



*SCANDINAVIAN-  
CANADIAN  
STUDIES*

*ÉTUDES  
SCANDINAVES  
AU CANADA*

**Volume 8  
1995**

*Editor / Rédacteur*  
*Wolfgang P. Ahrens, York University*

*Editor/Rédacteur*

Wolfgang P. Ahrens, York University

*Associate Editor (Book Reviews) / Rédactrice adjointe (comptes rendus)*

Gurli Aagard Woods, Carleton University

*Editorial Board/Comité de rédaction*

Anne Brydon, Anthropology, University of Western Ontario  
Errol Durbach, Theatre, University of British Columbia  
Christopher English, History, Memorial University of Newfoundland  
Brian McIlroy, Film, University of British Columbia  
Börje Vähämäki, Finnish, University of Toronto  
J. Donald Wilson, Education, University of British Columbia  
Kirsten Wolf, Icelandic, University of Manitoba  
Rochelle Wright, Germanic Languages, University of Illinois

---

*Scandinavian-Canadian Studies* is the official publication of the Association for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies in Canada. Subscriptions to the journal are available through membership in the Association, or may be purchased separately. (See inside back cover for membership information.) Manuscripts of articles should be sent to the editor: Wolfgang P. Ahrens, Department of Languages, Literatures & Linguistics, York University, North York, Ontario M3J 1P3; (416) 736-5016; e-mail: wahrens@vm1.yorku.ca. Papers may be written in English or French and must be double-spaced throughout, including notes and bibliography. The length of articles should normally not exceed 25 pages. Books for review, as well as manuscripts of the reviews themselves, should be sent to the Associate Editor (Book Reviews): Gurli A. Woods, School of Comparative Literary Studies, Carleton University, 1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6; e-mail: gwoods@ccs.carleton.ca.

*Études scandinaves au Canada* est l'organe officiel de l'Association pour l'avancement des études scandinaves au Canada. Les membres de l'Association reçoivent un abonnement à la Revue, mais il est également possible de s'abonner sans devenir membre. (Les renseignements sur l'adhésion se trouvent au dos de la couverture.) Les manuscrits des articles doivent être envoyés au rédacteur: Wolfgang P. Ahrens, Department of Languages, Literatures & Linguistics, York University, North York, Ontario, M3J 1P3; (416)736-5016; courrier électronique: wahrens@vm1.yorku.ca. Les contributions peuvent être en français ou en anglais, et doivent être à double interligne, y compris les notes et les références. Les articles ne doivent pas normalement dépasser 25 pages. Les livres pour comptes rendus de même que les comptes rendus doivent être adressés à la Rédactrice adjointe (comptes rendus): Gurli A. Woods, School of Comparative Literary Studies, Carleton University, 1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, Ontario, K1S 5B6; courrier électronique: gwoods@ccs.carleton.ca.

---

*Scandinavian-Canadian Studies* gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada towards publication costs.

*Études scandinaves au Canada* tient à remercier la contribution apportée par le Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada aux frais de publication.

ISSN 0823-1796

Printed in Canada / Publié au Canada

© Association for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies in Canada /  
L'Association pour l'avancement des études scandinaves au Canada



*Scandinavian-Canadian  
Studies*

*Études scandinaves au  
Canada*

**Volume 8  
1995**

*Editor / Rédacteur*  
Wolfgang P. Ahrens

*Associate Editor (Book Reviews) / Rédactrice adjointe (comptes rendus)*  
Gurli Aagard Woods

A A S S C — A A E S C

Association for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies in Canada  
L'Association pour l'avancement des études scandinaves au Canada

The editor and editorial board of  
*Scandinavian-Canadian Studies / Études scandinaves au Canada*  
take no responsibility for the opinions or data presented by contributors to this  
volume.

Le rédacteur en chef et le comité de rédaction de  
*Scandinavian-Canadian Studies / Études scandinaves au Canada*  
n'assument aucune responsabilité pour les opinions ou les données présentées  
par les contributeurs à ce volume.

## CONTENTS / SOMMAIRE

|                      |  |    |
|----------------------|--|----|
| Jussi M. Hanhimäki   | <i>In Search of Security:<br/>Finland and the Soviet-American Confrontation, 1945–1961</i> . . .                           | 1  |
| Daisy Neijman        | <i>Laura Goodman Salverson, Guttormur J. Guttormsson,<br/>and the Dual World of Second-Generation Canadian Authors</i> . . | 19 |
| Christopher S. Hale  | <i>Ethnic Minorities on the Canadian Prairies in<br/>the Writings of Aksel Sandemose and Sven Delblanc</i> . . . . .       | 37 |
| William Sayers       | <i>Power, Magic and Sex: Queen Gunnhildr and the Icelanders</i> . .  | 57 |
| Peter G. Christensen | <i>Sibelius, Kullervo and Fate Tragedy</i> . . . . .   | 79 |

### Reviews / Comptes Rendus

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Gurli A. Woods, ed. <i>Isak Dinesen and Narrativity: Reassessments for the 1990s</i><br>(Ottawa, 1994)—reviewed by Marina Allemanno . . . . .  | 103 |
| Pamela Wild. <i>Sointula: Island Utopia</i><br>(Madeira Park, 1995)—reviewed by J. Donald Wilson . . . . .   | 109 |
| Nelma Sillanpää. <i>Under the Northern Lights: My Memories of Life in the<br/>Finnish Community of Northern Ontario</i> . Edited by Edward Laine<br>(Hull, 1994)—reviewed by Varpu Lindström . . . . . | 112 |
| Börje Vähämäki. <i>Mastering Finnish</i> (New York, 1994)<br>—reviewed by John Dingley . . . . .   | 113 |
| Preben Meulengracht Sørensen. <i>Fortælling og ære: Studier i islændingesagaerne</i><br>(Århus, 1993)—reviewed by Patricia Bethel . . . . .  | 115 |
| Anthony Faulkes and Richard Perkins, eds. <i>Viking Revaluations:<br/>Viking Society centenary symposium, 14–15 May 1992</i> (London, 1993)<br>—reviewed by Patricia Bethel . . . . .                  | 119 |
| Sven H. Rossel, ed. <i>Ludvig Holberg – A European Writer: A Study in Influence<br/>and Reception</i> (Amsterdam and Atlanta, 1994)<br>—reviewed by Thomas Bredsdorff . . . . .                        | 122 |
| Johannes Væth. <i>Aksel Sandemoses Canada. Rejsebetrægtninger i udvalg 1927–28</i><br>(Herning, Denmark, 1994)—reviewed by Christopher Hale . . . . .  | 126 |
| Sarah Death and Helena Forsås-Scott, eds. <i>A Century of Swedish Narrative:<br/>Essays in Honour of Karin Petherick</i> (Norwich, 1994)<br>—reviewed by Marshall N. Matson . . . . .                  | 128 |
| Ivar Lo-Johansson. <i>Peddling My Wares</i> . Translated by Rochelle Wright<br>(Columbia, South Carolina, 1995)—reviewed by Christopher Hale . . . . .   | 132 |

*Scandinavian–Canadian Studies*

*Études scandinaves au Canada*

Volume 8

1995





# In Search of Security: Finland and the Soviet-American Confrontation, 1945–1961

Jussi M. Hanhimäki  
*London School of Economics*

**RÉSUMÉ:** *Cet article explore le rôle de la Finlande dans la confrontation américano-soviétique de la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale jusqu'au début des années soixante. La première section décrit les raisons pour lesquelles la Finlande, seule parmi les voisins occidentaux de l'URSS, put maintenir sa démocratie intacte tout en coexistant avec son ennemi juré. L'affirmation est que la Finlande bénéficia de sa position géographique éloignée, des nouvelles politiques étrangères et de sécurité adoptées par les gouvernements finlandais d'après-guerre, ainsi que d'une volonté commune de la part des Américains et des Soviets de soutenir une formule 'amicale mais démocratique' en Finlande. La deuxième section de l'essai explore l'usage symbolique de l'exemple finlandais dans les politiques soviétiques et américaines. À la fin, et bien que les deux côtés tentèrent d'utiliser la Finlande comme modèle pour servir à leurs buts respectifs, la relation finno-soviétique resta unique durant toute la Guerre froide.*

**ABSTRACT:** *This article explores the role of Finland in the Soviet-American confrontation from the end of World War II to the early 1960s. The first part describes the reasons why Finland, alone among the USSR neighbours to the west, was able to maintain its democracy intact and coexist with its former archenemy. The argument is that Finland benefitted from its rather remote geographical position, from the new foreign and security policies adopted by the postwar Finnish governments, as well as from both the Soviet and American willingness to support a 'friendly but democratic' formula in Finland. The second part of the essay explores the symbolic use of the Finnish example in Soviet and American policy. The article concludes that although both the Americans and the Soviets tried to use Finland as a 'model' to serve their respective goals, the Finno-Soviet relationship remained unique throughout the Cold War.*

In October 1943, shortly prior to the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers, Charles Bohlen, president Franklin D. Roosevelt's advisor on Soviet affairs, wrote a memo in which he speculated about the future relations between the USSR and its Eastern European neighbours. He maintained that: "If a basis for long-term collaboration between the USSR and the Western powers should be established under which the former's greater interest and political influence in the eastern European region was recognized the Soviet leaders might feel that they could safely tolerate the existence of comparatively free economic relations between the Western powers and the East European states." However, Bohlen added: "It is fairly certain that they would oppose, under all circumstances, a return to the prewar situation under which, in the Soviet view, nearly all states of Eastern Europe had anti-Soviet regimes and were freely able to conclude alliances among themselves or with the powers of Western and Central Europe against the Soviet Union." As to the attitudes of the Eastern Europeans, Bohlen thought that: "Probably a majority of the people in the 'middle zone' could be won to acceptance of a solution under which the USSR would exercise solely a preponderant strategic interest in the area; presumptively they would support governments of a 'popular front' type which would accept some degree of Soviet supervision in foreign affairs but be free to conduct their domestic affairs without interference" (Marks 1979: 204).

Bohlen described essentially the way in which Finno-Soviet relations developed in the aftermath of World War II, that is: Finland emerged as a 'friendly but democratic' country that was able to maintain a position between east and west, and one that succeeded in keeping its trade contacts with the west at a high level, sustaining its internal democratic institutions intact, while at the same time building a working relationship with the USSR. Although Bohlen referred to Eastern Europe in a broad sense, Finland was the only country bordering the Soviet Union to the west where this 'friendly but democratic' formula succeeded. The rather obvious question therefore arises: Why did Finland remain an exception?

Part of the answer lies in the innovative new foreign and security policies that were adopted in Finland under the leadership of Juho Kusti Paasikivi in the aftermath of the war. That is, the so-called "Paasikivi line" defined Finland's postwar search for security as one that was first and foremost dependent on its relationship with the Soviet Union. If the Finns continued in the path of an adversarial relationship, as had been the case in prior decades, they were bound to encounter serious problems.

Thus, Finnish foreign policy was driven by a need to satisfy the USSR's security needs in a way that would not jeopardize the nation's internal freedoms.

But this alone hardly suffices as an explanation. In Czechoslovakia, for example, a similar effort did not succeed beyond the early spring of 1948, when a communist coup d'état placed that country firmly within the Soviet bloc. Therefore, two additional questions need to be addressed: Why did the USSR not try to incorporate Finland more firmly into its sphere? Did western policies, particularly those of the United States, play a role in these developments? My argument is that in the end, while many factors affected the development, it was the unique convergence of security interests and policies of all sides that allowed for the Finns finding their security interests satisfied through a policy that could not work in countries south of the Gulf of Finland, and that the country's geopolitical location was among the most significant factors determining the outcome of Finland's search for security in the postwar era.

Geography had played a crucial role already in Finland's World War II experience, which included three distinct wars: the Winter War of 1939–40, the so-called Continuation War of 1941–44 when Finland acted as co-belligerent with Nazi Germany and, finally, the War of Lapland in 1944–45 when Finland, according to the terms of the Moscow Armistice that ended the war with the Soviet Union in September 1944, drove out the German troops stationed in Northern Finland in a coordinated move with its former enemy, the Red Army. When the guns finally quieted down in Northern Finland on 24 April 1945 the legacy of the previous six years proved devastating: 11% of the prewar territory had been lost, 420,000 refugees from those areas were to be settled (mainly from Karelia), 2% of the prewar population had been killed, a naval base in Porkkala (approximately 35 kilometers southwest of Helsinki) had been leased to the Soviets for fifty years, and US\$ 300 million worth of goods (based on 1938 dollar rates) were to be delivered as reparations to the USSR in six (later extended to eight) years.<sup>1</sup>

Added to this were many crucial political changes, both domestic and international, that forced a restructuring of Finnish foreign policy. In particular, the extreme left became a major political force in Finland when the Finnish Communist Party (FCP) was allowed to participate fully in Finnish politics. As a result, in the March 1945 Diet elections the Finnish People's Democratic League (FPDL), a coalition between the FCP and former left-wing Social Democrats, had its first electoral suc-

cess, winning 23.5% of the popular vote and 49 out of 200 seats in the Diet. Following the election, the FCP's leaders acquired several important cabinet posts, including the Minister of Internal Affairs, Yrjö Leino. At the same time, Juho K. Paasikivi, a former conservative party leader, took over the reigns of leadership, first as Prime Minister (1944–46) and then as President (1946–56). A long-time critic of Finnish foreign policy and its excessively anti-Soviet tendencies in the 1930s, as well as a member of the peace opposition group during the Continuation War, Paasikivi was the foremost advocate of cordial relations with the Soviet Union as the basis for Finland's future foreign policy. In his mind, the Finns needed to take into account the new geopolitical realities: the defeat of Germany and the enhanced power of the USSR. In particular, Finnish leaders should assure the Soviets that their security interests on their northwestern border were satisfied and that Finland would never again be used as a springboard for an attack against the USSR. As Paasikivi said in a speech in 1945: "Our foreign policy can never again be directed against the Soviet Union, and we have to convince our great eastern neighbour about this" (Paasikivi 1962: 15).

This new foreign policy, the so-called "Paasikivi line" (*Paasikiven linja*), was partly responsible for the fact that between 1944 and 1947 Finland became a symbol of what postwar superpower relations might have been. Already at the Yalta Conference in February 1945, Finland was used as an example of how successful interallied cooperation between the Soviets, British and the Americans could be. Unlike in Poland, everything seemed to be running quite smoothly in Finland: the Soviet-led Allied Control Commission (ACC) had been relatively easy on Finland, allowing the Paasikivi government to function according to Finnish law, the Finnish press to operate with considerable freedom and plans for Diet elections to proceed without outside interference. That the Paasikivi government tried to accommodate Soviet needs to the best of its ability naturally helped matters and was, indeed, encouraged by the United States which, having never declared war on Finland, had no say in the way the ACC operated in that country (Polvinen 1986: 26–27, 70–89). Moreover, as Jukka Nevakivi has shown in a recent article based on some of the newly opened Soviet archival materials, the Soviets refused to listen to the suggestions of some radical Finnish Communists who wanted a full-scale Soviet occupation of Finland in order to make the country one of the 'people's democracies' (Nevakivi 1993: 195–204; Rentola 1994). In short, Finland was not a trouble spot, but rather a symbol of interallied cooperation at a time when that cooperation was



beginning to crack, and a place where moderation and compromise, not radicalism and confrontation, reigned.

However, the question that still begs an answer is: why did the Soviets not attempt to incorporate Finland more closely after the war than they did? Or as others have put it: why were the Soviets so nice to the Finns?

One explanation could be that the Paasikivi Line certainly served to decrease Soviet security concerns regarding Finland. But it alone does not suffice, given that in Czechoslovakia a similar policy conducted by Eduard Beneš did not prevent the country from being taken over by a communist coup in February 1948. Thus, three added reasons need to be taken into account: first, Finland's geopolitical location in the fringes of Scandinavia and Eastern Europe did not make it into such a strategic 'hot spot' as, say, Poland or Czechoslovakia; second, the strength of the Finnish Communist Party was inadequate to allow for a successful internal uprising and coup d'état; and third, the role of western policies minimized Soviet threat perceptions regarding Finland.

The first two can be summarized quickly. Although the Finns shared 1300 kilometers of border with the USSR, their geopolitical location was more advantageous for the success of a 'friendly but democratic' formula than, say, that of Czechoslovakia. Unlike the latter country, Finland did not lie between the USSR and its major traditional enemy, Germany. The fact that Sweden stuck with its neutrality despite some western pressure to join NATO in 1948-49 meant that Finland was not sandwiched, at least in a military sense, squarely between east and west. That the Soviets had leased the Porkkala naval base in 1944 and had acquired a large chunk of eastern Finland further minimized the strategic benefits that might have accrued to the USSR if it controlled all of Finland. Moreover, Soviet security concerns were further satisfied with the signing of the "Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance" (FCMA) in 1948 that tied Finland, albeit with qualifications, to a Soviet security system. That is, it spelled out that Finns would fight against any attempt to use their territory as a base for an attack against the USSR, specifying the potential attacker as "Germany or any state allied with Germany." In short, the combination of these factors minimized the potential benefits that the Soviets might have reaped had they enforced their will unequivocally on the Finns. Indeed, the Kremlin felt secure enough about its security to return the Porkkala naval base to Finland in early 1956.<sup>2</sup>

Equally, if not more, important than Finland's geostrategic position in deterring a hostile takeover was the relative weakness of the Finnish Communist Party. It had been revealed already during the Winter War of 1939–40, when the puppet government of the "People's Republic of Finland" (headed by Otto W. Kuusinen a communist emigré who fled Finland after the Civil War in 1918) that the Soviets had set up failed to win any popular support in Finland. And although the extreme left received over 20% of the popular vote in 1945, many of the supporters were not in favour of a coup d'état, and had mixed feelings about the Soviet Union. In other words, creating a "People's Republic of Finland" had proved impossible in 1939 and would have required outside intervention in the late 1940s. Given the relatively satisfactory security arrangements described above, the Kremlin apparently considered such an intervention too costly, and with relatively meager concrete benefits to be gained, it thus turned down the pleas of some extreme leaders of the Finnish communists for a Soviet occupation of Finland (Nevakivi 1993: 199–200).

In sum, Finland was able to satisfy immediate Soviet security interests. The immediate postwar years (1944–1948), which in Finland are usually referred to as the "dangerous years," thus signified the Soviet acceptance of the 'friendly democratic' formula in Finland. The Finns made this easier by their conscious effort to comply with that formula. That it was not acceptable to the Soviets in Eastern European countries was a result of a combination of factors: in particular their different strategic locations and domestic situations, that is, the strength of internal communist parties and the establishment of a Soviet occupation.

What about western, particularly US, policy vis-à-vis Finland and the Finno-Soviet relationship. As Michael Berry has noted, the US played an important role as a sort of midwife to the "Paasikivi line" during the last years of World War II by encouraging the Finns to conclude a separate peace treaty with the USSR and stressing the importance of a cordial Finno-Soviet relationship in the aftermath of World War II. As Berry explains, Finland was a prototype of the type of solution that the Americans wished to see accomplished in all countries bordering the Soviet Union, and "that a flexible policy toward such East European countries as Yugoslavia would lead to solutions similar to Finland" (Berry 1993: 58).

American foreign policy vis-à-vis Finland and the Finno-Soviet relationship was, therefore, in part based on the hope that it could be repli-

cated elsewhere in Eastern Europe, i. e., that the 'friendly but democratic' formula would be less an exception than a rule in the Soviet Union's relations with its neighbours to the west. But even though this did not happen, the 'Finnish model' appeared a positive one when compared to the lot of countries like Czechoslovakia, Hungary or Poland. Once the East-West conflict intensified in the late 1940s and the descent of the Iron Curtain became the basis of a new European state system, the Finno-Soviet relationship appeared not only non-threatening to American interests, but represented to the US "a small puncture of the Iron Curtain [and] a penetration of encouraging significance achieved in any part of the Curtain" (Matson 1981: 196). Indeed, the fact that Finland retained its democratic internal institutions intact could be seen as a way of containing communism internally and allowed John A. Blatnik, a member of the House of Representatives, even to declare on October 19, 1949 that "[O]nce again [the Finns] are heroes, this time heroes of the Cold War."<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, given the Soviet presence in Porkkala and the lack of American power in Northeastern Europe, there was little the US could do. From Washington's perspective, to encourage the cordial Finno-Soviet relationship as expressed in the formulation of the Paasikivi Line was the best available option. The only alternative, given that the US was not ready to challenge the Soviets in their 'backyard,' appeared to be the establishment of a "People's Republic of Finland". Moreover, although the Soviets seemed tolerant of the Finnish exception, they apparently assumed a right to a certain degree of control over Finland's foreign policy and would not accept a clear western orientation on the part of the Helsinki government.

American policy towards Finland thus became an extremely cautious one that was designed 'not to tease the bear,' i. e., not to alarm the Soviets with a strong effort to link Finland more clearly to the West. The argument behind such a policy was repeatedly stressed in National Security Council policy statements through the 1940s and 1950s and can be summarized as follows: "In its policy toward Finland, the United States must avoid any steps which would threaten the delicate balance of Finnish-Soviet relations and call forth drastic Soviet measures inimical to Finnish independence."<sup>4</sup>

This cautious policy found its expression in, for example, US economic policy vis-à-vis Finland. The United States started giving economic aid to Finland in 1946 and continued to do so in growing amounts even after the 1947 Finnish decision, based on Soviet pressure,

not to join the Marshall plan. The Americans offered only limited aid, however, justifying it by the argument that large amounts would arouse Soviet suspicions and provoke possible counteraction. In October 1948, for example, John D. Hickerson, the Director of the European Division at the State Department, advised against large American credits to Finland, because they “might be used by the Soviets as a pretext for retaliation.”<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, although Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was concerned in 1953 about the political consequences of the growth in Finno-Soviet trade in the early 1950s that linked Finland economically closer to its eastern neighbour, he succumbed to the rationale of the ‘don’t tease the bear’-approach. In a telegram to the Helsinki legation on July 7, 1953 Dulles argued that the United States could do little to change what was characterized as ‘Soviet economic penetration’ in Finland, because “a massive effort aimed at diverting existing Soviet-Finnish trade to Western channels would threaten the delicate balance of Finnish-Soviet relations and call forth drastic Soviet measures affecting Finnish independence.”<sup>6</sup>

In other words, the United States policy can best be characterized as one that clearly recognized that the United States was not bound to risk war for the sake of Finland. The cordial Finno-Soviet relationship, the ‘friendly but democratic’ formula, appeared the best possible alternative that such a policy of self-restraint and recognition of limits could produce. Although disappointed over the fact that it could not be replicated anywhere else in the immediate aftermath of World War II, it was at least more acceptable than the perceived alternative: the extension of the Iron Curtain north of the Baltic Sea.

The Finnish exception thus emerged as a combination of Finnish, Soviet and Western decisions and interests, or lack thereof. It rested in part on the country’s geopolitical position, in part on the individual decisions made by all sides. It represented an exception acceptable to both of the superpowers and its success proved, at least ostensibly, that the “Paasikivi line” was the correct way for the Finns to safeguard their security in the aftermath of World War II. Despite its uniqueness, or partly because of it, the Finnish exception acquired some added, albeit largely symbolic, significance in the context of East-West relations as the frontlines of the Cold War in Europe stabilized in the 1950s when both sides, the Americans and the Soviets, found it a potentially useful propaganda tool.



This was something that Max Jakobson, an official in the Finnish embassy in Washington in the 1950s and later Finland's ambassador to the UN in the 1960s described in a memo to the Finnish Foreign Ministry in 1955. In his memoirs Jakobson recounts this communication in which he had argued that: "Finland has become a unique source of debate between east and west, a debate in which both sides accept the exemplary nature of Finno-Soviet relations as a premise. The disagreement is over which side should follow this example" (Jakobson 1980: 81).

Assuming that Jakobson was correct in his assessment it tells us two important facts: first, that Finland's position and Finno-Soviet relations were widely recognized and accepted by the mid-1950s and second, that that relationship was becoming to have some symbolic value for both sides in the Cold War context in the mid-1950s. Yet, although Jakobson referred to both sides, it needs to be stressed that Finland acquired a symbolic meaning mostly due to Soviet initiatives. Behind it lay the Soviet move towards a policy of 'peaceful coexistence' between states having different economic systems that became particularly significant in the Khrushchev era.

This use of Finland as a tool of Soviet policy came particularly evident in the context of the so-called "spirit of Geneva," which affected Finland in a significant manner: in early 1956 the Porkkala base was returned largely as another example of the 'peaceful nature' of post-Stalin Soviet policy. The Soviets also lifted prior objections to Finland's membership in the UN and the pan-Scandinavian Nordic Council. Further, following the XX<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in the spring of 1956 the Soviets started to refer to Finland as a neutral country and to link the notion of neutrality clearly to the policy of coexistence. The immediate object of the policy was, apparently, to use Finnish neutrality and its relations with the USSR as an example for others to follow, particularly the NATO members of Scandinavia, a linkage not missed in the United States. As CIA chief Allen Dulles maintained at a National Security Council (NSC) meeting on January 18, 1956: "the Soviet Union [is] trying to use Finland as a level to create a [neutral] Scandinavian Federation."<sup>7</sup>

Such concern about the expansion of neutrality was part of a conceived long-term threat that extended far beyond what seemed in Washington to be a largely peripheral issue. Finland was thus eventually caught into the whirlwind of East-West propaganda wars in the late 1950s. It is hardly an accident that in the summer of 1955 the National Security Council (NSC) undertook a full scale of studies on the neutralist

trends in non-bloc countries. Although not too concerned over classical neutrality, a summary report on neutralism in Europe identified a troubling post-war phenomenon of “quasi-neutralism” that consisted of a “hodgepodge of attitudes and tendencies which, for one reason or another, tended to impede effective cooperation with other nations.” Under the general rubric of ‘neutralism,’ the National Security Council (NSC) put “any attitude which involved a disinclination to cooperate with US objectives in the Cold War and in a possible hot war combined with either a similar disinclination or, at worst, a hesitation to go so far as to cooperate with the USSR objectives.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, opinion polls showed that the majority of those West Europeans who had heard of peaceful coexistence were in favour of it, and that the same polls showed a growing preference in 1955 not to side with either the US or the USSR in the Cold War. While such trends did not yet translate to government policies, they were naturally a major concern for the future of the American-led western alliance’s unity.<sup>9</sup>

A major reason for the advance of such attitudes was the declining perception of the imminence of a military threat from the USSR that was spreading in Western Europe. Indeed, NSC 5525 recognized that the Soviet moves towards an apparently conciliatory approach had had the effect of strengthening neutralist tendencies, those “hodgepodge attitudes” amongst allied countries. The Austrian State Treaty and neutrality declaration of 1955, Soviet disarmament proposals, and the Geneva Summit had “undoubtedly strengthened beliefs that either a new era has begun in the Soviet Union since Stalin’s death, or that the Soviets were never quite so evil as alleged.”<sup>10</sup> Indeed, in the mid-1950s many things were pointing to the possibility that the western alliance might have been at a starting point of gradual disintegration.

It was in this context that neutrality became to be considered a threat of sorts. As many scholars have noted, from the mid-1950s onwards the Soviets stressed peaceful coexistence and the emergence of a world-wide “zone of peace” that (in addition, naturally, to the socialist states) included the neutral and non-aligned countries; the possibility that popular opinion in allied countries might be lured into thinking that the time of confrontation should give way to a period of accommodation appeared a potential threat to western unity (Huldt and Lejns 1985; Petersson 1990; Hakovirta 1983; Light 1985). In other words, while neutrality as an official foreign policy of such countries as Sweden or Switzerland was not necessarily a threatening phenomenon per se, the possibility that such policy might hold appeal among NATO nations

made neutrality a potential springboard of sorts towards western disintegration and a vehicle in the USSR's efforts to create wedges within the alliance.

Thus Finland's new closer relationship with the Scandinavian NATO countries Denmark and Norway that was made possible by Finland's admission into the Nordic Council was linked to this general perception of the growing possibility of western disintegration. The return of the Porkkala Naval Base had been received positively in the Scandinavian countries and the concurrent membership of Finland in the pan-Scandinavian Nordic Council had given a voice to a country that officially proclaimed its 'friendship' with the Soviet Union as the main feature of its foreign policy. In effect, many feared that the Soviets were vicariously gaining a foothold in the Scandinavian organization and that, at the minimum, Finnish attitudes might moderate the anti-Soviet feelings prevalent in Norway and Denmark.<sup>11</sup> This concern was still taken seriously enough by the Kennedy administration to warrant the National Security Council (NSC) in 1961 to "stress the danger to Scandinavian and Free world security of unilaterally neutralizing or demilitarizing Scandinavia."<sup>12</sup>

Regardless of American concerns, however, in Finland the changed nature of Soviet policy was welcomed as an opportunity to break away from relative isolation and initiate a more active foreign policy. Nevertheless, it also led to the uncomfortable position in which official statements from Finland and the USSR often became to mirror each other when it came down to neutrality. It was no accident, therefore, that the view that the Finns and particularly Urho Kekkonen, who became president in February 1956 and remained in that post for an unprecedented 25 years, were only voicing Moscow's opinions became widespread in the west already in the late 1950s. Yet there was very little new in Kekkonen's advocacy of neutrality. As early as January 1952 he had called for the expansion of neutrality to all Scandinavian countries in the so-called 'pyjamas speech.' In an interview with the West German newspaper *Die Welt* on 23 April 1955, Kekkonen went further, declaring that in his opinion "international politics have reached a juncture in which true neutrality has become a viable option. One can say for certain that it would benefit the cause of peace in Europe. In 1952 I took the liberty to recommend this type of policy for Scandinavia. Now I might dare to think that it could be realized in an even larger scale" (Hanhimäki 1993: 221).

During Kekkonen's long presidency (1956–81) Finland's symbolic significance or image in the East-West context became a very useful propaganda tool for the USSR. In short, the Soviet argument was that Finland was neutral and independent, it had chosen to coexist with the USSR and was benefiting from that, therefore, it was an example of the way others should organize their relations with the USSR in a profitable way. At least in the late 1950s the Soviets seemed to have hoped that they could use Finland as a vehicle by which coexistence and neutrality could be spread to the west, particularly to the rest of Scandinavia and thus as a means of planting some seeds of disintegration in the western alliance (Rautkallio 1991: 41–106 and 306–352). The irony from the American point of view was that the US had itself clearly encouraged the cordial Finno-Soviet relationship in the immediate aftermath of the war, but in a changed international context this policy was about to backfire.

The Soviet attempt to use Finland as an example of, or a model for, coexistence, was evident in the late 1950s during the numerous high-level Finno-Soviet state visits. On each occasion, the Soviets used the opportunity not only to discuss bilateral political and economic matters with the Finns, but to try and use Finland as a platform from which to reach a wider western audience, particularly in Scandinavia. For example, during Khrushchev's and Bulganin's visit to Finland in June 1957, the Soviet press used the Finno-Soviet relationship as an example for the Scandinavians' to follow, and Khrushchev openly expressed his "grave concern" over the "bloc-mindedness in Norway and Denmark" (Rautkallio 1991: 140; Suomi 1992: 78–83). Indeed, as Secretary of State John Foster Dulles wrote to Helsinki on June 22, 1957, the Soviet leaders' visit "represented [an] attempt by Moscow to take advantage of Finnish circumspection in dealing with [the] USSR and Finland's good standing in West to (1) revive pre-Hungary Soviet efforts at personal diplomacy in free world (2) use Finland as illustration to [the] rest of Scandinavia of advantages of neutrality." Dulles added that: "according to an unconfirmed report Khrushchev offered future territorial concessions in return for Finnish support of Nordic neutral bloc."<sup>13</sup> The Finns appeared to be falling into a dangerous trap: they might feel compelled to adopt positions favourable to the USSR in the hopes that this might lead to the return of some of the territories lost in World War II.

Although these kinds of concerns continued to colour some American reporting regarding the Finno-Soviet relationship, the Soviet effort to use Finland as a way of bootlegging neutralism to Scandinavia never had a significant impact on Norway's or Denmark's NATO membership. The



early attempts in 1957 were interrupted by the attempt to overthrow Khrushchev soon after his return from Finland in the summer of 1957. Later on, Khrushchev's renewed courtship with the Scandinavian countries that so concerned some US observers came to an abrupt end when the Soviet Premier on July 19, 1959 suddenly cancelled a tour of the Nordic capitals that had been planned for August of that year. As super-power relations then deteriorated in the early 1960s due to such incidents as the U 2-flight, and as the Finno-Soviet Note Crisis of 1961 unfolded, any chance that the other Scandinavians might be 'lured' into fashioning their relationship with the USSR after the 'Finnish model' quickly evaporated. The ominous fact that President Kekkonen received the Soviet note—a call for military consultations due to alleged security threats from the West—while visiting the United States as the first Finnish President in November 1961, naturally served to alarm the Scandinavian opinion and remind them of the less than consensual basis of the Finno-Soviet relationship (Rautkallio 1991: 346; idem. 1993: passim; Suomi 1992: 475–520).

There were additional reasons why the Soviet campaign never 'took off' in Scandinavia. Most significantly, the counterpoint to the argument that others should imitate the Finno-Soviet relationship was relatively easy to make. Not only was the assumption, inherent in much of Soviet rhetoric, that Finns had organized their relations with the USSR out of their free will a far stretch, but even if one assumed that this was the case, the simple question to counter with was: why not replicate 'the Finnish model' in Eastern, rather than western Europe? This was the point that John Foster Dulles, for example, made to Soviet Premier Nikolai Bulganin during the Geneva conference in 1955—the quick response being that "Finland was not a realistic example in that context" (Hanhimäki 1993: 222). In other words, if Finland appeared a tool of the Kremlin, it also became a potential vehicle for the gradual erosion of the Soviet hold in Eastern Europe as well. In a sense, then, Finland could serve as a tool of 'rollback,' that policy so voluminously advocated by presidential candidate Dwight D. Eisenhower and his major foreign policy adviser John Foster Dulles, but largely unimplemented by President 'Ike' and his Secretary of State.

Although the fate of the Hungarian neutrality declaration of 1956 made the spreading of neutrality into Eastern Europe an unlikely prospect for the foreseeable future, the US National Security Council recognized the Finnish model as an opportunity throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. In a 1959 policy paper on Finland, for example, the National

Security Council (NSC) argued that “if Finland is able to preserve its present neutral status it could serve as an example of what the United States might like to see achieved by the Soviet-dominated nations of Eastern Europe.”<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, in 1961 Zbigniew Brzezinski and William E. Griffith proposed a similar usage in an essay published in *Foreign Affairs*. In an argument reminiscent of Charles Bohlen’s advice to Franklin Roosevelt in 1943, Brzezinski and Griffith called for “the creation of a neutral belt of [East European] states which, like the Finnish, would enjoy genuine popular freedom of choice in internal policy while not being hostile to the Soviet Union and not belonging to Western military alliances” (Brzezinski and Griffith 1961: 644).

The debate then continued throughout the remainder of the Cold War over whether Finland, a friendly democracy, was a threat or a prospective model; whether it was a negative possibility or a positive example; whether there should be ‘friendly democracies’ in Eastern or Western Europe. Indeed, this was largely what gave Finland some added, but to most Finns unwelcome, publicity when the spectre of ‘Finlandization’ became a popular word in the lexicon of those westerners opposing détente as a form of appeasement. The argument expressed particularly in the works of Walter Laqueur in the 1970s were similar to those already promoted in the 1950s and 1960s: Finland was slowly losing its independence under gradual Soviet pressure and this fate would befall other West European countries if they lost sight of the basic notoriety of the Soviet regime (Laqueur 1977: 37–41). On the other hand, such prominent people as George F. Kennan were quick to respond to these charges by maintaining that Finland had—in contrast to the views of the ‘finlandizers’—increased its freedom of action throughout the postwar era by practicing exactly the type of policies Laqueur and others found objectionable (Kennan 1979: 20). In the end, however, the fact remains that the debate about the wider implications of the Finno-Soviet relationship was based on a situation that was and remained unique throughout the Cold War: the notion that Western Europeans had any desire to emulate the Finno-Soviet relationship were equally unrealistic as the hopes that Eastern Europeans, despite their perhaps sincere desire, had an opportunity to imitate the Finno-Soviet relationship without Moscow’s consent.

Thus, as much as the Finnish solution was unique in the immediate aftermath of World War II, it remained so throughout the Cold War, despite the fact that it was seized upon by propagandists on both sides. It had its basis in some very specific geopolitical circumstances, it relied on

innovative policy decisions made in Finland, as well as the desire to maintain its unique position expressed in the policies of both the United States and the Soviet Union. For better or worse these conditions could not, however, be replicated elsewhere. Therefore, if we want to talk about a Finnish model in the Cold War context, it was not one that, realistically, had any wider use. Rather, Finland remained an exception and a symbol of a postwar order that, given the ideological, political, strategic, and cultural differences between East and West, could not be built. As long as there was a Cold War there was also only one friendly democracy.

### NOTES

\* The author acknowledges with gratitude the following for assistance given in the writing of this article: Wolfgang P. Ahrens, Holli Schaubert, Guillaume de Syon, John L. Gaddis and the participants in Ohio University's Contemporary History Institute's seminar series, as well as the anonymous reviewers of *Scandinavian-Canadian Studies*.

