

HANS NIELSEN HAUGE: A CATALYST OF LITERACY IN NORWAY

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*In this article, I **examine** the role Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771–1824) played in encouraging literacy in the Norwegian peasant society in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, **an** aspect of his ministry **never before discussed**. This **poorly** educated **son of a peasant** broke the unwritten rule of **never publishing texts for a large** readership without the **necessary** educational skills. Thus he opened up a new literate space where the common person could express him- or herself on paper. Hauge printed around 40 different texts, 14 of them books, in a language the peasants could understand. This inspired his followers not only to read, but also to write, mainly letters to Hauge and to Haugeans in other parts of **Norway**. **Some even** became authors. **Women** played a central role in this wave of literacy spreading **throughout the country**. Based on Hauge's original texts, I present some crucial aspects of his mentality and show how his ministry served as a catalyst to the growth of literacy among peasants during the period.*

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Hans Nielsen Hauge: A Catalyst of Literacy in Norway

Introduction

Hans Nielsen Hauge

Hans Nielsen Hauge(1771 – 1824) was a poorly educated peasant son who, through his writings, preaching and entrepreneurship, started the first lay movement in Norway. In the period 1796 – 1804, he travelled the whole nation. Hauge's books were printed in 200 000 copies during this period and were spread and read all over Norway.¹ His books numbered one to every fourth Norwegian.

He wrote over thousand letters to encourage and administer his network. He also contributed to the peasants' social and geographical mobility, giving young Haugeans money to establish new enterprises in the growing Norwegian cities.² He was imprisoned between 1804 and 1811 and under indictment until 1814 for his illegal travels, lay preaching and business. His books were confiscated in 1805, but Hauge continued his authorship, after some years in prison without pen and paper.³ Due to his broken health, for the last ten years of his life he led his revival through receiving visitors as well as writing books and letters.

After giving a short overview of different aspects of literacy in Scandinavia, I will take a closer look at how Hans Nielsen Hauge and his revival fuelled the process of reading and writing among peasants in Norway, by Hauge's mentality as it is expressed in his writings and by the Haugeans way of putting his beliefs into action. By peasant I mean the members of the rural society at large. The aspect of Hauge being a catalyst of literacy in Norway has not been discussed within the new literacy approach before. I will use Hauge's own authorship and the Haugean letters as my main sources to understand his mentality and his impact on literacy. I also use, among others, the works of church historian H. G. Heggveit and historian Olav Golf. Golf is the only historian who explicitly addresses the issue of literacy when it comes to Hauge. His scope is educational history.⁴ The focus on literacy will give new insights into why and how Hauge and his revival accomplished social, political and economic change.

Literacy in a broader lens

Literacy is traditionally defined as the skill of reading and writing. During the last decades, the traditional studies on educational literacy development have been supplemented by an extended literacy concept emphasising the study of different aspects of reading and writing practices. I will use both perspectives in this article.⁵ In the book *Religious Reading in The Lutheran North*, Charlotte Appel and Morten Fink-Jensen promote research on *religious reading* as important in a Nordic context because this practice seems to have had ‘an even greater significance in the North than in many other parts of early modern Europe’.⁶

They link this to the central role of the church in developing literacy, in addition to religious books being the most frequently available literature, and the role of the culture of reading in establishing what Stanley Fish called ‘interpretive and textual communities’.⁷ Walter J. Ong has defined the two as ‘interpretive communities ... held together by a hermeneutic heritage applicable to any number of texts or any text’ and ‘textual communities ... held together by a specific text or texts subject to competing interpretations from outside’.⁸ Fish focused on reading as activity and stated that texts not only give meaning, they are also given meaning by their readers. One of the premises of the Haugean revival was that state pietism already had established ‘interpretive communities’ where texts were given meaning by their readers. The established religious reading was a precondition of great importance because it made a joint interpretation of the texts possible among the Haugeans.⁹

Brian V. Street’s term *the anthropology of literacy* addresses both reading and writing as activities that affect individuals, society and culture.¹⁰ Barton and Papen define the narrower term *the anthropology of writing* as ‘the comparative study of writing as social and cultural practice’.¹¹ Studying writing from this viewpoint underlines its function in human life; writing is not only a skill, it is an act seen in relation to the dimensions of knowledge and power, identity, social change and the interface between local and global spaces.¹² This view of writing allows us to reveal everyday life textualisation and the impact uneducated authors nevertheless made on society. The anthropology of writing focuses on both texts as material, the production of **texts and** how **the** use of texts influences individual people and thus facilitates social and cultural change.

In the Haugean revival at the end of the 18th century, reading and writing as an activity among the peasants increased. The texts they produced reveal the values, beliefs and behaviours of their culture, as well as the historical context they were made in.¹³ They can therefore give us important insight in the revival's role in the textualisation process already emerging in the peasant society at large.

In this article I discuss the role of Hans Nielsen Hauge in encouraging the growth of literacy among the peasants of Norway. I focus mainly on the period of his ministry, 1796–1824. His influence was even greater after his death.

Literacy in Norway – another story

First it is useful to take a closer look at the Reformation process in Scandinavia as it took a different course in Norway than in the other countries. One of the core Lutheran values was that the Bible could – and should – be read by ordinary people in their own mother tongue. Hence the Reformation, in a long term perspective, introduced the literary world to the common people. The Swedish Reformation Bible was published in 1541, the Danish in 1550. A Norwegian bible was out of the question because a Norwegian written language did not exist. 96 out of 3000 copies of the Danish edition arrived in Norway.

