

Matthias Alexander Castrén and the Swedish Translation of the *Old Kalevala*

Kaisa Häkkinen

- 1 An extended version with 50 songs came out in 1849. The original *Kalevala* included 32 songs. In this volume, the original version (1835) is called the *Old Kalevala*, and the extended version of 1849, which is better known and in general use nowadays, is called the *New Kalevala*.
- 2 According to C.G. Borg, a younger colleague and friend of Castrén, there were no signs of Castrén's special interest in Finnish studies or even his outstanding scholarly abilities before the *Kalevala* (Borg 1853: 14–19).
- 3 A.J. Sjögren (1854) tells in his obituary of Castrén that at the beginning of his academic career, Castrén had planned to follow his family tradition and become a clergyman. See also Estlander 1928: 20. Estlander quotes Castrén's own letter to his uncle Abraham Fellman.
- 4 See further e.g. Söderhjelm 1924: 135 ff.

In the history of the Finnish-language culture of Finland, the appearance of the *Kalevala*, the Finnish national epic compiled by Elias Lönnrot, was a turning point of unmatched importance. As soon as the first part of the first edition was published in 1835, the *Kalevala* was made the very icon and flagship of the Finnish National Romantic heritage, at least in academic circles.¹ It was convincing proof of the capacity of Finland to develop a higher culture.

Over the period of the Swedish regime, from the Middle Ages until the dawn of the 19th century, the social status of Finnish-speaking Finns was low. There was a general impression that actual Finns would never be able to develop anything that could be called real culture. The *Kalevala* proved the opposite. It demonstrated in an undeniable way that the uneducated Finnish peasants were capable of creating high-level poetry based on their ancient and still-living folk traditions.

To Matthias Alexander Castrén, a newly qualified candidate of humanities at the Alexander University of Helsinki, the *Kalevala* and the emerging Fennomovement around it gave his life a totally new purpose.² So far, Castrén had mainly studied classical and oriental languages and philosophy to prepare himself to make a modest living as a cleric or teacher.³ Now he decided to devote himself entirely to Finnish studies, including all the languages and cultures related to Finnish.

There had been some interest in folk poetry even before the appearance of the *Kalevala*. In the circles of the Old Academy of Turku, the rise of humanist studies and international Romanticist ideas by the end of 18th century had inspired leading academics, above all Henrik Gabriel Porthan, to collect and study Finnish folk poems and national history. The so called Turku Romanticism in the first decades of 19th century involved cautious attempts to develop the official status of the Finnish language and to collect and publish Finnish folklore. Some young students and collectors like Adolf Ivar Arwidsson, Carl Axel Gottlund, Abraham Poppius, and Anders Johan Sjögren had even made a solemn pledge to speak Finnish to each other and to try to use the vernacular and the Finnish folklore material as a basis for developing a distinctive Finnish culture.⁴ As

some of them were studying at the Uppsala University, they had encouraged and helped the German researcher H.R. Schröter publish a collection of Finnish folk poems in a German translation.⁵ In Sweden, these efforts were noticed as a sign of an emerging Fennoman movement as early as 1810.⁶

The role of this cultural and scientific research was essential in raising the national spirit, as there were no possibilities to engage in open political activities. Of the young researchers mentioned above, Sjögren later made a most splendid career. First he was invited to become a correspondent member of the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg, then appointed to the post of assistant, then promoted to extraordinary academician, and finally he achieved the post of permanent academician for Finno-Ugrian and Caucasian languages and ethnology.⁷ In 1845 he was granted the rank of Councillor of State. In addition to his own scientific merits, Sjögren became an important organiser of the emerging Finno-Ugrian research tradition. For younger Finnish researchers like Castrén, he was an inspiring role model and an influential supporter.

