

NO. 76 | FALL 2018

SOURCE

A QUARTERLY
PUBLICATION
OF THE ATA'S
LITERARY
DIVISION



NORTHERN LIGHTS

FEATURING

LD PROGRAM, ATA 59

CONTEMPORARY SCANDINAVIAN LITERATURE

LARIN PARASKE, FINNISH FOLK POET

REVIEW: Misha Hoekstra's translation
of the Danish novel *Mirror, Shoulder, Signal*

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS:
Our *isoisä* from Vaasa

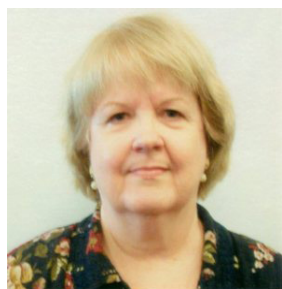


IN THIS ISSUE

FROM THE EDITORS.....	3
SUBMISSION GUIDELINES	4
LETTER FROM THE LD ADMINISTRATOR	5
LD PROGRAM AND SPEAKER BIOS FOR ATA 59.....	7
READERS' CORNER.....	11
LARIN PARASKE, FINNISH FOLK POET/SINGER by Frances Karttunen.....	13
CONTEMPORARY SCANDINAVIAN LITERATURE by Michael Meigs.....	25
REVIEW OF MISHA HOEKSTRA'S TRANSLATION OF <i>MIRROR, SHOULDER, SIGNAL</i> by Dorte Nors by Michele Aynesworth.....	37
WORDS WORDS WORDS COLUMN: Our <i>isoisä</i> from Vaasa.....	44
by Patrick Saari	
BY THE WAY: TOONS by Tony Beckwith.....	24, 36, 43
CREDITS.....	49

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From the Editors



Michele Aynesworth
Editor-in-Chief

The Nordic countries have been consistently ranked among the most developed, stable, and happy nations on earth. In the arts, they have never lagged behind either. From the Norse myths of the *Eddas* and *Kalevala* to Hans Christian Andersen, Ibsen, Strindberg, and Lagerlöf, the Nordics have also been at the forefront of world literature: Norwegian author Karl Ove Knausgård has been fueling controversy since his 3,500-page autobiography *My Struggle* started appearing in 2009, and Nordic noir continues to drive bookstore sales, translation, TV series, movies, and remakes throughout the world.



Patrick Saari
Associate Editor

In music, Icelandic singer-composer Björk has had a global career rivalling mainstream pop divas such as Madonna, Lady Gaga, and Beyoncé. As for movies, drawing on traditions dating back to Carl Theodor Dreyer, Ingmar Bergman, and Greta Garbo, the Nordics continue to command the silver screen with directors Lars von Trier, Nicolas Winding Refn, Baltasar Kormákur, and Aki Kaurismäki, as well as actors Alicia Vikander, Alexander Skarsgård, and Mads Mikkelsen, among many others.

In tribute to this vitality, this issue of *Source*, entitled “Northern Lights,” is dedicated to Nordic languages and writers. Frances Karttunen provides us with an in-depth portrait of Larin Paraske (1833-1904), a Finnish folk poet and singer. Swedish-to-English translator Michael Meigs gives us an eye-opening overview of Scandinavian literature; Michele Aynesworth reviews Misha Hoekstra’s English translation of a recent Danish novel, *Mirror, Shoulder, Signal*; and in the Words, Words, Words column, Patrick Saari remembers his Finnish grandfather and why he set sail for America in 1902.

LD Administrator Paula Arturo invites all readers to LD events at ATA59 in New Orleans and provides a schedule of speakers and speaker bios (pp. 5-10).

Upcoming issues

We look forward to reviews of presentations, news, interviews, and photos relating to LD events at the ATA59 Conference on October 24-27 in New Orleans for our Winter issue 2018-2019.

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Michele Aynesworth specializes in translating Argentine and French authors. E-mail: michele@mckayaynesworth.com

Patrick Saari, born in Pasadena, California, now living in Quito, Ecuador, writes, translates, and interprets in English, French, and Spanish. Email: patricksaari@netlife.ec

Mercedes Guhl translates English into Spanish for publishing houses in Mexico. She specializes in children’s and young adult fiction and graphic novels. Email: mercedesguhl@gmail.com

Special thanks to **Jamie Padula** for proofreading and to LD Administrators **Paula Arturo** and **Amanda Williams** for their support.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

As the journal of the ATA's Literary Division, *Source* is both a forum for the discussion of literary translation and a vehicle for LD members and guest contributors to publish their work. Novice translators, as well as those with more experience, are encouraged to submit translations of poetry and prose together with their meditations on the process. We are also constantly on the lookout for submissions from Asia, Africa, and all other less frequently represented cultures.

TOPIC FOR THE WINTER 2018 ISSUE:

- We are now soliciting contributions relating to LD events at the ATA conference October 24-27 in New Orleans: photos, news items, reviews of presentations, interviews, all welcome!
- Contributors are asked to follow the format guidelines below.
- **Submission deadline for the Winter issue: November 21**

FORMAT:

- Submit articles up to 1600 words, Word or text file, single-spaced.
- Garamond font, size 12, without indented paragraphs.
- Line breaks between paragraphs but no word breaks.
- Unjustified righthand margin.
- Endnotes please, not footnotes.
- Please include a brief, factual bio and photograph.
- Links and illustrations, etc., are encouraged.
- Submissions may be edited.
- Submissions go to patricksaari@netlife.ec or michele@mckayaynesworth.com

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LETTER FROM THE LD

Dear Members,

I can't tell you how excited I am about this year's conference in New Orleans! As I mentioned in my last Admin Letter, we've got a wonderful line-up of eminent speakers for you and a little surprise at this year's Division Lunch.

In case you missed the announcement, the division lunch will be at 12:30 pm on Saturday, October 27th at House of Blues. The restaurant is located in the historic French Quarter, just one and a half blocks from the conference venue, and offers eclectic cuisine, with options for Cajun and non-Cajun lovers alike.

Why do we want you to come? Because we want to get to know you. Our division has been working very hard this year to become more active and engaging and we believe that meeting in person at the division lunch will help us bring the division closer to you and foster member participation.

If you can't make it to this year's lunch, don't worry. There will be plenty of other division events. We'll have a stand at the Conference Welcome Celebration, our Annual Meeting on Thursday, October 25th at 4:45 pm, and our yearly After Hours Café on Friday October 26th at 9:00 pm.

Literary Division Administrator:
Paula Arturo, paula@translatinglawyers.com

Assistant Administrator:
Amanda Williams, amanda@mirrorimagetranslations.com



Paula Arturo is a lawyer, translator, and former law professor. Throughout her fifteen-year career, in addition to various legal and financial documents, she has also translated several highly technical law books and publications in major international journals for high-profile authors, including several Nobel Prize Laureates and renowned jurists. She is an independent lawyer-linguist for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review process of several Latin American states, as well as a legal-linguistic consultant for various international organizations. She is a co-creator of *Translating Lawyers*, a boutique firm specializing in legal translation by lawyers for lawyers. She is currently serving a two-year term as Administrator of the American Translators Association's Literary Division, Co-head of Legal Affairs at the International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters and member of the Public Policies Forum of the Supreme Court of Argentina.

If you'd like to get more involved with the division before then, you can connect with us on all of the following networks:

Website <http://www.ata-ld.org/>
Mailing List <https://tinyurl.com/atalistserv>
Blog <http://www.ata-divisions.org/LD/index.php/our-blog/>
Twitter @ATA_litdiv Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ATALitDiv/>

We look forward to seeing you at all these events and networks!

Best,
Paula



Crescent City Connection bridge over the Mississippi River in New Orleans

Literary Translation Program of Sessions and Speakers for ATA59 in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA October 24-27, 2018

Thursday, October 25

(017) International Literature: A Data-Driven Approach to Prioritizing Diversity

Gabriella Page-Fort, Literary Division Distinguished Speaker

(2:00-3:00 pm, Galerie 2)

(041) Susana Greiss Lecture: A Translator's Path to Eastern Europe

Sibelan Forrester, Slavic Languages Division Distinguished Speaker

(3:30-4:30 pm, Studio 8)

(032) Publishing Literature in Translation: How Translators Help AmazonCrossing Bring Stories to New Readers

Gabrielle Page-Fort, Literary Division Distinguished Speaker

(3:30-4:30 pm, Galerie 2)

LD Annual Meeting

(4:45 pm, Galerie 2)

Friday, October 26

(047) Stand up for Your Rights in Literary Translation!

Kevin Quirk

(10:00-11:00 am, Galerie 2)

(053) A Journey of 10,000 Miles: Translating Environmental Nonfiction

Ana Salotti

(10:00-11:00 pm, Studio 4)

(067) From a Double Margin: Translations of Croatian and Serbian Women Writers into English

Sibelan Forrester, Slavic Languages Division Distinguished Speaker

(11:15 am-12:15 pm, Studio 3)

(062) The Painter, the Lover, the Knave, and the Nerd: Translators Adding Value in Literary Translation

Ellen Sowchek (CT) and Stephanie Delozier Strobel

(11:15 am-12:15 pm, Galerie 2)

After Hours Café

(9:00 pm, Galerie 2)

Saturday, October 27**(180) How Clear Should I Make It?**

Jayne Costa-Pinto and Karen Sotelino

(8:30-9:30 am, Studio 8)

(129) Translating Books: A Race for Endurance Runners, Part I

Mercedes Guhl

(10:00-11:00 am, Studio 8)

(175) 50 (or so) Ways to Leave Your Author: When Is Infidelity Forgivable in Poetry Translation?

Lydia Stone (CT)

(11:15 am-12:15 pm, Studio 3)

(143) Translating Books: A Race for Endurance Runners, Part II

Mercedes Guhl

(11:15 am-12:15 pm, Studio 8)

LD Division Lunch

(12:30 pm, House of Blues)

(166) English Translations of the Qur'an: A Theoretical Framework

Abraham Haak

(3:30-4:30 pm, Studio 2)

For further information, updates, cancellations, and changes in time and/or venue, please check the Literary Translation section of the ATA59 web page: <https://tinyurl.com/LDUpdates2018>

Also see the webpage for sessions by Language and Specialization:

<http://www.atanet.org/conf/2018/sessions/>

Bios of speakers on literary translation topics

Literary Division Distinguished Speaker

Gabriella Page-Fort is the editorial director of AmazonCrossing, where she has worked since 2010. Her list includes award-winning authors from around the world, such as Laksmi Pamuntjak, Martin Michael Driessen, Laura Esquivel, Dolores Redondo, Laura Restrepo, Zygmunt Miloszewski, and Ayse Kulin. She was named *Publishers Weekly* Star Watch “Superstar” in 2017. She is also a literary translator from French and Spanish.

Slavic Languages Division Distinguished Speaker

Sibelan Forrester is a Susan W. Lippincott Professor Emeritus of Modern and Classical Languages and Russian at Swarthmore College. She has published translations of fiction, poetry, and scholarly prose from Croatian, Russian, and Serbian, and teaches a regular translation workshop at Swarthmore. Her research interests include poetry and poetics, women’s studies and gender studies, folklore, science fiction, and translation theory.

Kevin Quirk has worked as a freelance Norwegian government authorized translator and interpreter between Norwegian and English for 25 years. Born and educated in the U.K., he now lives in Norway, where he has also translated a number of books from Norwegian into English. He has held a number of positions in national and international translators association, and is currently the president of the International Federation of Translators.

Ana Salotti is an English>Spanish translator specialized in audiovisual content and natural sciences. She has been a professional translator since 2006, and has an MA in translation studies. In the environmental sciences, she has translated extensively for intergovernmental organizations dealing with ocean conservation and the management of fisheries, seabirds, and marine mammals around the world. She recently translated Deborah Cramer’s *The Narrow Edge*, an environmental nonfiction book on migratory shorebirds and the impact of humans on the ocean.

Ellen Sowchek has been an ATA-certified French>English translator since 1990, focusing on legal and human rights documents. As a sub-specialty, she has worked extensively in the entertainment industry as both a translator and interpreter, translating legal documents, scripts, dialogue treatments, press kits, subtitles, and credits for many films. She has also interpreted for many French and Francophone film and theater directors, actors, producers, choreographers, dancers, and other performers. She is a former editor of ATA’s French Language Division newsletter and is currently a grader for ATA’s French>English certification exam.

