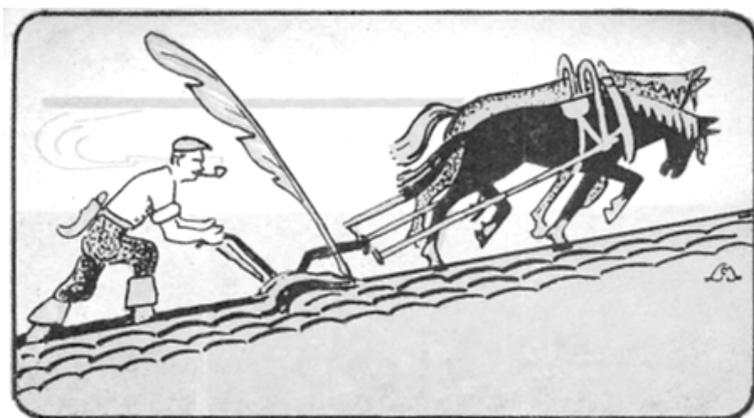


# Reading and Writing from Below: Exploring the Margins of Modernity



International Conference  
20th-22nd August 2014  
Helsinki, Finland

## Conference sponsor

Research project Reading and writing from below: Toward a new social history of literacy in the Nordic sphere during the long nineteenth century (financed by the NORDCORP). Steering committee: Taru Nordlund & Anna Kuismin (Finland), Ann-Catrine Edlund (Sweden), Matthew Driscoll (Denmark) & Davíð Ólafsson (Iceland). Advisors: Martyn Lyons (Australia) & Wim Vandenbussche (Belgium).

## Conference co-sponsors

Research project *Between voice and paper: Authorial and narrative strategies in oral-literary traditions*. (Kirsti Salmi-Niklander, financed by the Academy of Finland)

Finnish Literature Society

University of Helsinki

SHARP (Society for the History of Authorship, Reading & Publishing)

## Organising Committee

Anna Kuismin, Docent of Comparative and Finnish Literature, University of Helsinki

Tuija Laine, Professor of Book History, University of Helsinki

Kirsti Salmi-Niklander, Academy Research Fellow, University of Helsinki

Laura Stark, Professor of Ethnology, University of Jyväskylä

## Conference Secretary

Kristiina Anttila

## Conference Assistants

Hanna Lehtonen  
Julia Harju

Dear colleagues,

On the behalf of the organising committee I have the pleasure to welcome you to the interdisciplinary conference *Reading and writing from below: Exploring the margins of modernity*.

This conference theme has brought together scholars from fifteen countries, far and near, to explore aspects of literacies at the advent of modernity. ‘Modernity’ here is understood to have taken place anytime from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, depending on the context. By ‘literacy’ is meant not just the ability to read and write but rather the totality of the processes and practices involved in the production, dissemination and reception of written texts, while the perspective ‘from below’ indicates that the focus is on non-privileged people, their experiences and points of view.

Studying the literacy practices of people with little or no formal education from the lower strata of society challenges traditional dichotomies such as manuscript vs. print, oral vs. written as well as centre vs. periphery. This ‘from below’ perspective also changes the ways in which the processes of literacy education, acquisition and appropriation are understood, and thus invites a revision of social, cultural and literary history. As the titles of the plenary lectures and the numerous individual papers show, this approach is already producing significant results and is quickly expanding our knowledge of reading and writing from below.

The origins of this conference date back to the collaboration between Finnish and Icelandic scholars in the early 2000s which resulted in a series of workshops and the interdisciplinary research project *Reading and writing from below: Toward a new social history of literacy in the Nordic sphere during the long nineteenth century* (2011–2014). The present conference was preceded by two events, also organised by the Nordic project: *Vernacular Literacies – past, present and future* was held at the Umeå University in 2012 and *The agents and artefacts of vernacular literacy practices in late pre-modern Europe* took place at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in 2013.

The organising committee wishes you a warm welcome to Helsinki and many fruitful discussions with fellow participants over the next three days!

Anna Kuismin, University of Helsinki

# Practical Information

## Locations

**Registration and plenary lectures:** Finnish Literature Society, Hallituskatu 1 (Great Hall)

<http://www.finlit.fi/english/contact/map.htm>

**Paper sessions:** The main building of the University of Helsinki, Unioninkatu 34, Senate Square entrance. Seminar rooms are marked in the conference programme.

<http://www.virtualhelsinki.net/helsinkipanoraama/historia/english/yliopisto.html>

**Conference dinner:** Thursday 21st at the Restaurant Viola, Kaisaniemenranta 2. For participants who have signed up prior to the conference.

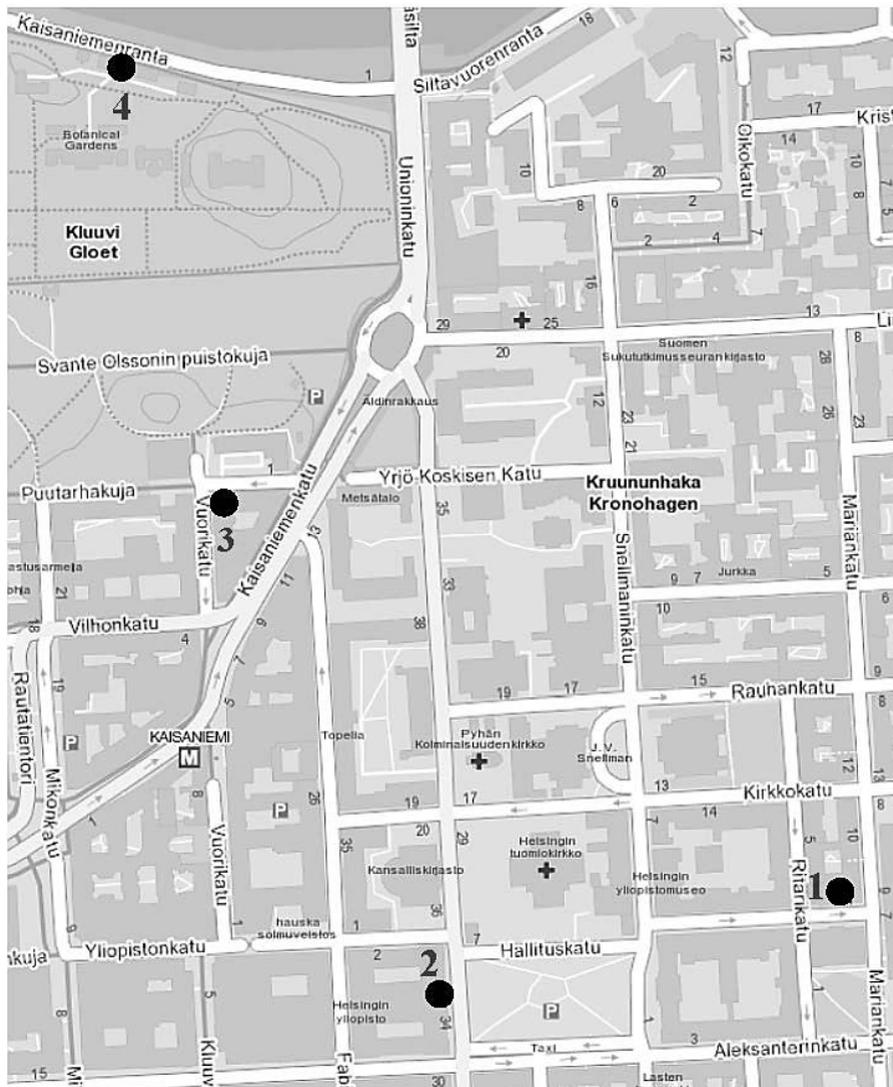
**Reception:** On Wednesday August 20th, there will be a reception for conference participants at 18:00 hosted by the Rector of the University of Helsinki in the University main building at Unioninkatu 34 (Senate Square entrance).

## Contact and Assistance

Organisers and assistants will be on site during the whole event. If you encounter any difficulties or have questions related to the event you can identify staff by the text "STAFF" on their nametags.

**Conference secretary:** Kristiina Anttila, tel. +358 (0)44 3666 933.

**Chair of the organising committee:** Anna Kuismin, tel. +358 (0)44 9957 050.



1. Finnish Literature Society (Hallituskatu 1)
2. University of Helsinki main building (Unioninkatu 34, Senate Square entrance)
3. Hotel Arthur (Vuorikatu 19)
4. Restaurant Viola (Kaisaniemenranta 2)
5. Lunch restaurant Piano (Rauhankatu 15)

## Lunch Restaurants Nearby

Restaurant Piano, Rauhankatu 15 (Please see the map)

Restaurant Armas, Kluuvi shopping center, Aleksanterinkatu 9

Restaurant Fratello, Kluuvi shopping center, Aleksanterinkatu 9

Restaurant Bank, Unioninkatu 20

## Transportation and Sights

**Taxi:** +358 (0) 100 0700.

**Public transport:** <http://www.reittiopas.fi/en/index.php>

**Things to do in Helsinki:** <http://www.visithelsinki.fi/en>

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

**20.8. WEDNESDAY**

12:00-13:00	Registration at the Finnish Literature Society, Great Hall, Hallituskatu 1		
13:00-13:05 FLS Great Hall	Opening of the conference, <b>Anna Kuismin</b>		
13:05-14:00 FLS Great Hall	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Plenary lecture</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Margaret Ezell</b>, 'For the ignorant reader': Imagining vernacular literacies in late seventeenth-century England Chair: Kirsti Salmi-Niklander</p>		
14:15-14:45 University of Helsinki main building teachers' cafe	Coffee		
14:45-16:15  University of Helsinki main building	<p><b>I Contexts of Literacy</b></p> <p>Chair: Kirsti Salmi-Niklander <b><u>Auditorium III</u></b></p> <p><b>Mastin Prinsloo</b> Shaka draws first: Literacy at the Bay of Natal in the early colonial era</p> <p><b>Tuija Laine</b> Children as readers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries</p> <p><b>Margrét Eggertsdóttir</b> Manuscripts as sources about their owners, their social status and literary interests</p>	<p><b>II Interaction of orality and literacy</b></p> <p>Chair: Laura Stark <b><u>Auditorium IV</u></b></p> <p><b>Eeva-Liisa Bastman</b> Singing scriptures, writing songs: Interaction between orality and literacy in Pietist hymns</p> <p><b>Timothy Ashplant</b> Stories, songs and scenarios: Resisting the written</p>	<p><b>III Manuscripts in rural culture</b></p> <p>Chair: Matthew Driscoll <b><u>Auditorium IX</u></b></p> <p><b>Matija Ogrin</b> Manuscripts by Slovenian peasant writers: genres, subjects, reception</p> <p><b>Anna Kuismin</b> Writing as a new technology in the texts of the nineteenth-century peasant poets</p> <p><b>Davíð Ólafsson</b> Presumption, participation, and user-generated content: An anachronistic approach to manuscript culture</p>

<p>16:20-17:50</p> <p>University of Helsinki main building</p>	<p><b>IV Religion and literacy processes</b></p> <p>Chair: Esko Laine      <u><b>Auditorium III</b></u></p> <p><b>Olli Viitaniemi</b> Models of spirituality and their circulation among the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Eastern-Finnish awakened peasants</p> <p><b>Mattias Lundberg</b> The melodic unification of learning and piety: social, cultural and institutional impact of Lutheran ecclesiastical music on lay literacy in early modern Sweden</p>	<p><b>V Folklore and literacy</b></p> <p>Chair: Ulla-Maija Peltonen      <u><b>Auditorium IV</b></u></p> <p><b>Silvia Hufnagel</b> Family, friends and <i>fornaldarsögur</i> in post-reformation western Iceland</p> <p><b>David Hopkin</b> The barmaid's tale: The dialect notebooks of a thirteen-year-old Breton</p> <p><b>Eija Stark</b> Personal narratives as expressions of <i>folk ideas</i> about social class</p>	<p><b>VI Writing and identity</b></p> <p>Chair: Davíð Ólafsson      <u><b>Auditorium IX</b></u></p> <p><b>Silja Laine</b> Lived landscapes: Writing about seasons in 19<sup>th</sup> century Finland</p> <p><b>Kaisa Kauranen</b> The public and hidden transcript of Kustaa Brask, a self-taught crofter</p> <p><b>Matthew Driscoll</b> Herdís &amp; Ólína: The poetry of everyday life</p>
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**18:00-20:00 Reception at the University of Helsinki main building, ground floor**

