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Heritage Tourism, Heritage Landscapes and Wilderness Preservation: The Case of National Park Thy

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Tourism involving national parks manifests itself explicitly or implicitly as heritage tourism because national parks represent important symbols of the national landscape. This paper traces the journey of the proposed National Park Thy in northwestern Denmark from ordinary landscape to symbolic landscape, to candidacy for national park status and focus for heritage tourism. It is argued that the processes at work in Denmark are similar to those underpinning the creation of national parks elsewhere.

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Introduction

This paper examines the relationship between heritage tourism and national parks. Specifically, it argues that tourism involving national parks involves visiting a heritage site because national parks are symbolic landscapes that have deep connections to national identity. The study explores the process through which ordinary landscape is transformed into symbolic landscape, and how symbolic landscape is enshrined in national reserves and parks. In this process, landscape is preserved as it supposedly looked at one point in time; thus national parks and monuments are not the authentic places they claim to be, but rather abstractions that function as national icons. It is this national icon, not landscape-as-fact that attracts heritage tourists. Thus, heritage tourism revolves around landscapes that are factually inaccurate, but symbolically correct. Two aspects of this process are crucial. First, landscape-as-fact becomes increasingly unimportant in the transformation of a landscape from ordinary to symbolic. Second, once made symbolic, landscapes are, to a certain degree, portable meaning that symbolic landscapes can be created in places where they did not originally exist and still retain their essential symbolic meaning.

This discussion is facilitated by the example of the proposed National Park Thy (pronounced 'too'), an area of dune heath in northwestern Jutland, Denmark – one of the largest expanses of heath in Denmark today (Figure 1).[1] But rather than representing a remnant ancient Danish heath that once clothed much of western Jutland and served as the Danish wilderness, the current extent in Thy is the result of reclamation projects during the 19th and 20th centuries aimed at

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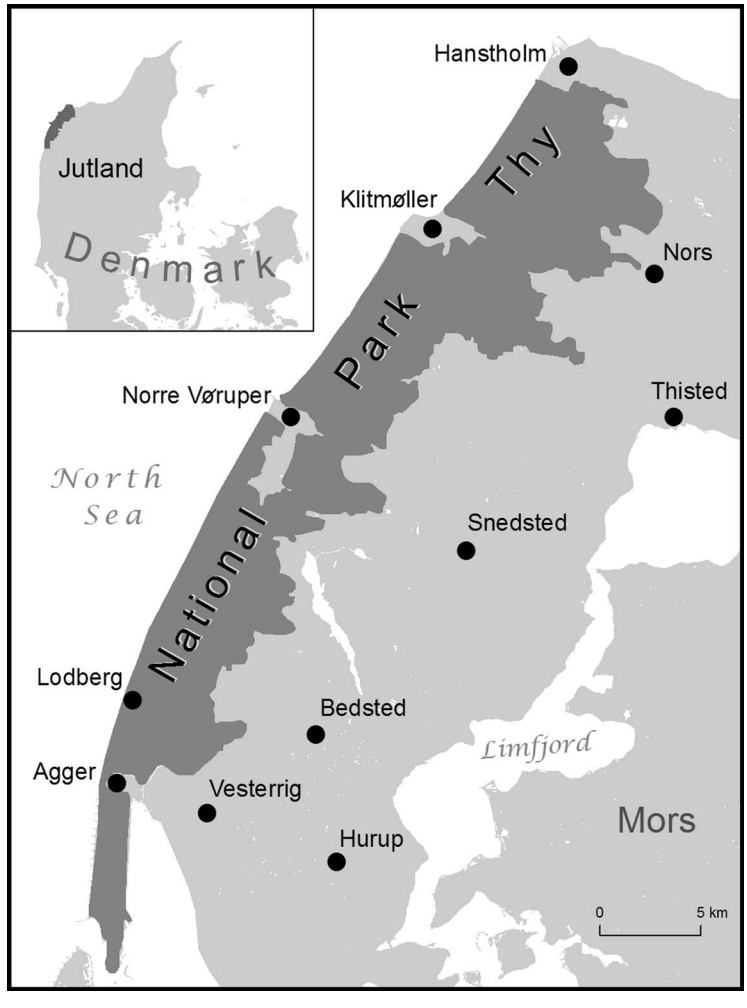

Figure 1 Proposed Thy National Park. Map drawn by Shanon Donnelly

stabilising coastal dunes that otherwise would move inland and swallow up valuable farmland. However, the research suggests that, despite its historical origin in reclamation and dune stabilisation, the heath of Thy has considerable heritage value as a remnant of the Danish heath wilderness. This is signalled by the area's status as a proposed national park and its explicit recognition as a 'duneland heath' and 'natural area' in the literature concerning the proposed park (Skov-og Naturstyrelesen, n.d.). The terms 'natural' and 'wild' also emerged prominently in a series of sampling-based, open-ended snowball interviews conducted among residents of the area and visitors to the area in July 2005.

The example of National Park Thy raises a number of questions about the interrelation of landscape and tourism. These include: what processes drive the transformation of ordinary landscapes into symbolic landscapes; how do

symbolic landscapes come to be heritage landscapes; why and how are heritage landscapes preserved; and what is the attraction of heritage landscapes to tourists?

