

A Tribute to a Great Author

Ulrika Gustafsson. *Världsbild under sammanställning. Individ, ensamhet och gemenskap i Ulla-Lena Lundbergs författarskap*. Åbo: Åbo Akademis förlag 2007. 260 p. (*Worldview under assemblage. The individual, solitude and community in Ulla-Lena Lundberg's writings.*)

Ulla-Lena Lundberg is a beloved Finland-Swedish writer, whose novels have been translated into Finnish, Danish, Russian, Dutch and German. Fragments of her novels have also been translated into English, in *Contemporary Finland-Swedish Fiction* (2005, ed. S. Death). Lundberg has twice been nominated for the Finlandia prize, the most respected literary prize in Finland. In many of her novels Lundberg depicts life in Åland and in Swedish-speaking Finland. Three of her novels describe Åland's development from the beginning of 19th century until the 1990s in the form of a family chronicle. According to Gustafsson, Lundberg shows how Finnish society – and Åland in particular – has developed from what Ferdinand Tönnies has called *Gemeinschaft* to the more individualistic *Gesellschaft*. Lundberg has also written novels that take place in the United States and Africa and two documentary books about Siberia and Japan.

Ulrika Gustafsson's dissertation analyses the thematics of Ulla-Lena Lundberg's oeuvre. In Gustafsson's interpreta-

tion Lundberg ponders the shortcomings of individualism in all of her works. Africa and historical Åland provide Lundberg with a model for another kind of subjectivity, a model that takes community and the human race as a whole to be more important than the individual.

Gustafsson relies on Felicity Nussbaum's ideas about the individual as an intersection where different discourses about subjectivity meet. In Lundberg's oeuvre most of the protagonists live in individualistic Western culture, but by traveling into foreign places and continents or investigating history they become familiar with optional discourses about subjectivity. Especially Africa is depicted as continent where people still live in *Gemeinschaft*.

Gustafsson uses two keywords for her study: worldview and subjectivity. The terms are intertwined as a certain worldview allows only certain kinds of subjectivities to be realised, and vice versa, an individualistic subject cannot altogether resign from her/his worldview that has an individual at its centre. Autobiography is a genre for which the concept of an autonomous subject is essential. That is why Lundberg's documentary book *Sibirien – ett självporträtt med vingar* (Siberia - A self portrait with wings) is of special interest for Gustafsson. The first part of Gustafsson's study is dedicated to an analysis of *Sibirien* against Philippe Lejeune's famous concept of autobiographical pact. The book has some of the key elements Lejeune requires for an autobiography,

for example, the identity of names of the author and the protagonist. But the most important element, the individualistic subject, seems to be missing in *Sibirien*.

Sibirien is about a group of bird-watchers who travels to Siberia. In the beginning Lundberg states that the book is a 'kind of autobiography'. However, the narrator depicts herself very seldom; instead she admires and wonders Siberian nature and its birds, and comments on and compares the history and the present of Russia. If the reader is to find Lundberg's authentic self from the text, s/he has to admit that this autobiography's subject can only be found as some kind of mirror-image of another people and nature. To explain *Sibirien's* divergences from the law of the genre, Gustafsson uses Caren Kaplan's theory about outlaw autobiography. An outlaw autobiography purposely rejects the traditional rules of autobiography and revises the subject of autobiography. Thus Lundberg's self portrait, where the self is hidden between the lines, can be seen as a critical comment about the autonomous subject of traditional autobiography.

The second part of Gustafsson's dissertation analyses the thematics of Lundberg's novels. The anti-individualism of Lundberg's oeuvre is the focal point of the analysis. Individualistic ideology serves people only as long as they are happy, asserts Lundberg in her novels according to Gustafsson. In Lundberg's novels women see love as an important part of their image of the good life. In Gustafsson's read-

ing romantic love between two people is the last what remains of supportive community. When it collapses the individual woman feels abandoned and miserable, completely on her own. Death can then be more tempting than solitude. In order to be able to live on, Lundberg's protagonists have to compensate for lost love. It could be bird-watching, or, more symbolically, relating an epic narrative, where the subject is positioned as only one link in the chain of generations.