1. See especially Polvinen (1986), pp. 11–27; Manninen (1983), pp. 139–181; Nøkleby (1983), pp. 279–323.

2. This largely parallels the interpretation found in Devlin (1975), pp. 439–442. For interpretations stressing the significance of Finland's geographic location see: Krosby (1960), pp. 229–243; and particularly, Karsh (1986), pp. 43–57.

3. US Congress, House, *Congressional Record*, 81st Congress, first Session, 1949, vol. 95, appendix, A 6664.

4. NSC 5403: US Policy Toward Finland, January 12, 1954, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–54*, VIII (Washington, D. C., 1985), 773 (hereafter FRUS, followed by year and volume). A similar statement had been included in all NSC (National Security Council) policy papers on Finland since 1948.

5. Hickerson to Knapp, October 28, 1948, RG (Record Group) 59, US State Department, British Commonwealth and Northern European Affairs, "Finland/Finance: Foreign Credits—the US," Box 13, NA (National Archives of the United States, Washington, D. C.).

6. Dulles to Helsinki, July 7, 1953, RG (Record Group) 84, Helsinki Classified General Records, Box 33, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland.

7. Memorandum of NSC meeting, January 18, 1956, *FRUS, 1955–57*, X, p. 67.

8. "Neutralism in Europe," Summary Report, August 19, 1955, WHO, NSC Staff Papers, Planning Coordinating Group Series, Box 2, Folder # 9, Bandung (2), DDEL (Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas). See Solheim, pp. 10–11.

9. "Opinion Factors Relating to the Four-Power Conference," State Department Study, June 11, 1955, WHCF, Confidential File, Subject Series, Box 28, DDEL (Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas).

10. NSC 5525, August 31, 1955, *FRUS, 1955–57*, Vol. 9, p. 530.

11. Memorandum of Discussion during 273rd NSC Meeting, January 18, 1956, *FRUS, 1955–57*, Vol. 10, p. 67.

12. Comments on NSC policies, undated memo (March 1961), Kennedy Papers, NSC Files, Departments and Agencies, Box 283, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Massachusetts.

13. Dulles to Helsinki, June 22, 1957, 660e.61/6–2257, NA (National Archives of the United States, Washington, D. C.).

14. NSC 5914/1: "US Policy Towards Finland," October 14, 1959.

### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Berry, Michael. 1993. "From Debt Payment to the Paasikivi Line: Ideological Preferences and Realpolitik." *Finland and the United States: Diplomatic Relations through Seventy Years*. Ed. by Robert Rinehart. Washington, D. C.: Institute for the Study of Diplomacy.
- Brzezinski, Zbigniew and William E. Griffith. 1961. "Peaceful Engagement in Eastern Europe." *Foreign Affairs* 39: 638–664.
- Devlin, Kevin. 1975. "Finland in 1948: The Lessons of a Crisis." *The Anatomy of Communist Takeovers*. Ed. by Thomas T. Hamilton. New Haven: Yale University Press. 433–447.
- Hakovirta, Harto. 1983. "The Soviet Union and the Varieties of Neutrality in Europe." *World Politics* 35, 4: 563–585.
- Hanhimäki, Jussi M. 1993. "Containment, Coexistence and Neutrality: the Return of the Porkkala Naval Base as an Issue in Soviet-American Relations, 1955–1956." *Scandinavian Journal of History* 28, 3: 217–228.
- Huldt, Bo and Atis Lejns. 1985. *European Neutrals and the Soviet Union*. Stockholm: The Swedish Institute of International Affairs.
- Jakobson, Max. 1980. *Veteen piirretty viiva. Muistelmia ja havaintoja vuosilta 1953–1965*. Helsinki: Otava.
- Karsh, Efraim. 1986. "Geographical Determinism. Finnish Neutrality Revisited." *Cooperation and Conflict* 21: 43–57.
- Kennan, George F. 1979. *Encounters with Kennan: The Great Debate*. London: Frank Cass and Co.
- Kennedy Papers. NSC Files. John F. Kennedy Library. Boston.
- Krosby, Hans Peter. 1960. "The Communist Power Bid in Finland in 1948." *Political Science Quarterly* 75: 229–243.
- Laqueur, Walter Z. 1977. "Europe: the Specter of Finlandization." *Commentary* 19: 37–41.
- Light, Margot. 1985. "Neutrality and Nonalignment: the Dialectics of Soviet Theory." *Millennium* 14, 1: 79–92.

- Marks, Eduard. 1979. "Charles Bohlen and the Acceptable Limits of Soviet Hegemony in Eastern Europe." *Diplomatic History* 3, 2: 201–213.
- Manninen, Ohto. 1983 "Operation Barbarossa and the Nordic Countries." *Scandinavia and the Second World War*. Ed. by Henrik S. Nissen. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 139–181.
- Matson, Robert W. 1981. "The Helsinki Axioms: US—Finnish Relations and the Origins of the Cold War." Ph.D. dissertation. University of Oregon.
- Nevakivi, Jukka. 1993. "Ratkaiseva välirauha 1944–1947. Miksi Suomea ei neuvostolaistettu?" *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 91, 4: 195–204.
- Nøkleby, Berit. 1983. "Adjusting to Allied Victory." *Scandinavia and the Second World War*. Ed. by Henrik S. Nissen. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 279–323.
- Paasikivi, Juho K. 1962. *Paasikiven linja. Puheita vuosilta 1944–1956*. Helsinki: WSOY.
- Petersson, Bo. 1990. *The Soviet Union and Peacetime Neutrality in Europe: A Study in Soviet Doctrine*. Stockholm: MH Publishing.
- Polvinen, Tuomo. 1986. *Between East and West: Finland in International Politics, 1944–1947*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Rautkallio, Hannu. 1991. *Kekkonen ja Moskova. Suomi lännessä nahtynä 1956–1962*. Helsinki: Tammi.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1993. *Neuvostovalan asialla. NKP:n vaikutus Suomessa 1960–luvulla*. Helsinki: Tammi.
- Rentola, Kimmo. 1994. *Kenen joukoissa seisot?—Suomalainen kommunismi ja sota 1937–1945*. Helsinki: WSOY.
- Suomi, Juhani. 1992. *Kriisien aika. Urho Kekkonen 1956–1962*. Helsinki: Otava.
- US-Department of State. British Commonwealth and Northern European Affairs. National Archives, Washington, D. C.
- US Congress, House. 1949. *Congressional Record*. 81st Congress, 1st Session, vol. 95.
- US Department of State. 1985. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–54*. VIII. Washington, D. C.: US Government Printing Office.
- US Department of State. 1987. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–57*. IX–X. Washington, D. C.: US Government Printing Office.
- White House Central File. 1953–61. Confidential File. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library. Abilene, Kansas.





## Laura Goodman Salverson, Guttormur J. Guttormsson, and the Dual World of Second-Generation Canadian Authors\*

Daisy L. Neijmann  
*University of Manitoba*

**RÉSUMÉ:** *Les auteurs Guttormur J. Guttormsson et Laura Goodman Salverson n'avaient pas beaucoup en commun à ce qu'il paraît, excepté qu'ils étaient des Canadiens islandais contemporains de la deuxième génération. Alors que Guttormsson a composé en islandais et selon la tradition poétique islandaise, Salverson a écrit des romans anglo-canadiens. Un examen plus attentif révèle pourtant que les œuvres des deux écrivains n'ont pas seulement des intérêts en commun, mais ils ont aussi été profondément marqués par une dualité et une fragmentation personnelle. Coïncés entre les deux réalités culturelles différentes du Canada et de l'Islande, Salverson et Guttormsson se sont tournés vers leurs écrits pour atteindre une intégration culturelle. La littérature leur offrait un véhicule pour exercer ce qu'ils percevaient comme étant leur responsabilité de la conservation du patrimoine islandais au Canada. Pourtant à un niveau plus profond et personnel, les œuvres de Salverson et Guttormsson manifestent la façon dont ces écrivains se sont réfugiés dans l'écriture pour résoudre leur aliénation et pour rapprocher leur monde à deux. La littérature que Salverson et Guttormsson ont créé pourtant n'apportait pas de solution à leur situation fâcheuse. Au lieu de cela, la dualité représentée dans leurs œuvres les a plutôt isolés comme auteurs et a empêché une lecture critique sérieuse de leur œuvre.*

**ABSTRACT:** *The authors Guttormur J. Guttormsson and Laura Goodman Salverson appear to have little else in common than the fact that they were contemporary second-generation Icelandic Canadians. While Guttormsson composed in the Icelandic language and poetic tradition, Salverson wrote English-Canadian fiction. A closer examination, however, reveals that the works of the two writers not only share similar concerns, but have also been profoundly marked by duality and a fragmentation of the self. Caught between the two*

*different cultural realities of Canada and Iceland, Salverson and Guttormsson looked to their writing to achieve cultural integration. Literature provided a medium to exercise their perceived responsibility towards the preservation of their Icelandic heritage in Canada. On a deeper and more personal level, the works of Guttormsson and Salverson show how these authors took refuge in the writing process in order to resolve their alienation and bridge their dual world. The literature Salverson and Guttormsson created, however, did not solve their predicament. Instead, the duality represented in their work has caused their isolation as authors and prevented serious critical attention to their writing.*

---

Guttormur J. Guttormsson and Laura Goodman Salverson are two Icelandic-Canadian writers who, at first glance, appear to have very little in common. One was a New Iceland farmer who wrote poetry in Icelandic. The other, a woman who grew up in several immigrant ghettos across North America, wrote fiction in English. As a result, they have been assigned to different literary traditions: Guttormsson to the Western Icelandic and Salverson to the Canadian. However, this separation disguises the fact that both writers were contemporaries who were born in Canada to Icelandic immigrants, and grew up in a Western Icelandic immigrant atmosphere. As second-generation Icelandic Canadians they belonged to that generation of New Canadians which inherited a dual sense of self, straddling two separate worlds which they harboured in themselves—the world their parents had left behind and the world they had been born into. It is precisely this duality which links the work and the authorship of both writers.

Guttormur Guttormsson was born near Riverton, New Iceland in 1878, and by the age of sixteen, he was an orphan. After a rudimentary formal education and several jobs, he took over his parents' farm. He died in 1966. Guttormsson made up for his lack of formal schooling by extensive and varied reading, in the tradition of the Icelandic *alþýðuskáld*.<sup>1</sup> His reputation in Canada and Iceland rests not only on the exceptional quality of his poetry, but also on the fact that he was a Canadian-born West Icelander who wrote in Icelandic and, to a considerable extent, in the Icelandic poetic tradition.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, Guttormsson was a Canadian, moulded by the Canadian environment and concerned with Canadian issues. This is clearly reflected in his poetry and sets his work apart from contemporary Western Icelandic writing composed by immigrants born and raised in Iceland. Guttormsson was a true Icelandic Canadian: neither quite Icelandic nor quite Canadian, but a unique



combination of the two. His poetry, too, is a curious and intriguing blend of Icelandic poetic tradition and diction, encompassing what is essentially Canadian subject-matter. It is really a Canadian literature captured in Icelandic poetry, as David Arnason points out.<sup>3</sup>

Guttormsson composed, for instance, many nature poems in which Canadian scenery is celebrated while it serves at the same time as an occasion for the contemplation of philosophical or social issues. In "*Indiána Sumar*" ("Indian Summer"), Guttormsson creates a lyrical picture of Indian summer as an Indian woman. However, as the reader is invited to share her beauty, he is also reminded that such moments of beauty in life, although intense, are usually fleeting. The poem ends abruptly with the icy cold of winter. Guttormsson's famous poem "Sandy Bar," a haunting tribute to the fate and achievements of the Icelandic pioneers in Canada, depends for its atmosphere on a scenery of towering spruces and a thunderstorm, which are common in Canada but almost non-existent in Iceland. Similarly, in the poem "*Býflugnaræktin*" ("The Keeping of Bees") bees are used as a metaphor for the creative urges of the poet which are, of necessity, locked away until time and opportunity will arise to tend to them. When that time finally arrives, the poet, upon setting them free, is viciously attacked and scarred by the starving bees. To an Icelander, this metaphor would be merely theoretical, since bees are not kept in Iceland. "*Bölvun lögmálsins*" ("The Curse of the Law"), in which Guttormsson attacks the exploitative grain speculators, is very Icelandic in its witty and radical social criticism, but has its basis in a social context that is thoroughly Canadian. With "*Indiána Hátíð*" ("Indian Festival") Guttormsson provides a scathing account of the plight of the native peoples. His descriptions of the natives are realistic, tainted neither by hostility or prejudice, nor by a romantic idealism. They reveal instead a deeply sympathetic understanding of the wrongs done to these people.

Because of this exceptional combination of Icelandic poetic form and diction and thoroughly Canadian subject-matter, Guttormsson's poetry could only be fully understood and appreciated by fellow Icelandic Canadians. While on the one hand the Icelandic language and cultural barrier prevented recognition by a Canadian audience, the Icelanders in Iceland did not quite understand Guttormsson's poetry either because of its Canadian flavour. This is attested to by the observation Arnór Sigurjónsson makes in his introduction to Guttormsson's collected poetry:

Among Guttormur's poetry there is a wide variety of aspects that are little or unknown to us here in Iceland. This concerns both the subject-matter itself and the understanding and opinions of the writer which appear unfamiliar to us, as well as the atmosphere which is enveloped in the subject-matter and its treatment.<sup>4</sup>

The following epigram is an example of the subtlety and intricacy this blend of Icelandic and Canadian could assume in Guttormsson's work:

*Fylgi snúka flakkar tveir,  
fárna en ríkra vinir.  
Plata, svíkja og pretta þeir  
pólítikarsynir.*

(*Kvæðasafn* 1947: 346)

A rough prose-translation of this verse could run as follows: "Two vagrants are bumming support / friends of the masses and the rich. / They cheat, betray and swindle / sons of politics." As the Icelandic critic Sveinn Skorri Höskuldsson points out,<sup>5</sup> the pun and main message of the epigram are hidden in the seemingly innocent, literal translation of the last line: while the Icelandic word *pólítikarsynir* is perfectly harmless in itself, a quick bilingual mind would catch the literal translation in English of the last part of the word, namely *-tikarsynir*. *Synir* is the plural of *sonur*, son, while *tíkar* is the genitive form of *tík*, meaning "bitch" in Icelandic. This epigram, then, depends for its effect on somebody who is bilingual enough to catch the nuances of wordplay depending on an English colloquialism within an Icelandic poem, and who is, in addition, sufficiently acquainted with the Icelandic poetic tradition of the *lausavísa*, an occasional epigram composed according to complex formal rules, to expect this hidden sting in its tail.

Guttormsson was writing this kind of poetry at a time when Icelandic was quickly giving way to English among the younger Icelandic Canadians who were much more assimilated into Canadian than into Icelandic culture. His audience, therefore, which was small to begin with, was quickly decreasing in number. As a result, Guttormsson's poetry was as isolated a phenomenon as it was unique, and his poetry never received the critical attention its quality warrants. The question here arises why Guttormsson chose his own isolation as a writer, continuing to write in a language and tradition unknown to the majority of his fellow Canadians, even though he was bilingual and could have opted to be one of the first West Icelanders to write in English.

In contrast, one of Guttormsson's Western Icelandic contemporaries, Laura Goodman Salverson, did make the conscious decision to

write in English in order to reach a wider Canadian audience. Salverson was born in Winnipeg in 1890, but whereas Guttormsson stayed sedentary in New Iceland throughout his life, she grew up travelling across the North American continent as a result of her father's idealistic wanderings. Like Guttormsson, Salverson received only a rudimentary formal education which she supplemented by avid reading after work hours. Although she was raised in an Icelandic atmosphere in the immigrant ghettos of various North American cities such as Winnipeg and Duluth, she was also exposed to the world outside the Western Icelandic community.

Her first novel, *The Viking Heart*, appeared in 1923. It was well received at the time by the general reading public in Canada and became a great commercial success. Not so among the West Icelanders, however. They objected to the way Iceland was portrayed in the introductory chapter, and to the novel's optimistic romanticism. While such objections were never raised against Western Icelandic authors writing in Icelandic, they became a source of grave indignation in the case of Laura Salverson who had opted to write in English. This can be explained by an extreme sensitivity rooted in a deep-seated self-consciousness not unusual among minority cultures. The fact that Salverson had exposed the Icelandic immigrants and their culture and customs to the larger Canadian audience in a way that was not exactly correlative to the self-constructed Western Icelandic public self-image, made her a virtual outcast of the Western Icelandic community. Moreover, although she became a widely read Canadian author, and the first to introduce the immigrant fate from the insider's viewpoint into English-Canadian fiction,<sup>6</sup> her works have not received the serious critical reception she was looking for. This is evident from her autobiography *Confessions of an Immigrant's Daughter*, published in 1939, in which a much darker tone bordering on bitterness had replaced her earlier optimism. The reception of her works has not improved since then. She is often absent from Canadian literary surveys and histories, or when mentioned she is usually dismissed as a minor immigrant author from the twenties and thirties.<sup>7</sup>

Although there is much that separates Guttormur Guttormsson and Laura Goodman Salverson as authors, there appears to be more beyond the surface which warrants a comparison between the two. Both were immigrants' children who were moulded by two different cultures, the Icelandic and the Canadian. These two cultural realities marked them with a profound duality which importantly influenced their works and caused their isolation as authors. Of course, duality is inevitably inherent

in the immigrant experience. While uprooting causes a deeply-felt psychological need to cling to the old and familiar, survival demands adaptation and assimilation. The Icelandic immigrants had been particularly keen on a combination of preservation of their native cultural heritage and assimilation, which they regarded both as a natural duty to the new country and as the surest way to economic survival.<sup>8</sup> For the immigrants' children born in Canada, however, this meant that they grew up in two worlds: an Icelandic one within the domestic circle, and a Canadian one outside of that circle. After all, there had been too little time for the gradual integration of the two into one Icelandic-Canadian immigrant culture. While for these children Canada was their only external reality, Iceland was an emotional reality, and as such perhaps a more demanding one for it could never be taken for granted and was not reflected in their external reality.

It was here that a very important role lay for Western Icelandic authors. In Iceland, literature had always constituted the main vehicle of cultural expression. Traditionally, a *skáld*, a writer, was a highly respected social figure within Icelandic society; such a person was not just a teller of stories, but a prophet and guide of the people. In Canada, Icelandic immigrant authors could naturally settle into this role by assuming the responsibility of creating literature designed to function as a guide on how to adapt to the new environment without losing the Icelandic cultural heritage. As the immigrants became settled and their Canadian children quickly assimilated, the emphasis for authors shifted accordingly from guidance in adaptation to the preservation of Icelandic culture in Canada through literature. Laura Salverson expressed the heavy responsibility she continually felt resting on her shoulders: were her behaviour and her work worthy of approval by traditional Icelandic standards, and did her writing contribute to the recognition and preservation of her heritage in the New World? Salverson visualized this profound sense of responsibility as a committee of approval, which was comprised of her "august ancestors," as she called them, thereby linking herself to her ancestral tradition. In her autobiography she notes the following about these august ancestors:

They too were outside my small, immediate world, but represented a ghostly court of equity, to whom it was my duty to refer the record of my deeds and misdeeds. ... One walked warily before this ghostly assembly, and shuddered to be found wanting in commendable behaviour.<sup>9</sup>

Next, in a chapter called "Birth of an author," Salverson elaborates on the consequences of her Icelandic upbringing for her authorship. The following explanation reveals in part the nature and extent of the influence on Salverson and Guttormsson exerted by their Icelandic background:

We never enjoyed material blessings, but we certainly had the benefits of complete mental freedom and boundless interest in the lives of our fellow creatures; in human beings, as they were, not as we wished them to be! Such an attitude toward life was the first obstacle in the way of successful authorship...

The second, and greater obstacle, was my conception of the purposes of fiction. Old-fashioned Icelanders did not look upon the sagas as something to kill time. They had, indeed, no predilection for such a curious desire. ... If there was nothing in the story to provoke a novel train of thought, nothing that gave you an intriguing glimpse of human foibles, nothing that touched on the springs of beauty in nature or in man, then why trouble to read the thing? A cup of coffee would do just as well, if all you wanted was mental oblivion! ... When I finally resolved to write of such people as were thoroughly familiar, the pioneers of the west, the fiddler had called another tune. The American continent had discovered sex! It had discovered *thoughts!* ...

To fly in the face of this brave new convention, with tales of antiquated mortals who stubbornly believed in the larger loyalties of social obligation, in honour and in friendship and the human spirit, was not a sensible course. In fact, it was almost a fatal course, since the only other popular medium of fiction—mawkish sentimentality—was just as impossible to me. ...

All of which will doubtless seem a strange invention, but the fact remains, that to the immigrants of Canada this need to justify their race was a powerful and ever-present incentive to courageous effort. It did not surprise me, therefore, that papa's first comment upon being told that I intended to write a book was not very flattering.

"My dear," said he, "are you sure it will be a good book? There are so many bad books the old bards must shudder to see!" (*Confessions*, 401-03)

These observations testify to Salverson's awareness of her isolation as an author, caused by a deeply-rooted sense of responsibility towards her Icelandic culture and background, especially in the field of literature. As an author, Laura did not feel free to pursue her own directions nor those of the major literary movements of her day. Her decision to write in English was not an attempt to escape this perceived responsibility. Rather, it should be seen as an attempt to introduce her ancestral culture to the larger Canadian public in order to gain acceptance and respect for it and thus ensure its survival in a future Canada. In *The Viking Heart*, she set out not only to explain to the Canadian public the price each immigrant group had to pay for a new future in Canada, but also to plea for each group's right to preserve its heritage, indeed to offer it as a contribu-

tion to the developing culture of its new country. In this way, Salverson portrayed the immigrants with a pride and dignity completely new in Canadian literature.

Also in her following books, which deal with various subjects—not all Icelandic, we can always detect the author's awareness of being a *skáld*; Laura Salverson's fiction invariably displays an underlying social and moral framework. The social protest found in her work sets it apart from the bulk of contemporary Canadian fiction, which consisted mostly of escapist or heavily moral literature. Especially in the critical passages in *Confessions*, Laura Salverson reveals a more modern sensibility than many of her contemporaries, using a sceptical tone which sometimes borders on irony to expose the underside of prairie city life. This aspect of Salverson's work is only one of many which has gone virtually unrecognized among Canadian critics.<sup>10</sup>

For Guttormur Guttormsson, there was no need, as there was in Salverson's case, to explain his concern and responsibility towards his heritage in his work. He did not address an audience completely unfamiliar with this problem. Rather Guttormsson's concern seems to be expressed in the very fact that he wrote only in Icelandic and adhered to the stringent Icelandic poetic rules. Guttormsson could have chosen to compose his poetry in English. Instead, however, he consciously confined himself to a poetic tradition which allowed him little poetic freedom, and which could only be understood by a small language community and an even smaller social community. After all, the Canadian context and subject-matter of much of his work were alien to Icelanders in Iceland. Also, Guttormsson obviously had the makings of a poetic experimenter, for his poetry is characterized by striking originality and symbolism. However, as Höskuldsson observes (1980: 77), Guttormsson never felt free to become this poetic experimenter. Instead, he opted for self-conscious composition in the Icelandic language and tradition in order to preserve and possibly maintain his literary heritage within the English-Canadian majority culture. Guttormsson, then, devoted his poetic talents completely to the service of the Icelandic-Canadian community. Much of his poetry is concerned with the community, its members, and its history in Canada. In accordance with the traditional Icelandic conception of the social function of poetry, many of Guttormsson's poems, like Salverson's fiction, also deal with the exposure of social evils in contemporary society, as the examples of his work quoted earlier show.

It is no coincidence that these two writers otherwise so very different should be connected through the same concerns. Christer Mossberg, in his study of Scandinavian immigrant literature, observes this concern as common among immigrant writers of the second generation and explains it in more detail:

As active participants in their communities, the writers were intimately aware of the problems of the group, such as alienation, and were therefore committed to the necessity of preserving the group identity. ... But the immigrant writers were not just tracing the process of change in the immigrant group in their fiction, but were also trying to fill a cultural—and one might even say spiritual—void in the lives of later generation immigrants torn from the old world values, and alienated from the new. ...

The literature of the 20's and 30's, therefore, focuses on the issues which the writers felt would determine the fate of the immigrant group. The writers look at the pioneer generation and are astounded by the scope of their achievements—and the sacrifices necessary for what these forbearers accomplished. ... The accomplishments of the first generation serve as a focal point of pride for later immigrants, though that pride is muted by a sense of sacrifice and loss.<sup>11</sup>

It is noteworthy in this respect that both Guttormsson and Salverson began by publishing works which immortalize the pioneer experience of the Icelanders in Canada through the commemoration of their trials and the celebration of their achievements: Salverson's *The Viking Heart* and Guttormsson's *Jón Austfirðingur*. These first works both make a valiant attempt at lending the pioneer experience a sense of historical continuity and epic scope. At the same time, they reveal a profound awareness and first-hand knowledge of the achievements and sacrifices of the pioneers, aiming to transform them into art and thus write them into Canadian history. Both *The Viking Heart* and *Jón Austfirðingur* also follow the same archetypal immigrant narrative pattern, consisting of a pastoral description of the Icelandic home, exodus, settlement in Canada, tribulations, death, and finally the re-establishment of harmony through a birth or re-birth. Both writers return to this theme at a later, more mature stage in their writing careers: Guttormsson in his famous poem "Sandy Bar" and Salverson in her novel *The Dark Weaver* and in *Confessions of an Immigrant's Daughter*. Interestingly, it is precisely these works which gained their creators most recognition: "Sandy Bar" is undoubtedly Guttormsson's most famous poem (David Arnason even goes so far as to call it the Icelandic-Canadian "anthem"<sup>12</sup>), while *The Dark Weaver* won Salverson the Governor General's Award for fiction in 1937, and *Confessions* was awarded the same prize for non-fiction in 1939.



However, the alienation, and the cultural and spiritual vacuum mentioned by Mossberg were not merely features observed by these writers in other members of their community. They themselves, too, belonged to that generation and suffered its predicament. Perhaps even more than attempting to locate their community in Canadian literature and history and to contribute to the preservation of the Icelandic heritage in Canada, these writers looked to their writing in an attempt to bridge the duality and alienation within themselves. In *Confessions*, Laura Salverson attests to her youthful, desperate attempts to flee her Icelandic background and become a full-fledged member of the North-American community. She found, however, that she could not accomplish this without suppressing an essential part of herself which linked her to a country that was also hers but that she had never even seen. As she notes:

Even without much vision, it must be clear to most that the past lives in us—that we are not products of one generation, and limited to the peculiar attributes of one set of parents. We were forsworn in the loins of the remotest ancestor, and shall continue until the last living is extinct. (*Confessions*, 144–45)

In the same work, Salverson identifies herself with the *huldufólk*, Icelandic elves, believing herself to be a changeling—a fitting metaphor indeed for her dual reality. This identification not only provided a viable explanation for her early feelings of alienation, but also validated her secret ambitions for adventure and success so far removed from her daily life in the immigrant ghetto. In Icelandic folk-tales, the *huldufólk* appear as beautiful and successful creatures that live in splendour. The belief in *huldufólk* has often been explained as deriving from “the yearnings of an isolated people for society and companionship. . . . They reveal dreams of happiness that are denied fulfilment in reality.”<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Salverson links this “discovery” about her changeling ancestry to her first attempts at story-telling, thus herself establishing a connection between her authorship and her dual identity (*Confessions*, 25).<sup>14</sup>

At the beginning of her writing career, Salverson was still very optimistic and convinced that her heritage would eventually get a place in the Canadian cultural mosaic. This optimism pervades *The Viking Heart* and other earlier works. However, the tone in her later works becomes increasingly sombre and fatalistic. In this respect, her novel *The Dark Weaver* is the very antithesis of *The Viking Heart*. The Scandinavian immigrants are brought down and defeated by the very ancestral continuity which ensured the preservation of the Icelandic heritage in *The Viking Heart*. The autobiography *Confessions* is possibly the most expressive of



Salverson's feelings of duality and alienation. Although the book ends with the success of her first novel, it is pervaded by her own sense of failure. *Confessions* is the tale of the impossibility to be Icelandic and Canadian at the same time, at least for Laura Salverson—as an Icelander, she was confined by Canadian society to the immigrant ghettos; as a Canadian, she was rejected by the Icelandic-Canadian community. In this respect, as Kristjana Gunnars observes, the book constitutes a confession to the personal tragedy underlying the success of a Canadian immigrant author, a confession of the failure to bridge a dual world.<sup>15</sup>

While Guttormsson was more secure in his identity as an Icelandic-Canadian in the isolation of his New Iceland community, he was nevertheless poignantly aware of his dual reality. Perhaps his most revealing expression of this is contained in the poem “*Íslendingafljót*” (“Icelandic River”). This river close by Guttormsson's farm becomes the metaphor of his duality, it is the body which separates the Icelander from the Canadian in him. The poem is an attempt to unite the two. The two banks, divided by the river, are connected through the trees growing on them, which spring from the same roots, shake hands through their reaching branches, and are subject to the same natural laws. The poet feels this connection to be so strong, that if a tree on one bank would fall, the one right across from it would automatically fall along with it. However, as long as nobody uproots these trees and they are fed with water from life's source, he says in the last stanza, they will continue to live and hold hands forever.

Similarly, in the poem “*Kanada*,” Guttormsson pictures Canada as a princess and Iceland as a prince who are united in marriage and establish a kingdom. Their children, although they speak a different language, are forever united in origin and soul. This belief in such a strong connection between Icelanders on different sides of the ocean, seems an almost willful contradiction of the reality of the time when it was composed. In 1944, Icelandic Canadians were developing their own immigrant culture distinct from Icelandic culture in Iceland itself. This belief rather seems to point to Guttormsson's own emotional need to bridge the duality of his own reality, just as Laura Salverson's *Confessions* appears foremost to be an attempt to deal with her alienation from the two worlds constituting her reality.

Tamara Palmer, in an article on ethnic prairie writing, defines this sense of alienation among many immigrants' children as marginality,

which she describes as “the result of being socialized into two different, often incompatible worlds.”<sup>16</sup> As Palmer points out:

a frequent response portrayed in ethnic fiction to tensions inherent in the uneasy relationship between the impulse to preservation and that to synthesis [is]: the marginal man, a second-generation version of the uprooted immigrant character who appears in various guises in fiction about ethnic experience on the Prairies.

(1987: 65)

In the works of Laura Salverson and Guttormur Guttormsson, it is often the authors themselves who appear as the marginal protagonists in their desperate attempts to “cure” their alienation, or marginality, with their writing. In this respect, the work of Guttormsson and Salverson conforms to Eli Mandel’s view of ethnic literature as “a literature existing at an interface of two cultures, a form concerned with defining itself, its voice, the dialectic of self and other and the duplicities of self-creation, transformation and identities.”<sup>17</sup> Mandel envisions ethnicity as a state in between the loss of self and its recovery. His emphasis is on the creation of the self, the “writing into existence” of a self that has become lost in the process of being translated into another culture, for ethnicity, Mandel argues, “sets into motion for the writer a whirligig or duality that can only be resolved in a myth, a restructured self, a fictional being” (1977: 61). However, Mandel himself does not recognize Salverson’s as a Canadian ethnic voice (he does not discuss Guttormsson), but rather classifies her among those authors who still belonged to an integrated community that regards itself as an authentic culture instead of an ethnic group. Mandel has probably based his judgment on a reading of *The Viking Heart* and, like many other critics, has mistakenly read Salverson’s attempts at “translating” her Icelandic background into a Canadian idiom in order to resolve her duality as an authentic cultural account. Although neither Salverson nor Guttormsson wrote self-reflexive literature, as Mandel prefers in ethnic writing, their work is obviously concerned, by means of the writing process, with self-definition and the problem of trying to recreate or redeem the self from being lost between worlds.

What connects these two authors, then, in spite of the fact that they are generally divided by separate literary traditions, is that they belonged to that generation of New Canadians that grew up in two worlds which it could not escape and not unite. They belonged to both and therefore to neither. The work of these two Icelandic-Canadian authors shows not only their predicament, but also the refuge they took in their writing to resolve it. Literature was a medium through which the responsibility for

the preservation of their Icelandic heritage could be exercised in a Canadian context. However, unless perhaps emotionally, the literature Salverson and Guttormsson created did not solve their predicament. The duality represented in their work on every level has caused their isolation as authors and prevented serious critical attention to their writing. Laura Salverson is considered by the Canadian literary canon to be too narrowly Icelandic to be truly relevant to Canadian literature, while at the same time she has been kept out of the Western Icelandic literary tradition because she was considered to be too Anglo-Canadian.<sup>18</sup> Guttormur J. Guttormsson, it is true, has certainly not gone unrecognized among Icelandic Canadians. However, while upheld as an ideal specimen of the true Icelandic Canadian, the truth is that his work has been largely inaccessible for the last decades. The translations of his work that do exist, such as the recent collection *Aurora/Áróra* by the poet's grand-daughter Heather Ireland (1993), suffer from limited distribution since the publication of ethnic literature in translation is still largely left to local or ethnic presses and private enterprises of committed individuals. Like Salverson's work, it lacks, therefore, a wider Canadian audience and serious critical attention. The duality that marked Laura Salverson and Guttormur Guttormsson as individuals and as authors continues to affect their work and its reception. Even today, it shows us the virtual impossibility of their generation's situation on the crossroads of cultures. The cultural integration these writers sought to achieve in their work would only be reached by later generations.

#### NOTES

\* The author gratefully acknowledges the financial support of The Netherlands Association for Scientific Research NWO, which made possible the research on which the following article is based, and the financial assistance of the Association of Canadian Studies in The Netherlands and the AASSC, which allowed for an earlier version of this article to be presented at the AASSC Conference at The University of Calgary in June 1994.

1. *Alpyðuskáld* literally means "poets of the people." In the Icelandic literary tradition, the poets referred to by this name composed almost exclusively in the conservative, popular genres of poetry which are characterized by extremely complex rhyme-schemes and metre, and baroque diction. They lacked formal schooling due to poverty, and are therefore often referred to in English as the "Unschooling Poets" or the "Unschooling Farmer-Poets" (since they, like indeed the majority of the Icelandic population until the end of the last century, were involved in farming). The *alpyðuskáld* composed for an

audience which suffered circumstances similar to their own, and many of them were known for the fierce social criticism and radical political views expressed in their poetry. See also Richard Beck, *History of Icelandic Poets 1800–1940* (Ithaca N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1950), pp. 61–73; and Viðar Hreinsson, “The Power of the Word: Some Reflections on ‘The Icelandic Academy,’” *The Icelandic Canadian* 51.2 (1992): 90–104. The distinction between the “learned” and “unlearned” was the closest nineteenth-century Icelandic society came to a differentiation in social status, according to Richard Tomasson, *Iceland, The First New Society* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), pp. 47–49.

2. For more information on Guttormsson’s poetry and its place in the Icelandic and Icelandic-Canadian literary tradition see Roy St George Stubbs, *In Search of a Poet*, Winnipeg: Peguis, 1975; and Watson Kirkconnell, “A Skald in Canada,” *Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 3rd ser., 33.2 (1939): 107–21; “Icelandic-Canadian Poetry,” *Dalhousie Review* 14 (1934): 342–44; “Four Decades of Icelandic Poetry in Canada 1922–1962,” *The Icelandic Canadian* 22.2 (1963): 17–27; “New-Canadian Letters,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 14 (1944–45): 300, and 18 (1948–49): 396–98; and “Publications in Other Languages,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 38 (1958–59): 482–83. See also Walter Lindal, “The Contribution of Icelanders to Manitoba’s Poetry,” *Mosaic* 3.3 (1970): 48–57; Richard Beck, *History of Icelandic Poets 1800–1940* (Ithaca N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1950), pp. 226–29; and Haraldur Bessason, “Introduction,” *Aurora/Áróra*, ed. Heather Ireland (Vancouver: private publication, 1993), pp. xvi–xxi.

3. David Arnason, “Icelandic Canadian Literature,” *Identifications: Ethnicity and the Writer in Canada*, ed. Jars Balan (Edmonton: Institute for Ukrainian Studies at The University of Alberta, 1982), p. 58.

4. *Í ljóðdagerð Guttorms kennir margra grasa, sem okkur hér heima á Íslandi eru lítt eða ekki kunn. Það eru bæði yrkisefnin sjálf og skilningur höfundarins og skoðanir, er okkur koma ókunnuglega, líka blærinn, sem um efnid og meðferð þess leikur.* “Guttormur J. Guttormsson og kvæði hans,” *Kvæðasafn*, ed. Sigurjónsson (Reykjavík: Ævun, 1947), p. 32.

5. “Í minningu Guttorms,” *Andvari* 22 (1980): 77.

6. Terrence Craig, “The Confessional Revisited: Laura Salverson’s Canadian Work,” *Studies in Canadian Literature* 10.1–2 (1985): 82–83; and Eric Thompson, “Prairie Mosaic: The Immigrant Novel in the Canadian West,” *Studies in Canadian Literature* 5.3 (1980): 239–43. Before the publication of *The Viking Heart*, the only fictional accounts in English about non-British immigrants in the West were by Anglo-Canadian authors such as Ralph Connor (*The Foreigner*, 1909) and Robert Stead (*The Bail Jumper*, 1914). It is often F. P. Grove who is credited with the introduction of the immigrant theme from an immigrant viewpoint into Canadian literature. However, while it is true that he had short stories published in Canadian journals prior to the publication

of his first novel *Settlers on the Marsh* in 1925 (two years after *The Viking Heart*), his accounts are focussed on the pioneer experience and do not explore the immigrant and ethnic experience of pioneers as such. For a discussion of the different approach Grove and Salverson took to the immigrant theme in Canadian fiction see Ruth McKenzie, "Life in a New Land: Notes on the Immigrant Theme in Canadian Fiction," *Canadian Literature* 7 (Winter 1961): 24-33.

