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Kaj Munk's "De Faldne" – Memorial Poem and Monument Inscription

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Abstract: On 29 August 1943, the Danish government resigned. The German Wehrmacht was to take immediate control of the Danish Army and Navy. Under widespread fighting against this "takeover," 23 Danish soldiers and two civilians were killed, and a further 53 were wounded. Munk promptly wrote the poem "De Faldne" in memory of the soldiers killed in the assault on the Danish Army and Navy. In Munk's wartime oeuvre, some dramas, poems and memoir work, implying a subtle, indirect appeal to resistance, have proved to be viable. His "direct" resistance poetry appears to be more time-bound. "De Faldne," however, is a special case. It is one of his best "direct," activist poems. As an inscription on memorials, it is sometimes referred to in ceremonial speeches, but it has remained untreated in the few serious recent readings of Munk's resistance literature. It is therefore an aim of the present article to fill in a gap.

When Munk wrote this memorial poem, he had already – through the open, resolute will to confront the occupiers which he had advocated at every possible occasion after 9 April 1940 – achieved a unique status as a national resistance icon. This status was further cemented when he himself joined the ranks of "De Faldne." During the night of 4 January 1944, he was arrested and killed. His funeral became a national event, and the brutal murder indeed strengthened rather than weakened the will to resistance.

"De Faldne" began to exert a strong and lasting influence on the construction of the collective memory of World War II and the Occupation when, after the Liberation, the first stanza was carved as an inscription in two places at the central memorial site for those killed in the freedom struggle, Mindelunden in Ryvangen. This first stanza was moreover used on a considerable number of memorial stones erected on local initiative throughout the country. The present

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article offers an analysis of its important role in the memory culture of the Occupation, both through its concrete presence on numerous monuments and as part of a wider memorial culture with ceremonial anniversaries and commemoration days like 9 April (the Occupation, 1940), 4–5 May (the Liberation, 1945), and 29 August (the end of the politics of cooperation, 1943).

This commemorative culture has retained its public appeal, perhaps even growing more important in recent years due to the shift toward a more activist Danish foreign policy since the 1990s. Quite recently, several of the monuments with Munk's words as an inscription have been revitalised and enhanced by musical and visual dimensions transmitted by new, digital forms of communication. Through the modification of this cultural heritage, Munk's words, as well as his fate, have become audible and visible in new ways.

In Mined Areas – War, Poetry and Memorial Culture

Kaj Munk (1898–1944) and the Occupation of Denmark 1940–1945 can be regarded as mined areas. In both cases, the fronts have been sharply defined between parties seemingly trying to impose their own comprehensive, strongly valorised interpretations on matters of composite complexity.

No other period of Danish history has attracted as much attention as the Occupation. Among historians, the main line of demarcation has been between dominating notions of "consensus" and "conflict" (Bryld and Warring 1998, 368). The strongly politicised instrumentalisation of the "conflict notion" by Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Prime Minister from 2001–2009, further polarised the public debate. Many historians have, however, avoided the "either-or" optics, instead mixing and combining both notions in new, nuanced ways. In my position, I try to synthesise recent trends in the scholarly treatment of the Occupation of Denmark.[1]

Munk is remembered primarily for two things: his death and his dramas. His brutal murder in 1944 became a historical event of national importance. In a sinister, ironic twist of fate, Munk was murdered on the orders of the very dictator who had, from his ascendance to power until shortly before the war, enjoyed Munk's passionate praise and defence. The circumstances of his death led to near unilateral remembrance of

1 One major reference could be to the position of Christensen et al. 2015.

him as a martyr for his outspoken resistance from the first day of the Occupation.[2] But an opposing tendency, which first appeared just after the war and continues to the present day, has focused on his passionate defence of dictatorship throughout most of his life as a very active public figure. My position is critical of both extremes, as well as of the underlying tendency to simplify and conflate life and work. Life and work are of course always interconnected in some way, but in Munk's case, very often the priest and the poet – the narrow-minded public prophet and the much wiser author – are at odds.

While the contradictions in Munk's mind continued and intensified during the war, a partial but important shift in attitude and values can also be observed. The comprehensive reading of Munk's literary wartime oeuvre in Gemzøe and Pahuus (2019, this part mainly my responsibility) focuses on the more subtle, enduring contributions to literature – not only to drama, but also to poetry and prose – where such a shift in values is implied. "De Faldne," one of the "direct," activist poems untreated in our monograph, presents several challenges. It is among the best of his resistance poems. And it is an example of a close yet complex interaction between life and oeuvre, both in and of itself, and through its fate in posterity.

Though often referenced with enthusiasm in broader historical and biographical contexts, Munk's resistance poetry has attracted few serious literary approaches in posterity. One exception is a lecture given by Marie Goul at the Kaj Munk workshop: "Kaj Munk – en digter under krigen" (Goul 2016b). Marie Goul distinguishes here between four main types of this poetry:

- *The small verses*. Examples: "Fortvivlelsen" and "Den største Daad" (Munk 1949a, 175; 216)
- *The satirical-critical poems*. Typically exposing the indifference and selfishness of the Danish collaborators. Example: "'Vi har det jo godt'" (274)
- *The national-patriotic poems.* Example: "Det danske Kald" (237f)
- *The poems of nature and environment.* Typically parables, indirect expressions of a will to resist. Examples: "August" and "Høftebyggerne" (200ff.; 269)

2 A tendency that has probably been even more pronounced in some almost "hagiographic" monographies from recent years than in the many memorial books published shortly after his death, see Gemzøe and Pahuus 2019, 378.

Goul exhibits a preference for the fourth type of poem,[3] but nonetheless provides good examples and observations regarding the other types. Despite a defence of the "national-patriotic" poems, she admits that they appear especially time-bound, increasingly difficult to appreciate outside of the situational circumstances. Yet "De Faldne" is not one of her examples; in fact, she does not even mention it. My aim is therefore to fill in a gap in her as well as my own treatment of Munk's wartime poetry.

