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The migration of The Emigrants. “Moberglands” in media and on both sides of the Atlantic

In the middle a shared experience: the agony and expectations of emigration. A real history split into two, a history of the lean, crowded patches of Småland and the need for strong arms on the virgin prairie. Compulsory state-church conformity and military needs of well disciplined male bodies as against individual freedom and exposure on the other side of the Atlantic.

Experiences were formed and mediated in accounts full of promise from those who made money on the passage and from those who went before and embroidered on their own mythical success. Warning examples were called forth from the guardians of the fatherland and those who made a profit from the crowded service market in the old country. Letters filled with details crossed the Atlantic preceding the travellers who brought their stories back home. Taken together these stories grew into songs of monumental success, but whisperings of hardships and death in ignominy were heard as well.

Politically, the Liberals in Sweden tried to create a native prairie, with its own *homesteads* within reach. The 'own-your-own-home' movement of the late 1800s was supposed to give the poor and virtuous a literal foothold on the native soil, thus tying international migration and socialism to more secure grounds. The National Emigration report simultaneously counted, mapped and swore at the apparent paradox that so many good potential citizens chose to leave their country for a new one of their own free will.¹

Strong collective memories seldom follow close on contemporary, ever so traumatic, individual experiences. A certain distance, but not too distant, so that the seriousness and relevance of experience remains, creates the condition both for the need to formulate a tradition and time to collect the resources that taken together can create a mould for casting future memories and expectations.² There is always a surplus of actors and stories in the air for telling about dramatic events shared by many people, but which of them gain a power of formation that survives in the formatting of individual memories and in posterity's image of a shared experience?

It is not the contemporary National Association against Emigration, or the very comprehensive Emigration report that has formed our current picture of emigration. Instead, it is Vilhelm Moberg's works *The Emigrants* (1949), *The Immigrants* (1952), *The Settlers* (1956) and *The Last Letter Home* (1959) that

¹ The emigration report with 20 appendices full of facts under Gustav Sundbärg's chairmanship 1907-1914. H. Arnold Barton, *A folk divided. Homeland Swedes and Swedish Americans, 1840-1940*, *Studia multiethnica Upsaliensia*, 10 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1994); Nils Edling, *Det fosterländska hemmet : egnabemspolitik, småbruk och hemideologi kring sekelskiftet 1900* (Stockholm: Carlsson, 1996); Kristian (red.) Hvidt, ed., *Emigrationen fra Norden indtil 1. verdenskrig : rapporter til det [15.] Nordiske historikermøde i København 1971, 9-12 august* ([København]: [Historisk inst.], 1971); Olov Isaksson, (red.), *Utvandrare och invandrare i Sveriges historia 1846-1996, Svenska emigrantinstitutets skriftserie*, 9 (Stockholm: Ordkompaniet distributör, 1997). For ethnological perspectives see Lizette Gradén, *On parade : making heritage in Lindsborg, Kansas*, *Studia multiethnica Upsaliensia*, 15 (Uppsala: Univ. : Univ.-bibl. distributör, 2003)

² Ron Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma. Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002).

have managed to assemble individual and collective accounts and offer a sufficiently many-sided and yet pregnant creation as a frame story for the destinies of many.

In the middle of the phenomenon we are going to follow there is the real many-sided reality of more than one million individuals emigrating from Sweden to America. The strongest effect of this mass movement account is paradoxically formed through the destinies and anxieties of a handful of fictional characters, described by a person who stayed behind. The tetralogy is one of the most important places formatting the cultural memory of the emigration, but not the only one.

Moberg did not physically stay in the emigrant region where he was born. While writing his novels he made long research trips to the USA in his concern to find a solid basis in reality behind the characters and events that he described.³ However, nobody is in control of his story, especially not if it is a strong formation making a great impact, as with Moberg's emigrant epic. Its influence is great, as is the recycling of it. Moberg would look with contempt on some of the recycling manifestations as vulgarisation and intrusion on his integrity as a writer as well as on the ordinary honest people whose spokesman he considered himself to be. Recycling his story in other ways than what he had in mind was for him to distort the word. For others his stories have become the starting-point for a series of projects of their own which they feel strongly about and which obtain their legitimacy from various quarters. Are they to be regarded as distortive or as creative, independent, even legitimate and on their own premises authentic creations of new formations? Generally speaking, two questions may be raised: what may count as original or at least firmly formatted interpretations? How are they recontextualised when experienced, handed over and recycled? For the first type of reasoning we have a more established set of concepts than for the other. The originals, if they are artistic, may obtain the status of works and copyright may apply to them, if they are scholarly they may require appropriate references and an openness to criticism, or if they are places to visit they may have an authenticity in relation to the events they represent. Different genres have different demands and conflicts frequently arise in the translation between them or in the simultaneous use of several of them. As regards recycling, we are less provided with theoretical and institutional frameworks. Tourism is such an experience genre. The sublime experience is a forgotten one. New forms arise when local communities more or less abandoned by the development of society try to create a feeling of self, an identity and financial opportunities in the same movement and by exploiting the strength of artistic interpretations. Here we will follow the emigrant story between a few firm formattings such as the novels, the film and the musical, but above all we will raise the question of how the latter more complex recycling of these forms appear when recontextualised by contemporary needs and opportunities.

Where then does the story lead? I leave behind the many individual reading experiences⁴, it is the new representations that are in focus here, the re-formations which incorporate the themes of the emigrant epic in new contexts and present them publicly but with different claims. The list will not be complete but still comprehensive and varied: academic emigration research, High Chaparall, Jan Troell's filmatic version, a musical and - our main focus here - two Emigrant- or Moberglands.⁵ Is this distorting the word, a description that Moberg would no doubt have confirmed, the film barely excepted? Is that then inevitable for a successful formation accepted by the public and finding resonance among the culture-building levels of society? Can the normative charge be reversed to look upon the formation as the

³ Wilhelm Moberg, *All upptäcka Amerika : 1948-1949* (red. Gunnar Eidevall) (Stockholm: Carlsson, 1995). I am grateful to professor Staffan Klintborg who with short notice helped me translate this paper.

⁴ Within cultural studies a tradition has developed where popular recycling of material from novels has been emphasised as active culture creativity. Janice A. Radway, *Reading the romance: women, patriarchy, and popular literature* (Shapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina P., 1984).

⁵ Some observations that have been made about Mobergland in Småland have been published in a more comprehensive article in Peter Aronsson, "Den osedda filmen . kulturarv och visualiseringsprocesser," in *Det förlutna som film och vice versa*, ed. Pelle Snickars & Cecilia Trenter, (eds.) (2004a).

"represented word", a necessary inclusion of transferred culture into new contexts where the creation of meaning can never mean antiquarian interpretation? Are there other ways of discussing authenticity than in relation to historical facts or the author's intentions? The prerequisite for something being distorted is the existence of an original and a clear view of what constitutes its non-negotiable authenticity. But it is not self-evident, if it is implied in an underlying feeling for the honour and rights of ordinary people, in the possession of a copyright, the places where it happened or in the very struggle to accept one's origin and find a way into the future.

The pure word visualized

From the milling history of emigration Moberg selects certain narratives, centering around Karl-Oskar and Kristina from Korpmoen. The story does not deviate from Moberg's profile as a writer but makes concrete some features that are common to large parts of his production. Moberg had a very intimate relation to the past. Practically every work from his pencil deals with questions that have expressly to do with his Småland past, while at the same time dealing both with essential personal questions and all the experienced dilemmas of modernisation.⁶

The relation to actual history as well as to the mediation via film and television has deepened over the years. Moberg's mistrust of the film went back to some early disappointments and less successful attempts to write his own film scripts. But successful films were made of historical novels like *Rid i Natt!* (1942), *Din stund på jorden* (1972) and *Raskens*, filmed with Moberg taking part in writing the script, but only completed after his death in 1975.⁷

All these works have been important to Swedish history culture with a political undertone. *Rid i natt!* immediately became relevant through its allusion to the German occupation and Swedish cowardice. Only a year after the book came out theatre productions were on the way both at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm, at Riksteatern, in Göteborg and Helsingborg. The radio theatre and film versions added to the massive medialisation in the midst of the war.⁸ Moberg also made statements about his view of artistic freedom in historical writing. While on one hand asserting a high degree of freedom he claimed at the same time that what had been written could have happened in principle and was thus in principle historically authentic.⁹

When at the time Moberg made his reflections on the relation between the novel and the film he did not touch upon the relation to the real background. He then states that the common ground is in principle an epic presentation, albeit based on words and pictures. This becomes a dominating translation problem: turning words into pictures, in this case old-fashioned dialogue into a historic but graspable feeling and squeezing the events of the novel into the framework of a film, which basically seems like artistic loss. His motivation to take part in such a transformation is that "film art is a power that today strongly contributes to moulding the soul of the people."¹⁰

⁶ Part of the text and material surrounding the filming and Sweden's Mobergland has been published earlier in Aronsson, "Den osedda filmen – kulturarv och visualiseringsprocesser."

