

Reaching winter grounds

Johan Turi : One never hears about the Sámi's arrival, as if they had come from somewhere else. The Sámi have always lived in these parts, here in the Sámi homeland.

Gloria Anzaldúa : “ A woman lies buried under me,
interred for centuries, presumed dead.”

Johan Turi : Yet the dead are not truly gone if the living speak or sing about them. I speak to you not because I know you are there and can see you with ordinary eyes, but because I know you *must* be there.

(*narrator*) : Johan Turi.

Elsa Laula Renberg : If I name you.

(*narrator*) : Elsa Laula Renberg.

Elsa Laula Renberg : There were no borders between us before. Our animals grazed freely between hills and valleys that belonged to all of us, owned by the natural not the political. One land, now split between four drawn lines.

Johan Turi : They came by way of the sea to the northwest outcropping and frightened the Sámi away from the coastal areas. And the Sámi fled to the forest uplands and they lived in peace for many years and looked after their herds in the forests and mountains which were deserted or unsettled.

But as the population grew, there also came people clothed in black to the place where the Sámi had first fled and they built settlements right where the Sámi were living, for they saw that they were good fields there that the reindeer had soiled, urinated, and manured, where the Sámi had lived for many generations. And once again, they drove the Sámi away from their dwelling places.

Elsa Laula Renberg : And we had to leave again, but now there were no forest tracts left, so we could no longer flee, but simply had to resign ourselves to the situation.

Gloria : “ A woman lies buried under me,
I hear her soft whisper,
the rasp of her parchment skin
fighting the folds of her shroud
Her eyes are pierced by needles,
her eyelids, two fluttering moths.

Johan Turi : And when the Norwegian settlers could no longer frighten them further away, then they started to steal everything they found: cheese, milk, hides and cattle. And they even killed some Sámi.

Elsa Laula Renberg : How can a state make decisions for a people whose lives and conditions they have no understanding of ? We have been made exiles from the very land we tread upon, made to fight back with fury.

Gloria : “ A woman lies buried under me,
afraid to wake, afraid to greet
the eyeless ovals of intimate faces.
And choosing. “

Daniel Mortenson : And what is the language of our resistance when they attempt to extinguish our mother tongue?

(*narrator*) : Daniel Mortenson, buried in 1924 as Samenes uredde fører, the fearless leader, carved upon his gravestone in Røros, Southern Sápmi.

Daniel Mortenson : The ones who forge ahead to the heat of battle, will not victor, only fight and fall. They are attempting to *clean* the country, rid it of the unknown.

(*narrator*) : In 1902,

Daniel Mortenson : our language was of no value. It was determined that only those Sámi who could speak, read and write in the Norwegian language and practiced it on a daily basis had the rights to purchase land. The language of the settlers is the language of defeat.

Johan Turi : The Sámi will not plunder. Our stories will not be lost, our tongues will not be cut.

Elsa Laula Renberg : We must take back what they have attempted to strip us of. We own our language, our land and our culture.

Gloria : “ A woman lies buried under me,
dreaming that she walks
across the horns of the moon
and wakes at the foot of its bridge.”

Elsa Laula Renberg : There is nothing but one answer only. And this is: a united Sámi association, running through every life nerve of the Sámi population.

(*narrator*) : *Lapparnes Centralförbund, established in 1904.*

Daniel Mortenson : Time has passed Elsa, we must begin to form alliances. We must bridge the fight for our rights as a people with those of the class struggle. I fear the spirit of nationalism has been awakened.

Elsa Laula Renberg : I have made contact with our sisters across the lands.

(*narrator*) : *Brurskankens Samiske Kvinneforening* established in 1910. Called *Brurskanken* after the grazing district, after the mountain in Vefsn, Southern Sápmi.

Elsa Laula Renberg : For many years now we have been dispersed, divided but never conquered. We need to create an arena for dissent where all Sámi can be together.

Gloria : “ A woman lies buried under me,
Clothed in black
the moon sheds its light-
a fragile snake skin
brushing my face.”

Johan Turi : Our allies opened their doors. Ellen Lie, a journalist for the newspaper called *Dagsavisen* became our carrier, communicating the needs and demands of the Sámi to the State and its public.

