

## KALEVIPOEG'S MISTAKE

DAVID ILMAR LEPASAAR BEECHER  
*Harvard University*

While several scholars have pursued the meaning and importance of Estonia's national epic, Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg*, to Estonian society and its aspirations for political independence, few have seriously engaged the text itself to contemplate what the events—the achievements and failures of the national hero—might signify, when taken on their own terms. Of course, this cursory treatment may be encouraged by the romantic tradition from which it sprang. On the whole, 19th century epics from Lönnrot's *Kalevala* to Longfellow's *Hiawatha* sought to do for their respective nations what MacPherson's *Ossian* had done for Scotland. They were attempts to recover (or imagine) a rich and unified cultural tradition in the distant past that would serve as a basis for a contemporary national identity. But the mere possession of a national epic in the early and middle portions of the 19th century—and having it proclaimed authentic—may have mattered more than its content. The vague, romantic idea of a national identity lurking among the misty folk traditions was enough to affirm a contemporary pride. Certainly, more people knew of *Kalevipoeg* than knew its gruesome details in their multifaceted particularities.

Nonetheless, *Kalevipoeg* deserves a second, closer look, it is in many ways a more modern and more political work than the contemporary and previous works that inspired it—MacPherson's Scottish epic or Lönnrot's Finnish *Kalevala*. Its deviation from its Finnish counterpart may lie in its contemptuous treatment of magic and mysticism. More often than not, the manipulation of spells serves as a force for evil, binds the homeland against its own best interest. Where every wound, every suffering, has a cure in the magic spells of the *Kalevala*, deep gashes are not so easily dealt with in *Kalevipoeg*. In a scene parallel to the "knee wound" incident of the *Kalevala*, Sulevipoeg dies despite all the incantations he and a Finnish "word-wizard" apply to the gash he has received in battle in the twentieth tale.

In *Kalevipoeg* the problems of government and society, when dealt with at all, are provided worldly, if somewhat fantastically symbolic answers. Finally, the political and social implications of *Kalevipoeg* are profoundly cautionary. In the greater "epic tapestry" of the text, the fall of Estonia derives as much from Kalevipoeg's misguided political agenda as from his particular immoral deeds (rape and murder). He emerges as an ineffective ruler because of his inability to provide an effective administration, not because of his individual moral failures as a human being. If there is a "mistake" it is Kalevipoeg's effort to protect Estonian sovereignty using repositories of wisdom and strength that lie outside itself. For in seeking a shield for his people, Kalevipoeg ignores the domestic, indigenous resources at his disposal. The text of *Kalevipoeg* does not look back and lament the loss of a mystical "sampo," a panacea for all ailments, in the manner of *Kalevala*. Rather, it laments the failure of Kalevipoeg to cultivate his state from the organic resources of Estonian society itself.

The promise that King Kalevipoeg brings to Estonians is not one of a democratic liberty; it is rather a promise of a national sovereignty and security against the invasions of the outside world. Indeed, the government Kalevipoeg imagines is a monarchical meritocracy, where the reins of government fall into the hands of the single man best suited to rule:

Kangem saagu kuningaksi,  
Vahvam teiste vanemaksi!  
Võimus jäägu ühe voiks,  
Ühe kätte kuningriiki,  
Muidu hulgalisil meelil  
Tuulest tüli tõusemisi! (226)<sup>1</sup>

The idea that nature—here the wind—will not tolerate the wishes of the multitude places the source of Kalevipoeg's legitimacy in God and nature rather than in any precedent or tradition of Estonian government.

