

The Cheerful Danes: Henry Clarke Barlow's 'Revelation of a Writing-Case' (1856) on Copenhagen

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Abstract

This article analyses two unpublished travel essays ('Revelations of a Writing-Case: At Copenhagen' and 'Revelations of a Writing-Case: Leaving Copenhagen') written by the British Dante scholar Henry Clarke Barlow (1806–1876) during his journey to Denmark and Sweden in 1856. Having explored the relationship between Barlow and Denmark and the context around the two manuscripts, this article considers the bases of Barlow's statement about the 'cheerful' Danes and examines his lively representation of public life in Copenhagen. What makes the Danes 'cheerful' in 1856 Copenhagen according to Barlow? The article also argues that in order to answer this question we need to move beyond the content of the essays and their possible classification as travel writing about Scandinavia and reflect on their history as archival objects.

Keywords

travel literature, Copenhagen, happiness, archives, culture

‘[L]oquacious, cheerful hearted citizens’ (Barlow 1856b):¹ this characterisation of the Danes living in Copenhagen is not taken from one of the United Nation’s *World Happiness Reports* where Denmark has occupied one of the top three positions between 2013 and 2017 (Helliwell, Layard, and Sachs);² it is an almost two-hundred-year-old quote from one of the two unpublished travel essays, namely ‘Revelations of a Writing-Case: At Copenhagen’ and ‘Revelations of a Writing-Case: Leaving Copenhagen’, written by the Dante scholar Henry Clarke Barlow (1806–1876) while visiting Copenhagen as part of his journey to Denmark and Sweden in 1856. Having explored the relationship between Barlow and Denmark and the context around the two manuscripts, this article considers the bases of Barlow’s statement about the ‘cheerful’ Danes and examines his lively representation of public life in Copenhagen.³

Like Ahmed explains, the increasing scholarly interest in definitions of happiness, the so-called ‘Happiness Turn’, is, among other things, due to the fact that happiness is seen as a way to measure progress (Ahmed 2010: 2, 4–5). In today’s *World Happiness Report*, ‘happiness’ is anchored in the high standards of living deriving from the social structures supported by the country’s welfare state. The parameters of the reports thus focus on evaluative happiness (i.e. general life satisfaction) rather than affective happiness (i.e. a feeling of joy at a specific moment) (Oxfeldt, Nestingen, and Simonsen 2017: 429–430). The foundations for long-term happiness appear to reside in the equality and social solidarity at the heart of the Nordic welfare model, characterised by the comprehensive and universal nature of the provision of welfare benefits mostly provided by the public sector, financed by general taxation and seen as integrally essential for economic growth and high standard of living (Esping-Andersen 1990; Hilson 2008). This does not mean to say that the welfare state is able to erase all inequalities or that national spending levels devoted to public welfare programmes should be used as sole measurements of the effects of the welfare state on society (Radcliff 2013: 115–116). Rather, as recent studies have highlighted, it emphasises that it is ‘the degree of decommodification a welfare state provides, not the amount of money it spends, that produces the positive consequences

in security, agency, and the provision of other human needs' that can better help us measure levels of happiness (Radcliff 2013: 116). While we clearly cannot talk of a comprehensive welfare state in nineteenth-century Denmark, this article explores to what extent, according to Barlow, the provision of certain welfare benefits is at the core of the Danes' cheerfulness in 1856 Copenhagen. Does happiness equate to progress in Barlow's texts? How does this cheerfulness affect the Danes' lives as well as Barlow's own perceptions of Denmark and the Danes?

