

<p>Author: LAXNESS, Halldór Kiljan</p>	<p><u>MANUSCRIPT RECORD</u></p> <p>Date Received <u>1/26/55</u></p> <p>Resubmitted _____</p> <p>Resubmitted _____</p> <p>No. of pages <u>312</u></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Typescript <input type="checkbox"/> Complete <input type="checkbox"/> Partial</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Book Published by: Raben & Sjorgran/Vi, Stockholm</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Proofs Published when: 1954</p> <p>Other: _____</p> <p>Illustrations: _____</p>
<p>Title:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">GERPLA EN KAMPASAGA</p>	<p>Additional material submitted (date and nature):</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Covers attached</i></p>
<p>Submitted by: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd. 40 Museum Street London W. C. 1 England</p>	
<p>Instructions for return:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AAK</p>	
<p>Disposed of:</p> <p>1) <i>M. W. Allen & Unwin</i> <i>March 9th</i></p> <p>2) <i>Book</i> <i>Post</i> <i>4/13</i> <i>EL</i></p>	

Contract or option terms:

By whom read:	Name	Date sent	Date returned	Fee
	Mrs. B.W. HUEBSCH	2/1/55	3/9/55	

Final Decision:

(See over for report)

Let it go C 3/9

Rejected by PV
3/9/55

READER'S REPORT FOR ALFRED A. KNOPF, Inc.

Author Halldor Kiljan Laxness Date sent to reader 2/1/55 Date of Report.....
Title GERPLA EN KAMPASAGA Reader Mrs. B. W. Huebsch

NOTE TO MSS. READERS

WE AIM TO PUBLISH PRIMARILY:

1. Those books that are so good that they leave absolutely no doubt in the reader's mind that they are worth publishing. Such a manuscript happens along but rarely.
2. Those serious books that are pioneers in their fields. Such books must not be judged so severely as:
3. Other serious books that are well written and authoritative and of a timely nature or permanent interest.
4. Books for their popular appeal pure and simple, of the sort that offers real pleasure to masses of readers and is a legitimate gamble for the publisher.

IF YOU RECOMMEND PUBLICATION OF THIS BOOK:

1. Please place it clearly in one of the 4 categories above.
2. Make a guess as to its sale.
3. Indicate any potentially libelous or censurable passages.
4. Make any suggestions that you think would improve the manuscript.

IF YOU RECOMMEND REJECTION:

1. Please state with extreme brevity the theme of the book and your reasons for recommending rejection.
2. Indicate if you feel the author is worth encouraging in the future.

PLEASE DOUBLE-SPACE REPORTS

Based on the old Icelandic saga "The Foster Brothers" this story takes us back about 1000 years, but it is more than a retelling or recreating of old tales. Nor is it just one more juicy and humorous account of the world of the Vikings and their unscrupulous way of life. The author is out to settle the account with the Viking ideal, the mentality of force and violence; he treats his blustering warriors and heroes with subtle irony and holds them up to ridicule, letting their words and deeds speak for themselves. The damage to the hero ideal is done from within, so to speak. Laxness is steeped in the Icelandic literary tradition and he has written the story of "Gerpla" in a style resemblant to that of the old sagas, yet retaining its own character. Traditional too is the formal detachment of the story teller; it is mainly the ~~the~~ tacit understanding between the storyteller and his present-day readers and their

common standards of values which make the irony discernible.

Were the literary artistry of the author the only decisive factor, I would not hesitate to recommend this book for publication, but assuming that the average reader is more concerned with the subject matter than with style and form, it seems doubtful that the book would meet with any wide appeal in this country. This notwithstanding that it has certain things in common with "The Long Ships", such as time, much of the locale and many of the main characters. But I think it puts greater demands on the reader; even one familiar with the historical and geographical backgrounds of the countries visited by the roving Vikings, as well as with many of the heroes, is apt to be confused by the multitude of names, relationships and ever-changing scene of action. And though Laxness has given us a vivid and colorful picture of the Viking world at the close of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century, I was not very much interested in anyone of his characters or the fates awaiting them.

GERPLA - ode to a warrior - is the story of the Icelandic foster brothers Thor-geir Havarsson and Thormod Bessason and the Norwegian king, Olav Haraldson - later known as St Olav - their hero ideal, in whom they see war and adventure glorified. Thorgeir, a ^{-like} caricature of the robot warrior ideal, suffers the bitter fate of being killed in his sleep by two nobodies - poor peasants - and the task of seeking blood vengeance falls to Thormod, a poet and dreamer, who nourishes the hope of meeting king Olav some day to salute him with "Gerpla", an ode he wrote, in praise of the king and Thorgeir, his great, glorious warrior. Thormod leaves his home, wife and two little daughters and sets out to find the killers of his foster brother. The hunt takes him to Greenland; after years of hardships and sufferings and without having achieved his mission, he leaves, still a young man but broken in body and spirit; lame, toothless, baldheaded, earless, ravaged by frost and famine.

He makes his way to Norway and finally gets face to face with his hero and idol, king Olav. It is the night before the fateful battle at Stiklastad, where he and king Olav will fall, and he happens to be the unseen, stunned witness to Olav's anguish before the decisive event. Seeing the glorious warrior wreathing and helplessly evoking his God is too much for Thormod; his dream of the hero ideal is shattered; his entire world collapses. When the king, having believed himself alone, finally discovers Thormod

and learns who he is, he asks him to recite his Gerpla in the darkness of the night.

"I no longer remember my poem", the poet answers in a dead voice, rises, and leaning on his stick, limps away.

I recommend rejection of the book, but I do so with hesitation and reluctance, for it is a work of many merits. It will no doubt be a good, if not a best, seller in the Scandinavian countries, but its appeal to the American public is likely to be limited. Laxness is of course a great writer; some other books of his may be a better gamble.

Alfhild Knebsch