

Institution: University College London
Unit of Assessment: 28 – Modern Languages and Linguistics
Title of case study: From Strindberg to Vinterberg: Multi-channel approaches to mediating Scandinavian classics
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Working in close collaboration with a range of non-academic partners, research insights into the connections between technological change and narrative and visual culture inform the mediation of Scandinavian literary and cinematic classics to UK and international audiences. Methods used encompass analogue and digital publication technologies, exhibitions, public talks, translations, theatre performance, and stand-up comedy. This has enhanced public awareness of and access to Scandinavian literary and cinematic heritage in the UK and internationally, produced new cultural resources, and transferred skills, knowledge and resources between researchers, partners in publishing, translation, design and theatre, and Scandinavian embassies and cultural institutions.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Research at UCL Scandinavian Studies applies literary and media theory and history to the interpretation of Scandinavian literature and cinema. The overarching principle for this work is that fundamental to the interpretation of a visual or narrative text are (i) its material instantiation and (ii) the processes of its production. The research falls into two inter-related categories.</p> <p>First, several research publications have applied media-specific analysis to literature and visual culture in innovative ways. This includes, but is not restricted to, the study of works which self-consciously call attention to their own material instantiation. This category includes Claire Thomson's monograph [d] on the seminal Danish film <i>Festen</i> (dir. Thomas Vinterberg, 1998), the first commercial feature film to be shot on digital video, which was nonetheless transferred to and distributed on 35mm analogue film. Thomson argues that the film employs the conceptual and visual tension produced by this clash of media to produce a new hybrid aesthetic fundamental to the film's emotional impact. She also examines the aesthetically productive tension arising from intermediality in her article on a 1942 Danish novel which reflects on its own material instantiation in book form to construct an imagined national community [e]. Thomson's analysis of August Strindberg's experimentation with indexicality in his essays and his photography [f] examines the engagement of a canonical nineteenth-century Scandinavian author with the cutting-edge media of his day, as does Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen's work on the intermedial influence of periodicals and scrapbooks in the narrative form of H. C. Andersen's fairytales [c]. This research demonstrates how materiality is part and parcel of textuality in our own age and in earlier technological eras.</p> <p>A second focus of the underpinning research is how technological shifts affect the aesthetics, production and reception of visual and literary texts. The current cultural and technological transition into the digital age is important here: Thomson's monograph [d] examines the influence of Dogme 95 on late twentieth-century filmmaking and its impact on popular anxieties about digital technology. Stougaard-Nielsen's article for the journal <i>Kritik</i> [a] explores the policies and practices entailed by digital storage and mediation of collective memory and cultural heritage. A ground-breaking and wide-ranging reconsideration of the relations between publishing, technology, translation and Nordic literature is provided by a substantial theme issue of the journal <i>Scandinavica</i> [b], edited by Stougaard-Nielsen with Elettra Carbone, a UCL Teaching Fellow.</p> <p>The research described here was conducted by Claire Thomson (Lecturer 2007–2013, Senior Lecturer 2013–), and Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen (Lecturer 2010–2013, Senior Lecturer 2013–).</p>
<p>3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)</p> <p>[a] Stougaard-Nielsen, J (2010). Den Digitale Kulturarvs Filologi. <i>Kritik</i> 196, pp.122–132. Submitted to REF2. <i>Kritik</i> is a leading Danish peer-reviewed journal of literature and culture, whose mission statement is to “build bridges between academic and public worlds”. http://www.kritik.gyldendal.dk.</p> <p>[b] Stougaard-Nielsen, J (2012), guest editor, with Carbone, E., Nordic Publishing and Book History. Theme issue of <i>Scandinavica</i> 51:2, 296 pp. Includes Stougaard-Nielsen's essay Nordic Publishing and Book History: An Introduction. A very substantial theme issue of <i>Scandinavica</i>,</p>

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incorporating fourteen peer-reviewed articles plus commentary. Selected material is available open access at <http://www.scandinavica.net>.

