

Imagining national belief through art: Old Norse Religion and the Vikings in J. L. Lund's painting *Nordisk offerscene fra den Odinske periode* (Nordic sacrificial scene from the period of Odin, 1831)

Imaginando a crença nacional pela arte: religião nórdica antiga e Vikings na pintura *Nordisk offerscene fra den Odinske periode* de J. L. Lund (Cena sacrificial nórdica do período odínico, 1831)

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Abstract

This article analyzes the painting *Nordisk offerscene fra den Odinske periode* (*Nordic sacrificial scene from the period of Odin*), created by the Danish painter Johan Ludvig Gebhard Lund (1777-1867) in 1831 and which presents a theme regarding Old Norse religion and the Vikings. We have made use of Ernest Gombrich's *schemata* theory and the studies of reception by Margaret Clunies Ross. Our main perspective is that Lund's work was related to both Danish nationalist romanticism and to a perspective of history and art in which the ancient religious forms and idealized representations of the Vikings played a major role in shaping social and cultural identities of his time.

Keywords: J. L. Lund. Norse myths in art. Vikings in romantic art. History of art. Nineteenth Century Art.

Resumo

O presente artigo analisa a obra *Nordisk offerscene fra den Odinske periode* (*Cena sacrificial nórdica do período odínico*) do pintor dinamarquês Johan Ludvig Gebhard Lund (1777-1867), executada em 1831, tendo como tema a religião nórdica antiga e os Vikings. Empregamos como teorias a *schemata* de Ernest Gombrich e estudos de recepção de Margaret Clunies Ross. Nossa principal perspectiva é a de que a obra de Lund esteve relacionada tanto ao romantismo nacionalista dinamarquês quanto a uma perspectiva de história e arte onde as antigas formas religiosas e as representações idealizadas dos Vikings ocupavam um papel primordial para a formação de identidades sociais e culturais de sua época.

Palavras-chave: J. L. Lund. Mitos nórdicos nas artes. Vikings na arte romântica. História da arte. Arte do século 19.

Introduction

Norse myths have always fascinated Western art since the nineteenth century. Whether in traditional visual arts or visible in the modern advent of opera, film, comics and television, the mythology and the universe of gods from the Scandinavian area hold a privileged space, shaping many expressions of cultural identity and being popularized by new medias recently. Our fundamental purpose in this article is to analyze Johan Ludvig Lund's *Nordisk offerscene fra den Odinske periode* (Nordic sacrificial scene from the period of Odin, 1831).¹ Despite its historical significance - it was the first artistic representation of a pre-Christian Norse ritual, as well as the first painting depicting the Vikings - it has not received any detailed analysis by researchers yet.² Our text is divided into three parts: first I have synthesized the general context in relation to the artistic reception of Old Norse themes in Europe and Denmark from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; secondly I have scrutinized the general contents of the painting; at last, the "Viking theme" has been taken into consideration.

As the main theoretical support on image, I rely on the studies from Cultural History, especially by Peter Burke. In such an approach, I seek to understand the fundamental social context in which a particular visual culture is created. Thus, the images provide access to contemporary views of a given social world; the images, then, need a series of contexts (cultural, political, material and artistic) in order to be understood.³ As an analysis methodology, I have chosen John Harvey's considerations about visual culture, understanding the tradition and intrinsic characteristics of the artifacts, its materiality and its situation.⁴

As main theoretical support for the theme of artistic reception I follow the idea that the popularity of Nordic themes in visual arts was due to its connection with ideals of national cultures and the political

¹ Born in Kiel (1777) and died in Copenhagen in 1867. He was appointed professor in The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, along with C. W. Eckersberg, in 1818. His main works were historical paintings, mythological and religious themes, natural landscapes and everyday themes. PALMER, Allison Lee. Johan Ludvig Gebhard Lund (1777-1867). **Historical Dictionary of Romantic Art and Architecture**. Lanham/New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019, p. 192-193.

² Perhaps one explanation for this is that Lund has a very low prestige in Danish art history. Recently, The Hirschsprung Collection in Copenhagen has been conducting research and exhibitions aimed at reevaluating Lund's work and restoring its central role within the "Golden Age" context of Danish art and the intellectual circle. From September 25, 2019 to January 12, 2020 this museum held the exhibition: *Den anden guldalder: Johan Ludvig Lund over alle grænser* (The second golden age: Johan Ludvig Lund across all borders), curated by Anna Schram Vejlbj. Available at: <https://hirschsprung.dk/en/udstillinger/udstillinger>. Accessed on: 19 May 2021.

³ BURKE, Peter. **Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence**. London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2001. I also use the referential of the of *schemata* theory: GOMBRICH, Ernest. **Art and Illusion**. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000, p. 77. I also adopt the studies on reception of Nordic themes: ROSS, Margaret Clunies. Reception studies. In: GLAUSER, Jürg Glauser (Ed.). **Handbook of Pre-Modern Nordic Memory Studies**. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2018, p. 361-369.

⁴ HARVEY, John. Visual culture. In: STAUSBERG, Michael (Ed.). **The Routledge Handbook of research methods in the study of religion**. London: Routledge, 2013, p. 502-522.

situation of each European country at that time, defined by Knut Ljøgodt.⁵ Another basic reference in my research is that in the representations of Vikings and Norse Myths by Europeans artists during Romanticism, the classicist reference was not always totally predominant, but this was also constituted by resistance, adaptation and use of Nordic motives, as pointed out by Nora Hansson.⁶ The main investigative endeavor is to try to ponder on the involvement of nationalism in European artistic production: in particular, the theme of the Vikings - were they related to symbols, themes or motifs linked to ideologies or national sentiments by the Europeans? How were the Vikings and Norse Myths portrayed by Western art? Have their representations changed over time?

