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# Mary Wollstonecraft's Scandinavian Journey

Pam Perkins

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**RÉSUMÉ:** *Cet article examine les représentations de la Scandinavie dans Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark (1796), par l'écrivaine anglaise Mary Wollstonecraft. Les écrits anglais sur la Scandinavie, au dix-huitième siècle, dépeignent le Nord comme un monde primitif et exotique; Wollstonecraft emploie ces conventions en décrivant les pays scandinaves, tout en les modifiant aussi. On se concentre, dans l'article, sur la façon dont Wollstonecraft peut se servir des idées reçues, à l'époque, à propos de la Scandinavie en Angleterre, pour se représenter elle-même, femme seule voyageant dans le Nord, comme une exploratrice hardie—tant sur le plan des idées que du monde physique. Enfin, son livre laisse entendre qu'on ne pouvait présenter la Scandinavie de façon adéquate à l'époque, en raison des conventions littéraires anglaises contemporaines quant aux descriptions de voyage.*

**ABSTRACT:** *This paper examines representations of Scandinavia in Mary Wollstonecraft's Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark (1796). Earlier eighteenth-century British writing about Scandinavia had presented the North as an exotic, primitive world; Wollstonecraft both builds on and modifies these conventions in her descriptions of these countries. The essay focuses on the ways in which Wollstonecraft is able to draw on established British ideas about Scandinavian order to represent herself, a lone woman traveller in the North, as a daring adventurer, both physically and intellectually. Ultimately, her book suggests that Scandinavia cannot be adequately represented in the conventional language of eighteenth-century British travel writing and so demands the eye of an unconventional traveller like herself.*

In June of 1795, the British feminist Mary Wollstonecraft landed on the Swedish coast, some twenty-two miles from Gothenburg, beginning a three-month journey through Scandinavia. In January 1796, she published *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, a travelogue that won considerable critical admiration, much of it focusing on the compelling figure of the narrator. The very Tory *British Critic*, no admirer of Mary Wollstonecraft's politics, nevertheless praised the narrator highly, admiring her "heart exquisitely alive to the beauties of nature, and keenly susceptible of every soft impression, every tender emotion" (602). Amelia Alderson (Opie), later a well-known novelist, wrote that the book made her lose "the cold awe which the philosopher has excited" in "the tender sympathy called forth by the woman" (quoted by Tomalin 239). Most famously, the philosopher William Godwin proclaimed in his subsequent biography of Wollstonecraft that *A Short Residence* was "calculated to make a man in love with its author" (Holmes 249). Such reactions might lead one to conclude that the book is more noteworthy for its self-revelation than for any of the sort of cultural and topographical description usually associated with travel writing, a judgment which would be supported by at least some twentieth-century criticism. *A Short Residence* is "autobiography superimposed on a travelogue," according to one critic (Myers 166); another argues that it is primarily an exploration of the problems of "eighteenth-century female autobiography ... generically disguised in a travel book" (Ty 61).<sup>1</sup> Yet such comments imply a generic division which is ultimately not sustainable, as the travels—and even more specifically, the destination—are inextricable from the autobiography. Writing at the end of a century which had seen an increasingly sophisticated critical response to the genre of travel writing, Wollstonecraft is able to use the constraints and conventions of the genre in order to characterize herself. Other British writing on Scandinavia from that era, as well as the critical responses to that writing, provide Wollstonecraft with a literary context in which Scandinavia is associated with the primitive, wild, and exotic. In her ability to appreciate the harsh landscape of the north, the narrator establishes her passionate individuality. Yet Wollstonecraft also goes beyond earlier British travel writers' (by then) fairly conventional representations of Scandinavia in terms of the wild and sublime, as she implies that ultimately Scandinavian culture and landscape resist representation within the conventional aesthetic categories of eighteenth-century British literature. As she does so, she simultaneously implies that her own character also resists categoriza-

tion, by aligning it with the wild, almost unrepresentable world she sees around her in Scandinavia. First by exploiting conventional British ideas of Scandinavia, developed through earlier travel writing, and then by trying to push beyond those associations in her own representations of the countries she visits, Wollstonecraft uses her destination as an integral part of the self-definition of her narrator.

The simplest, most obvious way in which Scandinavia contributes to the narrator's self-representation is that by travelling north, Wollstonecraft is able to imply her own physical boldness; as a woman traveller exploring such relatively unfamiliar territory, she immediately signals to the reader her own intrepidity and daring. Scandinavia was by any measure an unusual destination for an eighteenth-century Englishwoman, especially one accompanied only by an infant daughter and a maid. While women travellers were not quite as anomalous in the eighteenth century as twentieth-century readers might be tempted to think,<sup>2</sup> very few indeed headed north. When the German traveller Ida Pfeiffer visited the Nordic countries half a century after Wollstonecraft, she still felt it necessary to justify her destination—rather more so, apparently, than she had in her earlier travels in Syria, a journey which could be excused by “religious feelings.” A “journey ... to regions far more likely to repel than attract any other traveller!” Pfeiffer imagines a reader protesting on reading the title of her second book. “This woman could have had no object in visiting such a country but the wish to excite our astonishment and curiosity” (9). Throughout her book, Pfeiffer comments on the reactions she, as a lone woman, got from the inhabitants of the places she visited, and she frequently mentions the peculiar difficulties she faced. Wollstonecraft, likewise, makes clear to her readers that as a western European woman alone in Scandinavia she was something of an oddity, although unlike Pfeiffer, she insists that she was relatively unbothered both by the difficulties peculiar to women travellers and by the curiosity of her hosts. When, for example, she describes her initial landfall at an isolated pilot's hut on the Swedish coast, she comments on her maid's timidity, but insists that she “had not, like Marguerite, been thinking of robberies, murders, or the other evil which instantly ... runs foul of a woman's imagination” (66). Later, she proudly reports her first host's comment that she “asked him *men's questions*” (68), and, as she does so, she encourages her readers to reflect on the idiosyncrasy of her journey.

More subtly, and just as interestingly, in writing about her impressions of the North, Wollstonecraft is able to make a place for herself in what was often presented at the time as a rather overcrowded and stale genre. If one judges by the reviews, by the end of the eighteenth century British audiences were becoming rather jaded by travel writing. In 1793, a writer for *The Analytical Review* observed drily:

It is doubtless, no sufficient reason for not publishing minutes of a tour through any country that it has been before repeatedly described ... But a traveller who pursues the track which has already been beaten by Addison, Brydone, Coxe, Moore, Montague, and many other celebrated writers of travels, certainly appears under some disadvantage.<sup>3</sup>

A few years earlier, another reviewer had complained wearily that travels were all too often “parade[s] of insipid candour” by “idle egotist[s]” specializing in “the heightened description of a trifle” (*Analytical* 4: 136). Travel writing, it was generally agreed, should either impart useful cultural or geographical information, or it should provide such “lively or humorous description, [or] sentimental reflections, and other species of good writing, as may... [afford] elegant entertainment” (*Analytical* 15: 377). Despite the numerous “sentimental reflections” in *A Short Residence*, its edgy melancholia, as well as its outbursts on topics such as the mistreatment of women or the corruption produced by a commercial spirit, make it anything but a primly “elegant entertainment.” The book resists judgement—or dismissal—by such standards, and Wollstonecraft invites serious critical attention at least partly because she is writing about a subject which had not already been covered by “many other celebrated writers” and so might be presumed to offer more than yet another variation on an overly-familiar theme.

Precisely because it was relatively unknown territory, Scandinavia might seem ideally suited to provide jaded eighteenth-century British audiences with both the information and entertainment which was supposedly no longer readily available from books on the over-visited south. Nordic culture was, after all, much less familiar to that audience than was the culture of the Mediterranean or of continental western Europe, and the landscape offered ample scope for the sentimental raptures which were apparently demanded of British travel writers by the end of the century. As the various British writers who published on the topic insisted loudly and repeatedly, Scandinavia offered all the charms of novelty which might reinvigorate an exhausted genre—even if the landscape and culture were themselves less than entirely charming to a taste

formed by accounts of southern luxuriance. This insistence becomes, in fact, something of a convention. Enough eighteenth-century British authors vaunt themselves on their originality in travelling through Scandinavia to make their claims of novelty occasionally sound a little odd. Wollstonecraft might not have been following in the footsteps of huge numbers of her countrymen, but she was by no means alone in publishing on the subject. Besides William Coxe, whom Wollstonecraft cites in her own travelogue, British readers interested in Scandinavia could also have turned to the travels of Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, who spent several months in the 1770s in the northern capitals; to Andrew Swinton, who wrote about his mildly sentimental journey through the North in the early 1790s; to Joseph Marshall, who wrote a massive account of the geography, economies, and cultures of the Scandinavian countries, based on his travels in the 1770s; or even to a translation of Uno von Troil's account of his journey to Iceland with Sir Joseph Banks in 1772.<sup>4</sup> Yet the number of books available in English didn't seem to prevent critics from being impressed by the originality of the subject matter. At least one of Marshall's reviewers thought, in 1772, that his destination was in "itself a sufficient apology for adding one more to the numerous list of this kind of publications," while as late as 1837, the reviewer of a book of Norwegian travels was still calling for more of the same and lamenting that "Neither the picturesque beauty of their country, nor their peculiar institutions, seem to divert towards [the Norwegians] any great portion of that tide of travellers which is annually directed southward..."<sup>5</sup>

Granted, compared to the number of books pouring out on southern destinations, the rate of eighteenth-century British publication on Scandinavia is tiny. Even so, the apparently continual sense of delighted novelty with which critics greeted books on Scandinavia contrasts strikingly with the rapidity with which they became bored with other destinations—Scotland being a notable example. In 1773, the western islands of Scotland were still seen as a destination sufficiently remote and northerly to make Samuel Johnson's famous journey there seem mildly eccentric to many, not least to Johnson himself. Yet by 1777, the reviewer of Mary Ann Hanway's Highland travels could already complain that there had been so much written about Scotland that "[o]bjects... which at first were pleasing to the fancy" have begun to "become perfectly insipid" (238). This reviewer was not being idiosyncratic, either; when in 1782 Edward Topham published his *Letters from*

*Edinburgh*, he thought that the book required some apology and was careful to point out that he had ignored completely "the Highlands [and] western islands of Scotland, as nothing more could have been said on these subjects" (1: x).

The rapidity with which Scotland became exhausted as a source of travel writing (at least according to the critics, although those critics didn't do much to slow the masses of Scottish travels being published well into the nineteenth century) contrasts instructively with the response to Scandinavian travels. Scandinavia seemed to remain both alien and fascinating to a British readership, and that fascination was fed by a variety of eighteenth-century sources. There had been a rather sporadic British interest in Scandinavian culture throughout the century, although in the earlier years the focus seems mainly to have been on politics and history. In 1706, for example, excerpts from Samuel Pufendorf's *History of Sweden* were published as a pamphlet;<sup>6</sup> a few years later, in 1711, the publisher of a study of Swedish history and politics proclaimed that it had been "[t]he kind Reception" of a book on Denmark, which went into "Three Large Editions ... in less than Three Months," which encouraged him to commission the book on Sweden, as it was clear to him that people were very "desirous to be inform'd in the State of this other *Northern Crown*."<sup>7</sup> A more familiar manifestation of this interest is probably the mid-century literary vogue for a rather vaguely imagined north, a vogue exemplified in works such as Thomas Gray's decidedly grim poems about Norse myth and history and which was probably helped along by the *Ossian* craze.<sup>8</sup> By the early 1770s, there was sufficient interest in northern culture for *The Monthly Review* to print a detailed two-part review of the translation of Mallet's *Northern Antiquities* as its feature article. When Marshall and Coxe published their massive accounts of the culture, politics, and geography of Scandinavia in the 1770s and 80s, they were not bursting on an entirely unprepared audience.

When Mary Wollstonecraft published her book on Scandinavia, she was thus writing within a literary context that had firmly associated the north with the exotic and the strange and which had thereby encouraged an interest in it. There was even a small body of work that anticipated Wollstonecraft's refusal to write a "conventional" travel book about such an unconventional locale. Wollstonecraft was not, by any means, the only British visitor to Scandinavia to write a book on the subject in which she refused to give a systematic account of the "manu-

factures, commerce, public revenue, form of government, &c.” of the countries through which she travelled, choosing instead to focus on what “may perhaps be more interesting, the history of [her] own feelings and perceptions.” Indeed, the phrases just quoted are taken not from a description of *A Short Residence* but from a review of Andrew Swinton’s 1792 *Travels into Norway, Denmark, and Russia in the Years 1788, 1789, 1790, and 1791* (*Analytical* 14: 378). Swinton himself was anticipated by Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, who begins his own collection of letters from Scandinavia with a lengthy account of why he chose visit such an apparently unpromising destination. Scandinavia, according to Wraxall, lacks “materials for producing elegant delights” of the sort which travellers seek in southern destinations, and so the pleasure derived from accounts of the north must depend on “the eye of clear and perspicacious observation” (4). The northern countries are “covered during many months with snow,” he writes, growing increasingly vivid in his account of the disincentives to visiting the North “and wrapt in all the horrors of a polar winter: unpolished in their manners, and still retaining the vestiges of Gothic ignorance, they present not many charms to tempt the traveller” (4). Moreover, they have no “venerable remains” to attract the antiquarian, as “the elegant arts [are] chiefly confined to luxurious and southern climates” (5, 22). The question Wraxall implicitly poses is why anybody would want to go to Scandinavia, let alone write about it. His answer is that the “civilized” mind demonstrates its powers and abilities by the reflections and lessons which it can derive from the strange, unfamiliar, and even the unattractive.

Wraxall’s letters, while almost forgotten today, help focus attention on the ways in which Wollstonecraft’s *Short Residence* has at least some points in common with an existing body (however small, relatively speaking) of British travel writing on Scandinavia. The two books share a number of specific topics as well as general attitudes towards Scandinavia. For example, Wraxall, like Wollstonecraft, is dismayed by women drinking brandy before meals, disgusted by the profusion of the smorgasbord, and fascinated by the unfortunate Queen Matilda. Also, like Wollstonecraft, he is surprised by how well informed the local gentlemen are about western European current events. Whereas she is impressed by the freedom with which the Norwegians are able to discuss the latest developments in France, he (in a letter dated 25 April 1774) reports being “asked a thousand questions” about Boston and having to argue down his Swedish acquaintances’ assertions that “the colonies

will soon be absolutely free" (22). As Wraxall establishes his own "clear and perspicacious observation" by noting such details and creating an engaging book from what he presents as such unpromising material, Wollstonecraft is able to imply her own claims to perspicacity by constructing, twenty years later, her own compelling narrative of Scandinavia.<sup>9</sup>

Predecessors such as Wraxall and Swinton had thus established that a taste for Scandinavian landscape and culture was in itself the mark of an unusual and necessarily active mind and sensibility; there was little there to attract the mere tourist seeking passive and conventional entertainment. In this respect, Scandinavia is an ideal setting for Wollstonecraft's narrative, as the destination itself might alert British readers not only to her physical daring but also to the passionate independence of mind the narrator establishes as her leading characteristic. Indeed, unlike Wraxall and others, Wollstonecraft makes no attempt at all to explain the purpose of her journey north, other than referring rather vaguely to having "business to transact" (98). There were of course good practical reasons for her reticence, as she was trying to reclaim a ship with which Gilbert Imlay had evaded the English blockade of France and which he had then lost in some further wartime skulduggery.<sup>10</sup> Yet even if her silence on the point was entirely pragmatic, the literary effect, especially in the context of earlier British writing stressing the lack of attractions Scandinavia offers to those of conventional tastes, is to emphasize the narrator's free-thinking openness to experience.

Yet it is with Wraxall that one can also begin to see how Wollstonecraft moves beyond ideas of Scandinavia as merely exotic in its cold bleakness and towards a more complex representation both of the countryside and of the narrator observing it. Scandinavia, so Wraxall implies, demands a "philosophic" approach to travel, one in which the traveller does more than simply describe landscape and customs, as might suffice for the more obviously charming south. It would be exaggerating matters to say that Wraxall specifically enunciates an argument that the conventions developed for literary representations of the south are inadequate for a writer confronted with the stark Scandinavian grandeur. Later one of the Prince Regent's set, Wraxall generally seems rather more interested in sighing over Norwegian blondes than in abstruse discussions of literary or aesthetic theory. Nonetheless, in his uneasy justification of his own destination, Wraxall implies that he is of-

fering his readers something rather different from either sociological information or the pleasures of armchair touring through picturesque scenes. When Wollstonecraft set sail from Hull on her way to Gothenburg, she thus would have had access to at least one travelogue which suggested more or less explicitly that travels to the north required a different sensibility—different abilities, perhaps—than did more traditional routes. Admittedly Wraxall might not have been altogether successful in this endeavour; in a review of Swinton's travels, Wraxall is contrasted unfavourably with the later writer, cited as an example of a more conventional traveller, who is interested in mere externals, unlike the sentimental traveller Swinton. Even if he travels only in a very conventional "search of knowledge" (23), however, Wraxall implies that the type of knowledge to be gained from Scandinavia is very different from that offered by journeys in less "remote and inclement" lands (5).

It is this idea, undeveloped as it is in Wraxall's letters, which becomes central to Wollstonecraft's. One can find it at work most obviously in her interest not just in reporting odd or charming examples of Scandinavian culture and customs, but, more ambitiously, in speculating on the source of cultural difference. It was an eighteenth-century commonplace that landscape affected, even shaped, culture; critics such as Felicity Nussbaum have examined the implications of this belief on travel writing, primarily travel writing about the south—India, Africa, the Orient.<sup>11</sup> A number of British writers on Scandinavia took it for granted that the Northern climate shaped (and to a certain extent warped) the characters of the inhabitants. John Robinson, for example, stated as a simple matter of fact that while their climate made Swedes more "hardy" than natives of a "more moderate country," its severity also "cramp[ed] the Faculties of their Bodies, and indispose[d] them for any great Degree of Dexterity and Nimbleness" (20–21). Similarly, Uno von Troil, a Swede writing of Icelanders, commented on the hardiness bred by their spare land and diet, contrasting it with the greater delicacy of his more southerly countrymen (103).<sup>12</sup> Wollstonecraft could be sceptical about such ideas—she wonders at one point how the recipient of her letters would reconcile his (fairly conventional) theories that luxuriance of climate and vegetation encouraged female promiscuity with the sexual license of young Swedish women. "Who can look at these rocks, and allow the voluptuousness of nature to be an excuse for gratifying the desires it inspires?" she asks drily (82–3).

All the same, Wollstonecraft was clearly interested in the extent to which mind *can* be shaped by its surroundings. During her stay in the Norwegian fishing town of Risør, for example, she imagines the almost inescapable cultural and mental constriction of living in such a town, cramped in a tiny pocket of land surrounded by high rocks and the sea. "Talk not of bastilles!" she writes. "To be born here, was to be bastilled by nature—shut out from all that opens the understanding, or enlarges the heart" (131). Yet the deforming effects of living in such a place are not quite as simple as they might initially appear. It is perhaps not surprising that, steeped in Shakespeare as she was, Wollstonecraft should proclaim as she sails into Risør that "the world appeared a vast prison"—and Risør merely "a smaller one" (130). Yet despite this initial bleakness, she is also prepared to explore the ways in which confinement and solitude might be productive. As she wanders between rocks and water, she reports that her "mind was stored with ideas, which this new scene associated with astonishing rapidity" (131). The "sterile" landscape, horrifying at first, soon prompts reflections on human society, on her own needs and desires, and on the connections between manners and morals. The bare rocks, "huddled" houses, and empty sea around Risør serve not—or not only—to emphasize the narrator's sense of exile and alienation, but also to jar her into reflections on the way in which mind is independent of or superior to surroundings. "I could scarcely have imagined," she writes at the end of the letter, "that a simple object, rocks, could have admitted of so many interesting combinations—always grand, often sublime" (134). It is significant that the grammar of the sentence leaves open the question of whether it is the combinations—that is, the actions of the speaker's mind—or the rocks that are grand and sublime. The two merge, suggesting that the mind can shape the natural world at least as certainly as the world can shape the mind.

It is at this point that Wollstonecraft moves beyond some of the other British travellers to Scandinavia in her treatment of the interconnection of nature and culture. She is fascinated by—although sceptical of—the vaguely Rousseauian idea of a golden world of primitive simplicity in which the sublimity of the landscape is matched by the simple virtues of its inhabitants. Yet she resists celebrating or even searching for such an untouched world, as she insists that "the world requires ... the hand of man to perfect it" and that rather than being determined by landscape, the human mind is shaped by overcoming the limitations of

one's natural surroundings (121–22). When, late in the book, she prepares to head back south to Sweden from Christiania, she pauses to dream of travelling further north. "Why north?" she imagines her correspondent asking, and replies:

... not only because the country, from all I can gather, is most romantic, abounding in forest and lakes, and the air pure, but I have heard much of the intelligence of the inhabitants... The description I received of them carried me back to the fables of the golden age: independence and virtue; affluence without vice; cultivation of the mind without depravity of heart; with 'ever smiling liberty,' the nymph of the mountain. (148–9)

What she has in mind seems to be something along the lines of an animated C. D. Friedrich painting: a romantic world in which the majesty of the landscape dwarfs, without destroying, human dignity. This is a far cry from the picture of Risør as a place in which the inhabitants are stunted by their coldly barren surroundings, or of a Swedish farm where "[t]he current of life seemed congealed at the source" (88). Yet even as she evokes this pleasing vision of the north, she expresses scepticism: "I want faith!" she writes as she finishes her account of what she has been told of northern Norway:

My imagination hurries me forward to seek an asylum in such a retreat from all the disappointments I am threatened with; but reason drags me back, whispering that the world is still the world and man the same compound of weakness and folly, who must occasionally excite love and disgust, admiration and contempt. (149)

Elsewhere, she impatiently dismisses any belief in what she calls "Rousseau's golden age of stupidity" (122) and looks towards the civilizing effects of the future rather than longing for the primitive innocence of the past, an acceptance of the possibility of change and improvement in the manners and morals of the people which further undercuts the geographical or climatic determinism she queries throughout the book. Admittedly, part of what she imagines changing *is* the climate: "the destruction, or gradual reduction of [the Norwegians'] forests," she writes cheerfully, "will probably meliorate the climate; and their manners will naturally improve" (121). Yet she also imagines a wider diffusion of new political and social ideas, spreading out concentrically from France, eventually reaching fishing villages such as Risør, overthrowing even nature's Bastilles. Wollstonecraft's Scandinavia is a world in which culture is not something absolute and established by, and like, the

landscape, but is rather a process and as such must be described by an active-minded observer.

