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Writing at Borders

Edited by

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## ***Culture Unbound, Extraction from Volume 6, 2014***

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## Preface: Writing at Borders

By Tuulikki Kurki, Saija Kaskinen, Kirsi Laurén & Mari Ristolainen

This special issue is produced within an Academy of Finland funded research project *Writing Cultures and Traditions at Borders* (2010–2014) that has examined writing practices, texts, and amateur and professional writers in the Finland–Russia and Estonia–Russia borderlands. The aim has been to give voice to those people whose perceptions of the borders and borderlands have often been neglected within institutionalised and dominant scholarly and artistic discourses. The research project has focused on the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, and examines writing practices on the borderlands in their societal and historical contexts. Furthermore, the research has recognized the national borderlands as areas home to unique forms of writing cultures.

In this special issue, the practices of writing at borders are presented in an introductory article and four different article pairs. The introductory article written by the *Writing Cultures and Traditions at Borders* research project leader Tuulikki Kurki (University of Eastern Finland), claims that cultural studies and the humanist point of view has significant explanatory potential concerning the various borders and border crossings addressed in multidisciplinary border studies. Cultural and human understandings of borders and border crossings grow on one hand from the research of ethnographic particularities, and of the universal and culturally expressed human experiences of borders and border crossings on the other.

The first article pair examines territory-making and linguistic spaces relating to borders. *Tiiu Jaago* (University of Tartu) observes how Estonians have described political changes, especially the establishment of the Soviet rule in Estonia in the 1940s, in their autobiographical narratives. In the narratives, the relationship between the borders of Estonian territory, the borders of cultural space, and state borders are analyzed with the concepts of ‘continuity’ and ‘discontinuity’. Jaago claims that the entangled interplay of territorial, political and cultural borders reveals the polysemic and ambivalent nature of the concept of ‘border’. She argues that ideas of borders are constructed by three factors: the narrator’s experience of political change in Estonia, the method of narration, and the interpretation of the autobiographical narratives. *Tuulikki Kurki* (University of Eastern Finland) focuses on the construction of a non-Russian language space on the Soviet side of the Russian-Finnish national borderland from the 1940s until the 1970s. The article claims that the non-Russian language space and the national border differ from the official decrees dictated by Moscow, as can be determined from literature stemming from the late 1950s and early 1960s. She claims that the non-Russian language space and

border gradually became more multi-voiced, ambivalent and controversial, and that this subsequently influenced the identity construction of the borderland people.

The following article pair focuses on border crossers and crossovers that are represented in travel narratives and stories. However, both studies discuss texts that are written beyond the official corpus of travel literature in Finland. *Kirsi Laurén* (University of Eastern Finland) analyses the personal written narratives of Finnish tourists who travelled across the sea from Finland to Soviet Estonia during the period of 1965–1991. She uses the concept of “otherness” as an analytical tool when studying the travellers’ experiences of border crossings and cultural encounters. The article concentrates on travellers’ relations and conceptions of Soviet Estonia and their descriptions of facing otherness during their travels. *Kirsti Salmi-Niklander* (University of Helsinki) focuses on border crossings in travel stories in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The analysis is based on the methodological discussion of small stories and personal experience narratives that can be defined as “local event narratives”. The emphasis is on the aspects of time and space in the travel stories which often demarcate the boundaries of class and gender.

In the third article pair, the concept of border appears in contemporary national and political ideologies, and in people’s direct human experiences of the border. In her article, *Thekla Musäus* (Greifswald University) concentrates on Soviet Communism and Finnish Panfennism, and their influence on both the concrete national border and on more symbolically defined immaterial borders. The most important example of the latter concept are the so called ‘heroic borders.’ Heroic borders illustrate Soviet and Finnish nationalist ambitions which are often motivated by nations’ ideological ambitions. Using rhetorical analysis of the contemporary texts, Thekla Musäus shows how the evolution of international borders and expansionist ideologies complicates the ways in which ethnic, political, cultural and religious boundaries intersect and cross-cut each other. In *Saija Kaskinen’s* (University of Eastern Finland) article, the Finnish-Russian national border is examined utilizing a hybrid methodology. In it, she gives an example of one type of process in which the national border can be seen to become hybrid. The hybridization process of the national border is followed through various individual experiences (hybrid environments) that people have had about the border. In her article, she calls attention to the social and cultural realities that form different levels of hybridity, and which in turn, are embedded in the national border. These levels of hybridity are related to each other in complex ways that illustrate the nature of the national border as an entity of accommodation, resistance and change.

The final two articles focus on dislocated and symbolic borders that may appear as either conceptual or abstract. Dislocation of borders is examined in the constructs of both metaphorical writing and in communication at ‘borders’. In her article, *Mari Ristolainen* (University of Eastern Finland) discusses the figurative construction of Russian national borders and the symbolic meanings invested in them. She argues that borders can be written between areas that have no geographical connection, but

for example, due to a traumatic event, a border and a connection are formed. As such, she argues that whilst a geographical border may be perceived as real and supported by national policies, it has diminished meaning when not recognized or honoured by a 'written border'. In an inter-personal and cultural context of 'border', *Tarja Tantt* (University of Tallinn, University of Eastern Finland) examines metacommunication in conversations between Finnish employment officials and immigrants during service encounters. She suggests that the interactional situation between Finnish officials and immigrant clients forms a symbolic border, and thus an arena of border negotiation, where borders are crossed from one's own culture into a foreign culture. Metacommunication can function as a means of crossing the border, whilst a lack of metacommunication and subsequent silence may form a symbolic boundary to integration, if the client is unfamiliar with the customs and practices of his or her new home country, and if these are not explained.

The articles in this special issue give voice to travelers, borderlanders, amateur and professional writers, migrants, soldiers, and their families who have had direct experiences of borders and border crossings which have in turn expanded understanding of borders. Therefore, the articles reflect critically on ideological discourses that have constructed dominant meanings for the borders and border crossings as well as national margins in Finland, Estonia and north-western Russia. The connecting idea between the articles show that borders and border crossings are seen from the viewpoint of individual experiences and at the level of micro-level encounters, and the crossed borders are not just territorial or topographical but they always include socially constructed symbolic and metaphorical layers. Cultural conventions regulate the narration as well as the construction of these layers. Sometimes, as the articles show, the socially constructed symbolic and metaphoric border may be drawn completely separately from the territorial borders.

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Dr. **Mari Ristolainen** is representative of the new Russian Literature and Culture scholars who are applying cross-disciplinary approaches to Border Studies. During the past years she has been working as a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Eastern Finland. Starting from November 1, 2014 she is working as a researcher at the UiT Norway's Arctic University. E-mail: [mari.ristolainen@uef.fi](mailto:mari.ristolainen@uef.fi) or [mari.ristolainen@uit.no](mailto:mari.ristolainen@uit.no)

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## **Borders from the Cultural Point of View: An Introduction to *Writing at Borders***

By Tuulikki Kurki

### **Abstract**

This introductory article to the special issue *Writing at Borders* suggests that cultural studies and the humanist point of view have significant explanatory potential concerning various borders and border crossings in multidisciplinary border studies. Cultural and human understandings of borders and border crossings grow from the research of ethnographic particularities on one hand, and of universal and culturally expressed human experiences of borders and border crossings (however culturally expressed) on the other. In this article, this explanatory potential is made visible by examining the history of cultural anthropology, where borders and border crossings have been recognized in research since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The aim of this concise introductory article is to outline through selected examples how territorial, social, and cultural borders and border crossings have been acknowledged and understood conceptually in the history of Anglo-American and European anthropology. The selected examples illustrate the gradual evolution of the conceptualization of the border from a territorially placed boundary and filter, to a semantically constructed, ritualized and performed symbolic border, and finally to a discursive (textual) construction.

**Keywords:** Border, border crossing, diffusionism, symbolic anthropology, post-modern anthropology

## Introduction

Border studies reclaimed its visibility in geography and created “a new generation of border studies” in the 1990s (Newman & Paasi 1998; Newman 2007: 30). This new generation made borders a widespread research theme, not only in geography but also in social sciences and cultural research globally. The reasons for the re-emergence of border studies can be found in geopolitical changes that initiated in Europe (e.g. the collapse of the Soviet Union and the formation of the EU), in the US-Mexico borderlands, and in the global context of strengthening migration movements (Heyman 1994; Alvaréz 1995; Vila 2003a; Schimanski & Wolfe 2007; Sadowski-Smith 2008). In addition, the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States made border related security concerns a prominent theme worldwide (Sadowski-Smith 2002b: 2, 8; Wastl-Walter 2011: 2).

In the multidisciplinary field of border studies, many disciplines share some ideas about the characteristics of studied borders and their functions. According to the political geographer David Newman (2007: 33), one of the shared ideas of the border is that “borders determine the nature of group (in some cases defined territorially) belonging, affiliation, and membership, and the way in which the processes of inclusion and exclusion are institutionalized”. The question of power relations that are closely connected with the processes of inclusion and exclusion and with defining borderland cultures and identities, has also become a very central and widely utilized question (Newman & Paasi 1998: 188; Sadowski-Smith 2002a; Vila 2003b; Aldama et al. 2012). However, depending on the conceptual, methodological and theoretical choices in each discipline, the representations and therefore the understandings of borders also vary.<sup>1</sup>

According to political scientist Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly (2011: 3), in contemporary geopolitically and geographically oriented research, “borders are no longer only about territorially bounded authorities” and “they are not just sea and air ports of entry, or border crossing”, but “... also increasingly virtual or simply impalpable”.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, Brunet-Jailly (ibid.) suggests that such understandings of borders need to be developed to go “beyond our territorialist and geopolitical intellectual and policy traditions”. Some scholars (most notably Brunet-Jailly, Victor Konrad, Heather N. Nicol, and David Newman) have noted the gradually growing importance of the cultural and humanist point of view in understanding and conceptualizing borders in geopolitically and geographically oriented border studies (Brunet-Jailly 2005; Konrad & Nicol 2011: 74–75). Geographers Victor Konrad and Heather N. Nicol even suggest that culture and power are “the key variables for explaining how borders and borderlands originate, are sustained, and evolve” (Konrad & Nicol 2011: 75). Culturally oriented border research has been recently published in the fields of geography and social sciences (Wilson & Donnan 2012). However, what the concept culture stands for in research varies greatly. When the concept of “culture” is defined in geopolitically and geographically



oriented border research, it is understood for example as “a specific culture of borderland communities” (Brunet-Jailly 2005), “the way of life”, and also as a social construction, i.e. as a “representation of that life” (Konrad & Nicol 2011: 72, 74), although the later authors have suggested that the concept of culture should be explained more thoroughly in border studies (Konrad & Nicol 2011: 84).

Simultaneously, when social sciences and geography have noted the cultural aspect of borders, a rapidly growing amount of cultural research has been published on various levels of culture forms, as well as on sub-cultures, minority cultures, resistance and counter cultures, in and outside the territorial borderlands that construct, maintain, and deconstruct the dominating representations, ideas and meanings of borders and borderlands. These studies focus e.g. on forms of literary and visual culture (literature, poetry, art, photography) produced by writers and artists ranging from amateurs to professionals, oral narration (oral tradition and oral history), media, as well as aspects of every-day life (Donnan & Haller 2000b; Aldama et al. 2012; Kurki & Laurén 2012). This article agrees with Konrad’s & Nicols’ (2011: 84) claim that the concept of culture should be explained more thoroughly in border studies. At the same time, this article suggests that cultural studies and the humanist point of view has significant explanatory potential concerning various borders and border crossings in multidisciplinary border studies, since “drawing borders is the key to human cognition” and humans’ “identity and sense of difference from others is completely dependent on the existence of borders” (Donnan & Haller 2000a: 8). Cultural and human understandings of borders and border crossings grow on one hand from the research of ethnographic particularities, and on the other, from universal human experiences of borders and border crossings (however culturally expressed). In this article, this explanatory potential is made visible by examining the history of cultural anthropology, where borders and border crossings have been recognized in research since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The aim of this introductory article is to outline through selected examples, how territorial, social, and cultural borders and border crossings have been acknowledged and understood conceptually in the history of Anglo-American and European anthropology. This is achieved by examining selected research examples which conceptualize the different ways that the idea of borders and border crossing is conceptualised in relation to the underlying ideas of culture and culture change. The studied research examples represent the diffusionist culture theory of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the symbolic anthropology of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, and the postmodern anthropology of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. These examples have been selected because they illustrate the gradual evolution of the conceptualization of the border from being a territorially placed boundary and filter, to a semantically constructed, ritualized and performed symbolic border, and finally to a discursive (textual) construction. Each of these conceptualizations contributes to the understandings of borders and border crossings as research objects

of today. In a way, this article is an exercise where classical works of anthropology are read from the viewpoint of borders and border crossings.

### **Diffusionism and Geographically Influenced Viewpoint: Border as a Boundary and a Filter**

Territorial cultural areas, their borders and border crossings became acknowledged in European and Anglo-American cultural anthropology in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century when the concept of diffusionism was introduced in a refined form. Diffusionism was formulated as a theory of cultural change, where migration, cultural contacts and border crossings became the central factors in explaining the development of cultures worldwide. However, it was not a new idea in European anthropology, but rather one of “the major traditional paradigmatic alternatives structuring speculation about human differences, which were characteristically seen as products of change in time” (Stocking 1999: 180).<sup>3</sup> Diffusionist ideas developed and diversified (such as in neo-diffusionism) over the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Stocking 1999: 211–220). However, diffusionism lost its appeal in the 1930s–1940s when acculturation theories and other more differentiated sub-fields in anthropology started to develop (Voget 1975: 339, 346, 546–548).

In the general framework of diffusionism, anthropologists and ethnographers started to map cultural traits globally and draw cultural borders according to the distribution of cultural traits, including e.g. technologies, ideas, customs, and beliefs, first in Europe and later in the US (Voget 1975: 317–319; Eriksen & Nielsen 2001: 27).<sup>4</sup> The diffusionists developed a research method which compared the cultural traits of various cultural areas systematically to each other (Boas 1966: 251–252). The aim of the systematic comparison was to make the distribution of the routes of some cultural traits globally more visible, by recognizing similarities and subtle changes between traits seen in different cultural regions. Recognized similarities revealed the cultural, linguistic and physical contacts between the cultural regions and their populations, and thus exposed the routes of diffusion of cultural traits from one area to another. In addition, the aim was to trace the geographical and temporal origins of some dominating cultural features (ibid.). As a final result, the aim was to reveal the global historical construction of different cultural-geographical areas (Stocking 1999: 211–220). Cartographically, cultures became represented as “patch work quilts” of culture areas with various origins and histories, which nonetheless, did not necessarily form any unified or coherent whole (Stocking 1999: 218; Eriksen & Nielsen 2001: 27).

The diffusionist theory represented borders only implicitly. In the diffusionist model, borders can be understood as instruments denoting regional and temporal differences between cultures, and at the same time enabling the contacts between them. The territorially placed border is seen as a zone of cultural, linguistic or

physical contact, which enables the diffusion of cultural traits from one cultural area to another. However, during this diffusion, the cultural traits change. Thus, the diffusionist theory implicitly represented the border as a boundary and a filter which caused a change in cultural traits. The border allowed some cultural traits to pass through, but in doing so, the trait became either a more developed version of the original trait, or it decayed from its original form when some of its features were filtered out.

From a cultural center in which complex forms have developed, elements may radiate and impress themselves upon neighboring tribes, or the more complex forms may develop on an old, less differentiated basis.[...] the study of geographical distribution of cultural phenomena offers a means of determining their diffusion. (Boas 1966: 252)

The diffusionist model also established a relationship between the center and the margin – the borderlands of the cultural areas. According to the diffusionist model, the borderlands of the cultural areas represented more archaic and less developed forms of cultural traits, while the centers represented the sources of innovation from which novelty and developments travelled towards the margins. Furthermore, according to the model, cultural traits survived in more authentic forms in the margins than in the centers. Therefore, researchers looked for remnants of past culture forms in the national margins (Hautala 1954: 174–197). This was in accordance with the socio-spatial construction of borderlands in geography during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, where the borderlands represented areas that “were to be tamed, settled and civilized and hence brought under the hegemony of the white dominion” (Newman & Paasi 1998: 189).

Although the diffusionist ideas of border, its functions as a boundary and a filter, as well as, the cartographic representation of cultures as “patch work quilts” was influenced by geography (Voget 1975: 319–320), a metaphorical border was conceptualized as it became visible through recognized cultural differences. Therefore the border denoted cultural “situations characterized by contradiction and contest”, which is one of the extended usages of the border concept in contemporary border research (Donnan & Wilson 2001: 40). The diffusionist idea of border as a boundary and filter may still influence the representations of borders today, however, the idea of the borderland as an archaic wasteland of novelties has had competing representations and conceptualizations raised in border studies. With the emergence of the new generation of border studies, the border areas also became understood as hybrid spaces where several cultural features fuse, and form a hybrid culture which cannot be returned to any previously existing forms (García Canclini 1995; Bhabha 2007: 54–56). From this perspective, border areas and margins appear as areas of new, emerging cultural forms.

## Symbolic Anthropology: Border as a Ritual and Performance

During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the development of anthropology took different directions in the US and in Europe, as it started to diverge into studies of cultural anthropology in the US, and social anthropology in the Great Britain (Eriksen & Nielsen 2001: 39). Furthermore, several sub-fields started to develop which later evolved for example into medical anthropology, cognitive anthropology, and ecological anthropology amongst others (Voget 1975: 541–546). Some of these sub-fields recognized symbolic borders and border crossings in their research. One of these trends was symbolic anthropology which developed in the 1950s and 1960s in Great Britain. It studied culture as a system of meanings expressed in the symbols, rituals, and performances which maintain social order, and organize cultural thinking and classification systems (Eriksen & Nielsen 2001: 98–99). The symbolic borders and border crossings, expressed through various rituals and performances, became visible when the dominating social order or cultural thinking models became breached. One of the first researchers to study symbolic border crossings in anthropology was French anthropologist Arnold van Gennep (1873–1957). His theoretical formulations became further applied by anthropologists Victor Turner (1920–1983) and Mary Douglas (1921–2007) in representing symbolic anthropology in Great Britain.

The idea of ritualized border crossing can be traced to van Gennep's study *The Rites of Passage* (1909), where he examined the changes of the individual's social position in a society during the individual's course of life. Van Gennep defined these changes in social position as ritualized border crossings, and used the terms "separation", "margin" and "aggregation" to describe the move from the old position to the new one. According to van Gennep's model, in the first phase, the individual crosses the social border as she or he leaves her or his old social position. In the second phase, the individual shifts into the margin of the social order, and in the third phase re-joins the social order, albeit, in a new position. During a life course, this ritualized three phase movement shifts, for example, from a child to a youth, from a youth to an adult, and so forth (van Gennep 1909/1977.)

Victor Turner developed van Gennep's three stage model further. In his study, *Ritual Process* (1969/1977), Turner examined social order in an African society with the concepts of "structure", "antistructure", and "liminality". Turner claims that in a society, a member moves from one social position to another through liminality which forms a ritual process. Those who move to a socially higher position, for example, are first separated from the social and institutional structures and placed in the liminal space socially, institutionally and spatially. In this liminal space, no ordinary rules prevail but the candidates for the new social position must bare various trials and tribulations, even humiliation. After these liminal experiences, the candidates can become members of the social structure and gain a new higher social position (Turner 1977: 95–97; 102–106.).

In Turner's study, candidates for the new social position have crossed the borders of social order, and they are betwixt and between of the positions defined by the laws, customs and ceremonies in the society (Turner 1977: 95). Therefore, liminality means a withdrawal from the ordinary forms of social interaction, ambivalence, and being in a state of transition (Turner 1977: 167). Border-crossings and liminality are represented in many symbolic and ritualized performances, and Turner claims that liminality and marginality are themselves conditions which regularly create art, myths, and symbols (Turner 1977: 95–97; 102–106; 128). Therefore, it can be claimed that social borders, which are otherwise invisible in the society, become perceivable and understandable only through rituals, symbols and performances. For example, Turner describes young men's border crossings and entering a liminal space in the African Ndembu circumcision rite, as a ritual where "the novices are "stripped" of their secular clothing when they are passed beneath a symbolic gateway; they are "leveled" in that their former names are discarded and all are assigned the common designator *mwadyi* or "novice", and treated alike" (Turner 1977: 108). Removing secular clothing from the novices, and discarding their former names denote crossing the border and entering the liminal space. According to Turner (1977: 108), entering into the liminal space is also ritualized and symbolized in similar ways in other societies and institutions, such as monasteries. However, the liminal state gives the candidates ritualistic power. With the aid of their liminal, and betwixt and between positions, these individuals can question the dominating power structures of the society, and criticize those who have power in the social structure. Therefore, it can be claimed that the border and border crossing also function as "leverage" and source of empowerment for those who cross the border of social order.

Turner's concepts of "structure", "antistructure" and "liminality", and their relation to the use of power have had some applicability in contemporary border studies regarding national borders and border crossings, cultural production across the national border, experiencing the betwixt and between position, as well as in questioning the dominating social order and dominating power structures through the liminal position (Gilsenan Nordin & Holmsten 2009; Wilkinson 2010; Andrews & Roberts 2012; Cocker 2012). Crossing national borders can be described as a ritualized process which moves the border crossers to a liminal space in the new society before they are able to join its societal structures. According to Turner (1977: 108–111), the betwixt and between position can develop into a more permanent position in some individuals. Therefore, Turner's concepts could be applied to analyse those individuals who have crossed the national border more permanently, but have not yet become full members of the new society. These individuals can remain in liminal spaces for long periods of time that may both humiliate and empower them. Therefore, the liminality concepts such as the "culturally dangerous" and "culturally creative middle stage" also include a strong idea of potential cultural criticism (Weber 1995). Though its frequent usage and

popularity especially in the 1970s and 1980s, Turner's liminality concept has been criticized for representing cultural change through rites as consensual, and omitting for example the identity politics of those liminal persons who may resist incorporation into the prevailing social order (Weber 1995: 530) and these arguments have been stressed in recent cultural studies on borders (Vila 2003a; Aldama et al. 2012).

The other well-known representative of symbolic anthropology, Mary Douglas studied classification systems and cultural order in an African society in her classic study *Purity and Danger* (1966). The study pays attention also to symbolic borders, especially cognitive and psychological borders, and border crossings that are defined by cultural thinking. To analyse these borders and border crossings, Douglas uses the terms "classification", "ordering", "ambiguity", and "anomaly" which are particularly interesting from the point of view of border studies. Douglas regards the ambiguity and anomaly as "rejected elements of ordered system", and "systematic by-products of ordering in a culture and society" (Douglas 1966: 35). Therefore, border crossing makes the border crosser appear as alien and unsuitable, even dangerous, dirty and polluting. What is important in Douglas' definition of anomaly and ambiguity is that they exist only in relation to the dominating order and cultural thinking models. As such, border crossing phenomena are not necessarily ambiguous or polluting: "food is not dirty in itself but its dirty to leave cooking utensils in the bedroom, or food bespattered on clothing" (Douglas 1966: 35–36). In this example, the context of cultural thinking, categorization, and violating these categorizations, define an item as "dirt".

Although Douglas focused mostly on cognitive and psychological categorizations and the borders of culturally defined order, her conceptual models also have the potential to analyse the cultural, cognitive and psychological layers attached to territorial and national borders, border crossings, and bordering (inclusion and exclusion) processes which create the differences between "us" and "them". The cultural and social aspects of territorial and national borders (Donnan & Wilson 2001: 26–35) and the theme of "symbolization and (discursive) institutionalisation of differences in space" have become central themes in border and mobility research during the past ten to fifteen years (van Houtum & van Naerssen 2001: 125).

Simultaneous to Turner and Douglas, and the flourishing of symbolic anthropology in Great Britain, American anthropology started to focus more on its own territorial and symbolic borders. In the 1950s and 60s, the US-Mexico border and questions of migration became visible research themes in American Anthropology (Alvaréz 1995: 452–453). Gradually, questions concerning identity formation in the territorial and metaphorical borderlands and transnational spaces came to the fore. The cultural research of borders that began at the U.S.-Mexico border, significantly influenced the development of cultural research on borders and borderlands in the rest of the Anglo-American and European world. Some of the most



influential works in this area have been Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands: The New Mestiza=La Frontera* (1987) which focused on the multiply marginalized question of constructing feminine borderland identity in writing in the U.S.-Mexico borderland, Nestor García Canclini's *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (1995), and Renato Rosaldo's *Culture and Truth* (1989) which were among the first works to articulate the theoretical ideas of "border culture" (Heyman 2012: 49).

### **After the Cultural Turn: Border as a Text**

The next interesting point in time in regard to border studies is the cultural turn which meant major epistemological changes for cultural studies and other humanistic fields of research in the 1980s (Bonnell & Hunt 1999). This turn emphasized social reality as a linguistic and social construction, and in cultural studies, various cultural and social phenomena became studied as texts and as discursively (e.g. narratively, rhetorically, visually) constructed phenomena (Clifford & Marcus 1986; Bonnell & Hunt 1999; Jameson 2009). At the same time, the global migration movements started to strengthen. The centrality of nationalistic discourses on territorial borders and borderlands lessened and they became objects of critical scrutiny (Anderson 1991; Newman & Paasi 1998). In anthropology, dissatisfaction grew against those classic anthropological views of culture "which emphasized patterns of meaning that are shared and consensual", and which practically deny the possibility of cultural change, inconsistency and contradiction (Donnan & Wilson 2001: 35).

After this cultural turn, several other turns emerged which have subsequently affected the ways of studying borders in cultural research. These have been termed as the co-called spatial turn and the emergence of the motion paradigm. There is no single definition of what the spatial turn is. However, there is agreement on some of the conceptual and theoretical preferences that can be used to characterize the spatial turn in cultural research. These include for example, the visible position detailed in the works of Henry Lefebvre, Edward Soja and Homi Bhabha, as well as a keen interest in spaces, places, borders, mobility and identity (Gupta & Ferguson 2001; Weigel 2009; Berensmeyer & Ehland 2013). On the other hand, the motion paradigm "questioned the naturalized relations between bounded spaces and certain groups of people" (Paasi 2011: 20). As these topics emerged, borders were able to be newly conceived as a research object in cultural studies. In this context, borders and borderlands became seen as formations that are constructed against the idea of territorially bounded culture areas and identities, and against the concept of the so-called territorial trap (Newman & Paasi 1998: 192; Paasi 2011: 20). In anthropology, borderlands became seen not only as the meeting places of various cultures, and ethnic and linguistic groups, but as hybrid spaces, spaces of flows – borderland cultures in their own right (Gupta &

Ferguson 1992: 18; García Canclini 1995; Bhabha 2007). Furthermore, “diasporic notions of cultural identities and citizenship” as well as identities not bounded to places or territories became the focus of related research (Sadowski-Smith 2002b: 2, 10–17).

Since the 1990s, anthropological and cultural research on borders has exploded in terms of the number of publications and the diversity of approaches adopted. Whilst it is not the purpose of this introductory article to list all of the research that has been published, two main approaches to studying borders can be isolated in the published research: one studies borders, border crossings and bordering processes in connection with national and territorial borders, while the other focuses on metaphorical borders, border crossings, and bordering processes which may have no territorial dimension (Donnan & Wilson 2001; Wilson & Donnan 2012). Thus, borders and border crossings may be, for example “cultural, social, territorial, political, sexual, racial or psychological”, however, they are not necessarily seen as entirely different categories (Donnan & Wilson 2001: 19–20, 35). What unites most contemporary approaches in border studies are the post-structuralist works of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, and their formulations about discourse, power, and the construction of difference (Sarup 1988: 34) which have visibly influenced contemporary border studies (van Houtum & van Naesser 2001). It can be claimed that the concepts of discourse, power and difference are elementary parts of the common pool of intellectual means used in border studies today, regardless of discipline. For example, contemporary cultural research seeks to recognize the various levels of discourse and the power hierarchies between them, that influence the construction of identities, social reality and cultures in the borderlands (Donnan & Wilson 2001; Sadowski-Smith 2002a; Schimanski & Wolfe 2007).

These influences can be seen in the following example of cultural research: Since the 1990s and early 2000s, cultural studies did not focus only on issues of migration or identity formation that took place in national borderlands, but also on the literature and art relating to borders, borderlands, and border crossings (Alvaréz 1995; Sadowski-Smith 2002b: 2; Wilkinson 2010). As mentioned previously, as early as the 1960s Victor Turner suggested that liminal spaces create poetry, myths, and art. Now these aspects became keys by which to understand the experiences at borders and border crossings. It can be claimed that borders and border crossings include such understandings, experiences and emotions that contribute to the construction of borderland identities, that cannot be expressed precisely in everyday language, but rather through artistic genres. Indeed, art may even become the only forum by which these understandings, experiences and emotions can be expressed. The following example highlights the power of artistic language in expressing the ambiguous phenomena and anomalies that are related to border crossings between an individual and solid or liquid substances, and the way these contribute to one’s identity formation. Taken from Jean Paul Sartre’s *Being and*



*Nothingness* (1966: 777), the example describes the border crossing through individual's physical sensations when he plunges his hand into a "slimy" substance and finds it difficult to differentiate between himself and the substance:

But at the same time the slimy is *myself*, by the very fact that I outline an appropriation of the slimy substance. That sucking of the slimy which I feel on my hands outlines a kind of continuity of the slimy substance in myself. These long soft strings of substance which fall from me to the slimy body (when, for example, I plunge my hand into it and then pull it out again) symbolize a rolling off of myself in the slime. And the hysteresis which I establish in the fusion of the ends of these strings with the larger body symbolizes the resistance of my being to absorption into the In-itself. If I dive into the water, if I plunge into it, if I let myself sink in it, I experience no discomfort, for I do not have any fear whatsoever that I may dissolve in it; I remain a solid in its liquidity. [...] In the very apprehension of the slimy there is a gluey substance, compromising and without equilibrium, like the haunting memory of *metamorphosis*. (Sartre 1966: 777)

The experience of plunging his hand into slimy matter reminds the narrator of metamorphosis; a change of the body's form and characteristics that could aptly reflect the experience of the hybridization of identity, the experience of the third space, and of being in-between. The artistic and poetic expressions of Sartre's text exemplify well the effectiveness of artistic genres in expressing human experiences of borders and border crossings. It is important to recognize these fundamental experiences and meanings given to borders as objects of research. Borders do not exist without humans (as Sartre (1966) points out – the world is human), and therefore, when discussing the meanings, functions and possible consequences of establishing various borders, the human perspective and understanding of borders should be stressed, in addition to the political, economic, or social understandings.

This article proposes that recognizing individual and human aspects of borders and borderlands, expressed for example in borderland literature and art but not necessarily in everyday life, can be used as a means for cultural criticism, and criticism of the colonializing and homogenizing "gazes" which are directed towards borderlands. These "gazes" refer to Jean-Paul Sartre's idea of "becoming the object of look" and "a mode of being when it apprehends itself as having become an object for another consciousness" (Macey 2001: 154). Furthermore, "being the object of the other's look or gaze is often accompanied by a feeling of shame" (ibid.). Therefore, the idea of gaze includes a power relationship between the looker and the object of the look, where the looker seeks to create unifying and homogeneous representations of the object, such as the people and cultures which feature in territorial and metaphorical borderlands. Recognizing borderland literature and art as a critical voice against the homogenizing "gaze" is an important, empowering act. Good examples of studies of borderland cultures and identities that are used as a means for cultural criticism are the recent studies of the U.S.-Mexico border. Since the late 1980s, the people living in the U.S.-Mexico national borderland have become authors of border ethnographies, so making the voice of so-called "*indigenous scholars*" audible, and thus they have

become analyzing subjects in their own right (Alvaréz 1995: 459; Vila 2003b). The emergence of these indigenous scholars has been due to conscious acting against the “intellectual colonialism” that the borderland people have experienced at the U.S.-Mexico national border (Weber 1995: 532; Castillo & Córdoba 2002: 4). Later, this development led to the founding of so-called “borderlands performance studies”; in other words “de-colonizing performatics” that focus on the Latin population of the U.S.-Mexico national border (Sandoval et al. 2012: 3–4). Decolonizing performatics studies the various forms of Latina/o art as a decolonizing performative process which aims to achieve individual or collective empowerment, and to generate a pause in the colonial activities (Aldama et al. 2012; Sandoval et al. 2012: 2–3).

## **Conclusions**

What can cultural studies convey or contribute to the multidisciplinary field of border studies, and how can the cultural point of view increase the understanding of borders? It seems self-evident that cultural studies have the potential to convey individual and micro-level perspectives and understandings to several of the research perspectives applied in border studies. When the concept of culture is defined more thoroughly in border studies, cultural research can reveal the wide spectrum of meanings that is attached to the borders from the human perspective, starting from micro-level perspectives and ethnographic particularities, and leading to the perspectives maintained by the dominating political and ideological discourses that are reflected in the dominating cultural forms.

One of the key areas in which cultural research seems to have great explanatory potential is studying borders through art, literature, symbols and borderland culture forms where individual experiences are paramount. Defying classifications, being betwixt and between positions, as well as the emotions, fears and wishes that are projected onto the border and the “Other” on the other side of the border, all belong to the sphere of human experiences. By further investigation of poetry, art, and literature, cultural studies can gain a deeper understanding about hybrid and diasporic identities, cultures, and the experiences of liminality and third space that are part of the global human understandings about the border in various territorial and metaphoric borderlands. However, these understandings and conceptualizations are not necessarily recognized in the dominating border discourses maintained by the groups in power, and the experience based narratives and discourses of migrants or various minority groups may be silenced for political reasons. On the other hand, border discourses that are generated by dominating economic or political interests may represent borders as being completely different (e.g. as open and problem free) from the borders that appear in people’s observations and experiences at the regional level (see the articles in this special issue). Therefore micro-level perspectives, ethnographies of specific borderland

cultures, and border art forms have the potential for providing cultural criticism and deconstructing the dominating discourses which are directed towards both territorial and metaphorical borderlands, and their people and cultures (see: Abu-Lughog 1991: 147–150). Focusing on micro-level and individual cases is a means to critically study institutionalized and dominating ideas of borders, and the colonizing gazes which often result in marginalizing and homogenizing conceptualizations of borderland cultures and identities.