## 21.8. THURSDAY

<p>9:00-10:00 FLS Great Hall</p>	<p><b>Plenary lecture</b> <b>Jan Blommaert, Early and new heterographies: a frame for analysis</b> Chair: Laura Stark</p>		
<p>10:15-11:45  University of Helsinki main building</p>	<p><b>VII Writing and power</b> Chair: Archie Dick      <u><b>Auditorium II</b></u>  <b>Ana Rita Leitão</b> Hand-written proofs in Portuguese archives: from social to judicial function  <b>Sharon Murphy</b> Formed for men ‘principally’ drawn from the working-classes: Garrison libraries, reading rooms and nineteenth-century British troops  <b>Sami Suodenjoki</b> Denouncing enemies during political crisis: Accusatory writing by Finnish rural inhabitants at the turn of the 20th century</p>	<p><b>VIII Writing in the recording of folklife by lay collectors</b> Chair: Lotte Tarkka      <u><b>Auditorium IV</b></u>  <b>Katre Kikas</b>  Writing the national, (re)writing the local: Estonian folklore collectors in search of their local identity  <b>Jonathan Roper</b> Regional speech and respelling in writing from below (on the basis of the writings of Bob Copper)  <b>Linda Huldén</b> Self-positioning in ‘ordinary people’s’ responses to archive questionnaires in the late 20th century</p>	<p><b>IX Letters and literacies</b> Chair: Ann-Catrine Edlund      <u><b>Auditorium IX</b></u>  <b>Stephan Elspaß</b> Reading and writing practices of 19th century emigrants from the German-speaking countries  <b>Gijsbert Rutten &amp; Marijke van der Wal</b> Orality and literacy in Dutch private letters from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries  <b>Rik Vosters</b> ‘You must pardon me that which I did not write well’: 18th-century Flemish writing from below</p>
<p>11:45-13:15</p>	<p>Lunch</p>		
<p>13:15-14:45  University of Helsinki main building</p>	<p><b>X Readers and communities of reading</b> Chair: Ilkka Mäkinen      <u><b>Auditorium II</b></u>  <b>Úlfar Bragason</b> Jón Halldórsson of Stóruvellir and his reading circle  <b>Tarja-Liisa Luukkanen</b> Religious motivation and gender: self-taught rural readers in 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century Finland  <b>Kerstin Rydbeck</b> Reading groups and popular movements at the turn of the 20th century</p>	<p><b>XI Forms of censorship</b> Chair: Minna Ahokas      <u><b>Auditorium IV</b></u>  <b>Talitha Verheij</b> Popular Dutch penny prints  <b>Esko Laine</b> A kind of censorship: Thomas of Ragwald’s ill-starred effort to publish theological literature  <b>Markus Schiegg</b> Censored letters from 19<sup>th</sup>-century lunatic asylums: New material for language from below</p>	<p><b>XII Epistolary communication</b> Chair: Ritva Pallaskallio      <u><b>Auditorium IX</b></u>  <b>Kirsi Keravuori</b> Family letters and the epistolary culture in the mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century Finnish archipelago  <b>Emese Ilyefalvi</b> ‘If you read my letter, pass it on!’ A special way of communication by a Calvinist minister between the two world wars in Transylvania  <b>Pasi Saarimäki</b> The rise and fall of rural love: The significance of personal letters</p>

<p>14:45-15:15 University of Helsinki main building teachers' cafe</p>	<p>Coffee</p>	
<p>15:15-16:45 University of Helsinki main building</p>	<p><b>XIII Publishing practices</b> Chair: Sami Suodenjoki      <u><b>Auditorium II</b></u>  <b>Mike Sanders</b> Claiming cultural literacy: Thomas Cooper's <i>The Purgatory of Suicides</i> in the <i>Northern Star</i>  <b>Laura Stark</b> Elite criticism of popular correspondence to Finnish-language newspapers 1847–1870  <b>Karin Strand</b> Interest matters: On the 'exchange rate' between reality and fiction in street ballads of the 19th century</p>	<p><b>XIV Letters and sociolinguistics</b> Chair: Stephan Elspaß      <u><b>Auditorium IV</b></u>  <b>Carita Klippi</b> Truncated competence in the correspondence of a French soldier (1915-1918)  <b>Jill Puttaert</b> 'Out of great need I bring my child here...' Language use and choice in foundlings' letters from 19<sup>th</sup>-century Flanders  <b>Víctor Pampliega Pedreira &amp; Ana Luísa Costa &amp; Elisa García Prieto</b> Public versus private through letters</p>

**18:30**      **Conference dinner at the restaurant Viola** (Kaisaniemenranta 2)

## 22.8. FRIDAY

9:00-10:00 FLS Great Hall	<b>Plenary lecture</b> <b>Archie Dick</b> , How to study reading cultures <i>from below</i> Chair: Tuija Laine		
10:15-11:45  University of Helsinki main building	<b>XV Aspects of modernity</b> Chair: Pertti Anttonen <b><u>Auditorium IV</u></b> <b>Ann-Catrine Edlund</b> The song book and the peasant diary as participants in the construction of the modern self <b>Heikki Kokko</b> Finnish vernacular newspaper writers and the modern self in the 1850s and 1860s <b>Kati Mikkola</b> Popular perspectives on secularization in late 19 <sup>th</sup> - and early 20 <sup>th</sup> -century Finland	<b>XVI Authors, contexts and practices</b> Chair: Tuija Laine <b><u>Auditorium IX</u></b> <b>David Brewer</b> Viewing authors from below <b>Taru Nordlund &amp; Ritva Pallaskallio</b> Invisible contexts in 19 <sup>th</sup> -century newspapers <b>Ann O'Bryan</b> The literacy practices of African-American pioneers in the 19 <sup>th</sup> -century frontier	<b>XVII Literacy and immigrant experience</b> Chair: Susanne Haugen <b><u>Auditorium XIV</u></b> <b>Marija Dalbello</b> 'Writing the first letter home' in the shadow of Lady Liberty <b>Kirsti Salmi-Niklander</b> Hand-written newspapers and immigrant experience: The case study of Rockport, Massachusetts, 1903–1923 <b>Anne Heimo</b> Socialist endeavours under the Southern Cross
11:45-13:00	Lunch		
13:00-14:30  University of Helsinki main building	<b>XIII Varieties of literacy</b> Chair: Kirsi Keravuori <b><u>Auditorium IV</u></b> <b>Jakub Niedźwiedź</b> Multi-literacy in Vilnius in the seventeenth century <b>Tony Fairman</b> Three literacies in Kent, 1820–1821 <b>Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon</b> The impact of the 'creative class' on literacy and everyday life in Iceland: a micro-historical approach	<b>XIX Publishing strategies</b> Chair: Timothy Ashplant <b><u>Auditorium IX</u></b> <b>Aile Möldre</b> Longing for books: autodidact editors and publishers in Estonia in the beginning of the 20th century <b>Mikko Pollari</b> Publishing from below: Vihtori Kosonen as a working-class publisher <b>Ilkka Mäkinen</b> Not for everyone! Prejudices against teaching writing to the common people in nineteenth-century Finland.	<b>XX Writing instruction and literacy skills</b> Chair: Taru Nordlund <b><u>Auditorium XIV</u></b> <b>Arja Rantanen</b> Parish scribes and Ostrobothian peasants in the 18th and early 19th centuries <b>Olle Josephson</b> The roots of popular movement literacies in Sweden – colporteurs' reports <b>Michael Knies</b> Itinerant penmen and working-class handwriting instruction in 19 <sup>th</sup> -century America
14:30-15:00	<b>Closing of the conference, Anna Kuismin     <u>Auditorium XIV</u></b>		

## KEYNOTE LECTURES

### **'For the ignorant reader': Imagining vernacular literacies in late seventeenth-century England**

Margaret J.M. Ezell

Texas A&M University

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This talk will revisit the topics literacy and class by investigating the marketing of vernacular “self-improvement” books and dictionaries in the mid- and late seventeenth-century England and the strategies incorporating oral and pictorial techniques in popular print publication of important news events. In addition to well-known spiritual guides intended for the “poor” and “ignorant reader,” the genres of the vernacular dictionary and the “academy” (of compliments, eloquence, and delight) first becomes widely popular in the 1640 and flourished throughout the 1650s during the Interregnum and continued to be published well into the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Likewise, illustrated print broadsides intended to depict important contemporary events combined multiple techniques to reach the widest possible range of literacies. This talk will explore what might be the line between ignorance and literacy (secular and spiritual), and how readers “of all stations” might be accommodated in vernacular publications for readers having a variety of types of literacy.

Margaret J.M. Ezell is Distinguished Professor of English and the John and Sara Lindsey Chair of Liberal Arts at Texas A&M University. Her books include *The Patriarch's Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family*, *Writing Women's Literary History*, and *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print*. She has just completed a volume for the Oxford English Literary History series covering the period from 1645-1714.

## Early and new heterographies: A frame for analysis

Jan Blommaert

Tilburg University

*jmeblommaert@gmail.com*

In this paper I will address issues of historical contextualization in the analysis of “new” forms of heterographic writing of the "CU@4" type. Such forms of writing are currently widespread, even “viral”, due to the rapid and large-scale emergence of electronic long-distance communication. Formally, their structures coincide with older forms of heterographic writing, of which I shall discuss two examples: 17th century inscriptions on gravestone in Antwerp Cathedral, and an early 20th century inscription on the tomb of a young woman in Brittany, France. Linguistically, it will appear, there is very little “newness” to the viral heterographic practices we currently observe. Which is why we need to turn to historical-sociolinguistic analysis to explain the presence and circulation of similar linguistic forms over time and space. Entirely different sociolinguistic regimes govern the occurrence of similar forms, and the “newness” of viral heterography is a sociolinguistic phenomenon, not a linguistic one. Distinguishing between linguistic surface features and sociolinguistic conditions for occurrence and distribution, thus, are crucial elements of comparative and historical analysis.

Jan Blommaert is Professor of Language, Culture and Globalization and Director of the Babylon Center at Tilburg University, The Netherlands, and Professor of African Linguistics and Sociolinguistics at Ghent University, Belgium. He holds honorary appointments at University of the Western Cape (South Africa) and Beijing Language and Culture University (China) and is group leader of the Max Planck Sociolinguistic Diversity Working Group. He has published widely on language ideologies and language inequality in the context of globalization. Publications include *Ethnography, Superdiversity and Linguistic Landscapes: Chronicles of Complexity* (Multilingual Matters 2013), *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), *Ethnographic Fieldwork: A Beginner's Guide* (Multilingual Matters 2010),

Grassroots *Literacy* (Routledge, 2008), *Discourse: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

## **How to study reading cultures *from below***

Archie Dick

University of Pretoria

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Taking new directions and revising the social history of literacy from below re-assesses and builds on earlier work. But these initiatives also test promising methodologies, seek out overlooked archives, apply innovative technologies, and explore the margins of modernity. From about the mid-seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries, the Cape of Good Hope was seen as being on the fringes of the earth, and occupying an uncertain position between the worlds of the Atlantic Ocean in the west and the Indian Ocean in the east. Its slave community and non-privileged people provide difficult but promising sources for investigating reading and writing cultures from below.

This paper draws on my book - *The hidden history of South Africa's book and reading cultures* - and recent research projects to share their approaches and methods. It argues against the view that the lower classes at the Cape of Good Hope had no reading and writing cultures. Instead, their production of reading matter through copying and circulation influenced the introduction of print-capitalism at the Cape.

Archie Dick is currently Full Professor in the Department of Information Science at the University of Pretoria. He was a Visiting Professor at Wayne State University in 1997 and at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign in 2007, and in 2012 he was an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Centre for the History of Print and Digital Culture. He has authored a monograph entitled *The philosophy, politics, and economics of information*, and more than 80 scholarly and popular articles and chapters in books, some of which have been translated into Russian, Swedish, and

Spanish. His book on the Hidden history of South Africa's book and reading cultures was published by the University of Toronto Press in 2012. It was also published in 2013 by the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Press.

Archie Dick serves on the editorial boards of several national and international LIS journals, and is the Reviews Editor of the historical journal, *New Contree*. He was the Deputy-Chairperson of the Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE) Committee of IFLA, and was Chairperson of the National Council of Library and Information Services (NCLIS) from 2012-2014.

## ABSTRACTS OF PAPERS

(In order of appearance)

### **Shaka draws first: Literacy at the Bay of Natal in the early colonial era**

Mastin Prinsloo

University of Cape Town

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I am broadly concerned in this paper with the historical circumstances that produce associations with literacy as commencing as a resource of European culture in Africa. I examine records of early interactions between the Zulu people and European traders and settlers at the Bay of Natal in the early 19th century, as one site to examine these concerns. I examine various diaries, books, reports and journals of these first settlers as well as records of indigenous perspectives. I show how the settler/traders' descriptions of Africans in relation to literacy were shaped by the cultural models they held of the people and processes involved, and how these representations were frequently undermined in particular cross-cultural encounters. Similarly, I show how constructs of literacy and how it works in contexts of cultural encounters are contradicted by narrative accounts of actual experiences and uses. I established that text-based reading and writing practices (or print literacy) were one amongst several forms of sign-based meaning-making activities, which all used particular material technologies to make socially recognizable meanings. However, print literacy had a particular value, in its connections to strategies of power and status, but this status was challenged in the context of the Zulu court. I conclude that print literacy was not simply transplanted in the African context to do its work, the way 'great divide' theories of 'oral' and 'literate' culture have suggested, but was translated, interpreted, recontextualized and re-embedded in a range of ways by local people as well as by the trader/settlers. Such recontextualization processes were variable and uneven, depending on the social networks, power relations and mediating technologies that were in place.

# Children as readers in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries

Tuija Laine

University of Helsinki

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Children's literature as such is quite a new phenomenon. In fact, literature for children has been published only from 18th century onwards; before that there were available just schoolbooks or different kinds of guidebooks on good and expected behaviour of children. Many of the latter ones were written for noble or aristocratic families.

