



## **En ny tid**

*Ida Jessen*

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I 1904 kommer en ung friskolelærerinde til Thyregod, hvor hun hurtigt gifter sig med distriktslægen, dr. Bagge. Efter 23 års barnløst ægteskab dør lægen, og fru Bagge skal i gang med et nyt selvstændigt liv. Romanen er hendes dagbog fra en tid med mange omvæltninger.

## En ny tid Details

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## From Reader Review En ny tid for online ebook

### Lars Poulsen says

Den unge nyuddannede lærerinde, frøken Høy, kommer i 1904 fra Midtfyn til Thyregod vest for Vejle. Her skal hun drive en friskole. Romanen "En ny tid", er hendes dagbog. Den begynder da hendes mand, den lokale læge, ligger for døden, og den følger hende i årene efter, hvor hun skal lære at være enke.

Romanen består af en lang række kortere eller længere afsnit, der er medvirkende til at få historien til at virke ægte. Som læser føler jeg virkelig, at jeg sidder og læser en andens dagbog. At den springer lidt frem og tilbage i tiden, fra det der sker nu, til det der er gået forud, fungerer rigtig godt. For det er sådan det er. Vi tænker lidt på det ene, og lidt på det andet, og en dagbog gengiver netop dette.

Selv om Thyregod, langt ude på heden, ikke ligefrem er verdens centrum, følger man dog med de mange fremskridt der sker i begyndelsen af det nittende århundrede. Men man gør det så tilpas langsomt, at man ikke mister sig selv undervejs. Ida Jessen beskriver et til tider hårdt og slidsomt liv, men også de mange små glæder der er i det, og i det at være en del af et lille samfund. Man er aldrig helt alene, og der er altid en hjælpende hånd i kulissen.

At Ida Jessen skriver blændende, er vel efterhånden noget vi bare ved. "En ny tid" er mit første bekendtskab med hendes levende pen, og det bliver ikke det sidste. For selv om ordene og historien er enkle og uden de helt store krummelurer, så rummer de alligevel rigtig meget. Nogle forfattere går så meget i selvsving over egne evner, at de skriver deres tekster sønder og sammen. Ikke Ida Jessen. Hun har styr på sit håndværk, og kan med få ord lade mig møde frøken Høy/Fru Bakke, og lade mig lære hende at kende lige så godt som hun kender sig selv. Ja, måske endda bedre. "En ny tid" er rolig, langsom, og meget dyb. For mig, der er opvokset på Midtfyn, og har været buschauffør i Vejle, Give og Thyregod, var romanen en helt særlig oplevelse. Jeg kunne hele tiden se det hele for mig. For selv om det er en roman, og meget af det er opdigtet, så er heden omkring Thyregod og Vester der stadig, og Ryslinges bøgetræer står endnu.

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### SueLucie says

What an emotional experience reading this story turned out to be. It is made up of diary entries by a Danish woman, mostly written when she is approaching 50 in the late 1920s. Her husband of over 20 years is dying in hospital and she begins to record her thoughts and feelings over the next five years. These include recollections of her student days and her friends at that time, her innovative approach to schoolteaching, the people she knows after moving to Thyregod, her husband's character and her disappointment with their marriage, her reaction to his death and the change in her personal circumstances, and many observations of the ways the landscape and people's lives in the central heathland of Denmark evolved in the 20th century. I particularly enjoyed the descriptions of daily life at the school and then at the cottage and its garden.

Since the story is told through a diary not intended as anything but an outlet for its writer's current emotions and recollections, past events are often alluded to in passing, tantalisingly so. She is not explaining anything to anyone but is venting her feelings for herself only, and trying to come to terms with the way her life has turned out. Hints overlooked and motivations misunderstood are key and Lilly struggles not to succumb to self-pity and bitterness. Ida Jessen is a classy writer, conveying emotion with delicacy and sensitivity, and with an understatement reflecting the reticent character of the people here. I was particularly struck by

Lilly's ambivalence towards her new freedom, the sense that her husband took her identity as a wife with him when he died and she must learn how to be a widow, a different kind of single person.

This format is very much to my taste. I like to wonder what might have happened and wait for things to become clear by the end. In fact I don't even mind being left wondering. The ending is abrupt. Events take place that mean the need for the diary has gone so she stops writing in it, much as she did once before. So that's that, for the time being at least. I loved it, both the book and the ending. I can't recommend it highly enough.

With thanks to Archipelago via NetGalley for the opportunity to read this gorgeous book.