All over Scandinavia, the Bible was now read by the elites, but during the centuries it was made more widely available, together with other books and written materials, even to the peasants. The Danish Bible was sold for 1–2 riksdaler by the Waysenhusets Bogtrykkerie in Copenhagen from 1740, giving Norwegian farmers the opportunity to buy a bible they could afford for the first time (although it was too expensive for a large majority; a cow was priced at 3 – 4 riksdaler).¹⁴ The Reformation thus strengthened the position of the Danish language in Norway while Finland (which was under Sweden) by comparison **obtained** their Finnish ABC in 1543 and the New Testament in Finnish in 1548 **through the** efforts of the clergyman Mikael Agricola.¹⁵

The institutions of literacy were established far earlier in Sweden and Denmark than in Norway. The first printing shops in Europe appeared in Mainz around 1450. The technique spread around Europe in the following decades and reached Stockholm in 1483 and Copenhagen in 1490.¹⁶ Norway's first printing

press appeared around 1650, and the first Norwegian bookstore was opened in Christiania (Oslo) in 1771. The northern parts of Norway **obtained** their first bookstore as late as in 1855. Norwegians went to Copenhagen to study and were a part of the European and Danish literary culture there. Nevertheless, development across the region was not simultaneous.

Although the Swedish people **gained** their independence **by it**, they resisted the Reformation process. Only in Denmark was the Reformation a popular movement.¹⁷ Through state pietism and the introduction of confirmation 1736 – an attempt to revive the Reformation in Denmark-Norway – the peasants were taught to read. This was an important step forward towards literacy, even though the concept of being able to read included the ability to recite religious texts by heart.¹⁸ There were still many illiterates, and only a minority of people could write. **Indeed, many** Norwegian peasants opposed the **1741** school legislation, **that** was supposed to give **all** pupils, both male and female, **religious instruction**, because they had to pay for the school.

Reading Among the Haugeans

Reading Skills Among the Peasants

Due to the development of the institutions of literacy in Scandinavia, it has been a common view that Norway lagged behind the other countries in regard to reading up to 1850, and that Sweden led the way.¹⁹ It has been assumed that only a small percentage of the Norwegian population could read as late as 1814.²⁰ Reading is here defined as the ability to read a Danish text.²¹

However, according to the Norwegian literature researcher, Jostein Fet, reading ability among the peasants in the northern parts of western Norway was developing in parallel with the Swedish experience. He doesn't build his research on school history, which has been the most common approach. His work is based on 16,287 probated estates and many registers of souls from the northern parts of Vestlandet. The registers of souls are lists written by the ministers about their church members' literacy and morals. It is difficult to compare the Norwegian peasants' literacy with the Danish peasants' because of the lack of registers of souls in Denmark, but Fet states that taking account of the numbers of books they owned, the Norwegian peasants were far ahead.²² Through his studies, Fet

found that between 60 and 70 percent of Norwegian peasants could read in 1814, although it is impossible to find an exact percentage. How could this be? **The Haugean movement can provide part of the answer.**

The Haugean Reading Culture

Professor of history and education, Daniel Lindmark, suggests four criteria which characterise a reading culture: ‘... the content of reading; the organisation of reading; the aim of reading; and the function of reading.’²³ Appel and Fink-Jensen suggest one more; the teaching of reading.²⁴ I will use these criteria in the following to define the early Haugean reading culture.

Content: The Haugean Textual Community

The religious reading generated *religious writing*, and the texts, together with the Bible, were studied at the conventicles.

Historian Lars Ørstavik has found that the revival in Sunnmøre County had the greatest impact in areas where Hauge and his followers brought printed texts.²⁵ Historian **Svein** Ivar Langhelle found in his studies of northern Rogaland that the revival generated a growth in the amount of books owned by the peasants. It also affected which books they owned: the New Testament, Hauge’s books and Luther’s Catechism being the most frequent. Langhelle states that the revival made for ‘the building of a religious competence by purchased literature’ in the period before 1850.²⁶

He also gives an example of how the Haugeans approved specific books and denied others. This gave them a joint text-base which established them as a new, genuine ‘community of interpretation’ and, along with the writing of books and letters, facilitated the development of a ‘textual community’. Through the interpretations given in the letters and printed texts, a ‘textual community’ was shaped which dominated over individual interpretation as well as state authority. The texts were more than a body of meaningful sentences, they were a *revelation*, a holy message from God:²⁷

The whole Holy Scripture is woven together like a chain when it is explained correctly, and everything concerning our bliss is clear, and it contains many prophecies which contain light and spiritual revelations, which the God of Grace has revealed to me by his Spirit ...²⁸

These texts encouraged a corporate mindset among the Haugeans across the country, although they had regional differences. New texts had to be read and approved by a leader before they were printed, and some texts were banned.²⁹ The first independant chapel in Tysvær is an example of how the Haugean textual community was practiced. Langhelle has found that books of Luther, Johan Arendt, August Hermann Francke, Erik Pontoppidan and Hans Nielsen Hauge were approved by the Haugean leaders in Tysvær.³⁰ Hauge himself recommended the authors Luther, Arendt, Jersin, Spener, Francke and Pontoppidan together with the Bible.³¹ It is interesting that Hauge's books also contained other texts than religious ones. The Haugean textual community is only precise when it comes to religious reading. In other areas, the Haugeans had a broader scope and were open-minded towards new knowledge. Hauge was nonetheless clear that other texts should be read only by those not in danger of being misled by statements which challenged the authority of the sacred texts:

The strong in faith and enlightened can read much which will help him, while the weak, who cannot extract and keep the best, rot by the same reading.³²

I will now take a closer look at Hauge's authorship.

Hauge's Authorship and Mentality

In the late 18th century, it was rather outrageous for peasant sons to publish books.³³ Most of the published texts written by peasants were meant for the author's own family and friends, giving them a narrow, private target group.³⁴ Hauge, as the first lay man in Norway, wrote and printed his first book in 1796.³⁵

Hauge's authorship consists of biographical texts, travel reports, stories about persecution and about different cultures he met around Norway, agricultural knowledge and considerations, theological texts, songs and letters. He also wrote a book in which church history is presented comprehensively, showing that the Haugeans had a broader scope than Scandinavia.³⁶

Hauge's texts contain traces of both pietism and Lutheran doctrines.³⁷ His language was that of 'an uneducated ... peasant boy ...' according to himself, or, as bishop and church historian A. Chr. Bang wrote, '... coarse and unpolished ...'³⁸ This was perhaps one of the reasons why the peasants received Hauge; he was

one of their own. He was not, like their minister, an official, and he spoke and wrote to them **representing their own culture in Danish with many Norwegianisms**, and about things they could relate to.³⁹ Central themes in Hauge's writings are propositions, church history and descriptions of the conduct of a true Christian. The presentation of the biblical statements of faith combined with daily life instructions on how to practice faith, given in a peasant's language, made his books popular.

