

## Winter Afternoons in Buccleuch Place

Dana Caspi

‘What is Laphroaig?’ I asked Bjarne one afternoon in his room. It must have been in 1996: I was a fourth-year student and the fortunate translator of Peter Høeg’s phenomenal bestseller *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* into Hebrew. It was the first book I’d been asked to translate, and Bjarne very kindly offered to help me. With endless amounts of patience and encouragement, he explained every word and idiom that I struggled with, and there were many. But on that particular afternoon he seemed embarrassed by my question and didn’t answer straight away.

Eventually he said: ‘You don’t know what Laphroaig is?’

Oh my God, I thought, it must be something really rude, and this will be awkward for both of us.

When he did eventually explain, I realised he was embarrassed on my behalf: three years in Scotland and not a clue about whisky! But I think that with his keen senses, Bjarne also realised something else about me: I was still searching; I still had so much to learn! And so it was largely thanks to him that I was able to stay on in Edinburgh and work on a PhD in Scandinavian literature, with Bjarne as my supervisor of course. The years that followed were immensely exciting and edifying. Bjarne allowed me great freedom in my explorations and yet steered me safely towards coherence and purpose.

Eventually I chose to concentrate on translation and leave the academic world, but Bjarne's invaluable advice and insights, both as a translation consultant and as my supervisor, have been with me ever since, and I am grateful for the many hours we spent discussing everything from religious awakenings and Bible interpretations to geographical discoveries and conquests. And literature of course.

Wishing Bjarne a youthful retirement, full of curiosity and joy.  
*Slàinte*, Bjarne!