The third part of the study is about Lundberg's author-figure based on her oeuvre and her own comments about her authorship. Also the person behind the works is briefly commented on in connection with the Lejeunian concept of 'autobiographical space'. Autobiographical space is created through *Sibirien* read as an autobiography which shares its thematics with Lundberg's other works. Autobiographical space, where the different works of Lundberg meet, is used as a kind of evidence that proves that Lundberg's oeuvre is coherent and whole. The only problem is that *Sibirien* does not work as a traditional autobiography. According to Gustafsson almost no critics have read it as an autobiography. It was interpreted rather as a travel journal, or just a documentary work about Siberia, or as a non-fiction novel.

Sibirien really is a genre outlaw: it is not mentioned nor in either Lea Rojola's or Anna Kuismin's (former Makkonen) articles about the autobiographical 'boom' in Finland at the end of the 20th

century. Quite a number of books Rojola and Kuismin mention were written at the margins of autobiography, as *Sibirien*. Gustafsson persists to read *Sibirien* as an autobiography and ignores more obvious genres. This can irritate some readers – it made me eager to resist Gustafsson’s ideas. She could have condensed and re-arranged the first part of the study: it would have sufficed to briefly show *Sibirien*’s inlaw qualities as an autobiography and then analyse more thoroughly how exactly it is an outlaw autobiography.

I also would have hoped for a more detailed contextualisation of the main terms Gustafsson uses. Subjectivity, individualism, identity and community are widely discussed topics. Lundberg is not the only critic of individualism in the West. To realise this one has only to read Lundberg’s early novels that tell about young socialists in the USA and Europe in the 1960s. Gustafsson’s thematic analysis of Lundberg’s fiction relies on a couple of key works by Tönnies and Bauman. This makes the analysis logical but, on the other hand, it simplifies the interpretations.

The other side of Gustafsson’s sharp focus is that the reader hears the researcher’s own voice instead of hearing only echoes of the former theories. The variety of discourses about subjectivity and individuality could have lead Gustafsson to lose her vision altogether, if she had decided to map the discourses thoroughly. Now the dissertation elaborates fluently the main themes of Lundberg’s oeuvre.

Lundberg is portrayed as an intellectual, ethical writer. Gustafsson’s essayist style makes the book a pleasure to read, and I am sure that Gustafsson’s book encourages people to read Lundberg’s books – if they ever get a copy of it in their hands. Hopefully, someone will also continue to develop the ideas that Gustafsson has opened with her dissertation.

Päivi Koivisto

The Golden Days of Everyday Life in Finnish Literature

Riikka Rossi: *Le naturalisme Finlandais. Une conception entropique du quotidien*. Helsinki: Société de littérature finlandaise 2007. 254 p.

Riikka Rossi's doctoral dissertation *Le naturalisme Finlandais. Une conception entropique du quotidien* challenges the historiography of Finnish literature of the late 19th century in many ways. She disputes the claim that naturalism has not been a significant trend in Finnish literature and that even if there are some literary works, which in a remote way can be thought as naturalistic, naturalism has only been a small sub-plot with no real importance. In contrast, Rossi sees the years 1885-1895 as a golden period of Finnish naturalism. Rossi's research is not the first to raise the idea and possibility of the existence of Finnish naturalism, as there have been some articles and a few stray analyses of single works in the context of naturalism. Nonetheless, Rossi is the first to make a historiographical argument about Finnish naturalism.

Rossi has not done any 'archaeological' work to find forgotten novels that could perhaps be assigned the 'naturalism' label. Instead, she re-reads many novels that are usually regarded as representatives of literary realism as naturalistic novels *par excellence*. Among the best known earlier realistic, and yet now naturalistic authors are, for example, Minna Canth, Juhani

Aho, K. A. Tavaststjerna and Teuvo Pakkala. In addition to these, however, Rossi also brings up some less-known novels such as Kauppi-Heikki's *Kirottua työtä*. It is furthermore noteworthy that some Swedish-speaking authors are included in addition to the usually mentioned Tavaststjerna. For example, Rossi analyses Ina Lange's *Luba* and "*Sämre folk*", works that are perhaps best known only by feminist critics in Finland.

