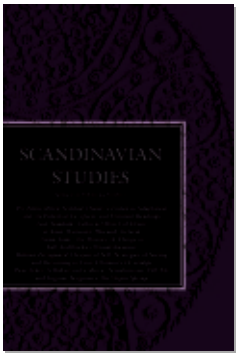
The Power of the Periphery: How Norway Became an Environmental Pioneer for the World by Peder Anker (review)



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> and formality; the *Guthlac A* poet, in contrast, wishes to draw attention to the transitions in his poem, while still creating a character with authentic speech patterns whose words hold power over the devils who attempt to persecute him; and the *Exodus* poet saves his hypermetric passage until the end, where it can stand apart from the rest of the poem and immortalize the story the poet is trying to tell in totem. (p. 51)

The countless small observations on Old Germanic metrics and syntax show that Hartman has full command of three traditions: Old English, Old Norse (with its stanzaic form), and Old Saxon (with its countless anacruses and other individual features). Her conclusions cannot be verified but always make sense. Quite naturally, she looked on the poems as texts. However, the poets could well be (inwardly) singing some lines to themselves in the process of composition. Perhaps some verses lent themselves especially well to such a process and recitation suggested lengthening. This is, of course, pure guesswork.

To conclude: those who will pick up where Hartman left off will find a foundational work on an intricate problem of Old Germanic poetic metrics, syntax, and style. Her erudition and attention to detail guarantee the success of the book, especially because given the state of the art, her weaknesses were probably unavoidable.

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■ Peder Anker. *The Power of the Periphery: How Norway Became an Environmental Pioneer for the World*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xiii + 285.

Popular impressions of the Norwegian relationship to nature tend to be simplistic, derived either from popular reporting on Norwegian environmental policy, or from the images of Norwegian mountain and fjord landscapes promoted by the tourist industry. In both instances, Norway is portrayed as offering something unique to the world due to its exceptional landscape and culture of nature appreciation. The title of Peder Anker's *The Power of the Periphery: How Norway Became an Environmental Pioneer for the World* gives the impression that the author will provide a historically grounded account of Norwegian environmental exceptionalism. However, it soon becomes apparent that Anker's actual aim is to expose the notion of "the power of the periphery" as a national narrative that has, at best, failed to deliver on its utopian vision and, at worst, exempted Norwegian environmental policy from scrutiny—scrutiny that was particularly warranted as the nation became wealthier due to the growth of the oil and gas industry.

Currently a professor at New York University, Anker focuses on the history of science, environmentalism, and environmental philosophy. *The Power of the Periphery* is Anker's first book-length presentation of the history of his home country for an English-language audience. He mentions the "receptive audience" Norwegian environmental thinkers have met abroad (p. 4), and it seems plausible that this impression is based at least in part on the reception Anker has received in his field, and the perceptions of Norway he has observed among colleagues and students.

With this international audience in mind, Anker has produced an account that is both informative and corrective. The book focuses on the history of environmentalism and environmental thought in Norway over 30 years, "beginning with the translation of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* into Norwegian in 1962 and ending with Norwegian scholars attending the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992" (p. 5). Mainly organized chronologically, the book begins with a brief account of earlier contributors to the notion of the "power of the periphery," such as the anthropologist Fredrik Barth, "adventurer" Thor Heyerdahl, and archaeologists Helge Ingstad and Anne Stine Ingstad. Anker devotes a chapter to the arrival of ecological sciences in Norway, explaining how the "steady-state" theory of ecology and the commitment to outdoor life (*friluftsliv*) informed early ecologists' research and political engagement. This sets the stage for the central chapters of the book, which present the history of the Deep Ecology movement, focusing on central figures such as Arne Næss, Sigmund Kvaløy Setreng, and Nils Faarlund. This period is characterized by the intellectual conflict between this circle, for whom the impending eco-crisis demanded a profound re-evaluation of social and environmental values (chaps. 3–5), and the managerial approach of Jørgen Randers, the co-author of the internationally acclaimed *The Limits to Growth* of 1972 (the key actor in chaps. 6–7). Randers's ideas would later prove influential for Norwegian policy, including the concept of "sustainable development," which was central to the climate policy proposals of Gro Harlem Brundtland and Jens Stoltenberg. Chapters 8–9 focus on these actors in the context of the Labor Party's energy policy, known as "power-socialism," and its conflicts with environmentalism, as well as the role of Norway on the global stage, as Deep Ecology rose to (and fell from) prominence in the United States, and Norway positioned itself as a "pioneer country" in addressing climate change. Anker's account is based on a wide variety of popular and scholarly writings, archival sources, and oral history, and he acknowledges personal familiarity with the people, places, and institutions in his account (pp. xi, xiii). The intellectual developments of the period are helpfully contextualized within the environmental protest