This paper contends that what has transformed the ordinary landscape of Thy into a symbolic landscape is its connection with the West Jutland heath. The wild heath began to acquire its heritage value as part of a growing nationalism during the 19th century as the heath lands were designated the mythological repository of the origins of the Danish state and as the simple and unfettered home of Danish folk culture. With the conversion of the West Jutland heaths after 1864 to farmland, heath became increasingly scarce, leading to calls for its preservation. This connection of heath to Danish history and the role that it plays as the Danish wilderness lies at the heart of the move to establish National Park Thy and the area's popularity as a tourism site.

Subsequent sections of this paper review the concept of heritage and heritage tourism, touching briefly on the notion of the tourist landscape. The paper then discusses the ways that ordinary landscape is transformed into symbolic landscape and follows with an examination of the processes through which symbolic landscapes become heritage landscapes before considering how heritage landscapes receive protection in reserves and parks as a focus for heritage tourism. The process with the example of National Park Thy is illustrated, showing how the production of certain images of the heath lands by a burgeoning culture of nationalism imbued them first with symbolic value, then with heritage value, and eventually created a template for their protection in a national park. The conclusion speculates on the role of symbolic landscapes more generally in heritage tourism.

Heritage and Heritage Tourism

Heritage is using the past for the present through the 'production, consumption and regulation of the cultural, political and economic meanings of the past' (Raivo, 2002: 12). Lowenthal (1994: 43) notes that 'heritage distils the past into icons of identity, bonding us with precursors and progenitors, with our own earlier selves, and with promised successors'. In that sense, heritage is a set of ideas, symbols and events that establishes and reinforces the social cohesion and identity, real or imagined, of a group of individuals. However, it is crucial to note that heritage is not history. 'Heritage has greater symbolic meaning than the object, time or place that is the historical reference' (Edson, 2004: 338). The term 'heritage' is naturally controversial since it implies at worst, an arbitrary and selective bogus history that trivialises the historical variety of social experiences of class, gender, and ethnicity and at best offers a new kind of interest in and understanding of the past (Johnson, 1996; Raivo, 2002). It is hardly surprising, then, that heritage tourism is equally vexed.

Tourism involves the 'transformation of the object and place into attractions, their gradual movement from a setting to a representation of a setting' (Wedow, 1977: 201). Heritage tourism involves the connection of tourists with a sometimes constructed, often mythical, past by promoting 'a vicarious experience that depends on using objects or locations as means of entering into or living in the past' (Edson, 2004: 337; Voase, 1999). Heritage tourism is a reflexive action that both reaffirms and constructs identity and allows the telling of a '"national

story" through museums and other heritage sites' (Light, 2000: 158; Worden, 2003). Of course heritage is itself the result of a discourse over 'which representation [of a place] from a variety of interpretations of place, will dominate' and the sites themselves are this discourse materialised (Hollinshead, 1997; Kruse, 2005: 90; Worden, 2003).

Heritage tourism is not merely tourist activity in a space where historic artefacts are presented. Rather, heritage tourism should be understood based on 'the relationship between the individual and the heritage presented and, more specifically, on the tourists' perception of the site as part of their own heritage' (Poria *et al.*, 2004: 20). Furthermore, the 'differences in perceptions of a site are reflected in differences in reasons for visiting a site . . . the *link between the individual and the site* [italics in original] is at the core of the understanding of heritage tourism as a social phenomenon' (Poria *et al.*, 2004: 26). At heritage sites, visitors experience a 'merging of the real and imagined which makes the visit more meaningful' (Kruse, 2005: 89). As such, heritage sites are highly symbolic, for they connect visitors to the personal and collective memories that comprise their identities.[2]

The Tourism Landscape as Symbolic Cultural Landscape

All tourism, heritage tourism included, takes place in a landscape, that can be broadly defined as the tourism landscape. All landscapes are to varying degrees products of culture; thus, tourism landscapes are particular forms of cultural landscape. Indeed, as Urry (1992) has taken pains to point out, tourism landscapes are cultural landscapes that are in some way distinctive. What separates the tourism landscape from ordinary cultural landscape is that tourism landscapes are to varying degrees symbolic. Particular interest here lies in those symbolic landscapes that derive their symbolic meaning from a specific historical context. Understanding heritage tourism thus revolves around understanding the discursive process wherein ordinary cultural landscapes are rendered symbolic, how symbolic landscapes become receptacles of historical content, how and why they are preserved, and how, once preserved, they become foci for tourism.

O'Hare (1997: 33) specifies a cultural landscape as 'the environment as modified, classified and interpreted by humankind'. Within the multiplicity of ordinary landscapes created by culture systems are certain landscapes that transcend their ordinariness, becoming in the process abstractions that signify aspects of local, regional and national culture. Meinig (1979: 164–165) noted that 'every mature nation has its symbolic landscapes'. These symbolic landscapes are 'powerfully evocative because they are understood as being a particular kind of place rather than a precise building or locality'.

Within the class of symbolic landscapes exist some that have explicit ties to national identity. Palmer (2002: 26) suggests that certain 'landscapes . . . become dominant symbols of "the nation"'. Indeed, 'the "national imaginary" is replete with images of special national landscapes or "golden places" (the spatial equivalent of "golden ages")'. These golden places may 'create a powerful sense of what national countryside "ought to look like"' (Palmer, 2002: 26). Landscapes' "naturalize" cultural or social constructions of nation and . . . locate individuals in particular positions in relation to them' (Palmer, 2002: 26). 'Thus

places and landscapes that posses a certain relevance for a nation's history and heritage have usually been denoted as essential codes in the national signifying system' as heritage sites and heritage landscapes (Raivo, 2002: 13). Heritage landscapes 'play a central role in the heritage industry's "recovery" of the past' and serve as the 'quintessential mirrors of a culture's collective past and their reinvention for tourist consumption fixes them in historical imaginations and helps ensure their future protection' (Johnson, 1996: 552).