The second concluding note of this article concerns the scholarly conceptualization and terminology used in border studies. Some researchers have suggested of writing a shared glossary of the terminology used within border studies (Newman 2007), and successful crossings across the associated disciplinary boundaries have been made. However, it is important to also maintain a connection between the concepts of each discipline and the core discussions of these disciplines. If the concepts are detached from the disciplinary core, they risk losing their efficiency as analytical tools. Thus, both the disciplines studying borders and the overall field of multidisciplinary border studies would benefit when analytical concepts are developed in a close relation to the disciplinary core of each discipline, and at the same time, maintaining shared dialog with the relevant questions within the border studies field. In this way, the multifaceted and sometimes even enigmatic borders may be understood in intellectually diversified and more profound ways.

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### **Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> In this context, representation means the various conceptualizations and representations provided through different media that are at the same time historically constructed entities (Knuuttila & Lehtinen 2010: 25).
- <sup>2</sup> As examples of these borders, Brunet-Jailly (2011: 3) mentions “electronic borders, non-visible borders – biometric identification & control, or electronic devices set to track flows of goods or people such as tracking financial transactions, spywares of all kinds”.
- <sup>3</sup> The other major explanatory paradigm was evolutionism.

- <sup>4</sup> One of the earliest anthropologists to do so was Franz Boas (1858–1942) whose aim was to study “regional distribution of folklore elements”, and to “reconstruct the original myths of each people, and to trace the migration of myths” in the North-West Coast America (Stocking 1999: 12).

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## Discontinuity and Continuity in Representations of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Estonian History

By Tiiu Jaago

### Abstract

The theme of this article is how Estonians have described political changes in their autobiographical narratives. The discussion is based on the observation that the establishment of Soviet rule in Estonia in the 1940s is construed in the studies of life stories, on the one hand, as a discontinuity of ‘normal life’, and on the other hand, as continuity. It is remarkable that irrespective of the demarcation of state borders by political decisions, Estonian territory is still perceived as a single and eternal whole. To what extent is the perception of discontinuity or continuity related to experiencing political change and to what extent is it related to the method of narration, and to what extent does it depend on the choices made by the researcher? An analysis of the three life histories discussed in the article indicates that experiencing discontinuity or continuity in a specific historical context does not coincide with its depiction in life histories. The texts reflect both the diversity of narrative methods (coherent representation of different layers of recollections, the comparison and contrast of different situations, etc.), and the context of narratives – for example the interviewer’s effect on discussing a topic or the relation of a story to publicly discussed topics. Recollections are characterised by variability, however this may not become evident as studies focus on certain aspects of the narrative or interrelations of the topic and public discourses. The polysemic and ambivalent nature of the ‘border’ unfolds through the entangled interplay of territorial, political and cultural borders, their narrative articulation in life story telling as well as researchers’ choices.

**Keywords:** Cultural border, cultural continuity and discontinuity, cultural self-description, life story, the Soviet period

## Introduction

This article deals with the terms ‘discontinuity’ and ‘continuity’, and ‘boundary’ or ‘delimiting’ associated with both the self-description of culture and the specifics of narrating about the past. I use the terms ‘continuity’ and ‘discontinuity’ in derivation from their narrative meaning: how these concepts are revealed when past events are organised into a coherent narrative. On the theoretical level, I rely on the approach by Juri Lotman relating to the mutual balance of the statics and dynamics of the (culturally meaningful) semiotic system: ‘how can a system develop and yet remain true to itself’ (Lotman 1992/2009: 1). In the article I pose three questions: Firstly; for what reason do life history researchers prefer to interpret the drastic changes of the 1940s in Estonia through expressions of discontinuity or continuity? Secondly; how does the mutual relation between continuity and discontinuity reveal itself spontaneously narrated life stories if the researcher does not aim to uncover either of these concepts. Thirdly; in such cases, how does the topic of changing the territorial, political and cultural borders manifests it? The texts analysed in this article are drawn from the collection of *Estonian Life Histories* preserved in the Estonian Cultural History Archives in Tartu (EKLA f 350).

The first part of the article introduces the general theoretical background for the study. The events that help to place the analysis of life histories in context will be discussed, and the question will be raised how the concepts of ‘discontinuity’ and ‘continuity’ are construed in studies of life narratives and the self-description of Estonian culture. The third part of the article is dedicated to an analysis of life histories, and in particular, how the theme of Soviet rule (a recurrent motif in these texts) is expressed in the contexts of continuity or discontinuity. Three life histories are discussed and I will compare the narrators’ descriptions of the events that altered the state borders in the 1940s, when Estonia was incorporated into the Soviet Union.

## Theoretical Framework for the Study: The Interdisciplinarity of Border Studies

Traditionally, the research of territorial borders and state borders belongs to the realm of human or political geography. The boundaries presented in life stories result from the narrator’s point of view and are multi-level by nature. This article focuses on the topic of the relationships between the territorial, political and cultural borders in the context of the continuity and discontinuity presented in the self-description of culture: what role is played by the physical space (the territory), the culture, the language; and in what aspect is the geopolitically established border different from the border created by the self-description tools of culture?



To answer these questions, a view into the history of academic border studies is provided.

The convergence of different fields of research started in the 1970s, and aimed to explain how we may interpret the interactive relations between the physical (administrative) borders established by the authorities and the subjective borders of the inhabitants. This task brought geographers closer to cultural researchers, linguists and sociologists. In the renewed research context of the geographical space, Anssi Paasi underlines the socio-cultural viewpoint, in which the focal analytical framework includes the oppositions ‘we’– ‘other’ and ‘here’–‘there’ (Paasi 1996: 14). The boundary is observed in this case as the ‘general principles of territorial organization’ (Paasi 1996: 27). At the same time, cultural researchers looked for possibilities to comprehend abstract borders. In this case the border is perceived as the meeting point of two cultures, where the marker of the border is the need to ‘translate’ the ‘other’: ‘The border is a bilingual mechanism, translating external communications into the internal language of the semiosphere and visa versa’ (Lotman 1984/2005: 210). Lotman gives an example, according to which certain persons, due to their particular talent or employment (magicians, blacksmiths, executioners), may operate as ‘interpreters’ on the boundary of cultural and mythological space, while settled in the same territory (ibid: 211). Such a boundary is not physically perceivable, but exists as a border between the culturally organised world and the translated (e.g. supernatural) world. The genres marking borders of this type (for example burial laments) are usual research objects of folkloristics, where the question is how people behave in border situations, in order to arrange relationships with this world and the beyond. For example, Madis Arukask describes the meaning of lamentation based on fieldwork among the Fenno-Ugric Vepsian people who live in North Russia: ‘... the folkloric practice was represented here in its original function of restoring order, in communication with the otherworld, the border between the two realms were (re)established so as to avoid unforeseeable consequences and primarily guarantee the well-being of the living’ (Arukask 2011: 132). Being an idea that joins different border concepts, this means that beside the physical characteristics of the border, the features of the border as a place of negotiations are also important. Additionally, modern holistic border studies emphasise the role of historical factors in the formation of administratively established borderlands. For instance, Karri Kiiskinen compares two sections of the external border of the European Union: the Finnish-Russian and the Polish-Ukrainian border. He demonstrates how the borderland is not only a contact zone between the states, but also a place of recollections influenced by historical factors (Kiiskinen 2012: 30–32).

Alongside the territorial, political and narrative aspects, the linguistic aspects are also significant in border studies. Anssi Paasi refers to geography as a linguistic practice (Paasi 1996: 22). His observation concerns primarily the scientific terminology, but the same can be applied to the ordinary language level. This lat-

ter element is studied in linguistics by means of semantic fields, which are formed by the concentration of words around certain topics. Using the connection between the concentration of words and the resulting fields, it is possible to research the speakers' understanding of phenomena and their mutual relationships which are marked by the words in the semantic field (Õim 1997: 256). In this context, for example, it is significant that in Estonian, the same word – 'piir' (border) – is used to mark the boundaries of a culture, a geographical territory and a country as a political entity. It is therefore predictable that the history of the evolution of words and concepts requires particular attention in international border studies (Cohen 1994; Klusáková & Ellis 2006).

In this article the territorial aspects and those concerned with the changing of state borders serve as a general background to this approach; with the focus on perceived (historically developed and culturally created) subjective borders of 'own' land. The narrative research perspective sets forth questions about the (inter)subjectivity of truth, text creation techniques and the impact of the narrating situation on text creation (Titon 1980: 288–291; Latvala 2005: 33–36; Klein 2006: 8–15). In the case of self-descriptive texts (such as the verbal descriptions of general culture), their ideological character, the interpretative nature of facts, and emotions and ways of expression, play 'an important role in the social construction of selves and cultural worldviews' (Matsumoto 2006: 48). Autobiographical narrating is understood as an intersubjective process, in the course of which the knowledge existing in the society is exchanged, evaluated and verified (Smith & Watson 2010: 16–18). These standpoints also serve as a basis for understanding the 'truth' of self-descriptive texts, and the contents of these texts cannot be handled as facts unambiguous from real life. Rather, it is a cognitive process, which involves the experiences and knowledge of living in a certain time period and space. In Estonia, the state borders were altered so often during the 20<sup>th</sup> century that Estonians, in referring to their country's past, tend to refer to time periods (the tsarist time; the time of independence; the Russian time; the German time); and as an analogy the time of manors (for example, the time of kolkhozes). This is in opposition to a politically defined territory (Estonia as a province of the Russian Empire; Estonia as a republic of the Soviet Union, etc.). Foreign rulers have 'come and gone' but Estonia has stayed put within its territorial boundaries, and it is this ideology that reflects the bond Estonians have with their country.<sup>1</sup> When talking about the Soviet Republic of Estonia, 'border' is a temporal notion, rather than a territorial one. In the analysis of the life narratives presented in this article, I shall point out these aspects more closely.

The approach in which the cultural borders of Estonia coincide with its territorial borders (irrespective of the state borders imposed by foreign invaders) is associated with the national awakening movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the establishment of a nation state in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (see: Jansen 2000: 45; Kruus 2005: 122–133, 400–402; Kõresaar 2005, 70; Nutt 2010). The interconnectedness

of the territory and cultural identity more generally characterises the development of national unity and the ideology of nation states. If the prerequisite of the state is ‘a political organization covering a particular territory’, and ‘a nation [...] is a community of people with a common identity, which is typically based on shared cultural values and attachment to a particular territory’, then ‘the nation-state is the most powerful combination of nation and state’ (Paasi 1996: 39). In Estonia however, this concept is based on historical experience that has been studied from an ethno-linguistic point of view: ‘Being *indigenous* is one of the key words used in describing relations between akin and alien because ‘we’ were here long before the ‘aliens’ started to arrive’ (Viikberg 2000: 187).

Such inconsistency between cultural and political borders in Estonia has given rise to the question of continuity and discontinuity: was the continuity of Estonia interrupted when Estonia was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1940 or not? – in the latter case, Estonia would be one of the native regions of Russia, and the national independence of Estonia would be understood as a deviation from the normal situation; on a larger scale, this is a question of the existence and nature of the boundary between Estonia and Russia. Also, how has the influence of foreign reigns shaped Estonian culture, and with such a multitude of foreign contacts, can we talk about self-sufficiency and the consistent development of Estonian culture? These questions were raised once again in the public debates of the 1990s, which included the studies of memoirs and life histories.

### **Basis of the Article: ‘Continuity’ and ‘Discontinuity’ in Life Histories**

On the one hand, the subject matter of the article was chosen based on the argument of researchers into life histories that the incorporation of Estonia into the Soviet Union in 1940 is described in life histories collected at the end of the last century as a ‘discontinuity’ (Kõresaar 2005).<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, we can see that cultural continuity is also a leitmotif used in depicting pivotal events. For example, similar cultural leitmotifs have been used to control, understand and describe the same periods or temporal qualities (Kalmre 2007; 2012). As a reader of life histories, I agree with the above views on discontinuity and continuity, and as a researcher of folklore, I have analysed life histories from the point of view of cultural continuity.

Controversial opinions prompted me to ask what triggers the use of one or the other concept. From a theoretical point of view, I do not see a problem in the simultaneous application of both concepts. Based on *Culture and Explosion* by Juri Lotman, various simultaneous processes (including everyday life and politics) move at different speeds, and therefore discontinuity and continuity are synchronous. A period of rapid transformation may be retrospectively interpreted as a natural course of history, so creating a concept of continuity (Lotman

1992/2009: 12–18). Therefore, life histories can be construed as cultural-ideological texts (see: Matsumoto 2006), and although these texts are based on real life, they constitute a self-description of culture, rather than an ‘accurate’ account of the past. Moreover, the ‘discontinuities’ of real life and those found in their descriptions do not necessarily overlap.

The fact that real life events may be described in multiple ways gave rise to a further question and prompted the author to analyse the subject in detail. References to studies raised a doubt that certain findings are accepted as ‘undisputable’. For example, the following statement: ‘The four and half decades under Soviet rule were viewed [in the 1990s] as a single and prevailing period of discontinuity during which normal everyday life and wellbeing, whether individual or collective (i.e. of the Estonian people), was considered impossible’ (Aarelaid-Tart 2012: 148–149). There is no reason to doubt the truthfulness of the above statement, however it does not leave any room for the parallel existence of alternative approaches or interpretations. Stories within a collection vary significantly (Matsumoto 2006: 34–35, 52). The variability becomes evident both in the diversity of methods used to construct a story and the interpretations of the past. In studying life histories and interpreting findings, it is important to differentiate between the actual events described and the way they are described. Otherwise, it would be difficult to understand why it was possible to talk in the 1990s about the pivotal events of the 1940s in different ways (both through discontinuity and continuity).

In the worst-case scenario, one description is extended to the general interpretation of the past, which casts doubt on the ‘accuracy of recollections of the Soviet time’ (Aarelaid-Tart 2012: 148). Therefore, the question of whether discontinuity or another discourse prevails in the life histories recounted in the 1990s, depends also on the background of the researcher and the context in which they place the stories. While Kõresaar’s study is often referenced when highlighting the prevalence of the discourse of discontinuity in Estonian life histories recounted in the 1990s, the type of texts studied by Kõresaar should be taken into account. These were the life histories of people born in the 1920s, drawn from the collection of life histories stored in the Cultural History Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum (Kõresaar 2005: 25). Besides defining the set of texts (and the group of interpreters of the past), it is important to define the aspects that create the context of the study. In the present case, it is the way the researcher correlates narratives with other cultural texts. Kõresaar used a dialogue in her study between life histories and the topics of public and political discussions. She emphasised that the texts were created in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It was a period when public discussions of history were characterised by the key-phrase ‘crisis of truth’ and the truth was sought from witnesses to history (Kõresaar 2005: 17).

The historian Toomas Hiio, for example, speaks about a tradition of political lectures delivered by historians in towns, villages and community centres (the so-

called ‘history road shows’), restored in 1988 and 1989: ‘When Sulev Vahtre [Professor of history at Tartu University] restored history road shows, the main topic of discussion was the epoch-making years in Estonian history. I also had to deliver a speech in Vara community centre in February 1989. It was about the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, its secret protocol and the consequences of both’. (Hiio 2010: 2.) Public discussions of Estonian political history held in the late 1980s and early 1990s were dominated by the idea of discontinuity (‘epoch-making years’). In her research, Kõresaar focusses on the axis of those debates where public discussions and approaches meet the accounts of narrators who had witnessed the events. At the same time, different discourses existed that were not in a dialogue with public life. Such stories have been analysed by researcher of folklore Eda Kalmre, concerning xenophobia in everyday life in post-war Estonia and rumours of human flesh being used in the food industry (2007). It explored the controversial feelings of Estonians about Baltic German culture during and after the war, when people hoped that the West would help to restore Estonian sovereignty (2012). In her research, Kalmre not only examines the historical context of the events recounted but, as a researcher of folklore, also looks at the international and historical spread of the motifs in the stories. She highlights the continuity of tradition: for example, the reasons for the motif of human flesh being used in the food industry becoming topical in a specific historical/political/social context (be it sausage factories in the context of food shortage, or organ donation in the context of medical progress).

The doubt that research findings are treated as undisputable arises when the researcher is referring to earlier findings, but does not show their context (which, in fact, defines the area of validity of the findings). When researching life histories, it may lead to a situation where the diversity of cultural self-description is overshadowed by the dominating discourse, without explaining under what conditions the given discourse may dominate other discourses. Whether the concept of ‘discontinuity’ or the concept of ‘continuity’ should be highlighted in the descriptions of real life and past events partially depends on the method of representation, partially on external factors existing at the time of recounting (such as different approaches to the past in society), and partially on the contexts created by the researcher and their field of research.

### **‘Discontinuity’ and ‘Continuity’ in the Self-description of Estonian Culture**

Ene Kõresaar emphasises that the context of the discontinuity experience and its representation in the stories told in the 1990s, is a broader understanding of Estonian national history and culture – they are treated as a series of discontinuities (Kõresaar 2005: 70). In referring to the works of historians Ea Jansen and Anti Selart, she also says that ‘discontinuity and continuity are opposite poles that have

shaped the approach to Estonian national history' (ibid.). The next section of this article is dedicated to the debates concerning both history and literary science, about the overlapping of the boundaries of Estonian culture and territory, and will show how these discussions are related to the rhetoric of discontinuity and continuity. In general, historians emphasise the continuity of settlement and political inconsistency, which means that Estonian national identity can be seen as a series of discontinuities. Literary scientists deal with external factors that influence culture and result in the discontinuity of Estonian culture.

Archaeologist Andres Tvauri is of the view that the development of a nation cannot be studied based on archaeological data. He argues however, that the settlement of Estonia is considered to be consistent: '[...] there is no doubt that the people who inhabited Estonia in the second half of the first millennium are the direct ancestors of modern-day Estonians' (Tvauri 2012: 21). In popular scientific literature, Estonian culture and territory are similarly related. Indrek Rünkla for example, speaks about the inevitable connection between territory and culture. He argues that: 'territory lives together with the culture developed within it,' and continues: 'Our space as a long-term permanent culture has been shaped and reshaped by acts and stories' (Rünkla 2010: 774–775). In his essay, he highlights the connection of an individual with his culture and territory, and finds all three to be interrelated. Tiit Kärner also starts with a premise that Estonian territory and culture are interrelated, asking: 'What will happen in a multicultural society?' He explains (referring to Juri Lotman's position that culture develops as a closed space), that with a multitude of cultures, territories (cultural spaces) can be separate. According to Kärner, Estonia, too, is characterised by a simultaneous, yet isolated existence of several cultures (Kärner 2010: 819).

Literary scientist Aare Pilv (2008) differentiates between three self-descriptions of Estonian culture: interruption (periods of independence alternating with periods of foreign cultural influence); existentiality (ethnic nationality or conservation of a nation – opposition to the fear of extinction); and self-colonialism (developing one's own culture by modelling on 'others', e.g. Western Europe). All of these concepts are related to each other by the question of 'self' and 'others'. The concept of discontinuity requires preserving the self – a situation in which culture is 'interrupted' with regard to the 'other' (Pilv 2008: 71). Pilv writes in his article *Estonia of existence* that these concepts were developed based on literature and the results were extended to culture as a whole (Pilv 2011: 851). His criticism refers to the fact that the role of literature in shaping the Estonian mentality is not as fundamental and exclusive as the authors he has analysed suggest. I agree with the argument that trends in literature do not explain all aspects of the self-description of Estonian culture, and believe that Aare Pilv has reached a conclusion that goes beyond literature:

We can ask what is the purpose of the existence of nations – what is the achievement or purpose that justifies their existence. [...] If we ask that question about Estonians,



the first answer is: we have lived here for more than 5,000 years; we survived slavery and Soviet occupation; in a word, we survived, we persevered and our main achievement is that we exist (Pilv 2011: 855).

Time and again, researchers come to the conclusion that it is continuity that is most valued from the point of view of Estonian culture.

Beyond discussions about literature, Hasso Krull's concept of a 'culture of interruption' is referred to mainly in order to emphasise the controversial nature of recollections gathered in Estonia in the 1990s (Kõresaar 2005: 64, 70–71; Aarelaid-Tart 2012: 147). The referred work by Hasso Krull includes his essays on literature in which he analyses the connection of Estonian-language printed works with world literature. He deals with inter-cultural dialogue rather than political changes (although they are of course related). In his collection of essays, he mentions the political aspect of the 'culture of interruption' of the 1990s. At the same time, he emphasises continuity: 'We have to remember that the concept of interruption does not mean a single event. Interruption is always recurring, a series of countless repetitions that creates fluctuation. Therefore, interruption is actually a special case of continuity' (Krull 1996: 7).

Self-description of culture is ideological, created by cultural and sociological means. Because of its ideological nature, it does not necessarily reflect the actual situation, as is also argued by Aare Pilv in his article. He says that literature often heroizes the nation because it is a more 'constructive' idea than the actual practices of survival (Pilv 2011: 855). It should be borne in mind however, that besides being ideological, the self-description of culture is not homogeneous: the same situations can be represented differently. The next question is: how the above self-descriptions that are prevalent among the Estonian general public are disclosed in the life histories of common people.

### **The 1940s and the Soviet Regime in the Context of 'Discontinuity' and 'Continuity': Based on Estonian Life Histories**

To enable closer study I chose real life narratives from the Estonian Life Histories collection (EKLA f 350). Also, papers by other life history researchers (including those referred to herein), are based on the same collection. The research study by Ene Kõresaar was based on one hundred stories from the Estonian Life Histories collection. The criteria for selecting the stories was that the narrators went to school in the Republic of Estonia, i.e. before the 1940s coup; and that their stories reflected the conflict characteristic to the Estonian society of the end of the 1980s (Kõresaar 2005: 18, 25–29). Aili Aarelaid-Tart used both published memoirs and biographical interviews that she herself had conducted, and explored the role of official political discourses in the memoirs (Aarelaid-Tart 2012: 142). The research by Eda Kalmre relies on published memories and materials from the Estonian Folklore Archives, which beside the recordings of rumours and folktales,

include descriptions of the milieu of the period when the stories were in circulation (Kalmre 2007: 23–24). Narratives of the same topic can be found among the texts of the Estonian Life Histories collection (EKLA f 350v, 27; EKLA f 350, 1077). The texts that I observe are basically of the same kind. However, I do not proceed from the responses in life stories to topics that are in the public foreground (e.g. in the press, politicians' speeches, or in schools), nor the milieu of descriptions accompanied by rumours. Rather I chose three stories to explore how the topical problems spontaneously emerge in them. This enabled me to follow how the topic of continuity and discontinuity is unconsciously revealed in the stories and to ask what causes the emergence of one method of description or the other. I limited the selection of texts firstly to the region, and then to the time and circumstances of narrating.

I have analysed the life histories of the residents of Kohtla-Järve, an industrial town in north-eastern Estonia.<sup>3</sup> The collection of life histories (EKLA f 350) includes about 500 narratives related to Kohtla-Järve and the surrounding region, and I have chosen three of those narratives for more detailed analysis. Two related aspects are important in these narratives: firstly, each of the three narrators represents a different generation (the time frames of their life histories are also different); secondly, the times (and the motives) of telling the stories are also different.

One of the narrators was born in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He entered the political turmoil of the 1940s as a fully developed personality and was able to compare his experiences as an adult in both the pre-Soviet and Soviet time of Estonia. In 1993, he contributed four volumes of memoirs to the Estonian Cultural History Archives that he had written in the period between 1979 and 1980 (EKLA f 350, 289 I–IV). Because his memoirs were solely written for his own purpose, they do not constitute a systematic account of his life story. The memoirs consist of descriptions of selected events and situations, and the results of his research into local history. Unlike other narratives discussed here, his contribution was not influenced by post-Soviet public discourses or any questions asked by researchers.

The second narrator was born in 1926 on the island of Saaremaa, the largest island of Estonia. He got a job in the mines of Kohtla-Järve in 1948, after completing his vocational training. As a young person, he endured many hardships that were visited on him and his family by political events (for example, being arrested together with his family on the eve of WW2 and serving on the 'wrong side' during the war), but in the parts describing his adult life he focusses on adapting to life under Soviet rule. The narrative is dated 1997 and was contributed to the archives in response to a collection project *My destiny and the destiny of those close to me in the labyrinths of history*. The author has offered a story full of adventures to readers, titled: *The life and adventures of a Saaremaa man* (EKLA f 350, 643).

The third narrator is a woman who was born in 1965 in Kohtla-Järve. She started her independent life away from her town of birth but returned in the 1990s. Her story was contributed in response to a call for contributions published by the



archives in 2001 (EKLA f 350, 1080). The theme of the collection campaign of 2001 was *My life and the life of my family in the Estonian SSR and the Estonian Republic*, which brings to the fore the correlation between different ‘times’. Since the narrator has no first-hand experience of the changes of the 1940s, an important but different aspect is raised, in which she reflects on her childhood and youth but always within the framework of the Soviet regime.

While the first contribution represents recollections of selected moments in the life of the narrator and texts on local history and the second narrative is an autobiographic adventure story, the third is built on the question raised by researchers: how to compare everyday life during and after the Soviet time. I will discuss the narratives through the following key terms: monument, relations between people, state border and the definition of ‘times’. Such a representation is based on the episodes extracted from the analysed life histories. For each key word, I will also refer to the discontinuity and continuity that relates to these descriptions.

### **Monument as a Symbol of Discontinuity and Continuity**

The narrative of the person who was born at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century includes an episode in which the narrator describes the erection of a monument in Jõhvi,<sup>4</sup> a small mining town in north-eastern Estonia, which was dedicated to fighters in the Estonian War of Independence.<sup>5</sup> The motif of the destruction of monuments symbolising Estonia’s independence is one of the markers in the study by Ene Kõresaar that refers to the rhetoric of discontinuity (Kõresaar 2005: 86–91). The narrative introduces the author of the monument – a local sculptor. Then the narrator describes the monument depicting the battle of Narva, which occurred on the Estonian- Russian border. The battle between Estonian troops and the Red Army took place in December 1919 and was one of the most important battles of the War of Independence. The plaque was designed to depict soldiers forcing their way towards the east, i.e. towards Russia. During the process of casting, the image on the plaque was reversed: the troops were facing west, which greatly annoyed the participants of the War of Independence. The narrator writes that he tried to cheer up the sculptor: ‘[...] ah, don’t worry, it means that they are attacking the Landeswehr<sup>6</sup>’ (EKLA f 350, 289-I, p. 34). This illustrates Estonia’s position between east and west: on the one hand, a fight against the Soviets (in which the troops are facing east), and on the other hand, a centuries-old antagonism with the Baltic Germans who had a higher place in the social hierarchy (and where the rifles are pointing west).<sup>7</sup>

The narrator goes on to describe at length the maintenance works that were done in the town in connection with the construction of the monument and reflects on the differences between a rural community and a modern urban environment.



The town of Jõhvi and Jõhvi Church in 1924. Photo: ERM Fk 461:86.



Monument to the War of Independence in Jõhvi in the 1930s.  
Photo: ERM Fk 2813:76.

Because the recollections not only include reflections on urban design (which is a politically neutral subject), but also the description of a symbol of independent Estonia – a monument dedicated to the War of Independence – it is quite logical that the subsequent description of the green area around the monument is presented in a political context:

Six years passed and when the Soviets came, the monument was demolished and the pieces taken away. When the Germans came, they gave permission to restore the monument. The stones were scratched and crumbling but the monument was in its place again. It remained in place for four years and then the Soviets returned and had the monument completely destroyed. (EKLA f 350, 289-I, p. 34).

The description of the monument's 'life' in the 1940s is typical in the context of Estonian life histories and studies into local history: the demolishing of something that existed, restoration, demolition, etc.<sup>8</sup> The rhetoric is also important: the (Russians, Germans, the Soviet regime, etc.) 'came' or 'arrived', meaning that the rulers 'came' and 'left' but the place remained. I concluded from such descriptions that discontinuity is perceived with regard to politics rather than one's country/neighbourhood: '[...] life histories describe political changes as interruptions; any changes in the environment or neighbourhood refer to continuity in which changes (positive or negative) form a part of natural progress. This indicates that the environment is perceived in recollections as more stable compared with experiences caused by political changes' (Jaago 2011d: 108). The analysed text supports the hypothesis that Estonia is perceived as a whole in terms of both territory and mentality, irrespective of the instability of authorities and political situations.

What about 'discontinuity'? On one hand, the episode describing the fate of the monument provides an opportunity to interpret it as a story of discontinuity: the Soviet regime resulted in the destruction of national symbols. On the other hand, the narrative is about recurring events, which obscures discontinuity (i.e. the destruction of the monument). The narrator describes the development of events or situations in different political contexts rather than contrasting situations or authorities. Therefore, it is more about continuity than discontinuity. How can this phenomenon be explained? According to Juri Lotman, any events that have created discontinuity can be retrospectively interpreted as natural progress (Lotman 1992/2009: 16–17). In the above-mentioned memoirs, the story of the monument is presented as a series of chronological events, which creates an impression of continuity. This explanation is inferred from psychological studies into relations between autobiographical narrating (memory) and self-continuity. The physical environment is perceived as the same, even when the mental environment changes. It is based on continuous contact with the same albeit changing place that creates continuous closeness. Continuous contact and closeness in turn create the accumulation of experiences that are represented in narratives as a continuous experience (Bluck & Alea 2008: 56–57). In the present example, it refers to recol-

lections related to the monument from both the 1930s and 1940s – a period during which the political regime changed four times.

### **Change in Interpersonal Relationships as an Indicator of Political Changes**

Besides environmental and political changes, the story about the monument represents the fates of the relevant local people. The narrator informs the reader that both the designer of the monument and the person who organised the construction had passed away before the regime changed, and therefore they both escaped the psychological or real punishment that the change of the regime would have brought upon them (EKLA f 350, 289-I, p. 34).

The fates of the people who entered the period of regime change are, in my opinion, represented by the narrator in the context of continuity. In his recollections of his school years, he tells about the fate of his religious education teacher: he was executed in the first year of Soviet rule. The narrator explains this as *'personal persecution at the beginning of Soviet rule'*. In the second part of his memoirs, he describes the death of the same man as the settling of accounts between local people. He does not have any proof but he uses the phrase: 'So they said' (EKLA f 350, 289-II, p. 28). Because the person concerned is quite well known to the Estonian public, it is easy to conclude (based on the information from biographical lexicons and from interviews with local people) that the recollections are not a witness statement. The narrator's admission 'so they said' means that the matter was discussed by people. The reason for this is probably that rather than recording a situation, he associated it with emotions and moral aspects (e.g. empathy, sense of justice), as well as with practical needs (how to behave when relations between people have changed). In his recollections, the discussion of a person's fate is more important than the event itself.

Established relationships continue irrespective of a change of power, even if the roles of people in society change. Changes in role start to shape the fates of relevant people. Therefore, his narrative is carried by the idea that the regime changes the (power) relations between people rather than acting against them as an independent force.

A similar approach to the effect of changing regimes on people's relationships is used in the second narrative. The author (a man born in 1926 on the island of Saaremaa) represents the course of events in two ways. On the one hand, he mentions that WW2 began on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939. He adds, however, that most people were not conscious of the fact that a war had begun. On the other hand, he describes changes in everyday life as a series of separate events during a longer period. The signs of changes are either visual (red flags and banners) or changed relations between people (their roles in the community). This means that political changes were perceived at the level of everyday relations, not just by acknowledging overall historical events. Further information about this latter aspect is added

in the course of narrating by connecting his story with historical events. However, the more often everyday life is depicted in the context of historical events (for example, when attention is focused on the establishment of Soviet rule in Estonia), the further away the author moves from everyday experiences.<sup>9</sup>

When talking about a later period, during which the Soviet regime had already become commonplace, the narrator paints a different picture of relations between people. In a situation where everyday life was politicised, it was not clear what the real motives were of people who talked about life or listened to others. The narrator describes situations in which he felt he had to be cautious. For example, in a story about a Siberian Russian who had been a prisoner of war, and was subsequently imprisoned after the war by the Soviet authorities and sent to work in the mines of Kohtla-Järve:

I am guilty of surviving the [German] prison camp, [...] he swore using foul language as is common among the Russians. He said that there were many people like him working in the mines. It was dangerous to listen to his swearing. NKVD<sup>10</sup> informers were everywhere and it was better to make a quick exit and not to listen to him. (EKLA f 350, 643, p. 68).

The narrator uses the expressions ‘informer’ whose stories were ‘dangerous to listen to’ and that ‘it was better to make a quick exit’ to escape those stories. At the same time, it is not clear what the real motive of telling those stories was. The narrator himself was also suspected of being an informer when he visited his brother abroad in 1966. His brother took him to the Estonian House in New York – a gathering place for the local Estonian community. The narrator’s brother warned him, and he noticed it himself, that he was suspected of being an agent of the Soviet authorities. For that reason, some people (including some of his childhood friends) were reluctant to talk to him (EKLA 350, 643, p. 75).

It appears that when describing the changes of political regime, the narrators focus on changes in human relations. The reason for the second narrator also using the theme of changing relationships when talking about a stable period is an extraordinary situation – a visit abroad during the Cold War. This means that the theme of relationships is shaped by the political framework.

It appears from the above that descriptions of human relations can be interpreted in the context of continuity. In the first story, established relationships continue after political changes, yet the actions arising from those relationships are coloured by the new political context (persecution that leads to killing). Again, the level of discontinuity or continuity is obvious in the representation and both aspects are closely intertwined in the narrated reality. According to Juri Lotman: ‘In reality, these represent two parts of a unified, integrated mechanism and its synchronic structure, and the aggression of one does not subdue but, rather, stimulates the development of the opposite tendency’ (Lotman 1992/2009: 12). The fact that the theme of human relations is brought to the fore in descriptions of general social life may, according to Lotman, refer to a situation of



discontinuity/continuity in real life. According to Lotman, a period of discontinuity is also characterised, besides a rapid development of events, by the role of an individual becoming more important (Lotman 1992/2009: 15). Therefore, in these stories continuity is achieved retrospectively by describing the past events as a continuous passing of time.