⁷ Peter Aronsson, "Den historiska romanen och historikerna. Vilhelm Mobergs *Rid i Natt!* i debatten," in *Vilhelm Moberg i blickpunkten*, ed. Ingrid Nettervik (Växjö: Vilhelm Moberg sällskapet, 1999); Bengt Forslund, *Vilhelm Moberg, filmen och televisionen : fakta och kommentarer : brevväxlingar och debattinlägg* (Stockholm: Carlsson, 1998), p. 109f.

⁸ Forslund, *Vilhelm Moberg, filmen och televisionen : fakta och kommentarer : brevväxlingar och debattinlägg*, p. 82f.

⁹ Aronsson, "Den historiska romanen och historikerna. Vilhelm Mobergs *Rid i Natt!* i debatten,"

¹⁰ The original is quoted from p.84 from the special program written for the premiere of the film in November 1942, from Forslund, *Vilhelm Moberg, filmen och televisionen : fakta och kommentarer : brevväxlingar och debattinlägg*, p. 84ff.

The themes of *Raskens* and the Emigrant epic, the two works with perhaps the greatest public success in Swedish history culture are similar: old hard-working and poverty-stricken Sweden takes on a personal shape. Love, honour and injustice are set to play under a cruel sky, on a soil next to impossible to plough and with indifferent, often cruel social superiors. We can feel with the people although the events take place in the distant past, prior to democratisation, equal rights, the welfare society, industry and mass communication.

The plans for making a film appeared immediately after the publication of the first novel in 1949, but it was not until 1968 that all the plans and alternatives came together when SF with Jan Troell as the director obtained the rights. During the shooting of the film Moberg was highly nervous about two things: the exaggerated interest on the part of the evening press to blow up and write down the film before it was finished: "*Please make the Emigrant as quietly as possible - this is my prayer, first and last!*" The other thing was his fear that the tourist industry would trivialize and vulgarize the theme: " I have heard that they have already opened cafés and waffle bakeries at Långasjö, as a service for the flow of tourists".¹¹ From having met opposition in the native area the director could now report that he was now regarded as 'canonized in the home country' ... I think I'll have to go down there and put a stop to this before it's too late. If I should try to rape the vicar's wife, perhaps that might help against the supposed canonization?"¹²

The premiere of the film took place on March 8, 1971, without Moberg, who stayed away in protest against SF giving *Expressen*, the evening tabloid, the rights to support the launching with pages of photos and quotations. Moberg felt side-stepped and threatened to sue. But he was also pleased that the publishers had printed a new cloth-bound edition in time for the premiere. Over a million Swedes saw the film in half a year. The success was repeated and reinforced the next year with *The Settlers*, with only a few critical voices being heard from the Press. The 1968 left-wing criticism of the film project, accusing it of being dated and not sufficiently socially involved Moberg angrily turned down as being in itself " A fad - nothing else. In a few years' time it will be dated".¹³

Even here we can see how Moberg noted with fear the popular interest in the filming and how local entrepreneurs did not hesitate to exploit the opportunities offered by this interest. This is obviously the basis of further conflicts around what is legitimate and what is illegitimate to use of local experiences, Moberg's stories and the SF film.

Mobergland Småland: the emigrant district

Southeastern Småland was colonized late. The many names ending in *-måla* tell us that the earth has been divided in historical time and that farmers have moved out to break the stony area to create new life. Conflicts and violence marked these areas in early modern times, most unlike the negotiated comfort of the Swedish model. In these areas Nils Dacke rallied the ordinary people who could not stand the demands of their superiors. Farmers rebelled if the burdens imposed from above displeased them. There developed a mentality where no one trusted anyone else and where the suspiciousness of institutions was rational and well founded. In another era a tough mentality may, however, turn out to be an enemy. When

¹¹ Letter from Moberg to Forslund on Dec 15, 1968, in Forslund, *Vilhelm Moberg, filmen och televisionen : fakta och kommentarer : brevväxlingar och debattinlägg*, s. 140.

¹² Forslund, *Vilhelm Moberg, filmen och televisionen : fakta och kommentarer : brevväxlingar och debattinlägg*. Brev från Moberg till Forslund den 12/2 1969, i Forslund, *Vilhelm Moberg, filmen och televisionen : fakta och kommentarer : brevväxlingar och debattinlägg*, s. 148

¹³ Forslund, *Vilhelm Moberg, filmen och televisionen : fakta och kommentarer : brevväxlingar och debattinlägg*, Quot. p. 137.

the region cannot feed more people without industrialization or modernization of agriculture, the antipathy against collective solutions, the distance to cities and coasts, and the complex small-scale economy create insurmountable obstacles to the future. In this area, as in many other forest areas, labour migration to the plains, the sugar-beet fields of Skåne and Denmark, and Germany's attractiveness for young maids (making a trip to Germany synonymous to becoming pregnant) an accessible road away from poverty. For those with more capital and daredevilness America was the attraction.

We know more about the Swedish Americans' efforts to make use of their past for drawing boundaries, for integration and creating meaning, and less about how the memory of these emigrations have been treated in the emigrant areas.¹⁴ Correspondence and remigrants convey histories of misery and happiness. Even at the time there was a fight about the stories, where the opponents of emigration tried to break down the attractiveness of the success stories. The semi-official oral constructions of memories are still waiting for their interpreters. One of the losers in the fight about home-ground memory was the culture conservatives who were challenged by Vilhelm Moberg.

The soiled word

The first public local response to Moberg's novel *The Emigrants* (1949) appeared as early as 1950. Organized impulses emanated from Ebbe Reuterdaahl in Uppsala, who was born in Småland and who looked upon Moberg's work as an expression of evil, soiling God-created Man, following the tradition of Communist and Nazi movements. Dirty literature crawling in excrements and sexuality had to be thwarted. A second appeal from 1950 was signed by nine parliament members representing Småland. The following year the list was added to by a large number of clergymen, school-masters and farmers, but also by indignant women cashiers, nurses and office clerks. In the parish hall of Ljuder as well as the Emigrant Institute there are documents from the local adherents of the Morality Campaign, who were concentrated around Moberg's own home district in particular. The recruitment, which was conducted in secret, ended up by gathering 3, 500 names.¹⁵

We, the undersigned, hereby urge all the people of Småland to join the protest raised against the author Vilhelm Moberg's way of describing the Småland emigrants. They left for unknown destinies with a firm belief in God, which carried them through all the hardships of life. In this Lutheran faith they fought their way honestly and created for themselves and their descendants an honored name in the New World.

These emigrants are worth a better fate than being dragged down in Moberg's stories to "dirty old men" - a crowd of people without morals. On the contrary, there is an aura of piety and purity both around the revivalists who remained at the time in the Småland parishes and around the emigrants. In the name of justice and truth this is what historians and authors today have to respect.

¹⁴ 14 Gradén, *On parade : making heritage in Lindsborg, Kansas*, p. 23ff.

¹⁵ Arthur Landfors, "Sedlighetsfejden," in *Perspektiv på Utvandrarromanen : dokument och studier*, ed. Erland Lagerroth & Ulla-Britta Lagerroth, (red.) (Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren, 1971).

During heavy times it is urgent to arouse the conscience of the people. We, the people of Småland, feel insulted by Moberg's way of describing our emigrant fathers - perhaps Sweden's best people - who at the great centenary in Chicago on June 2, 1948 were praised by the President of America, President Truman, with the words: "*The first of Swedish origin who sought their living in the country of freedom and equality were religious. This country is proud of its citizens of Swedish origin and of the deeds they have made. These freedom fighters have given us the heritage of their intelligence, their ideals and their industriousness. They have contributed to America becoming a great power both in their external strength and moral stature.*" ...

To achieve justice to the memory of the three hundred thousand Småland emigrants we urge the people of Småland to sign this appeal!

The 1951 appeal hangs in a prominent position in the House of Emigrants in Växjö, which was one condition for Moberg's support of the museum, for the donation of the documents for the novels and for his presence at the inauguration in 1968, with the names of the nine who undersigned the appeal from Algbodsoda specially marked. The fact that it happened to be concealed behind some other documents caused an outburst of anger from the author, who threatened to withdraw the donation.