Besides claiming the non-existence of naturalism in Finnish literature, Rossi challenges another 'common story' about our late 19th century literature. This story emphasizes the influence of the literature of other Nordic countries with a pinch of a Russian flavour. The traces of this story lead to George Brandes, who constantly stressed the "autonomous" status of Nordic literature. In Rossi's view, this story is strongly reduced and reveals the political, social, and aesthetic interests behind the literary historiography. This is disclosed, among other ways, by the repetitive nature of this story: Brandes' followers have never even begun to question his arguments. Instead, the story is repeated all over again until today.

According to Rossi, the most stimulating effect on Finnish naturalism came from French literature. To convince her audience of the French influence, Rossi has included a great number of French novels in her dissertation and this leads, inevitably, to a comparison between the Finnish and French texts which at times can be quite mechanical (as comparisons

often tend to be). Regardless, she is able to show and to place emphasis on the fact that even a fixed (at least in our minds) concept such as 'French naturalism' is not a singular one, but, instead, speaks with many voices. Furthermore, this has consequences for the definition of naturalism in general, on the one hand, and particularly for Finnish naturalism on the other.

Rossi's definition of naturalism is strongly based on David Baguley's study *Naturalist Fiction. The Entropic Vision* (1990). The concept of entropy, as the book's title suggests, is of utmost importance for the definition, because the starting point of all naturalistic literature is the tension between the characteristic of stability and instability in entropy. In addition to this, for Rossi, naturalism is not just a literary style but first and foremost a genre. This is quite a new idea, at least in Finland, but it can be explained through Rossi's definition of genre. According to her, the traditional definitions of genre (be it those of Fowler, Todorov, Genette etc.) are problematic in the sense that they all remain strictly within the literary sphere.

Rossi's desire, on the other hand, is to understand literary genres more contextually. For this purpose, she turns – in my mind very wisely so – to Bakhtin; although Bakhtin's genre is by no means a clear and fixed concept. Nonetheless, Bakhtin's schema certainly assists in contextualizing the genre theory. For Bakhtin, a literary genre always represents some kind of an 'answer' to the problems of its time

or it permits to handle social problems of its time. It is indeed interesting that literary scholars have not paid very much attention to Bakhtin's theory of genre. This is probably because he has not presented his theory in an explicit and coherent way. The theory of genres is, however, implicitly present in many of Bakhtin's writings. For Rossi, the key bakhtinian concept for genre is the chronotope and this concept makes genre a 'worldly' matter.

According to Rossi, naturalism's chronotope is 'the everyday' and especially the everyday as something trivial and banal. These are also the keywords in the notion of the aesthetics of naturalism. Hence, the characters in naturalistic novels are never exceptional persons as is often the case in realistic novels. Gray is the colour of naturalism and the colour spreads all over in the texts, even setting the form of a naturalistic novel.

With the concept of the everyday, Rossi's research becomes very up-to-date: it seems as though 'the everyday' is everywhere in the humanities nowadays. In addition, the concept of the everyday has everything to do with Rossi's argument that naturalism refuses to accept total determinism and a pessimistic worldview. As is well known, the accusations of being deterministic and even nihilistic were the reasons why naturalism was rejected in the official stories of Finnish literature. Rossi goes strongly against this and claims that because of the chronotope of the everyday, a "democratic overtone" enters the novels in question. In depicting

the everyday life, naturalism is concerned with the 'ordinary', and through this, the naturalistic worldview has the intention of helping to make the world a better place for those ordinary people who have not been so lucky in life's lottery.

According to Rossi, the idea of progress is, in a word, inscribed through the chronotope of the everyday in naturalist novels. This is a very common idea among the scholars of the everyday. Among scholars, discussions of the everyday are guided, or claim to be, by a democratic impulse. This is especially true in the accounts of Lefebvres and Heller, both of which have been important to Rossi's concept of the everyday. Behind this arrangement is the idea that, by representing the everyday, it is possible to encourage people to look more closely at their social environment and, consequently, that this will effectively contribute to an increase in social consciousness. Rossi does not refer to the heated debates that have been going on around the concept of the everyday, nor to the concept's long history. However, the concept is far from agreed upon. Some important scholars in the field have given up the concept all together and are using an alternative, life-world, in order to be released from the paradox that is inscribed in the concept of the everyday; namely, that the very 'everydayness' of the everyday must be overcome for its radical potential to be realized. This paradox also enters into Rossi's dissertation: due to the fact that her everyday is, after all, quite exceptional and shocking in many ways.