Of course, Kalevipoeg is less the originator or conceiver of Estonia's government than he is the enactor of his father's plan, a father he has never met, yet whom he resolutely obeys, to the extent that he knows how:

Jääb aga riiki jagamata  
Ühe poja paranduseks,  
Siis on tükil tugevusta,  
Suurel kivil kindelusta.  
Osad väetid, võimetumad  
Sööksid üsksteist ise ära. (28)<sup>2</sup>

But even in his father's imaginings, the single unified state is sanctioned on the grounds of its natural utility—its capacity to maintain its sovereignty against external pressures. The ordering of the domestic domain is left to nature's whims, described as a kind of organic blossoming from within:

Kui on poega meheks kasvand,  
Valitsuse voli votud  
Siis saab öitsev onne-aega,  
Rahupoli rahva keskel  
Eesti piiril idanema. (28)<sup>3</sup>

Ultimately, the role of the leader, as Kalevipoeg interprets his father's conception of it, is that of a kind of security guard who will ensure the organic flowering of a prosperous, stable society by preventing obstacles to that flowering, but allow the flowering to happen of its own accord. Indeed, though Kalev might have specified the means by which he hoped to see Estonia ruled after his death, he feels that the state, to some degree, is out of his own—or, for that matter, any human—control. The alignment of God and nature have a greater sway over anyone's fate, and serve as a deeper source for the legitimacy of his son's rule, than any decree he has made or can make from beyond the grave. Thus, when Kalevipoeg comes to his tomb for assistance, his only advice is that his son try to appease Taara by repenting and atoning for his "youthful indiscretions"—i.e., rape and murder:

Jumalate juhatusel  
Jooksvad elu joonekesed,  
Voolavad onne-lainekesed.  
Kogemata kuritegu  
Püüa jälle parandada! (97)<sup>4</sup>

The status of King Kalevipoeg as protector of society against external antagonistic forces emerges especially in his conception of himself and his army in war, but also in the projects he undertakes in peacetime. In the final battle, Kreutzwald evokes Kalevipoeg and his fellows as forming a protective wall against the invading forces:

Olevipoeg Aleviga,  
Kalevipoeg ise kolmas,  
Seisivad kui raudaseina,  
Kaljukunkad kohkumata  
Tammemets tugevusel  
Vaenulaste vae vastas  
Onnetuma päeva ohtul. (268)<sup>5</sup>

The imagery of sheltering, preventive walls enters into Kalevipoeg's peacetime activities as well, when Olevipoeg and Kalevipoeg set out to build a central fortress for the kingdom—a fortress for the king, but also a fortress that will protect all those who cannot protect themselves:

Sinna loodi lustlinna,  
Kasvatati kindlat kohta,  
Kaevati kivikelderid  
Varjupaigaks vanadelle,  
tehti kenad elutoad,  
Kallid kaubakamberid,  
Vikite viisilisti,  
Tasutie targalisti. (201)<sup>6</sup>

Along similar lines, Kalevipoeg provides the naked, defenseless hedgehog with his cloak of spines by tearing off a piece of his own coat. But perhaps the best or most revealing instance of Kalevipoeg's conception of his own role as leader—as a shield or shelter-provider—appears as he contemplates the possibility of taking down and making use of the tremendous

oak tree that his father planted. Kalevipoeg hopes to construct shelters for all who might need them. In this case, the shelter he imagines would serve as much to shield people from the antagonistic elements of nature, from rain and wind, as from the invasion of human enemies from abroad:

Riismetest saab rahukoda,  
Vaestelaste varjutuba,  
Leskedelle leinakamber,  
Kurbadelle kurtmiskamber;  
Sealt saab Viru vihmavarju,  
Talurahvas tuulevarju [...]  
Et sealt vaese leidvad varju,  
Lesed leinamfse paika. (209)[7](#)

Ultimately, Kalevipoeg has an externally oriented understanding of his function as king and leader of his people, as a securer of national sovereignty against outside forces that might seek to deprive Estonia of it. Indeed, in the last chapter Kalevipoeg puts things in political perspective when he places national sovereignty above all other values, "Ennemini elan üksi/ Kehva mehidese kombel,/ Kui et sulgun sunni alia,/ Vööru voliduse alia" (273)[8](#). If Kalevipoeg imagines himself a builder of structures and containers in which he hopes to house and protect the nation, the national spirit always seems somehow separate from Kalevipoeg's political endeavors, his effort to protect that spirit; this does not mean that Kalevipoeg does not concern himself with what takes place inside those shelters—the domestic problems and life of the nation. However, his attitude toward domestic life, for the most part, is not that of a governor or king. He is certainly a participant in the life of the nation—he flirts with women, he wrestles with demons, he goes on adventures (or vacations)—depending on how one would choose to describe his activities, but he does not govern.