In 1880, the Danish critic and scholar Georg Brandes wrote to the Norwegian author Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson:

Christianity basically did not come to Norway before the 19th Century. It came with Hauge and now it is here.⁴⁰

Even though Brandes was no church historian, he was the strongest authority on literature of his time. In his statement there is more acknowledgement of the impact of Hauge's authorship than of the quality of his writings; Hauge's authorship, he claims, changed both society and culture in large circles. Hauge was the best selling author of his time. Despite his harsh comments on the priests in his first books, and though he suffered severe persecution from the state church, Hauge chose to stay inside it. The national scope in Brandes statement underlines that, in the end, Hauge's revival did not split society, but rather introduced new values to it.

The Organisation of Reading

The Conventicle Act of 1741 **stated that if a household had a guest coming to visit, the father could not gather his own household to read from the Bible, teach and sing together without permission from the parish priest.** The Danish king used religion to keep his kingdom together, and controlled religious expression to serve his cause. The law defined the Haugean gatherings as illegal in so far as the local priest was not informed or being informed declined to approve. Nevertheless they were held all over the country up to Troms.

In 1802, Hauge appointed 32 regional leaders, creating the first nationwide leadership network driven by laymen in Norway. The organization as such was founded on friendships maintained by a frequent exchange of letters and visits, demanding that anyone in authority had to be able to read and write.

Hauge's way of leading his revival by conventicles, making people read and preach themselves in small gatherings in their homes, read letters and study edifying literature as well as sing songs and keep accounts, was an important reason why this group made such an impact on society, even though **many** of them were poor peasants at birth. Svein Ivar Langhelle has undelined the fact that the Haugean letters played a central role in the conventicles as the Haugeans kept contact through them. They both read letters, used them in their dialog, copied them and encouraged each other to write new ones.⁴¹

The Aim of Haugean Reading Culture

To Hauge, literacy was indissolubly tied to the preaching of the gospel. In 1822, Hauge wrote in his European church history that he hoped that the young men receiving theological education at the new university in Christiania 'would work a true fear of God in our native country'.⁴² He had noticed that the ministers had already changed their tune and now even encouraged common people to gather their household for devotionals. 'We now hear the Word of God from the pulpits,' he wrote two years before his death.⁴³ When he started to preach, the situation was different.

In the first years of the revival, the Haugeans often preached after the sermon due to the priests being more concerned with enlightenment than the Bible. When the Haugean leader, 18 year old Niels Iversen Riis, preached for the peasants outside the church after a sermon in Melhus in 1799, parson Steenbuch became so angry that he had Riis tied to his carriage and dragged him seven kilometres to his home. Riis continued to preach even though he had severe health problems after this incident.⁴⁴ These lay preachers broke the church monopoly of religion; they knew how to read, they knew what the Bible said and they preached to the peasants whenever and wherever they had an opportunity. The severe opposition shows how hegemonies of knowledge and power were fighting to defend themselves.

In order to educate new preachers, a focus on both biblical and interpretive texts was necessary. In several places the Haugeans were called 'readers'.⁴⁵ As Lindmark found for the early 19th century revival in Upper Norrland, the most important aim for 'the readers' was to become more like their

Master:⁴⁶ 'O, give us grace to become more like Your image!'⁴⁷ The only way to preach the gospel effectively was to establish harmony between life and doctrine:

... the one with the strongest truth and who lives the most God fearing life according to the Bible and the message of Christ (which matches the human heart) will win more than others for his message.⁴⁸

The struggle to establish a Christian conduct is often mentioned in the Haugean letters.

The Function of Reading

In its very function, reading defined the Haugean as a group. It helped them connect with each other more than anything else. It even tore down isolation, as books and letters came from other sides of the country. That lay preachers passing by read together with local Haugean communities also contributed to giving them an identity which was founded in the texts and raised above their local community.

The core of Lutheran teachings could be condensed into one word: *individualism*: Luther claimed that faith **was** a matter of personal conviction, not first and foremost a matter of the state. Hauge started the first Norwegian revival which **largely** managed to inculcate this **mentality** from the bottom up. He represented the main group in the Norwegian society – at that time consisting of about 90% peasants, though many of them owned their land. The Lutheran doctrine of personal conviction was the fuel for this group to push the values of individual freedom in speech, print and in religion, despite persecution. The Reformation was a change from above. The ministry of Hauge made way for Christianity in Norway managed by laymen, first under persecution from the state church, later on in cooperation with the church.⁴⁹

The broader concept of literacy has included 'the general ability to perform and act as a citizen', relating to matters of democratic rights, freedom of speech and equality.⁵⁰ Even though this was not the aim of the revival, it's focus on reading, writing and preaching also increased people's competence as citizens. It made this group more concerned about society. The ability to speak and read in public, to publish texts, to carry out leadership training in small fellowships

and regional ones, in addition to travelling the countryside as well as the cities, led to peasants finding each other and defining themselves as a group for the first time in Norwegian history. This even made political engagement among peasants possible, thus creating an entrée for peasants into politics.⁵¹

The Haugean religious reading made a long-term impact in Norwegian social and political development in the 19th century, not only after the Haugean movement was formally organized in the first wave of association in Norway around 1840, but even before. The Haugeans participated in the process leading to the formulation of a Norwegian constitution in 1814. Three of the Haugean leaders took part in the national assembly at Eidsvoll which passed it.⁵² The Haugeans were involved in politics both on a local, regional and a national level. Between 1815 and 1860, over 35 MPs came from the Haugean movement.⁵³ In 1853, priest Sinding in Avaldsnes, Rogaland, wrote that the Haugeans, even though they were a minority, had changed the customs and the mentality of the congregation as a whole. It was no longer possible to divide the Haugeans and those not belonging to the revival.⁵⁴ Svein Ivar Langhelle has found that, in spite of being a minority, the Haugeans in the northern part of Rogaland, had a normative hegemony in the area.⁵⁵ This probably reflects a break-through for a collective Haugean interpretive community in Avaldsnes.