The signatures of the protest were collected by John Samuelson, assistant vicar of Örsjö. As it happens, he was also an author colleague of Moberg's, who turned out his own emigration story in 1949: *Gå ut ur ditt land: allmogeskildring från den stora utvandringens dagar* ("Walk out of your country: a peasant history from the days of the great emigration"). Reuterdahl, too, was a writer of peasant tales with his own image of the people. It came out in three editions the very first year, but has never been reprinted or well known.¹⁶

None of the old friends, however, took sides with Moberg and his mother was filled with anxiety for what was going on. Moberg was slow to forgive, a trait which he seems to have shared with the parishioners. Even in 1965, at the fund-raising for the establishment of the Emigrant Institute, Algbodsoda to begin with stands alone outside the fund-raising and the "emigration fuss". Moberg's makes sure to contribute with a round sum matching the absent contribution, from an "anonymous Algbodsoda resident".¹⁷

It was not only in the old country that culture conservative criticism was heard. Criticism, both articulated and more silent, at the time also came from Swedish America focusing on Moberg's use of language, his criticism of the church and his denigration of the old mother country as poor and unjust. Moberg himself claims that "The National Appeal against Pornography and Swearing" had had effects in America which made his own research in the Swedish districts harder to carry out and forced him home by the Christmas of 1950.¹⁸

¹⁶ John Samuelson, *Gå ut ur ditt land. Allmogeskildring från den stora utvandringens dagar* (Örsjö, Stockholm: Hembygdens förlag, 1949). A few research libraries keep it. In the regional library of Växjö it stays in the stacks. Ebbe Reuterdahl, *Vem har rätt ? i litteraturfejden Moberg-Reuterdahl : en vädjan till svenska folket som tarvar svar!* (Uppsala: förf., 1951). For both authors the debate seems to be their final public appearance in the literary world.

¹⁷ Ulf Beijbom, (text) & Sune Ekstrand, (pictures), *Vilhelm Moberg och utvandrabygden* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1993), p. 191 and *Svenska Dagbladet* September 15, 1965.

¹⁸ Landfors, "Sedlighetsfejden," and citations from reviews pp. 188f. Gunnar Eidevall, *Vilhelm Mobergs emigrantepos : studier i verkets tillkomstshistoria, dokumentära bakgrund och konstnärliga gestaltning* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1974), p. 34

The fight about the public memory was about how to characterize the emigrant people. Were they like the conservative and pious people who stayed on or did they break with an unjust society? This should be a crucial question for everyone who stayed behind. Being abandoned is a potential trauma, if those who leave are loved, needed or at least respected and looked upon as belonging to the same people as oneself. Those who protested represented an inclusive history, but on the terms of established culture, whereas Moberg wrote about conflicts and injustices that drove people to leave. For Moberg himself it was obviously a big issue that his native district turned against him and that not even his friends dared to stand up against these protests. Distance in time plays a great part for everybody. When people we have met or lived among as children are described, the descriptions touch us more closely than when one or two generations have passed between. The story of the poverty and misery of the past forms the basis from the 1960s onwards of how modern society looks upon its own road to success.¹⁹

The memorial stone raised in 1970 near Moberg's birthplace, by Algutsboda local history society, must be regarded as a hand stretched out two decades after the Morality Campaign. Moberg still hesitated to take this hand, but finally accepted the raising of the stone without personally attending the inauguration. This takes us to the question of how the word becomes a place. Few genres have such powers of transforming fictional accounts into places worth visiting as the film.

Korpamoen: Klasatorpet or Drängatorpet or ...

In 1970 an important context was created for the further progress of the emigrant story. Filming had already begun with Jan Troell as director and under massive mass-medial coverage. It is in the years after the film was first shown that the emigrant country, to begin with, and later Moberg's own life and works began to form an increasingly important framework for activities and identities. As early as 1968, Sven-Eric Rydh, then head of tourism in Kronoberg County, and Ulf Beijbom, Director of the Swedish Emigrant Institute, had planned the trail called "In the tracks of the emigrants" - to the annoyance of Moberg, who hated mass tourism and the forms it takes. Only six years later, in 1974, appeared what we may call the first guide book to Mobergland, written by Rydh and Beijbom. It pointed to places of importance, not just to the Emigrant epic but also to other novels such as *Rid i natt!* and to Moberg's career as a private soldier and local journalist (Rydh, 1974; Rydh, 1985). The Kronoberg Book of 1978 was devoted to emigration, with Beijbom as chief editor and Professor Lars-Olof Larsson as one of the principal authors. In 1993 *Vilhelm Moberg och utvandrarbygden* was published by Beijbom with photographs by Sune Ekstrand. There was also an extensive model made of the fictional landscape, which was exhibited at the Institute from 1998. Information boards and maps of Mobergland and the Emigrant trail were put up at various spots in the district, for example at the Åkerby crossroads and outside Moberg's school. The Åkerby crossroads is where the travellers of the novel meet on their way to emigrate. Påvelsmåla school, which is described in the novel *Sänket sedebygd* (1935), was subsequently closed down and moved to Moshult, on a site provided by Moberg's sister Elsa. In 1963 the building was made into a local assembly hall and library, but it was gradually transformed into Vilhelm Moberg's school and became one of the main attractions of a visit to Mobergland.²⁰

The maps differ, but several places form the core: Moshultamåla with the family farm and the school, the soldier's cottage at Bjurbäcken, Korpamoen, Klasatorpet, Ljuder church, the Åkerby crossroads and, recently, Duvemåla village with the Rundqvist farm. The maps do not only function as

¹⁹ Peter Aronsson, *Historiebruk : att använda det förfutna* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2004b); Ulf Zander, *Fornstora dagar, moderna tider : bruk av och debatter om svensk historia från sekelskifte till sekelskifte* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2001).

²⁰ See also Beijbom & Ekstrand, *Vilhelm Moberg och utvandrarbygden*, pp. 62f.

simple travel guides. The final scene in *Sista brevet till Sverige* (1959), where Karl-Oskar sits thumbing an old map of his native district, is a metaphor of the man's homesickness, like the astrakhan apple and the swing in the barn are for Kristina. This is the map of Ljuder which was copied on the stone at the Åkerby crossroads. This real map is the link between the film and the native district. Of an entirely different character is the map of Mobergland outside the school he went to as a child. This map forms part of a consciously made up eco-museum with information on what places are appropriate to visit for anyone who wishes to experience Mobergland. The most elaborate fusion of the fictional and the real landscape in the shape of the model at the Emigrant Institute is now being questioned, probably because of its unclear boundaries between facts, fiction, novels and real life.

As the map suggests, there are within the general framework made up of Moberg's life and works, the film interpretation and the localization of places a number of actors and projects that infuse meaning into the landscape. They may be approached from two different perspectives. Those of us who come to visit have a mental landscape based on novels, films, musicals and other mediated impressions. Those who live in the area have, furthermore, an experience of the neighborhood, of cooperation and competitiveness, which they try to use for the benefit of the tourists. A world which has formed your entire life faces that of a temporary visitor and the common ground consists largely of a formed, mediated and communicated emigrant epic.

From the actors above we can see that both amateur researchers, professional historians, research institutes, county governors, local history societies, creators of musicals and private individuals are involved. However, nobody can pass by Vilhelm Moberg in alluding or referring to, or fighting against ideas around emigration. The paramount form that Moberg's influence takes is his film, followed by his biography and other writings. However, a few people have formed and been formed more deeply by the landscape, such as the Alfredsson family.

The Alfredsson story

A place like Korpamoen comes into existence at the crossroads between a literary work, a film version and the will of the local community to be seen and to utilize the cultural resources created. In this case it is also possible to show how the event interferes with and is used by the lives of a single family and a single individual after Arnold Alfredsson published his memoirs, dedicated to "the people of the Moberg country".²¹ The family at Lida had been involved at an early stage in the emigrant circle as well as in the local history society of Långasjö. Through the filming they were drawn into the formative center. Six of the family members were given roles in the film and, according to the biography, it was often on Arnold's suggestion that Jan Troell was guided to the right cast as well as the choice of places to shoot. However, Arnold was not just an advisor and actor in the character of Per Persson, the churchwarden, but he was also a film-maker. Parallel to Troell's film, he actually made two amateur films. One of them documented the filming and one turned into an alternative Emigrant epic, which was shown in community centers all over the district, both before and after the first night of the SF production.

