

Fractured Worlds – Scandinavian Narratives and Cultural Practices

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Introduction

This volume, *Fractured Worlds: Scandinavian Narratives and Cultural Practices*, presents a set of studies that, despite their methodological and thematic diversity, focus on instability—of identities, social structures, cultural norms, and representational forms. The concept of *fracture* serves as its guiding conceptual framework, encompassing not only historical and psychological ruptures—such as those generated by war, migration, or social transformation—but also epistemological and aesthetic discontinuities. Fragmented narrative forms, unstable identities, and tensions within cultural and linguistic practices point to a broader condition in which coherence is neither given nor guaranteed.

The structure of the volume moves from large-scale representations of crisis to increasingly localized and interactional forms of meaning-making. The opening study, focusing on Stig Dagerman's *Skuggan av Mart*, examines the ethical and narrative implications of neutrality and heroism in a post-war context. Through close reading, the article demonstrates how traditional heroic ideals become untenable in a world marked by moral ambiguity and political compromise. Neutrality emerges not as a position of moral superiority, but as an unstable and ethically fraught stance that generates guilt, responsibility, and paralysis, foregrounding Dagerman's critique of simplified moral narratives and his dismantling of culturally entrenched models of heroism.

This problematization of normative frameworks is further developed in the subsequent contribution on Scandinavian crime fiction by Nina Kaaberbøl and Agnete Friis. The study investigates how happiness functions as a normative and narrative construct within representations of welfare societies. Drawing on the distinction between evaluative and affective happiness, as well as Sara Ahmed's concept of happy objects, the analysis demonstrates how dominant ideals of the *good life* are destabilized when confronted with migration, exploitation, and transnational inequalities linked to Central and Eastern Europe. By examining themes such as family, motherhood, self-realization, and social responsibility, the article demonstrates that happiness operates less as an attainable emotional state than as a regulatory narrative that structures life trajectories while often obstructing their affective fulfillment.

The following contributions shift attention to the conceptual dimensions of space, temporality, and social organization. The analysis of Peter Høeg's *The History of Danish Dreams* explores the interplay between place, time, and identity through the lens of spatial theory, with particular emphasis on the notion of non-

places. It shows how the novel destabilizes linear temporality and fixed spatial coordinates, presenting family history as an allegory of Danish modernity in which national identity appears as a contingent narrative construction rather than a stable foundation.

A complementary perspective is offered by the study of C. J. L. Almqvist's *Amalia Hillner*, which explores the interplay of legal discourse, reality, and poetic imagination. Here, law functions not merely as a realistic framework, but as an interpretive space that seeks to manage the internal fractures of the world. The novel thus emerges as a hybrid text in which fragmentation becomes a fundamental condition for understanding reality and identity.

Questions of narrative form and coherence come to the fore in the analysis of Peer Hultberg's *Byen og Verden*. The study addresses the poetics of the text, asking whether the one hundred embedded narratives constitute a unified novel or merely a loose aggregation of stories. Through an examination of hypotexts, including mythological, biblical, and biographical patterns, the article argues that fragmentation does not signify the absence of meaning, but rather the operation of an alternative narrative logic. Particular attention is paid to interpretative gaps, which resist closure and compel the reader into an active role. These gaps not only structure the reading process but also reveal the instability of cultural and moral norms. In this sense, narrative form itself becomes a site of critical reflection on normativity.

The final contributions extend the scope of the volume beyond literary representation to the domains of linguistic interaction and interlanguage pragmatics. A contrastive study of request strategies in Norwegian and Hungarian examines how politeness, directness, and pragmatic norms are negotiated in everyday communication. Drawing on intercultural pragmatics and discourse analysis, the article demonstrates how linguistic structures and cultural expectations jointly shape the interpretation of requests, while also highlighting the risks of pragmatic transfer in second-language use. Politeness thus emerges not as a fixed property of linguistic forms, but as a context-dependent, culturally mediated practice.

This focus on normativity and its transmission is further developed in the closing study on Norwegian as a second language textbooks from the 1990s to the present. Through a diachronic analysis of widely used teaching materials, the article traces how concepts such as health and happiness are represented and reconfigured in response to shifting societal priorities. The findings reveal an increasing emphasis on mental well-being, self-management, and life skills, demonstrating how educational materials function not only as tools of language instruction but also as carriers of cultural values and normative models of the *good life*. In this way, language teaching is shown to play a significant role in shaping learners' perceptions of society and desirable modes of living.

The volume also addresses fracture within grammatical theory through an analysis of the German *scandal construction*. By comparing competing

theoretical models, the study highlights tensions between grammaticality and acceptability, as well as broader questions concerning the architecture of grammar and the role of processing.

Fractured Worlds does not seek to resolve the tensions it reveals. Rather than restoring coherence, it invites readers to engage with discontinuity as a fundamental condition of experience and interpretation. We hope this collection contributes to ongoing debates in literary, linguistic, and cultural studies by foregrounding fracture not as a deficit, but as a productive and indispensable category of analysis.