However, children have been reading texts since ancient times. Traditionally literacy has been more common in the upper social classes than among the lower ones, but reading skills have always been highly valued in families with literate parents. Since children's literature was scarce or non-existing, children in the beginning simply had to read books aimed for adults.

There are various documents that tell us about children as readers. Some of them have been written by children themselves, some by their parents, teachers or tutors. Amount and genre of the sources varies from one country to another. In Sweden and Finland for example there are more sources of children's reading skills than just letters or diaries written by them. Different sources give us a differing picture about children as readers.

What kind of matters had impact on children's reading in the 17th and 18th centuries? What did children read or were supposed to read? What kind of source material do we have of children's reading and how do the sources effect on the concept of child as a reader? In this paper I shall give some answers to these questions with the help of primary and secondary sources as well as earlier research conducted in different European countries.

## **Manuscripts as sources about their owners, their social status and literary interests**

Margrét Eggertsdóttir

University of Iceland

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The paper will concentrate on manuscripts as sources about their owners, their social status and literary interests. The focus will be on a manuscript written in 1773 in the Northern part of Iceland, not far away from the bishop's see at Hólar. The scribe was a farmer with no formal education, who wrote the manuscript for his wife. It includes the legend of st. Margaret, which was very popular because of the faith in Margaret's ability to assist women in childbirth and that the saga itself possessed the power to preserve mother and child in difficult deliveries. The manuscript includes genres that were questionable after the Reformation if not forbidden, such as poetry by the last catholic bishop in Iceland, the legend of a saint, but also popular poetry used for entertainment and a kind of gossip-poetry about important people. Thus it displays an interesting point of view of people from the lower class towards the upper class. The manuscript confirms that the production of manuscripts was not limited to the educated upper class, it is an interesting witness of how manuscripts were used and gives an insight into the cultural life of ordinary people. At last this manuscript will be compared with other similar manuscripts written for young women, who had a higher social position.

## **Singing scriptures, writing songs: Interaction of orality and literacy in Pietist hymns**

Eeva-Liisa Bastman

University of Helsinki

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The hymn is a lyric genre that invites discussion on the interplay between oral and literary culture. From the 17th century to the 20th century, hymns were composed both orally and in writing. A popular and widespread genre, the hymn was adopted by men and women from

all walks of life, illiterate and literate alike. Thus the complex processes of literacy are in many ways illustrated in hymns.

Hymns attained specific importance in Pietist revival movements, which used all possible means of communication in spreading the Word of the scriptures. The broadsheet, in itself a curious compound of song and print, became an important medium of publication for Pietist hymns. Hymns were also published in songbooks, such as the German *Geistreiches Gesang-buch* (1704), the Swedish *Sions sånger* (1743) or the Finnish *Halullisten Sieluin hengelliset Laulut* (1790), which were revised and reprinted numerous times in the course of the 18th and 19th centuries. Characteristic for the 19th-century revisions of *Halullisten Sieluin hengelliset Laulut* is the considerably large number of non-privileged people among the authors. In fact, hymns by peasant writers make up a substantial part of the hymnbook containing the most extensive Finnish collection of rhymed stanzaic poems from the 18th and 19th centuries. However, because of the oral nature of hymns, this significant poetic corpus has hitherto been neglected by literary scholarship.

My paper seeks to shed light on the specific oral-literary nature of Pietist hymns by studying the forms of writing and forms of speech in these poems. Hymns are highly rhetorical and make abundant use of different modes of speech and ways of address. From where do these forms derive? How do they relate to the rhetoric tradition of Pietistic literature or, in a broader sense, of Christian literature? In what way is the oral tradition of folk poetry present in the hymns? Do hymns lean more on oral or literary models of communication and expression? And ultimately, is it possible to make such distinctions?

## **Stories, songs and scenarios: Resisting the written**

Timothy Ashplant

King's College, London

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George Hewins (1879-1977) was a brick-layer and casual labourer in the market town of Stratford-upon-Avon, living among the poorest section of the population in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Britain. In his 90s, he related his life story in a series of interviews. The resulting narrative reveals the extent to which the lower-working class still inhabited a predominantly oral world. Among the genres on which Hewins drew were those of folk-song (predominantly rural) and music hall (urban). Through singing, story-telling, and the sketching of scenarios within his narrative, Hewins was able to offer a commentary on the conditions of his own life, and those of his workmates and neighbours. At the same time, his account repeatedly presents the written word as a weapon in the hands of various oppressive forces: the state, the army, the “charitable” middle class.

This paper will explore the interplay of oral and written in Hewins's self-narrative, and relate it to wider discussions about the nature of literacy/literacies in early twentieth century Britain.

## **Manuscripts by Slovenian peasant writers: genres, subjects, reception**

Matija Ogrin

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The majority of texts in Slovenian language, written by peasant writers and intended for their own domestic community during the 18th and 19th centuries, existed only in manuscript form. The prevailing cultural framework of the time simply didn't allow certain themes and genres that were important for common people to find their way into printed book. For this reason, peasant writers undertook this literary activity on their own in produced manuscripts. The earliest extant manuscript fragments that testify for such an activity are from the turn of the 16th and 17th century, yet the bulk of this literature came into existence

during the late 18th and 19th centuries. Although it was written by peasant writers for peasant readers, this literature had numerous influences from earlier German baroque literature. Nevertheless, the texts that are preserved in Slovenian peasant manuscripts retain a distinct folklore character according to the three basic criteria: 1) they maintain strong elements of religious and ethnic tradition; 2) these texts comprise also aesthetic function or dimension, but in most cases, it doesn't prevail over other functions of literature; 3) the language of this literature is strongly marked by dialects and regional idioms. The paper will give an outline of the “pre-modern” texts by Slovenian peasant writers in terms of genres – which span from folk song and fairy tale to religious drama and meditation – observing the three criteria of folklore literature mentioned above. On this background, some manuscript versions of apocalyptic texts will be analyzed as an example of widely spread, popular reading.

## **Writing as a new technology in the texts of Finnish Peasant Poets**

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Finnish nineteenth-century ‘Peasant Poets’ lived at the interface of the oral and the written culture. Although unschooled, most of these rural poets were able to write, but they didn’t always put their creations down on paper. Poems were often sung and disseminated orally, but some texts were published. In 1834 it was suggested that the newly founded Finnish Literature Society should pay attention on the “Natural Poets” or “Poets of Nature”. Some of the best known poets became members of the society and were encouraged to send their texts to Helsinki to be archived. In 1845 three peasant poets were invited to the capital where they were fêted by the Finnish-minded literati. The visit was a sign of a new relationship between the educated members of the Fennoman movement and the common people who joined in the struggle to elevate Finnish to an equal status with Swedish.

Writing represented a new technology in a predominantly oral environment, the implications of which manifest themselves in many

ways in the texts. For example, learning to write is depicted in many autobiographical poems, and there are recurring motifs and formulas referring to the act and implements of writing. Apologies for poor writing are explicitly expressed, and the metaphor ‘ploughing with the pen’ appears in many texts. I set these meta-poetic references in the context of the conditions in which the Peasant Poets practiced their craft. For one thing, holding a pen and moving it on paper involves fine mechanics, which is hard after a week of rough work of physical work. My paper also focuses on the linguistic self-consciousness reflected in some of the poems as well as references to the literary tradition in the making.

## **Prosumption, participation, and user-generated content: An anachronistic approach to in late pre-modern manuscript culture**

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In this paper I will propose three terms – predominantly employed in contemporary digital media and communication studies – as analytical concepts for the field of literary practices in the long nineteenth century.

The first is prosumer (the convergence of producer and consumer), coined by the futurologist Alvin Toffler in 1980 to describe what he saw as an emerging consumer type who would also be involved in the design and manufacture of products. In a similar vein the media scholars Marshall McLuhan and Barrington Nevitt (1972) had suggested a few years earlier that with the ascending electronic technology the consumer of information would become more involved in its construction. The second concept to be proposed is the notion of participatory culture, notably presented in the works of communications scholar Henry Jenkins (e.g. 2006). It is also used to describe contemporary digital culture and communications in which individuals do not act solely as consumers but also as contributors. Also grounded the first decade of the new millennium is the idiom User-generated content (UGC) that has become a household term among

those discussing a range of new circuits and procedures of communications and media.

These terms overlap considerably and have in recent years all been firmly associated with the advent of digital communications, and in particular its latest developments (Web 2.0), where the user plays an (inter)active role in the creation and formation of the content mediated. Manuscript culture has many interesting points of contact with the interactive media, because it too can be seen in the light of the prosumerism, participation and users actively generating its content. In applying these characteristics commonly attributed to post-print communications to the functions of an earlier medium, that of handwriting, I aspire to be able to shed light on their role and significance in the age of print and perhaps to understand better the resilience of the handwritten medium.

## **Models of spirituality and their circulation among the 19th-century Eastern-Finnish awakened peasants**

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In the beginning of the 19th century there arose rural spiritual awakenings in the northern Savo and Carelia which became merged under the leadership of Paavo Ruotsalainen (1789–1852). In addition to impacts of spirituality, these awakenings were increasing the level and utilization of literacy in the book-poor and semiliterate early modern Eastern Finland. The Awakened found creative ways to procure devotional books. They read aloud books to each other's in conventicles and shaped their own version of pietistic faith – which remaining partly in their self-written texts like memoirs and devotional tracts.

Based on my dissertation project, my paper will present a case study of the processes of literacy amongst Awakened peasants. The paper focuses to a tract by Paavo Ruotsalainen entitled *Muuan sana*

heränneille talonpojan säädyssä (1847) which is an essential reading on Ruotsalainen's faith.

At first I'll introduce the tract's intertextuality to devotional literature used by Ruotsalainen and his fellows. There seems to be references to various books like John Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress*. Ruotsalainen used sources like these as the basis of his constitution of piety presented in the tract.

Secondly I'll present an example how the Ruotsalainen's tract, in turn, got interpreted amongst his later followers. In the little booklet entitled *Elämä Kristuksen jälessä* (1895), written by another uneducated peasant Kusti Huovinen (1857–1936), can be found echoes of Ruotsalainen's tract. This was noticed also in the editor's preface of the booklet: "The book somehow systematizes the doctrine of Paavo Ruotsalainen".

"Small gate and narrow road" were not only metaphors of Ruotsalainen's piety but, moreover, quotations from *Pilgrims Progress*. Furthermore, variation of these metaphors constituted Huovinen's booklet as well. Spiritual models of pietistic books got new shape during the social processes of Awakened peasants' conventicles. These reshaped models of piety spread out as a self-written tracts. Reading of these tracts meant a restart for hermeneutic circulation of models of spirituality, as the Huovinen's case indicates.

## **The melodic unification of learning and piety: Social, cultural and institutional impact of Lutheran ecclesiastical music on lay literacy in early modern Sweden**

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From the period between the Swedish liturgical order for the Mass in 1531 and its equivalent in 1811, roughly estimated more than 35 million Sunday Mass services are likely to have been celebrated in the Lutheran Church of Sweden, effectively involving on a regular basis every

individual within the population. It is of great relevance to any historical understanding of the cultural and social circumstances in Sweden during this long period that a number of melodies were sung at, if not all, at least a vast majority of all these occasions. These fixed accentus melodies, as they are called, were the prime means of oral communication of scripture to the lower strata of society. What has in historical literacy scholarship been termed “religious reading”, a reading ability primarily aimed at memorizing a restricted number of pre-extant and familiar texts, here finds its twin, or at least a strong comparative case, in a musicological frame-work, since a type of “religious singing” to fixed melodies helps us understand many otherwise opaque sources and loci.

The importance of the accentus melodies for lay understanding of the scripture passage could hardly be over-estimated. It is attested in the spontaneous practice of “*eftermässning*”, where the laity followed the recitation of the priest on the accentus melody, a practice which in spite all attempts to abolish it lived on in many places well into the nineteenth century. I has recently been argued that the “*eftermässning*” was largely involuntary; when lay people acquired hymnals in print and manuscript, these contained also the epistle and Gospel passages for each Sunday, and since the practice of “silent reading” is a very advanced stage of literacy, the laity would simply follow with loud voice, or mimic the melodic recitation which they had heard hundreds of times, in their attempts to follow the written texts.

Questions of oral and aural performativity are at issue here. This paper takes into account the facts that (i) accentus singing adds something to the text which is clearly discernible for a musically untrained and illiterate listener; (ii) accentus singing relates to textual grammar, prosody and metrical matters. This is a link between documents such as the liturgical manuals which give instructions for the clergy how to chant “grammatically correct”, using different melodies for questions, full clauses, half clauses etc., and the hymnals available to the laity.

## Family, friends and *fornaldarsögur* in post-reformation western Iceland

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Fornaldarsögur, or legendary sagas, are stories that are set in Scandinavia before Iceland's settlement. The plot of these sagas is generally rather episodic and involves journeys by sea, encounters with supernatural beings, bridal quests and, not least, battles. They enjoyed immense popularity and were read and copied for centuries, up until the early twentieth century, as the vast number of manuscripts containing them bears witness. In general, texts and particularly fantastical literary works were confined to the hand-written medium in Iceland, as the printing press was until the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century under the auspices of the church who had no interest to print anything else than religious, legal or educational matters. Even after private printing presses were set up and books of literature became more easily available, *fornaldarsögur* were still copied by hand, especially by the lower strata of society. In this paper I will focus on the transmission of this literary genre during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in western Iceland, a rural place that played a vital role in the production, dissemination and reception of manuscripts. Two examples will highlight specific features of the transmission in the hands of farmers. First, the farmer Ólafur Jónsson (1722-1800) from the island Arney will serve as an example how scribal traditions stayed in the family. Second, the scribal community around the farmer Ólafur Þorgeirsson from Skáley á Skarðsströnd (1826-94) will exemplify the ways in which people collected and shared material for their scribal activities.