On a domestic level, the most Kalevipoeg does to ensure the welfare of the society or to engage his domestic resources is provide an example. He does not delve into the national coffers for the source of his own power and legitimacy. His first activity upon accepting the reins of government is that of farming: "Austelles adra-tööda,/ Pollumehe põlve-kesta." (106)[9](#) Though again, what is brought out here is not the importance of farming to the stability or success of the nation, but rather, the need for farming to receive the protection of the state in order for Estonia to flourish, in order to resist the subversive forces which might otherwise infiltrate society:

Ja et sahameeste seisus  
Rahupäevil öikka itseks,  
Sojakarast solkimata,  
alnu—verest varimata  
Seks on monusada mööka  
Kuningalle kanguseksi  
Igas kohas väga tarvis:  
toeks tungijate vastu,  
Varjuks vastu vaenlaselle  
Miska kurja karistada  
Vaenu-viha vähendada,  
Riigi seadust kohendada. (106)[10](#)

The dangers enumerated here, even the internal ones, are all dangers for which the sword provides a defense. Indeed, this explicitly aggressive weapon becomes like an agent of the state and justice in the manner of a shield against the forces that might subvert it.

Plowing and planting, the first acts of Kalevipoeg's statesmanship, bolster the organic metaphor for society that emerged in father Kalev's own conception of the working relationship between state and society. Kreutzwald enumerates in intimate detail all the things Kalevipoeg has plowed and planted—all the berries in the bogs, all the trees in the forest, all the conventional grains in the fields, and all the flowers on the hillsides. This plowing and planting, in keeping with most of Kalevipoeg's "larger-than-life" activities, takes the better part of a week of nonstop work (apparently he doesn't need to sleep). A. Annist has drawn attention to the symbolic value of Kalevipoeg's acts: "Seda sümboolsust on Kreutzwald lasknud aimata cepose mitmest kohas; mitte asjata ei soovita ta seda lugeda 'järelelemõtlemisega,' s. o ka ridadevahelise mõtte otsimisega" (55) [11](#) If we agree with Annist's claim that much of what Kalevipoeg does must be understood upon a symbolic or figurative level<sup>11</sup> we could say that, in this scene of plowing and planting, Kalevipoeg is essentially sowing a nation.

Nonetheless, even with this metaphor, Kalevipoeg's cultivation of the domestic state remains principally a protective or negative endeavor, a matter of keeping undesirable elements out, rather than regulating the positive elements within. Kalevipoeg undertakes to provide the best possible conditions for society to flourish. This scene, after all, represents one of Kalevipoeg's most intense engagements with the internal makings of society; but it ends with the laying of a foundation. After the planting, Kalevipoeg abandons his crop to fate, to grow of its own accord, and moves on to other adventures, protecting Estonia from more distant antagonists. Finally, Kalevipoeg's promotion of the organic flowering of Estonian culture and society does not in turn bolster the state.

Moreover, there are limits to Kalevipoeg's permission of that organic flowering. Taking heed of Annist's claim that Kalevipoeg's larger-than-life activities are symbolic of bigger concepts, like "vabadus" (freedom) and "rahvas" (the folk, or the people, Annist 55), we find a suggestion that in this farming scene Kalevipoeg may regulate the domestic life of society too much. After he has finished plowing, he shackles his horse to keep it from running away while he gets some sleep. But the fetters by which he keeps his horse, ironically, lead to its loss. When wolves come out of the forest and attack, the horse, it valiantly fights for its life, but owing to the fetters, it cannot run away. So, in the end, the wolves eat the horse alive.