On the one hand, Barlow's essays should be considered within the context of the nineteenth-century trend which saw the Scandinavian countries become an increasingly popular destination for British travellers in search of less trodden paths leading them away from the Grand Tourists of Southern Europe and closer to a sublime nature (Fjågesund 2014: 382–386) (see also Roos' contribution in this issue). From the 1830s onwards Scandinavia and Iceland also became more accessible thanks to the development of public transport and the introduction mid-century of regular passenger ships across the North Sea and to Denmark (Fjågesund 2014: 382). Scandinavia became fashionable both as a destination and as the topic of travel literature with the majority (50%) of travel accounts about the region being written by British travellers (Fjågesund 2014: 383). On the other hand, the content of Barlow's essays on Copenhagen appears to diverge from some of the most recurrent traits of British travel literature on Scandinavia for three main reasons: they centre on a city and city life at a time when many travel accounts on the North tend to focus on rural areas (Fjågesund 2014: 385–386); they single out Denmark at a time when many travellers were mostly drawn to Norway, Sweden and Iceland, which could more readily offer the 'opposite of what was typically on the menu of the Grand Tourist', namely 'unharnessed natural scenery' (Fjågesund 2014: 385); and they represent Denmark and the Danes in a positive light and Copenhagen as 'a learned and scientific capital' (Barlow 1856b: 1), putting aside the tensions between Denmark and Great Britain which, following the Napoleonic Wars, continued long after the official peace treaties between the two countries (Glenthøj and Ottosen 2014: 49–53, 137, 207, 253).

The Denmark of the early nineteenth century seemed far from reaching the political and territorial stability of today. Copenhagen was partially destroyed by several fires, the last and most devastating one in 1795. Moreover, following Denmark's involvement in the Napoleonic Wars and alliance with Napoleon, Copenhagen was also affected by two major military conflicts: the so-called Battle of Copenhagen of 1801, when the British fleet attacked the city following trade tensions, and the bombardment of Copenhagen in 1807, a combined land and sea attack to seize the city and capture the Danish fleet, supposedly to pre-empt a French plan to use this for a descent on Ireland (Munch-Petersen 2007: 97). After the Napoleonic Wars, Denmark suffered a big territorial loss when the country's fear of losing Norway to Sweden materialised in 1814: as part of the Peace of Kiel, Frederik VI was obliged to cede Norway to the King of Sweden (Glenthøj and Ottosen 2014: 207). These politically challenging events contributed, however, to a paradigm shift in the first half of the nineteenth century, which eventually led to a process of modernisation and 'cultural re-orientation' ahead of the country's industrialisation in the second half of the century (Steiner 2014: 1-2). This 're-orientation', later referred to as a 'Golden Age', involved not only the physical reconstruction of Copenhagen but also a period of intense production of culture which supported the country's growing nationalism (Steiner 2014: 39). By the time Denmark obtained its Constitution in 1849, the country was on the path to democratisation as it was no longer an absolute monarchy. Several scholars have also shown that the period between 1770 and 1840 'signalled a decisive break with the living standard of earlier periods' also connected to a decline in illiteracy and expansion of popular education (Boje 1986: 173, 175; Larsen 2017). As Steiner points out, this does not mean that differences in society had been eradicated as a large part of the population continued to live in poverty (Steiner 2014: 22-23). To what extent were the signs of this 're-orientation' picked up by Barlow in his essays? Was this what, according to Barlow, contributed to the Danes' cheerfulness?

Before analysing Barlow's manuscripts and the representation of Copenhagen they convey, I will start by reflecting on the form of these 'fragments', a term used by Stephen Greenblatt to refer to the

'microhistories of "displaced" things and persons', namely all the stories and instances that we then use to make history, to create a coherent 'grand narrative' (Greenblatt 2010: 16–17). I will also consider the extent to which the study concerning this article is part of a growing interest in archives and, more specifically, in university museums and collections. What is the function of these collections today? There is no doubt that, using Walter Benjamin's terms, archival material offers the researcher the 'aura' of the object, the lure of 'originality' through the analysis of 'previously unexamined material' (Freshwater 2003: 732), but is this the only reason these fragments should feature in teaching and research? To what extent does reflecting on the history of Barlow's essays as archival objects help us understand the representation of Copenhagen they provide?

Defining the Archival Fragments

The unearthing of Barlow's essays on Copenhagen was due to what we might call an interest in the archive itself, particularly what Stoler refers to as the shift 'from archive-as-source to archive-as-subject' (Stoler 2010: 44). Stoler suggests that this shift should at least partially be attributed to the increase of multidisciplinary research on the archive which has emphasised new perspectives. She goes so far as to argue that

"the archive" for historians and "the Archive" for cultural theorists have been wholly different analytical objects: for the former, a body of documents and the institutions that house them, for the latter, a metaphoric invocation for any corpus of selective collections and the longings that the acquisitive quests for the primary, originary and untouched entail (Stoler 2010: 45).

