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Grønstad, Asbjørn and Johannessen, Lene, eds. 2005. *To Become the Self One Is: A Critical Companion to Drude Krog Janson's A Saloonkeeper's Daughter*. Oslo: Novus Press, Studia Anglistica Norvegica 13. pp. 210. ISBN 82-7099-405-7.

Published in Norwegian in Minneapolis in 1887, Drude Krog Janson's immigrant novel *En saloonkeeper's datter* enjoyed a modest success before sinking into the oblivion typical for foreign-language literature in the United States. It received new life in 2002, part of welcome recent attempts to acknowledge the polylingual reality of American literature, when it was republished in English translation by the Johns Hopkins University Press as *A Saloonkeeper's Daughter*. The novel is an intriguing mingling of literary currents from both sides of the Atlantic, a bildungsroman that tells the story of Astrid Holm's immigration from Christiania to Minnesota, her initial dreams of fulfillment as an actress, and an ultimate coming into her own in rejecting marriage for a calling as Unitarian minister. Told with elements of melodrama, realistic urban immigrant fiction, sentimental romance and New Women's fiction its multiple sources, genres and thematic preoccupations make the novel adaptable to a variety of classroom syllabi.

To Become the Self One Is takes this recent translation as its starting point, with fourteen scholars based primarily at Norwegian and Baltic universities contributing essays organized in four thematic areas that have many intersections: History, Genre, Gender, and Performance. Given that little scholarly work is available on Janson or *A Saloonkeeper's Daughter*, this addition cannot be but welcome. It is especially refreshing that many of the essays engage explicitly with contemporary literary theory, a rarity for the writing typically produced on Norwegian-American literature (at least in the United States), while remaining accessible to a wide range of readers. That being said, the essays in *To Become the Self One Is*, while often suggesting useful starting points for thought, are uneven in quality.

The more successful include Kristina Aurylaite's chapter using de Certeau and Lefebvre to theorize a spatial "dialectics of access and prohibition" governing the narrative (2005:172). The attic space in which Astrid first plays at being an actress (a place that recurs as a topic in several of the essays), her inability to master the streets of Minneapolis and her success on the ministerial stage are seen as steps in Astrid's

resistance to objectification and irrelevance within the male spaces of her father and suitors. Axel Nissen's "*A Saloonkeeper's Daughter* in the Company of Women" reads the novel in relation to other American fiction of the era that stresses female relationships. In contrast to native-born authors such as Henry James, Sarah Orne Jewett or Louisa May Alcott, Nissen finds Janson more forceful in her insistence that nineteenth-century romantic same-sex friendships were the equal of marriage. Nissen ends by striking a deliberately provocative note, suggesting the novel as "arguably the first lesbian novel in American literature" (2005:127). A companion to Nissen's in the "Gender" section is Željka Švrljuga's piece on "Melancholy Strategies." Using the writings of Julia Kristeva on mourning as the basis for a psychoanalytic reading of Astrid's loss of her mother, Švrljuga argues Helene is a mother substitute rather than spouse substitute for Astrid.

Stuart Sillars' essay in the "Performance" section approaches the novel through discussions of multiple levels of framing, from the windows that Astrid is repeatedly seen looking through to the ideological framings of genre assumptions surrounding the bildungsroman. Sillars builds helpful alternative readings that suggest Norwegian folk tale elements at work in the structure of the novel and Astrid's multiple experiences of displacement as more internally than culturally motivated than is usual. Applying less familiar critical constructs, other of the more intriguing readings include Randi Koppen on "Sartorial Unitarianism," in which "the curious pervasiveness of dress as metaphor and practice in a novel which reads as a plea for authentic being" (2005:185) is explored and Sandra Halverson's plotting out of a cognitive linguistic reading of the novel. Irena Ragaisene's chapter on "Desire, Dream and Reality: The New Woman in *A Saloonkeeper's Daughter*" gives an introductory reading of feminist and New Woman concepts in the text while Anne Holden Rønning's chapter on the Woman Question imparts helpful background contexts on Janson's previous feminist writings.

Rønning's chapter also, however, highlights one of the shortcomings of the volume. The European orientation of many of its authors is clearly helpful in bringing out transatlantic aspects of the text, which for *A Saloonkeeper's Daughter* is particularly pertinent. Janson was friend and correspondent to Knut Hamsun and Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson (who figures crucially in the novel), was the wife of Kristofer Janson and remained active in Norwegian literary circles after immigrating to the United

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States in 1882. The novel was published concurrently in Copenhagen in 1887, which became the city Janson spent her last years in after her divorce. Several of the essays bring up welcome points about the novel's life as a text written also for Scandinavian readers and its often overlooked Norwegian contexts. Rønning however, cites British writers virtually exclusively in her chapter and seems unfamiliar with the specific American or Norwegian-American backgrounds Janson was writing within, a circumstance that seemingly applies to several of the work's contributors.

Unlike most works with the phrase "critical companion" included in their title, *To Become the Self One Is* does not attempt to be a one-volume compilation of resources. The individual and eclectic essays are not supplemented by extended contextual or background information, while biographical information on Janson is limited to what can be gleaned from within the chapters. Nor is a bibliography of criticism on the novel or Janson included, while the lack of an index also inhibits ready referencing. *To Become the Self One Is* should be useful however for those teaching the novel in American Studies, American Literature or the numerous other disciplines the text could be adapted to, as well as their students. This first extended criticism on *A Saloonkeeper's Daughter* will also hopefully lead to greater awareness of and further critical engagement with the novel.

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