

# Nordic Publishing and Book History: An Introduction

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As Janet Garton's thought-provoking historical overview of *Scandinavica's* 'first fifty years' in this issue makes clear, the cultures, societies and literatures of the Nordic countries are by no means restricted to a particular geographical region. As an international journal of Scandinavian Studies, *Scandinavica* is itself part of a transnational publishing circuit that has disseminated, analysed and added to the cultural dynamics of similarities and differences that make up the Nordic cultural sphere. The journal has adapted over time to the local conditions of academic publishing, to technological, cultural and institutional changes in Britain, through personal commitments and a vibrant international community of scholars.

This special themed issue of the journal that marks its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary aims to celebrate those commitments by offering a broad view on the history and characteristics of the modern publishing business and print culture of the Nordic countries. We have invited contributions that investigate the transnational and intermedial dynamics and the great variety of agents or cultural transmitters that have enabled the circulation of Nordic literature within and out of the Nordic region. Together, the articles collected here confirm that studying Nordic literature, with a view to their material forms and the publishing circuits within which they are written, disseminated and read, offer new perspectives on the literary culture of the Nordic region.

Based on extensive research into catalogues and market statistics, Anne Steiner investigates the Swedish book market following WWII. She demonstrates that the dramatic increase in publishing in the period to a large extent was driven by new publishing formats such as distinctly

branded and marketed paperbacks that catered for the 'new' identities and social roles of readers in the developing Swedish welfare state. Also with a focus on the Swedish publishing industry, Karl Berglund studies in his article the booming market for Swedish crime fiction in the period following the 'Golden Age' of the welfare state. He finds that when evaluating the national success of Swedish crime writers one has to take the changing publishing market into account. Amongst the most significant changes, Berglund highlights the increasingly internationalised book trade, an increase in pace, a dramatic (and to some surprising) rise in self-publishing and the wider use of various electronic media to accompany the verbal in the marketing of crime fiction. The enormous success of Swedish crime fiction both at home and abroad, therefore, needs to be viewed in a wider publishing and media context wherein crime fiction is now seen as the new 'normal' genre on the bestseller lists.

When considering the extra-textual factors that produce changes in the literary culture, local and global market dynamics, changing readerships and innovative publishing formats play a significant and often overlooked role in shaping the kind of literature that attracts the attention of the publishing industry and the consumers. However, such systemic conditions or general market conditions are not singularly responsible for determining the success (the market value and/or the cultural capital) of Nordic books and authors. Particularly when considering the canonization abroad of literature from comparatively small language areas such as the ones in the Nordic region, the nature of its dissemination is often seen to be dependent upon contingencies and dedicated individuals making the best (or worst) of highly localised conditions.

Such localised conditions are apparent, for instance, in the case of the translation and publishing of Finnish language literature in the Czech Republic after the velvet revolution of 1989 – a year that also brought radical changes to the publishing of foreign fiction. In their article, Jan Dlask and Lenka Fárová investigate this particular 'literary field' (a term and an approach they borrow from Pierre Bourdieu), involving a cast of translators, publishers, editors and grant institutions

that all contributed to stimulating the interest in and economic viability of Finnish language literature in the Czech Republic. The transfer of Nordic literature is here seen as highly dependent on the new possibilities of local political circumstances, but Dlask and Fárová's survey of the publishing market also demonstrates the centrality of, for instance, the academic training of a new generation of translators and the establishment of dedicated small publishing houses to the success of not only contemporary Finnish crime fiction but also of classics by Mika Waltari, the dominant Finnish writer in the Czech literary field.

Literature that crosses borders with the aid of translators and other agents gains in translation, in David Damrosch's sense, as the cultural transfer into the literary field of the host country adds to the total meaning and cultural capital of the work. By approaching the transnational publishing history of Nordic authors from a World Literature perspective, we shall see how individual works and authorships gain from being exposed to new cultural contexts. An excellent example is the case of the Danish author Johannes V. Jensen in Germany. Monica Wenusch argues that Jensen's author profile in Germany in his own time was radically different from his Danish author figure. The German publisher Fischer Verlag (an important publisher of Scandinavian literature in German particularly in the period between 1880 and 1920) marketed Jensen as a significant cosmopolitan author by focusing on his so-called mythic and exotic stories set in tropical forests or in environments outside Europe. Wenusch investigates the various publishing channels available to the publisher for branding Jensen's authorship such as literary journals and the use of specifically targeted paratexts including author's forewords. In this way, the devises used in the marketing of Jensen worked together to prepare a certain image of the author before a reader would encounter the actual literary texts. Wenusch demonstrates that it is not merely the translation of the literary texts themselves that condition the cultural transfer, the use of a variety of publishing channels, various media and a conscious use of paratextual devises play as much of a role in the transnational dissemination and reception of canonical Nordic authors such as Johannes V. Jensen.