One of the early promoters for the national awakening was Reinhold von Becker, an adjunct in history at the Academy of Turku. Becker set up a Finnish newspaper *Turun Wiikko-Sanomat* in 1820, published an excellent Finnish grammar in 1824, and encouraged one of his students, Elias Lönnrot, to write his candidate thesis⁸ on Väinämöinen, the central figure of Finnish folk poetry. Becker even gave Lönnrot his own poetry collections and notes on Finnish mythology to be used as source material.⁹

When the Academy was moved from Turku to Helsinki in 1828, Lönnrot continued his studies there and graduated as a Doctor of Medicine in 1832. For a long time, he worked as a district physician in Kajaani in eastern Finland, but his main interest continued to be the Finnish folk tradition and development of the Finnish language. He made several journeys to Karelia to collect folk poetry, publishing several minor collections of poems,¹⁰ and was one of the founders of the Finnish Literature Society in 1831. An important predecessor and model for Lönnrot was Zachris Topelius the Elder, a district physician in Nykarleby, located on the western coast of Finland. Inspired by Porthan, he started his collecting activity as early as 1803.¹¹ On the basis of his own experience, Topelius knew that the best singers came from the Arkhangel district of Russian Karelia, where the epic poems had been best preserved. Topelius published five booklets containing Finnish folk poems in their original form.¹²

Up to this time, Zachris Topelius and Elias Lönnrot had published songs as separate items, but in 1833 Lönnrot got the idea of combining a thematic selection of poems into three integrated

- 5 Schröter [1819] 1834.
- 6 The Swedish term *fennomani* was launched by the Swedish writer and critic Lorenzo Hammarsköld in his journal *Lyceum* in 1810; SAOB s. v. *fennomani*.
- 7 Korhonen 1986: 41–50.
- 8 *De Väinämöine priscorum Fennorum numine* 1827.
- 9 Kaukonen 1979: 24–26.
- 10 *Kantele* I–IV 1829–1831.
- 11 Kaukonen 1979: 18–21.
- 12 *Suomen Kansan Vanhoja Runoja, ynnä myös Nykyisempiä lauluja* (1822–1831).

- 13 Kaukonen 1979: 38–41.
 14 The first sketch entitled *Runokokous Väinämöisestä* containing 16 songs remained published.
 15 Kaukonen 1979: 56–58.
 16 Nowadays, 28 February is an officially a day for commemorating the *Kalevala* and Finnish culture.
 17 *Kalewala, taikka Vanhoja Karjalan Runoja Suomen kansan muinosista ajoista*.
 18 Keckman’s letters to Lönnrot on 24 December 1835 and 12 March 1836, published by I. Pääkkönen 1998: 160–162, 163–164.
 19 Schauman [1892–1894] 1967: 108–109.
 20 The title of the article is misleadingly “The IX song of *Kalevala*.” This must be the writer’s mistake and not a misprint, as the same number is repeated inside the article.
 21 Lönnrot 1835a.

wholes with Väinämöinen, Ilmarinen, and Lemminkäinen as central figures.¹³ In the first stage, he made sketches for three miniature epics, starting with “Lemminkäinen,” but then he decided to combine them all together.¹⁴ On his fifth journey in 1834 to White Sea Karelia, Lönnrot met Arhippa Perttunen, a famous singer in the village of Latvajärvi, who provided him with lots of new material and ideas for compiling and completing the planned epic.¹⁵ On 28 February 1835, Lönnrot proudly signed the preface of the *Old Kalevala*.¹⁶ In the preface he stated that there had been different possibilities to combine individual songs into a larger entirety, and the way he had chosen was not necessarily the best. However, he was quite satisfied with the result. The *Kalevala*¹⁷ appeared in two volumes: the first (containing songs 1–16) was published just before Christmas in 1835 and the second (songs 17–32) came out in March 1836.¹⁸

Why the *Kalevala* was Translated

The *Kalevala* was not an easy work to read and understand. August Schauman, a Finnish politician, novelist and newspaper manager, recalls in his memoirs¹⁹ that nobody actually read the *Kalevala* when it first came out. It was far too difficult to understand, even for those who spoke Finnish as their mother tongue. The language of the *Kalevala* diverged significantly from the language used in everyday speech and other types of Finnish literature. The vocabulary and the Karelian cultural context of the poems were equally unfamiliar to the enlightened audience, no matter if their own language was Finnish or Swedish. The only way to get acquainted with the celebrated *Kalevala* was by means of a summary of its contents, or a translation.

