

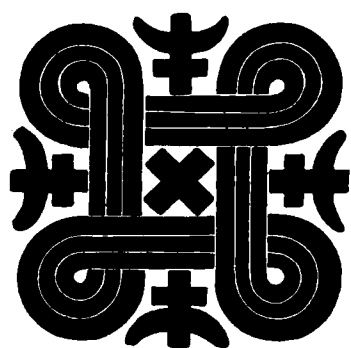
THE KALEVALA

or POEMS OF THE KALEVA DISTRICT

Compiled by ELIAS LÖNNROT

TRANSLATED BY

FRANCIS PEABODY MAGOUN, Jr.



THE

COMPILED BY

A Prose Translation with Foreword and Appendices by

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KALEVALA

OR *Poems of the Kaleva District*

ELIAS LÖNNROT

FRANCIS PEABODY MAGOUN, JR.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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- A. W. Linsén's cartoon, 1847, of Lönnrot on a field trip. (Substituting *cursando* for *cunctando*, Linsén adapts to his purpose a well-known verse from Ennius.) *Courtesy of the Finnish Literature Society, Helsinki.*
- Elias Lönnrot at age 43. A contemporary engraving from a painting made in 1845 by the Polish artist G. Budkowski.
- Elias Lönnrot in his later years. A contemporary engraving.
- Lönnrot's birthplace, Paikkari cottage, at Sammatti. Local post-card photographs.

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- Two folk singers with a harp accompanist in a one-room farmhouse at Järvenkylä (25 miles northeast of Turku), 1799. *From Joseph Acerbi, Travels through Sweden, Finland and Lapland, to the North Cape, in the Years 1798 and 1799, 2 vols. (London, 1802), vol. I, facing p. 226.*
- The earliest known photograph of Finnish folk singers, taken by A. Berner in 1872. *Courtesy of the Finnish Literature Society, Helsinki.*
- Semeika, Onola, and Kuokka, folk singers from Karelia. *Courtesy of the Finnish Literature Society, Helsinki.*
- The singers Olli Kymäläinen and Pietari Makkonen. A painting made in 1845 by G. Budkowski. *Courtesy of the Finnish National Museum, Helsinki.*
- A sauna with old-fashioned mixed bathing at Kemi, on the coast of Finland near the Swedish border, 1799. (At the door Acerbi checks a thermometer-reading.) *From Joseph Acerbi, Travels through Sweden, Finland and Lapland, to the North Cape, in the Years 1798 and 1799, 2 vols. (London, 1802), vol. I, facing p. 297.*

The device on the title page, the square (or concentric squares) with externally looped corners, is known in Finnish as *hannunvaakuna*, in Swedish as *Sankt Hans vapen* (St. Hans's arms). A favorite decorative motif in Finland today, used also in eastern Karelia and Estonia, it was formerly a common magic and protective sign carved on buildings and objects to safeguard them. In Sweden, too, cattle were protected by it against wizards and ill-disposed persons, and in Norway of old on Christmas Eve it was drawn with pine tar on the doors of houses. The design is found in medieval romanesque carvings, and earlier it occurs on Coptic textiles in Egypt and as far back as the eighth century B.C. on Greek vases.