"De Faldne" began to exert a strong and lasting influence on the construction of the collective memory of World War II and the Occupation when, after the Liberation, the first stanza was carved as an inscription at the central memorial site for those killed in the freedom struggle, Mindelunden in Ryvangen. Here Munk's words can be found in two places: at the main monument and at the execution site. This first stanza was also used on a considerable number of memorial stones erected on local initiative throughout the country. In the present article, I want to analyse its important role in the memory culture of the Occupation, both through its concrete presence on numerous monuments and as part of a wider memorial culture with ceremonial anniversaries and commemoration days like 9 April (the Occupation, 1940), 4–5 May (the Liberation, 1945), and 29 August (the end of the politics of cooperation, 1943).

This commemorative culture has retained its public appeal, perhaps even growing more important in recent years. As David Lowenthal suggests, "Memory does not preserve but adapts the past, to manage and enrich the present and anticipate the future" (2015, 332). Although commemorative culture expresses consensus and creates "a particular form of remembrance that is frozen in time," (Bryld and Warring 1998, 557) it is also subject to continuous change and interpretation. The shift toward a more activist foreign policy since the 1990s – in particular the Danish engagement in the wars in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan – has been accompanied by changes in the memorial culture. The past is being re-interpreted, and the monuments bearing Munk's words play a part in this process. Recently, several of these monuments have been revitalised and enhanced by musical and visual dimensions transmitted by new, digital forms of communication. Through the modification of this cultural heritage, Munk's words, as well as his fate, have become audible and visible in new ways.

3 Goul has authored the master thesis: "Denne skovens forpost. En økokritisk og eksistentiel læsning af natursynet i Kaj Munks forfatterskab" (Goul 2016a).

The Occupation

On 29 August 1943, the Danish government resigned. For some time, the resistance movement had been gaining momentum and the number of sabotage activities had been increasing – more than 200 sabotage activities were executed in the month of August alone (Mørch 1982, 222). The summer had also seen a wave of protest strikes against the German occupying forces roll through the major cities: Odense, Esbjerg, Odense again, and finally Aalborg, with its important airport. The funeral of Niels Erik Vangsted, a casualty of the first armed confrontation between the resistance and the Germans, attracted a crowd of 10,000 mourners in Aalborg on 23 August. In the ensuing turmoil, four were killed and 17 wounded by the Wehrmacht. Aalborg was then paralysed by a general strike in protest (Christensen et al. 2015, 419). After the declaration of martial law in Aalborg and the implementation of a nation-wide curfew, a German ultimatum demanding a drastic increase in the severity of punishment for all resistance, including the death penalty for sabotage, made it impossible for the coalition government to continue its policy of cooperation.

The German Wehrmacht was to take immediate control of the Danish Army and Navy upon the resignation of the government. Under widespread fighting against this "takeover," 23 Danish soldiers and two civilians were killed, and a further 53 were wounded. The Wehrmacht lost five soldiers. At Holmen, the naval headquarters in Copenhagen, the Danish navy was sunk so as not to be handed over to the Germans. About 250 Danish public figures were taken as hostages, among them political leaders, cultural personalities, scientists and high-ranking civil servants (Christensen et al. 2015, 427).[4]

Throughout the 1930s, the coalition government of The Social Democratic Party (Socialdemokratiet) and The Danish Social Liberal Party (Det *Radikale Venstre)* had pursued a policy of disarmament and neutrality. During the German invasion of Denmark and Norway in the early morning hours of 9 April 1940, a superior force attacked over the border in Southern Jutland; troops landed at several places on Funen and Seeland; the small Danish Airforce was annihilated on the runways; the military headquarters in Copenhagen was captured; and bombers circled above Copenhagen and the other major cities. After short battles that left 16 dead and quite a few wounded, the government decided to cease the futile military resistance, putting the protection of the

4 Some were released a few days later; others held until November.

population above the honour of the nation, and trying to maintain as much democratic control over Danish institutions as possible. In light of the German government's assurances that Germany had no intention "at antaste kongeriget Danmarks territoriale integritet eller politiske uafhængighed" (Mørch 1982, 218) – apart from a number of ultimate and immediate military demands – the Danish Government took the calculated risk to take them at their wording in an effort to maintain control: "Den nedlægger dog en alvorlig protest mod denne krænkelse af Danmarks neutralitet" (Mørch 1982, 218). A coalition government including the four major political parties was formed, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs remaining the official channel of negotiations between the occupying power and the government.

Until 1943, this unique framework resulted in a very different situation in Denmark than in most other occupied countries. On the one hand, politicians were repeatedly forced to sharpen legislation against sabotage, denounce sabotage activities publicly and warn the population against supporting the "irresponsible" saboteurs. Similarly, the Parliament agreed to ban The Danish Communist Party (Danmarks Kommunistiske Parti) and intern many of its members after the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941.[5]

On the other hand, politicians were able to maintain the constitutional state and democracy to a surprising degree. As late as 1942 and 1943, Danish Nazis were sentenced to prison for racist actions or utterances. An election in March 1943, by and large democratic, boasted a record turnout of 89,5%. The four democratic parties of the coalition government won with no less than 93% of the vote. Dansk Samling, a small nationalist party supported by Munk that openly advocated resistance but favoured corporative, anti-democratic ideas, received as little as 2,2%. Even fewer voted blank, as had been recommended by the illegal Communist Party. Unlike in all other occupied countries, the Nazi party DNSAP had not grown in popularity during the occupation, and received only 2,1% (see Bekker-Christensen et al. n.d).

