

Scandinavica: **The First Fifty Years** **1962-2012**

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This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the first publication of *Scandinavica*. In differing formats and under four different editors it has been published regularly twice a year since May 1962, thus far exceeding the average life expectancy of a 'niche' academic journal. During these fifty years it has been the main organ in the UK for debate on the literature and culture of the Nordic countries.

It was Elias Bredsdorff, Reader in Scandinavian Studies in the University of Cambridge, who took the initiative to launch the journal. It was an auspicious time in the history of Scandinavian studies in the UK, as he pointed out in his first editorial; the subject was thriving in as many as nine universities, with the main centres being London, Cambridge and Newcastle. The first meeting of what was to become the International Association of Scandinavian Studies had been held at the University of Cambridge in 1956, followed by Lillehammer 1958, Arnhem 1960, Aarhus 1962. Indirectly these conferences gave added impetus to the founding of *Scandinavica*, and provided the beginnings of a mailing list.

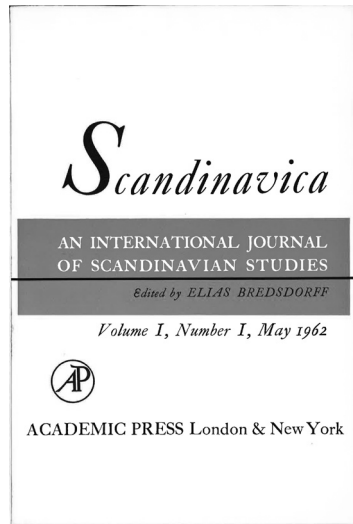
Bredsdorff's editorial sets out the main aims of the journal: to contribute to the academic study of the languages, literature, history and civilization of the Scandinavian countries, with the main emphasis on the literary rather than philological or historical aspects. For the purposes of the journal Scandinavia was defined as Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, and Finland (but only with regard to Finland-Swedish literature). It was to be published each year in May and November, and contain articles, research notes, reviews, and detailed bibliographies,

both of books and of articles published within and outside *Scandinavica*. The intention was 'to give priority to articles of a fairly general interest, rather than to highly specialized articles appealing mainly to a very small minority of readers' (Vol. 1, 1, 1962, p. 3). Articles should be written in English, French or German. The first few issues would contain historical accounts of the development of Scandinavian studies in various countries, beginning with Russia, as well as assessments of the present state of academic research in particular fields. The latter category

included in the first three years articles by Erik Dal on ballads, Göran Lindström on Strindberg, James McFarlane on Ibsen, Sven Møller Kristensen on Brandes. The first reviews concentrated on histories of literature and on comparative studies, and were written by such luminaries as Sven Møller Kristensen, John Northam, Peter Foote, Sven Linnér, Henning Fenger, Edvard Beyer, Steingrímur J. Þorsteinsson, P.M. Mitchell, Ursula Dronke. The ambitions of the journal were underlined by the presence of an international advisory board supporting the editor, comprising seventeen academics, all but one of whom were men, from fifteen countries.

In its first years the slimmish eighty-page issues of *Scandinavica* were published by the London-based Academic Press, with a rather fetching blue-and-white cover and a typeface which inevitably appears somewhat dated fifty years on. Other aspects of the journal recall what now seems a distant age of publishing; the instructions to contributors call for double-spaced typewritten manuscripts and suggest that the awkward Scandinavian letters æ, ø, å etc. might be inserted in the manuscript in ink. The journal cost 45 shillings or 7 dollars a year (private subscriptions 35s or \$5.50).

Scandinavica continued along its agreed trajectory for the next few years, publishing fascinating articles by M.I. Steblin-Kamensky on



the sagas (Vol. 6, 2, 1967), by Elias Bredsdorff on the sexual morality debate of the Modern Breakthrough (Vol. 8, 2, 1969), by Glyn Jones on William Heinesen (Vol. 9, 2, 1970), by Michael Barnes on *Draumkvæde* (Vol. 10, 1, 1972), by Walter Johnson on Strindberg (Vol. 10, 2, 1972) – to name but a few. A slight hiccup occurred on the occasion of the publication of James McFarlane's review of Michael Meyer's biography of Ibsen in May 1968, which suggested that he had borrowed rather too heavily from previously published sources; the UK's convoluted libel laws made it politic not only that the reviewer and editor should print a fulsome apology, but that the whole issue of the journal (Vol. 7, 1, 1968) should be withdrawn. By 1972 the advisory board had grown to twenty-one members from seventeen countries (still just one woman). And the previous year the editor had obtained a grant from the Nordic Cultural Fund to enable publication of a special supplement devoted to the works of Pär Lagerkvist, edited by Sven Linnér and distributed free to all subscribers to the journal. This supplement was followed by three more, all funded by the Nordic Cultural Fund: on Halldór Laxness (ed. Sveinn Skorri Höskuldsson, 1972), on Contemporary Scandinavian Poetry (ed. Göran Printz-Påhlson, 1973), and on Modernism in Finland-Swedish Literature (ed. Johan Wrede, 1976). The supplements were in great demand, and stocks of most were rapidly exhausted.

