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Lesninger i dansk litteratur. Fjerde bind. 1940-1970 by Anne-Marie Mai; Knud Bjarne Gjesing; Poul Schmidt; Anne-Marie Mai; Finn Hauberg Mortensen; Inger-Lise Hjordt-Vetlesen

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look for a more detailed discussion of Nielsen's literary oeuvre, *Levende Musik*, *Min fynske Barndom*, and *Digte*, and the composer's double gifts, I found Lawson's *Carl Nielsen* an insightful, informative, and sensitive portrayal of the life and work of the son of Niels Maler and Fyn, Carl Nielsen.

Lanae H. Isaacson  
*Garland Publishing, Inc*

■ Anne-Marie Mai and Knud Bjarne Gjesing, eds. *Læsninger i dansk litteratur. Fjerde bind. 1940-1970*. Series eds., Poul Schmidt, Anne-Marie Mai, Finn Hauberg Mortensen, Inger-Lise Hjordt-Vetlesen. Odense: Odense universitetsforlag, 1997. Pp. 1-375.

This, the fourth volume of a planned five volume collection of essays on important Danish authors and literary works, is actually the first published in the series. The editors intend to describe Danish literature not through an encyclopedic literary historical narrative—a project successfully, albeit somewhat dryly, accomplished by the well known nine volume series on Danish literary history—but rather through rigorous analytical considerations of important individual works (or, in some cases, entire oeuvres) of well known authors. At the same time, the editors clearly aver a canonical approach to Danish literature and, to this end, have also included essays on either lesser known authors (on an international scale) or on the lesser known works of well known authors. Compiling collections of essays that meet these criteria is a feat somewhat akin to an academic tightrope act yet, if this volume is an indication of the quality of the remaining volumes in the series, it is an act that the editors have pulled off with balance and grace. All of the essays are well written, well researched, and eminently readable. Rather than the tedious nature of an encyclopedic overview, the authors capture one's attention with attentive readings of specific works. Indeed, it is this focus on specific individual works that emerges as the strongest aspect of the volume, establishing its place alongside the literary historical encyclopedias as a companion rather than a replacement.

The essays collected here, written by some of Denmark's best scholars, provide an excellent overview of a selection of the most fascinating literary works from an exciting period in Danish literature. Starting with literature that emerged during World War II, the various articles trace an intriguing development of literary trends up through the tumultuous years at the end of the 1960s. Rather than stepping back to paint a picture of important groups, such as the one that grew up around *Heretica*, the directed readings

of an individual author's work provides a much more nuanced and detailed portrait of literary developments. Some of the most successful essays are those that provide close readings of poetic endeavors, such as Bredsdorff's opening essay on Morten Nielsen's *Krigere uden Vaaben* or Svend Erik Larsen's essay on Inger Christensen's *det*. Other essays, that examine specific novels or collections of short stories, are equally successful, such as Finn Hauberg Mortensen's engaging reading of Villy Sørensen's *Sære historier* or Inger-Lise Hjordt-Vetlesen's novel approach to Klaus Rifbjerg's *Anna (jeg) Anna*. Perhaps the most successful aspect of the collection is the implicit suggestion that the interpretations presented here are not the final word, but rather a starting point for other interpretive endeavors. The readings, thus, do not close off the literature but rather open it up.

Since the series is supposed to fund itself, with the receipts of the sales from previous volumes funding subsequent volumes, the decision to begin with the period from 1940 to 1970 was a clever one as the volume will certainly find a large audience in Denmark and the other Scandinavian countries. Written in academic Danish, the volume will likely have only limited appeal outside of Scandinavia—it is far beyond the abilities of most undergraduates, and most researchers would be disappointed in the limited bibliographic resources found in the notes. Indeed, for American audiences, the series will most likely appeal to those who teach Scandinavian literature—it could serve as both a background source for survey lectures on Danish literature and as a supplement to lectures on twentieth century Scandinavian literature. That said, it is clear that the series is an essential addition for any collection that hopes to provide coverage of Danish literature.

Timothy R. Tangherlini

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■ Lars Nylander. *Den långa vägen hem: Lars Noréns författarskap från poesi till dramatik*. Stockholm: Bonniers, 1997. Pp. 372.

At the moment, Lars Norén is in the limelight. He is said to be the best known Swedish playwright since Strindberg, and his oeuvre has by now started to attract the serious attention of scholars; the first comprehensive study is the present work by Lars Nylander at the University of California, Berkeley. In 1996, Cecilia Sjöholm's doctoral dissertation on the unconscious in Stagnelius, Ekelöf, and Norén's postmodern texts from the 1960s was published. The publication of Nylander's work was followed half a year later by Mikael van Reis's monograph on Norén's work from 1963 till 1983. Not surprisingly, given the subject matter of Norén's writing, it is