

Literature, Welfare & Wellbeing: Towards a Poetics of the Scandinavian Welfare State

The essays in the present issue of *Scandinavica* were first presented at a conference held in November 2010 at University College London and organized by the editors. This publication marks an early step in the new field of literary welfare studies. Collectively the essays aim towards a formulation of ‘the poetics of the Scandinavian welfare state’ by considering a few of the multiple ways in which post World War II Scandinavian fiction is intertwined with the welfare state. This entails a double engagement with how post War fiction has dealt thematically with the welfare state’s new types of people, milieux, mentalities, social formations, languages and conceptions of wellbeing and how this fiction in turn has been compelled towards formal renovation by the challenge of the welfare state. In thus offering its many different kinds of readers privileged opportunities to reflect upon and reach a better understanding of their living conditions under the welfare regime, this new ‘welfare literature’ has also in complex ways participated in inspiring, creating and developing the welfare state. One central claim which the seminar and the essays now published set out to test is that we cannot fully understand post War Scandinavian fiction without understanding its close and multifarious connections to the welfare state, even as we cannot fully understand the nature, history and future of the welfare state without considering the ways in which it is in part the product of literary and other works of art and the ideas and values they generate and put into circulation.

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