In line with Stoler's argument, my interest in the Barlow Papers was not the result of research on an already pre-determined topic but of an almost random search of what materials and topics the archive itself would offer when looking for anything in UCL Special Collections with a Scandinavian connection. Barlow's essays, together with other materials

discovered using the same criteria, were first used in connection with a teaching project which was later transformed into a research project.⁴ In other words, both projects should be seen in light of the growing interest in the centrality of the archive which has developed in the last twenty years. As Manoff points out in her exploration of the theoretical formulations of the archive, Jacques Derrida's seminal work *Archive Fever* (1995) played a key role in theorising this revived interest by emphasising 'the contingent nature of the archive', namely 'the way it is shaped by social, political, and technological forces', as well as the role it plays in shaping history and memory (Derrida 1995: 16–17; Manoff 2004: 12).

University collections such as the UCL Special Collections constitute a particular type of archive which, historically, has gone through different stages: an expansion phase from the eighteenth century to the early twentieth century where collection-based research and teaching were widely recognised as indispensable; a period of marginalisation during the twentieth century where that connection between collections, research and teaching was partially lost; a period of revival from the end of the twentieth century where the university collections are rediscovered as material heritage with cultural significance (Ludwig and Weber 2013: 652–653). Today there are roughly 400 higher education museums, galleries and collections in the UK (Arnold-Forster and Mirchandani 2001: 47) and several reports and projects on university collections show how these are the ideal means to bring teaching, research and public engagement together.

The UCL Special Collections are a fairly typical university collection, made up of bequests and donations that often came from people connected to UCL from 1829 onwards. The Barlow Papers are the result of Barlow's own original bequest of 1876 during what we can call, in Ludwig and Weber's terms, the Collection's expansion phase. In addition to his library, which included several editions of *La Divina Commedia* (the *Divine Comedy*), and 'a fund for the endowment of public lectures on Dante', Barlow bequeathed to UCL papers, such as manuscripts and notes, relating to his published and unpublished work on Dante or other topics of his interest as well as papers relating to his journeys (Flaxman Gallery 1995: 1). The latter include several

travel journals and essays which he compiled while travelling through Europe for his Dante research.

In their *The Intimate Archive*, Dever, Newman and Vickery emphasise that the general terms we often use to refer to the documents assembled within the archive ('archival material', 'papers' or 'collections') hide their heterogeneity (Dever et al. 2004: 3). The Barlow Papers are, for instance, a mixture of public and private documents including published work but also private notes and essays that never reached or were, at least ostensibly, not meant to reach the public sphere. The researcher sifting through these Papers thus ends up perusing and reporting 'on the details of private lives made public by virtue of their preservation within an archive' (Dever et al. 2009: 24). To overcome this tension between 'private lives and public scrutiny', the researcher needs to consider 'how individuals are constituted by, but also negotiate, social identity' while also reflecting the context in which the archive is constructed (Dever et al. 2-3, 10-11). What I will be investigating in the second part of this article is thus the private relationship between an individual, i.e. Barlow, and Denmark (particularly Copenhagen), while at the same time placing the two essays into broader cultural contexts in order to understand their functions and cultural significance. The Barlow essays on Copenhagen fall in-between the categories of public and private and could therefore be labelled as public private documents. Like his travelogues on Denmark and Sweden, they remained unpublished, but one cannot exclude that they were written with an audience in mind.⁵ There are, in fact, other examples in his Papers of notes and observations from his journeys that, while unpublished, were intended for publication, possibly as letters to a newspaper like the *Morning Post* – a conservative daily newspaper published in London between 1772 and 1937 – to which Barlow contributed in the 1850s and 1860s with a range of topics (Flaxman Gallery 1995: 2). It is also worth restating that Barlow donated his papers to UCL himself and was therefore aware of the fact that they would be preserved in an archive. Letters from Barlow to Charles Atkinson, Secretary to the Council of London University College, show that his donation had been planned already in 1865 and resulted in his will of 1867 (Flaxman Gallery 1995: 6).

