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CONSTRUCTIVE FORGETTING AND RECONCILIATORY MEMORY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY HISTORICAL FICTION

A comparative perspective on Scandinavianism,
pan-Germanism and Greater Netherlandism

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Research on Scandinavianism has shown that the making of a pan-Scandinavian identity relied greatly on the cultivation of a shared past in scholarship, education, literature, the fine arts and public proclamation.¹ Norse Antiquity and the Viking Age provided myths of common origins and historicised egalitarian values, while more problematic memories of inter-Scandinavian warfare in the late Middle Ages and Early Modernity were creatively reimagined to fit the unifying ideals of the present. Only in times of political crisis did negative images of the Scandinavian neighbours reappear in cultural productions, such as in the backlash of 1864 or in the years leading up to the dissolution of the Swedish-Norwegian union. However, such heat-of-the-moment antagonisms did little to upset the general trend towards reconciliatory remembrance within Scandinavian culture. This defusing, as I have proposed to call it, of potentially divisive memories is one of the ways in which Scandinavianism, understood as the cultivation of a Scandinavian identity, reconfigured the nation-building processes in its constitutive parts: national-historical memories were shaped and reshaped with at least one eye on the Scandinavian context.

This chapter examines whether these conclusions drawn from the Scandinavian case are applicable to two other pan-national movements as well. The two pan-movements in question are pan-Germanism and Greater Netherlandism, which were both, to varying degrees of intensity, intertwined with the pan-Scandinavian project. Despite these obvious and important overlaps – on which I will elaborate further down – their selection for analysis is primarily based on the language skills of the author and does not wish to disregard the importance of other pan-movements for Scandinavianism.² The main question is thus not whether there was any cultural transfer between the three selected movements

with respect to their respective memory cultures, but whether each of these pan-movements “ticks” in the same way: is the defusing of unwanted memories a core characteristic of pan-nationalism *tout court* or is it to some degree particular to Scandinavianism? And in how far can the application of reconciliatory memory be considered indicative for the success of a pan-national vision in creating cross-border cohesion? These questions will be addressed by, first, elaborating on the intricacies of reconciliatory memory in nineteenth-century Scandinavian literature and, second, by analysing how these insights apply to the pan-Germanic and Netherlandic cases. The literary evocation of the Austrian-Prussian War of 1866 and the Belgian Revolution of 1830 will serve as the most important case studies.

Scandinavianism: Reconciliatory memory and strategies for defusion

The three centuries after the fall of the Kalmar Union in 1523 were marked by repeated military conflict between Sweden and Denmark-Norway. The Swedish poet and bishop Esaias Tegnér (1782–1846) retrospectively designated this historical era the “Age of Severance” (*söndringens tid*). He used this phrase while symbolically crowning the Danish poet Adam Oehlenschläger (1779–1850) “King of Nordic Poets” during a graduation ceremony in Lund Cathedral in 1829, an act that to his mind for ever closed the lid on the era of inter-Scandinavian discord. Indeed, the next two decades saw the emergence of Scandinavianism as both an influential cultural movement (which, it has to be noted, built on pan-Scandinavian traditions running back to the late eighteenth century) and a political ideal that in its most ambitious formulation sought to establish a Scandinavian federation or constitutional monarchy.³ Next to realpolitikal considerations that saw a united Scandinavia as an indispensable bulwark against potential German and/or Russian aggression, the ideological foundations of Scandinavianism were provided by a Romantic historicism that exalted the shared linguistic, cultural and historical roots of the Danes, Swedes and Norwegians.

Whereas the political ideology went into decline after the Second Schleswig War (1864) – following Norwegian-Swedish non-interference in the matter – as a cultural affect Scandinavianism continued to inspire literary and artistic practices throughout the remainder of the century and after.⁴ This not only included the continuation of inter-Scandinavian cooperation and cultural exchange but also a persistent willingness to cultivate a shared Scandinavian identity through works of art and literature. Inspiration for this was not exclusively found in Norse mythology and Viking culture, which were seen as representing Scandinavia’s common origins and heritage, but also, notably – and perhaps paradoxically – in subjects from Tegnér’s Age of Severance, such as the siege and storming of Copenhagen (1659) or the Great Northern War (1700–21).

On a first look, such memories of war might be seen as offering fuel for stories of national self-aggrandisement at the expense of the Scandinavian

neighbour, but on closer inspection it becomes apparent that memories of inter-Scandinavian conflict are in fact predominantly used to convey a message of reconciliation and togetherness. Ever since the start of the century, writers of historical fiction creatively reframed potentially divisive memories in such a way that the sting could be taken out, so as not to upset the harmonious relations in the present. The work of Walter Scott (1771–1832) offered a “model of remembrance” that was keenly followed by Scandinavian authors.⁵ This model centres around a conflict between two different ethnic groups – such as the Normans and Saxons in *Ivanhoe* (1819) – who ultimately decide to lay their differences aside, recognising that each of them has to give up part of their identity in order to make a unified future possible.⁶ Scott’s model can as such be perceived as a form of reconciliatory memory that is not simply aimed at forgetting unwanted episodes from the past, but that instead acknowledged the trauma experienced, and the wrongdoings committed by all sides in the conflict, leading to the realisation that such discord should never reoccur in the future.⁷ Indeed, recalling inconvenient memories in this manner, and burying the symbolic hatchet in the process, was a necessary precondition for reconciliation and the imagination of a multinational identity in the present. Concurrently, favouring remembering over forgetting made it possible to still celebrate national heroes and achievements related to such conflict-ridden memories, without vilifying the Scandinavian neighbours.