[c] Stougaard-Nielsen, J. (2013). The Fairy Tale and the Periodical: Hans Christian Andersen's Scrap-Books. *Book History* 16, pp.132–154. Submitted to REF2. *Book History* is the international peer-reviewed journal of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing.

[d] Thomson, C. Claire (2013). *Thomas Vinterberg's Festen*. Seattle: University of Washington Press. Submitted to REF2. Volume commissioned for the Nordic Film Classics series.

[e] Thomson, C. Claire (2008). Material Resistance: Mogens Klitgaard's *Den guddommelige Hverdag* (1942) as National Narrative and Technotext. *Scandinavica* 47:1, pp.47–71. Submitted to REF2. *Scandinavica* is the UK's leading journal of Scandinavian literature and culture.

[f] Thomson, C. Claire. (2012). 'The Delayed Rays of a Star': Strindberg's Celestographs in the Light of *Camera Lucida*. *Swedish Book Review* 2012:2, pp. 50–6. Full text open access at <http://redroomlondon.wordpress.com/resources/swedish-book-review-strindberg-issue/>.

The quality of the research is indicated by its acceptance for publication in international academic book series, international journals such as *Book History*, and key journals in the field of Scandinavian Studies such as *Kritik* and *Scandinavica*.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Research at UCL Scandinavian Studies has provided a means by which Nordic cultural organisations can mediate their works to UK audiences and has created an environment in which new modes of mediation can develop. This is achieved both through organised events attracting diverse London audiences, and by developing new channels through which partnerships are strengthened with a range of collaborators, such as embassies, publishing houses, translator networks and theatre companies. This activity has been facilitated through the application of Thomson's and Stougaard-Nielsen's research expertise in digital technology and medium-specificity to the development of multi-platform publishing and cultural mediation.

Working with the London embassies of Denmark and Sweden and Nordic cultural institutions such as the Danish Agency for Culture, our research **enhances public awareness of Scandinavian cultural heritage and produces new cultural resources**. We are regularly called upon by such institutions to collaborate on developing effective and innovative modes of engaging UK audiences with the aspects of Scandinavian culture they wish to promote, and we often lead on the design and delivery of such activities through multiple channels which, during the impact period, included exhibitions and talks, theatre collaborations, translation and publication of important literary works, and the development of networks of translators, illustrators and publishers who benefit from our research insights in mediating these works to Anglophone audiences. Our research combines expertise in 'classic' Scandinavian literature and cinema with new insights into the cultural and technological contexts in which they emerged: we thus assist cultural institutions to re-interpret and mediate Scandinavian cultural capital for British audiences in ways which speak to contemporary interests and media consumption practices.

A recent and major example of this collaboration – in this case with the Embassy of Sweden in London – was the exhibition and event series *Strindberg's Red Room at UCL* [1–3]. This exhibition was commissioned and funded entirely by the Embassy of Sweden in London, which provided total funds of c. £5000. It took place in UCL's North Lodge exhibition space from 22 September to 22 October 2012, and featured 22 events as well as a core exhibition including materials provided by the Swedish Institute and the Nordic Museum in Stockholm. Curated by Thomson, this exhibition provided an introduction to the life and work of August Strindberg to mark the centenary of his death, but was characterised by a concern, rooted in Thomson's research, with Strindberg's creative output across media, genres and fields (e.g. plays, photography, painting, science essays). Visitors thus benefited from an enhanced knowledge and understanding of the significance and range of Strindberg's oeuvre, but could also hear presentations (e.g. one based on Stougaard-Nielsen's research on Hans Christian Andersen [c]), engage in discussion, and be exposed to artefacts and images on related topics such as the production of scientific knowledge, the role of chance in art, and nineteenth-century photographic experimentation. In addition to some 230 visitors in situ, the Red Room website had by 31.7.2013 attracted 6500 page views from 61

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countries [1]. Visitor comments [2] included: 'impressive and inspirational exhibit'; 'enlightening and thought-provoking'; 'very stimulating'. Another element in this commission was a special issue of the magazine *Swedish Book Review* [4] (including an essay by Thomson on Strindberg's photographic experiments [f]), published by Norvik Press and distributed to 380 subscribers. The Swedish Embassy confirms [3] that *Strindberg's Red Room at UCL* achieved two key goals: the centenary was marked in the UK in an innovative multidisciplinary academic frame, and in physical settings which brought Strindberg to audiences beyond the Embassy's established contacts.