The hybridity of the form of Barlow's essays emerges particularly in the second essay 'On Leaving Copenhagen', where Barlow makes a direct reference to an audience:

Before closing, for the present, our account with Copenhagen and wending our way farther North, it behoves the Writing Case to say before its interested listeners, a few further details of this lively metropolis and its loquacious, cheerful hearted citizens (Barlow 1856b).

We are not given more details about who these generic 'listeners' might be, but it is clear from the essays themselves that Barlow is presenting Copenhagen to those back home. In his essays, he appears to combine a nineteenth-century scientific interest for lesser known peoples and places with an 'eighteenth-century enthusiasm for sentimentalism' as he enriches his own impressions and perceptions with information (Thompson 2019: 111, 114–115). The essays comprise details on the topography of Copenhagen and references to notable buildings and places such as 'The King's New Market' and its buildings (to which a long section of the first essay is dedicated), 'The Church of Our Lady' with 'Thorvaldsen's celebrated figures of Christ and the twelve Apostles', Tivoli and 'Nikolaj Tower' (which concludes the second essay) (Barlow 1856a; Barlow 1856b). These references and descriptions are combined with observations on places of interest for scholars like Barlow himself, namely the three libraries, and reflections on the customs of the Danes which seem based on anecdotal evidence (such as his own experience of Kongens Nytorv, his witnessing of a baptism and of the Danes' Sunday customs). This combination of factual details and reflections is what makes up these 'fragments' (Greenblatt 2010: 16–17). Like Derrida in relation to the concept of the archive, Greenblatt points out the importance of '*contingentia*' in the study of culture and history, as the 'fragments' are not part of a historically ordained destiny but of 'connections between unexpected times and places' and thus remind us that culture is not fixed or predetermined (Greenblatt 2010: 16–17).

The connection between Barlow, a Dante scholar, and Copenhagen – which led to the two essays dealt with in this article – is, in Greenblatt's

terms, an ‘unexpected’ one. Barlow spent most of his life writing, particularly on Dante, travelling and collecting. The only child of lower-middle-class parents who supported him and his studies, he developed an eclectic interest in the arts, medicine (in which he obtained his degree in 1837) and geology (Lindon 1988: 47–48; Flaxman Gallery 1995: 1). As many of his contemporaries, following the Grand Tour tradition, he travelled and spent time in the South of Europe and particularly in Italy. He undertook his first tour of the continent in 1840 and discovered Dante’s work while in Pisa in 1844–1845. For the rest of his life, Barlow combined his newly found love for Dante with his taste for travel by specialising in the examination of manuscripts of the *Divine Comedy*. Barlow championed, in fact, a textual approach: only by consulting as many manuscripts as possible could one decide on controversial points in the text (Lindon 1988: 52). This comparative work culminated in his *Critical, Historical, and Philosophical Contributions to the Study of the Divine Comedy* (1864), which made reference to more than 150 manuscripts consulted in five different countries (Lindon 1988: 49). While in Copenhagen Barlow visited Det kongelige bibliotek (the Royal Library) to examine the two Dante *codici* kept there. It was therefore his quest for Dante manuscripts that brought him to Denmark and Sweden and not the nineteenth-century drive northward in search of alternative destinations following two centuries of Grand Tour tradition (Fjågesund and Symes 2003: 39). His original motivation for his visit to Copenhagen, I argue, may be behind the different perspective his essays offer on the city and its inhabitants.

Denmark’s Place in the North

In the second half of the eighteenth century and first half of the nineteenth century, the majority of foreign travellers embarked to Scandinavia for its wild nature, in contrast with the cultural journeys to the South (Fjågesund 2014: 385; Barton 1996: 1–2). As Fjågesund argues:

they did *not* come to the North in order to study the great achievements of European civilisation; they were not Grand

Tourists looking for palaces and cathedrals drawn by ingenious architects; and they did not come in order to admire galleries and libraries as reservoirs of man's most advanced aesthetic and philosophical endeavours (Fjågesund 2014: 385).

