Sointula and the Seeds of Kalervo Oberg's Culture Shock Model

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Introduction[1]

When you first suggested this conference to me, back in May 2012, I thought it was a wonderful idea but was sure that there was no way there could be sufficient interest in a conference on culture shock on a small Canadian island to fill 100 places. But, how wrong I was! This conference has been reported on the national news in Canada and in Finland, as well as in the *Huffington Post*, and it had sold out before it received any of this publicity! It's an amazing achievement and I think that everybody who has contributed to this should be very, very proud of themselves.

I have only been in Sointula for a few days and I have found everyone here to be friendly and welcoming. This seems to be a wonderful place to retire to, whether you want to commune with nature, enjoy the peace and quiet, or immerse yourself in the fascinating local history. But, of course, I would say that wouldn't I?

Because if the theory espoused by anthropologist Kalervo Oberg, possibly Sointula's most famous son, is correct then I would have to be in Stage 1 of culture shock and that would mean that I would inevitably find this community inspiring and its people profoundly lovely. Only later, if I moved here, would I, after perhaps a few months, really begin to hate you.

'Culture shock' is a widely examined model of how expatriates and other sojourners react to new cultural environments. It's so well-known that, in many ways, it needs little introduction. The first reference to it, despite many believing that Kalervo Oberg 'coined the phrase,' seems to have been in 1929 (Gamio 1929).

However, the most commonly known culture shock model – cited either explicitly or implicitly by many intercultural communication scholars, business scholars, social anthropologists, and popular writers is the Four Stage Model espoused by British Columbia-born Kalervo Oberg (1954) in a speech in August 1954 to the wives of US expatriate engineers working in Brazil. According to Oberg, people begin their sojourn in a 'honeymoon stage,' during which they find the new culture endlessly fascinating. This eventually gives way to stage two ('reaction'), which is characterised by a strong dislike of the new culture, a romanticizing of the home culture, a failure to learn the language, general anger, and obtuse stereotypes about the natives that one develops with other expatriates and co-nationals, with whom one socializes almost exclusively. In stage three, there is a sense of 'resignation,' and some coping strategies are developed, such as self-mocking humour. Finally, in stage four, having un-

[1] This paper is an abridged version of the keynote address given to the conference 'Culture Shock: Utopian Dreams, Hard Realities', held on the island of Sointula, British Columbia, on 20th-22nd September 2013.

derstood the culture and got used to it, there is a 'breakthrough.' One realizes that the new culture is 'just another way of living.' This so-called 'u-curve' model has been modified and debated by numerous researchers; however, it is broadly accepted, even if precise details are disputed and the final stage – or complete adjustment - may only be evidenced when the sojourner returns home to experience 'reverse culture shock.'

But what has 'culture shock' got to do with Sointula? Why do I think that it's even reasonable to refer to Sointula as the birthplace of culture shock?

Oberg's model raises an important, meta-academic, historical question. Although the phrase 'culture shock' precedes Oberg, he was the one who was the first to really think about it and develop it into a model. So, why did Oberg, rather than another anthropologist, happen to develop culture shock? Why did he infuse his model with certain assumptions and ideas?

I believe that Oberg's background helps us better understand why he was so particularly interested in culture shock. Not only was he from an immigrant background, something true of some academics who had briefly looked at culture shock before him, but he was, as I have discovered, also partly raised in Sointula which I will argue can be seen as culture shock in the extreme. Aspects of his later culture shock model heavily reflect both the nature of this commune (which clearly fascinated him so much that he wrote his BA dissertation on it) and its philosophy. More research is needed on this topic, and this is difficult because Oberg died in Corvallis, Oregon, on 11 July 1973 of a cerebral haemorrhage, with very little having been published about his early life. He also published little himself. Oberg married twice but had no children (at least there is no evidence of them in the records), and, as his brother and two sisters died young, he did not even have nephews or nieces. Still, the information I have unearthed on Oberg is worth presenting because it casts light on why it was he who developed culture shock, why he developed it as he did, and the role that his time in Sointula may have played in this. It also contributes to our understanding of the anthropologist who developed what remains a very popular model.

