

## Danish Literature

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[TT]Danish Literature

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[H2]1. General

[H4]Current Trends.

Stefan Kjerkegaard, *Den menneskelige plet. Medialiseringen af litteratursystemet*, Frederiksberg, Dansklærerforeningen, 158 pp., is yet another attempt to characterize contemporary Danish literature. In the wake of Jens Kramshøj Flinker, *Litteratur i 00'erne* (2013), Erik Svendsen, *Kampe om virkeligheden* (2015), Tue Andersen Nexø, *Vidnesbyrd fra velfrædsstaten* (2016), and Martin Gregersen and Tobias Skiveren, *Den materielle drejning* (2016), K. selects mediatization as his focal point for a reflection on the latest developments. The fundamental assumption is that today's literature is 'heteronym' (heteronomous) and cannot be accessed reasonably within the paradigm of autonomy. The specific reasons for this is the interplay of media — mainly social media — and authorial identity. According to K., literature must be conceived of as a rhetorical intervention, a form of communication inextricably linked with a sender. The current trend of self-representation is not seen as a literary phenomenon, but as a societal condition for the formation of identity in late modernity. Throughout the monograph, works by Yahya Hassan, Claus Beck-Nielsen, Asta Olivia Nordenhof, et al. are analysed along with affiliated paratexts. Though many of K.'s claims are heard before, the focus on mediatization and rhetorical intervention is a new and tenable methodology for further studies.

Thomas Hvid Kromann, 'Værk, offentliged, (net)arkiv. Transformationen af det litterære felt i medialiseringens tidsalder og hvordan vi sikrer det for eftertiden', *Fund og forskning*, 56:243-278, gives a concise report of current challenges of digitization of literature in Denmark. Based in a thorough scrutiny of selected literary blogs and websites, K. points to the fact that many digital sources relevant to scholarship is lost due to outdated websites which are archived unsatisfactorily. This could potentially leave future researchers poorly equipped when studying 21st-c. literature. Only a few decades ago, printed journals and news media were the most important fora for literary debate. These are easily accessible in archives, but this is not the case with digital debates. In addition, many authors publish digital works of a temporary nature which are never assigned an ISBN and disappear without a trace. Caspar Eric is the example of this phenomenon. The article detects an imminent problem for both libraries and literary scholars, one that needs even more attention than it is given already.

*Nordisk Kvindelitteraturhistorie. Over alle grænser 1990-2015*, ed. Anne-Marie Mai, Odense, UPSP, 294 pp., is a follow up to the voluminous *Nordisk Kvindelitteraturhistorie* (1993-1998), also edited by Anne-Marie Mai — then in collaboration with several others — and now available online. The volume is comprised of 21 articles on contemporary female authors from all the Nordic countries. Four of these deal with individual authorships, whereas the remaining contributions cover works from several countries. In her introduction, M. state that challenging gender is a ubiquitous venture in current literature. She traces the tendency back to the late 1960s, but focuses on the developments in the 21st c. in which she notes a combination of well-

known themes and experimental formal traits. The remaining articles deal with a variety of subjects: crime fiction, representations of the body, shame, race, autofiction, and more. Due to the limited size of the volume, the subject is treated in a more sporadic fashion than was the case with the aforementioned history of women's literature. Furthermore, the method is different. While the five volumes published during the mid-90s are organized chronologically and biographically, the current publication is more in line with recent developments within literary history. Thus, specific themes and motifs are pursued in a diverse material transgressing national borders, cf. the subtitle.