A leasing contract was made up with the local history society, which had bought the houses and leased the ground from the church. The 17,000 visitors who turned up in 1970, the first year, even before the first showing of the film were received by the whole Alfredsson family including children, parents and grandparents impersonating "a cottage or smallholder environment typical of the area around the turn of

²¹ Arnold Alfredsson, *Arnold i Lida: Sällsamma minnen och möten* (Växjö: private publication, 2003). My account follows the memoirs. Compare Beijbom & Ekstrand, *Vilhelm Moberg och utvandrabygden*, pp. 176-183.

the century".²² The following year the visitors were met by a fast developing visitors' environment, re-enactment and theme park where in addition to the smallholder environment with its Småland family dressed in contemporary costumes, small animals and cultivated land more and more things were for sale: Småland chairs, local handcraft (bought cheaply from manufacturers in the southern part of Kalmar County), jewellery, postcards and the best business idea in the form of a couple of grammophone records. "Grandma's songs" were recorded in situ in the woodshed in 1972 and the sequel "Sing along with Grandma" in a Växjö studio in 1974 and they both sold in the tens of thousands. The narrator is proud of the good business but is careful to stress the reasonable prices and the large local investments which the money made possible.

Moberg developed a frenetic resistance against the whole arrangement, viewing it as an infringement of his copyright on his literary creation, Korpamoen, and he threatened to sue the local history society for the

[m]ean and miserable spectacle that you have set up at Klastorpet, which has been falsely identified with Korpamoen and which has thrown my native district into disrepute all over Sweden with your outrageous falsification!²³

Arnold does not make a big deal of the attack but defends it in two ways: one is that he actually has the ownership right to the name by having registered the trade name at the county administration as the trading company of "Korpamoen Alfredsson & Co.", the other is his exact rendering of the "speech" by which he welcomes the visitors. In his speech, he emphasizes, like all other actors, that the names, people and places are invented, but that they are still combinations of local reality. Another challenge was offered by the neighboring parish of Ljuder, which claimed that the real origin of the Korpamoen of the novel was Drängatorpet at Bondeskog Södregård. A specially formed Korpamoen Society Ltd tried to convince the world around and at any rate managed to convince the National Swedish Road Administration to set up a sign: Korpamoen. Now Korpamoen exists in at least three places with different references to authenticity - in the novel, in the film, and in the National Road Administration worlds.

Life in the film world turned the local involvement in a more public direction, which continued even after the lease had expired and the local history society had taken over the arrangements themselves in 1981. Arnold and his family continued their activities at Hultet, which was now their permanent residence. To begin with, the bus tours kept coming as before but they were gradually reduced to single tours. The place of the film had a special attraction. A climax of a kind was reached when on Minnesota Day in Växjö in 1991 the couple was awarded the Charlotta Medal by the Swedish Emigrant Institute.

Klasatorpet is not just a ten-year parenthesis. The possibilities offered by the place are integrated with the Småland smallholders' view of themselves as never being able to make their living by farming alone. Entrepreneurship is here combined with a local family project which started long before the film and continued after leaving Klasatorpet. The intensive cross-fertilization of biography, medialization by means of their own films, music recordings, theatrical and TV productions has, however, lost its power and been replaced by the dynamics of culture tourism of a more general nature.

Ulf Beijbom defends the Alfredssons against Moberg, when he had felt his copyright infringed. He argues that the general picture offered by the family to the 15,000 or so first-season visitors had no taste of the artificial or vulgar. The activities, the language and their reception of the visitors gave the impression of a genuine Småland smallholder existence, despite the fact that the novel, the film and our

²² Eva Silvé-Garnert, "Vilhelm Moberg -- träskofolkets författare," in *En annan historia : sju folkliga historiker från Nils Månsson Mandelgren till Vilhelm Moberg*, ed. Janken Myrdal, (ed.) (Stockholm: Ordfront : Arkivet för folkets historia, 1982).

²³ Beijbom & Ekstrand, *Vilhelm Moberg och utvandrarbygden*, pp. 177f.

own present were interwoven in a new fashion in the demonstration of Kristina's swing, the dugout where Anna was killed by the porridge or the cottage with the marriage bed.

The fate of Alfredsson is elevated by Beijbom to an untold story of his own. He regards Alfredsson as more like Moberg and his characters than what Moberg himself would acknowledge, with the same sharp tongue and fascination for anything from Småland. Even Alfredsson does research and formatting; as a member of the Långasjö emigrant circle, founded as early as 1959, he became a pioneer in migration research and study circle work and even more so in a physical way by cultivating the garden, keeping animals and building his own museum. The connection between the emigrant story, the research circle and Moberg's share in establishing the research institute is the credo of Beijbom's story. A refereed list of the sources of the Emigrant novel is, consequently, the first volume in the series of Institute publications.²⁴

If this is a version of the emigrant story converging towards a realistic demand for authenticity, where Moberg himself can feel on firm ground (even if he causes conflicts by protesting against the local recycling of his copyright as an artist) as well as Alfredsson and Beijbom, one might ask if there is a limit, where the "spectacle" or the form violates the contents so that the distortion becomes an adequate term for it. Let us move 160 kilometers northeast in Småland to end up with another entrepreneur who has identified with the emigrants.

Emigrants as small entrepreneurs in Jönköping's Wild West

High Chaparral, "Wild West Park Smaland Sweden" was born in 1966 when Big Bengt Erlandsson began to build his Småland fort out of 200,000 telegraph poles, which he had acquired cheaply from the National Swedish Telecommunications Administration. He thought this could become a fun sort of representation for the dealers in construction equipment that came to buy second-hand machinery. The great western wave in Sweden started with the Bonanza serial from 1957 and continued throughout the 1960s. This aroused the curiosity of the visitors to his surplus store and the entrepreneur saw his chance of charging an entrance fee. The first showing of the TV serial in 1967 and the Emigrant film in 1971 became an unbeatable combination both for Big Bengt's life story portraying himself as a wild entrepreneur, proud of having built everything without building permits or architects' blueprints, and for the million Sweden who had similarly looked for ways of making their living and a mediated picture of the Wild West. "I hate the class society", says Big Bengt and compares himself to how Jesus stood up against the scribes?²⁵

The High Chaparral series was shot in Arizona, and even there the relation to authenticity is intricate, as is well expressed in the following citation:

The set location was the old movie town of Old Tucson, built as an authentic replica of 1870 Tucson for the 1939 movie, *Arizona*. ... The series strove for realism. What it achieved is legend.²⁶

²⁴ Beijbom & Ekstrand, *Vilhelm Moberg och utvandrabygden*; Bertil Hulenvik, *Utvandrarromanens källor: förteckning över Vilhelm Mobergs samling av källmaterial, Emigrantinstitutets skriftserie, 1* (Växjö: Emigrantinst. (Utvandrarernas hus), 1972).

²⁵ Semic Press contributed with an attempt at a comic magazine in 1968, but only one issue seems to have appeared.. Rickard Carlsson, "Big Bengt och de arme skriftlärde," *Känguru*, No. 10 (1997), <http://www.humf.su.se/kanguru/tidigare/nr10/bigbengt.htm>. www.highchaparral.se May, 2003.

²⁶ Material about the film is taken from <http://www.thehighchaparral.com/> 2003-08-20.

The controversy among fans turns around the familiar questions: what places and people served as models for the film? For a generation born in the 1950s John Cannon, Buck, Manolito and the others, together with the musical theme, *are* the Wild West. Big Bengt saw the possibility of linking the world of the TV couch to that of Vilhelm Moberg.

One of the first purchases for the theme park was the Kristina Cottage, which was said to have been the authentic one used in Troell's film, and where the waffles hated by Moberg were subsequently served. Later on, both multi-cultural and ecumenical claims were incorporated into this popular mixture of amusement park and history formation. Indians from Canada are flown in every year to show original dances, as a complement to the Great Train Robbery and the stuntmen and sharpshooters of the Western show. How the story proceeds is, however, not a simple question of a Gesunkenes Kulturgut.

When Sten Rentzhog, director the traditional open-air museum of Jamtli, the Skansen of Jämtland, visited High Chaparral he had a vision that this would also be the future of open-air museums. Why should one not also be able to amuse and attract more visitors to genuine buildings and authentic histories?²⁷ The inspiration has completed the circle and returned to the institutionalized cultural history heritage.

Historyland is turning history into entertainment, culture's response to the big commercial amusement parks, as fun and exciting as Tivoli or Sommarland. Historyland is allowing oneself to be amused and daring to play with history.