Travelling in Scandinavia thus not only provides Wollstonecraft with a wild, exotic landscape with which she can associate herself and signal her own freedom and independence of thought; it also provides her with an empirical basis through which she can argue her own political philosophy. A radical thinker who supported the ideals of the early years of the French Revolution and who famously vindicated the rights of woman, Wollstonecraft found in Scandinavia not only exotic scenery but also a new way to hone her rhetoric. On the simplest level, she insists that she has now seen more than others who argue about the political growth of nations on very incomplete and misleading data. "If travelling, as the completion of a liberal education, were to be adopted on rational grounds," she argues, "the northern states ought to be visited before the more polished parts of Europe" (173). Her reason is that in Scandinavia one begins at the beginning, visiting the primitive world about which so many writers had more or less uselessly theorized. Not only is the landscape like "the bones of the world," but, more importantly, the people are only just "arriving at the epoch which precedes the introduction of the arts and sciences" (103). Cultural smugness aside, this is an argument that is quite startlingly bold in its implication that nobody who has not seen and considered Scandinavian culture can properly understand European manners and customs as a whole. It is a long way from the simple dismissiveness of John Robinson, at the other end of the century, as he sums up the Swedish character as more qualified, by the rigour of the climate, "for a Life of Labour and Fatigue than of Art and Curiosity" (21). The curiosity, in Wollstonecraft's account, is still predominantly the prerogative of the Western European observer of the North, but that observer *needs* to understand the North if he or she is to understand anything else.

These ideas about the value of travelling in Scandinavia go far beyond the simple idea that the culture and landscape are unfamiliar and can thus be written about without wearying readers who have already heard too much of the same sort of thing. Wollstonecraft establishes herself as a philosophical traveller in the most literal possible sense, as she uses her travels to support her political philosophy and to establish her claims to serious attention, and as she presents herself as, unlike most others who speculate on culture, willing to start at the beginning, in the raw North. She thus uses her destination to imply her own abili-

ties as a serious thinker—much in the same manner as Wraxall implies that he is demonstrating his own sensitivity and philosophical originality by constructing a travelogue from the supposedly grimly unpromising raw material of the North. Wollstonecraft goes much further than Wraxall, however, implying that an emotional affinity to the landscape is as necessary to writers who hope to understand Scandinavia as is the coolly evaluative stance which can see and measure the gap between British literary conventions and Scandinavian realities. Otherwise, all they will succeed in doing is seeing only one of the equally compelling facets of the country: either the grimness of the natural Bastilles that stultify their inhabitants or the exalting sublimity of the wilderness. Wollstonecraft refuses to say that Scandinavia is one thing or the other; as she remarks tartly at one point, “[t]he most essential service” travel writers can “render to society, would be to promote inquiry and discussion, instead of making ... dogmatical assertions” (93). Her role as a travel writer, apparently, is not simply to relay facts and figures; rather than simply answering her readers’ questions about Scandinavia, she wants to inspire more. In effect, she tells her readers that they cannot expect mere passive entertainment from her book, or even straightforward information: they, like the traveller herself, will have to work because the countryside itself resists the writer’s judgements and certainties.

Indeed, the difficulty which Wollstonecraft presents herself as having to overcome is at times precisely the opposite of Wraxall’s struggle to find a way to represent the unfamiliar north in language palatable to British readers whose tastes have been formed by narratives of the luxuriant south. Where Wraxall focuses on simple difference, Wollstonecraft presents the countries through which she travels as being most alien when most soothingly familiar or attractive. For example, describing the long twilight of a Swedish midsummer in her first letter, she laments her inability to share the tranquillity around her. Slightly later, however, as she looks at the coastal rocks and reflects that in this “land of flint” they seem only “the bones of the world waiting to be clothed with everything necessary to give life and beauty” (66, 88), she seems to find a rather disquieting affinity with the barrenness she sees. “[I]t was sublime,” she tells her correspondent when describing the bare Swedish coast. As readers such as Ty and Lawrence have pointed out, *A Short Residence* is a work built on emotional isolation, as the speaker explores her own physical and mental disconnection from society in general and

from the unnamed, unresponsive recipient of the letters in particular. This emotional disarray is, the speaker suggests, reinforced and amplified by the strange world around her, leading critics to see the travelogue as both a prototype and a source of some of the Romantic poetry shortly to be published by Wollstonecraft's contemporaries.<sup>13</sup>

Wollstonecraft thus presents herself not just as a coolly rational observer, judging and describing Scandinavian culture for her relatively uninformed British readers but also as a woman whose passionate, even intimate response to the landscape makes it impossible for her to be emotionally disengaged from her subject matter. This is not a matter of her contradicting her own claims to philosophical seriousness; on the contrary, she insists on the impossibility of separating emotional and intellectual responses. "The cultivation of the mind ... warm[s], nay almost create[s] the imagination," (123) she writes, linking taste and intellect. It is perhaps at least in part because of this link that her contemporaries tended, despite the unconventionality and assertiveness of Wollstonecraft's narrative stance, to see the work as delightfully feminine.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, critics from the anonymous *British Critic* reviewer who was delighted to find that in this book the philosopher had, by and large, turned back into the woman, to twentieth-century readers who have found anticipations of *écriture féminine* in the book's fluid mixture of genres, have seen *A Short Residence* as a particularly feminine narrative.<sup>15</sup> Able to seduce even such a resolute rationalist as William Godwin, the narrator is usually read as showing her intense femininity by her emotive, even sentimental, connection to the world around her.<sup>16</sup> Of course, a sentimental journey was not necessarily something only a woman could make, as a generation which had wept copiously over Sterne knew very well, but there are other reasons not to follow eighteenth-century readers such as Godwin, Opie, and *The British Critic* reviewer in seeing the book as a peculiarly feminine travelogue because of the narrator's passionate emotions.<sup>17</sup> Even on the simplest level, after all, Wollstonecraft was writing a book in which sentiment and careful, informed inquiry go hand-in-hand. At times, it reads a little as if Sterne and Samuel Johnson had decided to collaborate on a travelogue; indeed, Conger has argued that these two unlikely figures are important joint influences on the work. The result is, strikingly enough, that Wollstonecraft's persona apparently seemed more acceptably feminine to her contemporaries when she was trekking alone through a harsh, sublime landscape, asking "men's questions," than it had been three years before

when she was writing about boarding schools and women's education in her *Vindication*.

The point here is not to argue the extent to which "masculine" or "feminine" styles predominate in the travelogue, but rather to suggest that once again, one finds some of the book's intriguing paradoxes hinging on its Scandinavian setting. That the eighteenth century associated the sublime with the masculine and the beautiful with the feminine is such a commonplace it hardly needs repeating; numerous critics have built on this gendering of qualities to argue that travelogues about southern lands and cultures implicitly feminized them by dwelling on their beauty.<sup>18</sup> According to critics of travel writing such as Sara Mills, western European travel writers, whether men or women, are thus able to employ discourses of femininity, deliberately or not, explicitly or not, to assert western European cultural superiority. Yet in Wollstonecraft's case, these dynamics work rather differently. Just as the landscape is presented as simultaneously enlarging the mind and stultifying it, the sublime, masculine grandeur evokes identification expressed in a mode which many readers have found strikingly, if not seductively, feminine. In what is perhaps the fullest recent discussion of this aspect of the book, Jeanne Moskal argues convincingly that the speaker reimagines Burke's categories of the sublime and the beautiful, regendering them so that she, as a woman, is able to "project herself into" the Scandinavian landscape, overcoming the sterility which she associates with Burke's sublime by doing so (280). If (admittedly, I'm oversimplifying matters here) critics such as Mills and Nussbaum have generally found that Western European travel writers exert control over the cultures they visit by "feminizing" them, Wollstonecraft's travel journal is obviously doing something rather more complicated.

These complications arise in part because of the doubly unconventional nature of the journey: it is made by a woman and, perhaps just as importantly, it is made to the north. Wollstonecraft obviously draws on some of the conventions of the sentimental traveller to create her very feminine persona. *A Short Residence* is, after all, about that most feminine of topics, a woman in love, and it refracts the strange northern world through the eyes of a self-consciously unhappy narrator, a woman longing for her absent and unattainable lover. Yet, this is no straightforward sentimental journey, at least in part because Wollstonecraft implies that the countries she is visiting resist sentimentalization. Scandinavia, as she presents it, is a primitive world, both in culture and land-

scape. Yet, it is a version of the primitive which cannot, except in odd, fleeting moments, be represented as pastoral; it is a world of stunning simplicity which nonetheless requires the sophisticated eye of an educated urbanite to appreciate its virtues. A landscape which undercuts or resists the conventions developed to describe more southerly destinations is thus perhaps appropriate territory for a very feminine eighteenth-century business traveller—a writer who also strains against conventional representations and categorization. The unconventionality of both author and destination thus work together to create a book which charms and fascinates despite (or through) its unfamiliarity, just as Wollstonecraft says Scandinavia itself does. If Wollstonecraft's work seemed blazingly original to her contemporaries despite such anticipations of it as Wraxall's and Swinton's work, that sense of originality arose not only because she was a woman doing what had previously been done only by men. The rhetoric which she uses to describe Scandinavia requires her to present herself as mixing disparate genres, styles, and approaches, because that is the only way in which she can represent the world in which she finds herself, one which, she implies, cannot be contained by the familiar tropes and devices of British travel literature.

Critics have argued before that despite the odd generic mixings that disrupt the love story as much as the travelogue, *A Short Residence* is an aesthetically unified, satisfying book, in many ways Wollstonecraft's best.<sup>19</sup> Yet, they have generally not suggested that part of what enables the book to bring together so many different strands and styles of narration is its setting. Scandinavia itself resists the conventions of travel writing, the book implies, conventions developed largely in narratives of a more luxuriant, pastoral south. Its starkness also challenges some of the happier Enlightenment dreams of simple, primitive happiness, dreams that the narrator yearns after but cannot accept. By building her fragmented, unconventional persona through her identification with this stark and almost unrepresentable "land of flint," Mary Wollstonecraft creates a work which pushes at the boundaries of the travelogue not just by incorporating autobiography, but also by attempting to find a new idiom for representing the unfamiliar north.

## NOTES

1. Karen Lawrence also examines the way in which *A Short Residence* works as autobiography in *Penelope Voyages*. I am misrepresenting Myers' argument somewhat

by using this quotation out of context; her article in fact stresses the generic complexity of the work. However, her emphasis is on the importance of autobiographical content, as she is arguing against other readings that see the personal material as an aesthetic flaw.

2. Sara Mills has commented on the surprising number of Victorian women travel writers in her book on the subject (27); while numbers were lower in the previous century, Mary Wollstonecraft could look to travelogues by women such as Ann Radcliffe, Hester Thrale, and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu—to name only the most famous—as precedents for her own work. As early as 1777, *The Critical Review* could comment, in its review of Jemima Kindersley's letters from the East Indies, that "The Letters of female travellers are now become not unusual productions" (Vol. 43 [June 1777]: 439).

3. See the review of Watkins' *Travels through Swisserland*...., 376. I have focused on reviews published in *The Analytical Review* for this discussion, as Wollstonecraft wrote frequently for that journal and hence would have probably read at least some of them.

4. The Eighteenth-Century Short Title Catalogue lists the following books on Scandinavian travels: William Bromley, *Several Travels through Portugal, Spain, Italy, Germany, Prussia, Sweden, Denmark, and the United Provinces* (1702); William Carr, *Travels through Flanders, Holland, Germany, Sweden, and Denmark* (1725; 5th ed.); Joseph Marshall, *Travels through Holland, Flanders, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Lapland, Russia, the Ukraine, and Poland, in the Years 1768, 1769, and 1770* (1772); Th—M—, *Letters from an English Gentleman, on his travels through Denmark* (1772); Sir Nathaniel William Wraxall, *A Tour through some of the northern parts of Europe ... in a Series of Letters* (1776); William Coxe, *Travels into Poland, Russia, Sweden, and Denmark* (1787); Uno von Troil, *Letters on Iceland* (1780; a translation); Andrew Swinton, *Travels into Norway, Denmark, and Russia in the years 1788, 1789, 1790, and 1791* (1792); William Thomson, *Letters from Scandinavia, on the past and present state of the northern nations of Europe* (1796). Of course, in addition to these travels, there are numerous histories of the Scandinavian countries.

5. See the reviews of Marshall, 567, and of Laing's *Journal* 40.

6. Pufendorf's *History* was published in 1702; the pamphlet focuses on the 1396 treaty linking the three Scandinavian kingdoms.

7. See Robinson's *History of Suedon*. The nonpaginated introductory remarks are by the publisher, "Tim. Goodwin."

8. Howard D. Weinbrot touches on some of the interest in a Germanic north during the eighteenth century in *Britannia's Issue*, although he argues strongly that

this was a very different phenomenon from, and much less important than, what he calls "Celtomania."

9. There is no evidence as to whether or not Wollstonecraft read Wraxall, yet it is very likely that she at least knew of the book. It is explicitly contrasted with Andrew Swinton's travel book about Scandinavia in a review published in *The Analytical Review* in December, 1792. While Todd and Butler do not include that review among the ones written by Wollstonecraft in their collected edition of her works, it is not unlikely that even if she missed the review on its initial publication—the month that she left for revolutionary France—she might have looked at it later when she was writing her own travel book on Scandinavia, one which could be described in many of the same terms used to describe Swinton's.

10. Richard Holmes provides the most detailed account of the purpose of this journey in his excellent introduction to *A Short Residence*, drawing on the important research done in the 1970s by Per Nyström. There is also some discussion of it in recent biographies of Wollstonecraft; see in particular the revised edition of Claire Tomalin's *Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft*.

11. See *Torrid Zones* 7–10. Wollstonecraft writes matter-of-factly that the best way to understand a country is to avoid the capital and "search where the habitations of men are so separated as to allow the difference of climate to have its natural effect" (85).

12. Von Troil, an admirer of *Ossian*, also wrote that, after seeing the Hebrides, he was not surprised that Scotland had produced such poets and heroes: "what can be more calculated to form a poet, than wild romantic and enchanting scenes of nature, which are here so pleasingly blended?" (21)

13. Richard Holmes, one of the work's modern editors, is diligent in tracing connections to the Romantic poets in his notes. The letters are among other things, he suggests, one possible influence on Coleridge's famous image of "a woman wailing for her demon lover"; more generally, he argues that the book anticipates the Romantic use of landscape as a symbolic means of self-expression (Holmes 39–41) and that there are anticipations of Shelley's organic vision of the natural world in the work (30). For a less sympathetic account of Coleridge's debt to Wollstonecraft, see Jane Moore's "Plagiarism with a Difference."

14. See Barker-Benfield for a discussion of the ways in which, by the end of the century, the idea that the emotions guided intellectual or (especially) ethical responses had become feminized.

15. *A Short Residence* has frequently been read as a peculiarly feminine and possibly feminist reworking of the conventions of the genre of travel writing, one

which explores the impossibility of objective descriptions of either culture or nature. See Ty, in particular, for a reading of this sort.

16. For a fascinating twist on this trope, see Lawrence's feminist reading of Godwin's response to the book as an inversion of the conventionally male plot of seduction through travel stories.

17. Mary Louise Pratt provides a detailed analysis of eighteenth-century "sentimental" travels and their relationship to the more intellectually prestigious "scientific" travel writing such as that practiced by Samuel Johnson. I am not, of course, arguing against twentieth-century readings of the book's use of "feminine" styles here; see Moskal and Ty for particularly compelling readings of the book's gendered prose.

18. For an opposing view, see Inderpal Grewal's *Home and Harem*, in which she argues that the "beautiful" was a category reserved for English landscape and women, and that when travel writers did describe a land in terms of its beauty, they were implicitly or explicitly viewing it with a possessive eye, seeing it as naturally "English" because of its likeness to England.

19. See Myers in particular, but Holmes also assumes the aesthetic harmony of the work. In contrast, Ty argues that the book is interesting because its aesthetic "failure" marks it as an example of the impossibility of female discourse in a masculine mode.

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## Juha K. Tapio's *Frankenstein's Notebook* and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein or, The Modern Prometheus*: Whose Monster is he, anyway?

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RÉSUMÉ: Lorsque Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley écrit en 1818 son roman *Frankenstein* ou, le Prométhée Moderne, elle ne pouvait guère se douter que son caractère principal, le Monstre, soit plus tard exploité et recréé sous une multitude de formes, qu'il s'agisse de caractères de dessins humoristiques ou de personnages dans nombre de films, de pièces de théâtre ou de récits. La fin du Monstre rappelle cependant toujours celle de l'œuvre de Shelley. Au lieu de recréer la vie du Monstre de Shelley, l'écrivain finlandais Juha K. Tapio, dans son roman *Frankensteinin Muistikirja* (Le Carnet de Frankenstein), le "ressuscite", en quelque sorte, et lui donne une vie prolongée, sinon indéfinie; ou c'est du moins ce qu'on nous fait croire au début.

J'examinerai le texte expressément littéraire (au sens bakhtinien du terme) de Tapio, s'articulant sur plusieurs niveaux, dans le cadre de l'œuvre de Shelley. J'ai choisi plusieurs points de vue critiques. Entre autres, en examinant le rôle et l'identité de "l'auteur", je me servirai des travaux de Roland Barthes. Les questions portant sur les phénomènes de la métalepse et de l'historicité dans le roman trouveront en revanche un appui dans les travaux de Brian McHale et de bien d'autres. Une préoccupation centrale dans mon étude consiste en une tentative d'établir si le discours littéraire de Tapio est en fin de compte une parodie de l'ouvrage de Shelley, ou s'il s'agit d'un exemple d'autocritique de l'écriture littéraire.

ABSTRACT: When Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley in 1818 wrote her novel *Frankenstein or, The Modern Prometheus*, little did she know that her central character, the Monster, would be appropriated and recreated in uncountable forms from cartoon characters to characters in various films, plays, and stories. In all, the Monster's end, however, loosely

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parallels Shelley's original. Instead of recreating the life of Shelley's Monster, the Finnish writer, Juha K. Tapio in his novel *Frankensteinin Muistikirja* (*Frankenstein's Notebook*), "awakens him from the dead"—as it were—and gives him an extended, if not indeterminate life, or so we are led to believe at first.

*I shall be examining Tapio's multi-layered, expressly literary (in the Bakhtinian sense) text within the framework of Shelley's original. My chosen critical points of view are various. Among others, in examining the role and identity of "the author", I shall draw on the writings of Roland Barthes. Questions concerning the phenomena of metalepsis and historicism in the novel, in turn, will find support from the writings of Brian McHale and others. A prevailing concern throughout my paper is an attempt to establish whether Tapio's literary discourse ultimately parodies Shelley's original, or is it an example of auto-criticism of literary writing.*

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Hence is written, day by day, an ardent text, a magical text, which will never come to an end, a glittering image of the liberated Book.

(Roland Barthes. *By Roland Barthes*, 1977, 64)

Although, according to Roland Barthes, the alphabetical order already banishes every origin in writing (Barthes 1977, 148), we are, nevertheless, left with the history of the traces of which a literary discourse such as Juha Tapio's *Frankenstein's Notebook*, published in 1996 and dedicated to Mary Shelley and "her enduring creation" is constituted. In his dedication Tapio plays with the word "creation" in referring to both Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* and the Monster, the pivotal character in both Mary Shelley's and Tapio's novels. If we talk of some kind of proto-beginning, which is not, however, intended to be the definitive ground for the creation, we know that ostensibly the idea and nightmare image for Mary Shelley's Monster can be traced to Dr. Polidori's and Byron's and the Shelleys' parties in the villa Diodati during the summer of 1816 when they amused themselves with tales about vampires and ghosts. We also know that some aspects of Mary Shelley's Monster stem from earlier recreations of the Faust legend, the central figure of which is knowledgeable in everything from medicine to theology. But what gives Mary Shelley's Monster the nightmare image, is his physical composition of stitched-together pieces of various corpses resulting in Dr. Frankenstein's disgusting and homi-

cidental *miscreation*. Mary Shelley's *Monster* is the outcome of a scientist's curiosity and misdirected affirmation of life. Intoxicated by his heedless optimism, Dr. Frankenstein thinks "A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their beginning to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs. ... [I]f I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter, I might in process of time renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption" (Shelley 49). These are words that have subsequently fostered the critical, although not universally endorsed view, that Mary Shelley's novel is a sustained and subversive indictment of the presumptuousness of male reason and male obsession.

The reality, the nightmare actuality of Dr. Frankenstein's experimentation and its flawed result, however, is in stark contrast to his initially lofty ideals and dreams. He describes one of his encounters with this "offspring": "I perceived in the gloom a figure ... its gigantic stature, and the deformity of its aspect, more hideous than belongs to humanity, instantly informing me that it was the wretch, the filthy daemon to whom I had given life" (Shelley 71). At the close of the novel, Mary Shelley's *Monster*, who is nameless and therefore has come to be associated with the name of his creator, Dr. Frankenstein, vows to end his miserable life by the fire of a funeral pile, and he is last seen being carried off on an ice-raft into "darkness and distance" (Shelley 221) and to what readers, ever since Mary Shelley's novel first appeared, have taken to be a certain death.

Now Tapio, however, tells us that the *Monster's* death was merely part of the narrative technique Mary Shelley used to end her novel. After all, he continues, she was only eighteen years old when she was writing the work so that, according to Tapio, it might even be natural to presume she simply lacked the patience to note down the narrative in its entirety (Tapio 18). Thus Tapio, in perhaps one among the most interesting forms of palimpsestic intertextuality, "rediscovers" the creature and extends his life. But unlike Mary Shelley's creation, Tapio's creature does have a name; the "*Monster*" takes his 'father's' name and turns it into both first and surnames; he is known as Frank Stein, and he tells the reader: "[b]ecause I am as if twice born, because I am 'here' already for the second time, my mind at birth was not the 'tabula rasa' which according to the English philosopher, John Locke, it ought to

have been; something had already been written on it before. Comprised of multiple substances, having been put together of many and varied elements, I am a living text, a fiction; like a literary text I too have been constructed upon the already existing and abundant source materials" (Tapio 108). Hence, these "source materials" of Tapio's "Monster" are textual elements rather than bits and pieces of corpses dug up from graves.

In this essay, I'll be examining Tapio's novel within the framework of Mary Shelley's work and I hope to establish through various critical comparisons whether Tapio's novel is a mere parody of Shelley's "original", or is, in Pascal's words the result of a "runaway thought" Tapio wanted to record by writing that it had run away (Barthes 1977, 66) and had now become something else, a text in which the subject—scattered and deconstructed—can only grasp itself by means of an existing image-repertoire (Barthes 1977, 158). Moreover, in the process of studying these two texts, I also hope to establish whether Tapio's *Frankenstein's Notebook* is, in fact, an example of auto-criticism of literary writing in general.