At the same time, the armed resistance movement made rapid gains in strength and popular sympathy, competing with this ostentatious

5 On 29 August, about 90 of the imprisoned Communists managed to escape from the Danish internment camp Horserød. The rest (about 150) were captured by the Germans and sent to the German concentration camp Stutthof (Christensen et al. 2015, 427).

manifestation of faith in the Danish democracy and its politicians and authorities. During the summer of 1943, the "losers" of the election, in particular the Communists, managed to win the battle for the minds and shift public opinion in favour of a policy of confrontation (Mørch 1982, 231).

Kaj Munk, Poet and Prophet between Despair and Hope

The occupation had a decisive impact on the life and work of Kaj Munk (1898–1944). During his youth, he had been deeply concerned about the cession of the Danish West Indies (the Virgin Islands) to the USA in 1917. He became similarly involved in the bitter polarisation between nationalist and moderate tendencies during the events preceding the reunion of North Schleswig (occupied by Germany from 1864 to 1920) with Denmark, and was shocked by the fall of kings and emperors in the wake of World War I. He came to regard dictatorship as the best form of government. Munk's early admiration for Mussolini[6] and his fascism extended to Hitler[7] after the Nazi takeover of Germany in 1933, and was especially pronounced between 1934 and 1938. From 1938 onward, however, he began to protest the persecution of Jews in Germany.

His rather extreme political views, which he often pursued as a very active public figure, did not prevent him from becoming one of the most important Danish dramatists. In his best dramas, the great religious, political and existential questions are confronted in intense open-ended dialogues. He explored several dramatic forms in a wave of productivity during the 1920s, creating both historical dramas, e.g. *En Idealist* (1924/28) and *Cant* (1931), and contemporary religious plays in a realist, regional setting, e.g. *Ordet* (1926/32) and *Kærlighed* (1926). His

6 Benito Mussolini (1883–1945). Leader of the Fascist Movement, seized power after the "March to Rome" in 1922. Italy's dictator (Il Duce) 1922–1943. Invaded Ethiopia 1935–1936. Allied with Hitler's Germany during World War II. In 1938, Munk recorded his emotions at Mussolini's seizure of power in a memoir article: "Da skete der det, at Napoleons Skygge forlod Paris og begyndte at iføre sig Kød og Blod. Og det frøs mig helt ind i Hjertet af Lykke" (Munk 1949b, 12).

7 Adolf Hitler (1888–1945). Leader of the National-Socialist Party (NSDAP). Germany's dictator 1933–1945. In a 1938 article comparing democracy and dictatorship, Kaj Munk admitted that Hitler's tendency to indulge in self-praise in his speeches might nauseate Danes, but qualified this observation by adding: "Men selv dette medgivet er det umuligt andet end at prise det hitlerske Styre for Klogskab over Klogskab, Sejr efter Sejr" (Munk 1949b, 24).

contemporary political plays from the 1930s – *Sejren* (1936), in fictional form debating the great dictator Mussolini and his understandable yet regrettable war in Ethiopia, *Han sidder ved Smeltediglen* (1938), debating the admirable Germany that Hitler had created and its serious flaw, the persecution of the Jews – are considerably more time-bound and narrow in scope.

The German invasion of Denmark on 9 April 1940 – a blatant violation of the non-aggression pact signed by the two countries in 1939 – decisively compromised Hitler in the eyes of Munk. Now, more than ever, he felt compelled – as a public figure, as a prophet – to arouse the resistance of the Danish people. As a conservative nationalist, he considered the appeasement of even blatant military superiority dishonourable and penned the bitter-ironic epigram "Fortvivlelsen" the very same day:

> De tusind Aar – saa blev de væk
> I Morges kl. 5 af Skræk.
> (Munk 1949a, 175)

Here he was alluding to the general idea of Denmark as a thousand-year-old kingdom, and more specifically to the well-known song "Danmark i tusind Aar" by Valdemar Rørdam, a national poet whom Munk admired so much that he tried to get him nominated for the Nobel Prize.[8] In surrendering to fear, politicians had betrayed the very essence of Danish history and tradition.

Some of his most famous and controversial speeches from the early days of the Occupation – the Ollerup speech in July and the Gerlev speech in August 1940 – are dominated more by his indignation over what he perceived as the failure of democracy epitomised by the capitulation on 9 April than by the renunciation of allegiance to the occupying power. In a long passage of the first speech, Hitler is lauded as "en af Verdenshistoriens største Skikkelser" (qtd. in Dosenrode 2015, 284). Democracy is laid to rest with sneering insults – Munk never became an unreserved democrat. Yet at the same time, a changing attitude can be observed, involving a certain acceptance of democratic alliance partners in the resistance, a kind of restrained populism, one might say, accompanied by profound shifts in values, the image of man and literary means.

8 But denounced when he published an poem praising the German attack at the Soviet Union.

The narrow-minded censorship introduced immediately at the behest of German command had a number of conflicting consequences for him. On the one hand, Munk's obsession with the occupation encouraged his general proclivity for putting political moralism above artistic conscience. Much of what he wrote during the war is occasional literature, mobilisation poetry that is literally unreadable outside of the situational context. On the other hand, his political commitment led to new literary possibilities. Up until this point, Munk had been a highly successful playwright. But theatre, by its nature a most "public" art form, was particularly affected by censorship. That forced him not only to write dramas with a more subtly-formulated message than the above-mentioned contemporary plays from the 1930s, but also to try his hand at other genres. The dramas Munk wrote during the war (especially *Niels Ebbesen* and *Before Cannae*) are superior to his works from the 1930s, and his best works in poetry and prose were composed during this period as well. His style was also influenced by censorship. Paradoxically, it often served as a proxy for the literary self-discipline with which Munk had so often struggled, and impelled him to seek indirect, refined forms of expression in a low-key, subtle and ironic tone.