According to Zaring (1977), the 'golden places' Palmer speaks of can be characterised by two archetypes: the pastoral and the wild (see also Bunkše, 1999). The former has, in Western culture, a deep symbolic connection to the nostalgic, pre-industrial past. Examples of this type of heritage landscape as a site for tourism include the many 'living history' sites that dot Europe and North America. Wild as an archetype is connected to nature in its pure form and to the communion of humankind with either deity or savagery. This type of heritage landscape is most often codified within a system of national parks, reservations and preserves. Given the present focus on national parks as heritage landscapes, the focus now turns to the interrelation of wilderness and tourism in this paper.

Wild Land as Heritage and National Park

Among symbolic landscapes, those that embody nature hold a special place. Yet the Western veneration of nature that society takes for granted today is of very recent origin. Western wilderness aesthetic has evolved mainly from the Romantic movement of the late 18th century. Previously in mainstream Western thought, nature was considered too imperfect to be of any importance (Kwa, 2005). Classical concepts of beauty emphasised orderliness and neat lines. A classically trained person viewed real nature as 'lacking in symmetry and other aesthetic qualities' (Kwa, 2005: 150). It was only with the coming of Romanticism in the late 18th century that classical notions of beauty dissipated and it became possible for nature to be aesthetically pleasing or desirable (Kwa, 2005; Skrapits, 2000; Zaring, 1977). Still, nature remained in the background figuratively and literally.

If, as in Raivo's (2002) phrase, 'heritage . . . is . . . production of the past', production of wild land as heritage dates from Humboldt, who 'transformed the concept of landscape from an aesthetic category into an abstract entity' thereby moving nature to the foreground (Kwa, 2005: 149). Through scientific expedition, 'nature emancipated itself from art and became a model for art' giving rise to the wilderness aesthetic (Kwa, 2005: 152). Humboldt's scientific writings would inspire a generation of scientists, fiction writers and landscape painters on both sides of the Atlantic (Kwa, 2005). A group of American artists later known as the Hudson River School were among those inspired by Humboldt's work. These artists would bring 'meteorological, geological, and ecological phenomena together in . . . grand overstatement' (Kwa, 2005: 159; Skrapits, 2000). Humboldt would also inspire the German painter Friedrich, who would heavily influence the Danish landscape painters of the early 19th century.

The Hudson River School, the park design of Frederick Law Olmsted and the writings of naturalist John Muir, all contributed significantly to the emergence of a national park movement in the United States (Kwa, 2005). The

Hudson River School provided the prototypical visual imagery of the national park. Olmsted's contributions lie in his design innovations, particularly the innovation of hiding reminders of human interference below the plane of vision (Colten & Dilsaver, 2005). However, the writings of John Muir are particularly crucial in the creation of national parks in the United States. Muir's concept of the wilderness cathedral and his use of religious imagery in writing about wilderness blended pastoral feelings of 'intimacy, security and home' with sublimity wherein nature 'transcends the human', creating a new and uniquely American concept of wilderness (Powici, 2004: 78). Indeed it has been argued that Muir's writings created a virtual cult of the wilderness in the Unites States (Colten & Dilsaver, 2005; Nash, 1982; Powici, 2004). This very specific and highly contextual understanding of wilderness is incorporated and preserved in US national parks (Dakin, 2003). Louter (2003: 252) notes:

> National parks are what we have made them, and nothing is more revealing than the way in which we have made them into wilderness. Perhaps one of the most powerful aspects of the wilderness ideal is that it advances an ideal of nature as a primeval landscape untouched by people. It is a place without history.

The transformation of wilderness (as of any symbolic feature) into heritage landscape typically is signalled by its enshrinement in national parks. William Wordsworth's early 19th century notion of a 'sort of national property' (Wordsworth, 2004: 93) became reality when the Yosemite Valley in California became the first wild area to be placed in the public trust. Abraham Lincoln created this first non-urban park on 30 June 1864, and gave it to the State of California, which governed Yosemite from 1864 until 1906, when it became a national park (Colten & Dilsaver, 2005). Yellowstone, today situated on the Wyoming–Montana border, preceded Yosemite as the first 'national park', largely because there was no state to administer it at the time of its creation in 1872 (Colten & Dilsaver, 2005). While the USA was the first nation to establish national parks, other nations rapidly followed suit: Australia in 1879, Canada and New Zealand in 1887, and Sweden in 1910 (Gotmark & Nilsson, 1992; Herath, 2002; Nash, 1970; Saunders & Norton, 2001).

The early American impetus to create national parks derived from a view of the wild frontier as one of the nation's most distinguishing characteristics (Louter, 2003). Preservation efforts, therefore, are often geared towards saving a landscape that the frontiersmen supposedly encountered and subsequently destroyed (Karen Olwig, 2004). So it is not surprising that the National Park Service often seeks to obliterate all traces of previous human occupation on park lands (Louter, 2003; Kenneth Olwig, 2002). Thus 'although we conceive of them [national parks] as wild lands, they are also products of human design, and so is the wilderness they preserve' (Louter, 2003: 251).