It may be thought that the circle was completed even when reality via individual experiences, social realism, fictionalization and culture tourism had again been merged into a cultural heritage in active use. But even the wild entrepreneur was taken up into the celebrated spheres of culture. Big Bengt Erlandsson, who had earlier declared that his only mistake was the one time he applied for a permit from the authorities, not for the 265 buildings, which were all illegally built, but for a 120-meter statue of the happy sheriff suspiciously like himself, was in 2004 awarded the Gnosjö municipality culture prize of 10,000 SEK for

[h]aving with High Chaparral created one of the main tourist attractions of Jönköping County, including a unique museum, thus really placing Gnosjö municipality on the tourist map.²⁸

This is after all not so surprising. The municipality has always supported Big Bengt by retrospective permits or inconsiderable fines, never requiring any demolition. Even the county administration, despite disagreeing conservationists, supported the statue. The opponents consisted of organized artists and the National Swedish Environment Protection Board, which by appealing to the Swedish Board of Agriculture (proposing a more modest 15-meter sheriff) put a stop to the monument. Thus, neither hikers on the adjacent Store Mosse national park, nor travellers by air will get to see the warning lights twinkle on the sheriff's shoulders. Visitors to Chaparral may, however, see the head, which had already been cast, placed triumphantly above the main entrance [CHECK!]. The artists can relax, not because they have safeguarded the image of the emigrants, but because they have stopped the "unsightly advertising image" to protect the public interest against the tourist industry.²⁹

²⁷ The Chaparral experience is also related by new actors in Historyland. The conference report *Att levandegöra historia. Museipedagogisk konferens 16-17 mars 2000, 16-17 november 2000* s 3.

²⁸ <http://www.gnosjo.se/webbtillbehor/startsidanyheter/5.1a993471003c3e58817fff684.html> 2005-03-08.

²⁹ Birgit Lundin, "God smak och lokalpolitik utmanas av "Big Bengt", " *Konstnären* 2, no. 1 (1985).

Is the time out of joint? Is the story distorted or the last word said? We will return to the answer but before that we will visit still another arena, which was inspired by the emigrant epic, but which has acquired an even wider reputation both in Sweden and "over there".

Kristina från Duvemåla

An addition to the existing broad cultural repertoire and a new audience were created in 1995 with the *Kristina i/från? Duvemåla* musical, based on all four novels, with music by Benny Andersson and lyrics by Björn Ulvaeus, both already world famous through ABBA. A comprehensive background story, with the same journey in Mobergland, has also been published on the official homepage of the musical.³⁰

Not only has the complete version of the musical hit the big cities (Malmö, Göteborg, Stockholm 1995-1999) but concert versions (in Minnesota and a large number of Swedish cities in 1996 and 2001, respectively) have reached millions of people, as have the TV programs shown about the musical. Furthermore, the musical has increased the interest in tourist attractions like Duvemåla (and New Duvemåla, see below), and by association the Music in the Glassworks concerts. As regards the importance of the landscape and the stories associated with that the musical cannot, however, compete with the film. The latter creates concrete place familiarity, which is undisputable, whereas the atmosphere of the former can to a greater extent be reproduced as a musical on the stages of the world without having recourse to a particular landscape as a source of energy.

Duvemåla was a little known Småland village until 1989 when the four Rundqvist brothers and sisters died and left 6 million SEK behind. The story of how a simple, frugal way of life contributed both to a fortune and to a strongly dilapidated farm is well known as one of the stereotype stories of the countryside. The farm was saved from the anonymous clutches of the State Inheritance Fund by local forces (the movables had, however, already been sold and scattered) as being a genuine place of great beauty. An additional nature value is that Kristina's fictional birthplace, which is based on the farm where Moberg's grandmother was born, lies just opposite the Rundqvist farm. Only a gatepost remains as a nostalgic sign. In the fields of Duvemåla music performances are arranged reminding people that the place has taken its shape from the successful musical. A barn contains one of the better organized museum shops in the area, with tablets, serviettes, key-rings, butter knives with the name of Duvemåla carved on them, besides the usual brochures, postcards and books and a cafeteria.

A musical is more flexible than a film, as regards both technology and narratology. If you cannot watch the entire performance, you can listen to a tune, feel nostalgic or get to know the famous people behind the musical. The repertoire is expanded to the point of bursting, while also acquiring its local roots.

Different forms of media for story-telling contain different structural possibilities. Script-writers are ideally free, but publication forces them into a competitive publishing system. The film market is even more restricted in its search for a form which has to appeal to a large audience because of the high production costs. In contrast, the transformation of this capital is freer as regards capital costs on the local level, but exclusive from a spatial point of view, especially when the demands for spatial authenticity makes it difficult to house two Korpamoen set-ups. When the demands for a complete narrative complex are weaker the degree of freedom for entrepreneurs like Big Bengt, Björn and Benny increases. The genres are so far liberated both from historical reality and artistic origins that the question of distortion and authenticity can only be seen in relation to the pleasure and the artistic experience they give. Do these works talk to us like art?

³⁰ www.duvemala.com.

We have already mentioned that the concert version of the musical has crossed the Atlantic, but it was preceded both by the emigrants, the novel, Vilhelm Moberg himself, the Mobergland idea and a place called Duvemåla.

Mobergland Minnesota

For people who emigrate it becomes an even more important task to first build up a story about the transition from the old to the new life, and then for later generations to find out how the new life is linked to the past. The need to relate to the past seems unavoidable, but it can of course be met in many different ways. Denying or repressing the old as being unbearable lies near at hand, but surprisingly often a nostalgic bridge is found to what one was forced to leave. The ethnic minorities in the USA are and were often intensively occupied with creating and relating to *communities* based on origin and religious affiliation.

The forms for this are principally the same as everywhere else: the individual self-insight into the play between fate and action, often joined into a meaningful progress through life aiming at the future and related to the collectivities of the language and the group. The institutional conditions for the collective forms are technically the same in the USA as in Sweden. The mixture between public bourgeoisie and voice of authority that characterizes the press, the clubs, the church and the school is later rivaled by more expensive and socially extensive mass media like television and film. The marked difference is the immediately noticeable multi-cultural element in the American environment which makes visible one's own distinctiveness as well as the necessity of choosing identity projects to associate with in the span between ethnic self-assertion and a new American identification. The latter process has in the last few decades made a number of small American towns into active actors in the field of identity policy. This also applies to Swedish municipalities, places and regions, but the ethnic dimension occupies much more space in the USA.³¹ The less integrative government makes the interplay of civil society and market more pronounced even in the same institutions, which are more embedded in political power in Sweden. The cultural heritage, the school and the church are all concepts that in Sweden are directly linked to the public authorities, but less so in the USA.

The formalized Swedish culture institutions in the USA gradually replace the more communicative sphere maintained for a long time by the Swedish-language newspapers. Today there are in the USA a number of museums, places and areas associated with Swedish emigration. In Minneapolis an institutional frame was already created by the newspaper man Swan Turnblad from Vislanda. The building that he ultimately managed to donate to the Swedish State in 1929 houses the American Swedish Institute in a very high-class environment. Even more important were certainly the many Swedish-language newspapers and the family rituals. But there is no doubt that here, too, Moberg's epic, the films, the jubilees and lately the musical as well have formed a frame around the stories of emigration and identity in a way that justifies talking about *Mobergland Minnesota*. A great many emigrants from Kronoberg County came to Chicago, and the early emigrants continued across the great lakes, in search of farming land, to Minnesota.

If the framework so far is the same for Mobergland Minnesota and Småland, the conditions for further development differ in many respects: the Swedish descendants are a subjectively defined minority (in the censuses the affiliation is stated by the individuals themselves) and the institutional framework is not as formalized as in Sweden: strong public research institutes such as the Emigrant Institute, regional and local tourist organizations are often looked upon by Swedes as having a more half-private foundation status, even if they are driven more by a public service ethos than by private profit. The organization that is actually stronger in the USA than in Sweden is the church, which in many ways functions both as the

³¹ Gradén, *On parade : making heritage in Lindsborg, Kansas* , especially Chapter 3.

mother of institutions and as the local community center even in secular matters.³² But otherwise there is more in America of an individual-initiator and social-club meaning-building market than in Sweden.