The first translated portions of the *Old Kalevala* in Swedish came out even before the epic itself appeared. Elias Lönnrot published the 11th song²⁰ along with some comments and explanations in the newspaper *Helsingfors’ Morgonblad* in July 1835.²¹ A translation of the 29th song was published in the same newspaper about half a year later. Earlier, the latter translation had been attributed to Lönnrot on the basis of the publication date: as noted above, the latter part of the *Kalevala*, including the 29th song, came out no earlier than March 1836. Yet, the correspondence between Lönnrot and Carl Niclas Keckman shows unambiguously that the translator was not Lönnrot but Erik Alexander Ingman, a young medical scientist and active Fennoman of Ostrobothnian origin. Some months later, Ingman also published a translation of the 5th song, this time signed by “Ign.” In fact, he had translated even more of the *Kalevala*, which can

be seen from the copy of the *Old Kalevala* once possessed by him and then donated to his Hungarian colleague and friend Pál Bugáti.²² This copy contains Swedish translations written in Ingman's hand alongside the original text. Yet, most of those translations remained unpublished.

C.N. Keckman, the Lecturer of Finnish of the University of Helsinki and the Secretary of the Finnish Literature Society, acted as the main assistant to Elias Lönnrot when editing and printing the *Old Kalevala*. He knew the epic thoroughly and used it as teaching material at the university. He made a Swedish translation word by word²³ for his own use and constantly asked Lönnrot for explanations of odd and obscure words and formulations. He also made notes of Finnish neologisms and semantic definitions in the contemporary literature, in order to compile a complete Finnish dictionary, using the Finnish–Latin–German dictionary²⁴ (1826) of Gustaf Renvall as a basis. As the esteemed poet J.L. Runeberg wanted to translate some parts of the *Kalevala* into Swedish, Keckman made a literal translation for him, and Runeberg then transformed the text into verse form.²⁵

The most renowned writer to translate some passages of the *Old Kalevala* was Frans Michael Franzén, a poet and bishop from Hernösand, Sweden. He was an elder half-brother of C.N. Keckman. After having made a successful career as a professor at the Old University of Turku, Franzén had moved to Sweden to begin an ecclesiastical career. In his letter to Keckman, Franzén sent two translation fragments including the beginning of the first song and a part of the third song. In addition, Franzén commented on some metric principles and areas of confusion.²⁶ It is possible that Castrén had seen these fragments among the posthumous papers of Keckman while he was preparing his own translation, but even if this were the case, Franzén's translations left no discernible impression on his work. Viewed side by side, it can be seen that no single line corresponds between Castrén's and Franzén's translations. Besides, Franzén's work shows a significant amount of artistic freedom, which was not typical of Castrén.

In 1839, the leading Fennoman activist J.V. Snellman started to publish a literary journal entitled *Spanska Flugan*, and in the first volume of it, he published an extant review of the *Kalevala* written by his cousin Henrik Piponius. To illustrate the contents of the epic, there were several song fragments included in a Swedish translation, which had clearly been translated by Piponius himself. Only the fifth song, which was published as an appendix of the review, was a copy of Runeberg's translation previously published in *Hel-singfors' Morgonblad*.

- 22 Molnár 1981.
23 In some sources, it has been claimed that Keckman's translation was metric, but for most of the translation, this is not so. There are some metric passages now and then, but they are not systematic. The famous introductory words, for instance (*Mieleni minun tekevi / Aivoni ajattelevi* etc.), have been translated by Keckman as *Lust göres mig / Min hjärna tänker / Lust (har jag) att börja (ihop) med runor / Laga mig att sjunga* etc.
24 *Suomalainen Sana-kirja*. See Renvall 1826.
25 Keckman's letter to Lönnrot dated 15 August 1836. Published by I. Pääkkönen 1998: 167–168.
26 Franzén's letter including the translations was published later by Grotenfelt 1886.