7. Laura Goodman Salverson is now only occasionally mentioned in a literary survey, sometimes no more than in passing, with the exception of a few slightly more elaborate discussions by Hallvard Dahlie in *Varieties in Exile: The Canadian Experience* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), pp. 64-69; Edward McCourt in *The Canadian West in Fiction* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1970), pp. 75-79; John Moss in *Patterns of Isolation in English Canadian Fiction* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), pp. 80-82 and *A Reader's Guide to the Canadian Novel* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981), pp. 253-54; Clara Thomas, "Women Writers and the New Land," *The New Land: Studies in a Literary Theme*, eds. R. Chadbourne et al. (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1978), pp. 45-59; Eric Thompson (1980); and Paul Stuewe in *Clearing the Ground: English Canadian Fiction after Survival*, part 2 (Toronto: Proper Tales, 1984), pp. 49-50.

8. John Matthiasson, "The Icelandic Canadians: The Paradox of an Assimilated Ethnic Group," *Two Nations, Many Cultures*, ed. Jean Leonard Elliott (Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice Hall of Canada, 1979), pp. 195-205. See also Patrick Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies, A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), pp. 261-62.

9. *Confessions of an Immigrant's Daughter*, 1939, rpt. in *Social History of Canada* 24 (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1981), pp. 49-50. All further references in the text will be to this edition.

10. A notable exception is W. H. New, *History of Canadian Literature* (London: MacMillan Education, 1989), p. 155, who discusses Laura Salverson in a section called "Social Protest and Social Change."

11. "Notes toward an Introduction to Scandinavian Immigrant Literature on the Pioneer Experience," *Proceedings of the Pacific NorthWest Council on Foreign Languages*, 28.1, ed. John T. Brewer (Corvallis: Oregon State University, 1976), pp. 114-115.

12. "Myth of Beginnings," *The New Icelanders: A North American Community*, eds. David Arnason and Vincent Arnason (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1994), p. 8.

13. Steingrímur J. Þorsteinsson, "Icelandic Folk Tales," *Scandinavica* 12.2 (1973): 89.

14. Interestingly, Kristjana Gunnars, a contemporary Icelandic-Canadian immigrant writer, uses the same *huldufólk* metaphor in her poetic cycle *Wake-Pick Poems* (Toronto: Anansi, 1981) to give expression to her dual sense of self and her search for belonging.

15. "Laura Goodman Salverson's Confessions of a Divided Self," *A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian Women Writing*, eds. Shirley Newman and Smaro Kamboureli (Edmonton: Longspoon/NeWest, 1986), pp. 148–53.

16. "Ethnic Response to the Canadian Prairies, 1900–1950: A Literary Perspective on Perceptions of the Physical and Social Environment," *Prairie Forum* 12.1 (1987): 67.

17. "Ethnic Voice in Canadian Writing," *Identities: The Impact of Ethnicity on Canadian Society*, ed. Wsevolod Isajiw, Canadian Ethnic Studies Association 5 (Toronto: Peter Martin, 1977), p. 65.

18. Apart from the issue of ethnicity, there is, of course, in Salverson's case, the factor of gender to be considered. The fact that she was a woman undoubtedly contributed to the lack of serious critical attention for her work by the Canadian literary establishment as well as the Icelandic-Canadian writing community. With the recent upsurge of women's studies and feminist literary criticism, however, this particular aspect of Salverson's authorship has become the subject of several critical discussions. See, for instance, Kirsten Wolf, "Western Icelandic Women Writers: Their Contribution to the Literary Canon," *Scandinavian Studies* 66 (1994): 154–203; Barbara Powell, "Laura Goodman Salverson: Her Father's 'Own True Son'," *Canadian Literature* 133 (Summer 1992): 78–89; Helen M. Buss, *Mapping Our Selves: Canadian Women's Autobiography in English* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), pp. 170–79; Kristjana Gunnars (1986), pp. 148–53 and "Ethnicity and Canadian Women Writers," *Room of One's Own* 14.4 (1991): 40–50; and Carol Fairbanks, *Prairie Women: Images in American and Canadian Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 29–30, pp. 174–75 and pp. 202–18.

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Arnason, David. 1982. "Icelandic Canadian Literature." *Identifications: Ethnicity and the Writer in Canada*. Ed. by Jars Balan. Edmonton: Institute for Ukrainian Studies at The University of Alberta. 53–66.
- Arnór Sigurjónsson. 1947. "Guttormur J. Guttormsson og kvæði hans." *Kvæðasafn*. Ed. by Arnór Sigurjónsson. Reykjavík: Íðunn. 5–36.
- Beck, Richard. 1950. *History of Icelandic Poets 1800–1940*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Bessason, Haraldur, see Haraldur Bessason.
- Buss, Helen M. 1993. *Mapping Our Selves: Canadian Women's Autobiography in English*. Montreal / Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Craig, Terrence. 1985. "The Confessional Revisited: Laura Salverson's Canadian Work." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 10.1–2: 81–93.
- Dahlie, Hallvard. 1986. *Varieties in Exile: The Canadian Experience*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

- Fairbanks, Carol. 1986. *Prairie Women: Images in American and Canadian Fiction*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Friesen, Patrick. 1984. *The Canadian Prairies, A History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Gunnars, Kristjana. 1981. *Wake-Pick Poems*. Toronto: Anansi.
- Guttormsson, Guttormur J., see Guttormur J. Guttormsson.
- Guttormur J. Guttormsson. 1947. *Kvæðasafn* [collected poetry]. Ed. by Arnór Sigurjónsson. Reykjavík: Íðunn.
- Haraldur Besson. 1993. "Introduction." *Aurora / Áróra*. Ed. by Heather Ireland. Vancouver: private publication. xvi-xxi.
- Höskuldsson, Sveinn Skorri, see Sveinn Skorri Höskuldsson.
- Hreinsson, Viðar, see Viðar Hreinsson.
- Kirkconnell, Watson. 1934. "Icelandic-Canadian Poetry." *Dalhousie Review* 14: 342-44.
- Lindal, Walter. 1970. "The Contribution of Icelanders to Manitoba's Poetry." *Mosaic* 3.3: 48-57.
- Mandel, Eli. 1977. "Ethnic Voice in Canadian Writing." *Identities: The Impact of Ethnicity on Canadian Society*. Ed. by Wsevolod Isajiw. Canadian Ethnic Studies Association 5. Toronto: Peter Martin. 57-68.
- Matthiasson, John. 1982. "The Icelandic Canadians: The Paradox of an Assimilated Ethnic Group." *Two Nations, Many Cultures*. Ed. by Jean Leonard Elliott. Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice Hall of Canada. 195-205.
- McCourt, Edward. 1970. *The Canadian West in Fiction*. Toronto: Ryerson Press.
- McKenzie, Ruth. 1961. "Life in a New Land: Notes on the Immigrant Theme in Canadian Fiction." *Canadian Literature* 7: 24-33.
- Moss, John. 1974. *Patterns of Isolation in English Canadian Fiction*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.
- Mossberg, Christer Lennart. 1976. "Notes toward an Introduction to Scandinavian Immigrant Literature on the Pioneer Experience." *Proceedings of the Pacific North West Council on Foreign Languages*. 28.1. Ed. by John T. Brewer. Corvallis: Oregon State University. 112-17.
- New, W. H. 1989. *History of Canadian Literature*. London: MacMillan Education.
- Palmer, Tamara. 1987. "Ethnic Response to the Canadian Prairies, 1900-1950: A Literary Perspective on Perceptions of the Physical and Social Environment." *Prairie Forum* 12.1: 49-73.
- Powell, Barbara. 1992. "Laura Goodman Salverson: Her Father's 'Own True Son'." *Canadian Literature* 133: 78-89.
- Salverson, Laura Goodman. 1937. *The Dark Weaver*. Toronto: Ryerson Press.
- Sigurjónsson, Arnór, see Arnór Sigurjónsson.
- St George Stubbs, Roy. 1975. *In Search of a Poet*. Winnipeg: Peguis.
- Steingrímur J. Þorsteinsson. 1973. "Icelandic Folk Tales." *Scandinavica* 12.2: 85-99.

- Stuewe, Paul. 1984. *Clearing the Ground: English Canadian Fiction after Survival*. Part 2. Toronto: Proper Tales.
- Sveinn Skorri Höskuldsson. 1980. "Í minningu Guttorms." *Andvari* 22: 77.
- Thomas, Clara. 1978. "Women Writers and the New Land." *The New Land: Studies in a Literary Theme*. Ed. by R. Chadbourne et al. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press. 45–59.
- Thompson, Eric. 1980. "Prairie Mosaic: The Immigrant Novel in the Canadian West." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 5.3: 239–43.
- Viðar Hreinsson. 1992. "The Power of the Word: Some Reflections on 'The Icelandic Academy'." *The Icelandic Canadian* 51.2: 90–104.
- Wolf, Kirsten. 1994. "Western Icelandic Women Writers: Their Contribution to the Literary Canon." *Scandinavian Studies* 66: 154–203.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1939. "A Skald in Canada." *Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*. 3rd ser. 33.2: 107–21.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1944–45. "New-Canadian Letters." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 14: 300.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1948–49. "New-Canadian Letters." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 18: 396–98.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1958–59. "Publications in Other Languages." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 38: 482–83.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1963. "Four Decades of Icelandic Poetry in Canada 1922–1962." *The Icelandic Canadian* 22.2: 17–27.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1975. *The Viking Heart*. New Canadian Library 116. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1981. *A Reader's Guide to the Canadian Novel*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1981. *Confessions of an Immigrant's Daughter*. Social History of Canada 24. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1986. "Laura Goodman Salverson's Confessions of a Divided Self." *A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian Women Writing*. Ed. by Shirley Newman and Smaro Kamboureli. Edmonton: Longspoon / NeWest. 148–53.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1991. "Ethnicity and Canadian Women Writers." *Room of One's Own* 14.4: 40–50.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1994. "Myth of Beginnings." *The New Icelanders: A North American Community*. Ed. by David Arnason and Vincent Arnason. Winnipeg: Turnstone Press.
- Þorsteinsson, Steingrímur J., see Steingrímur J. Þorsteinsson.





## Ethnic Minorities on the Canadian Prairies in the Writings of Aksel Sandemose and Sven Delblanc

Christopher S. Hale  
*University of Alberta*

**RÉSUMÉ:** *Aksel Sandemose et Sven Delblanc sont parmi les quelques écrivains scandinaves à écrire des Prairies canadiennes. D'origine danoise/norvégienne, Sandemose a écrit à partir des expériences personnelles qu'il a recueillies lors d'un voyage de trois mois et demi dans les provinces de Manitoba, Saskatchewan et Alberta en 1927. Par contre, le Suédois Delblanc est né au Manitoba, a quitté le Canada très jeune et est retourné à son lieu de naissance comme adulte pour renouer contact avec ceux qui avaient connu ses parents. Sandemose a écrit trois romans et de nombreux articles, tous basés sur son voyage, Delblanc a écrit la troisième partie de sa grande épopée familiale, Kanaans land, basée sur ce qu'il avait entendu raconter ses parents de leur vie au Canada à la fin des années 1920 et au début des années 1930, et sur ce qu'il avait appris lors de ses voyages au Canada en 1947 et 1980.*

*Quoique séparés d'une cinquantaine d'années, les deux auteurs décrivent les Prairies canadiennes de la même époque et ainsi représentent un milieu commun dans leurs textes. Donc, bien que Delblanc prétende ne pas avoir lu les écrits de Sandemose avant d'entamer Kanaans land, les ressemblances thématiques ne surprennent pas. Le présent essai examine la manière dont les deux auteurs traitent un thème commun qui revient fréquemment dans leurs textes—le comportement des autres envers les minorités ethniques, surtout les Galiciens et les Orientaux, dans les Prairies canadiennes. Les deux auteurs non seulement sympathisent avec ces groupes mais ils condamnent également toute manifestation de préjudice ethnique.*

**ABSTRACT:** *Aksel Sandemose and Sven Delblanc are two of the small number of Scandinavian authors who have written about Prairie Canada. Denmark/Norway's Sandemose wrote from his own personal experience while spending three*

and a half months travelling around the western Canadian provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta in 1927, whereas Sweden's Delblanc was born in Manitoba, left Canada at an early age and returned as an adult to his place of birth to talk to the people his parents knew. Sandemose wrote three novels and numerous articles, based on his trip, and Delblanc wrote the third part of his great family epic, *Kanaans land*, based on what he heard from his parents about their life in Canada in the late 1920s and early 1930s and what he learned about them on his later visits in 1947 and 1980.

Although writing fifty years apart, since both authors give a picture of Prairie Canada from about the same time in history, a similar milieu is reflected in their writings. Thus, though Delblanc has mentioned that he had not read Sandemose's Canada works before he wrote *Kanaans land*, the similarities in subject matter are not surprising. This paper examines how both authors deal with a common theme which features prominently in their writings—the treatment of ethnic minorities by others, in particular the Orientals and the Galicians, in Prairie Canada. Both authors not only empathize with these groups but also strongly condemn ethnic prejudice altogether.

---

Denmark/Norway's Aksel Sandemose (1899–1965) and Sweden's Sven Delblanc (1931–1993) are two of a small number of Scandinavian authors who have written about Prairie Canada. Sandemose published three novels and numerous articles, based on his trip there in 1927. Delblanc wrote the third part of his great family tetralogy, *Kanaans land*, based on what he had heard from his parents about their life in Canada in the late 1920s and early 1930s and on what he learned about them on his later visits.

One theme with which each author deals is the attitude of Prairie Canadians toward ethnic minorities, something which they heard a lot about and undoubtedly experienced directly. Since they were outsiders from Scandinavia, though, both Sandemose and Delblanc could look at the ethnic situation in Canada objectively. As in the United States, people of many different ethnic backgrounds lived on the Canadian Prairies in the 1920s and 30s. The largest number of these settlers had come from Europe with those from Germany, the Scandinavian countries and Central and Eastern Europe being well represented, but there were also quite a few who had emigrated to Canada from the Far East. The largest and most influential group, however, were the immigrants of Anglo-Saxon origin, and they more often than not looked down on immigrants from other countries.

After a survey of Sandemose's and Delblanc's connections to Canada, this paper will examine the way in which these authors deal with

Canadian attitudes of the times toward ethnic minorities, in particular the Chinese and the Galicians, on the Canadian prairies—Aksel Sandemose in his articles and in his three Canada novels, particularly *Ross Dane*, and Sven Delblanc in *Kanaans land*. As well, their personal views on these attitudes will be explored. Although writing fifty years apart, a similar cultural scene is reflected in their writings, since both authors give a picture of Prairie Canada from about the same time in history. Thus, although Delblanc had not read Sandemose's Canada works before he wrote *Kanaans land* (Delblanc 1988), the similarities in subject matter are not surprising.

Numerous papers and a few monographs have been published dealing with the works of Sandemose and Delblanc; however, a comparative analysis of the works of the two authors has not been published before. Only a few articles exist which concern Sandemose's Canada experiences and Delblanc's *Kanaans land*.<sup>1</sup> The views of Sandemose on the question of racial prejudice are contained in a number of articles and in various diary entries where he talks about the subject more or less directly. Though Delblanc nowhere comments directly on his own views regarding the matter in Canada, one can infer from the context in *Kanaans land* what they were. It would seem that he identifies strongly with Maria in the novel, whose character, after all, is closely based on his own mother, and that he lets her speak for him.

By 1927, Aksel Sandemose (1899–1965) had come to a turning point in his literary career. Since 1923 he had published four books of fiction and a fairly large number of articles which had appeared in various Danish newspapers and literary periodicals, but then he felt he needed fresh material for his writings and had to get away from Denmark for a while. In addition, he was in considerable debt and had a wife and three children to support. Accordingly, he approached the Canadian Pacific Railway agent in Copenhagen and suggested that the company send him to Canada to report on the Danish settlements there. The largest Copenhagen newspaper of the day, *Berlingske Tidende*, gave him the title of "Special Correspondent" and promised to publish whatever articles he cared to write about such a journey, so the CPR agreed to cover his travel expenses.

Sandemose arrived in Winnipeg on September 9, 1927. From there he made several trips west—the first to Maryfield and the second to the Redvers/Alida area of Saskatchewan in the southeast corner of the province. That November he took the train to Alberta, visiting the town of Holden near Edmonton, and after a couple of weeks there, he went south

to the Danish settlement of Dalum, near Wayne in the Drumheller area. In the middle of December he left Calgary and headed east, and after visiting his sister in Erie, Pennsylvania, sailed back to Denmark from St. John, New Brunswick, in February 1928. Two years later, in 1930, he finally emigrated, not to Canada, but to Norway, the homeland of his mother, and from then on he became and has been identified as a Norwegian author.

In the months following, many articles by Sandemose on Canada appeared in various Danish newspapers. Soon, too, three novels were published which have Canada as their setting and which are based on people he met on the Prairies and on experiences he had there. The first of these, *Ross Dane* (1928), is about the quintessential immigrant, Ross, who travels from South Dakota in search of some runaway horses, north into Canada. After teaming up with a caravan of Danes and a Métis, Ross journeys west to Alberta where the group establishes the colony of Beaver Coulee. Though the inhabitants often disagree and sometimes come to blows, over the years the settlement develops with Ross as its de facto leader. The second novel, *En sjømann går i land* [A Sailor Goes Ashore] (1931), is about Espen Arnakke, Sandemose's alter ego, who, after killing a man in Newfoundland, flees to Beaver Coulee. There he gets himself a farm, and after considerable struggle adjusts to life on the Prairies and eventually comes to terms with the fact that he is a murderer. The final novel in the trilogy, *September* (1939), has a love triangle as its central plot, but it also deals with the question as to what extent an immigrant from Europe becomes a true Canadian or remains a citizen of the old country.

In the 1920s Sven Delblanc's parents, like many other Scandinavians, immigrated to Canada. His father, Siegfried, had been a tenant farmer in Sweden, and, wanting his own land, bought a quarter section in the Swan River/Minitonas area of Manitoba between Lake Winnipegosis and the Saskatchewan border. Though the Delblanc farm was at the northern limit for the cultivation of wheat, their first years there were relatively successful, especially the bumper crop year of 1928. However, with the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, times got harder and harder. It was during these desperate years that Sven was born, on May 26, 1931. Several years later, Sven's mother was left a small legacy by one of her uncles, and this enabled the family to return to Sweden in 1935. Back in the old country, Siegfried bought another farm, but he could not thrive in a society which he felt was, "too old-fashioned, too conventional and bureaucratic" (Delblanc 1987: 72). Therefore, in 1946, he returned to Canada, after divorcing Sven's mother.

Back in Swan River, Siegfried lived in a log cabin the size of a bathroom since the neighbours had torn down his old cabin for its wood. He wrote glowing letters to his son about how great the future looked and how pleasant life was in the pioneer community. Sven was convinced enough by these letters to accept a one-way ticket to Canada from his father, and he arrived in Manitoba in the summer of 1947. Shocked by the primitive conditions in which his father lived, however, Sven became quickly convinced that he could not stay and thrive in this country. Fortunately he was rescued by his paternal grandmother who bought him a ticket home after taking out a loan against her house. Sven tells about this visit to his father in two of his last books *Livets ax* [Life's Ear of Grain] (1991) and *Agnar* [Chaff] (1992). Siegfried stayed on in Canada, remarried, and fathered three children, but never really succeeded in anything.

After having published more than a dozen novels, Delblanc came out with the first part of his tetralogy on the family of Samuel in 1981. This series traces the fictionalized history of Delblanc's own family from the time of his great-grandfather to his mother's death. It is the third book, *Kanaans land* [The Land of Canaan] (1984), which describes his parents' life on the Manitoba Prairie from 1926 to 1935. This novel portrays the hard-working but volatile Fredrik Weber in his struggle against the adversities of Canadian nature to establish a farm in the northern Manitoba wheat belt. Though suffering many setbacks, especially during the 1930s, Fredrik has a deep love for the Manitoba soil and faith in his future as a free man in Canada. In the end, he fails and is forced by his wife, Maria, to return to Sweden, much against his will. The action of the novel and its characters are seen primarily through the eyes of Maria, who never is able to adjust or come to terms with her fate as the wife of a Swedish settler in Prairie Canada. She is burdened with an intense homesickness for Sweden due to her almost slave-like existence under unspeakably primitive conditions, trying to raise three children and to run a household in what for her will always be a strange land.

In order to gather material for *Kanaans land*, Delblanc journeyed to Prairie Canada again in 1980. He had previously heard his parents talk about their life there and the people they knew, but he himself remembered very little about those days. Back in Swan River, however, he did meet some of the old-timers who remembered things from the 1920s and 30s, and they proved to be a considerable source of information. In fact, Delblanc maintained that almost every character in *Kanaans land* is modelled on a real person from that period (Delblanc 1988). In addition to oral sources, Delblanc went to various archives in Canada to get informa-

tion on the period so that he himself could acquire a feeling for the conditions prevailing at that time. As he describes it, "the book was a partial repayment of my debt to the country where I was born. A brick of a different colour in the edifice of the new Canadian literature" (Delblanc 1987: 72).

It is inevitable that in a multi-ethnic society some groups will be more influential and socially respected than others. Before the advent of World War II a pecking order had arisen among the various immigrant groups in Canada. As Howard Palmer (1988: 1741) remarks, "British and American immigrants were regarded as the most desirable, followed by northern and western Europeans, central and eastern Europeans and then by Jews and southern Europeans... Last were the blacks and the Asian immigrants ... who were considered inferior and unassimilable." As for the Chinese and Galicians in particular, "the ethnic stereotypes of turn-of-the-century Canada emphasized the peasant origins of central, eastern and southern Europeans and Asians, depicting them as poor, illiterate, diseased, morally lax, politically corrupt and religiously deficient." This prejudice extended to official immigrant policy. For example, the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 put a complete stop to immigration to Canada from China, though as Krauter and Davis (1978: 76) point out, Chinese and Japanese had a somewhat easier time of it in the prairie provinces where they took service-type employment, thus not being frequently in competition with whites. During the 1920s eastern European immigrants were officially classified as "non-preferred."

We find this ranking reflected in *Kanaans land* where Delblanc has Mrs. Wells, one of Maria's Anglo neighbours, talk about the various other families in the district. In particular she mentions the Galician family Kowals who, Mrs. Wells intimates, were very low on the pecking order, as they had built their house connected to the barn and had pigs and chickens in the kitchen. Maria's husband, Fredrik, later explains the situation very clearly to her.

Finast var de infödda kanadensarna, helst om de härstammade från brittiska öarna. Något mindre fina var skandinaverna, brittenas enkla kusiner från landet, i rang jämställda med holländare och tyskar ... Lägre än tyskar och skandinaver kom syd-européer, ... ännu lägre kom östeuropéernas brokiga skara ... (Delblanc 1985: 74)

[The most superior were the native Canadians, especially if they derived their origin from the British Isles. Somewhat less superior were the Scandinavians, the simple cousins of the British from the countryside, equal in rank to the Dutch and Germans... Lower than Germans and Scandinavians were southern Europeans, ... still lower was the motley group of eastern Europeans ... ]<sup>2</sup>

Almost every small prairie town had a café run by Orientals. Many of them had originally come to Canada to work on the building of the railroads, and when that work had finished they frequently stayed and set up a local business.

In Sandemose's *Ross Dane* and *En sjømann går i land* it is mentioned in passing in several places that the local café is owned by a Chinese, but only in *September* is actual prejudice against Orientals by Canadians illustrated. Here a farmer, Lloyd Evanson, reflects as he is sitting in Beaver Coulee's café.

Forbanna gult pakk som sto her og dro penger ut av lomma på folk uten å gjøre skikkelig arbeid, og gjømte kona si, så hun for den saks skyld kunne være myrdet og begravd, hvis det ikke var fordi det kom nye smårollinger støtt som ble synt til sjeriffen. Det kalte de kanskje dåp! De fikk navn som bikkjer. En bare sa de het slik og slik, men kom ikke her. Sånt var umulig. En het ikke noe sånn uten videre ... ho! Det var kanskje noe storfolket ute i Ottawa hadde bestemt, fordi de ikke ville ha den gule skitten i kirkebøkene. (Sandemose 1939: 19-20)

[Damned yellow rabble, dragging money out of people's pockets without doing decent work, hiding away his wife so she might be dead and buried, as far as that goes, if it weren't for little kids constantly popping up all the time to be shown to the sheriff. Maybe they call that baptism! And they're named just like dogs—this one's this and that one's that—never mind who they are! It's terrible! You don't just get a name without further ado ... indeed! Perhaps it was something those bigshots out in Ottawa had decided because they didn't want that yellow trash in the church registers.]

Also, by making the café owner Japanese rather than Chinese, as most people in town assume him to be, Sandemose emphasizes the ignorance that he feels most Prairie people show concerning Orientals.

A similar disdainful attitude is shown by some of the townspeople in Mintonas toward their Chinese café owner, Mr. Lee, in *Kanaans land*.

Mr Lee kallades "The Chink" av enkelt folk i Minitonas, och sådant borde han ju finna sig i såsom tillhörande en underlägsen ras. Dock kunde det komma för minitonasborna den pinsamma misstanken, att han i grunden föraktade dem alla, att han kände sig som ensam företrädare för en åldrig kultur, ensam i en hord av barbarer. Han stod orörlig vid kassaapparaten och lät inte märka någon föregelse, när barnen samlades utanför hans fönster för att sjunga "Ching, Chong, kinaman tjäna mycket pengar", för att sedan skrika av skratt och springa som skrämde möss. (Delblanc 1985: 75)

[Mr. Lee was called "The Chink" by a few people in Minitonas, and that was something he would have to be content with since he belonged to an inferior race. Yet the painful suspicion could occur to the citizens of Minitonas that he basically despised them all, that he felt himself the sole upholder of an ancient culture, alone among a hoard of barbarians. He stood motionless by the cash register and showed



no sign of offence whenever the children gathered outside his window to sing, 'Ching, Chong, Chinaman earn a lot of money,' then to shout laughingly and run off like frightened mice.]

In the article "Saskatchewan" (Sandemose 1928b), Sandemose describes a meal in a prairie café in Maryfield. The Chinese owner

begejstres ved Synet af mig, er paa Stedet min allerydmygste Tjener og skaffer mig Mad i en Haandevending. Dampende Skinke og hede, halvraa Kartofler paa en iskold Tallerken, Kaffe, der smager af Lakrids og har et gult, slimet Bundfald—antagelig det lerede Sand, som Kinamanden har haft med sig i Lommen fra Jangtsekiang. Paa Servicets Kanter sidder skorpede Rester fra mange Maaltider, og om Bordet kravler en Flok skævvøjede Børn med Silkehaar. De ser alle fast paa mig med deres mørke Glasblik, kun den mindste smiler og taler med dybe Strubelyde. Alt, hvad jeg ikke i en Fart faar trukket ind midt paa Bordet, hugges af Ungerne. Indigneret skæver jeg til Faderen. Han vil ikke møde mit Blik, og siger ingenting. Jeg ruger over Maden som en Grib, og maa stadig prikke med Gaflen efter smaa snavsede Fingre, der lister ind over Bordet. Omsider er jeg færdig og skyder Tallerkenen fra mig, men angrede, at jeg gjorde det saa tydeligt. Børnene kastede sig over Bordet som Vilddyr, jeg sad fuldstændig lammet, mens de rensede ud efter mig, slikkede Kniv, Gaffel og Tallerken og slubrede i Kaffens Bundfald som lykkelige Grise.

[is enthusiastic at the sight of me, is on the spot my most humble servant and gets food for me before you can count to five. Steaming ham and hot, half raw potatoes on an ice-cold plate, coffee that tastes like licorice and has a slimy, yellow sediment—probably the sandy clay which the Chinaman has had with him in his pocket from the Yangtze-Kiang. On the edges of the dishes sit the crusty remnants of many meals, and around the table crawl a flock of slant-eyed children with silky hair. They all look fixedly at me with their dark, glassy eyes, only the smallest one smiles and talks with deep, throaty sounds. Everything that I don't quickly manage to pull into the middle of the table is snatched by the children. Indignantly I look askance at the father. He won't meet my glance and says nothing. I guard my food like a vulture and constantly have to prick with my fork at small dirty fingers which slip in over the table. Eventually I am finished and push the plate away but am sorry I did it so obviously. The children threw themselves over the table like wild animals, I sat completely paralyzed as they cleaned up after me, licked the knife, fork and plate and slurped at the coffee grounds like happy little pigs.]

Similar words are used in Sandemose's diary (Sandemose 1927a: September 17) about this experience. However, in spite of these kinds of statements, judging from a couple of passages in his diary, Sandemose does try to understand the Oriental and even empathize with him.

Jeg tror ikke, at Kineseren ringeagter den Hvide, han betragter ham bare som den Kendsgerning, han er, men—han gaar og ser Kina, naar han kommer langsomt gaende med sin Sæk. Han haster aldrig. (Sandemose 1927a: December 16)



Jeg føler det, som staar jeg nærmere Kineseren end Amerikaneren. Det kom over mig, naar jeg talte med Kinesere, at her var Folk, der stod mig nærmere end jeg nogensinde havde anet. Det var en Afgrund imellem os, svimlende dyb, men ganske smal. I et pludseligt svagt Smil kunde vi slaa Bro, Kinamanden og jeg, Manden fra Norden. (Sandemose 1927a: December 19)

[I do not believe the Chinese despises the white man, he merely regards him as the fact he is—he sees China as he comes walking slowly down the street with his sack. He never hurries.

I feel as though I am closer to the Chinese than to the American. It would come over me, whenever I spoke with Chinese, that here were people who were closer to me than I had ever suspected. There was an abyss between us, tremendously deep, but quite narrow. In an unexpected, faint smile we could bridge the gap, the Chinaman and I, the man from the North.]

Maria in *Kanaans land* does not share the prejudice against Mr. Lee that some of the residents of Minitonas have. In fact, Mr. Lee's café soon becomes the only place in her new home where Maria can feel comfortable and at peace. It becomes her only place of refuge from the oppressiveness of her life as a hard-toiling farmer's wife.

... det var något i hans [Mr. Lees] uppträdande som gjorde henne lugn ... något i hans beteende som talade om gamla länder och åldrig kultur. Gamla präster och lärare hon mindes från studietiden kunde röra sig så där, med en mjuk artighet och vänlighet som blivit en andra natur. (Delblanc 1985: 54)

[... there was something about his [Mr. Lee's] manner which made her calm ... something in his behaviour which spoke of old countries and ancient culture. Elderly ministers and teachers she remembered from her school days could move about like this, with a gentle courtesy and friendliness that had become a second nature.]

In the café there, "var ett blygsamt överflöd och en doft behaglig som en smekning. Har var man långt från Minitonas vanliga lukt av hästgödsel, olja och damm" (Delblanc 1985: 54–5) [was a modest abundance and an aroma as delightful as a caress. Here one was far away from Minitonas's usual smell of horse manure, oil and dust].

However, like Sandemose, Delblanc recognizes how far apart the Chinese and the Europeans are.

Mr Lee var ensam företrädare för sin ras i Minitonas. Han var arbetsam och prylig, alltid artig och älskvärd utåt, men ändå egendomligt isolerad. Han sökte ingens umgänge och ingen sökte hans, han höll sig till hustrun och kafét och fick sällsynta besök av sin son ... (Delblanc 1985: 75)

[Mr. Lee was the only representative of his race in Minitonas. He was industrious and neat, always polite and charming outwardly, but still strangely isolated. He sought no one's company, and no one sought his, he kept himself to his wife, his son and his café.]

Sandemose and Delblanc both discovered that the group which many western Europeans regarded as one of the lowest in the social hierarchy were the so-called Galicians. Technically these were people from the Austro-Hungarian province of Galicia in central Europe, now part of Poland and Ukraine. On the Canadian prairies, however, the word had a wider meaning. As Sandemose explains, "Begrebet 'Galizier' omfatter alle slaviske Folk, og det bruges i Flæng om flere, f. Eks. Grækere. Mørke, skæggede Folk, der ikke taler Engelsk, er Galiziere" (Sandemose 1928a: 153). [The term 'Galician' includes all Slavic people, and it is used indiscriminately regarding others—for example, Greeks. Dark, bearded people who don't speak English are Galicians.] Or as Delblanc says, referring to the Kowals family in *Kanaans land*, "De var 'galicier' enligt Mrs. Wells, en oklar samlingsbeteckning på ukrainare, polacker och allsköns andra folkslag från östra Europa, som inte katten kunde hålla i sär" (Delblanc 1988: 70). [They were "Galicians" according to Mrs. Wells, an indistinct collective designation for Ukrainians, Poles and all manner of other peoples from eastern Europe that not a soul could tell apart.]

Galicians had settled in many different areas of Prairie Canada, but Sandemose found the friction between the Scandinavians and Galicians to be especially noticeable in Alberta. In the article "Danskeren i Canada" (Sandemose 1928a: 153) he says, "Nordboen kalder ham slesk, Øjentjener, uærlig, løgnagtig, hævngherrig og drikfædig." [The Scandinavian calls him ingratiating, payer of lip service, dishonest, lying, vindictive and intemperate.] To illustrate how mean and nasty Galicians were, a farmer told Sandemose about one of them who secretly put an iron rod into a neighbour's threshing machine and thereby destroying it, because nobody would rent his own machine.

Nu kører han (Galizieren) hver Nat med stort Besvær sit eget Værk hjem. Der mumles om, at en Dag vil den automatiske Smører paa hans Værk ikke give bare Olie, men Slibepulver med, det virker langsommere, men grundigere end en Jernstang. (Sandemose 1927a: November 8)

[Now he [the Galician] drives his own machine home each night with great difficulty. It is whispered that one day the automatic lubricator on his machine will produce not only oil but grinding powder along with it. It works more slowly but more effectively than an iron rod.]

Some of the attitudes which Sandemose experienced in regard to the Galicians, including the incident mentioned in his diary, are reflected in *Ross Dane*. One of the villains in the novel is Fyodor Murazezsky, a Galician, who comes to Beaver Coulee to settle. He is loud, surly, argumentative and frequently steals. His personality makes most of the

inhabitants of Beaver Coulee, including Ross, hate him. It also causes many of them to look down on all Galicians. Fyodor acquires a threshing machine and offers to rent it out to the farmers in the colony. However, one night Fyodor gets drunk and makes advances to one of the farmers' wives, after which no one will rent his machine. Therefore, Ross gets their jobs. But Fyodor is not slow to take revenge. The next day,

Manden, som kastede negene i tærskværket, sprang pludselig forfærdet tilbage i vognen. Med et rivende spektakel gik tærskværket i stå, remmen til motoren fløj af, og så opdagede man, hvad der var sket: Der havde været stukket en stålstang i neget. (Sandemose 1954: 197)

[The man who was throwing the sheaves into the threshing machine suddenly jumped back horrified in the wagon. With a terrible racket the threshing machine came to a stop, the belt on the motor flew off, and then they discovered what had happened. An iron bar had been stuck in the sheaf.]

Soon afterward Fyodor discovers grinding powder in the oil cup of his threshing machine. A feud then breaks out and Fyodor is found dead.

The main Galician characters in *Kanaans land* are the Kowals family. They are neighbours of Maria and Fredrik and the Wells and live in a strangely built farmhouse together with pigs and chickens in, what to everybody else in the area, is absolute squalor. The Wells family never lets their children play with the Kowals, and the former have planted a hedge on their property line to keep the Kowals at a distance. Most of those living in the neighbourhood never have anything to do with the Galicians socially, and while the Kowals attend the harvest parties held each year, Mrs. Wells would not dream of inviting them to her quilting bees.

Their uncleanliness becomes a great concern to Maria, who at first cannot quite understand why they are looked down upon so much. Mr. Kowals frequently beats his wife, and after one of these assaults, Mrs. Kowals flees to the Webers' farm for refuge. Maria, playing the good neighbour, lets Mrs. Kowals and her children stay overnight, but the next day, after they leave, she discovers that the house is infested with vermin, and calls the Galicians "ett sånt satans pack" (Delblanc 1985: 77) [bloody riff-raff]. Later on the gift of a foul smelling sausage from Mrs. Kowals to Maria is misunderstood by the latter. Thinking it spoiled, Maria throws it in the garbage, but later finds out, much to her embarrassment, that it was a specially spiced delicacy for Galicians.

As in *Ross Dane*, the Galicians are involved in a feud in *Kanaans land*. Mr. Kowals had always been at odds with his Scottish neighbours, the Campbells, over grazing rights. They finally come to blows, and Mr.

Campbell is eventually found by his sons Brian and Angus unconscious and with a couple of broken ribs. When word of this encounter spreads, most local sympathies, except for those of the Ukrainians and Poles, go to the Scots, and there is even talk of lynching. Attempts are finally made at mediation but to no avail. Angus Campbell meets Mr. Kowals by the river, beats him up and ties him to a tree, where he spends the night bitten by mosquitos and drenched by thunderstorms. Eventually the Mounties are brought in. Mr. Kowals is the one who is prosecuted and sentenced to serve a month in prison.

