

Elin Anna Labba, *The Rocks Will Echo Our Sorrow: The Forced Displacement of the Northern Sámi*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2024. 197 pages. ISBN 978-1-5179-1330-4. \$22.95 USD hardcover.

The Rocks Will Echo Our Sorrow is an English-language translation by Fiona Graham of Sámi journalist Elin Anna Labba's 2020 work *Herrarna satte oss hit*, which was awarded Sweden's August Prize for Best Nonfiction in that same year. In this work, Labba uses a combination of narrative prose, scholarly analysis, interviews, historical and recent photographs, Swedish colonial records, and Sámi written and oral sources to tell the story of the some 300 Sámi people forcibly removed in the early twentieth century from their traditional lands straddling the border between Norway and Sweden to lands hundreds of kilometers to the south, already inhabited by other Sámi groups. The text uses a number of Sámi terms which are helpfully defined in a glossary at the end of the book, and includes images of historical documents in Swedish, for which translations are provided in the appendix.

The English-language title is not a direct translation of the Swedish title, which literally means "the lords put us here," but rather reworks one of the last lines of Labba's text: "May the rocks echo with their joik" (174). The decision to reframe the English translation with a reference to the land echoing the voices of the displaced highlights one of the work's greatest strengths: its focus on the importance of joik, a form of Sámi singing, in remembering the displacement. Interspersed between sections of narrative prose or excerpts from interviews are several joik texts that recall experiences of the displacement. In contrast to the Swedish-language edition, where the joiks are presented only in North Sámi without any translation, the English-language edition presents the North Sámi original side-by-side with a translation into English. Joik also repeatedly appears in the main body of the text, describing how different individuals joiked or stopped joiking in response to the displacement, and recording the experience of leaving behind a home where the displaced knew how to joik their neighbors and the features of the landscape, for a place where they knew such joiks must exist, but where they had never heard them. Labba's text closes by acknowledging the similarities of Sámi experiences of displacement to those of other Indigenous peoples the world over, and expresses a wish for the joiks of the displaced elders she discusses in this project to echo in the lands from which they were displaced.

Labba's inclusion of the oral tradition of joik is paralleled by her repeated invocation of the Sámi written tradition, with quotes from Johan Turi, Paulus Utsi, and Nils-Aslak Valkeapää featuring prominently in the collection. Among these, Labba integrates most pointedly the work of Valkeapää, who writes of a reindeer herding Sámi worldview in his 1985 collection *Ruoktu váimmus (Trekways of the Wind [1994])* that "Mu ruoktu lea mu váimmus / ja dat johtá mu mielde" ("My home is in my heart / it migrates with me"). Labba's text continually questions the extent to which a mobile sense of home within migratory Sámi culture can be stretched, instead drawing attention to the difficulty with which displaced reindeer herding families from the north adapt to new herding grounds further to the south, even while still within Sápmi, the Sámi homeland. As Labba narrates the story of displaced families, for example, she points out how much effort the herders had to put into managing the reindeer's instinct to return to their northern tracts. At several points, the text also seems to be in direct dialogue with Valkeapää's work, such as when she sets the scene of a family during the displacement by echoing moments in Valkeapää's poetry where children's laughter and dog's barking constitute the soundscape of the migratory Sámi home; Labba's text takes this in a different direction: "Dogs bark and children play: the sounds of home, though home is far away now" (105). Labba's text's

engagement with both oral and written traditions sets the history of displacement within Sápmi into dialogue with larger ideas of home, place, and movement within Sámi discourses, while simultaneously shining light on an understudied aspect of Sámi history, and, more broadly, Nordic and European colonial histories.

The pairing of narrative and scholarly prose with excerpts of poetry, joik, and oral history, as well as photography, will make *The Rocks Will Echo Our Sorrow* of interest to a variety of scholarly audiences. The text is especially relevant for scholars who wish to incorporate Sámi perspectives into studies of Indigenous experiences of home and displacement. The complex way the text weaves together oral and literary references, musical and visual elements, and creative, scholarly, and journalistic styles will also interest scholars researching multimedia strategies in Indigenous texts. Graham's often quite enjoyable translation of Labba's prose, as well as the incorporation of a variety of historical documents into the book (oral histories, photographs, colonial records, etc.), makes this an appealing text for university instruction. *The Rocks Will Echo Our Sorrow* could easily be used in part or in full in any course on Indigenous or European history or culture that wants to include a Sámi perspective and disrupt narratives of Nordic exceptionalism. Especially when read in conjunction with works by Turi, Utsi, or Valkeapää, Labba's text also makes for an interesting study of intertextual practices within a specific Indigenous literary tradition. Labba's text is therefore a welcome addition to the field of Sámi studies specifically and to the fields of Nordic, European, and Indigenous history and Sámi and Indigenous cultural and literary studies more generally.

Works Cited

- Valkeapää, Nils-Aslak. 1985. *Ruoktu váimmus*. Guovdageaidnu, Norway: DAT.
Valkeapää, Nils-Aslak. 1994. *Trekways of the Wind*. Translated by Ralph Salisbury, Lars Nordström, and Harald Gaski. Guovdageaidnu, Norway: DAT.

John Prusynski
Department of Scandinavian Studies
University of California, Berkeley