It has been claimed that Hauge contributed to national independence in 1814.⁵⁶ There are no signs of a struggle for independence among the Haugeans, either in Hauge's texts or in the Haugean letters from around 1814. Due to the textual community Hauge established, it is more likely that the Haugean revival prepared a group among the Norwegian peasants to be a part of the democratisation process after 1814, as literacy and leadership training in the network increased their democratic competence.⁵⁷ In a long-term perspective the Haugean activities, based on the values of freedom of religion, speech and mobility, led to more personal freedom and political power for the majority of the people.⁵⁸ Professor Francis Sejersted writes: 'The Hauge revival was part of the foundations for a functioning Democracy in Norway.'⁵⁹

The Teaching of Reading

The school system was ineffective and without skilled teachers in many places. 'Year by year we experience that teachers are more and more dissolute and too many of them are unproductive', Hauge wrote from prison in 1807.⁶⁰ Many of the pupils only learned texts by heart instead of reading. 'He got his first teaching at home,' local historian Sigrid Svendsen writes about Jens Johnsgaard, born in 1792, one of the Haugean lay preachers in Øyer.⁶¹ This is how many of the peasants learned to read fluently, as schools were often of little help in this respect. This situation made the children dependent of their parents in order to gain knowledge about reading.

As late as in 1819, the clergyman O. Daae wrote that most of the school children in Hafslo 'forget during the summer what they have learned during the winter.'⁶² The Haugean homes were hubs for the teaching of reading and they even functioned as a school for elder boys and girls joining the revival. These homes served as an extended family, including those who could not receive teaching from their parents. Many of the Haugean women were interested in pedagogy in order to teach their children better, and in the cities they were more interested in popular education than elsewhere because of their economic activities.⁶³

Hauge wanted the school system to improve. At the end of his years in prison, Hauge wrote a letter to his friends all over Norway sharing his thoughts about better conditions for teachers. He wanted to lift their status and economic situation in order to fight poverty and social misery, as he states that lack of knowledge, unbelief and superstition are the very roots of these problems. One of his close co-workers, Thomas Olsen Amble, accordingly started the first organization of schoolteachers in Norway, called the Association of Teachers in Christiania (Christiania Skolelærerforening).⁶⁴ In northern Norway and in Setesdal, the Haugeans were called 'teachers'.⁶⁵

Haugean Writing: Challenging the Educated

Writing Skills Among the Peasants

Fet estimates that the common view that 12–24 percent of the Norwegian adults could write in 1800, is too low.⁶⁶ However, Norwegians received compulsory

teaching in writing as late as in 1827, when the Education Act was passed. The skill of writing was often handed down from the parents. Fet investigated the known texts written by peasants in the northern part of West Norway. He found that in the late 18th century, 16.1 percent of the printed song literature in Norway was written by peasants, fishermen and others from the lower levels of society. The same group of people wrote 41.5 percent of this genre 1800–1849, and the amount doubled within a few decades.⁶⁷ Another genre is private correspondence between peasants. Due to the provision of rural postal routes and the strengthened postal services, this correspondence grew after 1780. The letters give us insight into the 18th and 19th-century Norwegian peasants' universe:

Private correspondence provides evidence of increasing skill in writing and of a social development which necessitated communication over greater distances. Private letters give, seen together, unique insight into the heart of a peasant society.⁶⁸

The letters sent by Haugeans are a mix of Bible quotations, greetings and practical information about the fellowship, and the needs and development of the revival. They underline the strong religious approach to life among the peasants. Some of them are business letters as well, but mostly they are simple testimonies about strong friendship and devotion to God. According to Hauge himself, most of the Haugeans were writing:

We also experience, when eagerness and power comes into the heart, what rich fruit it provides, and that eagerness makes knowledge easy, hence most of those among us are both reading the Scripture and are writing. Even the old ones are learning, and the children are practising it, as well as working for the good of our land.⁶⁹

In this text we see that, to **Hauge**, the skill of reading and writing was a fruit of the revival. To understand why **he** had such impact on his time, his writings are crucial. He travelled 15,000 kilometres by foot with books on his back all over Norway. His followers did the same, despite the law which said that people could only leave their local society by permission of public officials.⁷⁰ This way of spreading books by foot was new and highly effective. Professor Hans Ording states that Haugeans were the first to do this, and that this way of spreading

literature was to become important to the cultural development of the Norwegian people.⁷¹ In the years following 1814, approximately 100.000 people read Hauge's texts.⁷² Fet names Hans Nielsen Hauge as a catalyst for literacy in the Norwegian society.⁷³ The Haugean revival was a "pull factor" in the development of literacy as writing was a private matter.⁷⁴ In order to know to what extent and which regional and local differences there are, more research is needed.

Letters in the snow

We assume that the Haugeans' strong commitment to each other motivated the demanding process of putting thoughts to paper. Fet states that the homes called 'houses for song and reading' (song- og lesarhus) were the homes from which most of the writers came.⁷⁵ Homes like these were characteristic of the Haugean movement. They often became hubs for the revival – and for the development of literary skills, farming and trade.