This Scott-inspired conflict-reconciliation narrative was dominant in portraying troublesome memories from the shared Scandinavian past throughout the nineteenth century. We find it in both popular light reading, such as in the works of highly popular and well-read authors like Carit Etlar (1816–1900), Carl Georg Starbäck (1828–85) and Rudolf Muus (1862–1935), and the historical fiction of canonical names like August Strindberg (1849–1912) and Johannes V. Jensen (1873–1950). These and many other authors employed one or more of three narrative ploys that helped *defuse* the potential divisive impact of problematic memories.⁸

The first is the representation of war as an aberration from the natural state of harmony and brotherhood between the Scandinavian peoples. This is closely connected to the idea of common roots. In ancient times, the Scandinavians had been a single people, so it was believed, and this common mainspring was seen as legitimation for continued harmonious relations even after this *Ur-Volk* had developed into the three modern nations. This idea was most commonly expressed through family metaphors: the Scandinavians are portrayed as brothers or siblings, whose historic quarrels thus offered the “reassurance of fratricide”: the wars could be presented as conflicts within the family, which made it impossible to clearly distinguish between victims and perpetrators.⁹ In fact, the rediscovery of family-bonds, or the regained knowledge of common roots, towards the end of the plot often exposes the war situation as an anomaly. All this is most neatly encapsulated by one of the characters from Rolf Olsen’s (1818–64) Norwegian national-history play *Anna Kolbjørnsdatter* (1852), who, after a

battle between Swedish and Norwegian forces during the Great Northern War, exclaims: “O, why can’t we all be friends? Norwegian, Swedish or Danish, aren’t we all children of the same mother, sons of the noble Nordic tribe?”¹⁰

A second strategy concerns the introduction of an alternative enemy. In Swedish literature this was often the Russians; in Denmark, the Germans regularly featured as the bad guys – and unsurprisingly so given the strained situation in Schleswig and Holstein, meaning that historical accuracy was often sacrificed in order to reflect political antagonisms in the present. Usually, these non-Scandinavian foes are presented as the evil masterminds behind inter-Scandinavian discord. For instance, in their respective works on the medieval knight Engelbrekt Engelbrektsson, both Starbäck and Strindberg ascribed the failure of the Kalmar Union to German intermingling. The most extreme example hails from Denmark and concerns the play *Gøngehøvdingen* (1865), which, although set during the almost complete occupation of Denmark by Swedish forces in 1658–60, does not feature a single Swedish character; their place has instead been taken by scheming German mercenaries.

Finally, many authors introduced a social opposition between the righteous common people and the abusive aristocracy that took precedence over the historic military conflict between Scandinavian nations. Aristocrats represent an internal alternative enemy of sorts, as they behave contrary to the national interest and thwart the egalitarianism deemed indigenous to the Scandinavian countries (also this idea is traced back to Norse Antiquity and the Viking Age), a general plotline that is congruent with the dominant master narrative in all three national historiographies in the nineteenth century.¹¹ The aristocracy is in that sense “foreign” to Scandinavia in terms of its cultural and political identity. Several authors thus use their historical fiction as a vehicle for their social criticism, usually pushing an agenda for greater popular representation. Such is for instance the case in the aforementioned works by Starbäck and Strindberg, who both saw power abuse by the nobility as an equally decisive cause for the collapse of the Kalmar Union as the German interference, while Carit Etlar’s novel *Gøngehøvdingen* (1853) can be read as a critique of the gross inequality experienced in contemporary Danish society. As is the case with the “alternative enemy” trope, the realisation that the aristocracy represents the “real” enemy is cause for characters from diverse Scandinavian backgrounds to team up and face the new challenge together.

The question now is whether – and if so, to which level of intensity – these three tropes of reconciliation and defusion appear in historical fiction in other pan-national contexts, such as in the present chapter, pan-Germanism and Greater Netherlandism. Concerning the Netherlandic case, the Belgian Revolution of 1830 has been selected as a case study; for pan-Germanism, the choice fell on the Austro-German War of 1866, which pitted Prussia against Austria in their claims for hegemony in the German-speaking world. To be sure, both these historic events concern instances of living memory – with the authors often being personally involved and pursuing a particular political

agenda – which marks a significant difference with the Scandinavian sites of memory discussed above, which are of a considerably older date. More recent memories of Scandinavian conflict, however, only played a minor role in the common imagination – the short Swedish–Norwegian war of 1814, for instance, created two wholly different commemoration traditions on either side of the border¹² – whereas the cultivation of older memories formed part and parcel of the Scandinavianist project and could potentially still be contentious (as can be exemplified by the Danish–Swedish skirmishes over the interpretation of the Stockholm Bloodbath of 1520), as contentious at times as the memorialisation of the Belgian Revolution and the Austro–Prussian War. Both revolution and war, moreover, represent the only straightforward instances of internal discord within the “pan–nation” in the Netherlandic and pan–German cases – and their cultivation in fiction, as we shall see, had much in common with the strategies found in Scandinavian literature.

Greater Netherlandism: From Dutch retaliation to constructive forgetting

In 1815, the Netherlands and Belgium were united in the United Kingdom of the Netherlands (*Het Verenigd Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*). This political union was however short-lived and came to an end with the Belgian Revolution of 1830 (although the Belgian secession was ratified only in 1839). The causes for the Revolution are manifold and complex, but resistance of the French-speaking south against the rigid language policies of King Willem I, who wanted to enforce Dutch as the official language throughout the realm, features prominently among them. Deep-rooted linguistic as well as religious differences thus proved detrimental for the sustainability of the political union. Nevertheless, the Flemish-speaking north of Belgium – save for a particularistic faction in Catholic West-Flanders – continued to aspire close ties with the Netherlands, not in the least to ward off French influences.¹³