Stephanie Delozier Strobel is a mechanical engineer turned technical translator, providing freelance translations on a variety of heavily technical subjects since 2001. She recently completed her first literary translation of a popular science book. She studied French and mechanical engineering at Drexel University and the Advanced Studies Program at the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She has also participated in writing workshops for translators at the “Translate in...” conferences.

Jayme Costa-Pinto is a translator and interpreter based in São Paulo, Brazil. His literary translations include works by American authors O. Henry, Richard Greenberg, and John Updike. He has a degree in translation and interpreting from the Associação Alumni in São Paulo, a BS in geophysics from the University of São Paulo, and a post-graduate certificate in Brazilian literature from the University of São Paulo. He has also participated in a special training program for simultaneous interpreters at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey. He has interpreted for various writers, including Salman Rushdie, James Ellroy, and Scott Turow. He is the president of the Associação Paulista de Intérpretes de Conferência.

Karen Catherine Sherwood Sotelino has a BA in international relations from Stanford University and a PhD in literature from the University of California, Santa Cruz. She has translated numerous essays for *Atlante* magazine (Pointer Editores, São Paulo) and six novels, including Raduan Nassar’s *Ancient Tillage* (Penguin Modern Classics, 2016). Her most recent translation is Raul Brandão’s *The Poor* (Dalkey Archive, 2016). She has taught translation at the Associação Alumni and Portuguese and translation at Stanford University. She has published numerous articles on translation theory in the U.S., Brazil, and Portugal. She is currently a visiting scholar at the University of California, Berkeley.

Mercedes Guhl jumped into translation while working in the book industry in 1990. Since then, she has been involved in different parts of the publishing process (e.g., editing, copyediting, proofing), but translation (English>Spanish) remains her main activity. With a degree in philosophy and literature, an MA in translation studies, and over 60 published translations, she has also gone into teaching, training translators at the undergraduate and graduate levels in Colombia and Mexico.

Lydia Razran Stone is a Russian>English translator. She is the editor of *SlavFile*, the newsletter of ATA’s Slavic Languages Division, and a grader for ATA’s Russian>English certification exam. She has worked for years as a biological/medical translator, but currently specializes in translating poetry.

Abraham Haak is an ATA-certified Arabic>English translator and educator with 30 years of experience in legal and technical translation. He has held positions as the lead quality assurance engineer at eTranslate and as a research assistant at the Harvard Law Library. He taught Arabic and German translation courses at New York University and was an assistant professor of English at Senzoku University in Japan. He is currently completing an English>Arabic translation of a full-length book from Yale University Press.

READERS' CORNER



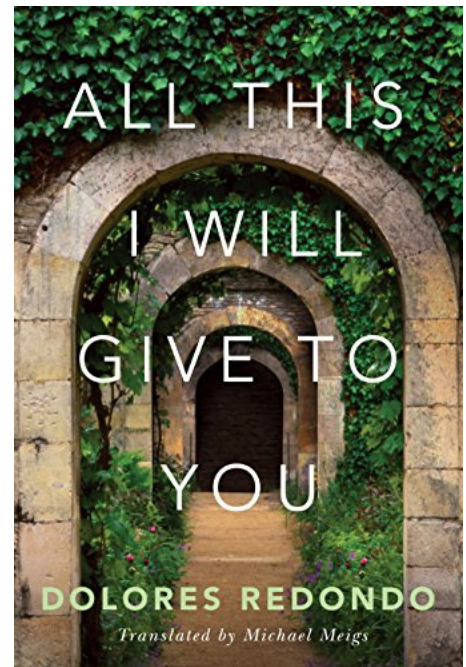
Cheryl Fain

Cheryl A. Fain, the official translator for the Embassy of Switzerland in Washington, announces the recent publication of *Beyond Muesli and Fondue: The Swiss Contribution to Culinary History* (BookLocker.com, Inc.), her book-length translation of *Schweizer Küchegeheimnisse* by Ambassador of Switzerland Martin Dahinden, with original recipes updated by Swiss Residence Chef João Marcos Barboza. This book, as well as the series, highlights the importance of culinary diplomacy in international relations.

On September 1, Amazon Crossing published **Michael Meigs's** translation of Dolores Redondo's novel *All This I Will Give to You*, and later that month Michael traveled to Spain to visit towns and locations that served as settings for the novel. He participated in a Brazilian Portuguese literature book review group and enthusiastically recommended *Noite dentro da noite* by Joca Reiners Terron, a complex, multi-layered phantasmagoric novel about events in Germany and Brazil between 1945 and 1989.

Here's a link to a perceptive review just published in the UK: <https://crimefictionlover.com/2018/09/all-this-i-will-give-to-you/>

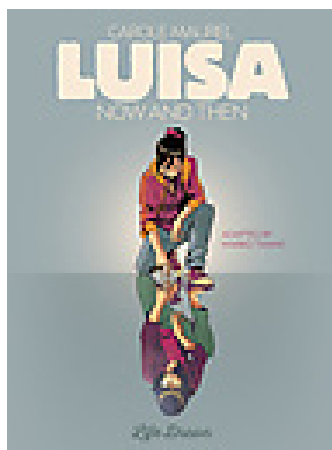
For more, see Michael Meigs's essay beginning on page 25 in this issue "Contemporary Scandinavian Literature: A Fan's Notes."



Life of a Bishop's Assistant is an experimental retelling of the life of 18th century memoirist Gavriil Dobrynin (1752-1824). It was written by Viktor Shklovsky, a leading figure in the Russian Formalist movement, in 1931—right before the movement was disbanded by the Soviet government. The book was translated by **Valeriya Yermishova** in the summer of 2016 and published by Dalkey Archive Press in July 2017. Prior to translating it, Valeriya read a third of it and made a glossary of Eastern Orthodox and archaic terms. As Michael Orthofer of the *complete review* has pointed out, it is a very funny book, and the humor and fascinating historical references helped propel the translation. Valeriya is grateful for the literary and legal translation training she received from past instructors like Marilyn Gaddis Rose, Eileen Hennessy, Alison Dundy, Kathy Stackhouse, and Jean Campbell.

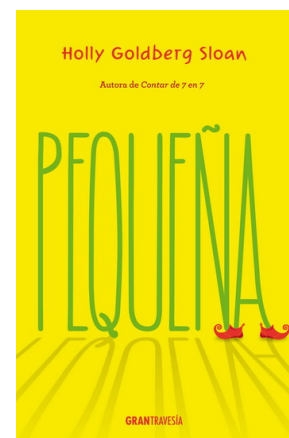


Valeriya Yermishova



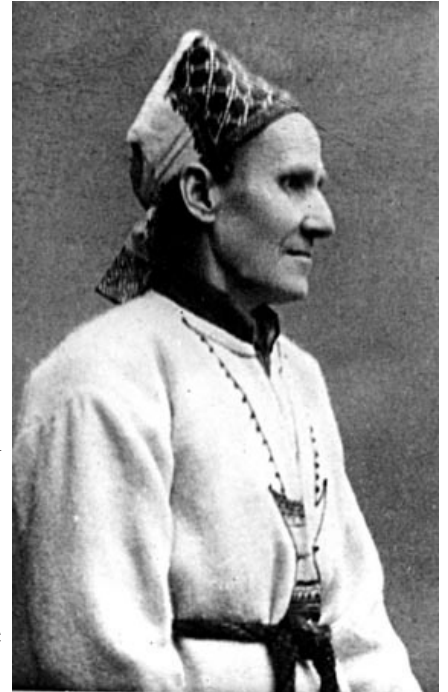
In *Luisa: Now and Then* (Humanoids, 2018) **Nanette McGuinness'** translation of *Luisa: Ici et là*, Carole Maurel's time-travelling graphic novel about sexual identity (adaptation by Mariko Tamaki), 32-year-old Luisa encounters her teen-age self and the two slowly merge, becoming whole via a journey of self-discovery and self-acceptance. *Publisher's Weekly* Starred Review.

Pequeña, **Mercedes Guhl's** translation of *Short*, a novel by Holly Goldberg Sloan, tells the story of a girl taking part in a summer theatre production of *The Wizard of Oz*. For the translation to work, it was necessary not only to read the novel that spun the musical, but also to see and listen to bits of both the classic movie and the musical, with Spanish dubbing. The book subtly reflects on how we weigh language down with social norms making it easy to overlook literal meanings.



LARIN PARASKE, Finnish folk poet and singer

Larin Paraske (1834-1904), an Izhorian oral poet, originally from Ingria, is a key figure in Finnish folk poetry and has been called the “Finnish Mnemosyne.” Paraske’s frequent listeners included several romantic nationalist artists, such as the Finnish composer Jean Sibelius (1865-1957), seeking inspiration from her interpretations of *Kalevala*, an epic poem compiled from Finnish folklore by the physician and philologist Elias Lönnrot (1802-1884) and first published in 1835. Paraske could recite over 32,000 verses of poetry (runic verses), which made her an important source for Karelian culture. Her poems were written down by the Lutheran pastor and folklorist Adolf Alarik Neovius (1858-1913) in the 1880s, and after several years of work, about 1,200 poems (runes), 1,750 proverbs, and 338 riddles were documented, along with several Finnic lamentations known as *itkuvirsi*, performed by crying and sobbing. Paraske was the composer of many of the songs/poems that were transcribed and published.



Larin Paraske

The region of Ingria (see map p. 15), originally occupied by Baltic Finnish ethnic groups, including the Izhorians, Karelians, Votes, and Vepsians, is bound by Lake Ladoga to the northeast, the Gulf of Finland and Baltic Sea to the northwest, and Estonia to the far west. The Neva River cuts across Ingria from east to west and the river’s delta is home to the port and imperial city of St. Petersburg. Ingria now lies entirely in Russia in the Leningrad Oblast (province). By the end of WW II, all remaining Ingrian and Karelian Finns had been shot, imprisoned, evacuated, deported, or relocated either to Finland or to other parts of Russia.

Karelia (see map p. 16), an ancestral land of the Finns, stretching north from the Karelian Isthmus and the northern shores of Lake Ladoga past Lake Onega and up to the northernmost tip of the White Sea, was home to many of Finland’s myths, legends, and epic poetry. It was widely travelled by Elias Lönnrot to compile folklore and *Kalevala*. Karelia, designated by the Soviets as an autonomous republic, is now almost entirely in Russia. The northern Ingrian/Karelian village of Vaskela in the district of Sakkola (parish of Mikkulainen), which is Paraske’s burial place and her mother’s hometown, is located near the Finnish border at the northeastern tip of the Karelian isthmus close to the shores of Lake Ladoga.

Paraske’s story, as told by Frances Karttunen below, is an abridged version of “Verses out of Serfdom: Larin Paraske (ca. 1834-1904),” pages 170 to 192, Chapter Three, “Three Native Informants,” in Frances Karttunen, *Between Worlds: Interpreters, Guides, and Survivors* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994). Excerpts reprinted courtesy of Frances Karttunen. Both Paraske poems cited here are translated from the Finnish by Frances Karttunen.

Verses out of Serfdom: Larin Paraske (ca. 1834-1904)

by Frances Karttunen

*Come death across the swamp,
pestilence along the winter road.
Take away this apple,
bear away this berry,
lure away this little lily.*
—Paraske's cradle song



Albert Edelfelt's 1893 painting of Larin Paraske, when she was 59

Paraske was born in Russian Ingria around 1834 of an across-the-border marriage. Her father's family had been bound to the Kusova estate [in Russia] for generations, but her mother was from Sakkola, just a few miles away in Finland.

Although they were from Ingrian border villages, members of Paraske's family knew Petersburg well. Her father, Nikitta, had learned blacksmithery in the city and afterwards constructed a forge on the Kusova estate. According to family history, Paraske's maternal grandmother, though from the Finnish side, had been packed off to serve a master in Petersburg, only to be rescued by her brother when he found her drawing water barefoot on the ice of the frozen Neva. Although there is a legal distinction between serfs and slaves, Ingrians then and ever after bitterly referred to their condition in those days as *orjuus* 'slavery.'

Suffering from tuberculosis, Nikitta's Finnish wife Tatjana nonetheless gave birth to eight children, of whom Paraske was the fourth. At some time, Tatjana managed to take Paraske back over the border [to Sakkola] to visit her relatives, but from the age of ten Paraske spent most of her summer days in a pack of Ingrian children herding animals in the estate's forest. To pass time and to distract themselves from hunger and bad weather, the children tried to outdo each other with songs that they had learned—cradle songs, dance songs, wedding songs, laments.

