
Newsletter
FinNALA

Finnish North American Literature Association

Volume 2 Number 2

Summer 2008

**FINNALA HOSTS READING SERIES AT
FINN FEST USA 2008**

Finnish North American authors, poets, and critics will visit at the FinNALA Booth to read from their works and meet their readers.

The schedule is below

Thursday, July 24

2:00 Donna Salli
3:00 Lisbeth Holt
4:00 --
5:00 Harri Siitonen
6:00 Jim Johnson

Friday, July 25

10:00 Beth L. Virtanen
11:00 K. Alma Peterson
12:00 --
1:00 Borje Vahamaki
2:00 Sheila Packa
3:00 Lauri Anderson
4:00 G. K. Wuori

Saturday, July 26

10:00 Josef Aukee
11:00 Karl Luntta
12:00 Kirsten Dierking
1:00 Diane Jarvi
2:00 Member Meeting
3:00 Steve Lehto
4:00 Suzanne Matson

BETH L. VIRTANEN PUBLISHES

Landscapes and Soulscapes: On the Literature of Finnish North America, edited by Beth L.

Virtanen, PhD, contains essays by M. Wargelin, A. Grace, T. Frandy, H. J. Virtanen, R. Taramaa, and B. L. Virtanen. Get it from the *Journal of Finnish Studies* or from Aspasia Books.

SHEILA PACKA IN PRINT AGAIN

Sheila Packa has a full length book of poems, *The Mother Tongue*, published by Calyx Press Duluth, c2007. Ellie Schoenfeld says, "These poems have wheels. They take a person to

unexpected places and I, for one, am thrilled to go there. Whether the landscape is the tender



Sheila Packa

grittiness of the Iron Range, the sensuousness of the body, or the complicated terrains of memory and expression, these poems are something to write home about. We are very lucky that she has sent them to us."

FINNALA MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The FinNALA members will meet on Saturday the 26th of July at 2:00 in the Auditorium Mezzanine at Finn Fest in Duluth at the DECC.

FINNALA BOARD TO MEET

The FinNALA board will meet in the Auditorium Mezzanine on Saturday, July 26th, at 1:00 at Finn Fest in Duluth at the DECC.

PLAY BY DONNA SALLI'S PRODUCED

Donna Salli's first play, a glimpse into the lives of a fictional Finnish-American family, is scheduled to open on Halloween night—in Finland. *The Rock Farm* (or *Kivistön Tila*) has been translated into Finnish and is in rehearsal in Joensuu. The project grew out of an exchange between Central Lakes College of Brainerd, Minnesota (where Salli teaches), the Community College of Joensuu Area, and the

University of Joensuu. Salli set the play in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, where she herself grew up, and wove into the lives of the Kivistö/Korpi clan a number of stories from her own family history, adapting and fictionalizing portions of her essays and poems with Finnish-American themes.

ASPASIA BOOKS PUBLISHED JEAN SIBELIUS CD – Compositions for Piano, Heidi Saario, Pianist, which can be ordered from www.aspasiabooks.com.

DR. ARNOLD ALANEN RECOGNIZED

In May 2008 Arnold Alanen received the Northeastern Minnesota Book Award for his recent volume, *“Morgan Park: Duluth, U.S. Steel, and the Forging of a Company Town.”*

LISBETH HOLT PUBLISHES

Lisbeth Holt's volume of verse *“Life is a Chrysanthemum”* has been accepted for publication by PublishAmerica.

DIANE JARVENPA IN PRINT

Tender Wild Things, a new book of poems by Diane Jarvenpa is published by New Rivers Press. Get a copy at <http://dianejarvi.com/> or www.amazon.com.

G. K. WUORI ANTHOLOGIZED

The Naked Circus, a story by G. K. Wuori is included in the book titled, *A Stranger Among Us: Stories of Cross Cultural Collision and Connection*. The story is about an 'internet order' bride and her strange duties upon coming to the U.S. It was first published in *StoryQuarterly* and was also the writing sample in his successful quest for a fellowship from the Illinois Arts Council in 2006.

POEMS BY JANE PIIRTO IN PRINT

Jane Piirto's *Saunas*, a collection of poems, is now available. The collection captures the strength and magic of family and tradition. From the frozen landscapes of her Finnish forebears to the ice-clear rivers and cold fields of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Jane Piirto paints a personal and extraordinary picture. Piirto uses the Finnish national story, Kalevala, to connect her poems to this world. These deeply moving poems are like chants celebrating what sustains us, reminding us of the wonder and mystery in

the everyday. As Jim Daniels says, “Unafraid to rail against political injustice and unafraid to laugh at our own foibles, Piirto takes us many places to show us just where she's from.”

Jane Piirto is a native of Ishpeming, in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, to which all four of her grandparents emigrated from Finland. She is Trustees' Distinguished Professor at Ashland University in Ohio. Her novel won the Carpenter Press 10th Anniversary First Novel Award. She has received two Individual Artist Fellowships from the Ohio Arts Council – one in poetry and one in fiction, and is listed as both a poet and a writer in the Directory of American Poets and Writers. She has received a Fulbright Grant to Argentina.



Jane Piirto

She was named an Ohio Magazine educator of distinction, was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Northern Michigan University, and is the recipient of the Mensa Lifetime Achievement Award. *Saunas* is available at your local bookseller, and online at spdbooks.org, www.mayapplepress.com.

LENNARD SILLANPÄÄ PUBLISHES

By the University of Helsinki Press, *Awakening Siberia, From Marginalization to Self-Determination: The Small Indigenous Nations of Northern Russia on the Eve of the Millennium*, by Lennard Sillanpää, is available. It is the analysis of a comprehensive survey conducted in the fall of 1999 on the traditional livelihood and land use of the small 24 different indigenous peoples of northern Russia to determine their current socio-economic situation and the status of their political rights.

The survey was a joint effort by the University of Helsinki and the Russian Academy of

Sciences, funded by the Finnish Ministries for Foreign Affairs and of the Environment. The data gained from these interviews are presented along five general themes: (i) economic situation in the region; (ii) traditional livelihood; (iii) relationship with majority culture; (iv) knowledge of their indigenous language, religion, skills and culture; and (v) opinions on socio-political issues affecting their lives. The responses demonstrate the intransigence of these issues and are comparable to the situation of indigenous peoples in other parts of the world.



Lennard Sillanpää

Lennard Sillanpää was born in Canada and is a graduate of Laurentian University and Queen's University. He worked on issues related to sustainable development, land claims negotiations and circumpolar affairs for the Canadian government before establishing his own firm, *Seeking Bridges and Associates*. He defended his doctoral dissertation at the University of Helsinki. Dr. Sillanpää is a Docent in political science at the University of Helsinki and a Visiting Senior Research Scientist at the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow.

SCENT

By Kirsten Dierking

Outside the lilac buds
are turning green,
soon,
around the day
of my birth,
I will bury my face
in purple flowers
and breathe a scent
so familiar,



Kirsten Dierking

I can't remember
a childhood house
with lilac bushes,
maybe it was my mother
who held the baby up
to the dense blossoms,
maybe it was
my first pleasure,
my mother whispering
breathe deep,
it goes so fast.

FRICTION

From *The Mother Tongue*

By Sheila J. Packa

My mother brandished her scissors.
She was never sentimental
never penned love notes or
measured words in poems
nor spent a lot of time dreaming--
never treasured her wedding gown
with its sweetheart neckline
a gathered seam down the middle
of the satin bodice that traced
her firm and slender torso.
It was a lot of dress for the offices
of the Justice of the Peace, for rows
of law books and dust.
She was nineteen, there was no aisle.
Her breasts didn't quite fill the fabric,
the soft folds falling and filling with heat.

When I was a girl, I played in that dress

and loved its satiny slide over my hips
the long sleeves with points
at my fingertips. I swept about
with her seams touching my body,
But one day, she spread the dress
upon the floor and cut it up for pillowcases.
Because, she said, sleeping on satin
preserves the hairdo, it had to do
with the lack of friction. So she made
her pillowcases of candlelight
and one day, years later, I lay my head down
in our bed and thought of her skirts,
the toss and turn between her dreams
and my own, and the way she cut
the fabric between us,
and I realized this is the place
we must go to make new
love and let the past go.