If we were to place the Swedish-American movement among the many strong history cultures existing in the USA, it remains a marginal phenomenon, a specialized use of history, which draws little attention from the stronger institutions, even in regional Minnesota historical societies in the classic Swedish districts.³³

It is possible to discern a first generation of committed reflexive heritage maintenance, which was formulated by Moberg back in the 1960s. The link to the press and, more ambivalently, to the churches, is obvious. In July 1964 it was reported to the readers of *Svenska Dagbladet* how "the Karl Oskar days are celebrated in 'Moberg land' in Minnesota." Ingmar Lindmarker, who wrote the article, alleges that few people have actually read the books, because of their "bad reputation of obscenity", but that the charter loads from the native country have created the interest behind the creation of the Karl Oskar festival. The initiator was Ted Norelius, the editor, who together with business people collected money for a bronze statue of the emigrants, which was driven around on a float in the parade. As we will see, a plastic cast was made and put up in front of the newspaper editors' office along the thoroughfare which is now called Moberg Road by the visitors.³⁴

The enormous activities around the US Bicentenary in 1976 forced the minorities to position themselves from a real historical perspective, as in *The Swedish Heritage in America*.³⁵ In Minnesota Theodor Norelius observed in *the Swedish Pioneer Historical Quarterly* 1979 how one of the more popular visiting tours among Swedish tourists began to take shape, one which had been based on the novels, gained momentum after the film and which in the late 1970s was known as "Mobergland" to many visitors. Although the scenes representing Chisago Lake were mostly shot in Sweden, they are also included in the same warm feelings by the Swedish Americans. Norelius mentioned the visiting goals in the following order: Glader Cemetery (the site of Karl-Oskar's and Kristina's graves), the Lutheran churches and the building which later became New Duvemåla. The first and last places derive their legitimacy from Moberg himself, who had said that these were the places he had had in mind for his characters' last home and final rest. A great deal of attention is also given to Norelius' own newspaper office; this is where Moberg, at the time completely unknown, put in an appearance in 1948 and was allowed to sit at the editor's desk to do research into the newspaper archives. Moberg's thorough and democratic work method, going around on his bicycle, talking with people, reading and taking notes, is pointed out with satisfaction. Cafés as well as sofas, desks and other places used by Moberg turn into secondary memorials in today's Mobergland.³⁶

³² Dag Blanck, *Becoming Swedish-American : the construction of an ethnic identity in the Augustana Synod, 1860-1917*, *Studia historica Upsaliensia*, 182 (Uppsala: Uppsala University Library distribution, 1997).

³³ Not a single place in Chisago County is included among the Minnesota Treasures. Denis Gardner, *Minnesota treasures. Stories behind the state's historic places* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2004). In the national register there are certainly 18 Historic places i Chisago county (none of them of any national importance, however). They are chiefly architecture-historically motivated, but two of them refer to houses which have been inhabited by Swedish-speaking journalists and leaders: Charles A. Victor House och Frank A. Larson House. See Mary Ann Nord, *The national register of historic places in Minnesota. A guide* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2003), pp. 38-41

³⁴ Ingmar Lindmarker, "Karl Oskar Days firas i "Mobergs land" i Minnesota," i *Perspektiv på Utrandrromanen : dokument och studier*, ed. Erlend Lagerroth & Ulla-Britta Lagerroth, (red.) (Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren, 1971), s. 203-206.

³⁵ Allan Kastrup & Swedish Council of America, *The Swedish heritage in America : the Swedish element in America and American-Swedish relations in their historical perspective* (Minneapolis: Swedish Council of America, 1975).

³⁶ Theodore A. Norelius, "Memories of Vilhelm Moberg at Chisago Lakes," *The Swedish Pioneer Historical Quarterly* XXX, no. January (1979), p. 53. This desk has now become revitalized as a cultural heritage since a list of its owners was produced and sent to me by Sally Barrott by e-mail after my tour in Moberg's footsteps.

The jubilees bring renewed energy into the reception and project plans: The Bicentenary of the Declaration of Independence in the year 1976, New Sweden in 1988, and the Emigration Jubilee in 1996. The final report that the Swedish committee for the jubilee handed over to the government in 1997, *Emigrants and Immigrants in Sweden's History 1846-1996*, begins with the speeches of His Majesty the King and Birgitta Dahl, Speaker of the Swedish Parliament. These are followed by a great number of articles written by scholars and cultural personalities. At the end of the book there is a list of all the activities during the year. 36 pages are required for the Swedish exhibitions, lectures and symposiums alone, and 10 for the American ones. The Swedish government had allotted 5.6 million SEK, which was shared rather evenly among the 50 or so arrangers who had applied for support. A fifth of the Swedish arrangements took place in the Småland emigrant country and a third of the American ones in Minnesota. What we here call *Mobergland* thus played no dominating role in the jubilee, but it was strongly over-represented.

The volume strikes the interpretative note which was more or less mandatory in the 1990s for drawing attention to the emigration: migration then and now, emigration then, immigration now. On the inside of the front cover Multicultural Sweden is presented in figures, adding up the immigrants of all nations to 936,022 "foreign-born immigrants" in 1995. At the back it is not the 1.2 million emigrants, but Sweden in America that is presented according to the 1990 Census. Minnesota and California contribute more than half a million Swedish descendants to the overwhelming total of 4,730,863 in the whole USA:³⁷

In 2005 people are looking forward to a new production of the complete musical, which has previously only been performed in a concert version in the USA. The conflict areas one may anticipate have less to do with the authorities and more with a majority of people who do not identify themselves with a Swedish origin and who already feel that this group allows itself too great freedom in the public space and also, in a more ambivalent way, with expansive Minneapolis hungering for more land to build commuter towns at a suitable distance from the city. There are many signs shouting NO HOSTILE ANNEXATION against the city's plans to expropriate ground for the common good - which has been interpreted as an expansion for well-situated commuters rather than the maintenance of a cultural heritage of farming Scandinavians.³⁸

The Mobergland introducing itself to inhabitants and visitors today is characterized by a detailed map as a frame for *The Swedish Circle*, club activities and sister cities in Småland. The museums provide those who are interested with a common reference frame and literature, but not least the chance to buy the decorations and food required to celebrate a real Swedish festivity. Nothing is missing that you can find in a Swedish handicraft shop; on the contrary - there is more to be had here.

The round tour

Sally Barrott is one of the enthusiasts of Swedish descent behind a brochure of *The Swedish Circle*, which has been published annually since 1997, the year after the Emigrant jubilee. From the beginning the triple links between reality, research and formatting have been clearly visible in the figure of Vilhelm Moberg:

This tour brochure tells the real-life story of the Swedish emigrants who came to Minnesota and became the subjects of research for Swedish author Vilhelm Moberg's novels: *The Emigrants*, *Unto A Good Land*, *The Settlers*, *The Last Letter Home*.³⁹

³⁷ Isaksson, *Utvandrare och invandrare i Sveriges historia 1846-1996*

³⁸ Cf parallel processes in Lindsborg. Gradén, *On parade : making heritage in Lindsborg, Kansas* , Chapters 3 and 8.

³⁹ "The Swedish Circle©" *End of the Emigrant Trail Self-Guided Tour* [1997].

At the back the so-called Emigrant Story is told, beginning with the colonizers of reality: a prosperous community was settled in the St. Croix Valley by Swedish emigrants from 1849: Erik Norberg from Bishop Hill arrives in Taylors Falls in 1850, paving the way for Per Andersson and four families to Chisago Lake. In 1854 the Historic Chisago Lake Evangelical Swedish Lutheran Church is organized. This is the real story which Moberg makes alive with his fictional characters Karl-Oskar and Kristina. In 1948 Moberg visited the area, went round on his bicycle, and talked to people about old times as a basis for his novels. This is where his interpretation has formed a grand narrative, becoming part of a regional project, and not in other places he also visited and was inspired by or stayed at for a lengthy period during 1948 - 1950 like Bishop Hill or California.⁴⁰

When Sally Barrott herself is asked to choose a day's tour and serve as guide of the landscape, she maintains that this is a hard task, because there is so much to show. The tour starts at her own house, where her mother now runs a B&B. The stories of the farmhouses go back to the first generation of emigrants, even though the family has not lived there for so long. In the room stands the sofa which Moberg sat on when he came there in 1948 with the mission to hand over a wedding gift. The gift came from Ivar Öhman, the editor, who had chosen his experience of Mother Louise as a young girl for the front-page picture for *Folket i Bild* 1945 of a country girl with a milk pail. At that time this was still the weekly magazine of the labor movement, but this event is a reinforcement of the personal link both to Sweden and to Moberg. This weaving together was further strengthened at the Emigrant Jubilee in 1996, when both the King and Queen and, what was even more important, Benny and Björn came to the place and the celebrations for which Barrott was one of the organizers.