The revival of Norse myths in European art

Post-medieval European interest in Norse mythology, culture and history has always been frequent, even though often limited to the Scandinavian countries themselves, especially by the works of the antiquarians. In general, the medieval Nordic themes start to become relevant to the arts as a whole after the crisis of neoclassicism in the eighteenth century, motivated especially by the search for national identities. Each country sought the roots for its aesthetic references in its own history, folklore and ancient literature. Rome and Pompeii were not the only stimulators of art at this time⁷ - major European nations sought inspiration from James Macpherson's *Ossian* poem, supposedly based on oral Scottish traditions, published in 1762. Far from a classical world according to the Roman or Greek molds, intellectuals and artists started to search for the political and cultural glories of their own past inhabitants, especially Celtic, Germanic or Scandinavian warriors, who evoked a barbaric and epic past whose symbolic figure of the bard Ossian could convey the achievements of their old deeds.⁸

In this context the book *Introduction à l'histoire de Dannemarc* (Introduction to the history of Denmark) was published in 1755 by the Swiss Paul-Henry Mallet (1730-1807), who was a language professor in Copenhagen during this period. In 1770 his book was translated into English and thus it

⁵ LJØGODT, Knut. Northern Gods in Marble: the Romantic Rediscovery of Norse Mythology. *Romantik*, v. 1, n. 1, 2012, p. 141-165. On the relationship between Norse mythology and nationalism also see: KUHN, Hans. Greek gods in Northern costumes: visual representations of Norse mythology in nineteenth century Scandinavia. *International Saga Conference*, 2011, p. 209-211; BRAUN, Sonja. *Der Baldermythos in den Werken von Ewald, Oehlenschläger und Grundtvig*. Universität Wien, Masterarbeit, 2017.

⁶ HANSSON, Nora. *Klassiskt och nordiskt: Fornnordiska motiv i bildkonsten 1775-1855*. Masteruppsats, Konstvetenskapliga institutionen, Uppsala Universitet, 2019, p. 1-90.

⁷ MONRAD, Kasper. *Mellem guder og helte: historiemaleriet i Rom, Paris og Kobenhavn, 1770-1820*. Copenhagen: Statens museum for kunst, 1990, p. 10-70.

⁸ ROSS, Margaret Clunies Ros (Ed.), *The Pre-Christian Religions of the North*, Volume I: From the Middle Ages to c. 1830. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2018, p. 249-405; MJØBERG, Joran. Romanticism and revival. In: WILSON, David. (Org.), *The Northern World*. New York: Harry Abrams, 1980, p. 207-238.

became the great reference of the so-called *The Nordic Renaissance*: as an alternative to neoclassicism, he presents a fusion of Rousseau's savage nobleman, the tradition to be reclaimed by the Ossian model and the recent pre-romantic concept of the sublime. Mallet's book not only deals with the historical past (in the form of monuments, chronicles and deeds) but also presents the laws and ancient religion of the Scandinavian countries. In 1756 Mallet also publishes a French translation of the *Eddas*. In this professor's work, the ancient Norse traditions were seen as wild, passionate and sublime, popularizing the interest in Norse Mythology throughout Northern Europe. A large number of English (and some German) poets published numerous works influenced by Mallet, propelling the emergence of various operas, theater, and visual arts in the Scandinavian countries by the end of the eighteenth century. In particular, in 1773, Johannes Ewald's *Balders Død* (Balder's Death) opera was premiered in Copenhagen with great success and it was constantly performed until the following century.⁹

In the early nineteenth century Denmark, nationalist romanticism was the leading point of reference for both artists and intellectuals in general. This was notably fierce after the English bombardment of the city of Copenhagen in 1807. Such incident grew into the main impetus for artistic creations that recovered, on the one hand, the glories of the past, and on the other, gave aid to the formation of the desired identity for the moment. Thus, we have the publication of N. F. S. Grundtvig's *Nordens mytologi* (Norse mythology, 1808), in which the Norse myths are integrated into the Danish Christian and nationalist context. Later that same year, Rasmus Nyerup translated the *Prose Edda* into Danish and in 1822 a translation of the *Poetic Edda* appeared by Finn Magnussen. In the 1810s and 1820s, the production of extremely iconic artworks presenting Nordic myths as themes in the Danish context also took place: Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg's painting *Balders død* (Balder's Death, 1817); the sculptures of Loki (1822), Odin (1827) Thor (1829) and The Ragnarök Frieze of Christiansborg Palace (1826) by Hermann Ernst Freund. All of these artists and literati were part of a period of creative production known as *Den danske guldalder* (Danish Golden Age).¹⁰ Remarkably, this has also been a period of intense historical and antiquarian study of the Danish past.¹¹

Since the seventeenth century, there have been expeditions to collect objects of material culture (such as coins, weapons, utensils) which increased private collection organizations related to Danish

⁹ KRISTMANNSSON, Gauti. Ossian in the North. *Translation and Literature* v. 22, 2013, p. 361-82; ROSS, Margaret Clunies & LÖNNROTH, Lars. The Norse Muse Report. *Alvíssmál*, n. 9, 1999, p. 3-28.

¹⁰ GRANDIEN, Bo. Painting and Sculpture in Denmark. In: ROSS, Margaret Clunies (Ed.). *The Pre-Christian Religions of the North: Research and Reception*, Volume I: From the Middle Ages to c. 1830. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2018, p. 447-468.

¹¹ GERVEN, Tim van. Is Nordic Mythology Nordic or National, or Both? Competing National Appropriations of Nordic Mythology in Early Nineteenth-Century Scandinavia. In: HALINK, Simon (Ed.). *Northern Myths, Modern Identities: The Nationalization of Northern mythologies since 1800*. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2019, p. 49-72; SCHNURBEIN, Stefanie. *Norse Revival*. Leiden: Brill Academic Pub, 2016, p. 299-302.

kings and aristocrats. The great public interest in such discoveries, coupled with the growing nationalistic interest in the study and conservation of these objects, originated in 1807 the Royal Committee for the Preservation and Collection of National Antiquities. In 1819 the *Oldnordiske Museum* (The Nordic Ancient Museum) was inaugurated, serving public service at the Trinitatis Church in Copenhagen and later transferred to Christiansborg Castle in 1832. Within the Danish national-romantic project, there has been a tension between the desire to obtain artifacts and the imaginative transcendence of these same objects: artists generally interpreted the past more imaginatively than historians and archaeologists of this period.¹² Norse themes, however, were a shared interest among all.

The painting *Nordisk offerscene fra den Odinske periode*

In 1815 painter Johan Ludvig Lund was commissioned by king Frederik VI and *Slotsbygningsskmissionen*¹³ to portray the various historical periods of religion in Denmark.¹⁴ Five paintings were carried out, whose names are *Christendommens indførelse i Danmark* (Christianity's introduction in Denmark, 1827), *Nordisk offerscene fra den Odinske periode* (Nordic sacrificial scene from the period of Odin, 1831), *Procession ved Kristi Legemsfest fra den katolske tid i Danmark* (Corpus Christi procession from Denmark's catholic period, 1834), *Solens tilbedelse* (Worship of the Sun, 1838), *Luthersk gudstjeneste* (Lutheran church service, 1843). Currently, all of them are stored in the Christiansborg Palace,¹⁵ with sketchy studies in the Hirschsprung Collection.