In a parallel scene, Kalevipoeg seeks to restrain the advice of an elder from far away who seems to understand the problems of the state. Kalevipoeg does not appreciate the elder's criticism and shouts in anger:

Ohjad hoidku, koied koitku,  
Ohjad hoidku hobu kinni,  
Kiitked ktinnihargasida,  
Lingu paelad metsalisi,  
Koied koitku koormaida [...]  
Mis on kovem kinnitaja,  
Vagevam vastupidaja,  
Sulgegu su suuda lukku,  
Loksutagu lougasida  
Kurja kone kuulutusel,  
Habemata avaldusel! (114)[12](#)

In addition to his impatient frustration with the old man's criticism, Kalevipoeg here provides an ample list of all the kinds of fetters civilization uses to control its own elements, to regulate society. Kalevipoeg calls for a restraint upon the old man. Kalevipoeg does not heed his wisdom. Finally, in both these instances, the fettering of the horse and the refusal to listen to the elder, King Kalevipoeg metaphorically overregulates the society he rules, places too many fetters upon it.

The language of "fettering" or "shackling" is a persistent motif throughout *Kalevipoeg*. But fettering is not only associated with the imposition of human will. Kalevipoeg's sleep, the other immediate cause of the horse's death, or at least Kalevipoeg's inability to fly to his horse's rescue, is also linked with the idea of fettering. Kalevipoeg's literal awakenings are almost always described in terms of breaking free of shackles or fetters. And falling asleep is frequently a matter of falling into a kind of harness or getting tied up by ropes or fetters; for instance, "Väsind silmad vajuivad/ Rutust une rakke'esse,/ Kiirest uinu kammitsasse." (141)[13](#) Sleep is constantly getting in his way. Many of the subversive events that eventually undermine Kalevipoeg's rule occur while he is "shackled" to slumber, unable to preside over his kingdom. First, of course, Kalevipoeg loses his horse—his prime agent of "social cultivation"—while sleeping. Sleep robs him of the sound cautionary advice of the elder as well:

Unenagu kodus kuju,  
Toelikke tahendusi  
Vaiba kirjal valelikuks.  
Voora vanarauga jutud,  
Targald antud tahendused  
Tuiskasivad aina tuulde. (119)[14](#)

Similarly, later on in tale twelve, Kalevipoeg feels himself "shackled" by a nightmare cast upon him by Peipsi's sorcerer. His sleep, which lasts for seven weeks, prevents him from attending to the problems of state. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, Kalevipoeg loses his sword to slumber. The sorcerer steals it from his side and drops it (accidentally) into lake Peipsi, while the slumbering Kalevipoeg remains vulnerable to the antagonistic forces of the everyday world he inhabits.

By associating sleep with fetters, Kalevipoeg remains firmly a part of the world he seeks to rule, firmly embedded within it or fettered to it, despite his desire to shield it from some enlightened position, from the perspective of transcendent wisdom. Emotions, like anger and sadness, which are also typically represented as forms of fettering, have a similar narrative effect. They bind or weave *kuduvad* Kalevipoeg into the tapestry of the epic (13). Hence, Kalevipoeg fails to attain the power over the state he desires. As much as he fetters the domestic world around him (often to the detriment of society), the world fetters him, for he is not exempt from the foibles and natural life processes of normal human beings—indeed, even in death, Kalevipoeg remains chained to the gates of Hell despite all his clamor.