QUILT

From *The Mother Tongue*

By Sheila J. Packa

old garments cut into pieces
stitched into the fabric
of so many women

cutting scraps into corners
into houses into entire lives
held with thread

pulled by the sharp needle
one eye
closing on the world

the way it was
the way it is
with an underside

a pattern that isn't completed
fraying and yet being mended
by those hands

always being useful
washing, pressing out
the wrinkles

finding what shapes
will fit together
gathering into circles

to fasten the layers
over the hard frame
talking secrets

over the design
the thimbles click
the knots are tied

NOT FORGOTTEN

By Sheila J. Packa

I learned to ride
the two wheeler with my father.
By his side I learned balance
and took on speed.
I was centered behind
the wide handlebars, my hands
on the white grips,
my feet pedaling.
One moment he was holding me up
and the next moment,
although I didn't know it,
he had let go.

When I wobbled, suddenly
afraid, he yelled *keep going--
keep going!*

He oiled the chain,
clothes-pinned playing cards
to the spokes. He put on
a basket so I could take my lunch.
Beneath the trees in the driveway,
the distance increasing between us,
I eventually rode until he was out of sight.
I counted on him.
That he could hold me was a given,
that he could release me was a gift.

VELOCITY

By Sheila J. Packa

One driver stops, lifts a broken wing
on the street outside the house.
He moves two ducks,

one dead, feathers spilled and floating
across the lanes,
one wounded.

Traffic flows along the highway,
endless traffic.
Drivers and passengers sealed up
in a hurry,
on the phone, distracted,
making lists, spilling coffee.

I watch, close to being
severed myself.
My grandfather in his grave

plays his violin.
I hear him now
beneath the ground

tapping his foot.
I tap mine the same.
he plays everything
that has fallen
and in the leaf mold and
black dirt, the music
is a kind of silence.
The wounded bird sways
in shock and fear

next to the body of its mate.
A woman came next
and wrapped the wounded
with a blanket and
carried it away in her arms
like a baby.

My grandfather in his grave
plays the violin
to nobody who is listening.
He plays to the stones
who say nothing.
He plays to the rivers.

He plays to the sky
and it is only the lifting wings
that keep his rhythm.

DEEP TRACKS By Sheila Packa

the cart of the past
jerks and squeaks

loose boards rattle
bolts drop

and iron grinds against iron
inexorably forward through the ruts

bits of straw
fly in the wind
gears weep grease
wheels in the mire break free

at each turn
a dog turns in his bed

my grandmother fills a spindle

with yarn on her spinning wheel
my mother puts the needle
down on the black record
plays an old song on the turntable

my father changes the tires
tightens the lugs
my sisters slip the rings on their fingers
jump through hoops

through the year of changes
we have taken an old road, taken our ropes

join the end to the beginning
to carry the heavy stars

ABOUT FACE By Sheila Packa

at fifty
I put the past behind me
and turn to face the light
that drives all life

the sun that rises
each new day, steady

while the world
that falls through its light
changes

trees stripped in winter
come full-leaved in the next season
young saplings grow
and fall with age
into the ever changing floor

the shimmering water
steadily moves
beneath the currents of wind

evaporating
upon the lives
that come into being
and pass from being

raining
upon the changing in me
I take the face
of my mothers and fathers

stop struggling against the past
invisible to the sun
no more than a refraction
against the wall

like the shadow of heat rising
as light falls through the window
or time
invisible shimmering waves
that have no being

I let them go
and dance with the light
like that grown tree
I watch from the new window
with a beginning, middle and end

I come now to my tree-ness
loving the shade, the shelter
that I bring
the wind with which I sway

like a stream that flows
from and back into the earth
feeding new beginnings

BREAD

By Sheila Packa

my grandmother nods
when I'm in the kitchen, making bread
mixing flour and yeast and salt
I pour warm water in the bowl
this was her way
of mending a broken heart—
make something to eat

after the baby died
she got through it somehow
mostly by taking care of the living

she would dust the flour from her hands
and drop the dough on the board
and fold it in half, over and around
turning it into a smooth skin

I knew nothing about her
dreams when she was alive
just her hairpins and cotton lisle stockings
lilacs and the bleeding hearts

my grandfather drank himself to death
...that's what happens when
it gets out of hand

I put the bowl near the warm stove
just like she did

let it go and let things rise
she taught me the virtue
of outlasting one's fate

I remember she was soft
in the places that used to be hard

she poured her brandy
in a teacup, I remember
her gnarled hands, silver hair
pulled back, off the way
the uniform rows of her garden
regularly weeded
and her one good dress
It's a clay bowl I use
shaped by another's hands
put through a fire
like her, like me

comfort comes
out of the oven's heat



Beth L. Virtanen

I DON'T TALK ANYMORE

By Beth L. Virtanen

I don't talk anymore
about the large things
or the small
I don't share
I roll the thought
around until it
congeals, solidifying
into an object
to be contemplated
to be mulled over
then I write it
hoard it in a book
save it with the rest
to let them all course
together

like so many birds
seventeen sand pipers
flying in unison
the stately vee
of a flock of geese
fourteen loons in loon pairs
churning up the lake;
they go together
they go all at once.

AT THE FARM

By Beth L. Virtanen

Birch woods and lakes,
small and ringed
with hemlock, cedar,
sometimes jack pine
tall and straight
in a clearing;
behind, a woodshed
adjacent to the sauna;

the barn stood
cut of logs which
fitted into perfect
dove tails;
above, the hayloft,
doors, two opened, hay
hooks exposed;
lilacs next to apple
trees along the path;
the old outhouse
leans left;
rose bushes and currants
circle it in green;
the swing set of wood,
four chains, two swings,
swaying slow;
the summer air hot,
moist, the sun fierce;
the cottage brown
and grey of age, an
old woman in the window;
a man asleep
in the adirondack chair
under the mountain ash.

CROON WHILE YOU CAN

By Lisbeth Holt

Softly croon while you can
Your sweet sounds of somnolence,
Those sleepy syllables, prelude to dreams.
Dance while you can, my little child,
With the silvery ethereal rays

And the violet hearts of spring and summer.
Twirl amidst them, my daughter,
For when autumn comes, and winter,
You will know those primitive joys
Which alone can console a weeping heart.
Turn, child, turn, your thirsting, wondering face
To the living fount of nature.
She alone will not forsake you,
So learn her ways with your intent tender heart.
Embrace that mighty force to your being's
very core,
And even in distress, my lovely child,
You will somehow arise above
The sorrowful turmoil, the silent rage,
And your wounds will heal like a miracle.
Sing, my child of nature,
Croon your dream song contentedly.
You will find nothing to fear.



Lisbeth Holt

TORSO AT COPAN

By Lisbeth Holt

I wandered alone in the lost world of Copan
Amidst emerald green plazas and ceiba trees.

Each step I took was on sacred ground.
Each intricate sculpture, each mysterious stela,
Awakened awe for the Mayan Michelangelos
Of more than a thousand years ago in this kingdom of
the sun.
Alone I wandered, pausing here, pausing there,
Marveling at soaring pyramids and
hieroglyphic steps,
Enduring stone testaments to the glories of this
dynasty.
I made my way into El Cementerio,

Its temples and courtyards harmonious and serene,
Home to Yax Pasaj's family, the sixteenth and final sun king.
I sat high atop a crumbling ancient wall
To drink in the enchanting scene,
(Royal spirits may still linger)
Then walked its perimeter.
I was stunned to discover an ethereal sculpture,
The most exquisite torso imaginable, a symbol of eternal life,
Part of the ancestral shrine, Sculpture 29,

Right hand placed over heart.
I photographed the torso from different angles.
It appeared complete in itself, timeless,
Somehow Egyptian ... I felt its powerful spiritual essence ...
The torso at Copan is etched forever in my heart.



The Torso at Copan

WOULD THERE BE COFFEE?

(In memory of Terttu Katka, poet, novelist,
my mother; 1916-2003)
By Lisbeth Holt

Would there be coffee? "Olisiko kahvia?"
Countless cups of coffee we shared
Over those decades, lost forever now,
And talk about the tangled threads of our lives –
At Taikalinna – Your Florida home –
Magic-castle,
At other homes we shared,
In Minnesota, California, Virginia;
In my Tessun-talo – Tessu's house.
At the last, you sat curled
Into my leather armchair

And I swaddled you with soft coverings.
"Näin on hyvä" – this is good,
You would say and be comforted.
All your life, you warmed us
With abundant nourishment,
Food, praise, comfortable coverings,
And always, yes, there would be coffee!
Above all, mother with great gifts,
Eloquent artist
Adventurer in imaginative realms,
You nurtured us to see
The fluid dimensions of magical being.



