

Re: Indo-European Languages and Gramatical Gender Loss

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2007-06/msg00750.html>

- *From:* phoglund@xxxxxx
 - *Date:* Fri, 15 Jun 2007 03:49:00 -0700
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On 15 kesä, 02:33, Trond Engen <trond...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

phogl...@xxxxxx skreiv:

On 14 kesä, 16:19, Trond Engen <trond...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

phogl...@xxxxxx skreiv:

So you are in favour of Nynorsk? Nice.

Well, I'm either a friend or a traitor. I'm highly sympathetic towards it, and I think Norwegian public life (and especially business) sees far too little of it. Myself, though, I grew up in Bokmål country and have always written Bokmål.

I see. I have always wanted to learn Nynorsk, and when I was twentysomething years old, I made some serious attempts at it –

Is there any living or dying language you have not yet made a serious attempt at?

Oh, there certainly are. To name just one example, I am entirely ignorant of the grammatical features of the Dravidian languages. I have no idea whatsoever of Tamil or Malayalam. Also, I have never even tried to learn either Chinese, Japanese or Korean, although I have found most of my Korean acquaintances rather likeable. Besides, that Han'gul alpabet is nice.

I read practically everything there was in Nynorsk at our local library, and it was quite a lot – from Turid Farbregd's translations of Finnish literature (such as Erno Paasilinna's "Den forsvunne armeen") to such classics as "Bondestudentar" and "Ferdaminni". The latter I liked very much, although I think I had understood much less if I hadn't been relatively fluent in Modern Icelandic at that time.

I would think your native knowledge of Finland Swedish came handy, too.

It is not strictly native – it is a language that exists in my family, but I have learnt it later than Finnish, although when I was 20–30 years old, I generally spoke much less Finnish than Swedish.

My introduction to classical Nynorsk on a large scale was Leiv Heggstad's translation of "Egil's Saga" which I read at nine. Since then I've never managed to read sagas in Bokmål.

I read my sagas in Icelandic, but I can guess what I mean.

Vinje and Garborg are both 19th century writers. They are the two first important authors in Nynorsk with the possible exception of Ivar Aasen himself. Vinje was a contemporary of Aasen and for a short time actually a classmate of the young Henrik Ibsen (Ibsen and Vinje started a satirical magazine together after finishing school). Garborg is a generation younger. They came from different areas of Norway and used their different backgrounds to develop and explore the possibilities of the young written language.

Yes, that is how it appeared to me too.

The most important of the third generation of writers are Kristoffer Uppdal and Olav Duun. Both spent years with manual labour before they got education and took to writing, and both were concerned with the transformation of society. Kristoffer Uppdal wrote the series of novels "Dansen gjennom skuggeheimen" ("The dance through the Shadow Land" acc. to Wikipedia) on the dawn of the working class. It's sort of the Norwegian equivalent of "la Recherche du temps perdu", the book everybody praise and nobody have read. Olav Duun's last book, "Menneske og maktene" is one of the best novels I've read (which of course is subjective. I range it up there with Rushdie's "Shame" and Garcia

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Marques' "Love in the time of Cholera") It's both a description of the fierce forces of the west coast nature of Duun's youth, a collective novel with deep dives into the psychology of all its characters, and an allegory over the world on the rim of a second world war.

I think I have tried something by Duun, but of Uppdal's "Dansen gjennom skuggeheimen" I know only the title. Maybe I should try it just for the sheer hell of it. I usually learn a language by tackling just that sort of books.

The fourth generation consists of Tarjei Vesaas, born in the same parish in Telemark as Vinje almost a century before him. He is generally considered Norway's most important post-war writer, a nature symbolist dealing with the psychology of the outsider, the destructiveness of the unspoken and the hope beyond the fundamental loss. He was married to the popular poet Halldis Moren Vesaas, who also wrote in Nynorsk.

Yes, I have read *Is-slottet*, when I was twenty years old.

And of course, when they published that big paperback package of my old favourite Kjartan Fløgstad a couple of years ago, I of course ordered the whole load. I haven't read them all yet, but it's because of time-shortage rather than difficulties with the language.

Kjartan Fløgstad is the head name of the generation who had their debut around 1970. His use of the language is free and contemporary and he received a prize from the Norwegian union for linguistic unity (or whatever my lot call themselves in English).

Oh, that lot. Nice. One of the first books about sociolinguistics that I have read was "Språkleg samling på norske folkemåls grunn", a collection of articles from "Språkleg samling".

He is an independent

Marxist and has been concerned with what he sees as the Labour Party's and the old labour movement's betrayal of the working class. Except from that he's a very funny writer, and almost every personal or geographical name in his books are carefully constructed puns. Still, finding his political agenda generally boring I've not been able to finish more than one or two of his books.

His agenda does mar some of his writing, but as I hadn't read any of

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the Latin American literature when I started to read him, I found the Latin American influence in his writing quite original and interesting. Besides, back then in Finland even the independent Marxist agenda was a novelty. We had neo-Stalinism in the seventies, no Maoism and no independent Marxism, at least among the leading writers and artists. Actually, for me Dag Solstad's "High School Teacher Pedersen's description of the great political revival that has ravaged our country" read like a description of Finnish Neo-Stalinism, although it was about Maoism.

The latest book I read in Nynorsk was by Frode Grytten. He has written entertaining short stories and a couple of surreal novels from his home town Odda.

I'll take note, thanks.

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