However, this Dutch–Flemish solidarity had to go through a notable slump in the 1830s. On the one hand, this owed to the collapse of Flemish literary and linguistic infrastructure – Dutch faculties were closed, literary societies and publishing houses were forced to dissolve – and the return of “Northerners” to their home country. On the other hand, many in the Netherlands were greatly dissatisfied because of the events of 1830. The first years after the Revolution saw the rise of a new popular genre, “Citadel Poetry,” so called to honour the “last stand” of Dutch garrisons in citadel cities like Antwerp, Namur and Liège. These poems indeed served to glorify Dutch heroism during the Revolution. An especially popular subject was naval lieutenant Jan van Speijk (1802–31), who had preferred blowing himself and his gunboat up in the sky rather than surrendering to the Belgian army. The Belgians, by contrast, were depicted as dumb-witted, immoral, unhinged and, first and foremost, unthankful towards their “good father” King Willem I.¹⁴ Main objective of this form of poetry was to seek

recompense for the wronged Dutch nation and their monarch. In all this, there seems to be no mourning for the loss of the south, as the Belgians are considered to have proven to be unworthy of Dutch solidarity.

Dutch historical novels that deal with the Belgian Revolution follow the recipe provided by Citadel Poetry to a tee. Between 1831 and 1841 five of these novels were published, in addition to two originally German novels that, unsurprisingly, corroborated the Dutch version of events (Table 11.1). Furthermore, A.R. Sloos (1805–69) wrote his *Dutchman and Belgian* already in 1838, but this novel was for unknown reasons not published before 1860.¹⁵ In all these novels, Dutch heroes like Van Speijk are celebrated for their cunning patriotism, even if the plotline must make a sharp detour to include them in the story (in Cramer's *The Sutler of the Dutch Army*, for instance, the titular heroine somewhat forcedly winds up in Antwerp, just in time to witness the gunboat exploding). The Belgian "rebels" are almost without exception portrayed as amoral crooks who do not act out of sincere national feeling, but out of an impudent lust to plunder, steal, rape, vandalise and murder. Their ungratefulness towards Willem's benevolent rule is likewise repeatedly underlined. Despite this obvious national bias, all authors purported in a preface that theirs was "a truthful and objective account of the events." Such remarks might not surprise us, as Toos Streng observes, given that the historical novel at this time also fulfilled the journalistic purpose of informing the public of relatively recent events, in that way supplementing newspaper reports that were generally short and wanting in detail.¹⁶

C.H. Clemens' (1808–41) *Lambert Broussard* from 1833 can serve as a representative example of the general themes and tropes applied in these novels on the Revolution.¹⁷ Clemens is also the one author who most empathically applied a family motif in his novel. The Belgians are here once more portrayed as unthankful children who show nothing but disrespect to their good father, Willem I. But Clemens also draws a sharp distinction between Wallonia and Flanders, a nomenclature that would otherwise only become widely used in the

TABLE 11.1 The Belgian Revolution in Dutch novels, 1831–1899.

Year	Author	Title
1831	Johannes Immerzeel Jr	<i>Hollands Leeuw Ontwaakt</i>
1831	Anonymous	<i>Oordeel niet voor het tijd is; dus weet of wacht</i>
1831	Anton Cramer	<i>De Marketenster van het Hollandse Leger</i>
1833	C.H. Clemens	<i>Lambert Broussard</i>
1834	Friedrich Bartels	<i>De Luikenaar*</i>
1841	K.L. Hencke	<i>De Citadel van Antwerpen*</i>
1841	G.L.H. Mispelblom van de Schelde	<i>Luik in 1830</i>
1860	A.R. Sloos	<i>Hollander en Belg</i>
1897	L. Zegers Veeckens Hzn.	<i>Het oproer ontweken</i>
1899	R. Boon	<i>De Citadel van Antwerpen</i>

* Originally published in German.

1840s,¹⁸ and he ascribes the wrongdoings first and foremost to the Francophone Walloons (one of the riot leaders is even called “François Le Franc!”), who are depicted as immoral plebeian murderers and rapists, who, moreover, always have a bottle of wine close at hand. In this way, the Walloons might be perceived as an alternative enemy, who drive a wedge between the “stepbrothers” Holland and Flanders. Clemens worked this family metaphor tightly into his plot. The eponymous hero – a Walloon revolutionary – accidentally kills his Flemish father-in-law (a double agent working for the Dutch), which leads to the death of both his fiancée and his mother-in-law, and, in the longer run, his own death as well. This might be interpreted as to mean that a marriage between Flemish and Walloon will bring nothing but trouble. Similarly, the use of the term “stepbrothers” – applied by several of the authors in question – might suggest that the relation between the Netherlands and Flanders should be understood as historical rather than biological; a relation, in other words, that might not require nation-building, let alone state formation.

In its use of the alternative enemy trope, *Lambert Broussard* thus resembles Scandinavian historical fiction. The application of the family metaphor is more ambiguous; on the one hand, it indicates that the cultural and linguistic ties are indeed acknowledged, but the use of the term stepbrothers betrays less commitment to the pan-national ideas than in the Scandinavian case; it is also telling that there never is any reconciliation between Dutch and Flemish in this corpus. However, the greatest deviation from Scandinavian literary practice – in Clemens’ work as well as in that of others – concerns the depiction of social relations. The Revolution is presented as emanating from the “rabble” (*het grauw*) – captained by a small group of ill-minded nobles and bourgeois agitators – who are made into caricatures of poverty, immorality and drunkenness. In this respect the novels even seem to support a strict preservation of class divisions. This stands in sharp contrast to the social criticism expressed by among others Etlar, Strindberg and Starbäck.