This trend can be seen in the poems published monthly in the paper *Berlingske Aftenavis* from January 1940 onward; the poems written after April are characterised by an indirect reaction to the occupation. At the turn of the year, they were adapted for the anthology *Navigare necesse* (1941). It also characterises a few of his later poems and is prevalent in his important and successful autobiography *Foraaret saa sagte kommer* (1942) and, as previously mentioned, in historical dramas like *Niels Ebbesen* (1942) and *Før Cannae* (1943). They represent a kind of moderate populism. Politically, the attitude inherent in works like these points away from Munk's prior fascination with flamboyant, heroic greatness. Literarily, they mark a break with his former predilection for hyperbole. These works, characterised by understatement as a stylistic figure as well as irony and humour, explore a new type of hero: unobtrusive and modest, yet unyielding when necessary.

The Memorial Poem and the Immediate Aftermath

Munk promptly wrote the poem "De Faldne" in memory of the soldiers killed in the assault on the Danish Army and Navy on 29 August 1943. For him, the abandonment of the policy of cooperation as well as the armed

resistance to the takeover were decisive events and a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. In reaction to what he considered the shameful surrender of 9 April 1940, he had tirelessly called for resistance, though his hope for a direct armed response had been fading. In his Gerlev speech in August 1940, he had admitted that the window of opportunity for armed response had closed. Balancing armed and unarmed forms of resistance was a constant preoccupation of his. "Det danske Kald," one of his unpublished poems from 1941, reflects on the national commitment in an imperative mode and verbalises the need for and strength of *unarmed* resistance, that is, rearmament of the mind:

> Nu kræver Danmark af os, vi er stærke,
> saa aldrig Frygt og Tvivl faar Overhaand.
> Alt, hvad der truer os, skal faa at mærke
> at stærkere end alt er endnu Aand.
> Kun Mod og Trods og Styrke vil vi øse,
> Hvor Storm og Hav slaar over Kysten ind.
> Er vi kun faa og smaa og vaabenløse,
> des mere vil vi ruste vore Sind.
> (Munk 1949a, 237)

In the historical drama *Niels Ebbesen*, the cautious and reluctant title figure long advocates unarmed resistance: "Jeg har den tro, at hvis vi vil, kan vi hævde os uden Vaaben, maaske bedre end med" (Munk 1949c, 228). Yet when after enough provocation he finally decides to take up arms against the invaders, he is pleased to learn that the priest Father Lorents has a well-stocked armoury hidden behind the altar.

Finally, in his autobiography *Foraaret saa sagte kommer* (also from 1942), Munk manages to manipulate an almost direct appel to rebellion into a memory of Danish workers at a celebration of 1 May long before the war:

> Han staar og ser sig stolt paa disse Landsmænd, Staunings Folk, danske i barket Skind og bredt godmodigt og dog handlekraftigt Sind, og han tror paa, at naar Prøvens Dag kommer, den, der er nær, og som de er saa sorgløst uvidende om, og naar deres Førere, som i Debatternes og Kompromissernes beklumrede Luft har sat deres Oprindelighed til, svigter og bøjer sig og knækker sammen, *da vil disse staa*. (Munk 1965, 266, emphasis in original)

Though Munk's abilities as a prophet were often limited, this passage is a kind of self-fulfilling prediction of the popular uprisings during the summer of 1943 that were re-created and re-enforced with the "Folkestrejken" in the summer of 1944.[9] For Munk, the events of 29 August 1943 must have been a real-life manifestation of a turning point that he had anticipated and worked tirelessly to achieve. The most important characteristic of this threshold was the transition to armed struggle.

This is the text of the original typewritten manuscript of "De Faldne":

Drenge, I Drenge, som døde,
I tændte for Danmark i dybest Mulm
en lysende Morgenrøde.

Danske velsignede Drenge!
vort Øje har Taarer. Men Hjertet slaar
saa stolt som ikke – aah! længe.

For nu kan vi atter være,
se Verden i Øjne roligt og frit.
I faldt jo for Danmarks Ære.

I gav os tilbage til Livet. –
Forbød de jer atter at gøre Brug
af Vaaben, de selv har jer givet?

Hil jer da, Vikingesønner!
Ulydige danske Soldater, Tak!
Gud jer det evindeligt lønner.
(Munk 1943a)[10]

"De Faldne" was included in Munk's last anthology *Den Skæbne ej til os* (1943). Twenty copies of a test print were sent to a circle of friends.[11] In

9 For a more detailed analysis see Gemzøe and Pahuus 2019, 354–355.

10 A copy from Munk's own typewriter (KMF 03.02.10). A facsimile of an identical handwritten version – with the slightly different title "Til de Faldne" and accompanied by an editorial criticising the government – was published on the front page of Information, the "paper of the resistance movement," on 28 August 1945, prior to the opening of *Mindelunden i Ryvangen.*

11 Copy at Kaj Munk Forskningscentret.

this version, there is a slight change in the third verse of the third stanza, which reads: "I frelste jo Danmarks Ære." This emphasises a dimension of salvation (through sacrifice). For a number of different reasons, each connected to the change of situation after 29 August, Munk was reluctant to proceed with publication. He instead entrusted a manuscript to his friend and admirer Arne Sørensen, the leader of Dansk Samling, to be published at a time to be agreed upon later. Another manuscript was given to Arne Sejr of the resistance organisation Studenternes Efterretningstjeneste. After Munk's death on 4 January 1944, the poem was published with the title *Kaj Munks sidste Digte* by Arne Sørensen in Sweden and by Arne Sejr (illegally) in Denmark (Møller 2014, 319).[12] Here there is a small change in the last line, from "evindeligt" to "evigt." In the officially published anthology with the original title (Munk 1946), and in the *Kaj Munk Mindeudgave* (Munk 1949a), the text is identical with the version of the test print from 1943.