The idea of social progress might have been the intention of naturalist authors but this does not automatically mean that the novels are engaged in progression. Sticking to the idea of social resistance through everyday depiction becomes problematic when looking at Rossi's analyses of the novels. She finds three kinds of naturalistic entropies in Finnish literature. Tragic entropy prevails in novels where innocent and often naïve characters are at the mercy of circumstances. In static entropy, the melancholic tone is dominant, no hope can be seen in the future, and the main theme of these novels is usually connected to loneliness.

Dynamic entropy is the most ambivalent one of the three. This is partly because the protagonist, in these novels, is usually a woman. To my mind, this is the only type of the three entropies in which social resistance can even be thought to appear. Indeed, there are often misogynistic features in these novels; in the sense that the woman's body is to blame for every disastrous event that occurs. As the demonized woman's body originated in the scientific discourses of the time, Rossi mentions briefly this scientific project's gendered nature and its consequences for literary naturalism. This scientific project, similarly to that of Zola, really is a masculine project set up to investigate dirty and sexual women in order to reveal their secrets. However, Rossi, with reason, also points out that dynamic entropy is very ambivalent: the model permits women to often be the agents of their own lives, not

just passively awaiting what happens but, rather, actively affecting their own fate.

Although the French influence has been strong in our literature and Rossi's research clearly and brilliantly shows this, there are some major differences between the countries and this could have been emphasized and pondered over even more. It is quite interesting that, according to Rossi, women seem to be the torchbearers of 'the new' in Finland during the late 19th century. The most important naturalistic writers in Finland are indeed female authors. Some scholars have argued, for instance, that Gerhart Hauptman is the pioneer of the working-class drama in Europe. Rossi shows that the credit is due to Minna Canth; however, she does not reflect very much on why women became so important in Finnish (and Nordic) naturalism. I would connect this to the concept of the everyday. Everyday life is weighted down with layers of meanings and associations, and one of these associations is, of course, gender. Women *have been* and *still are* persistently linked to everyday life.

There is also another important difference between Finnish and French literature and this has to do with class. Although Pakkala's *Vaaralla* and *Elsa* can be seen as representatives of a 'social' naturalism à la Zola, the question of class is far more important in the Finnish novels than in those of Zola, in which the emphasis is put on theories of heredity.

Rossi's dissertation is written in French. The solution is in some sense un-

derstandable because French literature has so strong a presence in the research. Yet, at the same time, it is a pity, because I think many Finnish scholars will not have access to the important arguments about Finnish literature and its history that Rossi presents in her book. The idea of an implied French reader is obvious. This becomes clear from, among other sources, the description of the Finnish context at the end of the 19th century. This is to say that, although the situation in Finnish political and social life and the nationalistic debates and discourses that circulated around in those years are very important for the birth of naturalism, Rossi's description of the context brings nothing new for Finnish scholars except, perhaps, that they partly explain why naturalism was rejected as a distasteful literary mode in Finland.

Earlier investigations about realism, symbolism and decadence, both in the late 19th and early 20th century, have shown how the eagerness to emphasize the nationally 'autonomous' nature of Finnish literature in early literary histories drew a veil before many essential features of our literature. Riikka Rossi's dissertation provides the overall picture of Finnish literature at the turn of the century with important perspectives on naturalism and, furthermore, invites us all to discuss and debate this rich and multi-faceted period of Finnish literature.

Lea Rojola

Voices on Finnish Feminist Literature and Research

Women's Voices. Female Authors and Feminist Criticism in the Finnish Literary Tradition. Ed. Päivi Lappalainen & Lea Rojola, Studia Fennica Litteraria. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2007.