Don Hagelberg

THE POLITICS OF STARVATION

On Manet's painting, "Luncheon on the Grass"
[La Dejeuner sur l'Herbe] By Don Hagelberg

Her eyes force me to look away
From her nakedness. She is not nude.
The heat of shame reddens my face.
Her eyes stare at me, so I look instead
At the still-life which graces me
By being there, somewhere just in front
Of her nakedness. She is not nude.
They picnic in this park: She as Eve,
Without a bother from the two "He's,"
Fully clothed at the edge of her nakedness.
Chemised, another woman bathes, backgroundedly,
To which Baudelaire whispers,

"It's all right to peek."
So I glance over and see those canvassed,
Staring disconnectedly, the two of them,
back at me.

Paid for her likeness, she has nothing to say-
Whether her wage was stingy or fair.

Impressed by her chest, I daub flecks
To render her in outside, "plein air."
She blurts, "*Do Not Fear!* **You** will be pleased-
The picnic meat is 'haute bourgeoisies.'"

Thought Daub: "On 'The Politics of Starvation'" By Don Hagelberg

'Haute Bourgeoisies' connotes, among other meanings, a sense of "good eating" as well as "rapaciousness."

The term favors the Urban 'Haute Bourgeoisie,' which emerged during the period between 1870-1910 and was investigated in "*The Haute Cuisine: How the French Invented The Culinary Profession* (by Amy B Trubek, U of Pennsylvania Press, 2001-02 [ISBN 9780812217766])

The term 'Haute Bourgeoisies,' first used as a pejorative by the aristocracy on the industrialists and bankers for their philistinism and mindless pursuit of "respectability," was coupled with their monomaniacal, heartless elevation of the world of the market place.

In order to achieve dominance, the 'Haute Bourgeoisies' moved their women out of the family business and forced them into the home as the maintainers of morality.

Moliere in his plays, Baudelaire in his poems and Flaubert in his novel, *Madam Bovary*, ridiculed the restricted vision, the reductionistic materialism, the blatant hypocrisy and the lack of cultural knowledge of the 'Haute Bourgeoisies' from Louis XIV to the beginning of World War I
But they ate well.

after I Ching hexagram 58

The Joyous Lake

by K. Alma Peterson

— He didn't say, it's only a rainbow
trout we want: throw the scrawny sunny
back. He said, let that dandy small fry go
tell the others: if they have the gills,
the worm is worth the hook. I, too, was
lithe, and flippant as a minnow — —

Occlusion

By K. Alma Peterson

Where light is warm I am from bed
cold onto the floor as with fallen book
a serial child scribbles loose clouds

curls of smoke why his dark brows
pitched parentally went gray and am I
nobody without a white coat
with only a notebook and a ribbon to keep
my place I put my hand
through my breath his frailty a chill
a swept-to conclusion a slant of torn sun
in and back hits at odd moments in what
was the briefest interruption: —



K. Alma Peterson

Variations on Misjudged Landscape

By K. Alma Peterson

Underlying blue: you can see it
flatten to accept
the dominance of red She said this as
a sumac leaf wheeled across
the wakened sky and that volt of violet occurred—

Individual clouds, blots
of thoughtlessness,
brief plays of light on stripes of shit
and glitter on the benches
where we sat enamored of long shadows

Green appears to flower
becoming bearded Still as my life was before
it happened on her dark

scheme
a small iris in pastel and charcoal looks carnivorous
—

The room cavernous with
forgetfulness: the shot
joy of our heyday We said this of the bale
delved by yellow arrows
that fell in grass relief along the gray continuum—



Josef Aukee

DISCREET POEMS

By Josef Aukee

1
Whitewash was the exercise attempted
Turpentine can next to sky-gray paint
Scrape the last of the peeling down to the wood

When it's late in the day and I'm still alive
All the canopies come off like lines
I'm the thinner and I have lips for you

2
Pouring you another glass of chardonnay
Chill of the bottle no match for the heat
Running flashbacks through my eyes to heart

20 years let us ignore each other at first look
I thought about getting the waiter to card you to
be certain
But then again there was that kiss on the hood of my
Impala

3
The light is on furthest way from the door
Helps to keep what bugs you can away
I should be a PC in the shop loading up on new
random access memory

Once and again I can resort to the boxes of life's
remains
Peek into a past that binds, throws me for a loop
Saw the picture of the five of us all intertwined

4
Turning the corner at First and Mission streets to
exchange

40 glances and three indecisions opening up the
world
With the desired address in sight, one pair locks and
stays

Up a ramp, behind the door, a sandwich is ordered
Every choice had between every possible
combination
You, the one who turned twice is the one that I want

5
A slate is chosen to replace the worn wood floor
Installation and maintenance had to be considered
A pallet of green, off-whites and bold blues turns to
clay

I can walk nearly anywhere without the map
Maybe the incline rather than the decline gets the
better view
It's been four days since I held you without my guard
down

6
Put all the crayon colors on the paper first, cover with
black and scratch
Uncover the image, one line, and one circle at a time
Red, green, yellow, purple blend from the sharp blade
cuts
I thought that every filter had been in place
Each new day screened, each new shape earned
You slipped through leaving your love on a sleeve

7
It was the discreet music the sold the whole
collection
Each release a spring day, a rock overturned
The thickest cover cannot contain the life in the beat

No matter how many times that I say your name
A left pocket holds the lost key, the sky that is blue
There's a candle to replace the light, we needn't
worry

Garden of Plenty

By Josef Aukee

In the garden
I am no longer a stranger to the birds of paradise and
fuchsia
This garden has a fence and cappuccino
The sun hits at all the right angles – in through the
pickets
On the fountain
A stilled life but for thoughts and leaves in the
breeze.

Out of the garden
I am even stranger to the pavement and walls – I
breathe
I am the pink snapdragon
Moss by the fountain
A green iron bench
A bee that hovers
I sit with bread and cheese on the building's
steps
Making up a garden

TO WALK IN THIS WOOD

By Josef Aukee

Undiscovered in branches
Breath indistinguishable from the breeze
Colored by the brown earth and eucalyptus
bones
Ferns are fingers overgrown at the stream edge
Merged into the entangled leafy vines

Some see Yosemite only by car
Some believe they weather best holed up in
fiorescent light
Some rollercoaster at the pier and call it a day at
the beach
Others fish at the market with no casting nor lure

The silent runner traces maps of land mines and
pulled muscles
Preserving the case for chilling
interdependencies
The guardrails and make-face competition
Fueled by efforts to shine or abdicate
Plod on a steady pace that broad strokes refine
The particular moment while taxiing the airplane
The turn taken like a flute solo
Nothing caught thereafter is the same
The diffusion of shade, bend of the note
Short crease on the collar known only to the
wearer

Leave a trail of mortgage checks and smiles
Costumes have been recycled and reinterpreted
The masks are stored
Personal technology shifts
Watching an evergreen starve is no longer subtle
Voice of the diminished 7th unveiled
Unable to wash enough to remove every germ
Every piece of yellow journalism
Touching the 3rd rail, a combustible engine
It's daisies in the wood, low trickle in the river

In the marrow, the meadow or mall

Better to take the errant vitamin, the quiet stroll
Grab a shirt and run
All flesh, bone and soul
Devour the portrait;
Reinvent the flow
To walk in the wood with purpose
With fowl, fauna

This flower
That branch is strongest
Inoculated by the breeze
That is only breath

WATCHING MOUNTAINS MOVE

By Josef Aukee

I am the one watching
Looking for the changes in the color
Of the water that makes up the sea
It moves the white sand up and back
I think it makes the mountains move.

I am the one watching
Out for the violent interdiction
Born out of the frustrated river
Trying to recarve a path through the city
The clash of nature in search of the man.
I am the one watching
Two cats in the bar that run
From the clubbers to the wild hill
Leaving people to react and reassess
How they pace themselves in the world.

I am the one watching
The measuring cup with flour and milk
A level eye to coincide with combustion
Creating pancakes topped with tree sap
From the land I am in and tender.

I am the one watching
Red slate steps heat in the sun
A sun that twists every endeavor
It's halting light feeds then hides
What can be seen—what we cannot underestimate.

I am the one watching
Friends gathering at the bleak café
Their murmurs, boasts and number crunching
Churn out the motion of commercial interests
On to one another: sharks on fish.

I am the one watching
Caterpillars turn, morph and fly
Slowly despite the speed in which we pause
A scarce but essential commodity

The fly feeds on the humming bird's jealousy.

I am the one watching
A building rise from ashes and old timber.
Changing the patterns of pedestrians
Accommodating the hearty men in hard hats
Watching the crane next to the mountains
Built for their proximity to the sea
I am watching.