The application of our research to enhancing public awareness and enjoyment of cultural heritage also extends to more straightforward forms of mediation. Thomson's introduction to a screening of Vinterberg's *Festen* at London's Nordic Film Festival 2012 at Riverside Studios, attended by 68 people, drew directly on her monograph [d] and was positively reviewed in *Kettle Magazine* [5]. Her Bright Club podcast on Nordic cinema including Dogme 95 was downloaded 1114 times (Feb 2011–Jan 2012). She also wrote and performed two research-based comedy sets on Danish film for Bright Club, UCL's academic comedy night, at Bright Club LIFE (4.2.2011, audience of 554, set and interview filmed by BBC [6]), and at Bright Club READING (9.5.2013, audience of 230) [7].

Our research has catalysed changes to existing businesses which has, in turn, benefited our cultural partners. Central to this endeavour has been the relocation to UCL in 2010 of a specialist Scandinavian publishing house, Norvik Press, first established at the University of East Anglia in the 1980s. Leveraging the support structures provided by UCL Advances and UCL Enterprise, more commonly used by STEM researchers commercialising discoveries, Thomson, as a Director of Norvik Press, has worked to create synergies between emerging print technologies, the department's collective expertise in Scandinavian culture, and its public engagement activities, in order to develop modes of mediating Scandinavian literature that are sustainable, cost-effective, inflected by research, and sensitive to readers' attachment to books as attractive material objects.

In 2010–11, Thomson was appointed a UCL Knowledge Transfer Champion (KTC) to apply her research insights on digital technology and medium-specificity to the development of multi-platform publishing. This KTC award funded a research assistant post (held by Marita Fraser) to provide the necessary expertise in production technology. Thomson also worked with UCL Advances to broker the appointment of Norwegian literature specialist Elettra Carbone as a Knowledge Exchange Associate seconded to Norvik Press to manage and evaluate the transition to digital print-on-demand (PoD) technology as Norvik's mode of production and distribution. PoD obviates the need for expensive storage of back stock and streamlines the ordering process. This had a critical impact on Norvik's dissemination of Nordic literature: sixteen books, including several key projects in collaboration with Nordic institutions, were published as PoD in the period 2011–13.

An important example is the translation series 'Lagerlöf in English', edited by Helena Forsås-Scott (researcher at UCL, retired 2010). Five volumes in the series have so far been published via PoD, all classic Swedish works that would not otherwise be in print in English. Building on the department's research emphasis on books as intermedial objects, this series also provided a framework to promote Swedish artists in the UK: the Embassy brokered a competition to design book covers for the series, in partnership with Beckmans College of Design, Stockholm. This provided UK exposure for the winner, Sture Pallarp. Similarly, illustrations for a new translation of the two-volume children's classic *Nils Holgersson's Wonderful Journey* (trans. Peter Graves, Norvik Press, 2013) were selected via open call. The selected artist, Bea Bonafini, benefited not only financially from use of her images but also in terms of artistic development, as evinced by her essay (included in the book [8]) discussing her conceptual engagement with the translated text. The cultural impact of the availability of this novel by Selma Lagerlöf, the first female Nobel Laureate in Literature, was powerfully expressed by critic Paul Binding in his *TLS* review: "my own life is unimaginable without Nils Holgersson" [9]. The synergies between UCL's public engagement activity and Norvik Press are further exemplified by Norvik's use of the Strindberg exhibition as an environment in which to re-launch and contextualise Peter Graves' translation of the Strindberg novel *The Red Room* (first published in 2009; 645 copies sold to date) [4]. These, and similar projects, have enabled Nordic cultural organisations to ensure that UK readers have access to significant works of Nordic fiction through an established and sustainable channel whose publication strategies are informed by UCL's research in Scandinavian culture and book history.