### **The Soviet Border as a ‘Discontinuity’**

A separate theme in recollections of the Soviet time is that of ‘abroad’ (relatives living in the West, visits, tourism), where ‘abroad’ was behind the closely guarded state border. The border could only be crossed under the strict control of the authorities. This component was analysed in the third story told by a woman who was born in 1965. One of the advantages of the collapse of the Soviet Union was: ‘the borders are open now; I have seen most of Europe’ (EKLA f 350, 1080). As a remark, it should be mentioned that while 1991, for Estonians, was the year when the borders disappeared (as featured in the above narrative), in the life histories told by the Russians, the collapse of the Soviet Union is associated with the creation of borders (for example, ‘when we lived in the Soviet Union, we did not know what a ‘border’ or a ‘visa’ was’) (see Jaago 2011b: 100). Finding relatives and travelling abroad (as a tourist or by invitation) is one of the chapters in the stories about the Soviet time. People describe their anxiety (will I get permission to travel abroad?) and travel impressions. A separate theme is crossing the Soviet border and meeting Soviet border guards – stereotypical protectors of the regime. For example:

It was clear without words where we had arrived – border guards [...] looked so grim-faced as if they were meeting a planeload of enemies. [...] My suitcases were searched thoroughly and when nothing was found they asked where I had hidden it. [When the narrator asked what they were looking for, he was told that he was suspected of bringing pornographic literature into the country.] (EKLA f 350, 643, p. 80).

The Soviet border represents discontinuity in these stories: it prevented people entering the territory that was perceived as a natural part of their space of movement. It is characteristic that people were treated in their ‘own’ country as enemies who posed a threat to the Soviet regime. The same story describes the consequences of travelling abroad. For example, those who had been abroad were required to share their impressions with their colleagues. It was not strictly compulsory, yet recommended and people were expected to do so. Potential contacts with authorities who checked the mentality and attitudes of those who had been abroad were more complicated, and whether or not one was allowed abroad again depended on how they described their travel experience.

The Soviet time had already stabilised during the period of the events described. There is, however, a clearly distinguishable emergency situation. On the one hand, there is confrontation between the authorities and the individual (actual

contacts with representatives of the state authority); on the other hand, there is uncertainty as to where and why ‘borders’ emerge (for example, the control of attitudes and mentality at the level of everyday life).

### **Delineation of ‘Times’ as a Technique of Joining Discontinuities**

The contributor who was born in 1965 cannot have had any first-hand recollections about the changes of the 1940s. Since she contributed her story as a response to the archives’ call for contributions, her narrative is not based on the development of events over time. In her story, she correlates memories of everyday life with a political framework. She offers episodes from her childhood – playing hide-and-seek in a maize field, boiling heads of maize in salty water and eating them together with friends. At the same time, she is connecting those everyday episodes with more general episodes of history that were put later into words: ‘It was the Khrushchev time when maize was cultivated everywhere, even in Estonia.’ For a person familiar with the Estonian cultural context, these are concrete hints about people’s attitudes towards the Soviet Union and towards what was taught at school. When we join three aspects – the narrator’s age (she was born in 1965), her childhood games in a maize field, and associating maize with the ‘Khrushchev time’ –, we can see a discrepancy. Nikita Khrushchev came to power after Stalin’s death in 1953. Although maize had been grown in Estonia since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the widespread planting of maize is associated with Khrushchev’s agricultural policy (Kalling 2009). After Khrushchev was ousted from power in 1964, the compulsory cultivation of maize was abolished. The narrator was born a year after the ‘Khrushchev time’ had ended, yet she associates a field of maize with that exact party leader and head of state.

The line between the Soviet period and the period of independence is marked in her story by another marker that is quite widespread in life histories – a shortage of goods (‘deficit’). The permanent shortage of goods was characteristic of the Soviet time but an unknown phenomenon before and after: ‘The elections and public holidays were the greatest. Then you could buy goods that were in short supply and see a film free of charge. In the evening, there was a dance party’ (EKLA f 350, 1028, p. 1).

Ene Kõresaar has analysed the theme of ‘deficit’ as one of the most characteristic features of the life histories that describe the Soviet time. She has defined shortage as ‘a lack of and restrictions on goods and services’ (Kõresaar 2003: 111). In everyday life, shortage was associated with a lack of choice and long queues. The goods in short supply were foodstuffs and industrial goods, including household electronics, clothes and goods that were needed on special occasions (e.g. weddings and funerals) – none of these was freely available. Besides referring to the period-specific shortage of goods, the above episode is characterised on the one hand by conventionality and commonness (people met and had a party), and on the other hand put into a political context (elections, public holidays).

A more indirect line between the Soviet time and the times before and after is drawn by the descriptions of public urban space (maintenance, behaviour). The recollections include descriptions of both how green areas and parks were created in mining towns in the 1930s, and how they were destroyed in the 1940s and 1950s (Jaago 2004: 54–58; 2012: 27). The episode concerning a monument discussed a border between rural society and creating a modern urban space, including a description of the maintenance works done in the town in the 1930s. Together with the construction of the monument, the muddy and untidy square in front of the church that had been used to tie horses was redesigned and tidied up (EKLA f 350, 289–I, p. 34). The second story (narrated by a man born in 1926) includes recollections from the early years of the Soviet rule in Kohtla-Järve: ‘When our lorry stopped in the muddy central square of the town, the first thing we saw besides puddles was a man staggering out of a beer shop characteristic of the time’ (EKLA f 350, 643, p. 67).

The author of the third story (a woman born in 1965 in the mining region of Kohtla-Järve), also writes about alcohol problems, in both her own family and in public places. She also mentions the shabby beer shops that were characteristic of the time and stood out among other buildings (EKLA f 350: 1080, 3).

The analysis of the life stories reveals that the more unequivocally the narrator has described the line between the Soviet time and the time of independence, the more obvious the discontinuity is. Among the stories analysed above, this is most clear in the narrative of the woman born in 1965. She not only describes past events but also puts them in a political context (associating the game of hide-and-seek with Khrushchev) or, vice versa, refers to the commonness of political events (public holidays and elections as a pleasant opportunity to meet acquaintances and neighbours). A different method of delineating ‘times’ requires a comparison of contexts, where events and situations characterising a certain epoch in one story are supplemented by the stories of other narrators. A comparison of life stories also showed that discontinuity and continuity as methods of narrating are connected with other methods of telling a story: for example, a comparison may show discontinuity but when the events and situations are lined up, the result is continuity.

## Summary

The life stories reveal the multilevel nature of the border, where from the point of the observer (or more precisely, the observer group), territorial aspects are associated with those of culture. The border approach that is characteristic for the group has evolved over a long period and covers both historical experiences and cultural self-descriptions. The Estonian experience refers to the variability of the state border (i.e. to the alternation of periods of national independence and foreign power). Cultural self-description supports the idea of the stability of borders



(Estonia as the home of the nation). Estonians experienced the Soviet Union however, without leaving Estonia. This historical situation gave rise to a question about the relation between the borders of Estonian territory, the borders of cultural space and state borders, concentrating on the key words of ‘discontinuity’ and ‘continuity’.

This article was triggered by an observation that the life histories contributed in the 1990s and 2000s represent controversial views: in some, memories about the 1940s are represented as discontinuity, and in others as continuity. Acknowledging that discontinuity is more associated with political situations, and continuity associated with aspects common to humanity and with descriptions of the home environment, I have analysed and compared three life histories from the same region. The narratives were selected from the collection of Estonian Life Histories (the Estonian Cultural History Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu). The narrators belong to different generations and their stories were told at different times and under different circumstances. My objective was to examine which factors referred to discontinuity and which factors referred to continuity, while the general topic is the variability of state borders and the exchange of power in Estonia.

The analysis indicated that discontinuity and continuity can be seen initially at the level of events, periods and situations; then at the level of the method of narration (an adventure story, a study, a story built on comparison); and lastly from the perspective of the researcher (how does the researcher contextualise the analysed texts).

In real life, the interrupting aspects and the aspects creating consistency in life occur simultaneously, and narrators can highlight both aspects in their recollections. If a narrator creates a consistent picture of the past, continuity is brought to the fore. Such a description is supported by the integrity of the narrator’s image of self, and his/her self-continuity. If the narrator lived in the same physical environment and experienced changes in the same neighbourhood (place), these fuse into layers of experiences and memories. Such layers create a picture in the mind of a reader (listener) of a place that is constantly changing but yet still remains the same. If the narrator emphasises differences, by contrasting and comparing, he/she creates an impression of discontinuity. For example, those narrators who had first-hand experience of the events tended to describe more everyday life and human relations. However, the narrator who did not have first-hand experience of the events of the 1940s, uses the scheme proposed by researchers (putting her recollections into a political context).

Is it possible to draw conclusions about the continuity or discontinuity of a situation (period or series of events) from recollections of the past presented as continuity or discontinuity? An indicator could be the way that narrators have described rapid changes and the new (unfamiliar) development of events. We can assume that the period (or the part describing the period) was perceived as discon-

tinuity. The same happens when the narrator describes the increasing importance of human relations at a community level, especially when political changes gave certain members of the community the power to shape the fate of others.

Whether it is discontinuity or continuity that is brought to the fore depends on the researcher's choice. What is important in the examples presented in this article is the connection between events described in life histories and the topics discussed at the same time in public (and especially in politics). Certain topics are not important for the public (such as gossip) and therefore the researcher is not able to connect the topics with each other in the process of recollection. When certain research findings are accepted as undisputable however, there is a risk that memories are schematised. For example, if an analysis is based on the interrelation between public discussions and the method of narrating, ignoring other methods that seem less important (for example, human relations compared to political opinions) or unreliable commentary (such as the rumours and urban legends about sausage factories using human flesh) in the context of public discourse. When studying memories and life histories, it is thus important to bear in mind that although the narrator's approach to the border can be attributed to a general historical and ideological background, the representations of the past may vary significantly.

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### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The ways in which Estonian culture, territory and state borders are put on the subjective map of Estonian narrators and those who immigrated to Estonia during the Soviet time do not overlap. For example, autobiographical texts contributed by Russian-speaking narrators to the collection of Estonian Life Histories (EKLA f 350) indicate that the authors identify themselves with two places and the togetherness of the republics of the Soviet Union has an important role in their stories. One of the most extreme examples is the life history submitted by a woman who was born in 1935. She has titled her autobiography '*We lived in the Soviet Un-*

- ion' and her description of events and situations is based on Soviet identity (EKLA f 350v, 33). Even if the Russophone authors define Estonia in their narratives as an independent entity, it is seen as a country that 'emerged' in 1991 as a result of events that subjectively altered the world map (borders were drawn where they should not be) and led to problems related to citizenship. Estonian culture and territory are not associated with each other in those stories. Estonia is either a concrete place of residence in Valga, Kohtla-Järve or elsewhere (a level lower than the country) or one of the republics of the Soviet Union, a region in the European Union or in the historical 'Baltics' (a level higher than the country) (Jaago 2011a: 146–147).
- <sup>2</sup> In treatments of history, political relations between Estonia and the Soviet Union are described using precise timelines, e.g. 'When Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union on 17 June 1940 and incorporated in the Union on 6 August 1940, the border between Estonia and Russia was not altered.' (Nutt 2010: 77). In memories and life histories, 'the 1940s' is a metaphorical expression and embraces several aspects of the relationship between Estonia and the Soviet Union (including war and the post-war period, repressions, the creation of kolhozes, etc.).
- <sup>3</sup> The texts from Kohtla-Järve, an industrial town in north-eastern Estonia, were selected in connection with my more extensive study of the narrative traditions of the region. This article forms a part of my study on Kohtla-Järve within the project 'Writing Cultures and Traditions at Borders': *Kohtla-Järve as a multicultural environment in the context of place identity and interpreting the past* (Jaago 2011b), and on multiculturalism at community and family levels (Jaago 2011c and Jaago 2012, respectively).
- <sup>4</sup> The neighbouring towns of Kohtla-Järve (granted town status in 1946) and Jõhvi (granted town status in 1938) are located in north-eastern Estonia, about 50 km from the border between Estonia and Russia (following the Narva River). Jõhvi was a district of Kohtla-Järve during the Soviet period. North-eastern settlements (including Kohtla, Järve, and Jõhvi) are first mentioned in written records (*Liber Census Daniae*) in the 1240s (Johansen 1933: 938–941). While Kohtla-Järve was created by merging surrounding villages into a single mining and industrial town, Jõhvi is a historical parish centre. Therefore, *Kohtla-Järve* is more controversial in people's recollections: historically, it was a rural region with a lifestyle characteristic of a village society. Mining and industrial landscapes, together with town houses and a lifestyle characteristic of an industrial town began to emerge gradually in the 1920s. In the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Soviet architecture, multilingualism and a multicultural environment started to prevail. The historical parish centre of Jõhvi on the other hand, has been represented as an urban environment.
- <sup>5</sup> The Estonian War of Independence (28 November 1918 - 2 January 1920) was a defensive campaign of the Estonian Army and its allies against the Soviet Western Front offensive and the aggression of the *Baltische Landeswehr* (local Baltic German forces).
- <sup>6</sup> *Baltische Landeswehr* (in Estonian: Landesveer) – The Baltic land defence was established by the Baltic Germans in 1918 in Latvia with the approval of the German occupation forces in order to fight Russian Bolsheviks. The Estonians fought the Landeswehr on their southern border, not in Narva, which is located on the eastern border.
- <sup>7</sup> In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was the Soviet regime and the Soviet Union (which imposed and represented it) – that were considered to be 'alien'. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century however, the 'aliens' were our social neighbours, such as the Baltic Germans and clerics who were a power in the land (Kruus 2005: 67–87). This aspect comes forward in connection with another recollection by the same author – a conflict between a pro-German teacher and Estonian students in an upper secondary school in the late 1920s (EKLA f 350, 289-I, p. 6–9).

- <sup>8</sup> The monument was inaugurated on 10 July 1935; it was demolished by local communists and Red Army mine specialists on 25 October 1940; restored from fragments on 16 August 1942; completely destroyed in 1945; restored and re-inaugurated on 23 June 1993 (Lehtmets 2004: 68–69).
- <sup>9</sup> It is also important that at the level of everyday life, Soviet rule was not established in Estonia on a concrete date that can be found in the calendar. It is associated with a treaty of mutual assistance signed between Soviet Russia and Estonia in September 1939, and the establishment of Soviet military bases on the territory of the Republic of Estonia. Local people felt the presence of a foreign power and witnessed the Red Army's attacks on Finland during the Winter War (e.g. EKLA f 350, 921). In larger towns, people witnessed the communist coup d'état on 21 June 1940 (e.g. EKLA f 350, 479). The arrests and mass deportations of people in June 1941 concerned close family and are, therefore, more closely associated with the establishment of Soviet rule.
- <sup>10</sup> The NKVD (acronym for the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) was the national and internal security authority of the Soviet Union (responsible for the maintenance of law and order, supervision of people's political views, intelligence activities, prisons, and the running of forced labour camps).

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## Non-Russian Language Space and Border in Russian Karelian Literature

By Tuulikki Kurki

### Abstract

This article examines Finnish language literature in Russian Karelia on the Russian–Finnish national borderland from the 1940s until the 1970s. It focuses on the concepts of the non-Russian language space and border that are constructed and studied in the context of three novels: *Iira* (1947), *Tiny White Bird* (1961), and *We Karelians* (1971). The article claims that the non-Russian language space and the national border started to be understood differently from the official degrees dictated by Moscow, as found in literature already from the late 1950s and early 1960s. From the 1950s onwards, the historical, linguistic, and cultural roots across the national border and the Finnish population were allowed to be recognized in literature. Furthermore, this article claims that in the 1970s, literature was able to represent such regional history, and also the closeness and permeability of the national border that influenced the lives of the Soviet Karelian non-Russian speaking population and their identity formation. This led to different ideas of the national border, in which the border and its functions and meanings became gradually more multi-voiced, ambivalent and controversial, in comparison to the conceptualization of the border as presenting a strict, impermeable boundary.

**Keywords:** Finnish language literature, Soviet Karelia, Russian Karelia, border, space

## Introduction

This article examines Finnish language literature in Russian Karelia (former Soviet Karelia) at the Russian Finnish national borderland (see map 1), and focuses on the concepts of non-Russian language space and border that are constructed in the studied literature.

Finnish language literature is one of the non-Russian language literatures established in the Soviet Union in the 1920s. At this time, the Finnish language, in addition to Russian, was made the language of local administration, education and culture for the non-Russian speaking<sup>1</sup> population in Soviet Karelia (Kangaspuro 2000: 100–101). Although during the Soviet era, the Finnish language linguistically and socially dominated the other Finno-Ugric languages (such as Karelian and Vepsian), its position as an official language of Soviet Karelia was not stable and varied according to changes in the political atmosphere (Kangaspuro 2000: 11–12; Kangaspuro 2002: 31; Kruhse & Uitto 2008: 54–55). There were two reasons contributing to the dominant position of the Finnish language. First, the political immigrants who had moved from Finland to the Soviet Union held the important positions in the local administration in the Soviet Karelia from the 1920s until the mid-1930s. Second, the Bolshevik nationality policy favoured the use of local languages in local administration and education in the 1920s (Slezkine 1994: 419–420). The dominating position of the Finnish language among the non-Russian speaking population was maintained throughout the Soviet era, with the exception of the last few years of the 1930s when the use of the Finnish language was banned for political reasons. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, writing and publishing in Finnish have continued in post-Soviet Karelia, although in modest quantities.

The presence of the national border has influenced the development of Finnish language literature in Russian Karelia in many ways. Firstly, linguistic, cultural, and historical connections across the Finnish-Russian national border have existed



Map 1: Russian Karelia at the Finnish Russian national borderland. © Tuulikki Kurki.

for centuries, and the border has permitted Finnish political emigrants to join the Finnish language literature field in Soviet Karelia (Kokkonen 2002; Palmgren 1984; Ylikangas 2004). On the other hand, during the oppressive years of Soviet totalitarianism, the border functioned as an impermeable boundary which aimed at protecting the Soviet Union and its communist ideology from the slightest influences of bourgeois culture. The political leadership in the Soviet Union regarded the borderland population as unable to choose their own ideological side correctly, and therefore they had to be protected against foreign influence (Chandler 1998: 4–5). This background raises two questions which this article focuses on. First of all, how is the so-called non-Russian language space constructed in the Finnish language literature of the Finnish-Soviet Union national borderland? Second, how have the literary representations of the Finnish-Soviet Union national border as an element of the non-Russian language space changed in literature? In this article, the term “non-Russian” is preferred instead of “Finnish”, because in Soviet Karelia, several ethnic-national groups such as Finns, Karelians, and Veps used the Finnish language, and furthermore, Finnish language literature also applied elements of the Karelian language.

The article focuses on the time period from the late 1940s until the 1970s. During this period, the representations of the Finnish-Soviet national border changed from being an impermeable separating boundary between East and West, to becoming a more ambiguous and multivalent border which already reflected the changes that took place during Perestroika and the immediate post-Soviet years. Consequently, during this time, the non-Russian language space was constructed in close connection with Moscow. This article claims that the non-Russian language space and the national border started to be understood differently from the official degrees dictated by Moscow, as found in literature already from the late 1950s and early 1960s. From the 1950s onwards, the historical, linguistic, and cultural roots across the national border and the Finnish population were allowed to be recognized in literature. In spite of this however, the ideological and societal differences on each side of the border were still strongly contrasted and opposed to each other. This article further claims that in the 1970s, literature was able to represent such regional history, and also the closeness and permeability of the national border that influenced the lives of the Soviet Karelian non-Russian speaking population and their identity formation. This was followed by different ideas of the national border, in which the border, its functions and meanings became gradually more multi-voiced, ambivalent and controversial. During the post-Soviet era, the national border has become one of the central factors that influences the development of the non-Russian language space and identity in post-Soviet Karelia. Although the construction of the non-Russian language space and identity are closely linked with each other, the concept of identity construction is not discussed in this article.

The conceptual framework of this article is based on cultural anthropology and new spatial history research on place, space, and borders (Gupta & Ferguson 1992; Bassin et al. 2010; Lefebvre 2012). In cultural anthropology, “space” is often defined as “a place” which is made meaningful and significant for a group of people (Gupta & Ferguson 1992: 11). In new spatial history research, space is defined both as an arena for historical events and as a construct of historical events. In other words, in addition to its geographical dimension, space has a mentally and socially constructed dimension that is both subjective and debatable (Bassin et al. 2010: 6–8; Lefebvre 2012: 13–16). Therefore, space is understood as a more abstract entity than a place. Often such terms as “a literary space” or “linguistic space” are used (Hernández 2009: 4, 8), while the term “place” is often “involved with embodiment: it is occupied and experienced” (Bassin et al. 2010: 11).

The question about who can turn a place to a meaningful space includes a question of power, that in turn is established through verbal struggle. Words can be seen as the means of battle of representations of the space and of material control over the space (Hernández 2009: 8). When the Soviet Union was formed, the central political leadership constructed the Soviet space, its territorial unity, and established and enforced the official views of shared history and values among the hundreds of different linguistic, cultural, and ethnic groups in the Soviet Union (Hirsch 2005: 5–9). The ideas of territorial unity, shared history and common values were enforced through political iconography, grand narratives, and metaphors which were ritualistically repeated in literature, art, film, and mass media since the 1920s (Bonnell 1997; Brooks 2001; Dobrenko 2008). Although, the largest ethnic-national groups were recognized and acknowledged in the Soviet Union, they were merged into the Soviet space, and expected to join communism and the “universal” Soviet culture (Slezkine 1994: 419–420). In this context, the representations of the non-Russian language groups were guided and directed from above by the Communist Party and therefore became very unanimous (Dobrenko 2008; Baločkaitė 2013).

In this article, the non-Russian language space means a discursively constructed regional, temporal and social unity (such as the ideas of shared region, history and values) of a non-Russian language group in Soviet Karelia at the Finnish-Soviet national borderland. On one hand, this non-Russian language space was merged into the Soviet space. On the other hand, it included elements that transgressed the borders of the Soviet space. These transgressions become evident when examining the position of Soviet Karelia at the national borderland. Throughout its history, Soviet Karelia as a borderland has had many cultural, linguistic and administrative ties with its neighbouring country, Finland. The proximity of the national border has been influential either directly or through negation, for example in the development of the Finnish language literature and its representations of the borderland area in Soviet Karelia (Ylikangas 2004).<sup>2</sup> Re-

gionally at the micro-level, the border and border crossings were actively present in the lives of the borderland population. Therefore, it is justified to define the non-Russian language space at the Soviet borderland as being debatable and multi-voiced. It is a space where the varied and conflicting cultural, political and economic interests of the place confront each other, and the space is under constant re-negotiation.

The research material of this article includes one short story and two novels which address the questions of national border, border-crossing, and the non-Russian population (Karelian or Finnish) in Soviet Karelia. The selected works represent some of the most recognized Finnish language works of their own time. They also follow the canon of Socialist Realism, and therefore reflect the dominating literature trends and political opinions surrounding the national border, border crossing, and the non-Russian population. Furthermore, according to publication catalogues, the annual number of published prose fiction was rather low during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the average number of published prose was 1–2 novels per year (translations not included). Therefore, relatively few novels are available to adequately reflect the characteristics of the published literary works during each studied time period. In addition, the authors of the studied works, Karelian born Soviet writers Nikolai Jaakkola (1905–1967) and Antti Timonen (1915–1990) were two leading names in the Finnish language prose literature in Soviet Karelia during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and they offer a good representation of the Finnish language literature field in Soviet Karelia at this time. The first examined work is Nikolai Jaakkola's short story *Iira* (Iira, 1947), which introduces a Karelian woman Iira, a Soviet patriot who becomes imprisoned in a Finnish prison camp during the Second World War. The second novel is Antti Timonen's novel *Tiny White Bird* (Pieni valkosiipi, 1961). It is the story of a Karelian girl Mirja who is taken to Finland during the Second World War, but, returns to Soviet Karelia as a young adult. The third novel is Antti Timonen's *We Karelians* (Me karjalaiset 1971). The main protagonist is a Karelian man named Vasselei who is unsure of his identity and therefore does not have a sense of belonging. In the novel, Vasselei probes his position in relation to Bolshevism, socialism, capitalism, and moves across the border between the Soviet Union and Finland in the early 1920s. In these studied literary works, the non-Russian language space is constructed in relation to the national border, various symbolic borders, and also border-crossings.

In the analysis section, methods of narrative and metaphor analysis are applied. The narrative is understood here as a narrative structure, where events follow each other and form a story (Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 3). Additionally, the concept narrative is "restricted, referring to brief, topically specific stories organized around characters, setting, and plot" (Riessman 2003: 1). In narrative analysis, the non-Russian language space and ideas of the border are studied through the main protagonist's development narrative: how he or she positions him/herself in relation

to the non-Russian language space, Soviet space, national border, border crossings and “the other” on the other side of the border, and also how these positions change in the narrative. Second, the analysis focuses on the central spatial and border related metaphors in each novel, and how they construct ideas of the non-Russian language space and border. Each novel is studied in the context formed by the dominating ideological and political discourses about Soviet space, Soviet identities, national border, Finland and the political West. Therefore the analysis of each novel begins with an introduction to the political and historical context applicable to where the novel was published.

### **Extreme Border and a Non-Existent Non-Russian Language Space**

The Finnish and foreign ideological influences were removed from the Finnish language literature of Soviet Karelia during the ideologically restricted periods of the late 1930s, late 1940s and early 1950s. One politically tight period was the immediate post-war years of the late 1940s when concerted post-war reconstruction work started, and the need to strengthen the country’s ideological unity intensified. The first post-war five-year-plan, launched in 1946, became the most important guideline for reconstruction in all areas of life (Clark 2000: 189). In addition, in external politics the world fell into the so-called Cold War era and was divided into the political East and West, and the subsequent ideological juxtapositions between them became strong (Chandler 1998: 81–82; Gaddis 2007). During the post-war years, Russification tendencies and centralism strengthened (Clark 2000: 150; Clark & Dobrenko 2007: 401). This meant that the expressions of regional nationalism were suffocated and eliminated, and the public sphere in which writers could discuss topical and political concerns in literature became non-existent (d’Encausse 1992: 91–93; Loewenstein 2001; Taubman 2007). Instead, the five-year-plan which stressed Soviet patriotism, the victories of the Red Army during the Second World War, and the ideological divide between the political East and West, became the guide post of literary and cultural life (Ermolaev 1997: 99–102).

Nikolai Jaakkola’s short-story *Iira* (1947) was published within a strictly controlled and politically charged post-war atmosphere. It narrates the story of a young Karelian woman Iira during the Second World War, and the events of the short story are located in the villages and woods of Soviet Karelia. The enemy, Finland, had crossed the national border and had occupied areas in Soviet Karelia. Furthermore, they had established a prison camp. The short story reflects the typical themes of literature in the post-war years determined by the elements of the five-year-plan which have been previously described. The short-story *Iira* constructs Soviet Karelia as an integral part of the spatial, temporal, and social Soviet space. The connection between the main protagonist and the power centre (Mos-



cow) is strong, even though Iira is imprisoned in the enemy's space. Therefore the novel creates interesting dynamics between the Soviet space and the non-Russian language space, and serves to show how this relationship was controlled in literature for political reasons.

The novel *Iira* has five parts: 1) Iira's childhood and the pre-war years; 2) participation in the Second World War at the Karelian front; 3) imprisonment in a Finnish prison camp; 4) her return home; and 5) the beginning of a new life. Each part of the novel defines Iira's position in relation to her homeland and home region, to the ideals and values of the Soviet ideology, to the border, and to the ideological enemy on the other side of the border. This article focuses on parts 3, 4, and 5 of the novel which construct the spatial, temporal, and social dimensions of the non-Russian language space. These dimensions can be identified in Iira's personal development narrative and in the most important spatial metaphor in the novel – the birch tree.

The first turning point in Iira's development narrative is the beginning of the so-called Continuation War<sup>3</sup> between the Soviet Union and Finland in 1941. When Iira reads a newspaper article which encourages Soviet citizens to gather their strength and destroy the enemy, she becomes convinced of her Soviet identity and the coming requirements of the war. She transforms from a Karelian girl into a conscious, self-confident and patriotic Soviet hero, who is extremely determined to serve and defend her home country. Iira pushes her emotions and fears aside, and replaces them with efficient rationality in order to find the best strategies by which to defeat the enemy. Her determination is visible in her war declaration:

Not an inch of the homeland, not a single grain, not a fragment, not even the smallest piece of our people's common wellbeing, not even one piece of the results of our people's co-operation will be given to the enemy.<sup>4</sup> (Jaakkola 1947 part 1: 93–94.)

In Iira's words, there is only one homeland and that is the Soviet Union. Her loyalty belongs to the Soviet Union and its peoples that form one Soviet nation. Homeland is the result of the shared history through which the Soviet Union was built by its people, and no-one is willing to give the slightest piece of it to the enemy. The novel represents Iira as a patriotic Soviet woman who is willing to sacrifice her life and youth for her home country. The Soviet patriotism is linked to the communist ideology and the power centre of Moscow, and is further strengthened when Iira leaves for the front in Soviet Karelia. Physically she recedes from Moscow, but ideologically her connection with it intensifies. This is shown when at the front, Iira sings a patriotic song with her women comrades:

The morning sun lights  
the walls of the Kremlin and makes it beautiful  
so vibrant  
so great  
there is no-one who could beat you  
the country so wide

my Moscow  
there is nothing like you, nothing more valuable than you.<sup>5</sup>

(Jaakkola 1947, part 1: 100–101.)

When the women are singing the song, the sun emerges from behind a cloud and shines on them. The song refers to the pervasive light and life giving power of the sun which was one of the most commonly used elements of the iconography built around Stalin. Stalin's centrality and pervasive effect is represented in the nature metaphors relating to him, of which the most popular were the sun and light (Plamber 2003: 25–27). Furthermore, during Stalin's era, the construction of the Soviet space included an idea that Stalin was the centre around which the Soviet space was organized. Centripetally, the ideologically most important areas were positioned at the center or as close to it as possible, and ideological importance of these areas lessened as the distance from the center grew (Plamber 2003: 20–21). The song also aims to show that there is no ideological distance between the power center and the periphery of the Soviet Union. Thus, the singing and the sun's appearance express a symbolical unity between the Soviet periphery and the ideological power center, Moscow, and its ruler Stalin.

However, Iira's unwavering identity as a Soviet patriot and her closely felt connection with the ideological power center is problematized in the third part of the short story. Finnish soldiers arrest her and take her to a Finnish prison camp – to the enemy's space. Her identity as an ideal Soviet woman and patriot is questioned when the Finnish soldiers interrogate her. The soldiers ask her whether she is a Russian, Karelian, Finn, or whether she represents so-called kindred people to Finns, because Iira can speak Finnish.<sup>6</sup> The idea of kindred people was strongly opposed in the Soviet Union. In the example below, Iira rejects the attempts to define her as a representative of the kindred people to Finns, but the Finnish soldier continues to pressurize her to cross to the “other side”; in other words to become an enemy to the Soviet Union:

Karelian? Yes, I am Karelian, but not your kindred people – she said with a calm and confident voice, stressing the word “your”.  
[...] “You do not understand what is best for you. Come to your senses. Join us, our groups... we have a common language, common origin, common enemy...”<sup>7</sup> (Jaakkola 1947 part 2: 46.)

Iira's doubts are caused not because she feels that a common cultural heritage with Finland makes her a Finn, but rather she doubts her ability to fulfil the requirements of the ideal Soviet woman and patriot. Because the Finnish soldiers have arrested her, for a moment, Iira questions her identity, her sense of belonging in the Soviet space, her loyalty towards her home country, and her own strength. She even considers suicide as a solution to her misery and problematic position in the prison camp:

Fatherland! If you only knew how passionately I love you. Forgive me, if I have somehow, unintentionally offended you... The Red Army soldier never surrenders or

becomes a prisoner. Did I surrender or was I forced to?[...] Nevertheless, it is so painful to be absent from one's army ranks when everyone should keep fighting.<sup>8</sup>  
(Jaakkola 1947, part 2: 44.)

Iira's faith and connection to the power center of Moscow is re-established when she hears another prisoner singing in the Russian language. When listening to the song, Iira finds the defiant and patriotic pride in her again which helps restore her willingness to survive. Finally, when peace arrives, a Red-Army officer with shiny gold Soviet stars on his uniform arrives at the prison camp to release the prisoners, and with his arrival, the connection to her home land, its values and ideals are re-established in Iira's consciousness.

In *Iira*, the war-time non-Russian language space is constructed spatially on the disputed national borderland, where ties with Finland and enemy become visible. However, at the end of the short story, the non-Russian language space re-establishes a strong link with the Soviet Union and returns to the Soviet space. Consequently, the ties across the border are cut off and become meaningless. The link between the power center and the Soviet Karelian periphery is reflected in Iira's character, as well as in her home village to which she returns and subsequently is returned to the Soviet space. After the war, Iira and the villagers are representatives of one non-Russian speaking population of the Soviet fatherland, who together with all Soviet citizens look towards a promising future. The change from wartime hopelessness to post-war hopefulness is expressed in the way in which Iira voices the words "home village" when she arrives home. Iira first sighs "Home village" when she sees her village which has been mostly burned down and destroyed by the enemy. However, when Iira hears sounds of work, of constructing new houses and cutting wood, then the home village creates the sense of belonging and of hope for a better future. Then Iira cries "Home village!" cheerfully and runs towards the new constructions (Jaakkola 1947 part 2: 64). Iira's self-confidence about the ability of the Soviet Union's periphery to defeat all obstacles to gain a glorious future returns.