Finland

Jönnrot's Field Trips

Field Trip of 1828

" " " 1832

" " " 1833

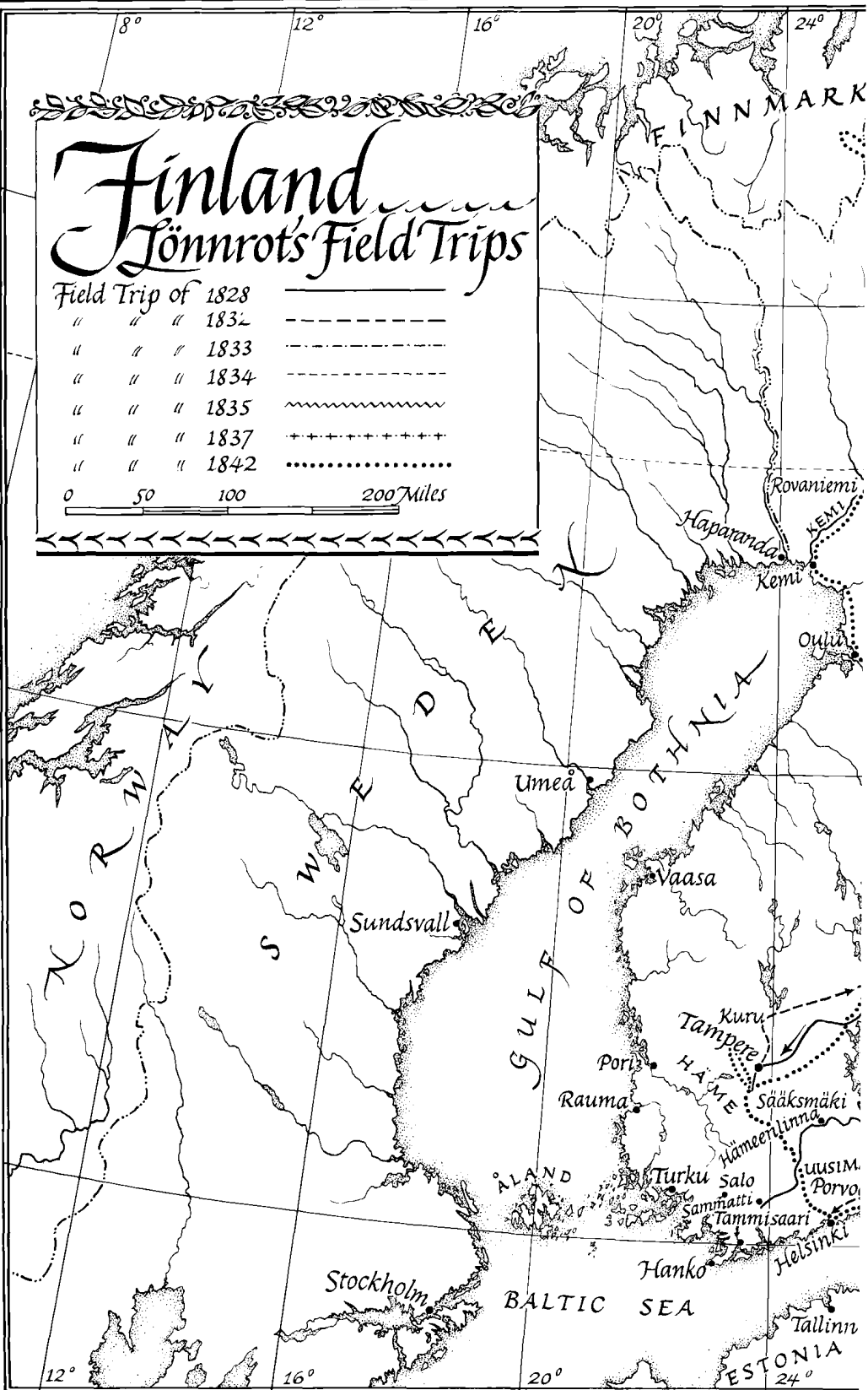
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FOREWORD

Again and again the *Kalevala* has been described as the national heroic epic of the Finnish people, a description which, at least outside Finland, has tended to do the work a certain disservice by raising expectations that the reader is not likely to find fulfilled, regardless of what else he may find that is richly rewarding at a poetical, folkloristic, or ethnographic level. Any talk about a national heroic epic is bound to evoke thoughts of the Greek *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the Old French *Chanson de Roland*, or the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*, all of which possess a more or less unified and continuously moving plot with actors who are wealthy aristocratic warriors performing deeds of valor and displaying great personal resourcefulness and initiative, often, too, on a rather large stage. The *Kalevala* is really nothing like these. It is essentially a conflation and concatenation of a considerable number and variety of traditional songs, narrative, lyric, and magic, sung by unlettered singers, male and female, living to a great extent in northern Karelia in the general vicinity of Archangel. These songs were collected in the field and ultimately edited into a book by Elias Lönnrot, M.D. (1802–1884), in two stages. The first version appeared in 1835 and is now known as the *Old Kalevala*; it contained about half the material in the 1849 edition here translated. For the many poems added to this 1849 *Kalevala*, now the canonical version, Dr. Lönnrot was indebted to a younger song-collector, David E. D. Europæus (1820–1884).