One might at first wonder how such a fantastic tale would have the credibility to sustain and foster lasting literary and creative interest. The complex narrative form, the tentative telling chosen by both authors answer the question, albeit only in part. Because of social scepticism of her times, Mary Shelley circumvented the question of plausibility by filtering the primary narrator's voice through several frames; hence, the story is transmitted by the use of multiple voices. Captain Walton, the primary narrator, transmits the story which Victor Frankenstein and the Monster relate to him, in letters to his sister so that the problematic of the supernatural is foregrounded through the mode of presentation, and the primary narrator cannot be questioned about the validity of the story since he is not writing about his own experiences.

Tapio's chosen mode of presentation is equally ingeniously filtered. Gertrude Stein, in one of her letters to Alice (B.Toklas), tells about a puzzling, yellowed pile of handwritten sheets Ernest Hemingway has left for her to read. He claims the author is one of his friends, but Gertrude Stein first suspects the whole matter to be one of Hemingway's practical jokes, although the handwriting is clearly not his, but the writing of "a learned man" (Tapio 9). Hemingway wants her to read the manuscript as soon as possible. After all, the fact that the writer, a cer-

tain Mr. Stein, and Gertrude, herself, have the same surname, that alone ought to capture her interest. Thus Gertrude Stein's exasperated deliberation about the nature and origin of the manuscript has its beginning. Her thoughts and reasoning seem to form a circle. First, she has to admit that Ernest is no fool; he might be somewhat naive in sexual matters, but he is not a fool. On the other hand, the confusing aspect of all this is that the manuscript is the autobiography of a completely fictive person, a person whom everyone—in actuality, the entire literary world—has always taken to be a wholly imaginary being, and it is told from the point of view of this *non*person, this monster. Bewildering as it seems to her, she closes the circle by concluding: so Frankenstein's Monster still exists, then! He didn't die on the Northern ice floes, after all! (Tapio 13). Hence Tapio, through multiple frames, and by matching the "inner structures" of the two fictional worlds, avoids anachronism, but Tapio's writing can be seen as revisionist in the sense that it debunks the orthodox version, not only of the Monster's tragic end, but what the reader familiar with Mary Shelley's novel predictably expects the extended life of her homicidal creature to be.

We learn that as Frank Stein leaves the Norwegian ship that had "rescued" him, he embarks upon a life of a wanderer in search of work, civilization and knowledge of languages, all necessary in his pursuit of providing a living and obtaining official papers that would testify to his existence as a person. He works at farming and street repair, he is a wandering salesman and a gravedigger, and upon saving enough money, he purchases false identification papers for himself. After spending some time in Sweden, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland—apparently he considers the English climate too cool and unstable, therefore unsuitable for him—he establishes an undertaker's business in Leipzig. Later on, he settles down in Paris. We see, then, that Tapio and Mary Shelley not only share intertextual space because of the clearly recognizable and specifically mentioned relationship between the two texts, but the reader witnesses the transmigration of the central character from one fictional universe to another (McHale 57). In view of the transmigration in particular, it is useful to know that structural analysis is reluctant to treat "character" or *actant* as an "essence" (Barthes 1987, 105) hence one's concern would not be to define the Monster, the subsequent Frank Stein, as a "being" as much as a "participant" (Barthes 1987, 106) in the two literary works. If I consider Tapio's work, specifically, in Roland Barthes's terms, the aim of contemporary literature to which *Franken-*

*stein's Notebook* belongs, has been to depersonalize character in the interest of avoiding the problematic concept of "essence". After all, psychology's ability to explain the inner workings of a "being" is not only finished, but has come apart in the face of its vain attempt to condense the uncondensable. At this point, however, the question arises how far can the use of the "identical" (and I put the word in quotation marks for obvious reason) character be extended before it has the opposite effect, that is, one that destabilizes rather than consolidates fictional ontology (McHale 57)? In short, we need to see whether there are enough actual carry-over properties from text to text to maintain the link, or whether Tapio's creature merely parodies Mary Shelley's Monster in the way that violates the ontological boundaries of these two fictional worlds (McHale 58)? I shall return to the "carry-over" properties more specifically a little later on.

If we look at the question of parody first, Frank Stein's choice in establishing an undertaker's business, and his allusion to the English climate within the context of what had happened to him in Mary Shelley's novel can be viewed as instances of black humour. His subsequent reference to his "composition" being a veritable orchestration of varying elements making his aptitude for the range of trades he undertakes understandable, works to maintain the link between Mary Shelley's and Tapio's creatures. Frank Stein reasons that the ease with which he is able to work at such a variety of trades and professions is a direct result of the equally varied inherited knowledge his composition retains. After all, parts of him might have belonged to an accomplished painter, a woodcarver—the possibilities are many (Tapio 24). What is noteworthy in all the above, however, is the fact that none of the allusions to Mary Shelley's novel contains elements of ridicule or perversion that would suggest Tapio's *Frankenstein's Notebook* to be a parody of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Moreover, although postmodern writing supplies us with numerous examples in which a contemporary author writes over or fills in the gaps of well known novels, J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* being one, Tapio's relation to Mary Shelley's work stands on its own for example in the way it consciously aims at providing multiple literary perspectives for the reader to contemplate, perspectives that amount to something more intellectually challenging than what a mere 'rewriting' would entail. Tapio's work is an extrapolation in which the sources Mary Shelley's novel provides are touched upon and then transformed into something entirely "new" which defies one-to-one correspondences.

To explain what I mean by “multiple literary perspectives”, I would like to look, for instance, at Tapio’s wide-ranging epigrammatic use of literary quotes which form a link between the actual text and the parallel-worlds of such literary works as Percy Bysshe Shelley’s poetry, Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra*, Hemingway’s “Banal Story” and William Blake’s “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell”. The effect of these parallel-worlds can be that of a momentary disorientation by double-vision. The superimposed epigrams, among them, for instance, Percy Shelley’s lines from the poem *Alastor; or, The Spirit of Solitude*: “When on the threshold of the green recess/The wanderer’s footsteps fell, he knew that death/ Was on him” (Abrams, *Norton Anthology of English Literature* 625–627), compel the reader not only to consider the literal meaning of the lines within the frame of reference of the chapter the lines precede, and the novel as a whole, but the epigram belongs simultaneously to other frames of reference. In the context of the poem, the Greek word “Alastor” is not used as a name, but employed for its meaning: “an evil genius”, thus the poem’s added perspectives become superimposed on Tapio’s text, sending the reader on extra-textual pursuits of additional discoveries. Among the discoveries, the poem’s exploration of what Percy Shelley called “doubtful knowledge”, or matters “in which no certainty is humanly possible” (Abrams, *Norton Anthology of English Literature* 665), provide multiple associations with both the novel’s subject and theme. By contrast, while Mary Shelley’s novel incorporates a rich world of allusions to “outside texts” as well as actual quotes, they are decidedly absorbed into her text and therefore, I suggest, appear—even if heterotopic to a degree—as explicitly arranged in support of the claims her text makes, whereas in Tapio’s work one can see the parallel fragmentary and possible textual worlds coexisting along with the world of his actual narrative. Laszlo Gèfin separates the two methods he terms “ideogrammatic” by referring to what in Tapio’s case amounts to a paratactic composition, that is, “the placing beside one another”, as opposed to hypotaxis or a composition “to arrange under” evident in Mary Shelley’s writing, one which signifies a dependent construction (Gèfin xii).

But if I return to the notion of whether or not there are sufficient properties being carried over from Mary Shelley’s *Monster* to Tapio’s Frank Stein in the interest of consolidating the fictional ontology of the creature, the reader already knows—at the outset—that in Tapio’s work s/he is concerned with textual elements rather than what Mary Shelley’s

novel suggests to be “textual representations” of a biological phenomenon. In other words, we witness a shift in the philosophy of perception; in Derrida’s terms, although *Frankenstein's Notebook* is, in part, a collection of autobiographical notes and prose, it is not to be confused with “the corpus of empirical accidents making up the life of an empirically real person” (Derrida 41). However, that does not eliminate the need to respond to the question to what extent Frank Stein as a textual participant is based on the already “existing image-repertoire”.

We read that although beset by a feeling of the unreal, Gertrude Stein asks Hemingway to arrange for her to meet Frank Stein now that she has read his manuscript. She puzzles and mulls over what the result might be if fictive personas become alive and materialize right off the pages of a book, if that happens even in the case of *one* such creature, what will happen to categories such as “imaginary” and “reality”? Gertrude Stein’s anxiety—after all, meeting literary creations of mythological dimension isn’t an every day occurrence—diminishes when she meets a refined gentleman of an indeterminate age. Her immediate impression is that there is nothing particularly monstrous about the man, although in some strange way, he cannot, at least not by his appearance, be linked with any specific period in a life of a human being. She can only come to the conclusion that all the past decades must have inevitably brought about an impressive change in him.

In Frank Stein’s apartment she observes a vast collection of books which contains, besides rare books from every imaginable field of human thought and knowledge, well-known works from eighteenth century romanticism, the century of his birth, including all of Mary Shelley’s publications (Tapio 38). We learn that he doesn’t only carry scars on his body as a testimony to his unorthodox “birth”, but he, like Mary Shelley’s Monster, is self-taught; he is a man of extraordinary erudition. But Harold Bloom points out that as Dr. Frankenstein had broken through the barrier that separates God from the human by creating apparent life, he had only succeeded in giving “death-in-life” (Bloom 9); Mary Shelley’s Monster is a victim of excessive consciousness, a phenomenon Romantic mythology explains as “the self unable to bear the self” (Bloom 9). Tapio’s brilliant reinterpretation of the phenomenon within a contemporary frame of thought has Frank Stein admit his semen is dead, he will never father an offspring; instead, as a literary creation, he, himself, is immortal in what can be perceived to be two

ways: as a participant in a magical text which will never come to an end but will continue to give birth to new and varied transmigrations and, more specifically, as a participant to whom Tapio "gives" an indeterminate life-span. In the end, Gertrude Stein admits that she senses in Frank Stein an endless search, a fiction without a final solution, or a solution without an ending in the novel, either will do. In short, it is a sentence without an end (Tapio 253). More importantly, perhaps, he doesn't belong to anyone, not even to himself since already in Tapio's novel an exponentially dyadic structure emerges. Tapio's novel ends with a clipping from *The Times*, dated 21. 11. 1925, reporting the establishment of an undertaker's business by Mr. Frank N. Steiner, who solicits customers from all layers of society. Customers may come and peruse coffins and accessories at his downtown offices, the address of which is 5 Belgrave Crescent (Tapio 262).

At the centre of Mary Shelley's novel lies a paradox. Dr. Frankenstein's tragedy doesn't stem from his Promethean excess, but from his inability to love his own creation, which in turn can be attributable to his ultimately hollow, flat character the insubstantiality of which—in a twist of romantic irony—gets fleshed out more fully in his creation. Though Dr. Frankenstein's Monster is abhorred rather than loved, the paradox lies in the fact that he is more intellectual, more emotional and ultimately more "human" than his creator (Bloom 3–4). It is this humanness that gets carried over to mature and manifest itself in Frank Stein and his decision to reject the life of everlasting hell of hatred and murder. Umberto Eco has argued that the postmodern, in recognizing the past, since it cannot really be destroyed because that would lead to silence, revisits it, but with irony, not innocently (Eco 67). Tapio's revisitation of the Monster's history is an affirmation of Eco's argument, as the revisitation is brimming with irony; the intellectual curiosity that once sent Mary Shelley's Monster reading Milton's *Paradise Lost* as true history has with time given the lines about the mind being its own place, one that can in itself make a heaven of a hell or hell of a heaven, significance beyond mere contemplation. Frank Stein has not only read and understood the lines but heeded their message. He admits to Gertrude Stein: "The longer I stay here in Paris, the more distance in time I gather between myself and all that which belongs to the past, the more dream-like and remote it all appears to me. ... I know my name is Frank Stein—after all, that is the name I gave myself—and I know that this moment is part of the present and that this place is called Paris. They

seem to be the only things that any longer carry any meaning" (Tapio 40). Frank Stein's apparent transformation into a forgiving, civilized being doesn't mean, however, that he does not continue to be haunted at times by memories and demons. Perhaps the most notable carry-over effect is his inability to have a lasting relationship with a woman. Aside from the pain which coexistence with a normally aging and subsequently dying woman would bring, he admits that having known Mary Shelley, he has consciously or unconsciously measured every woman he has since met with her spiritual being to the detriment of all the others. He concludes: "undoubtedly psychologists would explain the situation in expressly oedipal terms" (Tapio 103). Thus Frank Stein is aware he is living through a sequel and Tapio maintains for the reader the realistic illusion that foregrounds the intertextual dimension of his text (McHale 58).

As a literary discourse, *Frankenstein's Notebook* combines aspects of a memoir, diary entries, letters, Frank Stein's continuous summarizations of his experiences, and fragments of prose narrative and poetry. Although for reasons of easy classification, the text is considered a novel, its complexity defies easy genre categorization. To the degree that Tapio's text purports to set right the ending of Mary Shelley's novel, it enacts a critical revisiting of the latter. More importantly, however, it can be viewed as an example of auto-criticism of literary writing in general in so far as it questions, for example, the critical argument that concerns itself with what some see as the inevitable disappearance of the fantastic in twentieth-century literature. To conclude this study, I would like to expand on Brian McHale's paraphrasing of Todorov and the latter's claim that the disappearance of representation in contemporary writing necessarily results in the disappearance of the fantastic in literature of this period because the fantastic effect is dependent upon literature's possibility of representing the real (McHale 74). Rather, and in keeping with McHale's subsequent assessment of Todorov's stance as "greatly exaggerated" (McHale 75), Tapio, by admitting the central nature of Frank Stein being both textual and fictive, has succeeded in effecting the transmigration of the fantastic into this contemporary metatextual novel. In Tapio's writing the fantastic has been co-opted as one of many strategies in literature that pluralizes the "real" thus problematizing representation and eliminating the grounds for certain types of fossilized literary criticism. Certainty eludes Gertrude Stein to the end. She muses to Alice: "What if Frank Stein isn't the Monster or the

spy the Gendarmerie suspected him to have been during the second Franco-German war, but simply a sick person who suffers from mythomania, a sickness that makes its victims imagine most horrific stories and then tell these to others as the truth ... and there are forms of insanity that make the patient create a new, alternate self in which he subsequently starts to believe to a point that he gradually assumes this imaginary role to its smallest detail ... . He becomes that person, he becomes his own fiction." But these musings shift abruptly when Gertrude Stein, as if taking hold of her rambling thoughts, writes: "No. I wanted to believe—and I still do—that what he told us is true. That all the trouble he undertook to prove the truth of his story, the manuscript, the scars and all else" (Tapio 252) can be accepted as proof. Thus, Tapio's novel becomes an example of the postmodern fantastic in which he uses representation itself to overthrow representation.

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## Ibsen, Rank, and Freud: *Rosmersholm* and the discourse of Viennese Psychiatry

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**ABSTRACT:** *The fin de siècle Viennese psychiatrists—most notably Otto Rank and Freud—were intrigued by Ibsen as a modern exemplar of their own quest for a language in which to describe the psychic life, or the unconscious. Rosmersholm held particular fascination for them as a drama which linked clinical theory to philosophical speculation; and it provided them with an important literary source for psychiatric ideas and diagnoses relating to incest. Rank used both Rosmersholm and Little Eyolf as evidence for the “repressing” or “obscuring” of anti-social impulses in late nineteenth-century life; and Freud’s more famous analysis of Rebekka West—although it emphasized mainly her Oedipal tragedy—clearly anticipated the central thesis of his Civilization and Its Discontents, with its theory about the rechanneling of erotic impulses into disinterested cultural aims. A single term describes Rosmersholm as a tragedy of both “ennoblement” and “sublimation”, while Rebekka West remains the great exemplar in psychoanalytic criticism of the incompatibility of Eros and the ethical life. In the final analysis, the paradigms of psychiatry and dramatic tragedy have more in common than some contemporary critics are willing to acknowledge.*

**RÉSUMÉ:** *Les psychiatres viennois de la fin de siècle—avant tout Otto Rank et Freud—étaient fascinés par Ibsen comme exemplaire moderne de leur recherche d’un langage pour décrire la vie psychique ou l’inconscient. Ils étaient particulièrement fascinés par Rosmersholm comme une pièce qui liait une théorie clinique à la spéculation philosophique; et la pièce fournissait une source littéraire importante pour des idées psychiatriques et des diagnoses alliés à l’inceste. Rank s’est servi de Rosmersholm et de Petit Eyolf pour démontrer la “répression” et “obscurisation” du élan anti-social dans la vie quotidienne de la fin de siècle; et l’analyse célèbre de Rebekka West par Freud—bien qu’elle accentue la tragédie œdipienne de l’héroïne—pourtant préfigura la thèse centrale de La Civilisation et ses Mécontentements, avec sa théorie du regroupement des pulsions érotiques en objectifs culturels désintéressés. Un seul terme décrit Rosmersholm à*

*la fois comme tragédie "d'ennoblissement" et de "sublimation" tandis que dans la discussion psychoanalytique Rebekka West demeure comme un exemplaire vital de l'incompatibilité entre Éros et une vie éthique. Au fond, il semble que les paradigmes de la psychiatrie et de la tragédie dramatique ont plus de choses en commun que certains critiques contemporains sont prêts à reconnaître.*

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## I

So completely has Ibsen infiltrated the discourse of twentieth-century psychiatry that several generations of practitioners are apparently unaware of having shanghaied him into the service of their discipline and innocently use his concepts as their own intellectual property. Ernest Becker is a case in point. In *The Denial of Death* (1973)—a brilliant synthesis of psychology and cultural anthropology—he discusses human character as a "Vital Lie": a strategy of self-preservation and a fiction of value "that nature gives to each animal by the automatic instinctive programming and in the pulsating of the vital processes." (Becker, 52) A keen Ibsenian ear, attuned to the language of psychoanalysis, will immediately detect the intertext: Dr. Relling's "*livsløgnen*"—the "life-lie" of *The Wild Duck*, which at its most effective is indeed a vital process, "det stimulerende princip" (254). But Ibsen is nowhere acknowledged in Becker's book. He traces the concept of the Vital Lie all the way back via Maslow to Freud, to whom the idea is finally attributed without any reference to *livsløgnen*. Moreover, like Ibsen, both Freud and Maslow are aware that the obverse of vital process is a disengagement from repellent reality and a withdrawal into neurosis and denial: "We protect ourselves and our ideal image of ourselves by repression and similar defenses, which are essentially techniques by which we avoid becoming conscious of unpleasant or dangerous truths" (Maslow, 118–19). Here stand Gregers Werle and Hjalmar Ekdal (and possibly even Dr. Relling) in all their fallibility—fully dramatized exemplars of a clinical condition for which Ibsen had no specifically clinical language.

But if "*livsløgnen*" contributes to the discourse of clinical psychology, it speaks with equal authority for the cultural critic, like George Steiner, who reads it as one of those "'axiomatic fictions' of forward inference" that determine our survival as a species. The future-tense proposition, the grammar of hope, the syntax in which we speak of

"tomorrow": these, says Steiner, "constitute what Ibsen called 'the Life-lie,' the complex dynamism of projection, of will, of consoling illusion, on which our psychic and, conceivably, our biological perpetuation hinge" (159). It is an idea that he takes, in turn, all the way back to its source in Nietzsche's *Will to Power*, and rapidly forwards to the juncture of philosophy and his own brand of psycho-linguistics:

It is our syntax, not the physiology of the body or the thermodynamics of the planetary system, which is full of tomorrows. Indeed, this may be the only area of 'free will,' of assertion outside direct neurochemical causation or programming. We speak, we dream ourselves free of the organic trap. Ibsen's phrase pulls together the whole evolutionary argument: man lives, he progresses by virtue of 'the Life-Lie.'" (227)

"Repression," "projection," "transference," "counter-factuality," "self-deception": the analogues of "*livsløgnen*" reach across disciplines to explicate psychiatry, philosophy, evolutionary biology, linguistics, and cultural anthropology in an inclusive context. I want to suggest—following this line of inquiry—that the fascination of Ibsen to the first great psychoanalytic school of Vienna has its origins in a similarly wide-ranging inquiry, incorporating the clinical into the philosophical, and making of Ibsen an ally (sometimes, perhaps inadvertently, unacknowledged) in the search for a secular language to address what Hamsun called *det ubevidste sjæleliv*: the unknown soul-life, or, in clinical discourse, the unconscious life of the psyche.

## II

The Psychological Wednesday Society began meeting at Freud's Berggasse residence in 1902 and lasted until 1915. Its name changed to the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society in 1908 but it maintained the format of formal presentations and discussions of topics pertinent to the new discipline. The gatherings, as Max Graf describes them, sound rather like tutorials conducted in an Oxbridge college by a High Priest for his disciples:

First one of the members would present a paper. Then, black coffee and cakes were served; cigars and cigarettes were on the table and were consumed in great quantities. After a quarter of an hour, the discussion would begin. The last and the decisive word was always spoken by Freud himself. There was an atmosphere of the foundation of a religion in that room. Freud himself was its new prophet who made the heretofore prevailing methods of psychological investigation appear superficial. (Gay, 174)

There is a sense of exhilaration about these meetings: new ideas, new methodologies, a new psychoanalytic history, and a new language in which to express it were all in the process of creation. Sooner or later, the group would turn its attention to the new drama which, in Freud's case histories, had already begun to insinuate itself into diagnosis. Ibsen's *Little Eyolf* (1894) is a crucial example. Reading Freud,<sup>1</sup> one can justifiably assume that his sophisticated middle-class patients were thoroughly familiar with Ibsen's plays, and that references to events and characters would be instantly grasped. "One day the Rat-Wife in *Little Eyolf* came up in the analysis," Freud writes in his study of the Rat Man, "and it became impossible to escape the inference that in many of the shapes assumed by his obsessional deliria rats had another meaning still—namely, that of *children*" (Freud, 1909/1964, 215). This proves to be a break-through in the diagnosis, and an early instance of Ibsen's metaphors and symbols serving as both clinical resource and canonical evidence for the Viennese school's psychoanalytic theory.