Beyond this, the concept of wilderness itself is socially constructed. As a result, the wilderness of Muir 'is as much an effect of history, of context, as it is of place' (Powici, 2004: 83). While conceptions of wilderness like that of John Muir occur outside the US, in other parts of the world wilderness has retained the classical connotation of wasteland (Häyrynen, 2000; Powici, 2004; Sörlin & Nordlund, 2003). This distinction is important since the term wasteland typically

denotes landscapes with significant anthropogenic influence. Wilderness as wasteland, when enshrined in national parks, implicitly 'accepts the human and natural elements of parks as part of the same mental and physical landscape' (Louter, 2003: 253). Anthropologist Karen Olwig (2004: 492) does not agree with the view of nature that promotes 'wilderness that is separate from and prior to humanity and hence could and, in some renderings, should exist without human intervention'. While the US definition may have begun as the international model and 'this notion of nature may be dominant in certain countries, it is not the only one in the Western world, nor is it necessarily the most important . . .' (Karen Olwig, 2004: 492). In much of Europe, wilderness is defined as 'cultural landscapes that reflect centuries of close association between human beings and their physical environments'. This has led to the preservation of areas 'praised for the particular qualities they have acquired through sustained human interaction with the environment' (Karen Olwig, 2004: 492). It is this sort of place, one with 'particular qualities . . . acquired through sustained human interaction with the environment', that is enshrined in National Park Thy.

National Park Thy as Ordinary Landscape

In northwestern Jutland, 23,100 hectares of heath, dune and forest, 75% of it already held in the public trust, is encompassed in the proposed national park. The 'golden place' status of Thy is clearly reflected in the commentary provided by the interviews conducted in July 2005 with individuals living in or around the proposed National Park Thy, and visitors to the area. Interviewees clearly recognise the unique character of the region. 'This kind of landscape cannot be found anywhere else in Denmark' suggests an interviewee from Vangså. The region is also assumed to be wild. 'By the sea it is so clean and the nature and the wind are so good. It is wild and rough', says a woman who frequently visits the region, but lives in Copenhagen.

However, things in Thy are not what they seem. How much of the history of another symbolic place, the Yosemite Valley, has been 'written out' in the making of Yosemite National Park has already been discussed. In a similar fashion, by designating National Park Thy as an area of preserved dunefield heath, much of its true history is similarly dismissed. Indeed, it may only be that when it is noticed that the forest trees are planted in neat rows, the marram grass is neatly planted in the dunes or the Danish term '*klitplantage*' (dune plantation) is emblazoned on tourist maps that one realises that the area, rather than embodying a preserved primordial landscape, is instead a huge project to maintain heath along with plantations of shelter belt forest and expanses of dune grass to stabilise an area of the Danish coast. So, while it is true that National Park Thy is an area of dunefield heath, the true history is a story far more of dunefield dynamics than of heath, and its status as wild land has as much to do with Thy representing the recent refurbishing of a long-neglected peripheral corner of the Danish state as it does with any inherent primordial characteristics. It is at once wilderness and a triumph of human manipulation of nature, captured in a single preserved national space. How, then, did this ordinary landscape come to be the Danish wilderness? By way of explanation, it is useful to begin with a brief explanation of the ordinary landscape of the proposed park and its evolution over time.

The coast of Thy, from Agger to Hanstholm, includes a variety of topographic elements that reflect the Holocene processes of beach erosion with consequent creation and eastward migration of dunes as a consequence of removal of vegetation in the area by human occupation, beginning some 5000 years ago. Against this background human activity in the last century and a half has created a holding action to maintain the topography and ecology that has acquired heritage value in the area of the proposed national park.

The proposed park is a belt of dunes and sand plains that extends 5 to 10 km inland and overlies a hilly landscape from the last glaciation (Clemmensen *et al.*, 2001). While it is now largely stabilised by vegetation, the area was active until 100 years ago (Pedersen & Clemmensen, 2005) and is made up of four component zones: a flat beachfront, a coastal dune belt, a sandy deflation plain and an inner dune belt (Hansen, 1956).

Pollen studies indicate that, like much of western Jutland, the pre-occupation land cover of Thy was scrubby oak, birch and alder. Human occupation in Thy dates from 3200 BCE, and grazing has been practiced since 700 BCE. Heath first appears in Thy in the Late Neolithic or Older Bronze Age, and is the result of forest cutting (Clemmensen *et al.*, 2001). Drifting sand has occurred in the area since at least 2200 BCE.

Three main periods of sand movement occurred, each associated with increased storminess, wetness and water table height, which not only allowed sand to move and stick easily, but also allowed for cultivation of marginal sandy soils with associated clearing, so the sand, once airborne, moved further inland (Clemmensen *et al.*, 2001). The first phase of sand movement in the area occurred 2200–2000 BCE; the second period began just after 700 BCE and lasted approximately 700 years; and the third phase began during the Little Ice Age (1100–1200 CE) and reached its peak in the period 1625–1810 CE. In this period large scale dune formation took place and the current dune-field was created (Clemmensen *et al.*, 2001). Renewed forest cutting beginning around 1000 CE amplified this third sand-drift event – once started the cutting coupled with intense cultivation and dune grass destruction made the drift almost impossible to stop (Clemmensen *et al.*, 2001). The oldest recorded sand obliterations in Thy date from 1427 CE and significant obliterations are reported to have begun in 1625–1645 CE. The worst years for drifting sand were between 1680 CE and 1750 CE, the time during which Tvorup church was lost to sand twice and finally torn down in 1794, and Vang and Tvorup villages were dismantled and moved east to their present locations to escape the sand (VTVLGc, n.d.; VTVLGd, n.d.).