Nonetheless, despite his failures, he continues to try to escape the constraints of normal human beings. In fact, Kalevipoeg even conceptualizes this escape as a kind of duty to the state:

Kui mind tehti kuningaksi,  
Valitie valitsejaks,  
Pidin pesast pogenema,  
Lagedalle lendamaie,  
Kus üks loodud kotkapoega

Tuulilla peab tallamaie  
Omal tiival onne-teeda,  
Radasida rajamaie. (106)[15](#)

He seeks rule from the outside looking in, like a god in possession of those deep wisdoms that will shield Estonia from the onslaught of the outside world. To protect what is sweetest in Estonia he feels he himself must "maha jätma magusama." (106)[16](#) The necessity of his estrangement from life in Estonia strikes closest to home in an early lament, where he is saddened to find himself destined for a life of solitude:

Vennad kaugella Virussa,  
Teised Turgi radadella.  
Jäin kui lagle lainetelle,  
Pardipoega parve äärde,  
Kotkas kõrgele kaljule,  
Üksi ilina elamaie. (74)[17](#)

In seeking solitude, Kalevipoeg feels himself enacting the will of his father—yet he may overinterpret his father's desires. Kalevipoeg's father has defined the life of a powerful man as a life without constraint:

Leiab paksest pilvedesta,  
Kotkas kaljult pasapaika.  
Kanget meest ei kõida kõied,  
Pea ei kinni raudapaelad. (29)[18](#)

Still, a life without constraint need not mean what Kalevipoeg interprets it to mean—that is, a rejection of all the supports, all the national energy of one's society. If we look closely at his father's claim, we find that when Kalev describes the heroic strong man here he does not mean that the hero must act without inspiration or encouragement, but merely that the hero can make the most of minimal encouragement, that the wind can propel him through a cloud cover of adversity.

Throughout the epic, in keeping with his desire to escape the constraints of his present moment and space, Kalevipoeg constantly measures or has others (like Olevipoeg) measure the limits, the boundaries, of the world in which he lives. This habit achieves its culmination during the sixteenth tale. He recounts to Varrak, the Lappish sage, all the far-reaching places he has measured:

Vii mind aga, vennikene,  
lima otsa ukse ette,  
Vanataadi varavasse!  
Mere stigavusemoodud.  
Porgu piirid pikkusella—  
Neida tunnen noori mööda;  
Suure ilma otsa seinad  
Tänini veel teademata,  
Kasilla mul katsumata. (214)[19](#)

Kalevipoeg seeks a kind of transcendental wisdom, beyond all the well-worn trails of civilized existence. Elsewhere in this tale, Kalevipoeg expresses the desire to uproot strange sights, tear these memories from the places where they occur and assemble them for a deeper knowledge of the workings of the world, so that he might return home with a better knowledge of how to protect the precious national sovereignty of Estonia. Above all, however, Kalevipoeg seeks to find the precise place where the sky intersects the plane of the earth and sea, to probe the structural boundaries of the cosmos. He is reaching for knowledge outside conventional paths, wisdom that arises far away, so that he might better administrate the domestic republic.

The ultimate conclusion, that Taara has created a world where there are no ultimate barriers, forces Kalevipoeg to give up the quest. Indeed, he has not found the knowledge he pursued, the ship "Lennuk" (literally "airplane") failed to provide the escape implicit in its name. Kalevipoeg did not manage to reach beyond the ends of the earth. He did not acquire that objective, external wisdom with which he hoped to rule Estonia. The lesson of the quest and indeed, of *Kalevipoeg* more generally, may be that such wisdom is not possible. We need look no further than the title of the epic itself to see that the hero is embedded in a lineage—he is "Kalevipoeg"; he has no name, no identity, outside his patrimony. He is nothing but Kalev's son.

The failure of Kalevipoeg may finally lie in his effort to secure the state always from the outside. In constantly looking away, seeking to escape his embedded, fettered existence and to acquire a godly kind of wisdom he can apply back to the administration of the Kingdom, he forgets—or at least fails to deal with—the immediate concerns of that Kingdom. Indeed, Kalevipoeg neglects the fortresses he was building back home when he journeys in pursuit of the ends of the earth. More modestly, Kalevipoeg's attempts to use lumber from Finland to build fortresses also creates problems. The boards salvaged from the battles with the demons are too few to be of any use. Too many were lost in transit from Finland. And

ultimately, his dealings in Finland seal his death, for it is the sword crafted in Finland armed with the curse of the Finnish swordsmith that cuts off his legs. Kreutzwald attributes to Finland the ultimate responsibility for Kalevipoeg's death: "Aga mööga arvamista/ Sepa vanne segatanud." (273)<sup>20</sup> Hence, the Finnish curse "confuses" the well-meaning sword.