Lönnrot's title *Kalevala* is a name rare in the singing tradition; it describes a completely legendary region of no great extent, and

is rendered here "the Kaleva District." The personal name Kaleva upon which the local name is based refers to a shadowy background figure of ancient Finnish poetic legend, mentioned in connection with assumed descendants and with a few nature or field names. The action, like that of the Icelandic family sagas, is played on a relatively small stage, centering on the Kaleva District and North Farm (these are discussed in the Glossary). The actors are in effect Finno-Karelian peasants of some indefinite time in the past who rely largely on the practice of magic to carry out their roles. Appearing at a time when there was little or no truly belletristic Finnish literature, the *Kalevala* unquestionably—and most understandably—became a source of great satisfaction and pride to the national consciousness then fast developing among the Finns, who had been growing restive under their Russian masters. To some extent the *Kalevala* thus became a rallying point for these feelings, and permitted and in a measure justified such exultant statements as "Finland can [now] say for itself: I, too, have a history!" (*Suomi voi sanoa itselleen: minullakin on historia!*).

Lönnrot's own comments in his prefaces (see Appendix I) make clear that one of his chief aims was to create for Finnish posterity a sort of poetical museum of ancient Finno-Karelian peasant life, with its farmers, huntsmen and fishermen, seafarers and sea-robbers, the latter possibly faint echoes from the Viking Age, also housewives, with social and material patterns looking back no doubt centuries—all reflecting a way of life that was, like the songs themselves, already in Lönnrot's day destined for great changes if not outright extinction. Thus, from Lönnrot's point of view the many sequences of magic charms and wedding lays, at times highly disruptive to the main narrative, are for what they tell of peasant beliefs and domestic life quite as significant as the narrative songs about the Big Three—Väinämöinen, Ilmarinen, and Lemminkäinen.

Owing to the special character of its compilation or concatenation, the *Kalevala* possesses no particular unity of style apart from the general diction of the Karelian singers and the indispensable ubiquitous traditional formulas discussed below. Comprising miscellaneous materials collected over many years from many singers from all over Karelia and some bordering regions, these poems range in style and tone from the lyrically tragic, as in Poem 4, to almost sheer horseplay, as in Poem 3; some are poems of warfare,

while a number consist of magic incantations and magic charms. Among the most interesting, though perhaps superficially pedestrian, are the so-called "Wedding Lays" (Poems 21-25), with their keen, detailed observations on the daily life of the Karelian peasant. All call for quite varied styles in any English rendering.

The digests at the beginnings of the poems are Lönnrot's and were written in prose. Lönnrot is also the artless composer of Poem 1, lines 1-110, and Poem 50, lines 513-620; both these passages are pure flights of Lönnrot's fancy, and, despite a semblance of autobiography, bear no relation to the author's life.

On reading the Kalevala. In reading a new poem or a sequence of poems it is normal to begin at the beginning and read straight ahead, but in the case of the *Kalevala* this natural procedure has little to recommend it, since in a general way the present order of the poems is quite arbitrary, differing considerably, for example, from that of Lönnrot's 1835 *Old Kalevala*. Instead of starting with Poem 1 and reading through to the end, the reader is likely to derive greater satisfaction by beginning with some single story cycle—say, the Lemminkäinen stories (Poem 11 and following); though not in sequence, these can easily be picked out from the table of contents. One might then pass on to the Ilmarinen stories and to those dealing with Kullervo. The Väinämöinen poems form a somewhat miscellaneous group, and Väinämöinen keeps appearing here and there in a large number of poems dealing primarily with the other principals.