The Haugean homes were not considered private arenas. They were used to receive preachers, to meet, to eat and to work together and to help the poor and the sick. The living room even became a classroom during the conventicles. Here poor people touched a book for the first time. In these fellowships, they learned first to read and then to write. The process of learning to write was difficult; Danish was different from their mother tongue. It was normal to take ten to twenty years to learn to write.⁷⁶

It is reasonable to assume that many of the youths recruited into the movement did not know how to write. One of them was Ingeborg Fosmo (1800-1892) from Målselv, who learned to write through 'using Haugean letters as directives.'⁷⁷ In letters to Hauge and his friends, **people now wrote down their own thoughts.** When they entered into business in the growing cities, the officials complained that the Haugeans mixed texts about God in an oral language with the numbers in their accounting books. For want of pen and paper, people even sometimes used other materials;

I did not have paper, pen and ink. Instead of paper I used bark from a birch. My ink was a kind of black fluid, and my pen was a pointed pin. In wintertime ... I wrote letters in the snow.⁷⁸

Tollef Olsen Bachem, who wrote this about his childhood, did not learn how to write at school and hardly attained the skill owing to his family's poverty. He taught himself to write: 'Without a teacher, I started backwards and wrote the whole word instead of letters'.⁷⁹ Five years after Hauge's death, Bachem published a book with central letters from Hauge. Around 70 authors were directly inspired by Hauge.⁸⁰

Writing to Impact

In the small home fellowships among Haugeans, women as well as poor peasant boys were trained both to give speeches and to read aloud and write. This training is not to be overlooked, as it became a stimulus for women to contribute to society in the decades to come.

The best known Haugean author was a woman, Berte Canutte Aarflot (1795-1859), who also was a preacher.⁸¹ She wrote nine books which were read all over Norway, one running to nine editions. Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson wrote in the newspaper Aftenbladet after her death in 1859:

Her profound religious songs are a treasure in every farmer's house in Bergen and Trondheim dioceses, they have also reached other parts of our country and even outside our borders. We could say that she has contributed more than any other to the growth of religion among common people.⁸²

It is interesting to see how Bjørnson finds a connection between the spreading of her texts and the growth of religion among common people. He addresses writing as *activity*; a Haugean using her writing in order to make an impact on individuals, and, because she succeeds, she makes an impact on culture and society as well by contributing to the "growth of religion". Like Berte Canutte Aarflot, the other female Haugean authors mainly wrote psalms and biographical texts.⁸³

Writing: A Precondition for Social Mobility

The Haugean movement is a reminder of what Max Weber called 'Die protestantische Etik und der Geist des Kapitalismus' – hard work combined with reinvestment instead of spending is the basis of a capitalist spirit upon which society is built. To succeed in business, the skill of reading and writing was needed. The fight against poverty led the movement to make room for social

mobility, and many Haugeans established themselves in the growing cities of Trondheim, Ålesund, Bergen, Stavanger, Kristiansand and Drammen and began to make a living for themselves and others. Hauge gave and received microloans, and encouraged his friends all over the country to follow his example in a circulating letter written in 1802:

Do as I did and still do towards our fellow brothers and sisters: We give to each other, and the one in debt gives written evidence to the one giving to him, who keeps it. It is our will to work, and that our spiritual brothers and sisters shall inherit the earth ...⁸⁴

We see that Hauge stressed the need of a receipt for such loans. Entering into business required literacy.

Sunday school, an idea imported from Denmark, was an initiative mostly taken by officials. In several places, the Haugeans contributed to or started such schools, offering 18 to 20-year-olds teaching for free in subjects as writing and mathematics. As early as in 1800, four Haugeans had started such schools. One was **the previously mentioned** Thomas B. Amble, who opened schools in Christiania and Drammen.⁸⁵ Hauge and his brother-in-law Loose contributed to this kind of school in Bergen in 1802.⁸⁶ Golf lists fifteen Sunday schools run by Haugeans as far north as Trondheim.⁸⁷

Challenging the King's Men

The Haugeans challenged the contemporary realm of knowledge and power also through their writings. One of the main criticisms of Haugean laymen was their 'uneducated language'. The fellowships made people bold writers even though what they wrote showed that they were not educated. The use by the peasants of written words led to some Norwegian words being introduced into Danish, especially when they communicated things about ordinary life.⁸⁸ Whether this contributed to the revival of Norwegian as a written language is yet to be examined.

The ban on Hauge's books from 1805 was withdrawn in 1816. Lutheran ministers and clergymen all over the country had accused him of 'making less educated people speculate about Christianity'.⁸⁹ One example of the resistance to Hauge's activities is what the editor Mattias Conrad Peterson wrote in the newspaper *Trondhjemske Tidender* on the 9th of August 1799:

The disreputable Hans Nielsen Hauge, high priest and captain of the holy gang that is wandering around, allegedly spreading all over the country, has now arrived, but is not yet arrested. People like him could threaten our public security ...⁹⁰

Hauge visited him, bringing his written answer stating that, if necessary, he would patiently suffer in prison for doing good. Peterson changed his tone in a subsequent notice, written to explain to his readers that the reason why he printed Hauge's answer was that it was well paid for:

He (Hauge) came with his letter in person and spoke with great self control and decency ... To the benefit of this man it should be said publicly that he, certainly, in a moving, truly Christian way made his effort to save one sinner at the office ...⁹¹

This is an example of how closely linked the activity of writing and distributing a text was in Hauge's contact with the editor. The written sheets of paper became a point of contact between the persecutor and the persecuted – and made Peterson change the wording of his criticism from 'captain of the holy gang' to a person with 'great self control and decency'. There is no doubt that the textual products were crucial for the success of the movement. Trygve Riiser Gundersen has stated that Hauge in this situation entered a scene dominated by educated men, using their weapon – the newspaper pages - in his own language:

The editor against the 'high priest'. 'Enlightenment' against 'Bible language'. 'Public teachers' against commoners. In a kind of dialogue between the deaf and the blind.⁹²

This, according to Gundersen, *clash between two languages*, was seldom manifested in public. By answering, Hauge gave a voice to a silenced majority as well as to his message. The combination made room for great possibilities. His words were read even by the elite, giving them the other side of the story along with editor Peterson's confession of his change of mind. Nevertheless, Hauge ended up serving one month in prison.