Donna Salli

WAKE

By Donna Salli

is what I thought
and what it was--my aunt Vieno
suspended in a cloud of satin,
laid out in a blue dress the shade
of the grapes that grew
in my grandmother's arbor.

At her breast was pinned
a brooch, half-remembered silverwork--
around a stone, perhaps.
Her hands were cold,
pale, loose across her breastbone;
schoolteacher spectacles
perched useless
on her face.

It was days after
Mother's Day. I stood at profile height,
my hand in somebody's,
and willed her to get up. Off to one side--
my cousin Matti's round
red face, my grandmother inconsolable.
I willed her to get up--
but the next day they put her
in the ground.

One day in the fall
during woodcutting season--
the grape leaves gone to crimson,
my grandmother home by herself, horizontal
with grief--footsteps

crossed the upstairs floor. They stopped
at the top of the stairs,
and Vieno's voice called down, dusty,
in Finnish, "Mother, stop
crying now." *Aiti,*
älä itke.

WOMAN, WITH EARRINGS

By Donna Salli

She is small in stature.
Or she is tall. She walks the homely
hours like a feather lifting lovely
on a breeze, or she takes
the day with purpose, now a whisper,
now a clamor.

Her eyes are without color,
here gray, there green, yet there
blue, black, or brown. Her hair,
the same: it flows, the silkiest silk of corn,
or stands up, thick, a mind in every strand,
stands out, stands apart, dares
to riot and provokes what it dares.
Then again, she has no hair at all.

Cities know her name, buildings squat
or towered, streets, rivers flowing under
and between. Meadows know her,
where deer feed, the hushed margins
where they sleep. On her shoulders
rides the world: cottages, castles,
theatres, concert halls, she carries ships at sea, offices
with plazas, warehouses,
farm fields, mines so deep.

Mother to it all, she bares herself,
loosens her sheath to rush, when she must,
the gates and battlements. Fierce
little architectures dangle from her ears—
she turns her head, they flash
in warning.

LOVE SONG

By Donna Salli

Phoebe leaps at a thought,
twists herself into white question.
Mid-air, the tip of her claw
sizzles--a bronze-wing barely bobs
away. Before her feet touch ground, Phoebe finds
another object: land, tense,
spring. She comes up all eager iridescence,

a dragonfly in her teeth.

She will, and will not,
be loved. Pink-eared, she leans into her evening
caress, assures herself of devotion:
the immaculate face, gesture
of tail, robin's-egg eye gazing from ether.
Then--she is done. Phoebe
leaps, apple bark and mother bird
flying, becomes an electrified arrow above the
dark
of nestlings. The shining ones hear
no human call.

She is most she when she keeps
the Lord's watch at night against the adversary.
Mice leap fat into her jaws,
skulls crunching; she walks straight
up the silver-sided barn
to the moon. When mist steals across
the fields on feet padded,
she disappears.

RIVER BOTTOM HIGHWAY

By Donna Salli

It took us by surprise,
the way the mist suddenly lifted
from the river
and spilled onto a low-lying curve.

We'd been talking, my companion
laughing. I remember iridescent
blue behind his head, that beneath us a warming
thread of new pavement
unwound.

In seconds, we were fog-bound.
Just ahead, a pickup sashayed
out of a side road, its driver in a haze--
our warning snarl
of rubber brought his head around.

There was no time for fear,
just a curious detachment of body from soul.
The nose of the sports car
shimmied in its bearing down--then, a breath
away
from a broadside, it spun its heaving
ass around, slid us
to a dead halt on the far
shoulder.



Nancy Mattson

WHEN IN FINLAND

by Nancy Mattson

(Published in *Writing with Mercury*,
Hexham, England: Flambard Press, 2006
<http://www.flambardpress.co.uk>)

In Kaustinen, first hour of midsummer,
last light blending into new light
at half before one *puoli yksi*
I blinked and missed the night.

Dancers on an outdoor platform
moved in unison to a single accordion,
wildflowers fell from their hair.
I watched from the edge,
remembered the word for heart
and its first ending *sydän, sydämen*

Two women emerged
from the willow-rhythms,
a man claimed one, the other claimed me.
I thought of a little bird *pieni lintu*
She met my eyes on a held note,
raised me to the platform,
offered me the lead.

My right hand put itself
round the wrong side of her waist.
I had never danced with a woman
under the midnight sun –
my feet were blind,
arms unjointed, hands evasive
in a crooked-awkward *jenka*.

As we moved into a long-familiar waltz
light and forest took each other's measure

eye to eye *silmästä silmään*
the forest took a bow
and every birch and pine
stepped forward into place.

‘Tosi’ Is a Word for Truth

by Nancy Mattson

(Published in *Writing with Mercury*,
Hexham, England: Flambard Press, 2006
<http://www.flambardpress.co.uk>)

In the Finnish language
a fact is a truth-thing, *tosiasia*
I want to say old words
with my truth-mouth, *tosisuu*
I want to roll wishes
on my truth-tongue, *tosikieli*

I want to eat wishberries
swallow the truthpips
wash out my mouth with breadsoap
quench my thirst with springdrops
Blessed are the waterpoor

I want to climb truth to the moon
on rope rungs braided
with reeds from my wished
Call it a ladder of need
Blessed are the spiritpoor

I want to avoid the mawkish cracks
the rags of mangled prayer
the truthslap that marks the cheek
with a hurtprint that never fades
Blessed are the touchpoor

I want to hang my wishcoat
my spun linen dress and velvet scarf
on truthnails pounded on the walls
of a bedroom with no wardrobe
Blessed are the homepoor

I want to cross the threshold
of my grandmother’s kitchen
use wishherbs from truthloam
follow recipes in her birth tongue
Blessed are the wordpoor

I want to paint wingtruths
with coyotetail brushes
sketch longing with charcoal
from scorched pinelimps
Blessed are the artpoor

I want to ride Hubble to the stars

and see if each lightpoint
is a hole punched in shot silk
by God’s own truthpick
Blessed are the laughpoor

I want, I want: *haluan, haluan*
Haluan is my name

LINES ON A PARACHUTE

Tate Modern, London, 2006

by Nancy Mattson

(UNPUBLISHED <http://www.poetrypf.co.uk/nancymattsonpage.html>)

A paper parachute, cheap and faded green,
pops out from the right-hand page
of a bound volume held in a vitrine
of 1935 issues of *USSR in Construction*.

A rare and homely parachute,
like a children’s model of St Paul’s dome,
or Bloomsbury’s old Round Reading Room
built of bits of cardboard glued together.
Lines of draughtsman’s ink connect
parachute folds to the photograph
of a harnessed, helmeted, overalled, booted
figure against a backdrop of photoclouds,
steel toes pointed towards the photoearth,
ready to touch the blades of black and white grass.

*La vie d’un homme dépend
de chaque plie, de chaque corde.*

I squint to translate, my face
pressed against the glass box
protecting book and parachute.
Yes, a man’s life – a woman’s too –
depends on each fold and cord.
The heart must bind catgut with wire
to tie the body to a bubble of silk
and let it drop.

The tiniest error, say
an imperceptible rip in the cloth
or a tangled cord, and the self slips
into the ellipses between
the dot dot dot and *rien du tout*.

But Katia Mednikova is laughing.
The Komsomol pilot, Balachov,
fixes the parachute on her back.
“Why are you laughing?” he frowns.
“Must I cry?” she winks.

Be young and fearless, Katia,
climb into the open cockpit behind Balachov,

soar with him to 7000 metres, wait for his
engine to idle,
then jump at his hand signal.

The lines on paper say something like the whole
world
blended and whirled before Katia's eyes,
the abyss froze her lungs and she gulped her
whistle,
swallowed the wind that engulfed her.
She pulled
the ripcord
and ...