Denmark occupied a special place within this trend as it did not share the natural characteristics that fascinated the nineteenth-century British traveller who was looking to experience the Far North, the Arctic region. If Norway and Iceland were seen as regions that created a geographical as well as cultural link between the deserted or almost deserted Arctic and the rest of the North, Denmark, with its cultural and geopolitical attachment to the rest of the continent, functioned as a physical and metaphorical bridge between the North and the South (Kassis 2016: 236-238; Kliemann-Geisinger 2007: 82).

However, as Barton points out in his comparative analysis of foreign travel accounts on Scandinavia at the end of the eighteenth century, even if certain general trends in the way the Scandinavian region was represented can be observed, accounts still varied widely and often contradicted each other (Barton 1996: 2-3). The perspective of the traveller depended, in fact, on a number of factors, including 'their nationality, their previous travels, the routes they followed, and not the least the years in which they wrote' (Barton 1996: 3). The liminal space occupied by Denmark and Copenhagen was therefore interpreted by travellers in different ways. In the years prior to the Napoleonic Wars and the big fire of 1795, Copenhagen 'could not fail to impress': as the capital of the Danish Empire, it was regarded as an important European capital though, for some travellers, not displaying the same sophistication and progress as a city like London (Barton 1996: 5; Barton 1998: 29-30). *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* (1796) by Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) - a publication that, with its exaltation of the experience of a harmonic rural North with Scandinavian peasants as noble savages, came to be representative of what to expect from a journey to the North - presents a very different view of Denmark and particularly Copenhagen (Fjågesund 2014: 299-300). While Wollstonecraft praises the sublime nature of the landscapes of Norway and Sweden, she

finds Denmark, and particularly the city of Copenhagen, out of tune with the rest of the North. As Steiner points out, Wollstonecraft sees Copenhagen as

squeezed in between the sublime natural sceneries she has experienced in rural Scandinavia (against which the urban culture of Copenhagen is seen as artificial, superficial, and high-flown) and the metropolitan life of London (against which Copenhagen is an inferior provincial city lacking outlook and civilisation) (Steiner 2011).

While her experience of Copenhagen was affected by the destruction left by the fire which destroyed large parts of the capital the year before her journey, she uses the physical state of ruin of the city as a metaphor of the deprived state of its inhabitants as she writes that 'public spirit appears to me to be hardly alive here' and that '[t]he men of business are domestic tyrants, coldly immersed in their own affairs, and so ignorant of the state of other countries, that they dogmatically assert that Denmark is the happiest country in the world' (Steiner 2011; Wollstonecraft 1889: 150, 152).

Barlow's unpublished representation of Copenhagen written exactly sixty years after Wollstonecraft's presents the city and its inhabitants in a much more positive light and appears to have more in common with *A Residence in Jutland, the Danish Isles and Copenhagen* by the British travel writer Horace Marryat (1818–1887). In his analysis of Victorian travellers' fascination for the North, Dimitrios Kassis states that, unlike other nineteenth-century travel accounts focusing on the rural nature and the virtues of the Scandinavian peasants, Marryat's book from 1860 focuses on Danish cultural life, representing Denmark as 'an Arcadian society whose landscape may not possess the attractions of other Nordic countries, such as Iceland and Norway, but its increasing patriotism, remarkable literacy and affluent state provide the country with a distinct identity' (Kassis 2016: 259). In Barlow's essays Copenhagen acquires the status of an alternative destination situated between the natural Far North and the cultured continental Europe and, as I will explore in the next section, the 'cheerfulness' of

its inhabitants is not just an innate characteristic but one that derives from the education and culture provision available to them.