Kalervo Oberg's Family

Cora Du Bois (the only anthropologist, before Oberg, to look at the concept in any depth, and who is the single citation in Oberg's 1954 presentation) was, like Oberg, the child of immigrants, in her case from Switzerland to the USA (Du Bois 1954). But this still raises the question of why culture shock fascinated Oberg even more than it did Du Bois and why he presented it in the way he did. And this is where Sointula comes in.

In many ways, I discovered Oberg's link to Sointula completely by accident. I have been living in Oulu in Finland since 2005 and I became interested in Culture Shock in about 2007 when I was doing editing for an expatriate newspaper. I was sent an article to edit on the subject of culture shock and the model seemed to reflect exactly what I'd gone through living in Finland, and when I'd lived in Holland when I was student. And I noticed that the article had cited Canadian Kalervo Oberg as being the originator of the phrase. This immediately fascinated me because 'Kalervo' is a Finnish name. It is one of the characters in *Kalevala,* Finland's 'national epic.' This collection of folklore, first published in 1831, is often considered a significant part of the Romantic 'national awakening' in Finland which led to it gaining independence from Russia in 1917. Also, 'Oberg' is a Swedish surname and my wife comes from an area of Finland, Kokkola on the west coast, which has a Swedish-speaking minority. So, it may even have been that Oberg's parents were from the area of Finland that my wife was from.

I started looking into Kalervo Oberg and could find relatively little other than his obituary in *American Anthropologist* in 1974 (McComb and Foster 1974). It confirmed my suspicion that his parents were Finns. They had emigrated to Nanaimo, which is on Vancouver Island, and Oberg had been born there in January 1901. I also discovered that many Finns that did so ended-up working in the coalmines there.

Further googling of Kalervo Oberg led to a 1941 article in the *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* entitled, 'Harmony Island: A Finnish Utopian Venture in British Columbia' (Kolehmainen 1941). It stated that the treasurer of Kalevan Kansa, the group which founded Sointula, was 'A. Oberg' and one of its citations was Kalervo Oberg's 1928 'Grad-

uating essay' from the University of British Columbia, the title of which was 'Sointula: A Communistic Settlement in British Columbia' (Oberg 1928). I also found the biography of Matti Halminen (1936), who was one of the founders of Sointula. It mentioned that an 'August Oberg' was the treasurer and that his two daughters, Hilma, 4, and Elma, 5, had been killed in a fire in Sointula in 1903, which had killed 11 people, 8 of them children, leading to recriminations, which brought the colony to its knees.

This seemed to be just too much of a coincidence. Surely, with the same surname as the treasurer, and having written his graduating essay about Sointula, Kalervo Oberg had to be related to this August Oberg. I obtained Kalervo Oberg's graduating essay. He had interviewed August Oberg in the essay but had not mentioned any relationship or any personal connection he might have to Sointula.

But then it occurred to me that I could check the 1901 Canadian census through ancestry.co.uk. And, lo and behold, I found that Kalervo Oberg was the only person of that name in Canada, his father was indeed August (a coalminer) and he had two older sisters, Elma and Hilma. I checked the 1911 census, by which time the Obergs had moved to Tofino, and there was now a younger brother, Ilmari, but no sisters, seemingly because they had been killed in the fire. It was becoming almost certain that Kalervo Oberg had spent part of his childhood in the Sointula commune, which ran from 1901 to 1904, and it was confirmed beyond doubt when I found the death record for Oberg's mother Hilma. She had died in 'Essondale' in 1936. I could find this on no map and eventually discovered that it was a mental hospital.

I obtained Hilma's medical records. Her husband was August (who, like her, was from Lammela near Turku), her son was Kalervo, and it made clear that he was a graduate of UBC, that he was at Chicago University (where Oberg did his PhD), and one of the few people to visit Hilma Oberg in hospital was Matti Halminen, a member of the Kalevan Kansa committee. I had my man! Kalervo Oberg had been raised in Sointula.