Metaphorically, the non-Russian language space and Soviet space as a future-oriented homeland are represented through the birch tree metaphor which both begins and ends the short story. At the beginning of the story, the birch is described as being older than any of the villagers and had witnessed all of the events in the village's history. During the Second World War, the birch had been badly damaged and had almost died. The short story ends with a description of a new birch twig that grows from the side of the badly destroyed stump and reaches towards the sun. The birch metaphor, as well as those of trees and roots are fairly popular for regionalizing national and cultural identities (Malkki 1992: 31). In *Iira*, the birch stands for the homeland, life, and hope for a better future. In addition, the birch and the new twig serve as a metaphor for the non-Russian language space within the Soviet space. The destroyed birch and the new twig stand for the idea that the non-Russian language space cannot be destroyed. The stump and the

twig can be also be interpreted as metaphors for the older diminishing generation and the new rising generation, and for the time when new life returns to Soviet Karelia. The new generation looks towards the future and is guided by the sun's light. Thus at the end of the novel, Jaakkola evokes the dominant rhetoric and political image of the unquestioned faith in Soviet ideology under Stalin's guidance.

In *Iira*, the non-Russian language space is neither on its own, nor clearly distinguished from the Soviet space. It is visible only vaguely, and mostly by searching in-between the lines. On one hand, the birch metaphor can be interpreted as representing the development of the Karelian woman, Iira, and on the other hand, it can be seen as a metaphor for the regional history of Soviet Karelia and the collective memory of the non-Russian speaking population; both of which also return to life from the verge of destruction.

The literary critic Raisa Miroljubova (1950) strongly criticized *Iira*. She criticized the idea that Jaakkola had questioned Iira's identity as a patriotic Soviet woman. In addition, she criticized the birch metaphor which she regarded as a completely failed metaphor for a future-oriented Soviet society. According to Miroljubova, Iira and some other characters in the novel follow their biological instincts and emotions, and are therefore not fit to represent the ideal of a rational, alert Soviet patriot. An example of this irrational and uncharacteristic behaviour is Iira's prayer "in God's name" that no-one suffers in a prison camp in the future. Another character in *Iira* prayed to water spirits to save her life, and Miroljubova claimed that these characters were irrational and thus "lowered the moral characteristics" of the Soviet man, which was therefore unacceptable.

Miroljubova's criticism may have been an attempt to reject the expressions of regional nationalism that were politically explosive topics in the late 1940s. The purpose of her criticism may also have been to prevent a regional collective memory emerging from the short story. Strong criticism against prayer supported the idea that the religious ideas of traditional folk (especially if they were expressed in a non-Russian language) did not have any room in the Soviet space, and therefore were unable to be translated into the Soviet nationalist discourse. In addition, allowing positive representations of folk religious elements and collective memories of the non-Russian language people could strengthen the history and regional awareness of the non-Russian language population, which would have violated the ideological principles of the time. Miroljubova's criticism supports the idea that a non-Russian language group could not separate itself from the Soviet space in its literary representations. Similarly, it was barely possible to create literary heroes who would differ from Soviet ideals or who would emphasise a non-Russian ethnic national background.

## **The Border Emerges in the Non-Russian Language Space**

The political and cultural atmosphere changed radically after Stalin's death and Khrushchev's ascendance to power in 1954. First, the nationality policies in the Soviet Union returned to the utopia of one unified Soviet nation. Khrushchev's aim was to solve the nationality questions by "new communism" and the creation of one unified Soviet people. The unity of the Soviet nation would be based on the Russian language spoken by all of its citizens, as the ethnic-national groups in the Soviet states would receive their education in Russian. Furthermore, the nationality policies program redistributed the work force in the Soviet Union, the aim of which was to fuse the different ethnic-national groups together. In this way, Khrushchev's new communism would also erase the questions of inequality between the Soviet nationalities. (d'Encausse 1992: 97–98.)

However, the expressions of regional awareness were allowed more room in public discourse than previously during Stalin's era. Right after Khrushchev's ascendance to power, the new political trends allowed the non-Russian language groups in the Soviet states to express economic and cultural interests that were in conflict with the interests of other Soviet states and centralism (Simon 1991: 8). In addition, the ethnic-national groups were able to strengthen and advance their own national languages, values and life-style that also strengthened the ethnic-national consciousness. This in turn positively influenced the development of non-Russian language literatures (Simon 1991: 239–246). Another sign of the growing versatility of values in literature was the appearance of the so-called village prose which saw the depiction of regional, traditional village life as valuable (Parthé 1992: 107). Still, during the post-Stalin era, the literary criticism was ambivalent towards the representations of non-Russian language and ethnic-national features in literature: on one hand they were required, but on the other hand, they were seen as factors that threatened the unity of the Soviet identity (Miroľjubova 1950: 112–122; Bassin & Kelly 2012: 1–6). However, the permissive atmosphere quickly tightened in the late 1950s, as expressions of regional nationalism had negative consequences to Khrushchev and his ideas of centralism. Therefore, the expressions of regional nationalism and patriotism again became criticized for demonstrating nationalistic chauvinism. Thus, to avoid further problems, the idea of fusing the Soviet peoples became once again voiced more loudly (Simon 1991: 239–246; d'Encausse 1992: 96–97).

The fluctuating and controversial political atmosphere in Khrushchev's era also reflected in the Finnish language literature produced in Soviet Karelia. Soviet Karelia was represented as a quickly modernizing and urbanizing Soviet periphery (Kurki 2010), and trends that stressed regional, non-Russian language folklore as the source of artistic inspiration emerged. Furthermore, subtle contacts across the national border with Finland started to influence the themes of Finnish language literature. Contacts between the Soviet Union and the political West became sub-

tly evident in the late 1950s (Chandler 1998: 83), and at first the contacts with Finland were created through official literature and cultural organizations, exchange programs, and for example through the Finland-Soviet Union friendship association (Timonen 1963).

Since the late 1950s, the Finnish–Soviet Union national border and contacts across the border became a visible theme in the Finnish language literature of Soviet Karelia. This had also an influence on the construction of the non-Russian language space in literature. The first novels that noted the national border as a more multifaceted entity than just a strict separating division line and as a manifestation of the Cold War was Nikolai Jaakkola’s historical novel *On the Shores of Lake Pirttijärvi and Elsewhere* (Pirttijärven rantamilla ja muualla) in 1957. Some years later, Antti Timonen published his novel *Tiny White Bird* (1961) which is structured even more strongly around the border crossing theme. In the novel, a Karelian girl Mirja is taken from Soviet Karelia to Finland during the Second World War. In Finland, adoptive parents take care of her and she grows up under the influence of both capitalism and Finnish socialism, represented by the political Workers Movement. As a young woman she comes to support socialism and the peace movement, and feels suspicion towards the capitalist ideals that dominated Finnish society in the 1950s. At the end of the novel, Mirja finds her biological mother in Soviet Karelia and moves back to the Soviet Union where she once again feels at home.

The novel *Tiny White Bird* introduces two different ideas of the border: one which connects and one which separates. The novel shows the connections between the Finnish speaking populations across the Finnish-Soviet national border. At the same time, it stresses the ideological divide between the communist Soviet Union and capitalist Finland. Therefore, the non-Russian language space constructed in the novel is ambiguous. The novel begins and ends with a description of a tiny white bird which crosses the national border. The bird functions as a metaphor for Mirja who crosses the national border at both the beginning and end of the novel. From the bird’s viewpoint, the border is easy to cross, as it simply does not exist. Furthermore, the bird does not recognize “the line which had been axed under her nest in the woods and which is drawn with red ink on all the world maps” (Timonen 1961: 314). In a sense, the political definitions of the border, and the juxtapositions created by the border, border guards or regulations do not belong to the natural world but are more human constructs. Humans however have to follow strict regulations when crossing the guarded border:

Two border poles stood on each side of the border, next to the railway. One had the Soviet emblem, the other the Finnish emblem. The border guards from two different countries stood by the poles. Aino Andrejevna was amused when she looked at the tiny bird which jumped on the gritty soil next to the railway embankment. It found something on the ground and flew to Finland, and settled on a juniper tree, then it pecked something and flew back to the Soviet side of the border, and settled on a pine tree.<sup>9</sup> (Timonen 1980: 130.)



The bird's movement across the national border and its careless attitude towards it is comparable to Mirja who, at least at the beginning of the novel, is unaware of the human tragedies caused by its establishment. Furthermore, the white bird (and therefore Mirja) are associated with the well-known peace symbol, the white dove. This is also echoed by Mirja's Finnish adoptive parents who see Mirja as "a tiny bird of peace" whom they return to the Soviet Union at the end of the novel (Timonen 1961: 311). The peace metaphor reflects changed attitudes towards the national border, the political West, and Finnish society and its people in comparison to the earlier post-War literature of Soviet Karelia. Since the 1950s, the peace movement which sought a peaceful co-existence between socialism and capitalism strengthened in the Soviet Union, and the symbol of the white dove spread widely despite the continuing Cold War and the tense relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States (Gaddis 2007: 68–72). The theme of peaceful coexistence also reflected in literature which stressed universal humanist values and peace ideology. However, according to historian Geoffrey Roberts (1999: 38), from a political point of view, the goal of the peace movement was also to hinder "the development of the western cold war bloc".

The novel also represents the border as a brutal and violent dividing line when viewed from the human perspective. The border separates two different worlds from each other, and its establishment always causes blood shedding and tears. Timonen uses a metaphor of the Kemijoki-river when describing the consequences of establishing the Finnish-Soviet Union national border. The Kemijoki-river has one starting point in north but then divides into two branches which are separated from each other by the Finnish-Soviet Union national border: Whilst one branch flows to the east, the other flows to the west. The river is a metaphor for the Karelians and Finns who live in Finland and the Soviet Union as being a divided people. Even though they have a common origin and shared history, they are separated from each other by the national border and thence develop in opposite directions:

Through the wilderness, rocks, peat lands and lakes runs a line that is not always visible but it is marked with a wide red line on the world maps. It is the national border. There are numerous national borders on the world map. The borders go along seas, steppes and snow covered mountain peaks, they cut railways and are invisible barriers to gigantic ocean liners and airplanes. History knows numerous cases when those borders have been moved in one direction or the other, but all these occasions have been preceded by blood and tears, shed by nations. [- -] These borders separate two different worlds, two different life orders and ways of life, two different pasts and futures in the lives of individuals and nations. The divide between the two Kemijoki-rivers is a national border exactly like that.<sup>10</sup> (Timonen 1980: 24–25.)

Despite that the novel recognizes the historical contacts, language and oral poetry as connecting factors across the Finnish-Soviet Union national border, the border appears ideologically as a strict dividing line. At the same time, the border renders the realities on each side as inverted pictures of each other – it contrasts and juxtaposes

taposes. The border divides the world into good and evil, communist and capitalist, right and wrong. In Timonen's novel, both the connecting and dividing functions of the national border became the elements which also created the non-Russian language space of the national borderland.

The national border and the historical connections between the Karelians and Finns became a topical and problematic theme for Soviet Karelian writers in the early 1960s. Then, for example, Antti Timonen discussed the theme and the politically heated subject of the kindred people with a Finnish writer Antti Seppä through correspondence. The ideas that Timonen wrote in his letters about this sensitive theme explicate further the ideas presented in his *Tiny White Bird* novel. In the letter below, Timonen stresses the differences between Karelians and Finns, despite existing historical connections. In between the lines, it is apparent that the Finnish writer Antti Seppä has previously stressed the idea of a kindred bond between the Karelians and Finns in their correspondence. Antti Timonen rejects the kindred people ideology in his letter:

The question of the kindred people. That is a long and complicated issue to discuss in a letter. We indeed have a lot in common— language, Kalevala [national epic], fairy tales, songs, riddles. We have a similar nature, equally rough and beautiful on both sides of the border. However, we differ from each other in many respects. We have a different societal system, a different understanding of the profound questions of the human condition, different ideas of history, and different goals regarding the future. By the way, for me as a Karelian, that question is very close. I think that the idea of a kindred people has been spoiled by the West. Already long ago, the Western leading names of “kindred people ideology” approached the Karelians with a whip in one hand, and sweets in the other. Dogs and circus animals are tamed in that way, but not a people.<sup>11</sup> (Letter Antti Timonen to Antti Seppä, October 28, 1960.)

Timonen's opinion clearly states that the ideology of the kindred people is “low”, meaning that the ideology itself had strong imperialistic, militarist connotations, and was used for nationalistic rather than humane goals. Furthermore, Timonen emphasizes that Karelians are not a small isolated group, but they are part of the Soviet nation which includes millions of people. In this way, he emphasizes that the non-Russian language space in Soviet Karelia is in close connection to the center of the ideological space, Moscow. Furthermore, he does not regard the connections across the national border as important or meaningful. Timonen sees the Karelians and the non-Russian language space as socially and temporarily belonging to the Soviet space:

[...] however, I cannot tolerate the claim that we would be a small, isolated group. The Karelians I mean. Our group is not that small – we are over two hundred million, including Karelians, Russians, Bashkirians, Ukrainians. If I remember correctly, about seventy languages are used in the Soviet Union. See – also in this case we think differently. Language and ethnic-national differences do not mean national isolation. [...] If we Karelians would be isolated, we would live on the level that we lived on before 1917: As far as I know, before we were the most backward people in the world, if we are excluding the savages. Now, we have gradually achieved the same technical and cultural level as all of the other Soviet peoples.<sup>12</sup> (Letter Antti Timonen to Antti Seppä January 15, 1960.)

The turn of the 1960s was a period when the traumatic history of the Karelians and their division across the Finnish–Soviet Union national border could emerge in public discussion, albeit to a slight degree. In addition to literature, the newspaper *Soviet Karelia* (Neuvosto-Karjala) published some articles about families that had been split by the border (Räikkönen 1968). Nevertheless, the dominating literature strongly emphasized the construction of a unified Soviet people, Soviet space, history and future. It also emphasized the national border as a strong dividing boundary. The difference in comparison to the Stalinist era was that now the national border could be crossed peacefully. There were also some connecting factors across the national border, and so comrades could also be found among the “ideological enemy”.

### **Towards the Ambiguous Borderland Space**

The Soviet peoples started to become more and more aware of their ethnic-national backgrounds and express their ethnic-national identities in the 1970s (Simon 1991: 7). One reason for this can be found in the Soviet nationality policies. During previous decades, the policies of nationality aimed at merging the different nationalities with each other, for example, by promoting internal migration within the Soviet Union. Because of this, the 1970s was the era when people became increasingly interested in their ethnic-national backgrounds which had previously been tried to be erased. In literature, the expressions of ethnic-national identities and the history of the non-Russian language groups gradually began to emerge. Thus, the non-Russian language groups were able to express their alternative history narratives, for example through the literary genre of magic realism that had arrived in the Soviet Union. Examples of the best known writers following this trend were Chingiz Aitmatov and Fazil Iskander (Haber 2003).

In the 1970s, the Soviet Karelian literature also expressed the idea that the previous historiography had not shed enough light on the history of the Soviet Karelian people (Summanen 1973: 118–119). Then, several historical novels such as Antti Timonen’s *We Karelians* (1971) and Nikolai Jaakkola’s four piece novel *On the Shores of Lake Pirttijärvi* (1977) were published, so as to improve the situation. These novels exposed the internal conflicts and confrontations existing among the Karelian population during the formational years of the Soviet Union however these conflicts which had previously been kept silent. These novels brought up the painful and tragic history of the Karelian people who on one hand were divided by the national border, but on the other had to move across this border for political reasons.

Antti Timonen’s novel *We Karelians* focuses on the violent Civil War years in Soviet Karelia, when the Soviet Union was established. In Soviet Karelia, the Civil War (1920–1922) was fought between those who supported Bolshevism and the establishment of Soviet power (Reds), and those who opposed it (Whites). The

third party in the war were those Karelians who formed a temporary Karelian Government, and who wanted to keep Karelia separated from both the Soviet Union and Finland. Somewhere between the Reds and Whites was also a group of people who did not want to choose sides, but were nevertheless drawn into the fighting. In the Civil War, some opponents of Bolshevism joined troops of the Finnish Army which had its own interests in Soviet Karelia. In 1918–1920, the Finnish Army troops (also called the Liberation Army in Soviet Karelia) tried to invade the western parts of Soviet Karelia where the Finnish speaking population lived. In this way, Finland would have been able to expand its territory. The Finnish troops based its military headquarters, the so-called Uhtua Government, in the administrative region of Uhtua (contemp. Kalevala). However, the Tartu Peace Treaty of 1920 ended the action of Finnish troops in Soviet Karelia. During the same year, the Workers' Commune of Karelia was also established. Despite these events however, conflicts continued in Soviet Karelia. Several hundred Finns participated in the fighting which aimed at annexing the Karelians to Finland. After the Soviet regime was established in 1923 and border guards were positioned on both sides of the Finland-Soviet Union border, movement across the border stopped (Baron 2007: 26–27). The Civil War years were tragic. People had to choose their ideological side and try to survive through the hostilities. In addition, in the borderland area, the establishment of the national border with Finland had radical consequences for the everyday life and identities of the borderland population. These themes were studied profoundly in the novel *We Karelians*.

The novel *We Karelians* begins with a murder. A murderer (Mikitän Miitrei) disguises himself as a Bolshevik, and shoots a Karelian man Oleksei. Oleksei's brother Vasselei starts to look for an opportunity to exact revenge on the murderer. During the violent Civil War years in Soviet Karelia, Vasselei's search for revenge and his own identity form the basic narrative of the novel. Whilst looking for the opportunity for revenge, Vasselei continuously moves across the Finnish–Soviet Union national border. Each time he crosses the border, he has to evaluate his motives and loyalties towards the different ideologies and value systems, lifestyles and people on either side. When crossing the border, Vasselei continuously changes his position: first he is a Bolshevik, then a White, then he allies with the Finnish White troops. Finally he recognizes that he cannot and will not ally with anyone. This revelation symbolizes the idea that some Karelians prefer to live separately from Finland and the Soviet Union and their associated political interests. The revelation comes too late however. Vasselei had destroyed his relationship with both the Whites and the Reds, and finds himself in an ideological vacuum. In the end, Vasselei is wandering in the borderland area and wishes that the Bolsheviks could find him so that he could surrender to them. However, his brother's murderer (Mikitän Miitrei) who has become a Second Lieutenant on the White Army (the Liberation Army), finds him first and shoots him dead.

Skies scratched on the road. Now they are coming. Vasselei did not want to hide. He lit a cigarette so that he would be seen easily.

- Hello, who sits there?

What? That voice belongs to Mikitän Miitrei!... Vasselei was ready for anything else but not being shot by Mikitän Miitrei, even though he would be a Red.

Vasselei stood up and asked:

- Who is it?

- Second Lieutenant of the Liberation Army. Come here. Do you want to be captured by the Reds? What.. is it Vasselei?

- Damn! Vasselei became furious. Second Lieutenant of the Liberation Army? Too much anger and hatred filled Vasselei's mind and blurred his thoughts. He grabbed a knife and ran in the deep snow towards the lieutenant, growling furiously. The lieutenant had raised his revolver. Three shots rang out in the gloomy forest, Miitrei shot his victim three times at least. Vasselei stood still, as if hesitated what to do: to die right here and now, and by the bullets shot by that man. He started to fall slowly, as if he looked for a place to die.

- Will you take me, Karelian land?

Dry snow puffed and hid Vasselei. The indifferent moon lit the snowy forest.<sup>13</sup>

(Timonen 1971: 442–443.)

Vasselei's death symbolizes his position simultaneously as a Karelian man and a homeless man, both territorially and ideologically. The traumatic experiences of his homelessness and his inevitable death are created by the definition of the national border and by disputes between men, but nature remains indifferent to the war and violence that takes place.

Vasselei's movement across the national border, and life and death in the borderland also become a symbol of Soviet Karelia and its position as a borderland. In the novel, the non-Russian language space in Soviet Karelia is constructed separately from Finland's Finnish language space and the Soviet Union's Russian language space. Furthermore, the novel creates an impression that sharing the same ideology can connect people on the different sides of the national border, but different ideologies can separate people on the same side. Thus, the borders and their meanings appear ambivalent at the micro-level and in the encounters between individuals. This becomes evident especially in Vasselei's life-story which is full of contraction and ambiguity. In addition, the ambiguity of Vasselei's ideological identity and his feeling of homelessness suggest that among the borderland population, making ideological and political choices and formulating ideas of belonging are not black-and-white. Therefore, Vasselei's life-story at the national borderland can be interpreted as a symbol of the development of the non-Russian language space in Soviet Karelia. This space has belonged variably in the sphere of different ideologies and nations: Reds, Whites, the Soviet Union, and Finland. Vasselei was unsure of his own ideological belonging, and it is this which destroys him in the end. The only thing he was sure about was that he wants to live

in peace and see Karelia separated from the Soviet Union and Finland. This idea is simultaneously raised and killed in the novel: Vasselei is shot as an ideological traitor.

Finland on the other side of the border is experienced as a threatening place where restlessness and violence come from. At one point in the novel, Vasselei has two options regarding his future: Finland or Siberia. However, they both mean death to him, because in his mind, Finland is equated to the grave and Siberia to Hell (Timonen 1971: 68). This idea follows one of the common metaphors of the border as a death zone, and the idea that crossing the border means inevitable death (see Ristolainen 2014 in this journal). Furthermore, the dangerous, threatening Finnish space by way of the Uhtua Government, invades the Soviet Karelian space, and the Uhtua Government is seen as a threat as it attacks the Karelians (Timonen 1971: 102–103, 115).

In addition to metaphors of death and threat, the “otherness” of the Finnish space is defined by observed differences. For example, when Vasselei visits the headquarters of the Uhtua Government formed by the Finnish White army troops, he observes the similarities and differences between Karelians and Finns, e.g. their customs, clothes, and furniture (Timonen 1971: 51–53). In the example below, Vasselei describes the strangeness of the Finnish space. On the wall, he notes a map of the local area, but a local Karelian home would not need to have one due to the familiarity and local knowledge of the place. In addition, he notices that the house of the Uhtua Government has furniture brought from Finland, and they appear strange against the context of the Karelian building. Otherness is also observable in the eyes of the Finnish man which are blue, and regarded especially as a Finnish facial feature.

Vasselei sat down on the chair and looked around. A topographic map of the region was placed on bleached wall papers. A cupboard, desk, and chairs, all brought from Finland stood on unpainted, wide floor beams. [...] The host's words were friendly but his voice was dry and lifeless, just like his wide, blue and expressionless eyes. Something similar exuded from the entire surroundings.<sup>14</sup> (Timonen 1971: 51–53.)

The creation of the non-Russian language space continues in the novel through observations of similarities and differences. Vasselei observes that the Finns who tried to invade areas in Soviet Karelia attempted to speak the Karelian language among the Karelians, but they could not speak it correctly which both amused and irritated the Soviet Karelians (Timonen 1971: 86–88). Here again, some similarities are recognized between the Soviet Karelian non-Russian speaking population and Finns, but the differences are stressed to a greater degree.

In the novel, the non-Russian language space in Soviet Karelia also aimed at separating itself from the Soviet space. Some Karelians passively oppose the Soviet power and they form a “hidden” non-Russian language space within the Soviet space. The Karelians for example participate in required meetings organized by the Soviet authorities and accept those decisions that are profitable to them, but



they stall the enforcement of such decisions as long as possible (Timonen 1971: 113). Thus the non-Russian language space exists in social action, even though it is not otherwise observable.

At the end of the novel, the significance of the topographic border between Finland and the Soviet Union changes. The national border between Finland and the Soviet Union is established, and that changes the attitudes towards the border. However, the local borderland people are not aware of the establishment of the border and continue to move across it to meet their relatives and friends. According to Andrea Chandler (1998: 59), this was rather typical at the borderlands of the Soviet Union immediately after the national border was formally established. However, after establishing the border, the meaning of border crossing subsequently changed: it became forbidden and illegal. This was also a signal that the control maintained by the center had now been extended to the peripheries, and at the same time, the non-Russian language space had been placed more firmly in the Soviet space (Chandler 1998: 55–59). According to Chandler (ibid.), the center-periphery relationship that was created during the establishment of the Soviet Union, aimed at controlling the movements of the borderland population across the national border, and preventing the enemies ideology and criminal elements from entering the country. Furthermore, extending control and so-called micro-level politics<sup>15</sup> to the borderland and the borderland population was very important, because the borderland population often represented ethnic-national groups other than Russians. Their connections with similar ethnic-national groups across the national border thus formed an internal security thread. The Karelian and Finnish populations were considered such a threat in the Soviet Union, because their connections enabled counter-Bolshevik groups to join forces.

The idea of the Soviet border as a protective boundary against enemy ideology is also repeated in the *We Karelians* novel, because Vasselei is shot in the national borderland. Vasselei did not fit into the black-and-white ideological world view, which divided people as either supporters or opponents of Bolshevism, and therefore he had to die. On the other hand, Timonen creates an idea that nature and the “innocent folk people” do not recognize political and brutal borders, similar to the allusions in his earlier novel *Tiny White Bird*. In the example below, an elderly woman who has lived at the borderland for her entire life, crosses the national border to meet her sister who lives on the Soviet side. However, she does not know that the national border has been established, and that she should not cross it:

It was past midnight when the guards from the watchtower called that noise had been heard coming from the northern ski patrol route. Soon, four figures, instead of the expected three, appeared from the snowfall. The fourth was a tall, elderly woman with a sack on her back.

- Comrade Chief, we captured a defector, the oldest in the group announced. She was coming from Finland. [...]

The elderly woman started to nag in the Karelian language:

- For the whole of my life I have visited my sister, and she has visited me. I have not asked where the border is and why it is. Oh, the times we live in!

[...]

- Don't you know that the border has been closed? Lipkin asked. It has been notified in meetings.

- I don't have time to sit in your meetings.

Lipkin wrote woman's name down, gave her sack back and warned:

- Remember, this was the last time! If we ever catch you again, the worst will happen. And now, go home.<sup>16</sup>

(Timonen 1971: 452–453.)

As a whole, the novel strengthens the idea that the Finnish and Karelian languages are just superficial connecting factors across the national border. The separating and most dividing borders between Finland and Soviet Union are ideological, cultural and social, however, the border appears more ambiguous than previously depicted in Soviet Karelian literature.

Timonen's novel was well received. He received the Soviet Karelian state price for the novel (Neuvosto-Karjala June 9, 1971). This indicates that novels which problematized the significance of the national border from an individual point of view and discussed the historical and linguistic connections across the national border were accepted in the literary circles, as early as the beginning of the 1970s.

The literary and cultural life in the 1970s anticipated the changes that were to later emerge in the 1980s during Perestroika. The period from the 1980s onwards has been termed as a type of Cultural Revolution in the history of Russia. The political changes started in the 1980s ignited revolutionary changes also in literature and cultural life: the commanding presence of the Communist Party and the methods of Socialist Realism started to lose their dominance, and official censorship was abolished in 1986. By the turn of the 1990s, it was fashionable to talk about "the death of Soviet literature" (Brown 1993: 7; Marsh 1995: 3). In the late 1980s, questions regarding nationality also started to increase. The strengthening of regional national movements is not regarded as a reason for the disintegration of the Soviet Union, however due to this disintegration, national movements were able to ignite (Hirsch 2000: 225–226).

## Conclusions

In literature published from the 1940s to the 1970s, the non-Russian language space at the Finnish-Russian national borderland develops from a non-existent space, to a unanimous Soviet periphery space, and finally to an ambiguous, border-crossing space. The development of this non-Russian language space reflects the general atmosphere and opinion towards the national border, as well as to-

wards the many ideological and political borders that exist between the political East and West, and the Soviet Union and Finland.

In the late 1940s, at the beginning of the Cold War era, the national border between Finland and the Soviet Union was a sharp, exclusive, and almost impenetrable Iron Curtain. In addition, it was a border which protected against “the enemy” from entering either country. In literature, through metaphors and linguistic allusions, Finns and Finland were represented as a source of evil. The non-Russian language space in Soviet Karelia could emerge only as an integral part of the Russian language Soviet space. In addition, the national border marked the external border of this non-Russian language space, even though historical, linguistic and cultural connections existed across the national border with Finland.

Since the late 1950s and early 1960s, the non-Russian language space as a border crossing entity, and the linguistic, cultural and historical connections across the border have received slightly more room in Soviet Karelian literature. At the same time, connections between the Soviet Union and Finland started to revive through cultural and scientific exchange programs, and an increase in tourism. In literature, the connections across the national border often emerged as peaceful, but the ideological border between “us” and “them” was still emphasised. Worlds that were separated from each other by the national border appeared as counter-images of each other.

Since the 1960s and the 1970s, the non-Russian language space in literature has become more multivoiced because the individual life-stories of the national borderland population have received public attention. During the formation of the Soviet Union and the Second World War, many people had to cross the national border because of the threat of violence and hostilities. In addition, during the chaotic war time years, the border divided many families. Therefore, the border also became a noted source of trauma, and this topic was able to achieve some public space in literature since the 1960s. In the studied novels, the tragic and traumatic life-stories of the borderland population are still strongly intertwined with the ideological discourse of the border. In addition, since the 1960s, the non-Russian language social and cultural space changed in literature representations. For example, Antti Timonen’s novel introduced individuals who were not sure about their ideological, cultural, or societal identities, and this was a significant change compared to the unanimous literature of the 1940s and 1950s.

The changed representations of the national border, border crossings, and their significance to individuals’ lives that took place in the Finnish language literature of the 1960s and 1970s anticipated the trends that became more visible in the post-Soviet literature of Russian Karelia. The importance of the border and border crossings have now become central elements in writing the non-Russian language space and identity at the Finnish-Russian national borderland in the post-Soviet era. For example, the novels introduce protagonists whose identities are strongly connected with the border and border crossings: they live on the Finnish-Russian

national borderland, on the symbolic borderlands of the Soviet and post-Soviet eras, and on the borderlands of different languages and cultures. They also cross these borders, and these crossings permanently influence the protagonists' regional, temporal, and social space (Kurki 2013; Kurki 2015 forthcoming).

In this article, during the studied time period the role of the border has changed from being relatively insignificant, to becoming a rather prominent means of constructing the non-Russian language space in literature. This is in accordance where developing interaction and the historical connections between Finland and Russia have become increasingly visible factors in defining borderland identities on the both sides of the national border (Alasuutari P. & Alasuutari M. 2009; Hämynen 2012). This development follows the more general tendency where the identity formation of border crossing population has become a central element in borderland literatures and art, and can be seen at the edges of the post-Soviet space, globally in emigrant literature, and especially in the locale of the U.S.A.–Mexico national borderland (Sadowski-Smith 2008; Aldama et al. 2012.)

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### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The non-Russian speaking population as termed here means the Karelians, Finns, Veps and Ingrian Finns that had to use the Finnish language in matters of education, administration and culture in Soviet Karelia due to the Soviet language policies of the time.
- <sup>2</sup> Finnish political emigrants participated in the formation of the Finnish language literature in Soviet Karelia in the 1920s. Interaction across the Finnish-Russian national border was active in literary life from the 1920s until the mid-1930s (Palmgren 1984; Ylikangas 2004).
- <sup>3</sup> The Continuation War between the Soviet Union and Finland took place in 1941–1944. Finns defined the war as a continuation to the Winter War between Finland and the Soviet Union in 1939–1940. The Soviet Union defined the war as a part of the Second World War which they termed the Great Patriotic War against Germany.
- <sup>4</sup> “Ei vaaksan vertaakaan isänmaasta, ei jyvääkään, ei sirustakaan, ei pienintäkään palasta kansan yhteisestä hyvästä, kansan yhteistyön hedelmistä vihollisen käsiin, ei yhtään mitään!” (Jaakkola 1947 part 1: 93–94.)