Klaus Nielsen, *Bogen og værket. En introduktion til tekstkritik og boghistorie som litteraturteori*, Copenhagen, Museum Tusculanum, 192 pp., argues for the inclusion of textual criticism and book history in literary analysis. The first two sections present relevant terminology and gives a step-by-step instruction to the proposed method. The core issue is a fundamental reflection on the material and historical aspects of literature. N. sensibly insists that an awareness of various versions of a literary work is mandatory in order to conduct literary analysis in a qualified manner. Hence, an orientation in the extant versions of a given work is necessary before a text is selected as the subject of analysis. Textual and material variations between the versions should then inflict upon the analysis and be taken into consideration. To exemplify the method, N. conducts a reading of Per Højlund's *Gittes monologer* (1981-1984) which were published in both textual and auditive formats in the course of four years. This example lucidly demonstrates the validity of N.'s argument which importantly does not prevent the analyst from applying other methods in the analysis. Rather than restricting scholars and students of literature, N. calls attention to the importance of textual and material variation.

Jacob Ølgaard Nyboe, 'The Game of the Name: Genre Labels as Genre and Signature', *ScSt*, 2016:364-392, discusses N.'s own term 'genre signature' and its rhetorical potential. A genre signature is to be understood as 'creative genre labels through which a literary work claims an exclusive generic status'. By diverging from established generic categories a given work signals that it is itself innovative and divergent. Due to the rhetorical power of this specific type of paratext, N. argues that it can be conceived of as a genre in itself, along the lines of rhetorical genre studies. This current of genre theory lays the foundation for N.'s reading of genre labels in recent Danish literature. Though genre signatures can be detected in any literary epoch, N. states that there is a strong tendency in current Danish literature to equip works with peculiar generic terms. This claim is supported by numerous examples which are systematically divided into three subcategories. These are then discussed in the framework of genre theory with special regard to Anne Freadman's concept of 'uptake'. Finally, a more thorough reading of Lars Skinnebach's *Øvelser og rituelle tekster* (2011) is conducted. The article convincingly introduces the new concept, and the inspiring application of rhetorical genre studies on contemporary Danish literature could be transferred to other material as well.

*Passage*, no. 77, 'Materialitet', focuses on the current trend of 'new materialism' in humanities and the social sciences, in Denmark subsumed under the umbrella term 'the material turn' by Martin Gregersen and Tobias Skiveren. These two scholars open the journal volume with a theoretical introduction to the field. Other contributions are more narrowly focused on single

authorships or works of literature. Dan Ringgard, 'Om vejret i "Mogens"' (23-34), conducts a reading of the introduction of J. P. Jacobsen's canonical novella informed by philosophers Jane Bennett and Michel Serres and social anthropologist Tim Ingold. Torsten Bøgh Thomsen, 'Vi have intet at hovmode os over: Den anti-anthropocentriske Andersen' (49-64), attempts to document an increasing anti-anthropocentrism in H. C. Andersen. Søren Langager Høgh, 'Tinglysning: Who cares i Peter Adolphsens roman *Brummstein*' (79-95), regards relations between humans and non-humans in Adolphsen's novel, inspired by Martin Heidegger's concept of 'Fürsorge' (care or concern). Eva Magelund Krarup, '(Ny)materielle fusioner: Om krops- og kærlighedsfremstillinger hos Amalie Smith, Bjørn Rasmussen og Josefine Klougart' (113-126), applies the wider perspective of three contemporary authorships in which material aspects of romantic relations are studied. The volume is topical and contains relevant and original aspects of a diverse subject matter.

René Rasmussen, *Kærligheden til det uden navn. Om dansk samtidslyrik*, Hellerup, Spring, 425 pp., applies a specific perspective on Danish poetry from the latest decades. The introduction presents the claim that much recent Danish poetry can be conceived of as an alternative to hegemonic societal discourses affiliated with neoliberalism. The principal thought is that poetry provides a unique form of enunciation which addresses phenomena and sentiments excluded from the discourses of neoliberalism. Thereby, the lyric genre is said to give privileged access to 'the nameless'. The contemporary perspective presented in the subtitle should be interpreted loosely since the authorships and topics discussed cover five decades, not to mention the treatments of Paul Celan and Charles Baudelaire. The monograph is both a general contribution to poetics and a collection of focused studies of works by Inger Christensen, Peter Laugesen, Søren Ulrik Thomsen, Naja Marie Aidt, Lars Skinnebach, Amalie Smith, et al. R. has deliberately chosen not to begin with a thorough theoretical introduction. That is regrettable due to the relative heterogeneity of the work. A clearer opening section would have facilitated the reading of individual chapters.