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### **Okidoki says**

En historisk roman som börjar år 1904. Ja, det var andra villkor då för kvinnor, gifta och ogifta. Det förklarar varför Lilly stannar och underkuvar sig. Vi får veta mycket om hennes liv före giftermålet. Ska hon tuffa till sig? Romanen slutar lite tvärt, men rekommenderas trots eller just för att den är så oromantisk. Ser fram mot doktor Bagges anagram som kommer ut på svenska i september.

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### **Villivonkansbooks says**

3 Januari 1904 inleder Lily Hoy sin dagbok med: Jag är på väg nu. Allt är packat. Jag har inte ens tid att skriva det här. Jag fortsätter senare.

Det kommer dröja 20 år innan hon skriver igen i dagboken.

?

En ny tid är en varm berättelse om Lilys liv. Vi får följa henne när hennes man, läkaren Bagge ligger för döden. Historien flyter så sakteliga fram i lite lågmäld ton. Jag gillar det här, ska bli kul att få läsa även nästa del om Lily. Det är vackert, fängslande och skickligt berättat.

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### **Meike says**

Award-winning Danish author Ida Jessen tells the story of a teacher who, after losing her husband, has to make a new life for herself - what makes this novella so compelling is the voice of the widow as the unreliable narrator who slowly reveals the true nature of her marriage, and the possible contrasts between her and the reader's assessment of her husband's behavior. On top of that, Jessen paints a vivid picture of rural Denmark in the early 20th century and the dynamics in the town which are often equally a form of control and support.

The widow tells her story through diary entries, often depicting nature and encounters with townfolk, but more and more also flashbacks into her past as she strives to find closure. The book does require a patient reader who is willing to settle into the contemplative mood of the text, but once you really dive into it, the current will take you along and pick up speed.

A beautiful book.

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### **Chris Haak says**

Beautifully written short novel set in rural Denmark in 1927-32. The main character is a school teacher (married to the village doctor) and I just love her. She is a working woman in an age when not many women were working and she is a strong woman, which you notice especially when her husband dies. Of course she mourns her husband, and she feels vulnerable and lonely. But she is not afraid to make decisions, start driving a car, move houses, start a new life, having friends, and doing new things. She is also very honest about her marriage and her feelings for her husband. She loved him, but she also found him annoying at times and he was not always great to be around with.

All in all, a very impressive read! I'm looking forward to reading more of Ida Jessen's work.

Thank you Archipelago & Netgalley for the ARC

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### **Kirsty says**

I liked the idea of this, but I found the execution and prose to be quite dull. There is an almost jarring quality to the writing, so I was constantly aware that I was reading a translated book. I gave up reading at around the 15% mark.

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### **Michella Tora says**

På en måde gik jeg ind til denne bog, med en klar idé om hvad den indeholdt. Det indeholdt det jeg regnede med, og alligevel var den så meget andet og så meget mere.

Da historien starter er fru Bagge ved at miste sin mand, Vigand Bagge. Han er indlagt på hospitalet med en uhelbredelig sygdom. Alle ved at det er et spørgsmål om tid, så alt fru Bagge kan gøre er at vente.

Det her er en fin og stille historie, om en ældre kvinde som pludselig skal skabe sig en ny tilværelse i slutningen af 1920'erne og starten af 1930'erne. Men hvordan skaber man et nyt liv, når mand, hus og rutiner pludseligt hives væk under en? Ida Jessen har skrevet en reel historie. En stille fortælling, som sætter sig i en og som er vildt behagelig at læse.

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### **Annette Juhlin says**

Det här är en lågmäld, varm och vacker berättelse om Lilly Bagge som efter tjugo år som trogen maka och följeslagare till doktor Vigand Bagge, plötsligt står ensam efter hans hastiga insjuknande och bortgång.

Det är tidigt 1900-tal och som ofta skedde vid den tiden slutade Lilly sin anställning som lärarinna när hon gifte sig med doktor Bagge. Hon är van att anpassa sig efter sin make, så att han inte skall tycka att hon är allt för enfaldig och känslomässig. I dagboksform funderar hon över hur det kom sig att livet blev som det blev, och vad hon vill med sitt fortsatta liv. ”Vad ska jag göra när han inte finns här längre? Vem ska

påminna mig om vad jag ska tycka? Vem ska hålla mig på plats?”

Det blir snart tydligt att äktenskapet snarare var lämpligt än lyckligt, utan förtrolighet och verlig närlhet. På samma korrektasätt som Vigand förhöll sig genom deras äktenskap, ser han till att hon inte blir lottlös när han är borta. Men till och med när han ligger för döden håller han inne med de kärleksfulla orden och handlingarna.