The many magic charms, inserted here and there, can usually be skipped on a first reading of the poem or poems in which they occur, though some of the shorter are entirely appropriate in their contexts and do not appreciably obstruct the flow of the narrative. Some of the more extensive charms and series of charms—for example, the Milk and Cattle Charms of Poem 32 and the Bear Charms of Poem 46—can be enjoyed when read out of context. In the table of contents the presence of charms in the poems is always indicated. For the translation of many additional Finnish magic charms (*loitsurunot*) the reader is referred to John Abercrombie, *The Pre- and Proto-historic Finns . . .*, II (London, 1898), 65-389.

There are surely many possible approaches to a first reading of the *Kalevala*, and the remarks in the preceding paragraphs should

be taken only as the suggestion of one person, proffered in the hope of making a first acquaintance with this remarkable work a greater pleasure and more meaningful than the head-on approach. I shall now turn to certain matters characteristic of the style and structure of *Kalevala* verse, matters which also have considerable bearing on the manner of translation.

The style adopted here. Most translators of the *Kalevala* have imposed on themselves a heavy burden by attempting to reproduce or recapture something of the spirit of the original meter. In a strict sense of the word the “meter” cannot be reproduced in English, since Finnish is quantitative and English is a nonquantitative language; nevertheless a trochaic, four-beat, mainly eight-syllable line can be reproduced, though inevitably with the incredibly monotonous effect familiar to the many children who have read Longfellow’s *Song of Hiawatha* (1855), itself considerably influenced by a German verse translation of the *Kalevala*. More unfortunate than this rhythmical monotony is the highly restrictive nature of the measure, which allows a translator almost no latitude for rendering adequately or fully many verses of the original. And if the translator, as is often the case, also makes use of alliteration, so characteristic of the original, though often artificial in its effect, he finds himself even more restricted in his rendering or in his choice of words.

In the present prose translation, which aims to render the original as literally as possible within the limits of idiomatic English, the translator is freed of all such restraints, and is in a position to render the verses as exactly and completely as his competence allows. There can be no excuse for any significant departure from the original text, and such departures as may occur can only be put down to a lack of comprehension on the translator’s part. Once prose has been settled on as the medium of translation, many questions arise concerning the kind of prose to be used, the tone to be adopted. Here a simple, straightforward, and dignified language seems to be in order, with a minimal use of bookish words or exalted language and without slang, though in many dialogues a thoroughly colloquial idiom seems appropriate. In many respects the translation style used here recalls that used by the late A. H. Krappe and myself in translating the *German Folk Tales (Kinder- und Hausmärchen)* collected and edited by Jakob and Wilhelm

Grimm (Carbondale, Ill., 1960), and a similar style would also be suitable in translating the Icelandic family sagas. It is hoped that this approach to the present task, insofar as it has been fulfilled, will permit the reader to enjoy the *Kalevala* in a more natural atmosphere than seems possible in a versified rendering.

The oral poetry of unlettered singers. That all but some very small per cent of the verses in the *Kalevala* are the spontaneous product of native singers, mostly from Russian Karelia and to a considerable extent from the country around Archangel, nearly a century and a half ago, is apparent from a reading of Lönnrot's prefaces and from the encyclopedia articles in Appendix I. The songs were commonly recited to the accompaniment of a small harplike instrument, usually of five strings but sometimes more, called the *kantele*, here rendered "harp." The singers were of both sexes, old men predominating in the north around Archangel, young women in the south, in Ingria and the Karelian Isthmus. The *Kalevala* is, then, in essence the work of unlettered singers and belongs to the large category of so-called oral poetry.