Before the last of these supplements was published Elias Bredsdorff had declared his intention of stepping down as editor, which he duly did at the end of 1974. He handed over the task to James McFarlane, who in 1964 had become the first Professor of European Literature and head of Scandinavian Studies at the newly-established University of East Anglia. By 1977 McFarlane had taken on two assistant editors, Gavin Orton from the University of Hull and myself, by then a lecturer at UEA, and the advisory board had swollen to twenty-three. (One can almost follow recent political history from the list of advisory board members: the 1977 issues record members from Czechoslovakia and the U.S.S.R., as well as separate entries for the German Democratic Republic and the German Federal Republic. Still one woman.)

The journal continued its steady and satisfactory course under its new editor until the end of the decade. Then suddenly everything changed. The second issue of 1979 announced to subscribers that

Scandinavica would no longer be published by Academic Press, but that all orders should henceforth be sent to James McFarlane personally. Our publishers had decided that the journal was no longer economically viable, and had proposed such a steep increase in the subscription charge that McFarlane had decided this would be tantamount to killing it off. Being an early enthusiast for what was then called desk-top publishing, he made the bold decision to do it himself, to edit *Scandinavica* on his home computer and have it printed and distributed from UEA. By doing that he would be able to keep the subscription at its current rate, which by 1979 was £12 (abroad £15.30, or \$32). This was all made possible by the help of generous grants from home and abroad, listed in the front of the new journal: Statens humanistiske forskningsråd (Denmark), Norges almenvitenskapelige forskningsråd, Humanistisk-samhällsvetenskapliga forskningsrådet (Sweden), Finlands Akademi, Letterstedtska föreningen (Sweden) and The British Academy. Not to mention generous amounts of the editor's personal time.

The first issue of *Scandinavica* in 1980 has a very different look from the old blue-striped Academic Press design. The page size is shorter and slightly narrower, the typeface has changed. The front cover is dominated by what has since become our familiar logo, a striking black-and-white design based on a drawing of a tenth-century Viking brooch. In retrospect the inside pages look overly crowded; the margins are too narrow, and the layout looks as if it is designed to get as many words on a page as possible. Early computer difficulties in reproducing 'æ' and 'ø' are evident; the former is two separate letters squashed together, the latter a later-added slash which is always too long. But it was a technological triumph for its time, and received with great enthusiasm.

Producing and distributing the journal soon became a regular routine,



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and inspired to greater ambitions. If we could publish journals, why not publish books? British publishers in the 1980s were unwilling to take the financial risk of publishing translations of obscure Nordic writers – or even books about Nordic writers, unless they were called Ibsen, Strindberg or Andersen. So James McFarlane and I decided to start publishing our own, beginning with Michael Robinson's *Strindberg and Autobiography* and McFarlane's translation of Sigbjørn Obstfelder's *A Priest's Diary*. Again helped by grants from ever-generous Nordic funds and with our own in-house designer, Richard Johnson, and our first part-time paid office manager, we received our first parcels of chunky books under the imprint of Norvik Press in late 1986. We did not, however, officially become a company until we realised that we would otherwise be personally liable for any financial disasters. Later we were joined by our new professor Michael Robinson, and settled down to produce an ambitious three to four books a year.

Scandinavica, in the meantime, was still going strong. The two numbers a year continued to appear, though the 80-page issues had swollen by the mid-1980s to more like 130, with much more extensive bibliographies. It still cost only £15 or \$40 a year. From 1988 it received an annual subvention from the Nordic Publications Committee for Humanist Periodicals, which has been vital to its continued existence. In that same year James McFarlane decided to begin the process of handing over the editorship. For a couple of years McFarlane and Garton appear as joint editors, and from May 1991 I became sole editor. By then we had also acquired Michael Robinson as Assistant Editor, Glyn Jones as Reviews Editor, Gavin Orton as Bibliographies Editor, Harald Næss as Associate Editor (USA). With the addition of Bredsdorff as Editor Emeritus and McFarlane as Editor at Large, the editorial page began to look rather full, especially as the Advisory Board now numbered twenty-four. Four women.

