

describe and view puberty as the period when sexuality is discovered. But it is remarkable that the experience should to such an extent involve fears and concerns of how one will fare as a boy in relation to the prevalent "norms": not to become too tall, to become plump and not too skinny,

not to get hair on the chest, or elsewhere for that matter, to have a small enough penis, to worry how one is going to look wearing the mandatory "peho" (short for penis holder and the counterpart to bras in our society) which is to protrude from the skirts boys must wear, etc.

Language is intimately linked with thought and is a subliminal force of incredible power, evidenced by the very resistance linguistic sex neutralizing efforts still evoke today. *Egalia's Daughters* will most likely remain a milepost in the liberation of our language.

ALVA, ETT KVINNOLIV

Sissela Bok. Stockholm: Bonnier, 1987.

Kerstin Camenietzki

Alva, ett Kvinnoliv is a biography of Alva Myrdal, Swedish educator and writer, who was born in 1902 and died a few years ago. She was married to Gunnar Myrdal, the well-known Swedish economist and politician, who was the author of many books, among them *An American Dilemma*, published in 1944.

Alva's life was seemingly successful. She earned her B.A. in Sweden at the University of Stockholm in 1924. This was quite an achievement then, since girls were often not admitted into regular public high-schools, but had to study privately with tutors. From 1936 to 1948, Alva was the founder and director of an institute in Stockholm focusing on educational and child psychology. This institute trained young women to become kindergarten teachers.

Throughout her life, Alva was actively involved in political debates in Sweden, always advocating issues from a radical point of view. She was particularly interested in child education, families and

housing policy. She emphasized freedom and equality — equality between children and adults, men and women, rich and poor and peoples from all religions, countries and cultures.

From the end of World War II, Alva was often called on by the United Nations for various assignments in New York, Paris and Geneva. She also served as the Swedish ambassador to India from 1955 to 1959.

The author, Sissela Bok, is the daughter of Alva and Gunnar, and a Professor of Philosophy at Brandeis University. The book is therefore much more than a biography of Alva Myrdal. The author is, rightfully, proud of her mother's achievements, but she also brings out the "life of a woman" as the subtitle reads. Alva struggled most of her life with the conflict between marriage, family life and a career, or even just being able to work. She found her working life interrupted by having to accompany her husband on his many trips, particularly to the US. At times she felt as a mere appendage to her husband's career. Alva felt it a duty to work, once having received a higher education. Family life became increasingly difficult. Alva's problem was not just a social, but also a psychological one. Her husband had a strong, even domineering personality and Alva seemed to have lost her own identity when she met him. She even burned her diaries to start a new,

better life with him. This was, as her daughter explains, too great a sacrifice for Alva. As conflicts grew between father and son, Alva seemed to stay back, avoiding the conflict. Sissela Bok is very open about her parents' difficulties without being emotional. Instead, the book ends on a very positive note and reveals a strong friendship between mother and daughter later in their lives, after the difficult years in the Myrdal family.

Alva Myrdal wrote several books, many of these while accompanying her husband abroad. She wrote *Nation and Family* in 1941. A new edition was published in 1968 (with an introduction by Patrick Moynihan of Harvard). In 1956 she published *Women's Two Roles* together with Viola Klein, but she had some difficulty finishing this book. She had become involved with women in developing countries and found that the book was relevant only to women in more privileged and affluent societies.

Alva was not a fact-finding researcher, but a writer and reformer who tried to influence public opinion and governments, both in Sweden and throughout the world. Her interests reflected the social issues prevalent during many decades of this century. She became increasingly involved in international issues, such as women's rights across the world, disarmament and the problems of developing countries.

EARLY SPRING

Tove Ditlevsen. Translated with an Introduction by Tiina Nunnally. Seattle, Washington: The Seal Press, 1985.

Ellen Christensen Edmonds

Whenever you pick up a book in translation you cannot help wondering what is so special about this particular book to warrant the efforts of a translator. This state-

ment is not an attempt to judge the art of translation or to criticize the individual translator, but a realization of the enormously difficult task entailed in the translation of any piece of literature, where the sound of words is a factor determining the final product. This is particularly true in a work such as Tove Ditlevsen's *Early Spring*.

Ditlevsen is, as Nunnally notes in her introduction, "one of Denmark's best loved and most read authors." First and foremost, she is a poet. This is evident also in her prose writings. Her language is clear

and approachable, her diction is colourful and sharp, and her style is economical. Her illustrations, painted with irony and humour, conjure up thought-provoking images that will remain in the mind of the reader.

Early Spring is the part of Ditlevsen's autobiography that covers her childhood and youth. In the telling of her story the author is intensely personal and at the same time uniquely universal. The events are peculiarly Danish, in some cases peculiarly Copenhagen, but the feelings they evoke both in the child Tove and in the