It was Otto Rank, however, who spearheaded this clinical-critical approach to dramatic texts. He was the Society's paid secretary who began taking notes of its meetings in 1906 and contributing his own material to its proceedings. In his first month with the group he read a three-part presentation excerpted from his monumental monograph on "The Incest Drama and Its Complications" which, in 1912, he turned into a book whose subtitle virtually defined the literary aims of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society: *Das Inzest-Motiv in Dichtung und Sage: Grundzüge einer Psychologie des dichterischen Schaffens—The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend: Fundamentals of a Psychology of Literary Creation*.<sup>2</sup>

It is within the context of this vast comparative study of an erotic theme that Ibsen stands as a pivotal figure and exemplar of a thesis that transcends the sort of clinical diagnosis so easily dismissed as mere "psychologistic fallacy"<sup>3</sup> (Johnston, 1983). Part of that context, of course, is Freud's development of the incest fantasy into the nuclear complex of neurosis, the Oedipus complex. Rank's elaboration of *Das Inzest Motiv*, Peter Rudnytsky argues, "parallels Freud's intellectual development and forms an integral subplot to the history of psychoanalysis during this period" (xv). But although Rank appears, literally, as a footnote in Freud's now-famous psychoanalysis of Rebekka West in *Rosmersholm*, it would be a shame to leave him there as a mere adjunct to the history of the psychoanalytic movement. His work, together with

Freud's, creates the critical mass on which a psychology of literary creation depends; and, like Freud's, his psychoanalytic theory gradually modulates into a speculative philosophy of historical evolution in which he traces the advance of repression in the psychic life of the acculturated individual. His line of argument, simply stated, is that "the progress of sexual repression ... can be fully equated with general cultural progress" (Rank, 230), and this is the context in which he places Rebekka West as an exemplar of contemporary civilization.

There is also a much later sub-section in Rank's book which deals, in depth, with Ibsen's *Little Eyolf* and develops an analogue of the parent-child incest contained in the Oedipus complex. Borrowing from Pfister, Rank defines the incestuous attraction that exists between Asta and Alfred Allmers as the sibling-complex, or *Geschwister-Komplex*—a syndrome that confirms his thesis of progressive repression in modern Christian culture, where incestuous impulses find expression not in fact, but in subtextual suggestion or subconscious intimations. Indeed, the whole point of the sibling-complex in *Little Eyolf* is its determined perpetuation in the very face of all evidence to the contrary. Asta and Alfred are *not* blood siblings, and there is *no* incestuous taboo opposing their passion. Why then, Rank implicitly asks, do they continue to behave as if under the repressive influence of the *Geschwister-Komplex*? His answer is that Ibsen's play marks the turning point from a Romantic to a Modern civilization,<sup>4</sup> where the comparative differences between Goethe's *Die Geschwister* and *Little Eyolf* indicate the distinctive and defining qualities of the human condition—its "stage of repression" (541)—at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. In Goethe, the fulfillment of the siblings' incestuous desire is still possible by their subordination of consciousness to sexual impulse, and the repressions of culture to the demands of pleasure. But in Ibsen's world the defence mechanisms prove far stronger than the incestuous wish-dream. So extreme is the degree of repression in *Little Eyolf*, that the conscious denial of a sibling relationship remains powerless against the unconscious mind's insistence that Asta and Alfred's attraction is residually incestuous (545-48). This, in Rank's view, is the distinguishing characteristic of Ibsen's dramatic world:

[C]orresponding to the progress of repression, the impulses derived from the incest complex express themselves mainly in subtle ethical and psychic conflicts, which are often presented and dealt with in a psychological manner—dialectically and intellectually. In lieu of incestuous acts, murders, and killings, we find

reserved affections, unpronounced relationships, or differences of opinion, debates, and conflicts of will. The characters are doomed not by some external, powerful fate but by their own sufferings—by their neurosis. (542)

Here, in miniature, is Freud's more famous thesis: that civilization and repression are inevitable aspects of cultural evolution, and that various forms of neurotic discontent are the price we pay for moral and intellectual sophistication.

But *Rosmersholm* remains the most striking example, among Ibsen's plays, for Rank's thesis of the progressive refinement of the Oedipal impulse—or, as he puts it, the "continually increasing repression of the attraction between father and daughter, expressed in the increasing obscurity and delicacy with which this incestuous relationship is depicted" (330). In *Rosmersholm*, he argues, theme and style are intricately connected in hints and suggestions so buried in the subtext as to be almost imperceptible. Psychological "repression" and dramatic "obscurity" become virtually interchangeable concepts in his analysis of Rebekka's sexual relationship with Dr. West:

She has sexual relations with him, is finally adopted by him, and cares for him until his death. However, Dr. West, though not legitimately, is also her true, physical father. This fact is hardly suggested in the drama. It is obscurely suggested that West is Rebekka's father, but the existence of their sexual relationship is suggested more obscurely still. The entire incest complex, placed in the time before the action of the drama, is so obscured (repressed) that the uninformed spectator can hardly guess the actual state of affairs. (329)

Rank may, indeed, be the first critic to have cut through obscurity and the effects of repression to explain not only Rebekka's otherwise inexplicable behaviour, but the modernity of Ibsen's style "where powerful inner inhibitions render a clear expression of unconscious emotions impossible" (330). Freud, of course, will build on these perceptions and take their implications even further in his psychoanalytic study of the Oedipal dynamic in Rebekka's relationship with Rosmer. But Rank's pioneering comparative methodology—whether or not his speculative theories about "obscurity" and repression are ultimately convincing—points to a comprehensive thesis about civilized existence that links psychiatry to cultural and historical anthropology. His model is basically Freudian.

### III

In 1916, four years after Rank's publication of *Das Inzest Motif*, Freud included his far more acclaimed analysis of Rebekka West in a monograph on "Some Character-Types Met with in Psychoanalytic Work." The subjects of his inquiry were "Those Wrecked by Success"—a syndrome, derived from clinical practice, where a woman whose life's-project is on the verge of achievement suddenly gives up on her scheme and abandons it. But his analysis of Rebekka, in its specific application to the syndrome, is disappointingly reductive:

The practising psychoanalytic physician [he writes] knows how frequently, or how invariably, a girl who enters a household as servant, companion or governess, will consciously or unconsciously weave a day-dream, which derives from the Oedipus complex, of the mistress of the house disappearing and the master taking the newcomer as his wife in her place. *Rosmersholm* is the greatest work of art of the class that treats of this common phantasy in girls. (399)

One can understand the impatience of critics, like Brian Johnston (1989, 54–57), for whom this mode of critical inquiry is misguided and irrelevant. But Freud's means are not necessarily compromised by his conclusions. There are lacunae in his discussion of *Rosmersholm*—gaps waiting to be filled, arguments left mysteriously untested, anticipations of theories not yet formulated, textual evidence unexplored: "obscurities", in the Rankian sense, that make what he does *not* pursue even more fascinating than his articulate pronouncements. I want to deal briefly with the contents of his analysis, which is readily available and well-known, and then move—more speculatively—to the omissions in his argument and consider what he *might* have said about Ibsen's early gloss on *Civilization and Its Discontents*.

If Rank was interested in *Rosmersholm* as a co-ordinate, in terms of treatment and theme, of the stage of *repression* reached at the end of the Nineteenth Century and embodied in a canonical literary figure, Freud was ostensibly driven to Ibsen's erotic masterpiece as an exemplar of the Oedipus complex in modern tragic experience. Drawing on Rank's detection of the incest theme, Freud's diagnosis of Rebekka West remains (despite his concluding comment about working-class housemaids) a pioneering exposé of her deeply subconscious motives for rejecting an offer of marriage that she has striven, by virtually murdering the lawful wife, to secure. In Freud's analysis, Rebekka is indeed wrecked by success—wrecked, that is to say, by a sense of unspeakable and disabling guilt that stands in the path of her satisfaction. This guilt

has its origins, he argues, in the dimly intuited “reproach of incest” (398), later dredged into consciousness as feasible evidence that she had unwittingly become her mother’s successor in her father’s bed. When she first rebuffed Rosmer’s offer of marriage, writes Freud, “she stood under the domination of the Oedipus complex, even though she did not know that this universal fantasy had in her case become a reality” (398). As Rank had already argued, “with Ibsen, sexual repression has almost reached the limit beyond which its mechanisms either lead to neurosis or must become conscious” (Rank, 548); and in Freud’s reading, subconscious repression does indeed finally yield to fearful knowledge. Rebekka, having once again displaced the wife in Rosmer’s bed, stands in fear of replicating the primal trauma with the Father. The Oedipal fantasy has become, in reality, the Oedipal tragedy.

The ingenuity of Freud’s analysis derives mainly from its critical methodology, in its articulation of motives hidden beneath the obscurity of Rebekka’s untrustworthy confessions where the unspeakable is concealed in a tissue of lies and half-truths that are never fully amenable to explication. Rank points to forms of cultural repression. Freud *reveals* them in the subtext. Rank points to obscurity in the style. Freud *engages* it and *exhumes* it. But Freud never carries his argument forwards to Rank’s cultural application of his thesis. How, one wonders, could the author of *Civilization and Its Discontents* have missed Ibsen’s own powerful sense of *das Unglück in der Kultur*? Is it possible that the pursuit of the Oedipus complex as a “nuclear complex” dulls his sense of the crucial dialectical interplay between the forces of Eros and Civilization? Why is he so anxious to discredit the very evidence on which his own later theories will rest?—the acquired sense of guilt that compromises pleasure, the ennoblement of mind that compensates for renunciation and loss, the eternal conflict between conscience and chaotic impulse? *Rosmerholm* inspires the great speculative themes of the later Freud. But none is here developed.

Freud never went back to *Rosmersholm*, despite the fact that in the years between 1916 (when he diagnosed Rebekka as traumatized by sexual taint) and 1930 (when he wrote *Civilization and Its Discontents*) his reading of the Oedipus complex had been subsumed into the even larger thesis dealing with the collision of Eros and Culture—a later configuration, perhaps, of that elusive “nuclear” theme. After 1930—that is to say, after his claim that Oedipal guilt has been internalized as an aspect of the cultural superego—his sense of Eros and Tragedy expands

into the world-unhappiness of civilized existence, into the bleak view that unconstrained pleasure cannot co-exist with ethical consideration. But Rebekka had already articulated this tragic argument, and in his analysis of her syndrome Freud had even quoted some of her famous lines on this theme—her momentous revelation of the eternally fractured self, where nobility of mind is purchased at the cost of the body's passion and the pleasures of life: "It is the Rosmer view of life—or your view of life at any rate—that has infected my will... . And made it sick. Enslaved it to laws that had no power over me before. You—life with you—has ennobled my mind." (Freud, 394) But he stops just short of Rebekka's great tragic revelation: that nobility of mind is the dead-end of life's pleasures:

Die Lebensanschauung der Rosmer adelt. Aber—[...] sie tötet das Glück, Du. (96)

Det rosmeriske livssyn adler [...] men det dræber lykken, du. (83)

It is fascinating to speculate on how the Viennese psychoanalysts might have understood these words, how they might have appropriated Rebekka's tragic discourse into the terms of their own evolving discipline. Even if Rank and Freud had not seen the first production of *Rosmersholm* in Vienna in 1893, they were most certainly reading the play in German translation. Rank, as his translator indicates, presents all quotations from Ibsen in German; and it is these renderings (authorized by Ibsen) that underlie his analysis (xxxviii). As the quoted passages indicate, Ibsen's original *Riksmål* slips nicely into German so that there is a close etymological affinity in the concept of "being ennobled"—*adler* in the *Riksmål*, *adelt* in the German. But "ennoblement" no longer belongs to the discourse of modern psychiatry. Gregory Richter (Rank's translator) notes that the search for standard English equivalents for German psychoanalytical discourse tends to transform a richly metaphoric language into the jargon of psychiatric diagnosis. While Freud may indeed still speak like a poet of the psychic life to Bruno Bettelheim, James Strachey's standard translation makes him sound like a clinician in a white coat. The example that Richter chooses to illustrate his point is this very notion, in *Das Inzest-Motiv*, of *ennoblement*. "*Veredelt*," he writes, "has been rendered 'sublimated,' even though a more literal English version would be 'ennobled,' which might better suggest the highly positive sense Rank clearly associated with the German word" (xxxix).

After Rank and Freud, one *hears* Ibsen differently. A word like *veredelt*, straining to define an aspect of *det ubevidste sjæleliv*, acquires a dense archaeology of connotation linking emotional sensation to a philosophy of existence. Rebekka speaks, simultaneously, of erotic pleasure tragically sacrificed to a form of altruistic purity, but simultaneously of the rechanneling of furious psychic energies into a redeeming spiritual condition—what Freud defines as sublimation: “the deflection of sexual instinctual forces to higher cultural aims” (Gay, 164). She is, at once, the paradigm of tragedy and psychiatry—a living metaphor of those subtle ethical and psychic conflicts which, as Rank insists, remain dialectical and intellectual within the context of their psychological presentation. The idea of *ennoblement* humanizes clinical psychiatry, just as the concept of *sublimation* explicates metaphor as a psychic experience. In the final analysis, Ibsen’s tremendous appeal to the Viennese must surely have derived from their common pursuit: the discovery of a language, new to the discourse of modernity, that could articulate the soul-life of the culture in the context of its evolution.

Brian Johnston, in rejecting the “psychologistic fallacy” as a critical approach to Ibsen, offers an eloquent counter-image of his drama. “Works of art,” he writes, “are careful, consciously wrought metaphors that extend into a surrounding world of previous art forms and into the text of the world’s recorded history, remembering what the everyday world contrives to forget” (1989, 52)—or, one might add, remembering what the everyday world has always intuited but never found the means of expressing. Freud, disappointingly, delimits his reading of *Rosmersholm* to Rebekka’s Oedipal tragedy. But a Freudian reading of the play nevertheless affirms all the demanding criteria that Johnston specifies for great dramatic art, if by Freudian one concedes the profoundly dialectical structure of his thought and its affinity with Ibsen’s own tragic vision of experience. In this sense, Rebekka West’s tragedy of ennoblement is played out in Euripidean surrounds where the goddesses of Lust and Chastity project their operation into the eternal collision of *Id* and *Kultur-Über-Ich*, thus ensuring the operation of a cosmic grief that goes far beyond the clinical diagnosis of a common fantasy among adolescent serving maids.

The dialectical argument that structures *Civilization and Its Discontents* is marshaled, in embryo, in Freud’s 1916 analysis of Rebekka: the development of a guilt-laden conscience which debars her from unfettered enjoyment, an ennoblement of mind which compels the renun-

ciation of amoral will, and her recognition of civilization's—that is to say Rosmersholm's—negation of all freedom from accountability. But Freud advances this argument only to discredit it in favour of *das Inzest-Motiv* and its Oedipal implications. “The true motive of her sense of guilt,” he insists, “. . . is something quite other than the atmosphere of Rosmersholm and the refining influence of Rosmer. . . . Everything that happened to her at Rosmersholm, her falling in love with Rosmer and her hostility to his wife, was from the first a consequence of the Oedipus complex—an inevitable replica of her relations with her mother and Dr. West” (397, 399). What Freud asks us to take on trust, because it can be neither proved nor disproved textually, is the primacy of an essentially subconscious motive for Rebekka's relinquishment of her project. We are asked to concede that guilt becomes effective even before she knows anything of her cardinal crime, that emotional reticence derives not from moral development and the evolution of conscience, but from intuited trauma and the reproach of the incest-taboo. In this case-study of multiple motivation, Freud insists, a deep-seated Oedipal motive hides behind the more superficial one of ennoblement—a motive “repressed” (to use Rank's terminology) in order to protect the audience from the sort of distressing emotion that might have imperiled the effect of the drama (398).

It is a tricky argument, and far less satisfying than Freud's concession to the more rational and conscious reasons for “sublimation” that he finally returns to, almost as a disclaimer. In this formulation of his psychoanalysis, Dr. West and Rosmer represent the poles of an erotic dialectic: free-love that permits everything, and love transformed into a great self-renouncing Caritas; the tumult of unrestrained will, and the quiescence of the conservative conscience. Perhaps, he suggests, the sources of her guilt—both the unconscious and the conscious—are fundamentally the same:

[J]ust as under the influence of Dr. West she has become a freethinker and despiser of religious morality, so she is transformed by her love for Rosmer into a being of conscience and nobility. This much of the mental process within herself she understands, and so she is justified in describing Rosmer's influence as the motive for her change—the motive that has become accessible to her. (399)

What, then, is Rebekka's tragedy? Her intuited sense that a universal fantasy of incest has, in her case, become a reality? Or her bleak recognition that consciousness and the examined life cannot reconcile *lykke*

and *adelskap*—the impulses of unchecked pleasure, and the insistent drive towards moral responsibility?

If, for Freud, “civilization is a process in the service of Eros” (69) then *Rosmerholm*, surely, is a remarkable exemplar of this thesis. For it is Eros rather than incest that is the play’s *Urmotiv*: Ibsen’s dramatization of the Freudian paradox that the sexual instinct which binds us, libidinally, to the great unity of humankind also unleashes the energies that threaten the social order and allies itself with death. Rebekka’s lived-through trauma, vividly recreated in her narrative, is that of being impelled by a force, totally beyond her control, to murder and destroy. It is an overwhelming sensation of drowning in passion, of being broken and terrified into abject submission by something akin to love, but not love itself: *et vildt, ubetvingeligt begær* (81)—erotic energy that erupts out of nowhere, like a winter storm in the Northern Sea, chaotic and irresistible. In its grip, Rebekka loses all confidence in herself as an autonomous and self-directing woman, swept away by an impulse driving towards its satisfaction. That which invigorates her, also enslaves her; and, like Hedda Gabler, she comes to recognize in sexuality a condition of extreme *ufrihed*, enthrallment to a power she cannot control. Her intense desire for Rosmer or her incestuous sexual liaison with Dr. West amount to the same thing: the death-infected nature of *fri kærlighed*—the freedom to love—that her father had taken to abusive extreme and that she had herself exercised in Beata’s *sjålamörd*.<sup>5</sup>

If, as Freud grudgingly concedes, *Rosmersholm* may be a tragedy of moral ennoblement, and if Rebekka is indeed justified in describing Rosmer’s influence as the motive for her change, then there remains the alternative Freudian reading: that even if Rebekka had *not* slept with Dr. West, the demands of her ethical conscience, acquired through a process of cultural osmosis at Rosmersholm, are sufficient to account for her spiritual transformation. As she psychoanalyses her motives—what Ibsen, in another context, describes as holding a doomsession over the self<sup>6</sup>—her consciousness of anti-social sexual license reveals a simultaneous irruption of moral censorship that judges and inhibits:

Do you think I set about doing this thing coldly, with deliberate self-possession? The woman who did it is not the one standing here, telling you all this. I think there are probably two kinds of will in people! I wanted to be rid of Beate. One way or another. But I never really thought it would happen. With every step I risked, every time I moved closer, I seemed to feel something shrieking inside me: No further! Not another step! —But I *couldn't* just let it be. I *had* to risk a little more, a tiny bit further. Just a little bit more. And another little bit—always

just another little bit. —Then it just *happened*. —That's the way these things turn out. (III, 74–75)<sup>7</sup>

Clinical psychoanalysis might point to Rebekka's schizophrenic sensation of selfhood split into the drive towards desire and the countervailing drive towards moral restraint, the self that submits to Eros pitilessly observed by the self that screams in protest. But what she recounts is also a pre-Freudian instance of the dialectic of *libido* and *Kultur-Über-Ich*—here expressed as the tragic impasse between *lykke* and *adelskap*, pleasure and nobility, the gratification of individual desire and the spiritual survival of the community. To drown in desire is, after all, no more catastrophic to Rebekka than the sublimation of Eros by the powers of Agape, its vitality lost to moral judgment, its wild passion humiliated by the demands of a civilized social ethos. Anticipating Freud's dialectic by some fifty years, Ibsen noted in a letter about *Rosmersholm* that cultural conflict is rooted in the dissonant functions of the human spirit, in our struggle to balance life's impulses with ideological conviction and harmonize instinctive need with cultural order. In this tragic collision, what resolution can we hope for?

The different functions of the spirit [writes Ibsen] do not develop uniformly or comparably in any one individual. The acquisitive instinct rushes on from one conquest to the next. Moral consciousness, however, 'the conscience', is by comparison very conservative. It has its roots deep in tradition and in the past generally. From this comes the conflict within the individual.

(Oxford Ibsen VI, 447)

Trapped in this nexus, Rebekka West remains one of Ibsen's great tragic exemplars of Freudian *Unglücklichkeit*—despite Freud's determination to relegate her significance to a recurrent syndrome among Viennese female domestics.

Let me presume, in conclusion, to restate the *fin-de-siècle* Viennese view of *Rosmersholm*. Like Rank, I agree that it is a play about repression—not only in Rank's understanding of the idea as "obscurity," but in the Nietzschean sense so articulately defined by the 'Rat Man': "I did this," says my Memory. "I cannot have done this," says my Pride and remains inexorable. In the end—Memory yields" (Gay, 129). This is Rosmer's tragedy, where the *refusal to remember* becomes synonymous with the constraints of culture, while the exigencies of desire lay waste his most urgent needs to deny the operation of Eros. He is a living exemplar of the mind's determination to remain oblivious of itself, and—in the larger thesis—of the fragility of civilization confronted by a

Spenglerian muttering deep within itself. His tragedy of *repression* is finely balanced against Rebekka's tragedy of *sublimation*—in many ways more devastating because more articulate in its despair. Rosmersholm's ethical claims upon individual freedom and vitality, as Rebekka initially experiences them, are as irresistible and catastrophic as the trauma of Eros:

Rosmersholm has smashed me...Smashed me to pieces.—I was full of life, courageous, strong-willed when I first came here. Now I've collapsed under the rule of an alien law.

Rosmersholm has paralysed me. I've had my fearless and independent will imprisoned here. And devastated!

The Rosmer tradition and its view of life—*your* view of life, at any rate—has infected my will... . And made it sick. Enslaved it to laws that meant nothing to me before. (III / 79–83)

*Knækket, bøjet ind, skræmt, magtstjålet, stækket, forkludret, smittet, trælbundet*: There is a destructive kinetic energy in Rebekka's list of past participles, a lived-through sensation of the body racked by physically aggressive forces, broken, smashed, imprisoned, infected by disease, and sapped of strength. But the rending is also metaphysical, spiritual, sexual: a complete psychosomatic collapse, a sense of psychic enervation and impotence. Her threnody of loss cries out against a draining away of *begær*, of sexual passion, a grief even more intense than Rebekka's lament over her lost existential autonomy.

Rosmersholm, in the simplest formulation of Rebekka's experience, transforms Eros into Agape, *et vildt, ubetvingeligt begær* (81) into *den store, forsagende kærlighed* (82)—the “wild unappeasable lust” of the acquisitive instinct into the “great self-denying love” of the conservative conscience. Rosmersholm compels a reevaluation of the vital erotic energies, but even as it reveals the negative corollaries of the Life-force, so it offers in their place the nobility of spirit and the quiescent power that ensures the survival of the culture. Drained of will and her sexuality canceled, Rebekka balances the loss of abused vitality against the strange moral beauty of a selfless, inert, and asexual dispensation. She feels herself drowning, once again. But this time she is overwhelmed, in the deepest recesses of the spiritual life, by a nobility as irresistible as an incoming tide:

But when I came to share my life here with you—in tranquillity—in solitude—when you shared all your ideas with me so openly—everything you felt, so delicate and so fine, just as you experienced it—then the great change came over

me. Little by little—you see. Almost unnoticeably—but finally engulfing me. Right to the depths of my soul.