Beginning in 1539, royal decrees were issued prohibiting the foraging of sheep in the dunes, the use of dune grass and heath for fuel, and the harvest of dune grass for the roofs of homes, but these decrees were largely ignored by those living in the heaths and among the dunes (Hansen, 1956; Pedersen & Clemmensen, 2005; VTVLGb, n.d.). Serious efforts to stop dune movement by planting dune grass, heather, and forests of conifers began only after the decree of 1792, which required all dune parishes and parishes on the border of the dunes to plant marram grass on the dunes. Planting was unpaid duty work under this decree, and thus it met with only limited success (VTVLGb, n.d.).

The forest plantations in Thy are the result of experiments with exotic tree species and planting techniques undertaken by a series of men given the

responsibility to halt the drifting sand. Because of some very successful plantings of forest in northern Zealand's dune areas, Lauritz Thagaard (c. 1758–1829) was hired in 1799 as sand flight commissioner in Thy (VTVLGa, n.d.). In reports to the government about the conditions of the plantations, Thagaard was very optimistic, but the locals who planted as duty work did not share this optimism, and in 1836 they complained to the farmers' society in Viborg, which asked that a government commission examine the plantations (VTVLGb, n.d.). In 1838 the commission found it useless to continue the experiments, and in 1842 the planting stopped (VTVLGa, n.d.; VTVLGb, n.d).

In April 1853, Johann Riegels, who had experience from planting the Jutland heath further south, made another attempt to establish a dune plantation near Tvorup. When he died suddenly in 1861, Christian De Thygeson, with similar experience from southern Jutland, took over and built on Riegels' work, finding much greater success (VTVLGa, n.d.; VTVLGe, n.d.). De Thygeson greatly systemised the planting of trees at Tvorup so that on an annual basis 200,000–300,000 plants were introduced into the dunes (VTVLGe, n.d.). The number of plantations expanded after 1884 and slowly the dunes were stabilised. Under De Thygeson and those that followed him, the planting of heather went hand-in-hand with the planting of trees. Heather stabilised the shifting dunes so the trees could become established (VTVLGe, n.d.). It was as if a green carpet was rolled out over the dunes in Thy (VTVLGe, n.d.).

National Park Thy as Symbolic Landscape

To understand how the ordinary landscape of a dune reclamation project came to be regarded as Danish wilderness, it is crucial to understand the formation of a symbolic Danish landscape. Veneration of the Danish landscape is closely associated with the rise of nationalism in the early 1800s.

The rise of Danish nationalism

The capture of Copenhagen by the British navy in 1801 spurred a nationalistic reaction in Denmark, which led first to re-examination of culture and national identity, then to indigenous traditions being 'revisited, examined or invented' (Conisbee, 1993: 43). The initial spark was provided by a series of lectures in Copenhagen in 1802 by the Norwegian philosopher Henrik Steffens, who had studied under Schelling, then the leader of German Romanticism and an associate of Goethe. Among those attending these lectures was Adam Oehlenschläger, who became a leading voice of Danish Romanticism (GDC, 2007d).

The effects of Steffens' lectures on Oehlenschläger were immediate. Within weeks he produced his epic poem *Güldhorene* (The Gold Horns) and a year later the Romantic poetry collection *Digte* (Poems) which contained *Hakon Jarls Død* (Earl Hakon's Death) and *Sanct-Hansaften Spil* (A Play for Midsummer Eve). His production of Romantic poetry and plays continued unabated for the next decade despite extensive travel outside of Denmark. Upon returning from a visit to Goethe at Weimar (1805–1809), Oehlenschläger was named Professor of Aesthetics in 1809. Following the second siege of Copenhagen by the British in 1807, the alignment with Napoleon and consequent British blockade of Danish and Norwegian ports which led to the bankruptcy of the state, Romanticism fell

increasingly out of favour, and by 1815 Oehlenschläger turned increasingly to a more pedestrian topic – life among the Danish bourgeoisie – for his inspiration (GDC, 2007a; Jacobsen, 1986; Yahil, 1991).

Another man for whom Steffens' lectures appear to have provided impetus was N.F.S. Grundtvig, generally considered the intellectual father of modern Denmark. Grundtvig began intensive study of Icelandic while at the University of Copenhagen and subsequently dove into the writings of Fichte, Schiller and Schelling. His own first writings appeared during 1807–1809, when he completed *On the Songs in the Edda*, *Northern Mythology* and *The Fall of Heroic Life in the North* in rapid succession. In the next decade he completed *The Rhyme of Roskilde*, *Roskilde Saga* and the first modern translation of *Beowulf*, in addition to serving as editor of the Danish nationalist journal *Danne-Virke* (Danish Work) in 1816–1819 (MFAD, 2007).