A Finnish Community

So we can understand why culture shock fascinated Oberg so much. Firstly, he was raised in an immigrant community, even putting Sointula aside. There were many immigrant families in the area of Nanaimo in which the Obergs lived in 1901: 'Middle Ward – South.' Of the twelve households visible on the census page, which includes the Obergs, there are families who mark their ethnicity as 'Welsh,' 'Scotch,' 'English,' 'Irish' (though a few of these families had migrated from the United States), and 'Finnish.' The native language even of the Finnish children born in Canada is marked as 'Finlandish.' Oberg seems to have spoken Finnish as he drew upon un-translated Finnish sources when he was an undergraduate and interpreted for his mother when she was committed to the mental hospital, implying that she had never learnt English, despite living in Canada for 40 years, and was stuck in stage 2.

We can see, in Oberg's early childhood, evidence of culture shock. His neighbours are Finns and other non-Canadians, and his mother learns almost no English. But, of course, we can go even further. Oberg was raised on Sointula. We can see why Sointula fascinated Kalervo Oberg. As stated, he was briefly raised there, his father was one of its founders, and his two sisters died there. But in addition, it can be seen as the ultimate example of culture shock.

Oberg's graduating essay describes how, by 1900, many Finnish immigrants in Nanaimo had found life intolerable and planned to establish a commune and to reject modern capitalist society. They invited the socialist leader, radical Christian, and journalist Matti Kurikka (1862–1915) to come and lead them. As a journalist Kurikka had become the editor of Finland's leading socialist newspaper, *Työmies* (the Worker). According to Oberg, this newspaper was read by expatriate Finns in various places to which they had immigrated, particular the United States and Canada.

In 1899, Kurikka left Finland for Australia, and it was from there that he was invited, by a committee that included Kalervo Oberg's father, to come and lead the new community. He arrived in Nanaimo in August 1900. While in Australia, Kurikka had established a commune of Finnish immigrants called *Kalevan Kansa* (Folk of Kaleva), a reference to 'Kaleva,' the mythic Finnish homeland in Karelia, recorded in Finland's national epic *Kalevala*. The Australian commune had broken down: Kurikka was espe-

cially unhappy about the levels of alcoholism, and, despite having encouraged working-class Finns to move to Australia and not Canada, he changed his mind and accepted the invitation from the Finns of Nanaimo. By spring 1901, Kurikka and his followers had chosen Malcolm Island as the site for their commune. The government agreed to lease the island to the new Kalevan Kansa Company with various conditions, including that the members' children be educated in English. The Finns renamed the island 'Sointula.' By 1904, the colony had been devastated by infighting, and Kurikka left along with half the colony.

Oberg contemplated why Sointula failed. The roughly 200 Kalevan Kansa found a forested island on which they had to eke out an existence. There were wolves and bears to contend with. The group went there to begin a lumber operation – this, along with agriculture and fishing, would be the basis of their economy. They were not successful quickly enough and they could not obtain more credit. There were food shortages, a fire in which people were killed or left destitute, and, naturally, in-fighting, partly due to the fact that some islanders had different religious and/or political views than did their leaders. Nevertheless, what happened with the Finnish community appears to reflect Oberg's concept of culture shock. As the 1941 British Columbia Historical Quarterly article (Kolehmainen 1941, 112) summarized it: *[Their] grievances seemed only more intolerable when the [Finnish] immigrants, with growing nostalgia and diminishing objectivity, recalled the more attractive aspects of conditions in the Old Country: the simple life on the farms, the bright Northern sunshine and clear atmosphere, bracing winds and swaying evergreens; their proximity to and love for the soil. It was not strange, therefore, that many Finns, particularly those touched by prevailing Utopian socialist currents, yearned to "free themselves from tortuous toil in the deep bowels of the earth," and to build a new communal home apart from the capitalist world, where man would not exploit man, all would labour for the common good, and life would be co-operative, just, and harmonious.*

Part of the attraction to Sointula was the opportunity to rebuild a romanticized version of the life that had been left behind, something that, as Oberg stresses, tends to occur among immigrants in Stage 2. Oberg evidently contemplated Sointula in depth and, for obvious reasons, was emotionally affected by it, hence his decision to write his graduating essay about it. Sointula parallels his description of stage two of culture shock so closely that I suggest it helps to explain why Oberg became more interested in culture shock than did other anthropologists who, otherwise, were just as fieldwork-experienced.