BRAIDED RIVERS

by Nancy Mattson

(UNPUBLISHED [http://www.poetrypf.co.uk/
nancymattsonpage.html](http://www.poetrypf.co.uk/nancymattsonpage.html))

Shallow and frivolous, nevertheless
these braided New Zealandish rivers,
all spreading and splayed, they enchant me,
flaunting their numerous channels
like floozies or boozers, their long hair in
tangles,
wearing silk robes that flop open to negligées,
that almost hide crumbs and tea leaves scattered
on the soft laps of women unconcerned
with the world's notions of river power –
all that rushing and pushing
millions of gallons per second
through narrow chutes
all those rock-conquering
waterfalls grabbing
white lace & shaking it
to foam, noise & swagger,
spraying water like terrorists
brandishing Kalashnikovs

Braided rivers have the leisure given to them
by wide plains, the space to deposit their silt
like lines of floor-sweepings in a gymnasium
where dozens of young women move in unison
to music, ribbon-silks floating from their wrists
in airy ripples, developing long muscles
of calisthenic beauty and strength
Give me a slow river anytime, with no job or
purpose
but to shine and reflect, catch and string along
bits of open blue in fluid mirrors
rags of cloud in silk-embroidered patches

Braided rivers have it both ways,
never need to choose between water and ground.
Meandering around, they bathe and clothe

the autumn earth in soft textiles, threadbare,
the ground showing through everywhere,
its rocks and stones forming shoulders,
collarbones,
spines and skeletons of long-ago streams

Some families are braided rivers
the way they've spread across continents
in migratory waves, playing the old songs
with gusto and verve at first. But all their liquid
notes fade to adagios on ravelling strings,
their strong voices feather out to dry echoes:
boulders to stones, gravels to pebbles, dust
and, finally, silences in unconnected elsewheres
far and long away from the glacier tongues
which gave these family rivers birth



Lauri Anderson

PATSY

By Lauri Anderson

God is missing during wars, holocausts,
genocides, storms at sea. God pays no attention to
pain and suffering and broken hearts. He doesn't
notice when anyone or anything dies. He doesn't
give a damn about your cat or dog. God is not in
board rooms, court rooms, or prisons. He isn't there
when you skin your knee or snap your back.

God doesn't care that you stayed out all
night, parked in the silence of the church parking lot
with your high school girlfriend/boyfriend.

God is busy, listening to the music—of the
human voice, of instruments, of insects in the cool of
night, of rivers, of the spheres, of carpenters' tools.

Sometimes God stands or walks. Mostly He
just sits and wonders what went wrong. He hunts for

answers in Shakespeare and Woolf. But even then, He listens. And eats ice cream.

That's what angels are for. They make the ice cream. In between, they too listen. They too don't give a damn about me or you.

They (and God) listen.

God hates to be hedged in by anything.

That's why I put Him in parentheses. That's why I put most of this poem, or vignette, about Him in paragraph form. Paragraphs hedge Him in too. So do the capital letters.

Patsy Cline didn't worry about parentheses one way or the other. Maybe she didn't need them, and so she showed them no respect. She used her voice to hurtle them into the white

Void ()

SEEKING FATHER: QUEST AND THE FATHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP IN THE POETRY OF WENDY ANDERSON AND JUDITH MINTY
By Lauri Anderson

Wendy Anderson is an award-winning Finnish-American poet from the small slate-mining community of Monson, Maine. Her father Arvid, a first-generation Finn who spent his life within the local Finnish community, is the topic of a series of poems in her collection titled *Wild Things in the Yard* (Thorntree Press, 1986). Wendy is particularly interested in examining the father/daughter relationship around her father's death.

Judith Minty grew up in the Detroit area outside a Finnish community but with a Finnish father. She married, lived a suburban life in Muskegon, raised her family, and, in middle age, became a poet. She too has won awards. In her book-length cycle of poems titled *Yellow Dog Journal* (Center Publications, 1979), she returns to her father's roots in Michigan's rural Upper Peninsula in order to discover the part of him that has eluded her—the part he kept separate from his family life in Detroit and from his work life as an engineer. *Yellow Dog Journal* is divided into two equal cycles of poems, titled "Fall" and "Spring." "Fall" consists of twenty-nine linked poems and is by far the more powerful of the two cycles.

Each poet is on a quest that is emotionally overwhelming and very personal. Each is trying to communicate with a ghost. Each summons up a long-dead past, a childhood. Wendy writes out of a state of grief so powerful that the pain threatens to destroy her. Judith too

writes out of stark need, but her journey is even more difficult than Wendy's. Wendy was as close to her father as a daughter could be, but Judith is seeking the essential part of her father that she never knew. She is seeking the rural father who grew up in the Finnish community of Ishpeming. That father was at home in the wilderness and fished the Yellow Dog River in the Huron Mountains north of Marquette. Both poets use the bear as an archetypal spirit of the natural world, much as Faulkner did in his short story "The Bear."

Wendy uses the bear as a positive symbol, as an aspect of her Finnish roots. Her Finnish grandfather is "a bear of a man" when he arrives in America with strong survival skills that he teaches his son Arvid, Wendy's father. Grandfather Matti carries "the butcher's trade" in his hands and passes this knowledge on to his son. Like a bear, Arvid has "a furry face" and "shuffling feet" and "the stance of a hunter" as he holds a dead "bear in one hand" and later "work[s] his way through the beast/hanging the stretched carcass to dry/in the winter sun of the apple tree." The father Arvid becomes the ultimate bear, the bearman who slaughters lesser animals, including bears, for their meat and who does this for his family and community. Through linked imagery, Wendy also creates a transformed, Zen-like world where everything is one with everything else, with her father at this transformed world's center.

The powerful center of both the natural and human worlds, Wendy's "daddy" has "a face" that [is] "a neighborhood" where quarrymen with "blue hands" carry "lunch pails" while they jabber "in Swede and Finn." Here the kind of gigantism that Rabelais used so

effectively for satirical comic effects is used by Wendy to show love—her own for her father, her father's for the local landscape. Her daddy's hands become all of the local landscape—the hill that overlooks the town, the lake that the town hugs, even the lake's loons and the brooks' trout. His neck is the mountain behind the town. His body encompasses blueberries and pine trees; bear cubs take comfort in "the pool by his shoulder blades" and his "lap [is] a nest." He is the hawk and the wildflowers. He is the world of Monson, Maine.

We learn that flowers are very important to him—that he loves them. Through flowers he transforms his world into beauty and love. A "junked car, old tires" become planters rich with "purples and yellows and reds." He "bundle[s] flowers for neighbors. We learn that Arvid loves to cook. His butcher's trade is transformed as he yields his knife to change crude turnips into delicious meals by "skin[ning] the turnips alive...steaming and mash[ing]" and creating turnip pie. Wendy makes it

clear that her father loves his world—his own and others’ children, the house he has transformed into a home. Any strains in that world are missing; any mention of Wendy’s mother is missing, though she is the subject of other poems in the collection..

Wendy’s cycle of poems is a paean to her father, a series of love songs that come back always to his death—to his flight out of her life and into the grave. Again and again she returns to this idea, to the end of her childhood, and to her inability to comprehend or come to terms with her loss. She is stunned, feels burned alive, choked, nearly lost, nearly drowned. Still, she takes sustenance from her memories, from the love that her father gave her—that echoes through the entire world that he once was. Like rings in a pond, that love spreads out and out, comforting. Because she is her father’s child, Wendy is at home in the woods, or on a lake, or in a rude camp surrounded by forest, moose, bear, or loons. She is independent, free, and at home in her womanhood, but always she will long for her loss.

Judith Minty is not at home in the Huron Mountains in the “Fall” poems of *Yellow Dog Journal*. Neither is she at home in the suburbs where she has been “planted” for twenty years. As she runs away to her father’s wilderness, she becomes “pale and soft” like a baby, her “father’s child.” She is simultaneously running away from the woman she has become, seeking through the quest for her unknown father the unknown woman who lies somewhere within her. In this sense her cycle of poems contains a feminist message.

Judith is out of season. She drives north “400 miles” to a fishing cabin that “has not been lived in since August.” Now it’s October and the natural world is moving toward winter. Geese are flying south. Flies are in hibernation, like the cabin. Leaves are falling. Rain, often a positive image of renewal, rebirth, and fertility, becomes a negative. It “crawls,” “muddies,” and makes one “bone cold.” Flies in the cabin come to life and “cling to shadows.” The flies are like Judith, who is clinging to the shadow of her missing father, of her long-ago youth, of a time when she was happier. Judith attacks the flies with an old newspaper that is now a mere shadow of itself. The newspaper is ineffective, out of season, and of no importance except to light the fire. Daily news events will not be a part of Judith’s life in the forest.

Judith attempts to fit into her father’s world by fitting her feet into his old slippers and

by doing the timeless duties that he had previously done—lighting the stove, fixing a meal, washing the dishes. She feels “his presence” as she walks over his “linoleum floor.” Within his cabin she is like a queen bee and “this shack” is “a hive humming.” But instead of producing amber honey, she drinks too much from “the amber in [her] glass.”

The next morning Judith almost decides to end her lonely sojourn. She decides to “hike three miles to a phone” to call an old lover and ask him to join her “by driving nine hours into autumn.” We don’t know if the lover is her husband or someone else but we do know that this journey into the woods is less about Judith discovering her unknown father and is more about Judith discovering Judith.