Against this twin backdrop of national despair and an emerging Romantic Nationalism, the Danish Golden Age unfolded in Copenhagen between 1820 and 1848 (Jacobsen, 1986). The intense interaction of Danish musicians, writers, philosophers and artists was facilitated by the small size of Copenhagen (100,000 inhabitants) and the largely supportive role played by the Danish royalty and city's bourgeoisie (GDC, 2007d).

Adam Oehlenschläger's poetry served as the basis for several significant musical pieces of the time, including works by F.D.R. Kulau and C.E.F. Weyse. Other significant composers included N.W. Gade, J.P.E. Hartman and H.C. Lumbye. Ballet in Copenhagen flourished under A. Bournonville and vaudeville under J.L. Heiberg (GDC, 2007b). Other writers included the history poet and novelist B.S. Ingeman (GDC, 2007c), and H.C. Andersen, known for his children's stories, but also a prolific writer of travelogues and poetry. His *Jylland Mellem Tvende Have* (Jutland Between Two Seas), written during a trip there in 1859, is among the best of Romantic Nationalist poetry from the period (Hansen, n.d.). Faculty and students from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts also played a critical role in Denmark's Golden Age (Jacobsen, 1986).

The formation of a Danish landscape aesthetic

The rural setting of much music and literature of the day was also made explicit by the two leading painters of the time, the history painter C.W. Eckersberg and the landscape painter J.L. Lund, both professors at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. Both stressed the idea that their students should paint the Danish countryside, but Lund, who was a classmate of C.D. Friedrich, adopted a far more romantic attitude towards the Danish landscape than did the Realist Eckersberg. Thus, while Eckersberg's student C. Købke is most closely associated with Denmark's Golden Age (and in many respects anticipates Impressionism), Lund's student J.T. Lundbye most clearly and explicitly defined the Danish landscape aesthetic in art (Jacobsen, 1986).

Identification of a distinctly Danish landscape was integral to the production of national heritage in this period, and the Northern landscape emerged as a focal point (Conisbee, 1993). The art historian K. Monrad (1993a: 17) notes that 'landscape painting was rapidly drawn into the national struggle'. Drawing on the dominant philosophy and literature of the time, painters believed that national character was formed in the Danish countryside through interaction

with natural geographic features, and as a result, landscape painting that nurtured appreciation for the heroic past and the beauty of the Danish countryside emerged (Conisbee, 1993; Monrad, 1993a). The prevailing sentiment of these painters is perhaps best expressed by artist Johan Lundbye, who wrote 'What I have regarded as my aim in life as a painter is to paint my beloved Denmark' (Monrad, 1993a: 18).

By the 1830s, at the urging of the history professor N.L. Høyen, Danish artists turned toward painting scenes that were 'overtly historical' and 'contained nationalistic associations' (Conisbee, 1993: 44). This associationism is demonstrated especially by Christen Købke's 'Frederiksborg Castle in the Evening Light, 1835', a significant break from his work completed under the influence of Eckersberg, and by Lyndbye's 'Landscape at Lake Arre with a View of the Shifting Sand Dunes at Tisvilde, 1838'. In his painting, Lundbye added details like the burial mound symbolic of Denmark's heritage to a cultural landscape replete with farm animals, churches and houses, juxtaposed against monumental clouds and heather-clad dune hills. When this evocative example of the pastoral idyll of pre-industrial tranquility was first shown in 1838, the painting won praise for its 'genuinely Danish character' (Monrad, 1993b: 178). Encouraged by this praise, Lyndbye's paintings after 1838 often were thoughtful assemblages of national iconography replete with burial mounds, stork nests, beech trees and distant castles.

Heath as landscape aesthetic

As it did in Wales (Zaring, 1977) and other countries, the landscape aesthetic that developed in Denmark had two versions or moments – a picturesque moment embodied in carefully attended fields and pastures and a sublime moment embodied in the wilderness. Denmark had no soaring peaks or virgin forests, but it did possess something resembling wasteland: the West Jutland heaths. However, heath had existed in Denmark since at least 900 BCE (Odgaard & Rasmussen, 2000). Why, then, did something that had for a long time been a major component of Denmark's landscape take on special significance in the 1800s?

The cultural significance of the heath stems from about 1830 when, through the convergence of a number of literary and artistic inventions, the romantic notion of the Jutland heath as repository of ancient virtues and national values surfaced (Kenneth Olwig, 1984). These inventions and their spreading acceptance became the mechanisms of fixing heath as the object for production of wild heritage landscape, coming as they did after forested wilderness had been reduced to its negligible extent in the characteristically agricultural Danish countryside. Furthermore, the heath, littered as it was with Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age tombs, peat bogs and ancient battlefields, in turn became the logical repository for all that was uniquely Danish. However, history alone does not account for the emergence of the heath as a symbol of cultural heritage. This symbolisation is due primarily to the novels and stories of Steen Steensen Blicher (Kenneth Olwig, 1984).

Few are more powerfully associated with the formation of the idea of heath as wilderness than the writer Steen Steensen Blicher (1782–1848), a nationalist, novelist and priest assigned to the parishes of Central and Western Jutland

(Kenneth Olwig, 1984). Blicher's novels (*Fragments of a Parish Clerk's Diary*, 1824; *The Pastor of Vejlbye*, 1829; *Birds of Passage*, 1838; and *The Knitting-Room*, 1842) were set against 'the melancholy background' of the moorland of Central Jutland, and his characters often spoke in the local Jyske dialect. These less fertile regions were sparsely peopled, but the 'inhabitants were a vigorous and original race. Country squires, clergymen, and peasants were masters of the land, and lived very much as their forefathers had done' (MFAD, 2006). Gypsies, outcasts and other vagrants roamed the heath unrestrained. Blicher himself sometimes figures in his stories as the hunting parson, talking with peasants and gypsies, envying their freedom from conventional restraints.