The first two stanzas present the poem's paradoxical, antithetical logic and emotional ambivalence: sacrificial death transforming night into day, darkness into light; the co-existence of grief and joy, tears and pride. The next two stanzas are motivations. To "be," to exist, is to be able to face a world in which many have fought and died for years, on more equal terms. Restoring life, however, requires disobedience, another of the poem's main themes. Just as on 9 April 1940, politicians had forbidden the soldiers to use their weapons after the resignation of the government. Yet this time, many had disobeyed. To confront the Germans, the soldiers needed the courage to act against their explicit orders. In the final stanza, it is precisely this disobedience that enables the rebellious soldiers to restore their national heritage and qualify as Viking sons. Thus they become worthy of the highest regard, both human and divine.

Munk's enthusiasm and relief is manifested in the stylistically characteristic, deeply felt outburst: "saa stolt som ikke – aah! længe." Through three long years of blurred lines of demarcation, the *stain* left on Denmark's honour by the weak defence on 9 April and the government's compliance and passive laxity had festered in his mind. The "aah!" is mimetic of a sigh of relief at the end of this long wait, for the popular uprising, for the resignation of the government and for the armed resistance from disobedient soldiers in the Danish Army and Navy.

Metrically, Munk has chosen a short three-line stanza, with a three-stroke, mainly dactylic rhythm. The first verse: two dactyls and a trochee;

12 Further references to statements from Arne Sørensen and memoirs by Arne Sejr.

the middle and last verses nearly the same, but with anacruses. There are marked rhymes between the first and last verses in the three-line stanzas: "døde" – "Morgenrøde"/ "Drenge" – "længe"/ "være" – "Ære"/ "Livet" – "givet"/ "Vikingesønner" – "lønner."

In keeping with its appeal to tradition, the poem, like many other poems by Munk, alludes to old-fashioned words, forms and phrases, as well as to a tone reminiscent of tradition. This is first apparent in the adjectival form "i dybest Mulm" – the normal modern form would be "dybeste." Munk instead chooses a proverbial form well-known in the Danish poetry and song tradition, in particular from "Historiens Sang" by Jeppe Aakjær (1866–1930). This 1917 poem is also a sort of comment on a wartime situation: during World War I, Denmark's neutrality was respected and, according to the poem, the country could be characterised as "Du Pusling-Land, som hygger dig i Smug,/mens hele Verden brænder om din Vugge" (Aakjær 1923, 215). This contented complacency was not shared by the 30,000 young men from Southern Jutland (which, as mentioned, was occupied by Germany from 1864 to 1920) who were forced to fight on the German side, and of whom more than 5,000 were killed.[13] Aakjær's poem begins with these lines:

> Som dybest Brønd gir altid klarest Vand,
> og lifligst Drik fra dunkle Væld udrinder
> (Aakjær 1923, 214)

Munk was influenced by Aakjær and clearly inspired by him in his attempts to strike a popular note during the war. The poem "August" from *Navigare necesse* begins with the personification "Jeg er kun Lyngen, ikke regnet stort" (Munk 1941, 53) – an obvious nod to the opening of Aakjær's famous poem/song "Havren": "Jeg er Havren" (Aakjær 1923, 211). Similar to "De Faldne," "August" is in a short form with three-line stanzas. The heather symbolises the low-pitched yet unbending will to resistance, if necessary until death, of the popular underground:

> Og i min Død jeg drømmer om en Vaar,
>
> Da Landet, jeg fik frelst, mit Hjertes Digt,
> med Korn og Træer atter bølger rigt.

13 For more details see Gemzøe 2018.

Saa dør jeg gerne. Jeg har gjort min Pligt.
(Munk 1941, 55)

Metrically, the archaic form "dybest" makes the first stanza concise: with an alliteration on *d*, "dybest" is rhythmically identical to "Drenge," "døde" and "Danmark." When the first stanza was later carved into monuments, "dybest" was modernised and normalised to "dybeste" in most places. While some of the aforementioned effect is lost, this choice instead emphasises the rhythmical parallel and semantic contrast between "dybeste" and "lysende."

As previously mentioned, one modernisation in the 1944 edition is the replacement of "evindeligt" with "evigt." "Evindeligt" is also an old-fashioned word. Yet the line with "evindeligt" also fits better into the rhythmical pattern of the poem than the two-syllable word "evigt." The word "evindelig" as something positive in and of itself – without the trivial connotations that have recently emerged – is known from the Danish song and hymn tradition of the Golden Age.

In addition to Aakjær and the poetic vocabulary of Danish romanticism or the Danish Golden Age, the poem – with its concise short form, its strong alliterations and its emphasis on life, death and legacy – also draws on the Old Norse tradition, which is also referenced by the term "Vikingesønner." The proximity to the Edda poetry is especially evident when one remembers the famous stanza from "Hávamál" ("The Speech of the High One"):

Fæ dør, Frænder dør,
ogsaa du skal dø;
eet ved jeg, som aldrig dør,
Dom over hver en Død.
(*Nordens Gudekvad* 1968, 147[14])

"Boys" was widely used to refer to young men at the time, and was a favourite term of Munk's, see the title of another of his anthologies of poems from the war years, *Sværg det, Drenge* (1941). It also underscores, as other writers have done,[15] just how young the men who fought and were killed in the World Wars actually were.

14 The poet Thøger Larsen's widely canonised translation into Danish was doubtlessly familiar to Munk.

15 Among others, Kurt Vonnegut, in the title of his novel *Slaughterhouse-Five, or, The Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death* (1969).

It can be claimed that "De Faldne" unites almost all the dimensions of Marie Goul's aforementioned typology. It is, of course, one of the most important of the national-patriotic poems. Moreover, its form epitomises the pointed sharpness of the epigram and the gnomic impact power of Old Norse poetry, the text contains a satirical-critical exposure of the contradictions and hypocrisy of the political authorities, and the main message of the first stanza is delivered though the powerful symbolism of nature.