The traditional, oral poetry of many peoples past and present has been amply studied, and the techniques which make possible spontaneous, improvised, and usually rapid composition of isochronous verse is well understood. The techniques of the Finno-Karelian singers differ no more from those of their Indo-European fellow-singers than do the latter among one another.¹

The formula. The sole known device by which it is possible spontaneously to compose isochronous verse is the formula, which may be defined as a word or group of words, forming a just measure of verse, regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea. Any use of formulas except for such occasional rhetorical purposes as a refrain is unknown among lettered poets, whether Aeschylus or T. S. Eliot, and the presence of any appreciable number of formulas consequently identifies

¹ For some basic bibliography touching on Homeric Greek and Serbo-Croatian oral poetry see my paper "The Oral-Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Poetry," *Speculum*, XXVIII (1953), 446-464, and on Serbo-Croatian poetry Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960). On the possible Germanic (Old Swedish) influence on the development of the oldest traditional Finnish poetry see my paper "Conceptions and Images Common to Anglo-Saxon Poetry and the *Kalevala*," *Britannica: Festschrift für Hermann M. Flasdieck* (Heidelberg, 1960), p. 181.

poetry as oral. All oral poetry, then, is made up of formulas; *siitä* 'then,' so commonly used as the first measure of a Karelo-Finnish verse, is a formula, though small and inconspicuous. Equally a formula is *sanan virkko*, *noin nimesi* 'uttered a word, spoke thus,' but large (a whole verse) and quite conspicuous. For a translator to keep track of all the small, inconspicuous formulas and always render them in the same way would be a Herculean task and would require the preparation of a vast indexing apparatus. It is feasible, however, to take note of the more conspicuous formulas and render them by the same English words on each occasion; and this I have tried to do.²

The traditional or stock epithet. A striking feature that Finnish traditional poetry shares with the Homeric and Serbo-Croatian poems, a feature not in, say, Anglo-Saxon oral poetry, is the traditional or stock epithet for a person or even a place or thing.³ The use of the traditional epithet is highly developed in the Karelo-Finnish singing tradition and is amply represented in the *Kalevala*. The most famous epithet is, no doubt, "steadfast old" (*vaka vanha*), used of Väinämöinen; Väinämöinen is also often an "eternal sage" (*tietäjä iänikuinen*). Lemminkäinen is apt to be "reckless," as I have rendered the obsolete word *lieto*, Ilmarinen a "craftsman" (*seppo Ilmarinen*), also an "eternal smith" (*takoja iänikuinen*). Among place names, North Farm (*Pohjola*) tends to be "gloomy" (*pimeä*). Here and elsewhere it is clear that the demands of alliteration have influenced the singer's or the tradition's choice of epithets. In the Glossary of Proper Names I have tried to include with the names any epithets used with them, but an adequate treatment of the subject would require a special monograph or paper.

² Here I derived much help from August Engelbrekt Ahlqvist's *Sanasto* [Verbal Index], which though not quite complete nor 100 per cent accurate was often invaluable in following a formula through the text. I used the convenient reprint included in Väinö Kaukonen's *Elias Lönnrotin Kalevalan toinen painos* (Helsinki, 1956), esp. pp. 511-625 (including the proper names).

³ For a very full discussion of such epithets, Parry's *epithètes fixes*, see Milman Parry, *L'Épithète traditionnelle dans Homère* (Paris, 1928). In Anglo-Saxon poetry the nearest thing to this is the formula-phrase *mære théoden* 'illustrious prince' used with reference to a number of persons in the *Beowulf* songs. In imitation of Homer Virgil makes some use of the stock epithet, as Parry points out; and in imitation of the *Kalevala* Longfellow in *The Song of Hiawatha* uses such epithets as "Iagoo, the great boaster" and "Gitchie Manito, the mighty."

Parallelism and repetition. As used here, "parallelism," answering to the "variation" in Old Germanic verse, describes the device of repeating or substantially repeating the same idea or the same object in different terms in successive verses. In the *Kalevala* this device is pervasive, and is illustrated, for example, at the opening of Poem 33:

- 5 He uttered a word as he went along,
 kept saying while walking:
 "Woe is me, poor lad,
 woe the unfortunate lad.
 Now I have got into something,
 10 got into the futile occupation
 of being the herdsman of a steer's tail,
 a tender of calves . . ."

