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## Editorial Statement

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## Editorial Statement

Global migration is a complex, highly sensitive issue that has been intimately connected with Danish culture and society for much of the last two centuries. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, hundreds of thousands of Danes decided to try their luck out in the wide world, settling in Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, and the United States, among other places. The Danish American Heritage Society was founded to understand and celebrate the experiences and contributions of the more than 300,000 of those Danes who came to America. While the waves of mass emigration from Denmark slackened in the early twentieth century, migration did not cease, nor did its influence on both Denmark and other places vanish. This issue highlights different but complementary cases of migration that illuminate less-familiar aspects of Denmark's involvement in the phenomenon of global mobility in the twentieth century. The first article in this issue, by Danish PhD student Pernille Østergaard Hansen, describes and analyzes the profound impact of Danish immigrants on the cultural norms and social history of the Danish West Indies/U.S. Virgin Islands, particularly after the islands were sold to the United States in 1917.

After World War II, out-migration from Denmark continued, at a much slower pace than in the nineteenth century, but was soon eclipsed by the in-migration of workers and refugees to Denmark from Poland, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, and many other places. Today, approximately eight percent of Denmark's population, roughly 500,000 people, are first-generation immigrants. Much of the press coverage and political discourse concerning immigration to Denmark and the situation of "nydanskere" (new Danes) tends to be negative and/or generalized, ignoring the specificity of each immigrant's experiences and the emotional turmoil involved in becoming part of a new culture.

The second article in this issue is Kristi Planck Johnson's translation of Meryem Sert's pioneering 1987 memoir, *Pige i to verdener* (A Girl in Two Worlds), which is being published here for the first time in English. "A Girl in Two Worlds" describes the author's journey as a young girl from a small Kurdish town in Turkey to Denmark and her experiences growing up in Denmark as an immigrant, at a time when this was far from common. Meryem wrote this book when she was only



fifteen years old. Since much has changed in her life and in the world since then, we are delighted that Meryem has added an addendum to the original book for this publication, in which she brings the reader up to the present and describes how she has continued to develop her identity as a Kurdish Dane, a child of two cultures and co-creator of a third, hybrid one. Meryem's experiences have much in common with those of Danish Americans, who have similarly negotiated their own cultural identities over the past hundred and sixty years by combining elements of Danish and American culture in productive and wonderful ways. The third article in this issue, a selection of four poems by the Danish-American poet Finn Bille, explores related questions of identity, belonging, heritage, and memory in hauntingly lyrical form.

The book reviews in this issue also address the question of migration, particularly to North America, in thought-provoking, interconnected ways. Jennifer Attebery introduces us to the valuable and extensive collection of letters written and preserved by the Christian and Anna Nielsen family on the Harriman-Nielsen farm in Franklin County, Iowa. Anna Rue examines Orm Øverland's latest volume of Norwegian American letters, while Inger Olsen offers us a glimpse of Petie Kladstrup's fascinating story about her own Danish American family history and the white dove that has visited her family members in times of sorrow and loss.