Everything else—that horrible sense of drowning in desire, drained away from me, far away. All these forces thrashing about in me settled down quietly into silence. Spiritual peace enveloped me—the tranquillity that settles over the bird-cliffs, up North, under the midnight sun.

It was then that love came to me. That great desire for self-renunciation [*den store, forsagende kærlighed*], that contents itself just with the way of life that we have shared together. (IV / 82)

It is a measure of Rebekka's lost vitality that her acknowledgment of a better life should be built upon such desolation. But she is keenly aware, at the same time, that Eros cannot be transformed into Agape without a sense of life's diminution and impoverishment; and the play's dialectical contradiction, the *tvertimod* at the centre of Ibsen's vision, is summed up in Rebekka's bleak recognition of life's unreconcilable antinomies:

You—my life together with you—has ennobled me spiritually... . You can surely believe that. The Rosmer way of life ennoble. But (*she shakes her head*)—but—but—... But it kills pleasure, my dear. (IV / 83)

*Lykke* and *adelskap*, "happiness" and "ennoblement", Viking paganism and Christian scruple resist forever a marriage of contraries.

Freud's psychoanalytical reading of Rebekka's response to the marriage-proposal takes account of a crucial deterrent to the achievement of her life's goal, but concedes too little to the moral revelation and the layers of motivation that Ibsen builds into the moment. There is no doubt, in the stage direction that Rebekka shrieks with joy, that her immediate reaction to Rosmer's offer is one of jubilant pleasure. But exultation and despair seem inseparable in the utterance as if the cry of achievement were contradicted by a moral judgment on her triumph, as if the resurgent energies of will were simultaneously evaluated by the conservative conscience. She states her tragic revelation very simply:

Yes, my dear—this is surely the most dreadful thing, that now when all the pleasure of life is offered me with full hands—now I have become shut out of it by my own past. (IV / 84)

Freud interprets that past primarily as erotic trauma, disturbingly replicated in her passion for the much older Rosmer and manifested in the guilt of subliminal incestuous desire. But Rebekka's tragedy is, above all else, the Noblewoman's, the moralist's, whose entrapment between two orders of love—the Eros of natural selection and the

Agape of cultural evolution<sup>8</sup>—leaves her simultaneously devastated and exhilarated, sexually smashed and spiritually restored. “The price we pay for our advance in civilization,” Freud concluded, “is a loss of happiness through the heightening sense of guilt” (1930/1961, 134). Ibsen’s Rebekka is the pivotal dramatic exemplar in modern erotic tragedy of this form of Rankian/Freudian wreckage.

## NOTES

1. The play’s première production took place in Berlin’s Deutsches Theater in January 1895, and Vienna saw the play one month later at the Burgtheater (*Oxford Ibsen* VIII, 319).

2. This work has now been translated, for the first time, into English by Gregory C. Richter, for Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore and London (1992). It is prefaced with a lengthy Introductory Essay by Peter L. Rudnytsky, to whom I am indebted for information about Rank’s thought and its relation to Freudian theory.

3. Brian Johnston has been the most consistent of the anti-subtextual critics, arguing—with critics like Richard Hornby—that to read Ibsen plays as “Freudian runes” betrays a “ludicrous failure to live up to their challenge” (Johnston, 1983, 33).

4. Oliver Gerland, in his article “Hegel-Ibsen-Freud: Trauma and Memory in *Catiline*,” argues along very similar lines that “Ibsen’s dramatic texts bridge with uncanny precision the historical gap between Romanticism and Freud” (5). In this article he reconciles Hegelian dialectic and psychoanalytic process and suggests that Brian Johnston’s reading of Ibsen is not necessarily inconsistent with a psychological approach. See also his article on Pierre Janet’s traumatic memory theory and its application to Ibsen in “The Paradox of Memory: Ibsen’s *When We Dead Awaken* and Fin-de-Siècle Psychotherapy.”

5. *Själamörd* is Strindberg’s ingenious psychotherapeutic term for Rebekka’s crime against Beata. It has been translated by Walter Johnson as “Psychic Murder.” See the bibliography.

6. Cf. Ibsen’s poem, “Et Vers” (1878): “At digte,—det er at holde / dommedag over sig selv”: “To write—that is to hold a doomsession over one’s self.”

7. My translation. The speech occurs in Act III (pp. 74–75 in *Samlede Værker*) Here, and in other translated passages, Act and page references to *Samlede Værker* follow in parentheses.

8. Cf. B. F. Skinner: “If we can say that *eros* is primarily a matter of natural selection and *philia* of operant conditioning, then *agape* represents a third process of selection—cultural evolution” (490).

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- tals of a Psychology of Literary Creation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press: 1992, with an Introductory Essay by Peter L. Rudnytsky.
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## Community and Identity in Icelandic-Canadian Literature

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**ABSTRACT:** *Recent scholarship has begun to recognize and address the complexities involved in minority or "ethnic" writing. The main question literary critics in the field now face is to determine what constitutes minority writing, in order to be able to formulate approaches. This article will discuss these issues as they relate to Icelandic-Canadian writing: what is it that makes Icelandic-Canadian writing "Icelandic"? What is it about certain works or their authors that motivates publishers, editors, readers, and critics, to label them as "Icelandic-Canadian" rather than "Canadian"? Is it merely a matter of political sensitivity, the author's background, and/or the presence of ethnic markers in the text? Whose definitions of "Icelandicness" are we using in our application of this label, and what are the literary and political ramifications involved in relegating certain works to the realm of "hyphenation"? How have Icelandic-Canadian authors dealt with the issue of ethnicity in relation to their writing? My exploration of these questions aims to demonstrate how Icelandic-Canadian authors have attempted to deal with these issues in their writing by challenging traditional, "mainstream" definitions of ethnicity from within.*

**RÉSUMÉ:** *Des travaux de recherche ont récemment commencé à reconnaître et à traiter des complexités introduites par les écrits minoritaires. La problématique principale à laquelle les critiques de littérature multiculturelle doivent faire face consiste à déterminer ce qui constitue la littérature multiculturelle afin de pouvoir définir des stratégies d'analyse. Cet article se propose de discuter de ces problèmes en ce qui concerne les écrits islando-canadiens. La présente étude portera une attention toute particulière aux questions suivantes: qu'est ce qui rend la littérature islando-canadienne "islandaise"? Qu'y a-t-il dans ces œuvres ou leurs auteurs qui incite des éditeurs, des lecteurs, et des critiques à ap-*

*poser à ces écrits l'étiquette "islando-canadiens" plutôt que "canadiens"? S'agit-il seulement d'une question de sensibilité politique, de l'origine culturelle des auteurs, ou de la présence des éléments ethniques dans le texte? À qui doit on ces définitions d' «islandité» que nous entendons par ce label et quelles sont les ramifications littéraires et politiques de reléguer certains œuvres au domaine ethnique? L'exploration de ces interrogations vise à montrer comment les auteurs islando-canadiens ont traité de ces thèmes pour contester d'une position interne les définitions traditionnelles majoritaires de l'ethnicité.*

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Icelandic-Canadian literature, a body of writing produced by Canadians of Icelandic descent, invites many of the questions which only recently have come to be addressed by critics concerned with the development of a critical discourse on minority writing in Canada, the most urgent of which no doubt is: how do we conceptualize "Canadian minority writing"? Only now are we beginning to confront this question, as the comfortable notion of a homogeneous Canadian identity is no longer tenable, and even such binaries as "centre vs. periphery," "mainstream vs. ethnic" and "self vs. other," with which critics have approached minority writing, seem too simple, too reductive, and too dependent on notions of cultural homogeneity and authenticity.

On what basis do we define writers or texts as "minorities"? Do we do so because of a perceived inscription in signature or text? What are the grounds for such perceptions? Is it solely a matter of origins, which, for many in Canada today, are becoming increasingly remote and increasingly multiple? During my explorations of Icelandic-Canadian literature, I have found that many Icelandic-Canadian texts have been begging these questions for years. In 1992, Kirsten Wolf, in a review of Kristjana Gunnars's collection of new Icelandic-Canadian writing called *Unexpected Fictions*, raised questions about the implications involved in the use of "ethnic" or "Icelandic-Canadian" as literary banners, and their validity when the only basis for their use appears to be that of the author's ancestry rather than anything generated by the text itself. Wolf proceeded to ask the question whether ethnicity itself can form the basis for defining a literature (1992: 448). Francesco Loriggio has discussed the general complexities involved in these questions, suggesting that, decades after Barthes's claim that the author is dead, minority discourses have revived "the problematics of signature in a non-trivial manner" (1989: 592). Indeed, Loriggio argues that, since ethnicity cannot reliably be defined by content or formally, our only clue is signature.

In this paper, I will address some of these questions in relation to Icelandic-Canadian literature, a literary corpus which has a 125-year-old history and provides a frame of reference for generational continuity in minority literature (see also Padolsky 1994). As Smaro Kamboureli points out in her introduction to *Making A Difference* (1996: 11), the history of Canadian multiculturalism is a narrative that has many beginnings, all of which contribute to a better understanding of its many and diverse patterns. By using the broad term "Icelandic-Canadian literature", I realize, of course, that I am dangerously close to the generalizing approach that has plagued the study of Canadian literary diversity for so long, running the risk of effacing the differences that exist within the corpus by focussing on a presumed single collective perspective, the insiders' representation of an authentic culture. However, this discussion will focus on how writers of Icelandic descent have in various ways and in the course of time dealt with the question of their role and position in the larger field of Canadian literature, and challenged generalizing and confining classifications of themselves and their writings.

Enoch Padolsky is, even to date, one of few who has made concerted attempts towards the creation of a critical framework with which to approach "minority" writing, loosely defining "minority" on the basis of social status in Canadian society. His suggestions for a "pluralistic" approach I have found to be illuminating when applied to Icelandic-Canadian literature, which has generally benefited little by approaches based solely on formal expressions of "otherness." The fact that Icelandic-Canadian writing has, by now, a fairly long history in Canada, and that nearly all Icelandic-Canadian writers today are fourth- or fifth-generation Canadians, undoubtedly plays a role here, but what is striking about even some very early Icelandic-Canadian texts is their stubborn resistance to being "othered" while at the same time finding ways to proclaim their difference from other Canadian texts. This tendency became stronger as the majority of Icelandic people in Canada was quick to infiltrate many levels of Canadian society, intermarriage became a common feature, and identities were constructed which correspond perhaps the closest to Linda Hutcheon's description of "crypto-ethnicity", an ethnic identity that is "encrypted, silenced, unless articulated by choice" (1998: 32). The slippery nature of many of these Icelandic-Canadian texts in this respect could be held accountable for the fact that many critics both in Canada and Iceland have found it difficult to label them, recognizing them as somehow "different" yet finding that "difference" extremely hard to pin down. The post-colonial critic Trinh

T. Minh-ha has discussed the implications of what she refers to as “mutation in identity”, such as hyphenated identities and hybrid realities which pose a threat to any simplified division between outsider and insider:

Not quite the same, not quite the Other, she stands in that undetermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out. Undercutting the inside/outside opposition, her intervention is necessarily that of both a deceptive insider and a deceptive outsider. She is this Inappropriate Other/Same who moves about with always at least two/four gestures: that of affirming ‘I am like you’ while persisting in her difference; and that of reminding ‘I am different’ while unsettling every definition of otherness arrived at. (1995: 74).

Icelanders in Canada have tended to resist simplified divisions from the beginning. Their settlement ideal, signified by their naming of “New Iceland” and “Gimli,” was to contribute the best in their Icelandic heritage towards a new and better future in Canada.<sup>1</sup> This ideal was recorded in Icelandic-Canadian literature, which became the main site for the negotiation and construction of an identity based on these ideals, an identity which embraced Canada while at the same time infusing it with an Icelandic legacy. While nostalgic writing tended to degenerate into the excesses of cultural pride and isolation, immigrant writers such as Jóhann Magnús Bjarnason, Stephan G. Stephansson, Guttormur J. Guttormsson, Guðrún H. Finnsdóttir, K. N., and Gunnsteinn Eyjólfsson engaged in literary explorations of the new geographical and social environment they inhabited and the effects of cultural transplantation as well as in the process of constructing a Canadian identity which allowed immigrants to both participate and integrate fully into Canadian society while preserving what they considered valuable in their cultural heritage. Community expressions of cultural arrogance became subverted and parodied in K. N.’s poetry and Gunnsteinn Eyjólfsson’s short stories.<sup>2</sup> As I have argued elsewhere (1998a), the concept of Canadian identity these writers envisioned was one enriched by the heritages and differences of all that shared it. It was largely based on the immigrant view of Canada as a land of possibilities and a new beginning, of freedom and equality, and as a result, we find early expressions of profound concern over the prevailing attitudes of colonialism and imperialism which informed Anglo-Canadian culture.<sup>3</sup>

For the poets Stephansson and Guttormsson, the immigrant experience had significantly diminished their allegiance to any one country. They regarded themselves instead as citizens of the world, and their work tends to focus on such international issues as social justice, peace,

and the future of humanity, especially the disenfranchised, in an increasingly technological and materialistic society (Neijmann 1997). Stephansson's ideological position led him into trouble during the First World War, which he and others in the Icelandic community with him regarded as a European imperialist game that used its own people as pawns. Stephansson's collection of anti-war poems, *Vígslóði* ("Battlefield"), was only one, if the most controversial, contribution to what was probably the most painful clash in the Icelandic-Canadian community, which became hopelessly divided over the question whether the War constituted a betrayal of Canada's ideals and a victory for Anglo-Canadian colonialism over the rights of those cultural groups with a history of pacifism, or whether it offered people in Canada a chance to prove their worth as Canadian citizens and to settle their sense of indebtedness to the country that offered them a new beginning. The First World War constituted the first great challenge to the question of Icelandic identity in Canada, and it is therefore not surprising that it reverberates throughout the history of Icelandic-Canadian literature (Guðsteins 1998). As David Arnason has pointed out, Stephansson's anti-war poetry constitutes a significant challenge to the commonly held view that the modern sensibility from which it sprang did not find expression in Canada until much later (1982: 61–62).

For immigrant short-story writer Guðrún H. Finnsdóttir, the most pressing concern was the deconstruction of destructive dichotomies contained in ethnic and gender boundaries through integration based on a healthy respect for self and other, a concern she often and most powerfully depicted through the exploration of intermarriage. She believed that neither segregation nor isolation could ultimately be a solution to ethnic and gender divisions, but rather envisioned the continuation of the Icelandic heritage through the constructive integration of future generations, as the following quote from the story "Fýkur í sporin" ("Lost Tracks") demonstrates:

Ragnhildur elskaði enn þjóðerni sitt og tungu; en hún hafði öðlast við það vísyni og umburðarlyndi, sem árin og lífsreynslan ein geta veitt. Og hún varð að viðurkenna í huga sér, að rás örlaganna hefðu breytt öllu viðhorfinu. Hin unga, uppvaxandi Canada þjóð var að líkindum á leiðinni með að svelgja upp þjóðerni hennar, hana sjálfa og barnið hennar; en þeim hjónunum hafði auðnast, að bjarga því í tíma frá skipbroti, sem þeim var dýrmætast—ást sinni og sambúð... . En kynslóðir halda áfram að koma og fara, eins og vindurinn, sem þýtur um eyru manns—eins og laufblöðin, sem fljóta á fallandi árstraumi... . Vindurinn blæs—ryk aldanna fýkur í sporin—og áður en varir sjást þeirra engin merki. En draumar mannkynsins halda áfram að birtast og hverfa—og birtast á

ný—og með hverjum nýjum draum kviknar ný von, og—með voninni nýtt líf.  
(1946: 229–30)

(Ragnhildur still loved her Icelandic heritage and the Icelandic language; but she had acquired the broadness of mind and tolerance only years and experience can give. And she admitted to herself that the course of events had completely changed her outlook. The young, upcoming Canada was on its way to absorb her nationality, herself and her child; but she and her husband had managed in time to save from shipwrecking what was most precious to them—their love and their marriage... . But generations continue to come and go,—like the wind that whistles around one's ears—like the leaves that float on the currents of a river... . The wind blows—the dust of ages covers the tracks—and before one knows it no traces of them are seen. But the dreams of humankind continue to appear and disappear—and appear anew—and with each new dream a new hope is raised, and with the hope new life. [Wolf 1996: 109])

For most Icelanders, the “English” were just another cultural group,<sup>4</sup> and Icelandic immigrant literature became a site to develop discursive strategies to counter majority assumptions and claims to Canadian culture. In Jóhann Magnús Bjarnason’s fiction, the “English” appear as empty caricatures, characters who are culturally and emotionally barren because they have consistently denied themselves the enrichment of cultural interaction and the value of respect for self and others on which it is based. Bjarnason, a schoolteacher, also used the genres of fairy-tales and fables to adapt traditional Icelandic culture to its new, Canadian social and physical environment.<sup>5</sup>

These Icelandic-Canadian immigrant writers help demonstrate that minority literatures written in non-official languages have engaged in explorations of Canadian society, culture and identity as much as Anglo-Canadian writings have, and have indeed offered challenges and alternative views to those advocated in majority literature.<sup>6</sup> Noteworthy, too, is that the Icelandic-Canadian critical examinations of Canada’s social make-up and the ideologies informing it find their basis in a strong commitment to Canada and are conducted firmly from within that position, rather than stemming from an assumed position outside of Canadian society as the choice of language might suggest.<sup>7</sup>

Laura Goodman Salverson, born in Canada to Icelandic immigrants, was the first to take this counter-discourse into the realm of English, thereby laying bare some of the complexities involved in minority writing in Canada. Writing in English about Icelanders suddenly acquired popularity with a larger Canadian audience, but also became an exposé of hidden community secrets: an insider resorting to the outsider’s explicative strategies, Salverson spoke the unspeakable; in Trinh

Minh-ha's words, she exposed the secrets only to be imparted to insiders to a readership of outsiders (1995: 218; see also Godard). As she broke the silence, Salverson felt maligned and rejected by members of the Icelandic community and stereotyped by her larger Canadian audience, even though she herself contributed to that rejection and stereotypification. Barbara Godard has pointed to the ideological as well as aesthetic implications involved in choice of language for minority writers. When Salverson chose to write in English, a deliberate choice she herself attributes in her autobiography, *Confessions of an Immigrant's Daughter*, to a revelation she had in a library when she was ten and just learned the rudiments of her second language, she also consciously opted for a different literary and cultural context, different aesthetic expectations, in order to disrupt them. At the same time, she introduced the variable of gender, thus doubling her difference. As a writer, Salverson was strongly motivated politically, and set herself up as an example for other aspiring minority writers, particularly women, to follow; indeed, this is the reason she gives for writing her autobiography.

As Guðrún Guðsteins (1996) has recently demonstrated, Salverson's first novel, *The Viking Heart* (1923), can fruitfully be read as "doubled" minority women's discourse trying to break the silence within the male realm of Canadian literature in English. Guðsteins uncovers an "exaggerated doublevoicedness" in what she regards as Salverson's most problematic and most interesting novel, arguing that the effects of Salverson's double muting, of not being "heard" by the dominant group as a member of a cultural minority and as a woman, are evidenced by a tendency towards overarticulation due to the effort involved in making muted concerns visible to the dominant majority on terms that it will accept.<sup>8</sup> Such overarticulation could account for the passages of cultural pompousness in *The Viking Heart* to which some critics have objected and which has led others, notably Eli Mandel in his groundbreaking article "Ethnic Voice in Canadian Writing," to dismiss Salverson's writing as "ethnic" since, he argues, it is not concerned with problems of identity and self-definition but considers itself rather as part of an authentic culture.<sup>9</sup> As a text immersed in cultural as well as gender politics, however, the novel deals almost exclusively with issues of identity, the construction of a more comprehensive Canadian identity in particular.

*The Viking Heart* in many ways continues the identity debate which had up to that point been conducted within the linguistic security of Icelandic, as Salverson sets out to establish a dialogue not only with a

larger Canadian readership but also with her literary predecessors in the Icelandic-Canadian community. *The Viking Heart*, usually read as a romantic settlement saga, examines the painful process of becoming Canadian from the various angles introduced earlier by writers like Stephansson and Finnsdóttir which challenged majority views of Canadian identity based on an existing hierarchy of power and values (Guðsteins 1995: 142). Guðsteins has discussed Salverson's textual dialogue with Stephansson and other pacifists in *The Viking Heart* through the passage of Loki's slaughter of a calf, which echoes Stephansson's depiction in his anti-war poem *Víglóði* of Britain's "reeking slaughterpen" where blood-thirsty merchants "drink all the bloody profits off" (1998).<sup>10</sup> Such an insider's reading places into new light the blood-symbolism that Hopwood in her introduction to the NCL edition of the novel finds ineffective and mechanical, and indicates that minority writing often engages in cultural dialogues on different levels. Salverson also carries on Finnsdóttir's emphasis on the importance of reuniting polarities through love as well as her focus on the role of women in the development of Canadian society. *The Viking Heart*, like many of Finnsdóttir's stories, revolves around the love and strength of several powerful female characters who are the pillars of their community.<sup>11</sup> The novel strongly resists materialistic patriarchy as a betrayal of the promise held by Canada, and emphasizes instead the importance of social and cultural equality. Like Finnsdóttir, Salverson also displays a resistance of divisions, advocating the importance of what Guðsteins has termed "the totality of self", a recognition of the intrinsic value of self and other, based in a larger belief in the constructive potential of impurity: good contained within evil, past within present, destruction within construction, masculinity within femininity (1995: 142). In *The Viking Heart*, as in Salverson's later works, evil is redeemed by "the right effort."<sup>12</sup>

The fact that this has not always been clear to its readers probably has much to do with the fact that Salverson, in her attempt to make herself heard from within, adopted a style and genre then considered appropriate for Canadian women writers by the Anglo-male establishment (Campbell; Gerson). She used the popular form of the romance but infiltrated it with passages of social realism and cultural politics, disrupting the narrative with Icelandic words indicative of the cultural alternatives suggested by the text. Through her writing, she challenged majority representations of Canada and of minority groups in Canadian culture and society. As she herself said:

Fool or no I venture to believe that my own experience as an outsider member of a minority race has given me a more sympathetic insight into the touchy problem of racial adjustment than can be said of many writers who make use of a similar subject. Ralph Connor may have made a success with his *Foreigner*, but I should like to know where such a colony existed—and if the whole North End of Winnipeg did not rise up and mob him it only goes to prove that the people so misrepresented were his superiors in humor and forbearance. (LPP, box 16, folder 2, item 41 [undated]).

Her contribution has been important: at a time when ethnogenetic myth-making in Anglo-Canadian writing was reaching its zenith, Salverson challenged the very premise of those myths from within its own strictures and boundaries, helping to open up the field of Canadian literature in English for a larger, multicultural dialogue.