## The barmaid's tale: The dialect notebooks of a thirteen-year-old Breton

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The French newspaper editor Oscar Havard was inspired by reviewing Paul Sébillot's Folktales of Upper Brittany to go collecting himself. In 1881 he rambled the borders of Normandy and Brittany in search of oral narratives. Little came of this holiday enthusiasm but Havard did establish contact with some storytellers, several of them teenage girls, who wrote down stories for him. Particularly prolific was the 13-year-old Virginie Desgranges who sent him 11 notebooks filled with 94 songs, 35 tales and 3 longer fictions that she labelled 'stories of destiny'.<sup>1</sup>

Virginie Desgranges came from the most deprived social background – her father was a ragpicker, and she worked as a servant in a bar, a despised occupation, though one that contributed to her cultural repertoire. 5 years later she was dead: her life had left almost no trace in the official record, these manuscripts are almost the only evidence of her existence.

Contrary to the impression of the folklorist as lone explorer, most of Havard's contemporaries relied on similar networks of local correspondents. Desgranges was not unique but her example is fascinating. Her manuscripts reveal her rapid development as a writer. The initial notebooks contain no punctuation or line breaks: song followed song without separation, sometimes in a circle as Virginie filled up all available space. Later she presented herself in a more writerly fashion, with headings, paragraphs and full stops. Some of the rules she had to devise for herself. There were almost no orthography available for the local gallo dialect, she invented her own.

Desgranges' manuscripts are important historical documents. Ego-documents authored by the French workers are less rare than is assumed, but they are very uncommon for someone of her class, sex

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<sup>1</sup> The tales, but not the other items, have been published by Jean-Louis Le Craver, *Contes populaires de Haute-Bretagne* (Dastum, 2007).

and age. They offer unparalleled access to an unfamiliar social world while simultaneously telling us something of the personality of this young woman, both so ordinary and so exceptional.

## **Personal narratives as expressions of *folk ideas* on social class**

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Knowledge is not a singular concept: different social groups produce and transmit their own knowledges. The cultural knowledge as synonymous with folk ideas refers to the views, attitudes and conceptions of the common people. The term, coined by folklorist Alan Dundes, points to the traditional notions people have about the nature of man, the world and human life in the world. I shall use the concept of folk ideas in my study of personal narratives of self-taught common people in Finland that are compared with proverbs and folktales collected around the same time. The main focus of my presentation is in 24 written autobiographies of the common people together with the proverb sample of 100 texts and 60 folktales. I will examine and compare the narrative topics and motifs concerning social relationships and social hierarchy.

Written autobiographies reflect social and cultural norms as well as sanctions prevailing at the time of writing. The lives described in autobiographies were a result of various social and cultural factors and historical events such as class society, patriarchal order and the lack of poor relief. Life stories show how different historical events have affected people's lives and what kinds of social and cultural developments have taken place during the course of the writer's life.

In my presentation I will argue that written autobiographies reflect more egalitarian and middle-class views than those found in proverbs and folktales. I will test a following hypothesis: there were gradual changes in common people's views about social hierarchy, class society and their own life in the early twentieth century.

# Lived landscapes: Writing about seasons in 19th century Finland

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Eva Christina Lindström (1823-1895) lived her life and wrote her diary on a small island on the west coast of Finland. Observations about the weather and seasonal change are at the heart of her writing, which is extraordinarily rich in expressions concerning nature and seasons, especially the wintery weather; the wind, the snow and the ice. The diary, which she kept for almost four decades, tells us not only about details of peasant life but also how seasons were lived, experienced and interpreted in 19th century Finland.

Perceptions and writings about the weather are not natural, but deeply embedded in shared understanding and culture, just as any other form of writing. Cold may be an empirical fact that can be measured but feeling, perceiving and experiencing, let alone writing about a cold winter are culturally and historically conditioned. Eva-Christina's way of life and her writing had many traits of old, even pre modern traditions, but she was at the same time in many ways connected to a world that was going through a modernization.

In this paper I want to analyse the way senses and the sensual world is written about in Eva Christina's diary. How is seeing, touching and smelling, for example, used in her descriptions of the seasons and how is the sensuous world brought into her written language?

## The public and hidden transcript in the texts of Kustaa Brask, a self-taught crofter

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Kustaa Brask (1829–1906), a crofter from Eastern Finland, had probably not attended more than a few weeks of the local itinerant school. What was remarkable about this man was the fact that he sent a vast amount of his writings to the Finnish Literature Society (FLS). Brask's manuscripts add up to about 5700 pages of texts about religious, philosophical and societal matters, agriculture, popular education and history. His writings also include poems and drafts of textbooks as well as some collections of folklore and ethnographic material.

Among other things, Brask wrote about the life around him, revealing tensions in the local community and its internal hierarchies. The texts in which Brask discusses conditions in rural Finland are highly charged and even contradictory or inconsistent. Some of his pieces are forceful accounts of instances of injustice and dire poverty. However, it seems that Brask did not dare to openly criticise the land-owning class he depended on. The concepts hidden transcript – public transcript used by anthropologist James C. Scott (1990) in analysing authoritarian societies prove to be useful in discussing the case of Brask and his fellow crofters. The hidden transcript refers to the critique which those in power do not see or hear. These two concepts give equipment to understand and to analyse texts and behaviour of the subordinate people in hierarchical, undemocratic societies, which also nineteenth-century Finland with no doubt was.

It is rather difficult to have any direct evidence of the potential and probable hidden transcript of Kustaa Brask. We can read of his views only from the writings he sent to the upper class FLS-activists in Helsinki. His essays certainly give glimpses of ideas that were unconventional or challenged prevailing attitudes but he had strong reasons to be cautious of what he put on paper. But there is also a different type of material that allows us to investigate Brask's ways of thinking. It is a collection of his aphorisms included in a collection of proverbs sent to the FLS. One can say that one of these aphorisms

confirms the existence of Brask's hidden transcript even though his deepest thoughts still remain a secret: "The low and the humble dare to think but not to speak up about the errors of the high and mighty."

## **Herdís & Ólína: The poetry of everyday life**

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Herdís Andrésdóttir and her twin sister Ólína were born in 1858 on the island Flatey in Breiðafjörður, the daughter of a fisherman who perished at sea when the girls were just three; there were seven other children. The family was dispersed, with Ólína remaining with her mother. Neither had any formal education and both worked at various menial jobs from an early age. Herdís married in 1880 and had 7 children, four of which died in infancy; her husband died in 1889, when she was just 31. Ólína never married, but had an illegitimate daughter by the farmer in whose household she was employed as a servant, Guðbrandur Sturlaugsson, 36 years her senior and the father of nine.

Many years later, when Ólína and Herdís were reunited, when they were about 60 and had moved to Reykjavík, they discovered that they both had a talent for poetry. It had never, it seems, occurred to them to write any of these down, however, let alone publish them, but they were encouraged by friends to do so, resulting in the collection *Ljóðmali*, first published at their own expense in 1924 and reissued four times subsequently, each time containing more poems.

Their poetry was very traditional both in its form, which principally made use of *rímur* and ballad metres, and in terms of its subject matter, dealing with nature, reflections on life's joys and sorrows and so on; many are of a religious nature.

The sisters were also well known for their story-telling abilities, and some material of this sort – known in Icelandic as “þjóðlegur fróðleikur“ (lit. “national knowledge”) – has been collected and

published, most notably in the collection *Gráskinna hin meiri* edited by Sigurður Nordal and Þorbergur Þórðarson (Reykjavík, 1928-1936).

Although never fully accepted by – and somewhat at odds with – the Icelandic literary establishment, the sisters' poetry was much loved by ordinary people and many of their poems are still widely known and appreciated today. They have not, however, as yet been the object of scholarly attention.

My paper will look at the life and work of these remarkable women.

## **Handwritten proofs in Portuguese archives: From social to judicial function**

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The court files have provided an authentic revolution in the way we consider the written culture in Modernity. It is quite considerable the amount of testimonies brought into the light of our days that are an undeniable evidence of literacy among segments of the population traditionally placed in the shadows.

From proofs gathering until their inclusion in criminal records, there was a succession of steps with particular relevance to the validity of the cause it was intended to judge. Voluntary deliverance, postal interception or through authorized seizure and search, several strategies have been found by the court to use the testimony that, after careful examination, could be used to incriminate the defendant.

The handwritten productions we can find in civil and inquisitorial cases allow us to reconstruct more than just everyday experiences and communication mechanisms outside the law. In fact, their search, seizure, handling and archiving are essential to understand the objective impact of justice as a form of social control, as shown in the content of private letters. Moreover, we find there are types of claims where the

writing served, decisively, as incriminatory, including in a different guilt as the one that already ran in the court case.

It is our purpose to discuss how the epistolary productions witnessed the direct involvement of the defendants and allowed to reconstruct networks of sociability, thus identifying new targets. We intend to identify the role played by preservation conditions and legal interest in the collection of evidence between 1550 and 1834 in an inter-institutional perspective. At this level, we will analyze the strategies used in the selection and document dispersion that the investigator is currently facing.

## **Formed for men ‘principally’ drawn from the working-classes: Garrison libraries, reading rooms, and nineteenth-century British troops**

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The British army harboured reservations about the official provision of books and libraries to soldiers well into the nineteenth century, believing it was for a number of reasons dangerous to promote literacy among rank-and-file forces. This paper will explore both why this should have been the case, and the motivations behind the government’s eventual decision to grant funds towards the setting up of garrison libraries in the 1830s. What it will show is that the history of the establishment of these libraries has much in common with that of (free) public libraries in Britain; that they, too, were viewed as sites of contested culture from the very first, with advocates insisting they would contribute to the education, wellbeing and discipline of soldiers and non-commissioned officers, and opponents declaring they would promote inappropriate attitudes and, possibly, behaviour on the part of troops. In tracing the motivations of those responsible for the establishment and/or day-to-day operation of the garrison libraries and reading rooms, the paper therefore will have a two-fold ambition: namely, to examine what they reveal about contemporary attitudes to military readers in particular and, more broadly, to working-class readers at this period. A further concern of the paper will be to

demonstrate the link that supporters of the libraries increasingly made between the peculiar circumstances of military life and the subsequent behaviour of soldiers, and why they came to view the libraries as a means of mitigating the high rates of drunkenness, venereal disease, and crime that so plagued Her Majesty's forces throughout the Victorian period.

## **Denouncing enemies during political crisis: Accusatory writing of Finnish rural people at the turn of the 20th century**

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Throughout centuries, discontent and rancour have provided innumerable people from every social stratum an impetus for grasping the pen. Hardly anywhere is this more evident than in state offices, which deal with petitions and complaints sent upwards by ordinary citizens. Citizens' letters to officialdom represent various genres, one of them being denunciation, which can be defined as a voluntary report containing accusations of wrongdoing by other citizens or officials and calling for their punishment.

This paper focuses on the practice of denunciation in Finnish rural inhabitants' letters to the Russian government at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. At that time, an unprecedented number of ordinary Finns, many of whom were semi-literate and underprivileged rural inhabitants approached the Governor-General of Finland with letters of appeal or complaint. A significant part of these letters contained denunciations, which covered conspiratorial activity against the Russian government and were directed against upper-class individuals such as landowners and civil servants. The denunciations were encouraged by the Russian government's recently introduced measures, which aimed at incorporating Finland more closely to the rest of the empire and suppressing the Finnish nationalists' opposition to the integration. Yet the denunciations not only reflected citizens' loyalty to the authorities but they veiled complex communal tensions and personal interests related e.g. to land ownership, usufruct rights or debts.

In this paper, I discuss several aspects of the Finnish denunciatory writing during the years 1898–1905. First, how did rural inhabitants justify their letters to the government and what kind of rhetoric strategies did they use to furnish the addressee with a rationale to heed their requests? Were there models available that the senders could employ for formulating their letters? Secondly, the paper elucidates the relationship between the practice of denunciation and the public sphere. The Finnish-language press had expanded rapidly during the late 19th century, creating a new kind of public arena for political debate and achieving a wide readership also among rural people. The paper argues that this transformation of the public sphere had profound impacts both on the practice of denunciation and the lives of people who engaged in writing letters to the imperial authorities.

## **Writing the national, (re)writing the local: Estonian folklore collectors in search of their local identity**

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Folklore collecting campaigns in the 1890s Estonia provided a substantial amount of ordinary people with the possibility and motivation to create a position from which to write for themselves. As a result, the Estonian Folklore Archive presents a rich corpus for studying vernacular literacy practices of the time. In this paper I am focusing on the territorial identity of those writers: how they used the framework of collecting to build up connections with the national community on the one hand and their 'local' areas on the other.