What the children were doing there in the woods on the Finnish/Russian border was going on in villages from the shores of the Gulf of Finland all the way to the edge of the White Sea. In nineteenth-century Karelia and Ingria, for men, women, and children alike, singing was the undisputed arena for competition. Where survival dictated that undernourished people not expend unnecessary physical energy, and where people could acquire or display few material goods, virtuoso feats of memorization and improvisation were a way for individuals to measure themselves against one another.



Ingria in 1900, occupied by Finnish ethnic groups.

On the Kusova estate the two children with the biggest stock of songs were Paraske and a boy named Ontropo Melnikov. According to Ontropo, telling his life story many years later, he and Paraske were a good match for a while, but Paraske finally got the edge on him and eventually knew all the songs there were to know.

The songs the children sang belonged to a body of folk poetry shared by Finns, Karelians, Ingrians, and their linguistic relatives, poetry recognizable by its alliterative verse structure and by a company of heroes who appear in various exploits. Scholars had already taken notice of these heroes and their adventures in the eighteenth century, and by the time of Paraske's birth in the first half of the nineteenth century, a physician named Elias Lönnrot had written down

thousands of lines of the poetry and begun publishing it. While Paraske and her companions were competing to outsing each other in the woods near the shores of Lake Ladoga, Lönnrot was polishing his expanded second edition of *Kalevala*, an immense poetic construction he had woven together from songs like theirs.



Karelia, an ancestral land of the Finns

Lönnrot had gone by foot on long poetry-collecting trips through northern and eastern Finland and that part of Karelia that lay north of Lake Ladoga stretching to the White Sea. In the course of his career he even went by boat to Archangel and thence south through the country east of Lake Onega and to the northern shores of Ladoga. Everywhere he found men and women who sang to him of Väinämöinen the singing magician, Ilmarinen the smith, Lemminkäinen the womanizer, Kullervo the strongman, and Jokahainen the upstart challenger of Väinämöinen. Narratives about these men provided the substance of Lönnrot's *Kalevala*, a framework which he adorned with charms, prayers, wedding songs, lullabies, songs of grief and sorrow.

A connecting theme was the *Sampo*, a magical engine that perpetually ground out prosperity. A powerful woman commissioned it;

Väinämöinen promised to deliver it; Ilmarinen forged it; and then Väinämöinen, Ilmarinen, and Lemminkäinen set out to steal it back from its owner. During a battle for its possession, it was broken and its fragments scattered on the bottom of the sea, and so it is that since then prosperity has been so rare and arbitrary.

According to a Finnish folklorist, Ontropo Melnikov had received lashes for singing. When asked how it was that Paraske bested him at singing, Ontropo remarked that whipping made one's memory go to pieces. Women might snivel their laments at weddings and funerals, but men in slavery robustly singing of voyages, warfare, and magic were not tolerated. Yet although they were constrained from singing the long narrative songs, the Ingrians had not forgotten their heroes. When Paraske was an old woman, she had Lönnrot's *Kalevala* read aloud to her from beginning to end. After some thought she announced, "That's all mixed up," and began to set it right....

Paraske's days of singing in the forest were numbered. [Her mother] Tatjana finally succumbed to tuberculosis when Paraske was in her mid-teens, and [her father] Nikitta died soon after. Upon his death, the master of the Kusova estate confiscated the forge Nikitta had built....



Bringing the warrior Lemminkäinen back to life, scene from the Finnish epic poem, *Kalevala*. The central figure, the mother, looks very much like Larin Paraske.

An orphan at seventeen, Paraske longed for a life over the border in Finland, but she was bound to the estate. She was already in demand as a public singer, and as she went from village to village singing at other people's weddings, she advertised herself as a bride for the man who would buy her out of serfdom. The news carried to the other side, and an offer came from Kauril Stepanova, who lived in her mother's old home village [Vaskela in the district of Sakkola].

Kauril was twice her age, forty years to her twenty. He was poor and in bad health. Paraske was no beauty. She was tall and angular with a prominent nose and deep-set eyes. He needed a strong woman to do the heavy labor he could not do. Her price, it is said, was twenty-four rubles. Kauril paid it to the Kusova estate, took her back to Sakkola, and married her in the Orthodox chapel in mid-July 1853.

As the mistress of Kauril's tiny Larila homestead, Paraske dropped the patronymic from after her given name and acquired her new home's name in front of it. Before her marriage she had been Paraske Nikittina; for the rest of her life she would be known as Larin Paraske....

Much has been made of Kauril Stepanova's physical debilitation, but whatever it was that ailed him did not prevent the couple from conceiving children. Paraske gave birth at two- to three-year

intervals beginning in 1854. Her last child was a daughter who died without baptism in 1878 when Paraske was in her mid-forties and Kauril was in his mid-sixties. Altogether Paraske gave birth to nine children, of whom only three survived: Nadeschda, their third child; Tatjana, their fourth; and Vasle, their sixth.

Throughout her pregnancies Paraske plowed and dug, planted and harvested Larila's fields. When the land lay under snow and ice, she spun wool and flax, wove cloth, and embroidered it. In the early years she was able to supplement their income by taking nurslings from the Petersburg foundling hospital. [By her account, she relieved the foundling hospital of fifty children over the years. Paraske was what was known in the nineteenth century as an angel maker.] With the wet nursing operation closed down by the authorities, she joined work crews hauling freight barges along nearby waterways.



Ilya Repin, *The Volga Barmen* (1870)

The Russian painter Ilya Repin's painting *The Volga Barmen* [see painting above] shows what the work was like. Haulers worked with broad leather bands across their chests. The bands pinned their arms to their sides as they leaned forward so far that only the harness kept them from falling on their faces. They used their whole body weight to move the vessel behind them as they trudged through sand and water. It was work for mule teams, but in that time and place it was human beings, not mules, that did it. Among the dark, hardened bargemen in Repin's painting is a young blond boy with a cross on a chain around his neck and a face as pretty as a girl's. He stands upright with one hand under the chest band, holding it away from his flesh. Imagine that boy as a young woman with tender, milk-engorged breasts. That was Paraske.

She was tall, she was strong, and work made her tough. She was still a singer, and hard times deepened her art. In that corner of the world life transitions called for dramatic weeping. When a young woman was to be married, she engaged in a round of tearful farewells to her mother who had raised her; to her sisters and brothers from whom she was parting; to her home where she had lived until then. As she imagined living in a strange house among people she did not know, at the beck and call of a mother-in-law; she went into a frenzy of lamentation. And of course, her family reciprocated with their own weeping. Talented singers were engaged to lead all this crying. Professionals needed only to concentrate for a few moments, handkerchief pressed to cheek, and then the tears would begin to flow, inspiring tears in all beholders. And so a wedding would be off to a proper start.

Likewise, on certain feast days of the Orthodox calendar people went to the burial grounds to weep for their deceased relatives. The graves resembled miniature chapels. Each was covered by boards, and marked by a cross with its own little roof. The woman who led the weeping would rest her cheek against a grave marker, ready her handkerchief, begin to speak to the ancestors, and then the tears would come....

Scholarly investigators were not impervious to the power of her art. Another Larila woman recalled that once [Adolf] Neovius [27-year-old Lutheran pastor in Paraske's home district of Sakkola] asked Paraske to sing about the bride leaving her childhood home. Paraske warned Neovius that he wouldn't be able to endure it, and he replied that he would make his heart as hard as a stone. But as they sat side by side, she engrossed in her lament, he too began to weep, as did everyone present. Everyone who saw and heard her sing was struck by the intensity and volatility of her emotions during her performances.



Hugo Simberg, *The Wounded Angel* (1903)

In her cradle songs, Paraske invoked death as the sandman that came to put children to sleep for eternity. She sang of the boys and girls beneath the sod, the child with hands full of flowers borne to the land of the dead. This conspiracy with death, this willingness to let children go, was common to the people of the border lands, where epidemics and famine were everyday fare and subsistence was always just beyond reach....

In the 1880s Finns were still seeking their national and cultural identity on the very edge of their own country or out beyond its borders. Within Finland, foreign investment had fueled development of textile mills, granite quarries, glass and ceramic factories, steamship lines, railroads, and the like. Traditional culture seemed on the retreat before internationalism. Young Kaarle Krohn, son of a Finnish folklorist and destined to become a more famous folklorist himself, theorized that the folk poetry from which Lönnrot had constructed the *Kalevala* had originated in western Finland and spread out to the east and north. Now it had been obliterated at the core and only survived on the fringe, where it was soon to expire. Collectors went to the eastern border areas to salvage it from the lips of aged singers.

Neovius was of this generation, and his parish assignment took him right where he wanted to go. In Sakkola he was the soul of responsibility in his spiritual and administrative roles, aiding poverty-stricken parishioners from his own limited personal funds. But he also took advantage of his four-year stint in Sakkola to hear the songs of every old lady he could find....

Neovius paid singers at the rate of one ruble per hour to let him write down their verses line-by-line. Paraske assured him that she could sing without repeating herself for days on end. Sometimes she came to him, and other days her neighbors observed him visiting in her cottage. Toward the end of the summer she stayed at the parsonage for five days during which she provided Neovius with a hundred different songs....

In 1888, Paraske followed [her husband] Kauril's coffin to the Orthodox burial ground and sang him into his grave. In front of the villagers gathered in the cemetery she wept over the desolation of widowhood, silent evenings, lonely mornings, the cold bed, alienation even from God's comfort. More privately she sang:

*All the others lie by twos,
It's just me passing the night alone,
All the others two-by-two,
Me alone in solitude.*

*Pairs of mosquitoes in the air,
Pairs of birds are flying,
Pairs of fish are in the sea—
Me alone in solitude.*

Neovius wanted every single one of Paraske's songs. When the young pastor left Sakkola to return to his comfortable hometown of Porvoo, he brought Paraske to live with him and his family, to sing for him until the wellspring of verses ran dry. She came in January of 1891 and stayed through the spring of 1894....

When Neovius was ready to “sing” Paraske, he got out his notebooks, and they sat down together. She sang a song from beginning to end, dictated the words line by line, and explained the meanings of the many words he did not know....

In March Paraske visited Helsinki for the first time. She went to sing at a meeting of the Finnish Literature Society in its ornate new building that had just recently been completed....

Back in Porvoo the snows of that first winter melted away, the lilacs blossomed, and Sibelius came to hear from Paraske’s lips how *Kalevala* verses were truly sung. He listened intently, made notes and in the next year completed his *Kullervo symphony* about the most tragic of the *Kalevala* heroes....



With the Northern Lights in the background, the Finnish hero Kullervo rides to war,
subject of Sibelius’s *Kullervo* choral symphony

By now, Paraske was a celebrity, and she made her public appearances in a handsome folk costume. With a dark skirt she wore a long white overgarment embroidered at the wrists and neck and tied at the waist with a woven woolen ribbon. A heavily embroidered Ingrian headcloth concealed her hair....

Dressed in it, Paraske sat for portraits and photographs in Porvoo and Helsinki. A half a dozen or more artists drew and painted her likeness. The most famous of them were the celebrated painters Eero Järnefelt and Albert Edelfelt, for whom she sat as a model in January 1893. Edelfelt painted her seated on a rock in a field, elbows on her knees, large work-hardened hands clasped, eyes set on something far away or deep within [see painting on page 14].

In Porvoo Neovius had completed the first volume of Paraske's poems, and it too was published in 1893, a golden year for Paraske in what Finns then and to this day consider their golden age of painting, music, architecture, and literature. Three portraits of her hung in the Helsinki Exhibition. Within Finland and beyond, Paraske was featured in newspaper and magazine articles...

[However,] the seven fat years from 1887 to 1894 gave way to [ten] cold and hungry years. The publisher of the first volume of her poems discontinued the series for lack of public support. In Sakkola Paraske had no livelihood, no income at all. Her health began to give way, and as winter loomed, she sent letters to Neovius, and he sent money....



Jean Sibelius in his mid-twenties

By Eastertime [1903] she could no longer leave her bed. She spent her days in earnest prayer that God would bless and reward her benefactors and finally deliver her from life.

Through the summer days and through the darkening autumn she prayed. God only relented in January when the ground was frozen solid against the gravedigger's shovel. Her daughter [Nadeschda] wrote to Neovius that her last words had been, "Now I want to be alone. I have my own work to do."

The battles were not yet over. Nadeschda wrote that a large crowd of local people had followed Paraske to the burial ground. The coffin was donated, and they had marked her grave with a

plain black cross... There was no money for anything more.

