

Editor's Note

In front of you, dear reader, you have *American Studies in Scandinavia*, volume 45: 1-2. It is a double issue, including both a section about U.S. conservatism since World War II and a number of articles with general content. In addition, there is an ample and generous reviews section. Furthermore, it is the issue with which I conclude my period as editor of *American Studies in Scandinavia*.

In line with Alf Tomas Tønnesen's initiative, "American Conservatism since World War II" is the collected response to a call for papers which attracted writers from many subject areas, universities, and countries, and the final texts, after the peer review process, are written by Niels Bjerre-Poulsen, Denmark; Tom Packer, Great Britain; Hilde Løvdal Stephens and Leif Magne Lervik, Norway. The section or theme is expertly introduced by Alf Tomas Tønnesen as guest editor, and it relevantly positions strands of developments and perspectives. As a special issue, "American Conservatism since World War II" makes an addition to a series of special issues over the years, in my period of editorship highlighting transnational strategies, American spaces, Latino/a Studies, Nordic Spaces in North America, and topics for subsequent special issues have already been suggested. The next to come is "American Cultures of Work" with Martyn Bone, Joe Goddard, and Andrew Miller as guest editors.

The series of special issues, with topics suggested by prospective guest editors, all originate in a call for papers, and the resulting text submissions are then subject to the double blind peer review process which finally provides a number of texts for publication. This procedure implies both strictness and a sense of serendipity: strictness in quality control and serendipity in the final outcome to represent the special issue.

One special issue a year leaves the second issue with a general content, based on individual text submissions. Here, there are also certain modes of inclusion, which the texts in the present issue may illustrate. The vast

majority of texts are individual text submissions which go, or do not go, for peer review, and which then are rejected or accepted, and, if accepted, subsequently revised for publication. Kristina Fjelkestam's text, "Alcott, *Little Women*, and the Popular Sublime" makes an instance. As it turned out, the text added to the topic areas constituting American Studies, since it concerns children's literature and adds to the theory of the sublime. Benita Heiskanen's text, "Living with the *Narcos*: The 'Drug War' in the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez Border Region" links back to the previous special issue of "Latino/a Studies" and thus provides an instance on interlinking. Pirjo Ahokas' text, "Challenging the Color-Blind American Dream: Transnational Adoption in *A Gesture Life*, *The Love Wife*, and *Digging to America*" illustrates yet another mode of inclusion. The text is based on her keynote speech at the conference of the Nordic Association for American Studies in Örebro, 2013, and subsequently revised in the format of an academic text, which, in its turn, was subjected to the normal procedure of the double blind peer review process. The public nature of the original appearance of the keynote could pose a problem for the peer review process to work. It is therefore important to have a wide international network of peer reviewers, not immediately related to the Scandinavian field of American Studies. There is one text missing, which was planned for this section: the winner of the Orm Øverland Essay Prize, 2013, but this text, about the poetics of relational place-making and the politics of aesthetic autonomy will be published in an issue to come.

The individual texts in the second section of the present double issue should have an introduction of their own, and in the correct order of appearance. So, in her study Pirjo Ahokas focuses in her study on transnational and transracial adoption in three novels: *A Gesture Life* by Chang-rae Lee, *The Love Wife* by Gish Jen, and *Digging to America* by Ann Tyler, and it is her argument, along with the title of her text, that in the three novels the American dream is pursued through denial of racial difference. The "popular sublime" is the key concept for Kristina Fjelkestam in her argument about the aesthetics proclaimed in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* trilogy. In a historical context "the popular sublime" is a move away from eighteenth-century elitism and existential angst to a general recognition, in the nineteenth century, of the nobleness and sublimity in all mankind, and thus it conveys a democratic message. In "Living with the *Narcos*: The 'Drug War' in the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez Border Region" Benita Heiskanen discusses violence out of fieldwork and interviews in the region and context-

tualizes her discussion as a global crisis issuing “citizenship, political and human rights, across national boundaries.”

In times of editor transfer, here are finally some statistics and reflections. In my period as the editor of *American Studies in Scandinavia*, 2007-2013, 62 texts have been published, by in all, 60 authors. 49 texts are written by Scandinavian authors. The division between the Nordic countries is uneven: Sweden 22 texts, Denmark, 13, Norway 10, and Finland 4. This reflects the editor's country of origin and also a circumstance which has been discussed in the NAAS board meeting: getting texts may be a matter of personal networking and acquaintances. To judge from statistics it is therefore apt that the editorship moves from Sweden to Finland. 13 texts come from outside Scandinavia: the United States heads the chart, and there are texts from Great Britain, Slovenia, Turkey, and the Arab Emirates. The Scandinavian majority is overwhelming, and it is particularly evident from the two most recent issues, 44: 2 and 45: 1-2, now being published.

Rejection rate is, in all, 25-30% as a result of the double blind peer review procedure. Each text has been allotted at least two peer reviewers. To keep the peer reviews blind, Scandinavian peer reviewers have participated to a very limited extent. The Scandinavian academic community is small, and even if the texts are anonymous, their topics may, and often do, reveal the authors. An international double blind peer review procedure, however, has made it possible to maintain a high quality level responding to the listing in *Web of Science*. This has made *American Studies in Scandinavia* a venue for as many as 60 scholars during the present period. The cooperation between me and the Southern Denmark University Press has worked well, and the procedure of editing and proof-reading has also been a means to achieve publications of high quality.

All my best wishes go to Ari Heli as the new editor. To me, *American Studies in Scandinavia* has a very important function as a venue for academic publications among Scandinavian American Studies scholars, and for a continuous definition of what is American Studies. A sustainable future for the journal is therefore necessary.

Anders Olsson
editor

Mid Sweden University

American Conservatism, the Republican Right, and Postwar U.S. Political History

Alf Tomas Tønnesen

Volda University College

Guest editor

This thematic issue of *American Studies in Scandinavia* discusses the rise of American conservatism since World War II and the way issues dear to conservatives increasingly shaped the political conversation and legislative agenda in the United States. The Age of Franklin Roosevelt, with shared prosperity and an expansion of the role of government in welfare and economic activities, came to an end in the late 1970s and has been replaced by the Age of Ronald Reagan, an era of deregulation of business, tax cuts, and a renewed focus on self-reliance. In spite of the election of Barack Obama in 2008, the Age of Reagan is arguably still ongoing. The House of Representatives is led by conservative Republicans, and conservatives in the Senate have repeatedly filibustered Democratic legislative proposals. The Supreme Court has a majority of conservative justices. The Affordable Care Act, President Obama's signature legislative accomplishment, does not have a public option and is based on ideas initiated by Republicans.

In the middle of the 20th century it did not seem likely that conservatism would strongly influence the trajectory of American politics in subsequent decades. In 1950 American literary critic Lionel Trilling claimed that "liber-