Inspired by Blicher, artists, who had up to now restricted their landscape painting largely to Zealand, also came to paint the heaths. Martinus Rørbye made many sketches of Jutland in 1830 on his way to Norway, and Louis Gurlitt painted there in 1833 (Monrad, 1993b). Dreyer's canvas 'View of a Wooded Landscape in Jutland, 1840' popularised the notion of Jutland as a barren landscape with strong wind bending the trees and driving the clouds. The mood in the painting is grim. Dreyer's use of horizontal lines increases the effect of isolation and loneliness.

The writing of Blicher and the work of artists he inspired cemented the notion of the heaths as both contemporary wild frontier and historic background against which the earliest period of the Danish nation-state played out (MFAD, 2006; Kenneth Olwig, 1984). The heaths thus became increasingly associated with Denmark's heroic past as well as exemplifying freedom for a people emerging from a stultifying manorial system.

While the concept of heath as wild land and frontier was well established by 1850, there was no movement to preserve it at that time, since no scarcity of heath existed – approximately 20% of Jutland was uninhabited heath or dune-field (Kenneth Olwig, 1984). The impact on agricultural production of losing Slesvig-Holstein to Germany in 1864, however, prompted reclamation projects with the goal of resettling the heath and returning it to arable or grazable land, under the slogan 'what was lost without must be regained within' (Kenneth Olwig, 1984: 58). In a programme that threatened the extent of what quite recently had been put forward as the national heritage wild landscape, the heath was broken, lakes drained, marshes filled and thousands of homes established (see map in Kenneth Olwig, 1984; Jacobsen, 1986; Yahil, 1991). Heath reclamation was primarily carried out under the auspices of the Danish Heath Society and its co-founder Enrico Dalgas (1828–1894). The impact of the reclamation was dramatic. By the early 20th century, 200,000 hectares of Jutland heath remained from the 400,000 hectares of a century earlier, and the figure was reduced to 81,000 hectares by 1961 (Kenneth Olwig, 1984). It was in reaction to this trend that the heath preservation movement, launched under the guidance of Jeppe Aakjær (1866–1930), began to question the social, aesthetic and ecological basis for reclamation (Kenneth Olwig, 1984). Of the 81,000 hectares of heath that exist in Jutland today, most occur in small plots scattered throughout western and central Jutland. However, there is one place where large expanses of heath can be seen, and that is in western Thy.

Symbolic Landscape and Heritage as National Park in Denmark

The proposal to create National Park Thy was submitted on 1 July 2005, received preliminary approval in May 2006, and enabling legislation was completed in early 2007 (Jensen, 2006). The proposed national park encompasses 23,100 hectares of dune, heath and forest. Of the area within the park, 8000 hectares are covered with heath, 8000 are in forest plantation, 1500 are farmland and the remainder is beach and dunes stabilised by grasses (Nielsen, 2005). The proposed park contains one of the largest expanses of dune heath in Europe, if not the world. It also includes Hansted Wildlife Reserve, which is closed during 1 April–15 July for bird breeding season, and portions of it are closed at all times (Jensen, 2006; Nielsen, 2005). The park is designed to increase tourism, provide areas for recreation, conserve dune heath and produce timber for a variety of uses (Jensen, 2006).

Currently, the area that is to comprise National Park Thy, along with the associated coastal towns of Agger, Norre Vorupør, Vangså and Klitmøller, host approximately 815,000 tourists each year (Midt-Nord Turism, 2004). It is hoped that the creation of National Park Thy will substantially increase this number. The proposed park provides a variety of tourism options including hiking, hunting, beach-going, birding and orienteering (Jensen, 2006).

Public reaction to the proposed park has been mixed. Local mayors and other local political leaders largely support the park as a way to increase tourism, which has fallen in recent years (Nielsen, 2005). A study has shown that the proposed park could cause tourism to double in 15 years (Nielsen, 2005). Interviews in this study with those in the tourist industry indicated enthusiasm for the idea of a national park, albeit tempered by environmental concerns. One of the interviewees, a manager of rental properties in the area, put it this way:

> I think [the national park] is good for two reasons. First, people in Copenhagen notice we have a special nature – the politicians open their eyes and they do something for one of the most beautiful places in Denmark. Second, it will bring new employment. [But we must also be careful] … Thy has a special nature. I have enough tourists to fill my (rental) houses. It is a good thing when you have the original things, when you have an authentic natural experience.

All foresters and heath and beach wardens support the national park as well (Nielsen, 2005). Ib Nord Nielsen, project manager for National Park Thy, suggests that increased tourism will not harm the proposed park because tourists use the sea and forests, but, contrary to the authors' observations, stay away from dunes (Nielsen, 2005).

Conversely, the interviews found considerable suspicion with the park proposal among residents in the area. A resident near Vangså noted:

> I don't like it. It is not necessary. It is only disturbing what we already have now. If too many people come, then it will be destroyed. People don't need help learning about it. It is best when we see it our self, when we learn it for our self.