Barlow's Copenhagen

Travelling to destinations such as Norway and Iceland required, as Fjågesund and Symes put it, 'an individual effort and an acceptance of toil and hardship' given the nature of the territories themselves. It was this hardship that set the traveller apart from the tourist (Fjågesund and Symes 2003: 48). Barlow starts the account of his arrival in Copenhagen with a description of his journey. This is not a dramatic one where the traveller is at the mercy of violent natural phenomena and sea monsters, but a complex one where the traveller moves from one means of transport to the other (first the steamer, then the train and finally the drosky) (Fjågesund and Symes 2003: 339). In Barlow's representation, the danger to the traveller in this case does not come from nature but from modernity as he describes the horse-drawn omnibuses filled with 'lively occupants going to the places of evening amusement' rushing through the streets of Copenhagen and putting other vehicles at risk (Barlow 1856a).

Despite – or possibly because of – the metropolitan character of the city, the overall image of Copenhagen given in Barlow's account is a very positive one: the city is referred to as 'picturesque', but also as 'busy', 'cheerful' and 'pleasant' (Barlow 1956a). Although smaller than other European capitals, Copenhagen is, in Barlow's view, still a 'capital', a 'metropolis' and a 'city' (Barlow 1956a; Barlow 1956b). This becomes particularly clear in Barlow's depiction of Kongens Nytorv – translated in his essay as 'The King's New Market' – which, founded in 1670, was part of King Christian V's (1646–1699) plan to give the capital a new city centre. Here Barlow portrays the constant flow of people crossing this square arriving and leaving from the twelve streets pouring into it. 'People of every sort of honest calling' – which in Barlow's account includes 'groups of gaily dressed fashionable women [...] with quantities of pretty children', 'staid men of business', 'smart officers, soldiers, sailors, students' and 'armigers' – pass through the square keeping the balance of what Barlow calls the city's 'moving map'

(Barlow 1856a). In this opening passage, Barlow is clearly picking up on how densely populated Copenhagen had become. The population of the capital grew increasingly throughout the nineteenth century, going from a figure of 100,000 in 1800 to 150,000 in 1850 (Hall 1997: 181; Steiner 2014: 22). While he emphasises that ‘all persons and things’ cross the city centre, Barlow appears to be focusing in his description on representatives from the so-called ‘cultured classes’, even though this group only made up a relatively small part of the population compared to the number of people who lived in poorer conditions (Bjørn 1990: 86–89; Steiner 2014: 22).

As in the case of Kongens Nytorv, places are generally used to present images of Danish society but also, where possible, introduce connections and comparisons between Denmark and Great Britain. The cemeteries in Copenhagen and their ‘sobriety’ are, according to Barlow, testimony of the Danes’ ‘loving remembrance of those who are no more’ and of how ‘the union of families, separated by death, the connections of kindness, the ties of friendship, and the merits of the brave [...] enter into thoughts of their daily life’ (Barlow 1856a). Barlow attempts to support his observations by narrating his visit to a tumulus raised to the memory of the Danish officers who fell during the Battle of Copenhagen on 2 April 1801. Writing about his guide, a retired Danish Captain, he states:

But though the “Battle of Copenhagen” was so disastrous to the Danes, yet along with his countrymen he bore the English no ill will, but on the contrary, he seemed to love his old former enemies as himself and the courtesies and entertainments we received at his hands, were carried to the account of our own country (Barlow 1856a).

Besides illustrating the moral conduct of the Danes, this anecdote partially addresses in this manner the thorny issue of the tumultuous past between Denmark and Britain. As mentioned in the introduction, the British attacks of Copenhagen in 1801 and 1807 as well as the following Danish-British conflict between 1807 and 1814 after the alliance of Denmark with Napoleon, which ultimately resulted in

Denmark's defeat and its loss of Norway, complicated Danish-British relations for the first half of the nineteenth century (Kassis 2016: 236). The conflict made Denmark inaccessible during the years of the war and, as Kassis points out, discouraged 'a romanticisation of the Danish nation' and resulted in 'the projection of Denmark as a despotic country' (Kassis 2016: 236; see also Barton 1998: 172-175). While from an architectural perspective, Copenhagen may not be as impressive as other European capitals, its vitality is. It is exactly this vitality that, in Barlow's account, is representative of Denmark's ability to develop and move on, not just from an urban perspective but also from a moral one as the Danes have been able to put aside their ill feelings for the role Great Britain played in the capital's destruction and the shrinking of the country's borders.