Hauge also experienced opposition from the 'newspaper men' in Bergen. In 1800 Hauge had travelled to Copenhagen and printed 50–60,000 copies of his books, the greatest number of books printed before 1814 for Norwegian readers. While he was binding **these** books in Bergen in 1801, together with five women

and one attendant, the newspaper-establishment insisted on his arrest. Even the binding equipment was confiscated to hinder more books being produced.⁹³

Hauge also communicated with the elite through personal letters. He contributed to the founding of the University of Oslo, and the first professors in theology in Norway, Svend Hersleb and Stener Stenersen, were his friends.⁹⁴ Stenersen, however, never accepted Hauge as a lay preacher.⁹⁵ In 1824, shortly before he died, Hauge wrote a letter to Stenersen, expressing his concern about the professor's latest book, in which Hauge was named a zealot because of his preaching without being approved by the authorities. He argued that Stenersen in the same book admits that the Haugean teachings did not differ from Lutheran doctrines. Hauge also rejected the accusation of being arrogant, of thinking he was wiser than the teachers of the church;

This blemish is within all humans; why not us? But, as a wanted blemish that we boast of, I do not accept. Dear professor, convince me! ... It is strange that we, the lay people, should think of ourselves as wiser than the well educated people, especially when you also say that we appreciate Enlightenment and Science. This I do not understand as I assume you mean the teachers of the Christian church ...

In this text, Hauge is trying to convince Stenersen that he is not an arrogant zealot. Due to their personal relationship, his answer is not printed in the newspaper this time, but in a personal letter. In this way, he even confirmed their friendship. He also suggested that there *was* a difference between the Haugeans and other people: 'I hold to Pontoppidan: We are all sinners, but in very different ways'. The letter is full of self confidence and without any regrets. Hauge ends the letter by putting a note under his name, saying 'I was especially hurt ... that zealots do not have any true Christian value.' The text reads as a letter from a hurting friend, not a competitor, showing *how* the layman Hauge struggled until his death against the clerical world's condemnation of his lay preaching and writings.

The fact that Hauge had published his church history two years before Stenersen published his, could have been the reason for the professor making harsh comments about Hauge on print. Hauge writes in his introduction that he had asked 'educated men' to write a church history for lay men, but they were

too busy. He explains that he did not write much about the Lutheran Reformation since professor Stenersen recently had published a 'complete history' over the theme.⁹⁶ If so, Stenersen's criticism might have been out of resentment rather than conviction; the lay preacher published before the 'well educated' professor. Thus Stenersen may have felt the need to underline that it did not have the same legitimacy as his. In these two different ways of communicating, we find not only two languages, but two *cultures*. According to the texts of Hauge's 'textual community', he was not allowed to fight 'against flesh and blood'. Stenersen, belonging to the pietistic 'interpretive community' of his time, had looser ties to the biblical text and belonged to a culture where the state gave approval to a man's calling from God. It was not a matter of revelation but of education.

The clash of languages was not planned by Hauge. The fact that Professor Hersleb helped Hauge with his texts after 1814, shows that Hauge's uneducated language bothered him. He did not write orally on purpose, but by lack of education. Consequently, his authorship was not intended to promote a peasant opposition against Danish or other authorities, even if the increased writing activity among the Haugeans **challenged** a written sphere dominated by formal Danish. It was rather the first sign of peasants entering the educated world. The next two generations of Haugeans sent 11 young men to Christiania to study.⁹⁷

To secure the large amount of books needed for his revival, Hauge intervened in the printing business as well. In Kristiansand, Hauge's friend, Hans Thorsen Bachrud, owned the printing press and, from 1803, the only newspaper in the diocese, *Kristiansands Adresse-Contoirs Efterretninger*. Hauge helped him with the investment money, probably because of the newspaper's effectiveness in communicating to the public. Hauge wrote articles in this newspaper on new achievements in agriculture in Denmark after his trips to Copenhagen 1800 and 1804, encouraging the peasants to improve their crops.⁹⁸

One of Hauge's followers was the leader of the publishing house in Norway called Grøndahl & Dreyer. Hauge supported the Haugean Christoffer Grøndahl in establishing his firm in 1812, taking him in 1800 as a 16-year-old to Copenhagen to learn typography.⁹⁹ Grøndahl printed the material produced at

Eidsvoll in 1814. He published all Hauge's books issued after 1815. Grøndahl also printed half a million copies of the Bible and the New Testament and, in 1824, the Bible in the Sami language.¹⁰⁰ Hauge and three Haugeans were among those who contributed most to the founding of the Bible Society in 1816, which ordered the Bibles.¹⁰¹ In 1822 they had distributed 6,000 New Testaments to the poor and to schools. Grøndahl later established the first library in Christiania 'for free use' with mainly religious literature. The library was promoted by Henrik Wergeland in 'For Arbeiderklassen'.¹⁰² There are many examples of Haugeans contributing to the spreading of religious literature.¹⁰³

Hauge also started the Eiker papirmølle – a paper mill where the 50 workers both lived and even stayed on after they became too old to work.¹⁰⁴ The paper mill provided paper for Hauge's many books, and was made possible by Haugeans all over the country sending clothes to Eiker. It even made the writing of his thousand letters possible, as the increase in printed texts in Norway had made paper less available.¹⁰⁵

As we have seen, Hauge's authorship implied activities which belonged to the elite. He intervened in the whole process from paper to print. The paper mill, printing and production of newspapers and books as well as the writing itself was a sign of a new time when knowledge and power were no longer reserved for the few.

Conclusion

The extended understanding of literacy as 'the function of reading and writing in their social and cultural contexts' allows us to see *how* literacy developed in the Haugean fellowships around 1800.¹⁰⁶ Hauge and his followers promoted literacy to educate strong believers and facilitate social mobility. They did not only read already known texts. They read new texts, letters being the most frequent. When they gathered in their homes, books and letters were a central part of their fellowship. They travelled from place to place, bringing the texts with them, making the written products a link between the different local groups and the regional and national network. In this interaction, literacy became a stronger part of their culture, equipping them to make an impact on their community and even on society at large.

