernacularization or adaptation to the American context that the songs were now rooted in, and thus increased the viability of the songbook—at least for a while.

Rewriting the Prevailing Narrative of Danish American Immigration History

As initially stated, a master narrative telling a story about the quick assimilation of Danish immigrants in the US has largely domi-

nated Danish American immigration history. By introducing the Danish People's Society, an organization that has so far been noticeably absent in the substantial literature on Danish American history, this paper has aimed to both nuance the picture painted by the master narrative and show how this organization played a pivotal role in the creation and preservation of a distinct Danish American cultural heritage.

By applying theoretical insights from contemporary studies of assimilation and religion to a historical study of the songbook published by the Danish People's Society, this paper has argued that this songbook comprises a valuable lens for the study of aspects of integration. The examination of the songbook has demonstrated how both people and objects are able to carry ideology, religion, and culture from one country to another, just as both material and immaterial elements of a cultural heritage could possibly affect processes of integration. These findings indicate that cultural preservation does not facilitate a quick assimilation, as the master narrative suggests; on the contrary, the social, religious, linguistic, and cultural integration of Grundtvigian Danish Americans was probably affected, even postponed, as a result of the ongoing usage of and identification with their ethnic heritage.

This study has been limited by the absence of source material attesting to exactly how the usage of the songbook affected each of its users, as such source material is, unfortunately, almost non-existent. In spite of this limitation, it is clear that the original meaning and function of cultural elements were often altered, as they were transplanted to a new context. In America, the songbook was not just a collection of Danish songs; it was a cheap and easily accessible piece of material culture that represented the ideology of the Danish People's Society and facilitated a collective practice affirming their ethnic identity. Additionally, the study has sought to illustrate that cultural transmission and transplantation are not solely linguistic processes, but that they also have material and social implications. These implications are interrelated and have mutually reinforced the transmission and adaptation of the Danish cultural heritage in America, which is probably one of the main reasons why the songbook became such a great success among the Danish population in the US. Another reason is the songbook's balance between continuity and change, between cul-

tural preservation and renewal, that made the songbook appealing to both the first generation and subsequent generations of Danish immigrants. While the original aim of the organization was to transplant and preserve the Danish cultural heritage in the US, this heritage was transformed and tailored to fit the American context, and a unique Danish American culture emerged. This culture mirrored the intermediate position of Danish Americans, who, because of their loyalty to their ethnic heritage, to some extent maintained their position as migrants—as persons characterized by their movement between two nations, between a Danish past and an American future.

Despite the fact that a majority of Danish emigrants left Denmark to improve their social status and start a new life in America, their migration did not necessarily result in greater wealth. Many immigrants were confronted with economic, psychological, and social barriers. As an alternative, the Danish People's Society offered a familiar community for like-minded Danes who spoke the Danish language and practiced well-known customs. The American dream could be relegated to the background for a while. The initiatives promoted by the Danish People's Society, such as the formation of ethnic enclaves and the preservation of ethnic culture, language, and traditions that have been crucial to the creation and preservation of a distinct Danish American cultural heritage, are very similar to the characteristics that were ascribed to southern and eastern European immigrants in the end of the nineteenth century.²⁸ However, unlike Danes, southern and eastern Europeans were frequently labeled as unwanted by the American government and people, just as ethnic groups that exhibit similarly "foreign" characteristics are considered undesirable by parts of the Danish government and population today. This less flattering aspect of Danish American history should not be forgotten when Danish American heritage is celebrated today.

Endnotes

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⁹ Frederik Lange Grundtvig, "Det Danske Folk i Amerika," *Dannevirke*, April 13, 1898, 3.

¹⁰ Georg Christensen and Hal Kock, *N. F. S. Grundtvig. Værker i Udvalg* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1948), 408–35.

¹¹ Frederik Lange Grundtvig, "Indbydelse til at Indtræde i Dansk Folkesamfund," *Dannevirke*, April 13, 1887, 58–59.

¹² Stølen.

¹³ Frederik Lange Grundtvig, "Sangen hos Det Danske Folk i Amerika," *Dannevirke*, January 26, 1887, 14.

¹⁴ Such Danish American songs were thematically grouped in the second index of the 4th edition of the songbook: Dansk Folkesamfund, ed., *Grundtvigs Sangbog for Det Danske Folk i Amerika*, vol. 4 (Aarhus: S. Jensen Sort, 1916).

¹⁵ Høirup, 151–53.

¹⁶ This song is no. 132 in: Frederik Lange Grundtvig, *Sangbog for Det Danske Folk i Amerika. Ved F. L. Grundtvig*, 1st ed. (Manistee, Mich.: J.P. Paulsens Forlag, 1888). The specific example of tailoring is also mentioned in Høirup, 151 and in Stølen, 105.

¹⁷ cf. Anthropologist Thomas J Csordas' argues that travelling religions rely on portable practices and the transposable messages: Thomas Csordas, "Introduction: Modalities of Transnational Transcendence," *Anthropological Theory* 7, no. 3 (2007): 259–72.

¹⁸ The phrase is part of the song "If you will" ("Hvis du vil") by F. L. Grundtvig himself. The meaning of the phrase is interpreted in: Frederik Lange Grundtvig, "Folkelige Foredrag. Holdt i Clinton (3 of 6)," *Dannevirke*, December 28, 1887, 205.

¹⁹ Høirup, 154.

²⁰ Rodney Harrison, "Heritage and Globalization," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research*, ed. Emma Waterton and Steve Watson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 309–10.

²¹ This song is no. 153 in the 1st edition of the songbook. The translation is inspired by Stølen, 146–47.

²² The translation is borrowed from Stølen, 142.

²³ Grundtvig, "Sangen," 14.

²⁴ Peggy Levitt, "Religion on the Move: Mapping Global Cultural Production and Consumption," in *Religion on the Edge: De-Centering and Re-Centering the Sociology of Religion*, ed. Courtney Bender, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 171.

²⁵ Inge Adriansen, "Grundtvigianernes Symbolske Iscenesættelse af Folk og Nation," in *Samfundsbyggeren: Artikler om Grundtvoigs Samfundstænkning*, ed. Ove Korsgaard and Michael Schelde (Frederiksberg: Forlaget Anis, 2013), 172.

²⁶ This poem is cited in Danish on page 110-11 in: August Faber, *Kirke og Folk. Digte af Frederik Lange Grundtvig* (Cedar Falls, Iowa: Dansk Boghandels Forlag, 1909).

²⁷ For elaboration on this theoretical position see Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). See also Manuel DeLanda's contribution to the "New Materialism": Manuel DeLanda's blog, "The Geology of Morals: A Neo-Materialist Interpretation," 1996, <http://www.t0.or.at/delanda/geology.htm>.

²⁸ Diane C. Vecchio, "US Immigration Laws and Policies 1870-1980," in *Immigrants in American History – Arrival, Adaptation and Integration*, ed. Elliott Robert Barkan, vol. 4 (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2013), 1487–88.