Finally, all of Kalevipoeg's efforts to secure the advantage of Estonia by voyages to foreign lands come to naught—whether he pursues wisdom or material gain. Even Varrak, who guides Kalevipoeg to the ends of the earth in search of the key to the cosmos, ends up doing more for Lapland by their bargain than Kalevipoeg does for Estonia. For Varrak ends up taking the chest of laws of Kalevipoeg's father, chained to the wall of Kalevipoeg's home.

The ultimate irony of the epic may lie in this chest. Kalevipoeg journeys far to pursue the key to good government, to deep wisdom. In going abroad, Kalevipoeg hoped to recover deep, ancient knowledge, pluck it from the eclectic sources at the far reaches of the universe, unshackle it from the places where it presently resides:

Läki vöörast vaataie,  
Soomest sala sahkamaie,  
Nurmedelta noppimaie,  
Kanarbikust Katkumaie  
Merepõhjast pühkimaie,  
Kivikildest kergitama,  
Mägedsta kängutama,  
Mis nad sala varjutavad  
Kallimada kuulutavad! (211)<sup>21</sup>

But all the while, the chest that might have guided the politics of the nation lay at the heart of his home. Rather than discover the deep laws of the cosmos and society by his journey to the ends of the earth, Kalevipoeg loses the deep wisdom of the Estonian nation, the chest—the key to national sovereignty—forever.

This passage also brings out Kalevipoeg's contrasting engagement with his homeland and the world abroad. While he follows the directions of Estonians—particularly birds—in traversing the world, the wisdom he pursues is always elsewhere. The best he finds in Estonia is a way to get there. As much as he has sought to unfetter the wisdom of far-off places, he is quite content to leave the chest fettered to the wall at home; just as he fatefully fettered his horse after his first bout of plowing, or called for the ancient elder's mouth to be fettered, and prevented him from speaking indigenously Estonian wisdom. Kalevipoeg's mistake is ultimately his failure to take full advantage of his national resources. He pursues foreign ideals unsuited to the national character, much as Kreutzwald claims the modern writers of Estonia do in his 1857 introduction to the epic:

Eestlane on, nagu varës tuntud valmis, iseomahiilgavalt musta sulestiku välja kiskunud ja uhkeldabringi vöörast kirjute sulgedega, ilma et aimaksi seda huhmakust, mida ta näitab kogu maailmale sellega, et ta oma väärtuslikku varanust ei pea milleskiski, hinnates ainuülsaks ja auväärseks üksnes vöörast ja ainult sellepärast, et see on vooras (Kalevipoeg II, 56)<sup>22</sup>

Rather than the golden age of Estonia, *Kalevipoeg* represents a failed government under the misguided rule of one man—a man who fails to take advantage of the indigenous offerings of his country, despite all the good deeds he performs for it.

In all fairness to Kalevipoeg, although he hires Finnish "word-wizards" to advise him, he *does* in fact respect his indigenous national identity, the very identity that the crow of the parable rejects. In fact, Kalevipoeg says as much in his first confrontation with the Finnish swordsmith, noting that every pine cone must respect its origins, and every bird its own song:

Ega sugu lahku soosta,  
Vösu ei veere kännusta;  
Igal linnul oma laulu,  
Sugu mööda sulgis-kubbi:  
Rähnil kirju, kaarnal musta,  
Tedrepojal punaharja  
Kukepojalla kannuksed,  
Kalalgi sugu soomuksed... (76)<sup>23</sup>

So Kalevipoeg's failure may not be a failure to accept his Estonian lineage and culture, but rather his inability to recognize the implications of that acceptance—i.e., his inability to realize that the power of that identity must come from within, not from the garments that cover up the surface. For all his efforts to cultivate Estonian society organically, the political strength of the state never seems to well up from within society—the state is inorganically imposed. According to Kalevipoeg, the voices of Estonia remain cacophonous without a leader to organize them; he claims they displease the wind: "Muidu hulgalisil meelil/ Tuulest tüli tõusemisil! (226)<sup>24</sup> And it is a very inorganic state indeed that rejects the political viability of its own indigenous society and culture in the name of the national spirit.