Michael Kallesøe Schmidt, Krista Stinne Greve Rasmussen, and Svend Skriver, 'Digtets formater. Ny dansk lyrik mellem tekst, værk og koncept', *DSt*:135-152, applies terminology from textual scholarship in order to give a survey of current publication forms of poetry in Denmark. Guided by the terms text, work, and concept the authors discuss recent poetry by Lea Marie Løppenthin, Olga Ravn, Mikkel Thykier, Simon Grotrian, and Caspar Eric. The overall claim is that the printed book no longer holds a privileged status when it comes to publishing poetry. Furthermore, it is noted that many poems today are published in several different media, often with textual variations and implications for the reader's acquisition and interpretation. The poet's choice of publication form is then affiliated with a conceptual frame which can be of higher or lesser importance. The article is yet another reflection on the status and ontology of literature after the introduction of digital media.

Camilla Schwartz, 'Take me to Neverland. Androgynitet, hysteri og voksenfobi i ny dansk litteratur', *Edda* 104:24-42, detects a tendency in contemporary Danish literature dubbed 'voksenfobi' (adulthood phobia). It refers to fictitious depictions of young people who refuse to lead an adult life or are unable to do so. This condition is interpreted as a consequence of the competitive society of late capitalism and is connected with psychiatric diagnoses such as ADD,

social phobia, hysteria, and eating and personality disorders. The motif is found in works by Bjørn Rasmussen, Asta Olivia Nordenhof, Cecilie Lind, et al. Methodologically, S. applies psychoanalysis, gender studies, and sociological categories, seemingly informed by 'the affective turn' as labeled by Patricia Waugh. It is a central point that the tendency in question is affiliated with the widespread use of autobiographical subject matter in recent Nordic literature which entails that the speakers of the many works commented are conceived of as performed subjects. S. argues that these speakers represent a general obsession with early youth in contemporary society. Though several scholars have attempted to characterize 21st-c. Danish literature, S. manages to provide with an original perspective.

[H4]Literary History.

*Danish Literature as World Literature*, ed. Dan Ringgaard and Mads Rosendahl Thomsen, New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 286 pp., is the first attempt at a comprehensive treatment of the international dissemination of Danish literature. In a joint effort, the contributions aspire to cover works from the complete Danish literary history from the Middle Ages to the 21st c. The composition is chronological and ranges from the three obvious authorships in this context, H. C. Andersen, Søren Kierkegaard, and Karen Blixen, to more original study objects such as Dan Turèll, Inger Christensen, and the final chapter on contemporary Nordic crime fiction and television. The artworks and their international reception is in focus, and the introduction does not present a theoretical framework other than the general perspective of world literature. Future research in the field will most certainly take inspiration from this welcome and groundbreaking work of Danish literary history.

Jonas A. P. Gissel, *Gud, livet og menneskene. 9 konservative danske forfatterskaber*, Århus, Munch & Lorentzen, 301 pp., gives an account of Danish literary history in the period 1860-1920 in which Georg Brandes is not the protagonist. The explicit aim is to revitalize the interest in conservatism in literature as opposed to the preoccupation with radicalism in studies of the late 19th c. The monograph consists of a general and polemical introduction to the subject followed by nine chapters each treating a specific authorship. Finally, G. sums up his investigation and discusses similarities and differences between the authors in question. Several of the included authorships are now widely forgotten, e.g. K. G. Brøndsted, Thor Lange, and Henrik Scharling. Hence, it is an accomplishment of great value to reinstate them in the awareness of literary scholars as a corrective to the predominant conception of 'The Modern Breakthrough'. The 'conservative' authors maintain Christian faith and ethics as guiding lights in their literary works and form an alternative to the scientifically inspired atheism propagated by Brandes and his followers.