A second, and related, example of our contribution to business development is our ongoing

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collaboration with the semi-professional theatre company Foreign Affairs. Our Strindberg centenary activities included the publication by Norvik of a volume of 4 one-act plays by Strindberg, an initiative designed with the Swedish Embassy and coordinated under the auspices of our Impact Studentships (see below) to provide opportunities for networking and skills development for Swedish-English translators. Experienced translation mentors were assigned to aspiring translators, who worked in pairs on the translations, consulting Foreign Affairs on the performability of the resulting texts. Two of these plays were then produced by Foreign Affairs, premiering on 19 October 2012 at the Bloomsbury Theatre Studio (2 performances, c. 60 attendees). This translation project thus expanded the young company's repertoire with two new productions of Strindberg's lesser known plays. This collaboration is acknowledged by the co-founder of Foreign Affairs, Trine Garrett, as a watershed for the company, crystallising its focus on translated material and artistic collaborations. Foreign Affairs' income from the Strindberg productions funded the group's membership of the Independent Theatre Council and its incorporation as a company [10].

That our contribution to the mediation of Nordic culture in the UK is regarded by our partners as a **sustainable and valuable exchange of skills, knowledge and resources is evinced by significant financial investment on their part**, not only for specific events but also in the form of scholarship funding. Three doctoral studentships have been part-funded by Nordic cultural institutions under the UCL Impact PhD Studentship scheme, which couples research with impact-generating activities; this partnership scheme is otherwise predominantly used in STEM research. In 2010, two PhD studentships in Swedish-English translation were brokered by Thomson and the Swedish Embassy's Cultural Counsellor, and co-funded by the Swedish Academy, the Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation, and Mr Stefan Olsson (a total of £64,575) [3]. These PhD projects draw on Thomson and Stougaard-Nielsen's research in print culture, intermediality and cultural transfer. The projects have enhanced the public's and cultural institutions' understanding of the agency of translators and other actors in the translation, publication and promotion of Swedish literature, and developed and sustained networks between stakeholders in the UK and overseas, via such channels as the students' contributions to *Swedish Book Review*, presentations on Radio Wales, at the Gothenburg Book Fair, the British Centre for Literary Translation Summer School, and at London events such as the Nordic Noir Book Club and New Swedish Fiction Book Club, as well as the collaborative drama translation project outlined above. A third Impact Studentship in 2013 demonstrates that this model is recognised as successful and sustainable. With the intention of building on existing literature-focused collaboration in London with the Danish Embassy, the Danish Arts Council's Committee for Literature contributed £32,353 in summer 2013 to co-fund an Impact PhD studentship focusing on the role of social media in the promotion of new Danish fiction in the UK [11], with the practical remit of establishing a new network for Danish-English translators.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- [1] *Strindberg's Red Room at UCL* Wordpress blog statistics. Access available on request.
- [2] Visitors' book from Strindberg's Red Room exhibition. Available on request.
- [3] Statements from Danish and Swedish Embassies on collaborations. Available on request.
- [4] Sales, circulation and download figures for Norvik Press, including *SBR*. Available on request.
- [5] Nordic Film Festival: *Festen At Riverside Studios*. Rosemary Ellen Cherry, *Kettle Magazine*, 5.12.2012. <http://www.kettlemag.co.uk/article/nordic-film-festival-festen-riverside-studios>.
- [6] BBC interview and extracts from set. 'Can academics be funny?' 23.2.2011. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-12456553>.
- [7] Bright Club event audience and podcast download figures. Available on request.
- [8] *Nils Holgersson's Wonderful Journey*, including Bonafini's essay is available on request.
- [9] 'With the Wild Geese'. Paul Binding, *Times Literary Supplement*, 14.12.2012, pp.14–15; available on request.
- [10] Statement from Foreign Affairs on the impact of our collaborations. Available on request.
- [11] Statement by Danish Agency for Culture on Impact PhD studentship. Available on request.