The painting of our main interest is the second one in the collection's chronological order of execution. It is a canvas painted in oil technique [Figure 1], executed within a romantic and idealistic framework, demonstrating strong influences from the Nazarene movement - especially the highlight to the spirituality of ancient times.¹⁶ The image represents a supposed sacrificial rite from the Viking Age, displaying as the central figure a priest dressed in white, who presides over the cult. In front of him, beside a dolmen, is a nearly human-sized statue of the god Thor, while at his feet, occupying the foreground to

¹² RIX, Robert William. In darkness they grope: Ancient Remains and Romanticism in Denmark. *European Romantic Review*, v. 26, n. 4, 2015, p. 435-451.

¹³ *The Palace Building Commission* it was the state institution responsible for the reconstruction of Christiansborg Palace and the new City Hall and Justice Palace building in Nytorv, Copenhagen. Arkivet, **Thorvaldsens Museum**. Available at: <https://arkivet.thorvaldsensmuseum.dk/people/slotsbygningsskmissionen>. Accessed on: 19 May 2021.

¹⁴ VEJLBY, Anna Schram. Johan Ludvig Lund. En alt for glemt kunstner. In: **Den anden guldalder**: Johan Ludvig Lund over alle grænser. Denmark: Den Hirschsprungske Samling, 2019, p. 45, 86.

¹⁵ PEDERSEN, Knud Børge. J. L. Lunds malerier i Statsrådsalen på Christiansborg Slot. **Historiske Meddelelser om København**, 2017, p. 117-161.

¹⁶ As we can see in painters Johann Friedrich Overbeck, Ditlev Conrad Blunck and Franz Pforr. Regarding the influence of the Nazarene movement in Lund's work, see: GREWE, Cordula. J.L. Lund. Lukasbrødrene og den moderne religiøse kunsts frembrud. **Den anden guldalder**, op. cit., 2019, p. 160-209.

the right, sits a skald playing the harp. Also in the foreground, although at the far left, a male figure carries a musical instrument (*lur*). Secondly, behind the priest, several people gather, from peasants to warriors. The picture presents a total of almost thirty people, mostly men, but with the presence of one child and two women. We are going to deliver our analysis of the painting's contents in two levels: the main elements (the priest, the skald, the musician, the statue and the sacrifice), and then the secondary elements (the audience). This content analysis is going to take into consideration some comparisons with other works of the painter, while also contextualizing his artistic influences and the studies of archeology and Norse Mythology which were current in Denmark and Europe then. Finally, we are going to analyze the framing of the work in national and cultural terms of its time.

The priest is the central figure of the canvas. Endowed with intense white and showing the most intense color on the painting, he wears a yellow cloak, a knife in his belt and raises his hands in front of the statue. Although some records of sacrificial cults do exist in medieval sources, this scene is very fanciful. In Johan Lund's time, there was little information on the ancient religions of Europe, so he made use of the conventional artistic (and stereotyped) mode of representing the typical Celtic religion priest, the druid: in various illustrations from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these priests were depicted wearing a long cloak of light color and bearing a huge white beard. An example is the classic illustration by Meyrick and Smith (1815) of a druid.¹⁷ These visual stereotypes (*schemas*) act as a familiar filter for themes with little historical information: "a guess conditioned by habit and tradition."¹⁸ Nevertheless, the representation of a druid likewise comes close to the idea of the priest in Christianity (in pre-Christian Nordic context experts use the term "cult leader"¹⁹). In this collection of five Lund paintings, white color refers to the supreme spirituality religion is able to provide.

Another element drawn from the reinterpretations of Celtic culture was the bard, represented just below the priest in the *Nordisk offerscene* painting, visibly influenced in a forthright manner by other artist's paintings of Ossian (Nicolai Abildgaard's *Ossian*, 1787, Statens Museum for Kunst, who had been a teacher of J. L. Lund; *Ossian und Alpin*, 1788, Sammlung Archiv für Kunst und Geschichte, by Asmus Carstens; and especially *Ossian und Malvina*, by Johann Peter Krafft, 1810 and 1821, private collection). Whereas in painting the priest character is the direct intermediary between men and the supernatural - the predecessor of the Lutheran reverend - here the bard-poet represents a tradition which had been lost in Lund's time and needed to be rescued by the artists: the guardian of memory and of past deeds.

¹⁷ MEYRICK, Samuel Rush; SMITH, Charles Hamilton. *The costume of the original inhabitants of the British islands*. London: R. Havell, 1815.

¹⁸ GOMBRICH, op. cit., 2000, p. 77.

¹⁹ SUNDQVIST, Olof. Cult leaders, rulers and religion. In: BRINK, Stefan (Ed.). *The Viking world*. London: Routledge, 2008, p. 223.

Another detail is that within the Ossian tradition from the eighteenth century the Celtic world was merged with the Germanic one, creating a Northern European artistic character to perpetuate "high ideas of magnanimity, generosity, and true heroism."²⁰ Even though some intellectuals at that time distinguished the Scandinavians from the Celts (such as Árni Magnússon) and the writers paid little attention to Macpherson's work in Copenhagen, the Danish painters devoted many of their works to this theme.

Although some researchers believe that the last painting in Danish art exhibiting the Ossian theme was *Temora* (1828), by F. L. Storck²¹, Johan Ludvig Lund's work still echoed the Macpherson tradition. It transformed the Celtic tradition into an instrument for the revitalization of the ancient Norse world, in which the poet then has taken a position to enhance the religious moment. Lund modifies Carstens's *Ossian und Alpin* (1788, Sammlung Archiv) as well, replacing a large harp with a smaller one in the poet's hands. The theme would still return in Lund's work five years later, in the painting *Den sidste skjald*²² (The last skald, 1837, Statens Museum for Kunst, Figure 2), however in a different context: the poet is in front of a dolmen, in a position of desolation and sadness, just holding the harp and no longer playing it. At first, the poet was related to the still living glories of his people, while in the second painting he is merely the last representative of a culture that was now dying, something dearly appreciated by romantic aesthetics. In the background of *Den sidste skjald* there is a cross on the hill by the sea. This adds to the melancholy atmosphere of the painting, because it announces the new times (the arrival of Christianity).

