Programme

8.45 - 10.00: Registration and introductions

8.45 - 9.15: Registration (Wellcome Collection, 5th floor; doors will open at 8.45 am and will close 9.15 am)

9.15 - 9.25: Welcome and practical remarks (Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen, UCL)

9.25 - 9.45: Introduction by Mary Hilson (Author of The Nordic Model: Scandinavia since 1945, Reaktion, 2008) (UCL Scandinavian Studies)

9.45 - 10.00: Introduction by Prof. David Napier (UCL Department of Anthropology; representing the Grand Challenges of Human Wellbeing)

10.00 – 11.00: Key-Note Address

Lasse Horne Kjældgaard (University of Copenhagen)

The Poetics of the Scandinavian Welfare State

Key-note speaker will be presented by Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen (UCL)

There is a general consensus within the social sciences that the Scandinavian welfare state represents a political and cultural paradigm that is unparalleled in certain respects. The "Scandinavian model" is a well-described topic in terms of sociology and political economy. Many political controversies have revolved around the model, but it has also been negotiated with much fervour in post-war Scandinavian fiction. The talk will address some of the literary energies unleashed by the Scandinavian welfare state model in Danish imaginative writing during the so-called "golden age of welfare", from 1950 to 1980.

11.00-11.30: Coffee Break

11.30 – 12.40: Panel 1: Origins and Age

Anne-Marie Mai (University of Southern Denmark)

Literature as Companion and Critic of the Welfare State

In Denmark, the idea that literature has a vital role to play in the public debate does not emerge with the welfare state. It goes back to the age of enlightenment and to Ludvig Holberg. In this respect, Villy Sørensen's thoughts from the 1950s on the democratic necessity of art were the jewel in the crown rather than the start of something new. From the 1960s, however, the linguistic turn and new forms of poetry break with Sørensen's rather essentialist and edifying view on literature and seek new modes of interaction with the development of the welfare state, e.g. by addressing the obscene, the ugly and all that seems to evade "the good life" and the human ideals officially articulated by the welfare state.

Peter Simonsen (University of Southern Denmark): Old Age and the Challenge of Well-Being in the Welfare State

A growing body of contemporary fiction sets out to account for the experience of growing old and as such reflects the ageing societies of the west. This paper considers contemporary literary texts about old age that are set in nursing homes or similar facilities by Norwegian and Danish writers such as Stig Sæterbakken, Per Petterson, Kirsten Thorup, Anders Bodelsen, Bent Vinn Nielsen. The paper centrally asks: is well-being an option for the old citizen in the welfare state, is old age well-being represented as mainly the state's problem, the family's or the individual's?

12.40 – 1.40: Lunch Break

1.40 - 3.15: Panel 2: Modernism(s)

Nils Gunder Hansen (University of Southern Denmark)

Adultery as a Symbol of the Welfare State in Anders Bodelsen's "The Christmas Gathering"

The Danish philosopher and writer Villy Sørensen was one of the prominent advocates of the welfare state in the debate of the 1950s. In his book Digtere og dæmoner (Poets and demons, 1959), he made a famous interpretation of the "situation of the engagement" between men and women in the old Danish folksongs. Sørensen did not make a connection between the welfare state and society's organization of sexuality, but in the short story "Julestue" ("The Christmas Gathering", 1965), the Danish writer Anders Bodelsen did. In the story, sexual emancipation in the form of a planned adultery (exchange of sexual partners) works as an ambivalent – tempting but also frightening – symbol of the welfare society under construction. To the male protagonist, adultery represents a kind of "second sexual debut", accompanied by emotions of anxiety and risk, very parallel to the "situation of engagement" in pre-modern society, according to Sørensen.

Anders Thyrring Andersen (University of Southern Denmark) Against the Aloof 'Hereticaner'

The years 1948 to 1953 saw the publication of the renowned magazine Heretica, which must be seen as the centre of that particular tension between tradition and modernity, which was being articulated after the War. Heretica is most often represented by Danish literary historians as an aloof and secluded form of late symbolism. However, around the magazine two to three generations of authors would gather to create several kinds of modernism, which have informed Danish literature ever since. And the people around Heretica were highly important for the cultural and institutional climate in the years after the War - notably as regards many of the cultural policies concerning the construction and maintenance of the welfare state.

Claire Thomson (UCL)

'The sun will shine on the homes of the future': Welfare-Era Architecture in New Danish and Swedish Cinema

The construction projects of the last two decades in the Øresund region – the Øresund Bridge, Ørestaden, Calatrava's Turning Torso tower in Malmö, the dismantling of the Kockums crane - have been the focus of a body of fiction and documentary films which exploit the potential of architecture to function on screen as abstract pattern, symbol, and inhabited place. This paper focuses on two such films: 1:1 (dir. Annette K. Olesen, Denmark, 2006) and Sossen, Arkitekten och det skruvade huset (The Socialist, the Architect and the Twisted Tower, dir.

Fredrik Gertten, Sweden, 2005). Each film, in its own way, references the building projects of the welfare era as concrete expressions of the ideology of the Welfare State, and renders visible the disjunctures between planned space and lived space.

3.15 - 3.30: Coffee Break

3.30 – 4.40: Panel 3: Performativity and Marginality

Louise Zeuthen (University of Southern Denmark)

Suzanne Brøgger's Performative Welfare Critique

In Scandinavia, Suzanne Brøgger has become synonymous with sexual liberation and the struggle for gender equality. As such she embodies a highly significant narrative about the Danish welfare state, which accentuates the relationships between gender, sexuality and equality. However, to understand the full complexity of Brøgger's welfare critique we need a new and extended concept of 'the work'. Indeed, it is through the staging of private life and sexuality that Brøgger formulates her critique of the unexpressed norms of the welfare state, in particular as far as issues of gender are concerned. Taking its point of departure in performativity theory, the paper will give a variety of examples of this from Brøgger's versatile work.

Helena Forsås-Scott (UCL)

Narratives from the Margin: Welfare and Wellbeing in Kerstin Ekman's Skraplotter When Kerstin Ekman was awarded the 2003 August Prize for Skraplotter, the committee highlighted the role of the scratchcard as 'sinnebilden för ett utarmat Sverige av idag, sett ur marginalens perspektiv med snabbt avfolkade landskap, kyrkor och konsumbutiker'. With the plot of Vargskinnet (1999-2003), of which Skraplotter is the third and final volume, covering virtually the whole of the twentieth century, we are certainly offered a survey of the welfare state – but is it true to say that the Sweden represented here is 'utarmat', and what are the implications of 'marginalens perspektiv'? This paper draws on work by Mieke Bal, Susan S. Lanser and Rosi Braidotti to explore narrative and narration in Skraplotter. To what extent are memory and history problematised in this novel with its kaleidoscope of texts and voices? What are we to make of subjectivation and identity, given that we have a male character projecting a range of selves, a character-bound narrator who is female, Sami and elderly, and an external narrator whose sections are increasingly focalised by another female character in search of her origins? What, finally, does the novel's pivotal work of art, a creation of tissue paper, feathers and shards of coloured glass, invisibly suspended and brought to life by the setting sun and soon enough consumed by fire, have to say about the pleasure of the text and, indeed, about the poetics of the welfare state?

16.40 – 17.20: Roundtable and drinks.

Chaired by Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen and Peter Simonsen

19.00: Dinner for Speakers