

The Wheel of Fortune Delivers a Mishmash**Hanneleena Hieta**

Marko Lamberg, Ulla Piela & Hanna Snellman (eds.) 2018. *Satunnaisesti Suomessa*. [Randomly in Finland.] Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja 97. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society. 325 pp. ISBN 978-951-858-005-1 ISSN 0355-0311.

Randomly in Finland is an article compilation consisting of 15 articles by authors representing various disciplines and ranging in their topics from medieval time to the modern day. Translating the title of the book poses a difficult task. The Finnish word *satunnaisesti* can be translated as ‘randomly’, ‘incidentally’, ‘unexpectedly’ or ‘by chance’. The book aims to describe people and circumstances that have appeared or occurred somewhat unexpectedly over the course of history in Finland. The focus is on the unexpected element – something you would not expect in the environment in question, at least not until you find out more about the phenomenon in question. A metaphor for this is the wheel of fortune, two versions of which also appear on the cover of the book. It symbolises the haphazard way of the world: a person’s fortunes can turn overnight. This provides a healthy counterbalance to our idea that people live their lives rationally with great planning and that the world develops in a linear fashion, as the editors of the book, Marko Lamberg, Ulla Piela and Hanna Snellman, point out.

The book is divided into three sections. The first section is titled ‘Encounters’ (*Kohtaamisia*). The articles deal with encounters between Finns and ‘strangers’ and between communities and cultures that are alien to each other. The second section, ‘Life Paths’ (*Elämäpolkuja*), deals with foreigners who have settled in Finland (Anu Lahtinen, Tiina Miettinen) or moved from town to the countryside (Veli Pekka Toropainen) by chance, starting from the 16th century. These three articles are historically oriented and interesting, in particular, in their usage of source material in the pursuit of creating an accurate idea of a historical person, their life and character, and their interactions with their surrounding communities. This section also contains an article about an artefact that has travelled from Switzerland to the Porvoo Museum (Aki Arponen) and another about the career choices of translators (Osmo Pekonen). Finally, the third section, ‘Visits’ (*Vierailuja*), is about occasional visitors to and travellers in Finland at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. In addition to an article on Viennese female orchestras in Finland (Nappu Koivisto), this section includes in fact two articles dealing with travelling salesmen in the countryside (Johanna Wassholm, Anna Sandelin). One of the articles (Wassholm’s) focuses on Tatars and is quite

valuable since relatively little has been written about this ethnic group. The section also contains two articles that probably did not fit under the canopy of the other titles: one dealing with public spaces and monuments in Vyborg in 1908–1917 (Maria Lähteenmäki) and a text that is mainly a bibliography of Swedish translations of *The Kalevala* in 1835–2018 (Liisa Laukkanen & Harry Lönnrot).

Even though all the articles have their merits, present interesting cases and make valid arguments, I will now focus more thoroughly on the first section of the book, as I believe it is of most interest to fellow ethnologists. The first article, ‘The Experience of Being “Finnish” or a “Stranger” in the Middle Ages’ by Tapio Salminen, challenges the reader to think about how group identities and linguistic-ethnic labels were created in the medieval Baltic region and questions what we can know about them given the sporadic nature of historical sources. The second article, ‘Encounters on the Road and in the Archives – Worker Matti Simola’s Roma Tradition Archives’ by Risto Blomster and Kati Mikkola, deals with a collection of Roma traditions that Matti Simola, a worker, donated to the Finnish Literature Society in the 1950s. Simola himself was not Roma, so this raises many interesting questions about the origin of, motives behind and representativeness of the donation, as well as about how the archival institution appraised and classified the material and how the academic researchers’ community ultimately welcomed it – or why it did not. The article is an excellent piece of archival ethnography.

The third article, ‘At the Same Table Eating the Same Food: Filipino Sailors on Finnish Freight Ships’ by Anne Ala-Pöllänen, sums up some of the results of her doctoral dissertation. Since 2009, Finnish ships have been able to hire mixed-nationality crews. This has led to Finnish-Estonian-Filipino crews and to a situation that resembles Doreen Massey’s notion of ‘throwntogetherness’, an unexpected co-existence and cohabitation. The different ranks and nationalities on board work in different shifts and under different terms of employment, but they all come to the same mess hall to eat. Ala-Pöllänen explains how behaviour in the dining room differs between nationalities and how frustrations about the right kind of food come about when there are people from different cultural backgrounds intermixing. The article is thoroughly researched and a very good example of modern ethnographic fieldwork.

In their article ‘Tracing Rosa on Three Continents: Interpretations of Transnationalism and Changing Finnishness’, Anna Rastas and Leena Peltokangas retrace Rosa Emilia Clay’s life. She was born in Southwest Africa to an Englishman and a local woman. The English father gave her up to be raised as a foster child by the missionary couple Ida and Karl Weikkolin, who brought her to Finland. Their intention was to train her as a teacher and send her back to Africa. However, she immigrated to the United States, joined the Finnish communi-

ty there and married a Finn. She was active in the immigrant community and the workers' movement and stayed in the United States for the rest of her life. It says a great deal about prejudice in America that Rosa's daughter never told her children about Rosa's African origins. Even though her story was reported in contemporary newspapers, and a book (with pseudonyms) was written about her life in 1942, she was mainly forgotten until quite recently. Now she has also become a symbolic figure as 'the First African Finn' in the African diaspora to Finland. The article is an interesting and well-written quest into intersectionality. In particular, it raises questions about how white Europeans decided about Rosa's future, with the voices of neither the child nor the African mother being heard in the process. The article also points to the dialogue between activism and academic research. I would recommend it for reading material at the higher education level.

The last article, "We Ski to Kill": Samuli Paulaharju's Northeastern Front, 1918' by Tiina Seppä, is a hair-raising account of letters that the ethnographer-writer Samuli Paulaharju wrote home from a military expedition in the northeastern part of Fennoscandia and his war journal. The letters are accessible in the Archives of the Finnish Literature Society. I agree with the author that it is important to gain an academic understanding of the ethnic-nationalist ideological movement supported by so many Finnish scholars at the time. But I personally do not completely agree with the extent to which this article quotes word for word the graphic accounts in the letters. Firstly, the letters were private and, secondly, Paulaharju did not show an interest in promoting this ideology after 1918. The article certainly delivers what it promises, and it adds new facets to the public image of Samuli Paulaharju.

Randomly in Finland is a compilation of well-written articles, all excelling in their own field of study. Because they are written with clarity and are relatively short, I can see their usefulness as textbook material for students and as summing up results of larger projects for the general public. However, as a cover-to-cover reading experience it leaves the reader somewhat perplexed. I know so much more about random things now. The book certainly escapes any kind of experience of linear development and steady progress. I believe this was the intention of the editors, but, at the same time, I look forward to more thematically coherent compilations in the Kalevala Society Yearbook series in the future.

AUTHOR

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