Similarly, farmers interviewed were not in favour of the proposed park. Quoting a farmer near Vang:

> I don't really like it. There is enough national park – it is already a park. I don't really think they know what they are talking about. I don't see how farmers fit in with this idea of a park. In Copenhagen they assume only big cities and then park and beach. It seems the farmers will lose out and I don't think it will help with the development of the region. I think everyone is confused.

A farmer near Lodbjerg put it this way:

> I think we have nature enough without being named as a national park. I am also a farmer and, although my farm is 2–3 kilometres from the national park, I think there may be more regulations put on our heads as farmers because of it.

Tourists to the area are generally ignorant of the underlying political struggle over the national park, but are cognisant of the 'natural' beauty of the area. A tourist in the coastal town of Klitmøller remarked that 'This coastline as we have here – you won't find elsewhere – it is a rough nature.'

It is significant that the discussion surrounding National Park Thy is about how best to preserve nature and not about the authenticity of nature in National Park Thy. That the area encompassed by the proposed national park is a product of nature is taken as given by all interviewees. It also is important that heath plays a key role in this seemingly natural landscape. Indeed while the official publications of the proposed park are careful to make the distinction between the heath of West Jutland and the dune heath of Thy (Skov-og Naturstyrelsen, n.d.), considerable slippage of place names which involve these terms occurs in Thy and on official maps (Geodætisk Institut, 1930, 1965).

If National Park Thy is to enshrine what is natural – forest belts, heath and the coastal dunes – and all the symbolic meaning that these landscape elements carry, then, ironically, the naturalness must be managed. Not surprisingly, the plan for operation of the proposed park reflects the goal of maintaining a landscape with the explicit elements of national and cultural heritage, and fostering its use as a tourist landscape.

Ib Nord Nielsen notes that the plan for the park includes returning 3000 ha of current forest to dune heather (Nielsen, 2005). Dune heather is to be maintained by controlled burns on a 20-year cycle, and measures such as cutting encroaching trees, discontinuing drainage projects, and grazing cattle and sheep. It is hoped the local populations of deer eventually will thrive to the point that they can replace the cattle and sheep that currently graze the heath (Nielsen, 2005). Plans also call for some of the coastal dunes to remain unvegetated; it is felt that some sand drift is desirable in the park since sand flight is part of history and nature here (Nielsen, 2005).

Timbering in the forests, a joint effort between private and government interests to produce some wood and chips for fuel, will also continue, as will farming within the park (Nielsen, 2005). Currently, most trees within the proposed park boundaries are conifers (primarily Sitka spruce) and are harvested using clear-cutting techniques (Nielsen, 2005). However, foresters in the area

are increasingly transitioning to hardwoods, primarily beech and oak, and are converting away from clear-cutting methods (Jensen, 2006).

Unlike many national parks that prohibit residences and farming operations, National Park Thy allows private enterprise in some areas. Private farmers in the park have two choices: accept land use restrictions and receive state subsidies, or have no land use restrictions and receive no subsidy (Nielsen, 2005). In the park, all forms of fertiliser will eventually be banned. Even farmers outside the park may feel some pressures. Farms abutting the park may also find it increasingly difficult to expand (Nielsen, 2005).

Conclusion

This paper has traced the history of the transformation of the heaths of Jutland from ordinary landscape, to symbolic landscape, to their proposed enshrinement as a national park. Thus, the wild land of Thy is not truly wild and, because of that, what is enshrined in the proposed national park is not really what it claims to be.

The proposed national park, like parks enshrining nature elsewhere, are managed to maintain a 'nature' that has been socially constructed, and this makes them, in some way, false places. The proposed park is a place for the appreciation of duneland heath and forests. But the forests are planted, as is much of the heath, and much of what appears as wild land is of fairly recent origin – the result of reclamation efforts in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The real history of the proposed National Park Thy is thus much more about the struggle of Denmark to protect valuable agricultural lands from sand flight than it is about the preservation of wild land.

It is argued here that the landscape encompassed by the proposed park has long since become symbolic and, symbolic landscapes 'are understood as being a particular kind of place rather than a precise building or locality' (Meinig, 1979: 165). Symbolically, National Park Thy is only slightly about Denmark's struggle against sand flight.

In Thy, as in many other heritage sites, symbolism and memory have obliterated history. Thousands of sun-seeking tourists flock to Thy annually to sit on its beaches and surf the waves off the coast. Thousands of heritage tourists come to walk trails across the heath and through the forests. They come not for the specific reclaimed landscape of a peripheral corner of northwest Denmark, but to see the Jutland heaths, the very same heaths from whose shores Knud the Great invaded England, whereon the Viking King Erik Glipping was murdered, that Steen Steensen Blicher used as the melancholy backdrop for his popular novels, that Rørbye sketched, and that Dreyer painted. It is this symbolic heath that the Danes seek to preserve and maintain in National Park Thy.

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Notes

1. A heath is an extensive area of rather level open uncultivated land usually with poor coarse soil, inferior drainage, and a surface rich in peat or peaty humus occupied by plant materials of the *Ericaceae* family (Merriam-Webster, 2006).
2. This includes all tourists both domestic and foreign – the process is reflexive and foreign tourists' identities are solidified even if the heritage portrayed is not theirs – an act of otherness.

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