The collective history of immigration, objects and places, the personal and the mediated are in the stories constantly woven together to form parts of a common story, where also the narrator has unique experiences and a position which cannot be replaced. Through the brochure and the goals of the visit the occasional visitors are invited on their own to the performance, or as is recommended, together with a guide by agreement. What is visited is not just the place of the original emigrants or the source of inspiration for Vilhelm Moberg. In a more indirect way it is the land of the present entrepreneurs that is being shown. Their image of the essential past also lays claims on where the essential identification of the various places should lie.

The structure of the first as well as the latest brochure is made up of the places of Chisago City, Lindström, Center City, Shafer, Scandia, Taylors Falls, Almelund and North Branch. Over the years have been added the sister communities in Småland's Mobergland. Following the same order they are Algutsboda, Tingsryd, Hassela, Nöbbele, Lessebo and Åseda. Almelund and North Branch are still lacking sister communities and Hassela is not in Småland, but in Hälsingland. It is actually Lindström that has been named after an emigrant from Hassela, but the famous Hazelden Foundation rehabilitation center is actually located in Center City.

The guided tour instead follows the arrival of the emigrants. At the St. Croix river, Taylors Falls, the celebration actually began with historical pageants, boat trips and the *re-enacted* arrival of the emigrants in the presence of dignitaries like the Swedish King, Björn and Benny. The cross fixed by nature itself to the wall of the rock diagonally across from the landing place reinforces the feeling of a mission, a task to build a community. Just as in the jubilee year we follow the *Emigration trail* laid out for the occasion with wagons along Route 8, later officially named and signed the Moberg Trail. A few barns and dilapidated buildings remind us of building technologies from the old country. The next visit is to Chisago Lake Lutheran Church. Several monuments show how joint memories were built up around the church congregation. This is underlined by the fact that the parish rooms on the ground floor of the church, in addition to

⁴⁰ Gustaf Lannestock, *Vilhelm Moberg i Amerika* (Göteborg: Zinderman, 1977); Moberg, *Att upptäcka Amerika : 1948-1949* (ed. Gunnar Eidevall).

assembly halls, comprise both a local history museum, which is not quite in order, so Sally tries to rearrange objects and signs. Outside the exhibition room there is an entire wall of mailboxes, which are still used to reach the parishioners.

The tour naturally begins with *the Emigrant Trail*, from Taylors Falls up to the village and the church, but the continuation of the route is open to negotiation and lunch planning. We go off southwards, to Scandia to visit Gammalgården ("The old farm"), where the Scandinavian holidays are celebrated and where a big new store has been opened, crammed with Christmas decorations and Scandinavian handicraft. Nearby stands the Gammalgården chapel, illustrating the link to the Lutheran Christian heritage. The fact that the whole place today is surrounded by a *memorial park* dedicated to one of the local sons who was killed in Vietnam does not add to the creation of a uniform, peaceful Scandinavian meaning that we have been shown.

More central to the modern construction of Mobergland as a window to the rest of the world is the Glader cemetery and the adjacent New Duvemåla house. The latter can be immediately found when searching for Mobergland on the Internet. The cemetery is the place which inspired Moberg to the scene where Karl-Oskar sits mourning by the grave (CHECK!) Tourists are said to come here to the original, beautiful, but soon abandoned churchyard to search for their graves. It has been renovated and provided with a new sign and a parking-lot. From the place one has a view towards New Duvemåla, to which an old house was moved for the 1996 jubilee. This was a huge task involving a number of volunteers and sponsors. Different opinions were held about whether it should be a neat little house, or whether it should look worn and antiquated. Sally Barrott does not hide the fact that she, too, was disappointed when she found that it had been provided with a far too shining paint for the inauguration, but she observes that the paint will (fortunately) fade by time. For the inauguration Barrott's relatives from Åseda had got hold of a genuine Småland boulder, which they had then persuaded Volvo (at neighboring Braås?) to transport to its new place of residence, where it is supposed to be a symbol of the earthly ties between the places. The astrakhan tree stands for Kristina longing for the old country - consequently a newly planted tree stands next to the house.

Finally, the more recent monuments in Lindström require a visit. The replica of the Karl-Oskar and Kristina sculpture in Karlshamn stands in front of the newspaper office. At a distance it seems to have the weight of a bronze statue, but viewed closely one can see traces of it being shipped around on floats during one parade after the other. These *floats* are focuses of small town identity policy, and the sculpture itself was donated by a plastic manufacturer.⁴¹ The newspaper office, like several other places, contains memories of Moberg's journey in 1948. Here is the above-mentioned desk, which is on its way to being transformed into a valuable relic, since Moberg sat there among other local historians doing his research. In front of one house there is a big sign: "Moberg slept here in 1948". In Chisago City we find the monument of Vilhelm Moberg himself, which was inaugurated at a royal visit in September 1996: there he stands with his bike as a symbol of the ties between emigrants and immigrants.

In a guided tour the story takes on a personal shape, but there are connections here to many aspects of history culture that we have encountered before and also a few new ones. Among the new ones we notice in particular the jubilees' and the festivals' condensed formation of a community and a common origin and also the continued central position of the church, in the middle of the village.

⁴¹ Gradén, *On parade : making heritage in Lindsborg, Kansas* .

The migration of the emigration epic: a distorted reality?

The rich documentary background to the novels has been pointed out both by Moberg himself and by researchers. It is indeed a very rich material, from traditional social-historical sources to ethnographical records and interviews. The aim of literature based on history is to describe what might have happened, not exactly what happened. His use of material for the novels has been mapped and discussed in detail.⁴²

Issues of a more scholarly character, concerning the language mix and other facts have attracted much less attention in the aftermath of *Utvandrarna* compared to earlier works like *Rid i natt!* where the factual conditions in 17th-century Swedish society were eagerly debated both in mass media and in scholarly journals. Perhaps Moberg had learnt a lesson which also suited his brand of realism, although he asserted the author's freedom in principle, when scholars accused him of the unhistorical, skewed or tendentious selection in his 17th-century novel. The scholars were in no way unanimous in the debate about *Rid i Natt!* The debate concerned the question whether the oppression of the common people was really as arbitrary and lawlessness as widespread as it appeared from the dramatic story. Even then did the discussion stimulate to further research, where the range of views between those who wallowed in tales of misery and those who pointed to possibilities for the future was carried over into areas which in the 1940s were not supposed to be historically interesting: the relations between love, honor and violence.⁴³

In the academic world as well as in adult education people seem to have basically allowed themselves to be inspired by Moberg's works. This time the debate was less concerned with Moberg's use of material and more with his (continued) criticism of scholarship, of the established professors' superior attitude and their hiding away of the true history of the people. Moberg's last major work, *Min svenska historia* (1970/71) was to fill this gap. However, he had declared his views as early as 1946:

[O]ne has undoubtedly the feeling that something is missing in our historians: the understanding of the real annals of the people, of the common man's struggle and hardships throughout centuries ... Our chroniclers are prisoners of books and mouldy volumes, professors who lack contact with the genuine contemporary Swedish people and who are therefore also unable to create concrete pictures of this people's life in the past.⁴⁴

Sten Carlsson, one of the leading forces behind emigration research at Uppsala claimed that "great tasks are to be found in the world of the fairy-tale and poetry. This is what he should return to." Most people did not, however, agree with this sharp criticism. The Stockholm Professor Sven Ulric Palme was, on the contrary, overwhelmingly positive, not only about the writing of history in itself but also about the great benefit Moberg had achieved for academics interested in developing social history, who because of him had been able to receive money from the government for the great emigration project.⁴⁵

In the gap between the definite past and the will to make it come alive in the present several different strategies are open for dealing with this distance. The fight between the historians and Moberg became so virulent, because they embraced the same knowledge-theoretical idea of a really existing past

⁴² Eidevall, *Vilhelm Mobergs emigrantepos : studier i verkets tillkomstshistoria, dokumentära bakgrund och konstnärliga gestaltning* ; Hulenvik, *Utvandrarromanens källor : förteckning över Vilhelm Mobergs samling av källmaterial* ; Erland Lagerroth & Ulla-Britta Lagerroth, *Perspektiv på Utvandrarromanen : dokument och studier, Perspektiv på-*, (Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren, 1971); Lannestock, *Vilhelm Moberg i Amerika* ; Vilhelm Moberg, "Romanen om utvandrar-romanen," *SLT*, no. 3 (1957); Vilhelm Moberg, *Berättelser ur min levnad* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1968).