- 27 Lénström 1841: 13–14.
 28 There are odd spelling errors in Lénström's example words (*kionto* pro *luonto*, *Ridvala Kecka* pro *Helka*) which indicate his full ignorance of the Finnish language.
 29 *Helsingfors' Morgonblad* 54/1840.
 30 *Finnische Runen* 1819, see Schröter 1834.
 31 Ett manuskripts öde; *Wiborgs Tidning* 16/1869.

A Swedish docent of Uppsala University C.J. Lénström, who was a good friend of Snellman, published a concise study of Finnish folk poetry with several text samples in 1841, before Castrén's translation of the *Kalevala* appeared in its entirety.²⁷ Lénström was not able to translate songs from Finnish into Swedish,²⁸ but he made use of the existing Swedish translations published earlier in *Helsingfors' Morgonblad*. Among those fragments was Castrén's own translation of the core parts of the 31st song.²⁹ Yet, some other folk poems published earlier in Schröter's collection³⁰ were translated by Lénström from German into Swedish.

Even if reviews, accounts, and fragments of the translations of the *Kalevala* had been published, a complete version in any major language was still badly needed. In 1836, the Finnish Literature Society offered a prize of 500 rubles for a complete translation of the epic into Swedish or German. Despite of the attractive prize, the task was too challenging, as no candidates showed up.

The most unsuccessful of the Swedish translations of the *Old Kalevala* was that of Abraham Poppius, the former fellow student of A.J. Sjögren and C.A. Gottlund. In his younger years, Poppius had been a promising poet and a reformer of the literary language. Later he pursued a career as a clergyman, first in Sweden and then in eastern Finland. Without informing anyone, he had started to translate the *Kalevala* into Swedish, but when he completed his work, he discovered that Castrén's translation had appeared just recently. Poppius assessed Castrén's work to be superior to his own manuscript and decided not to publish it. Instead, he used the sheets as wallpaper for his own working room and painted them over.³¹

Castrén Gets to Work on the Kalevala

After completing his master's degree in 1836, Castrén did not have any clear plans for the future. In his undergraduate days, Castrén had lived for two years as a tenant in Runeberg's home together with Zachris Topelius the Younger, so he was well acquainted with all National Romantic and Fennomans endeavours and achievements of the time. As he was especially interested in languages, he came to read some works of Rasmus Rask, one of the true pioneers of historical-comparative language studies. Rask had developed a new systematic approach to writing grammars, even of languages he did not know himself, which meant he was able to write a grammar of any language and compare these grammars with each other. It was certainly something that Castrén could apply to his own research of Finno-Ugrian languages!

As Castrén had now decided to dedicate himself to Finno-Ugrian Studies and to follow the pattern of Rask and Sjögren, he was eagerly looking for an opportunity to start his fieldwork career. It was not easy, however. He was only a poor *magister* who had to make his living by giving private lessons, teaching schoolchildren, and writing newspaper articles.³² Among those articles, there was a description of the magical skills of ancient Finns, which was published in *Helsingfors' Morgonblad* in 1837.³³ The next year, he read a paper on the mythology and witchcraft of ancient Finns at the term feast of the Ostrobothnian Students' Union. Castrén found Finnish mythology and folk beliefs absolutely fascinating.³⁴

In the spring of 1838, Castrén was invited—luckily enough for free—to accompany his friend Carl Robert Ehrström, a district physician in Tornio, on a short multidisciplinary expedition to Lapland. Castrén was happy to participate, as he wanted to expand his knowledge of the Saami language, mythology, and ethnography. The results of his expedition were not especially good, as Castrén had not yet developed a clear scientific agenda and only managed to take some scattered notes. Anyway, the burdensome yet eventful journey constituted a useful model for his future expeditions.

In May 1838 C.N. Keckman died and after that, his lecturer's post at the University of Helsinki became vacant. Castrén wanted to apply for the post, but as he was away from home, he asked one of his friends, L.I. Ahlstubbe to tend to the application. Unfortunately, his friend was sluggish and Castrén's papers arrived too late.³⁵ Instead, C.A. Gottlund, an active collector and publisher of folk poetry who was known for his radical motto "write as you speak,"³⁶ was appointed.