For Paraske Finland had held the promise of freedom, yet there she had lived in poverty almost beyond comprehension. She had known devotion in marriage, disappointment in her children. She had inspired the greatest creative minds in Finland, but for her contribution to the national patrimony, the Finnish Literature Society had always offered her too little and too late. In her Orthodox community where she had sung so many into marriage and into eternity she was left

*When Paraske
was an old woman,
she had Lönnrot's
Kalevala read
aloud to her from
beginning to end.
After some thought
she announced,
"That's all mixed
up," and began to
set it right.*

cold and hungry in her old age, yet she had been cherished and supported by a circle of Lutheran friends. Ontropo Melnikov, with his back ruined and spirit broken by the knout, outlived Paraske by more than a decade; Neovius, young enough to be her son, had joined her in death long before their complete collection of her poems was finally published in 1931.

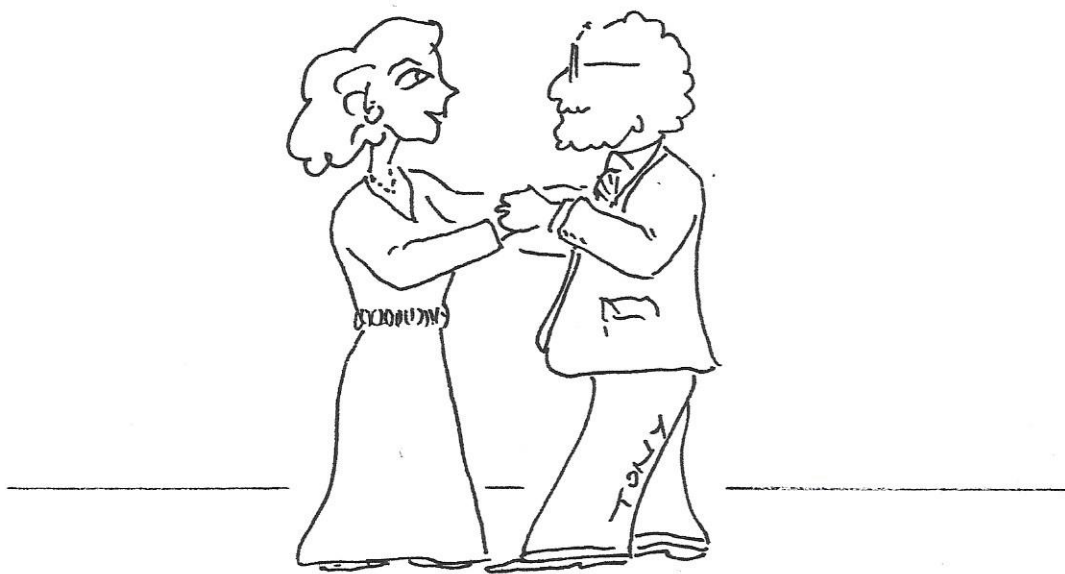
In the 1940s, the border moved again, and Paraske no longer sleeps in Finland.

Twelfth generation Nantucketer **Frances Karttunen** was educated in the local public schools. She received a bachelor's degree with honors from Radcliffe College in 1964 and a Ph.D. in linguistics from Indiana University. She held the position of Senior University Research Scientist at the Linguistics Research Center at the University of Texas, Austin, and also served as Program Director for Linguistics at the National Science Foundation. Over the years she has been awarded three Fulbright fellowships, all in Finland. In 1997–98 she and her husband, Alfred W. Crosby, shared the Bicentennial Fulbright Professorship in American Studies at the University of Helsinki. One of Dr. Karttunen's grandmothers was a native Nantucketer and the other an immigrant from Finland. The difficulties and adjustments they and their family members encountered were among the inspirations for *Between Worlds* and her later book, *The Other Islanders: People Who Pulled Nantucket's Oars*.



Frances Karttunen

BTW

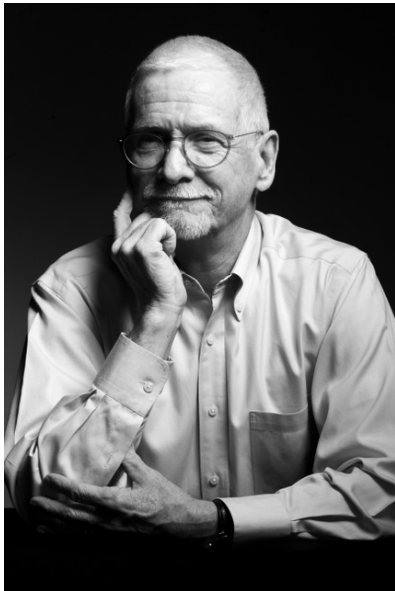


*“Once you start saying things like dichotomy and vis-à-vis,
it’s so terribly hard to stop.”*

CONTEMPORARY SCANDINAVIAN LITERATURE

A Fan's Notes

By Michael Meigs



Michael Meigs reviews theatre, translates literature from Spanish, Swedish, French and German, and since 2008 has published the on-line journal www.CTXLiveTheatre.com, dedicated to live narrative theatre in Austin, San Antonio and the rest of Central Texas. He served as a Foreign Service Officer with the U.S. Department of State for more than thirty years, assigned abroad to Africa, Europe, South America, and the Caribbean. He has graduate degrees in comparative literature, business, economics and national security studies. His e-mail address is michaelmeigs@gmail.com.

I won't deny it: my discovery of Swedish writing was casual and entirely serendipitous. I'm not an academic, and during my career as a United States diplomat I worked principally in French, Spanish, and English. It seemed unlikely that, after retiring about 10 years ago, I would become deeply involved in contemporary Nordic fiction.

After all, native speakers of the Scandinavian languages constitute a tiny minority of the world's population. Fewer than 10 million speak Swedish; about 5.6 million speak Danish; Norwegian speakers are about 5 million. So those three languages, as close to one another as, for example, Spanish and Portuguese, are home to about 20 million. Compare that to totals for a variety of other European languages: the world holds 400 million Spanish speakers; about 350 million English speakers (250 million in the Americas, 55 million in the United Kingdom, almost 20 million in Australia and New Zealand); 203 million Portuguese speakers; 78 million German speakers; and 76 million French speakers.¹

Or put another way, the population native in Swedish, the language via which I entered contemporary Nordic literature, numbers less than 3% of the world population of native English

speakers. If we compare them with all those native speakers of the other European-based languages mentioned above, Swedish speakers amount to fewer than 1% of that total.

But things happen and unexpected pathways open. I'd been doing freelance translations from Swedish into English for authors and agents for several years when we visited Norway and were hosted for a day in Oslo by Swedish author and intellectual Gabi Gleichmann. He asked me how I'd gotten involved with Swedish, considering that I'd never been posted to Scandinavia. I remember feeling momentarily embarrassed after telling him the truth.

A friend had sent me a copy of an early 'Inspector Wallander' novel by Henning Mankell, and I'd enjoyed the fictional Kurt Wallander, who worked in the small town of Ystad on Sweden's south coast. I liked the police procedural but was also entertained by the protagonist's life story, family problems, and moody musings. Amazon.com provided a second Wallander novel, but none of the others had yet been translated into English. I found the third of the series in German and read it; and I wondered how difficult it might be to learn enough Swedish to read the others. While visiting my daughter during her first year of university in Chicago, we checked out the Swedish-American museum in the northern suburb of Andersonville. They kindly allowed me to scrounge from the bin a yellowing Swedish translation of Michael Arlen's 1924 mystery *The Green Hat*. That, an elementary grammar, and a small dictionary got me started. It was slow at first—a bit like building a highway with a pickaxe—but since the Swedish language shares many elements with English and with German, I was soon making progress.

Gabi, who was pleased with my 2012 translation of his wonder-filled novel *The Elixir of Immortality*,² appeared appalled to learn that I'd gained access to Swedish through the low portal of popular genre fiction. I was quick to reassure him that my reading had soon become more sophisticated, including works by Per Olov Enquist and Lars Gustafsson. That appeared to reassure him, and he shared anecdotes about Gustafsson, who had returned to Sweden in 2006 after teaching for more than 20 years at the University of Texas in Austin.

Gustafsson was my bridge to the world of Swedish-English translation. After retiring from the U.S. Department of State, I attended a month-long language course in Swedish at Uppsala University, north of Stockholm, surrounded by students mostly in their twenties. I knew of Gustafsson because we'd relocated to Austin and he'd been profiled in the local paper. In the Uppsala University bookstore, I found a paperback copy of his novel *Dekanen*³ (*The Dean*). Paging through it, I was fascinated to discover that he'd set the story in Austin and created a mythic University of Texas academic with strange powers and a link to supernatural doings out in the arid Big Bend of southwest Texas. Months later, I located an e-mail for the retired emeritus professor, a giant of Swedish contemporary writing, and I sent him a request for permission to translate the novel. I got a three-word reply: *Okay by me*. Translating it was a challenge, and the outcome was highly satisfying. A 50-page excerpt from my translation was awarded the 2011 Translation Prize by the American-Scandinavian Foundation.

Discovering a New (Nordic) World

Scandinavia is an open region, friendly to English speakers, with a society comfortably similar to that of the United States. Tourism is fun, providing access to the graceful capitals and towns, histories of Vikings, and vast tracts of woodlands and seacoasts, mostly unspoiled. And armed with the language—or at least the ability to read the language—one walks into bookstores to find a wide and varied feast of contemporary literature. Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian are similar, so there's lots of room for a language lover to explore the national literatures.

Scandinavian countries' publishing industries offer a great deal of translated fiction, including translations between the Nordic languages. Purchasing fiction in Stockholm, I found at times that I'd chosen a Norwegian novel rendered into Swedish. For example, the journalist, lawyer, and former Norwegian Minister of Justice Anne Holt authored a popular detective series about Hanne Wilhelmsen, a senior police officer who happened to be a lesbian; her novel *Blind Goddess* was published in 1993, the first in a highly popular series. I absorbed one after another in Swedish translation. Only in 2012 did the first novel of the series appear in English, in a translation by Tom Geddes.⁴

Stepping into a bookstore in Stockholm was a revelation. The shelves were well stocked with all sorts of titles written in Swedish or translated into the language. As elsewhere in Europe, there was a profusion of novels from other countries, especially from English-language authors, with novels ranging from Thomas Pynchon to Dan Brown to that mistress of crime fiction Agatha Christie, now mostly forgotten in the United States.

For a linguistic hobbyist living in Austin, Texas, books in Swedish were hard to get at first. Because of U.S. customs hassles, the major Swedish bookstores would not mail to U.S. addresses. On my summer visits to Sweden I would load up suitcase and backpack with paperbacks to take back to Texas. I remember being particularly chagrined when the carefully courteous SAS staffer insisted on weighing my carry-on backpack as well and charging me \$100 for the extra kilos.

The rapid development of e-book sales has been a boon for those of us outside Sweden. A principal source has become the website www.bokus.com, offering downloads of e-books and audiobooks and accessible by clients outside Europe. The Swedes themselves have been slow to adapt to e-books. Researcher Elena Maceviciute of Borås University found that, as of 2016, only about 2% of publishers' revenues came from sales of e-books, as compared to an estimated 25-30% in the United States.⁵

In 2016, new e-book titles numbered 948, accounting for 36.2% of the market; new hardbacks added up to 638 (24.4%), new paperbacks 425 (18.6%), new digital audio titles for download 487 (18.6%), and titles published as new physical audiobooks 115 (23.0%).⁶ Note that about two-thirds of e-book titles were from back catalogs, while new titles were probably offered both as hard copies and e-books.⁷ Given the relatively low costs of publishing e-books, publishers were probably preparing for a shift in Swedish reading habits, just in case.

