

of skeins of the softest silk and finest thread beautifully tied together with lovely pale pink ribbons" (127). Often, according to Max Luthi<sup>2</sup>, descriptive prose is kept to a minimum in fairy tales. He stated: "This absence of all desire to describe unessential details gives the European fairy tale its clarity and precision." (50). But in these Italian gems, the author's descriptive imagination was in full force. The tales are beautiful, and they are written to be read silently or aloud and enjoyed.

JACQUELINE THURSBY

**Livo, Norma J. and George Livo. *The Enchanted Wood and Other Tales from Finland*. Englewood, Co.: Libraries Unlimited, 1999. 188pp. \$27.50**

Some Finlanders will tell you that hidden deep in the waters and forests of their rugged country are trolls or *peikkos*, human-like creatures who live in clans or families. The *peikkos* also inhabit the craggy mountains and rolling hills. Some are noisy and have tails (*Hiisi*), some are giants (*jattilainen*), some are dwarfs (*kaapio*), and still others (*keiju* fairies) are beautiful females who can entice beautiful but unsuspecting men. Woven into a collection of nineteen folktales, these characters assume tasks and mischiefs that make it difficult (and maybe unnecessary) for some believers to separate myth from reality.

To help charm and engage the rest of us with this ancient and complex culture, the Livos have put together a carefully researched and accessible text that documents and preserves the folk literature and culture of Finland. From the Finnish National Anthem in the beginning of the book, to *Part IV* which includes a helpful reference section, a bibliography, and an index, the book is informative, lucid, and engaging. Part I describes the folklife of the Finns, and is contextualized by the creation myth from the Finnish national epic, *Kalevala*. The land and climate are described, and the complex early history is carefully explained. The text systematically explains the adverse climatic conditions and how the Finns have occasionally used those conditions to their advantage. The Introduction in Part I invites the reader into a mysterious world. "Come with us to the north woods," it says, "and meet the people with *Sisu*" (5) (*Sisu* represents guts, tenacity, and/or perseverance.)

The second section of Part I, Culture and Traditions, begins with a description of Independence Day (December 6, 1917) and continues with leading folk practices of today's Christmas celebrations in Finland. "The word *Joulupukki* is the Finnish word for Father Christmas and literally translates to Christmas goat" (33). The old custom is unique and it is remembered today by straw goat figurines that hang above the Christmas table or tree.

Part II takes the reader through a spectrum of vernacular traditions including proverbs, folk beliefs, and folktales. From weather proverbs, "If a cat sits looking out the window, it means rain is coming." (59) to "The Tree of Life," a great oak often pictured at the center of shamanistic drums. To make a prediction using the drum, the Shaman placed a small piece of reindeer bone on the top of the drum and then shook it. The path that the piece of bone took and where it stopped was then read to reveal information thought to be from the spirit world. This section of the book also includes an explanation of the *sampo*, the magical millstone and producer of plenty.

The nineteen folktales following include two stories about the *sampo*: The *Taiga Sampo* (The Magic Mill) and "The Magic Millstone." Other stories resonate with vaguely familiar folk practices from other parts of the northern world. The story of "The Amazing Towel" as an episode where an underwater bride distributes gifts of remembrance to her guests: "beautiful shirts, stockings, gloves, and other fine handiwork" (113) were given away similar to Potlatch traditions in the American Northwest.

In the story "Sacks of Cold and Heat," I was reminded of the character Sampson's comment in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The Finnish tale has the protagonist say, "They promised to be grateful, but they were merely biting their thumbs at me" (156). The last tale, a fictionalized account of a 1600s witch trial, ends with the Shaman's "death by fires and stake along with his magical drum" (170). There is historical accuracy to the tale; many of Finland's Shaman were put to death for practicing magic during the days of the European witch hunts.

Part III is made up of intriguing recipes, most of which have common ingredients and uncomplicated methods. Finnish pancakes (*pannukakku*), salmon stew (*lohikeitto*) or the famous lutefish (*keitetty lipekala*) are all here for the adventuresome novice or master chef to try. At the end of the recipe section are color plates of well-chosen

paintings and photographs. Three of artist Akseli Gallen-Kallela's well-known paintings are reproduced.. they are illustrations from the Kalevala. "Lemminkäinen's Mother," (1897) was so popular that copies of it were displayed for many decades in Finnish schools. The lore is that the face of the mother in the painting was that of Gallen-Kallela's own mother who modeled for him. Supposedly he told her horrible stories until her face took on the fear and tragic expression he sought.

This text provides a wide range of valuable information about Finland, a little known country and yet the fifth largest (in land size) in Europe. The book is an historical and cultural overview with an appeal for any age. From notes on architecture to literary contributions, from saunas to folktales, it can be used as an accurate research resource or for pleasurable reading aloud. The national epic of the Finns, *The Kalevala*, is an expression of Finnish nationalism. "Through this work came a national movement to establish proof of an ancient culture that solidified an identity distinct from their Nordic neighbors and Russian rulers" (39). *The Enchanted Wood* might have developed more specific information about the establishment of Finnish identity through that work.

More information should have been included about the region of Karelia. Many Karelian songs had "analogues in Finland's national epic, the Kalevala."<sup>3</sup> Elias Lonnrot "Treked countless miles through the sparsely populated country north and east of Kajaani and across the nearby Russian border in Karelia, collecting these backwoods areas a large store of epic songs no longer to be found in Southwestern Finland."<sup>4</sup> Karelia was mentioned in the text but not given the discussion it deserved considering its importance in influencing Finnish nationalism. In spite of that, the book would be a valuable addition to school and public libraries. "The stories can be used as read-alouds with younger students; older students will find valuable material for reports. Storytellers, folklorists, and general readers, especially those with an interest in Finland, will also appreciate the book."<sup>5</sup>

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