In September 1838, Castrén returned to Helsinki. There, he was told that the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg was planning an expedition to Siberia, and A.J. Sjögren, who had been invited to join the expedition but was unable to go, was looking for a suitable Finnish replacement for the expedition. Two young Finnish scholars, M.A. Castrén and G.A. Wallin were recommended to Sjögren. He chose Castrén, as he was well acquainted with arctic conditions and was known to be a good hunter as well, whereas Wallin was born in Sund, Åland. Unfortunately, the expedition was postponed and Castrén had to find some other meaningful way to make a living in the meantime.

As Castrén was now interested in further study of Finnish mythology and folk poetry, he applied for a grant from the Finnish Literature Society in order to travel to Karelia where the old folk tradition had been preserved. He managed to obtain the grant, and the next summer he spent four months collecting songs, magical

- 32 Borg 1853: 19.
33 In December 1836, *Helsingfors' Morgonblad* published an anonymous review article entitled *Några ord om Kalevala*. This article has been attributed to Castrén in several connections, but as for the contents and style, it is quite obvious that Castrén was not the author (see e.g. Borg 1870: VI; Hautala 1954: 140–142). A closer examination shows that there are several fragments of the 20th song of the *Kalevala* translated into Swedish which are perfectly identical with Henrik Piponius' translations published later in *Spanska Flugan* (1839). Thus, it is quite plausible that it was Piponius, a cousin of J.V. Snellman, who had written the article in *Helsingfors' Morgonblad* as well, and not Castrén or E.A. Ingman, as supposed before. The newspaper does not give the name of the author, but there is a footnote stating that the article was based on a speech held at the term feast of the Ostrobothnian Students' Union. At that time, Piponius was one of the most active members in the union.
34 Castrén's letter to Sjögren dated 29 September 1838; cited by Setälä 1915: 4–5.
35 Havu 1945: 262.
36 Gottlund's mother tongue was Swedish, but he learned a kind of Savo dialect in his childhood, as his father Matthias Gottlund became cleric of Juva and the family moved from Strömfors (in eastern Uusimaa/Nyland) to southern Savo.

- 37 Castrén 1904; Timonen 2007: 18–19.
- 38 Kaukonen 1979: 141–143. In 1848, Sjögren also sent his own collections to Lönnrot.
- 39 After Keckman’s death, the material was gradually handed over to the Finnish Literature Society. See e.g. FLS Minutes dated 17 October 1838, 1 April 1840; Sulkunen 2004: 77–83.
- 40 See e.g. Collan 1838, 1839. For some recent overviews of the topic, see e.g. Siikala 2008, Ahola 2014.
- 41 *Helsingfors’ Morgonblad* 47/1841.
- 42 FLS Minutes 5 February 1840.
- 43 Those passages are given in the notes added to the synoptic translation of this volume. Only the diverging lines have been written out.

spells, and folk tales in the famous villages of Karelia where the rune singing tradition was still alive such as Latvajärvi, Uhtua, and Vuokkiniemi.³⁷ Later he delivered his collections to Elias Lönnrot, who used them as material for his new edition of the *Kalevala*.³⁸

One of the purposes of the field expedition was to collect background information about the world of the *Kalevala*. In his articles and speeches on Finnish mythology, Castrén had used the *Kalevala* as reference material, and now he wanted to understand it more thoroughly. The posthumous material of Keckman³⁹ was useful in many details, but many important questions remained unanswered. An academic discussion around the basic character of the *Kalevala* and the central figures of the epic was only about to begin.⁴⁰ Was there some historical background to the songs of the *Kalevala*? Were Väinämöinen and Ilmarinen originally gods or heroes? Was it possible to consider the *Kalevala* a real folk epic, or was it rather the collector’s creation? The only way to get answers to these questions was to go deep into the elements, actors, and processes which had brought about the enigmatic *Kalevala*.