Here it will be noticed that every second line to all intents and purposes repeats the thought of the line before. This device is common in Anglo-Saxon poetry, though to no such extent as in the Finnish tradition, which here, as in other compositional matters, may have been influenced by Germanic, perhaps specifically Old Swedish, singing.

Far less common than parallelism is outright repetition, as in Poem 33, lines 99–100, 220–221:

- 100 "With what shall I now pay back the woman's mockery,
 the woman's mockery, the girl's derision?"

Here the end of line 99 is repeated as the beginning of line 100, itself finished off by parallelism in its second half. Similarly:

- 220 In this way Kullervo, son of Kalervo,
 took vengeance on the girl's ridicule,
 the girl's ridicule, the woman's derision,
 paid the bad wife her wages.

Here one sees a criss-cross arrangement of parallelism and repetition, where the first part of line 221 repeats the last part of line 220, the last part of line 221 parallels the first part of the same line, and line 222 parallels line 220. Where there is repetition in the text I have always repeated in the translation, just as in instances of variation I have sought for variation in the translation.

To print the short lines that correspond to the verses of the original in a single column would be uneconomical of space and would make for an unattractive type-page. Consequently, and partly in imitation of the scheme first used to my knowledge in the Centenary Commemorative Edition, *Kalevala—Uuden Kalevalan satavuotismuistopainos*—1949 (Helsinki, 1949), and followed by Björn Collinder in his selective Swedish translation, *Kalevala: svensk Tolkning* (Helsinki, 1950), the lines have been printed in pairs, with line 2 following line 1, line 4 following line 3, and so on, but—as opposed to those texts—with a slight space as a break between the verses of the original:

- 5 He uttered a word as he went along, kept saying while walking:
 "Woe is me, poor lad, woe the unfortunate lad.
 Now I have got into something, got into the futile occupation
 11 of being the herdsman of a steer's tail, a tender of calves . . ."

This arrangement tends, furthermore, graphically to emphasize parallelisms and repetitions where these occur.

The historical present. The historical present tense is, if not to quite the same extent as in the Old Icelandic sagas,⁴ favored by the traditional singers, and it often alternates in a lively fashion with preterite forms, as, for example, in lines 151–152 and 277–278 of Poem 1:

She *keeps* weeping softly and continuously, *uttered* a word, *spoke* thus
 She *forms* little islands in the sea, *produced* hidden reefs

As in translating the Icelandic sagas, one may at times feel tempted to level out these presents in favor of preterites; but the temptation is to be resisted as somewhat willfully doing away with a feature of the style that was surely felt by the singers, as by the Icelandic saga men, to add a pleasing vividness and variety.

Hypocorisms. Hypocorisms—that is, short names, nicknames, or pet names based on longer names, such as Nicky for Nicholas, Bill for William—are as common in Finnish as in English and are conspicuous in the *Kalevala*. Thus along with Lemminkäinen's epithet-name *Kaukomieli* 'man with a far-roving mind' there is a

⁴ See Andreas Heusler, *Altisländisches Elementarbuch*, 3d ed. (Heidelberg, 1932), p. 128, § 412; cf. p. 129, § 416.

commonly used hypocorism *Kauko* 'far' formed by abbreviatory truncation. Here and in other similar cases I have only used the full form, since to retain short forms alongside of full forms could easily lead to confusion of identity—as would the Ted, Ned, and Eddie of an English original, all referring to one and the same Edward, if kept in a German translation and read by a German who knew no English nor anything about the makeup of English names.