The central object of observation in the *Nordisk offerscene* painting is a statue of the god Thor, set above a small platform of arranged and jagged blocks. Right next to it is the figure of a man carrying a *lur*. The statue is made of stone²³ and bears two details in gold (the belt and the diadem). The god is also wearing a tunic with short sleeves and portrays a long hair and a beard. He holds a wide-headed hammer and has a small bracelet on his right arm. At the base of the statue lies a small vase, a bowl and a hammer, possibly manifesting the idea of offering them to the deity. Albeit several mythological descriptions of this god exist, information about his worship was scarce at the time of Lund. Virtually the only document

²⁰ CELENZA, Anna H. Harwell. Efterklange af Ossian. *Scandinavian Studies*, v. 70, n. 3, 1998, p. 363.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 382.

²² Here Lund was objectively influenced by the Swedish Erik Gustaf Geijer in his poem *Den sist skalden*, published in *Iduna* magazine in 1811. In this work, Geijer performs a praise to the Nordic past, a true elegy to a "golden age" - the Viking Age - a pagan but honorable, festive and heroic time - which is lamented for its end, but which can return, at least symbolically. The skald figure is the main means for this symbolic return. GREENWAY, John. *The Golden Horns: Mythic Imagination and the Nordic Past*. Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2008, p. 140-142.

²³ Anna Schram Vejlbj sent us a note on this detail, by email (February 12, 2020): "It is interesting that I have always thought that the Thor statue was made of bronze. I now realize that Lund seems to have changed the material from bronze to stone between the painted sketch and the finished painting. I have mainly looked at the sketch which has a warmer tone than the light grey of the finished painting. Perhaps he wanted the contrast to the belt and head band".



Figure 1:
Johan Ludvig Lund, **Nordisk offerscene fra den Odinske periode** (Nordic sacrificial scene from the period of Odin), 1831. Oil on canvas, 370 × 272 cm.
© Christiansborg Slot (EKS1051).
Photo: Ole Haupt.



Figure 2:
Johan Ludvig Lund, **Den sidste skjald** (The last skald), 1837. Oil on canvas, 97 x 76 cm
© Statens Museum for Kunst (KMS309).

available at this point was the description of the statue of Thor in the Uppsala temple (Sweden), included in the *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum* (Deeds of the Bishops of Hamburg) by Adam of Bremen, written in the eleventh century. It was first printed in 1514 and then being quoted by various antiquarians until the eighteenth century, including Olaus Magnus, Ole Worm and Olof Rudbeck. Still, the document does not give much detail about this statue²⁴ and since iconography on Thor from the Viking Age was unknown, the artists had to imagine their own frame of reference. Lund does not follow the traditional representations of this god from European art until the early nineteenth century, which were almost all derived from reinterpretations of the illustrations from Olaus Magnus's book *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* (A Description of the Northern Peoples, 1555): in it, Thor is using crown, there are stars above his head and he sits on a throne, or in a more Danish context (as in Johannes Wiedewelt's illustrations for the opera *Balders Død*, Balder's Death, 1780), showing his warmongering and aristocratic tones. Johan Ludvig Lund's Thor has a much simpler and static posture, resting his hammer on his shoulders - anticipating the famous statue of Bengt Fogelberg (*Thor*, 1844, Nationalmuseum) - but also very different from the neoclassical framework of his countryman Hermann Ernest Freund (*Thor*, 1829, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek) or the fearless, brave and militarized deity present in Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg's painting *Balders død* (Balder's Death, 1817, Det Kongelige Danske Kunstakademi). The prevailing meaning of Lund's statue of Thor is that of a god capable of providing aid to all members of Old Norse society represented in the painting.²⁵ Thor's head is very reminiscent of the *Christus* statue (1821, Denmark's Church of Our Lady) from the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen, with its ringed hair and very pointy beard. Here Lund associates the most popular Norse god with the figure of Christ, a tradition already followed since medieval literature, giving thereby the pre-Christian world a place worthy of figuring in the religious history of his country.

Just beside the statue there is a small dolmen, with a ring and an oak branch on its surface, consisting of a large flat horizontal slab supported by two small blocks. Lund here repeats the traditional interpretation of the megalithic remains as ancient sacrificial altars, a misconception existing since the Renaissance that had been updated in Copenhagen by antiquarian Børge Thorlacius in 1808.²⁶ While

²⁴ SONNE, Lasse Christian Arboe. *Thor-kulte i vikingetiden*. København: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 2013, p. 156-164.

²⁵ Other drawings and paintings by Lund depict various themes of Norse Mythology: *Ydun* (1827), *Odin* (1827), *Brage* (1827), *De tre norner* (The Three Norns, 1844), *Saga* (1849). In 1822 Johan Lund won a competition among the artists of The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts for the best drawings on Norse Mythology, with the drawing *Balder og Mimer hos nornerne* (Mimir and Balder visiting the Norns). LANGER, Johnni. Nationens skæbne: Nornerne i dansk kunst 1780-1850. **Perspective: Journal of art history**, SMK - Statens Museum for Kunst, januar 2021, p. 1-23. Available at: <https://www.academia.edu/44847415>. Accessed on: 19 May 2021; SALLING, Emma. Den tungsindige helt. **Meddelelser fra Thorvaldsens Museum**, 1989, p. 288.

²⁶ HEMMET, Minna Kanzler. Ved dem ligger Oldtiden ligesom aabenbaret for vore Øin. **KUML: Årbog for Jysk Arkæologisk Selskab** n. 66, 2017, p. 12, 13.

other contemporary artists (such as Johan Christian Dahl and his painting *Vinterlandskab vem Vordingborg*, Winter landscape in Vordingborg, 1829, Statens Museum for Kunst) were already portraying dolmens in a more scientific and realistic framework, Lund preferred to perpetuate the association of stone traces as the main ritual instruments of pagan religion, an idea also closely associated with the Celts and Germanics in general during the eighteenth century.²⁷ We further conceive that in the *Nordisk offerscene* painting, Lund was objectively influenced by an illustration of a book on Norse mythology by Paul Mallet from 1756 [Figure 11].²⁸ In this image a dolmen was pictured next to a large runic stone, accompanied by a representation of Sleipnir and Odin. Set in a twilight and covered with moss, it gives the illustration a certain mystery.