movements (including the nonviolent direct actions against the Mardøla and Alta-Kautokeino hydropower developments) and political concerns of the time (the Cold War, the European Community referendum). It is at times surprising that some of the conflicts described are 50 years old because their current relevance is obvious: swap acid rain for carbon emissions, or hydroelectric projects for oil pipelines, and the actors and positions are strikingly familiar.

"Periphery" does not serve as a robust theoretical term in Anker's account, but rather describes a distinctively Norwegian ideology in which distance from the forces of industrialization, globalization, and urbanization is viewed positively, and it is assumed that this position affords Norway a more ethical and harmonious relationship with the environment that must be shared abroad. The scholar-activists whom Anker describes imagined the mountains of Norway as a microcosm that could serve as a model for the national macrocosm, and in turn, the nation could serve as a model for the world (pp. 4, 239). Anker is an engaging storyteller, vividly portraying the scholar-activists of this period, including their ideals, ambitions, follies, and quarrels.

Although the central thesis that frames Anker's work is clear, there are also implied arguments about the role of environmentalism in the institutional and political landscape of the time. For example, Anker explains how, in the context of the Cold War, Deep Ecologists attempted to provide an "alternative direction . . . other than communism and consumer capitalism," a vision embraced by both the University of Oslo (p. 81) and the Church of Norway (p. 138). Another example is Anker's claim that the focus on mountain environments in ecology research and ecophilosophy led to the prioritization of this environment over others, such as the ocean, even as environmental threats to the latter grew (pp. 214–6). The account of Deep Ecologists often comes across as a cautionary tale regarding interdisciplinary research (e.g., their failure to update their understanding of ecology from the "steady-state" model [pp. 102–3]) and the negative effects of a culture of exclusivity on scholarship (pp. 106–17). These broader implications could have been given more attention in the book; without a clear understanding of the stakes of Anker's argument, non-Norwegian audiences may lose patience with the more detailed accounts of the inner bureaucratic workings of Norwegian institutions.

Although Anker's account has obvious value for the history of science and environmental policy in Norway, *The Power of the Periphery* has relevance for other fields as well. For example, Anker's account of the prevailing environmentalist views of the period might aid literary scholars in considering how this cultural context informed the work of

environmentally engaged writers who were active at the time (cf. the epigraph by Rolf Jacobsen). Chapter 1 has implications for postcolonial scholarship, as the author advances an argument that Norwegians' travels among Indigenous peoples formed the basis of a national narrative about what were imagined to be "ecologically informed steady-state societ[ies]" (p. 29); like the Vikings and the fishermen and mountain peasants of the Norwegian past, such societies were deemed worthy of emulation. This ideology is echoed by the Deep Ecologists' orientalizing perceptions of the Sherpas of Nepal (pp. 75–9). Finally, Anker's evaluation of the Lutheran dimensions of Norwegian environmentalism will be of interest to scholars of religion—particularly the use of environmental engagement as a strategy to signal the Church's contemporary relevance to young people (chap. 6).

Overall, Anker provides a thorough and engaging history of environmental thought and action in this formative period. Although the full work provides a cohesive account, there is much to be gleaned from individual chapters, as brief explanations of material presented earlier orient the reader, and the open access publishing format makes it accessible to students. The events described contribute to explaining Norway's rise to prominence within both environmental philosophy and policy, while also indicating Norway's shortcomings in these areas. Although the thesis implies that Norway is unified in its evaluation of itself as morally upstanding and worthy of emulation, the story Anker tells is characterized by debate and conflict. The result is a complex portrayal of Norwegian environmentalism.

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