Ib Johansen, *Fantastikkens labyrinter. Fantastiske fortællere i dansk litteratur fra 1985 til i dag*, Copenhagen, Science Fiction Cirklen, 397 pp., is a continuation of J.'s *Sfinksens forvandlinger. Fantastiske fortællere i dansk litteratur fra B. S. Ingemann til Per Højholt* (1986). The first volume is a genre history of Danish fantastic literature from Romanticism to 1985, the present publication covers the latest three decades. Though the title signals a focus on 'fortællere' (narrators), the chronological account is structured as a sequence of analyses of works mainly

focused on intertextuality. J. detects a plethora of implicit and explicit references to Danish and international fantastic literature. As the introduction states, much scholarly work has been done within the genre since Tzvetan Todorov's seminal study, *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* (1970). However, J. is alone in his effort to document the developments in Denmark throughout the latest centuries and his work repairs an omission in Danish literary scholarship. The selection of authors is eclectic and branches from children's literature (Lene Kaaberbøl) over popular literature (Dennis Jürgensen) to more common objects of academic study (Per Højholt, Harald Voetmann, Olga Ravn). This is indeed a literary history 'after the great divide'.

Flemming Lundgreen-Nielsen, 'Henrich Steffens i 1842 om nordisk mytologi', *DSt*:115-134, sheds light to a dark area of S.'s oeuvre: two lectures on the influence of Christianity on Norse mythology, given in Berlin. They have never been translated from German and are widely forgotten by scholarship. L.-N. clearly points out that the lectures are of poor scholarly quality and only deserve mention due to their author. S. is famous for introducing the philosophy of Friedrich Schelling to a Danish audience, thus instigating Romanticism according to several literary histories. It could be added that the subject of Norse mythology is also highly important in the early 19th c. Specifically, its interrelation with Christianity was a seminal topic for S.'s cousin N. F. S. Grundtvig. Though the lectures are probably not a hidden gem in literary history, it is a worthy achievement of L.-N. to reintroduce them to scholarship.

Anita Mašková, 'Marie Grubbe: En litterær genganger. Gengangerens betydning for forholdet mellem forfatteren og helten', *Spring*, 41:77-104, treats four literary depictions of the historical figure Marie Grubbe. In analyses of Ludvig Holberg, St. St. Blicher, H. C. Andersen, and J. P. Jacobsen, M. discusses the repeated utilization of G. in works of literature from the 18th and 19th c. Theoretically, she follows Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the character as a tension between an author and his 'hero'. In the case of Holberg, this choice of theory does not seem to match well with the reflective epistle under study. The three remaining readings are more convincing, and the general discussion of Grubbe as a literary 'genganger' (revenant) demonstrates a new way of employing Bakhtin in literary analysis.

*Romantic Norths. Anglo-Nordic Exchanges, 1770-1842*, ed. Cian Duffy, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 281 pp., seeks out cultural commonplaces between Britain and the Nordic countries in the late 18th c. and Romanticism. The ten articles study Britain's relations to Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Greenland, Newfoundland, and Lapland. As this list suggests, the scope is regional rather than national, and the introduction explicitly underlines this principle. This is completely in accordance with current developments within literary history in which the national perspective is somewhat outdated. The introduction also notes that in spite of the conflicts between Britain and Denmark-Norway in the early 19th c., there has been a mutual cultural interest and exchange between the two kingdoms. This claim is documented by two articles. Lis Møller, "'They dance all under the greenwood tree': British and Danish Romantic-Period Adaptations of Two Danish 'Elf Ballads'" (129-152), shows how John Keats, Adam Oehlenschläger, et al. adapted the same Danish ballads in similar ways, enhancing their supernatural elements to approximate concurrent gothic fiction. Cian Duffy, 'Coda: Comparing the Literature of "the North" — William Wordsworth and Jens Baggesen' (251-258), argues that

Baggesen might have influenced Wordsworth's 'Ode. Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood'. Whereas Danish-German relations under Romanticism have been studied comprehensively, this volume traces new intercultural relations and challenges the notion of Nordic Romanticism.