Bear as spirit of the forest, as archetype, soon makes a mythic appearance at the heart of the cycle of poems, but the bear is purely imaginary, as Judith imagines it somewhere in the forest, beyond sight, beyond the perimeter of the clearing that surrounds the cabin. Judith is terrified of the unseen, possibly lurking bear. She is an oursaphobe of the worst sort. She imagines the bear sneaking up to attack her because she is menstruating, and she believes the bear can smell her blood. The bear represents all of Judith’s womanly fears—her inability to be natural in the natural world, to be at home in the cabin in the forest. But of course she is also unable to be at home in the life she has made in the suburbs. She fears that she doesn’t fit anywhere. She either must come to terms with this fact *or* she must change.

She sticks close to the cabin out of fear but later imagines the bear bursting into her clearing, disputing its ownership, reclaiming the cabin for the forest. She runs to the door because she has mistaken the honking of southbound geese for the screaming of a bear. Judith gives us a quick biography of her missing father in the tenth poem (of twenty-nine)—how he, as a typical UPer, fled south after college to Detroit to seek a larger world of opportunities but who also periodically returned to the river, the falls, the glittering ore that he loved. She tells us that he never visited his three widowed sisters trapped in their homes in nearby Ishpeming. The sisters, it is implied, know nothing of the land that traps them but that frees their brother. Judith must learn to be more like him and less like them.

As the cycle of poems advances, Judith does begin to change. She discards suburban strictures. She stops combing her hair, talks aloud to herself, unbuttons her shirt and lets her “breasts swim in the full moon’s light.” Her daily tasks take on a rhythm in tune with the world around her. The archetypal river becomes the source (as water) of all life and she sees everything (from the *fire* of autumn leaves to the

jet stream of a plane) mirrored in its surface while the sky above mirrors the river in the jet stream and in the flow of southbound geese. As she slowly comes to terms with her fears, the landscape takes on Zen-like qualities of oneness.

Simultaneously and also gradually the bear moves from far away to become aspects of Judith herself. Eventually she realizes that the bear is inside her—that it is all of Judith that she has suppressed and hidden away in her own personal basement. She realizes that her daughters and their daughters must wrestle with the same bear, the same fears—that the bear is an inner weight they all carry. The bear is an eroticism that must be freed. It is also freedoms that must be taken advantage of. It is, ultimately, the remade and remodeled woman who will break the bonds of suburban housewifery and will write these poems of self-discovery. Toward the end of the “Fall” cycle of poems, Judith the narrator becomes an old “crone,” an “old woman who hobbles on her stick” and “who mutters deep in her throat and smells of bear.” She and the bear are finally one while, simultaneously, Judith the narrator is a kind of Tiresias figure, a wise one who sees through to the truth.

After that, as the “Fall” cycle draws to a close, the river itself and its falls become bearlike but beautiful; the warm fire in her stove becomes aspects of her fisherman father; soon, as a new woman, she can head south into troll-land for she has at last discovered her place in the world and she can now re-enter the life she had fled or change it.

In the final poem (“29”) Judith buries her unnatural refuse—“plastic jugs, booze bottles, old cans.” Simultaneously she is burying any remnants of her time in the woods, her search into the past. At last she is at home in the present. She “roll[s] back on [her] haunches and let[s] the long shrill howl” of the inner bear “rise.” It runs out like a song from [her] throat.” Her inner bear is free, free at last.

Wendy Anderson and Judith Minty have written some of the more important poems as yet produced by Finnish-American poets, and yet both of the works examined in this essay are currently out of print. Both poets continue to be active. Judith has produced a small canon, and Wendy has continued to publish in journals. Both do readings. Both have taught poetry right up to now. Both deserve recognition for the artistic quality of their writing and the emotional power that grows out of that artistry.



G. K. Wuori

A WALK ACROSS TOWN

By G. K. Wuori

This is a true story that starts out very Finnish and ends very American. I think I like the Finnish part better (though I did forget to write about my grandmother’s salt pork stew, a serious error), but history, of course, isn’t necessarily about the things we like. If it were, the Finnish neighborhood I’m writing about would still exist.

I should warn you. If you think this is going to be some Memory Lane travelogue you’ll get blown out of your socks by the end of it.

Anyway, the two old grocery stores, Carlson’s and Montavon’s, are still on the corner of Tenth and Pleasant in DeKalb, Illinois. They have Mexican names now because this always was a neighborhood of shifting ethnicity. But Montavon’s was next door to one of the many Finnish saunas that dotted the neighborhood up until the middle of the last century, the Finnish neighborhood – home, at one time, to nearly 2,000 Finns in a town of about 10,000. I think the sauna cost a dollar when I was growing up. My best friend, Mike, and I would go there early on a Saturday night, steam ourselves silly, then go out looking for girls. Usually, the sauna proved to be the more successful venture on those nights.

There were maybe another half-dozen family-run grocery stores in the neighborhood. They were Finnish, but I don’t recall many foods in them that were distinctively Finnish beyond the ever-present hardtack and the occasional barrel of lutefisk. There were also – Finns being Finns – maybe twice that many neighborhood taverns. Rukavina’s was one of the more popular ones, along with Ed’s Tavern that had been built in an old garage.

Going east on Pleasant (we're going to walk west in a minute), you run into the factory neighborhood where the Finnish men worked: American Steel, Wurlitzer, General Electric. Because so many of the men had come here alone, they would go to the Finnish Community Center after work for a hot meal. I've seen a picture of my dad at the center. He and several other young men are in uniforms and performing some sort of gymnastics routine. Sadly, that picture has been lost, but the Center is still there, reborn a number of years ago as the DeKalb Area Women's Center.

The Finnish neighborhood isn't Finnish anymore, so we're going to walk west from Tenth Street to Seventh, then take a jog onto Fisk Avenue and go past my childhood home. It's still there, a (now) vinyl-sided salt box with a sunken living room. Two huge elm trees prevented much grass from growing in the back yard, but they're gone now, victims of Dutch Elm disease. The house is now owned by a city fireman who also plays the bagpipes.

Maybe another quarter mile takes us to the end of Fisk. To your right you'll see the old St. Mary's Hospital where I was born. It has been reincarnated into many things over the years, though its current incarnation is one of emptiness. Look straight ahead, though, and feast your eyes.

You're looking at the Ellwood House, a marvelous mansion (open to the public) that had once belonged to Colonel Ellwood. The Colonel took the invention of his friend, DeKalb native Joseph Glidden, and manufactured/marketed it up into a fortune that had the Colonel rubbing elbows with Andrew Carnegie. That invention was barbed wire.

But – quickly now. Circling past the mansion south for a block, then heading west again, we're in the neighborhood of the university. We've walked maybe a mile and a half, but it's a beautiful day so you shouldn't be too tired.

Stately professorial homes are all over the place, although for many the grandeur is long gone as the homes have been chopped up into student apartments. As we walk down by Annie's Woods (named for Annie Glidden), we cross the Kishwaukee River and are fully on the campus. Huffing up a bit of a hill, we find ourselves at Lucinda and Normal, the center of the campus. Looking west on Lucinda you can see the high rise dorms that sit on the edge of the cornfields.

We're not going to go that far, however. We've slowed down on Lucinda as we passed the University Center on our left. We can see Neptune Hall coming up but we're not going that far, either.

Instead we're going to stop and glance for a second at that sign over there that says Northern Illinois University. Then we're going to swing our gaze just a bit to the right to see that devastating array of crosses with the now too-familiar names on them: Dan, Gayle, Catalina, Julianna, and Ryanne. Just behind that sad memorial is Cole Hall, site of the shooting on Valentine's Day 2008 that took those five lives and injured sixteen others.

This is all true and, as I said earlier, I like the Finnish part better. If only we could pick and choose the histories that make us what we are.

HISTORY OF KANSALLISSEURA, PORT ARTHUR, ONTARIO

By Kaarina Brooks

Some months ago Pentti Junni – a well-known radio host and musician in Thunder Bay, Ontario - called and asked if my sister, Raili Garth, and I would be interested in writing the history of the now defunct Kansallisseura (Loyal Finns in Canada) of Port Arthur, as one half of Thunder Bay used to be



Winter Picnic

called. The work would cover the entire history of the organization from 1926 to its demise a few years ago.

Being former active members of the "Nor Shor Club" we agreed. This Youth Club operated under the auspices of the Kansallisseura and folk danced at some Finnish Canadian Grand Festivals in the 50s and early 60s. Also, on many a summer weekend, we enjoyed having a sauna and swim at the "Kansallisseuran kämppä" at Surprise Lake, or trudged through waist-deep snow to have a winter picnic at the freezing, unheated "camp".