I am especially interested in the question of locality and being a local. One reason for asking this is that the collectors are (and were at the time) quite often generally referred to as 'local collectors'. This name stresses their insiderness, implies that they have an access to the emic side of the community matters. Locality was also meaningful in terms of nation-building: in the process of folklore collecting the nation was being conceptualised as a mosaic of local places and so the 'local' collectors of folklore helped to fill in the gaps in this mosaic.

However, the period of folklore collecting campaigns was also a time of rapid modernisation, one part of which was growing mobility: people were moving to towns, searching for work in other parts of the country or migrating to other parts of the Russian Empire. All this also concerned those 'local' collectors: some of them collect while on holiday in their birth parish, some write from Siberia about their childhood memories and some send their contributions from places where they have moved quite recently. Relying on these examples I am raising questions about the ways those collectors used the idea of nation-as-mosaic to reinterpret and strengthen their local identities.

## **Regional speech and respelling in writing from below (on the basis of the writings of Bob Copper)**

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How do you show the character of regional ('non-standard') speech in your writing by means of spelling? In a language like Finnish where the standard spelling system is entirely phonetic, you can convey this by phonetic respellings. But this question is far more tricky one to answer in a language like English, where the standard spelling system has no one-to-one correspondence with standard pronunciation to begin with. It is also a question that was faced by Bob Copper (1915-2004). Copper, the son of a farm bailiff, who worked as a bird-scarer, a lather boy, a lifeguard, a soldier, a policeman and a pub landlord in the course of his working life, was also a singer and collector of the traditional songs of England. In the final decades of his life he wrote a series of books about local (Sussex) folklife, which feature (amongst other things) attempts to use nonstandard spelling to represent the speech of local people, including that of his own family and his younger self. In my paper, I will look at his practice in representing Sussex speech orthographically and its development over his writing career (1971, 1973, 1976, 1994, 1997, 2013) and will contextualise this with reference to the attempts of others to do the same from the 1830's onwards.

## **Self-positioning in ‘ordinary people’s’ responses to archive questionnaires in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century**

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The Archives of Folk Culture, kept by the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland, have been using questionnaires to collect written narratives of the life and traditions of Swedish-speaking people in Finland since the 1950s. Many of the respondents are non-professional writers in the sense that writing has not been an essential part of their daily work, and most of them can probably be included in the group of so-called ordinary people whose writing for the most part remains invisible (cf. Sheridan, Street & Bloome 2000:6).

In my paper, I will exemplify how some respondents with practical occupations, all women in the age of 60–75, position themselves as writers by commenting on their texts and writing processes in responses from five decades (1960s–2000s). Moreover, I will show how the respondents position themselves in relation to the reader, primarily the archive staff but also possible future archive users, by choosing various strategies for addressing him or her. The role of the directives given by the archive in constructing the relationship between the archive and the respondents is also discussed, as well as some changes over time in the directives and responses.

## **Reading and writing practices of 19th century emigrants from the German-speaking countries**

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In German language historiography, the ‘long 19th century’ has predominantly been presented as the age of Bürgersprache (‘bourgeois language’) and the spread of standard German, with a focus on literary

and printed language. This, however, entails a narrow view on what is ‘worth’ in an account of a nation’s (language) history. From a broader perspective, including a ‘view from below’ (cf. Elspaß 2005, Elspaß 2007), the 19th c. must be rather be hailed as the century in which, for the first time in more than 1,100 years of writing in German, not only a selected few, but the majority of the people were able to communicate in spoken and written German. Mass literacy can thus be seen as a crucial landmark in the history of German.

Drawing on a corpus of some 880 letters from correspondences between 19th c. emigrants from Germany, Austria and Switzerland and their relatives and friends at home, the talk will set out to explore reading and hand writing practices of ‘ordinary people’ in late modernity. It will then compare the findings from the letter corpus with accounts of such practices in the research literature from different disciplines and ask whether an interdisciplinary approach (pursued eg. in Langer et al. 2012) can contribute to a better understanding of these practices.

## **Orality and literacy in Dutch private letters from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries**

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The linguistic experiences of illiterate and semi-literate people from past periods and the related cultural practices are mostly beyond the horizon of historical linguists. As has been argued over the past years, however, ego-documents such as private letters from the lower and middle ranks of society can be used to assess the linguistic practices of lesser-skilled writers, and may give an insight into the spoken language of the past. In this paper, we will discuss aspects of the written language as found in Dutch private letters from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, drawing on the Letters as Loot-corpus compiled at Leiden University (available at [brievensalbuit.inl.nl](http://brievensalbuit.inl.nl)). We will show that these letters contain both typically oral elements, i.e. traces of the spoken language not usually found in written language of this period, and typically written language features. Our main claim will be that despite

unambiguous interferences from the spoken language, the shift from spoken to written language use often implied a shift from localizable language features to supralocal elements. This testifies to a very high awareness of the medial, situational and, consequently, linguistic differences between spoken and written language, even among lesser-skilled language users from the lower and middle ranks of society.

We will discuss three case studies. The first focuses on the interplay of phonology and spelling, and sets out to find traces of the spoken language. The second discusses the typically written language feature of formulaic language. Our third case study involves clause chaining, and here the question is to what extent the remarkable patterns found in the letters are typical of the spoken language or of the written language. The combination of “oral” and “literate” elements in one text type will lead us to critically review both the rigid distinction of “the oral” and “the written” and the interpretation of their combination in terms of hybridity.

## **‘You must pardon me that which I did not write well’: 18th-century Flemish writing from below**

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The Dutch language in Flanders has long been thought to have undergone a process of ‘linguistic degeneration’ between the late 16th and early 19th century: in sharp contrast to the ongoing standardization of Northern Hollandic, Southern Flemish was left to ‘regress’ to the level of local dialects as French took over most of its prestige functions in society. Social arguments play a crucial role in this discourse: as French became the language of the upper social strata, Dutch was only being used among the lower ranks of society, where it could not develop into a full-fledged standard language.

Empirical analyses of 19th-century Flemish writing, however, show that the use of Dutch among the higher social classes was not as limited as has often been assumed, and the writings of members of all social strata mainly seem to differ in terms of when – not if – the idea of invariable

language standards became important (Vandenbussche 2002; Vandenbussche 2004). Overall, writers from different social backgrounds in the 19th century display a remarkable linguistic competence in Dutch, which argues against the lack of standardization in preceding decades (cf. Rutten & Vosters 2011).

This paper will delve into the roots of this remarkable competence, examining Southern Dutch in the 18th century. In a new project on orality and literacy in this period, we aim to analyze private letters from writers with different social backgrounds. Because of their indirect ties to the spoken word, these sources offer excellent test cases to investigate the tension between formal writing conventions and traces from spoken everyday vernaculars. We will report on the first explorations of this material, with our main emphasis lying on letters from lower-class writers. By examining different linguistic features that would have been indicators of local, spoken dialects, we will weigh the hypothesis of linguistic degeneration against the idea of an ongoing process of standardization in 18th-century Southern Dutch.

## **Jón Halldórsson of Stóruvellir and his reading circle**

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Jón Halldórsson (1838–1919) was born at Neslönd by Lake Mývatn, North Iceland. He was a farm hand at Grenjardarstaður and Stóruvellir, North Iceland, before he immigrated to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1872. He settled in Nebraska 1874 as a farmer. Jón Halldórsson died in Chicago 1919.

Jón Halldórsson had no formal education. But he was an ardent reader. As a farm hand at the rectory Grenjardarstaður he had access to the library of the priest. He also became a member of the reading society of the vicinity. Furthermore he and his closest male friends formed a reading circle, lent books from bookish men in the neighbourhood, and ordered books from Copenhagen. The paper deals with the subject of their readings and their reading experience, based on information given in their personal correspondence.

# Religious motivation and gender: Self-taught rural readers in the 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century Finland

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My paper will concentrate on a double theme: both on the social history and on the religious motivation of reading. Special emphasis will be paid on women as readers. I shall compare two types of Finnish-speaking readers in different historical contexts. These readers are the 19th-century uneducated and partly self-taught readers in a rural municipality of Karstula and the rural readers within a 18th- and 19th-century religious movement known as Ostrobothnian mysticism. Concerning the 19th-century reading habits in Karstula exceptional source material, so far not known anywhere else, has stood the test of time allowing a detailed study of reading practices.

The two different contexts of reading, the pre-modern and the modernizing one, will be defined in economical, administrative and ecclesiastical terms as well as through processes of change as a key element depicting the social history of reading. How do they differ and what they have in common and what was the role of gender?

During the time of the mystical movement Finnish was a vernacular, and the movement also produced the Finnish-speaking copy books its members read. Later in 19th century Finnish was made into an official language of Finland, alongside with Swedish, with some exceptions and transition periods. In this situation the Finnish-speaking literature was by far and large created by the educated elite. The study of both of these types of readers is based on primary sources, on archival material and examines reading as a social phenomenon; what social processes supported or facilitated the reading practiced by the common Finnish-speaking men and women and how religion both prevented and produced modernity in Finland.

I maintain that in both contexts religion, practicing religion by reading books and manuscripts was of essential importance, but in reference to male and female readers this motivation produced different and rather surprising outcomes. In addition, religious reading was a carrier of

values and attitudes, and preached norms and modes of behaviour especially to women turning the question of the modernity upside down; in some respects more modern was the pre-modern.

## **Reading groups and popular movements at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

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Reading groups is a popular activity among many Swedish readers today, as in many other countries. The reading group however has a long history in Sweden and the purpose of this paper is to focus on the historical perspective. The paper discusses the literary practices that emerged in the Swedish popular movements' educational work around 1900 onwards, and how they have contributed to the interest in social reading and reader communities into our time.

Most important here is the study circle method. It was developed within the temperance movement at the turn of the 20th Century and had its predecessors in the 19th Century's upperclass reading groups, in the liberal educational circles of the 1850s but also in the free church movement's bible meetings, English bible circles and in the educational activities that emerged in North American Chautauqua during the 1870s. In the study circle, books were discussed that circulated among the participants. The circle was expected to be a forum where an active search for knowledge took place in democratic interaction between all participants, and the empowerment function of this self-educational work was important.

This study method was an important reason why the popular movement's educational work quickly evolved into a mass movement in Sweden. As early as in 1911, the study circles started to receive subsidies from the government. However, in order to get this public support the study circle work had to be organized by a study association. Consequently, study associations evolved during the first half of the 20th century, in association with many different popular movements and NGOs. In its original form, the study circle method

focused on literature and was closely associated with the studying and discussing of fiction. Later on, the circles however came to focus mostly on other subjects than literature. But still today, the ten existing study associations together form the largest organizer of reading groups in Sweden.

## Popular Dutch penny prints

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In this paper I will focus on the diachronic aspects of the adaptations of stories in the Dutch popular printing culture of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Dutch publishers adapted literary stories to a new medium; the narrative penny print. They tried to reach an as large as possible reading public and penny prints in particular created a possibility to disseminate literature to different kinds of readers. The penny print can be considered as the printed mass media of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These prints are known for their remarkable long lifespan, and they paid an important contribution to the survival of many popular stories. The production of penny prints took place in a dynamic relation with the demands of the contemporary public: the market influenced how and which stories were printed, and publishers anticipated strategically on the persistent popularity of those stories. By further exploring the characteristics of the selection and adaptation in popular printing, we gain more insight into processes of cultural exchange and the circulation of stories across boundaries of geography, class and age.

I will also take into account the influence of censorship and new ideologies, the standardization of the content and the ways in which stories became increasingly adapted for children during the nineteenth century. Thus, my paper will reflect upon the characteristics of the selection and adaptation of stories in Dutch popular prints, with an attendance for their contemporary cultural context. In my conclusion I will argue that the development of these adaptations were dependent on the dynamic relation between the characteristics of the medium, the story and the producers, distributors and consumers.

## A kind of censorship: Thomas of Ragwald's ill-starred effort to publish theological literature

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Thomas Ragwald (b. 1724), a son of a poor peasant in Tyrvää, is one of few self-learned peasant writers known in 18th century Finland. Ragwald's literary production consists of ca. 50 titles of different genres or types of leaflets. He wrote pietistically motivated hymns, prayers, poems, and also deeply personal texts, e.g. a unique description of the surgical operation of his own harelip (1763). In his texts Ragwald combines religious ardour, attitudes arising from the peasant environment, with a clear striving for knowledge, both secular and divine.

In early 1760s Ragwald tried unsuccessfully apply imprimatur for re-publishing of two long ago sold-out theological dissertations. Both of those had already been censored and approved by the Ecclesiastical Chapter in Turku. There seemed to be no obstacle whatsoever to this self-made activity. The Ecclesiastical Chapter did, however, reject this plan: it denied 1762 Ragwald to publish any theological text. This decision was justified by explaining how unthinkable it was for a common, self-learned Peasant to edit theological texts even though they were neither written by him nor contained heterodoxy of any kind. Publishing of theological texts was according to the Ecclesiastical Chapter allowed to the members of the clerical Estate only. The Fact that these texts had already been published was no excuse to make an exception and let a common man especially when he was known for his inclinations to pietism to re-publish texts which as such were inappropriate or even harmful to people like him. This indicates that not only the content but also reader's social status could make a book harmful in early modern Scandinavia. The battle of books was never a battle for contents only.