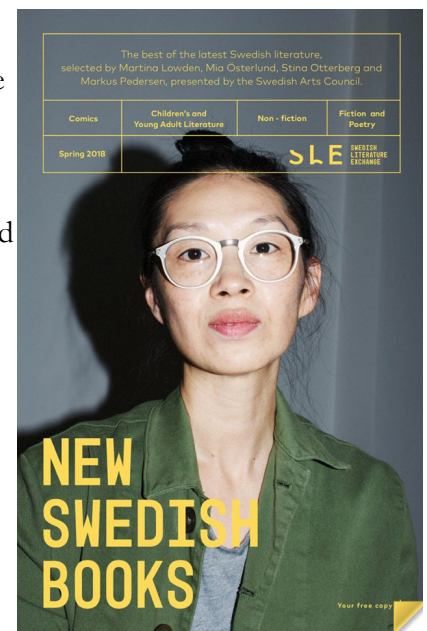
Publishing thrives in Sweden. The analysis done for the Swedish Booksellers and Publishers Association by Erik Wikberg, PhD,⁸ demonstrated that the 2017 turnover in the industry was just over US\$ 400 million at today's exchange rate. That publication's statistics of 2017 revenue generated by category can be summarized as follows:

Sweden: 2017 Publishing Sales by Category Percentages derived from figures in thousands of Swedish kronor		
Category	Percentage	Change from 2016
Literature	13.2	- 4.9
Detective novels and thrillers	12.2	+0.7
Foreign literature	15.1	+0.1
Children's and YA literature	17.1	+3.6
Humanities and social science	15.9	+7.9
Popular non-fiction	10.6	-6.3
Technical literature, textbooks	9.0	-1.5
Food and drink	4.2	Unchanged
Other/not categorized	2.6	-11.4
TOTAL in thousands of Swedish kronor	3,652,060	Unchanged

Note that translations of foreign literature constituted more than 15% of titles on offer. In contrast, in the United States translated foreign titles have remained at only about 3%.

Relatively soon after relocating to Austin in late 2007, I came across the website of Swedish Translators in North America (STiNA), open to anyone interested in Swedish literature and its translation into English. I joined that small group and later, after responding to a publisher's inquiry with translated excerpts, I was chosen to translate Gabi Gleichmann's novel. A couple of years after completing that challenging but thrilling task, I traveled to Sweden to visit the annual Gothenburg Book Fair.

The four-day Book Fair in late September is an enormous gathering. Publishers, writers, and translators confer there; the general public crowds the vast rooms of the center where books are piled high. Authors are interviewed and deliver readings to receptive audiences who treat them like media stars. The event has an annual theme focused on a foreign country or region, while publishers and Swedish cultural authorities court foreign publishers and translators with activities. In 2016, they passed out glossy brochures presenting an array of titles thought likely to appeal to non-Swedish audiences.⁹ Selections were made not by Arts Council members but by a panel of Swedish writers. Editions were published for Swedish poetry,



Cover, 2018 *New Swedish Books*
Photo is of Mara Lee, author of the poetry collection *Kärleken och Hatet* (Love and Hate)



Swedish comics, new Swedish drama, new Swedish books for young readers, and Swedish performing arts for an international audience. The spring 2018 edition can also be viewed online.¹⁰

Cultural promotion by the Swedish Arts Council is an ongoing effort detailed both in Swedish and in English at the website <http://www.kulturradet.se>. The Council maintains a registry of translators from Swedish and periodically hosts translators at seminars.

An informative and ongoing review of current titles is published online twice a year by the London-based *Swedish Book Review* (<http://www.swedishbookreview.com>). Some may have been translated into German or other European languages; few or none will have made it into English.

The official site of the Swedish government offers a well-drafted and informative page on modern Swedish literature,¹¹ updated regularly. Not surprisingly, the lead image is of a young woman reading a copy in English of Stieg Larsson's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*.

Swedish Noir

Take a look at the legend on that page of the official site: *Swedish fiction is among the most translated in the world. Crime writers such as Stieg Larsson, Camilla Läckberg and Henning Mankell have helped attract international readers.* The marketing blurb conflates Swedish literature writ large with the international phenomenon of translations of Swedish noir fiction.

A panel of academics discussed the Swedish crime novel phenomenon at the 2016 Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study in New Orleans and attributed it in large part to two authors: Henning Mankell (whose Inspector Kurt Wallander enticed me into the language) and Stieg Larsson, the investigative journalist who died unexpectedly in 2004 and left behind a trilogy of unpublished thrillers featuring the tattooed female techno whiz Lisbeth Salander. On the one side of Swedish noir stood the weary, disabused rural cop with a host of personal problems; on the other crouched the mistreated, abused, and vengeful female outsider.

The stories were strong, ripe for readers of genre fiction and for cinematic treatment. Swedish actor Rolf Lassgård portrayed Wallander and was succeeded by Krister Henriksson, initially in the cinema and then in a lengthy television series. Kenneth Branagh played Wallander for the BBC between 2008 and 2016. The 2009 Swedish film of Larsson's first volume of the *Millennium Trilogy* starring Noomi Rapace was redone for U.S. audiences with Rooney Mara. These visual



SWEDISH LITERATURE

Swedish fiction is among the most translated in the world. Crime writers such as Stieg Larsson, Camilla Läckberg and Henning Mankell have helped attract international readers.

treatments further intensified demand for the series of novels by Mankell and by Larsson. And they alerted publishers to additional potential gold lying in plain sight.

Wikberg's study of Swedish publishing in 2017 documents the fact that 12.2% of that year's sales revenue came from Swedish detective novels or thrillers. The year's 'top twenty' was entirely dominated by the genre. Standing at the top of the 2017 list was David Lagercrantz's 2015 continuation of the Millennium books—now no longer a trilogy but a series, with another volume published in September 2017. Lagercrantz's novel had been prepared in secret and released simultaneously in Swedish and in English. Other crime or thriller authors featured in Sweden's top twenty were Lars Kepler, Leif G.W. Persson, Jens Lapidus, the Norwegian Jo Nesbø, Mari Jungstedt, the Dane Jussi Adler-Olsen, and Malin Persson Giolito (daughter of Leif G.W. Persson, an attorney and like her father a popular crime writer). Also featured among the top twenty was Jan Guillou, a controversial former journalist whose reputation was made with exposés and crime fiction but who turned to historical fiction and now is engaged in an ambitious family series chronicling Swedish life in the twentieth century.

That's a wealth of Nordic talent for popular fiction. Many another Scandinavian writer has tried to follow in their footsteps. As have some who aren't Scans at all; the academics commented at the 2016 meeting that at least one writer in Germany had been publishing under a Swedish-sounding pseudonym.

Foreigners on the 2017 'top twenty' list of fiction sales in Sweden were Dan Brown with one title, Elena Ferrante with all four of her Neapolitan novels, and Kazuo Ishiguro, winner of the 2017 Nobel Prize in Literature, with two titles. Note, by the way, that the list does not distinguish between books in the original languages and translations into Swedish; many Swedes are perfectly comfortable reading English novels in the original language.

A Spectrum of Fiction

As a hobbyist of Swedish and a freelance translator, I've been privileged to have glimpses of a wider spectrum of the national literature. I'm not very familiar with classic Swedish fiction, such as the nineteenth and early twentieth century works of August Strindberg and Selma Lagerlöf (although the Uppsala University summer language institute arranged visits to the homes of both). The summer course provided glimpses of twentieth-century writers including Karin Boye, Åsa Linderborg, and Theodor Kallifatides. Recommendations at the Gothenburg Book Fair prompted me to purchase Sara Stridsberg's *Beckomberga, an Ode to my Family*, which evokes the looming shadow of mental illness, and Lotta Lundberg's *Timme Noll (Zero Hour)*, three tenuously connected tales of women facing crises over generations following the end of the second world war. Other Stridsberg titles are available in English, but Amazon.com currently lists this one only in Swedish and in French. Lundberg's novel, which won the 2015 Swedish Radio Prize for fiction, has been translated into German but apparently not into English.

My closer exploration of modern Swedish fiction began with Gustafsson and P.O. Enquist, former housemates at Uppsala who became stars of Swedish intellectual circles. I was captivated and deeply moved by Enquist's *Book about Blanche and Marie*,¹² which portrayed Marie Curie and her assistant, both of them poisoned by handling radioactive materials, as well as by his novels *Levi's Journey*¹³ about the nineteenth century evangelical movement in Sweden, the rural tale *Captain Nemo's Library*,¹⁴ and his grumbling biography *Another Life*.¹⁵ I'd already read Enquist's *The Royal Physician's Visit*¹⁶ in German and shivered at the fatalistic historical tale of the court physician who became Queen Caroline's lover and effective regent for the mad King Christian VII of Denmark. As for Gustafsson, I also read the other two books of his Austin, Texas trilogy, only one of which, *Story with a Dog*,¹⁷ has been translated into English—awkwardly, for UK translator Tom Geddes didn't capture Texas speech and idioms (e.g., "A yellow mongrel [. . .] kept upsetting his dustbins. . ."). Early on I read *The Death of a Beekeeper*¹⁸ and *Bernard Foy's Third Casting*,¹⁹ but that was before I had enough mastery of Swedish to appreciate them fully.

Swedish literature has been enriched by the country's willingness to receive refugees. Though the visible presence of persons not ethnically Swedish has stirred a certain amount of xenophobia,

popular fiction now often includes Swedish characters with family origins from elsewhere, usually in positive portrayals. Prominent writers have roots outside Sweden. Theodor Kallifatides, now 80, immigrated to Sweden in 1964 at the age of 26 and has published close to 30 titles of verse and fiction written in Swedish. My friend Gabi Gleichmann came to Sweden at the age of 12, the child of Hungarian diplomats. Screenwriter and playwright Alejandro Leiva Wenger was 9 when he arrived in Sweden from Chile in 1985. Dramatist Jonas Hassen Khemiri, son of a Tunisian father and a Swedish mother, was awarded the 2015 August Prize for fiction by a committee from the Swedish Publishers' Association for his *Everything I Don't Remember* (translated by Rachel Willson-Broyles for Simon and Schuster's Atria Books in 2016). Two years later the August Prize went to Johannes Anyuru, whose father came from Uganda, for *They Shall Drown in their Mothers' Tears* (not yet translated, although his 2012 *A Storm Blew in from Paradise* was published by World Editions in 2015 in a Willson-Broyles translation).

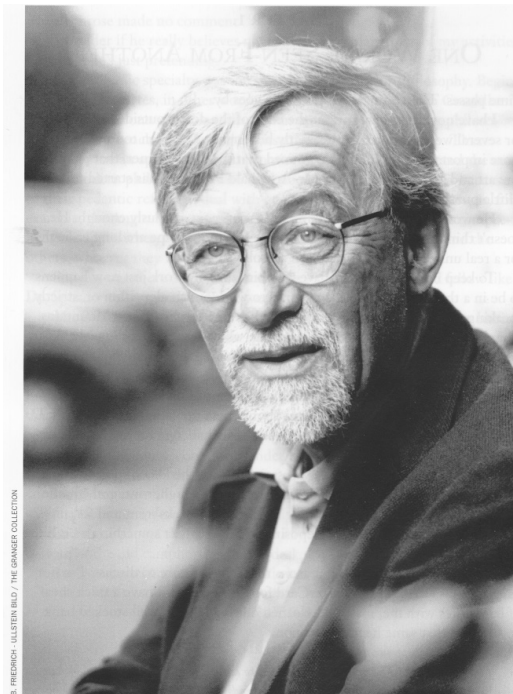
Nominations for the August Prize help an outsider identify titles of interest but are no guarantee those works will be translated. The committee establishes a short list of six titles each year. The current Wikipedia summary indicates that only 2 of the 30 fiction titles on short lists since 2013 are available in English: Khemiri's *Everything I Don't Remember* and the 2013 prizewinner *Willful Disregard* by Lena Andersson (New York: Other Press, 2016, in a translation by Sarah Death).

Swedish film and television companies have successfully adapted a number of series of popular genre fiction. That fact and the development of video streaming services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and MHz networks (<https://mhznetworks.com/>) mean that non-Swedish-speakers can enjoy the imaginings of popular Swedish authors and screenwriters but without access to the original texts.

The last episode of *Wallander*
with Kenneth Branagh



Working directly with authors and their agents over the past decade has given me new appreciation of Swedish publishing and literature. Through happenstance and networking, I was engaged to translate texts clients were hoping to place with international publishing houses. Some of these opportunities came via Swedish Translators in North America; others were referrals; some were responses to the résumé I handed out at the Gothenburg Book Fair. They've ranged from short articles to, more typically, 50- or 60-page excerpts, to whole novels. Working with these texts has in some respects been similar to the *pro bono* work of interpreting and translating to and from French and Spanish that I've done for asylum seekers and refugees: rarely have I learned of the outcomes of the efforts.



Lars Gustafsson, 1992

Photo of Lars Gustafsson (1992)

More than you can imagine

It's impossible for me to offer a really comprehensive view in this brief discussion of Scandinavian—mostly Swedish—literature. In the last analysis, any overview depends upon the breadth of one's own exposure to a given body of literature.