By 1840, Dutch irritation over the events of 1830 had waned and both Citadel Poetry and its prose equivalent went out of fashion. When Sloos’ novel was finally marketed in 1860, the author did not refrain from remarking in the media that “about much of what I deemed to be good and true back then, I would have judged differently now.”¹⁹ The Belgian Revolution only reappeared in two literary memoirs of veterans in the closing years of the century, which according to the newspapers were of such poor quality that one could wonder why they had been published in the first place.²⁰

Remarkable is the relative neglect of the Belgian Revolution in Flemish literature. The only relevant novel that I could find is *The Revolution of 1830* (1858) by Hendrik Conscience (1812–83), Belgium’s foremost historical novelist and Scott acolyte. The novel recounts the author’s first years in the newly established Belgian army, which he joined in the immediate aftermath of the Belgian Revolution. Only 17 years of age at the time, it becomes clear that Conscience’s primary motivation for joining the army was not so much the fight

for the freedom of the fatherland – he acknowledges to have been unaware of the causes of the Revolution – but rather the realisation of his own personal freedom, and the wish to overcome his perceived childishness and femininity (of which he is repeatedly accused throughout the book) and mature into manhood. The novel accordingly ends when his hard-liner superior acknowledges Conscience's value as a soldier. In this personal memoir, the Dutch "enemy" is described in neutral, and sometimes even positive terms, most notably when the ill protagonist is given care and lodgings by a poor Dutch family, who show nothing but affection for "our Belgian."²¹ Besides this intimate scene, however, there is no further reflection on the relation between Dutch and Flemish, and the realisation of Belgian independence is defined as just and desirable.

By the time of the publication of Conscience's book, the political relations between Belgium and the Netherlands had significantly improved. The 1840s had witnessed the recovery of linguistic and cultural cooperation between Flanders and the Netherlands, helped by a renewed orientation within the Flemish Movement on the North, following its dissatisfaction with French hegemony in the Belgian state, and a reaction against pan-Germanism, which after the Germanist Congress of 1846 with all its anti-Danish rhetoric was increasingly seen as a threat.²² According to Leerssen, the "starting shot" for Greater Netherlandism was given with the first joint congress of Dutch and Flemish philologists and medievalists, organised in 1849.²³ The congresses had as its objective "the preservation of the Netherlandic tribe [...] the promotion of unity between North and South [...] and the reinforcement of the common *Volksgeist*."²⁴ These events were organised on a regular basis, alternately north and south of the shared border, and inspired the joint standardisation of orthographies and a project for a comprehensive Dictionary of the Netherlandic Language.²⁵ In this context of mutual rapprochement, the disappearance of the Revolution from the literary imagination might signal a commitment to a form of "forgetting that is constitutive in the formation of a new identity,"²⁶ which thus stands in contrast to the reconciliatory remembrance characteristic of Scandinavianism.

The fact of the matter is that Belgium and the Netherlands would develop divergent memory canons after the break-up of 1830.²⁷ In the Netherlands, the corpus skewed towards the Middle Ages, the Reformation and the Eighty Years War.²⁸ In comparison, historical fiction in Flanders mainly served to convey that nation's continuous struggle for freedom against foreign oppression, a centuries-long battle that only recently had been put to an end.²⁹ The Northern Dutch had only been the last in a long list of oppressors after the Romans, the French, the Spanish, the Austrians and, again, the French. Indeed, vilification of the French is a characteristic and oft-returning theme, feeding into a clear predilection for medieval topics, such as in Conscience's highly influential *The Lion of Flanders* (1838), and a tendency to reflect on the contemporary tensions between Flemish and Walloon in Belgian society.³⁰ Thus, one might say that, when taking a bird's-eye view of the entire corpus, there is an "alternative" enemy – the French – but this enemy never shows in narratives of Dutch-Flemish conflict and

reconciliation, as these do not exist, not in Flemish literature, nor in the Dutch, where religious discord and internal discord – as during the late-medieval Hook and Cod Wars – were prevalent themes.

Dutch and Flemish literature thus formed “closed circuits” that from the pre-determined national framework reinforced its national profile by retroactively selecting subjects from the national past that appealed first and foremost to a national audience and that worked into the articulation of a national identity that left little room for reconnection across the border.³¹ To be sure, similar observations can be made for Danish, Norwegian and Swedish literature;³² yet, here memories of mutual conflict – and the reconciliatory way in dealing with them – provided notable overlap between the respective national literatures. According to Lode Wils this lack of a truly shared history between Flanders and the Netherlands forestalled the emergence of a cross-border national consciousness; linguistic unity alone proved not to be enough for pan-Netherlandism to gain wide popular appeal or a cultural *éclat* comparable to the Scandinavian case.³³ The ideal of the political unification of Holland and Flanders would only gain a relatively small following in the circles of radical Flemish activists, and in the Netherlands among members of the *Algemeen Nederlands Verbond* (ANV, “Pan-Netherlandic Union,” founded in 1895).

Pan-Germanism: War between brothers

Pan-Germanism was considerably vaguer in its geographical formulation than the other two macronationalisms under discussion.³⁴ Grosso modo a distinction can be made between a pan-national ambition to unify the German-speaking world into a single nation state, a project that was thus largely congruent with the push for the unification of Germany, and a more ambitious vision to politically unite all Germanic-speaking peoples, which was rooted in the comparative philology of Jacob Grimm (1785–1863) and Ernst Moritz Arndt (1769–1860), and which envisioned a German-led superstate that included Flanders, the Netherlands, Alsace-Lorraine, Luxemburg, Scandinavia (or at the very least Jutland), parts of Poland and the Baltic region, as well as the German-speaking parts of Switzerland and Austria, including Süd-Tyrol.³⁵ Although this Germanic vision was only put on the political agenda by the Nazis and never truly formed part of the unification effort in the nineteenth century, pan-Germanism was nevertheless often seen as a threat from the Netherlandic and Scandinavian perspective.³⁶ German aggression directed towards Denmark, in word and deed, not only harnessed Scandinavianist sentiments in Danish nationalism as well as, albeit to a lesser degree, in the other Scandinavian countries, but it also inspired renewed Dutch-Flemish solidarity as a bulwark against possible future German expansionism.³⁷ The reactions to pan-Germanism were however not one-sidedly antithetical. There were those in Scandinavia that saw Scandinavian unification as a first step towards integration in a larger pan-Germanic constellation, while others preferred pan-Germanism over pan-Scandinavianism as a more powerful

alliance against the “real” Slavic threat.³⁸ Pan-Netherlandism would from the 1930s lean increasingly towards National Socialism; the fact that many of its most fervent supporters collaborated with the Nazis during the war would lead to the movement’s marginalisation after 1945.³⁹