In a later article (Sandemose 1935), Sandemose takes up the Scandinavians' prejudice against the Galicians as he himself found it on the Prairies and gives his own views on the subject. Here he remarks how even the most enlightened Scandinavian farmers would complain about the Galicians building their houses differently and not being able to speak proper English. However, they did not seem to realize that the Galicians in turn were complaining about the same things in regard to the Scandinavians. The reason for this, he finds is that,

Innvandrere i Amerika opdager meget fort at de ikke betraktes som mennesker av første grad. Men de er maktesløse overfor de innfødtes veldige majoritet og grunnfestede sikkerhet. Derfor lager de sin egen hakkerang.

[Immigrants in America discover very quickly that they are not regarded as people of the highest degree. But they are powerless when faced with the natives' enormous majority and established security. Therefore they create their own pecking order.]

Sandemose himself experienced this ethnic prejudice firsthand. He mentions briefly the incident in his diary (Sandemose 1927a: November 10), but he expands on it in the above-mentioned article (Sandemose 1935). On one of the farms where he was staying was a dog named Jim with which he had become very good friends. However, one day after returning from a trip to the nearby town to buy a pair of boots, the dog attacked him without warning. After the farmer got the dog tied up, Sandemose was given a cup of coffee in the kitchen where he showed off the boots, even though the dog's toothmarks were all over them.

Da skjønnte Farmeren alt: De støvlene har du kjøpt hos galisieren!

Jo, jeg hadde da det. Men skandinavene i kolonien brukte ikke å handle der, og de lot ofte nok mannen kjenne sin forakt. Nei, så klok var altså Jim! Pokker'n til bikkje! Den fikk teften av en galisier da du kom i de støvlene! Fin bikkje!

[Then the farmer understood everything. 'You bought those boots at the Galician's.'

Indeed I had. But the Scandinavians in the colony did not usually shop there, and they often enough let the man feel their contempt. My, so clever Jim was! What a dog! he smelled a 'Galician' when you came in those boots! Smart dog!]

For the farmers this was proof enough that there was something wrong with the Galicians, when even a dumb dog could figure that out. Of course, Sandemose knew better.

Folkene satte med strålende logikk den fordømte kjøteren på linje med sig selv og langt over galisierne, fordi det var lyktes dem å opdra den til *sine* fordommer, og den kunde ifølge sakens natur aldri komme høiere på rangstien enn til bøddelens skitne jobb.

[With brilliant logic people placed the damned mongrel on a par with themselves and far above the Galicians, because they had succeeded in breeding *their* prejudices into him, and due to the nature of the circumstances, he could never climb higher up the ladder than to the dirty job of an executioner.]

The Scandinavians did tell Sandemose about one Galician whom they regarded with a certain degree of respect. He was a cattle trader who had purchased grain for a higher price than the grain dealers were offering the farmers several years before Sandemose's visit. He had almost been ruined in the ensuing conflict with the grain buyers, but had held out, eventually succeeding in breaking their conspiracy. As a result of his actions the farmers could rely on higher grain prices in the future.

In *Ross Dane* there is also one "good" Galician, Ivan. He and Ross soon become friends. One winter, the price the grain buyers are offering for wheat reaches a disastrous low, so Ross and Ivan form a cooperative, acquire a corner on the crop and offer a higher price to the farmers for it. As a result they save the farmers from bankruptcy. In *En sjømann går i land*, Ivan appears at the beginning as a respected patriarch of Beaver Coulee.

The prejudice shown the Galicians on the Canadian Prairies preoccupied Sandemose so much that he even tried to look at the situation from the Ukrainian point of view. Here he supposedly cites a Ukrainian who is trying to place his countrymen.

I Skandinaver spolerer jeres egne Chancer, I lærer jeres Folk at rejse rundt her i Canada i Stedet for at tøjre dem til hver sin Pæl. *Mine* Folk, de bliver hvor jeg sætter dem, hvad som helst er for dem Paradiset, sammenlignet med det, de kom fra. I kalder dem med Smædeordet 'Galiziere', men er de ikke noget nær de eneste, som betaler deres Jord og Maskiner kontant, blot de har været i Canada et Aar eller to? ... Men vent! Om tyve Aar rykker Ukrainerne ind i Provinsernes Styrelse, om 30 Aar laver vi Canada til et ukrainsk Dominion. I Dag er hver tiende Mand her en Ukrainer. Vi er et frugtbart Folk, og vi henter daglig nye Sværme over Havet. Om

35 Aar lukker vi af for de selvglade Skandinaver... . (Sandemose 1927a: December 17)

[You Scandinavians ruin your own chances, you teach your people to travel around here in Canada instead of tethering each one to his post. *My* people stay where I put them, anything is paradise for them compared to what they came from. You call them by the abusive term ‘Galicians’, but aren’t they almost the only ones who pay cash for their land and equipment after only having been a year or two in Canada? Just wait! In twenty years Ukrainians will move into the government of the provinces, in 30 years we’ll make Canada into a Ukrainian dominion. Today every tenth man here is a Ukrainian. We are a prolific people, and daily we get new throngs from across the ocean. In 35 years we’ll close it off to the self-satisfied Scandinavians... .]

Stopping in Montreal on his way to St. John, New Brunswick to catch the boat for Europe, Sandemose was interviewed by the *Montreal Herald*.

“I notice with regret that not only the Danes but the Scandinavians and Germans that have settled in the West look down with a certain degree of condescension upon the farmers from Southern Europe, and I cannot say that this attitude is justified—not, at any rate, as farmers. There are Galicians, Ukrainians and others who could give the Nordics quite a few wrinkles as to method both of production and marketing. Though Danish myself, I am not so foolish as to regard lightly the merits of the Southern European as a farmer. From what I have seen, he is a darned good farmer.” (“Danish” 1928)

Though Maria in *Kanaans land* was furious at Lisa Kowals for bringing lice into her house, she soon comes to her senses and is shocked at her own feelings of prejudice.

[Hon] låg flera nätter vaken och bad Vår Herre förlåtelse för sitt rysliga utbrott mot familjen Kowals. Det var ett minne som plågade henne svårt. Å, Gud, vem är jag egentligen, och vad är det för känslor och värderingar jag bär på utan att ana ...

(Delblanc 1985: 78)

[(She) lay awake for several nights, praying to Our Lord for forgiveness for her horrible outburst at the Kowals family. It was a memory that plagued her severely. Oh God, who am I exactly, and what sort of feelings and values do I have without suspecting... .]

When Mr. Kowals is sentenced to prison, Delblanc, as the narrator, presents this as an unfair, prejudicially determined judgment.

As time goes on, Delblanc describes how the Galicians in Mintonas become more and more accepted in the community. Their children adapt readily to Canadian customs and social mores, and even Mrs. Kowals gradually changes her “foreign” ways under the influence of her daughters. Having children in school, of course, helps considerably. Their skill

in farming is evident in the fact that already before the Great Depression when most farmers grew only wheat, the Galicians were practising diversified farming, as they considered single crop farming as something against nature. Therefore, when most people in Swan River are suffering heavily during the hard times, the Galicians, in fact, are not doing too badly. Thus in Delblanc's world, Sandemose's predictions in the late 1920s that the Galicians will in the future move up in society are already beginning to come true.

Scandinavians, too, are subject to ethnic prejudice both from Canadians and from other immigrants. While "Galician" was the derogatory term applied to Central and Southern Europeans, "Scandahoovian" was one of the ones applied to the Nordic peoples, as well as others. Sandemose mentions what a surprise awaits the new emigrant from Denmark.

Han kom herover som *Dansker*, han troede, der blev blæst Fanfare, naar han gik i Land, at alle Kanadas Farmere vilde slaas om ham. Og saa spørger man ham frækt: Danmark? Maaske en By i Sverige? (Sandemose 1927b)

[He came over here as a *Dane*, he thought they'd blow him a fanfare when he came ashore, that all of Canada's farmers would fight over him. And then someone has the audacity to ask him: Denmark? A city in Sweden, maybe?]

The truth is that,

Blonde Folk er Svenskere—og baade Islændinge, Danske og Norske, foruden mange Tyske, maa finde sig i denne Fællesbetegnelse: De er Svenskere... . Canadierne kender gennemgaaende mindre til Danmark end Danskerne til Canada. Den ene siger 'Vov' og den anden svarer 'Mjav'. (Sandemose 1928a: 153)

[Blond people are Swedes—and Icelanders, Danes and Norwegians, in addition to many Germans, have to put up with this blanket term: They are Swedes... . Canadians as a whole know less about Denmark than Danes about Canada. The one says 'Woof', the other one 'Meow'.]

In *Ross Dane* after Fyodor Murazevsky takes a house which he has laid claim to from Ross Dane, Ross tries to take it back. Furiously Fyodor shouts, "svenske abekatte kommer her og vil stjæle en fredelig mands hus." [Swede monkeys come here to steal a peaceful man's house!] Ross is enraged: "Abekat, det fik være. Men svensker! ... Han sprang på Fjodor" (Sandemose 1954: 124). [Monkey, never mind. But Swede! ... He jumped on Fyodor.]

The Scandinavians fare far worse, in particular the Swedes, in *Kanaans land*. Throughout most of the novel all Scandinavians, including the Webers, have been highly regarded by everyone in Swan River and



Minitonas. In fact most people feel the valley couldn't get enough of them, since they prove to be hard-working and virtuous members of society. One day, during the height of the depression, Maria hears that a Swedish family from the northern part of the country is going to come and settle on a neighbouring farm.

... hon föreställde sig att de var värdiga och tystlåtna människor, med fjällhöjders blå fjärrblick, med bibelords och folkvisors klang i rösten. Underligt bara att de valt att invandra under dessa svåra tider... (Delblanc 1985: 321)

[... he imagined that they were dignified, taciturn people with the remote look of distant mountain peaks in their eyes and with the echo of Biblical phrases and folksongs in their voices. Strange that they chose to immigrate during these hard times... ]

Maria finds out soon enough why.

Familjen Viklund doftade inte skog och folkvisa, de luktade snusk. De hade sänts till Kanada på det kommunalas bekostnad, ingen i hembygden ville längre ha med dem att göra. De var under all mänsklighet, de var som djur, inte som vilda djur, med det vildas värdighet och kraft, nej, de var som grisar ... drivna av slö njutningslystnad. (Delblanc 1985: 32 1-2)

[The Viklund family didn't have the aroma of forest and folksong, they smelled of filth. They had been sent to Canada at the expense of the county, no one back home wanted anything more to do with them. They were beneath all humanity, they were like animals, not like wild animals with their dignity and strength, rather they were like swine ... driven by a sluggish love of pleasure.]

The father is constantly saying obscenities and chewing tobacco, while the mother is fat, dirty and almost toothless, with a love of gossip and slander. They have a precocious fourteen-year-old daughter who has a snotty nose and dull, gurgling laugh. The whole family has a love of drink, and much of the money which they brought from Sweden is wasted on this. Their house is in shambles and filthy beyond comprehension.

It soon turns out that they steal from their neighbours, and have no intention of preparing themselves for the long winter ahead. The Weber family tries to help them, as do other neighbours, but to no avail. In a land where people attach great importance to nationality, Maria's and Fredrik's reputation soon begins to suffer.

Är det så här ni lever i ert hemland, Mrs Weber? Är ni verkligen nöjd med familjen Viklund och deras leverne? Inte? Ni menar att de inte är alldeles typiska för svenska folket och deras vanor. Men borde ni inte i så fall ingripa och ställa till rätta? Så kan man tycka, i alla fall, men inte är det så lätt för oss att veta hur ni lever där i det gamla landet. (Delblanc 1985: 325)



[Is this the way you live in your homeland, Mrs. Weber? Are you really pleased with the Viklund family and their way of life? No? You mean that they're not altogether typical of the Swedish people and their customs? But shouldn't you then intervene and set things right? That's what you'd think, at any rate, but it's not so easy for us to know how you live over there in the old country.]

Maria is at a loss as to what to do or say. The final straw comes when the Viklund father gets his daughter pregnant. Maria sympathizes somewhat with his wife, but when it turns out she is only jealous of her daughter, and not shamed by the act of incest, Maria has had enough. When the child is born, the community is outraged and Maria and her family are ostracized. Then Maria reports the Viklunds to the Swedish consul in Winnipeg and they are taken away. Not until the Webers finally leave Minitonas, do they regain the respect of their neighbours.<sup>3</sup>

It is clear from their writings that Sandemose and Delblanc reject racial and ethnic prejudice. Not only do they empathize with immigrants' plight in a highly stratified society dominated by the Anglo-Saxon cultural and social values, they condemn racial bigotry and discrimination altogether. In his newspaper and magazine articles and in his literary works, Sandemose shows an understanding of the Galicians' difficulties and can almost identify with the Chinese. Delblanc, speaking through Maria, conveys a sympathetic attitude toward them as well.

In a diary entry (Sandemose 1927a: December 18), Sandemose summarizes his views on discrimination and prejudice:

Hjemme i Danmark kender vi jo ikke til Racehad. Ganske vist ser man f. Eks. Jødeforfølgelse, men det tjener os til Ære, at den holdes nede af ikke-Jøder. Hvor der er Spirer til et saadant Had er det ikke *Ringeagt*, men i Canada er Racehadet nærmest Ringeagt for andre Racer end sin egen. Ringeagt for andre Racer er en af de taabeligste, dumme Ideer, der rider Menneskeheden.

(Sandemose 1927a: December 18)

[At home in Denmark we're of course unacquainted with racial hatred. To be sure you see, for example, persecution of the Jews, but it is to our credit that it is kept down by non-Jews. Where there are the seeds of such a hate it is not *contempt*, but in Canada racial hatred is almost contempt for races other than one's own. Contempt for other races is one of the most foolish and stupidest ideas that plagues mankind.]

Delblanc has the Galician family's status in the community rise in the eyes of its members from despised outcasts to accepted fellow immigrants, once reconciliation with their Scottish foes has been achieved. Indeed, Delblanc indicates toward the end of *Kanaans land* that the Galicians will survive the Depression and will succeed where others fail as they belong

to the few who carry on mixed farming. In a poignant twist of the immigrant story, it is the Galician family that takes over the Scandinavian immigrants' farm when the latter return to Sweden.

## NOTES

1. These include "Aksel Sandemose and Canadian Prairie Fiction" (Carlsen 1981) and "'Dichtung und Wahrheit' i Sandemoses Canadaerfaringer" (Hale 1991b) and "Aksel Sandemose's View of Prairie Canada" (Hale 1991a). The writer has also dealt with the topic of Aksel Sandemose's racial prejudice in Canada in "Aksel Sandemose's Observations on Racial Prejudice in Prairie Canada of the 1920's" (Hale 1986). Sven Delblanc's tetralogy, including *Kanaans land*, is discussed in, for example, Lisette Keustermans, "Den mörka och den ljusa kvinnan i Sven Delblancs Samuelserie" (Keustermans 1992) and Rochelle Wright, "Delblanc's *Kanaans land* and Moberg's Emigrant Tetralogy" (Wright 1992).

2. This translation and those following are my own.

3. Delblanc (1988) has stated that there was indeed such a family in Swan River when his parents lived there.

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Carlsen, Jørn. 1981. "Aksel Sandemose and Canadian Prairie Fiction." *English Literature of the Dominions: Writings on Australia, Canada and New Zealand*. Ed. by Konrad Gross and Wolfgang Kloos. Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann. 51–60.
- "Danish Settlers in Prairie Provinces Terribly Sea-Sick." *Montreal Herald*. February 10, 1928.
- Delblanc, Sven. 1988. Interview. Edmonton, Alberta. February 5, 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1984. *Kanaans land*. Stockholm: Bonniers.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1987. "A Storyteller's Story." *Saturday Night*. December 1987.
- Hale, Christopher. 1986. "Aksel Sandemose's Observations on Racial Prejudice in Prairie Canada of the 1920's." *Selecta*. 131–6.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1991a. "Aksel Sandemose's View of Prairie Canada." *Scandinavian-Canadian Studies*. Vol. 4. 61–76.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1991b. "'Dichtung und Wahrheit' i Sandemoses Canada-erfaringer." *Norsk Litterær Årbok*. 64–76.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1991c. *Livets ax. Barndomsminnen*. Stockholm: Bonniers.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1992. *Agnar*. Stockholm: Bonniers.
- Keustermans, Lisette. 1992. "Den mörka och den ljusa kvinnan i Sven Delblancs Samuelserie." *Edda* 2: 159–69.

- Krauter, Joseph F. and Morris Davis. 1978. *Minority Canadians: Ethnic Groups*. Toronto: Methuen.
- Palmer, Howard. 1988. "Prejudice and Discrimination." *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Second Edition. Vol. III. Edmonton: Hurtig. 1740-3.
- Sandemose, Aksel. 1928a. "Danskeren i Canada." *Danmarksposten*. June 1928.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1927a. *Rejsedagbok*. Royal Library, Copenhagen.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1954. *Ross Dane*. Copenhagen: Fremad.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1928b. "Saskatchewan I." *Berlingske Tidende*. July 9, 1928.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1939. *September*. Oslo: Tiden.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1935. "30 Juni." *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfarts-Tidning*. May 24, 1935 (in Norwegian).
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1927b. "Winnipeg." *Berlingske Tidende*. December 30, 1927.
- Wright, Rochelle. 1992. "Delblanc's *Kanaans land* and Moberg's Emigrant Tetrology." *Scandinavian-Canadian Studies* 5: 81-93.





## Power, Magic and Sex: Queen Gunnhildr and the Icelanders

William Sayers  
*Silver Spring, Maryland*

RÉSUMÉ: *Dans les sagas islandaises les origines de la reine Gunnhildr de Norvège se retrouvent au Finnmark, Útgarðr symbolique d'où elle puise une force séductrice qui se dirige contre des Islandais visiteurs par les modalités de l'influence politique, les liaisons sexuelles et la magie. La menace que représentait la monarchie hégémoniste norvégienne pour l'Islande du treizième siècle en proie aux conflits domestiques est féminisée dans les sagas mises en scène dans une époque passée quand les conséquences négatives de la faveur tout aussi bien que celles de la défaveur contribuent à la vendetta insulaire mais à la longue puissent être contenues et neutralisées.*

ABSTRACT: *In the sagas of the Icelanders the origins of Queen Gunnhildr of Norway lie in Finnmark, a symbolic Útgarðr from which she draws a seductive strength levelled at visiting Icelanders through the modalities of political influence, sexual liaison and magic. The threat that the expansive Norwegian kingship posed to conflict-torn thirteenth-century Iceland is gendered female in these sagas set in an earlier era when the negative consequences of both favor and disfavor may contribute to local feud but can ultimately be contained and neutralized.*

---

When the fractious Icelandic chieftains, with their farmer clients and men-at-arms, surrendered political independence and the state organization of the Commonwealth, and acknowledged the King of Norway as their ruler in the years 1262–64, they replicated the collective decision of some two and a half centuries earlier in the island's conversion to Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Submission to the Norwegian state and alliance with its Church were seen as ways out of the factional feuding that was debilitating the country during what later historians would dub the Age of the Sturlungs after the leading family in the conflict. Earlier in the century

even one so attached to the national identity and its history as Snorri Sturluson had succumbed to the prestige and continental sophistication of the royal court.

The family sagas composed during this period, but set some centuries earlier, appear to reflect an unease that accompanied this decision to submit to Norwegian rule. A consistent artistic treatment symbolically circumscribes the negative consequences of various seductive or coercive Norwegian associations. This handling of relationships with Norway is paralleled in the analysis of feud in the family sagas. The large-scale faction fighting of the later century, as recounted in the contemporary sagas, is given a clearer, although not contingency-free, causality and more defensible, if somewhat outmoded, ethical principle in the more limited inter-familial feuding of the preceding centuries in which losses, while great in individual human terms, never threaten the fabric of society. When passion is finally spent, negotiation and reconciliation among the survivors close the door on feud and contain its deleterious effects, just as Norwegian influence is contained.

The family sagas' ambivalence towards Norway finds expression in several ways.<sup>2</sup> Opening chapters recount the Norwegian origins of well-placed Icelandic families but later episodes often evince a mistrust of traders and other visitors from Norway. Similarly, gifts, especially weapons, of Norwegian provenance may fail in the more demanding Icelandic environment, may be used in ethically indefensible ways such as a secret killing, or may be catalysts that precipitate envy and jealousy into violence. At the same time, a trip to the court of a Norwegian king or earl is the social launching for many promising young Icelanders on the way to successful trading and raiding farther afield. It is as if only a Norwegian king could take the true measure of an Icelander. In a genre that so actively promotes Icelandic identity, the king or earl naturally found the young visitor so outstanding in his generation that a place as king's man was immediately offered. Summarily put, collective thirteenth-century Icelandic submission to expansionist Norwegian rule is recast in the fiction of individual tenth-century Icelandic parity or superiority and the royal desire to appropriate, non-coercively, this prized human resource.

In the saga world, this ambiguous Norway is usually gendered male. In 'man-to-man' encounters, verbal or athletic, and other tests, the Norwegian king recognizes the visiting Icelander's credentials of birth and personal qualities of martial ability, intelligence, eloquence, and

manners.<sup>3</sup> But in Gunnhildr, the Queen of Eiríkr *blóðøx* 'Blood-Axe', and Queen Mother of the later rulers Haraldr *gráfeldr* 'Grey-Cloak', Erlingr, and their brothers, Norway is gendered female and represents a different but equally compelling and seductive threat to vulnerable, susceptible Icelandic masculinity.<sup>4</sup> While Icelandic worth is still recognized, the two-edged recognition is not competitive and relative but basic and absolute: the female recognition of male. The queen's interest is not so much in functional masculinity, to be deployed centrifugally in the king's service, as in essential maleness—not gender but sex. Movement is centripetal and Gunnhildr is at the centre.

\*

Etiology is a pre-eminent concern of both mythology and 'received' national histories. In their interest in national origins medieval Icelanders anatomize historical causality with a view to enhancing the legitimacy of settlement, early land-claiming and subsequent ownership through descent. This purposeful historiography found large-scale expression in *Landnámabók* and its customized recensions. It is reflected on a lesser scale in the early, ancestral chapters of family sagas that introduce themes and character types to be elaborated later, and employ a variety of proleptic narrative devices such as apparitions, omens, dreams, premonitions, spells, and curses. These create a sense of inevitability in the narrative but stop short of turning the characters into fatalists. Sufficient manoeuvring space is left for willed, even heroic, action. The capsule moral and physical portraits that often accompany a character's appearance in the sagas have a similar projective function, creating plausibility and, here too, a narrative determinism dictating later human actions and decisions. Recognizing this concern for origins, mythic and historical, we may then seek prototypes, antecedents, and parallels for the Gunnhildr of the family sagas in three areas: firstly, in mythology, secondly, on the plane of historical human archetypes, and, thirdly, in the traditional portrait of the Norwegian queen that is recorded in historical writing other than, in some case earlier than, the family sagas.

\*

Margaret Clunies Ross has written of 'male pseudo-procreation' in Old Norse mythology in which the creation and first operation of the cosmos are realized with only marginal contributions from the female principle.<sup>5</sup> Limitations on female agency make the goddesses largely incidental players in the myths that have been best preserved. Despite this apparent lack of empowerment in the sense of initiating the storyline of

myth, Freyja, the goddess of sexuality and fertility, is actively sought by the giants. Their efforts to appropriate the force she represents insidiously tie it to their world, Útgarðr, and thus to the external threat to Ásgarðr. Freyja, one of the Vanir, introduced *seiðr* or sorcery among the Æsir. This magic, thought to have been based in female procreative power, was considered unmanly, hence dishonourable, for men to practise and in the family sagas its effects are often shown to hamper male competence. In the guise of Gullveig, it may also have been Freyja who introduced contention over material possessions, here gold, among the Æsir. In a more general characterization Freyja is said to get one half of the slain when she rides to battle. Sexuality is linked with death as moments in the regenerative cycle. The *Edda* poem *Locasenna* (*The Contention of Loki*) gives a more explicit sense of Freyja's activity in the social dimension, when Loki accuses her of sexual promiscuity and repeated marital infidelities. Mythic Freyja, in her associations with magic, sexuality, conflict and death, is here proposed as one model for Gunnhildr in her interaction with Icelanders.

In the Latin histories of the early Norwegian kingship, Gunnhildr is presented as a Danish princess, the daughter of Gormr,<sup>6</sup> but in vernacular historical works, with perhaps a bolder Icelandic imprint, such as the kings' sagas incorporated in Snorri's *Heimskringla*, she is given a more exotic and dubious far-northern ancestry.<sup>7</sup> This identification is founded in the casual but thorough-going xenophobia that early Norse texts evidence for Celtic, Finnic and Slavic peoples. In both the kings' histories and the family sagas, malign magic and the moral deficiencies of its practitioners are ascribed to cultures on the periphery of the Norse world. Additionally, the frequent attribution of sorcery to foreign women is a means to feminize the portraits of these cultures.<sup>8</sup> This can be illustrated with an account in *Heimskringla* that immediately precedes the introduction of Gunnhildr and thus provides an ideological environment for assessing her first appearance and actions in the work.

On a trip to northern Norway King Haraldr *hårfagri* 'Fair-Hair' is given a love potion by Snæfríðr, daughter of the Saami Svasi, who imposes a condition of legal marriage before releasing the girl to the king's ardour, magic sealed with legitimacy (*Haralds saga ins hárfagra*, Ch. 25, in Snorri Sturluson 1979). Haraldr is said to have loved Snæfríðr witlessly and his kingdom suffered neglect. Even when dead, Snæfríðr's appearance remains fair until a wise man tricks Haraldr into changing the clothing of the corpse which falls into corruption. The remains are burned and the king regains his senses. Gro Steinsland (1991) has written



recently of the theme of *hieros gamos* in poems on, and histories of, Norwegian kings: the union of the king and the female tutelary spirit of the land in the assumption of territorial sovereignty. But Haraldr's marriage is to forces of deception and to a foreign land, initiated with sorcery and realized in sexual obsession. His rule is flawed, if only temporarily.

One of Haraldr's sons by a more conventional marriage is Eiríkr, who would win the byname 'Blood-Axe'. Returning from a raiding expedition to the White Sea and Permian he meets Gunnhildr, the daughter of Ozurr Toti, a ruler in Hálogaland in northern Norway (*Haralds saga ins hárfagra*, Ch. 33). Gunnhildr has been at a Saami 'charm school' learning magic, but on meeting Eiríkr immediately proposes a ruse whereby she can trick and kill her male teachers, and leave with Eiríkr. Since both wizards have been courting her, she encourages them to lie on either side of her at night, drugs them into a sound sleep, and delivers them to Eiríkr's men who pull skin bags over their heads and kill them. The next night the region is visited by a great thunderstorm, an event consonant with belief in the weather-working ability of the Saami and Finns. Again a legitimate marriage follows a seduction in which the woman has been the agent and the man apparently powerless to resist. Cautious and vague presentations of pre-Christian magic by Christian saga authors do not explicitly link it with religious belief or cult, so that it receives little cultural or historical anchoring and is thereby denied legitimacy. Nonetheless, despite its origins with the Other, it operates as a socially destabilizing force. In these episodes its representatives are the Saami, literally and figuratively located in the Beyond—Finnmark as Útgardr. Outside time, in outside space, sorcery, alterity and supernatural advantage are, paradoxically, always a threat to those inside, in time.

In the several *Heimskringla* accounts of the Norwegian kings in which she appears, Gunnhildr is given only two lengthy speeches. The stratagem to overcome the Saami sorcerers is one occasion; a later episode, in which she incites her sons to vengeance, the typical whetting scene, is the other.<sup>9</sup> In both of these, woman as social agent among males of her social station can proceed only by indirection (but by 'direct discourse'), just as in wider fora she was incapable of armed or legal action on her own. Despite differences in their palettes of social agency, the value system within which such women operated, with its emphasis on property, succession, social hierarchy, political alliance, and personal honour was the same as men's—or so our viricentric source materials would have us believe.

Gunnhildr and Eiríkr have numerous sons and the union is a lasting one (cf. Snæfríðr's 'staying power'). Shortly after the courting episode and resulting marriage, Gunnhildr is identified by the author as likely responsible for poisoning one of her husband's half-brothers and rivals to the throne. As with the love potion delivered by Snæfríðr, the conventional, ancillary function of woman as purveyor of drink in the public hall is turned to malefic purposes. Shortly after this accusation of political assassination, the saga gives physical and moral portraits of Eiríkr and Gunnhildr. As in the family sagas, such sketches, in which the assessment of the community is often a significant component, are employed either to introduce a character or to synthesize action up to that point, often at the apogee of a career or prior to an undertaking that will have serious consequences for the narrative and its players. In *Haralds saga ins hárfagra* we read:

Gunnhildr, kona hans, var kvinna fegrst, vitr ok margkunnig, glaðmælt ok undirhyggjumaðr mikill ok in grimmasta (Ch. 43).

[Gunnhildr, his [Eiríkr's] wife, was a very beautiful woman, shrewd and skilled in magic, friendly of speech, but full of deceit and cruelty.]<sup>10</sup>

As with Snæfríðr's corpse, appearances deceive.

This then is the Gunnhildr that was 'available' in the vernacular historiographical tradition for deployment in the family sagas, if we for the moment disregard the relative chronology of the Norwegian royal histories and individual family sagas. Gunnhildr's subsequent role in the kings' sagas is largely as a counsellor to kings—her husband or her sons—plotter rather than executor. Her activity on the political stage of the royal hall and in its wings is consonant with the capsule portrait and its emphasis on intellection and speech rather than physical action. With age she takes on distinct witch-like contours in her efforts to capture the young Óláfr Tryggvason, the future king, under the guise of fostering him (*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, Chs. 2–5). Absent from the *Heimskringla* accounts and character sketch since it impinged little on matters of state, but suggested in the anticipatory Snæfríðr episode, in Gunnhildr's northern origins, and in her initial contact with Eiríkr, is her activity in the sexual sphere. This is, however, prominent in the family sagas.

\*

Gunnhildr plays a consequential part in four of these sagas—*Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, *Njáls saga*, *Laxdæla saga*, and *Flóamanna saga*—and one may observe, in the first three cases at least, that the deployment of this character is consistent with, and contributes to, their rich

thematics. The early chapters of *Egils saga* are organized for a *chiaroscuro* effect most apparent in 'light' and 'dark' family members. The fair representatives have the good looks and interpersonal skills to complement their martial ability, they are popular and conventionally successful. The dark family members are difficult of temperament, ugly, no less the warriors, but also shape-shifters, smiths and poets (the transgenerational metamorphosis of metamorphosis itself). Egill's uncle Þórólfr introduces the 'light brother' motif, which is realized in the next generation by his nephew and Egill's brother, also named Þórólfr. The uncle, well received at court by Haraldr, is guilty of a hubris that tempts him to ostentation, however loyal, which wakens the envy of others whom he has bettered in legal matters. Finally it rouses the distrust of King Haraldr who has him killed. Another face of the imparity and disequilibrium between Iceland and Norway is seen in the young Eiríkr's gift to Skallagrímr of a fine axe. The astute smith finds the weapon flawed, showy but not strong. He stores it away out of sight and later it is discarded at sea. But not all Norwegian influence is so summarily disposed of.<sup>11</sup>

The younger Þórólfr enjoys the initially successful reception at the Norwegian court experienced by his uncle and he accompanies Eiríkr when he meets Gunnhildr in the far north. In the saga Gunnhildr is described at this point as good-looking, shrewd and a clever sorceress (*Gunnhildr var allra kvenna vænst ok vitrust ok fjölkunnig mjök*, *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar* 1933, Ch. 37). As with the *Heimskringla* portrait such authorial pre-judgment establishes the sign under which Gunnhildr will act and determines her relationship with the Icelanders. The saga states that a close friendship grew up between her and Þórólfr, innuendo confirmed by the king's later jibe when the relationship had soured (*en verit hefir kerra við Þórólfr af þinni hendi en nú er*; Ch. 48). The charge is repeated or made more explicit in other sagas and in other sexual liaisons.

Later, Egill's obstreperous behaviour turns the Queen against the family. At a feast at a royal farm off the Norwegian coast Gunnhildr reacts to Egill's satire of their host. In fact, she seems to take an instinctive dislike to Egill, man and poet, and tries to poison him. Egill's response to Gunnhildr is to employ her register to counter her malice: he draws his own blood and rubs it into runes he has carved on the horn she has had served to him. His magic gains circumstantial superiority through improvised verses which detail the magical gestures. The horn splits and the poisoned drink is spilled. Poetry and the supernatural then combine to give a temporary advantage to Egill, in distinction to earlier recipients of horns from Gunnhildr.

Somewhat later, Gunnhildr tries to have Egill killed. Since this approach goes without effect, Gunnhildr charges her two brothers to kill one of Skallagrímr's sons or, better still, both. But the plot fails, and Þórólfr and Egill make their way to England to take service with King Athelstan. While the elder Þórólfr had succumbed in the Norwegian environment after matching himself with the king in ostentation, Egill and his brother are more successful in surviving the downturn of their fortunes there, although their success is conditioned by their respective roles as dark and fair family representative.

The erotic relationship between Gunnhildr and Þórólfr Skalla-grímsson had only been hinted at in the saga, although two such mentions (one in the king's words) and their congruity with authorial innuendo in other sagas are perhaps enough in the spare narrative economy of the genre to fuel speculation. In hatred of Egill the queen was ready to see Þórólfr killed as well. Although *Njáls saga* shows Gunnhildr capable of a curse that will be efficacious back in Iceland (see below), it would be a tenuous argument that made her responsible for Þórólfr's death at the battle of *Vínheiðr* in England, after he has survived numerous other encounters. Yet the dialogue between the brothers before the battle has a heightening effect and the scene warrants close attention (Ch. 54). Egill seeks to keep Þórólfr by his side at the head of the main force, which would have entailed them both facing the Norse troops of King Óláfr, but Þórólfr (more a king's man by nature) backs Athelstan's separate disposition of leaders on the battlefield, to which Egill grudgingly acquiesces. This results in Þórólfr leading the second force and meeting the Scottish troops, known to be lightly equipped, mobile and hence deceptively dangerous. Once in battle, Þórólfr's rapid advance leaves his flank exposed and he is killed in the subsequent sudden attack from that quarter. Like his earlier charge into battle with his shield on his back in order to wield his spear more freely, this seems a faint echo of the hubris of his uncle and namesake. And death among the Celts, also known for their magic and 'treachery', if not attributable to Gunnhildr's malice, is at least consonant with the fate of many who fall from her grace and, indeed, with her own fall (see below).

The enmity of Gunnhildr and Egill had been heightened by Egill killing her son. Each then invoked the telekinetic force of magic to dispossess and displace the other. Gunnhildr enchants Egill so that they must meet one last time. This drives him malcontent from Iceland on his wayward trip to York, after he had been outlawed from Norway by more purely legal means. But earlier Egill had expelled Gunnhildr and Eiríkr

from Norway in a powerful scene in which he raised a pole of defamation topped by a horse's head, coercing the spirits of the land to banish the royal pair. The territorial dimension—eviction from land—is critical, an inversion of the motif of succession to land which is central to the saga.

Gunnhildr repeatedly seeks to circumvent Egill by overriding the dictates of hospitality and by publicly discrediting conventional male principles of due legal course. In the head ransom scenes in York, the author of the saga, judged by many to be Snorri Sturluson, gives Gunnhildr the tactical weapon of direct speech. Gunnhildr seeks to prevent or discount Egill's verses and have him killed, as if recognizing in poetry a power comparable to her sorcery. In an 'arrogation' of discourse, her critical voice is even directed against the king in the royal hall. Later, in the form of a twittering bird at the window, she tries to disrupt Egill's night-time composition. The socially destabilizing nature of Gunnhildr's agency, her *modus operandi*, with its indirection and needling attack on personal honour, is openly recognized in Eiríkr's earlier words: "*Meir frýr þú mér, Gunnhildr, grimmeiks en aðrir menn*" ["More than any other person, Gunnhild, you try to goad me into cruelty"].<sup>12</sup> Thus, even the kingship is perverted under Gunnhildr's transforming influence. As if in denial of the queen's assumption of public discourse, Gunnhildr is only rarely mentioned in Egill's verse and is never addressed by him in public, a refusal to recognize in her a conspecific opponent.<sup>13</sup>

While one might look for a sexual undercurrent in the relationship of Egill and Gunnhildr, their parity in magic and speech arts yet distinct natures—as in a Roman circus's matching of a great cat and bear—seem to preclude this. Gunnhildr's enmity is greatest toward Egill among the Icelanders but is also least efficacious. Because *Egils saga* is about contention with the monarchy in Norway rather than feud in Iceland, her power and magic do not reach the island, except to draw Egill from it. Yet all the resources of Egill's several talents are required to withstand Gunnhildr successfully.

In *Njáls saga* an older Gunnhildr is not so much an adversary who paradoxically facilitates the hero's self-realization, including the acquisition of honoured status in Iceland, as she is one of the keys that winds the mechanism of future feud in Iceland. Early in the saga the Icelander Hrútr Herjólfsson contracts to marry Unnr but, in a proleptic thought that alerts the public, senses that he and the girl are not fated to be happy together. Before they marry he must go to Norway to claim an inheritance. As often, the reputation of the prominent Icelander has preceded him to the

royal court and Hrútr is taken into the social and sexual custody of the king's mother, Gunnhildr. She will further his case with the king in return for his service as lover. The saga's tone is neutral and its pragmatism suggests Hrútr had very little choice in the matter.

