

Preface to a Definitive Treatise on Flo Ingbrest as an Avatar of the Earth Swede

Although Flo Ingbrest is briefly mentioned¹ by the immortal poet, Joe E. Skilmer [Bibliographer: John F. Nims, ***Studies in Bibliography***, 1967], in his masterpiece “Therese”, Skilmer provides no details on the life of this remarkable woman. In fact, he failed even to capitalize “earth” in his description of her, and one can infer that he mistakenly considered her a mere mortal. Indeed, Skilmer passes her over lightly to favor lesser beings: Therese of the title, Leah, who became rooted, motionless, under Flo’s spell, Honesta Robbins, who dyed her hair in a vain attempt to compete with the Earth Swede, the fickle Anne Mittley, and Greymouth, one of the callow youths who worshiped at the feet of Flo Ingbrest.

Professor Nims, the recognized Skilmer authority, failed to provide significant additional information about Flo, giving us only the following: “We have learned little about Flo Ingbrest -- Florence C. Ingbrest of 1222 Stitt St., Des Moines. Her very address is known only because it was found tattooed on the left hip of a sailor washed ashore at Tampa after the great hurricane of '23. It is clear that Miss Ingbrest meant much to the poet, who saw in this simple Swedish girl a power participating so fully in the chthonic matriarchal atavism of the dark earth itself that he calls her simply his ‘earth-Swede’.” It is obvious from Nims’s description of Flo as “this simple Swedish girl” that he did not understand her majesty and power. The Earth Swede does not *participate in* the power of the earth; instead, one could well say that she *is* the power of the earth, both its dark force and its life-giving and life-sustaining essence.

In research for his treatise on “The Poetry of Protest” [in the journal ***College English***, Vol. 32, No. 6 (Mar., 1971), pp. 696-700], Floyd C. Medford hinted that he found further information on the life of the Earth Swede as Flo Ingbrest, but, except for mention of one of her multitude of descendants, Eve Ingbrest, he failed to enlighten us on his discoveries. Professor Medford’s focus was not even on the Earth Swede, but instead on an obscure American poet who published his works variously as Irneh Wordsworth, Ira Nee Wordsworth, or simply his tribal name, Longfellow. Thus, we can dismiss Professor Medford as a serious scholar on matters pertaining to the Earth Swede.

Another Skilmer researcher who mentioned the Earth Swede was Nat Strehner [“Skilmer's ‘Therese’: A Problem”, ***College English***, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Jan., 1971), pp. 490-491]; however, Professor Strehner was chiefly interested in technical issues relating to Nims’s interpretation of Skilmer. He provides no deeper insight into the aspect of the Earth Swede who was known to Skilmer and others of his period as Flo Ingbrest.

In this work, we will examine the brief temporal existence of the Earth Swede as Flo Ingbrest and will attempt to provide an overview of the ways that she, as this entity, influenced the history of humanity. We will show that her influence was not limited to poetry or even to literature but that the men upon whom she fleetingly turned her attention – and it was almost exclusively men who

¹ “I think? That I shall never, see!
Up, owe 'em love. Leah's a tree.
A tree – who’s hung? Greymouth is pressed
upon the earth-Swede, Flo Ingbrest.”

were uplifted by her spell -- made dramatic advances in the fields of science, medicine, economics, and even sports. Having available to us much more recorded information than that which Professor Nims had at hand, we have traced the movements of Flo Ingbrest over several decades and can document many of the occasions she smiled upon men, who were previously considered mere plodders but suddenly became giants in their fields, at least for a brief time. Although it is true that she sometimes used aliases, we have definitively identified her as Flo Ingbrest in each of these occurrences and will document each case.

Finally, after an exhaustive study of the Earth Swede's appearance as Flo Ingbrest and of Flo Ingbrest's importance to the structure of the modern world, we will identify other possible avatars of the Earth Swede throughout history. We leave it to other researchers to investigate these avatars as we have done with Flo Ingbrest.