I remember vividly a momentary exchange I had with my father when I was a pre-teen. A physician, he always had a book on his bedside table. I learned years later that, from time to time, he would arrange his consultation hours so that he could occasionally absent himself of an afternoon to see a film.

It was early evening. I'd finished one novel and had another in hand, checked out from the public library. In new-found enthusiasm I exclaimed, "There's always more to read!" He just smiled, recognizing in me the same devotion to the written word and to storytelling.

There's always more to read. We never have enough time. Those of us who have learned other languages in pursuit of the obscure pleasures of absorbing and appreciating some of the vast amount of literature not written in English face an impossible task. Our lives are enriched and sometimes altered irrevocably by that exploration. And sometimes, just sometimes, with the craft of literary translation we have the opportunity to try to take some small number of the rest of the world's English speakers along with us through the veils of cultural and linguistic differences.

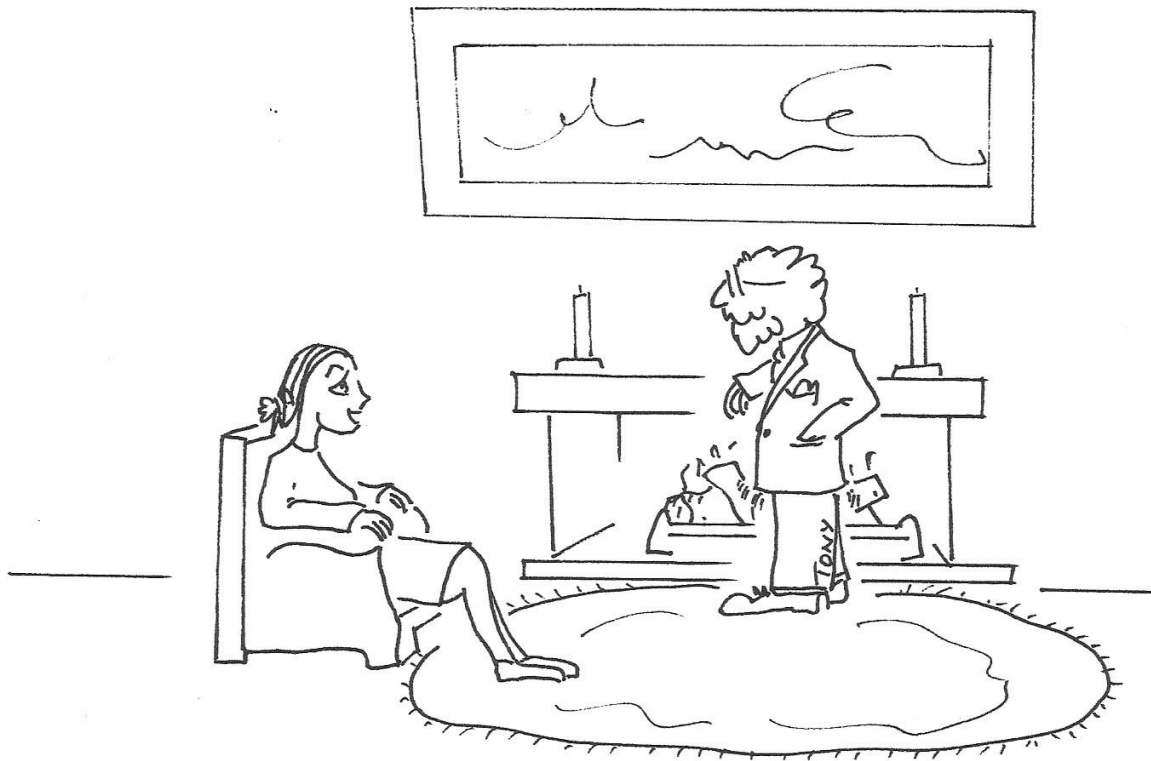
HIGHLIGHTS OF MICHAEL MEIGS'S SWEDISH-TO-ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

- Annika Kinch's novel *And the Rainbow Touched Mauritius*, a self-published novel set on that island in the Indian ocean.
- Novels by Sandra Gustafsson—*Seared* and *The Rival*—that tell tales of psychologically distraught protagonists.
- *The Scent of Ice* by Solveig Vidarsdotter, a thriller set in the countryside by Gäddede, close to the border with Norway.
- *Guilt: Johnny Liljas Pays It Down* by Olle Lönnaeus, the grim tale of a policeman blackmailed by a gangster.
- *Sigrid, the Myth of Valhalla* by Johanne Hildebrandt.
- Award-winning journalist Carina Bergfeldt's chilling newspaper account of the 2011 murders of 77 persons at a youth camp on the Norwegian island of Utøya, her short novel *My Father's Death*, and *Seven Days to Live*, her book-length examination of the death penalty in the United States, based on research in Texas.
- *To Hell and Gone* by Thomas Engström, the second in his series of novels about the fictional East German former STASI officer Ludwig Licht, a freelance mercenary after the fall of the Wall. This one is set in Appalachia, where Licht has been dispatched to investigate far-right vigilante groups. The series now consists of four books. Each Swedish title refers to a point of the compass. The literal translation into English of the second book is *South of Hell*.
- *The Paradox* by Karin Ersson Ekstam and Lotta Malkar, a Zara Stolt mystery set in the shadowy world of international corporations.
- Two films scripts for Copenhagen Bombay Productions: *Krig* by Jannik Tai Mosholt and *Welcome to Monstria* by Rickard S. Söderström.
- *The Lure of Water* by Madeleine Bäck, a gripping story of a young couple who get mixed up in crime and have to deal with a terrifying murderous ancient spirit from the deep Swedish forests. This is the first of a series of young adult novels entitled *The Pact*. Additional titles appeared in Swedish in 2017 and 2018.
- *Ironskull, the Journey to Vanadis* by Nils Håkanson, an adventure novel set in Stockholm and Finland at the time of the first world war, featuring a band of extraordinary performers recruited by a masked spymaster. Håkanson, a tattooed student of Russian literature, aims to achieve the sweep and excitement of graphic novel fiction—entirely in prose.
- Excerpts from three of Håkan Nesser's 'Inspector Barbarotti' police procedural series. Nesser's earlier 'Chief Inspector Van Veeteren' mysteries, set in a country that sounds suspiciously like the Netherlands, was published in 2008 as *Mind's Eye*,²⁰ translated by Laurie Thompson. The only novel of the five-book 'Barbarotti' series translated into English as of this writing is *The Darkest Day*, published by Pan Macmillan last November in a translation by Sarah Death, the UK's doyenne of translation from Swedish.

NOTES

- 1 These approximations come from a 2015 article by Paul Anthony Jones published in *Mental Floss*: <http://mentalfloss.com/article/67766/worlds-top-20-languages-and-words-english-has-borrowed-them>
- 2 *The Elixir of Immortality* (New York: Other Press, 2011), translated by Michael Meigs.
- 3 *Dekanen* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 2003), unpublished English translation by Michael Meigs
- 4 *Blind Goddess* (New York: Scribner's, 2012)
- 5 <http://www.hb.se/Forskning/Aktuellt/Magasin-1866/Artiklar/Nummer-1-2017/Hur-ser-nasta-kapitel-ut-for-e-boken-i-Sverige/>
- 6 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/541658/number-of-new-fiction-book-titles-and-editions-published-in-sweden-by-format/>
- 7 <http://www.forlaggare.se/digitala-bocker-i-sverige>
- 8 *Boken 2017 – Marknaden, trender och analyser* by Erik Wikberg (Stockholm: Svenska Bokhandlareföreningen och Svenska Forläggerföreningen, February, 2018) available on-line via <https://www.internationalpublishers.org/market-insights/data-and-statistics/635-swedish-market-data-for-2017-published>.
- 9 http://www.kulturradet.se/en/publikationer_/New-Swedish-Books5/
- 10 http://www.kulturradet.se/sv/publikationer_/New-swedish-books-spring-2018/
- 11 <https://sweden.se/culture-traditions/modern-swedish-literature/>
- 12 English edition: Vintage Books USA; New Ed edition (September 1, 2007), translated by Tiina Nunnally.
- 13 English edition: Penguin Putnam Press, Overlook imprint, 2009, translated by Tiina Nunnally.
- 14 English edition: Green Integer Books, London (July, 2001), translation by Anna Paterson.
- 15 *Ett annat liv* (Stockholm: Norstedt's, 2008)
- 16 English edition by Vintage; New Ed edition (2003-04-10), translated by Tiina Nunnally; originally published in Stockholm by Nordstedt's, 1999.
- 17 (London: Harvill Press, 1998), translated by Tom Geddes.
- 18 English edition: New York: New Directions, 1981, translated by Janet K. Swaffar and Guntram H. Weber.
- 19 English edition: New York: New Directions, 1988, translated by Yvonne L. Sandström.
- 20 *Mind's Eye* by Håkan Nesser (New York: Vintage Crime/Black Lizard, 2008), translated by Laurie Thompson.

BTW



"People are starting to wonder when, exactly, push will come to shove."

Book Review

By Michele Aynesworth

Title: *Mirror, Shoulder, Signal*

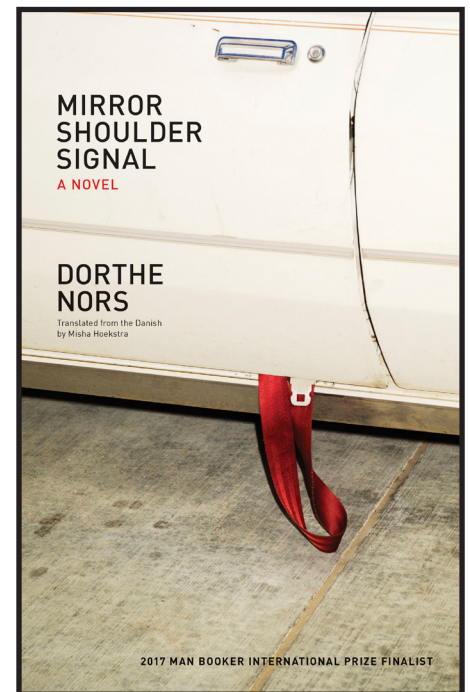
UK: Pushkin, 2017; US: Graywolf, 2018

From the Danish: *Spejl, skulder, blink*
(Gyldendal, 2016)

Author: Dorthe Nors

Translator: Misha Hoekstra

According to *Time Magazine*, books about middle-aged women facing life alone are trending. Fittingly, the English translation of Dorthe Nors' short novel *Mirror, Shoulder, Signal*¹—a book about a middle-aged woman facing life alone—made the Man Booker International Prize (MBI) short list in 2017 for the best book in English translation.



About the Man Booker International Prize

The MBI is awarded each year to a book in English translation; the £50,000 prize is shared equally between author and translator.

In an excellent podcast² for the *Guardian* Daniel Hahn, a member of the MBI panel of judges, notes that only three women authors were represented on the foreign literature list, consistent with the fact that only a quarter to a third of books translated into English are by women authors. On the other hand, he says winning translators reflect the gender ratio for literary translators, about fifty-fifty. He adds that judges are looking for *a specific voice, in a specific situation*, in their search for a winner.

The voice in Nors' novel

Like Sonja the protagonist, Dorthe Nors was born in Jutland, studied Swedish literature, and began a career translating Swedish crime fiction into Danish. In the above-mentioned *Guardian* podcast, Nors says her focus was primarily on the existential structure of her character's mid-life crisis, when Sonja finds herself “stuck” in Copenhagen, translating Swedish noir. Nors, asked if this didn't parallel her own life, answers: “I'm forty-six... some years ago I was in that position where I thought: Where is life going to take me, and what can I choose from now

on?” Nors laments that, with the noir wave, Nordic crime fiction became perverted, dwelling on the sensational. She turned to writing her own fiction, she says, influenced by Swedish interest in the existential and by the stylistic subtlety of Danish minimalism. She then began translating her own stories into English and eventually became so well published that she is now translated by Misha Hoekstra.

The voice in *Mirror, Shoulder, Signal* is that of Sonja, an inward-dwelling forty-year-old woman who decides that the solution to her paralysis and angst is to learn to drive, as if learning to drive would show her which way to go. Though Sonja has a “rich expansive inner world” (p. 108), she is basically screwed up. (One hopes it is not the solitary work of literary translation that has pushed her to the edge.)

Some of the British find it hard to swallow American idioms

A look at some reviews of Nors’ novel exposes a rather amusing British aversion to the fact that the translator is American. In my reading, there are only a couple of spots in the novel that stand out as notably “American” idiom. One is the passage in which the masseuse Ellen is telling Sonja in Danish to “clench your buttocks,” meaning “get a grip.”