In April of this year Raili and I drove to Thunder Bay to pick up several boxes of papers, documents, and photographs that Toini Jacobson



Folkdancing

had diligently kept for years in her home and had bequeathed to Pentti Junni's care upon her death. As we briefly skimmed through the contents of the boxes, one of the most important and



Toini and Santa Claus

interesting documents we found - among the countless receipts for x pounds of wieners and x loaves of pulla for a social event or a dance - was a personal letter of thanks to Kansallisseura from President Urho Kekkonen on the occasion of his birthday.

No final form or size for the book has been decided on, but it was agreed that for visual interest it should contain as many photographs as possible. Unfortunately not many pictures were taken in early days of the society, and very few



Dancing at Christmas Party

of the ones that we found had any way of identifying the people or the occasions. (There is a lesson here for members of all organizations to

document their photos and documents with care!) At the end of June, as soon as Finnjoy 2008 is over, work will start on the history and on preparing the documents for their final resting place, possibly with the immigrant archives in Ottawa. We are sure it will be not only a challenging, but also a rewarding project. And - we hope - also an enjoyable experience!



69TH FINNISH CANADIAN GRAND FESTIVAL By Sirpa Kaukinen

The Finnish Canadian Grand Festival traces its roots back to 1940 and to a group of Finns who met in Sudbury to plan a large summer festival to help war-torn Finland.

Lempi Johnson, who later came to be known as the mother of the Finnish Canadian Grand Festival, asked her friend Kalle Lehto to help her in planning this. Kalle Lehto in turn asked ten men to a meeting in the Lehto's sauna. There the decision was made "to invite Ontario Finns to a large song, music and sport festival in the summer of 1940."¹ Then the four ladies including Lempi enjoyed the after sauna 'coffee and pulla' with the men.

These pioneers are all gone, but we still celebrate our festival annually. Over the past 69 years there has been a name change from the Song, Music and Sport Festival to the present Finnish Canadian Grand Festival. During this same time some 60 clubs across Canada have helped to organize the festival in nine cities from Montreal to Vancouver.

The Finnish Canadian Cultural Federation was founded in 1971. Among its tenets of "promoting Finnish culture and ethnic customs in Canada"² has also been "to actively support the Finnish Canadian Grand Festival in co-ordination with the local organizing committee, and endeavor toward the continuation of these annual Festivities."³

This year's *Finnjoy 2008* at Toronto's Mel Lastman Square was combined with *Nordic Fair*, a celebration of history, culture and modern day life of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. As I viewed the performers who followed one another in folk dancing, gymnastics, playing music, singing, and showing fashions, I realized our festival has endured because we have accepted change.

The original idea of a large music and sports event is still there but the audience is now a second, third or fourth generation Finn or an interested person. We listened to Finnish music and viewed popular Finnish fashions. We saw a play in Finnish and English about life in Ostrobothnia in Finland in the 1850's and a play in Finnish about poet Eino Leino and his relationships to the women in his life. A variety of lectures were presented in English. There were performances from other Nordic countries and their products were sold at our common tori/marketplace. Many languages were spoken at our event.

Plans are underway to celebrate the 70th festival in Sudbury in 2009. We are also looking forward to organizing another Finn Grand Fest together with Americans of Finnish ancestry in the year 2010 in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. We welcome thousands to these annual celebrations of our culture and heritage. The future of our festivals is in our hands.

Notes

¹ Mauri A. Jalava, *Lempi Johnson*, 54th Finnish Canadian Grand Festival Program 1993.

² Mauri A. Jalava, *The Basic Tenets, KSK'n Postia, A Special Update of the KSK'n Postia for the FinnFest '91*. Kanadan Suomalainen Kulttuuriliitto 1991. The Finnish Canadian Cultural Federation 1991.

³ Ibid.

Bibliography

Jalava, Mauri A, *Lempi Johnson*, 54th Finnish Canadian Grand Festival Program 1993.

Jalava, Mauri A, *KSK'n Postia, A Special Update of the KSK'n Postia for the FinnFest '91*.

Kanadan Suomalainen Kulttuuriliitto 1991. The Finnish Canadian Cultural Federation 1991. *Finnjoy 2008*, Festival Information and Registration Form.

REVIEW OF HEKKANEN'S *OF A FIRE BEYOND THE HILLS* by Beth L. Virtanen, PhD

Bravo, Ernest! *Of a Fire Beyond the Hills* chronicles the verbal confrontation of pro- and anti-war groups that culminates on his front lawn in Nelson, British Columbia, in 2007. Of course, the story is fictionalized, much like some work by G. K. Wuori, but the drama of the story brings to the forefront of our attention the

importance of examining the interests vested in national and international politics.

In true American fashion—Hekkanen caustically calls to accounting pro-war individuals of both Canadian and American extraction. In his account of the confrontation, no pro-war individual owns his own stance on the war by signing his name to a petition that names Hekkanen as an anti-war protester who should be induced to remove himself from the community.

As usual, Hekkanen engages in deep and serious criticism of American politics and, here, of Canadian complicity in them. While his writing is as nuanced and subtle as any notable author and more well-crafted than many, Hekkanen's most important contributions are made in the substance of his work. That and in the dry humor that he brings to the task.

In the novel that details a span of time of no more than a few days, Hekkanen's characters engage in acts of resistance against a small-scale public official who seeks to end Hekkanen's dissent by bullying him into silence. Of course, grounded in the kind of tradition of *sisu* that allowed Finns to fight the Red Army of the Russians to a draw in WWII, Hekkanen's characters do not and can not cow to

the threats of a petty tyrant.

Hekkanen does not use large online retailers. To purchase the book, go to www3.telus.net/neworphicpublishers-hekkanen/.

REVIEW OF WUORI'S *AMERICAN OUTRAGE* BY Beth L. Virtanen, PhD

An American Outrage: A Novel of Quillifarkeag, Maine, by G. K. Wuori is a complex study of human motivation. It is a disturbing book, an unsettling one, a book that one remembers having read for a long time both for its ordinary people and the extraordinary events in which they are involved.

In Quilli, Maine, something went awry when four law enforcement officers—all women—emptied four clips of ammunition into a game dresser who was asleep in her home, a hunting camp, drunk from too much vodka and loneliness mixed with a bit of self-pity.

Ellen DeLay had left her husband of more than twenty years after he accidentally closed her in the toolbox in the back of his pickup, not discovering her for three days. The absolute isolation and degradation of being locked in with the results of her bodily functions for three days unglued Ellen and sent her searching for something to mend what had become broken within her. Her search was cut short by the blazing shotguns of the sheriff and her posse.

The law enforcement officers, called to investigate an accidental shooting, were drunk in their own way—on the power of their badges and their fear of a woman who lived by an alternate sense of morality. And they were caught amidst their brutal act by a hidden witness.

G. K. Wuori writes an engaging book about those on the fringes where right and wrong become confused and where vengeance comes with a huge price. Or does it?

American Outrage is published by Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, ©2000.

***NORTHERN ORACLE* CONNECTS OUR SPIRITS TO OUR HOMELANDS**

By Beth L. Virtanen, PhD

Kirsten Dierking's second book of poetry is a delight to read. I captured my own sense of belonging to something larger and bound me to the ancestors from whence I came. Explicitly, Dierking introduces the text as influenced by her Sami forerunners with their animist traditions. She says, "In many ways, these [Sami] beliefs reflect my own sense that our lives are inextricably entwined with the spiritual in animals and nature" (Author's Note).

Strategically to orient the reader within her own Sami mindset, Dierking introduces each of the five sections of her work with a snippet of poetry from the work of the late Nils-Alsak Vaalkeapää, *Trekways of the Wind*. The first section, titled the Animist," is introduced with a verse thus by Vaalkeapää:

Life
writes in the air with a puff of breath
inscribes the water with a finger

This arrangement announces, in case anyone might have been in doubt, that the point of the work is to comment on the large themes of existence through the minutia of lived experience, though Vaalkeapää's eyes as contained in a puff of breath or in the transient inscription on the water by a single finger.

On the following page, Dierking writes thus in "Northern Oracle":

The aluminum prow scratches over submerged vines, drifts through platters of lily-pads. I lean to the side, rest my hand on the water, touch the sky of unknowable swimmers feeding beneath me. . . . (p. 5)

We are, as a result of her words, placed into the order of her universe, one in which underwater beings are as important and cognizant in their own ways of the world about them. Humans, all of us, are beings in a world that is inhabited by varieties sensate creatures, each with a perspective and an experience to contemplate. Dierking's work is like that, acknowledging all of our world and our places in it.