This policy of the ecclesiastical Chapter gives insights and opens new perspectives on the concept of knowledge in the 18th Century. What kind of books were understood useful, what harmful or even dangerous? Who had access to learned literature and what happened to those who tried to cross the line unauthorised? These questions are

essential for my Study in the Project Spheres of useful knowledge. It contributes to the project's general objective to pinpoint the intersections and interconnections between learned, ideological and abstract forms of knowledge on the one side, and local, practical and everyday forms of knowledge on the other. The results will be interpreted in the framework of recent national and international studies on popular/vernacular authorship in the 18th century.

## **Censored letters from 19<sup>th</sup>-century lunatic asylums: New material for language from below**

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This paper focuses on private letters from lower class scribes of the 19th century that the author has recently discovered in the archive of the Psychiatric Hospital in Kaufbeuren, Southern Germany. All the patients' files of Kaufbeuren, founded in 1878, and from the nearby asylum Irsee, founded in 1849, have been stored until the present day. They contain thousands of letters from or to the patients, which had never been delivered to their addressees, but had been kept by the institution.

Both for social history and historical sociolinguistics, the worth of these letters can hardly be overestimated. They give insights into everyday life inside the asylum, as well as the patients' personal thoughts and feelings, which are usually not verbalized in official documents. Having the "highest potential to render authentic sources of historical orality" (Elspaß 2012:159), these private letters offer important new sources for a southern German 'language history from below', an area from where existing corpora lack material (Elspaß 2005:70).

Unique in this corpus is the existence of both private and official letters, e.g. to the doctors, by the same individuals. Official letters provide data from asymmetric constellations, where writers try to employ official registers, viz. the 'language of distance' (Koch / Oesterreicher 2007). Up to now, research has only focused on either symmetric (e.g. 'immigrant letters', cf. Elspaß 2005, or 'sailing letters',

cf. Van der Wal et al. 2012) or asymmetric (e.g. 'pauper letters'; cf. Fairman 2007) constellations, resulting from the respective corpora. The letters from the lunatic asylums, however, for the first time allow an analysis of the question, to what extent were scribes from lower classes were able to adapt their language to different speech situations?

## **Family letters and the epistolary culture in mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century Finnish archipelago**

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The Archipelago off the South-West coast of Finland was a region of relatively high literacy long before elementary schools were established. The tradition of peasant sailing and trade dating back to the Middle Ages made reading and writing necessary skills which were learned through informal education within the community. The focus of my paper is on the correspondence of one family, the letters written by merchant shipper Simon Jansson and his wife Wilhelmina to their three sons. The parents, both born during the first decade of the 19th century, learned to read and write at home and their literary skills can be described as modest but they nevertheless carried out an extensive family correspondence during several decades. The letters document in great detail the everyday life of the family, the local news of the island community, the social networks and the efforts of the self-educated parents to provide a university education for their sons - as well as the conflicts arising from the growing social and cultural gap separating the two generations. Using Jacques Pressers concept of "ego-document" I explore the possibilities and boundaries of family letters as historical source material to family life, to the literary practices and epistolary culture on the islands and to the processes of modernization which made education and upward mobility possible for the three sons of the Jansson family. The bilingual family correspondence also provides insight into to the linguistic practices both within one family and between Finnish and Swedish speaking groups in the Archipelago, as well as into the meaning of language in the process of education.

## **‘If you read my letter, pass it on!’ A special way of communication by a Calvinist minister between the two world wars in Transylvania**

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Dezső Bonczidai (1902–1946) was a Calvinist minister in Kide (Chidea, Romania) between 1928 and 1946. From 1933 to 1936 he wrote regularly – every week or every two weeks – hand-written newspaper of eight pages to the members of his congregation, which he called ”Pastoral Letters”. This manifestation was unique in Transylvania and also in Hungary; so far we haven’t found any similar pastoral activity. Although the village consisted of two streets, with 388 Calvinist believers, where all of the people had daily connections, the pastor chose a new form of communication.

In my paper, I’ll examine this particular activity and text-corpus in the context of the Transylvanian Reformed Home Mission, answering the following questions: why did Dezső Bonczidai write these letters? How did he put them into practice? What kind of texts and genres could be found in his letters? What were the reactions of the villagers?

## **The rise and fall of rural love: The significance of personal letters**

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This paper examines personal letters which were sent by unmarried men to their lady-loves in rural Central Finland in the late 19th century. Nordic historians and ethnologists have previously made a comprehensive analysis of the unofficial and official courtship conventions and traditions that determined how unmarried men and women were able to meet and get to know members of the opposite

sex. The ultimate goal of the courtship process was legal and Christian marriage, which was considered to be a lifelong union.

However, it is clear that many of these relationships broke up before a wedding ceremony took place. Researchers have less frequently been able to study this other side of these courtships. Personal letters are, however, a useful historical resource which enables us to research into unsuccessful rural courtships. The source material of this paper consists of 11 letters. The letters have been well preserved as appendices to the minutes of six different court cases that concerned child maintenance in the Rural Court District of Keuruu between 1889 and 1899. In these cases unmarried mothers were seeking financial support from the fathers of their children, and they had brought the letters to the courtroom in order to demonstrate their claims of an earlier sexual relationship.

The aim of this paper is to explore the nature of these personal letters. A) How did the letters come to be written? What sort of cultural resources did uneducated men have to have in order to communicate successfully through letters? B) What was the content of the letters? What issues were regarded as so important in their courtship that men were willing to put themselves out to write and send these formal letters? C) Why did men send letters to their lady-loves? In other words, what was the role of letters in the progress and failure of their courtship?

## **Claiming cultural literacy: Thomas Cooper's *The Purgatory of Suicides* in the *Northern Star***

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This paper explores the politicisation of established conventions and traditions of reading and writing through a specific focus on Thomas Cooper's 'Chartist Epic', *The Purgatory of Suicides*. It argues that Chartism (Britain's first working-class movement) understood that 'technical' literacy (i.e. the ability to read and write) was a necessary but insufficient precondition for working-class emancipation. Chartism

believed that in order to challenge the cultural hegemony of the ruling classes, the working-class needed to achieve 'cultural' literacy - the ability to understand and produce complex cultural forms (e.g. poetry, the novel). The paper examines the various ways in which Thomas Cooper's 'Chartist Epic', *The Purgatory of Suicides*, was mediated in and through the leading Chartist newspaper - the *Northern Star*. In particular, it focuses on a series of excerpts from the poem which were published (with an accompanying commentary) from September 6th 1845 to December 13th 1845. However, it also considers the other multiple manifestations of the poem in the pages of the *Northern Star*, for example, in adverts, reports of meetings and in correspondence. The paper explores the political and ideological significance of both the choice of extracts made by the editor of the *Northern Star* and the accompanying commentary. The paper will also ask whether the extracts and commentary are to be understood as primarily empowering or constraining their readers? Thus, the paper has two main foci. Firstly, it considers the types of textual relations which a periodical publication simultaneously engenders, mediates and negotiates with its working-class readers. Secondly, it argues for the importance of 'cultural literacy' as both site and object of working-class emancipation.

## **Elite criticism of popular correspondence to Finnish-language newspapers 1847–1870**

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Using Finnish-language newspapers which have been digitized by The National Library of Finland as my source data, this paper explores the social tensions and conflicts that accompanied the entrance of non-elite writers into the public sphere. I focus on the years 1847–1870, a period in which the press represented for Finnish-speakers the only forum for political and social debate outside of parish meetings.

Lack of full literacy among rural commoners created a vast informational divide between them and members of the higher Estates (clergy, merchants, and aristocracy), all of whom were functionally

literate. However, it was possible for determined commoners to learn to write and read fluently, either from informal schools run by manor lords, clergymen or female members of the gentry, or from other literate commoners. The Finnish-language press provided one of the first real uses to which Finnish-speaking commoners could put their writing skills.

As increasing numbers of rural inhabitants learned to write and Finnish-language newspapers provided these writers with a forum in which to demonstrate this ability, questions began to be raised over to what extent peasant farmers needed the ability to write. Educated clerks and scribes who had formerly earned money by drawing up contracts and other documents for the unlettered rural masses now began to resent the fact that some farmers no longer needed their assistance. Moreover, some farmers had begun to demand that clerks and scribes write documents in Finnish rather than in the Swedish language in which the latter had been educated. Elites, in turn, began to criticize the inferior writing of commoners as well as the confusion it caused in the courts. Rural commoners could fight back in the press, but if they were identified, especially landless men such as crofters and labourers often suffered the consequences.

## **Interest matters: On the ‘exchange rate’ between reality and verse in street ballads of the 19th century**

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This paper discusses narration in Swedish skillingtryck; vernacular prints for the popular market produced from the late 16th century up to the 1920ies. The physical form was generally a sheet of paper that was folded into a booklet with 8 pages, but the content could vary a lot – as could the authors and agendas. Mainly in versified form, a diversity of genres are represented in these prints; from political pamphlets and religious lamentations to crime reports, topical as well as traditional ballads, beggar verses and humorous songs.

Despite differences in subject, ideology and sentiment, these commercial prints share a general prerequisite: the need to be selling, that is: to appeal to people. To be “interesting”, the authors (professional, amateur and anonymous writers alike) employ a range of textual and narrative strategies; features like moral polarization and heightened realism.

In the paper I present some case studies of prints that claim to depict real events and criminal cases of their time. The questions are: how does the versified narration relate to the actual event, as far as it is known from other sources? What kind of fact is reported, what is not? How do the texts tell, and what assumptions about popular taste and opinion can be discerned?

## **Truncated competence in the correspondence of a French soldier (1915-1918)**

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Since the Chomskyan paradigm, the concept of competence has been revisited in different linguistic traditions, the reference to an ideal speaker-hearer having mainly been challenged by a more realistic vision of communication that takes into account the heterogeneity of a speech community as well as the extension of the concept itself beyond the categories of autonomous linguistics. The latest reinterpretation of the concept has been proposed by Jan Blommaert in his research on multilingualism in African communities and postmodern European societies. He uses the term truncated competence (and truncated repertoires) to designate individual situations and trajectories in which monoglossic, standard linguistic systems are not entirely established or acquired. The concept of truncated competence can be applied in the study of lower class language and grassroots literacy in historical sociolinguistics in order to show the complexity of language contact situations. The present paper deals with the linguistic competence of a French soldier, captured by the enemy at the beginning of the First World War. The prison camp offers this representative of the lowest layers of society a context in which to set pen to paper and to put into

practice his knowledge of standard French supposedly acquired at the obligatory state school. The 115 letters and post cards sent to his family provide justification for the use of the term ‘truncated competence’ in the present case and show the exact composition of his written language form.

## **‘Out of great need I bring my child here...’ Language use and choice in foundlings’ letters from 19th century Flanders**

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This is an exploratory study of the language use and language choice in 19th century foundlings’ letters, which were found in and around Gent.

In the 19th century a lot of unfortunate mothers from the lower class were compelled to abandon their child. Hoping to see it again at a better time, they wrote a little note and added a mark.

These sources ‘from below’ are precious since they reveal a part of the real (language) (hi)story of the lower class people from the past.

Since some of these letters were copied by the clerk of the orphanage, a first assumption was that the latter corrected some initially marked features into non-marked ones. However, it appeared that the clerk didn’t modify a lot. It seemed to be more important for this writer to transcribe the letters literally than to ‘correct’ possible unusual spellings.

Our study consists of two domains: the first part is a research of the language use, mainly some aspects of orthography. The second part focuses on the choice of language in the foundlings’ letters. A remarkable fact is that some of these letters were written in French, whereas it is generally assumed that lower class people only spoke Dutch dialects.

## **Public versus private through letters**

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Letter writing is an invaluable source for the study of past societies. The systematic analysis of letters can reveal not only individual lives but also social behaviours in the process of evolution. Our purpose is to make a reflection on the border between the public and the private, two domains that frame individual lives. Although, a priori, the private-public distinction seems a clear-cut one for us today, we know that it is the outcome of an evolution. In former periods, such a distinction was more blurred and complex. Thus, letter writing becomes a useful source for the understanding of such evolution process. This paper is based on the systematic analysis of a (Spanish-Portuguese) letter corpus from the 1600-1834 timespan. The letters' texts can offer us a set of clues for the 'public versus private' issue. Those can be either textual-discursive clues or content clues, such as private and personal information given inside an official or a business letter. On the other hand, we want to cross compare our epistolarity analysis with the results offered by other studies, the ones that trace the domestic space evolution and the connection between domesticity and the private sphere.

## **The song book and the peasant diary as participants in the construction of the modern self**

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In the beginning of the 20th century, the written word took a more and more vital part in everyday life of the ordinary people in Sweden. One common literacy practice among young people in Sweden was copying songs and poems in so called song books, another common literacy practice was writing diary notes. Today, diary writing and blogging are considered as practices explicitly related to identity construction. The link to identity construction is less apparent in the vernacular literacy practices of the song book and the peasant diary in the early 20th century. In this paper I will discuss in what ways the song book and the

diary can be said to have participated in the discursive construction of the modern self. The theoretical basis lies in New literacy theory and Actor-network-theory, in which literacy is seen as a social activity and literacy artefacts, such as the song book and the diary, as participants in the discursive construction of identity (Barton & Hamilton 2005; Brandt & Clinton 2002; Latour 2005). Discourse is here understood as the mediating mechanism in the social construction of identity (Ivanič 1998). A case study of song books and diaries owned by a young woman from rural area in Sweden will illustrate different aspects of the construction of the modern self within the literacy practices. The aspects in focus are: the emergence of the literacy practices, the literacy events, the participants and the texts.