Finally, Kalevipoeg is less an ideal hero than he is a flawed human being—larger than life to be sure, but with a symbolic and pedagogical value that lies more in his mistakes than in the ideals he embodies as the quintessential Estonian. In the 1857 introduction to the epic, Kreutzwald satirizes the tendency of the contemporary Estonian intelligentsia to imitate and applaud foreign models of art and literature, while ignoring their own. Kalevipoeg's tendency to seek Estonian sovereignty from external sources echoes the national cultural inferiority complex that Kreutzwald observed in Estonians of his day. But however much *Kalevipoeg* offers a cultural criticism of the mid-19th century, it also embodies what Kreutzwald finds lacking among the art of his contemporaries. For Kreutzwald's epic is built out of indigenous folk songs and legends. And as such, it is an antidote to the common trend of imitating foreign models; it is a first step in the right direction. It is a step, not back into the past, but into the future through the memory of what went wrong. Ironically, Kalevipoeg's mistake as a political leader supports Kalevipoeg's achievement as a politically charged work of art.

#### WORKS CITED

- Kreutzwald, Fr. R. *Kalevipoeg: Üks Ennemuistene Jutt Kahekümnes Laulus*. Tallinn: Ühiselu, 1993.  
Kreutzwald, Fr. R. *Kalevipoeg: Tekstikriitiline Väljaanne Uhes Kommentaaride ja Muude Lisadega II*. Tallinn: Eesti Riiklik Kirjastus, 1963.  
Kreutzwald, Fr. R. *Kalevipoeg: An Ancient Estonian Tale*. Trans. Jüri Kurman. Moorestown: Symposia Press, 1982.  
Annist, A. "Sissejuhatus." *Kalevipoeg*. Tallinn: Eesti Riiklik Kirjastus, 1961.

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all subsequent Estonian language quotations from the narrative of *Kalevipoeg* derive from Kreutzwald, Fr. R. *Kalevipoeg: Üks Ennemuistene Jutt Kahekümnes Laulus*. Tallinn: Ühiselu, 1993. The following translation and all subsequent translations of the text are taken from Kreutzwald, Fr. R. *Kalevipoeg: An Ancient Estonian Tale*. Trans. Jüri Kurman. Moorestown: Symposia Press, 1982.

And let the bravest man be king,  
the most courageous one be elder;  
let power rest in the hands of one—  
a single man to rule the kingdom!  
Otherwise the wishes of the multitude  
will soon raise rancor from the wind. (219)

<sup>2</sup> If the state stays undivided  
Is but one son's patrimony,  
then the unit will have strength,  
the firmness of a boulder;  
fragments are feeble and feckless  
and would devour each other. (25)

<sup>3</sup> When the boy has grown to manhood,  
taken up the reins of government,  
the bloom of a happy age,  
a time of peace among the people,  
shall sprout within Estonia's borders. (25)

<sup>4</sup> The brooklets of our life,  
our waves of happiness,  
run guided by the gods.  
Try to atone for your unfortunate crimes. (93)

<sup>5</sup> Along with Alev, Olevipoeg,  
and Kalevipoeg, as the third,  
stood like an iron wall, like rocky cliffs, unwavering,  
with strength of an oakwood  
against the force of foemen  
on the eve of that dire day. (259)

<sup>6</sup> A merry stronghold was constructed,  
a sure fortress was stood  
and stone cellars dug  
as a refuge for the aged;  
fine living rooms were made,  
storing-rooms for precious goods. (195)