Dialogues from legendary history between a hero and female supernatural being offer another situational affinity for the Gunnhildr of the family sagas, and in particular in the farewell scene with Hrútr. These encounters centre on name riddles, knowledge tests, debate or mutual abuse and can be means to heroic self-realization.<sup>14</sup> With Hrútr, Gunnhildr puts a premium on truth; elsewhere, for example in *Egils saga*, she more than holds her own in debate, even recasting its rules. When Gunnhildr learns of Hrútr's desire to return to Iceland and sees through his poorly advised lie that he had no woman waiting for him there, she lays a spell on him. While coincidence and accident are often at the origins of saga contention, there is always a volitional human act too, with its roots in malice, anger, acquisitiveness, poor judgment or simple ill-chosen reticence. Hrútr's failure to answer Gunnhildr honestly is the first willed act in the long chain of events that will lead to the deaths of Gunnarr and later of Njáll and his family. Good will and reconciliation break the chain at times, but hatred and envy reforge the links. Gunnhildr's vengeful spell, which is little short of gratuitous, is that while Hrútr may have normal sexual relations with other women, he and his wife will experience only mutual dissatisfaction. The erotic liaison of Hrútr and Gunnhildr is given little development, but back in Iceland, the locus of important action for this saga, Unnr's narratively powerful explanation to her father of Hrútr's physical dysfunction is explicit and clinical. The hypertrophic tumescence seems an ironic comment on the sexual encounter with Norwegian greatness. Eventually the marriage is dissolved, the divorcee Unnr mismanages her resources, and her kinsman Gunnarr is called in to assist in furthering her claims.

In these episodes Gunnhildr is portrayed as a sexual predator but the Finnic erotic magic that assisted Snæfríðr in seducing Haraldr and freed Gunnhildr for marriage to Eiríkr is now inverted. Conjugal sexuality is denied and only adultery is physically possible. The curse follows Hrútr's failure in the knowledge test before the powerful female, lying about his legitimate Icelandic engagement. In certain respects Gunnhildr prefigures Gunnarr's future wife, Hallgerðr, the principal female agent for ill in the saga, and, to complete the triptych, the Irish queen Kormloð (Gormflaith), who figures briefly in the late chapters devoted to the Battle of Clontarf outside Dublin (see below).



Some of the events of *Njáls saga* are coincident with those of *Laxdæla saga*, and Hrútr Herjólfsson figures here again. His voyage to Norway and stay at the Norwegian court are recounted, but not his liaison with Gunnhildr. This occlusion has a multi-part motivation. The plotline of *Laxdæla saga* is distinct from that of *Njála* and the feud to which the queen's curse on Hrútr gives indirectly rise is not part of the story. Thus, Gunnhildr is incidental to this saga, although we must think the character sufficiently well established in the minds of the saga public that mention of her would be thematically resonant. A second explanation is that Hrútr's nephew, Óláfr pái 'the Peacock', so named for his noble bearing and finery, also visits Norway in the course of a trip to Ireland to authenticate his descent from an Irish king. Here the saga proceeds by the innuendo seen in *Egils saga*, saying only that the Norwegian king, Haraldr, received Óláfr well, and Gunnhildr even better. Óláfr, thus far a man of luck, is given the twofold recognition at the Norwegian court that is due prominent Icelanders, but is allowed to escape Gunnhildr unscathed, their erotic liaison, if there was one, apparently without future bearing on the saga or on the Icelander's life. The later Óláfr does, however, give evidence of a certain hesitancy of will, for example, in the matter of his daughter's marriage, and this may be limned in his ready acquiescence to Gunnhildr's attentions. The third explanation of Gunnhildr as merely an institutional presence and latent force in the saga is that the typical complex of events that makes up the erotic court interlude in the family sagas is here shifted to another couple. Óláfr's son, Kjartan, even more a paragon of Icelandic virtues than his father, is engaged to marry Guðrún but postpones the wedding until his return from a trip to Norway. Kjartan stays at court longer than agreed and forms an amorous attachment to Ingibjörg, daughter of King Tryggvi, who succeeded Gunnhildr's sons to the throne. When Kjartan and Ingibjörg reluctantly part, she gives him an elaborate headdress (cf. other domestic tokens such as the proffered horn of ale). It will cause envy and strife first among the women, then among their men, back in Iceland. Again the female Norwegian contribution, linked to a woman in Iceland, leads to the death of the most socially valued person in the saga, Kjartan himself in this tragic case. Naturally this means that Óláfr's luck, too, has run out.<sup>15</sup> The functions of Gunnhildr and Norwegian favour have been shifted to a more innocent actress, Ingibjörg, but the consequences are the same.

In other family sagas (*Harðar saga*, *Flóamanna saga*), the skalds' sagas (*Kormáks saga*, *Hallfreðar saga*) and a continental tale (*Jómsvíkinga saga*, where her Danish antecedents are recognized), Gunnhildr is

an episodic but consistent presence, distinctly contoured in the Icelandic historical consciousness as insightful, sexually ravenous, harsh and vengeful. As a last example, the type-scene at court is also found in *Flóamanna saga* where the Icelander—the big, imposing man at the banquet—is Þorgils Þórðarson, who initially has the queen's favour and then is literally kicked away from the throne by her and must thenceforth make his own way. In one sense the aged Gunnhildr is also summarily disposed of.

Saga characters are usually quickly eclipsed when they are no longer relevant to the forward drive of plot. This technique of dismissal, which can also be judgmental, is applied to Gunnhildr. In no saga does she have a significant 'final appearance' on stage. We must return to *Heimskringla* and other royal histories to learn that the aged Gunnhildr, her sons and a small retinue fled from Norway to Orkney when their political fortunes waned. *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* notes the individual deaths of these failed rulers and only at the very end does the historian say: *Váru þá dauðir allir synir Eiríks ok Gunnhildar* (Ch. 87). Gunnhildr's death around the year 999 is not noted, just as Hallgerðr's end goes unmentioned in *Njáls saga*; malign female power fades finally into inconsequence. According to *Ágrip* (Ch. 11), Gunnhildr came into an enemy's hands in Denmark and was killed and buried in a bog, a fate often meted out to sorcerers in the family sagas.<sup>16</sup> Gunnhildr starts on the northern Finnic periphery of the Norse world, plays a purposeful but malevolent role in Norwegian politics, and ends on the south-western Celtic periphery (Orkney) or interred in southern continental earth (Denmark).

\*

At this point a brief excursus will explore two possible further influences in the elaboration of Gunnhildr as narrative character; in both cases this influence would have dated from the post-conversion period. The complex, interdependent relationship between male and female in Norse mythology, the prominence accorded a matriarchal figure like Auðr in *djúpúðga* in settlement history, the free exploitation of cognate descent in assembling the most prestigious genealogies, the rights accorded women in law (to the extent that pre-Christian Scandinavian law can be securely recovered from extant law tracts), the full-dimensional figures of Hallgerðr and Bergþóra, Guðrún and Eddic Brynhildr—these and a host of other examples and considerations make the issue of a putative pre-Christian Scandinavian misogyny both hazardous and well be-



yond the scope of this article.<sup>17</sup> Whatever one's stand on this issue, our texts give no evidence of a further darkening of the image of Gunnhildr that might be attributed to conventions of anti-feminism that could have reached the north with other Christian ideology. Gunnhildr is no frail vessel manipulated by the Devil! However, a motif—in contrast to a pervasive Christian-coloured conception of sex and gender—which might have at least resonated with medieval Icelanders familiar with the Bible is the incarnation and feminization of a foreign state, ideology and cultural influence in a powerful, sexually ravenous woman. In *Revelations* the state is both political and moral, and the Whore of Babylon is described as follows: "... the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters; with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. ... And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and bedecked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication" (17: 1–2, 4). Could the visiting Icelanders of the family sagas be seen as "kings, who have received no kingdom as yet, but receive power as kings one hour with the beast" (17: 13) or Iceland's seduction by and submission to Norway be likened to those "peoples and multitudes, and nations and tongues" in whose hearts God had put the will to "give their kingdom unto the beast" (17: 16–17) "for by [her] sorceries were all nations deceived" (18: 23)?<sup>18</sup> Such a characterization could have appeared as a further, negative change rung on the *hieros gamos*, the legitimizing union of male rulership with supernatural female territorial force.

\*

From individual narrative realizations of Gunnhildr and this additional external model I turn to some general observations and tentative conclusions. In the medieval etiology of Iceland, the Norwegian threat to individual personal freedom in the late ninth and early tenth centuries had led to the settlement of the new country. The nation's successes and the kinds of setbacks it overcame, the social tragedies it suffered and then accommodated, are documented in the family sagas that are proposed as social and ideological histories of the early centuries of independence and nationhood. Then, in the thirteenth century the Norwegian menace reappeared: firstly, in the seductive offer of title and place at the Norwegian court; secondly, in the pragmatic advantage seen in submission to Norwegian rule as an alternative to debilitating factional violence; and thirdly and most negatively, in the active threat to national franchise and

the collective distinctiveness that the Icelanders so actively promoted at home in their elaboration of the saga genre and abroad in their near-monopoly of skaldic verse. Although in the symbolic treatment of the family sagas the Norwegian 'gift' causes strife back in Iceland through a female intermediary, its effects are ultimately dominated and successfully contained after feud has run its course. But the moment of reconciliation and social recovery that we find at the end of individual family sagas proved transient. No lasting lesson has been learned and the relapse in the thirteenth century, the age of saga-writing, is into social violence on an even greater scale. In a culture shaped by reciprocity, the obligation of Norwegian royalty's attention, gifts and favours comes due and is at last repaid with interest in Iceland's fateful submission to Norwegian rule.

In the family sagas as incarnated in a Norwegian king and his queen or mother, Norway is doubly gendered, and both genders, male and female, have the potential for good and ill. The Norwegian king bears witness to functional masculinity, male gender, the queen to essential maleness, male sex. Development of the natural historical relationship between Icelander and Norwegian king, between Iceland and Norway, is repeatedly deflected by the extraneous, 'alteric' presence of Gunnhildr, and her far-northern, hence negative, cultural and geographical antecedents. For the purposes of this exposition Gunnhildr's arsenal was itemized as power, magic and sex, which we might expand as the command of resources on which secular rulership draws, the harnessing of supernatural forces, and the difference and attraction between female and male. The various family sagas reveal different emphases: political authority and magic figuring prominently in *Egils saga*; magic more efficaciously tied to sexuality in *Njáls saga*; *Laxdæla saga* and *Flóamanna saga* illustrating the more conventional award and withdrawal of patronage, the power to further court cases, assign rank, and finance voyages. Gunnhildr's power, sorcery and sexuality are, however, best seen operating as a complex. Given the legal constraints on women's social agency in medieval Scandinavia, it may seem that Gunnhildr has access to enhanced resources through her queenly station. But from the perspective of gender construction, this complex of secular power and sexual attraction working like supernatural magic is fundamental to female gender rather than an increment to it. The queen has everywoman's powers, deployed more openly in a more prestigious context. As in the scenes of incitation with the whetting woman and reluctant avenger, the female fills a functional void left by male inadequacy and then plays on male susceptibility to the calls of vanity, honour and shame. But Gunnhildr always seems

driven more by personal desire and her sense of queenly status than by concern for the good of the Norwegian state. In her harsh and vengeful counsel during the reigns of Eiríkr and their sons, Gunnhildr's agency contributes to misrule. The Norwegian rulers, Eiríkr and their sons, are guilty of the same lack of kingly discernment as Gunnhildr's Icelandic lovers.

Gunnhildr's historical role as royal wife and mother, and fictional role as polyandrous sorceress are kept separate in the kings' sagas and family sagas, respectively. Like Freyja, Gunnhildr is under the sign of primary sexuality, which on closer examination proves to be the distorted mirror image of male desire rather than its complement, the powers of fertility and procreation. The biological sexual act is divorced from natural consequences. Gunnhildr bears sons to kings but no bastards to Icelanders. One may speculate that this sterility is further underscored, perhaps in judgmental fashion, in episodes late in her career when the aging queen seeks young partners. The social act of adultery, initiated by the female but acquiesced to by the male, is likewise undertaken with a disregard for consequences. This sexual activity, in which only present, and initially the queen's, needs are satisfied, exists outside Norwegian time and place, since it is not implicated in the greater matters of statecraft. Contrary to the kings' sagas and other histories, the family sagas deny Gunnhildr a role in making Norwegian national history.<sup>19</sup> But this inconsequential, transient, female Norway becomes tragically meaningful in causally driven, male-directed Iceland. Unlike the supernatural female figures offering union with legitimate sovereignty, Gunnhildr can assure no man of land: Eiríkr and his sons lose Norway and, in the symbolic causality proposed here, the Icelanders later lose Iceland.

In the masculine ideology of the early North, the female principle, when kept within the ordered confines of male-created culture, including legal marriage, is a generative force. But when given its head, when empowered, its dynamics lead outside the law to social dissolution, on the cosmic level to apocalypse. Even under societal restraint, we find a distinctive female palette of action: women relying on speech acts, innuendo, goading, shaming, and various other kinds of indirection as the queen exercises political power through the manipulation of husband or son.

As in the discourse of myth, bodily appetites and functions are made the bearers of ideological statement. In Norwegian Gunnhildr (and her 'exotic' origins), sexuality is exploited as a macro-metaphor, as it is

elsewhere in the family sagas in men's jockeying for honour, in which ethical, martial and political inadequacies are equated with inability to defend against homosexual rape by other men, animals and supernatural beings. In an apparent simplification, medieval Icelandic writers equated the political situation of two countries to the relationship between man and woman. The fictionalized accounts of Gunnhildr and the visiting Icelanders make FEMALE appetite and influence into metaphorical representations of socio-political forces and ambitions, a proxy for the Norwegian statism of a later age. But what is the metaphorical equivalent of the complementary MALE susceptibility to flattery and sexual vulnerability? In what kind of ethical frame of reference is such deficiency viewed? In the saga public's idealized world of law there was responsibility for all action and these are not casual adulteries. *Njáls saga* makes the point of personal accountability in its closing thumbnail sketch of the Irish queen Kormloð "*Hon var allra kvenna fegrst ok bezt orðin um allt þat, er henni var ósjálfrátt, en þat er mál manna, at henni hafí allt verit illa gefit, þat er henni var sjálfrátt*" ["She was endowed with great beauty and all those attributes that were outside her own control, but it is said that in all the characteristics for which she was herself responsible, she was utterly wicked"].<sup>20</sup> Even though the saga genre makes motive of less importance than consequences, the emphasis in ethical judgments on willed action and *sjálfráð* is fundamental.

Our sources are silent as to why men like Þóroldr, Hrútr, Óláfr, Þorgils and others succumbed to Gunnhildr's charm or charisma, or Kjartan to Ingibjörg's. The economy of the saga genre, where all detail may be assumed meaningful, encourages us to speculate as armchair psychologists on matters such as the degree of pressure that a set of events and the need to maintain personal honour would exercise on a given character type, but only within the confines of the known socio-political circumstances. In terms of 'depth' of personality and psychological state, this does not authorize us to go very far. We are then returned to collective ethos as the backdrop against which these men are best assessed. The Icelanders' ethical laxness, their infidelity to the national ethos, retains—intentionally, I would say—the unproven logic of metaphor and the complexity of the later chain of events that it prefigures, the loss of Icelandic independence. A further exploration of the ethical climate of the era of family saga composition, in particular as it relates to Gunnhildr's incarnation, might include consideration of 1) a sense of the passage of the heroic, individualistic, free-booting morality, 2) the recognition that Christianity and Christendom afforded of European culture and of a more

complex world of guilt as well as shame, 3) the emergence, aided by hindsight and the sense of history, of concepts of civic responsibility and accountability, 4) a questioning of how the ethical direction of a country differs from that of an individual life or family, and, in the matter of the elaboration of gender, 5) the apparent incompleteness of male gender that requires a patroness, a female authenticator of essential worth (here skaldic verse offers interesting parallels in the poets' apostrophe of Woman).<sup>21</sup> Where collective Icelandic masculinity in the sagas sensed itself incomplete or judged itself to have been inadequate to circumstances, the void was often filled by a constructed feminine gender that remedied or exploited this weakness—if weakness it was. From our perspective, the Norwegian queen's contribution to the entanglement of individual lives and families in Iceland and to the dynamics of the Icelandic family sagas makes Gunnhildr our finest medieval vamp.

#### NOTES

1. A first version of this study was presented at the Annual Meeting of the South-Eastern Medieval Association, Marymount University, Balston, VA, 29 September–1 October, 1994. This expanded but still speculative discussion intentionally retains some of the rhetorical mode of the original presentation.

2. See the exploration of the foreign allure and menace as exemplified in *Laxdæla saga* in Meulengracht Sørensen 1987, and in *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar* in Taylor 1995; a more theoretical approach in Lindow 1995.

3. Comparisons when undertaken by promoters of a leader in the debate sub-genre *mannjafnaðr* usually contribute to contention; in flyting the principals enter into direct verbal conflict. The Norwegian king's advantage in such assessments also draws on his authority and the continuity of the royal office itself. These translate as experience and wisdom and take narrative expression as kingly prescience of what awaits the Icelander back home. Usually, the forecast is dire and the tone cautionary. While Icelanders often have premonitions, these tend to occur on home ground; abroad, their psychological antennae are less effective. But the king's or earl's advice is generally disregarded. As this article will go on to illustrate, the queen's contribution is to add to the store of ills to be visited on Icelanders on their return to the island.

4. Earlier discussions of Gunnhildr are found in Sigurðr Nordal 1941, and Turville-Petre 1951.

5. Clunies Ross 1991; comparable point of view in Linke 1992.

6. *Historia Norwegia* (1880), thought to date from about 1055. Gunnhildr figures, too, in the *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagensium* of the monk Theodoricus, Ch. 6.

7. Vernacular texts are cited by chapter from the Íslenzk fornrit series, and the kings' sagas from the recensions appearing in Snorri's *Heimskringla*, 1979. Additional citations from the two works *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga tal* and *Nóregs konunga tal* (1984); on the former, see now *Ágrip af Nóregskonungs tal* (1995).

8. Examples are Frakkøk in *Orkneyinga saga*, the cultural hybrids Þórgunna in *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Eiríks saga rauða*, and Gríma, wife of the sorcerer Kotkell, in *Laxdæla saga*. The notion of female Finnic witchcraft is established as early as Ch. 12 of *Ynglinga saga*, making it part of the greater environment of all subsequent Norwegian history.

9. The stylized discourse of the scenes of incitation is of considerable interest since the referential dimension (the facts of a killing, the need for vengeance) which is common knowledge is so subordinate to the relational (the judgmental nature of the speech made publicly by a woman to and about a man). Critical attention to *hvøt* or 'whetting' includes Clover 1988, Heller 1958, Jochens 1987, Miller 1984.

10. Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla: History of the Kings of Norway*, trans. Hollander, 1964. *Nóregs konunga tal* also notes her attachment to wealth and land: *Gunnhildr kona hans var fjøgr sjónum ok tígurlig, <ekki mikil kona> djúphuguð, margmálung, ok grimmlunduð, eigi vinholl, ærit gjørn til fjár ok landa* (Ch. 5).

11. Taylor 1994: 750 also calls attention to these consciously staged symbolic events.

12. Ch. 48; trans. Hermann Pálsson and Edwards. Cf. *Ágrip af Nóregs konunga sögum*: *Gunnhildr kona hans var allra kvenna fegrst, lítill kona sýnum en mikil ráðum; hon gørðisk svá illráðug, en hann svá áhlýðinn til grimnleiks ok til allskyns áþjáunar við lýðinn, at þungt var ar bera* (Ch. 5); [*Eiríkr*] *gerðisk þar enn med ráðum Gunnhildar konu sinar svá grimmr ok greypr við lýð sinn, at hann þóttisk varla bera mega* (Ch.7).

13. This observation conjoins Egill's likely authentic verse and Snorri's narrative in a perhaps indefensibly close relationship. Theoretical issues of what constitutes a worthy opponent are examined, with reference to flyting, in Parks 1990.

14. See, most recently, Swenson 1991.

15. Óláfr pái's failure to recognize the supernatural source of his material well-being, as illustrated in the episode of the ox Harri and the animal's supernatural mother, may be viewed as yet another Icelandic variant on the *hieros gamos* theme of relations with the land. Óláfr's naive luck is then comparable to the social success of a 'fair brother' until brought low. The revenge taken by the mother of Harri over the killing of the ox will be the death of Kjartan.

16. Gunnhildr meets a similar fate in Theodoricus's history, Ch. 6, and in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* in *Flateyjarbók* 1860–68, I. 152f.

17. Among numerous recent works on the situation of women in the early medieval North, the following explore negative stereotyping from differing perspectives: Clover 1993, Kress 1979, and Gísli Pálsson 1991.

18. Coming to my attention since the completion of this article is McCone's (1990: 154f.) similar juxtaposition of the motif of woman as city/state and related Biblical passages in his consideration of the Irish deployment of the theme of the goddess of territorial sovereignty. Other Norse familiarity with Biblical treatments of legitimate royal rule is evident in reflections of the Nebuchadnezzar story from *Daniel*; see the discussion in Sayers 1994.

19. This may somewhat overstate the case, for purposes of focusing on the symbolic role of the queen. On the level of detail, she is certainly involved in issues like court cases over land claims, favouring one party or another, and this naturally has implications for the future political support that will be available to the king.

20. *Brennu-Njáls saga* 1954, Ch. 154; trans. Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson.

21. Important contributions, among many, on the question of ethics in early Iceland are Andersson 1970, Hermann Pálsson 1971, Meulengracht Sørensen 1993, Thompson 1977. On the notion of women as proxies for reluctant men, see Clover 1986, and on the motif of the poet's apostrophe, see Frank 1990 and Sayers forthcoming.

### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Ágrip af Nóregskonunga tal, Fagrskinna — Nóregs konunga tal.* 1984. Ed. by Bjarni Einarsson. Íslenzk fornrit 29. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag.
- Ágrip af Nóregskonunga tal.* 1995. Ed. and trans. by Matthew James Driscoll. Viking Society Text Series 10. Leeds.
- Andersson, Theodore M. 1970. "The Displacement of the Heroic Ideal in the Family Saga." *Speculum* 45: 575-93.
- Brennu-Njáls saga.* 1954. Ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson. Íslenzk fornrit 12. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Njal's Saga.* 1960. Trans. by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Clover, Carol J. 1986. "Maiden Warriors and Other Sons." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 85: 35-49.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1988. "Hildigunnr's Lament." In *Structure and Meaning: New Approaches to Old Norse/Icelandic Studies.* Ed. by John Lindow, Lars Lönnroth and Gerd Wolfgang Weber. Odense: Odense University Press. 141-83.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1993. "Regardless of Sex: Men, Women and Power in Early Northern Europe." *Speculum* 68: 363-87.
- Clunies Ross, Margaret. 1991. "Pseudo-Procreation Myths in Old Norse: An Anthropological Approach." In *Social Approaches to Viking Studies.* Ed. by Ross Samson. Glasgow: Cruithne Press. 35-44.



- Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*. 1933. Ed. by Sigurður Nordal. Íslenzk fornrit 2. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Egil's Saga*. 1976. Trans. by Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Flateyjarbók*. 1860–68. Ed. by G. Vigfússon and C. R. Unger. Kristiania: P. T. Malling.
- Flóamanna saga*. 1991. Ed. by Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson. In *Harðar saga*. Íslenzk fornrit 13. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag.
- Frank, Roberta. 1990. "Why Skalds Address Women." In *Poetry in the Scandinavian Middle Ages*. Ed. by Teresa Pàroli. The Seventh International Saga Conference (12<sup>o</sup> Congresso Internazionale di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo), Spoleto, 4–10 settembre, 1988. Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo. 67–83.
- Gísli Pálsson. 1991. "The Name of the Witch: Sagas, Sorcery, and Social Context." In *Social Approaches to Viking Studies*. Ed. by Ross Samson. Glasgow: Cruithne Press. 157–68.
- Heller, Rolf. 1958. *Die literarische Darstellung der Frau in den Isländersagas*. Halle (Saale): M. Niemeyer.
- Hermann Pálsson. 1971. *Art and Ethics in Hrafnkel's Saga*. Copenhagen: Munksgaard.
- Historia Norvegiae*. 1880. Ed. by Gustav Storm. In *Monumenta Historica Norvegiae*. Kristiania: A. W. Brøgger.
- Jochens, Jenny. 1987. "The Female Inciters in the Kings' Sagas." *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 102: 100–19.
- Kress, Helga. 1979. "Mandom og misogyni: Noen refleksjoner omkring kvinnesynet i *Njáls saga*." *Gardar* 10: 35–51.
- Laxdæla saga*. 1934. Ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson. Íslenzk fornrit 5. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag.
- Lindow, John. 1995. "Supernatural Others and Ethnic Others: A Millenium of World View." *Scandinavian Studies* 67: 8–31.
- Linke, Uli. 1992. "The Theft of Blood, the Birth of Men: Cultural Constructions of Gender in Medieval Iceland." In *From Sagas to Society: Comparative Approaches to Early Iceland*. Ed. by Gísli Pálsson. Enfield Lock, Middlesex: Hisarlik Press. 265–88.
- McCone, Kim. 1990. *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature*. An Sagart: Maynooth.
- Meulengracht Sørensen, Preben. 1987. "Norge og Irland i *Laxdæla saga*." In *Festskrift til Alfred Jakobsen*. Ed. by Ragnar Hagland et al. Trondheim: Tapir. 185–95.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1993. "Humour, Heroes, Morality and Anatomy in *Fóstribræðra saga*." In *Twenty-Eight Papers Presented to Hans Bekker-Nielsen on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday 28 April 1993*. Odense: Odense University Press. 395–418.
- Miller, William Ian. 1984. "Choosing the Avenger: Some Aspects of the Bloodfeud in Medieval Iceland and England." *Law and History Review* 1: 159–204.



- Parks, Ward. 1990. *Verbal Duelling in Heroic Narrative: Homeric and Old English Traditions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Sayers, William. 1994. "Deployment of an Irish Loan: ON *verða at gjalti* 'to go mad with terror'." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 93: 151–76.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Forthcoming. "*Blæju þöll*—'Young Fir of the Bed-Clothes': Skaldic Seduction." In *Menacing Virgins*. Ed. by Kathleen Kelly and Marina Leslie.
- Sigurður Nordal. 1941. "Gunnhildur konungamóðir." *Santið og saga* 1: 135–55.
- Snorri Sturluson. 1979. *Heimskringla*. Ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson. Íslenzk fornrit 26–28. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1964. *Heimskringla: History of the Kings of Norway*. Trans. by Lee M. Hollander. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Steinsland, Gro. 1991. *Det hellige bryllup og norrøn kongeideologi: en analyse av hierogami-myten i Skírnismál, Ynglingatal, Hæleygjatal og Hyndluljóf*. Oslo: Solum.
- Swenson, Karen. 1991. *Performing Definitions: Two Genres of Insult in Old Norse Literature*. Studies in Scandinavian Literature and Culture 3. Columbia, South Carolina: Camden House.
- Taylor, Marvin. 1994. "On Gizurr Þorvaldsson's Speaking Style." In *Santiðarsögur / The Contemporary Sagas*. Ed. by Sverrir Tómasson et al. The Ninth International Saga Conference, Akureyri 31.7–6.8, 1994. Preprints. Reykjavík. 743–57.
- Theodoricus Monachus. 1880. *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagensium*. Ed. by Gustav Storm. In *Monumenta Historica Novegiae*. Kristiania: A. W. Brøgger.
- Thompson, Claiborne W. 1977. "Moral Values in the Icelandic Sagas: Recent Re-evaluations." In *The Epic in Medieval Society: Aesthetic and Moral Values*. Ed. by Harald Scholler. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer. 347–60.
- Turville-Petre, E. O. G. 1951. *The Heroic Age of Scandinavia*. London, New York: Hutchinson's University Library.





## Sibelius, *Kullervo*, and Fate Tragedy

Peter G. Christensen  
*University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee*

RÉSUMÉ: *Kullervo*, op. 7, basé sur les poèmes 31–36 du Kalevala, est une oeuvre très importante dans la carrière de Jean Sibelius, mais rarement analysée en détail. Après sa première en 1892, Sibelius a interdit toute autre exécution de l'oeuvre, de même qu'il a interdit d'en publier la partition. On chercherait néanmoins en vain une juxtaposition aussi provocatrice de la musique absolue avec la musique descriptive, dans le but d'étudier le pouvoir expressif de la musique. Le premier des cinq mouvements de *Kullervo* introduit une thème qui, dès le début, se distingue du héros et de son histoire. C'est n'est qu'après, quand le chœur rattache ce thème à des paroles du poème épique dans le cinquième mouvement, que nous pouvons comprendre le sens de la mort de *Kullervo*.

ABSTRACT: *Jean Sibelius's Kullervo*, op. 7, based on Runos 31–36 of the Kalevala, is a work of great interest in the composer's career, but it has seldom been analyzed in any detail. After its premiere in 1892 Sibelius forbade any further performance of it or publication of its score during his lifetime. However, nowhere else in his work do we see absolute and program music juxtaposed so provocatively in order to investigate the expressive potential of music. The first of the five movements of *Kullervo* introduces a theme which initially stands apart from the hero and his story. Only after the chorus associates the theme with words from the epic poem in the fifth movement can we understand the significance of his death.

---

The refusal of Jean Sibelius (1865–1957) to allow performance of *Kullervo*, op. 7 in its entirety from the time of its premiere in the spring of 1892 to his death in 1957 has never been entirely explained.<sup>1</sup> Erik Tawaststjerna claims that in 1930 Sibelius told Cecil Gray that he was not happy with *Kullervo* but that he did not want to do a touch-up job for fear of wrecking the work as a whole (120). It is possible to speculate that

Sibelius set *Kullervo* aside as a youthful work, one which needed revision. However, considering the greatness of this choral symphony—a work as memorable as his first two published symphonies—we are still inclined to find his actions surprising.<sup>2</sup> A second hypothesis for explaining the ban on the performance of *Kullervo* is that the work was so painful to compose that it drove Sibelius to a despair he wanted to forget. This idea seems more likely, as on 23 March 1892, he wrote to his fiancée, Aino, “During the last few days I have been at my wits’ end over my work — have entertained suicidal thoughts and the like” (Tawaststjerna 105). Such a bleak comment on composing the music is not surprising, given the pessimistic view of life in the *Kullervo* story itself.

Investigating the reasons for Sibelius’s anxieties over *Kullervo* is timely for English-language readers interested in the *Kalevala*, Finnish oral tradition, the *Kullervo* story, and Sibelius’s life. We have recently had two new poetry translations of the *Kalevala* into English, those by Eino Friberg (1988) and Keith Bosley (1989). They join the two earlier twentieth-century translations, still in print, those by William Forsell Kirby (1907; rpt. 1985) and by Francis Peabody Magoun (1963). Bosley has also translated selections from Lönnrot’s *Kanteletar* (1992) and Finnish oral poetry in *The Great Bear* (1994); as well as *Finnish Folk Poetry, Epic* (Kuusi, Bosley, and Branch, 1977). In addition, Aleksis Kivi’s tragedy *Kullervo* (1860), the source for the libretto of Aulis Sallinen’s opera *Kullervo* (1992), is now available in English. Finally, Sibelius appears in two recent historical novels: Bo Carpelan’s *Axel* (Swedish 1986; English 1989), based on this author’s great-uncle’s friendship with Sibelius; and William H. Trotter’s *Winter Fire* (1993), which focuses on a German World War II officer trying to meet with Sibelius, while attempting to win the Finns over to the side of the Nazis.

This essay will examine Sibelius’s *Kullervo* in three parts. First we will explore the nature of the *Kullervo* story in Runos 31–36 of the *New Kalevala* of Elias Lönnrot (1802–1884), and the disturbing conclusion of the *Kullervo* story in Runo 36, as well as the initial reception of Sibelius’s symphony as a Finnish nationalistic work, and Sibelius’s opposition to Wagnerian music drama. Second, we will look at the critical literature on Sibelius’s *Kullervo*. Although several surveys deal with art and music inspired by the *Kalevala*,<sup>3</sup> there have been only three detailed analyses of Sibelius’s *Kullervo*—those by Erik Tawaststjerna (1976:

108–23; Swedish 1965), Ferruccio Tammaro (1984: 47–69), and Eero Tarasti (1979: 222–71). Each of these interpretations sees Sibelius's *Kullervo* as a tragedy, either a fate tragedy (Tawaststjerna and Tammaro) or a Greek tragedy (Tarasti). Third, we will examine the symphony with reference to the system of musical aesthetics elaborated in the nineteenth century by such figures as Schopenhauer, Wagner, Hanslick, and Nietzsche. This examination will show that the previous analyses of *Kullervo* have been misleading, since they fail both to come sufficiently to grips with the pessimism explicit in the *Kullervo* story and to attend to the non-programmatic nature of the music with which Sibelius starts his symphony. Once we divorce *Kullervo* from these misreadings, we can see it more properly either as a statement of the meaninglessness of life in the face of a death which wipes out everything, or else as a justification of suicide as the only way of maintaining life as a value.

Relatively isolated from the main narrative strand of the *Kalevala*, the *Kullervo* story, labeled by Hans Fromm as a “fate tragedy” or *Schicksalstragödie* (1985 Kommentar: 540), does not clearly manifest the religious views of the rest of the epic.<sup>4</sup> Interpretation of it has been problematic. Sibelius did not choose to dramatize all of *Kullervo*'s story. He omitted episodes and used general titles to indicate a series of events, as is the case with *Kullervo*'s destructive adventures when he was a youthful serf of his uncle Untamo. “*Kullervo*” is the part of the *Kalevala* which Lönnrot, the tailor's son, most personally created from the lines of poetry he stitched together. Bosley writes:

Lönnrot virtually invented the *Kullervo* of cantos 31–36 by combining poems about an orphan child of Herculean strength (for example FFPE [*Finnish Folk Poetry, Epic*] 41–43), about a departing warrior (137), about incest (44, 45), and about reacting to news of death (137–141); the main characters of these poems have various names, including *Kullervo*, while the incestuous brother is sometimes called Lemminkäinen. (Bosley 1989: xxxii)

Michael Branch too believes that the *Kullervo* story “lacks a real counterpart in authentic tradition.” He writes, “*Kullervo* is a composite character compiled from ancient stories about an unnaturally strong child (the European ‘strong John’ motif), ballads of Germanic origin about a young robber who unwittingly commits incest with his long-lost sister, and medieval fantasies about a soldier away at war” (xxxii). Whereas in the *Old Kalevala* (1835) the *Kullervo* story was given only one canto

(No. 19; see Magoun 1969) and had no incest motif, Lönnrot in 1849 “transformed Kullervo into a hero comparable to Oedipus and Hamlet, and condemned by the fates to destruction” (Branch xxxi).

Lönnrot remarked in the “Preface to the *New Kalevala* (1849)” that in place of Kullervo on his tax-paying trip, some singers have other protagonists, such as Lemminkäinen or a son of old Väinämöinen (375). He had already commented in the “Preface to the *Old Kalevala* (1835)” that only Kullervo among the sons of Kaleva had a particularly bad reputation (370). Juha Pentikäinen observes that in a revised, posthumously published preface to the *Old Kalevala*, Lönnrot wrote that the Kullervo runes were particularly confused since some indicated that, his parents having been killed, he was taken captive in his dead mother’s womb, whereas others told of his bidding farewell to his parents (40). Such intractible contradictions probably pushed Lönnrot to go further in composing *runos* of his own making.

It is not clear what we are to make of Kullervo’s murder of his master Ilmarinen’s wife, his heartlessness toward his family members, his seduction of a woman who turns out to be his sister, his revenge at war against his uncle, and his ultimate suicide, as the narrator fails to comment. A platitudinous remark by Väinämöinen about the necessity for good child-rearing spoken right after Kullervo’s death tells us nothing. Björn Collinder (28) takes Lönnrot to task for ending Runo 36 with such a moral, implying that Lönnrot thought that these few words could soften the blow of such a disturbing story.

Although child rearing does not seem to be the key issue at the end of the “Kullervo” Runos, the relationship of Kullervo to his mother is, in my opinion, the key to his suicide. Except for his mother, Kullervo had previously expressed indifference to all members of his family (father, brother and sister at home). When his mother dies, he is overwhelmed with grief. Her voice from beyond the grave tells him to take the dog and go into the forest in search of provisions. When he comes upon the place where he had sexual relations with the girl who proved to be his sister, he is not only reminded of his unwitting incest but also of the grief he had caused his mother through her daughter’s suicide. Kullervo was much more strongly attached to his mother than to his father. She is his major link to life, and after her command to go to the woods brings him to reliving the traumatic incest, he no longer finds any reason to endure life

further. Väinämöinen's talk of child neglect addresses itself only to Kullervo's rearing by his abusive foster parents. Kullervo loves his real mother so much that he cannot do without her high regard. Kullervo's death would have been of interest to Sibelius because of the attention given by Richard Wagner to incest as a theme in music drama, a theme lightly touched upon by Frederik Cygnaeus.