From 1991 to 2008 I was the editor of *Scandinavica*. During those years we introduced special themed issues of the journal organized by guest editors: on Drama in November 1992 (ed. Michael Robinson), on Nordic Film in May 2000 (ed. Rochelle Wright), on Queer Writing in May 2001 (ed. Paal Bjørby), on Laxness in May 2003 (ed. Gunnþórunn Guðmundsdóttir and Daisy Neijmann), on Re-imagining Nordic National

Narratives in November 2005 (ed. C. Claire Thomson), and on Hans Christian Andersen in November 2007 (ed. Hans-Christian Andersen (his namesake) and Bjarne Thorup Thomsen). We also published a bibliography of Modern Icelandic Literature in Translation by Kenneth Ober as a special supplement in 1997. The passing of time is attested to by the changes on the editorial pages and by the growing list of obituaries of members of the advisory board which began to appear: Ludovica Koch in 1994, Amy van Marken in 1995, Bernhard Glienke in 1997, James McFarlane in 1999, Elias Bredsdorff in 2002, Sveinn Skorri Höskuldsson and Hermann Pálsson in 2003, Mogens Brøndsted in 2007. All affectionately remembered and all sadly missed.

By 2008 the editorial page informs all enquirers that the Assistant Editor is my colleague – from UEA and later UCL – Claire Thomson, Reviews Editor is our Norvik Press editorial assistant Neil Smith, and Bibliographies Editor the British Library's Scandinavian specialist Barbara Hawes. The advisory board numbers twenty members, of whom eleven are women – a majority for the first time. Subscriptions now cost £18.50 for individuals and £37.50 for institutions in the UK, \$50 for individuals and \$72.50 for institutions abroad. The journal also has a website and an e-mail address. Some slight visual changes have begun to appear, in that the stark black-and-white of the cover has become colour-coded according to year: green in 2006, blue in 2007 etc. Inside the covers the font has changed and grown larger, the margins become more generous. Otherwise the journal appears very much as it has since 1980.

It was time for a change, for many reasons. I was about to retire from my chair at UEA, and wanted to concentrate on other projects; my university had followed the recent depressing trend and peremptorily decided to close its flourishing department of Scandinavian studies, so was no longer a natural base for Norvik Press and its journals. (In 2002 we had been joined by *Swedish Book Review*, edited with unflagging zeal since 1983 by the one-man-band Laurie Thompson at Lampeter, and now going from strength to strength under its new editor, the translator Sarah Death.) We decided to move lock, stock and barrel to UCL – the stock bit being particularly fraught, as we had by now around 15,000 books, as well as back runs of journals, which were

squirrelled away in cupboards all over UEA and had entirely taken over Neil Smith's cottage. I handed over the editorship of *Scandinavica* to Claire Thomson at the end of 2008; the rest of the press followed slightly later.

In its third incarnation under its fourth editor, the journal has shrunk by a millimeter or two, but is otherwise the same size. The look is however totally different; gone is the logo, and the front cover presents a kaleidoscope of colourful Nordic art, landscape and design, with the title in a bold stripe down the left. After some experimentation the font has settled down as a rather minimalist, clean Lucida Sans. The editorial page records Assistant Editor Christopher Abram, Reviews Editor Janet Garton, Bibliographies Editor Barbara Hawes, Associate Editor Harald Næss, Editorial Assistant Elettra Carbone (our new Norvik Press office manager and general miracle worker). The advisory board lists the usual suspects, the UK price is unchanged.

The content of the journal is evolving under its new editor at a rather faster pace than previously, in line with new developments in the field. Claire Thomson's editorial note in the first issue of 2009 expresses a particular interest in contributions from postgraduate students and from colleagues working at the interdisciplinary boundaries between Scandinavian studies and other fields. It also introduces a new 'comment and debate' section as a forum for work in other formats than the traditional article, such as interviews, student essays and opinion pieces. The tradition of special issues will continue, so far with an issue on Literature, Welfare and Well-being (Vol. 50, 1, 2011), and another on Nordic sculpture is planned. In accordance with modern technological developments, some of our content is moving on-line; from 2012 the bibliographies will be available in updatable electronic format rather than as a printed list, and our reviews and some article content will also be



published on-line. In 2008 I promised a full index for *Scandinavica's* first fifty years by the time we reached our half-century; work on that is well advanced in collaboration with the US journal *Scandinavian Studies*, and we expect that the joint website will be available shortly.

Since our move to UCL, both Norvik Press and our journals have taken on a new lease of life. I am immensely grateful to my colleagues Claire Thomson, Sarah Death and Helena Forsås-Scott for joining me as directors of the press after what had been a rather lonely few years, and to Elettra Carbone for her unremitting efforts in getting to grips with such an idiosyncratic enterprise. Norvik Press has just reached its quarter-century and published its hundredth title; our books, now less chunky and more streamlined, constitute a library of Nordic classics. *Scandinavica* is in safe hands, and continues to be what it has always been, a forum for excellence in Nordic cultural studies.