## [H2]2. Individual Authors

### [H4]Aidt.

Alastair Morrison, 'Unredemptive recognition: Naja Marie Aidt and the turn against critique', *Orbis Litterarum*, 72:536-559, ambitiously attempts to trace a parallel between current American debate on literary criticism and contemporary Danish literature. The point of departure is the 'turn against critique' most prominently propagated by Rita Felski. However, M. modifies Felski's concepts in order to apply them to her chosen material. After initially summing up the positions of this debate, she moves on to a reading of Naja Marie Aidt's critically acclaimed collection of short stories *Bavian* (2006). The focal point is Felski's optimistic idea of 'recognition' which is adjusted to the ambiguous relations between readers, narrators, and characters which is found in Aidt's stories. In spite of the discrepancy between the overall claim of similarities between American criticism and Danish literature and the very limited exemplary material, the article presents an original affective reading of Aidt. The method proposed deserves more scholarly work and could be developed in a clearer manner.

### [H4]Andersen.

*Det frosne spejl. Læsninger af H.C. Andersens 'Ilsjomfruen'*, ed. Jacob Bøggild, Ane Grum-Schwensen, and Torsten Bøgh Thomsen, Odense, USDP, 168 pp., comprises eight analyses of a single tale by Andersen. Seven of these readings were originally presented orally at two seminars organized by The Hans Christian Andersen Centre at The University of Southern Denmark in 2014 and 2015. The editorial introduction states that 'Ilsjomfruen' is the longest of A.'s tales and furthermore generically complex due to a combination of realistic and fantastic elements. This is allegedly unique in the context of A.'s works though it is a common trait of fantastic literature. Finally, the editors claim that the tale is somewhat neglected by scholarship, and the volume aims at mending this. Paul Binding, "'Ilsjomfruen" som metaforisk billede af det nye Schweiz' (15-32), contextualizes the depiction of Switzerland inherent in the story. Dag Heede, 'Kolde afvaskninger — Driftsmelodrama i alpeku(li)sser' (47-60), discusses chastity and A.'s apparent demonization of sexuality. Both Lilian Munk Røsing, 'Animering og animalisering i H.C. Andersens "Ilsjomfruen"' (33-46), and Torsten Bøgh Thomsen, 'Elephanttunge listappe — Anti-antropocentrisme i "Ilsjomfruen"' (79-104), apply the perspective of 'new materialism'. Other contributions treat composition, genre, intertextuality, and poetics. In conclusion, this is yet another publication by The Hans Christian Andersen Centre stimulating current interest in the authorship.

Wenjie Li, 'The Complexity of Indirect Translation. Reflections on the Chinese Translation and Reception of H. C. Andersen's tales', *Orbis Litterarum*, 72:181-208, studies the phenomenon of 'indirect translation' with respect to Chinese versions of H.C. Andersen's tales. The purpose is twofold: on the one hand, this specific kind of translation is discussed within the

framework of translation theory, on the other hand, Chinese translations of Andersen are commented. The case of Andersen is interesting since his works have often been – and allegedly still are – translated into Chinese languages from one or more English versions rather than the original Danish. Nonetheless, his tales have been canonical in China since the middle of the 20th c. The article documents substantial deviations in the Chinese translations from the originals, though this is not always the case. This is not surprising, but L. further shows how the early critical reception of Andersen in China is strongly influenced by criticism in the English language. Thus, the reader gains insight into a fascinating example of cultural transmission.