Kolehmainen contrasts the first major interpretation of the Kullervo story made by Cygnaeus in 1853 with one offered by J. E. F. Perander in 1872 (143–44). For Cygnaeus, Kolehmainen writes, "Kullervo was born to greatness, but fate made him a slave" (143). Or, in Cygnaeus's own words, "Naturen har danat honom till hjelte, men hans öde har degraderat honom till träl" (Cygnaeus 1853: 119). He had no opportunities to use his Promethean power creatively, and he turned demonic. Cygnaeus (1853: 95–153) in his discussion of the Kullervo story is mostly concerned with Kullervo as a thrall, and not as a suicide, although it is of interest that in a footnote he mentions Wagner's *Opera and Drama* to connect the suicides of Oedipus and Kullervo, Wagner having already mentioned Oedipus's incest as a potential theme for music drama (148). Perander, on the other hand, according to Kolehmainen, saw Kullervo as somewhat analogous to Sophocles' Orestes, for "he had no choice but to carry out his appointed role: he was the instrument of the moral law that demanded retribution for the unlawful death of his father" (Kolehmainen 144; see also Perander 133–43; and Hautala 54). In this view, the avenger is destroyed by his own revenge. However, each of these interpretations has a problem. Kullervo is unthinking in his strength from the start, and he chooses to ignore his mother's warning not to go to war against his uncle as a means of forgetting the incest he has committed. As Friberg and Davis point out, it may be that the "Kullervo cycle represents failure of reciprocity within collateral lines of a lineage, as well as total failure of exogamy" (21). However, surely the power of Lönnrot's story derives from its personal nature not its anthropological underpinnings.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Julius Krohn and his son Kaarle argued that despite Lönnrot's classical education, he had put together an epic "more nearly the product of the people than any in existence" (Wilson 74–75). When this level of national ideology was left aside by critics, two things happened. On the one hand, Lönnrot's personal contribution to the Kullervo material caused the relative neglect of

this story by those who examined the *Kalevala* for its folklore content or for its religious roots in shamanism. On the other hand, Lönnrot's transformation of the original oral materials brought the Kullervo story into the study of nineteenth-century European Romantic literature characterized by attention to the doomed, sombre hero. Alphonso-Karkala (1986: 13) thinks that this bifurcation of interest has gone on long enough, and he warns against the view that Lönnrot's *Kalevala* is neither authentic folklore (a reservation expressed in Bosley [1977]) nor genuine epic. He considers the *Kalevala* a successful integrating of the older Uralic and the newer Semitic spirituality (24). Pentikäinen in his *Kalevala Mythology* presents the complex interweaving of these motifs in the poem, at the same time giving voice to three different views about the meaning of the Kullervo story.

First, for Pentikäinen, the character Kullervo may be taken as an example of heroic suicide, "a common phenomenon in Finland, particularly during difficult times such as the period of Russian oppression at the turn of the twentieth century" (42). This interpretation I call the existential one, in which the hero takes his destiny into his own hands. Second, Kullervo's death may be the result of a predetermined, horrible fate against which he can do nothing to escape. In this view, life is "tragic and incomprehensible," for a "person is fated to live a particular life, to do certain deeds without deliberation or substantial reflection," and nevertheless, "he is weighted by guilt for his deeds, and this guilt drives him toward suicide" (220). This I call the tragic/fatalistic view. Finally, in stressing that death is everywhere in Kullervo's life and that he brings about directly and indirectly many deaths, Pentikäinen suggests a third view: life is meaningless because death wipes out all life, all achievement, and all distinction between good and evil (200). I call this the nihilistic view.

*Kullervo* was begun in Vienna, where Sibelius was reading the *Kalevala*, and completed in Karelia after Sibelius had heard Larin Paraske sing hundreds of runic chants. It was the first enduring work of nationalistic Finnish music. Although Sibelius liked to call *Kullervo* a symphony, he also referred to it as a "symphonic poem for orchestra, soli, and chorus" (de Gorog 81). The published score is labeled "Tondichtung." It consists of five parts: (1) Einleitung (Introduction), (2) Kullervos Jugend [Kullervo's Youth], (3) Kullervo und seine Schwester



[Kullervo and His Sister], (4) Kullervo zieht in den Kampf [Kullervo Goes to War], and (5) Kullervos Tod [Kullervo's Death]. The chorus sings in the third and fifth movements, supplemented in the third movement only by Kullervo (baritone) and the sister (soprano) he seduces. The orchestra movements are in sonata-form, rondo, and scherzo, respectively, whereas the third and fifth movements with chorus are *durchkomponiert* (Tawaststjerna 107).

We need to come to terms with Kullervo's suicide at the end of Sibelius's symphony, at the point just after Kullervo has thrown himself on the sword that had no objection to killing its guilty owner, since it kills the guiltless as well. Here the orchestra returns in monumental *tutti* with the opening theme of the first movement (Sibelius 1961: 4-5, labeled Section A. This statement of the theme would be bars 23-31, but the bars in *Kullervo* are not numbered). The theme is reorchestrated for emphasis and slowed down, but it is still unmistakably the same theme. We must ask: is it used to foster the existential, the tragic, or the nihilistic view of the hero's life? The chorus sings at the close of the last movement:

Se oli surma nuoren miehen,  
kuolo Kullervo urohon,  
loppu ainakin urosta,  
kuolema kovaosaista.

(Lönnrot 1975: 372)

And that was the young man's doom  
the Kullervo fellow's death—  
the end for the fellow, death  
for the ill-fated.

(Lönnrot, *Kalevala*, Bosley translation, 1989: 495)

The orchestra has already come in *tutti* (*maestoso*) without the chorus on page 450 of the score, with the above verse beginning midway through page 452 (Sibelius 1961). There is a pause of two pages (453-55) after "urohon" in which the theme is again played without the chorus.<sup>5</sup> Since the chorus makes no comment except to say that Kullervo died, the interpretation must be found in the music rather than in the words.

According to the first of my three possible interpretations based on Pentikäinen, the return of the first movement theme could indicate the hero's individuation—the point at which he becomes most himself, committing the action which separates him from common humanity, and

conferring value on life by ending it by his own hand. In the second view, the return of the major theme from the "Introduction," after its absence for three movements, represents the inability of the hero to escape the tragedy laid out for him in the past. The intervening moments have only been a delay on the journey that destiny has stored up for him in the course of his life. The third interpretation, stressing the use of the main motif in the first and last moments of the composition, posits the closure of death in conjunction with the sword's message: death is amoral, taking away equally the good and the bad from the earth.

Sibelius tried in part to control the way his *Kullervo* would be interpreted. He gave the false impression, picked up by earlier biographers (see, for example, Ringbom 119), but exposed by Tawaststjerna, that he first "learnt to know runic song in the summer of 1892, after having completed *Kullervo*" (Tawaststjerna 121). Actually, he had heard Larin Paraske before he completed the symphony. Lisa de Gorog observes that the main theme of the first movement is a romantic, non-Finnish one, Sibelius having given up on the idea of using a folksong for the main theme (81). However, the main theme of the second movement, "opening on a strong stress, repetition of tones, and a limited melodic range" has typical features of Finnish folk melodies (81). She concludes that the principal themes of the first two movements set up a conflict between *Kullervo* as a man of the world and as a Finn (84), autobiographically a stand-in for the composer himself.

As Sibelius became more and more celebrated for his symphonies, according to Tim Howell, he did not want to be known as a composer influenced by folk music (1989: 6). Nor did he want to be isolated from the musical tradition of Germany in which he was trained. In 1892 the backdrop against which *Kullervo* appeared led to the foregrounding of Finnish elements. Harold E. Johnson, working from Aino Järnefelt's recollections, writes that there was "considerable danger in staking one's reputation on a work with a Finnish text at a time when most of the people attending and supporting symphony concerts were Swede-Finns" (44).

Although *Kullervo*'s premiere was considered at the time a great triumph for Finnish art, Sibelius tried to control this unpublished work during his lifetime by declining to use his symphony to draw attention to Finland. In her recent book, Glenda Dawn Goss includes a letter from

Olin Downes to Sibelius of 31 August 1950, in which he entreats Sibelius to allow the Polytech Chorus of Finland to perform *Kullervo* on their coming tour of America. Downes suggests that Sibelius may be reluctant to let go of "an early and comparatively immature representation" of his art (Goss 219). Sibelius was not to be swayed, responding elusively, "Though I realize that *Kullervo* even with its potential weaknesses has its historical value at least within my own production I am not certain that the modern public would be able to place it in its proper perspective" (Goss 220). Given Finland's independence since World War I, it would have been hard for non-Finns to understand the cultural politics from which the work sprang.

The success of *Kullervo* as a work of Finnish art, poised between the Scylla of Swedish cultural domination and the Charybdis of Russian political hegemony in Finland, has led to too narrow a view of *Kullervo* in terms of nineteenth-century nationalistic revivals. We must also examine the issue of the expressive potential of music as raised by Schopenhauer, Wagner, Nietzsche, and Hanslick in discussions of absolute music, program music, and the development of Wagnerian "music drama."

Burnett James cautions, "To say that Sibelius after *Kullervo* might have followed the way of Wagner rather than Beethoven is grossly to oversimplify, even to distort, yet does help to pinpoint a necessary argument" (29). Choosing the symphony over opera, Sibelius turned his back on music drama, producing only the one-act minor work, *The Maiden in the Tower*, and abandoning *The Building of the Boat*, the sketches for which he put to use in *The Swan of Tuonela* (James 113). Both Sibelius's secretary Santeri Levas (73) and Bengt de Törne (60) indicate an aversion by Sibelius to Wagner's music, but their memoirs are quite impressionistic and need to be used with caution. The attempt to understand *Kullervo* only in terms of German musical compositions leaves us with the traditional comments that there is some Wagner in the orchestral palette of *Kullervo* and reminiscences of Bruckner's Wagner-influenced long sustained pedal points (de Gorog 81). However, we must turn from what we can hear in the music itself to the question of the relationship of Sibelius to German music theory pervasive in Berlin, where he studied, and Vienna, where he began the work.

The musicological analyses of Tawaststjerna, Tammaro, and Tarasti have each contributed great insights into the structure of *Kullervo*, but they all work from the unexamined premise that the themes in the first movement have an extra-musical reference. They disregard the strong current of formalism in nineteenth-century music theory which would have called this presupposition into question. Mahler in the 1890s withdrew the program designation to his First Symphony (premiered 1889), and Rimsky-Korsakov did the same with *Sheherazade* (premiered 1888). With these instances in mind, we must not make hasty generalizations about the programmatic "content" of Sibelius's *Kullervo*.

Tawaststjerna finds the first movement to be filled with character depiction of Kullervo:

Kullervo himself then, is a figure of tragic dimension predestined by fate to misery and disaster. In the first movement, Sibelius as he himself described it, paints a general picture of him in broad brushstrokes without dwelling on any dramatic details. (110)

For Tawaststjerna, this "Kullervo theme" reflects "different aspects of the hero's psyche: E flat minor represents the mystic, while C minor portrays the hero and seer" (110).

Tawaststjerna's mistake, however, is to believe that the first movement, labeled "Introduction" can represent anything. "Introduction" is clearly a label of a different nature than "Kullervo's Youth," for in the first movement we are not being invited to create a story or a character. It is only in retrospect that the theme in the first movement can have any extra-musical (story or character) content. Tawaststjerna would not have us recognize that the first theme of the "Introduction" can only be read retrospectively as a death theme. It has no story content until it meets up with the words of the chorus. We start with a death that we cannot cognitively identify in the "Introduction," and it is finally revealed to us at the end of life. This is the third of the three choices opened up by Pentikäinen's discussion, the nihilistic one.

Tammaro follows in Tawaststjerna's footsteps in labeling the psychological qualities associated with the themes of the "Introduction". He finds the first theme of the first movement to be indicative of Kullervo's warlike spirit. The second theme reveals Kullervo's introverted traits; and the third, his tragic and passionate qualities (54). Tammaro believes that

Kullervo's death is a heroic expiatory sacrifice (63) and that he is a cursed figure with a sorrowful destiny (53). Tammaro, seeing character traits in music marked simply "Introduction," not surprisingly compares *Kullervo* to Mahler's *Das klagende Lied* and to Schönberg's *Gurrelieder* as choral symphonic music evoking dramas of fate (35).

Tarasti's semiotic analysis also offers some musical comparisons. According to Tarasti, in form Sibelius's *Kullervo* may recall Liszt's *Dante* and *Faust* symphonies, but it is perhaps most reminiscent of Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet* in its shifts between chorus and orchestra (231-32). As in the case of Tammaro's Mahler and Schönberg comparisons, the analogy skips over the fact that there is a program to all the movements of these other choral/symphonic works.

For Tarasti the so-called *Kullervo* theme of the "Introduction" "corresponds to the presentation of the hero's attribute, a strong-minded character, which in itself—along with the theme of fraternal enmity and vengeance—forms the motivating force of the narration, its initial situation" (235). Tarasti believes that the "epically descriptive instrumental sections ... succeed in realizing that which caused difficulties for Wagner—namely the incorporation of the epic element into drama" (235). Tarasti recognizes the difference between the "more or less abstract musical notation" of the second and fourth movements and the third and the fifth (236), but he runs aground on the first movement.

Tarasti describes the main theme of the "Introduction" as if it can reveal character when no character has been introduced:

The initial part of the theme consists of four bars, where the bouncing motif is first heard rising through the second and fifth degree up to the tonic and descending with majestic common harmonies, as though filling the gap of the preceding great interval leap; these elements can be said to represent the contrasts in *Kullervo*'s character—just the kind of correspondence between theme and hero that the aesthetics of a romantic symphonic poem require. We may thus suppose that the octave leap at the beginning of the theme would express the aggressive and destructive forces in *Kullervo*, while the latter half reveals his sovereign nature, as it is stated in the runes: "*Kullervo* is a man, a king." (237)

Tarasti's methodological error here leads him to make a key interpretive error when he gets to the return of the *tutti*, when they present twice more the opening bars of what he calls the "*Kullervo* theme" (269). He states, "Between the fragments of the *Kullervo* theme the chorus gives its state-

ment in G major: "Thus the hero's life was ended / Perished thus the hapless hero" (Kirby translation; 269).

With the return of the theme on the *tutti*, Tarasti argues, "If one had to find a musical counterpart of the catharsis of ancient tragedy or that which Nietzsche called the 'metaphysical' consolation of tragedy, one would certainly best find it in this point of the *Kullervo* Symphony" (269). Tarasti does not quote Nietzsche, but the following passage is relevant. In Section 24 of the second edition of *The Birth of Tragedy* (1878), Nietzsche wrote (in Walter Kaufmann's translation):

The content of the tragic myth is, first of all, an epic event and the glorification of the fighting hero. But what is the origin of this enigmatic trait that the suffering and the fate of the hero, the most painful triumphs, the most agonizing oppositions of motives, in short, the exemplifications of this wisdom of Silenus, or, to put it aesthetically, that which is ugly and disharmonic, is represented ever anew in such countless forms and with such a distinct preference... ? (Kaufmann 1967: 140)

Tarasti understands Nietzsche, but his application of his thought to Sibelius is misleading. Tarasti, coming from a Nietzschean perspective, finds catharsis where there is none. He is, in effect, taking the second, tragic, view based on Pentikäinen: we are consoled because there is a hero struggling to overcome the forces around him that are more powerful than he is. Not surprisingly, as he steers clear of Sibelius's bleakest implications, Tarasti refuses to label the sword's reply to Kullervo's question as nihilistic. He calls it "cynical" (267). For Tarasti "the sword is exclusively the symbol of violence and thus Sibelius's musical interpretation agrees with the general moral principle of the *Kalevala*, condemning violence" (268).

Since Tarasti has already decided that Kullervo is a mystic and a seer, without any information from Sibelius's music that this is so, it is not surprising that he overstresses Kullervo's repentance, which is for him the "central theme of the introductory scene of the Finale" (119). He believes that when Kullervo "wanders like a sleep-walker" back to the place of incest, he is going to an expiatory death, one reflective of the "Christian influence at work in the *Kalevala*" (119).

Surely, this view is mistaken, as Kullervo is not racked by conscience at this point. He blunders upon the site of the incest quite by accident and suddenly is so overcome that he takes his own life. Even Väinämöinen's tacked-on moral, which Sibelius omits, is not a condem-

nation of sin but a warning about the dangers of child abuse.<sup>6</sup> Although he is correct in stating that the sword does not have any positive value as it does in Wagner's *Ring* or Glinka's *Ruslan and Liudmila* (268), the chorus never condemns Kullervo's suicide, and neither should we as listeners.

The tragic view requires the theme to represent a set of circumstances that cannot be avoided. However, the "Introduction" can represent nothing concrete, neither events nor character. Only after the chorus identifies the theme can we see that we have been poised between a premonition of death and death itself throughout the whole composition.<sup>7</sup>

The above analysis is based on a formalist approach to music, which was the dominant trend of the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> In *Philosophy and the Analysis of Music*, Lawrence Ferrara (1991: 1-30) reviews the longstanding debates between those formalists, who like Eduard Hanslick and Edmund Gurney in the nineteenth century, along with Igor Stravinsky in the twentieth, denied a referential quality to music, claiming that music expresses nothing but itself, and those who believe, on the other hand, that music expresses some type of extramusical content. Theodor Adorno and Deryck Cooke both represent distinct variations on this latter type.<sup>9</sup> It appears as if the formalists are still in the majority.

For Sibelius the idea that in music individual feelings can neither be represented nor expressed would have been available in *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (*On the Musically Beautiful*) by Eduard Hanslick, first published in 1854, and in its eighth edition (1891) while Sibelius was in Vienna beginning *Kullervo*. It was a response to Wagner's then recent *The Art Work of the Future* and *Opera and Drama*. In *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics*, Edward Lippman indicates, "Hanslick confines music to the dynamics of feeling, to patters of motion; it is a moving arabesque" (299). Hanslick writes in the third chapter of his essay, *On the Musically Beautiful*, about the autonomy of music (Payzant's translation, 1896):

It is extraordinarily difficult to describe this specifically musical autonomous beauty. Since music has no prototype in nature and expresses no conceptual content, it can be talked about only in dry technical definitions or with poetical fictions. Its realm is truly not of this world. All the fanciful portrayals, characterizations, circumspections of a musical work are either figurative or perverse. What in every other art is still description is in music already metaphor. (32)



Thus Hanslick tried to establish the difference between music and the other arts, all referential to some degree, a project which continued the pioneering work on different art media, *Laokoon, oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing.

The debate over the possibility of an absolute, autonomous, or unconditional music needing no “extra-musical ‘formal motive’ to be meaningful” was, according to Carl Dahlhaus in “The Twofold Truth of Wagner’s Aesthetics” (37) at the centre of the century’s musical aesthetics. Thus it can hardly be coincidence that Sibelius gave no program designation to the first movement of *Kullervo* in contradistinction to the four other movements. Although it is often maintained that Wagner’s view of music was in strong opposition to that of Hanslick, Dahlhaus argues that the main trend of nineteenth-century musical aesthetics was a justification by its great theorists of absolute music over the eighteenth-century emotional theory of aesthetics (38). Furthermore, he finds that Friedrich Schlegel, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Schopenhauer, Hanslick, Wagner, and Nietzsche all belong to this school of thought. Dahlhaus claims:

Strictly speaking it is only Schlegel, Hoffmann, and later Nietzsche who expound a theory of “absolute” music that ventures without qualification on the metaphysical, or (to invert the formulation) a metaphysics of which “absolute” music is an organon—music, that is, which is not founded on emotions, but on which the emotions can be regarded as similes, as secondary reflections. Schopenhauer melded the metaphysics of music with the emotional theory of aesthetics (though in an abstract form), Hanslick was opposed to metaphysics ... and Wagner modified the metaphysics of music (of “absolute” music, though he did not call it by that name) with an empirical theory of “conditional” music. (38)

In *Music and the Historical Imagination*, Leo Treitler applauds Dahlhaus’s reformulation of this debate, which he traces back to E.T.A. Hoffmann’s championing in 1814 of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven as heralds of this new absolute music (176).<sup>10</sup>

Hoffmann’s statement appeared only four years before the first edition of Schopenhauer’s *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (*The World as Will and Idea*), a work which was not to become widely influential until three decades later. Although one might initially think of Schopenhauer as being a representative of the formalists since he emphatically denies that music expresses particularized phenomena, such a view is misleading. For him, music represents the will, and his thought, so important to

Nietzsche and Wagner, may provide a second possible interpretation of the use of the return of the first movement theme in *Kullervo*. It might be possible to argue that even if Sibelius does not connect the theme of the first movement to anything in Kullervo's life, the theme has a content apart from its retrospectively given one. We might take a Schopenhauerian view of the theme and argue that in the disclosure of melody we experience the deepest secrets of human willing and feeling. Schopenhauer writes in *The World as Will and Representation (Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Volume 1, Part 3, Section 52, E. F. J. Payne translation):

But we must never forget when referring to all these analogies I have brought forward, that music has no direct relationship to them, but only an indirect one; for it never expresses the phenomenon, but only the inner nature, the in-itself, of every phenomenon, the will itself. Therefore music does not express this or that particular and definite pleasure, this or that affliction, pain, sorrow, horror, gaiety, merriment, or peace of mind, but joy, pain, sorrow, horror, gaiety, merriment, peace of mind *themselves*, to a certain extent in the abstract, their essential nature, without any accessories, and so without the motives for them. (1969; 1: 261)

Wagner in his Beethoven essay of 1870 with its tribute to Schopenhauer calls attention to the same point, the "*individual will*, silenced in the plastic artist through pure beholding, awakes in the musician as the *universal will*, and—above and beyond all power of vision—now recognizes itself in full self-consciousness" (1977: 184).

If we grant that the main theme of *Kullervo's* first movement represents joy or, less likely, sorrow, it still has no story-meaning until it returns as a type of death theme. At this point we are advised to remember that Schopenhauer analyzed suicide in *The World as Will and Idea*, and thus in the context of *Kullervo* the return of the theme would not represent nihilism but existential triumph. For Schopenhauer, "Far from being denial of the will, suicide is a phenomenon of the will's strong affirmation" (Sec. 69; 1969, 1: 398). The one who commits suicide *does* will life; he is "dissatisfied merely with the conditions on which it has come to him. Therefore he gives up by no means the will-to-live, but merely life, since he destroys the individual phenomenon. He wills life ... but the combination of circumstances does not allow of these, and the result for him is great suffering" (1: 398). In Bryan Magee's words, "Schopenhauer believed that life has to be lived forwards yet can be understood only backwards" (222), and this aspect of Schopenhauer's thought ties in well with the structure of Sibelius's symphony, in which the main theme can

be understood only retrospectively after suicide prevents a further forward motion. The first theme has no content until the chorus gives it one at the end of Kullervo's life. Only in retrospect is its meaning exposed. As Silk and Stern indicate, Schopenhauer, unlike Nietzsche, was not a great admirer of the Greek tragedies, for he did not find in these plays many characters who had what he would consider the wisdom to renounce the world and its woes. Thus he preferred figures from Shakespeare, Goethe, and Schiller who had arrived at such advanced consciousness (328).

Kullervo may be seen as a character who comes to this consciousness and kills himself. In his death we emphatically do not have what Tarasti sees in it with his Nietzschean glasses—the glorification of the fighting hero. Kullervo becomes ennobled in the Schopenhauerian view when he finally stops fighting and cuts through the veil of Maya. He feels that choosing his own death is the only way of preserving the will.

If we never arrive at a final conclusion as to the meaning of *Kullervo* it is because this symphony asks us to take a stand first on whether music can be representational or not. The three critics arrive at their interpretations of *Kullervo* working under the assumption that absolute music can reveal character and story line, leading Tawaststjerna (120) and Tammara (53) to see it as a fate tragedy (120), and Tarasti as a Greek tragedy (269). However, an aesthetics rooted in either Hanslickian formalism takes us to a nihilistic conclusion, and the Schopenhauerian version of expressionism leads us to an existential one. On these two counts *Kullervo* should be considered program music despite the absolute-music character of the first movement.

In any event, probably no other work in Sibelius's *oeuvre* is as provocative. First, he has taken as text a part of the *Kalevala* of considerable ambiguity. Second, elsewhere in his work we do not see that juxtaposition of absolute, programmatic orchestral, and choral/orchestral music which asks us to evaluate our premises about music's expressive potential. Furthermore, this second issue has largely been lost due to the contextualization of *Kullervo* within a discourse of nationalism and a rather narrow understanding of German music theory. We can only speculate as to why *Kullervo* was withheld from performance for almost 65 years, but it seems likely that Sibelius knew that once the symphony was analyzed as something other than Finland's claim to its place in world

culture, musicologists would see in it a confrontation with nihilism and suicide with which he was at pains to disassociate himself both philosophically and personally.

## NOTES

1. Glenda Dawn Goss lists the dates of the early performances in her book on Sibelius and Olin Downes. The first performance, conducted by Sibelius, was 28 April 1892, with a *matinée* the next day, and the fourth movement only the day after that. In March 1893 came three performances. Then the world heard nothing of it until 1 March 1935, when the third movement was given. In June 1957 an extract from the third movement was played. Only when Jussi Jalas (1908–1985), who married Sibelius's daughter Margareta, conducted it at the Sibelius Festival on 12 June 1958 was it heard for the first time in sixty-five years (Goss 220–22). The American premiere with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra did not take place until 1978 under Kenneth Schermerhorn. Sibelius developed choral music that capitalized creatively on the use of the Finnish accent on the first syllable of words (Hodgson 31), and this may be one reason it challenges American singers.

2. For many students of Sibelius, familiarity with *Kullervo* was first gained through the 1971 recording conducted by Paavo Berglund, the program notes of which included Kirby's translation next to Lönnrot's original. All detailed musicological analysis can draw upon the score published in 1961 by Breitkopf & Härtel. The manuscripts of the score are in the Helsinki University Library (Kilpeläinen 20–24).

3. See Kolehmainen 1973: 277–87; Laitinen 1985; Layton 1985; and Alhoniemi (1990). Tammaro (1984: 50–51) mentions Filip von Schantz's *Kullervo* (an overture, 1860), Robert Kajanus's *Kullervo's Death* (a funeral march, 1881), Armas Launis's opera *Kullervo* (1917), Aleksis Kivi's drama *Kullervo* (1860), Juho Heikki Erkkö's drama *Kullervo* (1895), A. Gallen-Kallela's paintings *Kullervo's Curse* (1897–1899) and *Kullervo Goes to Battle* (1901).

4. It is very difficult to construct an interpretation of the *Kalevala* which is able to cover the *Kullervo* cantos as well as the Väinämöinen materials. Although Canto 32 contains spells for guarding a herd, the main events of Cantos 31–36 take place outside of any clear religious framework. For the relationship of Christianity to the Uralic religions in the *Kalevala* see Comparetti (1898; Italian 1892), Haavio (1952; Finnish 1950), Fromm (1985 "Kommentar", and 1985 "*Kalevala*, Mythos und Christentum"), and Alphonso-Karkala (1986). For the relationship of the *Kalevala* to Indo-European comparative mythology, see Minissi (1985), and to shamanism, see Santillana and von Dechend (1969), and Pentikäinen (1989).

5. In any event, the use of the returning motif was to become a hallmark of Sibelius's symphonic method (Cherniavsky 159). Bruckner, whom Sibelius admired, was one of many composers successful with this method of achieving symphonic unity.

6. Although Tawaststjerna seems to think that the Christian element here is strong, Felix J. Oinas notes that Lönnrot's "editorial practices betray his tendency to reduce the Christian and legendary features, while strengthening both the heathen and the historical-realistic elements" (1978: 290).

7. In his study of Sibelius's Fourth Symphony, Tarasti goes so far as to say that at one point in the first movement the "brass symbolize on an actorial level some Finnish Hagen in this Fennougric *Götterdämmerung* and produce a certain actorialization in the universe of this symphony" (1994: 249).

8. Jean Matter (1967) gives a useful musicological analysis of *Kullervo* without any reference to the Kullervo story at all. He does not attempt to see the entire composition as anything other than absolute music, in strong contrast to the other critics discussed. Robert Layton (1993: 148) makes the same assumption as Tawaststjerna, Tarasti, and Tammaro about the programmatic nature of the first movement of *Kullervo*.

9. Of course, there have been attempts to find a middle ground between the two schools. For example, Roman Ingarden writes that one feels that the supporters of pure music are right in that "the connection sometimes appearing between the musical work and the real world is not an essential factor for the musical composition" (82). However, for him the formalists are wrong "when they insist that in a musical work there is nothing that is not in itself a sound-construct" (82). One recent attempt to affirm that music has a content is Laurence Berman's *The Musical Image: A Theory of Content* (1993: 19), which relies on an archetypal model constructed from five dichotomies. In a different vein, Peter Kivy (1980: 46) has argued in *The Corded Shell* that (as writers such as Schopenhauer and Susanne Langer had suggested) "music is *expressive* rather than *expression*; that we recognize emotions as features of music rather than feel them as a result of stimulation" (46), a view wholeheartedly attacked by John Neubauer in *The Emancipation of Music from Language* (1986: 57–58).

10. In contrast to Dahlhaus, Bojan Bujić in his notes on Wagner (in his useful collection of nineteenth-century writings on musical aesthetics) is unable to find in the ambiguities of Wagner's Beethoven essay (1870) more than a repudiation of his past beliefs (1988: 53).

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Alhoniemi, Pirkko. 1990. "The Reception of the *Kalevala* and Its Impact on the Arts." *Religion, Myth, and Folklore in the World's Epics: The Kalevala and its Predecessors*. Ed. by Lauri Honko. New York: Mouton De Gruyter. 231-44.
- Alphonso-Karkala, John B. 1986. "Transformation of Folk Narratives into Epic Compositions in Elias Lönnrot's *Kalevala*." *Jahrbuch für Volksliedforschung* 31: 13-28.
- Berman, Laurence. 1993. *The Musical Image: A Theory of Content*. New York and Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.
- Bosley, Keith, trans. 1994. *The Great Bear: A Thematic Analysis of Oral Poetry in the Finno-Ugrian Languages*. Ed. by Lauri Honko, Senni Timonen, and Michael Branch. New York: Oxford University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1989. "Introduction." *The Kalevala*. By Elias Lönnrot. Trans. by Keith Bosley. Foreword by Alfred Lord. Oxford: Oxford University Press. xiii-lvi.
- Branch, Michael A. 1985. "Introduction." *Kalevala: The Land of the Heroes*. Trans. by William Forsell Kirby. London: Athlone Press. xi-xxxiv.
- Bujić, Bojan, ed. 1988. *Music in European Thought, 1851-1892*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Carpelan, Bo. 1989. *Axel: A Novel*. Trans. David McDuff. Manchester: Carcanet.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1989. *Axel: Roman*. Stockholm: Bonniers.
- Cherniavsky, David. 1947. "Special Characteristics of Sibelius's Style." *The Music of Sibelius*. Ed. by Gerald Abraham. New York: W. W. Norton [Rpt. New York: Da Capo Press, 1975]. 141-76.
- Collinder, Björn. 1964. *The Kalevala and Its Background*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell.
- Comparetti, Domenico. 1898. *The Traditional Poetry of the Finns*. Trans. by Isabella M. Alderton. London: Longmans, Green & Co.
- Cygnæus, Frederik. 1853. *Det tragiske elementet i "Kalevala"*. Helsingfors: Afhandlingar i populära ämnen.
- Dahlhaus, Carl. 1980. *Between Romanticism and Modernism: Four Studies in the Music of the Later Nineteenth Century*. Trans. by Mary Whittall. Berkeley: University of California Press. [Translation of *Zwischen Romantik und Moderne: Vier Studien zur Musikgeschichte des späteren 19. Jahrhunderts*. München: Emil Katzschler, 1974].

- de Gorog, Lisa. 1989. *From Sibelius to Sallinen: Finnish Nationalism and the Music of Finland*. New York and Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.
- Ferrara, Lawrence. 1991. *Philosophy and the Analysis of Music: Bridges to Musical Sound, Form, and Reference*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.
- Friberg, Eino, and Scott Davis. 1988. "Structure in the *Kalevala*." *The Kalevala: Epic of the Finnish People*. By Elias Lönnrot. Trans. by Eino Friberg. Ed. and intro. by George C. Schoolfield. Illustrated by Björn Landström. Helsinki: Otava. 20–25.
- Fromm, Hans. 1985. "Kalevala, Mythos und Christentum." *Poetica* 17, 1–2: 83–99.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1985. "Kommentar." *Kalevala: Das finnische Epos des Elias Lönnrot*. Trans. by Hans Fromm. Stuttgart: Reclam. 387–614.
- Goldman, Albert, and Evert Sprinchorn, eds. 1970. *Wagner on Music and Drama: A Selection from Richard Wagner's Prose Works*. Trans. by H. Ashton Ellis. London: Gollancz. [First edition New York: Dutton, 1964].
- Goss, Glenda Dawn. 1994. *Jean Sibelius and Olin Downes: Music, Friendship, and Criticism*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Haavio, Martti. 1952. *Vänämöinen: Eternal Sage*. Trans. by Helen Goldthwait-Väänänen. Porvoo & Helsinki: Werner Söderström Osakeyhtio.
- Hanslick, Eduard. 1986. *On the Musically Beautiful: A Contribution towards the Revision of the Aesthetics of Music*. Trans. and ed. by Geoffrey Payzant. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Hautala, Jouko. 1969. *Finnish Folklore Research, 1828–1918*. Helsinki: Finnish Society of Sciences.
- Hodgson, Antony. 1984. *Scandinavian Music: Finland & Sweden*. Rutherford, N. J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.
- Howell, Tim. 1989. *Jean Sibelius: Progressive Techniques in the Symphonies and Tone Poems*. New York: Garland Press.
- Ingarden, Roman. 1986. *The Work of Music and the Problem of Its Identity*. Trans. by Adam Czerniawski. Ed. by Jean Harrell. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- James, Burnett. 1983. *The Music of Jean Sibelius*. Foreword by Raymond Bantock. Rutherford, N. J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.
- Johnson, Harold E. 1959. *Jean Sibelius*. New York: Knopf.
- Kilpeläinen, Kari. 1991. *The Jean Sibelius Musical Manuscripts at Helsinki University Library: A Complete Catalogue*. Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel.
- Kivi, Aleksis. 1993. *The Heath Cobblers (Nummisuutarit) and Kullervo*. Trans. by Douglas Robinson. St Cloud, Minn.: North Star Press.
- Kivy, Peter. 1980. *The Corded Shell: Reflections on Musical Expression*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.



- Kolehmainen, John I. 1973. *Epic of the North*. New York Mills, Minn.: Northwestern Pub. Co.
- Kuusi, Matti, Keith Bosley, and Michael Branch, eds. and trans. 1977. *Finnish Folk Poetry, Epic: An Anthology in Finnish and English*. Introduction by Matti Kuusi. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society.
- Laitinen, Kai. 1985. "The Kalevala and Finnish Literature." *Books from Finland* 1: 61–64.
- Layton, Robert. 1985. "The Kalevala and Music." *Books from Finland* 1: 56–60.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1993. *Sibelius*. New York: Macmillan. [First ed. London: J. M. Dent, 1965].
- Levas, Santeri. 1973. *Sibelius: A Personal Portrait*. Trans. by Percy M. Young. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press. [First ed. London: J. M. Dent, 1972].
- Lippman, Edward. 1992. *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Lönnrot, Elias. 1975. *Kalevala: Karjalais Suomalainen kansanepos*. Helsinki: Karjala Kustantamo Petroskoi.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1989. *The Kalevala*. Trans. by Keith Bosley. Foreword by Alfred Lord. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1988. *The Kalevala: Epic of the Finnish People*. Trans. by Eino Friberg. Ed. and intro. by George C. Schoolfield. Illustrated by Björn Landström. Helsinki: Otava.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1985. *Kalevala: The Land of the Heroes*. Trans. by W. F. Kirby. Introduction by M. A. Branch. London: Athlone Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1963. *The Kalevala, or Poems of the Kaleva District*. Trans. by Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1992. *The Kanteletar: Lyrics and Ballads after Oral Tradition*. Trans. and ed. by Keith Bosley. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1969. *The Old Kalevala and Certain Antecedents*. Trans. by Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1963. "Preface (1849) to the *New Kalevala*." *The Kalevala, or Poems of the Kaleva District*. Trans. by Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963. 374–79.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1963. "Preface (1835) to the *Old Kalevala*." *The Kalevala, or Poems of the Kaleva District*. Trans. by Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 365–74.
- Magee, Bryan. 1983. *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Matter, Jean. 1967. "Kullervo, ou comment naît un grand musicien." *Schweizerische Musikzeitung/Revue Musicale Suisse* 107 (Nov.-Dec.): 343–53.