## **Finnish vernacular newspaper writers and the modern self in the 1850's and 1860's**

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The Finnish concept “sivistys” is similar in many ways to German word “Bildung” and Swedish “bildning”. Its main meaning refers to personal self-formation, but it can also be understood in a wider sense like a culture or civilization. “Sivistys” was developed in the era of 1820–1850 when the Finnish literary language was normalized mainly by the Swedish-speaking educated people. Thereby “sivistys” has its roots primarily in the Swedish word “bildning”. “Sivistys” was used in public by educated people, but in the era of 1820–1850 there aren't any published texts, where somebody is trying to define “sivistys” concept. This is mainly because of people who used it could understand its meaning in Swedish language. They don't need to define its meaning in Finnish.

The 1850's and 1860's were the period in Finnish history when the modernization started to appear in ordinary people's sight. There were social reforms, Finnish newspapers multiplied and railroads and telegraph lines were built. At the same time, there began to appear texts in newspapers, where writers tried to define, what “sivistys” means. I have collected these texts and I'm using these as my research material.

All of the writers, who tried to define what “sivistys” was, had lived their childhood in Finnish-speaking vernacular families, whose way of life was characterized by natural economy and oral tradition. But all of them had been on the brink of adulthood in touch with some phenomenon of modernization. Some of them had acquired education, some had not. All of them had learnt to write and experienced social mobility.

In my work, I have found that in their attempts to define concept “sivistys” these writers tried to explain their experience of change which modernization had resulted in their identity. Definitions of concept “sivistys” are self-reflective. Writers really bring out their conceptions of the idea of the man. This is why my research material allows me to examine how modernization has affected the ways how people thought about their selves on the borderline between pre-modern and modern.

Charles Taylor has shown how modern identity or self has formed in the thinking of most important philosophers and other contemplative authors in the Western tradition. Dror Wahrman has shown how the formation of the modern self was connected with the wider cultural change in eighteenth century England. Inspired by these scholars I attempt to figure out the formation of modern self in Finnish vernacular thinking.

## **Popular perspectives on secularisation in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Finland**

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In my paper I will focus on the secularisation and transformations in religiosity ‘from below’, in other words, from the perspective of non-privileged persons, their experiences and points of view. I seek to illuminate what kind of transformation secularisation was at the grassroots level in the late 19th and early 20th century Finland. How did people change their religious thinking and activities? How did they

experience and interpret the phenomena that have been characterised as secularisation?

Secularisation studies have almost invariably been conducted at the macro-level using quantitative methods. Such surveys tell us nothing about how individuals interpreted the processes of secularisation. In order to reach the perspective from below, different data must be studied. In my paper I will utilize autobiographical, descriptive and contemplative texts written by the common people such as diaries, recollected narratives, oral memoirs, poems and letters. Nearly all of the source materials are stored at the Finnish Literature Society.

I will show in my paper that it is more useful to approach the changes of the late 19th and the early 20th centuries as a holistic reshaping of religion and religiosity rather than solely as secularisation, i.e. the decreasing importance of religion. I will illustrate with examples what kind of syntheses of world views the texts and oral memoirs of the common people contain, and how the common people saw the relationship between the Lutheran teaching, folk religion and new ideologies like socialism and Darwinism.

## **Viewing authors from below**

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In this talk, I'd like to explore what we can learn about later seventeenth- and eighteenth-century conceptions of authorship by considering the most frequently viewed kind of authorial image in most urban areas of the Anglophone world: namely, the shop sign. Booksellers and circulating libraries routinely used images of authorial heads to mark their establishments in an age before street numbering and so these images were, at least cursorily, seen by thousands or even tens or hundreds of thousands of people a week, quite literally "from below" (the signs hung three or four meters from the ground). Yet the shop sign canon included many celebrated figures whose likenesses were not generally known. How many of us, then or now, could confidently identify an image of Nicholas Rowe or Thomas

Otway? Why then should these signs have been used? How could they have been commercially effective? I'd like to contend that at least here (and I suspect elsewhere in eighteenth-century portraiture) likeness was almost beside the point. Rather, these images were first and foremost emblems of these authors' reputations and as such functioned more like material personifications (of, say, "Wit" or "Learning" or "Ease"), than any sort of straightforward representation of actual persons. This reconstruction of the felt experience of viewers who often only knew these authors as names (i.e., they had not, and perhaps could not, have read their texts) matters for the purposes of this conference because it can help us undo the overly facile accounts of "the emergence of modern authorship" that all too often get told about eighteenth-century Britain. In other words, it can help us see how, in the realm of authorship, as in so many other areas connected with the social history of literacy, there was something of an ancien régime that complicates any attempts to draw a straight, much less triumphalist, line from then to now.

## **Invisible contexts in 19<sup>th</sup>-century newspapers**

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The nineteenth century saw the rapid development of a new national standard language of Finnish. Towards the end of the century, the most intense language debates were calming down and the visible language planning was moving behind the scenes. At the same time, Finnish newspapers expanded with a growing demand for new text genres and for new writing conventions. In this paper, we will examine how the local and global interacted with each other in nineteenth-century Finnish newspapers. Our data consists of two popular types of texts, public announcements and rural letters that both dealt with local news and events. In our analysis, we apply the concept of entextualisation, the shift of discourses to new contexts, from the local to the global. Theoretically and methodically our paper combines sociolinguistic discourse analysis and syntactic study.

## **The literacy practices of African-American pioneers in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century frontier**

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The Beech Settlement was a community of free African Americans who migrated, beginning in the 1830s, from Virginia and North Carolina, to Indiana. The Beech was just one of many such communities of African Americans, who, though free, were suffering increased threats and hostility in the slave states of antebellum U.S.A. Many were highly literate at the time of migration. Others had some level of literacy. All were strongly motivated to educate their families, as well as provide an environment in which they could succeed and thrive.

The Beech Settlement was unique in that its settlers, led by a core of highly literate individuals (many of whom had owned land while in the South), organized a circulating library housed in their meeting house, which served also as their church and school. The circulation records and the minutes of the meetings of the Board of Directors survive, as well as a list of some of the books that were held in the library. In this paper I examine these surviving documents and other primary materials to portray a community of readers, writers, orators, and educators, who, although denied legal access to education until their migration, had learned to read and write and had developed the skills to create a thriving community of readers.

## **'Writing the first letter home' in the shadow of Lady Liberty**

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In the proposed paper I focus on the cultures of reading and writing among the arriving immigrants at the Port of New York at Ellis Island in the first decade of the 20th century. Scenes of arrival to America in official photographs and other sources frame the port of entry as a

place of reading and writing in which the iconographies of arrival and letter writing are interwoven. Like handiwork for women in detained rooms, writing and reading on the premises of the immigration station and its hospital's library was constructed within the regulative discourse of immigration. Detained at the moral gateway of modernity, immigrants enacted the progressive era debates about literacy and illiteracy. "Writing the first letter home" in the processing station epitomizes that discourse in one such image engages dichotomies of reading and listening, writing and orality. The immigrant letter writing could be represented as a solitary or collective act. Often posed but nevertheless candid shots of the anonymous participants of the Great Migration at the turn of the nineteenth and the twentieth century from Europe to America in a highly regulated environment of the Ellis Island hospital and detained rooms invoke total and external realities of text at a particular historical moment and writing and reading as a troupe of modernity in the context of arrival to America. The letters of migration connect writing closely to orality in the expressions of autodidacts or in dictation and that awareness inhabits the iconographies of writing and fictions of immigrant epistolarity created through popular Ellis Island photographs which were emblematic and widely circulated in the mainstream media from National Geographic to New York Times. I will contrast these fictions to the actual experiences of letter writing and exemplary "America letters" that are so influential in understanding migration experience of that period.

## **Hand-written newspapers and immigrant experience: The case study of Rockport, Massachusetts 1903-1923**

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My paper is based on a long-term research project on hand-written newspapers as an alternative medium in Finland and among Finnish immigrants in North America. Finnish-Canadian immigrants called them *nyrkilehti* ("fist press"). Recently, I have discovered several interesting collections of hand-written newspapers at Finnish American Heritage Center (Hancock, Michigan). The largest collection is the

hand-written newspaper *Walotar* (Lady of Light), which was edited by members of the temperance society *Walon Leimu* (Glow of Light) in Rockport, Massachusetts 1903–1926. This unique collection runs to 1200 pages. The Finnish community in Rockport was established at the end of the 19th century, when Finnish immigrants were recruited to stone quarries.

Based on the preliminary exploration of this large material, I will focus on the stylistic, thematic and generic changes in *Walotar* during the first ten years of its publication. *Walotar* was “writing from below”, since its contributors had had only a very modest schooling in Finland. Finnish temperance societies and Lutheran congregations established libraries and had Finnish Sunday schools. During the first years all contributors of *Walotar* were men. Most texts were essays on the relationship of temperance movement and the church, with a strong anti-clerical and socialist tendency. In the 1910s more generic and thematic variety can be observed in *Walotar*, including local event narratives, sayings (“*Luuknapei*”, “*Sanoi*”) and fictional short stories. Many women contributed to the paper, using “Kitchen English” (“*kitsiengelska*”), a hybrid language which Finnish women had learned working in hotels, boarding houses and private homes. *Walotar* is an excellent source for the study of immigrant experience and literacy practices in an immigrant community.

## **Socialist endeavours under the Southern Cross**

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The first permanent Finnish colony in Australia, Finbury, was founded at the turn of the 20th century, when Matti Kurikka and his followers migrated to Queensland to establish a socialist utopia “*Kalevan kansa*” (“*People of Kaleva*”) in 1899. Though Kurikka’s plans failed and he and some of his followers continued their journey to Canada in 1901, Kurikka’s ideas lived on among his followers who stayed behind in Australia. Ten or so of them found “*Asiainedustusseura Erakko*” (“*The Hermit Society for the Promotion of Affairs*”) in 1902 in the sugar cane district of Nambour, Queensland. The society broke-up in 1904 because of ideological and personal disagreements in November 1904.

In addition to meetings and social events the society published a handwritten newspaper Orpo (Orphan) from 1902 to 1904 (26 numbers). The newspaper also provided an important window onto the surrounding society since most of the settlers did not speak or read English. Many of the texts refer to literary or oral sources (newspapers, books, telegrams, letters, eyewitness testimony, gossip and rumours). Though the paper was dedicated to the promotion of socialist ideology and the documenting of the history of the first Finnish colony in Australia, in practice it acted as a battleground for dealing with local disputes and claims of authority.

In my paper I will focus on the short-lived history of Finnish socialist organizations in Australia and on the way the first Finnish migrants dealt with their internal struggles. This paper is related to my current research on memories of Finnish-Australians funded by the Academy of Finland (project n:o 250307).

## **Multi-literacy in Vilnius in the 17th century**

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The main question of the paper is how we can view literacy of the inhabitants of the capital city of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 17th century. In that period many languages (Polish, Ruthenian, Latin, Church-Slavonic, Lithuanian, Hebrew etc.) and several alphabets (Latin, Cyrillic, Hebrew and Arabic) were used in Vilnius. Their use was sometimes limited to different fields (literature, religion, law or administration) and there were some people who had to use several written systems. The paper will present how in such a multicultural city the level of literacy of a person would change in different communicative circumstances. I will focus on the relationship between Polish and Ruthenian which were the main written vernacular languages in seventeenth-century Vilnius. Then I will ask to what extent we can discuss this relationship in terms of competition or co-operation. What determined the choice of a specific written language? When were these languages complementary? The paper will be illustrated with manuscript and printed sources from Vilnius archives and libraries.

## Three literacies in Kent, 1820-1821

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Descriptions of late modern languages until 1877, when the phonograph was invented, have to be sourced from writing. But, because all printed texts began as handwritten scripts until 1867, when the typewriter was invented, descriptions don't have to be sourced only from printed writing, as, in fact, most of them are. Furthermore, just as only a fraction of all that was written is described, so the writers belong to a fraction of the higher ranks, who are a fraction of all writers. Those descriptions, therefore, describe writings of a minority and don't have to account for differences in rank or class, or in other social factors. In sum, language change (only the 'Standard', in fact) is described in a social vacuum (autonomously) and 'non-Standard' acts as a waste-heap of undescribed language. But linguists have begun to study handwritten scripts written by all ranks in society. Describing language change in those social and linguistic ranges requires new organising categories.

A socially based description places the formal linguistic mechanisms by which a language and literacies, including the 'Standard', work in a context of less formal social mechanisms. This paper reports on work-in-progress, aimed at filling the descriptive vacuum and unifying the study of all writing under categories which don't favour the 'Standard' over the 'non-Standard' varieties. It proposes three experimental categories for describing all written language: social rank or class, schooling and literacy. It applies those categories to a sample: the letters (1820-1) of three writers of three social ranks: (1) Stephen Wiles, son of paupers of New Romney, Kent, and apprentice to (2) Mr. John Vaughan, master watchmaker and silversmith in Rye, Sussex, and (3) Mr. Thomas Woollett, an overseer in New Romney and Wiles's teacher. Wiles and Vaughan wrote to Woollett in their socially controlled literacies and Woollett replied in his. The categories must describe all literacies without bias.