- 5 “Aamuaurinko valollansa / Kremlin seinät kaunistaa / niin eloisa / niin mahtava / ei löydy sinun voittajaa / maa valtava / mun Moskova / ei vertaistasi kalliimpaa” (Jaakkola 1947, part 1: 100–101.)
- 6 The idea of kindred people can be dated back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it became a politically explosive subject in Finland and the Soviet Union. According to the idea, Finns, Karelians, Estonians, and Hungarians form kindred peoples with each other because they have linguistic and cultural ties (Puolakka 2013). In the 1920s, the White Finns used the kindred people ideology as an argument for their penetration into Soviet Karelia and their attempt to annex borderland areas of Soviet Karelia to Finland (Niinistö 2001).
- 7 “Karjalainen? Niin, minä olen karjalainen, mutta en... teidän heimokansalaisenne. – sanoi hän varmalla, rauhallisella äänellä korostaen erikoisesti sanaa ”teidän”.  
- Mitä, mitä te sanoitte? [...] Te ette käsitä omaa parastanne. Tulkaa järkiinne. Siirtykää meidän puolellemme... Meillä on yhteinen kieli, yhteinen alkujuuri, yhteinen vihollinen...” (Jaakkola 1947 part 2: 46.)
- 8 “Isänmaa! Jospa sinä tietäisit, kuinka kiihkeästi minä rakastan sinua. Anna anteeksi, jos olen jollakin tavalla tahtomattani loukannut sinua... Puna-armeijalainen ei saa antautua vangiksi. Antauduinko minä vaiko jouduin?” (Jaakkola 1947, part 2: 44.)
- 9 “Rautatien varressa eri puolilla raja seisoj kaks pylvästä. Toisessa oli Neuvostoliiton ja toisessa Suomen vaakuna. Kumman pylvään luona seisoj eri maiden rajavartiosotilas. Aino Andrejevnaa huvitti katsoa pikku lintua, joka hyppelehti hietikolla ratapenkereen vieressä. Jotain siitä löydettyään se pyrähti Suomeen katajan oksalle, noukkasi jotakin ja lensi Neuvostoliiton puoleiseen mäntyyn.” (Timonen 1980: 130.)
- 10 “Korpien ja kallioiden, soiden ja salolampien halki kulkee linja, jota ei siellä ehkä aina huomakaan, mutta joka merkitään maailman kartoille leveällä punaisella viivalla. Se on valtakunnan raja. Maailman kartalla on paljon valtakunnan rajoja. Ne kulkevat meriä, aroja ja lumipeitteisiä vuorten harjanteita, katkovat rautateitä ja ovat näkymättöminä esteinä niin suurille valtamerilaivoille kuin lentokoneillekin. Historia tuntee lukemattomia tapauksia, jolloin noita linjoja on siirretty puoleen tai toiseen, mutta jokaisen tällaisen tapauksen edellä ovat kansat vuodattaneet verta ja kyyneleitä. Satojen valtakunnan rajojen joukossa on sellaisia, jotka eivät maailman kartalla eroa muista, mutta kansojen elämässä ja koko ihmiskunnan historiassa ne merkitsevät hyvin paljon. Nämä rajat erottavat toisistaan kaksi eri maailmaa, kaksi erilaista elämänjärjestystä, elämäntapaa, erilaista menneisyyttä ja tulevaisuutta yksilön ja koko kansojen elämässä. Kahden Kemijoen välisellä vedenjakajalla kulkee juuri tuollainen valtakunnan raja.” (Timonen 1980: 24–25.)
- 11 “Heimokysymys. Se on pitkä ja monimutkainen juttu näin kirjeessä väiteltäväksi. Meillä on todellakin paljon yhteistä - kieli, Kalevala, sadut, laulut, arvoitukset. Meillä on samanlainen luonto, yhtä karua ja kaunista rajaa kummallakin puolella. Mutta me eroamme monessa muussa suhteessa. Meillä on toisenlainen yhteiskuntajärjestelmä, erilainen ajattelutapa elämän tärkeimmistä kysymyksistä, erilaiset käsitteet historiasta ja erilaiset tavoitteet tulevaisuuteen nähden. Muuten, karjalaisena minulle tuo kysymys on hyvin läheinen. Minusta tuntuu, että tuota heimoajattelua on tavattoman paljon pilattu sieltä lännestä käsin. Sikäläiset ”heimoaatteen” päämiehet ovat kautta aikojen, jo paljon ennen Lokakuun vallankumousta ja monastisen jälkeen lähennelleet meitä, karjalaisia, toisessa kädessä makeisia ja toisessa ruoska. Sillä tavalla kesytetään koiria ja sirkuseläimiä, mutta ei kansaa. (Letter from Antti Timonen to Antti Seppä October, 28, 1960.)
- 12 “[...] mutta en jaksa sulattaa sitä, että joukkomme on pieni ja eristetty. Karjalaiset nimittäin. Ei meidän joukkomme niin pieni ole – onhan meitä yli kaksi sataa miljoonaa, siinä luvussa karjalaiset, venäläiset, balshkirit, ukrainalaiset. Muistaakseni meillä puhutaan ja kirjoitetaan noin 70 kielellä. Katsos, tuossakin asiassa ajattelemme eri tavalla. Kieli ja kansalliset eroavai-

suudet meillä eivät merkitse kansallista eristyneisyyttä. [...] Jos me karjalaiset olisimme eristettyinä, niin eläisimme sillä tasolla, millä elimme vuoteen 1917 saakka: Tietääkseni me olimme maailman takapajuisinta kansaa, jos ei nyt verrata aivan villikansoihin. Nyt kun alamme olla sillä teknillisellä ja kulttuurisella tasolla kuin kaikki muutkin Neuvostoliiton kansat.” (Letter Antti Timonen to Antti Seppä January 15, 1960)

- 13 “Tieltä kuului suksien suhinaa. Nyt ne tulevat. Vasselei ei halunnut piileskellä. Hän syytti tupakan että hänet huomattaisiin helpommin. – Hei, kuka siellä istuu? Mitä perkelettä?! Tuo ääni oli Mikitän Miitrein!.. Kaikkeen muuhun Vasselei oli valmis, mutta ei Mikitän Miitrein ammuttavaksi, vaikka olisi kuinka punainen. Vasselei nousi ja kysyi kuitenkin: - Kuka se on? – Vapautusarmeijan vänrikki. Tulkaapas tänne. Aiotteko jäädä punikkien vangiksi? Mitä! Onko se... Vasselei?... –Emäs!—Vasselein valtasi silmitön raivo. Valkoisen armeijan vänrikki?! Sekunnin murto-osassa risteili liian paljon vihaa ja raivoa. Ne sumensivat järjen. Käsi sieppasi puukon ja hän syöksyi syvässä lumessa raivosta muristen vänrikkiä kohti. Tällä oli revolveri ojolla. Synkässä metsässä kajahti kolme laukausta, Miitrei ampui uhriaan ainakin kolmesti. Vasselei pysähtyi. Seisoi paikallaan aivan kuin taaskin epäröiden, mitä nyt tehdä, kuollako juuri tähän ja juuri tuonko miehen kuulista. Hän alkoi hitaasti kaatua kuin olisi etsinyt sopivaa paikkaa, mihin kuolla. – Oatko miut, Karjalan mua? Kuiva lumi pöllähti ja kätki Vasselein poveensa. Kuu valaisi välinpitämättömänä lumista metsää.” (Timonen 1971: 442–443.)
- 14 “Vasselei istahti tuolille ja katseli ympärilleen. Haalistuneiden seinäpapereiden päälle oli kiinnitetty paikkakunnan topografinen kartta. Maalaamattomilla leveillä lattiapalkeilla seisoi Suomesta tuotu kaappi, kirjoituspöytä ja tuoleja. [...] Isännän sanat olivat ystävällisiä, mutta ääni kuiva ja eloton, samanlainen kuin hänen suuret siniset ja ilmeettömät silmänsä. Jotain samantapaista huokui koko ympäristöstä.” (Timonen 1971: 51–53.)
- 15 According to Chandler (1998: 57–58), micro-level politics meant that the population at the national borderland was harnessed to co-operate with border guards. Their task was to observe movement at the borderland, report illegal border crossings and smuggling attempts. Micro-level politics also included the ideological education of the borderland population.
- 16 “Oli jo yli puolen yön kun tähystysasemalta soitettiin, että pohjoiselta partioladulta päin kuului ääniä. Pian lumipyrystä sukelsikin esille neljä lumen peittämää ihmistä odotetun kolmen asemesta. Neljäs oli pitkänpuoleinen vanha nainen kontti selässä.  
- Toveri päällikkö, olemme saaneet kiinni rajaloikkarin, ryhmän vanhin ilmoitti. – Suomesta oli tulossa. [...]  
Mummo alkoi paapattaa Lipkinille karjalaksi:  
-Ilmasen ikäni olen käynyt sisareni luona ja hän miun luona. Emmä ole kysellyn, missä on raja ta mitä varoin. Ohhoi, aikoihin olemma elän! [...]  
- Etkö sie tiijä, jotta raja on pantu umpehe? Lipkin kysyi, - Siitä on sanottu kokouksissa.  
- Jouvan mie tiän kokouksissa istumah.  
Lipkin kirjoitti nimen muistiin, työnsi mummolle kontin eväineen takaisin ja varoitti:  
- Tämä oli viimeinen kerta, muista! Jos vielä suamma kiinni, paha etehes tulou. A nyt mäne kotihis.” (Timonen 1971: 452–453.)

## References

### Archive material

National Archive of Republic of Karelia.

Letter Antti Timonen to Antti Seppä, 15/1/1960, Fond 1075, opis 1, delo 1/28.

Letter Antti Timonen to Antti Seppä, 28/10/1960, Fond 1075, opis 1, delo 1/28.



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# Facing the Otherness: Crossing the Finnish-Soviet Estonian Border as Narrated by Finnish Tourists

By Kirsi Laurén

## Abstract

This study examines Finnish travellers' experiences of travelling across the sea frontier between Finland and Soviet Estonia during the period of 1965–1991. The article focuses on the narratives of Finnish tourists about border crossings and cultural encounters. The analysis concentrates on travellers' relations and conceptions of the former Soviet Estonia and their descriptions of facing cultural otherness during their travels. The concept of otherness is used as an analytical tool to interpret the narratives.

**Keywords:** Finnish-Soviet Estonian border, Soviet Estonia, Finnish tourism, narrative, otherness

## Introduction

Having lived in Estonia for a while now, it is especially funny to think about my first trips when many things behind the Gulf seemed to be strange and unusual, even inconceivable. In the last twenty years Finland and Estonia have become closer to each other, and those travellers who cross the Gulf today probably do not undergo the same kind of culture shock.<sup>1</sup> (148–152)

The quotation above was written by a Finnish man who lives in Estonia. In the narrative, he reflects on his relationship with former Soviet Estonia and the present-day independent Estonia. According to his narrative Finland and Soviet Estonia differed significantly, whereas the present day Estonia and Finland are culturally close. Despite the fact that Finns and Estonians were actively interacting with each other prior to WWII, the war and closing of the border of the Soviet Union changed their relationship so that familiar neighbours became strangers to each other. Relations gradually became closer when cross-border travelling between Finland and Soviet Estonia opened again in 1965. When travel across the Gulf of Finland started, it played an important role in the convergence of the countries and cultural encounters (Salokannel 1998a: 108–109; Zetterberg 2007: 713).

Helsinki and Tallinn, the capital cities of Finland and Estonia, are located on opposite sides of the Gulf of Finland. The sea frontier and travelling across it thus forms a bridge between two state administrative and cultural centers. Regular passenger traffic through this water route has been active since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Graf & Roiko-Jokela 2004: 90). The seaway has been an important unifying bridge between the countries, enabling their interaction especially after WWII when Estonia was part of the Soviet Union and isolated from the western world. Regardless of the short geographical distance between Finland and Estonia (only 85 kilometres), the mutual knowledge of Finns and Estonians of each other has varied during different periods. For example political situations, changes in travelling circumstances, education and living standards have influenced the transfer of information between the two countries (Alenius 2002: 61–66, 73). Nowadays, the fastest sea lane takes less than two hours and it is the most widely used way to travel between Finland and Estonia.<sup>2</sup>

This research focuses on the narratives of Finnish tourists that tell about travelling from Helsinki to Tallinn and encountering cultures in the time of Soviet Estonia, starting from 1965 when a direct shipping lane was established, until the independence of Estonia in 1991. The research questions are: How are cultural encounters represented in Finnish travellers' narratives? What kind of conceptions and images did travellers have of Soviet-Estonia and its people? The research material consists of narratives that Finns have written and sent to a nationwide writing collection entitled: *There was a time in Georg Ots* (Silloin kerran Georg Otsilla, in Finnish)/*Across the Gulf of Finland* (Yli Suomenlahden, in Finnish), organized by the Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society (SKS) and the



Tuglas Society in 2009–2010. In the writings, Finns remember their ferry trips to Soviet Estonia. Before 1965, Soviet Estonia was isolated over 20 years from western countries, and consequently the shipping lane was closed. Although Finns were able to travel by ferry to Soviet Estonia during the years 1965–1991, Soviet tourism to Finland was still strictly limited and difficult (Zetterberg 2007: 713). After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of Estonia in 1991, the land, sea and air routes really began to open up. Border crossing further developed after Estonia joined the European Union (EU) in 2004, and the Schengen area in 2007 (Finland joined the EU in 1995 and the Schengen area in 1996).

### **Border, Otherness, We and the Other**

In this research, the conceptions of otherness are actualized in the narratives of Finnish tourist's border crossings from Finland to Soviet Estonia. National borders separate nations, countries and cultures from each other, so the role of the border is to make a difference between us and them. By crossing these borders, borders also become places of cultural encounters (Alvarez 1995: 462). When travelling to a foreign country, a typical way to conceptualize cultural encounters is to make comparisons and contrasts between the familiar and the unknown. This is because people understand themselves, their identity and nationality in relation to other people, groups, and societies. Establishing a difference between "we" and "the other" is mainly directed by culture. Different cultures make their own meaning systems which can be used to recognize members from the same culture and distinguish them from others. This meaning system also helps to act within a culture which makes it possible to manage and cope with it. Cultural meanings do not arise coincidentally, but are learned through social interactions and boundaries with other members and groups of a culture. Thus, we become aware of our own identity by clarifying *who I am* and *where I belong*. Cultures are seen as relatively permanent constructions of meanings and conventions which have their own temporal and spatial continuity (Barth 1969: 9; Bruner 1990: 33–34; Hall 2003: 85–86; Delanty 2011: 637). Consequently, cultures and traditions connect people to the previous generation's way of life. Because of this fact, the understanding of being for example a Finn or an Estonian includes the idea of a historical continuum which the individual or group can see themselves to be part of.

Cultural and subjective identities develop in a process where we are being socialized in our inner group and also in our connections with external groups. In this process, different groups and their members are assigned stereotypical conceptions. Stereotypes typically reduce, simplify and exaggerate human features, and by doing so, the characteristics of people are easily solidified and consequentially not given the opportunity to change. Stereotyping creates symbolic boundaries between *us* and *them*, which helps us to construct and systematize the world. At the same time, stereotypes also highlight the differences in connections alt-

though they are actually less than the similarities. The essence of difference, otherness, as well as stereotype, is ambivalent which means that their character could be both positive and negative. When creating cultural, social and subjective identities, it is necessary to recognize differences between people and cultures. However, the making of difference and the emphasis on otherness include intonations of threatening danger, negative feelings and antagonism towards “the other” (Bhabha 1994: 66; Hall 1997: 234–238, 257–259; Raittila 2004: 17–18). In addition, the way we represent our thinking about “them” and others has an effect on how we understand “we” and ourselves. Our ideas of the other, we and them, are not stable categories. Instead, they are constructed and changed in different places and at different times. The issue in these constructs is about power and rhetoric, rather than about the essence of otherness (Hallam & Street 2000: 5–6).

Beside the concepts of otherness and difference comes the concept of similarity; in order to distinguish between otherness and the familiar, we also have to recognize what is similar. To recognize similarities and familiarities relates to the knowledge and understanding of unfamiliarity and “the other” (Izotov & Laine 2013: 99). However, in cultural encounters, similarities are not given the same (or any) degree of attention, when compared to differences and originality (Löytty 2005: 162). This can be seen in the empirical research material analysis of this article.

## Materials and Methods

My research material consists of selected texts that have been sent to the writing collection entitled *There was a time in Georg Ots* (Silloin kerran Georg Otsilla, in Finnish)/*Across the Gulf of Finland* (Yli Suomenlahden, in Finnish). The open writing collection campaign was organized in Finland by the Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society and the Tuglas Society in 2009–2010. The texts have been written by Finns who travelled in Soviet Estonia and independent Estonia, and thus take the form of travel writing (see Duncan & Gregory 2002). However, these unpublished and archived texts do not belong to the institutionalized literature of travel books and cannot be categorized to a certain genre. Single texts do not necessarily compose a coherent story. Instead they can be made up of short and episodic memories, and so do not commonly follow the conventional forms of e.g. short story writing. The writers are not professional authors but rather people who found the theme of the writing collection interesting and were willing to share their travel experiences. Nevertheless, in their texts the writers compare their travel experiences, various countries and people with their own homeland and its people, so in that sense, the topic comes close to that of travel writing (Pelvo 2007: 13).

In the call for contributions, the organizers asked Finnish tourists to write stories about travelling to Estonia, and to tell what had happened during their trips,

what has changed and what has remained the same. In addition, the following prompts were given to help people recall their memories and to motivate them to write: my first trip to Estonia; my most memorable visit to the southern neighbour; the Estonian people; places and atmospheres; souvenirs from beyond the Gulf; mishaps and incidents; work and free time during the travels; are there differences between the former and the current Estonia?<sup>3</sup> Altogether, 96 writers participated in the collection and sent 580 pages of text. All the texts are archived in the Finnish Literature Society's Folklore Archives in Helsinki and are available for research. In the archive, the text's pages are marked with numbers. In this article, the page numbers of the text references (archive sources) are given in parenthesis, e.g (508–510). Contributors names have been omitted to protect the anonymity of the writers.

The remarkable social changes that happened in both Soviet Estonia and in Estonia after its independence in 1991 have also been reflected in the travelling experiences of Finnish tourists. A comparison between the previous and current Estonia is part of the narratives' construction. However, travelling to today's Estonia is given much less coverage than past memories of travelling to Soviet Estonia – a time when travelling across the Gulf of Finland was full of excitement and surprises. As such, the Soviet period in Estonia takes a central position in the research. Thus, when I chose my research material from the writing collection corpus, a criterion was that the text should include narratives about travelling to Soviet Estonia. Guided by this, I chose 11 texts from the writing collection corpus, four of them written by women and seven by men. The writers did not give their ages, but on the basis of the texts I estimate them to be about 45–65 years of age, so they still remember the period of Soviet Estonia. The female contributors occupations are a farmer, a librarian and a teacher (one of the women didn't reveal her occupation). The men's occupations are a teacher (2), a headmaster, an engineer, a nurse and an information technology specialist (one of the men didn't reveal his occupation). Many of the writers were in the field of teaching which reinforces the fact that teachers have played a central role in building the cultural bridge between Finland and Estonia.

Judging from the texts of the research material, it seems that among the writers are people who have been active in the Estonian language and culture, and have increased their knowledge of Estonia by travelling and meeting friends and relatives there. The writer's texts reflect warm and close relations towards a southern neighbouring country which is repeatedly called a *kindred* or *brother* nation. According to the texts, among the writers are also those who have had a relationship with relatives in Estonia prior to WWII, so their picture of Estonia has been constructed over a long period of time. It is necessary to take into account that the writers are by definition, a selected group of people. Many of them have long-term relations with Estonia and Estonians and could therefore be characterized as

“Estonian friends” – those who have been interested in Estonia and its culture for a long time.

By reminiscing on travel from Finland to Soviet Estonia, Finnish travellers reflect on experiences such as what happened before and during their travels, and what kind of people and surroundings they met, both on-board and on-shore. The narrators examine their experiences and memories from the perspective of a Finnish cultural background. The emphasis on the narratives is on drawing a comparison between the Finnish, Soviet Estonian and Estonian people; how they look and act, and their way of life. Typically, the narratives concentrate more on differences and seldom on similarities and familiarities. The writers highlight this in their narratives and so it also becomes an analytical focus of this article. The temporal context of this research spans about 25 years, 1965–1991, including the time before Estonian independence. However, it is important to take into account that the memories have been written today. In this article, the concept of otherness (presented earlier) is used as a tool for textual analysis. In the analysis, I give sensitive consideration to the words and emotional expressions that the writers use in their narration. I also take into account the kind of interpretations the writers give to their experiences and emotions (Latvala & Laurén 2013).

To understand the narratives of Finnish travellers that are the focus of this research, I will next give a historical overview of the relationship between Finland and Estonia in the context of neighbourhood and travel.

## **Relations Between Finland and Estonia and the Revival of Cross-border Travelling**

Finland and Estonia are kindred nations, both of whose languages, Finnish and Estonian, belong to the Finno-Ugric language group. Both countries are democratic republics and are part of the European Union (EU). Finland has about 5.5 million inhabitants and the amount of those whose native language is Estonian is about 40 000. The population of Estonia is about 1.3 million and the amount of Finnish citizens in the country numbers around 6000 (Embassy of Finland, Tallinn 2014; Estonian Embassy in Helsinki 2014; Statistics Finland 2013). The countries’ histories are connected to each other in many respects and they have various contacts, for example in the fields of culture, economics, tourism and education. In addition, Finns and Estonians have close family and kinship relations (Zetterberg 2007: 18–19, 582–583, 713).

Past and present Finland and Estonia are in many ways connected to their eastern neighbour Russia, by which they have both been ruled during periods of their history. The Autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland was part of the Russian Empire from 1809–1917, as was Estonia from 1721–1918 (Zetterberg 1995: 62).<sup>4</sup> A national awakening strengthened in Finland at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Finns became aware of the fact that their language and cultural traditions

differ from other Europeans. In consequence, they started to actively create a nation of their own (Anttonen & Kuusi 1999: 307–319).<sup>5</sup> Mainly inspired by the example of Finland, the awakening of Estonian nationalism also started and they began to create and form their own national culture and nation (Alenius 2002: 62–63). Strong feelings of brotherhood (*heimoaate*, in Finnish) between Finns and Estonians prevailed, and this encouraged Finns to assist the Estonians in the Estonian War of Independence in 1918–1920. In that war, Estonians fought for their sovereignty against the Russian Empire and Finnish soldiers fought side by side with their Estonian brothers. As a consequence of the Russian Revolution in February 1917, Finland managed to disengage itself from Soviet Russia and declare its independence. Soon after in 1918, Estonia managed to do the same (Lukkari 1996: 24–25; Zetterberg 2007: 504–508).

After they gained their independence, the interaction between Estonia and Finland became increasingly busy and diverse. Lots of contacts were created, especially between various occupational groups and in the fields of culture and sport. Finland also played an important role when Estonian universities began to develop and achieve western standards (Rui 1998). Especially, teachers were among the first who made contact with their colleagues across the sea and meetings and reciprocal visits between Finnish and Estonian teachers was common practice. Because of the co-operation of teachers, interaction between students was also vivid, especially among students of the Finnish-Estonian students' unions which were established in Tartu and Helsinki. The brotherhood perceived between the nations was highly appreciated and permeated the whole political field, as well as worker's associations and civil guards. Tourism also increased quickly and up to six ferries per day could cross the Gulf of Finland in summer, during the period following Estonian independence from 1918–1940 (Lukkari 1996: 38–39; Rausmaa 2007:16–17).<sup>6</sup>

WWII 1939–1945 caused many changes and strangled the free interaction between Finland and Estonia. Finland went to war with the Soviet Union but managed to preserve its independence when the war ended. Estonia however, was occupied by the Soviet Red Army in 1940 and became part of Soviet Union, along with Latvia and Lithuania. This led to them becoming isolated from the western world, whereas the independent Finland continued its active cooperation with the west and other countries. The previously close connections between Finland and Estonia broke down but for Estonia, Finland still provided a potential link to the west. However, as a western country, Finland posed a threat to the Socialist Soviet Union and therefore relations between Finland and Soviet Estonia were kept as distant as possible. Even though the official relations of the Soviet Union with Finland were good, in the secret reports of their authorities, Finland represented a western enemy (Roiko-Jokela 1997; Made 2002:113–114; Graf & Roiko-Jokela 2004: 33–36; Zetterberg 2007: 713). From the perspective of the Soviet regime,

travel between Finland and Estonia was also seen as a threat and was therefore closed immediately after their occupation of Estonia.

After a long-term period of closure and the death of Stalin in 1953,<sup>7</sup> the Soviet Union began to gradually open up to the outside world and foreigners were allowed to visit Moscow and Leningrad. Most of the travellers came from socialist countries, but the number of tourists coming from the West was relatively low. Soviets made their tourist trips mostly to other socialist countries, partly because in the eyes of the Soviet leadership, their citizens' trips to western countries were seen as problematic; travel to the western capitalist world was thought to increase critical attitudes against the socialist and communist system. Therefore the travel of Soviets citizens to western countries was kept strictly controlled, difficult to arrange and subject to license (Syrjämäki 1986: 56–68; Lukkari 1996: 72; Graf & Roiko-Jokela 2004: 39–40, 91). When the travelling between Finland and Soviet Estonia was suspended, a traveller who wanted to make the trip from Finland to Tallinn had to have a good reason for their journey. Firstly, the traveller had to get a visa which required complicated arrangements. The journey had to be made via Leningrad, and finally, the traveller had to face the distressing border crossing formalities (Nupponen 2007: 16).

Travelling between Helsinki and Tallinn was suspended since 1939, but was revived again in July 1965. The open sea route was important for the interaction between countries, but for Estonians it had a more important meaning: it opened and fortified a way to the West, and consequently helped Estonians to release themselves from the rule of Soviet Union (Savisaar 2005: 16–17; Graf & Roiko-Jokela 2004: 87). The *Vanemuine* ferry service started from Tallinn to Helsinki on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1965 carrying influential Soviet Estonian politicians. The following day it came back bringing Finnish politicians to Tallinn. After a couple of days, the Finnish *s/s Wellamo* started from Helsinki, bringing tourists to Tallinn (Graf & Roiko-Jokela 2004: 87). Also, the Finnish passenger ships *s/s Ariadne* and *s/s Silja II* began operating on the route. However, the route was unprofitable and the Finnish parties stopped their ship traffic after only a few years. The Estonian *Vanemuine* continued its traffic, and was later supplemented by the *m/s Tallinn* and *m/s Georg Ots*. The Finnish Finnlines company later arranged cruises to Tallinn in the 1970's with their *m/s Ilmatar* and *m/s Finnhansa* vessels (Nupponen 2007: 16; Yle, Elävä arkisto 2011).

After WWII, Finland and other western countries had to accept the fact that Estonia as a nation was gone and had become a part of the Soviet Union (Made 2002: 122–123; Rausmaa 2013: 20). When the border between Finland and Soviet Estonia was closed, Finns got their information about Estonians mostly from the West, from old “Estonian friends” (*estofilit*, in Finnish), Estonian refugees and expatriates. The countries maintained their relations but their interactions were conducted from above, and when the shipping lane was opened the meetings between Finns and Estonians were organized in the terms of goodwill visits (Salo-



kannel 1998b: 15). The former president of the Republic of Estonia (from 1992 to 2001), Lennart Meri, has stated that the reopening of travel between Tallinn and Helsinki was a social phenomenon beyond comparison in European history, although the travel was parallel (Salokannel 1998a: 108–109).<sup>8</sup> Finns were able to visit Soviet Estonia even though they were under the restrictions and control of the Soviet administration, but Estonians who wanted to visit Finland were still strictly controlled and only the chosen few were granted a license to travel (Graf & Roiko-Jokela 2004: 91). Even though Estonians were not able to visit Finland as much as Finns were able to visit Soviet Estonia, the cultural bridge between the countries strengthened because of the opened sea lane. The sea lane gave an opportunity to maintain personal relations between Finns and Estonians that had been created before it was opened. Gradually, along with the relations between private citizens, various organizations also began to create forms of cooperation. People who were active in cultural life on both sides of the Gulf of Finland played an important role, for example, by establishing various friendship organizations such as the *Tuglas Society*<sup>9</sup> which was found in Helsinki 1982 (Ylönen 1998: 352–357; Rauhala 2002: 432; Rausmaa 2007: 40–55).

### **Cultural Encounters on a Ship**

In the research material of this study, it is typical that the narratives of Finnish travellers start with the episodes of writers' first trips to Soviet Estonia and their reflections about encounters between western and eastern cultures on board. During the Soviet period, the number of the passengers was limited and under the predetermined travel programs of the time, travel should happen in groups (Graf & Roiko-Jokela 2004: 91). The control of the Soviet authorities is reflected in memories where Finnish tourists remember their travels at the end of 1960's when the shipping lane had just opened after a closure of 20 years. This control of travelling continued until the beginning 1990's. Estonia was inaccessible and closed for a long time, and right after the shipping lane was opened, Finnish tourists found it as providing an exciting opportunity. According to the narratives, the Finnish passengers departed on the ship with a sense of excitement, but at the same time they were nervous about the Soviet authorities' strict control. Already in Helsinki harbour, before going aboard, their attention was drawn to the symbols of the Soviet Union on the ship. For example, one writer states that "it was very strange to get on board when the chimney was bedecked with the hammer and sickle" (139–137).



A Finnish family crossing the Gulf of Finland by *Georg Ots* to Tallinn.  
Foto: Jukka Ristolainen.

Only a few decades earlier Finland had been at war with Soviet Union, and thus stepping aboard aroused mixed feelings: the journey was to Soviet Estonia which, however, was part of the Soviet Union – the former enemy of Finland. After WWII, the Soviet Union was closed and ordinary Finns knew hardly anything about it. Most Finnish tourists did not know much about travelling to the Soviet Union and had little idea of what to expect. As travel became more frequent, stories about circumstances in Soviet Estonia spread quickly, so travellers were then able to construct preconceptions about their travels. This made the travel preparation easier and lessened the surprise of cross-cultural encounters on both the border and in Soviet Estonia. However, these first trips were in most cases full of new and astonishing experiences, aroused by different cultural encounters. Before travel and on the ship, Finnish passengers had to adjust to Soviet conventions that they felt to be strange. They strived to follow the official rules related to travelling because if they didn't, it was known to cause trouble. According to the narratives,

there were many strange rules. For example, at the time, travelling with the whole family was forbidden. It was rare to defy this rule and if someone did so, it attracted attention. This kind of bravado could have been questioned by others, as seen in the following text:

When the shipping lane then opened in 1965 we immediately ordered a trip to Tallinn. The Furniture Retailers organization of Kymenlaakso started an unforgettable journey in midsummer. There were my parents-in-law, me and my husband. That attracted the attention. We were cautiously asked, how it was possible that so many family members had got permission to travel – so typical of the Soviet time.

Everything was new and strange, already on the ship. The customs officers on the ship started checking immediately when the ship departed, then a four hour customs inspection in the harbour. I had *Kotiliesi* [a women's magazine, KL] to read during the trip, and it was scrutinised for over an hour in the backroom; perhaps they were afraid porn and politics would be imported into the country.<sup>10</sup> (508–510)

The authorities' control on board is depicted and criticized in the narratives of Finnish tourists, and by these descriptions the narrators are drawing a difference between Finns and Soviets. In the text example above, the "Soviet time" represents the stereotypical impressions of both the Soviet and the Soviet Union, where people were controlled from above. The writer describes the customs officers' long-lasting checks on board and in the harbour as "new" and "strange". The narrative reflects the censorship enforced in Soviet Estonia which fed on communist ideology where exposure to western, political, religious and pornographic influences across the border was controlled (Ermolaev 1997: 181–257; Graf & Roiko-Jokela 2004: 40–47). The effects of censorship were realized in border practices where, for instance, passengers' western magazines and books were confiscated. For the Finnish travellers, the prohibition to bring products and things that were considered ordinary in Finland was so incomprehensible that they could not necessarily take it seriously during their first trips. As such, they may have had newspapers and magazines with them which then became a problem on the border and further delayed the border crossing (136–137, 508–510, 549–551, 167–170).

In the texts of the research material, the authors tell of the checking on the ship and on the Soviet Estonian border. The descriptions of these actions mostly express surprise and are negative in tone. The authorities' behaviour during customs inspections has also been unforeseeable for the Finnish travellers, because almost everything could be seen as suspicious, from a jumper to a rubber boot. The authors describe the customs inspections as irritating, oppressive and frightening. One passenger who was travelling to Tallinn in 1986 narrates his experiences like this:

At last, we came into the harbour. We went to the immigration control and customs. It took time. Passengers stood in a row like soldiers, waiting for their turn. When it was my turn to hand over my passport, the man in a glass cubicle stared chillingly at me and the passport, then again at the passport and me. In the end, however, he slapped a stamp in my blue covered passport. It seemed that the luggage of all travellers was rummaged through by the men and women customs officers. "Why do

you have two pairs of socks with you? For what reason do you need two sweaters?" Stupid questions for which you need to either fabricate as wise an answer as possible, or fell silent submissively. Those authorities really knew how to humiliate passengers. The air in the harbour hall was heavy. I felt dizzy. The reception in our sister nation was not very warm.<sup>11</sup> (143–146)

The text example above tells of the narrator's indignation and reluctant resignation to the authorities' behaviour and "stupid questions", which she felt to be humiliating. In general, for most of the authors who tell about their border crossings, the Soviet authorities' behaviour left negative first impressions of Soviet Estonia. They remember how the border crossing evoked unpleasant emotions, as well as physical sickness.

## Wondering and Comparing

Finnish travellers describe their arrival in Soviet Estonia, the harbour, and the urban environment in their narratives. The descriptions also tell how they value the environment, thus the aspects of beauty and ugliness form central roles in the narratives. For most of the travellers, Tallinn was a new and unknown place, and they tried to conceive it by comparing it with the Finnish urban environment, which was familiar to them. So they made their observations about the city through cultural lenses. Observations like these are selective and the aesthetic interpretations that are based on these observations are also culturally bounded; we have learned and got used to our experience and thus value some things as beautiful and pleasant, and others as ugly and unpleasant (see Rolston 2007: 81–82; Downton 2009: 176–177).

The narratives of Finnish tourists concentrate mainly on the strangeness of Tallinn and its people. The harbour area of Tallinn is typically described by using negative characterizations, like "a terrible sight", "a dump of various junk and stuff", "gloomy" (167–170). When arriving at the port, various symbols of the Soviet Union drew the attention of travellers, like "the red and white stripes on the chimneys, on which had been painted the occupiers' visible signs of the sickle-hammer" (167–170), "there was a smell of Mahorkan (Russian tobacco with a distinctive smell) and some odd smell in the terminal" (136–137), "when we walked out of the terminal, a huge picture of Lenin was greeting us on the wall of the opposite building" (148–152), and "Volgas and Moskovits (types of Russian car) were revolving around us" (188–191). The observations that the travellers made describe Tallinn in a negative light and represent the dilapidation of the city: "after arriving in Tallinn we were struck by inconceivable raggedness and rusty cars" (1–2), "you heard mainly the Russian language on the streets of occupied capital" (549–551) and "the houses were badly painted and the air wafted the smell of brown coal, cabbage and Mahorkan" (136–137).



Soviet signs on the streets of Tallinn in 1981. Photo: Jukka Ristolainen.

According to the narratives, the Soviet occupation was thought to worsen Estonia, but to the Finnish tourists, the Estonians were seen to be reluctant in addressing this situation. The inhabitants' disinterest in taking care of their environment is seen in the narratives as implicitly attributed to the influence of the Soviet Union. This also comes out in the following narrative in which the author tells about her trip to Tallinn to visit her sister's family. The writer describes the building where her sister's family lived and compares it with Finnish houses and building techniques:

It was a new block of flats built by Russians, and Finnish builders [they were building a hotel in Tallinn, KL] lived there. – –The staircase was poorly finished, not even warehouses are in such a condition in Finland! There could be many different types of wallpaper in the rooms and on the ceilings as well. Moreover, it was so cold that electric heaters were needed, in spite of the fact that there was normal central heating.<sup>12</sup> (125).