In his writing, Hauge promotes literacy and gives advice on how to spread it. His thinking was adopted by thousands of followers, and through the organization of gatherings in the homes, people were empowered not only by being encouraged to read and to preach, they even started to put their words on paper. One of the most significant effects of the Haugean revival was that it empowered common people to write. Hauge's mentality was based on the core value of equality regardless of income, capacity, age or gender. Because of this, personal freedom was not for the few but for all. Thus, writing was not reserved for the elite who knew how to write Danish.

The writing of letters was perhaps the most important grip to encourage the Haugeans to write. They were often in a Danish language full of Norwegianisms. Jostein Fet has stated that this activity was important to the development of literacy in the Norwegian society.¹⁰⁷ How this contributed to the development of the Norwegian written language is an interesting question which has not yet been examined. A further question is what regional differences may be found in how the first Haugeans promoted literacy.

Hauge even inspired people, women included, to write songs and books. Writing was traditionally a skill some families handed down to their children. It was also a male domain. The Haugeans operated like an *extended* family fellowship, taking care of those whose families never could teach them literacy. Later on they also developed ways of education, both in the domestic sphere and abroad through missions.

By his example and authorship, Hauge opened a new literary space for common men and women. When we celebrate 200 years of the Norwegian constitution in 2014, Hauge's contribution to literacy in Norway may be seen as a challenge to the traditional nation state perspective by focusing on one of its prisoners.

Notes

¹ Kullerud, *Hans Nielsen Hauge – mannen som vekte Norge*, 337. Norway had a population of 800,000 – 900,000 citizens in 1800.

² For a definition of a Haugean, see Golf, *Haugebevegelse og folkeopplysning*, 7.

³ Golf, *Haugebevegelse og Folkeopplysning*, 20. Rian, *For Norge, kjempers fødeland*, 270.

⁴ In 1993, Finn Wiig Sjursen included around 2,100 titles published about the Haugeans between 1796 – ca. 1850 in his bibliography. Many of them are of lesser value for historical research. See Sjursen, *Den haugianske periode*. Golf considers Heggtveit as, in some part, a primary source. Golf, *Haugebevegelse og Folkeopplysning*, 10.

⁵ For a brief overview of this new research, see Lindmark, 'Introduction: The many faces of literacy', and Barton and Papen, *The Anthropology of Writing. Understanding Textually-Mediated Words*, Part 1.

⁶ Appel and Fink-Jensen, *Religious Reading in the Lutheran North*, 1.

⁷ Fish, 'Interpreting the "Varorium"', 474.

⁸ Cited in Lindmark, *Reading, Writing and Schooling*, 219. Quote from Forstorp, 'Att leva och lesa Bibeln. Textpraktiken i två kristna församlingar', 305. See also Appel and Fink-Jensen, *Religious Reading in the Lutheran North*, 6.

⁹ Appel and Fink-Jensen, *Religious reading in the Lutheran North*, 6.

¹⁰ Street, 'Afterword', in Barton and Papen, 226.

¹¹ Barton and Papen, *The Anthropology of Writing. Understanding Textually-Mediated Words*, 9.

¹² Barton and Papen, *The Anthropology of Writing*, 8, 10.

¹³ Barton and Papen, *The Anthropology of Writing*, 9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁵ Fet, *Skrivande bønder*, 388 (English abstract).

¹⁶ Merriman, *History of Modern Europe*, 34 (Map 1.3).

¹⁷ Gilbert, *Reformation in Germany and Scandinavia*, web.

¹⁸ Chartier, 'Cultural Perspective on literacy teaching for young readers', 12.

¹⁹ Fet, *Skrivande bønder*, 389.

²⁰ Nilsen, *Hva fikk nordmennene å lese i 1814?*, 12.

²¹ Fet, *Skrivande bønder*, 388.

²² *Ibid.*, 388, 389.

²³ Lindmark, *Reading, Writing and Schooling*, 219.

²⁴ Appel and Fink-Jensen, *Religious Reading in the Lutheran North*, 11.

²⁵ Ørstavik, *Haugeanismens sorte epidemi*, 18.

²⁶ Langhelle, 'Tok haugianarane det skrivne Ordet i si makt?', 8.

²⁷ Stibbe, *Hans Nielsen Hauge and The Prophetic Imagination*, 74, 75.

²⁸ My translation. Hauge, *Forsøg til en avhandling om Guds Viisdom*, 151.

²⁹ Ording, *Hans Nielsen Huges skrifter*, vol. 1, 55.

³⁰ Langhelle, 'Tok haugianarane det skrivne Ordet i si makt?', 34.

³¹ Golf, *Haugebevegelse og Folkeopplysning*, 32.

³² Cited in Golf, *Haugebevegelse og Folkeopplysning*, 19.

³³ We know of about 28 books which were published in Norway in 1819, a number which illustrates how rarely books were written. Pryser, *Norsk historie 1814–1860*, 134.

³⁴ Fet, *Lesande bønder*, 378.

³⁵ Sjursen, *Den haugianske periode*, 5.

³⁶ Hauge, *Udtog av Kirke-Historien*, 1822.

³⁷ Coldevin, *Bodø by 1816–1966*, 438; Hauge, *Udtog av Kirke-Historien*, 208.

