

Preface

This special issue of the *Tijdschrift voor Skandinavistiek* is dedicated to Alan Swanson, who has been the head of the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Cultures at the University of Groningen since 1992. The volume with ten essays was presented to Alan Swanson during the symposium *Staging, Images and Poetics - from a Transatlantic Perspective*, held on 30 and 31 October 2006 to mark his retirement. The essays, like Alan Swanson's main work, focus on theatre, opera, dance and music.

Scholars from the United States, Great Britain, the Nordic countries, Belgium and the Netherlands discuss in their essays Scandinavian poetry, opera, drama, music and dance from a historical and contemporary perspective.

2006 is also international Ibsen-year as it is the 100th anniversary of Ibsen's death. In addition to the symposium itself, an evening programme was arranged for 30 October – a performance of the Chamber Opera *September* by Eivind Buene, based on Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*. *September* was performed by the Dutch chamber orchestra *Helicon* with Marianne E. Andersen (mezzo-soprano) and Monica Danielson (alto), and Pieter van der Wulp as conductor. The performance of the opera is not an everyday example of Dutch-Norwegian-Swedish co-operation, and it was also the world premiere outside Norway of this contemporary chamber opera, the first based on a play by Ibsen.

Swanson and Ibsen have in common that they lived abroad and that they can be regarded as intermediaries between different cul-

tures. Alan Swanson has always been well disposed towards the transatlantic dialogue and the symposium as well as this volume can be seen as a reflection of this cross-cultural co-operation.

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The editors have chosen a chronological order for the contributions, based on the time and context of the theme dealt with.

The volume opens, therefore, with 'Ut Pictura Poesis: Word and Image in George Stiernhielm's *Hercules*', by *Susan C. Brantly* (University of Wisconsin - Madison). In this contribution, George Stiernhielm's artistic choices in his epic poem, *Hercules*, are examined in the light of Baroque language theory and aesthetics. Stiernhielm's attempts to unite word and image result in his incorporation of emblems, paintings and allegorical figures common in ballet at the time. Interesting also is that the poem occasionally approaches the strategies of concrete poets from the 20th century, who similarly experimented with making language say what it meant.

In "'Vacker som faux": The Drottningholm Theatre Aesthetic', *Anne-Charlotte Hanes Harvey* (San Diego State University) examines some key aspects of the unique aesthetic of The Drottningholm Court Theatre. A main ingredient in the Drottningholm Theatre aesthetic is the use of *faux* in the lavishly employed *trompe l'oeil* which transforms pine and plaster to gold and marble and helps unite the stage area and audience seating area into one performance space. Hanes Harvey draws a detailed comparison between this *faux*, 19th-century *faux*, and today's trendy *faux*. The comparison makes clear the sophisticated and theatrical nature of the Drottningholm *faux* and its centrality to the Drottningholm Theatre aesthetic.

Bertil van Boer's (Western Washington University) contribution, 'The Greatest Gustavian Opera Never Written: Lidner's Tragedy *Medea*', is about the Swedish poet Bengt Lidner, who was active in

Stockholm during the Gustavian period. Against the backdrop of King Gustav III's ambition to create a state-sponsored public opera, designed to reflect a new cultural nationalism, Van Boer discusses why Lidner failed to get his opera *Medea*, based on the Greek myth, set to music and performed. Van Boer evaluates the text and suggests that it could have been that there was no composer in Stockholm who was able to match the power and imagery of Lidner's *Medea*.

Janet Garton (University of East Anglia) presents a new perspective on Ulrik Brendel in *Rosmersholm*, in "Are you really going to have this person in your living-room?" Ulrik Brendel's difficult entry into Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*. Garton examines the development of the Brendel character from draft to draft, and offers some suggestions about the varying problems he poses or contributions he makes to the overall unity of the play. Her discussion of Brendel casts light on a character that has not always been paid much attention. It also creates an impression of the working methods of Henrik Ibsen, known for the many drafts he made before his final play, and shows how he wrestled with his characters and literary creations until the bitter end.

Another new perspective on a play is given by Barbara Lide (Michigan Technological University) in 'Strindberg's *Lycko-Pers resa*: Staging the Fantastic'. Lide argues for a revival of the play, which was barely acknowledged by Strindberg, probably due to the harsh criticism of Edvard Brandes. Later, too, the play was not one of Strindberg's most popular among either theatre people or Strindberg scholars. Lide emphasizes the role of *Lycko-Pers resa* as a model for Strindberg's later station dramas and *sagospel*, or fairy-tale plays, and she discusses how the piece has the magic of staging in common with, for example, Strindberg's *Ett drömspel*.

Rochelle Wright (University of Illinois) gives in her 'Ibsen's Transcreations in Iran and India' examples of Ibsen's ongoing relevance across national borders and the barriers of language and culture.

She focuses on the 1993 Iranian film *Sara*, directed by Dariush Mehrju'i, based on *A Doll's House*, and the Indian director Satyajit Ray's 1989 version of *An Enemy of the People*, *Ganashatru*. Both films are so-called transcreations, translations where a work in one language acquires a new cultural/historical/political specificity in another. Set in, respectively, contemporary Tehran and West Bengal, both films follow Ibsen's plots relatively closely, while simultaneously adapting and transforming the source text to make the subject matter relevant in another cultural context.

In his essay *Henk van der Liet* (Universiteit van Amsterdam) studies two famous songs by the Danish poet-author-painter-troubadour Holger Drachmann (1846-1908). He asks how much truth there is in the assertion that it is mainly because of the music that was written to accompany them that Drachmann's songs have survived the ravages of time, while most of his oeuvre has today been consigned to oblivion. Van der Liet proposes the idea that these songs have altered in status from being plain (popular) songs, to being locations of memory, i.e. cultural phenomena that have become part of – and sustain – collective understanding(s) of identity.

Morten Egholm (Københavns Universitet) focuses in his contribution on the Danish filmmaker Carl Th. Dreyer (1889-1967), whose last film was an adaptation of the play *Gertrud* (1906) by the Swedish author Hjalmar Söderberg (1869-1941). Egholm asks the question why Dreyer's film *Gertrud* (1964) was received so negatively by most of the viewers, as well as by the film critics at that time. Egholm places Dreyer's film in the context of the aesthetics of the so-called *caméra-stylo* school, and through his analysis of Dreyer's adaptation of Söderberg's *Gertrud*, he shows that Dreyer to the very end of his career was faithful to the literary sources on which he based his films. At the same time Dreyer never compromised when it came to cinematic integrity and stylistics.

In her contribution, *Godelieve Laureys* (Universiteit Gent) investi-

gates the use of theatre metaphor in the Swedish language. The use of theatrical words and expressions is very common and – in the terminology coined by George Lakoff – ‘theatre’ may be said to be a frequently used ‘donor domain’, from which words and expressions are derived and used with a metaphorical meaning in various so-called ‘recipient domains’. Among the questions Laureys raises are: To what extent are theatrical metaphors conventional, and what is their level of lexicalisation? And what is the relative frequency of metaphorical usage compared to literal meaning(s)?

The *finale* of this volume is a playful dialogue between two dancers/voices, represented by *Petra Broomans* (University of Groningen) and *Lars Huldén* (University of Helsinki), who perform a choreography in words, so to speak. The two dancers discuss Argentine and Finnish tango and the importance of putting on the right shoes. The question is raised whether all tangos have to be sad, and how best to understand the rich tango tradition of Finland: is it folklore or a passion? Finally, a sad undertone threatens to take hold when one of the dancers fears that the tango may soon become a phenomenon of the past; but dancer 1 has the last word: “trust your feet, dance your memories, even if it hurts”.

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