⁴³ Lars-Olof Larsson, "Födde frie folk," i *Småländska strövtag genom fem sekler*, ed. Lars-Olof Larsson (Växjö: Diploma, 1976) och Peter Aronsson, "Författarkonsten och historikerna," i *Makten över minnet. Historiekultur i förändring*, ed. Peter Aronsson, (red.) (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2000)

⁴⁴ Vilhelm Moberg, "Författaren och hans hembygd," in *Hyltén Cavalliusföreningens Årsbok 1946* (Växjö: 1946), pp. 25–26.

⁴⁵ Silvé-Garnert, "Vilhelm Moberg – träskofolkets författare", p. 152 (cit) - 154

which should be portrayed as well as possible in the present. With an absolute and correspondence-theoretical concept of knowledge the area became crowded. Somebody was wrong, or had at least failed to give parts of the past its righteous place. The differences within this paradigm were that Moberg saw the necessity of filling in the gaps and creating an experience of the whole, based on facts. The historians looked upon their task to point to the difference between guaranteed factual knowledge and that which we cannot know, in order not to force an interpretation on anyone as if it were reality.

For the contemporaries this contrast seemed principal and unsurmountable. For both Moberg and Carlsson the difference between them was certainly important also for the understanding of their own professional identities. I am not you - and well is that. Considering how the emigrant history will be used by other actors we may in "the pale cast of afterthought" look upon the different positions as a subtle game, where they agreed on most of the things that had to do with the relation between reality and knowledge. Instead it is the different individual driving forces, professional identities and roles in society that create conflicts. But Moberg did not restrict himself to hitting against the elite, he also criticized hard what he thought of as the vulgarized and commercialized non-culture among the peasants of his time.

Moberg's fear of the spread of waffle cafés and tourist buses was caused by the slow trickle that was made visible in the 1960s by holiday reforms and motorism and that has since grown into a powerful industry - which for many places has meant the hopes of being able to stay on and survive. Several travel companies in Sweden do sightseeing tours of Mobergland Småland and conduct more ambitious journeys to Swedish-American country, where Mobergland Minnesota is always one of the main attractions in combination with Chicago, Bishop Hill, Charles Lindbergh etc.

Interpretations of the past function when they are formatted with artistic value and complexity, but also when they form part of a historical situation where they can link and bridge historical-cultural dynamics on several levels. The personal acquires social, commercial and scholarly extensions. Moberg's novel is undoubtedly such a formatting creation, but after the film it can hardly be imagined without that cast, localization and visualization.

Are the processes of negotiation, translation, recycling of the emigration and of Moberg's novel a distortion of the word or even of reality? Is it power language and whose power, in that case, controls these uses of history? Who is responsible and how are we to view the forces behind? The many levels of story-telling provide a rich basis for a discussion of the relations between reality, scholarship, publicity and the individual.

Moberg blames a number of the other actors for having distorted the word. It is the history professors who do not pay attention to the reality of ordinary people but instead in their work conceal the real circumstances. It is the commercial forces that drag busloads of tourists out to their "waffle cafés", profaning the values represented by the ordinary people, in strong contrast to the Långasjö circle's serious mapping of the emigration. The dwellers in Korpamoen "after the film" are threatened to be sued for stealing intellectual property. Like many authors of historical novels, Moberg alternates between two different claims on the truth and on property rights: the novelist claims freedom against the factual, and insists on his total possession, protected by copyright, of the places and characters created by his imagination. The historian asserts the authenticity of the stories as a whole and of principal details. Alfredsson at Korpamoen asserted his right by registering the company name at the Swedish Patent and Registration Office.

The guardians of Småland customs in their appeal against Moberg's language use saw a distortion of their ancestors' honor as they wanted to remember it. This caused a most concrete battle about words like "rampant rod" and characters like Ulrika. The battle was not about whether they existed but if they correctly represented the reality of the past which they still identified themselves with as relatives and locals. There is no doubt that Moberg's naturalism has become much more accepted and appreciated by

posterity and that his opponents have been accused of bigotry. But they, too, are part of Småland reality. In a way one could say that at some distance the campaign against Moberg merges with the contents of the novel into a story illustrating different aspects of local culture, where the former establishment appears to be the historical losers.

The actors of the neighboring parishes to some extent compete with each other when history seriously moves into the economic sphere of tourism. The interpretation of which places in the area lay behind Moberg's fictional world is one of the disputed assets, where the claims on truth are based on the realities of Mobergland rather than those of an Emigrant country. Even though the parish of Ljuder got the National Road Administration on its side with the sign pointing out Korpamoen, the "winner" in the battle for the Korpamoen of the tourists is probably Klasatorpet through having been the place where the film was shot and through being more powerfully brought home to the public. The entrance ticket is a map of places at the farm described in the film and in the novel.

Businesses and local societies in Algutsboda have concentrated their efforts around Moshultamåla school, which they have renovated, but above all in the Dufvemåla which was set up after the launching of the musical, with open references to originals in the countryside as a communicative genre (*Sigvard the lonely farmer*, the films of *Änglamark* and *En plats i solen*, the latter based on a novel by Stig Claesson, and also Claesson's novel *Vem älskar Yngve Frej* (translated as *Ancient Monuments*), dealing with experiences in recently urbanized Sweden..

Big Bengt writes himself strongly into a Småland emigration identity with the emphasis on courage, wilfulness and entrepreneurship. Most visitors may not take these references very seriously, but Sten Rehtzög, director of the Jämtland County Museum, saw the potentiality of achieving an effect by changing the form in which the past was mediated, an effect which usually only commercial actors seemed competent enough to achieve. Via his commercially formed but still certainly deep personal identification that Big Bengt built into High Chaparall an impulse from tourism comes back to the traditional cultural history museum in Östersund. The distorted word, or vitalized history mediation? The paths of history are unfathomable.

Scholarly descriptions are in themselves a special genre which, however, is not without its interest in a discussion of a distorted word. In a traditional sense an informed discussion is guaranteed by the information being comprehensive and correct. A more demanding norm is that correct information is also supposed to provide knowledge, that is, to contribute something we did not already know empirically or in theory. In an ethnographic work there is actually a distortion problem which refers to the ability to faithfully describe the complexity that operates and produces the uses of history. The very distance of the method always borders on irony. Even when this can be avoided in a formal sense the academic genre involves a reading which implies a "critical scrutiny", a questioning of everything where cynicism easily becomes the norm, including those parts where a fair production of meaning is threatened, especially when it concerns drawing a fair picture of people's deep personal driving forces.

There is a decisive contrast between the starting-points for describing emigrant and immigrant areas thematically. The difference is also made clear in the form of the novel where *The Emigrants*, *The Immigrants* and *The Settlers* form different volumes. For the author they constitute an epic unity, for the emigration areas they entail challenges of different kinds. Those who stayed on need to interpret and negotiate their relation to those who left. For the National Association against Emigration it was a problem concerning knowledge and propaganda which lay behind the fact that so many were enticed away from their mother country. It created a lack of manpower problem, which threatened the nation's development. We know little about how the locals thought. Perhaps they understood better the difficulties and hopes lying behind their relatives' choice, even though they themselves belonged to those who stayed on, or had not yet left. For their present-day descendants the trauma they experienced is no longer alive, and heroizing history-

telling in combination with the distance in time provide an opening for writing oneself together with those who emigrated in a joint historical narrative. However, it is evident that the emigration is less thought of as an all-Swedish experience and more as an individual and local experience which creates an individual and local-specific attitude to the past and to the emigrants in America.

In the USA the personal link is of course even more fundamental, because this is the means whereby one may choose to maintain or re-establish an ethnic dimension to one's identity. The multicultural state which one forms part of is the immediate context here. What is Swedish is merged with a cultural Scandinavian unity, and what is national in the sense of state-national is clearly of less importance. Instead of rivalry between local communities it is rather in the negotiation about the relative status and importance within the framework of a multicultural society that the interpretations enter the stage in Minnesota. Mobergland becomes a contribution to a more or less hidden discussion about the character of a settlement established only 150 years ago. Which groups may lay claim to having been there first and to being the most typical and interesting reason for visiting the area? Rural culture is stressed in Mobergland, but naturally plays a minor part in Chicago's Swede-town. It is no wonder that the opponents sometimes proclaim "Swede alert" when the guided bus tours are approaching Lindstrom as well.

Here Moberg on his bike would probably have sided with the non-Swedes. The capacity of mass culture to distort the word seemed to scare him more than the risk that the story would not acquire a position in the public world of the bourgeoisie. The ability to control the semantic ramblings of a word through the various cultural forms is, however, quite limited. And, finally, it may still be even more essential as a structural condition for authentic communication than the demands that authenticity be understood as realism.