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RECENT FLIGHTS OF THE TRUMPETER EDITOR

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For as long as I can recall I have wanted to go to Norway. My earliest memories are part of a cultural space which includes "the old country". Ancestors on both sides of our family were Norsk. I am an elder son and was educated by my father and his male relatives to remember and pass on tradition and old ways. These lie deeply buried and influence me in unexpected ways.

After generations away from Norway some of us feel a strong pull from the old country we have never set foot in, but which in so many ways we know. We experience journeying to Norway as coming home. There is completion, a circle is joined when we touch the ancient soils and rocks of those northern mountains and shores. The plane I was in flew along the valley my great grandfather came from. The log house he was born in, built in 1620, still stands.

The polar route is good for a trumpeter to fly. Sun on the snow and water of Greenland and Iceland is awe inspiring. The shores of Norway are inviting as you fly across the stormy Norwegian Sea. I'm glad that I travelled on invitation from Kit- Fai and Arne Naess.

I spent the last week of October in Norway appreciating the long heritage and harmonious blending with nature that are written through the Norsk landscape in its artifacts, history and mythology. Oslo is a subtle blend of ancient history with modern energy and forms. Even in remote areas there are old houses that have been remodelled (many 400 or more years old) to have all of the advantages of the electronic era. Yet they retain their older, more secure ties with the land in buildings, artifacts and families dwelling centuries in specific places. It is impressive to stand on farms, such as those of my cousins', realizing that the valleys have been farmed for thousands of years. In this harsh northern climate with a short growing season life flourishes in diverse ways; stock, agriculture and culture are adapted to local conditions. Farms fit into the landscape. They even enhance it, add greater diversity.

The valley in which my cousins dwell was relatively isolated until the mid-19th century. Even now it is remote. It still has wild reindeer herds on its adjacent higher plateaus. The glaciers left it about 10,000 years ago. There is evidence that ancestors of the current inhabitants invaded the land with their domestic animals (sheep and maybe goats) as the ice retreated. Over countless generations herds moved back and forth from valley floor to mountain meadow plateaus with the seasons.

Generations of shepherds went into the mountains with the animals, staying in huts while caring for the flocks. In the fall the sheep were driven to the meadows in the valley. The culture evolved living on two levels with seasonal changes. The winter days are short. Darkness and cold weather encourage indoor activities which contribute to the richness of place and depth of culture there: All of the arts and crafts come into play, carving, woodworking, knitting, painting, cooking, etc., story telling, music playing, singing and folk dancing. Such valleys, with their rich, old, rural, cultural heritage, exist all over Norway.

Their preservation is of great concern to the Norwegians.

Norway's mountains (fjells) and fjords create a rugged landscape that gives rise to, encourage, and even incite diversity. The bunad (or traditional regional costume) evolved along with local dialects and artistic styles. They reflect local colors in dialect, vernacular architecture, and other folk crafts. One sees this in the rural areas, in villages, and in urban museums.

Before setting foot in Norway I knew something about it. I heard a lot of Norsk as a child. I knew of Norway's linguistic and cultural diversity and was familiar with its history. When I explored Oslo this fall, I saw diversity manifest in the city, but also its historical depth, as is evident in the Folk Museum at Bygdøy. Here one can witness the variety of local traditional costumes, different styles and forms of music and dance, and different types of building (in the outdoor museum), and practical arts of every sort.

Despite this considerable diversity, growing out of long dwelling in specific places, there is an underlying sense of wholeness, a harmony of themes of interrelationships familial and natural. Norway is an impressive land. It calls to those who have glaciers, river water, mountain peaks, meadows and fjords in their veins. The blend of ancient and new is harmonized by natural elders from the humans, animals and plants right down to the rocks of primal ground. Through my travels it became increasingly clear how central to this richness is narrative, dialogue, discussion, conversation, the daily ebb and flow of actions embedded in living stories, legend and myth. From these stories mythology arises. When we dwell a long time in a place, the land speaks through our cultures.

By mass manufacturing one story and electronically distributing it throughout the world we do not serve human needs. We need to create self-sustaining cultures that are ecocentric and ecosophic — that is, that are deeply harmonious with nature's places but which also draw values from a shared common ground, and larger traditions. Within a given heritage there can be great diversity, yet there can be common themes, a sense of belonging to a national whole; our identity is part of a larger historical reality. All people contribute to the larger story. I saw examples of this local participation and contribution in the larger whole in, for example, the Folk Museum in Oslo. Some items on display even came from the farm upon which my great grandfather was born.

These ruminations lead me to reflect on how by dwelling in place respectfully over generations we venerate our lives, and we create cultures which are increasingly rich with communal and individual values that all — including other beings — can share. The land becomes happier for it. The land in Norway looks happy. This is encouraging. I want to see more.

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