When restricting pan-Germanism to the German language and the unification process (which comes with the important sidenote that the Germany that became a nation state in 1871 counted significant numbers of non-German speakers within its borders), it quickly becomes clear that the position of Austria is a problematic one. The convincing Prussian victory in the war of 1866 secured the exclusion of Austria from the future united Germany; a Greater Germany solution (*Großdeutschland*) was thus abandoned in favour of a Lesser Germany (*Kleindeutschland*). Although Prussian-Austrian relations logically soured for some years – the defeat was mourned in Austria especially because it was framed as a victory of the Protestant North over the Catholic South – a strong sense of cultural and ethnolinguistic communality persisted and was even actively promoted by Austrian literati.⁴⁰ The fact that, in Prussia, the war had been termed the Brothers War (*Bruderkrieg*) from the outset exposes the tension that was felt between culture and politics at the time, as the war was by many perceived as a civil war of sorts. Indeed, as Tobias Hirschmüller has pointed out, the term *Brüder* was explicitly used to exclude the non-German-speaking peoples of the Austrian Empire from the narrative and to envision continuing pan-German solidarity even after this military bump in the road.⁴¹

The family motif already apparent in the very name *Bruderkrieg* itself is also generally interwoven in the modest wave of historical novels thematising the war in the immediate post-war years (see Table 11.2).⁴² These first works were

TABLE 11.2 The Austro-Prussian War in German and Austrian novels, 1867–1918.

Year	Author	Title
1867	Stanislaus Graf Grabowski	<i>Unter Preußens Fahnen</i>
1867	Julie Burow	<i>Die Preußen in Prag</i>
1867	Julius Conrad	<i>Der siebentägige Krieg oder: Die Todsünden des Feindes</i>
1867	H. Liebach	<i>Der Spion im preussischen Hauptquartier, oder die Rache der Wienerin</i>
1867	J. Retcliffe	<i>Von Berlin nach Königgrätz</i>
1869	Edmund Hahn	<i>Hohenzollern und Welfen</i>
1874	Gregor Samarow	<i>Der Todesgruß der Legionen</i>
1898	Moritz von Berg-Nesselröden	<i>Graf Hasso Felsberg. Ein Leutnant von der Garde du Corps</i>
1900	A. Meymund	<i>Vergangene Tage</i>
1905	Karl Crome-Schwiening	<i>Unter dem springenden Pferd</i>
1906	Edith Gräfin von Salburg	<i>Königsglaube</i>
1914	Robert Hohlbäum	<i>Österreicher</i>
1914	Karl Christian Rückert	<i>Der tote Preuße</i>
1918	Robert Hohlbäum	<i>Das Vorspiel</i>

without exception written from the Prussian perspective and consequently brim with triumphalism over Prussia's overwhelming success. However, they in general strike a reconciliatory tone when describing the Austrian opponent. The paradox ingrained in the word Brothers War is solved by highlighting that such a war may indeed be unnatural, but it is nonetheless a necessary evil on the road to the unification of Germany. This united Germany, it is made clear, should be made in the image of Prussia, which naturally should take the lead in shaping Germany's future.

This emphasis on Prussia as the single viable model for a united Germany in itself harbours the evocation of an alternative enemy as well as, in a more subtle way, the incorporation of a social critique. These tropes are most comprehensively employed in the 1867 novel *The Prussians in Prague* by Julie Burow (pseudonym of Julie Pfannenschmidt, 1806–68). In her book, Prussia is represented as an ideal state of meritocratic cultivation and religious tolerance, which is set in contrast to the Catholic orthodoxy that would take over were Austria to become the leading power. It is in other words not so much Catholicism *per se* that is targeted, but specifically an intolerant and aggressive Catholicism that is not in the first place represented by Austria, but by ultramontanism and the Papacy in Rome, which aspired to exert political power beyond the walls of the Vatican, and that as such formed a common enemy for the open-minded and freedom-loving Germans. Prussia, to the contrary, is portrayed by Burow as a haven of religious freedom, where religion is a matter of personal choice instead of dogma, and that offers a good home not only for Christians of different confessions but also for Jews. All this is captured in the main plotline, which centres on a tug of war over the custody of the toddler Polly, who is the son of an impoverished Catholic Austrian nobleman and a half-Jewish, half-Protestant Prussian actress, but who is at first snatched from his grandmaternal care by a particularly dogmatic monk. In addition to this, Burow repeatedly stresses the high level of education, or *Bildung*, in Prussia, where even the common soldier can engage into meaningful intellectual discussions with his superiors and can rapidly climb the ranks based on both his military and his intellectual capabilities. This focus on meritocracy, in Burow's account, offers further support for Prussia's claim to hegemony in the unification process.

In most of the other novels, the North/South divide between Protestantism and Catholicism, as well as the emphasis on meritocracy, is less well-developed than in Pfannenschmidt's story, where it is a major point of discussion between the various characters. Instead, the most common way to strike a reconciliatory tone is through praising the valour and courage in battle of both sides, while death is often literally portrayed as the great equaliser: Prussians and Austrians brotherly lie side by side on the battlefield and in the field hospitals, where the fallen and wounded, be they friend or foe, are treated with equal respect.