However, the dissemination of Nordic literature abroad has not

always been a straightforward successful one, as Petra Broomans points out in the case of the reception of Pär Lagerkvist's *The Hangman* in the Netherlands – a text from 1933 that was critical of political developments in Europe and in Germany in particular. The case of the translation and performance of the play version in the Netherlands, and the role of certain 'cultural transmitters' therein, illustrates, according to Brooman, 'that not only aesthetical values, but also and in a greater extend ideological motives, politics and personal motives were involved in the cultural transfer process'. While the performance of the play did cause the fierce debate and turmoil intended by the cultural transmitters, Broomans questions whether we can talk about a straightforward successful cultural transfer in this case as the play, which was considered important and innovative in Sweden, became the subject of fierce criticism on both aesthetic (by the most prominent critic Menno ter Braak) and political grounds in the Netherlands.

In a case study closer to our own time, Anne Myrup Munk also questions the cultural transfer into Danish of the Swede Mara Lee's first novel *Ladies* (2007, 2008) with a view to the construction of the author figure of Lee in the Danish publisher Rosinante's marketing strategy. In her article, gender politics within the Danish literary field (including reviewers in the daily press) is seen to have a direct influence on the book as a visual object. Central to Myrup Munk's investigation, which draws on Gerard Genette's concept of the paratext and Jerome McGann's call for considering a work's bibliographic codes, are the significance of the book design from the first to the second edition of the novel in the Danish translation. Her discussion hinges firstly on whether the design of the book and the genre ascription contribute to a trivialisation of literature written by women, or whether the gaudy pink first-edition book jacket can be seen to subvert the cliché representation of an 'intellectual chick lit' genre, and secondly the publisher's rationale for changing the design of the book jacket for the second edition (now in pale blue) and re-labelling the novel 'intellectual contemporary literature'. Myrup Munk's case study demonstrates, as the studies by Blask and Fárová and Broomans, 'that literary texts are situated in an indefinite zone between agents with different agendas and outputs that converge over time as symbolic struggles are

carried out and new concepts for the marketing and understanding of literature developed'. As these studies demonstrate, the symbolic (or personal, political and ideological) struggles between agents, institutions and cultural transmitters that situate literary works (their meaning, place on the market and in national canons) in a liminal zone is of particular importance to understanding the forces and conditions that make certain texts travel across linguistic and cultural borders. As these studies also show, it then becomes central that we pay attention to the great number of 'cultural transmitters' or 'agents' (of which many were included in Robert Darnton's seminal conception of 'the communication circuit', including publishers, translators, reviewers, funding bodies, readers etc), beyond our interest in the literary texts themselves, in order to understand the large scale formation of national and transnational canons and the small scale dissemination and reception of particular texts and author figures in select circuits or literary fields.

Such communication circuits are, apart from being determined by market conditions, also influenced by cultural perceptions, as Charlotte Berry's study of the niche-market transmission of Swedish childrens' books to the British market makes clear. Berry's case study is the picture book publications of the Edinburgh publisher Floris Books and the particular challenges the publisher faces in the transmission of cultures when it comes to, for instance, the image-to-text proportions relative to the age of the targeted readership between Swedish and British traditions. The question of a successful cultural transfer is also discussed in terms of the publisher's marketing of a specific Nordic style of illustration, which emphasises the Swedish landscape and a 'Nordic feel'. In this way, the success of Nordic childrens' literature on the British market depends on both the limitations and possibilities in its perceived cultural foreignness.

Edel Sheridan-Quantz's article about international connections in the Danish publisher Carl Stender's picture-book productions engages directly with the early history of transnational picture-book publishing in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Europe. The case of the dissemination and transnational production of picture books and childrens' literature reveals a widespread practice of, what Sheridan-

Quantz calls, the nativisation, adaptation and remixing of internationally distributed illustrations. National picture-book cultures, therefore, were deeply dependent on and influenced by internationally distributed, generic illustrations generated and marketed by major 'leader firms' such as the London-based publisher Raphael Tuck. Together, Berry and Sheridan-Quantz's articles offer new perspectives on the globalisation of cultural products with the cultural transfer, publishing and marketing of picture books across borders as a pertinent example for our time with its accelerated globalisation of the publishing market and increasingly diversified and mixed-media ecology; the conditions of local and global markets and cultures are demonstrated to be in constant exchange and seen as mutually enriching.