- Minissi, Nullo. 1985. "Kalevala funzionale con Dumézil fuori dell'indoeuropeo." *Belfagor* 40, 4 (July): 377-402.
- Neubauer, John. 1986. *The Emancipation of Music from Language: Departure from Mimesis in 18th Century Aesthetics*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1967. "The Birth of Tragedy" and "The Case of Wagner." Trans. and ed. by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House.
- Oinas, Felix J., ed. 1978. "The Balto-Finnic Epics." *Heroic Epic and Saga: An Introduction to the World's Great Folk Epics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 286-309.
- Pentikäinen, Juha. 1989. *Kalevala Mythology*. Trans. and ed. by Ritva Poom. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Perander, J.E.F. 1872. "Tragillisesta periaatteesta Kullervorunoissa." *Kaikuja Hämeestä* 1: 133-43.
- Ringbom, Nils-Eric. 1954. *Jean Sibelius: A Master and His Work*. Trans. by Geraldine I. C. de Courcy. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Sallinen, Aulis. 1992. *Kullervo, Opera in Two Acts*. Libretto by Aulis Sallinen. Trans. by Erkki Arni. Cond. Ulf Söderblom. Finnish National Opera Orchestra. With Jorma Hynninen, Eeva-Liisa Saarinen, Matti Salminen, and Jorma Silvasti. Helsinki: Ondine. ODE 780-3T.
- Santillana, Giorgio de, and Hertha von Dechend. 1969. *Hamlet's Mill: An Essay on Myth and the Frame of Time*. Boston: Gambit.
- Schopenhauer, Arthur. 1966. *The World As Will and Representation*. Trans. by E. F. J. Payne. 2 vols. New York: Dover [First ed. Indian Hills, Colorado: Falcon's Wine Press, 1958].
- Sibelius, Jean. 1961. *Kullervo, op. 7*, Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1971. *Kullervo, op. 7; Scene with Cranes from Kuolema, op. 44; Swanwhite, op. 54*. Cond. Paavo Berglund. Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. Helsinki University Male Voice Choir. Railli Kostia, mezzo-soprano. Usko Viitanen, baritone. Program Notes by Robert Layton. Hollywood: Angel. ANG SB-3778.
- Silk, M. S., and Joseph Peter Stern. 1981. *Nietzsche on Tragedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tammaro, Ferruccio. 1984. *Jean Sibelius*. Turin: Edizioni Radio-televisione Italiana.
- Tarasti, Eero. 1979. *Myth and Music: A Semiotic Approach to the Aesthetics of Myth in Music, especially that of Wagner, Sibelius, and Stravinsky*. The Hague: Mouton.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1994. "The Semiotics of Symphonism: A Deconstruction of National Meanings in Sibelius's Fourth Symphony." *A Theory of Musical Semiotics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 242-65.

- Tawaststjerna, Erik. 1976. *Sibelius: Volume 1, 1865-1905*. Trans. by Robert Layton. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Törne, Bengt de. 1938. *Sibelius: A Close-up*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Treitler, Leo. 1989. *Music and the Historical Imagination*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Trotter, William R. 1993. *Winter Fire*. New York: Dutton.
- Wilson, William A. 1976. *Folklore and Nationalism in Modern Finland*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.





## REVIEWS / COMPTES RENDUS

**Gurli A. Woods, ed.** *Isak Dinesen and Narrativity: Reassessments for the 1990s*. Ottawa: Carleton University Press for The Centre for Textual Analysis, Discourse, and Culture, 1994. vii + 240 pages.

Reviewed by MARINA ALLEMANO  
*University of Alberta*

Karen Blixen is for mature readers, and—one may add—for contemporary critics. If the assessment of her by Torben Brostrøm in Gyldendal's *Dansk litteraturhistorie* [Danish Literary History] from 1966 is any indication of the critical position held in Denmark vis-à-vis her authorship, we may assume that she was only partly understood during her own time and the 1960s. Brostrøm sees Blixen (Danes generally don't use her pseudonym Isak Dinesen) as a "mythic writer," who is especially preoccupied with the theme of destiny and the motif of the Fall, and who sees art (storytelling) as a means to dissolving the Fall and reconstructing a mythic world of old. Thus "Author" equals God who equals Fate. Rejecting her as a modern, contemporary or psychological writer, Brostrøm labels Blixen "æstetiker" (aesthete) with a penchant for the supernatural and fantastic à la the German Romantics Heinrich von Kleist and E. T. A. Hoffmann. All of this is of course not untrue, but from the perspective of the 1990s, it is not very sophisticated either. As Morten Kyndrup observes in his contribution to the book under review ("Isak Dinesen Versus Postmodernism: The Criticism of Modernity and the Problem of Non-simultaneousness in Relation to Isak Dinesen's Work" [133-149]), Dinesen's criticism of Modernity was read "backwards" by her contemporaries (136).

For the past thirty years different critical approaches, in particular feminist and poststructuralist, have opened new doors to her writing and revealed depths and horizons hitherto gone unnoticed; or, to quote Kyndrup again, "the same signs (i. e., Dinesen's narratives), which according to an earlier framing had one meaning, will now, in principle, produce another meaning" (134). And so they do.

*Isak Dinesen and Narrativity: Reassessments for the 1990s*, edited by Gurli Woods, is only one of the latest in a series of newer studies, but it is the first anthology of diverse critical articles to be published in English. The anthology contains fourteen articles, three of which are by Dinesen specialists (Susan Hardy Aiken, Sara Stambaugh and Bo Hakon Jørgensen) who have each written a book in addition to articles on the author. Other contributors have previously published articles on the subject as well, but some have only a passing but informed interest in selected narratives by Dinesen. One contributor, A. W. Halsall, for instance, claims not to be a specialist but finds Dinesen's "The Blank Page" a convenient and illustrative text for his own methodology ("Methods of Narratology and Rhetoric for Analyzing Isak Dinesen's 'The Blank Page'" [150–164]). In fact, this enigmatic tale is the most frequently quoted Dinesen text along with *Out of Africa* in the volume. In spite of its brevity, it has become "a kind of paradigmatic feminist text," as Barbara Gabriel points out on page 92 in her article "Mallarméan Poetics and Isak Dinesen's Politics in 'The Blank Page'" (79–101), and now it has taken on a similar luminary status for critics interested in narratology, metafiction and deconstruction.

Regardless of their specialized area, all fourteen contributors share a common vision of Dinesen as a modern even postmodern writer, but not all are interested in the feminist aspects of her writing. As Halsall puts it, there are readers "whose ideological presuppositions do not commit them to reading it ["The Blank Page"] as a tract, feminist or otherwise" (150). So there.

Nevertheless, the eight articles by women scholars all deal with gender and feminist issues, and two of the remaining six by men make references to gender roles and gender specificity (Casey Bjerregaard Black in "The Phenomenon of Intertextuality and the Role of Androgyny in Isak Dinesen's 'The Roads Round Pisa'" [180–192] and Toby Foshay in "Isak Dinesen's 'The Pearls': Resentment and the Economy of Narrative" [193–203]). Of those that apply feminist frameworks, Aiken's "Consuming Isak Dinesen" (3–24) and Gabriel's aforementioned contribution tie for first place in respect to theoretical virtuosity and textual coverage. Aiken of course has an advantage, being the author of the excellent study *Isak Dinesen and the Engendering of Narrative* (1990), portions of which reappear in the newer article (the same is the case with Sara Stambaugh whose contribution "Isak Dinesen Among the Victorians: Some Shared Symbolic Techniques" [115–130] in part draws on

material from her book *The Witch and the Goddess in the Stories of Isak Dinesen: A Feminist Reading* [1988]).

Relying on theoretical analogies of the masquerade and carnival, as developed by Teresa de Lauretis and Bakhtin respectively, and following the feminist positions of Irigaray and Cixous, Aiken argues convincingly that “*Out of Africa* rewrites the imperialist script ... as subversion” (12), and that gender has a lot to do with it. Moreover, Dinesen rewrites “herself” through various poses, as do many of her characters, and manages to blur the distinction between body and narrative; as the world consumes texts, authors and the objectified female body, Dinesen retorts with “dis-orderly enactments” and gets the last Isakian laugh.

Gabriel’s superb paper deals with “The Blank Page” as a text at the intersection of existing (French) Symbolist discourse and that of Woman’s subjectivity. In comparison, Bo Hakon Jørgensen focuses on Dinesen as a neo-Symbolist *sans la féminine* and reads her as an extension of the French and Danish (Sophus Claussen) masters, and aims to uncover Dinesen’s conception of “the nature of the story” (in “The Poetics of the Story: On Symbolist Tendencies in Isak Dinesen’s Fiction” [102–114]). Both Gabriel and Jørgensen successfully establish the presence of the Symbolist creed in Dinesen’s texts, that “the internal combination of the elements [in the work of art] is more significant than their possible reference to the recognizable outside world” (Jørgensen 104); that is, signifiers are prioritized over the signified. They also both quote Dinesen quoting Baudelaire in “The Invincible Slave-Owners,” and Jørgensen concludes that form which “originates in the storyteller’s olympian perspective” is united with “subjectivity” (111). Voilà, the Divine Story. But Gabriel augments the argument by showing among a multitude of things that Dinesen practices a critique of Symbolism and locates in its discourse (which is rooted in “patriarchal desire”) “a politics of gender” (88–89). Voilà, the Luciferian Story.

The articles by Kristjana Gunnars (“Life as Fiction: Narrative Appropriation in Isak Dinesen’s *Out of Africa*” [25–34]), Gurli A. Woods (“Lilith and Gender Equality in Isak Dinesen’s ‘The Supper at Elsinore’ and ‘The Old Chevalier’” [47–61]), Kathryn Barnwell (“Tapping the Roots: Hidden Sources of Power in Isak Dinesen’s ‘The Dreamers’” [62–76]) and Sara Stambaugh are likewise informative. Gunnars raises the questions of discontinuity and dislocation in Dinesen’s autobiographical writing. Where Aiken in her book argues that *Out of Africa* can be read as “a text of transport,” Gunnars points to “the narrator’s own powerlessness



in relation to that *jouissance*" (33). In the end, Gunnars concludes, the text is "a story of progressive silencing" (34). I agree.

Woods, Barnwell and Stambaugh write on Dinesen's use of mythical figures, legends and symbols whose significance may escape readers. Lilith from Jewish folklore is generally perceived as a demonic, nocturnal female in flight, but Woods demonstrates through her close reading of Dinesen that the figure represents independence and "a silent subversive force in much of Dinesen's writing" (61), especially as a force that shows up unreliable narrators of the phallic order.

Barnwell occasionally slips into feminist New Ageisms with references to the Mother Goddess, Mother Earth and "female wisdom" in her tracing of figures such as the Wandering Jew, the Sphinx and Donna Anna (from *Don Giovanni*). Nevertheless, many obscure allusions are being clarified, and the argument about Dinesen's texts being gender-conscious is ultimately strengthened.

The Victorian scholar Sara Stambaugh has a cornucopia of public symbols and symbolic plots to offer from the Victorian repertoire that directly or indirectly has found its way into Dinesen's fiction. By her own admission, Stambaugh's critical approach is that of "middle-aged New Criticism" written in "straightforward English" (*The Witch and the Goddess* 3). Theoretical discourse has its obvious advantages, but this reader must admit that Stambaugh's elegant prose is a stylistic (re)treat in the middle of a volume rich in technical language.

Speaking of which—in the essay by H. Jill Scott ("Sp(1)acing out of the (Sub)Text: Rewriting through Landscapes in Isak Dinesen's *Out of Africa*" [35-46]), jargon and creative criticism have merged into a discourse that makes communication difficult. Playful orthographic devices with brackets, slashes and dashes are very effective (and even necessary) to convey certain poststructuralist notions, but the polysemic associations that Scott gives to the bracketed (l) in "sp(1)acing" add humour rather than sense to her thesis: "(l) signifies the meeting point of 'place' and 'space' as presence, but mute and therefore absence" (35), Scott explains. So far so good. But (l) also signifies the French homonyms "elle" and "ailes"; the "capital 'L' embodying the metaphysical dialectic of the angle, which must explode into the metaphor of woman"; and the (l) as "symbol of the phallic signifier"; all of which is analogous to the representations of woman in *Out of Africa* (35). Adding ludic(rousness) to the ludic, Scott invents "sp(1)a(y)cing" (42) to imply that Dinesen subverts the novel genre (and Lacan's positing of woman as not All) and creates a

space of feminine *jouissance* and indeterminacies. In any case, Scott reads the loss in *Out of Africa* as a liberating moment, freed from the male specular gaze; here she may agree with Aiken but disagree with Gunnars.

In the remaining six articles that deal with *Interpretive Strategies from Rhetoric to Deconstruction*, some recurring terms are postmodernism, self-deconstruction, intertextuality, metanarrative, dialogical discourse and disauthentication.

Kyndrup, who has written several books on postmodernism, notes that truth or authenticity is to be found at the level of enunciation in Dinesen's texts, an argument, I may add, that is also used in autobiographical theory in which the narrator's manipulation of the text is seen as the generating of the desired authenticity. Yet the omniscient narrator in "The Deluge at Norderney" is unreliable and keeps the truth from being "objective." With the help of charts and thorough explanations that sometimes run into redundancies (e. g., "in [the tales'] (enunciated) enunciation, *enonciation*..." [136], the latter French *sans l'accent aigu*), Kyndrup proposes that the story is a deconstruction of its own authenticity and hence somewhat "postmodern." His insight is to see that Dinesen is not turning away from the Modern condition but is "working it through" and performing a "staging of the problem" (149), and thus she is also commenting on or anticipating the Postmodern condition already germinating in Modernity. His argument dovetails nicely with those of Gabriel and Jørgensen that see the Symbolists as the first Moderns.

Authorial deconstruction and disauthentication are also the topics of Cristina Gheorghe's contribution "Deconstructing the Fictional World of Isak Dinesen's 'The Monkey'," (204-220) but with a difference. Taking the position of Eco and Pavel that a certain amount of referentiality must be assumed by the reader for him/her to properly receive the fictional world, Gheorghe sees Dinesen's deconstructive strategies as signifiers of "the rupture of the hierarchy of patriarchal society of her time" (204). Not being an enthusiast of Doležel's possible world semantics, I find the ensuing application of the four modal systems a bit confusing; however, with persistence I managed to get through it and learn something about "The Monkey" en route.

Analysing "The Blank Page," both A. W. Halsall and Mark A. Kemp look at narrators and readers. Both observe the difficulties the reader has in naturalizing the text (Kemp, on page 170 of his "The Silent Tale: Pragmatic Stragedy in 'The Blank Page'" [165-179]) or formulating its

*ethos* (Halsall 150, Kemp 172). Kemp follows Eco's procedure and looks for the construction of the Model, i. e., naive, reader and the eventual Critical reader. At the text's semantic level, which is necessarily over-coded with ideological significance, says Kemp, the naive reader is constructed as a consumer of didactic folktale, chivalric romance and the Gothic tale (172–73). A series of paradoxes in the tale increasingly unsettles the Model reader, and at the pragmatic level the Critical reader is left with ambiguity.

Employing no-nonsense Aristotelian rhetoric and formal narratology, Halsall arrives at a similar conclusion that the existential, i. e., historical, reader will end up as an "*implied* reader" if wishing to solve the riddle of the "open work" (163–64). Although complex in its argumentation, Kemp's exposition is ultimately more satisfying than Halsall's, in that the latter tends to overdefine Genette's nomenclature of diegetic narrators and underdefine tropes such as *aposiopesis* and *reticentia* (153). Also, I find that the two parts "Narratology" and "Rhetoric" do not form the symbiosis that Halsall wishes for, but remain distinct entities. In part two, for instance, there is nary a direct reference to the various diegetic situations and corresponding narratees of part one, and with the simple label of *implied* readers at the end of the essay, one wonders why Halsall bothered to list Genette's terms at all.

Toby Foshay also situates Dinesen within Modernity, but enters into dialogue with Robert Langbaum and Aage Henriksen regarding the closed or open nature of Dinesen's thematics. Like Henriksen, he vouches for the open structure and continues the argument by saying that a certain interaction exists between consciousness [moral / religious], body [sex] and the world (195). Foshay reads "The Pearls" as a metanarrative about "the cognitional primacy of storytelling" (199), about the overcoming of resentment "through narrative by means of narrative" which "enables us finally to recognize the imaginary nature of desire itself" (203), a notion that might sit well with a Lacanian analysis, I should think.

The aspects of textual self-consciousness and carnivalesque and Menippean discourse appear again in Casey Bjerregaard Black's paper. A new observation is the little known fact that Dinesen was an admirer of the little known American author James Branch Cabell, a writer of fantasy in the ludic mode. Pointing out what several other contributors have also implied, Black sees the Dinesen tale as a "writerly" text, but in addition he examines the game of intertextuality that forms a special kind of

*vraisemblance* in the text. His point of departure is Jonathan Culler's notion of *vraisemblabilisation*, a five-level process of interpretation which includes the monological aspects of the story, the references to a general cultural text, generic conventions, textual self-awareness, and finally the ironic/parodic game of intertextuality (182). The aspect of androgyny as a vital aspect of the ironic game is mentioned just before the finishing line. I, for one, would have enjoyed an extended discussion of that fascinating topic. However, I was glad finally to see a recognition, if only in passing, of the kinship between Dinesen, Pirandello and Sterne, all creators of self-conscious texts with a history that goes back to Cervantes.

At last, congratulations are due to the editor for her inclusive agenda; for her initiative and organisational work around the 1990 International Colloquium on Dinesen at Carleton, which in time became the foundation for the anthology; and for her useful introduction that includes brief abstracts of each article. The index seems adequate, and the bibliography likewise, although an alternative arrangement with a bibliography appended to each article would have facilitated a quick scanning of the theoretical references of each contribution. I found few typos and only a glaring one that turned out to be quite funny: in his second sentence, Bo Hakon Jørgensen allows the young Dinesen to mature four years in one solar year, making her fifteen (instead of eighteen) years old in 1903 and nineteen in 1904 (102). The anthology is to be recommended to teachers, researchers and graduate students interested in Dinesen as a modern writer.

**Pamela Wild.** *Sointula: Island Utopia*. Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 1995. 223 pages.

Reviewed by J. DONALD WILSON  
*University of British Columbia*

Sointula is not known to most Canadians today, or even British Columbians for that matter. Thus, it is frequently the case that people ask me "Where is that?" when I mention I've been researching the utopian settlement of Sointula on Malcolm Island, 300 kilometres northwest of Vancouver. From 1901 to 1905, a group of Finns, who never numbered more than 250 inhabitants at any one time, sought to establish a settlement based on utopian socialist principles that dated back to the early nineteenth century. The inspiration behind the colony was the Finn Matti Kurikka (1863-1915), an editor, author, publicist and playwright, well known in socialist and literary circles in Finland before coming to

Canada in his late thirties at the invitation of a group of Finnish miners discouraged with their lives near Nanaimo. Kurikka's main associate in this venture was long-time friend and fellow editor A. B. Mäkelä (1863–1932) who, after Kurikka's departure in 1905, was to live out his life on Sointula as a sometimes editor, lighthouse keeper and member of the Communist Party of Canada.

The story of this part of Sointula's history constitutes almost two-thirds of Pamela Wild's *Sointula: Island Utopia*. A former resident of Sointula herself, Wild became fascinated with the obvious parallels between the turn-of-the-century utopians who sought to flee the dangerous and exploitative coal mines of James Dunsmuir on Vancouver Island and the "hippies" of the late sixties who congregated on Malcolm Island in their flight from the Vietnam War, "civilization," and persecution in the United States. And the parallels between the two migrations are quite striking. Like several other ethnically-based settlements in British Columbia of the time, the former Sointula was characterized by isolation, a homogeneous ethnic population with strong ties to Finland, a commitment to cooperation, even communitarianism, and a desire to escape from the harmful features of capitalism. Many of these same goals and aspirations were shared by the recent migrants from the United States who on Malcolm Island relished the prospects of a "return to nature" and the simple way of life. For a time the tensions between the "old" and "new" inhabitants ran high. The latter were for some time thought to be lazy, shiftless and "druggies," but eventually as the newcomers settled in, got jobs, built homes and tilled the soil, relations improved between the Finns and "the others". Although there were rumours of "hippie communes," Wild assures us there really weren't any as such, just a lot of cooperation and doing things together, whether at work or play.

*Sointula: Island Utopia* is a popular, not an academic account of the history of Malcolm Island although the utopian part is heavily based on the work of a number of established Finnish and Canadian scholars who have written extensively about Kurikka and Mäkelä. Like most popular accounts, a number of errors have unfortunately found their way into the text. The Finnish Lutheran Church did not oppose universal education in the late nineteenth century; in fact it was a strong proponent of universal literacy. Matti Kurikka became involved with Minna Canth, a mentor of sorts, in Kuopio *after* his stay at Helsinki University. Mäkelä's Finnish name was Augusti (not Austin); in Canada he went by Austin McKela. The map is not complete, failing to show us the location of Rough Bay and Kaleva. There are numerous misspellings of Finnish words. Ku-

rikka's first wife was a Palmqvist; his daughter from that marriage was Aila not Alli. The first newspaper he edited was in Viipuri not Vipurin. The Finnish-American socialist newspaper is *Raivaaja*. Kurikka lived out his life in Penkere, Connecticut, not Penker. The "fist press" or handwritten newspaper is "nyrkkilehti". These errors mar an otherwise interesting text, and the photographs, both historical and present-day, are excellent, giving the reader a real sense of the island and its fascinating history up to the present.

The best part of this book, for this reviewer at any rate, are the last six chapters which treat the post-1905 period. Here Wild documents the ways in which the island recovered from the breakup of the utopian settlement that saw the colony split because of economic problems and ideological differences between those who supported Kurikka and his opponents. The Co-op store established in 1909 was Canada's first consumer cooperative. The Sointula Socialist Club formed in 1907 joined the Socialist Party of Canada, leading the *Western Clarion* to declare, "If only our Anglo-Saxon members had half the zeal of the Sointula Finns!" (126). Subsequently the Socialist Club switched their allegiance to the Social Democratic Party of Canada, and then through the left-wing Finnish Organization of Canada most became members or adherents of the Communist Party of Canada. As logging and fishing became the island's economic backbone, the men became active in both logging and fishing unions. In the famous fishermen's strike of 1936, one striker recalled: "The leaders who held us together during [that strike] were Sointula fishermen" (137).

Wild is also adept in her description of Malcolm Island's social life in the 1930s and 1940s. As one resident reported: "There was no church, no policeman, no beer parlours, and no trouble in those days" (159). But this ideal situation was not to last. Electricity in 1951 and telephone service five years later helped change the island. Organized religion in the form of coastal missionaries came for the first time in 1948. (The original Finns were rabidly anti-clerical.) The first church, an interdenominational one, was opened in 1961. The RCMP arrived in 1965. Television and booze at Saturday night dances became common. High school students took the ferry each day to school in Port McNeill. But still by the late 60s (before the arrival of the hippies) "everybody knew everybody". "When you saw a man coming down the street," one informant reported, "you knew where he was coming from, you knew where he was going, and you knew what he was thinking about" (175). The arrival of the American "hippies" changed all that. Now there are two convenience stores, two

churches, a liquor store, a licensed hotel, an RCMP substation, several bed-and-breakfasts, and two fishing lodges. Today about 750 people make their home on Malcolm Island.

The author's conclusion to this very readable book is that relative harmony ("sointula" in Finnish) has been restored to Malcolm Island, but progress is defined very differently now. The community ideal, the colony's original goal, is apparently slipping away. Wild's final words say it all: "Sointula's Finnish and utopian roots provide a link with the past, but that unique sense of community spirit is fading with each generation" (197).

**Nelma Sillanpää.** *Under the Northern Lights: My Memories of Life in the Finnish Community of Northern Ontario.* Edited by Edward Laine. History Division: Mercury Series Paper 45. Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1994. 129 pages.

Reviewed by VARPU LINDSTRÖM  
York University, Toronto

The history of women, especially the history of immigrant women, has been enriched by the publication of Nelma Sillanpää's memories. Nelma Sillanpää was not a remarkable woman in the conventional sense. Unlike most women whose biographies, diaries or letter collections have been published, Sillanpää was not rich, educated or famous, nor was she married to a powerful husband. She did not commit a crime nor did she partake in any sensational historical events. She was simply a Finnish immigrant daughter of hardworking northern Ontario bushworkers.

The editor of Sillanpää's "memories," Edward W. Laine, has been careful not to distort the simple, straightforward style of the storyteller. This gives the book a sense of authenticity and integrity. The reader quickly learns that Sillanpää does not sensationalize or over-dramatize. She is not seeking sympathy for the hardships she experienced as a lonely child growing up in isolated bushcamps but rather tells in a matter of fact way, yet sometimes with humour, of her family's poverty. Her first home, for example, is described as a place so small that one had to go outside to turn around. The first five chapters are most rewarding for social historians seeking to learn about living and working conditions in the bush while highlighting the child's and woman's experience.

The second theme of this book immerses the reader in the social and cultural life of the northern Ontario Finnish ethnic communities



where Sillanpää was an active participant in gymnastics and sports. In her youth she was able to cross the deep political divisions which separated Finnish cultural activities in northern Ontario. Later in her life, however, she identified with the church Finns. The book reveals much about the second generation's efforts to maintain cultural ties to the Finnish community while adapting with equal ease to the host society's institutions.

Nelma Sillanpää allows the reader to chart the assimilation process of her parents and her own development in between two cultures. During the Second World War her loyalties were clearly with the Canadian troops. Her Finnish Canadian boyfriend had volunteered to fight with the Canadian troops in Europe while Nelma found work in the war industry. At the same time, and especially after the Second World War, she worked actively to raise funds for war-torn Finland. There is no hint of conflicting loyalties or identity crisis. This energetic organizer and leader accepted her position as a Finnish Canadian; she married within the ethnic group and continued to work all her life actively within its many cultural institutions.

The book does not attempt to give any overview of northern Ontario history or the Finnish immigrant experience. Its goals are more modest and personal. Still, there is much a reader interested in women's studies and immigrant history can learn from Nelma Sillanpää's selected memories. They supply a fresh, honest perspective to the every-day experiences of one immigrant child and woman and open windows on aspects of Canadian social history seldom explored.

**Börje Vähämäki.** *Mastering Finnish.* New York: Hippocrene Books, 1994. 386 + x pages.

Reviewed by JOHN DINGLEY  
*York University, Toronto*

*Mastering Finnish* (henceforth: *MF*) is a recent addition to Hippocrene's *Mastering X Language* series and like its stablemates *MF* follows certain guidelines with respect to approach, stressing practical skills and the use of the language in its social setting. The author, Vähämäki is a Finn and an experienced teacher of his mother tongue, currently holding a position at the University of Toronto, where he has done much to advance the Fennic cause in Canada. *MF* is divided into two main sections: Teaching Units, and Reference Grammar. In the nineteen Teaching Units, each Unit covers a discrete communicative situation, with grammar points being introduced somewhat randomly. Each Unit has a vocabulary list in-



cluded, with further useful comments on set expressions and idioms, plus interesting information appertaining to Finnish life and culture. At the end of each Unit are some exercises, the answers to which can be found at the end of the book. Chapter 20 is given over to review tests. Tapes are also available, but were not on hand for this reviewer. The Reference Grammar section is a compact, uncluttered summary of the main points of Finnish grammar. Vähämäki labels it rather ambitious (ix), a description with which I would not disagree.

Initially let me make a general point. If you happen not to be an Estonian, Finnish is deemed a difficult language to come to grips with. However, in my opinion, the main difficulty that Finnish presents is the utter strangeness of the vocabulary. We simply do not recognize much at all. Take for example the following sign: *Huoneen käyttäjä: ikkunat kiinni lähtiessä*. Faced with this, even the distantly related Hungarian will be as baffled as any mere English-speaker. Yet paramount in language learning is the acquisition of vocabulary and it is this which proves to be the most daunting of tasks for the student of Finnish. In this respect *MF* is found wanting. Vähämäki introduces vocabulary at a furious pace, with little or no subsequent reinforcement and, most unfortunately, there is no comprehensive vocabulary list at the end of the book. However, this major detraction aside, I can say that Vähämäki succeeds admirably in introducing the student to Finnish in real-life situations.

Throughout *MF* I find little to fault or criticize. Now and again the English wanders off line, e. g., on page 27 "deep-going consequences" sounds strange to me. Perhaps "profound" would be better. Page 35, "wicket" in the sense of "counter" is only used in this way in Canada. Page 132, "runs" should read "run". Page 136 in the sentence: "Keys are often forgotten at home," "forgotten" is a direct translation from Finnish *unohtaa* and is not acceptable in English, where "leave" would be normal. Page 346 "supercede" should be "supersede". (This is the most common spelling error in English.) Other points I would mention are the following. In the discussion of vowel harmony on page 27 it should be noted that this phenomenon is not always rigorously carried out, e. g., *tällainen*, *minkälainen*, and in compounds such as *kesäaamu*. On page 56 SE (Southeast) as a noun is *kaakko*, whilst *kaakkoinen* is the adjective. Page 30 *jne.* is more usually read off as *ja niin edelleen* than *ja niin edespäin*. Page 318 (referring to page 311) the partitive plural of words like *kapakka*, i. e., *kapakoita*, seem to defy the laws of gradation. Since the desinence begins with a single consonant, no gradation should take place. On page 342 Vähämäki says: "The verb will agree in number and

person with the subject." Then on page 343 he gives: *Autossa on nahkaistuimet*, where agreement is lacking. This topic is more complicated than Vähämäki makes out. Page 47, ex. 4, no. 6 has the English "two one-way tickets" which is translated on page 365 as *kaksi menopaluulippua* [two return tickets].

These minor points notwithstanding, Vähämäki's *MF* is to be seen as a major contribution to Finnish studies in the English-speaking world. In methodology it is much more ambitious than Oli Nuutinen's solid standby—the *Suomea suomeksi* series. Nuutinen (who sadly died recently) is, however, more realistic with respect to the introduction of vocabulary, and perhaps a combination of Nuutinen and Fred Karlsson's excellent reference grammar, superbly translated by Andrew Chesterman (= *Finnish Grammar*), might still prove to be more popular than *MF*. In some ways I can see *MF* being used as a sequel to the Nuutinen/Karlsson combination, its being perhaps more of a second year book than a first.

One final point: Vähämäki chooses not to treat in his *MF* the many participial and most of the infinitival constructions of Finnish. His justification is that these do not fall within his purview, being used more or less exclusively in the written medium. While this is true, it does mean that some of the significance conveyed by the words in the sign I mentioned earlier would remain a mystery. *Huoneen käyttäjä: ikkunat kiinni lähtiessä* [Room User: close the windows when you leave], where *lähtiessä* is a 2nd infinitive inessive, and is one of the many constructions not covered in *MF*. And yet Vähämäki is vindicated in that the sign, which I encountered in a computer lab at a provincial university in Finland, was probably penned by a fairly uneducated person for whom such infinitival constructions verge on the exotic. This particular infinitival form is not strictly correct in that it lacks the possessive suffix *-si*. It should read: *Huoneen käyttäjä: ikkunat kiinni lähtiessäsi*.

**Preben Meulengracht Sørensen.** *Fortælling og ære: Studier i islændingesagaerne*. Århus: Universitetsforlag, 1993. 390 pages.

Reviewed by PATRICIA BETHEL  
Ottawa

Over the past two decades, the date of composition of the medieval Icelandic sagas and comfortable assumptions about the texts' historicity and relative sophistication of their prose style have undergone a thoroughgoing re-evaluation. *Fortælling og ære* is a major contribution to this process.

Until fairly recently, the deceptively simple style of the *Sagas of the Icelanders* tended to lead critics to date the genre as relatively early. If, as in *Egils saga*, scaldic verses were embedded in the saga, the authenticity of the verse and surrounding text was considered to have been guaranteed, simply because of the difficulty of composing such verse. Whether the saga style was, in fact, as artless as it appears at first sight has been questioned; the thirteenth-century polymath Snorri Sturlason has been suggested as a saga author as well as the compiler of *Heimskringla*, and as more has become known about oral transmission, doubts have appeared about the transparency of the process by which earlier material was thought to have been passed down. The literary and historical attitudes of both the audience of the oral materials underlying the Icelandic sagas and the possibly very different audience of the saga writers have therefore engaged considerable recent interest.

Meulengracht Sørensen is already well known to English-speaking Scandinavianists, most recently through his introductory work *Saga og samfund*, translated as *Saga and Society*, as well as through a number of articles and books published over the past two decades. With *Fortælling og ære* ([Narrative and Honour]—an admittedly inaccurate translation of the concepts encompassed by *sómi*, *sæmð*, *virðing*, *metorð* and *metnaðr*)<sup>1</sup> he has added another important, though very technical and certainly controversial study to this list.

In some ways the book is arranged in a rather puzzling fashion: the first part is broadly concerned with the contemporary audiences' changing attitude to truth in the sagas, and the second with the medieval treatment of *ære*. There is also an extensive *coda* summarizing research in the field for much of the century and particularly since about 1970, which one might, under ordinary circumstances, expect to have introduced the entire study.

Some of the author's strictures in this coda on the use of goblets from indiscriminately chosen sagas to buttress arbitrarily designated distinctions (the legal historian William Ian Miller is particularly roundly slated)<sup>2</sup> are undermined slightly in his conclusion immediately after by his use of the deaths of Þórðr and Snorri Þorvaldssynir as an example of the extent to which historical episodes could be governed by the concepts of *ære*.

Meulengracht Sørensen begins with some extremely important reminders of the meagre grounds supporting many received assumptions underlying the Old Norse / Icelandic literary-critical edifice, particularly

about the validity of quarrying saga literature for contemporary history and about the reliability of some accepted textual indicia of authenticity or oral transmission or even the degree to which individual sagas are to be viewed as discrete entities. He also includes a survey of the literature about the use of changes in saga writing styles to indicate the centuries, or even decades, in which the various works were likely composed, or edited, from existing sagas.

One of his theses, however, that for two generations after the loss of self-rule the periods of settlement, paganism and independence were used by the saga writers as subject matter for projections of their contemporary political concerns, seems unconvincing as the principal explanation for detailed knowledge and descriptions of the earlier Icelandic society, however cogent such a suggestion may be as a contribution to the filter through which the saga-writers viewed the past. Since occasionally he also approaches a tentative dating of a narrative, such as *Grettis saga*, on the basis of its content, especially its overseas episodes, elaborations of his argument are occasionally disquieting. Similarly, the contrast between the freedom of Icelandic society and the pitfalls of service at the Norwegian court, which prove so disastrous in *Egils saga*, need not necessarily be explained as explicit political comment, although Meulengracht Sørensen argues at some length that in *Laxdæla saga* the problems encountered by Kjartan (though not by his father Óláfr) were a direct result of a clash between characteristics associated with royalty and a far more egalitarian society. Yet even in *Egils saga*, the societal implications of service of members of a local Norwegian royal family with foreign monarchs do not poison service with Aðalsteinn (Æthelstan). Foreign links, particularly ambivalent for a powerful family during the extension of the Norwegian monarchy, are contrasted at some length with the later Icelandic attitudes to the various courtly connections of Snorri Sturlason and Jón Loptsson; but the study appears curtailed.

Where the socio-anthropological approach seems most cogent is in a breakdown of the various roles that the characters in the sagas play: these are in turn the promising young man, the member of a foreign court who on his return marries and settles down, and the widely-respected, relatively peaceable grandee. The female analogues are the obedient daughter, the wife in charge of the household, and the aggressive matriarch and perhaps widow. Meulengracht Sørensen points out that this schema interprets the problematic figure of the wife egging her male kinsmen on to avenge a slight as a neutral or even honourable figure

rather than as a harpy or an unfortunate consequence of ecclesiastical misogyny.

Much of what the author writes about the nature of narrative truth in the first half of the study is valuable even if one disagrees with the thesis that there is persuasive if sparse internal evidence of a change in attitude toward truth (*sandhed*) twice, in the early twelfth and in the thirteenth century, and that the laws are more closely tied to literature than they are usually credited with having been: there are salutary reminders that the quintessentially self-effacing saga-writer was working within a very specific literary tradition, rather than being simply a conduit of oral traditions, that what could well have appeared to have been a startling innovation could have become widely adopted and indeed canonical within a generation, that the sagas are not necessarily reliable historical sources, and that important figures in some purportedly historical accounts may be fictional. But the uncritical modern reliance on the historicity of the sagas attacked by the author seems sometimes overdrawn, although one must realize that Meulengracht Sørensen is advocating a newer approach as forcefully as possible; and occasionally, as in his discussion of the laws or his characterization of "prestige structures," his enthusiasm for the substitution of a socio-anthropological approach, while yielding some valuable observations, approaches advocacy. Some of his remarks about the laws appear to fall into this category.

To a practising lawyer, Meulengracht Sørensen's statements about Icelandic legal codices as a result of the last phases of the country's independent history are somewhat disconcerting. The formula governing choice of laws, for example, seems a practical resolution of a problem in a field that still has a reputation for difficulty. It is also of particular interest to modern scholars of Conflict of Laws because of the absence of the concern that has largely shaped modern procedures: intrusion on another state's sovereignty.

Similarly, analogy with the range of predicaments underlying many modern cases suggests that seeking a source for Icelandic laws in analogies with surviving narratives rather than real cases (115), while impossible to prove or disprove, underestimates a widespread and possibly timeless talent for getting into complicated trouble.

There are a few quibbles. The author's explicit adoption of a socio-anthropological approach at times invokes an attitude of observer without noting that the reporter may himself be manipulated by his informants or that his report may be incomplete.

There are occasional misprints (for example, *medddeler* on page 57 and *forklaing* on page 321) and some unclearness in the "Index," which is very serviceable, but thinly annotated. Some entries, particularly those concerning concepts that may be treated at length without being specified, are sparsely represented: *landnamstid* has one citation, though a good deal of the discussion touches on it.

The composition of the readership that Meulengracht Sørensen is addressing is occasionally unclear. It is well-acquainted with the sagas, including the later sagas, with scaldic verse, and, to a lesser degree, with the laws, and is capable of assimilating criticism in several different languages without the need of translation. But all Old Norse/Icelandic quotations of any length, presumably at the behest of the publishers, are translated and the originals usually relegated to the footnotes. Some uncertainty over the philological background of his readership may also be betrayed by the exhaustive etymological descriptions of the various major terms that the author provides.