(*narrator*) : Samelandsmøtet, February 6th, 1917 Metodistkirken, Trondheim.

Johan Turi : Astri Aasen became our eyes, painting beautiful portraits of our people. Every painting was a unique gesture into the depth of our traditions. Marie Finskog arrived in a *tjurrie-tjohpe* from Røros which from underneath two long braids of hair exposed themselves threading into one another until they reached her soft hand, resting directly on her upper thigh. Her green *gapta* flowed freely from her waist down to her ankles meeting stripes of yellow, red and blue embroidered along the hemline.

Elsa Laula Renberg : We spoke about our schools and the demand for our children to be taught in our language.

Daniel Mortenson : We spoke about our lands and where our animals have the right to graze and ways to organize.

Johan Turi : The small man from the big city shouted down from the pulpit.

(*narrator*) : Martin Tranmæl.

Johan Turi : His feathery hair swayed back and forth with each breath he took, exhaling about Unions and associations.

Elsa Laula Renbger : There was passion and love, and indeed his passion was inspiringly out of place.

Johan Turi : Among the Sámi, each person has a particular duty yet on this day we left with a resurgence of hope and a feeling of unity. A light that would guide us through a period that has been too dark, through winter, towards the migrations.

Daniel Mortenson : Where our herds may graze free.

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Johan Turi : One day, another kind of stranger arrived, one the Sámi had never encountered before. A beast, disguised as one of our own. The sweat came dripping through his hides and a deep dark roar came singing from his lungs.

Gloria : “ A woman lies buried under me,
I hear her soft whisper,
the rasp of her parchment wings
fighting the folds of my shroud.”

Johan Turi : When the boy arrived they began treating his sweat for chills. Resorting back to old methods they gave him warm blood from a reindeer and for his cough, they rubbed the soles of his feet with ice and heated them up as hot as the boy could stand. Everyone gathered around and watched his death. When the doctor did arrive some days later,

Daniel Mortenson : It was too late. The doctor knew exactly what it was and told them with his colonial tongue,

(*narrator*) : “save yourselves”

Elsa Laula Renberg : It finally reached winter grounds arriving mutated and ever more virulent in February 1919. “*Virgin soil*” the doctor said, people who live in the periphery are not exposed and therefore not equipped.

Johan Turi : Vulnerability is the basis of our strength. The Crown understands what it has done, and that we have been neglected like a bastard child. Given nothing to protect ourselves with, not even a warning, a sign in which we could decipher.

Elsa Laula Renberg : Do we face life, or death?

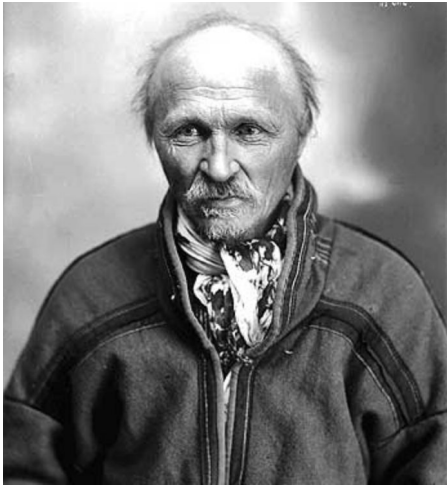
Gloria : “ A woman lies buried under me,
I emerge covered with mud.
Twigs fall from my eyes.
I rise, smell every flower
touch the four corners
and the burning trees.

In my own hands
My life.