Vigands plötsliga död, efter alla år då hon anpassat sig efter honom, alla år då hon slättat över det hon egentligen vetat men inte stått ut med att veta, får Lilly att ta fram sin gamla dagbok och i ord fundera över den situation hon hamnat i. Vem hon är, vem hon var och vad hon vill.

”Han är död. Han finns inte. Han kommer aldrig att kunna böja sig över mig och placera en kyss på mitt huvud. Aldrig mer ska han komma stegande genom vardagsrummet, viftande med sin otillgänglighet framför näsan på mig. Aldrig mer kommer jag att sitta mittemot en uppslagen tidning vid frukosten.”

Trots dödsfallet och trots Lillys osäkra framtid sprudlar snart berättelsen av hopp. Jag läser och njuter av den här ljuvliga berättelsen. Ida Jessen har en förmåga att beskriva det som sker med små nyanser som inte säger så mycket, men som mellan raderna säger allt. Lilly Bagge står inför en ny tid, och vi får följa hennes väg in i den. Det är härlig läsning att få följa med på resan. Att få följa Lillys försiktiga förändring tillbaka till den levnadsglada och spontana kvinnan hon en gång var, då hjärtat sprang före henne. Och jag njuter av beskrivningarna av det lilla samhället på Jylland och livet som levs där, så mycket att jag själv vill resa dit.

En ny tid är den första romanen av två om makarna Bagge. Hösten 2018 kommer Jessens bok Doktor Bagges anagram ut på svenska. I den får läsaren följa Lilly Bagges make, doktor Bagge, och hans tankar om livet, relationer och äktenskapet. Jag ser fram emot att läsa den, och få inblick i en åtminstone till det yttre väldigt stram, korrekt och okänslig person. Jag ser fram emot att få veta hur han såg på sin hustru, om det fanns verkliga känslor för henne eller om han hade känslor för någon annan.

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## **Book's Calling says**

Slušný dánský p?íb?h. Babilo to m? podobn? jako Jmenuji se Lucy Bartonová nebo Stoner.

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## **Michael says**

Med "En ny tid" tager Ida Jessen læseren tilbage til Thyregod-egnen i starten af det 20. århundrede. Friskolelærinden Lilly Høy ankommer i 1904 med intet andet end fire pelargoniestiklinger, optændingsbrænde og sin dagbog. Dagbogen glemmer hun alt om, så snart hun påbegynder sit nye liv. Først 20 år senere, i 1927, finder Lilly, der nu er Fru Bagge, dagbogen frem. Hendes mand, distriktslægen Vigand Bakke, ligger for døden, og dagbogen bliver hendes faste holdepunkt i den svære tid. Langsamt udfolder Lillys historie sig: om den dejlige, uforglemelige tid som lærerinde og om det kærlighedsløse ægteskab med V. Bagge. Da Vigand dør, efterlades hun i en stor ensomhed og sidder tilbage med en masse ubesvarede spørgsmål, som den nyfundne dagbog giver udtryk for, nu hvor hun som enke skal finde sig selv og meningen med livet. Det hele er mesterligt skrevet og foruden at være et smukt kvindepørtræt og et smukt tidsbillede demonstrerer Ida Jessen, at hun er en mester i antydningens kunst. At Jessen har vundet både

Blixenprisen og DR's Romanpris for denne roman er derfor på sin plads og fuldt fortjent.

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## **The Idle Woman says**

4.5 stars

I have just finished reading a really gorgeous little book: *A Change of Time* by the Danish author Ida Jessen. Through her diary, a widowed school-teacher in early 20th-century Denmark remembers her late husband and uses her loneliness as a spur to revisit her life and, slowly, anxiously, recover her sense of self. For once, cover and book coexist beautifully: Jessen's novel is like a Hammershøi in prose: a haunting, timeless, intimate exploration of loss, rendered by the translator Martin Aitken into elegantly spare English. Although the book won't be published until March, I just had to write about it now, before the feeling of it fades; and it's deeply suited to these long, dark winter evenings. A little jewel...