It is not known when exactly Castrén decided to translate the whole epic into Swedish. According to a review article published after the appearance of the translation, the work took about two years.⁴¹ In any case, after the journey to Karelia, the translation work was already underway.⁴² In July 1840, Castrén sent a sample of the Swedish version of the 31st song to be published in *Helsingfors’ Morgonblad*. As the Finnish Literature Society celebrated its tenth anniversary in March 1841, Castrén announced his forthcoming book available to subscribers. The Swedish translation of the *Kalevala* came out in June 1841. In the preface of the *Kalevala*, Castrén quoted Rasmus Rask who had praised the Finnish language for its richness, melodiousness, and grammatical regularity.

According to the preface, Castrén had used translated portions published earlier⁴³ as material for his own work. Yet, a detailed comparison suggests that only Runeberg’s translations were good enough for Castrén. All the others, Lönnrot’s translations included, were modified significantly or totally ignored by him.

Castrén has used trochaic tetrameter skillfully and his translation gives much of the same rhythmical impression as the original text of the *Kalevala*. Yet, the rhythm is based only on stress without taking into account syllable length, which makes the work somewhat monotonous. Due to the structural differences of the languages concerned, Castrén could not apply the same metric constraints and preserve all the linguistic features that characterize the *Kalevala* language. Now and then, there are one-syllable words at the end of the line, and in extreme cases, a whole line may consist solely of

one-syllable words. Some stylistic aspects (e.g. alliteration) of the original poems have been mostly abandoned as well.

As for the contents, Castrén has managed to convey the meaning of the source text astonishingly well, which proves his full understanding of the cryptic wording of the original poetry. In most cases, the Swedish text is more transparent and easier to understand than the epic in its original form. No doubt Castrén had privileged access to supplementary information from the literal source material in the archives of the Finnish Literature Society, as well as from his colleagues, above all Elias Lönnrot, who was his esteemed friend and long-time collaborator.

For the most part, there is a precise correspondence between the original text and Castrén's translation. Sometimes Castrén has taken a few lines⁴⁴ from the song variants published by Lönnrot after the very text of the *Kalevala* in the same volume, and sometimes he has changed the order of the lines.⁴⁵ The most important alteration made by Castrén is that he simply censored and omitted certain passages of the poems which he considered to be too delicate or impudent, especially for younger readers. Those parts can be found, among other places, at the beginning of the 25th song.

Lectures on the Kalevala

Along with the *Kalevala* project, Castrén had prepared his docent thesis on comparative grammar studies, which he published and defended in the autumn of 1839.⁴⁶ In January 1840, Castrén was appointed Docent in Finnish and old Scandinavian Languages, and after that, he was qualified to lecture at the university. Castrén did not hurry to begin lecturing, however, as at that time, docents were not paid for their work and he had to make his living by giving private lessons instead.⁴⁷ Yet, in the spring term of 1841, Castrén was ready to start his career as a university teacher by giving a series of lectures on the *Kalevala*.

Castrén's younger colleague and friend C.G. Borg has described his way of lecturing as being quite free, i.e. Castrén did not read a full text written in advance, but used only some concise notes to support his oral performance.⁴⁸ Sometimes Castrén read song passages from his own translation and then explained them using his own notes, partly based on the extensive *Kalevala* material compiled by the late lecturer of Finnish C.N. Keckman. Keckman had assisted both Zachris Topelius the Elder and Elias Lönnrot in editing and publishing folklore material, and for his own lectures, he had collected a large quantity of notes, word lists, and preliminary

44 Castrén has indicated those lines with an asterisk.

45 Castrén has indicated those lines with square brackets.

46 *De affinitate declinationum in lingua Fennica, Esthonica et Lapponica*. See further the Finnish grammar section of this volume.

47 Estlander 1928: 42.

48 Some parts of the lectures have been preserved in the manuscript and were published by C.G. Borg in *Nordiska resor och forskningar VI* in 1870.