Nonsense words. As in the Old Icelandic and Serbo-Croatian singing traditions, Finno-Karelian makes some use of nonsense words to fill out the meter. The favorite is a pleonastic or expletive measure-filling *on*, formally identical with *on* 'is,' but without meaning and of course never to be translated; this suggests a similar use of *um*, formally 'around,' and of 'from' by the Old Icelandic singers of verse of the Edda type.⁵ Two other words seem often to be used very much like the pleonastic *on*, especially in the first measure of a verse, namely *itse* 'self' and *tuopa*, *tuop'on* (pleonastic) 'that (indeed),' and are but rarely translated. Of a quite different order is the coining of new non-words for the sake of maintaining rhythm in a verse or of producing a jingling effect. Such words are often modeled on the real word to which they are parallel. In the original these are striking and constitute a minor but definite feature, and these I have tried to imitate in translation. For example, one may note in Poem 47, lines 259, 279, 299, the repeated verse (and formula) *uiskenteli*, *kuiskenteli*, where *uiskennella* is a normal verb meaning "to swim about," but there is no word *kuiskennella*. Accordingly I have translated *kuiskenteli* by an English non-word, "wam about," and so in other such cases. In Poem 11, line 56, mention is made of Ingria (Finnish *Inkeri*), immediately echoed by the non-words *Penkeri*, *Pänkeri*; these are rendered by "Pengria, Pangria."

Pronunciation. While it is hardly feasible to give anything approaching a complete or precise account of the Finnish pronunciation of the proper names in the *Kalevala*, enough can perhaps be said or suggested to let the non-Finnish reader achieve a reasonable approximation of what a Finn might say. Syllable division is here marked by a hyphen.

⁵ See Heusler, *Altisländisches Elementarbuch*, p. 41, § 41, § 125 and note.

The main stress, shown by an acute accent, is always on the first syllable, with a slighter, secondary stress, shown by a grave accent, on the third; these stresses are less strong than in the Germanic languages, including English.

The consonants are in the main like their English equivalents, though to an English-speaker's ear the unaspirated Finnish *k*'s, *p*'s, *t*'s sound somewhat weak and as if slightly approaching *g*, *b*, *d*. Double consonants are, as in Italian, pronounced twice, with a distinct if short pause between the two, as *Uk-ko*; cf. Italian *bóc-ca* 'mouth.' Initial *h-* (*Hä-me*) is as in English, but at the end of a syllable, as in *Äh-ti*, *h* has about the value of *ch* in Scottish *loch* or German *ach!*; spelled in German fashion this would appear as *Achti*.

The vowels have the so-called Continental or Latin values: *i* is tense as in *machine*, not lax as in *hit*, *is*; *y* has the value of French *u* in *lu*, *vu*, or German *ü* as in *für*; *ö* has the value of German *ö* in *schön* or French *e* in *ce*, *le*; *ä* is a very fronted sound but approximates the *a* of British and sometimes American English *at*, *sat*, and may be compared with the *a* of the French negative *pas*. A long vowel, written double, is pronounced or held about twice as long as a short vowel, written single, as *Túu-ri* vs. *Túr-so*; there is, of course, no absolute length, and the relation of a long vowel to a short one may be compared to that of a quarter to an eighth note or a Morse dash to a dot.

Finnish is rich in diphthongs, that is, in pairs of vowels spoken within the compass or confines of one syllable and in writing never hyphenated, though each vowel tends to retain its full identity. Thus, in *Lóu-hi* one hears both the *o* and the *u* with an effect suggesting that in British and sometimes in American English of *low*, *row* (a boat); so in *Kúip-pa-nà* and *Vúok-si*, again, both vowels are clearly heard though quickly spoken, and so in *Káup-pi*, where *u* is something of an offglide. In diphthongs in *-i*, as *ai* in *Äi-no* and *äi* and *öi* in *Väi-nä-möi-nen*, the *i* is a palatal offglide and *ai* is about equivalent to English *I* or the *y* in *my*. In the case of the long but ubiquitous name *Väinämöinen* the reader may perhaps come off best by letting it go at *Vý-na-möi-nen!*

Lexical aids. I have made use of the ordinary lexical aids, including especially Elias Lönnrot, *Finskt-Svenskt Lexikon—Suomalais-suomalainen sanakirja*, 2 vols. (Helsinki, 1874-1880), with *Sup-*