It is rather ironic, although telling, that Salverson has always been considered by non-Icelanders to be a reliable spokesperson, a true representative of her culture. This aspect of minority writing, the fallacy of a monolithic "I" representing an authentic culture, has only recently come to be acknowledged and addressed. As Salverson herself reveals in her autobiography, she was rejected by many from her community because of her "inaccurate" representation of Iceland and Icelanders.<sup>13</sup> Gender of course evidences one site of difference, and it probably exercised a significant influence on Salverson's reception within the Icelandic community (Wolf 1994). Interestingly, however, Salverson seems to have partly constructed the rejection of her work by the Icelandic community, just as she condemned some of the same stereotypes of Icelanders she herself helped create or introduced into Canadian literature (Neijmann 1998b). This may well have been Salverson's own, lived statement that, in Kamboureli's words, "cultural boundaries are porous, that cultural representation is contingent on the authors' singularity of imagination" (1996: 4), an imagination that, like identity, is in constant flux, and constantly being re-invented. Salverson continually courted and rejected the positions of insider and outsider, thus resisting being caught by either.

Salverson's writing by itself alone raises many issues important to a discussion of minority writing. While it has now come to be recognized that relations between writers and their cultural communities impinge on, indeed are inscribed in, their literature, critics have so far stayed away from the thorny issue of "popularity", a concern with community readership that translates itself into writing of a less experimental nature. The larger implications of the antagonistic relationship that has developed between academic and popular Canadian writing has

fairly recently been discussed by Robert Lecker (1995), and while the issue is of course much too large to discuss here in more detail, I believe it is of great pertinence to the field of Canadian minority writing. No-one would, I think, deny the grass roots of most minority as well as regional cultures, and indeed, critics have hailed its occurrence in more experimental writing. However, writers who consciously choose more traditional forms of writing to address a community audience tend to be ignored by critics in the academy. Since literature was a popular occupation among Icelandic immigrants (i. e., practised with enthusiasm by people from all social levels), a significant component of Icelandic-Canadian writing falls in the category of “popular writing.”

Salverson is a good example of someone whose literary reputation has suffered among critics because of her popular appeal. More recently, W. D. Valgardson has experienced a similar lack of academic recognition for his writing, as he made a conscious choice not to alienate the audience from which he felt his inspiration had sprung and which nourished his aspirations as a writer (1979–80: 180). Kristjana Gunnars, in a discussion of the influence of critical reception, or lack thereof, on minority writers, points out:

The works of both Salverson and Valgardson have been popular as well as literary. But while the writings of both show considerable craftsmanship and artistry, there appears to be an invisible brick wall separating popular acceptance from academic intellectual consideration and absorption into the canon. It is easy to brush these matters off as a question of excellence. (1991: 41)

Gunnars goes on to argue that the lack of dialogue with other cultures or the literary establishment constitutes an “invisible assault” on the writer’s self-confidence. Certainly, this has been true for Salverson and Valgardson, who experienced their struggle for literary as well as cultural identity as painful.<sup>14</sup> During the current post-colonial climate, the politics informing notions of aesthetic excellence and artistic judgment have, of course, received closer attention (see also Gunnars 1991: 50). As readers and critics we would seriously limit our understanding of minority writing in Canada if we ignored the environments which have spawned many minority writers and the dialogues they continue to conduct with their cultural communities and literary ancestors. In the development of a critical discourse on minority writing, it is important that the hierarchies that have kept so many writers on the periphery are not copied but rather re-examined from a fresh perspective.

Contemporary works by W. D. Valgardson, Kristjana Gunnars, David Arnason, Bill Holm, Betty Jane Wylie, Martha Brooks and

Marion Johnson bear testimony to the large diversity still existing among Canadian writers of Icelandic descent today. Sites of difference include gender and locality as well as degree of identification with an Icelandic background. Betty Jane Wylie, a writer of part-Icelandic descent who of necessity turned to the writing of non-fiction in order to make a living, has recently returned to creative writing and seeks part of her inspiration in her Icelandic-Canadian heritage.<sup>15</sup> Although she does not deny or reject her part-Icelandic ancestry, Martha Brooks has never provided any indication that she identifies with that part of her cultural background apart from what she obviously considers to be a personal connection.<sup>16</sup> The same can be said about Marion Johnson, whose only published work of fiction to date, *The Book of All Sorts*, displays no concern with the matter of literary ethnicity.<sup>17</sup>

In other cases, the obvious differences create separations that seem almost artificial. Bill Holm is an American author, yet his writing has much in common with that of David Arnason. Both are writers with a comic vision who have been moulded by the prairie landscape and culture and by growing up in Icelandic communities which tended to disregard the national border as trivial because of a shared culture, history and geography. Holm and Arnason are, in fact, also the only two contemporary authors who share the fact of single origins. The issue of multiple origins and its influence on minority writing is one that has remained largely unexplored in Canada, at least among critics. This may be due to the fact that, as Trinh points out: "Any mutation in identity, in essence, in regularity ... poses a problem, if not a threat, in terms of classification and control" (1995: 217), and this may have been even more strongly the case in Canada where multiculturalism has tended to promote a view of Canada as a cultural mosaic made up of homogeneously conceived ethnic communities. While Kristjana Gunnars and W. D. Valgardson are both known as Icelandic-Canadian writers, Gunnars is in fact half-Danish and Valgardson is more than half Anglo-Irish. How is hybridity inscribed in literary texts?

Based on a number of works written by Americans of multiple origins, the American anthropologist Michael Fischer's has formulated some observations on the writing of mixed heritage. He suggests that "[o]penness to construction of new identities is promoted by the fact that almost all writers acknowledge a creative sense of being of mixed origins" (1986: 224-5):

It is a matter of finding a voice or style that does not violate one's several components of identity. In part, such a process of assuming an ethnic identity is an

insistence on a pluralist, multidimensional, or multi-faceted concept of self: one can be many different things, and this personal sense can be a crucible for a wider social ethos of pluralism (196).

While it is likely that a plural heritage reinforces these aspects, the dual heritage implied in an Icelandic-Canadian identity, as I have argued, provided sufficient stimulus by itself for the creation of multi-faceted concepts of self among Icelandic-Canadian writers. What is of particular interest here is that for a writer like W. D. Valgardson, the matter of "multiple origins" has been a traumatic, if ultimately constructive experience, something which he himself has attributed to "the Canadian experience," where segregation often triumphed over integration. Although Valgardson's first short-story collections and novel have almost exclusively been discussed in the light of his Icelandic background, they deal in fact largely with the rural disenfranchised in an increasingly urban and materialistic society, harking back to the concerns that informed the work of writers like Stephansson and Guttormsson. The setting is decidedly multicultural and often not specifically Icelandic-Canadian. In response to being labelled as "Icelandic," Valgardson has indeed in many interviews tried to emphasize the fact that he was influenced by the various cultures that inhabit the Interlake area and their shared immigrant history in Canada, and once claimed that his perceived characteristic "saga style" actually derived from his reading of Russian writing (1987), conceivably in an attempt to escape the limiting qualifier of "Icelandic," like Salverson before him.

In more recent works, Valgardson's concern with cultural dialogue and the construction of identities achieves more prominence, and here, the influence of mixed heritage appears as painful and the existing boundaries between cultural groups as exclusive and divisive. As he explains in an interview:

Whenever you have a very strong ethnic community, if you are not 100 per cent genetically pure you are very aware: that is the Canadian experience. The whole thing about the integration into becoming Canadian, of course, is very difficult and is most difficult in those who are the first to cross the boundary... I have given up all the terrible despair that I felt over not being totally Icelandic and not being totally Irish. It would have been much easier if both parents had been Irish or both parents had been Icelandic. Belonging to two communities forces a kind of growth, and it forces a kind of struggle with something other people do not have to struggle with. That growth is painful, but that is part of the Canadian experience. (*Other Solitudes* 137-139)

A lifetime, sometimes several, of rejection must be redeemed in order to construct an integrated identity. This process may include the decon-

struction of undigested influences from the ancestral country, which continue to colonize the experience of cultural identity in Canada and prevent integration. Axel in the two-part story "The Man from Snaefellsnes" (1990) has to return to Iceland in order to redeem himself from his great-grandfather's past and begin to construct a positive identity for himself. Similarly, Valgardson has refused to "correct" the spelling of Icelandic words in his texts, claiming that Icelandic language purism has no place in a multicultural society like Canada's, and preferring the use of Canadian Icelandic instead (Vignisson; qtd. in Guðsteins 1997).

The differences in emphasis and tone between his works and those of David Arnason are striking and can in part be explained, I believe, by the fact that Arnason, who also grew up in the Interlake but in a fully Icelandic family, has been much more secure in his local and ancestral identity. Interestingly, although Arnason's work appears as multicultural as Valgardson's does, it is not only more urban but also less saliently "Icelandic" than Valgardson's has been perceived to be. Could it be that in Canada, at least for some writers, ethnicity becomes a bigger deal when multiple origins are involved?

Arnason has been quite emphatic about his desire to be regarded as a Canadian writer, and while he strongly identifies with his Icelandic background, he has been very careful to avoid classification solely as an Icelandic-Canadian author. When Arnason's work does deal explicitly with his Icelandic background, it is not in a traumatic but rather in an affectionately playful way, very much, in fact, in the way described by Fischer, where the construction of multiple selves is used to challenge dominant hegemonic ideologies, such as the prominence of Ontario and Québec in representations of Canadian culture, the fallacy of a homogeneous Canadian identity, and inherited colonialisms which Arnason has termed "dreams of Empire" (*The New Icelanders* 8). However, even his "non-Icelandic" works often have, on closer reading, a subtext that can be seen in the generational continuity of his Icelandic-Canadian literary heritage. Arnason's writings often revolve around the question what it means to be Canadian in an increasingly urban, international and globalized culture, resisting the colonial heritage from the Old World as well as the colonizing pull from the United States. Arnason's work thus continues to address many of the concerns that occupied his literary forbears, such as the question of Canadian identity, the multicultural reality that is Canada, and the concern with the influences of colonialism and imperialism. In *The Pagan Wall*, for instance, Arnason revisits the theme of the First World War earlier addressed by writers like Stephans-

son, Finnsdóttir and Salverson, from a contemporary perspective, to examine what it has meant for Canada and its colonial heritage. Iceland makes a very brief appearance in the novel, although none of the main characters is Icelandic. Guðsteins has demonstrated how Arnason changes Iceland's geography to symbolize its legacy of encompassing contradictions, thus echoing Salverson's symbolic but inaccurate description of Iceland in *The Viking Heart* to which the Icelandic community objected so strongly, and deconstructing the "sanctity", the cultural colonization imposed by the Icelandic mother country on the development of a separate Icelandic-Canadian culture (1997).<sup>18</sup> Arnason has always made it very clear that, for him, his Icelandic heritage begins with the arrival of the first immigrants in Manitoba in 1875.<sup>19</sup> In this light, it is also interesting to note that Arnason, like his immigrant forbear Bjarnason, has frequently created Canadianized versions of traditional fairy-tales and used the genre of the fable to parody mainstream Canadian politics.<sup>20</sup>

Kristjana Gunnars's works, too, display a profound and continuous concern with the issues of identity and representation. She is the only contemporary Icelandic-Canadian writer who is herself an immigrant. When she came to Canada and began to write, she felt that she was automatically equated with the Icelandic community in Canada, although she did not share its history, was unfamiliar with the community, and had been partly moulded by an Iceland which was drastically different from the Iceland the original immigrants had left. These differences were generally ignored, instead she felt pressured to make the community "her business," something she referred to later as a tyranny of the way in which one's own culture is perceived (1974). Gunnars began researching Icelandic immigrant history in Canada, and created her own imaginative representations in *Settlement Poems 1 and 2* and *The Axe's Edge*. Interestingly, the reception of these works in the Icelandic community was one of bewilderment rather than recognition. Her "Icelandicness" was not so much an experience of cultural community but of individual displacement. This makes Gunnars's work significantly different from that of Valgardson and Arnason. With Icelandic as a native language Gunnars had direct access to Icelandic immigrant literature rather than filtered through community experience, and in her works she establishes a textual dialogue with her Icelandic immigrant forbears as part of a larger exploration of Canadian cultural history.

In *Wake-Pick Poems* and *The Prowler*, Gunnars deals with her mixed heritage which, as in Valgardson's works, appears as an outsider's experience. Like her Icelandic immigrant foremothers Finnsdóttir and Salverson, Gunnars actively resists the insider/outsider dichotomy in her texts. In both works, the narrator continually re-invents herself and recreates her own past in order to avoid being trapped by borders, boundaries and stereotypes.<sup>21</sup> Guðsteins has analyzed how the poetic cycle *Wake-pick Poems* continues Salverson's literary efforts to destabilize dichotomies towards a more constructive acceptance of their binary interdependence through a structure based on dual heritage, paternal and maternal, which in Gunnars's case equal Iceland and Denmark. Later in the poem, the duality broadens to include Canadian and Icelandic-Canadian. As Guðsteins has demonstrated, the poem works towards an ultimate resolving of the tensions between the dual heritage by resisting its destructive tendencies and moving towards integration. The main structural principle of the poem, that of weaving, names Salverson's legacy and affirms her vision as it echoes Salverson's symbol of Canada as a "dark weaver" in her Governor General's Award-winning novel of that title (Guðsteins 1995).

Similarly, *The Prowler* is an exploration of settlement that contains many echoes of *The Viking Heart* and *Confessions of an Immigrant's Daughter*, both being autobiographical, relying on memories and concerned with the question how to write difference, how to inscribe cultural and female identity into Canadian texts. Gunnars, too, deals with the issue of war in *The Prowler*, and, like Salverson, she addresses Stephansson, viewing war in the framework of imperialism which she sets against Iceland's legacy of pacifism. Gunnars, like Stephansson, has used the immigrant experience as a starting point for embracing concerns that transcend ethnic and national borders.

Having Icelandic as a native language, Gunnars has also experimented with Canadian English, informing it with Icelandic words and Icelandic ways of speaking English. After all, as she points out, linguistically Canada is no more a homogeneous country than it is in any other way, and that also goes for the diversity in the ways people speak English here. Fully aware of Canada's multicultural reality, she promotes the adoption of words and speech rhythms from the ancestral languages of Canada's many cultural groups:

Certainly we base our understanding of literature and narrative on the Canadian English that is rooted in English English. We derive our literary history from Britain. My sense was that much of Canadian language is rooted elsewhere. I

wanted, since I had that kind of ear, to hear what a *Canadian* story sounded like.  
(*Axe's Edge* 2)

Elsewhere, Gunnars has explained her ideas and motives on this subject more elaborately:

What fascinated me when I began was the possibility of escaping the unilingual mode, expanding the language I wrote in by pushing out the boundaries. I made cracks on the surface of the English I wrote in by shifting into an Icelandic phrase or changing the structure of an English sentence in accordance with Icelandic sentence structure. This is possible in poetry and it is good to be able to let your language be informed by other modes of thought... In Canada it should happen with the native tongues and languages of the immigrants. Those rhythms should be allowed to enter, to alter the rhythms of English so we can start thinking in other ways. (Demchuk 1984: 32-34)

It would seem that in Icelandic-Canadian writing, as Michael Fischer has argued, “[i]t is the inter-references, the interweaving of cultural threads from different arenas, that give ethnicity its phoenix-like capacities for reinvigoration and reinspiration” (230). In spite of many and various differences between individual writers of Icelandic descent, some clear patterns may be detected which appear to suggest a generational continuity in Icelandic-Canadian literature, even among fourth-generation Canadians. These patterns include an early and strong commitment to Canada, a profound concern with social and cultural equality, and an enduring resistance to centralizing, homogenizing and confining forces such as colonialism, imperialism and nationalism by continually devising strategies to challenge and escape simplified classifications and definitions. Can ethnicity or nationality form the basis for defining a literature? Icelandic-Canadian writers appear to suggest that such an approach by itself is too limiting, too “definitive,” although it can contribute to a better understanding, a more diverse reading of a text. Perhaps the only definition that we can ultimately give to minority literatures is that they force us back, in a variety of ways, to constantly refocus, re-examine, redefine the adjective “Canadian” as a heterogeneous and transcultural concept which is in constant flux.

## NOTES

1. The naming of New Iceland, the original area of settlement along the west coast of Lake Winnipeg which existed as a republic with its own constitution during the first years of immigration, initially indicated the desire to found a new Iceland, but soon the majority of the immigrants changed their past-oriented attitude to a future-oriented one and the adjective “new” became more important than the noun it quali-

fied. It is the latter meaning that we find in, for instance, the title of David and Vincent Arnason's collection *The New Icelanders* (1994). Gimli is part of a Norse post-apocalyptic myth, the name of the hall where only the best of gods and people will live after the old world has been destroyed, and they have been cleansed of its corruption.

2. See, for instance, K. N.'s poems, "Bréf til Jónasar Hall", "Brúin", "Já", and "Gunnars-saga hin nýja" in which he parodies both the Icelandic immigrant mythos and the literary heritage it is based on by subverting a literary reference which has served as the foundation of Icelandic cultural nationalism (see also Helgason 1998). Gunnsteinn Eyjólfsson's "Jón á Strympu" stories parody Icelandic nationalism in New Iceland through their anti-hero, Jón á Strympu, who represents a perversion of the ideal immigrant Icelander (see Neijmann 1997 and 1998a).

3. This concern derived to a large extent from the fact that Iceland itself had been a colony for centuries and was, during the main wave of immigration to Canada, engaged in a nationalist struggle for independence from Denmark.

4. Other cultural minority groups tended to share this view, as, for instance, Linda Hutcheon's account of growing up in Toronto's Little Italy demonstrates (1998).

5. Bjarnason's autobiographical novel *Eiríkur Hansson* and his detective novel *Í Rauðárdalnum* ("In the Red River Valley") abound with caricatures of "the English." Bjarnason's fables are collected in *Gimsteinaborgin* ("The City of Jewels"); for a discussion of their cultural relevance see Neijmann 1997.

6. I agree with Padolsky's suggestion that minority writing in non-official languages can be fruitfully compared with contemporary Anglo-Canadian writing to explore the literary differences engendered by minority and majority positions in society (1991: 115-16).

7. Palmer (1987) has demonstrated that this is the case in many minority immigrant texts.

8. Guðsteins relies here on the Ardeners's analysis of women as a muted group, and on Helga Kress's application of this analysis to early Icelandic women's writing.

9. Salverson's *Confessions of an Immigrant's Daughter* is a narrative of self-definition if ever there was one, dealing throughout with the difficulties embedded in the inscription of a cultural and female identity, the writing of difference.

10. Based on Watson Kirkconnell's following translation of Stephansson's epigram from *Víglóði*: "In Europe's reeking slaughter-pen / They mince the flesh of murdered men / While swinish merchants, snout in trough / Drink all the bloody profits off" (Stephansson 1987: 77).

11. Indeed, an intriguing parallel exists between a passage in Salverson's *The Viking Heart* and one of Finnsdóttir's stories entitled "Traustir máttarvíðir." In each, a woman's love and strength constitute the "trusted pillar" which supports the construct of society, and one appears almost a literal translation of the other, although it is un-

clear who "translated" whom. While *The Viking Heart* was published in 1923 and Finnsdóttir's story first appeared in print in 1925, it is known that both authors had begun writing much earlier.

12. In *Confessions*, Salverson quotes her father's axiom: "That which people accomplished, whether good or evil, was the true substance of themselves, and could not perish" (214–15). For a more detailed discussion on this see Guðsteins (1995).

13. Guðsteins has demonstrated how, on certain levels, the rejection of Salverson's "inaccurate" portrayals of Icelandic subjects continues in contemporary Iceland. As she points out, the recent translation into Icelandic of *Confessions* contains "corrections" of Salverson's "mis-spellings" and "mis-representations," thereby obliterating important structural elements in the original text (1997).

14. This is evident from Salverson's correspondence with her editor at Ryerson's, Lorne Pierce, and Valgardson's more recent interviews and fiction (1987; 1990; 1993; interview in *Other Solitudes*).

15. See, for instance, Wylie's story "Memories of Chocolate Sauce" in *Unexpected Fictions*, and her play "Veranda". In the case of Wylie, one could of course attribute to her Icelandic background the fact that she turned to writing when sudden widowhood forced on her the necessity to provide for her family. Other writers of Icelandic descent have often attributed the influence of their background on their writing to the fact that the Icelandic community has always supported writing and tended to regard it as a worthwhile occupation to pursue. According to Wylie herself, she turned to non-fiction because one can hardly make a living off creative writing in Canada, let alone creative writing which focusses on one particular cultural group (personal conversation, November 1997).

16. When prompted specifically about her Icelandic background in an interview with *The Icelandic Canadian Magazine*, Brooks merely replied: "Because of who my grandparents were as human beings, I have a warm connection with their past and with their traditions. I remember that they lived their lives well, as good people" (Webster).

17. It has recently been brought to my attention that Johnson is presently engaged in writing a work of fiction concerned with her Icelandic background. If this is indeed the case, it is interesting to note Gunnars's observation that Canadian ethnic women writers such as Kulyk Keefer and van Herk did not dare express themselves concerning their ethnicity because they wanted to get established first; Gunnars adds: "To me that is telling" (1991: 42).

18. George Bizstray has drawn attention to the colonial influence often exercised by the mother countries of cultural minority groups: "Let us face one fact: what we call acculturation, mutual understanding, and good citizenship in this multicultural country, may appear to the cultural chauvinists overseas as bastardization of our ancestral tradition, language and heritage" (1987: 112).

19. See his article "Myth of Beginnings" in *The New Icelanders*. Similarly, his short story "The Sunfish" (1982) which deals with the immigrant experience of physical and cultural settlement, excludes Iceland, the country of origin, and is instead entirely focussed on Canada.

20. See his two latest works of fiction entitled, *The Dragon and the Dry Goods Princess* (1994) and *If Pigs Could Fly* (1995).

21. This re-invention of her own past has significantly influenced the reception of Gunnars's work both in Iceland and in Canada. While the Icelandic-Canadian community does not appear to recognize its immigrant past in Gunnars's works, in Iceland there have been objections to Gunnars's "inaccurate" representations of Icelandic history, as a result of which an Icelandic translation of *The Prowler* was rejected for publication. (Guðsteins 1997).

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## REVIEWS / COMPTES RENDUS

**Jussi M. Hanhimäki.** *Containing Coexistence: America, Russia, and the "Finnish Solution", 1945-1956.* Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1997. 279 pages.

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The task of giving this work a title which might catch the eye of the potential reader and offer a reliable guide to the book's contents evidently exercised the attention of author and editor. The fact that the first strategy won out over the second does not greatly assist the reader, for only the third part of this study addresses the United States' attempt to contain "peaceful coexistence", the foreign policy of the Soviet Union identified with the leadership of Nikita Khrushchev after Stalin's death in 1953.