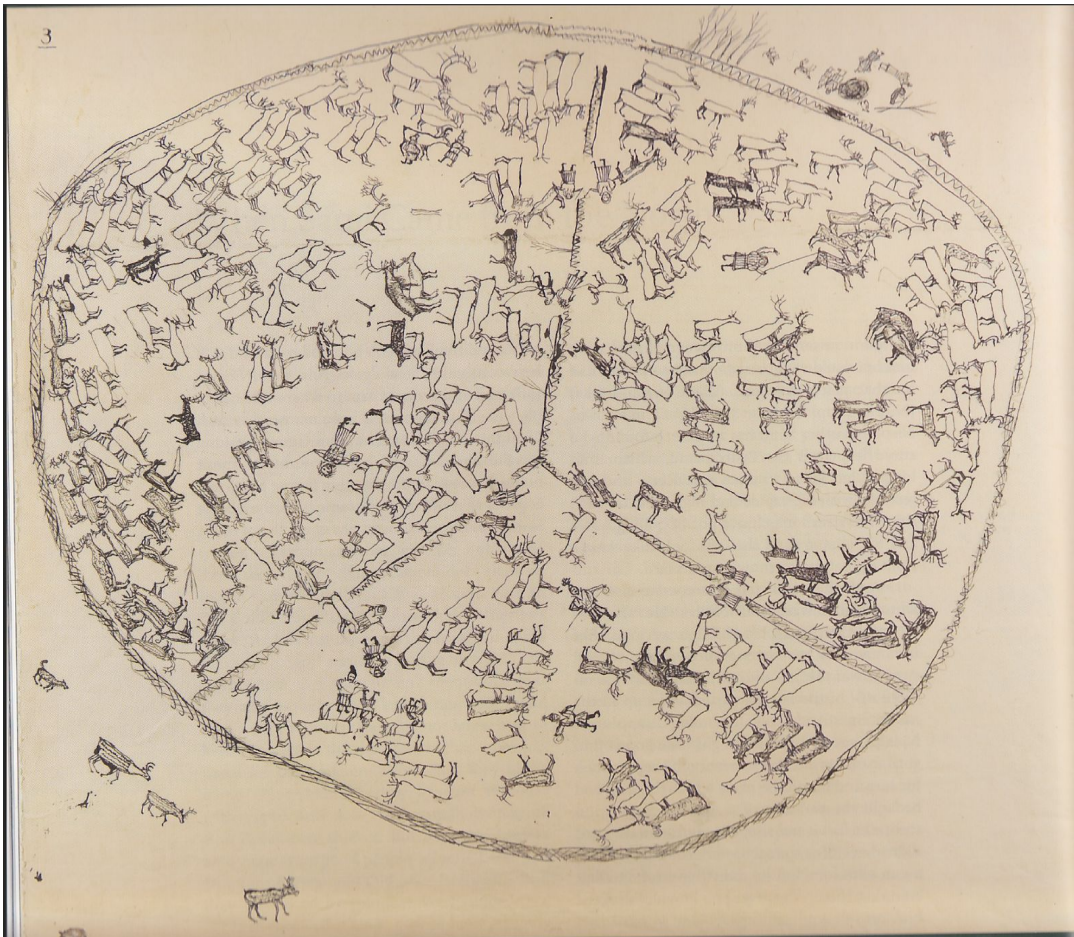
Johan Turi : Many would gather to stare at the spectacle of death. Some tried to help by calling upon Noaidi, some Sámi escaped into the mountains but the stranger was inescapable and traveled by means unbeknownst to us. Many vanished from our sight.