Oberg experienced many different cultures. For his master's degree and doctorate, he moved to the United States, where he studied at the University of Pittsburgh (for his master's) and the University of Chicago (for his doctorate, which he received in 1933). He eventually married an American and became a naturalized American citizen. He conducted anthropological fieldwork in Alaska with the Tlingit (Oberg 1933). He also worked in Peru, Ecuador, and Brazil on various development projects as a civil servant for the American government. By 1954, Oberg had experienced many different cultures and in a variety of circumstances. He was in a position to articulate what he and others of his acquaintance went through when doing so.

Oberg's Ideology and Matti Kurikka[2]

There is a case for arguing that Oberg's fascination with culture shock was sparked by his immigrant background and especially Sointula. But the influence of Sointula over Oberg's culture shock model seems to go further.

The philosophy expressed in Oberg's graduating essay – and later in his 'Culture Shock' presentation – appears to be influenced by the philosophy of Matti Kurikka, a man who exerted an intellectual influence over August Oberg, Kalervo's father. Kalervo Oberg is very much an apologist for Kurikka. The following statement from his graduating essay surely implies support for at least some of Kurikka's views: 'If Kurikka had succeeded in bringing Finnish socialists to his own high level of thinking, it is quite probable that Finland would have never suffered the horrors of the red revolution of 1918' (Oberg 1928, 8). When politically polarized Finland gained

[2] Much of this section was originally published in Dutton (2011) and then Dutton (2012, Ch. 4).

independence from Russia, which had ruled it since 1809, in December 1917 there soon began a bloody civil war, which lasted from January to May 1918, between the Whites (nationalists) and the Reds (socialists), which the former won. Oberg later goes even further in his praise of the charismatic leader: 'Undoubtedly Finland will eventually recognise Kurikka and give him a place amongst the most worthy of her sons' (Oberg 1928, 11). Sometimes it is unclear whether Oberg is paraphrasing Kurikka's views or stating his own: 'Kurikka was first and foremost a Finnish patriot. To free Finland from the tyranny of Russia was the first ambition of his life but this was not possible so long as the nation was ununited, when one class tyrannised another' (Oberg 1928, 10-11).

Mindful of Oberg's positive attitude towards Kurikka and his thinking, we can discern a number of similarities between their respective philosophies, as expressed in Oberg's graduating essay and in 'Culture Shock.' The first involves an apparent acceptance of what is known as New Thought Metaphysics. Oberg writes that Kurikka was 'pre-eminently a man of spirit proclaiming the supremacy of mind over matter' (Oberg 1928, 2). In other words, Kurikka believed that people could change their perceptions just by thinking differently - a common view among theosophists. And, indeed, Kurikka has been termed a 'theosophist' (Lindström 1999). In light of the evidence I have noted, this seems to foreshadow Oberg's belief that you can, in effect, 'think away' Culture Shock. Oberg (1960, 4) argues that, when you realize that the new culture is 'just another way of living,' then your feelings of anxiety evaporate. Thus, in effect, he seems to believe that, by thinking differently (i.e., by accepting a certain belief), you can actively change the way you feel. This is not congruent with the evidence that people gradually adapt to new environments and that their thinking changes accordingly. But we can see a similarity between one of Oberg's beliefs about culture shock and one held by the seemingly admired leader of his childhood commune.