The decision to direct the title to the issues and protagonists of the final act of the drama obscures the fact that American policy towards Finland in the first decade of the post-war era moved, not always consistently, through a number of stages. These reflected American responses to the reciprocal foreign policies evolving between the two actors at the heart of this story, Finland and the Soviet Union. Nor does the title indicate clearly that the focus here is American concern for the foreign policy of the Soviet Union as it was constructed in Washington from a reading of Moscow's policy towards Finland. As Finland tried to fashion a foreign policy towards the Soviet Union which would assure Helsinki both security and a wide degree of independence while respecting the foreign policy interests of the Soviet Union, the resulting "Finnish Solution" was susceptible to various readings. It looked very different to observers in Helsinki, Moscow and Washington. Moreover, in Washington itself the Department of State and the National Security Council might assess Finno-Soviet relations very differently.

Because Western researchers since 1917 have been barred from Soviet archives, an air of incompleteness and speculation attends any diplomatic history of the twentieth century in which the Soviet Union is a factor. However, a convincing account of Soviet policy is not impossible to

give; and the generous archival policy of the United States, the most open in the world, should not result in acceptance of a US perspective. Hanhimäki has mined the resources of the National Security Council which bear on Finno-Soviet relations, the *fonds* of the National Archives on US relations with Great Britain and Norden generally, the papers of Presidents Truman and Eisenhower, and those of their well-known advisers, Acheson, Kennan, Dulles, Bohlen and so on. His research in the Finnish archives, especially the papers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and those of President Juho K. Paasikivi (1946–56) and of his foreign minister and successor Urho K. Kekkonen (1956–1981) appears to have been equally thorough. With the exception of some published material in Swedish, the sources for this study are exclusively Finnish and English.

Given the national biases of his sources, Hanhimäki keeps them at arm's length, on the whole successfully. There are occasional lapses, however. Three examples underline the need for vigilance in the use of sources that draw so heavily on the United States' perspective. First, we are told that "Stalin [kept] his Eastern European stooges under vigorous control" (p. 51). This is an easy and dismissive comment, a cold war bromide of the time which passed in the West for objective truth. Since it is proposed in a discussion of Tito's refusal to toe Moscow's line, it may reflect the prevailing Western belief that the cold war was a direct result of, if not solely explained by, Stalin's imperialism in Eastern Europe. It ignores the possibility that Stalin's policy at Yalta and his response to peacemaking and the post-war recovery of Europe were defensive, signs of the Soviet Union's vulnerability. He rejected Marshall Plan aid, financial coordination at Bretton Woods, and unification of the American, French and British zones of occupation into West Germany, and he resolved to challenge the American nuclear monopoly: in all this he was determined to conceal the weakness of the Soviet Union from the West.

A second example that can be cited is Hanhimäki's claim that in creating NATO in 1949, the West: "[i]n a sense ... completely, and with justifiable cause, shut the door on compromise by creating a military alliance that was clearly directed—whether defensively or offensively—against the Soviet Union" (p. 64). What was the justifiable cause? Was it Soviet imperialism? Was it imperialism extended by the domino theory (1949 being the year of Mao's victory in China) whereby all states were threatened by a common front of international communism? In this claim, the qualifier "in a sense" curiously accommodates the crucial admission of Western, primarily American, responsibility for a policy which froze the cold war in its most unaccommodating and polarized stance. From

that policy directly followed the rearmament of West Germany, her entry into NATO, and Stalin's resulting formation of the Warsaw Pact. For Western cold warriors, it was an easy, even logical step to characterize members of the Warsaw Pact as Soviet stooges.

As a final caution, we note that the author is familiar with the historical (he calls them "geopolitical") constraints that led Finland first to belligerency against the Soviet Union in 1939; then to a common front with Germany in 1941 and to an alliance (the Ryti-Ribbentrop Pact) in June 1944; and finally to the Moscow Armistice (September 1944) and war against the Germans until their expulsion from the north on the eve of V-E Day in April 1945. However, Hanhimäki, like his American sources, seems to ignore or underplay the depth of the Soviets' suspicion of Germany. A legacy of Operation Barbarossa and the "Great Patriotic War" from 1941, Soviet fears stretched back as far as the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk of 1918. In offering these correctives I am aware that it is difficult to assess the affect of perspectives on events through which we ourselves have lived and which have been constructed for us through cold-war rhetoric.

Indeed, this study of the evolution of American policy towards Finland, itself a result of American assessments of Russian and Finnish policies towards each other, is informative, carefully controlled, fully documented and accessible to the general reader. The chapters might have been edited to give a smoother and more integrated whole but the scholarly jargon which can make the works of political scientists unreadable to all but their specialist peers is commendably absent here. And while American policy is the theme, those who know post-war Finnish domestic and foreign policy only through what they have gleaned from the news media, will find most interesting the manoeuvres and strategies of the two dominant practitioners of Finnish foreign policy, Paasikivi and Kekkonen. They brought Finland out from under the shadow of the Soviet Union to a position of independence and neutrality which allowed for non-alignment in foreign policy, entrance into the United Nations and recognition of Finland's international status. Their achievement was remarkable: creating and taking advantage of conditions that permitted Finland to evolve from a defeated and occupied power required to sign a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance with the Soviet Union in 1948, to one which had paid off its potentially crippling reparations to the Soviets by 1953 and recovered full territorial sovereignty by 1955 with the Soviets' agreement to withdraw their troops from the Porkkala naval base west of Helsinki by January 1956. All this required

caution, a nice sense of *Realpolitik*, and a constant awareness of the strategic interests and historic influence of Czarist Russia and the Soviet Union in the Baltic generally, and especially vis-à-vis Finland.

After all, Finland as a Russian province had been permitted only a discretionary degree of local autonomy before independence in 1918. That independence had been the result of Russia's defeat and near-disintegration in World War I; in the inter-war years its status was still subject to the Soviet Union's sanction. And Paasikivi, independent Finland's first prime minister and negotiator of the Dorpat Treaty with the Soviet Union of 1920, admitted the miscalculations of Finnish foreign policy: claiming an inter-war border with the giant neighbour which lay only 31 miles west of Leningrad; and joining a common front with Germany in 1939 which hardened into co-belligerency from 1941 to 1944 and left her no negotiating room in 1945. While the Americans and British were often sympathetic to the difficulties of Finland's position, the proponents of "the Paasikivi Line" recognized that Finland clearly fell within the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. No military help would be forthcoming from the United States or NATO if the Soviets moved to occupy the country. Indeed if close financial or commercial links were established with the West, Moscow might decide to close them down completely.

The strength of the Finnish position, distinguishing it from the countries of Eastern Europe which were occupied in 1945 and moulded into the Warsaw Pact in 1955, was precisely its position between East and West and the possible repercussions of its choices for the balance of power in the Baltic region. The author is instructive on the importance which Finland assumed in Sweden's foreign policy, and thus in the eyes of the protagonists of the cold war. Might Finland's absorption by the Soviet Union lead Sweden to join NATO? The U.S. would welcome Swedish membership on the whole, but not at the cost of the Finnish domino falling. The Soviets sought to avoid this tradeoff, preferring a neutral Sweden and a Nordic region which might prove a laboratory for the policy of "peaceful coexistence", the Moscow-inspired thaw in the cold war, initiated by Stalin's successors from 1953.

The key to Finland's independent existence lay in Moscow. "The Paasikivi Line" was predicated on that fact. London agreed. And during the decade which is the focus of this study Washington manifested a variety of responses: disappointment at Finland's failure to accept Marshall Plan aid; concern about the 1948 Finno-Soviet treaty; determination to contain the Soviet Union in 1948-49, when the power of the United

States was still supreme; and fears that Finland would prove another "stooge" as cold war attitudes hardened—fears that were confirmed by what the Americans saw as Soviet expansionism in Korea. Signs of thaw in the Kremlin were only slowly credited in Washington: an armistice in Korea; the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Austria and from Port Arthur in China; the acceptance of Yugoslavian neutrality; and an invitation to Germany's Chancellor Adenauer to visit Moscow. Reluctantly the United States accepted that in Finland there might be a third way between East and West. Even so, the author makes it clear that "peaceful co-existence" remained an object of suspicion. It was not only the House Committee on Un-American Activities that persisted in seeing the "new" Soviet foreign policy as a snare and a delusion, a cloak for global expansion. Not the least of the interesting themes of this study is the education of those responsible for the formation and analysis of American foreign policy in the post-war decade.

Throughout this period the "Finnish Solution", then, comprised a position of neutrality between East and West maintained insofar as the security interests of the Soviet Union were neither questioned nor endangered. President Kekkonen early recognized, as had his mentor Paasikivi, that after the Soviet evacuation of Porkkala there was no prospect that either eastern Karelia and Viipuri (in 1945 Finland's second largest city) or the former Petsamo region in the north-east would be returned. Finland would be permitted only as much as was consistent with the strategic, geographic and ideological interests of the Soviet Union. Hanhimäki argues convincingly, so it is something of a surprise that he tries to make the case for the "Finnish solution" as a model for neutrality, a third option between East and West: "by their very existence Finland and the other neutrals [presumably Austria and the signatories of the Bandung agreement of 1955] reduced the tensions between East and West and challenged the supposed omnipotence of the two superpowers" (p. xviii). But after 1955, no other country in Europe emerged to join Sweden, Austria and Finland in their neutrality. Certainly neither Finland nor Austria dared risk their independence by actively promoting a third way. The Finnish case was unique to its time and place; it may offer an example of European neutrality in the cold war context (p. xiv) but there were no imitators. The thaw in the cold war may have begun, but great power interests still carried the day. Finland was beneficiary rather than agent in this process. As the author concludes: Finnish neutrality "must be attributed to the post-Stalin changes in Soviet foreign policy. Without [them] ... the return of Porkkala ... would scarcely have materialized as

early as 1955" (p. 192). However, if the key to a successful foreign policy is the ability to assess power—your own, your opponents' and that of your friends—the "Finnish Solution" proved an undoubted success. It is perhaps at that level that the book offers a model for the formation and assessment of other national foreign policies.

**Daniel Abondolo.** *Colloquial Finnish: The Complete Course for Beginners* (with dialogues by Hanna Björklund and Elina Multanen). London and New York: Routledge, 1998. x + 307 pages.

Reviewed by JOHN DINGLEY  
York University, Toronto

Abondolo's *Colloquial Finnish* is a true tour de force. It manages, within the confines of a modest volume of some three hundred pages, to combine a masterful exposition of Finnish grammar (wholly the work of the author) with very informative and natural dialogues (written by two native-speakers, Hanna Björklund and Elina Multanen) covering many aspects of Finnish life. In all sixteen units, the grammar and the dialogues go hand in hand, with Abondolo skilfully introducing his grammar points and exercises around the material in the dialogues.

The author starts off in his introductory remarks (pp. 1-3) by giving some fine background information about Finland and the Finnish language. Perhaps he is being a shade on the optimistic side when he says (p. 1) that (talking of Finnish vocabulary) "the learning curve flattens out fairly soon." This is not my experience. In addition, I would take issue with the statement (p. 3) that Finnish is open to foreign borrowings. To my mind, the opposite is true. 'Literary' Finnish at least is very hostile to foreign borrowings, preferring to coin new words from Finnish roots. Admittedly things are different in the many varieties of 'spoken' Finnish, and I shall return to this 'literary' vs. 'spoken' dichotomy later.

As I have said, Abondolo presents in this book a thoroughly accurate and, given the space restrictions, a remarkably complete account of Finnish grammar. Perhaps it is surprising that just about all the various participial and infinitival constructions are dealt with, since these belong fair and square to the 'literary' language and would thus seem marginal to *Colloquial Finnish*, which is concerned more with the 'spoken' language. For my part, I find it admirable that such constructions are included and presented in such a lucid way.

Abondolo has chosen to describe the grammar in a fairly rigorous manner, displaying a sound knowledge of contemporary linguistic thinking. For instance, both nominals and verbs are given in a basic form, from which all other forms can be derived systematically. Sometimes this basic form is identical with the dictionary entry form (called the 'citational' form by Abondolo) and sometimes it is not. For instance, the noun *rengas/renkaan* ('ring') is given the basic form *renkaX*. The X at the end stands for the alternation involved in the declension of this word. Similarly, *rinne/rinteen* ('slope') is given the basic form *rinteQ*, where the Q stands both for the alternation and for the glottal stop that is to be heard at the end of *rinne*. Another example is the partitive singular, which for Abondolo is *-t + A* (where 'A' stands for either 'a' or 'ä'), with *t* alternating with zero, e. g., *maa+ta > maata* ('ground'), but *kirja + ta* yielding *kirjaa* ('book'), with the deletion of *t*. All of this linguistic notation generates successful surface forms, but I would seriously question if such an approach is appropriate for absolute beginners, the vast majority of whom will have little or no background in linguistics. What will a beginner make of a form such as (p. 52) *opiskele + AQ*, which is Abondolo's basic form for the infinitive *opiskella* ('to study')!

Abondolo's treatment of participles and infinitives is, as I mentioned, extensive. On p. 247, he deals with forms such as: *olin putoamaisillani* ('I was about to fall'). (By the way, in Abondolo's terms, this consists of the 3rd infinitive plus the suffix-chain *-is-i-ll-A-PX* [where 'P' stands for the personal pronoun]!) Perhaps the author might have pointed out that these forms are sometimes labelled the 5th infinitive, although clearly deriving from the 3rd infinitive. Given such an extensive treatment of participles and infinitives, one might have expected to see some mention of the following:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. <i>Onko Pekka tavattavissa?</i>                   | 'May I see Pekka?'                                  |
| 2. <i>Olin lukevinani kirjaa.</i>                    | 'I was pretending to read the book.'                |
| 3. <i>Asunto on vuokrattavana.</i>                   | 'Flat to let.'                                      |
| 4. <i>Kirja lähetettiin minulle arvosteltavaksi.</i> |   |
|  | 'The book was sent to me to be reviewed/to review.' |
| 5. <i>Tulin tehneeksi virheen.</i>                   | 'I chanced to make a mistake.'                      |
| 6. <i>Työ tuli tehdyksi/tehtyä.</i>                  | 'The work got done by chance.'                      |
| 7. <i>Sain sen tehdyksi.</i>                         | 'I got it done.'                                    |

On p. 199, Abondolo is quite right to point out that in participial clauses (linking clauses for Abondolo) the subject does not always go into the genitive, e. g., *mies sanoi siellä olevan poikia* 'the man said there

were boys there', but he could also have referred to another instance: the frequently occurring 'have' equivalent, e. g., *mies sanoi pojalla olevan kello* 'the man said the boy has the watch'.

On p. 13, Abondolo states that Finnish has no future tense, requiring the present to render future as well as present meaning. This is true in much the same way that one can say English has, morphologically, no future, since it uses, in the main, periphrastic structures with 'will', 'shall', and 'going to' to express future meaning. In a similar way, Finnish can have recourse to two periphrastic structures, to wit: 1) *olla* ('to be') plus the present active participle, and 2) *tulla* ('to become') plus the 3rd infinitive in the illative. Here is an example:

1. *Professori on pitävä esitelmän.*

'The professor is going to/will give a lecture.'

2. *Professori tulee pitämään esitelmän.*

'The professor is going to/will give a lecture.'

It is true that the Finnish constructions occur less frequently than do 'will', 'shall', and 'going to' in English, and it is also true that the Finnish forms are usually more emphatic than their English counterparts. However, both Finnish constructions are used, especially the one with *tulla*.

On p. 119, Abondolo considers constructions such as: *me ollaan jo puhuttu tästä* ('we've already talked about this') to be "rather logical." I beg to differ. As is well known, 'spoken' Finnish uses the passive (indefinite for Abondolo) as a replacement for the 1st person plural, e. g.,

<u>'literary'</u>	<u>'spoken'</u>	
<i>puhumme</i>	<i>me puhutaan</i>	('we speak')
<i>emme puhu</i>	<i>me ei puhuta</i>	'we do not speak')
<i>puhuimme</i>	<i>me puhuttiin</i>	('we spoke')
<i>emme puhuneet</i>	<i>me ei puhuttu</i>	('we did not speak')

Now, the perfect passive of *puhua* ('to speak') is *on puhuttu* ('one has spoken'). So, one would expect the transform of *olemme puhuneet* ('we have spoken') to be *me on puhuttu*. ('we have spoken'). However, this is not generally used. Instead one finds the form given by Abondolo (p. 119), i. e., *me ollaan puhuttu* ('we have spoken'). Here, *on* is replaced by *ollaan*, the present passive of *olla*, and in effect we have a sort of double passive. Similarly, we find:

<i>emme ole puhuneet</i>	<i>me ei olla puhuttu</i> (not <i>me ei ole puhuttu</i> )
	('we have not spoken')

<i>olimme puhuneet</i>	<i>me oltiin puhuttu</i> (not <i>me oli puhuttu</i> )
	(‘we had spoken’)
<i>emme olleet puhuneet</i>	<i>me ei oltu puhuttu</i> (not <i>me ei ollut puhuttu</i> )
	(‘we had not spoken’)

Not much logic here, I aver.

An important generalization is missed in the section on the formation of the genitive plural (p. 147). Abondolo states that (p. 147) “*e*-stems form their pG (Abondolo’s form for ‘plural genitive’) more often with *-ten* than with *-en*.” True, but this misses the point that only those nominals having the partitive singular in *-ta/-tä* can have the genitive plural in *-ten*. So, *kieli, kieltä, kielten* (‘language’), but *ovi, ovea, ovien* (‘door’). In fact, this linking of the partitive singular with the genitive plural goes beyond *-e* stems, e. g., *ajatus, ajatusta, ajatusten* (seldom *ajatuksien*) (‘thought’), also *ihminen, ihmistä, ihmisten* (alongside *ihmisien*) (‘person’), also *kytkin, kytkintä, kytkinten* (alongside *kytkimien*) (‘clutch’), also *askel, askelta, askelten* (alongside *askelien*) (‘step’). It is not yet the case that all nominals with a partitive singular in *-ta/-tä* prefer a genitive plural in *-ten*, but things seem to be moving in that direction, e. g., *onneton, onnetonta, onnettomien* (but *onnetonten* is possible) (‘unhappy’).

In the discussion on the comparison of adjectives and adverbs (p. 186), it should be noted that *mitä ... sitä* (‘the more ... the more’) is just as common as *mitä ... sen* (‘the more ... the more’). *Mitä ... sitä* is usually given as the preferred form by standard reference works and sometimes it is the only form given, e. g., it is the only form given in the *Suomea suomeksi* dictionary by Nurmi et al. So, constructions such as *mitä pikemmin, sitä parempi* (‘the quicker the better’) will certainly be encountered.

The dialogues in *Colloquial Finnish* cover many topics, all having to do with things Finnish, or at least put in a Finnish setting. There has been a genuine attempt to build these dialogues around real-life situations, e. g., using the phone, shopping, getting ill, etc. Additionally, a lot of interesting information about Finland is given, e. g., sightseeing in Helsinki, taking a sauna, Finland’s government, and Finland in the European Union. There are problems, however, in the final dialogue (pp. 263-65), which discusses computers. Sadly, the contents here are hopelessly out of date. Nobody in Finland today (or anywhere else for that matter) would dream of buying a black-and-white monitor. In addition, no mention is made of the Internet or the World Wide Web. Moreover, everybody today uses a mouse!

With very few exceptions the dialogues are written in a ‘non-literary’ form of the language, which according to Abondolo (p. 8) is “a range of varieties of Finnish as spoken by younger people in Finland today, particularly in urban areas.” In fact, it is a watered-down version of the ‘spoken’ language of the Greater Helsinki Conurbation. Here is a typical example (p. 200):

- Eeva: *Mitä sä meinaat tehdä juhannuksena?*  
 Kaarina: *Mä meen mökille niin ku aina.*  
 Eeva: *Missä teidän mökki on?*  
 Kaarina: *Sipoon saaristossa. Mitäs sä meinaat tehdä?*  
 Eeva: *Mä en oo ihan varma. Me ollaan yleensä Mikon kanssa menty Seurasaareen kattoo(n) sitä perinteistä juhannuskokkoa, mut tänä vuonna ajateltiin tehdä jotain muuta.*

Compare the foregoing with its ‘literary’ equivalent:

- Eeva: *Mitä aiot tehdä juhannuksena?*  
 Kaarina: *Menen mökille niin kuin aina.*  
 Eeva: *Missä mökkinne on?*  
 Kaarina: *Sipoon saaristossa. Mitä sinä aiot tehdä?*  
 Eeva: *En ole ihan varma. Olemme yleensä Mikon kanssa menneet Seurasaareen katsomaan sitä perinteistä juhannuskokkoa, mutta tänä vuonna ajattelimme tehdä jotakin muuta.*

- [Eeva: What do you intend doing at Midsummer?  
 Kaarina: I am going to the cottage as always.  
 Eeva: Where is your cottage?  
 Kaarina: On the Sipoo Islands. What are you going to do?  
 Eeva: I am not quite sure. I have usually gone with Mikko to Seurasaari to watch the traditional Midsummer bonfire, but this year we thought we would do something different.]

The differences are not so great, and Abondolo rejects outright the use of real slang. However, I question the wisdom of writing the dialogues in this watered-down version of the Helsinki ‘spoken’ language for the following reasons:

1. In the grammar sections of the book, Abondolo has described, almost without exception, the ‘literary’ language. So, the language described in the grammar sections and the language of the dialogues are at odds.
2. A person learning Finnish from this book might very well get the impression that no-one ever uses the ‘literary’ language in speech.

This is quite a wrong impression. In most situations, and certainly in all formal situations, the 'literary' language will be used. At the time of writing this review, I am watching the World Cup on Finnish TV. The language used by the commentators is essentially the 'literary' language.

3. When one learns a foreign language, one should, I suggest, tread with a light step. If there is an accepted 'standard' language, one would be advised to learn this first. After all, that is what foreigners are expected to do! Finnish certainly has a 'standard' language, accepted by all Finns, and revered by many.

Even in a book entitled *Colloquial Finnish* I believe it is perfectly justifiable to write all dialogues in the 'literary' language. Yes, sometimes they might sound a little stilted, but they will always be representative of the most widely used variety of Finnish.

The comments I have made above notwithstanding, *Colloquial Finnish* is a very welcome addition to the stable of Finnish grammars and textbooks written for the English-speaking world. It will find its niche.

I found only two misprints: on p. 200, for *kattoo*, read *kattoon* ('to watch'); on p. 214, for *Otsolahi*, read *Otsolahti* (= a place name in Finland).

**Daisy L. Neijmann.** *The Icelandic Voice in Canadian Letters: The Contribution of Icelandic-Canadian Writers to Canadian Literature.* Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1997. 436 pages.