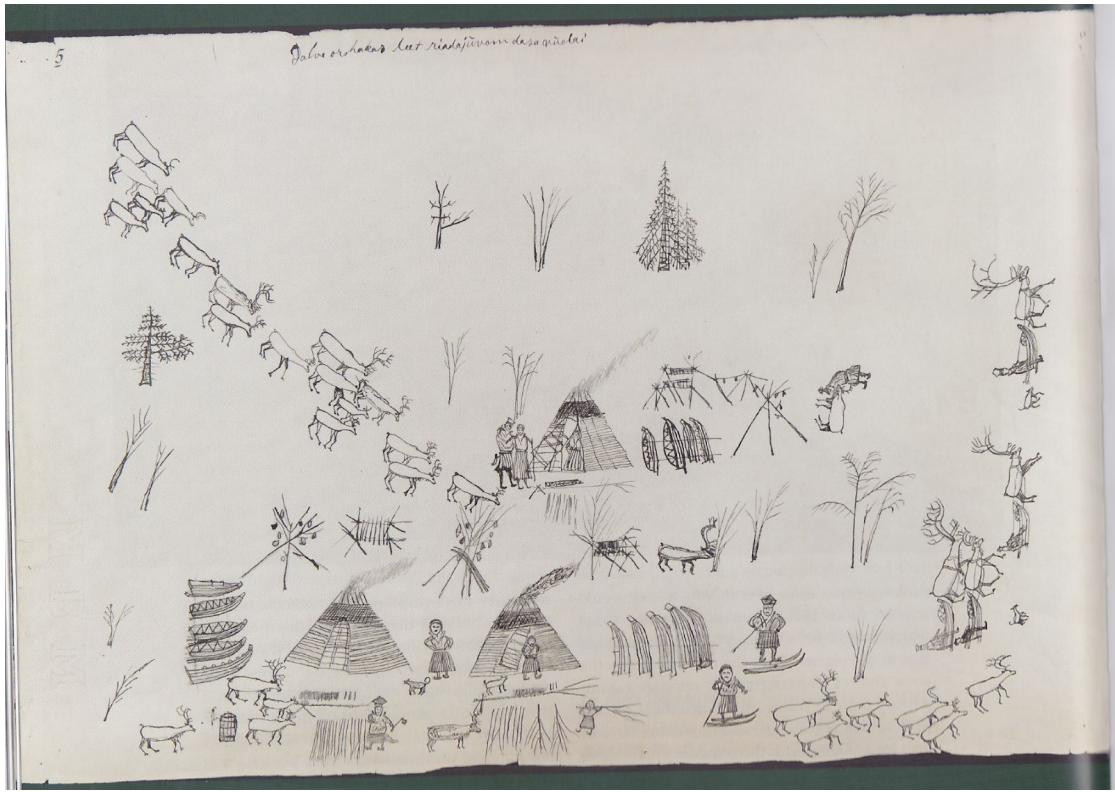
The only thing that can prevail amidst death is life. For the dead are not truly gone if the living speak or sing about them. What will be remembered will be the cowardness of the Crown and the strength of our people which will again and again rise to their calling to defend what is theirs.

Johan Turi



Drawings from his literary work *Muitalus sámiid birra*





Elsa Laula Renberg



Brurskankens Samiske Kvinneforening



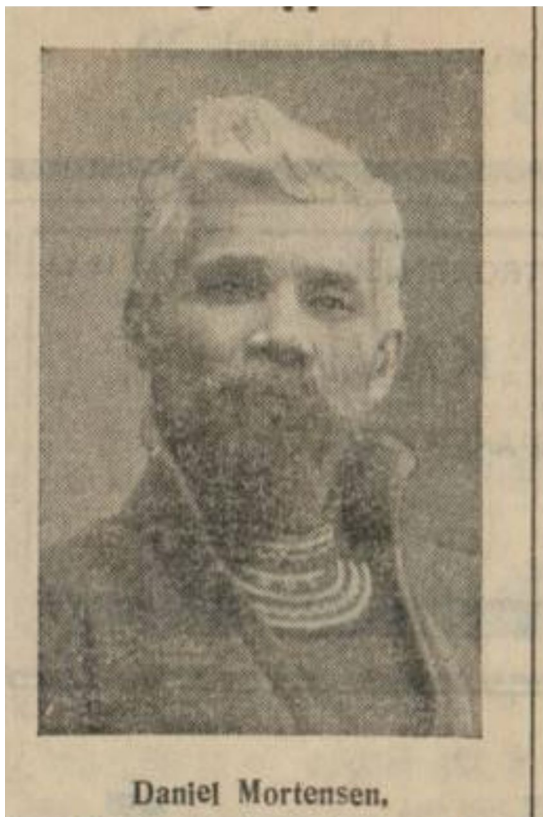
Ellen Lie (left) and Elsa Laula Renberg (right)



Portraits of Marie Finskog and Daniel Mortenson by Asti Aasen



Daniel Mortenson



Caricature of Martin Tranmæl roaring from the pulpit of the Sammemøte of 1917



Ved det store lappemøte i Trondhjem forleden holdt redaktør Tranmæl foredrag om organisationens betydning. Virkningen skal ha været overvældende,

