

Found in translation

Ohio writer introduces Swedish poets to American audiences

For the new book *I Dreamt About Sam Shepard Last Night*, Ohio University Professor Scott Minar introduces American audiences to the renowned Swedish poet Ingela Strandberg.

“Strandberg is what people in literary circles call a ‘poet’s poet,’” Minar says. “She’s kind of difficult but also has a lot of energy in her writing.”

Although Strandberg is highly regarded in her homeland—she’s the recipient of the Swedish Academy’s Bellman Prize, which is on level with the Pulitzer, Minar notes—her work hasn’t been known across the Atlantic.

That changed after Minar came across the work of Göran Malmqvist, a linguist and Swedish Academy member who has translated the work of his fellow Swedish poets into English. Minar, Malmqvist, and Strandberg began a correspondence, which led the Ohio University professor to make inquiries with American literary presses about publishing the Swedish authors’ works.

“I have never seen responses like the ones I received to the Malmqvist translations of Strandberg’s work,” Minar says. “People misuse the word ‘unique,’ but her work is truly unique.”

Within hours or days, several prominent journals expressed interest in publication, a process that often takes six months to a year, Minar notes.

In 2015, Marick Press published *I Dreamt About Sam Shepard Last Night*, a book of selected Strandberg poems. Journals such as *The Laurel Review*, *Poetry International*, and *Crazyhorse* also have featured the translated works. In 2016, Marick Press will publish Malmqvist’s translation of another Swedish poet, Lennart Sjogren.

In addition to writing the introductory essay about Strandberg in the Marick Press book, Minar will serve as a contributing editor to a special international edition of *The Laurel Review* that will spotlight the work of the Swedish writers and others from across the globe. Malmqvist also has translated Minar’s “Introducing Ingela Strandberg” into Swedish, which will be published in a new book of her poetry in Stockholm, Minar reports.

Minar, a professor at Ohio University’s Lancaster campus, is the author of two books of poetry, *The Palace of Reasons* and *The Body’s Fire*, and has a third one in the works. While his own writing is different from the poetry of his Swedish colleagues, Minar says he relates to their desire to continually push themselves out of their creative comfort zones.

“The connection I have with the Swedish and international writers is that, they do things in a way that’s sort of refreshingly different,” he says. “I try for that, too.”



» SCOTT MINAR

Scott Minar is a professor at Ohio University’s Lancaster campus and the author of two books of poetry.

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