The representation of sacrifice is at the heart of Lund's canvas. We have to consider that the painting was originally given another name, the same as an 1830 drawing: *Ofring til Thor* (Sacrifice to Thor).²⁹ Nevertheless, why has the title been changed to *Nordisk offerscene fra den Odinske periode* (Nordic sacrificial scene from the period of Odin)? The image of rituals on bloodthirsty altars related to the god Odin had been consolidated in Danish poetry for several decades, far more than in relation to the god Thor.³⁰ For example, Adam Oehlenschläger in his poem *Harald i Offerlunden* (Harald in Offerlunden, 1803) presents this referential: "Her hvor Odin de tilbade (...) Altrets gamle Stene rasle"³¹ (Here where Odin was worshiped (...) The altar of old stones rustle). This poet repeats this interpretation again in another work, *Nordens guder, The gods of the North*, 1819: "Til Odin offres Mennesker som Fæ"³² (To Odin, people are sacrificed like cattle³³). This romantic vision of an ancient ritual performed in a mysterious yet exciting

²⁷ Johan Ludvig Lund does not conceive of megaliths as products prior to the ancient Germanics - in his painting *Solens tilbedelse* (Worship of the Sun, 1838, Figure 3, dealing with prehistory) there is no structure, monument or construction, whereas in *Habors tilbagekomst fra slaget, og hans Modtagelse ved Kong Sigars Hof* (Habor returns from the battle and has a reception at the King Cigar Court) (1819, Figure 5) - dealing with the theme of the legendary history of Scandinavia, has a large megalithic ensemble situated at the top right of the painting.

²⁸ MALLETT, Paul Henry. *Edda*, ou Monumens de la mythologie celtique et de la poésie des anciens peuples du Nord. Copenhague: Claude Philibert, 1756, p. 1.

²⁹ This drawing was exhibited at Charlottenborg Palace in 1830, as catalog available at: REITZELL, Carl; LANGE, Julius. **Fortegnelse over danske Kunstneres Arbejder paa de ved Det Kgl. Akademi for de skjønne Kunster i Aarene 1807–1882 afholdte Charlottenborg-udstillinger**. Copenhagen: Thieles Bogtrykkeri, 1883, p. 396. We couldn't find this drawing in any Copenhagen archive.

³⁰ Another question of this new title is the election of Norse mythology as a reference for pan-Scandinavian commonality (with the term *nordisk*), while paganism was taken as a time reference (with the word *Odinske periode*), anticipating the creation of the Viking Age concept in 1836 (*Vikingatiden*, emerged in the **Annaler for Nordisk oldkyndighed og historie**). On the topic of pan-Scandinavianism and its influence on nineteenth century art, see: GERVEN, Tim van. **Scandinavianism overlapping and competing identities in the Nordic world 1770-1919**. Academish proefschrift ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2020.

³¹ OEHLENSCHLÄGER, Adam. *Harald i Offerlunden*. **Digte**. Kiöbenhavn: Universitetsboghandler Fr/Brummers Forlag, 1803, p. 52, 55.

³² Idem. *Nordens guder*: et episk digt. Kiöbenhavn: H.F. Popp, 1819, p. 378.

³³ The quote could be translated also as "both people and cattle are sacrificed". *Fæ* could also just mean livestock and not only cattle.

night-time setting for nationalist yearnings to rescue the country's past was also conveyed by Nikolaj Grundtvig, the most iconic intellectual in Denmark at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In the poem *Gunderslev Skov* (Gunderslev Forest, 1808), a forest is the scene of ancient remnants of the cult of the gods, now dormant but still symbolically present by the passing of imposing winds. He follows the prevailing notion that we have already commented, that the megalithic blocks served as altars for worship: "Alterets mossede Stene"³⁴ (altar's mossy rocks).

On the other hand, Lund also made some modifications of this Danish literary tradition. In his *Nordisk offerscene*, he retains the dolmens as altars and perpetuates Odin's name on the canvas, but inserts Thor into the painting, bringing him closer to the figure of Christ. The theme of people being sacrificed by the Norse, described in medieval sources (as in the Adam of Bremen chronicle, *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, Deeds of the Bishops of Hamburg, eleventh century), in Danish antiquarians and artists was removed. In the painting, instead of humans, he depicts a white horse, which is restless, foreseeing its disastrous fate. Behind the priest a man carries a sledgehammer, possibly the animal's immolation instrument [Figure 1]. Lund breaks with the *schemata* of depicting human immolations (especially women) over dolmens by both Celtic, Germanic and Scandinavian priests, something very common in European art. The scene is further softened by the presence of a hoop and a tree branch above the dolmen, with several oaks flanking the horse and the various people present at the ritual. The oak tree was sacred for both the Celts and the Norse, being described in various ancient sources regarding the worship of the god Donnard and Thor.³⁵ All these modifications make the sacrifice scene much more compatible with the ideals of the collection.

In the painting *Nordisk offerscene*, in front of the priest, a young man carries a horn with golden adornments, and another one carries a *lur*. Both are allusions to objects discovered in Denmark. In 1639 and 1724 two horns made of gold, full of symbols, images and runes were found in Gallehus. Despite their importance, they were stolen and melted in 1802.³⁶ A year later, Adam Oehlenschläger published the poem *Guldhornene* (The Golden Horns), in which he relates these objects to references from Norse mythology and provides a mythopoetic perception of nature. His ancestors seemingly had great

³⁴ GRUNDTVIG, Nikolaj. *Gunderslev Skov*. **Nyeste af Kjøbenhavn** 5, n. 101 (1808), column 1599. On the relationship between ancient monuments and the perception of Old Norse religion as a proto-Christianity in Grundtvig, see: RIX, Robert William. Visiting the Nordic past: domestic travels in early nineteenth-Century Denmark. **Scandinavian Studies**, 90, n. 2, 2018, p. 227-231.

³⁵ CHADWICK, H. Munro. The oak and the Thunder-God. **The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland**, v. 30, 1900, p. 22-44. The forest depicted in the painting was based on the region around the lake Bagsværd in the northern outskirts of Copenhagen. It was a means that the artist found to suggest historical authenticity for the scene. SCHULTE-WÜLWER, Ulrich. Lund som landskabsmaler. In: **Den anden guldalder**, op. cit., 2019, p. 122.

³⁶ The images of Gallehus' golden horns were reproduced in drawings from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, allowed for its reproduction in copies in 1993. OLSEN, Rikke Agnette. *Guldhornenes billeder*. **Oldtiden Ansigt**. København: Det Kongelige Nordiske Oldskriftselskab, 1990, p. 154.

imaginative capacity and a high spiritual power that were lost. Thus, the poem criticizes its contemporary culture - which Oehlenschläger felt could no longer appreciate the unity of religion, nature and imagination.³⁷ Lund reestablishes such views in this painting: the priest is the central matter of the canvas, bordered by the *lur*, the skald's harp and the *völva's* staff.

