The Orthodox Christian Tradition Meets Popular Revivalism: Bengt Pohjanen’s Song of Praise to Lars Levi Laestadius

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A Tornedalian Akathistos

”Lovsång till Lars Levi Laestadius.
Kiruna-Lasse – In memoriam!”

[Song of Praise to Lars Levi Laestadius.
Kiruna-Lasse – In memoriam!]

(Bengt Pohjanen 2000, På ett litet men vilar ett helt millenium. Andliga tal och privatfilosofisk mottagning, Norma Bokförlag: Skellefteå)
A Borderological Approach to the Use of History: Some Reflections on Border Studies

• Identification Processes and the Use of History
• Contemporary Deconstruction and Renegotiation of Borders
• Rewriting History
• Region building, the Formation of Regional Identity and the Idea of a European Cultural Identity (“unity in diversity”)
• Identification as Becoming
• Minorities and Postcolonial Challenges of Complicities Between Nation-Building and Cultural Homogenisation
Europeanization and the status of minorities

Sweden ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in 2000. Jiddish, Romani, Finnish, Sámi and Meänkieli were granted official status as minority languages in Sweden.
Bengt Pohjanen: a short cv

– author of fiction, poetry, an opera libretto, co-author of two Meänkieli grammar books etc.
– former minister in the Church of Sweden
– wrote an academic thesis on the Finnish author Antti Hyry
– publisher
– debater
– Orthodox Christian priest (father Benedikt)
– promoter of Meänkieli culture in the Torne Valley (Pänktti)
Identity Constructions in Contemporary Tornedalian Literature

• The Torne Valley
Muli & Pohjanen’s *Meänkieli rätt och lätt* (2005): ”I was born without language”

I was born without language
umbilical cord speechlessly
bandaged
by a mute midwife

I grew up at the border
under the cross-fire from two
languages
which have whipped my tongue
to dumbness

I was raised
with demands of clarity
language and nationality

I was whipped at school
into language, clarity
nationality
I was whipped to contempt
for that which was mine
the want of a language
and the border

I was built by exterior
violence
as well as interior constraint
on abbreviations
and misunderstandings

I was deprived of my identity card

(translation by Anne Heith)
Pohjanen’s seven women and men who have shaped Meänmaa and its people

• Bengt Pohjanen, 2006: ”Sju flickor, sju pojkar”, *Gränsens tredje rum*, Barents Publisher: Överkalix
Questions of Cultural Identity

”identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being”

(Stuart Hall, *Questions of Cultural Identity*)
The Content of the Form:

The Akathistos Hymn:

The most well-known Akathistos is anonymous and undated. It is considered to be a masterpiece of Byzantine hymnography. It is a composition in praise of Mary containing twelve series of twelve salutations addressed to Mary. According to some scholars the hymn is the work of Romanos the Melodist, dating from the early sixth century. (Leena Mari Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn*, 2001)
Kiruna-Lasse: a Tornedalian who reached the summit of wordly success
NOUS. Utkast till en noetisk filosofi

- Pohjanen’s sketch of a noetic philosophy:
Popular Tornedalian revivalism: identity marker in opposition to the assimilation politics of nation-building and modern consumer society
Altar-piece in the Jukkasjärvi church painted by Bror Hjort
Den tornedalsfinska litteraturen

Från Kexi till Liksom

Bengt Pohjanen – Kirsti Johansson