The Cheerful Dane

The adjective 'cheerful' plays a central role in Barlow's essays as it is attributed on more than one occasion to both Copenhagen as a whole and its inhabitants. While the cheerful Dane may initially bear resemblance to the concept of the honest, hospitable, moral and free 'noble savage', often used to depict the Norwegian character, there is one key difference between the two. Similarly to the noble savages of the North, innocence and good behaviour, particularly in the form of honesty and hospitality, are initially described as a natural characteristic typical of these 'creatures of nature' (Fjågesund and Symes 2003: 162). Writing about his first-hand experience of the baptism of 'seven infant Danes', Barlow remarks on how 'the quiet little creatures behaved extremely well' (Barlow 1856a). He then adds:

The muchness of these seven little Danes, contrasted with the usual obstreperousness of the infant Briton and Gaul on like occasions, seemed remarkable, and might, perhaps, be taken as an indication of the natural docility of the Danish character, for, as all travellers know, a better behaved people is not to be found in Europe (Barlow 1856a).

Their good behaviour, just like their special closeness to nature, is something the Danes appear to be born with (Barlow 1856a).⁶ However, unlike their cousins farther north, the Danes do not display a 'simplicity' in cultural matters (Fjågesund and Symes 2003: 172). The 'Christian principles' that 'the children of the poor as well as of the rich are weaved in' are also only part of the explanation behind the Danes' disposition and behaviour (Barlow 1856b). For the cheerful Dane happiness derives primarily from knowledge and education: 'Religion, science and art all assist in their weekly training, the effect of which is seen in their well behaved, orderly, and humane conduct, their high moral feelings, their courtesy, kindness, candour, and good faith' (Barlow 1856a).

In his essays, Barlow remarks on several occasions the centrality of culture in Danish society, observing that, thanks to this, even 'the poorest people have plenty to talk about' (Barlow 1856b). While he does not make any direct references to the country's educational system based on Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig's (1783–1872) pedagogical ideas about the dissemination of education – an aspect that Marryat develops in his travel book in 1860 – Barlow praises cultural practices that give as many people as possible access to the educational system (Kassis 2016: 255–256). The Danish School Acts of 1814, which decreed that all children should have at least seven years of schooling, played an important role in the establishment of 'den danske folkeskole' (the Danish public school) (Larsen 2017: 5). While they did not wipe out major separating factors which caused differences in access to school education in Danish society, the Acts 'demonstrated a desire to make schools part of state business for which the government took responsibility' and 'issued guidelines for nearly all the conditions in a school, from personnel and curricula to buildings and discipline' (Larsen 2017: 4).⁷ They also acknowledged that 'the public school system should extend knowledge beyond the Christian scriptures' and that 'school should play a more important role in the lives of all children' (Larsen 2017: 9). Ultimately schools should 'udbrede sand Religjøsitet og fremkalde borgerlige Dyder' (disseminate true religiosity and promote good citizenship) through a combination of subjects that went beyond Christianity and included,

for instance, reading, writing, arithmetic and gymnastics (Larsen 2017: 11). This attitude towards education was very different from that to which scholars like Barlow were used to in Victorian Britain, where the disposition, as stated by Kassis, remained highly elitist and appeared to be 'attached to a system seeking to promote the values of the Empire rather than concentrate on the humane aspect of education' (Kassis 2016: 255).

Barlow admires the practice of opening public museums after the morning service on Sundays 'for the instruction and amusement of the people' (Barlow 1856a). Resorts are also available for the entertainment of different social groups: 'the Tivoli gardens', the amusement park and pleasure garden opened in 1843, is, according to Barlow, the 'most popular place of evening amusement in Copenhagen for the middle & working classes' and 'is enormously crowded' (Barlow 1856a). In his second essay, Barlow makes a point of describing the city's university and public libraries, including their cataloguing systems. These are all places which, due to his researches, he made use of, but that also support his underlying argument that the key to happiness and harmony is access to culture and education. It is ultimately culture that makes Copenhagen a worthy destination for foreign travellers and one that goes beyond picturesque landscapes. Copenhagen – Barlow concludes – is:

a lively little capital, one of the best kept, and cleanest and sweetest in Europe, well paved, well lighted, well supplied with elegant shops, with Restaurants, Cafés, and Conditori, and all their customary attractions, it is yet a learned and a scientific capital, admirably well furnished with scientific men savans, archaeologists, artists, and men of letters (Barlow 1856b: 1).