Reviewed by BODVAR GUDMUNDSSON  
Nivaa, Denmark

The Icelanders who emigrated to Canada after 1870 brought with them an old and extraordinary literary tradition. They had just barely set foot in the new country when they started creating new literature in the spirit of their old tradition. What was the literature of these settlers like? Did it embody some special tone which was not to be found in the literature of other ethnic groups that emigrated to America? How did it develop in the course of time? Has it left any traces in modern Canadian literature? These are the questions Daisy L. Neijmann attempts to answer in her voluminous book.

In the first chapter Neijmann gives a general survey of the literary history and background of the Icelanders. Naturally enough Icelandic

medieval literature takes up a great deal of space. The Icelanders who began writing narratives in the 13th century were the descendants of Norwegian immigrants who settled in an uninhabited country in the 9th and 10th centuries. And in fact the Icelandic Sagas deal with the settlement, the problems of the settlers and the way in which a society based on laws and rights came into being. The settlers brought with them not only their livestock and possessions, but also poems and stories. Neijmann describes how the special consciousness of Icelandic literature, with its pagan roots, survived and developed in spite of Christianization, the Reformation and other new cultural currents.

The second chapter, "The Search for Vinland the Good," traces the history of the Icelandic settlement in North America. There is an exposition of the Romantic movement in Europe and its special Icelandic variant. The story of the first emigrations and their causes is told and finally there is a description of the events leading up to the establishment of New Iceland in 1875.

In order to survive the migration from the old country and be able to justify the settlement in the new one, a certain mythic foundation is needed and in Neijmann's view three myths are most prominent in the early literature of the West Icelanders. The first one is historical in nature:

It is primarily concerned with the historical settlement of Iceland and the Norse discovery of the American continent. Its main claim is that the Icelanders have never lost their Viking spirit of proud independence, noble courage, and most important, what they term *útþrá* ... to reach beyond. (77)

The second myth is based on the geographical and social conditions in Iceland:

It suggests that the country's climate, its general tendency to natural disasters and its social inertia made life in Iceland intolerable. Those who strive for freedom and success, therefore, have no other choice than to leave Iceland. (78)

The third myth is extremely pronounced, both in the earliest Western Icelandic literature and in newspaper articles:

It is concerned with actions, rather than theoretical explanations, with any action, in fact, which serves to prove the worthiness of the West Icelanders as both Icelanders and Canadians... In short, West Icelanders must be portrayed as outstanding in both Iceland and Canada. (78)

In the third chapter Neijmann makes an assessment of the quality, extent and characteristics of the literature of the Icelandic immigrants in Canada. The truth is that its bulk was quite incredible relative to the number of the immigrants, which is best explained by the ancient literary tra-

dition the settlers brought with them. However, this literature is by no means all of equally high quality. In order to investigate the special Icelandic characteristics of this literature Neijmann selects the poets Stephan G. Stephansson, Kristján N. Júlíusson (Káinn) and Guttormur J. Guttormsson, and the prose writers Jóhann Magnús Bjarnason, Guðrún H. Finnsdóttir and Laura Goodman Salverson, who was the first of West Icelandic writer to publish extensively in English.

In the light of the three myths these poets and writers are naturally enough marked with different traits. Guttormur J. Guttormsson was, for example, not born in Iceland but in New Iceland, although his environment and cultural heritage were totally Icelandic. Of great interest is the study of the works of Laura Goodman Salverson and her struggle to gain recognition on an equal basis with native writers, i. e., those of Anglo-Saxon descent.

The objection might perhaps be made that more writers should have been included in order to get a broader view of special Icelandic characteristics, but that would have led to fruitless speculation. In the writing of traditional literary history choices will always have to be made, and these choices have to be based on the evaluation that those selected contribute in some way to the development of literature or are in some way representative. If we are to make some criticism of this part of the work it would perhaps mainly be that nearly all the examples from the works of the poets are in Icelandic. This must severely limit the usefulness of this excellent chapter for English speaking readers.

This lack of translations of Icelandic poetry actually leads one to reflect on the astonishing and lamentable fact that a selection in English of the poetry of Stephan G. Stephansson in verse does not exist; the only thing we have is some prose translations that are reminiscent of school versions.

The fourth chapter deals with the origin of Canadian literature as a literature with national characteristics. During the decades following the Second World War the descendants of the Icelandic immigrants stopped writing literature in Icelandic. The national identity of these people changed. They no longer considered themselves to be Western Icelanders but rather Icelandic Canadians. The special Icelandic thread spun from a long literary tradition with roots in pagan myths becomes extremely attenuated. However, there are still Canadian writers who derive strength directly from their Icelandic roots and preserve in their writings some of the characteristics that can be traced to their Icelandic origins and the Ice-

landic literary tradition. As examples of this Neijmann takes Kristjana Gunnars, David Arnason and Bill Valgardson. A thorough appraisal is made of their works and the conclusion is that

Icelandic-Canadian literature is a reality within the larger field of Canadian literature. While indeed the works have little in common with the western Icelandic tradition, and certainly cannot be considered a direct continuation of that tradition, there has developed an Icelandic-Canadian identity based on a common cultural heritage and immigrant past; it is expressed in their writings in a fully integrated way. (350-351)

In the fifth and last chapter Neijmann gives an account of the policies of the Canadian federal government, which are concerned is based on multiculturalism, although French and in particular English features are dominant. The main conclusion of the book is that

... Icelandic immigrants in Canada brought their literary heritage as their main cultural baggage. This heritage had been the major vehicle of popular cultural expression in Iceland over the centuries, and was firmly rooted in the Old Icelandic literature which reflected Iceland's own immigrant origins. (387)

This Icelandic cultural heritage has then been an asset for a few modern Canadian writers, especially the three mentioned above, Kristjana Gunnars, David Arnason and Bill Valgardson. For how long the Icelandic voice will be heard is, however, perhaps just a question of time, for:

Young writers of Icelandic-Canadian background, however, are returning to mainstream Canadian writing... Significantly, their most recent works show that Valgardson, Arnason and Gunnars are turning away as well from ethnic influences on their writing. (390)

*The Icelandic Voice in Canadian Letters* is an ambitious work. The author has set herself high standards of scholarship. It is based on the work of many years, and the author's knowledge of Icelandic, Western Icelandic and Canadian literature is admirable.

It is considered to be a fault if a reviewer has nothing but praise for the work reviewed. However, it is hard to find fault with Daisy Neijmann's extensive work. As stated above, her selection of authors for inclusion might be disputed, but in my opinion she has found the right way. A few errors, in themselves insignificant, have found their way into the text, e. g., in the description of the *dróttkvætt* and *hrynhent* meters on page 9, where it is stated that the *dróttkvætt* meter has six lines while the *hrynhent* has eight. Both meters have eight lines. The *dróttkvætt* has six syllables in each line, and the *hrynhent* eight. On page 10, one reads that Kvasir was killed by the dwarfs who collected his blood in a cauldron

and mixed it with mead. But in fact it was honey with which the rascally dwarfs mixed Kvasir's blood. The intoxicating brew that is made when honeyed liquid ferments is called mead. Both these slips should have been detected by those excellent Icelandic scholars who are thanked by Daisy Neijmann for having read through the text and "saved me from errors" (ix)!

**George C. Schoolfield.** *Helsinki of the Czars: Finland's Capital, 1808-1918.* Columbia, South Carolina: Camden House, 1996. 308 pages.

Reviewed by VARPU LINDSTRÖM  
York University, Toronto

Schoolfield's *Helsinki of the Czars* presents a lively, often whimsical, portrait of a city that grew from an inconspicuous merchant harbour into a "Neo-Classical showplace." In this "tribute" to Helsinki, Schoolfield, a respected literary historian and Professor Emeritus of Germanic languages and literatures of Yale University, shares his enthusiasm for the city, its architecture, arts, literature and multiculturalism. *Helsinki of the Czars* invites English speaking readers to share in the city's intrigues, divisions, hatreds and triumphs. It is the most comprehensive history of Helsinki available in English.

The most refreshing aspect of this book is its conscious insistence on viewing the city life of Helsinki from the perspective of a well-informed outsider. The readers' focus is directed to the foreign roots of virtually all of Helsinki's artists, architects, academics, industrialists, and other prominent citizens. Attention is also drawn to the strong Russian presence, to the tri-lingual (Swedish, Finnish, and Russian) street signs, and to the overwhelming influence of Swedish-speaking Finns in the city's economic, political and cultural development. Totally missing in this book is the rather ethnocentric glorification of Finnish-born, Finnish-speaking citizens of the city, which mars a good number of Finnish language texts. Perhaps the clearest example of this is Schoolfield's emphasis on the centrality of the role of the German troops in the liberation of Helsinki from the Red Guard in the Civil War of 1918. "They (the Helsinki White Guard) had their own plans for taking the city without German aid, a notion that would have made von der Golz (leader of the German forces) smile—later on, he said diplomatically that the White Guard was 'essential for the morale of the population.'"

This book goes to great length to bring out the importance of the Finland-Swedish as well as international influences in the history of Helsinki. Although not explicitly stated, it is easy to decipher from Schoolfield's often cynical and cryptic comments, that for him, the increasing Fennicization of the city made Helsinki a more homogeneous, but also a more intolerant and less hospitable place in which to live and work, particularly for great artists and visionaries. Intolerance, Schoolfield suggests, caused the exodus of such notables as architect Eliel Saarinen, who emigrated to America; Carl Gustaf Mannerheim, Commander-in-Chief of the White Guard who moved (temporarily) to Sweden from "the promised land of intrigue"; and "enormously wealthy" Hjalmar Linder who published a critical article "Red madness has been succeeded by White Terror" which "aroused such hatred against him that he left Finland forever; three years later, he killed himself in Marseille."

Schoolfield bases his view of Helsinki on extensive research, especially in the field of Finland-Swedish literary sources. He provides interesting remarks from diaries, letters and other private sources of prominent citizens of Helsinki. He includes anecdotal references and rumours to paint less than flattering portraits of some of his subjects. From a traditional historian's perspective, such practice can be questionable, but most readers will, no doubt, find it interesting and amusing. A more challenging aspect for the general reader will be to sift through the hundreds of place names given in Swedish and the equally numerous individuals introduced only fleetingly (despite the extensive glossary). As a companion reader for those uninitiated in Finland's history I would strongly recommend a general textbook on this subject which could situate the history of Helsinki in the overall context of the history of Finland and its neighbouring countries.

Schoolfield has an uncanny ability to make Helsinki (or Helsingfors as the city is referred to throughout the book) come alive for the reader. Some of its leading citizens and heroes are brought down to human scale. We laugh at their follies and commiserate with their misfortunes. Overwhelmingly the individuals to whom we are introduced are prominent *men*. Some attention is given to women entrepreneurs and "beauties," but far less to the rapidly growing women's rights organizations. Social issues such as poverty, prostitution and working class slums are viewed from a city planner's perspective. There is little attempt to research workers' diaries or letters or to include the latest Finnish language research on the social history of the city. Such sources would likely not corroborate

ers' diaries or letters or to include the latest Finnish language research on the social history of the city. Such sources would likely not corroborate the rather favourable impression of the city created by *Helsinki of the Czars*.

Like all authors, Schoolfield has made a conscious choice to concentrate on his strengths which are, by any standard, formidable. In his preface, the author openly acknowledges the influence of his Nordic literary research, more specifically the Swedish-language literature of Finland. He concedes that the book argues no thesis but was simply written because "he (the author) likes the place and its genius, and because he wishes to share his liking with others..." The strengths of this book reflect the author's preferences: The growth and development of the University of Helsinki and its academic life are described in detail; literary figures and the development of both a Finnish and a Swedish language press and theatre contain many meaningful insights; the language struggle between Swedish and Finnish speakers is described in its full acrimony; and the love-hate relationship which Finns had towards Russia (and its Czars) is depicted through the eyes of the press, students, administrators and politicians.

Overall, Schoolfield succeeds (despite his own modest claims) in presenting a lively history of the city of the Czars (Alexander I, Nicholas I, Alexander II, Alexander III and finally Nicholas II). In the hundred and ten years (1808-1918) covered, Schoolfield's Helsinki grew from a small town into a beautiful and well-planned cosmopolitan city. As the author promised in his preface, this book allows the reader to share in the "fascinating if episodic drama" of Helsinki-Helsingfors.

**Tuula Hökkä**, ed. *Naiskirja*. [A collection of essays about literature, feminist research, and culture]. Helsinki. KKL Series No. 8, 1996. 212 pages.

Reviewed by SEIJA PADDON

The closest English translation of the title of this collection of essays is *A Woman's Book*. Tuula Hökkä, the editor, situates the work within the joined disciplines of feminist and literary research. We learn that a need for study material in those fields prompted the birth of the collection. Hökkä considers Women's, Feminist, and Deconstructive Feminist Studies as separate entities in contrast to the Anglo-North American view that sees the latter as one of many subgroups within Feminist Studies.

More importantly, perhaps, the introduction tells us the essays "illustrate what is happening in Finnish women's literature, and how the phenomena serve to further progress in Women's Studies."

Before embarking on a commentary of specifics, I would like to begin by making a generalized assessment of the text as a welcome and noteworthy secondary source for Finnish Literature Studies in particular, and Finnish Studies generally, everywhere (on this continent as well as in Europe). There is a *caveat*, however. Readers accustomed to the English model of scholarly writing, one based on an expressed thesis and its support, will find that these essays which follow the German model, often take on what might best be characterized as a commentary mode. The lack of context in the sense of a specific, or should I say provable, authorial argument can, at first, be somewhat distracting to the unaccustomed. Moreover, stylistically, the frequent use of passive construction commonly found in the reporting of scientific or official information lends the writing a tone that occurs less in English language literary studies. What might puzzle the reader more, however, given the text's declared scholarly approach, is the fact that of its twelve essays, the leading essay is the only one written by a male, Vesa Haapala. The position of his essay might challenge one to ponder its symbolic or other value within the collection's avowed textual politics.

In fact, Haapala's essay is a model of masculine discourse with its at times rather tenuous link with its declared object of study, the poetry of Edith Södergran, its display of encyclopaedic knowledge, excessive end notes, and male authoritarian bibliography. Haapala's abundant use of secondary material however, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, for example, becomes challengeable when it wanders off the object of its study. To cite an example, when Haapala discusses the phenomenon of transubstantiation in connection with Södergran's *Vierge moderne*, more or less the only poem he explores, he overlooks the fact that the Reformation rejected the concept, and that there is a great variance among Protestants and their approaches to the dogma of transubstantiation. Ultimately Haapala's study can be seen to enrich the reader's intellectual "resources", but too often the connections with the actual poem are attenuated at best.

By contrast, and within the collection's declared aim or philosophy, the joint study of Päivi Karttunen and Päivi Molarius on the aspects of pleasure and nausea in women's literature of the 1990s is a well-conceived and interesting examination of a challenging topic. Their writing

casts a wide net from Jotuni to Kauranen and Lander. It explores what has long been the subject of women's study cross-culturally, the female conundrum—the *body female*. Sirpa Kivilaakso's essay on Anni Swan's fairy tale, *Death and a Girl*, in turn, probes the oedipal problematics in mother-daughter relationships in a way that invites the reader to rethink familiar readings from *Kalevala* to H. C. Andersen's fairytales.

While any review can at best be merely subjective, I am compelled to say that Pirjo Lyytikäinen's essay on the topic of metamorphoses in Leena Krohn's writing is an excellent example of contemporary literary scholarship. Whether we are reading it within a *postmodernist* or *new modernist* frame, her exploration of the "illusory" truth, the paradoxical impermanence of things and their significance in Krohn's writing in particular is a "must" read for anyone studying Finnish literature.

Tuula Hökkä has chosen as her focus the essayist, Sinikka Kallio-Visapää. This remarkable woman who began her career as an art critic, and whose oeuvre includes poetry, prose, and essays, draws on influences from a large circle of human cultural achievements. Hökkä's explorations bring to light many arresting ideas, among them the question whether Kallio-Visapää's continentalism and her Germanic leanings in cultural politics might not have been untimely; similarly, one might ponder whether the fact that she was a woman with a decidedly independent mind might not have gone against the tenor of her times. Hostility towards elements of 'continentalism' and internationalism in some quarters has not, of course, been merely a 1950s phenomenon. Some of us would deem them to be timeless and persisting on a varying scale among chauvinistic critics everywhere. Be that as it may, for anyone interested in multi-talented Kallio-Visapää and modernism, in both European and Finnish contexts, Hökkä's thoroughly researched essay will prove to be indispensable reading.

The remaining seven essays would also deserve special mention as noteworthy contributions to Finnish Studies, but within the frame of this review, suffice it to say that Tiina Sinisalo's treatment of Mariaana Jäntti's *Amorfiaana*, an exceptionally difficult novel to interpret, deserves to be singled out as a significant scholarly analysis of its language. On reflection, it is not an exaggeration to say that the collection as a whole has more than met its aim to provide much needed secondary sources within its specified fields of study, something that by no means is an inevitable outcome of all such projects.

**Elinor Barr.** *The Scandinavian Home Society, 1923–1993: A Place to Meet, a Place to Eat.* Thunder Bay: Singing Shield Productions, 1996. 200 pages.

Reviewed by J. DONALD WILSON  
*University of British Columbia*

For its size, Thunder Bay has a large number of amateur historians. Many of them gather for regular meetings of the Thunder Bay Historical and Museum Society which produces an annual report. Thunder Bay also has a number of very active ethno-cultural organizations and community centres, such as those operated by Italian, Croatian, Polish and Finnish-Canadians. In the north end of the city (the former Port Arthur), there is in fact a concentration of such centres in the Bay and Algoma business district, commonly referred to by locals as "Finntown". There within a stone's throw of each other can be found an Italian Hall, the large Finlandia Club (and Hoito Restaurant) and the Scandinavian Home Society (also with a restaurant). The last mentioned is the topic of Elinor Barr's appealing book.

As a former resident of Thunder Bay in the early seventies, I approached this book with a great deal of fascination. My interest, though, was prodded by the fact that the author was a student of mine in History at Lakehead University over twenty years ago. I can say at the outset that Elinor Barr has done a very commendable job in compiling this history from a variety of primary sources, but primarily the minutes and other records of the Scandinavian Home Society (SHS). This venture has obviously been a labour of love on her part, but she generously acknowledges the assistance of many others in Thunder Bay's Scandinavian community who helped with data collection and translation. The history of Thunder Bay's Finns has benefited greatly from the work of people like Chris Kouhi, Ahti Tolvanen and Marc Metsaranta, the Italians by historians like Tony Pucci and John Potestio, and working-class immigrants generally by the work of Jean Morrison and Ernest Epp. But until Elinor Barr became involved the history of Scandinavians in Thunder Bay was little known. Her personal effort at preserving this heritage and now recording it deserves great credit.

Founded in 1923 the Scandinavian Home Society was a meeting and eating place for young Scandinavian immigrants, mostly men who came to Northwestern Ontario seeking their fortune from Sweden, Finland (Swede-Finns), Norway, and Denmark. The society, and after 1926 its building, provided a place for such immigrants to gather and play

cards (poker) or chess, read a book in the library of several hundred volumes, join a drama, literary or singing group, or simply enjoy a cheap and wholesome meal in the restaurant on the ground floor. Such a gathering place provided a welcome haven in a strange land after a hard day's work or a spell in the woods.

Drawing freely from the SHS's minutes, the author is very good on the day-to-day operation of the Society. She carefully traces the ebb and flow of the Society's fortunes over a seventy-year period. We learn a great deal about the SHS leadership—all men—and particularly the founding president Oscar Johnson (to whom the book is dedicated) who served from 1923 until his death by accident in 1940. Owner of the Central Tent and Awning Works, he also served for many years as vice-consul for Sweden. By contrast, another SHS president (from 1950–52) and longtime member of the Board of Directors was Einar Nordström, a Swede-Finn who worked as a milkman and later ran a bookshop and music store. A member of the Communist Party, Nordström was a prominent radical and peace activist in Thunder Bay in the 1960s and 70s. Yet, Barr makes nothing of the fact that this organization could elect as its president individuals so widely divergent politically as Johnson and Nordström. In fact, another prominent Communist and frequent electoral candidate for the Party in Thunder Bay, Bruce Magnuson, also belonged to SHS and served as treasurer in the late fifties. That the society's membership encompassed people from both the left and the right politically stands in sharp contrast to other ethno-cultural groups in Thunder Bay such as the Finns and Ukrainians who had very distinct politically divided organizations that would have nothing to do with each other. Barr tells us the Society's constitution made explicit that "members have the right to discuss questions of a political, economic as well as a social nature. However, no religious questions are to be dealt with..." but leaves it at that. Interestingly, the Society's first subscription was to a Communist newspaper *Ny Tid* (New Time) and another early subscription was to *Arbetaren* (The Worker), a paper faithful to the Socialist Labor Party of the United States. Later, the Society subscribed to *Frihet* (Freedom) published in Winnipeg by the radical Scandinavian Workers and Farmers League, to which, incidentally, Einar Nordström belonged. Barr does state that Eric Lindberg, manager of the restaurant from 1941 to 1959, "feared a Communist takeover when he was manager" (p. 131), but she buries this in a footnote. Clearly, the author has no interest in pursuing these matters, but prefers instead to recount the more pedestrian aspects of the operation of the Society and the restaurant which was intended to

provide income for the Society. All that Barr will concede is a simple assertion that "the Society itself championed no particular cause" (p. 37).

Throughout its history, the SHS has been "a place to meet, a place to eat," as the book's sub-title suggests. In that respect, it resembled a number of other ethno-cultural organizations nearby, such as the Finlandia Club and the Italian Community Centre. But Depression difficulties (loans had to be taken out to remain viable) and not wanting to be considered "foreign" during World War II challenged the overall objective of preserving Scandinavian culture. In the fifties and sixties, only a few immigrants from Scandinavia arrived in Thunder Bay to help renew the immigrant culture. Consequently, it is not surprising that from 1963 the SHS minutes, previously written in Swedish, were written in English. Similarly, a 1980 photograph of the kitchen staff (p. 96) reveals two of the four staff members with non-Scandinavian surnames. From 1989, however, a reorganization of the Society and the restaurant led by people like Carl Westerback and Elinor Barr herself has put the organization on a new and sound footing with bright prospects for the future.

Although Barr is a careful historical researcher a few historical errors jump out. For example, Canada declared war on Germany on September 10, not September 4, 1939. Unemployment insurance was introduced in 1940, not 1942. But on the plus side, the book contains a good map, and is copiously illustrated along with clear and informative captions. Barr even tells us the present-day use of some of the buildings in the historical illustrations. The 150 "Immigrant Profiles" are a tribute to the author's historical detective work. Overall, this is a good publication, carefully designed, and one the publisher can be proud of. Other ethno-cultural groups in Thunder Bay and elsewhere would do well to follow the model provided by this book.



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