Lori Yamato, 'Surgical Humanization in H.C. Andersen's "The Little Mermaid"', *MT*, 31:295-312, carries out a discussion of the intricate relation between body and soul in one of Andersen's most canonical tales. The ending of the story is of special interest to Y. since the mermaid's quest for a soul is only resolved after her death. She never attains neither humanity nor a Christian soul, but what is then the final result of her efforts? Through analyses of tropes in A.'s descriptions and a scrutiny of previous scholarly debate on the subject, Y. pinpoints the undetermined status of the protagonist, roaming between human and non-human. In addition, the transformation of the mermaid body is regarded in the light of disability studies. Thus, the narrow focus on a single work of literature is expanded to encompass social bodily norms and their regulatory power. The article poses the highly topical question of the boundaries of humanity in an original manner.

[H4]Grundtvig.

Jørgen I. Jensen, *Denne ene sommer. Grundtvigs Nyaars-Morgen som symfonisk digtning*, København, Vartov, 174 pp., is a small monograph devoted to the interpretation of a single poem, *Nyaars-Morgen*. This canonical work of poetry has attracted much attention from Grundtvig scholars, and J. begins by contextualizing his reading, thus motivating the narrow scope of his study. As the subtitle of the book states, the analysis applies terms of musicology. The intention is to extract meaning from form, i.e. discuss interrelations between melody, composition and content. Recently, Kristoffer Garne has conducted a similar reading of the poem with respect to the genre of the sonata in *(Gen)klange. Essays om kunst og kristendom tilegnet Nils Holger Petersen på 70-årsdagen* (ed. Kristoffer Garne and Lars Nørgaard, 2016). However, biographical, historical, and theological methods to a large extent dominate the study. J. visualizes his analysis of the opening stanza by transcribing select passages from the poem into sheet music and thereby demonstrates a surprising rhythmical affinity to Adam Oehlenschläger's 'Guldhornene'. This leads to an interesting discussion of the poem's underlying layers of Christian and Norse mythology, respectively. It is a pity that this method is not applied with more consequence throughout the monograph. Besides, the list of references is not satisfactory.

Jesper Høgenhaven, 'Grundtvigs *Nyaars-Morgen* som bibelsk "videreskrivning"', *GrSt*:57-102, also treats *Nyaars-Morgen*, yet in a strictly biblical perspective. Inspired by church historian and Grundtvig scholar Jakob Balling, H. regards the poem as 'moderniseret helligskrift' (modern Scripture) along the lines of Dante and John Milton. G.'s work is regarded as a continuation and development of apocalyptic narratives in both the Old and the New Testament.



The abundance of biblical allusions is interpreted as a rhetoric of consolation and comfort for both reader and speaker. H. seems highly dependent of Sune Auken's doctoral dissertation, *Sagas spejl* (2005), throughout his analysis, but perhaps the article could fruitfully function as a historical backdrop of the current tendency of apocalyptic narratives in Danish literature.

[H4]Pontoppidan.

Rasmus Vangshardt, *Livets febrile hemmeligheder. Et litterært slægtskab mellem Henrik Pontoppidan og Thomas Mann*, Hellerup, Spring, 161 pp., is a comparative study of Henrik Pontoppidan's *De Dødes Rige* (1912-1916) and Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (1924). The agenda of the small monograph is twofold: on the one hand, the authors' alleged common inspiration in Friedrich Nietzsche is traced, on the other hand, Pontoppidan's position in literary history is revised. Normally, P. is mainly affiliated with 'The Modern Breakthrough' and critical realism, but V. suggests that his authorship should also be regarded in the light of Romanticism. Methodologically, the study is unorthodox since *De Dødes Rige* is read on the basis of *Der Zauberberg* which was published eight years later. V. renounces chronology in order to give an account of common traits between the two works and their relation to Nietzsche. He explicitly states that the aim is not philological documentation of influence, but rather to pave the way for a new perspective on the two works and Pontoppidan's authorship.