This year we celebrate the 200-year anniversary of Fredrika Runeberg (1807-1879) – one of the first female novelists in Finland. She has been commemorated in many ways – for example, with seminars and through the publication of books on and critical editions of her writing. Since Runeberg is not only seen as one of the foremothers of Finnish literature, but also holds an almost sacred position in the history of Finnish literary feminism, one way to celebrate her is to turn the gaze to her literary and feminist followers. In the book *Women's Voices. Female Authors and Feminist Criticism in the Finnish Literary Tradition* we are presented with Finnish women's literature from 1840 to this day. The book is edited by Päivi Lappalainen and Lea Rojola and it consists of an introduction, eight articles on Finnish women's literature and two articles on Finnish feminist research in art history and musicology.

Päivi Lappalainen and Lea Rojola describe the aim of *Women's Voices* to be two-fold. Through the collection they wish to, on the one hand, present the reader Finnish women's writing and, on the other

hand, introduce the ways in which Finnish researchers have made use of feminist literary theory. In their introduction the editors give a brief history of Finnish women's literature and feminist research – a map by which the reader can navigate through the collection of rather different essays. Both the map and the book as a whole fill a gap in English-language publications on Finnish literature.

The collection is composed in a classic, chronological manner. We start in the "beginning" – in the 19th century with two articles by Kati Launis and Päivi Lappalainen. In her article Kati Launis discusses the novel *En qvinna af vår tid. Karaktersteckning af Stella* (A Woman of Our Time: A Character Sketch by Stella, 1867) by the writer Marie Linder (1840-1870). From Launis' analysis of the Gothic elements and the liberal ideas of Linder's novel, we turn to the naturalist stream in women's fiction. Päivi Lappalainen asks in her article why Minna Canth (1844-1897) in *Kauppa-Lopo* (Lopo the Peddler, 1889) and Ina Lange (1846-1930) in "*Sämre folk*" ("The Worst Sort of People", 1885) made use of naturalism, a mode of writing which has been seen to objectify and exploit women. Both Launis and Lappalainen address the connection between gender and genre/mode of writing and in their analyses they show how the choice of genre could function as a strategy for female writers in the 19th century to reject the romance plot.

The question of genre and gender is also central in Kukku Melkas' reading of

the “Surmaava Eros” (“Eros the Slayer”) Trilogy – three independent novels written in the 1920s by the Finnish-Estonian novelist Aino Kallas (1878-1956). In her reading Melkas discusses the relationship between gender, the choice of genre and the power of knowledge production. Melkas’ article is followed chronologically by Leena Kirstinäs’ article on the poet Eira Stenberg (b. 1943) and by three articles on contemporary literature written by Lea Rojola, Viola Parente-Čapková and Liisi Huhtala. Whereas Parente-Čapková and Huhtala turn their gaze on classical questions of feminist and women’s fiction – the relationship between mothers and daughters and the question of shame, corporeality and sexuality – Rojola discusses the postmodern play with authorship and identity in the novels by Pirkko Saisio (b. 1949) written under the pseudonym of Eva Wein. In her text Rojola shows how Saisio’s narrative technique reveals the constructiveness of categories such as gender, ethnicity and sexuality. The question of the relationship between ethnicity and gender is also addressed in the historically and culturally contextualised exposé of Sámi women’s literature by Vuokko Hirvonen. The book concludes with two articles on feminist research on art and music written by Tutta Palin and Taru Leppänen.

The aim of the book, as articulated by Lappalainen and Rojola, is by no means uncomplicated and the editors themselves are the first ones to point that out. Even if the collection can only offer a limited

view of Finnish feminist literary research and literature, it is still tempting to pursue the question of criteria and selection a bit further. What kind of literature and research is included in this collection?

In their introduction the editors note that feminist research has, since the nineties, become more pluralistic and more aware of the differences among women. This is illustrated throughout the book by, for example, multiple theoretical approaches and through the inclusion of the article on Sámi literature. Lesbian studies and themes are also mentioned and addressed, but still I find a few themes missing that easily could have been included in the introduction.