- ³⁸ Hauge, 'Hans Nielsen Huges Testamente', 235, 236.
- ³⁹ Aarflot, *Norsk kirkehistorie*, 260.
- ⁴⁰ Molland, *Norges kirkehistorie*, 52.
- ⁴¹ Langhelle, 'Tok haugianarane det skrivne Ordet i si makt?', 32.
- ⁴² Hauge, *Udtog av Kirke-Historien*, 224 (my translation).
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, 224 (my translation).
- ⁴⁴ Heggtveit, *Den norske Kirke i det nittende Aarhundrede*, 173.
- ⁴⁵ Langhelle, 'Tok haugianarane det skrivne ord i si makt? – Religiøs kompetansebygging i Nord-Rogaland 1820-1850', 33. Golf, Haugebevegelse og Folkeopplysning, 31.
- ⁴⁶ Lindmark, *Reading, Writing and Schooling*, 219.
- ⁴⁷ Ording, *Hans Nielsen Huges skrifter*, vol. 1, 49.
- ⁴⁸ Ording, *Hans Nielsen Huges skrifter*, vol. 1, 57.
- ⁴⁹ Molland and Egede Bloch-Hoell, 'Hans Nielsen Hauge, norsk legpredikant', web.
- ⁵⁰ Lindmark, 'Introduction: The many faces of literacy', 4.
- ⁵¹ Koht, *Norsk bondereising*, 352, web. Pryser, *Norsk historie 1814–1860*, 288.
- ⁵² Aarflot, *Norsk kirkehistorie*, 288. The Haugeans were the farmers: Ole Rasmussen Apenæs from Vestfold, John Hansen Sørbrøden from Østfold and Christopher Borgersen Hoen from Buskerud.
- ⁵³ Pryser, *Norsk historie 1814 – 1860*, 263.
- ⁵⁴ Langhelle, 'Tok haugianarane det skrivne Ordet i si makt?', 30.
- ⁵⁵ Langhelle, 'Tok haugianarane det skrivne Ordet i si makt?', 32.
- ⁵⁶ Ording, *Hans Nielsen Huges skrifter*, vol. 1, 57.
- ⁵⁷ Sejersted, *Demokratisk kapitalisme*, 73.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 179.
- ⁵⁹ Sejersted, *Den vanskelige frihet 1814–1851*, 259.
- ⁶⁰ Hauge, 'Christendommens Elskere', XXI, 98.
- ⁶¹ Svendsen, *Billeder fra Huges tid*, 63.
- ⁶² Solem, *Hafsloalbumet II*, 94.
- ⁶³ Golf, *Vekkerrøst fra kvinner*, 97.
- ⁶⁴ Sjursen, 'Fra Hans Nielsen Hauge til Norsk Lærerakademi', 262.
- ⁶⁵ Golf, Haugebevegelse og Folkeopplysning, 31.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 389.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 162.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 391.
- ⁶⁹ Hauge, 'Christendommens Elskere', 98.
- ⁷⁰ The Norwegian Law of Poverty made clear that a person needed a passport in order to travel from his or her domicile. Despite this, Hauge and his followers travelled all over Norway. This was one of the reasons why Hauge spent more days in prison than outside in the period 1796–1811.
- ⁷¹ Hauge, *Betragtning over Verdens Daarlighet*, 66.
- ⁷² Vannebo, *En nasjon av skriveføre*, 37.
- ⁷³ Interview with Jostein Fet, May 2012.
- ⁷⁴ Appel and Fink-Jensen, *Religious reading in the Lutheran North*, 9.
- ⁷⁵ Fet, *Skrivande bønder*, 364.
- ⁷⁶ Fet, *Skrivande bønder*, 378.
- ⁷⁷ Golf, *Vekkerrøst fra kvinner*, 52.

- ⁷⁸ Tollef Olsen Bachem cited in Heggveit, *Haugianismens Tid*, 178.
- ⁷⁹ Tollef Olsen Bachem cited in Heggveit, *Haugianismens Tid*, 178.
- ⁸⁰ Heggveit, *Den norske Kirke i det nittende Aarhundrede*, 787–799.
- ⁸¹ Golf, *Haugebevegelse og Folkeopplysning*, 49.
- ⁸² *Aftenbladet* December 2, 1859, my translation, web.
- ⁸³ Golf, *Vekkerrøst fra kvinner*, 90.
- ⁸⁴ Hauge, 'Rettroendes Samfund', 287.
- ⁸⁵ Golf, *Haugebevegelse og folkeopplysning*, 74.
- ⁸⁶ Golf, *Haugebevegelse og folkeopplysning*, 74.
- ⁸⁷ Golf, *Haugebevegelse og folkeopplysning*, 74, 75, 76.
- ⁸⁸ Fet, *Skrivande bønder*, 391.
- ⁸⁹ Rian, *For Norge, kjempers fødeland*, 280 (my translation).
- ⁹⁰ Peterson, Mattias Conrad, editorial, *Trondhjemske Tidender*, edition no. 32, August 9, 1799, in Hauge (1954), vol. 5, 298.
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 300, 301.
- ⁹² Gundersen, *Om å ta ordet*, 9. My translation.
- ⁹³ Kvamen, *Brev frå Hans Nielsen Hauge*, bind 1, 111. Letter 'To friends', August 11, 1801.
- ⁹⁴ Rian, *For Norge, kjempers fødeland*, 270; Collett, *Universitetet i Oslo 1811–1870*, 327.
- ⁹⁵ Stenersen, *Hans Nielsen Huges Liv, Virksomhed, Lære og Skrifter*, 1.
- ⁹⁶ Hauge, *Udtog av Kirke-Historien*, 4, 5.
- ⁹⁷ Golf, *Vekkerrøst fra kvinner*, 95.
- ⁹⁸ Golf, *Haugebevegelse og folkeopplysning*, 154.
- ⁹⁹ Golf, *Hans Nielsen Hauge og folkeopplysning*, 174. Rian, *For Norge, kjempers fødeland*, 281. Koren, 'Grøndahl&Søn', 839.
- ¹⁰⁰ Pryser, *Norsk historie 1814–1860*, 134.
- ¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 262.
- ¹⁰² Golf, *Haugebevegelse og Folkeopplysning*, 56, 149.
- ¹⁰³ See Golf, *Haugebevegelse og Folkeopplysning*, 67, 68.
- ¹⁰⁴ Coldevin, *Bodø by 1816–1966*, 434.
- ¹⁰⁵ Fet, *Lesande bønder*, 58.
- ¹⁰⁶ Lindmark, *Reading, Writing and Schooling*, 218. For the development of literacy in Norway in general, see Vannebro, *En nasjon av skriveføre*, 1984.
- ¹⁰⁷ Fet, *Lesande bønder*, 197.