As a whole, the work is clearly a significant argument for the use of other disciplines, particularly anthropology, in saga studies and expands greatly on the lines recently explored by, among others, Theodore M. Andersson and Robert Dennis Fulk.

Whatever this reviewer's occasional reservations, this remains an important study, one bound to direct the course of a good deal of debate over the next few years and one definitely to be recommended.

**Faulkes, Anthony and Perkins, Richard, eds.** *Viking Revaluations: Viking Society Centenary Symposium, 14-15 May 1992*. London: The Viking Society for Northern Research, 1993. 204 pages, 12 plates.

Reviewed by PATRICIA BETHEL  
Ottawa

The Viking Society recently collected and published fourteen papers presented at the hundredth anniversary meeting of the Viking Society for Northern Research, originally formed as an offshoot of the considerably older Orkney and Shetland Society of London which it now incorporates. Since accounts of the first meetings of the Viking Club, as it then was, and press hilarity at the notion have already been published in *Saga-Book*,<sup>1</sup> the papers in this collection focus less on the development of the Society than on changes in literary, historical, linguistic and archaeological scholarship in the field over the century. But because of the breadth of

scope and the time constraints imposed by the centenary meeting, most of the papers reproduced here are overviews<sup>2</sup> of work done in the various fields with which Scandinavian Studies are concerned rather than the more specialized material that one expects in *Saga-Book*. The assorted papers remain, nevertheless, an excellent introduction to scholarship pertaining to the pre-Modern Scandinavian world.

Many of the foremost scholars in the various fields are represented: Michael Barnes contributes a retrospective view of the degree to which Norse was considered to have persisted in the British Isles, gracefully animadverting on the Orkney and Shetland concerns of the founders of the Society ("Norse in the British Isles," 65–85). Ursula Dronke also contributes a paper on Eddic Studies (specifically *Voluspá* and *Rígsþula*) taken from the second volume of *The Heroic Edda*, in press nearly a quarter of a century after the first volume ("Pagan Beliefs and Christian Impact: The Contribution of Eddic Studies," 121–127), and Ele Roesdahl writes on archaeology, especially in Denmark at about the period of the Conversion, pointing out that the transition appears to have been peaceful but to have occurred at a time of great artistic, economic and probably social change ("Pagan Beliefs, Christian Impact and Archaeology—a danish View," 128–136). R. I Page adds a lighthearted overview of Norse runic studies, especially in the insular context. He pays particular attention to the question of whether runes were much used in such a commercial centre as Dublin, since the survival of organic materials from the excavations would have meant that a deposit of sticks like those made in Bergen would be expected to have been preserved. And Peter Foote delivers a magisterial summary.

Although inevitably the main focus is medieval Scandinavia and the larger westerly part of the Scandinavian world toward the end of the first millennium, there is occasional reference to more modern concerns. Hence the first paper, by Knut Helle, ostensibly on Norway from 800 to 1200, also contains a description of the contemporary political concerns of the nineteenth century which impelled several leading nationalist Norwegian historians to project a sturdy nineteenth-century democracy upon the Norway of the early Middle Ages.

A comparable survey of histories first published toward the beginning of the century marks Gunnar Karlsson's contribution, "A Century of Research on Early Icelandic Society." His paper notes that the sagas and lawbooks have immense and as yet unexploited potential for Icelandic social history, but he also suggests that the inadequate language background of some of the scholars recently approaching Scandinavian



Studies seems to have led them to ignore potentially valuable secondary literature in modern Icelandic.

The same warning is sounded by Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, the most eminent current exponent of a socio-anthropological approach to the sagas and the society that produced them. In his paper, "Historical Reality and Literary Form," he not only provides an overview of the work done by the principal modern investigators, but he also warns of the danger of an uncritical social anthropological approach reducing all problems to a single crude common lowest denominator.

Possibly the most challenging paper to write was Christine Fell's revaluation and summary of the retrospective centenary papers, "Norse Studies: Then, now and hereafter." She traces modern British interest in Norse studies from the publication in 1605 of *A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence in Antiquitie, Concerning the Most Noble and Renowned English Nation* by the Dutch scholar Richard Verstegan and draws the Society's attention not only to the likelihood that William of Malmesbury was acquainted with some names and stories otherwise found only in Icelandic but also to the presence of the Norse futhark in some post-Conquest manuscripts. As the title indicates, part of her assignment was to forecast the likely future of Norse studies, a depressing undertaking in the current difficult political atmosphere and one further complicated by the misunderstanding of what can best be called terms of literary or historical art. Fell provides several instructive examples, including members of a University Senate who consider a Chair of Modern Literature to refer to a post with specialization limited specifically to the twentieth century.

As medieval studies in general have not been notably receptive to modern literary theoretical approaches, perhaps because of the alterity of the cultures described by and producing the subject literature and because scholars are aware of the extent to which textual and material preservation is largely the result of happenstance, there is very little approaching literary theory.

The collection of papers published in *Viking Revaluations* does not attempt to be compared to such other Viking Society publications as Kenneth Ober's translation of M. I. Steblin-Kamenskij's *The Saga Mind* or Peter Foote's of Dag Strömbäck's *Conversion of Iceland*. It is rather more a summary of current scholarship and a record of an enormously interesting centenary meeting of an important scholarly society. The volume boasts as frontispiece an enthusiastic, congratulatory letter from



Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, the President of Iceland, who has herself attended at least one of the Viking Society functions.

### NOTES

1. J. A. B. Townsend, "The Viking Society: A Centenary History," in *Saga-Book XXIII* (1992), 180–212, and Andrew Wawn, "'The spirit of 1892' Saga-steads and Victorian Philology," in *Saga-Book XXIII* (1992), 212–252.

*The Pall Mall Gazette* reported the meeting of 12 January, 1894 under the headline "VIKINGS DRINK TEA." Townsend, *ibid.*, 189–190.

2. One of the contributors, Gunnar Karlsson, stated that he had been asked to provide a "sweepingly authoritative review" of his subject (23). By and large the volume follows this pattern. An exception to this broad summary is Bjarne Fidjestøl's study of the degree to which the court skalds reflect their Christianization in their kenningar ("Pagan Beliefs and Christian Impact: The Contribution of Scaldic Studies").

**Sven Hakon Rossel, ed. *Ludvig Holberg—A European Writer: A Study in Influence and Reception*. Internationale Forschungen zur allgemeinen und vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft 8. Amsterdam / Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1994. 238 pages.**

Reviewed by THOMAS BREDSORFF  
*University of Copenhagen*

In 1822, a hundred years after Ludvig Holberg commenced his frenetic writing of comedies, a German translation appeared of no less than twenty-four of them. Were the Germans really that interested in the founding father of Danish literature, as he was often called in Denmark at that time, during the Golden Age? Or was it rather a publicity stunt staged by Danes, seeing that the translator in spite of his very German name, Oehlenschläger, was none other than the Danish poet and scholar Adam Oehlenschläger, who in one of his several capacities, that of Professor of Literature at the University of Copenhagen, might have been simply attending to his business as a propagator of Danish literature?

According to Vivian Greene-Gantzberg's admirably well researched and illuminating study in the book under review, the latter seems closer to the truth than the former. The astonishing fact to emerge from her study, however, is not that four volumes of *Holbergs Lustspiele* hardly reflect a genuine interest in a Danish playwright among German theatre people in the 1820s but rather that, eighty years earlier, while Holberg was still around, his standing among the Germans had been disproportionately high. During the 1742–43 season German theatres staged 190 plays, all told. Forty-four of those, or close to a quarter, were by Holberg.

And further: "Between 1748 and 1865, more than 2,000 Holberg performances took place in Germany" (83).

When Oehlenschläger performed his impressive translator's feat interest in Holberg was clearly on the wane. It has been downhill ever since. During the early half of the 20th century only three Holberg productions on German speaking stages are listed. And only the smaller of the German speaking countries held on to Holberg into the 1980s: Switzerland, Austria and the German Democratic Republic. When *Jeppe of the Hill* was staged in Stuttgart in 1975 the leading German drama review, *Theater Heute*, did not think much of this "Lehrstück ohne Lehre." This appears to be where Holberg stands with the Germans now, not enough of a moralizer to be genuine 18th century, too much of a moralizer to be genuinely modern.

Vivian Greene-Gantzberg, of the University of Maryland, has a substantial amount of earlier Danish scholarship on which to base her study of Germany as reflected in Holberg and—most importantly—Holberg as reflected and received in Germany, particularly studies by Carl Roos. She makes eminent use of her predecessors and adds her own findings, especially concerning recent times. The result is impressive: reliable, thorough, and well-documented information on what Holberg learnt from abroad and how his works have fared there. The same goes for the remainder of the total of seven articles in this "study in influence and reception," as editor Sven H. Rossel of the University of Washington aptly subtitles his volume.

The editor himself lifts the onerous burden of introducing the English-reading audience to Holberg's quite impressive cosmopolitanism. The historian Torben Damsholt, previously of the University of Copenhagen, likewise has the facts at his fingertips in a survey of Holberg's dependence on Greek and Roman sources. The remainder of the seven contributors specialize, as does Greene-Gantzberg, in one each of the major cultures or linguistic communities to which Holberg relates.

The protagonist himself, who had traveled extensively in Italy, France, Holland, and England, but had always hurried through Germany, tended to speak gently, if less than enthusiastically about the Germans, who "never go to excess, except perhaps for eating and drinking" (67). Maybe he was endeared by their being so anxious to read and stage him. His novel *Niels Klim*, which he published originally in Latin, was translated into German the very year it appeared, sooner even than the translation into Danish.

That, unfortunately, was not true of the Italians and the French, to say the least. When, in 1986, a belated tricentennial conference was held in Rome, Lone Klem of the University of Oslo, informed the participants that the greatest contemporary Italian comedy actor and director, Dario Fo, was contemplating staging *Jeppe of the Hill*. If the anecdote is true, Fo's interest never got beyond the act of contemplation and hence does not appear in the chapter on Holberg and the Romance world by Jørgen Stender Clausen of the University of Pisa, where the facts of the Roman Holberg-tricentenary are reported. Stender Clausen, like the rest of the contributors, deals almost exclusively with provable facts.

Procrastination on the part of the Italians seems to have been Holberg's fate. Carlo Goldoni of 18th century Venice might have contemplated *The Political Tinker*. According to Stender Clausen, Goldoni was familiar with that Holberg play. We know this with no less than "almost absolute certainty" (121). But no trace is left in Goldoni's work of this "almost absolutely certain" familiarity with Holberg.

For this very reason—the insistence on facts and on what is provable—Stender Clausen has to be reticent on the very important issue of which tricks of the theatrical trade Holberg learnt from the theatre groups with which we know he resided during his Italian sojourn. An otherwise prolific autobiographer, Holberg kept his silence on this matter. My own guess is that he did so for tactical reasons. When literature was at issue he showed no sign of the post-romantic anxiety of influence which forces authors to insist on originality. As has been thoroughly documented by yet another eminent Holberg scholar, the late Aage Kragelund, Holberg's idea of originality often was to find the quotation that hit the mark, as in his eyewitness account of the Great Fire of Copenhagen in 1728 which turns out to be a patchwork of excerpts from Pliny's description of the eruption of Vesuvius A. D. 79.

Holberg certainly did not entertain our modern view of originality, except when it came to histrionics. After all, it was by the "poetic frenzy," as he used to call it, resulting in fifteen comedies at the rate of one per month, that one could tell Professor Holberg apart from the other learned nerds at the University of Copenhagen.

What appears most original in Holberg, with the benefit of hindsight, is his sexual politics. He entertained the then strange idea that women could be as gifted as men. He also believed women could be as stupid as men. He did not subscribe to any notion of a privileged feminine mystique. He simply believed that some women might be as gifted

as some men, and hence as well suited to hold offices then reserved for men. At least, that possibility could not be precluded without further examination, he maintained.

The idea ought to have been obvious to the philosophers of the Enlightenment. After all, they were the men who came up with the notion of Human Rights. Only, to extend those rights to women did not occur to them, except for Holberg and a few others. From where did he get this exceptional idea? Gerald S. Argetsinger of the Rochester Institute of Technology puts the question and provides a speculative answer, a type of answer otherwise conspicuously absent in this volume, which is impressive for its encyclopedic qualities. Holberg got the idea from observing Queen Anne. The fact that Holberg in England witnessed men going to war at the orders of an Iron Lady is what turned him into a feminist!

Far-fetched as this may be, it is possibly no more far-fetched than another answer based on a piece of information provided by F. J. Bille-skov Jansen, Professor Emeritus of the University of Copenhagen, at the Rome conference to which I referred above. A Norwegian contemporary medical researcher apparently observed (however he may have gone about it) that one of Holberg's testicles remained in his abdomen and that this deficiency might have turned Holberg into a neuter. For the nine years that have passed since that information was provided, no more has been heard of the stones theory, nor has anyone considered that theory in relation to Holberg's view of gender roles.

The explanation could be much simpler, simpler than any theory of influence or biology is able to support. It could be that Holberg was simply exceptionally unprejudiced and intelligent. Whatever the reason, it remains a fact that Holberg has his Marthe character say (with total backing of the authorial voice, and several other characters like her throughout his work): "The time will come when society will consider brains more important than sex and ability more important than name. When our intellects are weighed I shall be elevated to the position of magistrate and you won't be any higher than a pancake!" (*Jean de France*, Act II, Scene 3; 147)

Never mind Argetsinger's Queen Anne theory. What matters is that the author provides the quote, in the original version and in English translation, with chapter and verse, for anyone to check and pursue his or her own theorizing. The same attention to detail applies to the remaining contributions to this volume: a documentation of an astounding number of Holberg translations into Russian by Cynthia Dillard of the

University of Washington, and (by Bent Holm of the University of Copenhagen) a detailed mapping of how *Jeppe* has fared on Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish stages.

What Sven Rossel has provided is an impressive documentary of Europe's life in Holberg and Holberg's life in Europe. It is fair and fitting that the volume should be dedicated to the one living scholar to whom we all owe more than anybody else when it comes to reliable knowledge about Holberg: F. J. Billeskov Jansen.

#### NOTE

A somewhat similar review in Danish of this book, by the same reviewer, appeared in the newspaper *Politiken* on August 13, 1995.

**Johannes Væth.** *Aksel Sandemose's Canada. Rejsebetrægtninger i udvalg 1927–28.* Herning, Denmark: Poul Kristensens Forlag, 1994. 84 pages.

Reviewed by CHRISTOPHER HALE  
*University of Alberta*

In 1927 the then Danish author Aksel Sandemose spent three months visiting the Canadian prairie provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. His journey was part of a campaign the railways were conducting by sending a number of "immigration experts" and journalists to the country in the hope that they would give favourable reports on conditions there. In addition, the Copenhagen newspaper *Berlingske Tidende* gave Sandemose the title of "Special Correspondent," promising to pay for and publish articles about Canada which he might send them. During his travels he kept a very detailed diary in which he made entries almost every day and which he used for material in his Canada articles and later for his three novels set in Alberta.

The articles which Sandemose wrote based on his Canada trip can be divided into three groups. First, there are those which are quite factual and give Sandemose's views on the advisability of immigration to Canada. A number of these are rather polemical in nature and criticize some of the tactics used by railway and steamship companies to attract emigrants from Denmark. The second group of articles purport to describe episodes which Sandemose himself experienced during his travels but which may or may not be partly or wholly fictitious. Finally there are the totally fictitious ones which are basically short stories with a Canadian setting. The second group is the one which may be of most

interest to the modern reader, and fortunately the articles in Væth's collection have been selected from it.

Out of the fourteen or so articles in this group, Væth has chosen nine and one poem. In my opinion these are among the best written, freshest, wittiest and most humorous and give an excellent picture of Canada in the 1920s as seen through the eyes of a Scandinavian writer. The collection begins with "Porten til Canada" [The Gateway to Canada] in which Sandemose makes the reader feel as though he himself is aboard the steamer carrying immigrants up the St. Lawrence with all its sights and even its sounds coming over the water from the shore. Next "Winnipeg" presents a lively picture of the still raw city to which almost all immigrants came, only shortly afterward to continue on to the farming areas to the west. A vivid depiction of a farmworker's day during the harvest season with its backbreaking, ceaseless toil follows in "Høst i Canada" [Harvest in Canada]. "Redvers" contains one of the most marvellous descriptions, though possibly somewhat exaggerated, of what it was like to stay in a shabby small-town hotel on the prairies. The reader is then given a personal tour from horseback of the prairie in "Saskatchewan" with a beautiful picture of a countryside lit at night by a myriad of straw fires. "Den sidste andejagt" [The Last Duck Hunt] takes place near Lake Manitoba and humorously describes the adventures of two failed hunters. Subsequently the reader is taken through a violent snowstorm and all the supernatural visions it can conjure up during the ice-cold Alberta winter in "East Coulee". After the poem "Vinter i Alberta" [Winter in Alberta] comes an account of Sandemose's trip home in heavy seas with his being one of the few passengers on board not to become helplessly seasick. Finally, in "Vinter og vår" [Winter and Spring] Sandemose is back at home in Copenhagen telling how one day at springtime, strange insects began emerging from a bison head he had brought back with him after they had lain dormant during the long winter.

The ordering of the articles is essentially based on the chronological order of Sandemose's journey as he depicts it in his diary. Technically speaking, therefore, "Redvers" should follow "Saskatchewan" instead of the other way around, although this makes little real difference in the overall effect of the collection.

One wonders, however, why one or two more articles were not included, for example, "Flytning paa Prærien" in particular, or even "En kanadisk Præst". These are equally as entertaining as the others and fit in well with that group. If the number of inclusions was actually limited to

ten, then I would have wanted to leave out "Den sidste Andejagt," since this article appears in a slightly altered version in the readily available novel *En flykning krysser sitt spor*, and substitute one of the above for it.

The orthography of the articles has been modernized with the use of "å" for "aa" and lower case initial letters for nouns. While this might make it easier for the modern audience to read, something of the feel of the original articles is lost as a result.

Væth has also included a brief introduction to the volume. Here he mentions the author's situation during the months immediately preceding his journey, including his efforts to get away from Denmark for a while. After failed attempts to get a free trip to the Far East with *Det østasiatiske Kompagni* and a job as a high school teacher in Cascallares, Argentina, he managed to persuade the CPR (Canadian Pacific Railroad) to give him a trip to Canada. Væth then gives a brief overview of the trip, followed by a few words introducing the articles. Here, too, I agree with Væth that many of Sandemose's Canada articles are the highpoint of his Danish writings. At the end of the volume is a list of the newspapers and periodicals in which the articles appeared.

It is high time that Sandemose's Canada articles were made readily available in print, as they have not appeared since they were originally published in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and Væth has certainly done a great service to Sandemose readers by having them republished. I would highly recommend the book not only to specialists in Sandemose but also to the general reader. Unfortunately, because they are in Danish, the collection is not available to the general Canadian reader, many of whom might well be interested in seeing how a foreign writer viewed their country in the 1920s.

**Sarah Death and Helena Forsås-Scott, eds.** *A Century of Swedish Narrative: Essays in Honour of Karin Petherick*. Norwich: Norvik Press, 1994. 301 pages.

Reviewed by M. N. MATSON

This *festschrift* tends in two opposite directions, in toward its honoree and her colleagues, and out toward a larger world, where Swedish writers "deserve," in the words of the dust jacket, "to be more widely known." Writing that is likely to arouse wider interest is not the sort that academics tend to do, and in this case it seems that some of the writers have attempted to pay homage to Karin Petherick by including in their essays



analyses of narrative that manage to be both laboured and perfunctory. Yet all twenty-one contributions are in English, six of them translated. As befits a generous enterprise, the essays sometimes ramble, and their diction, syntax, and even spelling are sometimes free. In respect to English at least, the centre cannot hold, and the editors have been wise as well as collegial to let it go.

Selma Lagerlöf's stories and novels are considered by Vivi Edström, Helena Forsås-Scott, Peter Graves, Brita Green, and Linda Schenck. All five demonstrate that Lagerlöf is not so simple, naïve, or child-like as she seems or as she herself sometimes said she was. The child-like is not in fact so simple; it must be decoded into various even opposing aspects (Edström on *Gösta Berlings saga* [1891]); the apparently submissive feminine voice of character subverts the masculine voice of poetic source (Forsås-Scott on "Astrid" [1899]); what is seen contradicts what is spoken (Graves on "De fågelfrie" [1894]); and what is natural, feminine, and life-giving survives war and weeding out (Schenck on *Bannlyst* [1918]). Taking a slightly different tack, Brita Green shows how elaborately Lagerlöf wove patterns of repetitions and parallels she found attractive in fairy tales.

Ranging widely through Hjalmar Bergman's many novels, Kerstin Dahlbäck argues that they are not only through-composed rather than improvised, but their composition is informed by a dialectic between the unreliable narrator and the implied author. Without paying much attention to the genre boundaries he crosses, Björn Meidal moves from Bergman's novel *Lotten Brenners ferier* (1928) to Strindberg's play *Ett drömspel* (1902) and novel *Götiska rummen* (1904). Meidal's concern is with intertextual details that relate setting, incident, and especially the characters Lotten, Indra's Daughter, Ugly Edith, and Ester Borg to each other. In respect to Bergman's Oedipal rivalry with Strindberg, Meidal suggests how Bergman does away with the father from whom he borrows so much: he dispenses with Strindberg's belief in a moral order enforced by supernatural agency. What consolation Bergman offers, Meidal implies, is in ironic comedy itself.

With absorbing, partly recycled material, Göran Stockenström wrestles with various forms of what he calls Strindberg's "dilemma": the difficulty of communicating a spiritual vision. As Dahlbäck suggested of late Bergman, Stockenström's Strindberg in his late work resorts to essayistic expositions of his ideas or in the play *Stora landsvägen* (1909) to "epic discourse." More centrally concerned with crossing genre bounda-



ries, Gunilla Anderman sees Lars Norén's novels *Biskötarna* (1970) and *I den underjordiska himlen* (1972) as transitional between the earlier poetry and later plays. In a well documented essay laden with the terminology of narrative analysis, Anderman appears sometimes to forget her theme of transition and to make distinctions for other reasons, perhaps even for their own sake.

According to Laurie Thompson, the 1949 play *Ingen går fri* by Stig Dagerman is simpler than his 1948 novel *Bränt barn* upon which the play is based because drama lacks the resources of narrative. But Thompson also argues that certain characters in the play are more sympathetic than their fictional originals because Dagerman was dramatically apologizing for the exposure of his family in the novel. With anecdotal charm, Margareta Wirmark compares life and art, both in her own experience and in Sven Delblanc's depiction of Södermanland in the 1970 novel *Äminne* and the 1988 picture book *Sörmland i minnet*. Wirmark proposes that Delblanc overcomes the bookishness in his earlier descriptions when in his later work he describes the seasons, and that in the 1991 novel *Livets ax* he achieves as well a direct description of his father as the devil in his childhood paradise.

The most consistently persuasive of the cross-genre studies is Louise Vinge's on Ingmar Bergman's *Den goda viljan* (1991), a novel-script, written for both the theatre of the mind and the TV or film studio. Vinge suggests that in making up a story about his parents, Bergman forgives them, and in so doing, forgives himself for being a liar, a story teller, like his father the clergyman.

Johan Wrede pulls out a thread of imagery that associates drowning with "woman" in Harry Martinson's poetic narrative from 1929 to 1956. Wrede finds two related themes in the imagery: man's lack of personal moral vision into nature and womanly sorrow over the loveless violence that results. As usual with such studies, the various contexts of the imagery tend to obscure the thematic unity one attempts to derive from it. Malin Andrews gives a lucid account of Arvid Brenner's novels *Kompromiss* (1934), *Vintervägen* (1945) and *Stranden mitt emot* (1953) in the context of three decades of the German-Swedish writer's career. Lars Gyllensten's career as both author and editor of his own work is touched on by Thure Stenström in the course of a witty defense of paying attention to what a writer says about his own work—except when he says "Ignore what I say." But a writer with "almost perfect control of his instrument," as Stenström says of Gyllensten (219), may nevertheless need

correction on those rare occasions when he loses control, and in any case, he does not control the reader. Furthermore, what is said well is not necessarily what is said truly.

Phil Holmes and Göran Printz-Påhlson concentrate on one novel each: Vilhelm Moberg's *Rid i natt!* (1941) and Lars Ahlin's *Kvinna, kvinna* (1955). Holmes's essay is an interesting synopsis of *Rid i natt!* in its historical context followed by a somewhat repetitive listing of its allegorical and symbolic incidents and images. Printz-Påhlson's essay is the most impressive in range and pointedness of critical reference—from Plato and Aristotle to Genette and Derrida. It makes the point that narration and dialogue (or telling and showing, or diegesis and mimesis) are mutually embeddable, and that embedding one in the other can lead not only to confusion but to loss of verisimilitude, as in "the retelling, say, by an elderly spinster from Nob Hill of a criminal's account of his own activities" (205). Printz-Påhlson concludes that the strength of Ahlin's novel is in the narration more than in any ideas it expresses; it is the highly embedded narrative itself that achieves the Ahlinian ideal of equality.

Berit Wilson and Sarah Death also concentrate on one novel each: Ulla Isaksson's *Paradistorg* (1973) and Kerstin Ekman's *Änglahuset* (1979). Wilson's essay is an account of the social and literary context of the novel's genesis and of its characters and themes of motherliness, nature, and the affectless "Aniara person." Sarah Death makes the point well that in Ekman's Katrineholm tetralogy, of which *Änglahuset* is the third book, women's time is cyclical and natural, men's is projective and industrial. Julia Kristeva is quoted to support this biologically engendered distinction, and Ekman herself is quoted as saying women's "fate is pure biology" (271), which not only makes it pointless to imply that it has been unjust, as Death does, but leaves her instances of cross-gendered behaviour (the trade-unionist Ingrid acts like a man, and her brother Konrad acts like a woman) in theoretic limbo.

The volume concludes with a brief history and frequency study of the name "Karin" in Finland and Sweden by Marianne Blomqvist, and a bibliography of Karin Petherick's books, translations, articles, and major book reviews by John Townsend. The editors' foreword does not summarize or relate the essays, but it does convey the respect and affection felt for Karin Petherick, and it includes a brief autobiographical sketch by Karin Petherick herself. Norvik Press has produced a handsome book—with a reproduction on the dust jacket of part of Helene Schjerfbeck's

1909 painting *Girls Reading*, and after the *Tabula Gratuloria*, a photograph of Karin Petherick gazing patiently at and beyond the camera, perhaps surprised at the attention given her and the literature she loves.

**Ivar Lo-Johansson.** *Peddling My Wares*. Translated by Rochelle Wright. Columbia, South Carolina: Camden House, 1995. xi + 229 pages.

Reviewed by CHRISTOPHER HALE  
*University of Alberta*

Rochelle Wright's book consists of a short preface, the translated text from Swedish of Ivar Lo-Johansson's novel *Gårdfarihandlaren* (1953), a translator's note and finally an "Afterword" consisting of an essay "Subversion of Genre in Ivar Lo-Johansson's *Peddling My Wares*."

The novel itself is partially autobiographical; it takes place immediately after World War I when the author is a young man, just starting out on his own. It describes how the protagonist decides not to continue to work a small farm like his forefathers, but rather to seek his fortune as a peddler and live a free life. His main goal in life is to become a writer, but he also desires to meet up with his ideal, a nomadic individual named Johan Kvast, "the embodiment of human perfection"(3), a symbol to the protagonist of the free life, who set out on a journey before him. He travels around various parts of Sweden, to a large extent in the northern provinces, attempting to sell inexpensive wares to the local populace. However, as a peddler he is an almost pitiful failure. In the beginning he is afraid to approach people and to try to sell them anything, and when he finally becomes bold enough to do so, he usually bungles the attempt. Only once in a while does he succeed in selling his wares in any quantity, and this happens more by a fluke than by his sales ability. Toward the end of the novel, the protagonist stays a couple of weeks with an asocial old man, Forssen, a sort of father figure to him, who sells wares to the people in a small village. In the end the protagonist realizes that he cannot make a living from being a peddler and returns home. At home he meets again his ideal who has now purchased a small plot of land with a cottage on it, is getting married, and settling down. At this point the protagonist realizes that his dream of being a free man, roaming the world as a peddler is impossible. However, he has taken a large step toward discovering his identity.

Wright's translation is eminently readable. As she states in her "Translator's Note," "My primary goal...has been to produce a text that does not read like a translation, but rather conveys the impression of

being an autonomous English-language work," and she has succeeded admirably in this. As she says at the end of the "Note," "not all translators are as fortunate as I in having known the author personally, but trying to understand 'how the writer breathes' may nevertheless serve as a useful metaphor for approaching any given text."

I would, however, like to make a few minor comments on the way some passages have been translated. For example, on pages 44-46 an old peddler and the protagonist are talking, and the peddler uses a fairly colloquial style in the original Swedish which is not reflected in the English translation. On page 56 Wright translates the Swedish expression, "hon är borta på frining" as "she's off bundling." The English expression, while mild as it probably should be in the mouth of an elderly woman implies more than the Swedish one. At the end of the novel, the name of Johan Kvast's home "Idyllevik" [Idyllic Bay] becomes "Pacific Bay" in English. The Swedish original gives the impression that Kvast has found his "Paradise," something the translation does not impart. These minor points, however, do in no way detract from the overall quality of the translation. As a matter of fact, Wright has done an excellent job of rendering some difficult to translate passages. For example on page 118, when the starving protagonist is asked his name at a farm, the use of the word "heter" [be called] by the farmer, causes him to think of the rhyming word "äter" [eat]. Wright translates this into English with a play on the word "full" very effectively by having him say, "What's your full name?" Another example of the translator's skill is her deft rendering of Forssen's verse on page 211.

Her nine-page article "Subversion of Genre in Ivar Lo-Johansson's *Peddling My Wares*" deals with the classification of the novel. Lo-Johansson, Wright explains, was ambivalent in regard to autobiographical writing, having condemned it in the late 1930s as being too subjective and individual, but then between 1951 and 1960 employing autobiographical material in eight prose works. By that time he felt that such writing was, in fact, of some value. The roots of *Peddling My Wares*, believes Wright, go back to various genres in European literatures, including the travelogue, the "picaresque," the *Bildungsroman*, and fairy tales and myths. But the conventions of each of the literary genres that are drawn on are "controvverted" and in the dialogue between the protagonist and the narrator is hidden a debate between realism and romanticism, with realism being the winner. The analogy with *Don Quixote* is made. The protagonist, Wright concludes, is on a romantic quest (Poetry and Woman), but he is so ego-centric that he does not recognize his dilemma,

and needs to get rid of his ego-centricity in order to see clearly, which in the end he makes progress in doing, as did Lo-Johansson himself.

This "Afterword" is very informative and, to be sure, does shed light on the interpretation of the novel, though I think some of the comparisons Wright makes to other European genres could be developed more. One possible influence on Lo-Johansson which she does not mention is that of *Parzival*. In Wolfram's epic the knight goes on a long quest to become the king of the Holy Grail. One key encounter in this quest is his stay with an old hermit. This encounter reminds one of the stay of the protagonist with Forssen in *Peddling My Wares*. Like Forssen, the hermit helps Parzival toward self-realization, and Parzival continues his quest and brings it to completion.

However, if Wright's book is considered to be aimed at a scholarly audience, and this has been true of most of Camden Houses's publications, I am of the opinion a more thorough essay would have been in order, placing the novel more concretely in the framework of Lo-Johansson's overall production. Though the one-page "Preface" mentions a few facts about the author's life and works, as does the "Afterword," I feel something more substantial is called for. In particular, a critical assessment of the author's work and his position in Swedish literature would have been desirable. Though he has appeared in English before now, it seems to me that relatively few English-speaking scholars who do not know Swedish would know much about or even have heard of Ivar Lo-Johansson and his writings.

Nevertheless, I would most definitely recommend Wright's translation of *Peddling My Wares* to the English reader, as I feel she has captured the essence of the original, and makes one more work of this important modern Swedish author available to a wider reading public.



## AASSC / AAESC

Association for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies in Canada

L'Association pour l'avancement des études scandinaves au Canada

(1995-1997)

*President/Président*

Christopher English, History, Memorial University of Newfoundland

*Past President/Président sortant*

Harry Lane, Drama, University of Guelph

*Vice President/Vice-président*

John Tucker, English, University of Victoria

*Treasurer/Trésorière*

Birgitta Linderoth Wallace, Canadian Heritage, Historic Properties, Halifax

*Secretary/Secrétaire*

Daisy Neijman, Icelandic, University of Manitoba

*Members at large/Membres adjoints*

Fred Thompson, Architecture, University of Waterloo

Hans Möller, Library, McGill University

*Editeur/Rédacteur (Journal/Revue) (1995-99)*

Wolfgang Ahrens, Languages, Literatures & Linguistics, York University

*Editeur/Rédacteur (Newsbulletin / Bulletin)*

Will van den Hoonard, Sociology, University of New Brunswick

---

The main aims of the Association are to encourage studies on and promote research in Canada in all aspects of life in the Scandinavian societies, to provide a multi-disciplinary forum for the presentation and discussion of papers on all matters relevant to Scandinavian studies, and to stimulate awareness of and interest in Scandinavian studies in Canada. Membership fees are \$30 a year for regular members and \$15 for student and retired members. Institutional memberships are \$40. Fees should be sent to the Treasurer of the Association: Birgitta Linderoth Wallace, Canadian Heritage, Historic Properties, Upper Water Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3J 1S9.

Les objectifs principaux de l'Association consistent à promouvoir les études et les recherches canadiennes sur tous les aspects de la vie dans les sociétés scandinaves, à fournir un forum multi-disciplinaire pour la présentation et la discussion d'articles portant sur toutes les questions essentielles aux études scandinaves, et à susciter un intérêt pour les études au Canada. La cotisation annuelle est de 30\$ pour les membres ordinaires, de 15\$ pour les étudiants et les retraités, et de 40\$ pour les institutions. Les cotisations doivent être envoyées au trésorière de l'Association: Birgitta Linderoth Wallace, Canadian Heritage, Historic Properties, Upper Water Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3J 1S9.



## CONTENTS / SOMMAIRE

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>Jussi M. Hanhimäki</b>  |     |
| <i>In Search of Security: Finland and the Soviet-American Confrontation, 1945–1961</i> .....   | 1   |
| <b>Daisy Neijman</b>   |     |
| <i>Laura Goodman Salverson, Guttormur J. Guttormsson, and the Dual World of Second-Generation Canadian Authors</i> .....   | 19  |
| <b>Christopher S. Hale</b>   |     |
| <i>Ethnic Minorities on the Canadian Prairies in the Writings of Aksel Sandemose and Sven Delblanc</i> .....   | 37  |
| <b>William Sayers</b>  |     |
| <i>Power, Magic and Sex: Queen Gunnhildr and the Icelanders</i> .....  | 57  |
| <b>Peter G. Christensen</b>  |     |
| <i>Sibelius, Kullervo and Fate Tragedy</i> .....   | 79  |
| <b>Reviews / Comptes Rendus</b>  |     |
| Gurli A. Woods, ed. <i>Isak Dinesen and Narrativity: Reassessments for the 1990s</i> (Ottawa, 1994)<br>—reviewed by <i>Marina Allemanno</i> .....  | 103 |
| Pamela Wild. <i>Sointula: Island Utopia</i> (Madeira Park, 1995)<br>—reviewed by <i>J. Donald Wilson</i> .....   | 109 |
| Nelma Sillanpää. <i>Under the Northern Lights: My Memories of Life in the Finnish Community of Northern Ontario</i> . Edited by Edward Laine (Hull, 1994)<br>—reviewed by <i>Varpu Lindström</i> ..... | 112 |
| Börje Vähämäki. <i>Mastering Finnish</i> (New York, 1994)<br>—reviewed by <i>John Dingley</i> .....  | 113 |
| Preben Meulengracht Sørensen. <i>Fortælling og ære: Studier i islændingesagaerne</i> (Århus, 1993)<br>—reviewed by <i>Patricia Bethel</i> .....  | 115 |
| Anthony Faulkes and Richard Perkins, eds. <i>Viking Revaluations: Viking Society centenary symposium, 14–15 May 1992</i> (London, 1993)—reviewed by <i>Patricia Bethel</i> .....                       | 119 |
| Sven H. Rossel, ed. <i>Ludvig Holberg – A European Writer: A Study in Influence and Reception</i> (Amsterdam and Atlanta, 1994)—reviewed by <i>Thomas Bredsdorff</i> .....                             | 122 |
| Johannes Væth. <i>Aksel Sandemoses Canada. Rejsebetrægtninger i udvalg 1927–28</i> (Herning, Denmark, 1994)<br>—reviewed by <i>Christopher Hale</i> .....  | 126 |
| Sarah Death and Helena Forsås-Scott, eds. <i>A Century of Swedish Narrative: Essays in Honour of Karin Petherick</i> (Norwich, 1994)—reviewed by <i>Marshall N. Matson</i> .....                       | 128 |
| Ivar Lo-Johansson. <i>Peddling My Wares</i> . Translated by Rochelle Wright (Columbia, South Carolina, 1995)<br>—reviewed by <i>Christopher Hale</i> .....   | 132 |