Deborah Smith, in her article “Why readers are embracing translation,” lauds Hoekstra’s liberal translation, as might be expected: co-winner of the MBI in 2016, she herself was criticized for the liberties she took translating *The Vegetarian* from the Korean.

Smartly noting that the massage context means that the metaphor’s bodily connection is what needs to be put across, Hoekstra told me how he “riffed on the word ‘tight’ and, as Ellen is somewhat prim, added a note of apology to keep it believable”:

“Your buttocks are hard,” Ellen says. “That’s because, if you’ll pardon a vulgar phrase, you’re a tight-ass with your feelings. An emotional tight-ass, a tight-fisted tightwad.”³

Is Hoekstra trying to have his cake and eat it too—reveling in the American vulgarity, but having his character apologize for it? In any case, Smith adds that Hoekstra’s time at a PR firm honed his ability to “seduce with English.” “Indeed,” she continues, “English-language translations are assessed as English-language novels, without reference to the original; judges put themselves in the shoes of the general reader, for whom, after all, these books are intended.”⁴

Some of the British, however, find it hard to swallow American idiom as “English,” witness this passage from a *Guardian* review by Catherine Taylor:

Originally from remote west Jutland, [Sonja] has never got used to big city life in Copenhagen. (Or “gotten” – one of the main intrusions on the reading experience is Misha Hoekstra’s aggressively American-English translation, which has the effect of rendering a cosmopolitan European city into something akin to a US shopping mall.)⁵

Would British English sound more like Copenhagen? Consider this passage:

“CHINKS!” shouts Jytte.
“FUCKING HO!” shouts the driver. (p. 14)

Perhaps the reviewer would have liked it better if the driver had responded, “Don’t get your knickers in a twist!” So much more Copenhagen.

Another curious example comes from Rebecca DeWald’s August 28, 2017 review in the *Glasgow Review of Books* of an event at the Edinburgh International Book Festival of 2017:

The event with the most explicit focus on translation was certainly “The Power of Translation”, co-chaired by Daniel Hahn and Nick Barley, in conversation with Danish translator Misha Hoekstra and Norwegian translator Kari Dickson....

Hoekstra read a section in Danish and (American) English, which he described as more “straightforward because it’s dialogue. But in the more lyrical passages, I changed it to make it more American.”⁶

Most amusing was the judges’ insular reaction to Hoekstra’s title. Here head MBI judge Nick Barley is quoted:

“As judges we discussed it a lot, because in the UK you say ‘mirror, signal, manoeuvre’”, Barley explained to audible approval from the audience. It turned out, the English title is a direct translation of the standard phrase in Danish, and apparently even driving schools in the UK and US differ in their taught order of actions. Ultimately, Hoekstra clarified, “we wanted a title that also worked in the US.”

Hoekstra explained that he had discussed writing in American English even when translating for British publishers with publishers in the past, and settled on making the text “more me, rather than British”. I was reminded of the Reading Workshop the previous day, in which we discussed the MBI winner with Daniel Hahn. A translator had asked whether publishers were looking for a more “domesticated”, or even “violating” translations that read well in English, rather than a text that might be closer to the source – to stereotype the extreme poles in approaches to translation. The answer was an unwavering: “The target is the English reader, not the original, and that is what’s expected by publishers and readers”. At the same time, a question from the audience about Dorthe Nors’ English skills, and the seemingly throwaway comment “she is more fluent in English than I am in Danish” by Hoekstra made me wonder: Can the ultimate goal of fluency in the translation also mean that perfect command of the translated language becomes a secondary skill? I am far from advocating “faithful” translations, whatever they may be, but I do wonder if absolute freedom in tone and voice of the translation might not overlook the linguistic competence involved in translating literature.⁷

Very interesting to note here the British unease with non-British English combined with an allergic reaction to translators taking much license with the prose.

Misha Hoekstra, AKA Minka Hoist

Curious to find out more about Misha Hoekstra, I first looked at his bio at the back of the book: “Misha Hoekstra is an award-winning translator. He lives in Aarhus, where he writes and performs songs under the name Minka Hoist.” Finding little more in a Google search for Misha Hoekstra, I tried Minka Hoist and was directed to his Facebook page. Pay dirt.



From Minka Hoist’s Facebook page:⁸

About: Raised by wolves in Nixon’s America—yet not till that fateful moonstruck night in 2010 did MH mount that knoll and finally begin to yip & howl.

Current Location: Aarhus, Denmark

Influences: Bob Dylan Leonard Cohen Neil Young The Grateful Dead American folk
On his LinkedIn page, Hoekstra sums up his varied career this way: “Over the past 25 years, I’ve handled the whole gamut of writing, editing and publishing tasks for dozens of organizations. In the last dozen, I’ve also translated numerous texts from Danish to both British and American English.” For his translation work, Hoekstra has received numerous awards, including the 2017 Danish Translation Award and the Leif and Inger Sjöberg Translation Prize in 2012.

To sum up

THE AUTHOR wrote a book about existential angst that one reviewer found “darkly comic” (the comedy escaped me, unfortunately) “with the unforced ease of a song.”⁹

MINKA HOÏST



This old speech river gashes along
Cutting crosschannels in silted-in song
The black distance sounds a tidal gong
Through this tongue, these teeth

THE TRANSLATOR did a good job of conveying Sonja's "specific voice" in a "specific situation." As for lyricism, I really didn't notice that much. In fact, when I read on p. 100, "The sizzle in her words frees up her jaw," I thought, Really? Here are the preceding lines of indirect speech that supposedly free up her jaw with sizzle:

She can't send that letter [the one she's written to her sister]. And it's not because of the business with Bjarne. It's the *way* Sonja expresses herself—indeed, the letter's very tone will interpose new distances between her and Kate. Like the time with the dead landscape between the equipment shed and the piggery. The time with the Devil and the absent chickens, and that's the problem: the things Sonja says *and* the way she says them.

Not much sizzle there. Was it in the letter? Here's how it starts:

Dear Kate,

So I'm going to try a letter anyway. Don't let that confuse you. I've got to spend the time doing something, ha-ha!"

Well, it goes on, maybe I'm missing something. Maybe the irony is that Sonja's words don't really sizzle, and that's why she's stuck in her career as a translator. In fact, Sonja herself seems rather suspicious of lyricism: "*They should have sent a poet*," thinks Sonja as her driving instructor is showing her mounds of debris.

"Gorgeous, eh?" says Folke.

"Yeah, some nice mounds," says Sonja. (p. 164, Graywolf edition)

Misha Hoekstra, on the other hand, gives evidence on his Facebook page of having a bent for lyricism, and in fact, there is a lovely descriptive passage at the end of the novel as Sonja is having a spell of "positional vertigo":

She bends all the way forward while she weeps, yes, she's weeping, and the stones whirl round like a murmur of starlings in her inner ears, they surge about and cast themselves quick here, quick there, they look like a fingerprint against the late summer sky. Then they swoop down over the rushes, swoop up over the rushes, they whoosh in across town and away from it again... and Sonja flits with them in a silty blackness, a viscid underworld of sorrow and hands and then she's toppling off the bench, her face plunging toward the pavement except that Martha grabs her.... (p. 186)

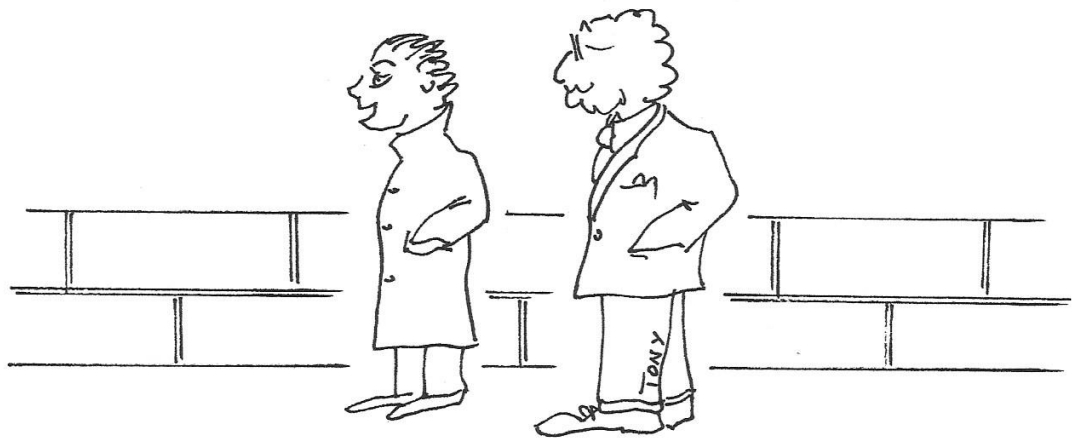
After I sent Hoekstra a draft of this review, he sent me the following comment:

"Thanks for writing and sharing the piece – I too find the British grousing amusing, and I'm so glad you ended with the starling passage. Lyrically, I think it's the book's pinnacle, and one that other reviewers have ignored."

NOTES

- 1 UK publisher: Pushkin (2017); US publisher: Graywolf, 2018
- 2 Man Booker International prize and Dorthe Nors: books podcast, *The Guardian*, 28 March 2017 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/audio/2017/mar/28/man-booker-international-prize-and-dorthe-nors-books-podcast-mirror-shoulder-signal>
- 3 Deborah Smith, "Why readers are embracing translation," *Financial Times*, April 28, 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/642f68f0-2a7d-11e7-bc4b-5528796fe35c>
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Catherine Taylor, "Mirror, Shoulder, Signal by Dorthe Nors review: coping alone in Copenhagen," *The Guardian*, 4 March 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/GuardianNorsreview>
- 6 Rebecca DeWald, "EIBF 2017: A Sympathising Eye on Translation—The Man Booker International Award," *Glasgow Review of Books*, 28 August 2017, <https://glasgowreviewofbooks.com/2017/08/28/eibf-2017-a-sympathising-eye-on-translation-the-man-booker-international-award/>
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 <https://www.facebook.com/hinkamoist/photos/a.481491521925565/481491541925563/?type=1&theater>
- 9 Parul Sehgal, "A Darkly Comic Novel Stares Down a Life of Solitude," *New York Times* review, May 22, 2018 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/22/books/review-mirror-shoulder-signal-dorthe-nors.html>

BTW



*“Actually, once you get on the road,
it’s not such a long way to Tipperary after all.”*

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

Our *isoisä* from Vaasa

By Patrick Saari



1897 painting of a Finnish boy

A man of few words, our Finnish grandfather, our *isoisä*, must have had misgivings, not specifically about the English language, but about language itself: according to Finnish peasant lore, the more and faster you talked, the darker were your intentions. Criminals talked smoothly and abundantly, saints were silent. If an irrepressible urge to speak, write, or use language in any way came over you, rather than succumb to that evil temptation, it was best to go alone deep into the woods in the dead of winter and get totally smashed, thereby reconnecting with your ancestors' *sisu*, the Finnish version of unflinching stoicism, and their Cistercian-like vows of holy silence. The other option was to catch a boat and head for garrulous Amerikka.

Granddad's penchant for taciturnity may have had something to do with the complexities of the Finnish and Saami languages, as well as with the traumas of dominance, empire, and discrimination associated with the country's other two languages, Swedish and Russian. We will never know, because by the time we were old enough to engage in chit-chat, Granddad, though sturdy and active, was already lapsing, long before it was fashionable, into his own gruff version of a Zen meditative state.



Granddad Krist Saari
(1882-1966), as a young man

Granddad would always write and speak to our father, our *isa*, in Finnish, but there was evidence he had occasionally said a word or two in English. The story goes that, during a brief stint as a local policeman in Ely, Minnesota, he had locked up a “lady” found sprawling in a roadside gutter, knocked out by high-octane drinking and related disorderly conduct. When he woke her up the following morning for breakfast in jail, she asked him for a Kotex, and he courteously replied: “Sorry, ma’am, all we got is cornflakes.” Proof enough that he could, if he had to, both understand and speak the “native” language.

When we were still children and he came to live with us for a few months at Chopmist Hill, Rhode Island’s topmost peak, when he was close to 80, he would get up at dawn after a winter storm, clear the long driveway, come to breakfast before the school bus arrived to pick us up, and disapprovingly declare with the expertise of an Inuit that “Snow here is heavy, no good, *perkele*” or “Bad snow, wet, *paska*.” Then he would withdraw to his room upstairs, take a wad of chewing tobacco, insert it into the side of his mouth, sink into his thoughts as he ruminated his plug, and then distractedly take shots at the large empty Chase & Sanborn coffee can we had strategically located at an angle of his armchair so it could act as a spittoon. But the brown syrupy juices he would propel would so often miss the can that the rare zinging sound of a hit was cause for rejoicing.