The German takeover on 29 August 1943 immediately created a most dangerous situation. The protection of Danish Jews had been an uncompromisable condition for the government. Similarly, Munk's first and most important criticism of the Nazi regime in Germany had been levelled at the persecution of the Jews. After 29 August, an enforcement of the "Endlösung" in Denmark was ordered, which commenced in October 1943. But parts of the old German leadership allowed a warning of the ongoing operation to leak, and most Jews were able to flee in time. The Danish resistance movement earned massive popular support for its large-scale rescue operation, in which approximately 7,000 Jews were transported to the coast and sailed to Sweden. The operation succeeded to an unparalleled extent, and nearly all Danish Jews survived the war.[16] For many Danes, the rescue operation opened their way into the resistance movement.

When Munk wrote this memorial poem, he had already – through the open, resolute will to confront the occupiers which he had advocated at every possible occasion after 9 April 1940 – achieved a unique status as a national resistance icon. This status was further cemented when he himself joined the ranks of "De Faldne." During the night of 4 January 1944, he was arrested and killed. His body was found in a roadside ditch the next morning with a clumsy note attached that attempted to blame his death on the resistance movement. He was the first victim in what

16 These were the figures, according to Mørch: "det lykkedes kun for tyskerne at få fat i 454 af de 7684 jøder. Resten slap væk og blev illegalt befordret til Sverige" (Mørch 1982, 224). Those arrested were taken to Theresienstadt in Austria. Most of them survived, largely due to the dramatic rescue operation of "the white busses" in the first months of 1945. On the initiative of the leader of the Swedish Red Cross, Folke Bernadotte, thousands of Scandinavian prisoners were rescued from the German concentration camps – "herunder 429 af de oprindeligt 481 danske jøder og statsløse jøder fra Danmark, der var interneret i Theresienstadt. 52 af de deporterede var døde af alder og sygdom i lejren" (Lidegaard 2013, 439). The (small) difference between Mørch's and Lidegaard's numbers is probably due to the latter's inclusion of "statsløse jøder fra Danmark."

would become a series of terrorist murders of Danish celebrities, and his funeral became a national event accompanied by an outpouring of support. The brutal murder indeed strengthened rather than weakened the will to resistance.

The assassination was carried out by the Peter Group (cover name of the leader Otto Schwerdt), a Gestapo group sent to Denmark (and re-enforced by Danish helpers) on the direct orders of Hitler, who was very dissatisfied with the development in the country. In addition to sabotage activities, now rapidly increasing in number, the resistance movement had begun to practice "Stikkerlikvideringer," assassinations of persons (mainly Danish citizens) suspected of informing on their countrymen in the resistance. About 400 killings of informers took place during the occupation, some of them on very dubious grounds.

By initiating a terrorist policy of retaliation – "Clearingmord" and "Shalburgtage"[17] – as a response to the killings of informers and the sabotage activities of the resistance movement, Hitler disavowed the "indulgent" policy of the German occupying forces thus far. The main leader, Werner Best, a convinced and fervently antisemitic Nazi, had pursued a subdued policy in Denmark, on the grounds that, in his opinion, it best served Germany's interests. Now and for the duration of the war, the situation in Denmark became almost "normalised" – with arbitrary murders of civilians, terror, imprisonments, deportations to concentration camps, torture and executions. The Peter group alone was responsible for 91 killings of Danes, as well as 131 bombings of buildings and passenger trains that resulted in at least 36 more deaths. The group also blew up most of the Tivoli Gardens, including the concert hall (Christensen et al. 2015, 492, 497).

From 1943 until the end of the war, the resistance movement grew rapidly. Sabotage activities became more frequent and intense than, for instance, in Norway, which had suffered a very different kind of occupation from the start. This change was undoubtedly a consequence of the clearer line of demarcation between the occupiers and the occupied. As it was now apparent that the Allied Forces would win the war, another factor may have been the need to encourage recognition of Denmark as an active participant on the Allied side, a motivation also

17 In addition to the homophonic similarity to "sabotage," this common designation hinted at the complicity of *Schalburgkorpset*, a Danish aid organisation for the Germans, mainly recruited from returning Danish Eastern Front volunteers.

inherent in Munk's "De Faldne" : "For nu kan vi atter være, / se Verden i Øjne roligt og frit."

The peace and the monuments

The National Memorial Site: Mindelunden i Ryvangen[18]

After the war, "De Faldne" gained monumental status as a prominent example of a memory culture that has been conceptualised as "Kulten af den faldne soldat" (Bryld and Warring 1998, 257). Ryvangen, to the North of Copenhagen, housed a training ground and barracks for an engineering regiment. Several Danish soldiers were killed when German troops stormed these barracks on 29 August 1943. After the takeover the Germans began to use the area as an execution site. Those executed here were buried at the site; after the Liberation, the remains of nearly 200 people were found. Of those, 91 were returned to their home areas. The rest were re-interred on 29 August 1945 with an impressive popular as well as official participation (see Bryld and Warring 1998, 271–274; Adriansen 2011, 126).

It was decided to make Ryvangen the central memorial site for those killed in the freedom struggle. In 1947, the remains of resistance fighters who had died in German concentration camps were also repatriated here. The main responsibility for the future state cemetery lay with the Minister of Church Affairs in the Liberation Government, Arne Sørensen, who as founder and leader of Dansk Samling was much respected as a former resistance fighter and a member of the Freedom Council. In the summer of 1945, and without consulting other partners, he presented the government with a proposal for the main monument: a composition of a grieving mother with her dead son, by the sculptor Axel Poulsen.[19]

This choice for the main monument gave rise to quite a controversy. The critics, represented by the Artistic Committee of the Resistance Movement, would have preferred a monument emphasising victory rather than mourning. The criticism eventually quieted, however, and after the inauguration of Mindelunden at a magnificent ceremony on

18 Can be viewed at Straarup 2016.

19 This choice was no doubt favourably influenced by Axel Poulsen's prestige as the main artist of the central memorial site located in Marselisborg, Aarhus that commemorated the many killed Danes in forced German service during World War I.