The narrative underlines that the Soviet represents undesirable otherness. The author criticizes the Russian/Soviet ability to construct proper buildings. Their buildings are in the authors eyes totally different than Finnish ones; Finnish buildings are much better, because they are properly build and warm, whereas Soviet



buildings are of poor quality (“poorly finished”), tasteless (“different types of wallpaper”) and cold.

During their visits in Soviet Estonia, Finnish travellers watched and compared people on the streets of Tallinn. According to their narratives, it was possible to distinguish local people from Finns because of their shabby and modest clothes (136–137, 549–551). However, Estonians stand out from the Russians with their quiet, humble and kind behaviour (549–551). One writer tells, that “when wandering the streets you learned quickly to distinguish between the Estonian and Russian. The Estonian walked expressionlessly, looking down, while the Russian was walking briskly, speaking loudly, and relaxed and enjoying their existence.” (167–170). The Russians that the travellers met on the streets and shops are depicted negatively in the narratives; they were rude and arrogant: “Buxom Russian matrons who were standing behind their tables treated both foreigners and Estonian-speakers rudely” (508–510). In these narratives, the writers are contrasting Finns, other foreigners and Estonians (*we*), to Russians (*them, the other*).

Finnish travellers who visited Tallinn during the Soviet period have many memories of its hotel accommodation. Especially, the *Viru* hotel is remembered in many narratives. Built by Finns in 1972, the *Viru* was one of the *Intourist* hotels included in the State’s Tourist Office, and was numbered among the top five hotels in the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup> The USSR State Security Committee of the KGB recruited spies and informers to monitor different sectors of society, for instance administration, schools, and hotels. Their task was to control people (especially foreigners) who brought western influence to the Soviet Union. Since foreigners stayed in the *Viru* hotel, it also came under KGB control (Nupponen 2007: 9, 31, 50).

In the memories of the *Viru*, Finnish travellers tell of their suspicions about KGB’s infiltration among the foreign travellers, and how they feared to come under its observation. A writer who stayed in *Viru* in 1975 describes his suspicions:

Regardless of the things that we heard about microphones in the hotel rooms and that through them our conversations were recorded, we were not able to hide our impressions. Big Brother’s control, indeed, annoyed us in many ways. The microphones manifested themselves in other ways as well. [...] One day a man slipped in to my room behind the cleaner, and he did not say a word, but presented matters like currency change etc. by using written notes.<sup>14</sup> (549–551).



*Viru* hotel in 1981.  
Photo: Jukka Ristolainen.



From the perspective of the KGB, it was not appropriate that the Finns and Estonians met each other, because Finnish tourists were known to bring forbidden western products into the country and deal them to local people. Therefore Finnish ship travellers were controlled almost everywhere – in their hotels as well as on the streets (Graf & Roiko-Jokela 2004: 167–169). Regardless of the embargo on foreign products by the Soviet Union, some Finnish travellers brought for example coffee, groceries and western clothes, which they gave to their Estonian friends or relatives, or sold to other people in Soviet Estonia. According to the narratives, they found it both necessary and kind to bring different products to Estonians, especially when it emerged that the selection of food and other goods available in the shops of Tallinn was minimal. However, it was always a risk to bring forbidden goods across the border, and even if the products were successfully brought across, it was another matter to deal them without being caught. If the KGB got to know of these countertrades and western souvenirs, it would mean not only trouble to the dealer, but to the receiver as well. Thus, items were given to Estonian friends secretly and discreetly (e.g. 549–551).

## **Conclusion**

Travelling motives undoubtedly influence how cultural encounters, other countries and their people are experienced and understood. As mentioned earlier, the writers and their narratives in this research are constructed for the most part from an exceptional group of people. They have long-term relations to Estonia, its culture and language, and some have relatives and friends there. For such travellers Estonia is not just a country through which to pass; instead, since their first visits to Soviet Estonia, it has since become an annual place to travel. The authors still remember the Soviet period when Estonia belonged to a country that represented otherness in a variety of ways. Their narratives show the remarkable role our memories and past experiences play in the process of making conceptions of different cultures and people.

The narratives of Finnish tourists about travelling from Finland across the Gulf of Finland to Soviet Estonia expose their experiences, but above all, their conceptions of Soviet Estonia and the Soviet Union, which they had adopted in both Finnish and western culture. The border between Finland and Soviet Estonia comes up very clearly in the narratives: it separates the eastern and western nations, which are seen as different in many ways. During the 50 years of the Soviet period, in Finland it was thought that Estonia was lost and it would be forever a part of the Soviet Union (Salokannel 1998b: 15). The generation that was born after WWII did not know Estonia as anything other than a part of the Soviet Union (see Onnela 1998: 69), and this can be seen in their narratives. According to these narratives, Soviet Estonia was almost unknown for those who travelled there

for the first time. For them, it represented *otherness* and “eastern”, something that differed from Finnish and western.

In the narratives of Finnish tourists, the descriptions of border crossings and travelling to Soviet Estonia are ambivalent. Travellers knew that on the other side of the border the Soviet regime prevailed, but the populous were also Estonians, seen as a sister nation. Some of the passengers already had contacts in Estonia before the shipping lane was opened, but most of them knew very little about the Soviet regime’s concrete influence on Estonian society and culture. So, the first trips were anticipated with excitement and curiosity. The strictness of the border authorities’ checks on board and again on shore were a nasty surprise, especially for those Finns who had not travelled to the Soviet Union before. Unpleasant and humiliating checks were remembered well after decades had passed, and these memories describe the cultural encounters with an emphasis placed on the differences between us and them. Consequently, the narratives of border crossing during the Soviet period are mostly told in a negative tone, and the writers interpreted them to represent a typical “Soviet time” and “Soviet spirit”. The descriptions about border crossings and writers’ interpretations of their cultural encounters are quite similar in the various texts covered in this study – on the whole, they repeat mostly negative characterisations of the Soviet period and Soviet Estonia.

The research material texts concentrate mainly on the period of Soviet Estonia and the focus is for the most part on the speculation about otherness and the establishment or creation of difference. According to the narratives, Finnish travellers looked at Soviet Estonia through their own cultural lenses, and thus the Soviet way of life and people were interpreted as being culturally different (the *other*) than that of Finns (*we*): they looked different, they acted differently and they spoke a different language (Russian). In relation to Russians and the Soviet Union however, Estonians are identified with Finns (*we*). Additionally, the narrators make a difference between Estonians and Russians because of differences in their language, behaviour and external appearance. Estonians are seen as resigned victims who were forced to give up their western culture under the pressure of Soviet power.

The Soviet Union and all things “Soviet” represents otherness in the narratives of Finnish travellers, and invariably it means something negative: the disrepair of buildings and the whole cityscape of Tallinn, the lack of food supplies and commodities, the control of Big Brother, and the dominance of the Russian language and other cultural signs appear everywhere. Estonian culture and Estonians are represented as something that is hiding in silence and remains in the background. For example, elements of Estonian history such as their old buildings, songs and other oral history – actually, all considered as good and beautiful – are thought to be preserved from the corruption of the Soviet Union, and to represent the past Estonian (western) culture.

Tallinn is still in the midst of changes today, although the last of the signs and scars that the Soviet regime left behind have been repaired and removed from the urban landscape. Its new architecture represents completely different values: glassed-in office-blocks, shopping centers, hotels and stores (Virtasalo 2008: 38). Modern-day Tallinn is a western city, and Finnish travellers visiting there today mostly shop, enjoy the various cultural and health attractions, or simply relax in the urban atmosphere.

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### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> ”Jo jonkin aikaa Virossa asuneena on erityisen hauska muistella ensimmäisiä matkojani, jolloin lahden takana tuntui olevan paljon outoa ja erikoista, käsittämätöntäkin. Parinkymmenen vuoden takaa ovat Suomi ja Viro tulleet paljon lähemmäs toisiaan, eikä ensi kertaa lahden yli matkustava varmaankaan koe samanlaista kulttuurišokkia.”(148–152).
- <sup>2</sup> Finns make about two million leisure trips to Estonia every year and along with Sweden, it is the most favorite destination. Many ferries operate daily between Helsinki and Tallinn (Statistic Finland 2014; Tourism Tallinn; Viro.fi).
- <sup>3</sup> Cruises and book prizes were raffled for those who participated in the collection. See more about the collection at: <http://www.finlit.fi/kra/keruut/vironmatkat.pdf>. See more about the call for contributions and its results at: <http://www.finlit.fi/kra/keruut/vironmatkattulos.htm>
- <sup>4</sup> Finland was part of the Kingdom of Sweden until the end of Finnish War in 1808–1809, when Finland was ceded to the Russian Empire as the autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland (Zetterberg 1995: 62).
- <sup>5</sup> Finland’s educated classes began to make determined efforts to promote Finnish national unity and the emergence of nationalism at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Finnish national epic *Kalevala*, compiled by Elias Lönnrot, came out in 1835 and it has an important meaning for the creation of the Finnish nation (Anttonen & Kuusi 1999: 307–319).
- <sup>6</sup> Regular travelling between Helsinki and Tallinn began already in 1837 (Lukkari 1995: 39).
- <sup>7</sup> Joseph Stalin was a general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the leader of the country from 1922–1953. Stalin ruled Soviet-Estonia during the period of 1944–1953 (Lukkari 1995: 68–71).
- <sup>8</sup> From the time of opening up until August 1967, 15 000 Finns had already visited Tallinn which was a remarkable amount in those days (Nupponen 2007: 17). Travel across the Gulf

of Finland was however asymmetric: 200 000 Finns visited Tallinn whilst only 20 000–30 000 Estonians visited Finland (Graf & Roiko-Jokela 2004: 91).

- <sup>9</sup> *Tuglas Society* (Tuglas-seura, in Finnish) is a friendship society that connects Finns and Estonians. Its main purposes are to support the interaction between Finland and Estonia, and to increase the mutual knowledge of each (Tuglas Society: 2014).
- <sup>10</sup> ”Kun sitten vesitie vuonna 1965 avautui, tilasimme heti matkan Tallinnaan. Kymenlaakson Huonekalukauppiasyhdistys lähti keskikesällä unohtumattomalle matkalle. Meidänkin perheestä appivanhempani ja minä mieheni kanssa. Sepä herätti huomiota. Meiltä kysyttiin varovasti, miten on mahdollista, että samasta perheestä on päässyt matkustamaan niin monta henkeä – neukkuajalle tyypillistä. Kaikki oli uutta ja outoa jo laivalla. Tullimiesten tulo laivaan jo kaukana ulapalla tarkastukseen, neljä tuntia kestänyt tullitarkastus satamassa. Matkalukemiseksi ottamaani Kotiliettä tutkittiin takahuoneessa toista tuntia kai peläten maahan tuotavaa pornoa tai politiikkaa.” (508–510).
- <sup>11</sup> ”Vihdoin tultiin satamaan. Purkauduttiin passintarkastukseen ja tulliin. Siinä kuluiakin aikaa. Matkustajat seisoivat tiukoissa riveissä kuin sotilaat, odottaen vuoroaan. Kun oma vuoroni tuli ojentaa passini, mies lasikopissaan tuijotti hyytävästi vuoroin passia, vuoroin minua, sitten taas passia ja minua. Löi sentään lopulta leiman sinikantiseeni. Tullimiehet ja -naiset tuntuivat penkovan jokaisen maahan tulevan matkalaukut. ”Miksi teillä on kahdet sukat mukanaan? Mihin tarvitsette villapuseroa?” Tyhmiä kysymyksiä, joihin oli syytä keksiä joko mahdollisimman viisas vastaus, tai vaieta nöyrästi. Ne virkamiehet osasivat todella nöyryyttää matkustajia. Ilma satamahallissa oli raskasta. Pyörrytti. Vastaanotto veljesmaassa ei ollut kovin lämmin.” (143–146)
- <sup>12</sup> ”Se oli uusi venäläisten rakentama kerrostalo, jossa suomalaiset rakentajat asuivat. – – Rappukäytävä oli surkeasti viimeistely, ei Suomessa ole edes säilytystilat siinä kunnossa! Huoneissa saattoi olla montaa eri tapettia ja katossa myös. Lisäksi siellä oli niin kylmä, että piti olla sähköpatterit, vaikka oli normaali sähkölämmitys” (125).
- <sup>13</sup> The *Viru* hotel still operates in Tallinn but has become a part of the chain of Finnish *Sokos* hotels (Nupponen 2007: 9, 31).
- <sup>14</sup> ”Vaikka olimme kuulleet huhuina, että Viru-hotellin huoneissa oli mikrofoneja, joilla äänitettiin huonekeskusteluja, emme käsityksiämme osanneet salailla. Isoveljen valvonta tosin kiusasi monella tavalla. Mikrofonit kävivät muullakin tavalla ilmi. – – huoneeseeni livahti kerran siivoojan mukana mies, joka ei puhunut sanaakaan, mutta esitti rahanvaihto ynnä muita asioita kirjoittamallaan lapuilla.” (549–551).

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## **Adventurers, Flâneurs, and Agitators: Travel Stories as Means for Marking and Transgressing Boundaries in 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Finland**

By Kirsti Salmi-Niklander

### **Abstract**

The article focuses on border crossings in travel stories, which were published in hand-written newspapers in 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Finland. These papers were a popular tradition in student organizations and popular movements. Border crossings appear in travel stories in three different representations. Firstly, border crossings are repeated motifs in travel stories, both as challenging events and as small gestures and encounters. Travel stories demarcate boundaries, but they also provide a means for transgressing them. Secondly, hand-written newspapers as a literary practice highlight borders between oral and written communication. They were produced as one single manuscript copy, and published by being read out aloud in social events. Thirdly, the authors of hand-written newspapers were placed on the border of different positions in society such as class, gender and age. My analysis is based on the methodological discussion of small stories and personal experience narratives; travel stories can be defined as “local event narratives”. I have outlined four basic models for travel stories which emerge from hand-written newspapers: the great mission story, the grand tour story, the flâneur story and the retreat story. The analysis of travel stories is presented through four different case studies with a time range from the 1850s to the 1920s: these materials have been produced in two provincial student fraternities (osakunta), in the temperance society “Star” in Helsinki in the 1890s, and in the Social Democratic Youth Club in the small industrial town of Karkkila in the 1910s and the 1920s. Many parallel features can be observed in travel stories, even though the social background and ideology of the authors are quite different. Time and space are important aspects in travel stories, and they often demarcate boundaries of class and gender.

**Keywords:** Travel stories, hand-written newspapers, border crossings, class, gender, oral-literary tradition, narration

## Introduction

Travel stories are one of the main genres of “grand narratives”, ranging from Gilgamesh and Odyssey to contemporary road movies. Research on travel writing has become an established academic field during recent decades. Tim Youngs and Charles Forsdick summarize the essence of travel stories as a mixed literary genre, oscillating between autobiography and science: “The scientific writing gives to travel writing its objective quality of observation and reportage. The autobiographical draws also on the construction of the protagonist [...], which helps introduce elements of the fictional” (Youngs & Forsdick 2012: 1).

Eric J. Leed (1991: 7) outlines the basic difference between ancient and modern conceptions of travel: “The ancients valued travel as an explication of human fate and necessity; for moderns, it is an expression of freedom and an escape from necessity and purpose”. The distribution of romantic ideas in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century changed the experiences and meaning of travel: getting to the destination was no more the most important rationale for travelling, but travelling rather served as a means for creating a “counter-reality” to a rational bourgeois life. Nature and scenery gained symbolic value and became means by which to reach other forms of reality (Varpio 1997: 26–27). Romantic imagination turned material journeys to mental journeys into the self. A good example of a romantic journey is Samuel Coleridge’s well-known poem “*Kubla Khan*” (1816), situated in the imaginary palace of Xanadu (Fulford & Lee 2012: 407–408).

Border-crossings are recurrent motifs both in ancient and modern travel stories, and the borders can be geographical, social, cultural or mental. For example, a shaman may travel in other mental states, an explorer may map unknown territories, and a flâneur may observe the different sceneries and subcultures in modern cities. Border-crossings between worlds, territories and cultures are liminal phases which contain elements of danger. Referring to Yuri Lotman, Hein Viljoen outlines a boundary as having a basic semiotic meaning which separates “us” from “them”, and the safe, cultured world from an unsafe and chaotic world (Viljoen 2013: xiii): “Boundaries divide and differentiate both conceptually and in social life, but are also sites where communication and exchange can take place” (Viljoen 2013: xiv).

Literary historian Yrjö Varpio (1997: 209–260) has analysed boundaries and border crossings in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Finnish travel stories published in books and periodicals. Boundaries were established between nature and culture, “us” and “the others”, center and periphery, freedom and captivity. Border crossings can be observed in the inter-textual links and citations, and symbolic expressions and small semiotic signs which demarcate class and ethnic boundaries (Varpio 1997: 238–240).

Published travel writing is often based on diaries and notebooks which have been edited by the writer or other editors (Bourguet 2012). Travel stories were

popular material in 19<sup>th</sup>-century private letters and diaries, written by both educated and self-educated people (Varpio 1997: 15; Ollila 2000: 58–61; Hassam 2012; Nordlund 2013). Unpublished archival materials also present access to the experiences of writers who could not get their stories published in print.<sup>1</sup>

This article focuses on travel stories in hand-written newspapers, which were a popular tradition in Finnish student organizations and popular movements during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They were in most cases produced as a single manuscript copy and published by being read aloud at meetings and social evenings. The editing process was often collective and several people participated in the creation of individual texts. Therefore, hand-written newspapers provide excellent material for studying narrative interaction in historical contexts (Salmi-Niklander 2013).

Border crossings appear in hand-written newspapers in three different representations. Firstly, border crossings are repeated motifs in travel stories, both as challenging events and as small gestures and encounters. Travel stories demarcate boundaries, but they also provide a means for transgressing them. Such border crossings will be interpreted as metaphoric and symbolic expressions, observing interpersonal encounters. According to my observations, travel stories build up a narrative “red thread” – a thematic continuity from the 19<sup>th</sup>-century student organizations to the communities of working-class young people in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Finland. The tension between individuality and collectivity is one of the underlying themes in texts written by young adults in both the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Secondly, hand-written newspapers as a literary practice highlight borders between oral and written communication. They provide an excellent example of an oral-literary tradition, which can be interpreted as including those expressive genres which involve both oral and written communication.<sup>2</sup> Oral performance was an essential part of their publication and sometimes the writers would highlight their words for a listening audience, rather than leave it to the papers’ readers: these were texts aimed to be listened to in a social event, not to be read silently.

Thirdly, the authors of hand-written newspapers were placed on the border of different positions in society such as class, gender and age. Young people writing these papers were going through a liminal phase between childhood and adulthood, and many of them went through changes in class position through either education or professional training. Popular movements provided possibilities for young women to enter the public sphere. For university students, the phase between childhood and adulthood was extended, but by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century youth was also being recognized as a separate age among the rural population and the working classes. The establishment of agrarian youth societies and socialist youth clubs was one reaction to this development (Kemppainen, Salmi-Niklander & Tuomaala 2011).

The narrative interaction behind texts in hand-written newspapers can be reached through contextual close reading and other available sources such as minutes, memoirs, printed almanacs and other publications. While interpreting the gaps and silences in these texts, it is important to keep in mind the audience to which they were performed. In 19<sup>th</sup>-century student societies the audience was all-male, but in popular movements women had started to participate in meetings and other activities. Even though many young women did not openly reveal their opinions and experiences, they co-created the texts as part of the audiences.

### **Travel Stories as Local Event Narratives**

Writers of hand-written newspapers utilized a great variety of genres and motifs adopted from literary culture (essays, poems, short stories) and oral tradition (proverbs, folk songs, folk legends). My special interest lies in local event narratives, which along with parodic news and advertisements are genres typical of hand-written newspapers. They depict recent events in local communities, such as meetings, trips, social evenings and informal gatherings. Fictionalization and localization may be outlined as two main narrative strategies in hand-written newspapers. Local events and personal experiences are fictionalized using various literary methods, for example narration, metaphors, literary citations, irony and parody. Localization on the other hand, includes different means of rewriting and reinterpreting printed texts in a local context, where ideas, motifs and whole stories from printed sources could be fitted to local communities (Salmi-Niklander 2004: 175–178; 2007, 192–193).

Travel stories are a hybrid narrative genre moving between big and small stories, personal experience and local event narratives. Local event narratives are in many ways different from personal experience narratives as depicted by Sandra Dolby Stahl (1989: 12–13): their plots are usually simple and undramatic, and instead of individual experiences they focus on collective action. The travels depicted in these stories are both long and short, and may include adventures across the country or abroad, or visits to neighbouring parishes or villages. Although many travel stories in hand-written newspapers depict “small” events,<sup>3</sup> they have intertextual, and sometimes ironic or parodic links to the models of “big travel stories”.

In local event narratives, I have observed various complex narrative positions which writers utilize in order to fictionalize their own experiences (Salmi-Niklander 2004: 172–175; 2006: 206). The first person plural (“we”) is much more common in local event narratives than the first person singular (“I”). In this sense, travel stories in hand-written newspapers are different from those in printed literature, which often have an individual protagonist. Even in stories told in the first person, the narrator takes the position of a commentator or an observer, and seldom refers to his or her individual experiences (Salmi-Niklander 2004: 164–



165). The development of observational skills has been one of the educational uses of travel, and observation was one of the key methods used on scientific journeys (Leed 1991: 60–61).

### Four Models of Travel Stories

I have outlined four basic models for travel stories which emerge from hand-written newspapers: the great mission story, the grand tour story, the flâneur story and the retreat story. The first three models are familiar from literature and mythology, and have been previously studied, e.g. by Joseph Campbell (the great mission story; 1956) and Walter Benjamin (the flâneur story; 1999).

Many researchers of travel writing have developed their own typologies for travel stories and their protagonists. Arne Melberg (2005: 27–29) outlines three positions of the modern travel-writer: a witness, a tourist, and a flâneur. A witness “sees what nobody else has seen”; a tourist “sees what everybody else has seen”; and a flâneur (or flâneuse) does not have any definite goals but remains open to all new impressions. MacLulich (1979) has delineated three different forms in Canadian exploration narratives, where the journey can be depicted as progress towards a definite goal (a quest), as a struggle against unbearable hardships (an ordeal), or as a more loose and digressive exploration of unknown territories (an odyssey) (MacLulich 1979: 74–76). Some of the travel stories in hand-written newspapers fit into these models, but “small” travel stories narrated by young people in agrarian or working-class communities especially tend to follow different styles of emplotment.

	<b>Narration</b>	<b>Characters</b>	<b>Sensory and emotional experiences</b>
<b>Great Mission</b>	First person singular	Allies, enemies, assistants, informants	Trials, hardships
<b>Grand Tour</b>	First person singular	Companions, strangers, servants	Adventures, observations
<b>Flâneur Story</b>	First person plural/singular	Passers-by, temporary companions	Impressions, observations
<b>Retreat Story</b>	First person plural/singular	Friends, hosts, companions	Emotional renewal and distance

**Table 1.** Basic models of travel narratives in hand-written newspapers.

In the great mission-story, the narrator is working with a serious purpose and facing trials and hardships on his way. On his missionary journey, he meets both enemies and allies who help him to perform his great purpose. The grand tour has been a part of young gentlemen's education since the seventeenth century, and proceeds through adventures and observations which provide new knowledge and life experience for the narrator (Leed 1991: 184–192; Buzard 2002: 38–47). The main character in the flâneur story is a modern traveller, depicted by Walter Benjamin as a wandering observer of modern city life, who absorbs scenic impressions and creates temporary relationships with passers-by (Benjamin 1999: 416–453). The retreat story may be placed in locations such as sanatoria or remote boarding houses (for example Thomas Mann's 1924 work: *Der Zauberberg*), and provides the possibility for a refreshing withdrawal and distancing from the hectic routines of everyday life. The people on retreat create new companionships. Anne Ollila (2000: 86–88) provides some examples of retreat stories in her monograph, based on the archives of the Hällström family in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Finland, and many family members spent time in sanatoria and reflected upon their experiences in correspondence.

Physical experiences, emotions and personal encounters are expressed differently in travel stories. In the great mission story, they are related to the trials and hardships which the main character faces on their way to some great purpose. In the grand tour story, emotions, experiences and encounters are a part of the learning process. In the flâneur story, they are related with momentary impressions and relationships, and in the retreat story, they are a means for emotional refreshment and renewal. In hand-written newspapers, all of these basic narrative models are combined and parodied.

### **“Entering the Field” Narrative**

The oldest example of travel stories in this corpus of hand-written newspapers is Berndt August Paldani's five-part report on his folklore collecting journeys in *Kaukomieli* – the hand-written newspaper of the Western Finnish Student Fraternity, in 1852. Hand-written newspapers were revitalized by Finnish students in the early 1850s, when student activities were strongly controlled by Czar Nicholas the First and his officialdom, following the revolutionary year of 1848 (Klinge 1967: 135–137).

*Kaukomieli* was one of the earliest hand-written student papers, with 28 issues from November 1851 until the end of the year in 1852, when the provincial student fraternities were prohibited. The paper included contributions both in Finnish and Swedish. *Kaukomieli* is a name for the *Kalevala* hero Lemminkäinen, and folklore collecting activities were quite strongly emphasized in the paper. Some poems by peasant writers were also published in the paper (Kuismin 2012: 11–12).

Paldani (1823–1860) was a student of theology and made two folklore collecting journeys to Ylöjärvi, Virrat, Ruovesi, Ikaalinen, Parkano and Kuru, the first during the Christmas vacation of 1851–1852 and the second in April 1852. The Western Finnish Fraternity had raised 76 rubles to support his journey, so he was obliged to provide a report in *Kaukomieli*. Paldani's travel stories were later published in print in an anthology edited by A.R. Niemi in 1904. Therefore, his stories belong to the canon of published travel stories concerning folklore collecting journeys (Varpio 1997: 58–64), even though this occurred more than fifty years after he wrote the original stories. The existing travel stories by Elias Lönnrot and Antero Warelius probably inspired his writing.

The first part of Paldani's travel story in which makes his journey to his collecting field is most interesting in its narrative complexity. The story begins as a flâneur story: Paldani depicts his travel with a couple of other male students, first by horse cart and then by sleigh from Helsinki towards Tampere, progressing from one inn to another. The narrator merges in the group of travelling students and does not identify his own emotions and experiences separately from the others. In this respect, the story resembles the published diary of Zacharias Topelius from 1840 (Varpio 1997: 15). The travellers joke on the tedious details of winter travel and observe the beauties of winter nature and of a strange light in the night sky. The narrator depicts this collective visual impression and its various interpretations:

I have to mention the glow, which we saw in the sky after going for a while. It looked very beautiful from further away; a red light flashed at times bursting into the sky, blurred at times like the Northern Lights. We looked at this wonderingly and asked our coachman to drive faster to get there, because when the road turned, this showed first in the North, then in the North-West, so that we thought it would be next to the road, but it did not come our way and was left on the side, and at last disappeared from our sight. Probably it was a fire, a pity for those who met this hard luck.<sup>4</sup> (Transl. Kirsti Salmi-Niklander)

An important turning point of the story takes place in Tampere, when the narrator continues his travel alone towards his field and his great folklore-collecting mission. At this point, the travel narrative changes into a great mission story. From this point he has to proceed and make decisions on his own, which is not very easy in the middle of winter in the countryside.

Paldani depicts in great detail a breath-taking sleigh ride over a lake covered by ice which was still quite thin, by sleigh with a farm-hand who amuses him during the journey with “mostly very ugly and obscene” folktales and legends: “The ice was bad, the water gushed up from the cracks; I hesitated and wanted to turn back, but the man answered: ‘Let's take the godly spirit on us and let's drive in a godly manner’”.<sup>5</sup> This expression could well be an ironic reference to the theological studies of the narrator, which the coachman had probably found out about at this stage. The journey serves as Paldani's initiation for his field, and like all field-workers he faces other hardships and unexpected events. In the village of

Luhalahti (in part 2), he attends a New Year's dance with other young people from the village. They are very curious about him and he is forced to sing himself before his audience is willing to perform folk songs and riddles for him.

Yrjö Varpio has observed the romantic imagery surrounding nature's symbolic and mythic meanings in Elias Lönnrot's travel stories: nature provides him with a pure experience, and some of his natural observations remind him of ancient myths (Varpio 1991: 215–216). Analogous romantic imagery also comes out in Paldani's travel stories, but the story of the sleigh ride over thin ice reminds him of the dangers of nature. Berndt Paldani's great idols Elias Lönnrot and Antero Warelius were from a quite modest artisan and peasant background, however Paldani himself was an officer's son, which therefore made his role as a folklore collector more tension-filled. During his travels he faces suspicion and ridicule from the country people, and has to struggle to convince them of the sincerity of his purpose. Paldani depicts in detail many encounters with rural people. Apparently, he is relieved to spend a night at the house of a local priest in Karvia (part 3), depicting the priest as "a friendly and talkative man" with whom he "spent his evening in an amusing manner"<sup>6</sup>. However, he only mentions common people by their whole proper names: Kalle Sävijärvi (a crofter who after some hesitation performs many folk-songs for Paldani), and a self-educated writer, Joose Westerbacka who becomes Paldani's key informant. Westerbacka is an excellent storyteller, but also literate and later he sends proverbs to Paldani in writing. Paldani faces suspicion from the local people who take him as "a government spy" looking for information on superstitions and witchcraft. Westerbacka reveals these rumours to Paldani, but also supports and defends him.

During Paldani's second folklore collecting journey in April 1852, his experiences are much more positive: people are friendly and willing to share their songs and stories with him, and "even the girls have rosy cheeks". Paldani reflects on the reasons for this in the fourth part of his travel stories: "But why has my collecting more success now than in winter? Is it that I am more used to do my work, and the common people no longer take this as a strange matter? On the contrary – in winter I said almost everywhere: I will come again, keep your stories in mind [...]".<sup>7</sup> (Transl. K. Salmi-Niklander).

Paldani's story is quite a typical example of a Great Mission story, during which the traveller faces hardships, learns to act in new ways and grows as a person. Personal growth is achieved through finding new allies. The narration varies between vivid stories of encounters and situations, and more "academic" depictions of local dialects and manners, provided with occasional footnotes. These narrative changes reflect the tension-filled relationship between Paldani and "the people" whose traditions he was collecting, and his fellow students to whom he performed his stories.

The comment on "girls with rosy cheeks" in the last part of Paldani's travel story insinuates the possibility of romantic encounters with young country wom-

en. All the women in Paldani's travel stories are anonymous, be they country girls at local dances, old gossiping women, or farmers' wives providing shelter and meals for the traveller.

## A Romance on Uuras Island

The hand-written newspaper *Savo-Karjalainen* was produced by the Savo-Karelian fraternity since 1864. Its heyday however was in the mid-1880s, when new liberal ideas on evolution and women's liberation were debated in the fraternity, and the founders of Finnish realistic literature (Juhani Aho and Matti Kurikka) wrote their first stories and poems (Ruutu 1939: 324–329). There was high competition for editorial posts on the paper, and some individual articles raised fierce debates.

The travel story *A day on Uuras Island* was published in *Savo-Karjalainen* 16 October 1886 [the author has given his initials -e- -é-]. The story takes place on the island of Uuras in the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland, with a lively international harbour and a large Russian garrison. This story is obviously related to Grand Tour stories, and young students who had just passed matriculation exams and got their white student caps had a tradition of making a tour around the country to see different cities and provinces. Some Grand Tour stories like this were published in *Savo-Karjalainen*, and they also appear in the established literature of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. One well-known example is the short novel *Helsinkiin* ("To Helsinki", 1889) by Juhani Aho, in which two young men travel by boat and train to study in Helsinki. The novel has been linked to decadence-literature, since the other main character is a young student who makes his first experiments with alcohol and prostitutes, following the model of older students (Lappalainen 2000: 170–177). Some travel stories written by students were also published in small booklets (Varpio 1997: 113). Domestic Grand Tour stories preceded the youth travel-movement, which originated from the German *Vandervöge* movement and was propagated in Finland by August Ramsay in the 1890s (Varpio 1997: 190–195).

The first person narrator is a young student who makes his journey towards the city of Viipuri, by way of the island of Uuras. By accident (or with ill intent) the boatman the narrator has hired does not take him to the harbour, but instead to the Russian garrison. Here he meets very hostile and aggressive Russian soldiers, but has a very pleasant saviour in the form of the daughter of a Russian official, who speaks quite fluent Finnish and leads him safely to the harbour. The narrator depicts his mixed emotions after his adventure: although he should have no reason for sorrow, he still misses his pretty saviour:

I remained sitting on the wharf in low spirits. I don't understand what reason I had for sorrow any more, since I had got where I wanted – to the harbour; but I would have hoped myself a thousand times in such a similar trouble, if I could have been

saved from it in a similar manner. But, I could not spend a long time thinking on this, since after a short wait we heard the whistle of the ship and I had to continue my journey. Soon, the beach behind me was tangled in thick smoke, which came out from the chimney of the ship when it slid over the smooth sea (Transl. K. Salmi-Niklander).<sup>8</sup>

The story is very coherent and appears to be a personal experience narrative. However, I have strong suspicions that this story is fictional, although the writer probably has some first-hand experience of the island. The narrator is depicted in quite an ironic manner, for example in another section, he tries to use his knowledge of Old Greek with Russian soldiers.<sup>9</sup> The story also has parallel motifs with ancient travel stories: for example, the young woman who saves the narrator from a dangerous situation but is then parted from him has some resemblance with the women in Homer's *Odyssey*. However, the narrator does not have any great mission or task to achieve, beyond making observations and having adventures.

19<sup>th</sup>-century published travel stories provide plentiful examples of colourful depictions of other nationalities, emphasizing their inferiority and strange habits. *A Day on Uuras Island* followed the stereotypical models of depicting Russians, that are often seen in Finnish travel stories (Varpio 1991: 227–233). The Russian soldiers' behaviour is depicted as aggressive and frightening:

Some other soldiers glanced at me looking very cruel, and shook their dirty fists in front of me, so that I started thinking that this might concern a lese-majesty. The others seemed merely to be amused by my trouble, they made faces and laughed holding their bellies.<sup>10</sup>

However, the romantic encounter with the young Russian woman suggests fictional possibilities for transgressing such ethnic boundaries.