Of natural world, in "Shovelling Snow," she writes,

If day after day I was caught inside
this muffle and hush

I would notice how birches
move with a lovely hum of spirits. (p. 10)

Here, she acknowledges a living world, the vibrant place that provides for and keeps the beings who live upon its surface. It is a world with a particular sound and very particular sense. I think, perhaps, that I might have heard these birch trees hum; I am sure, for Dierking reminds us

how falling snow is a privacy
warm as the space for sleeping" (p. 10).

She shares with us

how radiant snow is a dream
like leaving behind a body

and rising into that luminous place
where sometimes you meet

the people you've lost. How
silver branches scrawl their names

in tangled script against the white.
How the curves and cheekbones

of all my loved ones appear
in the polished marble of drifts. (p. 10)

These visions connect our selves so strongly to those who came before in our intimate relationship with the experiential world; these visions are the stuff of Dierking's work. It is powerful.

The text itself is divided into four sections, each introduced by the words of the Sami poet Nils-Alsak Vaalkeapää. Dierking, in her intimate way, connects with, plays off, and extends his work to the North American continent. As Nils-Alsak Vaalkeapää says, "my home is in my heart/it migrates with me," Kirsten Dierking replies, "All this time./the life you were/supposed to live/has been rising around you/like the walls of a house/designed with warm/harmonious lines. . . . (75).

Northern Oracle is published by Sprout Press and is available at www.dierking.net.

**REVIEW OF SHEILA PACKA'S
*THE MOTHER TONGUE***

By Beth L. Virtanen

Sheila Packa has given us moments to pause over a new book of poems that reflects our most profound hopes, identifications, and loves. It isn't a sentimental work where words are written in jingle-verse to recur again and again, making us wakeful when we would love nothing more than to sleep. No. Packa's work is there for us when we can't sleep and our thoughts turn inward in introspection of our innermost being, the self we know when we are naked and alone with no need of pretence.

Packa's verse iterates what it is to know northern Minnesota, to be born of the gaping wounds of open-pit mines that obliterate a landscape, of the temerity of the awakening of love urges as we enter puberty, of our grounding in the aspirations of our parents for us and their efforts to support our first steps into adulthood.

She opens the text with the title poem, "The Mother Tongue," in which we are located in the world of her mother, the quintessential mother to whom we are all born:

I migrated from another tongue
My mother spoke another language
had another border I didn't learn.

I came up through her body
listening to the familiar voice
moving along new vowels, crossed

this fence in my mother's arms.
She set me here, upon the leaves of grass.
Her language became instrumental, went

from my tongue deep into the body,
a vibration along the spine
from a heart through the breath

the shiver and release
a voice that I know from the inside,
a violin that hums and thrums[. . .] (9)
In this voice, informed by, but not continuous with that of the mother, Packa's narrator brings us from the moment of creation and into location within the world, "among invisible and unknown borders/ and later those wide like rivers and mountains" (9).

The mother locates and grounds the narrator, locates and grounds us. It is the mother in whom we make our home and it is the mother

who departs, leaving us to carry on in the position of motherhood:

When my mother died, she brought me
to a border again, and
crossed by herself into silence.

From time to time, I come to that place,
a closed gate that one day will open.
I can give you only these words.

They will fall upon your body
as they will, no one knows
what will root, what tangle will tell, how deep

they might become. I know now
the curious life of words: now
I also speak in the mother tongue. (10)

The poem, like the book, encircles, perhaps tells, the life cycle: we are born into the moment of our mothers. We grow into ourselves in reference to, and/or opposite of, and/or extending her. At the moment of death, she brings us with her to the border that only she crosses, and we learn to speak as she, in the language of ourselves that came to us from her.

Through three sections, "The Mother Tongue," "Torrent," and "Fluency," Packa explores the facets of love, first as foundational through poems centered on coming into being as a person, second as coming into being as a lover, and the third as coming into being in the articulation of self into a complex and grounded whole with capacity to speak, to name, to represent, finally, to render poetic.

The Mother Tongue is available from Calyx Press Duluth. Also check with North Wind Books on the campus of Finlandia University.

**REVIEW OF MARK KNIPPING'S
*FINNS IN WISCONSIN***

By Beth L. Virtanen, PhD

From their roots and migration patterns in Finland to their journey across the Atlantic, Mark Knipping chronicles the Finns' journey to Wisconsin where they joined established groups of immigrants from Europe. Knipping notes Finn's contributions to logging, fishing, agriculture, and other industries as they made their way in Wisconsin, primarily after the turn of the last century, noting how Finnish architecture differed from that of other European immigrants.

Knipping also notes how Finns maintained certain cultural traditions, including sauna, Juhannus, and the practice of medicinal cupping in addition to the maintenance of their handicrafts. They made

hand-carved skis, homemade shoes, hand-knitted mittens and scarves made from home-grown wool that was hand carded and spun. They made their own fishnets and other fishing paraphernalia that reinforced self-sufficiency.

Unlike other immigrants, Finns tended to remake their culture of origin wherever they went, according to the author, living in “little Finlands” where they maintained their individual culture well into the twentieth century.

The text also includes an autobiographical piece by Kristiina Niemistö who migrated in 1896 from Köyhäjoki near Kaustinen in Finland to Wisconsin and later on to Florida. It captures with immediacy the experience of immigration through the first-person narrative.

The text is well-researched and contains numerous photos. It is published by the Wisconsin Historical Society Press and is available at wisconsinhistory.org and from amazon.com.

A REVIEW OF RICHARD DORSON’S *BLOODSTOPPERS AND BEARWALKERS*

By Tim Frandy, University of Wisconsin

In 1946, a young Richard Dorson, a man who would become one of the 20th century’s most important folklorists, traversed Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. He spoke with local residents, collecting a vast assortment of stories they told about work and pranks, love and sex, ethnicity and class, strong men and ghosts, magic and healers. Published originally in 1952’s *Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers*, these legends, fairy tales, fabliau, anecdotes, and jokes remain every bit as entertaining, humorous, and biting today as they did five decades ago.

In Dorson’s collection of Upper Peninsula folk narrative, he realizes a watershed moment in the history of American folklore, in which folklorists begin to regard common people as active participants in pluralistic and locally constructed cultural expression. Dorson’s instinct toward inclusion of new folklore narrative genres unaccepted in the 1950s predates and defines his discipline’s direction over the next half century. Dorson’s chapter “The Finns” includes selections ranging from the trickster Lapatossu to the Finnish Cinderella (a boy) Tuhkimo, from shaman and soothsayer tales to salty absurd savolainen jokes. Frank Valin’s tales alone mix genres and offer incisive narrative portraits of 19th century Finnish

hardship, in which shamans and workmen alike dupe and confound their oppressors.

In the third edition, Dorson’s original text is supplemented with a fascinating introduction by James Leary, who masterfully contextualizes Dorson’s accomplishments during the 1950s, without shying away from *Bloodstopper’s* deficiencies. The new edition also features 65 pages of additional tales and commentary, some previously unpublished, including sections on dialect stories, big eaters, and epic lazybones. The third edition of *Bloodstoppers* is a rare gem, a pleasure to read, monumentally important, and a must for anyone interested in the Lake Superior region.

Richard Dorson. *Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers: Folk Traditions of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. 3rd Edition with Additional Tales.* Ed. James P. Leary. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008. Pp. 371.

NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION TEAM

Beth L. Virtanen, PhD, Editor

Sirpa Kaukinen, Associate Editor

FINNALA BOARD

Lauri Anderson, Finlandia University

Varpu Lindström, York Univ. Toronto

Jopi Nyman, University of Joensuu

John Stotesbury, University of Joensuu

Borje Vähämäki, University of Toronto

Beth L. Virtanen, University of Alberta

Marianne Brown, Independent Scholar

Fran Wiideman, Michigan Tech. University

NEW MEMBERS

FinNALA welcomes new members: Donna Salli,

Lisbeth Holt, Lennard Sillanpää, Mary Lukkarila,

Sheila Packa, Barbara Simila, K. Alma Peterson,

Yvonne Lockwood, Josef Aukee, Jim Johnson, and

Judy Harvala Henderson.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Membership in FinNALA costs \$10.00 US and supports the website. The website, in turn, supports the dissemination and study of Finnish North American Literature and makes available to the online bibliography of Finnish North American Literature. Visit and join at www.finnala.com.