- 49 Korhonen 1986: 52–53.
 50 G. Castrén 1945: 22–23.
 51 As the focus of this publication is Castrén’s linguistic activity, discussions of folklore, mythology, and semantic interpretation of the *Kalevala* fall outside the scope of this work. For a recent overview of Castrén’s mythological considerations, see Ahola–Lukin 2016.
 52 *Helsingfors’ Morgonblad* 47, 48/1841. The author of the anonymous review was apparently Fabian Collan, the editor of the newspaper.

translations from different sources to explain the cryptic language of the *Kalevala*. Keckman’s main source was Lönnrot himself, which can be seen from his correspondence with Lönnrot.

Castrén made careful preparations for this own lectures, as he wanted to complete the existing material and arrange it in a new way. He made alphabetical lists of proper names and appellatives which might deserve some speculation and clarification. He went through all the songs line by line and pointed out striking or problematic details, such as morphological peculiarities or strange dialect words. Castrén planned a full commentary and dictionary of the *Kalevala* to complete his translation, but the work remained half-done, as new possibilities for field expeditions arose in the autumn of 1841. Elias Lönnrot invited Castrén to join him on a journey to Lapland, and from there, Castrén continued alone to the east, supported financially by the Finnish Treasury.⁴⁹ All the while, he was waiting for the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg to come to a decision on launching the planned expedition to Siberia.

The Reception of the Translation of the Old Kalevala

Castrén’s translation was received with praise and gratitude, and it was widely circulated immediately.⁵⁰ Now the scientific community in its entirety was able to acquaint itself with every detail of the contents of the *Kalevala* and take part in discussions concerning the epic and the problems of interpretation.⁵¹ The translation was regarded by all as trustworthy and accurate.⁵² The differences between the original and the translation were mostly seen as a consequence of the differences between the languages concerned. An undeniable fact was that Swedish was a language of culture with a long tradition and stabilized means of expression, whereas Finnish was young and naïve, full of capricious novelties and enigmatic surprises. Those properties were not translatable. In any case, Castrén had managed to convey the meaning and the nature of the epic very well.

Thanks to the translation of the *Kalevala*, Castrén’s name became widely known even outside the academic circles of Finland. So far he had been only one talented scholar among many others, but now he was a noteworthy young expert with special skills in Finnish mythology and folk traditions. The translation of the *Kalevala* inspired an ever-increasing number of nationalist researchers and amateurs to study the Finnish language and culture, to interpret the historical events behind the songs and to search for the actual locations of the heroic deeds, battles, and adventures described in the

Kalevala. Some artists inspired by the *Kalevala* even artistically rendered the episodes of the epic on the basis of Castrén's translations and interpretations.⁵³

Castrén's translation was of great help when exporting the *Kalevala*, especially into the German-language area of Europe. Herman Kellgren, one of the students attending Castrén's lectures on the *Kalevala*, was invited to teach Finnish to professor Hermann Brockhaus in Leipzig. There, he used Castrén's *Kalevala* and Keckman's notes as his primary lecture material.⁵⁴ Brockhaus was a professor of Sanskrit and Persian linguistics, but he was eager to learn the Finnish language as he wanted to translate the *Kalevala* into German.⁵⁵

The most renowned user of Castrén's translation was Jacob Grimm, a German linguist who was one of Castrén's most appreciated idols. In March 1845, Grimm gave a presentation of the *Kalevala* to the Berlin Academy of Sciences including some parts of the 19th poem in its German translation. He also published his presentation in Finland, in *Fosterländskt Album* II, declaring that the German translation was made by him on the basis of Castrén's Swedish translation.⁵⁶

In spite of its indisputable usefulness, Castrén's translation became obsolete already in his own lifetime. After having published a collection of lyrical songs entitled *Kanteletar*⁵⁷ in 1840, Lönnrot started to work on an edited and expanded version of the *Kalevala*. There was a huge number of new songs collected by Lönnrot, his disciples, and other kindred spirits after the appearance of the *Old Kalevala*, and they constituted a valuable resource for modifying and completing the epic. A new and richly supplemented edition of the *Kalevala* was published in 1849, and after that, the older edition receded into the background.