## **By Train, by Foot and by Bike**

During the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, hand-written newspapers were adopted by both temperance and agrarian youth movements (Numminen 1961: 459–471; Karpio 1938: 449–450). Late 19<sup>th</sup>-century travel stories reflect technological and social changes. The introduction of trains and bicycles changed the technology of travelling, and along with it, the sense of space and time. My third case study is a temperance society known as *The Star* in Helsinki, and the weekly hand-written newspapers which were edited by the members of its speakers' club, *Kehitys* ("Progress").<sup>11</sup> A volume of approximately 500 pages was written during the years 1891–1893, and it has been preserved in the manuscript department of the National Library. The society belonged to a nation-wide organization, Friends of Temperance, which was established in 1883. The membership of *The Star* varied between 100 and 200 members during the 1890s, the beginning of which saw an increased number of members drawn from the artisan and working classes. At the same time, the amount of students and civil servants diminished. About one third



of the members of the society were women, both unmarried and married and from different social backgrounds.<sup>12</sup>

Some travel stories were published in *Kehitys*, which followed the Grand Tour model in a more proletarian context of young artisans. For example, in October 1894 a writer under the pseudonym “Eemu” depicted a boat trip from Helsinki to Stockholm with his friend. In November 1894, another travel story was published, depicting a narrators experience of boat travel back to his home region of Karelia, after working for ten years in Helsinki and other cities in Finland.

There are also several stories centring on the summer retreats of young artisans and working class people, which follow the Retreat Story model. One of these is a two-part story, written by a young woman under the pseudonym “Enne”. She was one of the few female writers in *Kehitys*, and published a few reports and poems in 1893. Based on small idiosyncrasies in her texts it appears that “Enne” had probably only undergone elementary schooling, and she may have been one of the four seamstresses or three female servants who belonged to the society in 1890 (Salmi-Niklander 2005:84–85).

The picnic report is a simple story: a group of young men and women makes a short trip by train and continues on foot for 13 kilometres to the seaside. The narrator proceeds in the collective first person plural, merging first into the group of four young women, who get up early on Sunday morning to be in time for their departure. They are worried since the rest of the group (young men) are late:

The whole trip started to look suspicious [for us], one thing and another was said about people who break their word. Only five minutes were left before the departure of the train, when at last four more people arrived – this was still not everyone but we could not wait any longer, we rushed to the train which soon blew the signal for departure.<sup>13</sup> (Transl. K. Salmi-Niklander)

The concerns about the exact time and being late were related to new experiences of railway travel (Ollila 2000: 53–55). “Enne” received a critical response from the male members of the group for her apparently innocent picnic report. The reasons for this (which was published in the next issue of *Kehitys*), were some quite mild critical remarks she had offered about the young men’s behaviour during the picnic: she remarked on their almost missing the train and not carrying the coats and lunch bags of the girls right from the beginning. A close reading of the picnic report suggests a collective jealousy as being a possible reason for this aggressive response: after the young men courteously carried the luggage of the young women during the hike, the girls then neither see nor hear of them again, other than their host, a young Mikael Nyberg, who is courteously referred to as “Our Director”.

The picnic provides a possibility for collective intimacy between Mikael Nyberg and the picnickers: he shows them scenes from his childhood and also the cottage where he lives during the summer. Members of the Nyberg family invite the group to drink coffee and eat strawberries on their porch, which was a unique

moment of intimacy for young working-class people. This was a well-known intellectual family, since Mikael Nyberg's mother was daughter of the famous writer Zacharias Topelius, and the villa was next to his home, Koivuniemi manor. However, the family members are only referred to by their first names, which outlines the intimate spirit of the visit.

"Enne" never refers to herself as an individual actor, nor to her own emotions or experiences. However her emotions are reflected in the romantic tone of the depiction of the scenery, in which the narrator refers to herself and her friends using the collective third person:

The inlet was tranquil, the ancient birches offered cool in the shadow of their thick-growing branches, the aspen leaves quivered, and the birds sang songs of praise of their Creator, everything, everything was full of serene peace, which created new emotions in the heart of a traveller from Helsinki.<sup>14</sup>

Romantic and modern ideas and images are mixed in Enne's travel story. The beginning of the journey is recounted using the tensions related to railway travel, but her depiction of the scenes at Koivuniemi manor relates more to romantic travel stories, in which scenes are presented as symbols of mental states.

Two months later in September 1893, two stories were published in *Kehitys*, which depicted a summer retreat which happened in the previous July: a group of six young men take the train to Kerava and continue by horse cart to a farmhouse, where they spend their summer vacation fishing, enjoying nature, and making friends with local "men of temperance". The narration proceeds in the first person plural, with the members of the group referred to as "persons".

It felt so sweet to travel on a beautiful summer evening surrounded by the singing birds, and in the good smell of all the fruits of the earth. When we got to our destination we could enjoy the hospitality of the people of the house. Later in the evening we were accommodated in two buildings close to each other, where we got comfortable dwellings. On the first morning we woke up early to the lovely singing of the birds and the gentle smile of the morning sun. After eating our breakfast we went to see the village scenery and in the afternoon we went fishing.<sup>15</sup> (Transl. K. Salmi-Niklander)

I have determined by way of the indirect references to the other "men of temperance", that the travellers were actually all men, but this fact is never openly stated. The writer behind the initials J.S. was probably Jaakko Saha, a construction worker and later an engine driver. His wife had joined the society before him, and it is quite probable that there were other wives and fiancées of the travellers among the listeners of this story. Compared to Enne's story, the conventional nature observations give this story a feminine tone. It was important to convince the female spouses that their husbands had actually spent their holidays properly. As such, the collective narrator demarcates the boundary between the men of temperance, and "drunkards" who can be observed in the countryside. This especially comes out in the scene when travellers visit a local reformatory and some boys who they

had known in Helsinki: “It was nice to see the well-organized institute and those tidy boys, who earlier were great scoundrels”.<sup>16</sup>

The other story coming from this same summer retreat rather follows the Grand Tour model. One of the travellers (probably a young pressman Karl Skogster) is a passionate cyclist and takes his bicycle (which is ironically referred to as his “horse”) to the retreat. He gets the mail and newspapers to his friends using his “horse”, and in the middle of their vacation he starts his own individual journey. Unlike the narrator of the retreat story, this narrator uses the narrative “I” the whole the time. He depicts in great detail his day’s journey, which is quite an achievement considering the road condition of the time:

On 22 July started my proper journey. I left from Tuusula at 6 in the morning and rode without resting about 35 km. Then I made a stop at a small tenant farm in Nurmijärvi. After having some breakfast I continued to Wihti, making a few stops at some houses to drink milk or water – whatever was available, until about noon. After riding 80 km made a stop at the Pakasela inn to have dinner and to dry my clothes since it rained several times. After having a rest for an hour I continued almost without a stop through Pusula and Somerniemi to the Söderkulla manor in Somero, where my brother was staying. There I rested for 3 days after riding 120 km in one single day. [...] Travelling in general felt very joyful although I was alone without a companion, but the new scenery attracted me so much that having a companion did not even come to my mind [...].<sup>17</sup> (Transl. K. Salmi-Niklander)

The individuality of the narrator’s experiences and emotions makes this story a counter-narrative to the retreat story, in which all the emotions and experiences are strictly collective. The bicycle revolutionized travel in a different manner than trains: it provided a means for long, solitary and independent journeys, and also the possibility to experience new scenery. The joy of solitary travel is often reflected in the detailed depictions of bike travels.

### **Working-class Dandies on an Agitation Tour**

My last case study takes us to the 1920s, to the small industrial community of Högfors in Southern Finland. Young people in the community edited a hand-written newspaper *Valistaja* from 1914 to 1925. The paper was confiscated by the police in 1926 and later found in the attic of the local police station in the 1980s. The writers of *Valistaja* were young unmarried men and women in their late teens and early twenties, and formed the first fully literate generation in their families and community. The young men worked in the ironworks and the young women were either servants or worked on the farm owned by the ironworks (Salmi-Niklander 2004). *Valistaja* is an example of the heyday of hand-written newspapers during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their great popularity during this period is largely due to the strict censorship of the times, the birth of the labor movement and the political uprising which occurred during the periods of Russification (Ehrnrooth 1992).

Young women had an active role in the youth club, and in editing *Valistaja*. However, during the last three years when *Valistaja* was published (1922–1925), the factory boys “took over” the paper with their travel stories, but only fragments of these stories have been preserved. In the travel stories, the writers depict the journey itself in great detail, including the relationship between travellers, their quarrels and discussions, and eating and drinking. The travel stories construct a complex narrative network. The same characters appear in several stories and the same events are depicted in many stories by different writers.

Two stories depict the same journey, an agitation tour to Oinasjärvi. Comprising loose sheets, it has only been possible to estimate a very approximate date of these stories, and based on their content it is likely they were both written during the years 1922–1923. One story however ends quite abruptly, since the writer runs out of paper. The stories are written in a spontaneous style, and were probably composed very soon after the tour had taken place.

The topic is an trip to Oinasjärvi, a village in the parish of Somero, around 40 km to the west of Karkkila. This is not a long journey in the context of today’s modern roads and vehicles, but at the time, with horse-drawn carriages on small and meandering roads it took a whole day. In the story, the young men were going to perform at a social evening in the local worker’s hall, which was an important activity for the young people in Karkkila. They divided into two groups, one of which has some difficulties in getting a horse and a carriage. Finally, they manage to get a local farmer to drive them to their destination with his horse and carriage, albeit with some skulduggery: they lie to him about the destination and then rely on his ignorance of the local geography.

The two stories provide good examples of the complex narrative positions in hand-written newspapers: in the first story, the narrator proceeds in the first person from the beginning to the end of the story, depicting his own observations and emotions. The narrator of the other story belongs to the less fortunate group of the travellers: his story proceeds in the first person plural, until he depicts the dialogue between himself and the farmer who has been fooled into driving them to their destination. When they get there, the young man and the farmer finally fall into conversation, and the narrator reveals that he has also served as a farmhand:

We arrived at the house – everyone’s mind seemed bright, coffee was on everybody’s lips. The men took their horses to the stables, except for the Bearded Lout [Partamoukka, the farmer]. The chap smoked and swore, so I soothed him and asked if he had been here before, and sure enough he knew all the places. I said I had been a farmhand in Hattula – what is the bigger house there, Passari? The man listed [the houses] – it was Passari. Yeah it was Passari I agreed.<sup>18</sup> (Transl. K. Salmi-Niklander)

The two stories are good examples of collective “streams of consciousness” with expressions in the local dialect, jokes and incorrect orthography, which was typical of young men’s travel stories. The stories bring up the tensions between factory workers and local farmers, and a class border is indicated between them: the

young men act in quite an arrogant manner towards the farmer, even though they actually are dependent on him. Young factory boys are called by their first names, but the farmer is called the Bearded Lout (“Partamoukka”). The young women who form the audience of this story are also indirectly present: at the social evening and dance at the Oinasjärvi society hall, the narrator insinuates that the young men had (or at least tried to have) sexual relationships with the village girls. The girls are referred as a collective subject “Maanvahva” (“Heavy Earth”). However, sexuality was a delicate topic in the community of the young working-class men and women of Högfors, and young women opposed the rough behaviour of the boys, which they experienced as harassment. In villages, the factory boys were treated as dandies with amusing talk and fashionable outfits, whereas in Högfors they were controlled by their bosses, their fathers and the area officials.

### **Boundaries, Breaks and Continuities**

Hand-written newspapers provided possibilities for presenting texts that could not have been published in print. Berndt August Paldani’s travel stories were written in a period when Russian officials strictly controlled and censored student activities, especially those with a nationalistic agenda. However, his stories were printed five decades later, after their value for folkloristic research had been recognized. In the 1880s students had more freedom, but the critique of Russian soldiers in *Savo Karjalainen* would still have been quite a sensitive theme to discuss in print. Hand-written newspapers in temperance societies and socialist organizations provided the first possibilities for publishing for writers from lower classes. The travel stories from *Kehitys* and *Valistaja* presented in this article, would hardly have passed the editorial evaluation of the printed papers of the time, because of their simple topics and use of nonstandard language.

Related with the great historical trends of travel writing, travel stories in hand-written newspapers have complex autobiographical elements. Paldani’s travel stories have a first-person-singular protagonist and quite strong scientific elements when detailed information on place-names and local traditions is provided. *A day on Uuras Island* also has a first-person-singular protagonist, but the fictionality of the story is underlined by parodic elements in his narration. Applying MacLulich’s terminology, Paldani’s travel stories follow the quest-model, leading towards a definite goal, whereas *A day on Uuras Island* follows the odyssey-model (MacLulich 1979).

The travel stories written by the members of the temperance society “*Star*” and by the young men in Högfors have first-person-plural protagonists, which makes them quite different from the stories written by university students. Small semiotic signs in encounters between classes (Varpio 1997: 238–240) are depicted “from below” in these stories. “Enne” depicts an intimate meeting with an upper-class family, which was a unique experience for a young working-class woman. The

male writers construct borders within the lower classes: for young workers and artisans in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Helsinki, this boundary lay between decent men of temperance and drunkards; for the young factory boys in Högfors, the boundary lay between socialist factory workers and simple rural people in neighbouring villages.

Paldani's folklore collecting travel stories and those of the Högfors factory boys have some parallel features, even though the social background and ideology of the travellers are quite different. One of these parallel features is the wavering masculine subject, a group of young men wandering from one place to another. Another common feature is the dependency and dialogue between the traveller and the coachman. Both Paldani and the factory boys are on a great mission, be it collecting folklore or agitating socialist ideology, however in their travel stories this great mission is rather presented as a spontaneous drifting from one place to another. Common to both sets of stories though, is the treatment of women as anonymous, mostly collective subjects.

Rita Felski (1995: 16–17) and Janet Wolff (1990: 35–50) have observed the masculinity of the figure of “the flâneur” – an idle observer of urban life. Young women in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Finland adopted, parodied and ironized travel stories as a masculine genre in their own writing (Salmi-Niklander 2007: 204–205). Hidden or neutralized gender was a new narrative convention in the conversational communities of young men and women, which started to be established in late 19<sup>th</sup> century: in many local event narratives and also in some travel stories, it is quite difficult to determine the gender of the narrator.

Time and space are important aspects in travel stories and in local event narratives in general, and they often demarcate boundaries of class and gender. Anne Ollila (2000) has observed the experience of time in the personal writings of young middle class women in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Finland. One of the key experiences brought by the new technical development, especially the trains, was the importance of exact time (Ollila 2000: 53–55). Berndt Paldani and the bicyclist of *Kehitys* carefully document the times, spaces and place names of their travels. In contrast, travel stories often include sequences where “the time vanishes” in the collective experience of the beauty of nature, or in breath-taking experiences such as a sleigh ride over weak ice. Anne Ollila's research material also includes letters written by a young woman in a sanatorium, which reflect a parallel experience of “vanishing time” (Ollila 2000: 87–92).

Digital information has revolutionized media culture in early twenty-first century, but many apparently new phenomena have old roots. Travelogues are a very popular genre in blogs, and many parallel narrative practices can be observed between travel blogs and hand-written newspapers. Another common feature is the possibility for immediate feedback, either in oral performance situations or with written comments or signals. Travel is today associated with the transition period between childhood and adulthood, and global Grand Tours are still an important



part of upper and middle class education. Studying the history of young people's alternative forms of publishing provides insight for the new media with old and new border crossings.

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### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> One example of popular travelogues is the sequence in the autobiographical diary of a crofter's son Kalle Eskola, in which he depicts in detail the training in Krasnoje Selo near St. Petersburg in 1889, during his military service in a sharpshooter battalion near St. Petersburg (Kauranen 2009: 149–156).
- <sup>2</sup> My formulation of the term is related to the ethnographic-ideological orientation in the research of orality and literacy, which focuses on hybrid oral-literate practices (“literacies”) as challenging the “great-divide” model of orality and literacy (See for example: Street 1993).
- <sup>3</sup> On narrative research oriented to “small and big stories”, see Bamberg 2006, Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008. For discussion on local event narratives, see Salmi-Niklander 2004: 137–138; 2009.
- <sup>4</sup> ”Mainitsemata en kuitenkaan voi olla, kun vähän aikaa olimme kulkeneet, sitä loistoa, joka näkyi taivahalla. Kauniilta näkyi tämä kauemmaksi; kun punanen valo välisti välähtäen, välisti hämmentyen niin kuin rutjat (norrsken) syökseisi taivahalle. Ihmetellen katselimme tätä, ja käskimme kyytimiehen ajamaan joutuaksemme paikalle, sillä kun maantie mutkisteleksen, niin näkyi tämä milloin pohjoisella milloin luotehella, niin että tien vieressä luulimme olevan, muttei sattunutkaan tiehemme, vaan jäi sivullen ja viimein katosi pois näkölaelta (synkrets). Kaiketikki oli tämä valkean vaara, ja raukat ne, joita kova onni kohtasi.”
- <sup>5</sup> ”Huonoa oli jää, niin että vesi pulppuili halkiomista jäällen, jolloin minä epäilin ja tahdoin takasin pyörtää, mutta siihen vastasi mies: ’otetaan hurskas luonto päällemme ja ajetaan hurskaasti’.”
- <sup>6</sup> ”Hän on ystävällinen ja puhelias mies ja kulukin iltanen hyvin hupasesti hänen tykönänsä [...]”
- <sup>7</sup> ”Mutta mintähden menestyypi kerääminen paremmin nyt, kun talvella? Sentähden, että minä olen tottunut asiani toimittamaan paremmin, ja rahvas ei tätä enää pidä ihmeenä. Mitä vielä – talvella sanelin mennessäni melkein joka paikassa: vielä tulen, laittakaa juttunne muistoon, kun valittivat muistosta pois menneen [...]”

- 8 ”Alla päin, pahoilla mielin jäin istumaan laiwasillalle. En ymmärrä, mitä syytä minulla nyt enää oli suruun, olinhan päässyt sinne, minne tarkoitinkin, nim. laiwasatamaan, mutta kuitenkin olisin toivonut itseni tuhannen kertaa samanlaiseen pulaan, jos olisin waan samalla tawalla woinut tulla siitä pelastetuksi. Waan pitkää aikaa en saanut tätä mieltä, sillä wähäisen odotuksen perästä kuului jo laiwan wihellys, ja minun piti jatkaa matkaani. Pian kietoutui ranta takanani paksuihin sawupilwiin, jotka nousta pöllähteliwät laiwan sawupiipusta sen wiiltäessä sileätä merenpintaa.”
- 9 On the topic of the “unreliable narrator”, see Rimmon-Kenan (1983: 101).
- 10 ”Toiset sotamiehistä silmäilivät minua hywin julman näköisinä, ja puivat likaisia nyrkkiään edessäni, niin että rupesin jo luulemaan, että tässä on ehkä joku majesteetti-rikos kysymyksessä, toisia näytti minun pulani waan huwittawan ja he irwistelivät ja nauroiwat waan maansa pidellen.”
- 11 *Kehitys* could be translated in English as “progress”, “development” or “evolution”.
- 12 This information is provided in the printed almanacs of the temperance movement, which included information drawn from individual societies.
- 13 ”Jo alkoi epäilyttää josko koko matkasta tulee mitään, yhtä ja toista jo sanottiin ihmisten sanojensa syömisestä; 5si minuuttia oli enää junan lähtöön kun vihdoinkin saapui 4jä henkeä lisää ei ne vielääkään olleet kaikki waan ei enää auttanut odottaa, riensimme junaan joka kohta vihelsi lähdon merkin.”
- 14 ”Peilityynenä lepäsi merenlahti, ikivanhat koivut tarjosivat viileyttä tuuheiden oksiansa siimeksessä, haavan lehdet lerkuttivat ja linnut lauloivat kiitoslauluja luojallensa, kaikki kaikki oli työntä rauhaa, joka loi Helsingistä tuleen matkailian sydämmeen uusia tunteita.”
- 15 ”Tuntui niin suloiselta matkustaa kauniina kesäehtoon lintujen sävelten ympäröimänä, ja maan kaikenlaisten hedelmän hyvässä tuoksussa. – Matkan perille saavuttua saimme nauttia talonväen vieraanvaraisuutta. Myöhemmällä ehtoolla majoitettiin meidät 2teen lähekkäin olevaan rakennukseen, jossa saimme mukavat asunnot, ensimmäisenä aamuna heräsimme jo varhain lintujen suloiseen lauluun ja herttaisen aamuauringon hymyilevään katsantoon, aamiaisen nautittua läksimme tarkastelemaan kylän kauniita seutuja ja ehtoopäivällä menimme kalastamaan.”
- 16 ”[...] oli hauska katsella sitä hyvin järjestettyä laitosta ja niitä siistiä poikia, jotka ennen olivat suuria heittiöitä,[...]”
- 17 ”22 p. heinäk. alkoi varsinainen matka kello 6 aamulla läksin Tuusulasta ja ajoin levähtämättä noin 3 ½ penink. sitten poikkesin pieneen torppaan Nurmijärvellä siinä vähän aamiaista nautittuani jatkoin matkaa Wihtiin välillä poiketen johonkin ihmisasuntoon juomaan maitoa tai vettä kumpaa sattui olemaan saatavissa, kunnes noin puolen päivän aikaan 8 penink. ajettuani poikkesin Pakaselan kestikievariin päivällistä nauttimaan ja kuivaamaan vaatteitani sillä satoi useampia kertoja, siinä noin tunnin aikaa levähtyä jatkoin matkaa melkeen poikkeuksetta Pusulan ja Somerniemen kappelin läpi aina Someron pitäjään Söderkullan kartanoon jossa asuu veljeni siihen jäin lepäämään 3si vuorokaudeksi ajettuani sinä yhtenä päivänä noin 12 penink. [...] Matka ylipäänsä tuntui hyvin hauskalta vaikka olinkin aivan yksin ilman matkatoveria, waan yhä uudet ja uudet näköalat viehättivät niin paljo ettei voinut johtua mieleenkään matkatoveria.”
- 18 ”Saavuttiin talolle jokaisen mieli näytti kirkkaalta, jokaisen huulilta keikkui kahvia kahvia, miehet vei hevosensa korjuun paitsi parta, hän poika istui poltteli ja kiroi, minä lohduttelin häntä, kyselin jos hän on ollut täällä ennen, ja kyllä hän tiesi kaikki paikat, minä sanoin että olen ollut siellä Hattulassa renkinä mikä sen isomman talon nimi on, siellä on Passari ja mitä aijä siinä luettelä, se oli Passari juu Passari se oli sanon minä,[...]”

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## **Rattling Sabres and Evil Intruders: The Border, Heroes and Border-crossers in Panfennist and Soviet Socialist Realist Literature**

By Thekla Musäus

### **Abstract**

In this article I analyse Russian and Soviet Karelian literary texts written in Finnish at the time and in the style of socialist realism, and Finnish poems, songs and novels of the same era, proposing the idea of a ‘Greater-Finland’. I turned my attention to the question of how the depiction, construction and use of borders is handled in the respective texts, and look to determine whether the opposed ideologies of Soviet Communism and Panfennism led to similar or different artificial results. This analysis proves that the texts of the two ideologies generally draw strict distinctions between the ‘heroes’ of their own side and the bad ‘Others’. Only the heroes of the plot are able to either cross borders or to establish new ones. While in the Soviet texts opponents of Soviet society inside the Soviet Union are depicted as foreign and separated through ideological, symbolic and topographical borders, the Karelians in the Finnish texts are suspected as a hybrid people, spoiled by their contact with the evil Russians.

**Keywords:** Topographical and symbolic borders, literary rhetorics, socialist realism, panfennist ideology, Stalinism, Karelia

## Introduction

At the beginning of a Finnish book about Eastern Karelia published in 1934, there is a photograph: an aisle between dark fir and birch trees, subtitled '*Raja*' – 'The border' (Akateeminen Karjala-Seura 1934: 7). On the other side of the Finnish-Russian border, in a Pravda article of 1932, a lengthy caption about the achievements of socialism reads: 'Each new factory and sovchoz (*farm state*) stabilises socialism in the USSR and strengthens the power of the world's proletariat in its struggle for communism, and for a *worldwide Soviet Republic*.'<sup>1</sup>

The dreams and ideals of the small western country of Finland about security and a greater fatherland called '*Suur-Suomi*' ('Greater Finland'), and the Soviet Russian utopia of worldwide communist upheavals: both for distinct ideologies, but can these two ideologies in any way be compared?

In this text I shall discuss whether and to what extent there were similarities between Panfennism,<sup>2</sup> and the Russian Communist ideology of the 1920s and the times of Stalinism.<sup>3</sup> As sources to analyse I have not chosen seemingly 'objective' or 'scientific' official statements such as geographical textbooks and dogmatic newspaper articles, but rather fictional texts. The reason for this is the assumption that the rhetorics of the two ideologies may find a more diversified and subtle ground for expression, in the especially rhetorical argumentation typical of fictional genres such as novels and poems. By analysing fictional and lyrical texts I want to identify the ideology in the argumentation techniques of fictional narration, plot and lyrically coded emotions. I also wish to detect how those elements of literary discourse in their own way contribute to the underlying ideology (cf. Plett 2001: IV, 1). The motif of the 'border' and connected literary motifs of bordering and liminality such as 'the others', 'the enemies', even possible 'friends abroad' hereby prove to be a central element in the structure of the chosen texts (Schimanski & Wolfe 2007: 14). Taken together, these elements constitute an important part of the ideologies in question.

In the first part of this text, after considering the general question of comparing different ideologies, I shall briefly outline the important traits concerning the 'border' in the ideologies of Soviet Communism and Panfennism. In the rhetorical analysis of selected literary works, in the second part I shall concentrate on the motif of the 'border' as it emerges in the texts (cf. Keränen 1996). In the texts, I shall show how the concept and literary motif of the 'border' fits into the literary discourse of both ideologies from the 1920s until the beginning of World War II in 1939. In my analysis, I shall take into account episodes which deal with topographical and physical borders, and their transgression and confirmation, as well as episodes dealing with inner and symbolic borders. Some general information about Finland and its history in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as some details about the cultural impacts of Stalinism will be necessary at the beginning of my reflections.



## Comparing Ideologies

Comparing different ideologies such as Stalinism and Fascism has become a frequent subject of studies: Hitler and Stalin, the ‘minor’ dictators of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. Mussolini, Franco, Salazar), together with their associated mechanisms, culture and history have been investigated from many different points of view (cf. for example Luks 2007; Fitzpatrick & Geyer 2009; Jessen 2011). These subject studies are all gathered under the general heading of ‘totalitarian regimes’ (cf. Arendt 1962; Pohlmann 1995).

Can these studies set an example for comparing Finnish and Soviet/Russian ideologies in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century? Since the era of Stalin, the Bolshevik regime in the Soviet Union may without doubt be termed as totalitarian, but Finland was a democratic country at this time.<sup>4</sup> Having become independent in 1917, it had a functioning parliament with bourgeois, democratic, socialist and even communist parties, and also a free press. Nevertheless, after the civil war in 1918 which ended in favour of the ‘Whites’, reactionary forces were predominant. Communist viewpoints and ideals were suppressed, and for a long time, the victims of the civil war on the ‘red’ side were either criminalised or just not talked about (Ylikangas 2002: 408).

At this time, hegemonic ideas were gaining in repute in Finnish society. During the Romantic period of the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Elias Lönnrot (1802–1884) created the national epic *Kalevala* (Lönnrot 1849/1982), mostly from poems he had collected from the Karelian inhabitants of the Eastern ‘Russian’ part of Karelia. Since this time, the ideal of a great past (and future) of Finland had become part of the cultural movement of ‘Karelianism’ in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Sihvo 2003). Among artists and the socially active, there arose a sense of unity and closeness, together with a feeling of obligation by the Finns to help and free the Finnic people on the other side of the Finnish-Russian border (Niinistö 2005: 16–21). The main enemy in this struggle appeared to be the Russians. So, Panfennist ideas already had some tradition before the time of Finnish independence from Russia. Different to the ideal of ‘Karelianism’ in the arts, Panfennism had a decidedly political (if not polemic) impact and also had political actors behind it, for example the members of the ‘*Akateeminen Karjala-seura*’ (‘Academic Society of Karelia’, AKS) – a student and academic association which was very popular and influential in Finland in the 1920s and 1930s (Eskelinen 2004). Panfennism propagated the idea of a Greater Finland, which was considered to comprise of Finland as well as the surrounding territories of the White Sea/or Vienan Karelia and Ladoga Karelia, Ingria, Votia and also Estonia (Paasi 1996: 101); areas which have traditionally been inhabited by Finnic people. Panfennism idealises a hereditary, historically founded unity of different Finnic people under the guidance of Finland, subtly defining Finland and ‘Finnishness’ as somehow superior to others. After becoming independent in 1917, in Finland there were

both political and military attempts to unite the Karelian areas east of the Finnish border with Finland (Kauppala 2013: 160–162). In the Continuation War of 1941–1944, Finnish troops set foot in Eastern Karelian areas which had never previously belonged to Finland. The Panfennist groups openly welcomed this chance to create a ‘Greater Finland’ consisting of the whole of Eastern Karelia and Finland (Pimiä 2012).

What of the development of Finland’s big neighbour, the Soviet Union in the meantime? Founded as a federation of equal socialist countries, the officials of the Soviet Union initially spoke of an expected world revolution. At the beginning of the 1920s, the Karelian Soviet Republic was designed as a model republic, in the hope to lure Finland and other Scandinavian countries to change their political systems and become Socialist (Baron 2007: 20–51). In the 1930s however, when the world revolution seemed to be delayed, the Soviet Union concentrated more intensely on its internal problems – it was the time of Stalinist purges and repression. Even in these times of Stalinist repression, the Soviet Union still presented the ideal of being different people united under the leadership of the Russian Soviets; an ideal opposed to that of backward ‘bourgeois nationalism’ (cf. Slezkine 1994: 414–415). When talking about the imperialist Western countries, it was stressed that any hostility was mainly directed at the ruling classes and not to the working people of these countries. So the ideological framework of the Soviet Union propagated the picture of the Soviet Union as being the defender of every nation and their people’s rights. Under the unifying ideology of free and equal people under the flag of communism, borders were long perceived to be of only minor interest. However, historians and sociologists studying the Soviet era are beginning to realize that the official ideology of a borderless unity and solidarity among all people in the Soviet Union was accompanied from the very beginning by a decided segregation of nationalist ideas and politics (cf. Slezkine 1994: 415). The results of the present literary analysis correlate with this apprehension.

## **Texts**

From the middle of the 1920s, and especially after the First Congress of the Soviet Writers Association in 1934, the fictional texts of Soviet writers of the time under consideration were expected to be a voice of Communist ideology. However, the question is more complicated if one considers those texts written in a Panfennist key. As there was no official obligation or aesthetic prescription of how to express pro-Finnic ideas or ideals in fictional literature, the detection of the traits of Panfennism may prove more difficult. The long tradition of the ‘Karelianist’ idealisation of an ancient Finnish culture in literature, painting, sculpture and architecture can serve as an aesthetic background for a more aggressive ideology of Panfennist superiority. A thorough rhetorical analysis of the topos of the border within each ideology gives a possibility for comparing the two ideals against a

neutral background (Plett 2001:15–16). Not in spite of the fictional character of the texts chosen, but especially because of their fictionality, these texts make it possible to discover the elements of ideological rhetorics subtly intertwined with and part of their literary devices of plot, structure and style.

### **Panfennism**

As mentioned above, Panfennist ideas had a tradition which stemmed from at least the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – the time of cultural ‘Karelianism’. ‘Karelianism’ then dominated all spheres of the arts, literature, architecture, music – and thus the whole society. Already in descriptions of his journey to Eastern Karelia, in 1880 the journalist Vilhelm August Ervasti (1845–1900) points out, that ‘behind the border, the Finnish land still continues with another third of its parts’ (Ervasti 2005: 239). His observation ends with the wish that:

[...] the time shall come again, when the Finnish fatherland will have the same wide borders, as it had had in olden times [...]. The voice of the blood would not talk in an incomprehensible language anymore [...]. We would not be Swedes in the eyes of the Karelian anymore, nor would they be Russians in our eyes. The same Finnish land would embrace both.<sup>5</sup>

(Ervasti 2005: 242.)

The olden times he refers to are the prehistoric past, which was generally thought to be depicted in the *Kalevala* as an era of some kind of prefinnic kingdom.