5 May 1950, it grew completely silent. Since then, it has been generally agreed that a mourning monument is quite suitable for a burial ground, and that the simple structure of the burial ground is both evocative and harmonious. Parts of the excellent characterisation of the main monument in Bryld and Warring deserve to be quoted:

> Axel Poulsens monument er en pietà, en moder ved sin søns lig, hugget i granit. Moderskikkelsen repræsenterer Danmark, sønnen de faldne frihedskæmpere. Hun er en hverdagskvinde og meget langt fra de valkyrier og skjoldmøer, som var det 19. århundredes måde at fremstille Mor Danmark på i den nationale kunst. […] Som hverdagskvinde repræsenterer hun en forening af alle sørgende mødre og hele landets sorg over krigens ofre. Hun er stilfærdigt sørgende, men ikke knust eller knuget. I sin sorg udtrykker hun rankhed og styrke. Sønnen er ung af fysiognomi og et idealt billede på de unge, der døde under krigen. […] På skulpturens sokkel er indhugget nogle linjer af et digt af Kaj Munk […]. Strofen er hyppigt anvendt på de mange mindesten og mindeplader, der er rejst over hele landet til minde om de døde frihedskæmpere. Strofen understøtter monumentets repræsentation af de døde som Danmarks sønner, men angiver tydeligere end dette, at døden var meningsfuld i og med, at den var et resultat af en indsats for Danmark. (Bryld and Warring 1998, 276f)

They conclude: "Danmark fik intet egentligt sejrsmonument. Det nationale monument over besættelsestiden blev et sorgmonument for de døde frihedskæmpere" (Bryld and Warring 1998, 277).

In front of the main monument lies a large burial ground with more than a hundred identical tombstones of Bornholm sandstone, all with nameplates on top surrounded by a cover of heather. As we know from Munk's aforementioned poem "August," heather can symbolise humility and perseverance. Moreover, heather became a kind of national symbol because it was associated with the vast heaths once mainly found in the central and western parts of Jutland. The Danish author Steen Steensen Blicher's well-known poem/song "Hiemvee," ends with the line: "Der hvile ogsaa mine Been engang / blandt mine Fædres lyngbegroede Grave" (Blicher 1961, 190).

At the main monument, foreign guests lay wreaths and the annual commemorations draw many visitors; the anniversary in 1995 was attended by 50,000 people (Adriansen 2011, 126).

Figure 1: The central monument in Ryvangen. Photo by Gunhild Agger and Anker Gemzøe

In addition to the main monument, there are several other memorial sites in the Memorial Grove of Ryvangen. Among these are a memorial wall for those who disappeared in German concentration camps and prisons, as well as monuments for the 1,600 Danish sailors who died while sailing in Allied service and for those killed in the Danish Army and Navy.

Most important, however, is the execution site itself. Early in the morning, the prisoners were brought here from Vestre Fængsel (Western Prison) in central Copenhagen, tied to three wooden poles – with the rest of the condemned waiting – and executed by firing squad. A half-roof sheltered the execution platoon during rain.

Figure 2: The memorial stone at the execution site in Ryvangen. Photo by Gunhild Agger and Anker Gemzøe

The shot-scarred poles stood for many years on the site. They were replaced by bronze castings in 1967, when the original poles were moved to the Freedom Museum in Copenhagen.

The first stanza of Munk's "De Faldne" is engraved on a stone at the execution site. The stone is placed where the execution platoon would have stood, so that when reading the text, visitors are also confronted with a view of the three bronze poles.

As suggested, there are several explanations for this use of Munk's text two central places in the National Memorial Grove in Ryvangen. First, there is the suitability of the text as an inscription, with its concentrated, antithetic and gnomic character. Second, the author's own iconic status as one of the most famous victims of the oppressors during the Occupation certainly plays a role. Arne Sørensen's aforementioned important role in the establishment of Mindelunden may have also contributed to the choice of Munk's stanza for the main monument. They had, after all, been close friends: he had been entrusted with Munk's manuscript containing this poem and had later attended to its publication.

Memorial Stones

The first stanza of "De Faldne" was used not only at two places in the National Memorial Grove in Ryvangen, but also at memorials erected

on local initiative in several places throughout the country. Here, the first two of the above-mentioned reasons for using the text predominate, especially Kaj Munk's exceptional status both as a tireless instigator of resistance and as one of the most prominent victims in the freedom struggle.

At Randers Nordre Kirkegård, a local *Mindelunden* was unveiled soon after the war. The central memorial stone bears the inscription of the first stanza from Munk's "De Faldne."[20] The memorial commemorates eleven men killed for Denmark between 1940 and 1945. Five of the eleven were executed by German forces and most of the others died in direct confrontations with the occupiers. Randers and the nearby town of Langaa were nodal points on the railway line crossing Jutland and important targets of railway sabotage. In November 1943, three bridges at Langaa were blown up. Three of the young men buried here were executed after having participated in this epoch-making act of sabotage. This was the first mass execution during the Occupation in Denmark. The Memorial Grove also includes the grave of the Canadian airman J.R. Bradley, who was shot down near Randers.

Several years later, a memorial grove was opened at the execution site Skæring Hede (Skæring Heath), north of Aarhus. One side of the memorial stone bears the names of the executed and the inscription: "Kæmp for alt hvad du har kært." The other side displays the stanza followed by "Kaj Munk 1943/Henrettet 4.1.1944."