Second, both Kurikka and Oberg believed very strongly in equal free will. According to Oberg, Kurikka believed that all humans are ultimately the same and that they all have equal free will. In speaking of culture shock, Oberg assumed that his listeners were all equally able to overcome it and to make free decisions - assuming they were not members of a minority that, according to him, simply could not cope in foreign countries at all. There is a wealth of scientific evidence that Oberg's view is not accurate. People's decision making is limited by hereditary personality characteristics and intelligence, life development, and economic circumstances, meaning that the degree to which they are free differs. This being the case, it seems arbitrary to argue that some people simply cannot cope in foreign cultures but that most can; that these people are equal in their ability to cope; and that they will overcome culture shock if they work through its stages and finally accept that the foreign culture is 'just another way of living.'

Oberg's model of culture shock appears to reflect a belief that humans are not only much the same in their inherited capacities but that these capacities themselves are broadly irrelevant. We are restricted only by culture, which can be changed through free action. Oberg's graduating essay reflects this view. 'There is no doubt that these habits can be changed,' he writes, referring to 'our beliefs and customs' and 'everyday conduct,' which he believes are entirely the product of 'social heritage.' This means that a 'better society' can be created by a 'change in social organization.' He writes here with the absolute conviction later evident in his 'Culture Shock' article. And he continues: 'Perhaps Plato's scheme of taking children to a special colony is after all a final solution of the problem' (Oberg 1928, 33). By 'problem,' Oberg is referring to his belief that 'communistic' groups do not have enough time to change people's most basic 'habits of everyday conduct.' Here it would appear that Oberg argues that all differences between societies are cultural. Societies have varied, 'yet the individuals that have composed the whole process have been individually about the same' (16). The same belief – in a kind of equal free will and cultural determinism – is implied with regard to Western expatriates who experience culture shock: they can all act positively to overcome their 'ethnocentrism.' And, in his paper, Oberg (1960) explains how they can do this.

Third, Oberg reflects, indirectly, Kurikka's view that all religions are equal (what we might term 'religious relativism'). According to Oberg (1928, 6),

Kurikka was influenced by the Romantic Movement and advocated a 'pantheistic' style of religion, in which he saw all the famous religious leaders as wise men (rather than as prophets) but tended to concentrate on the teachings of Jesus. Kurikka believed in equality, which was to be lived out in an egalitarian community in which everyone cooperated for the greater good and spent all their time in the service of God, something he saw as enacting the teachings of Jesus. This recreation of a supposedly pure way of life - and the belief that all such 'natural' ways of life are unique, equal, and valuable - conforms to the thinking of such Romantics as Rousseau, by whom, Oberg notes, Kurikka was influenced. In Rousseau's philosophy, those who dissent or who are regarded as impure and corrupted are seen as 'other.' They are often described in very negative and emotional terms, such as 'Enemy of the People.'

The Romantic Movement disdained bourgeois society and prized the materially and educationally 'primitive' – that is, tribal or folk cultures – while stating (inconsistently) that all cultures are equal. In Kurikka's philosophy, dissenters and manifestations of religion that he regards as corrupted, such as Finnish Lutheranism, are likewise dismissed as 'bourgeois' or 'capitalist' while he, at the same time, argues that all religions are equal.

If we replace 'religion' with 'culture,' Oberg's thoughts parallel this. For Oberg, cultures are equal because different cultures are 'just another way of living.' However, it appears that non-Western peoples are culturally determined and that any negative aspect of their culture is the fault not of them (in the sense of being due to their personalities and thus their decisions, for example) but of the 'conditions and the historical circumstances which have created them' (Oberg 1960, 3). This does not hold true for Western expatriates. In contrast to their hosts, expatriates, involved in their 'cocktail circuit,' are blamed for their 'ethnocentrism' (Oberg 1960, 3). They have the freedom to modify their behaviour and to overcome culture shock but fail to do so. Their behaviour is 'derogatory,' and their categorizations of natives are invariably 'invidious' and, implicitly, not 'honest' (Oberg 1960, 3).