Reconciliatory memory of this kind, it must be stressed, was employed to not only mend the divisions between Prussia and Austria but also those between Prussia and Hanover, Austria's most powerful ally in the north during the war. Such is for instance the case in novels by A. Maymund (years unknown) and Karl

Crome-Schwiening (1858–1906). Edmund Hahn's (years unknown) *Hohenzollern and Guelfs* (3 vols., 1867–69) sheds light on the events from the perspective of Hanover's royal family, whose familial ties connect them to the royal houses across the continent, including that of Prussia. The application of Scott's model of remembrance is made very explicit, when Scott himself makes a brief appearance in the second volume; the queen of Hanover praises his work, assuring her son, Crown Prince Georg, that "never has a troubled mind read a book by Walter Scott without being soothed by it."⁴³ The road to reconciliation being presented here is for King Georg V – who went into exile in Vienna after his defeat against Prussia – to relinquish his claims to the throne in order to make a united Germany possible, something which he in the end does not do, neither in the novel nor in real life. Despite that reconciliation does not truly come in his novel, Hahn makes it clear that this would have been the right way for the king to have acted. Interestingly, the example to follow introduced in the story is the Swedish Prince of Vasa, who tells the king that he does not wish to reclaim his father's throne – which had been lost after the coup of 1809 – as that would not be in the interest of his people; it would only cause harm. By his example, he encourages Georg to likewise put the common good above his personal interests – the king, however, laughs at the possibility and brushes the suggestion aside.

The reconciliatory frame might have been dominant in dealing with the Austro-Prussian War, but it had no monopoly. This is most apparent in the 4-volume *The Spy in the Prussian Headquarters, or the Revenge of the Viennese Girl* by H. Liebach (pen name of Hermann Baeblich, 1832–unknown). Although the story has its "good" Austrians that engage in friendly relations with the Prussians, and Liebach does not fail to express the customary praise for the valour of the Austrian troops, he also explicitly takes a stance in a controversy that divided Austrian and Prussian public opinion in the months immediately after the war. This controversy centred on Hieronymus Roth (1826–97), mayor of Trautenau (Trutnov), Bohemia, site of the only Austrian victory in the war. Roth had published a pamphlet after the war in which he complained about the "inhumane treatment" he and his fellow inmates had received during their 80-day imprisonment in a Prussian cell. This elicited a counter-pamphlet from the Prussian side, which accused him of all sorts of crime and wished for his execution. From his novel it becomes clear that Liebach sided with the anonymous author of the latter pamphlet. In his rendition of the events, Roth is the leader of a band of outlaws who, with the approval of Austrian high command, employ cowardly guerrilla tactics against the Prussian forces, while engaging in the robbing of corpses – be they Prussian or Austrian – and the harassment of the local populace.

Through taking a firm stance in this controversy, Liebach forecloses a simple reconciliatory reading of his text. At the same time, however, he leaves the imagination of a pan-German continuum intact, as he lets his characters realise that most men in Roth's company are Czechs or Hungarians "whose speech, demeanour, and, above all, whose rapacious deeds stand in sharp contrast to their uniform."⁴⁴ This points at another common trope in this corpus: the

exclusion of the Hungarians, Slavs and Italians from the grand narrative of the *Bruderkrieg*, which is to remain an exclusively German-speaking affair: the other ethnic groups might pose as Austrians, they will never be able to mask their true identity – that is the point Liebach wants to make. In his novel, the Czechs and Hungarians might be perceived as alternative enemies, but in most of the other novels in Table 11.2 exclusion is not achieved through the vilification of minority groups, but rather through silence: these citizens of the Empire feature solely as the nameless extras filling up the ranks of the Austrian army or populating the areas surrounding the main sites of war; they have no agency in the plot. Here, Julie Burow – who herself was born in present-day Lithuania – represents somewhat of an exception, as she writes in positive terms about multilingual Prague, while she praises the Slavic peoples for being a stalwart bulwark against the “Crescent Moon” (her appeal to religious tolerance, notably, does not extend towards the Islam), thus employing the familiar stereotypes of the “bulwark” and the “crossroads” that have a longstanding history in describing Eastern Europe.⁴⁵

After 1871, historical novels put the events of 1866 into the perspective of the subsequent war with France and the establishment of the German Empire. This does not mean, however, that France is now introduced in fictional plots as an alternative enemy that can inspire Prussian–Austrian reconciliation. Gregor Samarow’s *The Legion’s Final Salute* (1874), for instance, is a surprisingly neutral account that sheds light on the run-up and unfolding of the Franco–Prussian War from both the Prussian, French and Austrian perspectives, minutely describing the deliberations of the politicians, monarchs, generals and diplomats involved in the matter, in the act demonstrating that realpolitik and practical considerations often took precedence over ethnocultural arguments.⁴⁶ In general, however, the *Bruderkrieg* narrative developed in the late 1860s remains leading up to the Second World War, while any negative portrayals of Austria akin to Liebach’s approach do not reappear. This was no doubt helped by the improving relations with Austria after 1870, which were cemented through the signing of the Dual Alliance in 1879 and the shared experience of the First World War.