The *lur* is a Bronze Age musical instrument, first found in 1797 in the Brudevælde Mose swamp, Denmark. Its name is modern, adopted by researchers from the Icelandic sagas. Even though the Viking Age instrument was straight and made of wood, the Bronze Age instrument was metallic.³⁸ It became a symbol of national identity in Denmark thanks to its widespread use in pagan times, regardless of whether during ancient or medieval times. Both the horn and the *lur* were developed into objects symbolizing the Scandinavian past in general: both appear together in an illustration from Esaias Tegnér's *Frithiofsaga*, in the 1839 edition.³⁹ Significantly, there are young men holding these objects, the only men who have no beards on Lund's canvas. Were they possible metaphors of nationalistic and spiritualistic dreams for the future?

Just behind the priest appears a figure with the most contrasting color of the canvas. It is an old lady, wearing a strong sky-blue cloak and a staff, illustrated in a thoughtful and reflective position and placing one finger on her chin. She carries a small purse and a typical Viking Age brooch: she is a *völva*, a kind of prophetess mentioned in both the *Eddas* and the Icelandic sagas [Figure 4]. The best-known character of this type is cited in the eddic poem *Völuspá*, in which she is resurrected by Odin in order to predict the future. In the artistic circle of Copenhagen the figure of the *völva* was well known, as we can see from Andreas Ludvig Koop's *Vola der åbenbarer sig for Thor* (Vola reveals himself to Thor, 1822, Det Kongelige Danske Kunstakademi),⁴⁰ even in a supernatural and deviant context (she appears floating to the god Thor after he killed a number of giants, an allusion to a non-existent narrative in mythological sources). The inclusion of this character on Lund's canvas, however, gives the ensemble a more historic and realistic tone, especially by placing it behind the priest, reinforcing the religious context of the painting. The same is not true about the group of warriors on the left, at the bottom of the scene: these are *Vikings*.

³⁷ RIX, op. cit., 2015, p. 435-451.

³⁸ TSUKAMOTO, Chichiro. **What did they sound like?** Reconstructing the music of the Viking Age. Master thesis, Háskóli Íslands, Reykjavík, 2017, p. 5-7.

³⁹ **BIHANG till Frithiofs saga**. Stockholm: A. Bonnier, 1839, p. 21.

⁴⁰ The drawing and the subsequent painting was based on the poem *Volas Spådom* (Prophecy of the Seeress), by Adam Oehlenschläger (1819). SALLING, op. cit., 1989, p. 284-286.



Figure 3:
 Johan Ludvig Lund, **Solens tilbedelse** (Worship of the Sun), 1838. Oil on canvas, 370 x 272 cm.
 © Christiansborg Slot. Photo: Ole Haupt.



Figure 4:
 Enlarged detail of sketchy studie for Johan Ludvig Lund's **Nordisk offerscene**, 1831. Oil on paper, 43,1 x 32,1 cm.
 © Den Hirschsprungske Samling.

The Romantic Invention of the Viking

This is certainly a historical moment in Western art: the first representation on oil painting of these famous Scandinavian characters. The first member of the group carries a spear a decorated armor and a crested spherical helm [Figure 4] – obviously influenced by eighteenth century aesthetics and with a lack of historical background. The second one wears a wolfskin over his head and trunk, also carrying a fanciful sword does not correspond to the Viking Age sword models, and a large dart, similar to a Roman pilum (also an imprecise model for Norse standards). This is possibly an allusion to the *úlfhéðnar* described in the Icelandic sagas or even an influence from the representation of the Germanic warriors composing the Roman army. The third warrior in the painting is the most important of his group, for as much as this is certainly the representation of a leader: depicted in a red tunic and wearing an imposing golden helmet with side wings. Like the skald and the priest, he has a huge white beard, a symbol of wisdom and knowledge.

The romantic image of the Vikings is derived from the eighteenth century's growing interest in Icelandic sagas, along with the reinterpretation of an idealized past. Some of the earliest modern translations of medieval Nordic literature, such as *Heimskringla* (The circle of the World) in 1633 (in the Danish translation from Peder Claussøn Friis), still used the concept of Viking as a pirate and not as a substitute for Nordic. It was from the eighteenth century onwards that scholars recovered the term from medieval sources, in an attempt to create a more glorious past for their countries during the process of nationalization.⁴¹ The Icelandic sagas became the favorite sources for this association and as a direct effect of this, the word Viking was already mentioned in the *Oxford English Dictionary* of 1807. But it was through the Swedish literature of the early nineteenth century that the term Viking became a word used almost exclusively as a reference to the Scandinavian people in general, in an ethnic, adventurous and heroic sense.⁴²

In 1811 the Swedish magazine *Iduna* published the poem *Vikingen* (The Viking), by Erik Gustaf Geijer, the first artistic work conveying such romantic imagination on the subject of these adventurous Nordics. The central point of the poem is the freedom and glory achieved by marine adventure. Hence the

⁴¹ LANGER, Johnni. The origins of the imaginary Viking. *Viking Heritage*, n. 4, 2002, p. 7-9. Available at: <https://www.academia.edu/390901>. Accessed on: 19 May 2021; ROESDAHL, Else. Vikingerne i dansk kultur. *Fortid og Nutid*, n. 2, 1994, p. 158-172; WILSON, David (Ed.). *Vikinger og guder i europæisk kunst*. Aarhus: Moesgård Museum, 1997; ROESDAHL, Else. Vikingerne i dansk kultur. *Fortid og Nutid*, 2, 1994, p. 158-172; DJUPDRÆT, Martin Brandt. Vikingen får sin hjelm/Vikingen bliver til. In: *Vinkler på Vikintiden*. Copenhagen: Nationalmuseet & Skoletjenesten, 2013, p. 6-29.

⁴² HOFSTRA, Tette. Changing views on Vikings. *Tijdschrift voor Skandinavistiek*, v. 24, n. 2, 2003, p. 147-160; WAWN, Andrew. *The vikings and the victorians: Inventing the Old North in nineteenth century Britain*. London: D.S. Brewer, 2000; LÖNNROTH, Lars. The vikings in History and legend. In: SAWYER, Peter (Org.). *The Oxford illustrated history of the vikings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 225-249.

word Viking here becomes associated with an expedition warrior (*kämpe*) and as the sea king (*sjökonung*). Freedom, independence, and self-government in Geijer's work blended with the very idea of nation that Sweden had been building in the early nineteenth century. The poem was restricted to Swedish intellectual circles, although his ideas were popularized in the *Frithiofs saga* version of the Swedish teacher and bishop Esaias Tegnér, published in 1825 and which came to be translated into several languages.⁴³ This book would also be reprinted in Swedish several times: 1827, 1828, and 1831, all three of which were accompanied by illustrations. Tegnér's *Frithiofs saga* was translated into Danish by H. Foss in 1826.