This view is problematic because, in the case of non-Westerners, it reifies 'history' and ignores the science of personality. A group's 'history' is really what that group does, its culture, over a period of time. So we have a circular situation where culture is caused by history and history is caused by culture. From a scientific viewpoint, how a group behaves will be affected by factors such as their modal personality and intelligence, leading to their making distinctive decisions, rendering their culture, whether historically or currently, in a sense, their fault. However, if history and culture cause each other in an eternal loop, then a group can only attain their 'culture' by it being thrown out of the sky like a thunderbolt.

But, this is only true of non-Westerners. Like Kurikka and Rousseau, Oberg constructs an enemy: the 'middle-class,' 'ethnocentric,' 'cocktail circuit' Western expatriate. When Oberg refers to all cultures as 'just another way of living' he is advocating cultural relativism - that all cultures are equal and cannot be judged by outside standards. But, in reality, he appears to regard Western and non-Western peoples as fundamentally different. Non-Western peoples are the helpless products of culture and history and are not responsible for the problems in their societies (which Oberg accepts are 'real') – problems, we might suggest, that are caused by their behaviour and highlighted by expatriate stereotypes. In contrast, Western behaviour – such as ethnocentrism and stereotyping – is not explained away by Western history and culture.

Oberg blames Westerners for their unacceptable behaviour and suggests that they need to reject it, implying that they have the freedom to do so and are responsible for the nature of their culture. Moreover, he condemns the stereotyping of natives but finds it acceptable to stereotype Western expatriates (e.g., as being part of a 'cocktail circuit'). Thus, Kurikka's 'religious relativism' (and its related inconsistencies) is reflected in Oberg's 'cultural relativism.' On the surface, both advocate relativism, while in reality both prize one kind of religion (or culture), the primitive or supposedly pure one, above another. And they appear to judge the religion/culture they prize by different standards than they use to judge the one they dislike. Of course, cultural relativism was highly influential in anthropology by 1954. So this similarity between Oberg and Kurikka must be considered alongside other influences.

Fourth, there are other religious dimensions to Oberg's presentation of culture shock. Both Kurikka and Oberg seem to think in terms of absolutes and to employ emotive language with a fervour common to religious groups. Kurikka dismissed marriage as a 'capitalist licence to rape.' Oberg (1960) writes that, when American expatriates meet to 'grouse' about the natives, 'you can be sure' they are in culture shock. There is no possibility that you might be wrong. He also characterizes culture shock as a 'malady' with a 'cure,' casting it as an unquestionably bad thing. This is even though one might argue that insights could be gained from experiencing culture shock, a view commonly accepted by anthropologists. In effect, according to Oberg's version of culture shock, the person who does not accept cultural relativism is portrayed as being essentially mentally ill (because only once he accepts cultural relativism is he 'cured'). It is, of course, a well known tactic of political regimes to dismiss intellectual opponents as being mad or, if such regimes are of a particularly religious bent, as being possessed by some evil spirit. Oberg's way of discussing culture shock comes close to religiosity in this sense.

Kalervo Oberg Himself

So, I think there is a case for arguing that Oberg developed the model of 'culture shock' and that he did so in the way he did because of his background in Sointula.

Now, in making this case, it might be suggested that I've been rather critical of Oberg's philosophy. This is probably true. I think he may have been emotionally involved with both Sointula and other ideas and, as such, less able to perceive bias in his thinking. But I don't want to be too critical of this, because bias is a problem we all have to fight all the time and, despite there being philosophical problems with the detail, Oberg's model seems to be empirically accurate and an important contribution to making sense of social life. Moreover, I think you can respect and even like a person despite having philosophical disagreements with them. And during my research, I feel that I've got to know Kalervo Oberg.

And I think it's a tremendous shame that very few people have heard of him. Culture Shock is an extremely popular idea, even a cliche, and he was the person who popularized it after his speech was published in *Practical Anthropology* in 1960. He deserves to be better known.