Our French grandmother, who had been living with us *en Amérique* for more than ten years, was the epitome of benignity and self-possession. But at the sound of spitting she would lose her composure and hiss: “On n’a pas idée d’infliger ça à ma fille!” (Why would anyone ever wish to inflict *that* upon my daughter!). It was uttered rhetorically in a whisper so hushed that neither she nor God could hear her momentary lapse into uncharitableness (speak to the wind for only the children will listen). Truth be told, I never understood whether, by *ça*, she meant the spit, the spitting, the spittoon, or the spitter. Lovely in all possible ways, *Grand-maman* could be forgiven for looking askance at someone spitting on the floor in one of the bedrooms upstairs. If half a dozen children were running around the house, all manner of bodily dramas were par for the course. If a physician had prescribed a daily glass of tawny port for your heart, drinking could not be frowned upon. If smoking was considered, at the time, medicinal for all of life’s ailments, then lighting up a Lucky Strike or Gauloise could go unquestioned. And if curses (*perkele saatana*, *paska*) were muttered in a language hardly anyone on the planet could understand, then that could be tolerated as well. But a line had to be drawn somewhere and spitting was it.

Although I was partial to the *renard passant d’or en pointe*, a fancy name for the yellow fox in the lower half of *Grand-maman*’s family escutcheon, I was not at ease with her disapproval of Granddad’s tobacco chewing: despite his bearishness, Granddad was keenly aware of her slights. Body language, then as now, crosses borders, transmits subtleties, betrays what dare not be said or

understood. Hurt at not being welcome, he would go to his son and announce, in Finnish so that no one else could understand, that New England snow was too heavy and wet for his taste and that he was heading back west. But Dad was no fool, so he would protest, sit Granddad down at the kitchen table, pour him a shot of good whiskey, serve him a beer to chase it down, give him a raw egg to crack and gob as well, and speak chest-deep words of consolation in the language of the old country.



Our Dad, Albert Emmanuel Saari (1919-2007), as a young man

When I recall Granddad sitting there hunkered and stoic, his steel-gray eyes moist with rheum and the pain of having lost his only surviving son, the apple of his eye, his *poika*, our Dad, to the factitious comforts of New England and the arms of an exotic wife, our inimitable *Maman*, of having lost him to the very dream of having him leave the wilderness after his two other sons had been killed when they were still but children, one by typhoid and the other by drowning in a bucket, the words “preternatural” and “primeval” spring to mind, and they cling to him as no other. With his genetic connection to the woods and the many-splendored hues of snow, it was as if he had emerged long before this messy business of civilization had made it to the stage, before its ensuing accretions that our *Maman* and *Grand-maman* held so dear.

Born in 1882 near Vaasa (Nikolainkaupunki at the time), a bilingual Swedish-Finnish town on the western coast of Finland across from Sweden on the Gulf of Bothnia, in the Grand Duchy of Finland, a relatively autonomous part of the Russian Empire since 1809, Granddad was the son of a log driver who, before his only child was born, had tripped and slipped from one of the logs he had been herding down the river and been cruelly crushed to death. Not long afterwards, in a tale that, I am embarrassed to confess, always brings to mind Gunter Grass’s *The Tin Drum* and the story of the shrieking pint-size narrator’s maternal grandmother Anna Bronski in the potato

fields of Kashubia, Poland, our pregnant great-grandmother, while digging potatoes behind her house, felt the first pangs of labor and her waters breaking. Alone and bereft, she dragged herself to the sauna log cabin in the backyard next to the river and delivered the child herself, most likely squatting on a bench in front of the stove laden with steaming stones.



The town of Vaasa, Granddad's birthplace, in Finland on the Gulf of Bothnia in 1872

By the time the fatherless boy was a teenager, Pan-Slavism and Russification were in full swing. In 1898, Russia's Tsar Nicholas II arbitrarily launched a series of punitive measures against the Finns, including mandatory use of Russian, the dismissal of thousands of Finnish civil servants, and most importantly an army bill drafting able-bodied young Finns (no doubt as prime cannon fodder for Russia's Asian wars) into the Tsar's army for five-year service anywhere in the Russian Empire, instead of the traditional 90-day service in Finland.

The vast majority of Finns spontaneously responded by civil disobedience and peaceful protest, a movement all the more noteworthy for being against the country whose most famous author, Tolstoy, had inspired modern pacifism and nonviolence: first in *War and Peace* and its description of the 1812 Battle of Borodino pitting Russia against Napoleon and yielding 70,000 casualties out of a quarter million combatants (inspired in turn by Stendhal's account of the Battle of Waterloo in his novel *The Charterhouse of Parma*); then in his later writings, *What I Believe* (1884) and *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (1894). Viewed as subversive, the latter publications and their translation had been forbidden in Finland, although there was no dearth of journalists, writers, and artists who had read the books and were disseminating Tolstoy's ideas, several years before Gandhi, who was also inspired by Tolstoy, started his seven-year Satyagraha campaign in South Africa (1906).

Whether or not Granddad was one of the 522,931 Finns signing a petition to the Tsar against the new army bill, we may never know, but there is no doubt that, when this petition and yet another were ignored and the rights to freedom of speech and assembly were abolished to quell the protests, he was one of the 15,000 conscripts, out of the 25,000 Finns drafted, who refused

to serve. With the passport of a friend who had a medical school deferment, in 1902, a year also marked by famine as a result of flooding and crop failures, Granddad set sail for Amerikka. When he arrived at Ellis Island, he claimed back his true identity, and quickly found work, most likely manual labor or as a factory hand.

Shortly thereafter, late on a Saturday night, with a few stiff drinks under their belt, Granddad and his sidekicks, some like him still in their teens, stumbled into a brightly lit hall serving free freshly brewed coffee. This was Amerikka, a land of plenty, no better place to be (gimme a doughnut, please, a piece of prairie land, a ranch house, and cattle to go, thank you), although it was vaguely understood, language barriers notwithstanding, that all the bountiful Americans were asking in return for the coffee was a signature, for some odd reason (crazy gringos).

It turned out that the brightly lit hall was a recruitment center and, before the crack of dawn, Granddad, awash with coffee, had become a U.S. Marine. After basic combat training, he was shipped off to the Philippines to fight in the tail end of the Philippine-American War and the Moro Rebellion, jumping from the skillet of the Russian draft into the fire of America's betrayal of the Filipino independence fighters it had supported earlier to get rid of the Spaniards and make the country's dream of an independent republic come true. And just as Emile Zola had signed a petition in 1898 protesting Russia's treatment of the Finns, so did anti-imperialists like Mark Twain, in 1900-1901, inveigh against America's cynical treatment of the Filipinos.



Granddad would have been among the American soldiers battling the Moro rebels in the Philippines in 1902

Note: In Finnish, *isä* means father and *isoisä*, grandfather. *Sisu* is a Finnish “untranslatable,” bringing together the qualities expected of a true Finn: perseverance, resilience, grit, rectitude beyond the call of Christian duty, hardiness, and heartiness. Used as expletives, *perkele* refers to a primitive malevolent spirit, whereas *saatana* is the Christian Satan. *Paska* means shit, *poika* boy/son, and *saari* island. From 1893 to 1916, 262,382 Finns emigrated to America. For a full story of the Finns resisting Russification, see Swarthmore College's Global Nonviolent Action Database: <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/finns-resist-russification-end-conscription-regain-elections-1898-1905>.

CREDITS

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Frederic Edwin Church, *Aurora Borealis* (1865), Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C. The Northern Lights (Aurora Borealis) are produced by solar wind passing through the earth's magnetic field. Wikimedia Commons. <https://tinyurl.com/o6m6twv>

Note: All contributor photos are courtesy of the authors.

Page 6

Bridge and Mirror, Crescent City Connection Bridge over the Mississippi River in New Orleans, photo by XEON, June 28, 2013. Wikimedia Commons. <https://tinyurl.com/y9dc3pp4>

Pages 11 and 12

Book cover of *All This I Will Give to You* from <https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-1-5039-0254-1>

Book cover of *Luisa: Now and Then* from https://www.humanoids.com/y_catalog/book?work_id=201

Book cover of *Pequeña* from website of Océano México:

<http://www.oceano.mx/obras/pequena-holly-goldberg-sloan-ebook-18353.aspx>

Page 13

Larin Paraske, Finnish folk poetry singer, photo from *Kansallisbiografia*. Wikimedia Commons. <https://tinyurl.com/ybhbv3ku>

Page 14

Albert Edelfelt (1854-1905), *Larin Paraske* (1893), oil on canvas, Hämeenlinnan Art Museum, Hämeenlinna, Finland. Wikimedia Commons. <https://tinyurl.com/y867yl5b>

Page 15

Map of parishes in Ingria around the year 1900. Wikimedia Commons. <https://tinyurl.com/yak3mven>

Page 16

Map of Karelia today. Wikimedia Commons. <https://tinyurl.com/y8kgp6gx>

Page 17

Akseli Gallen-Kallela (1865-1931), *Lemminkäisen äiti* (*Lemminkäinen's Mother*, 1897), tempera on canvas, scene from the Finnish epic poem, *Kalevala*, Ateneum Art Museum, Finnish National Gallery, Helsinki, Finland. Wikimedia Commons. <https://tinyurl.com/ybgqqvjq>

Page 18

Ilya Repin (1844-1930), *The Barge Haulers on the Volga* (1870), oil on canvas, Russian State Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia. Wikimedia Commons. <https://tinyurl.com/y7tw7fcl>

Page 19

Hugo Simberg (Finnish symbolist painter, 1873-1917), *Haavoittunut enkeli* (*The Wounded Angel*, 1903), oil on canvas, Ahlström Collection, Ateneum Art Museum, Finnish National Gallery, Helsinki, Finland. Hannu Aaltonen (photographer). Voted by Finns as their "national painting." Wikimedia Commons. <https://tinyurl.com/yc7fawlg>

Page 21

Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Kullervon sotaanlähtö* (*Kullervo Rides to War*, 1901), scene from the Finnish epic poem, *Kalevala*, wall fresco, Old Student House and Music Hall, University of Helsinki, Finland. Wikimedia Commons. <https://tinyurl.com/y9hfv955>

Page 22

Photo of Finnish composer Jean Sibelius in 1891, when he studied in Vienna (26 years old). Wikimedia Commons. <https://tinyurl.com/yc7ucxka>

Page 23

Photo of Frances Karttunen taken in 1992 for the dust jacket of the 1994 hard-cover edition of *Between Worlds*, photographer Philip Spalding III.

Page 25

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Page 28

Cover of *2018 New Swedish Books*, Mara Lee, author of poetry collection *Kärleken och Hatet (Love and Hate)* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 2017), photo by Märta Thisner. <https://tinyurl.com/ycdtwb7j>

Page 29

Cover of *Swedish Book Review* 2018:1, from website: <https://www.swedishbookreview.com/2018-1.php>

Page 30

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Page 32

Photo of Kenneth Branagh as Wallander, from <https://www.radiotimes.com/tv-programme/e/d6smc7/wallander--s4-e3-the-troubled-man/>

Page 33

Photo of Lars Gustafsson (1992) was published in the Spring 2012 issue of *Scandinavian Review*. The photo credit is B. Friedrich - Ullstein Bild /The Granger Collections and it was provided by his agents, Carl Hansen Verlag.

Page 37

Book cover of *Mirror, Shoulder, Signal* from <https://tinyurl.com/Graywolf-org>

Pages 40 and 41

Minka Hoist Facebook images, courtesy of Misha Hoekstra

Page 44

Hugo Simberg (1873-1917), *Säkkijärven poika (Boy from Säkkijärvi, 1897)*, Finnish National Gallery, Helsinki, Finland. Wikimedia Commons. <https://tinyurl.com/y9z4k4nd>

Pages 45 and 46

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Page 47

Vaasa, colored lithography from 1872, probably according to a drawing by Gösta Philip Armfelt. Wikimedia Commons. <https://tinyurl.com/ybkbopez>

Page 48

American soldiers battling against the Moro rebels in the Philippines, photo from United States Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs Division. Wikimedia Commons. <https://tinyurl.com/y6u97w7w>