The Dual Alliance also marked a watershed in the Austrian remembrance of the war of 1866, which, in contrast to Prussia, was only rarely called *Bruderkrieg* or Austro–Prussian War and was instead commonly referred to with a variety of other names, including German War, Austro–Prussian–Italian War, “the Bohemian battlefields” or simply “the war of 1866.”⁴⁷ Pain and irritation over the defeat had largely waned and the 1880s witnessed a rising popularity of pan-German thought in the German-speaking parts of the Austrian public sphere, which among other things expressed itself through the erection of monuments honouring Bismarck along the German–Austrian border.⁴⁸ Despite these developments, however, it was not until the start of the twentieth century that Austrian novelists started to take an interest in the war of 1866. The novels that now appeared on the market were without exception vehicles for the evocation of pan-German ideas. Edith von Salburg (1886–1942), one of the most productive authors of her generation, gave literary expression to such sentiments in her two-volume novel

Königsglaube from 1906, but in a later novel, from 1933, she really hammered the point home with its title alone: *German to German. Germany and Austria, Two People – One Blood!*

Robert Hohlbaum's (1886–1955) *Austrians*, published only a couple of months before the outbreak of the First World War, offers a more complex reflection on Austrian national identity in relation to the wider *Alldeutsch* solidarity. The plot centres on a father and son who hold opposing views on the matter. The father is a devoted Austrian patriot who has to retract his negative views of the Prussians when the war brings him into contact with Prussian officers; similar to many a Scandinavian novel, the war not only brings conflict, it also brings contact, and this contact in turn leads to the invalidation of age-old stereotypes, which turn out to have no basis in reality. The son, on the other hand, is a keen supporter of a potential Austrian *Anschluss* and on that account refuses to join the student corps and “fight in a Brother War against my brothers.” He holds a derogative view of Austria, which he sees as “something half-Papist, half-Czech.”⁴⁹ The Prussians, however, teach him how to love his own country, his *Heimat*, and thus win him over to his father's side. To further underscore the point, the father desists a profitable position in Prussia in order to remain living on his home soil. In *Austrians*, Hohlbaum thus makes the case for a heartfelt Austrian patriotism within the confines of a larger pan-German cultural community, which means that he does not support the realisation of a Greater Germany.

Hohlbaum would disapprove of his own message even before the war had ended. Disgruntled with the collapse of the Empire, he would ultimately join the *Großdeutsche Volkspartei* (The Greater German People's Party, established in 1920), which championed the unification of Austria and Germany as its main objective. His second novel on the Austro-Prussian War, appearing in 1918, consequently communicated something entirely different. Here, the seven years between the mass celebration of the Schiller centenary in 1859 and the start of the war in 1866 are portrayed as a “prologue, the prelude to the great event, the outcome of which will bring closer the shared struggle that we will fight alongside our brothers with every day.”⁵⁰ Hohlbaum's turnaround foreshadows the ideological course the remembrance of the Austro-Prussian War would take in historical fiction in the interwar period. Like Hohlbaum himself, who would become a member of the NSDAP in 1934 and even adopt German citizenship in 1937, the memory of the Austro-Prussian War would become ingrained in Nazi propaganda and form a building block in Hitler's *Heim ins Reich* policies.

Conclusion

It would be unfair and unacademic to judge pan-Germanism solely from the perspective of its ultimate absorption into Nazi ideology.⁵¹ Pan-German thought, it is true, remained tightly interlaced with dreams of a Greater Germany, making it susceptible to irredentism, xenophobia, racism and anti-Semitism, but the historical novels spent on the war of 1866 include both tropes that foreshadow this

troublesome future – as in Liebach’s and Hohlbaum’s anti-Slavism – and insertions of a more progressive nature – as in Burow’s plea for religious tolerance (also towards Judaism) and individual choice. Indeed, in its cultural guise, pan-Germanism had in the nineteenth century much in common with the Scandinavian recipe for reconciliatory memory, first and foremost in its use of family motifs. The representation of the war as one between brothers made it possible to write about the conflict not only as a tragic and counterintuitive event but also as a wholesome experience that prepared the ground for future rapprochement. Ultimately, however, this future in the pan-German case is of a very concrete political nature and concerns the full realisation of the once-abandoned Greater Germany solution, while Scandinavia’s future concerns the continuation of the present, characterised by harmonious cooperation, and is thus considerably more modest in its aspirations.

The use of family motifs also most clearly corroborates the assumption that Greater Netherlandism had a much weaker cultural and historicist profile than the other two movements. The Dutch and the Flemish are at best seen as stepbrothers, while the “alternative enemy” and “social criticism” tropes are only minimally applied. Occasionally, the Walloons or the French appear as stand-in bad guys, but in general Dutch novels present a rather black-and-white opposition between “good” Dutchmen and “bad” Belgians. If there ever is any social criticism, it is one of a conservative nature that speaks in debasing terms of the lowest classes in society. More importantly, reconciliation was ultimately achieved through silence and forgetting in the Netherlandic case: memories of mutual conflict never played a part in the identity-making process. Scott’s lesson that remembering such negative experiences is a much more powerful tool in forging multinational identities than simply forgetting them was never taken to heart.

It must be said that reconciliatory memory is most comprehensively interwoven in Scandinavian historical fiction. The general narrative that reappears throughout the corpus is one of the common people seeking to affirm its rights in opposition to a corrupt aristocracy, whose worldview is often crafted on the authoritarianism of either the Germans or the Russians. Such an alternative enemy is not always present in the Prussian and Austrian novels. Most commonly this role is assigned, in the Prussian case, to Catholicism, either personified by scheming clergymen or encapsulated by a more abstract concept of religious bigotry, while also the non-German inhabitants of the Austrian Empire repeatedly give *acte de présence* as the story’s main villain. A social critique is at best only implied in the elevation of religious freedom, personal choice and public education (see Table 11.3 for an overview of conclusions). Very cautiously, then, it can be concluded that at least part of Scandinavianism’s success in preparing the ground for today’s Nordism can be attributed to its intricate development of a reconciliatory narrative that suffused Scandinavian culture from the middle of the nineteenth century onward. In addition to this, it should be remarked that Scandinavianism was never tainted by the Second World War, as is the case with pan-Germanism and Greater Netherlandism.