A fascinating case from the inter-war period of the transfer between visual and verbal media in modern publishing in the Nordic countries is the subject of Anne Bachmann's article 'Souvenirs from the Selma Lagerlöf Silent Film Adaptations'. Several of the Nobel Prize-winning Swedish author Selma Lagerlöf's works were adapted into films and were reissued in editions illustrated with film stills. The publication of these not-too-expensive 'beautiful books' was, according to Bachmann, a response from the devotees to the 'culture of the book' to the changing market dynamics of the period following WWI, which included both rises in paper prices and the cheap-book revolution. The phenomenon of Lagerlöf editions illustrated with film stills and 'literary' cinema souvenir programmes are early examples of the cross fertilization between book publishing and cinema that plays a significant role in publishing today, notably through an engagement with comparative forms of cross-media marketing.

Bjarne Thomsen's article 'Text, Traffic and Transnational Thought' adds to the image of Lagerlöf as an author who shrewdly operated in the literary marketplace of her time. She targeted a variety of periodicals, journals, magazines and anthologies, including international outlets, which, according to Thomsen, 'could function as literary laboratories or shop windows, provide possibilities for popular and political engagement, give national or international prestige'. Of particular interest in this study are Lagerlöf's smaller prose pieces, which appeared in periodical publications before and during WWI. Thomsen

demonstrates that the subject matter of these prose pieces and their publishing channels together show Lagerlöf's dismissal of political and cultural isolationism and her transnational commitment during the war years. Bachmann and Thomsen's studies of this central author in the Nordic literary canon argue convincingly that intermedial and transnational publishing formats in the early twentieth century offered new ways in which authors from the North-European peripheries could engage not only with new readerships but also with the growing concerns in Europe regarding the dangers of self-sufficient nationalism and the necessity for transnational or intercultural dialogue.

While Nordic literature and publishing may be considered peripheral to the central markets and political developments in Europe, the Nordic region itself is rich in complex and changing cultural, linguistic and political centres and peripheries. Nowhere more, perhaps, than in the case of Finland where the shifting publishing circuits and interests in the literary marketplace have made up the field upon which Finnish 'imagined communities' have been negotiated. The negotiation of the national and international interests of the Finnish book market is the theme of Jyrki Hakapää's article, which investigates the entangled history of dependent agents of Swedish publishers and Finnish book sellers in the nineteenth century – a period in which a Finnish national culture was taking shape. Hakapää's interest is in the history of the book trade in Finland during the custom decree on book imports, 1845–1857, and the intricate ways in which publishers and book sellers tried to circumvent sales taxes on Swedish titles across the Finnish-Swedish border in order to take part in the international book trade.

Sofia Kotilainen also considers the history of the book in Finland in terms of nation building in the nineteenth-century. Her micro-historical case study focuses on the early lending libraries in the Finnish rural areas of the 1850s, particularly the lending library of Saarijärvi in Central Finland, which made Finnish language literature for popular education and enlightenment available to its community in a time of censorship that prohibited the publication of most Finnish language literature. In Kotilainen's study, a peasant farmer called Matti Taipale is singled out for his central role in the establishment of the lending library and for his part in the development of a local vernacular culture.

In Hakapää and Kotilainen's research into the negotiations of a Finnish literary culture in and against regional, national and international attempts to consolidate the political and cultural centres and peripheries on the book market, we find an insistence on considering the all too easily accepted poles of the centre and the periphery as inherently fluid, entangled and dependent on the chosen perspective. In the literary field, as may be seen to be a common thread through most of the articles collected in this issue, the local is infused with, conditioned and changed by the possibilities of the trans-local and, importantly, vice versa.

The significance and localisation of publishing circuits to the forging and evolution of national cultures, signalling a clear co-dependence of centre and periphery is also evident in the case of the critical reviews of Faroese literature published in local journals, as Anne-Kari Skardhamar argues in her article. Until the 1930s, she argues, literary criticism in the Faroe Islands was evaluating literature exclusively for its ability to affect a nation-building project. With inspiration from William Heinesen and related Nordic journals, literary and cultural criticism in Faroese journals developed towards a more secure national self-image with a cosmopolitan attitude. Skardhamar insists on the importance of a cosmopolitan cultural field particularly to small nations as a national confidence expressed through, for instance, a literary canon, established on international aesthetic criteria, will provide Faroese publishing with access to the international markets and a place in world literature.

As the articles collected here show, when considering Nordic literature through the diverse approaches to publishing and book history we witness an expansion of the Nordic literary field both in spatial and temporal terms: the physical movement of books and their texts within existing and changing publishing circuits presents not only an entanglement of local and transnational concerns but also an entangled history of the dependency and influence of literary culture on the marketplace for books and other cultural products.