For the full review, please see my blog:

<https://theidlewoman.net/2018/12/01/a...>

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## **Laura says**

I found this book odd in some ways and quietly refreshing in others. The story follows the entries in Lilly Høy's diary covering a period of her life from January 3 1904 to November 1 1932. Although this in itself causes the first of the oddities - she only keeps this diary for just over a year when she first moves to Thyregod as a new teacher in the folk school. Many years later, in fact 22 years later as her husband is in hospital dying, she finds the diary and starts to keep new entries which end some 5 years later with the close of the book - in 1932

Part of the difficulty with this author is that there are no explanations - as a reader you have to do a bit of juggling and work things out for yourself, and this also applies to her plot, such as it is. For example we're introduced to Peter Carlson, but it's only later he reappears as an emotionally significant other to Lilly or as Fru Bagge, which is how she refers to herself.

The book opens with our narrator's husband Vigand Bagge, the parish doctor, dying in the hospital in Give, which is a town, some distance from their home in the village of Thyregod. And this is the other slight difficulty I encountered. I had to keep looking up all these Danish names and places on Google Maps. It wasn't a big deal, but they are all real places, and as I know practically nothing about Denmark apart from the usual - its capital is Copenhagen, there is a statue of the Little Mermaid in the harbour in remembrance of Hans Christiaan Anderson etc. - and so this turned into a real geography lesson for me.

I checked out Ryslinge, which is on the island of Fyn, in the sheltered east of the country - this is where Lilly grows up and then she goes to the teacher training college in Strib - also on Fyn. On a day trip to see her old "college" friends, she crosses to the island from the ferry at Fredericia. Books are ordered from Vejle, the main city in the area. When she first arrives in the hinterland, the train only goes as far as Give, and then she travels for another two hours in Peter's "cart" to Thyregod.

The geography and history of Denmark, however, is part of this book. One of Ms Jessen's interests is an

investigation into the changes occurring in this tiny real-life village of Thyregod and the surrounding area. Our narrator, Fru Bagge documents her own observations of the changes in this village over her life span and in deed as the village school teacher, she is instrumental in a number of its developments - the parents's evening for example is to provide the adults with a forum, and place for lectures, and later, she takes on the role of librarian and brings to life the town's Book Collection.

Peder Møllergaard, the town's self-declared leader and organiser speaks to Lilly, after her husband's death.

*"For we are indeed happy that you chose to stay, Fru Bagge."*

*I have no idea what would make him say such a thing.*

*He told me the parish book collection, housed at the Young Men's and Women's Christian Association, is at present without supervision, and asked if the position would interest me.*

*"I don't think there's much of a salary," he said, with his back half turned."*

*I made no comment.*

*"It would please me," he said, "if you would take it on."*

It is in this simple conversation that we understand Lilly is being given a life-line, and at the same time being asked to shoulder her civic duty, even if it is only in a very small way, and yet this is how the town grows and develops and improves - through the hands and goodwill of its inhabitants. I liked the lack of explanation here and the overall use of understatement.

Our author's interests, include local history and land development; which is important as the town and its hinterland is regarded as possibly the poorest area of the whole country. Fru Bagge recounts "that as late as 1870, as much as 90% of the district was heathland", which means it was very poor for agriculture and without other resources. And our narrator gives us detailed and often beautiful descriptions of the weather, the land, the use of peat to keep the cold at bay, how people managed, the children's responses to their first school ever in such a small village in this backwater of the country.

I think quite a few readers will balk at this packing in of a lot of local lore and history, not expecting the plot to be diversified in this way, but it makes sense - lives are always intermingled with a community and how that community develops affects directly the personal development of each individual and this is essential to what this very personal tale boils down to.

Also there is some difficulty in following the narrative; our narrator flicks forwards and back a lot with her memories both personal and wider, and it's not always immediately apparent that there are links and connections between one path and the other. For instance Fru Bagge is given a short "story" written by one of her husband's patients who was treated for tuberculosis. The village pastor gives it to her as a sort of compensation for her husband's refusal to have any kind of funeral, but as it turns out the story documents the relationship between Peter Carlson, and his wife Henriette, - the Peter of whom Lilly had formed a brief, but intense relation. When Lilly reads the story, its effects are not immediately apparent and they are certainly not revealed to us the reader, but later we understand it is connected to her decision not to pursue her long lost interest in Peter Carlson. Peter who has in fact re-initiated the relationship after the death of Lilly's husband. Meanwhile, we are informed somewhere in the middle of these bits of memory, that Peter's wife succumbed to the Spanish influenza of 1918. It's just a brief line and told with more relevance to the effect it has on Carl and his sisters, who are Peter's children.

So the book does not present a particularly easy read - as it does not flow and follow neatly. It is **not** the case that the reader has nothing to do but turn the pages etc. No: I flipped back and forwards multiple times in my Kindle, trying to pin down various bits of information.