<sup>7</sup> a hall of peace can be built of them,  
a hiding hut for orphans,  
a mourning room for widows,  
for the sad a sorrow-chamber,  
all of Viru can find refuge from the rain  
the farming folk find a wind-shelter [...] shelter  
shelter can be sought by the poor  
a spot for mourning found by widows. (201)

<sup>8</sup> "I'd sooner live as a solitary, / in the manner of a poor man, / than submit to domination / under alien government" (263)

<sup>9</sup> "Honoring a farmer's labor, he took up the plow." (103)

<sup>10</sup> And to assure that the plowman's estate  
would ever bloom in peace,

untainted by the din of war,  
unsullied by gory strife,  
the merry sword was the king's support,  
much needed in many ways:  
as support against the invader,  
a shield against the enemy;  
to punish crime,  
decrease strife's rancor  
and enforce the nation's law. (103)

<sup>11</sup> Kreutzwald has allowed us to see this symbolism in numerous places throughout the epic; it isn't without reason that he encourages the reader to approach the epic 'reflectively' i.e., encourages the reader to search for meanings between the lines, (my own translation)

<sup>12</sup> May reins restrain and ropes bind,  
let the reins restrain the horse,  
a hobble hold plow-oxen  
and the bands of a snare bind beasts;  
let ropes contain cargoes [...]  
Whatever is the stoutest tie,  
the toughest and most durable—let it close your mouth now,  
snap your jaws shut  
at this vile speech,  
this insolent announcement. (110)

<sup>13</sup> Kalevipoeg's weary eyes  
quickly sank into sleep's harness,  
swiftly into slumber's shackles. (136)

<sup>14</sup> the hero's dreaming wove forms  
into a flickering tapestry,  
it twisted truth into delusion:  
the aged stranger's tales,  
these intimations of his wisdom,  
were strewn into the wind. (115)

<sup>15</sup> When I was made ruler,  
chosen to be the king,  
I had to quit my nest  
and fly into the open fields  
where a natural eagle's son  
must tread the wind  
and clear the road to happiness. (103)

<sup>16</sup> "leave what is sweetest behind". (102)

<sup>17</sup> My brothers are far off in Estonia  
others in distant Byzantium;  
I was left like a wild-goose on the waves,  
a duckling by the riverbank,  
an eagle high on a rocky crag—  
To live in this world alone. (70)

<sup>18</sup> like the eagle, the strong man  
finds a rocky nest on wings of wind  
even through a cover of clouds.  
The hero isn't held by ropes  
not bound by iron bands. (25)

<sup>19</sup> But lead me, brother,  
to the threshold of the earth's edge,  
to the Oldman's gate.  
I have plumbed the depths of the seas  
and paced the length of Hell's borders—  
these I know with my measuring cords;  
but the walls of this wide earth are, to this day unknown to me,  
untouched by my two hands. (206)

<sup>20</sup> "But the thoughts of the sword/ were muddled by the smith's curse." (263)

<sup>21</sup> Let us go to see strange sights,  
uproot them stealthily from Finland,  
pluck them from the pastures,  
tear them from the heather,  
sweep them up from the sea's bottom,  
plunder what's beneath the waves;  
let's raise them from stone splinters,  
pry them loose from the hills—  
whatever has been hidden there,  
the precious treasure they proclaim! (204)

<sup>22</sup> The Estonian is like the crow in the well-known fable who tears out his own glossy black feathers and struts about in mottled alien plumage without being at all aware of the ridiculous spectacle that he presents to the world: his own valuable belongings he deludedly regards as nothing, but only the foreign is considered beautiful and precious, merely because it is foreign. (293)

<sup>23</sup> A man can't part from his kindred;  
a cone can't roll far from its tree;  
each bird has its own song  
and feathered coat according to its kind:  
the woodpecker, mottled; the raven, black;  
the grouse's son a comb of red;  
the rooster's son bears spurs.



Even fish have the scales of their strain... (72)

<sup>24</sup> "Otherwise the wishes of the multitude/ will soon raise rancor from the wind." (219)