Tegnér's saga gives an account of a love story between the hero, Frithiof, and his adopted sister, Ingeborg, whose passion is rejected by the brothers. Especially in an excerpt from this work - the *Vikingabalk* (The Viking Code) - nautical endeavors receive heroic valorization, being transformed into a series of norms whose central core is courage, masculinity and honor. Tegnér romanticized several passages of the *Eddas* and further radicalized the vision of an invincible hero who cannot be stopped by any obstacle or fear. In this sense, cowardice is seen as an element subject to death. However, unlike what is observed in Erik Geijer, the Viking of Tegnér is shaped by Christianity, that is, he is a "civilized" character, without rambunctious or predatory behavior.

From the 1830s on the term Viking became constant in numerous books, artistic works, seminars and letters, giving rise to a romantic fashion - the Norse were seen as the glorious ancestors or as the figure of the "other", revealing aspects of the notions of identity by part of the intellectuals and artists of the period. In particular, the detail that interests us the most at this moment is to analyze the three Viking warriors in Lund's painting, an anticipation of the immense popularity they would bring about through Wagner operas during the 1870s,⁴⁴ but which was already present in Lund's imagination.

The first warrior seen in the canvas *Nordisk offerscene* was influenced by an earlier painting of Lund (*Habors tilbagekomst fra slaget*, Harbor return from the battle, Akademiraadet, Figure 5), executed in 1813. It is a scene taken from Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* (Deeds of the Danes, in Peter Frederik Suhm's version)⁴⁵, depicting the narrative of Hargbard and Signy, demonstrating a fascination with the heroes of the sagas and with the medieval world, even though without the romantic reference of the Vikings as proposed by

⁴³ MJØBERG, op. cit., 1980, p. 207-238.

⁴⁴ In general, Scandinavian artists used very little the stereotype of the winged or side-horned helmet during the early nineteenth century. These became much more common in British, German, and American art after the 1870s. Roberta Frank, The Invention of the Viking Horned Helmet. In: DALLAPIAZZA, Michael (Ed.). **Scandinavian International and Medieval Studies in Memory of Gerd Wolfgang Weber**, 2000, p. 199-208; DJUPDRÆT, Martin Brandt. How the Viking got his helmet. In: **We call them Vikings**. Andersson, Gunnar (Ed.). Stockholm: Riksantikvarieämbetet Och Statens, 2016, p. 186-193.

⁴⁵ VEJLBY, op. cit., 2019, p. 45. For a critique of Lund's time on this painting, see: BRØNDSTED, P.O. Habors Tilbagekomst fra Slaget og hans Modtagelse. **Athene, et Maanedsskrift**, v. 2, Apr. 1814, p. 359-368.

the model of Esaias Tegnér: The character Habor is very similar to the heroes of classical mythology, whose shield with animal coat of arms is highlighted.

Already in an 1819 drawing [Figure 6], which was a study for the painting *Christendommens indførelse i Danmark* (Christianity's introduction in Denmark, Statens Museum for Kunst), we locate the origin for the second canvas warrior in *Nordisk offerscene*. In this image, Lund deals with missionary Ansgar's preaching in the Hedeby city in the ninth century⁴⁶, while a small group of six warriors stands on the sidelines of the crowd watching his preaching. Two of them carry wolfskins, but one of them carries a *carnyx*, a Celtic wind instrument (which were not used by the Norse, Figure 7). Some move their arms in a position of distrust, while the central leader demonstrates a thoughtful and bowed head, with one hand on his chin. This scene was influenced by classical sources, in which Celts and Germanics are merged with or taken as Scandinavians, but even so, the painter moves towards a medieval expression with reference to the Norse.

Notwithstanding, when Lund painted *Christendommens indførelse i Danmark*⁴⁷ (Christianity's introduction in Denmark, Christiansborg Slot, Figure 8) in 1827, he made several modifications. He eliminates the group of discontented warriors with the preacher, letting only three of them, among whom the leader carries his spear, portrayed in a thoughtful and suspicious position, but now, instead of a smooth helmet, he wears small side wings and a cloak. He contrasts with the anachronistic knight right in front of him, standing on the right side of the missionary Ansgar, while holding a sword, dressed in his full armor and with his hand on his waist [Figure 9]. This symbolizes the triumph of Christianity over paganism which was at that moment beginning to succumb. In this case, the leader represents the pagan figure⁴⁸, which then became the Viking image.⁴⁹

In turn, on the *Nordisk offerscene* canvas Lund adds a winged helmet to the Viking leader, denoting a leading or prestigious role that is confirmed by his huge white beard. His bright red garment was pictured to reinforce his importance on the canvas, something also added to the other prominent characters (the skald wears a green tunic; the priest wears an intense white garment; the *völva* was

⁴⁶ SCHULTE-WÜLWER, op. cit., 2019, p. 122.

⁴⁷ It is the only painting in the Christiansborg Palace collection that depicts a historic event and not just a religious practice. VEJLBY, Anna Schram, op. cit., 2019, p. 86. For a critique of Lund's time on this painting, see: HØYEN, N.L. *Christendommens Indførelse i Danmark* [1828]. In: USSING, J. L. (Ed.). *Niels Laurits Høyens Skrifter*, vol. 1. København: J. L. Ussing, 1871, p. 22-31.

⁴⁸ An important detail added (in relation to the study) is the inclusion of a dolmen on a hill, in the background, on the far right of the painting. The man behind the warrior with the winged helmet actually points towards the dolmen in the background while the man next to him points upwards. It should be noted that this relationship with the dolmen reinforces the pagan character of the group.

⁴⁹ During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, writers and artists portrayed Germanic chieftain Arminius with a winged helmet, although his men retained flat, undeveloped helmets in the same images. Examples are found in Daniel Casper von Lohenstein's novel *Großmüthiger Feldherr Arminius* (1689), illustrations by Crispin Pas the younger, Christoph Weigel's picture-album *Sculptura historicarum et temporum memoriatrix* (1699). FRANK, op. cit., 2000, p. 204-205. Another possible influence in Johan Ludvig Lund may have been the representation of Odin with winged helmet, as in Andreas Ludvig Koop's drawing *Vola der åbenbarer sig for Thor* (1822) or drawings of valkyries with wing helmets, made by his friend Hermann Ernest Freund (1822-1828).