One missing link is a discussion on the development of Finnish feminist literary research during the last 15 years. Where do we stand today and how has our way of understanding power, gender, identity and narrative changed through, for example, the inclusion of queer, post-colonial and intersectional perspectives in the field of feminist literary research? We find these theoretical perspectives partly in, for example, Lea Rojola’s aesthetically and intellectually engaging article, but these ongoing theoretical negotiations could have been mentioned also in the introduction. Furthermore, if the purpose of the book is to introduce Finnish feminist literature and research, then a more detailed discussion of Finnish history and the women’s movement would have been informative. Especially the question of language remains open and the collection

fails to bridge the language gap particular in terms of Finnish literary history. Even though many Swedish speaking writers of the 19th century and some researchers of the Second wave feminism are mentioned in the collection, the more recent research and literature written in Swedish during the 20th and 21st century are ignored.

Having said that I wish to end the review by underlining the importance of this insightful and exciting book. A book on Finnish feminist writing in English has long been needed and this collection not only fills an empty space, but also does so elegantly.

Rita Paqvalén

A Spectrum of Voices and Otherness

Toiset ambivalentit äänet. Essays in Feminine Poetics in Nordic Countries. Ed. Tuula Hökkä. Helsinki: nTamo, 2007. 207 pages.

Nordic female poets and poetics in the context of Modernism, speaking English, Norwegian, Estonian and Finnish... In the anthology *Toiset ambivalentit äänet (Other Ambivalent Voices)*, six female scholars from three different countries introduce poets of their native countries. According to the editor Tuula Hökkä, the idea behind the book can be traced many years back. The scholarly discussions on modernist poetics started in the 1980s. Recently, several seminars and meetings have been held, for instance, in Oslo and Helsinki. Despite the cross-national cooperation and multilingual approach, the book project has not received any funding.

The modest preface leaves room for the essays, for several independent voices. The essays are few, but quite long and comprehensive. The opening article by the Norwegian scholar Unni Langås serves as an "Introduction" to Eldrid Lunden's (1968–2000) poetry for readers who are not so familiar with this contemporary poet. According to Langås, Lunden always speaks in a female voice and includes other women's voices in her poetry. Lunden uses these different voices to embrace several social contexts.

The other Norwegian scholar, Sissel Furuseth, examines Gunvor Hofmo's (1921–1995) oeuvre and its relations to Expressionism. Furuseth employs the concept “the poetics of shame” and shows the expressions it takes in Hofmo's poems, on both formal and thematic levels; she describes how shame is both historical and private. She makes comparisons by pointing out connections between Hofmo's poetics and Edith Södergran's poetry, for example.

The Estonian scholars, Ele Süvalep and Auli Auväärt, explore two Estonian poets, Betti Alver (1906–1989) and Debora Vaarandi (1916–2007). In Estonian literary history, Alver's work belongs to more than one literary current. According to Süvalep, one of the main features in Alver's poems is her exceptional imagery and its change towards “self-mythology”. Süvalep emphasises Alver as a European poet belonging to the occidental cultural sphere. However, Süvalep also refers to the influences of oriental culture on Alver's poems. In this connection, she mentions Jaan Kaplinski and Viivi Luik. But how close is Alver's “self-mythological imagery” to these successors? Like Alver, Debora Vaarandi reflects the development of Estonian literary history in her poetry. In effect, Auväärt discusses the societal and political aspects in Vaarandi's poetry. Somewhat surprisingly, only Auväärt's article is included in both Estonian and English.

Finnish literature and scholars are also present in the anthology. Tuula Hökkä

continues her analyses of the oeuvre of Eeva-Liisa Manner (1921–1995). She reveals the poet's attitudes towards the world and writing and their representations. Hökkä's article is comprehensive in many respects, but her observations concerning eastern – particularly classical Chinese – literature remain inadequate. This is characteristic of the Finnish literary discussion on Modernism.

Last but not least, Anna Hollsten discusses Finnish children's literature by analysing four well-chosen examples. She explores how the aesthetic dimensions make children's books ambivalent texts. From this perspective, Hollsten sets the female authors Iris Kähäri, Marjatta Kurenniemi, Aila Meriluoto and Kirsi Kunnas against the background of the modernist poetic canon.

By recognising multiple conflicting and mixed, but also parallel and complementary voices, *Toiset ambivalentit äänet* presents poetic phenomena like free verse and ekphrasis. In addition, it covers several philosophical, rhetorical and theoretical as well as historical and cultural aspects. As a result, the anthology offers a spectrum of Nordic modernist otherness in the 20th century.

Tuulia Toivanen