The sentence "Kæmp for alt hvad du har kær" is a quote from a poem/song by Christian Richardt (1831–1892), a canonised part of the Danish song tradition: "Altid frejdig, naar du gaar / Veie, Gud tør kende." It became one of the most widely used songs during the Occupation; the last stanza in particular became a kind of declaration of faith for freedom fighters:

> Kæmp for Alt hvad du har kjært,
> Dø, om saa det gælder,
> Da er Livet ej saa svært,
> Døden ikke heller.
> (Richardt 1961, 290)

Another memorial stone quoting the first stanza of Munk's "De Faldne" stands in Lendum, near Sindal in North Jutland. It was erected

20 Can be viewed at Straarup 2020.

Figure 3: The memorial stone at the execution site of Skæring Hede. Photo by Kim Ole Larsen

in memory of three local resistance fighters who lost their lives in a firefight on 3 May 1945. Here they have chosen or retained the form "i dybest Mulm." On the carved relief, a man with a plough and a man with a rifle shake hands, confirming the mutual understanding and acceptance between the unarmed and the armed resistance.

Further memorial stones for killed freedom fighters with Munk's stanza from "De Faldne," mostly erected shortly after the war, stand in Brøndbyøster, southwest of Copenhagen; Bisserup, Seeland, near Slagelse; Dalum, Funen, near Odense; Gjerlev, Jutland, North of Randers; Bjerregrav, north of Viborg; Hadsten, Eastern Jutland; Østre Kirkegaard, Sønderborg on the island of Als, Southern Jutland. There are probably

even more. The stanza has also been used on the memorial stone for two English airmen that stands in Brarup, on the island of Falster.[21] Though obviously not "blessed Danish boys," they are nonetheless blessed for having "lit a dawn" for Denmark through their efforts until death.

It is a common feature among many of the memorial stones that they in size and shape resemble runestones from the Viking Age. This is an especially obvious characteristic of the stone from Skæring Hede, whose form is closely reminiscent of the most famous of all Danish runestones, the big Jelling Stone, on which Harald Blåtand (911–985; King Herold Bluetooth) commemorated not only his father, King Gorm the Old and his mother, Thyra, called Danebod, but also the unification and Christianisation of Denmark during his own reign. The stone from Lendrup similarly alludes to earlier runestones, which frequently included reliefs (often figuring masks), both in shape and with its own prominent relief presenting a strange mixture of archaism and modern social realism. Such memorial stones are thus discreetly connected to the same national historical imaginary world that is alluded to in the last stanza of Munk's poem: "Hil jer da, Vikingesønner!"

Musical Revival and Echoing Memory

In later years, the Danish contributions to military engagements in Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan, which took the lives and limbs of a number of Danish soldiers, have in some ways revitalised this memorial poem. Martin Frendrup Krag Nielson, a Danish veteran who had i.a. served in Bosnia, visited Mindelunden in Ryvangen in 2016. Reading the first stanza of Munk's poem at the execution site, he was inspired to set it to music. He grew up in a family of musicians and had played the violin for many years. His mother Bente Frendrup Nielson, a highly acclaimed organist and concert pianist, wrote the sheet music for the melody.[22]

The project also involved Ole Rønnest, a retired forensic technician who has worked voluntarily for the British Commonwealth War Graves Commission since the 1980s, supervising and reporting on conditions at the many British war graves in Denmark, including airmen's graves from

21 Ole Rønnest (see later) in an e-mail from 30 June 30 2022 to Peter Øhrstrøm (Kaj Munk Forskningscentret, Aalborg). According to Rønnest, it is a unique case.

22 Ole Rønnest in an e-mail from 6 December 2019 to Peter Øhrstrøm.

Figure 4: The memorial for fallen resistance fighters in Brøndbyøster. To the right stands the sign with the QR code granting access to the "music video" of "De Faldne." Photo by Lisbeth Hollesen

World War II.[23] Through Ole Rønnest, the Kaj Munk Forskningscenter, represented by Peter Øhrstrøm, was consulted in order to make an informed choice of a suitable version of the poem, a process in which I also became involved.[24]

The project was completed in June 2022. "De Faldne," in the original version quoted above, recited by the composer Martin Frendrup Krag Nielson and accompanied by the melody in an atmospheric musical arrangement from Bente Frendrup Nielson, was recorded in a studio production by Bo Møller.[25] The spoken word and music are supported by a visual accompaniment of images of Munk's face and the Memorial Grove in Ryvangen that changes between stanzas. Information boards have now been erected by Naturstyrelsen (the Danish Nature Agency)

23 Ole Rønnest's e-mail from 30 June 30 2022 to Peter Øhrstrøm. Rønnest has published the book *Den dømte Eskadrille – en beretning om engelske flyvere der mødte skæbnen over Aalborg* (2006). There exists also an augmented English version, *Report of The Doomed Squadron and The Return of Blenheim R 3821* (2007).

24 I owe thanks to my friends and former partners at Kaj Munk Forskningscentret, especially to Peter Øhrstrøm. With his information in 2019, he was one of the animating forces for this article, and has been helpful all the way through.

25 Bo Møller died shortly after the production.

with a QR code that leads to the playing of the poem at the following memorial sites: Kaj Munk's Memorial in Hørbylunde Bakker, the memorial for Blichfeldt Møller in Hadsten, as well as the memorials at Randers Nordre Kirkegård, Skæring Hede, Hollandshus in Rold Skov, Sønderborg Østre Kirkegård and Brøndbyøster.

In its engraved form, "De Faldne" explores more dimensions than perhaps any other of Munk's resistance poems. Moreover, the stone inscriptions of the first stanza of his memorial poem have exerted a monumental influence on Danish memory culture in remembrance of the Occupation of Denmark during World War II. "De Faldne" strikes a nerve and has proved itself capable not only of survival, but also of revitalisation, supplemented by a musical dimension and transposed into relevant forms of communication for a digital age. This is an enrichment and a useful reminder in a posterity where, as time passes, we inherently become more and more removed from the events commemorated in the poem. This same passage of time can also change our own perspectives, creating circumstances that promote a new visibility and in turn bring about a need for technological innovations.

Yet regardless of the circumstances, the words of the short inscription have the power to draw us into the echoing remembrance of a writer who, unarmed, showed the same courage, and faced the same consequences as those whose deaths are commemorated here.

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