I've been able to find few people still alive that remember Oberg but those that do suggest he was a very smartly dressed, polite, thoughtful man. After his stints as a civil servant for the US government, Oberg end-up lecturing anthropology at Oregon State University where there is, to this day, a Kalervo Oberg Memorial Award for anthropology seniors. Prof. Court Smith, of Oregon State University, told me that: *He was a very approachable person. In my case he was very sensitive to my feelings and intentions. I remember going to a party at his house. We were instructed to bring a poem to read. I forget the exact occasion, but these were times of social and environmental unrest and my wife and I read "The Hollow Man" by T.S. Eliot. My colleagues felt and expressed that this was too much of a downer for the occasion. Dr. Oberg was quite supportive of our selection.*

Smith also stressed that, in the late-1960s during a time of student rebellion, students still respected and listened courteously to Kalervo Oberg.

It seems that Oberg was a kindly man despite a life marred by a series of tragedies. Oberg married twice. He married first in Vancouver on Christmas Day 1926 to Annie 'Mable' Vance. They were still married in 1937 when they sailed from New York to Southampton in England. I have been unable to find out how the marriage ended. Oberg married again in Baltimore on 30th June 1945, to an American, Lois Pearly Rimmer (1915–1995). So, Oberg almost certainly experienced the upheaval of divorce at a time when divorce was quite rare. He may even have been widowed.

He does not appear to have had children with either of his wives. We can only speculate on why, but it's not unreasonable to suggest this may have been due to fertility problems.

Oberg lost all three of his siblings at young ages and the death of his brother Ilmari, at 21, set off a further tragedy.

Oberg's mother Hilma was committed to Essondale, a BC psychiatric institution late known as Riverview Hospital. According to the hospital's records, Kalervo Oberg testified that his mother began to become paranoid and depressed after her son Il-

mari died in 1923, convinced that people in Tofino were trying to kill her. Her husband noted that this became a serious problem around 1930. In August 1932, Hilma's mental condition had become so strained that Oberg's parents visited him in Chicago, where he was doing his PhD, with a view to finding a specialist for Hilma. While in Chicago, Hilma had a complete mental breakdown. Her behaviour was described as violent and erratic, oscillating between laughter and depression, and her husband and son committed her to Chicago State Hospital in October 1932. She was force-fed, refusing to eat because she thought someone had put blood in the food. In June 1933, Hilma was deported and committed to Essondale. In the three years she was in hospital, her husband could only afford to visit twice. Hilma ultimately died of pneumonia in 1st March 1936. Her husband died on 5th November the same year.

And most tragically of all, Oberg lost his two sisters (aged 4 and 5) when he was just a toddler, in a fire which almost took his own life. One of Kurikka's ideas was that people should sleep in large, communal buildings rather than separate cabins. A fire broke out in the children's sleeping quarters in January 1903 and spread rapidly. As Paula Wild (2005, 68-69) summarizes in Sointula: Island Utopia: *Mrs Oberg was in one of the sleeping rooms on the ground floor when the fire broke out. She carried her two young sons outside, then found it impossible to return for her daughters. When her husband escaped from the third floor and heard that the girls were still inside, he plunged back into the flames. Finding the little girls huddled in bed, he picked them up and started for the door. Halfway there the floor collapsed. Oberg fell, Elma and Hilma slipping from his arms. With his clothes, face and hands on fire, Oberg struggled to the door where he was pulled out by several men. The bodies of the girls were later found a few steps from the door.*

But despite all that tragedy, Kalervo Oberg will still be remembered as a pleasant chap. And, whether pleasant or not, as the innovator of culture shock, he deserves to be better remembered.

Conclusion

This conference can be seen in many ways: a celebration of local history, an academic examination of utopianism and culture shock, a wonderful example of how a quirky idea can come to fruition if lots of enthusiastic people put their heads together. But having the conference here in Sointula was inspired by the Kalervo Oberg connection. We wouldn't be here this afternoon if it wasn't for Kalervo Oberg and so, in that sense, this conference is kind of in his memory.

Dr Oberg: you were behind a very popular phrase and a very useful model of human behaviour, and more people need to know that. So, when we have our first drink at the dinner later let's toast Kalervo Oberg, Dr Culture Shock. Kiitos! Well done!

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