And the ending - well I could hardly believe the ending first time round, I had to go back and re-read all the little snippets of information about Peter and then this other man - all over again, but the feelings strike true, and ultimately the book seems to have done a sound job of representing the messiness of life.

I read someone's review recently who said - you have to get to the end of your life before you can make sense of it, and so novelists start at the end, with all their plans laid out neat and straight - not so with this novelist and for this I particularly like her.

Some of the shifts are quite jarring - so be warned. I don't want to gloss over some of my personal irritations. I want my reviews to be as honest as possible.

On the other hand, however, I would like to include this gorgeous description of Lilly's hens that she kept at Rose Cottage, just to demonstrate how wonderful Ida Jessen's writing can be:

*April 19 1929*

*I find much pleasure in the hens. When I have been down to open the hatch in the mornings, they dash to the fence and watch me wistfully as I go back to the house. After lunch I let them out of the run, and shortly afterwards they are clucking and scraping all over the garden, except the kitchen garden, which Carl has fenced off. Most have particular friends whose company they prefer. One encounters them unexpectedly in some snug little hiding place or enjoying a dust-bath down by the pond. They love the spring and sunshine. They tidy their feathers as if they were shaking sand from a towel, settle themselves more comfortably and cluck softly to each other. ... In the summer, when the french doors were left open, they would often venture into the dining room to see me. They were the politest of visitors, calling out to ask if they were welcome, and whenever I appeared too abruptly from another room they would scatter and fall over themselves in a rush to be gone.*

I think a lot of readers will complain about the abrupt ending, but I think it complies with the diary format. She kept the diary through the painful lonely years after her husband's death and then when she meets an old friend at the age of 50 and falls in love once more, she no longer needs the diary and so it breaks off, quite suddenly - but true to life.

Ms Jessen is certainly pushing against the parameters of what a novel is, and this experimentation will unsettle quite a few readers. On the whole, however, I think this is good. This is what Virginia Woolf did, she didn't bother with Her Following, or her sales and income etc. Ms Jessen like Ms Woolf wants to see what can be done with this tried and tested format - let's push it somewhere new. And I say - Good for her.

Thank you to Netgalley for an ARC.

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**jo says**

this is a tender, meditative book written in the form of diary entries by an on and off school teacher in a small town in rural denmark in the 1920s. the teacher, whose name is revealed, poignantly, only at the end (i won't spoil it for you because it's a sweet, sweet moment) starts to keep journal entries in earnest when her husband is in the hospital dying, and in fact writes consistently only when she is deeply alone, so that most of what we get from this book is how to live alone with snow and nature and long walks regardless of the weather. as she writes, our narrator thinks back on her life before her marriage to the town doctor, and of her life during

the marriage, and in the rhythm of the narration, which is also the rhythm of the writer's mind, there is great strength and great acceptance, but also great resolve. she is a formidable character whose qualities emerge slowly as she talks to herself and, because this is a novel, to us.

this is also a portrayal of denmark, a country about which i knew absolutely nothing. it is purely coincidental that i read two books set in denmark back to back, and now i feel i know a little bit more (how could i not?), and also feel that when we think we know a place because of this or that headline in the news we really don't know a damn thing (the other novel is the extraordinary Mirror, Shoulder, Signal). for one, for a country this small, denmark appears to be deeply cleaved by regional differences. this should not be surprising to this italian but it is. for two, denmark seems to have a strange and mysterious area, the heath, sandy and shifting and unforgiving, much of which has probably been conquered by agriculture right now, but which, still, i'd love one day to see.

there is no way a woman can write deeply about her life without talking about men. the men in this particular book are lovely even when they are not. they are also very male, closed off or shy or indecisive, as men are often acculturated to be. our narrator is kind to them all, as they are, in their own ways, to her. there are also meaningful female friendship, grounded in shared pain and tenacious.

this novel makes me nostalgic for a time and place in my life in which people dropped in and out of each other's house, bearing small gifts, invariably being asked to stay for coffee. it seems this is like life should be, and yet i can't imagine its being like this now, in *these* time and place in which life has placed me. still, we are all a little less lonely when people drop in on us with a few apples or a sapling for our garden, all the while making sure we are okay.

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### **Sarah says**

Der er som sådan ikke noget galt, med det Ida Jessen gør. Hun skriver vidunderligt og karaktererne står fuldstændig klart og fint for mit indre blik. Til gengæld er selve historien ærlig talt lidt tung og kedelig. Der mangler ligesom det dér, som hun ellers kan....dé, hvor hun griber en om hjertet.

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