TABLE 11.3 Reconciliatory memory in Scandinavian, Netherlandic and pan-German historical fiction according to its three main tropes.

	<i>Scandinavianism</i>	<i>Greater Netherlandism</i>	<i>Pan-Germanism</i>
Family motif	Brothers	Stepbrothers	Brothers
Alternative enemy	Germans Russians Aristocracy	Walloons The “rabble”	The Papacy Orthodox Catholicism Czechs, Hungarians, Italians, etc.
Social criticism	Egalitarian	Conservative	Individualistic Meritocratic (<i>Bildung</i>)

Notes

- 1 van Gerven, *Scandinavism*.
- 2 On for instance pan-Slavism, and the Risorgimento, see Björk-Winberg and Egorov’s, and Johnsen’s contributions to this volume.
- 3 Glenthøj and Ottosen, *Union eller undergang*; Haarder Ekman, *Mit hems gränser vidgades*; Hemstad, *Fra Indian Summer til nordisk vinter*.
- 4 Haarder Ekman, *Mit hems gränser vidgades*; Grandien, *Röndruvans glöd*.
- 5 Nielsen, “His pirates had foray’d on Scottish hill”; Rigney, *The Afterlives of Walter Scott*.
- 6 Rigney, *The Afterlives of Walter Scott*.
- 7 On reconciliation, forgetting and remembrance, see Knutsen, “Strategic Silence.”
- 8 van Gerven, *Scandinavism*.
- 9 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 199–203.
- 10 Olsen, *Anna Kolbjørnsdatter*, 94.
- 11 Berger, “Nordic National Histories”; Linde-Laursen, *Bordering*. See also Bohlin’s contribution to this volume.
- 12 Hemstad, “United Kingdoms.”
- 13 Couttenier, “Literatuur en Vlaamse Beweging”; De Wever, “Groot-Nedeland.”
- 14 Weijermars, *Stepbrothers*, 237–49.
- 15 I am grateful to Toos Streng, who compiled a comprehensive database of all works of historical fiction, both originally Dutch and translated, published in the Netherlands between 1790 and 1899. Using this database made my selection of relevant novels an easy task. The database is accessible at https://www.academia.edu/20284910/Historische_romans_in_Database_Streng. My own database of Scandinavian historical fiction can be consulted at <https://scandinavism.com/literature/>
- 16 Streng, “De historishe roman.”
- 17 Clemens had witnessed its backlash from close by as he had had a teaching position in Liège at the time; the outcome of the Revolution forced him to return to the Netherlands.
- 18 Wils, “De Belgische Revolutie.”
- 19 Anonymous, “Hollander en Belg,” 207.
- 20 See for instance the review in *Rotterdamsche Courant*, May 15, 1897.
- 21 Conscience, *Volledige werken* 13, 57.
- 22 Couttenier, “Literatuur en Vlaamse Beweging”; Leerssen, “Landsnamen, taalnamen.”
- 23 Leerssen, “Landsnamen, taalnamen,” 484.
- 24 Cited in Leerssen, “Landsnamen, taalnamen,” 484.
- 25 Leerssen, “Greater Netherlandism.”

- 26 Connerton, "Seven Types of Forgetting," 62–64.
- 27 Leerssen, "Novels and Their Readers."
- 28 Mathijsen, *Historiezucht*; Streng, "De historishe roman."
- 29 Couttenier, "Nationale beelden"; Verschaffel, "Leren sterven."
- 30 Verschaffel, "Spiegelpaleis."
- 31 Leerssen, "Novels and Their Readers."
- 32 van Gerven, *Scandinavism*, 167–72.
- 33 Wils, "De Belgische Revolutie."
- 34 This does not mean that the territorial demarcations of Scandinavianism and Greater Netherlandism were set in stone. Scandinavianism had significance for Finland and Iceland, while the Boer Wars of 1880–81 and 1899–1902 elicited ethnolinguistically inspired solidarity in Flanders and the Netherlands with their "beleaguered brethren" in South Africa.
- 35 Leerssen, "Pan-Germanism."
- 36 Boysen, "Mit oder gegen den 'Pangermanismus'."
- 37 Couttenier, "Literatuur en Vlaamse Beweging"; Glenthøj and Ottosen, *Union eller undergang*; Leerssen, "Landsnamen, taalnamen."
- 38 Sørensen, *Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson*; Seip, "Nasjonsbygger og kosmopolitt."
- 39 De Wever, "Groot-Nedeland"; Leerssen, "Greater Netherlandism."
- 40 Fiedler, *Konstruktion und Fiktion der Nation*; Hirschmüller, "Vom Bruderkrieg."
- 41 Hirschmüller, "Vom Bruderkrieg."
- 42 This overview could easily be retrieved from the database compiled by the "Projekt Historischer Roman" of the University of Innsbruck. This database contains ca. 6300 historical novels written in the German language between 1780 and 1945, as well as around 400 novels written in the DDR. See, <https://webapp.uibk.ac.at/germanistik/histrom/datenbank.html>
- 43 Hahn, *Hohenzollern und Welfen*, 72.
- 44 Liebach, *Der Spion*, 226.
- 45 Ugrešić, *Nobody's Home*; Wolff, *Inventing Eatsern Europe*. See also Johnsen's contribution to this volume.
- 46 The name on the cover is a pseudonym of Oskar Meding (1828–1902), a Hanoverian diplomat who changed sides to Prussia in 1870 and who had first-hand knowledge of most of the events that he describes.
- 47 Hirschmüller, "Vom Bruderkrieg."
- 48 Winkler, *Die deutschnationalen Bestrebungen*.
- 49 Hohlbaum, *Österreicher*.
- 50 Hohlbaum, *Das Vorspiel*, cover text.
- 51 Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German*.

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