Figure 5:
 Johan Ludvig Lund, **Habors tilbagekomst fra slaget, og hans Modtagelse ved Kong Sigars Hof** (Habor returns from the battle and has a reception at the King Cigar Court), 1813. Oil on canvas, 141 x 178 cm.
 ©Akademiraadet. Photo: Frida Gregersen.



Figure 6:
 Johan Ludvig Lund, **Ansgar prædikende** (Ansgar preaching), 1819. Drawing/pencil, 523 x 781 mm.
 © Statens Museum for Kunst (KKSgb13640).



Figure 7:
Johan Ludvig Lund, **Ansgar prædikende** (Ansgar preaching, detail of the figure 6).



Figure 8:
Johan Ludvig Lund, **Christendommens indførelse i Danmark** (Christianity's introduction in Denmark), 1827. Oil on canvas, 370 x 570 cm. © Christiansborg Slot. Photo: Ole Haupt.



Figure 9:
Johan Ludvig Lund, **Christendommens indførelse i Danmark** (Christianity's introduction in Denmark, detail of the figure 8).

characters (the skald wears a green tunic; the priest wears an intense white garment; the *völva* was depicted wearing a sky-blue one). We can clearly point out the influence of the Nazarene movement on the painter - the colors are not thought of in terms of light and materiality coming from nature or even from human society in natural terms. They are designed to highlight the moral and abstract meaning the author wishes to convey: these are precisely the main religious elements of his interpretation of Old Norse society.

The last significant elements in Lund's painting are the representations of a woman and a child in the background of the group, just behind the priest [Figure 4]. Unlike most people, she is not looking at the statue of Thor but remains with her face turned to the Viking leader. It bears a diadem with intertwined spirals, another Bronze Age pattern mistakenly related to the Viking Age. While this woman has a much more decorative figure in relation to the ensemble, the child, standing behind and leaning on a man's lap, is much more significant. It refers to the idea of innocence and, at the same time, the hope of a new future, supported by the Christianization that is coming in the future. This theme in which the child holds a special place in the scenery was extremely common in nineteenth century Scandinavian drawings and paintings on Christianization.

Conclusion: *Nordisk offerscene* and the national context

The nineteenth century was a period of intense changes, where nationalism occupied an important space as an ideological and social framework. The visual arts played a great role in the construction of national identities and themes, essential for countries that sought self-assertion, delimitation of borders and identities within a world that was increasingly globalized. In this context, several artistic works related to the Norse appeared, which visually "invented" the Vikings, within what Eric Hobsbawm has proposed as a set of practices of symbolic nature, inculcating values and behavior and implying an artificial relationship with the historical past.⁵⁰ Real historical continuity was thus replaced by a series of images or stereotypes that were inspired by the myths, legends or individual fantasies of the artists. Icelandic sagas and Nordic Mythology contributed to arouse in Europeans, in general, an interest in the ancient history and archaeology of each country. The Vikings were a reflection of this historic time, providing a benchmark of a magnificent past to countries that have undergone humiliation, were oppressed or needed to create a sense of patriotic pride.

And within this context, the *Nordisk offerscene* painting was part of a major art project in the history of religion in Denmark, in which Christianity was the central theme: the first production in the collection

⁵⁰ HOBBSAWM, Eric. Introduction. **The invention of tradition**. Ed. Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 1-14.

of the Christiansborg Palace was the only one whose size was 570 cm [Figure 8]. In this project, paganism is represented as anticipating Christianity. Whether in a simple and bucolic way in prehistory [Figure 3] or already containing the superior form of priesthood and ritual [Figure 1], the history of Denmark has moved towards its true national religion, established in the pagan period [Figure 9]. Visual art confirms the Christian nationalist yearnings of the period: "The form of representation cannot be divorced from its purpose and the requirements of the society in which the given visual language gains currency."⁵¹

In this way, the painter brought together the three phases of religious history of Denmark (paganism, Catholicism and Lutheranism) in a single timeline, displaying Christianity as being "rooted in the past, celebrated in the present and providing hope for triumph and success in the future."⁵² The *Nordisk offerscene* painting and religious collection of Christiansborg Palace contains a clear ideology of destiny. Its messianic fervor and cultural-religious agenda would inevitably come to create the future for the Danish nation.

And *Nordisk offerscene* painting was also the last breath of a romantic view of the history of Denmark in which Old Norse religion mingled with the megalithic landscape, merging the Celts with the Norse and considerably influenced by the "spirit of ancient times" of the poets Oehlenschläger and Grundtvig. This archaeological conception would be objectively undone four years later with the publication of *Ledetraad til Nordisk Oldkyndighed* (Guideline to Scandinavian Antiquity), by Christian Jürgensen Thomsen. At the same time, however, this painting inaugurates another *schemata*, one that would be bound to success among artists until the twentieth century: the romantic vision of the Vikings. Various elements of Lund's canvas would come to be perpetuated in later works.

Lund's work is currently being reevaluated. Compared to the impact of C.W. Eckersberg, it is much smaller, both in terms of the number of works in the collections of Danish museums and in repercussions. Lund's paintings were not seen by subsequent generations as realistic and his continental influences are now seen with less prejudice.⁵³ *Nordisk offerscene* painting, in this sense, manifests both influences from the Nordic theme of older artists, and nationalist ideals from sponsoring the work. There are many aspects of Danish art in the nineteenth century that still need to be studied, including Lund's work, especially the link between representations of Norse mythology and Old Norse religion with pan-Scandinavian themes, material culture, patriotic ideologies and religious nationalism, landscape, boundary and space politics, among others. We believe that Johan Ludvig Lund can be a starting point for these discussions, while hoping the present paper can also restore his historical value as an artist.

⁵¹ GOMBRICH, op. cit, 2000, p. 87.

⁵² BACKHOYSE, Stephen. *Kierkegaard's Critique of Christian Nationalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 4.

⁵³ VEJLBY, op. cit., 2019, p. 97-99.



Figure 10:
The Nordisk offerscene painting in the State Council Room, Christiansborg Slot. Photo: Stig Nørhald.



Figure 11:
 MALLET, Paul Henry. **Edda, ou Monumens de la mythologie celtique et de la poésie des anciens peuples du Nord.** Copenhagen: Claude Philibert, 1756, p. 1.

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