Return to the Kalevala

In his comments and reviews of the *Old Kalevala*, Castrén had criticised some aspects of its contents, especially the order of certain episodes. When the new edition came out, he could notice that some of his comments and suggestions had been accepted. The most important change was that Lönnrot had moved the song contest between Väinämöinen and Joukahainen from the final section close to the beginning, after the creation of the earth and the birth of Väinämöinen. Some fragmentary parts, especially the Kullervo cycle and the story of Lemminkäinen, had been completed successfully. On the other hand, Castrén criticised Lönnrot for overused

- 53 Stewen 2008.
54 G. Castrén 1945: 23, 195–198.
55 Brockhaus expressed his enthusiasm for the *Kalevala* and Castrén's translation of it in a letter he sent to Elias Lönnrot. A Swedish translation of the letter was published in Snellman's Swedish newspaper *Saima* in 1845. A little later, a young researcher named Herman Kellgren was sent to Leipzig to teach him Finnish. Yet, Brockhaus' translation remained incomplete.
56 ”Jag har vid studium af den Finsk poesin varit i tillfälle att taga till råds af Math. Alex. Castréns förträffliga svenska öfversättning af Kalevala. Castrén har äfven i andra arbeten ådagalagt den grundligaste bekantskap af det finska och därmed bestägtade språk.” Grimm 1845: 64.
57 *Kanteletar taikka Suomen Kansan Wanhoja Lauluja ja Wirsii.*

- 58 Kalevala, Toinen painos. *Litteraturblad för allmän medborgerlig bildning* 2/1850.
- 59 Castrén's wish later came true, as the series *Suomen kansan vanhat runot* (SKVR) was published in 33 volumes. All the poems can be easily found in the SKVR database hosted by the Finnish Literature Society.
- 60 *De affixis personalibus linguarum Altaicarum*.
- 61 The fragments were published by C.G. Borg in *Nordiska resor och forskningar* VI in 1870.
- 62 Castrén does not mention the name of the book, only the abbreviation of the name of the author (Dieff.). Anyway, the page numbers given in Castrén's manuscript match those in Diefenbach's 1851 dictionary.
- 63 *Nordische Reisen und Forschungen* 3: M. A. Castréns Vorlesungen über die finnische Mythologie.
- 64 *Nordiska resor och forskningar. Föreläsningar i Finsk mytologi.*
- 65 *Luentoja suomalaisesta mytologiasta* (Castrén 2016).

parallelism and the discontinuity of the contents. Castrén wrote a review of the new edition and sent it to be published in *Litteraturblad* in February 1850.⁵⁸ He concluded his review with the wish that in the future, it would be possible to publish every runic poem ever collected as separate items to showcase the abundance of material and submit it for critical evaluation.⁵⁹

After a long and complicated preparation process, a chair in Finnish language at the University of Helsinki was established in 1850. Castrén produced a thesis on personal suffixes of the Uralic and Altaic languages⁶⁰ for the chair, and he was appointed professor on 14 March 1851 by the Chancellor of the University, Crown Prince Alexander himself.

In the autumn term of 1851, Castrén held one course of lectures on the new edition of the *Kalevala*, and another course on Finnish mythology. As before, the *Kalevala* course was mostly based on concise notes and examples, only some parts of which were written out in full and published afterwards.⁶¹ The manuscript notes show that Castrén had found a new and interesting line of research: etymological comparisons between the Indo-European languages and beyond. Several times he refers to Lorenz Diefenbach's newly published dictionary *Vergleichendes Wörterbuch der gotischen Sprache*⁶² and presents long series of word comparisons alongside the source.

Castrén wrote out his lectures on mythology in full, partly in advance, partly afterwards, as his state of health worsened and he was too sick to continue his lectures in the spring term of 1852. Even then, the *Kalevala* was his primary reference material and a kind of starting point for wider comparisons. The lectures on mythology were published posthumously in German,⁶³ Swedish,⁶⁴ and Finnish.⁶⁵ Castrén died on 7 May 1852.