Happiness is Access to Culture

Reflecting on the implications for future research posed by the growing interest in archives, Manhoff states that 'archival discourse provides a place to enter the debate about changes in knowledge-making practices' (Manoff 2004: 21). Barlow's fragments on Copenhagen are a

clear example of this as they present a less explored perspective on the Danish capital in the middle of the nineteenth century. While written during a period of growing fascination towards Scandinavia, they are not directly representative of a rejection of the beaten track of the Grand Tour but a consequence of his draw to the South, particularly Italy and Dante. Barlow's comparative textual approach to Dante Studies at least partially dictates his itinerary as he is forced to travel to Copenhagen in order to see two manuscripts and, as a scholar carrying out research, he pays particular attention to the cultural provision of the city and its accessibility to locals and foreigners.

The fact that the motivation behind Barlow's journey diverges from that of other British travellers to Scandinavia in the nineteenth century does not mean that his essays should be analysed in isolation: Barlow does indeed make reference to some of the recurrent themes (the Scandinavian's love for nature, the complex Anglo-Danish relations in the nineteenth century). It does however also partially explain why his perspective appears to be open to aspects often disregarded by other travelogues of the time. Having put aside the dramatic historical events of the beginning of the century, according to Barlow Denmark and particularly the urban spaces of Copenhagen are represented as an alternative to the Far North. Copenhagen is an accessible modern city buzzing with life and the Danes are modern renaissance people who have developed into a balanced and well-organised society with an interest in all disciplines thanks to their approach to cultural dissemination. While Barlow's essays make some reference to social differences within Copenhagen's society (namely the middle classes, the working classes), he has a tendency to represent the Danes as a rather homogeneous society. Himself a member of the middle class, Barlow takes little account of the lower classes and no account of those marginalised by society altogether. Like today's *World Happiness Reports* he does, however, not fail to acknowledge that welfare and long-term happiness are generated by making welfare benefits as comprehensive and universal as possible.

With his references to museums, libraries and universities, Barlow offers not only a representation of the dynamics of public life in nineteenth-century Denmark seen by a British traveller; he also

comments, as I do in my study, on the important role that archives and access to them play in the production of culture and dissemination of education.

Endnotes

¹ This quote features at the beginning of Barlow's second essay, 'Revelations of a Writing-Case: On Leaving Copenhagen' (Barlow 1856b).

² In the World Happiness Report Denmark ranked at the top in 2013 and 2016, in second place in 2017 and in third place in 2015 (Helliwell et al. 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017).

³ During his Scandinavian journey, in addition to the two essays analysed in this article Barlow also wrote an unpublished travel journal called Denmark and Sweden in the Summer of 1856. Of a third essay on Copenhagen's museums we only have the title as Barlow never completed it. All manuscripts are part of the Barlow Papers, kept at UCL Special Collections.

⁴ A short outline of this teaching project ('Scandinavian Collections: Joint Danish and Norwegian Languages Classes in the UCL Art Museum') can be found in Fung 2017: 129.

⁵ The tension between public and private documents in eighteenth and nineteenth century travel writing was not uncommon as even ostensibly private travel letters were at times written and edited with the intention of being published (Barton 1996: 3).

⁶ In his essay, Barlow writes that the Danes 'love the woods as their native home, possibly inheriting this feeling from their primitive ancestors' (Barlow 1856a).

⁷ Among the separating factors, Larsen mentions the following: where the children came from (towns or countryside), social class and gender. Differences involved the number of school days as well as the choice of subjects available to the pupils (Larsen 2017: 4-5).

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