# The influence of the ‘creative class’ on literacy and everyday life experience in modern Iceland: a micro historical approach

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Manuscripts, like other books, do not just contain conventional texts but also often pictorial material of various kinds – drawings, illustrations, decorations and symbols. In my research I have centered on a detailed survey of pictorial material in manuscripts from the long 19th century. The material has been treated as a form of personal expression (ego-document) rather than being considered for any aesthetic qualities it may have. A wide range of illustrations (drawings) found in 19th-century Icelandic manuscripts, wood carvings done on everyday domestic utensils, and photographs from the period has been the subject matter in my research project. I have examined the ways in which these sources can be used, e.g. the light they shed on people’s creative thinking and attitudes to life in general. This element of the research is essential to produce a clear view of the options people had to process and interpret their thoughts and emotions.

The focus of this paper will be on investigating the influences that creative work of this kind in texts had on the individual persons who had to live with the formal restrictions of a rather rigid society. Including will be a focus on how this activity contributed to people’s increased awareness of the need to improve and consolidate literacy skills, how it served to promote abstract thinking and concepts about life, and how it consequently encouraged creative activity of various kinds among the general public. Individuals who produced this kind of pictorial expression will be studied – especially one farmer from the 19th century who made his own encyclopedia about the creation of human societies in historical times – and conclusions drawn about their importance to the cultural milieu of the ordinary working class in general. These individuals formed, as I see it, members of a ‘creative class’ whose passion lay in cultivating creative activity of various kinds.

## **Longing for books: autodidact editors and publishers in Estonia in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

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The development of Estonia in the second half of the 19th century is characterised by general modernisation, which intensified further in the beginning of the 20th century. This process involved socioeconomic, political and intellectual transformations. The aim of the Noor-Eesti (Young Estonia) movement, established in 1905 was to broaden and deepen the basis of Estonian culture. The members of the group deliberately cultivated their aesthetic programme, by following fashionable European trends, and tried to raise Estonian criticism and aesthetic thinking to a corresponding level. The enlivening of social and cultural life was mirrored in the rapid increase of book production.

It was also a characteristic feature of the period that persons of Estonian nationality became increasingly involved in the book branch, hitherto dominated by German entrepreneurs. The generation who entered printing and publishing in the 1880s-1900s were largely autodidacts. The data on their life stories is rather limited. However, questionnaires prepared for the biographical reference publication “Public figures of Estonia” in 1932 by the Estonian Literature Society, preserved in the Estonian Literary Museum shed some light on the biographies of two self-educated actors of Estonian book culture – Mart Tamverk and Tõnu Franzdorf. Both of them became authors, newspaper editors, printers, publishers and booksellers, active correspondingly in Haapsalu and Narva, two provincial towns in the beginning of the 20th century. Their activities had an important role in stimulating the local people to participate in creative work, offering a possibility to publish their books or to write articles to the newspaper, thus entering and creating the public sphere.

## **Publishing from below: Vihtori Kosonen as a working-class publisher**

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Working-class publishing during the time of the so-called old working class movement in Finland is still a notably under-researched part of the Finnish literary field. So far, only the biggest and perhaps the most important publishing house of the time, Työväen Sanomalehti-Osakeyhtiö, has been the subject of a detailed study, and a comprehensive research of the publishing sector as a whole is yet to be made. Studying the field might, however, offer new insights to the ideological formation of the working-class movement and the development of Finnish literary culture in general.

My research has focused on one of the actors of the field, Vihtori Kosonen, whose most prolific years in the trade were 1907–1910. During this short period he published around ninety titles originating from ten different countries and ranging from fiction, poetry, plays to theoretical works on e.g. socialism and education. The original authors under his wing included famous figures such as Eino Leino and L. Onerva, as well as less-known names such as Anni Kaste and Fanny Davidson. As translations Kosonen published titles from such international authors as Leo Tolstoy, Henry George and Ellen Key.

In my paper, I will examine the role of Kosonen's company in enriching the field of Finnish working-class literature. Through a short biography of Kosonen, I will appraise his relationship to the working-class movement and the ideological influences behind his publishing policy. Then, by analysing his output of translations of foreign literature, I will highlight his role in mediating international influences to the working-class readership. Third, by providing a close look at his publishing policy of Finnish authors, I will estimate his role in supporting domestic working-class literature. Thus, I will open up a perspective to working-class publishing as a facilitator of reading and writing from below.

## **Parish scribes and Ostrobothnian peasants in the 18th and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries**

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For a period of over 200 years Finnish peasants in Ostrobothnia relayed on parish scribes. These afforded the peasants reading and writing skills both on administrative and private occasions. Scribes were employed from 1620s onward to control and assist peasants in the collection of taxes, but during the 18th century they were closely connected with the parish administration. In the 1860s, some of the scribes were employed as chairs or secretaries when the local administration was reorganised in the countryside. In everyday life peasants also needed help with reading and writing.

In my study of parish scribes, I have examined their social and geographical background, careers and skills. In my presentation, I will focus on the collective of parish scribes as a professional and social group in the period 1721–1868. Who were these scribes, which skills and what kind of careers did they have, and what were their status and role in society? These are questions I will attempt to answer.

Parish scribes offered assistance on various occasions when reading and writing skills were needed. The work of three parish scribes can be studied in the light of the rich source material they have produced. My study of probate inventories, registers of possession made after death, will also show that scribes were often asked to write these documents, but that they were far from alone in writing these inventories.

## **The roots of popular movement literacies in Sweden: Colporteurs' reports**

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It is often stated that the popular movements are of extreme importance in the Scandinavian history of the late 19th and early 20th

century, i.e. in the transformation to modern societies. They promoted self-reflexivity, democratization and the concept of nation state, organizing mainly workers, peasants and petty bourgeois people. They were also agents of literacies as they developed their own literacy cultures, centered on regular local meetings and supported by a flood of brochures, tracts, books, journals etc.

The rise of widespread popular literacy in Sweden may, in some aspects, be seen as a process of secularization. It is more or less completed by the popular movements, from the free evangelistic movement, dating from the 1860s, over the semi religious temperance movement from the 1880s, to the explicitly non-religious labour movement from the 1890s. In this study, I go back to the roots.

The central figure of the free evangelistic movement was the colporteur, a lay preacher of humble origin, with a rudimentary education. He travelled through the country, preaching, making prayer-meetings, distributing tracts. The colporteurs were nationally organized in Evangeliska Fosterlandsstiftelsen (founded in 1856) and reported regularly in letters to the board; extracts were published in *Budbäaren*, the journal of Fosterlandsstiftelsen. The original letters are often preserved.

I present an analysis of these letter reports, focused on the following themes:

- The literacy culture of the movement, as represented by the various kinds of texts (religious as well as non-religious) and their functions, as mentioned in the reports
- The interface between the oral and the written in the communicative practices of the colporteurs
- The letter reports as such, i.e. genre patterns, topoi, rhetorical devices and style
- The relation between the colporteurs' letters and the extracts in the journal.

## **Itinerant penmen and working class handwriting instruction in 19<sup>th</sup> century America**

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During the late 19th century in the United States, writing academies, business schools, and penmanship colleges formalized the teaching of penmanship and the training of handwriting instructors. Professional penmen derided the quality of the penmanship instruction offered in public schools and offered the above alternatives. For instance, students learned to write a “business hand” in business colleges as part of a practical commercial education. This formalization included the rejection of the earlier model of the itinerant penman or traveling handwriting teacher. While writing academies for the elite existed, itinerant penmen roamed the country, offering courses in penmanship in cities and small towns. They promised, in the course of a short series of classes, to train students in the basics of business writing and ornamental penmanship. Professional penmen often considered these itinerant penmen to be frauds, reprobates, and drunks who provided mediocre instruction to the working-class. Leaders of the profession, writing in respected penmanship periodicals, accused these itinerant “sharks” of giving penmanship a bad name and of causing “irreparable injury...to the business.” However, some of the elite penmen started their careers as travelling instructors, and provided encouragement and advice to their still-wandering colleagues on how to gain respect from the local populace and offer a responsible course of study for small-town students. This talk will discuss the abilities and problems of the itinerant penmen from the perspective of the penmanship periodicals where their careers were discussed, and how their impact on the reputation of the profession was critiqued and often disparaged. The role of business colleges in the professionalization of penmanship and as a venue for both penmanship instructors and students to gain economic prosperity will also be addressed.

## INDEX OF NAMES

### **Presenters and Chairs**

Ahokas, Minna	9	Laine, Silja	30
Anttonen, Pertti	11	Laine, Tuija	17
Ashplant, Timothy	20	Leitão, Ana Rita	33
Bastman, Eeva-Liisa	18	Lundberg, Mattias	25
Blommaert, Jan	13	Luukkanen, Tarja-Liisa	42
Brewer, David A.	67	Margrét Eggertsdóttir	18
Costa, Ana Luisa	54	Mikkola, Kati	56
Dalbello, Marija	59	Murphy, Sharon	34
Davíð Ólafsson	22	Mäkinen, Ilkka	9
Dick, Archie	14	Möldre, Aile	65
Driscoll, Matthew J.	32	Niedźwiedz, Jakub	62
Edlund, Ann-Catrine	54	Nordlund, Taru	58
Elspaß, Stephan	38	O'Bryan, Ann	59
Ezell, Margaret J.M.	12	Ogrin, Matija	20
Fairman, Tony	63	Pallaskallio, Ritva	58
Garcia Prieto, Elisa	54	Pampliega Pedreira, Victor	59
Haugen, Susanne	11	Peltonen, Ulla-Maija	8
Heimo, Anne	61	Pollari, Mikko	66
Hopkin, David	28	Prinsloo, Mastin	16
Hufnagel, Silvia	27	Puttaert, Jill	53
Huldén, Linda	38	Rantanen, Arja	67
Ilyefalvi, Emese	48	Roper, Jonathan	37
Josephson, Olle	67	Rutten, Gijsbert	39
Kauranen, Kaisa	31	Rydbeck, Kerstin	43
Keravuori, Kirsi	47	Saarimäki, Pasi	48
Kikas, Katre	36	Salmi-Niklander, Kirsti	60
Klippi, Carita	52	Sanders, Mike	49
Knies, Michael	69	Schiegg, Markus	46
Kokko, Heikki	55	Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon	64
Kuismin, Anna	21	Stark, Eija	29
Laine, Esko M.	45	Stark, Laura	50
		Strand, Karin	51

Suodenjoki, Sami	35
Tarkka, Lotte	9
Úlfar Bragason	41
van der Wal, Marijke	39
Verheij, Talitha	44
Viitaniemi, Olli	23
Vosters, Rik	40

### **Attendees**

Alfauzan, Abdullah H. A.  
 Ahola, Joonas  
 Aunola, Salla  
 Bailie, Anne  
 Begna, Esther  
 Grönstrand, Heidi  
 Heikkilä, Elina  
 Hirvonen, Kaisa  
 Järv, Risto  
 Kajander, Konsta  
 Koning, Elisabeth  
 Kotioja, Eeva  
 Kyläkoski, Kaisa  
 Lauerma, Petri  
 Lykogiannaki, Stella

Muinonen, Maija  
 Mustonen, Eija  
 Nordlund-Laurent, Sara  
 Pesonen, Riitta  
 Päivi Räisänen-Schröder  
 Rajavuori, Anna  
 Roininen, Niina  
 Salmesvuori, Päivi  
 Savolainen, Ulla  
 Tinitis, Peeter  
 Vandenbussche, Wim  
 Veturliði Óskarsson  
 Österman, Joanna

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Anttila, Kristiina  
 Harju, Julia  
 Lehtonen, Hanna

## Notes

## Notes

## Notes

*White Field, Black Seeds: Nordic Literacy Practices in the Long Nineteenth Century.* Edited by Anna Kuusmin & M. J. Driscoll. SKS 2013.

This collection presents the work of primarily Nordic scholars from fields such as linguistics, history, literature and folklore studies who share an interest in the production, dissemination and reception of written texts by non-privileged people during the long nineteenth century.

**On sale during the conference. Price: 25€ (regular price 42€).**

*Kynällä kyntäjät. Kansan kirjallistuminen 1800-luvun Suomessa.* Toim. Lea Laitinen ja Kati Mikkola. SKS 2013.

Itseoppineiden kansanihmisten 1800-luvulla kirjoittamat tekstit kertovat ruohonjuuritasolta Suomen historiaa. *Kynällä kyntäjät* on ensimmäinen laaja yleisesitys suomenkielisten kansankirjoittajien teksteistä. Monitieteiseen tutkimukseen perustuva teos tarjoaa uudenlaisen näkökulman vuosisadan suuriin yhteiskunnallisiin ja kulttuurisiin muutoksiin. Se avaa monivivahteisen näkymän siihen, millaisia prosesseja kulttuurin kirjallistuminen, sääty-yhteiskunnan rakenteiden murtuminen ja suomalaisen kansakunnan rakentaminen olivat tavallisen kansan näkökulmasta.

Myynnissä konferenssin aikana **25 euron** hintaan (ovh 42€).



A wooden board inscribed by Vilppu Jeremiaanpoika (1858-1898), a saddle maker from southern Finland.