During the Finnish Civil War, Ilmari Kianto (1874–1970) compiled a booklet of Anti-Russian poems under the title *Hakkaa päälle* (Hit them on the head, 1918). Kianto was a Finnish writer, who at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had studied in Russia and lived most of his life in the Finnish part of Karelia. He supported pro-finnic ideals but also wrote socially critical novels and was in conflict with the Lutheran church because of his liberal ideas. ‘*For a Greater Finland – a free Vienan [i.e. White Sea] Karelia!*’<sup>6</sup> (Kianto 1918: 58) is the title of one of his poems from 1918. To achieve a Greater Finland, he calls for the ‘the payment, which the fatherland demands from its infallible blood [...] the spiritual crown of pearls, which was achieved by martyrs!’<sup>7</sup> (Kianto 1918: 62). In his novel *The Virgin of Viena (Vienan neitsyt)* Kianto draws the picture of a heroic Karelian girl, ‘Taria of the shore of Tshirkka’<sup>8</sup> (Kianto 1920: 17), being killed by brutal Russians while fighting for the purity and independence of her homeland of Karelia. The novel is based on the history of the so-called ‘Kinship-Wars’, when in the time after Finnish independence from Russia from 1917–1922, Finnish army divisions and individual volunteers went over the border into Russian territory in order to fight for the independence of these areas from the young Soviet Union and to unite the respective regions with Finland (cf. Niinistö 2005). In the novel, Finnish volunteers come over the border between Finland and White Sea Karelia to a little Karelian village on lake Tshirkka. One of the protagonists (a Finnish soldier) explicitly states that the border they have crossed ‘should not exist anymore’<sup>9</sup>

(Kianto 1920: 171). The Finnish volunteers plan to unite Karelia with Finland. Flowery, lofty comparisons are given, in which their military expedition is compared to ‘the Finnish war-bridegroom, the one who was sent to wed Viena-Karelia.’<sup>10</sup> (Kianto 1918: 48), and ‘[T]he Finnish crowned head is seen to hug the princess of Viena’<sup>11</sup> (Kianto 1918: 109). Of course the pure Karelian virgin of the plot, Taria, falls in love with one of the Finnish soldiers. He doesn’t have a name, but she only calls him ‘hero’ (*sankari*): Kianto 1918: 60 onwards), although he protests: ‘*A hero one becomes, only when one ceases to be touchable by the hand.*’ Heroes are the soldiers in the other world’s army.’<sup>12</sup> (Kianto 1918: 63). To leave for the ‘other world’ will be his fate too, as is that of all the heroes in the story, be they Finnish or Karelian. The Karelians, ‘this slaves’ people of ancient poems’<sup>13</sup> (Kianto 1918: 49), in the eyes of the Finnish savior ‘shall not melt together with the Slavic ill, deceitful blood, but from the very beginning of their existence are presupposed to unite with that dawning land [i.e. Finland]’<sup>14</sup> (48). Nevertheless the attempt to unite Viena-Karelia to Finland fails. In Kianto’s story, this is explained by the ‘double-dealing character of Karelia’<sup>15</sup> (Kianto 1918: 168):

The deceitfulness was the sin of your people’s bosom – the slave’s mark was branded on your forehead, as the curses of your thousands of years’ old history were tormenting you [...].<sup>16</sup>

(Kianto 1918: 168)

In his 1931 poem ‘*Rajalla*’ (‘At the border’, Kailas 1939: 247–249), the young poet of Finnish modernism, Uno Kailas (1901–1933) doesn’t offer a word about the ‘hybrid’ Karelians (cf. Young 1995: 4, 18–19). He only talks of the Russians as inhuman, Asian forces of the steppes, and foretells ‘a morning of blood is to be seen’<sup>17</sup> (Kailas 1939: 248). The speaker of the poem, the ‘guardsman’<sup>18</sup> (vs. 1 and 12, 247, 249) swears to defend his homeland against the ‘icy breath of the east’<sup>19</sup> (vs. 5, 248) at the border, which he calls the ‘chasm in the ice’<sup>20</sup> (vs. 1 and 12, 247, 249).

Of course it is the Finns’ privilege and obligation to draw the border with a rattling sabre: Kianto’s Finnish bridegroom ‘[a]dvise[s] to clear with the long riding-sabre of the truth, a never heard of deep wound, up to the breast of the White Sea’<sup>21</sup> (Kianto 1920: 48). In one of the most popular Panfennist poems, the *March of the AKS* (1926, text by a popular songwriter of the time Reino Hirviseppä, 1906–1992), this ideal is made even clearer: ‘[...] we draw the border with a sword. / This is our obligation as brothers / [...]: A new morning of Greater Finland is to break / [...].’<sup>22</sup> (Hirviseppä 1942; cf. Sulamaa 2011: 25) Last but not least, there is the famous ‘*Scabbard Order*’ (‘*Miekantuppipäiväkäskey*’) of General Mannerheim, head of the Finnish army at the time of both the Winter War (1939–1940) and the Continuation War (1941–1944) (cf. Fingerroos 2010: 121; Meinander 2012: 72). At the beginning of the Continuation War, Mannerheim rather bluntly talked of new borders between Finland and Russia and of ‘freeing’

Karelia, referring thereby to an order he had given already in 1918 (Niinistö 2005: 24):

[...] I said to the Finnish and the White Sea Karelians, that I'm not going to put my sword into its scabbard, before Finland and Eastern Karelia are free. I swore this in the name of the Finnish people's army, trusting in its heroic men, in Finland's self-sacrificing women.<sup>23</sup>

(Mannerheim 1941).

If one keeps in mind that Panfennist thought in the time after Finnish independence up to the 1940s was not an official ideology in Finland, but just one among other ideas in a basically democratic country, it is surprising how open, if not to say aggressively the idea of a Finnish superiority is expressed in the analysed texts. The chauvinist and racist metaphors about spoiled blood, deceitful character and a slave's precondition in Kianto's texts make it clear that the Russians and the Karelians are in every respect inferior to the Finns. The 'Pocahontas-myth' evoked in the character of the Karelian heroine Taria and the comparison of Karelia with a pure princess, adds to this stereotypic structure (cf. Theweleit 1999). Kailas' equations of the Russians with uncivilised forces of 'Asian' origin, point in the same direction. This popular symbolic border confrontation of Russia as representing barbarism, and of Finland as western, representing civilisation, is one of the core elements of the Panfennist border rhetoric (cf. Paasi 1996: 170–172). The motifs of border-shifting, expressed by Kianto's Finnish protagonists as the intention to incorporate Eastern Karelia into Finland are therefore not real border crossings over to the 'other side' of the border. Instead, in the terms of the Panfennists, a 'real' or 'correct border' has to be drawn further east. The metaphor of slashing a wound into the morphology of the Karelian landscape used in Hirviseppä's, Kianto's and Mannerheim's texts makes the aggressive character of Panfennism quite clear. The corporeality of the Finnish state and its border also suggests the 'naturalness' of the aspired borders between the Finnish Self and the Russian Other (cf. Paasi 1996: 195). The Karelian virgin of Kianto's story truly belongs to the concept of the Finnish hero (Kianto 1920: 60). In her purity, the union with the Finnish soldier is symbolised by an innocent ride on a reindeer (Kianto 1920: 62–63), whereas the Russian invaders of course try to rape her. Their illegal penetration into the Karelian lands and their attempted crime against the innocent girl, lead the girl to murder her captors before dying. The seemingly simple plot of the story is complicated by the fact that Taria's brother Arhippa, who had become a soldier in the Soviet army, comes back to his home village and emerges as the one who has killed Taria's beloved Finnish hero. This dramatic revelation fits perfectly with the thesis of the 'hybridity' of the Karelian people, mentioned above.

The seriousness of the Panfennist ideological conflict between the good Finns and the bad Russians as a matter of life and death is stressed by the religious and ethical connotations in the texts – the 'obligation as brothers', and the 'martyr-

dom' of the defenders of Finland and its kin. So it is no surprise, that the male 'hero' of the story as well as the girl herself, her parents, and the loyal younger brother and sister cross the final metaphysical border into death, supposedly all landing on the better side of it, in the realm of heroes. Christian faith is dominant in the story and the girl Taria for example, gives the Finnish hero a silver cross as a token of her fidelity before parting with him (cf. Paasi 1996: 193–199).

Hirviseppä makes use of the symbolic borders of time in another way, in order to stress the truthfulness of Panfennic ideals: 'a new morning' is going to break, when the goal of a Greater Finland will be achieved. Kailas also talks of a border in time, although in a much more pessimistic tone, foretelling 'a morning of blood' – the confrontation between the eastern enemy and the western Finnish border guard.

### Socialist Realism

This is the frontier – two posts facing one another in silent hostility, each standing for a world of its own. [...] The two poles stand on level ground, yet there is a deep gulf between them and the two worlds they stand for. You cannot cross the intervening six paces except at the risk of your life.

This is the frontier. (Ostrovsky 1952/2002: 114)<sup>24</sup>

This epigraph is taken from the novel *How the Steel was Tempered* (Kak zakalialas' stal', 1932) by Nikolai Ostrovsky (1904–1936), one of the canonised and most popular authors of socialist realism. The border mentioned here is that between Poland and the Soviet Union, but it could just as well be anywhere else on the border of the Soviet Union:

From the Black Sea over thousands of kilometres to the Arctic Ocean in the Far North stands the motionless file of these silent sentinels of the Soviet Socialist Republics bearing the great emblem of labour on their iron shields.

(Ostrovsky 1952/2002: 114)<sup>25</sup>

The main character of the novel, Pavel Korchagin, is also a guardsman (at least for some time of his life). He is the son of a poor worker, a worker himself, hero of the civil war, guardsman and member of the Cheka, the special military force created to fight any enemies inside the Soviet Union (later to become the KGB). In the course of the 1930s, the border guard is to become one of the ideal heroes of the Socialist Realist novel (cf. Herold 1999: 110), and vigilance against internal and external enemies was to become one of the most idealised qualities of that time (cf. Günther 1994: 89). The frontier guard and Chekist embodies these traits of character in an ideal way.

Since the foundation of the Soviet Writers' union in 1932, the latest Soviet literature was bound to the dogma of socialist realism (cf. Clark 2000: 3–4; Lorenz 1994: 81). Soviet novels had to fulfil strict demands to depict Socialist reality in a positive, heroic light, to create positive heroes with no doubts or hesitations, and



to have a relatively simple plot. The creativity of the authors was harshly reduced; facts and a documentary style as used in the newspapers were to be the guideline. Also to provide a template were some exemplary canonical works, for example *How the Steel was Tempered* by Ostrovsky, or *Cement* (1925), a novel about the reconstruction of a factory after the civil war, sabotage and the socialists' struggle with backward engineers and bureaucrat, written by Fedor Gladkov (1883–1958) (cf. Clark 2000: 4–5). In contrast to the flowery language used in the Finnish texts analysed above, the style of the Soviet stories is rather laconic and matter-of-fact, although the special metaphors and symbols of Socialism are of course present. Dialogues and descriptive passages dominate, whereas parables and the comparison of digressions are rarely to be found.

In the Soviet Union, the Finns did not play such big a role as a neighbour as is seen in the Finnish context. Finland fitted into the general picture of capitalist neighbours on the other side of the Soviet border, and even worse, during the Second World War, Finland was perceived as part of Hitler's fascist system and his plan to take over Russia (cf. Meinander 2012).

While the general attitude of socialist ideology can be found in any of the novels published from the 1930s until the 1950s, the Soviet Karelian fiction, written in Finnish and published in the Karelian Soviet Republic can shed additional light on the special relationship between the Soviet Union and Finland. I have decided to analyse both Soviet Karelian and contemporary Russian fiction, in order to grasp as much as possible of the Soviet ideas about borders as represented in fictional texts of that time.

In the Karelian Soviet narratives, the general patterns of socialist realism prevail. The Soviet Karelian Finns are united with the Russians in the struggle against evil capitalists and 'butchers'<sup>26</sup> (Heimovaara 1934: 128), creeping from the other side of the Finnish-Soviet border into Karelia at the time of the civil war, in order to cruelly murder innocent Bolshevik cadres. Nationality is not usually mentioned. Only the fact that a certain work is written in Finnish, with use of Finnish names of localities and story characters, suggests that it is about Karelian Finns and not about Russians. This uniformity applies also to Ostrovsky's novel. The main part of its action takes place in the Ukraine, but the story is written in Russian and its characters usually speak Russian; any differences between Ukrainian and Russian nationality seem irrelevant. The fact that a person belongs to another nation or is in any other way different or foreign is mentioned only in respect of the enemies – be they Finns from the other side of the Finnish-Soviet border or enemies within the Soviet Union. The saboteur in Oskari Johannssons (1892–1938) short story 'To the last log' ('Viimeiseen parteen' 1935) is, although not from capitalist Finland, a foreign Karelian from the area of Tver. When he is trying to provoke the honourable Bolshevik Karelian lumberjacks, one of them bursts out: 'Why have you come here then, heretic?'<sup>27</sup> (Johansson 1935b: 75) and continues 'Wrap soft cotton bandages around your hands and go back to where

you have come from!’<sup>28</sup> (Johansson 1935b: 75). Of course the evil foreign intruder and saboteur is in the end punished and marked as a ‘foreign element’ – ‘a *kulak*’ – an outsider of Soviet society: ‘[...] the kulak had to take the responsibility for his deeds before the people’s court’<sup>29</sup> (Johansson 1935b: 84). Enemies on the other side of either inner or outer ideological, or real borders are usually not characterised individually, but mostly through their negative deeds or simply through their being on the other side of the (ideological) border. So, an almost anonymous enemy is placed in opposition to the good, individualised Soviet citizens (cf. Günther 1994: 100; Herold 1999: 114).

In the Russian Soviet novels, the enemies of the new era are seen as ‘foreign elements’. In Gladkov’s novel *Cement* these are also seen as Kalmyk Tatars and uncivilised Cossacks, behaving ‘like gypsies’ (Gladkov 1951: 113), the typical outcasts of society. They live in an isolated mountain area, difficult to reach. In *How the Steel was Tempered*, bandits and smugglers are in close contact with foreign elements, the ‘colony of rich German farmers’ (Ostrovsky 2002: 138).<sup>30</sup> The latter do not integrate into the Bolshevik society but their ‘kulak farms’ stand apart ‘within half a kilometre of each other’, their houses are ‘as sturdily built as miniature fortresses’ (Ostrovsky 2002: 138).<sup>31</sup> In this novel dealing with the time of revolution and the civil war, the outer borders of the Soviet Union play an important role, as they are shaping the new, united Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, and also as a place for heroes to prove their superiority. In *Cement*, which takes place after the victory of the Bolsheviks in the Civil War, only the internal borders are relevant – there is no longer a need to stress the Soviet Union’s general unity. Additional to the heroic borders of the Soviet Union in Ostrovsky’s novel, internal borders of society such as those between the expatriate German farmers and the Soviet citizens proper are mentioned. These internal borders, in a way, repeat and reaffirm the external border, serving as a kind of duplication of the latter (cf. Schimanski 2006: 49–50).

In the stories analysed, the Soviet hero is the one who is able to cross those internal borders which are often immaterial or symbolic, and thus demonstrates his power and qualities as a superior being, not being bound by any limits (cf. Görner and Kirkbright 1999: 9). The special role of the Soviet hero concerning those internal borders becomes clear in an episode of *How the Steel was Tempered* in a scene which takes place in a train compartment. In order to repair some electrical defect, Korchagin, who is serving as a technician for the Soviet railway administration, enters the wagon of Polish (i.e. capitalist enemy) diplomats waiting at a Soviet railway station for further transport. He recognises the lady in the compartment as a former neighbour from his home village, Nelly Leshchinskaia. Again it is the Soviet hero, who is able to cross an important (immaterial) border, the border of languages (cf. Schimanski 2006: 42): Switching to Polish, Korchagin reminds the noblewoman of their former acquaintance. Korchagin’s border-crossing and the conversation which follows makes the border between the

bourgeois woman and the working hero even more real: instead of seeking friendly words for her former childhood playmate, the lady insultingly calls him ‘the servant, just as you always were’ (Ostrovsky 2002: 103)<sup>32</sup>. The Soviet hero retains his innocence and integrity, reminds her of her bad behaviour and stays polite: ‘[...] in fact we’re even polite to them [i.e. the bourgeois diplomats], which is more than can be said of yourself.’ (Ostrovsky 2002: 103).<sup>33</sup> While trying to re-establish the former social border between the laundress’ son and herself, the lawyer’s daughter, Nelly in fact establishes another one, the (seemingly paradoxical) one between civilized Soviet working men and uncivilized bourgeois Polish diplomats. Her moral inferiority is further stressed by the fact that she is addicted to cocaine (Ostrovsky 2002: 104).

In their heroic lives, the main characters of the Soviet novels often cross more than one spiritual border, those of ideology and faith, when they overcome the mistrust of the old society while serving the party (cf. Schimanski 2006: 55–56). They also have to undergo a transitional situation (usually in war), where they almost die but miraculously survive. Endorsed with superhuman abilities, the Soviet hero ‘cross[es] [...] the borderline of death’ (Ostrovsky 2002: 68),<sup>34</sup> sometimes even more than once. ‘A jump over death’<sup>35</sup> (Gladkov 1951: 101) is the title of a chapter in *Cement*. In this chapter the female hero is captured by Kalmyk rebels who threaten her and even feign her assassination, after which she again gets free. Describing Pavel’s recovery after being wounded in the civil war, Ostrovsky writes: ‘This was a second birth [...]’<sup>36</sup> (Ostrovsky 1954: 147). When defeating death, the hero as a sacrifice, often loses some precious part of his integrity, for example his eyesight (Korchagin in *How the Steel was Tempered*), or his legs like Pesa in *From Beneath the Branch Harrow* (Risukarhin alta, 1934) by the Finnish-writing author Torsten Heimovaara (?–1938). Despite such suffering however, the hero continues with superhuman strength to serve the party. This loss of corporal abilities or parts of the body can be interpreted as a special and very personal kind of gift the hero has to make, in order to cross the border to perfection (cf. Schimanski 2006: 43). For the ‘newborn’ main character, in his feelings and actions, the usual limits and constraints of society no longer seem to be important. He becomes an omnipotent and sometimes rebellious, fairy tale-like hero (Clark 2000: 138–141). When emotions are characterised as absolutely right and ideal in Ostrovsky’s novel, they are called ‘borderless’ –for example there is ‘borderless fury’<sup>37</sup> (Ostrovsky 1954: 99), ‘borderless patience’<sup>38</sup> (Ostrovsky 1954: 149), ‘borderless joy’<sup>39</sup> (Ostrovsky 1954: 156) and so on.<sup>40</sup>

In the scene at the Polish-Soviet border mentioned above, of course it is the Soviet border guard who is, if only symbolically, able to cross the insurmountable border. Being properly and warmly dressed in his Soviet uniform, he is asked by the Polish border guard to lend him some matches: ‘[T]he frontier service regulations forbid one from entering into any conversation across the border’ (Ostrovsky 2002: 116),<sup>41</sup> but he feels pity for the freezing Polish border guard:

‘The poor beggar may be a bourgeois soldier but he’s got a hell of a life. Imagine being chased out into this cold in that miserable outfit, no wonder he jumps about like a rabbit, and with nothing to smoke either.’ Without turning around, the Red Army man threw a box of matches across to the other. (Ostrovsky 2002: 116)<sup>42</sup>

This kind of border crossing is in no contradiction to Herold’s observation that in the stories she analysed, the Soviet frontier guards explicitly do not cross the physical border. They stay portrayed as the good and righteous ones on their own side, only defending Soviet territory against intruders from outside.<sup>43</sup> As Ostrovsky’s border guard does not physically cross the border himself but only makes a thing cross the border, he in fact makes the border more concrete (cf. Herold 1999: 112). The small box of matches however, which symbolises the superiority and freedom of the Soviet guardsman is not allowed to stay on the other side of the border: the Polish soldier notices some propagandistic Soviet text on it and quickly throws it back.

In the Karelo-Finnish novel, the real border can sometimes be transgressed in another way: The actions of some of the novels of Johansson, situated in former, feudal times take place in a removed place: ‘[f]ar away behind the hills [...]’<sup>44</sup> (Johansson 1935a: 15). Also in his monumental novel *Jymyvaaralaiset*, published in Karelia in 1932, the exiled Finnish communist writer Eemeli Parras (1884–1939) doesn’t make it absolutely clear whether the story of a farmer’s family from before the time of the revolution is taking place either in Finland or in Eastern Karelia. When talking about former feudal times, it sometimes seems to be easier or maybe even desirable to situate the plot ‘abroad’, not explicitly in Karelia or Russia. Thus the border between ‘them’ and ‘us’ is blurred and the situation depicted seems even more remote. The border of time ‘before the revolution’ and the topographical border between ‘here’ and ‘somewhere far away’ unite to stress the total difference of the depicted situations, with the glorious socialist reality that exists in the Karelian republic of the storyteller’s presence (cf. Schimanski 2006: 55–57).

## Conclusion

Both Panfennists and Stalinists want to cross borders: the Panfennists want to get over the Finno-(Russian-)Karelian border in order to unite the Eastern Karelian area with Finland, and the Soviets want to cross the borders in order to achieve communism for the whole world, although in fictional literature this aim is only of minor importance. In Soviet literature of the 1920s and 1930s, ‘internal borders’ in society play a much more important role and sometimes act as a mirror for the external borders. Panfennists consider the existing border between Finland and Russia as wrong, and see it as their right and obligation to correct it in order to draw a ‘right’ border between their kin and the ‘others’. The brutal metaphors of slashing the borderline into the ground as a wound, in an interesting way corre-

spond to the body rhetorics that Herold has observed in the Soviet border novels of the second half of the 1930s: there the Soviet state which has to be defended is also associated with a body. The transgression of borders associated to the body's skin automatically becomes an illegal intrusion into the body of Soviet society (Herold 1999: 118–119).

The 'correct' border, (be it new or existing), is depicted as an absolute, insurmountable line, a chasm as represented in Kailas' poem, or an unbreakable chain of border posts as featured in Ostrovsky's novel. All the good is on this side, and the bad on the other. In both Soviet and panfennist literature, the enemy stays as the enemy, and fraternity is restricted to one's own kind. The moral borders correspond to both social and real ones. The moral superiority of the heroes does however make some symbolic temporary border crossing possible, and the defenders of their own borders are portrayed as the idealised heroes of the society which they represent.

Panfennist heroes have to cross the visible, existing border of Finland and by force draw an ideal, 'right' border (or at least try to do so), to achieve real heroic qualities. By being called 'martyrs', their mission acquires an additional religious character, but it also openly declares their fate – they have to die for their great deeds. Soviet heroes on the other hand only have to nearly cross the border between life and death in order to become perfect. In their actions they are the only ones who are able and allowed to cross borders.

Spies or saboteurs in the Soviet novels are marked as foreign, not really belonging to the homogeneous Soviet Society: they are Kalmyk, expatriate German farmers or Karelians from another region. The question of enemies within their own area (be they spies or saboteurs), did not concern the Panfennists to the same extent as the Soviets. The concept of being 'truly Finnish' in some way seems to have been easier to preserve than being 'truly Soviet'. The Finnic neighbours, the Karelians, are seen as a hybrid, spoiled people and play the role of enemies within the Finnish sphere. Logically in Kianto's novel, the bad ones have to finally stay outside the Finnish borders, or the good ones have to perish.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> „Каждый новый завод и совхоз [...] укрепляют социализм в СССР и увеличивают силы мирового пролетариата в его борьбе за коммунизм, за мировую советскую республику.” Pravda 1932: 3, italics are mine. With the exception of the citations from part II of Ostrovsky’s *How the Steel was Tempered* (Ostrovsky 1952/2002), all translations from Finnish and Russian given in the text are by the author, T.M.
- <sup>2</sup> The term ‘Panfennism’ was coined on the model of the popular romantic movement of ‘Pan-slavism’ in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Slavic area. Philosophers, authors, politicians and historians at that time spoke in support of the mental, linguistic and even political unification of the Slavic people, especially in contrast to western European influences. They were convinced of a special superior mission of the Slavs to save the world (Ivanišević 2004: 513–515). In Finnish ‘Panfennism’ is often called the ‘idea of a Greater Finland’ (‘Suur-Suomi aate’, cf. e.g. Niinistö 2005: 16). The term ‘Panfennism’ was not used by Panfennists themselves, but can be found in Russian documents (20). It proves to be a fitting locution by which to gather different pro-Finnic ideological viewpoints and ideals of the analysed period.
- <sup>3</sup> ‘Stalinism’ usually is used to characterise the time of the leadership of Joseph V. Stalin as general secretary of the Communist Party’s Central Committee from 1924 until his death in 1953. At the end of the 1920s Stalin succeeded in bringing the party system under his control, which was further centralised under his dictatorship in the 1930s, throughout World War II, until the beginning of the 1950s. The main characters of this time are a centralised totalitarian regime under the leadership of the Communist party, covering all areas of political, economic, social and cultural life of the Soviet Union. (cf. Afanas’ev 1994; Hoffmann 2003: 2)
- <sup>4</sup> For a more detailed discussion about the political situation in Finland especially in the 1930s cf. for example Siltala (1985).
- <sup>5</sup> ‘[...] taas koittaisi aika jolloin suomalaisella isänmaalla olisi samat laajat rajat kuin sillä muinoin oli [...]. Veren ääni ei silloin enää puhuisi käsittämätöntä kieltä [...]. Me emme enää karjalaisten silmissä olisi ruotsalaisia eivätkä he meidän silmissämme venäläisiä. Sama Suomenmaa sulkisi syliinsä molemmat.’
- <sup>6</sup> ‘Suomi suureksi – Viena vapaaksi!’
- <sup>7</sup> ‘[...] palkka, jota Isänmaa viattomasta verestänsä vaatii [...] henkinen helmikruunu, joka – marttyyreilla saatiin!’
- <sup>8</sup> ‘Tshirkkarannan Tarja’
- <sup>9</sup> ‘[...] *rajaa* ei enää olla saa [...]’, italics in the original text.
- <sup>10</sup> ‘[...] Suomen sotasulho, hän, joka lähetetty oli Wienaa kihlaamaan.’
- <sup>11</sup> ‘Suomen kruununpää nähdään syleilemässä Wienan prinssitärtä.’
- <sup>12</sup> ‘*Sankariksi tullaan vasta kun lakataan olemasta käsinkoeteltava*. Sankarit ovat – sotilaita Tuonen armeijassa.’, italics in the original text.
- <sup>13</sup> ‘[...] muinaisrunolli[n]en orjarahva[s] [...]’.
- <sup>14</sup> ‘[...] se ei ollut suvattu sulamaan slaavien sairaaseen, viekkaaseen vereen, vaan se oli jo oman olemuksensa alusta säädetty liittymään siihen valkenevaan maahan [...]’.
- <sup>15</sup> ‘Kaksinaamainen Karjala’
- <sup>16</sup> ‘Kaksinaamaisuus oli sinun kansallishelmasyntisi – orjanmerkki oli sinun otsaasi poltettu, sillä tuhatvuotisen historiasi kirot sinua kirvelivät [...]’.
- <sup>17</sup> ‘[...] verta on näkevä aamu [...]’.
- <sup>18</sup> ‘vartija’
- <sup>19</sup> ‘[...] hyisenä henkii Itä [...]’.
- <sup>20</sup> ‘[...] raja railona aukeaa [...]’.
- <sup>21</sup> ‘Neuvoi sitä raivaamaan valtävylää halki Wienan ja ravahuttamaan totuuden pitkällä rat-susapelilla ennenkuulumattoman syvän haavan hamaan Walkean meren rintaan.’
- <sup>22</sup> ‘[...] me piirrämme miekalla rajan. / Se meidän on veljinä velvollisuus / [...]: Suur-Suomelle aamu on koittava uus / [...]’.



- 23 '[...] lausuin Suomen ja Vianan karjalaisille, etten tulisi panemaan miekkaani tuppeen ennen kuin Suomi ja Itä-Karjala olisivat vapaat. Vannoin tämän suomalaisen talonpoikaisarmeijan nimessä luottaen sen urhollisiin miehiin ja Suomen uhrautuvaisiin naisiin.'
- 24 '„Рубеж – это два столба. Они стоят друг против друга, молчаливые и враждебные, олицетворяя собой два мира. [...] Меж двумя мирами пролегла пропасть, хотя столбы вырыты на ровной земле. Перейти эти шесть шагов нельзя человеку, не рискуя жизнью. Здесь граница.' (Ostrovsky 1954:235)
- 25 '„От Черного моря на тысячи километров, до Крайнего Севера к Ледовитому океану выстроилась неподвижная цепь этих молчаливых часовых советских социалистических республик с великой эмблемой труда на железных щитах.' (Ostrovsky 1954: 235)
- 26 'lahtar[it]'
- 27 'Mitä jerehtnikkaa sinä olet tullut tänne?'
- 28 'Kääri käteesi pumpulikkääreet ja painu takaisin sinne, mistä olet tullutkin.'
- 29 '[...] kulakki sai kansanoikeudessa vastata teoistaan.'
- 30 '[б]огат[ые] [...] немцы-колонисты' (Ostrovsky 1954: 251)
- 31 '[...] крепкие кулацкие дворы; дома с пристройками как маленькие крепости.' (Ostrovsky 1954: 251)
- 32 '[...] рабом [...] так и остались' (Ostrovsky 1954: 226). The direct translation of 'раб' is 'slave'.
- 33 '[...] даже грубостей не говорим, не в пример вам.' (Ostrovsky 1954: (226)
- 34 '[...] перевали[вает] [...] смертный рубеж.' (Ostrovsky 1954: 201)
- 35 'Прижок через смерть'
- 36 'Это было второе рождение [...].'
- 37 '[...] его ярости не было границ [...].'
- 38 'безграничное терпение'
- 39 'радость [...] безгранична'
- 40 As a literary translation of part I of the Ostrovsky's novel was not available, these citations are given in my translation – a freer translation would probably prefer 'unbounded' to 'borderless'.
- 41 '[...] [П]олевоу устав пограничной службы запрещает бойцу вступать в переговоры с кем-нибудь из зарубежныхников [...].' (Ostrovsky 1954: 236)
- 42 '«Хоть и буржуйский солдатишка, а жизнь у его дырявая. Выгнали на такой мороз в одной шинелишке, вот и прыгает как заяц, а без курева так совсем никуда». И красноармеец, не оборачиваясь бросает спичечную коробку.' (Ostrovsky 1954: 236)
- 43 Unfortunately these stories were not available for me to consider them more thoroughly for this text.
- 44 'Kaukana tuntureiten takana [...].'

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## **If the Borders Could Tell: The Hybrid Identity of the Border in the Karelian Borderland**

By Saija Kaskinen

### **Abstract**

This paper analyses the nature of the border. The paper poses the question of whether a border, in this case the national border between Finland and Russia in the Finnish Karelian border region, can have its own distinctive identity[ies], and if so, could the border itself be or become a hybrid – a border subject. To examine the hybridization process of the border, this paper draws on individual experiences of the border that are illustrated using interview material. In addition, by analysing historical documents, literature and historiography, the paper shows how the border has affected people's relationship with the border itself and also their perception of regional landscapes, regional memories and identity. On the other hand, this process can be reversed by exploring how people have changed and embodied the border. The paper utilises the framework of John Perry's theory of "reflective knowledge", where both conscious experience and the knowledge it yields differ from physical knowledge that is explicitly characterized in terms of empirical facts. Exploring these relationships enhances our understanding of the role of "private knowledge" and its contribution to the understanding of borders.

**Keywords:** Border, identity, hybrid, reflective knowledge, private knowledge

## Introduction

Interviewer: “Do you agree with those people who claim that national borders will eventually disappear because they will simply lose their significance in the globalized world?”

Interviewee 1: “Hmp ... This idea seems just like those people who want to stay as unmarried partners, you know. Like cohabiting, not willing to commit but unwilling to live alone. People like that will learn that the world can suddenly become a void that exhausts you to death, simply because you don’t know who you are or where you belong. But if you have a home country ..., not everybody has, mind you, ... and if it is not in the middle of a civil war or somehow made totally incapable of sustaining life, then no matter how down trodden you are, your home country takes you in. Ask any of the Karelian evacuees.” [A seventy-nine year old farmer currently living in the Karelian borderlands in Parikkala, Finland.]

Interviewer: “How did it feel when the national border was established almost in your backyard?”

Interviewee 2: “Well, I must say like Abraham Lincoln has once said that ... ‘You can fool some of the people all the time, and all the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.’ Regardless of all the nonsense in the name of diplomacy, that border doesn’t fool me or anybody else, ever. It’s a lie” [An eighty year old male from the Karelian borderlands who has lived in Canada since 1954].

Interviewer: “So, what comes to your mind when you think of the Border [the national border between Finland and Russia]?”

Interviewee 3: “Tragedy, Power, but mostly ... well, at least recently, mostly Compassion.” [A forty year old female, Finnish-American citizen originally from Turku, who lived in the USA for twenty-four years.]

In two groups of Finns living in North America and one in the borderlands of Finnish Karelia, their experiences of the national border between Finland and Russia evoke hair raising, maddening, and saddening stories, which can at the same time be found to be heart-warming, inspirational and uplifting. It seems that the perception and meaning of the national state border between Russia and Finland can be talked about and referred to with contradictory definitions and explanations. The national border invokes painful memories of war, loss, and death, consequently, generating strong feelings of hate and fear. On the other hand, the border can inspire wisdom, forgiveness, and optimism, gained through diversified experiences of life away from the border as well as from life on the border. Even an initial indifference toward the border or a sense of its declining relevance and significance as a generalizing organizer in political and social life (see: Ohmae 1995: 5; Guehenno 1995: 1–19), turned to avid interest or even concern, when questions started to revolve around the Finnish-Russian state border’s role in the whole system of world borders. Issues such as how a global rather than national approach to the Finnish-Russian state border impacts one’s own national and individual identity formation arose amongst many of the interviewees. Does the Finnish-Russian state border (also the most eastern border



of the EU), function as a dividing line between Finland and Russia or between the EU and Russia – and what is Finland’s position in this formation? Also, the common sense national identity (Billig 1995; Anderson 2003) is problematized when debating the questions of the eastern national state border’s role and place in global trade, immigration, food and energy systems. Furthermore, notions of Finland’s sovereignty are challenged when its political engagement and responsibilities in international economic and military co-operation, and its involvement in international humane organizations are determined. It therefore asks the question as to whether issues such as these that have traditionally been represented by the empirical realities of the state border, can be transcended into a phenomenological human consideration? The sheer diversity of the national borders might also provide a reason why the identity and nature of borders has not attracted much scholarly attention (Zimmerbauer 2011).

Due to the diversity of attitudes, opinions, and approaches towards the Finnish-Russian national border, as well as the incongruity and inner conflict that it reveals, this paper raises great confusion: What is a national state border in its essence? Are national state borders, such as the Finnish-Russian national border merely artificial, administrative socio-political constructions that once established become “uncontroversial and clearly defined in law” or are they a human matter, realized and manifested in a direct relationship with people who either live or have lived within the spaces marked by them? Is the Border real, personally true? These initial questions led to the general undertaking of this paper, so as to examine the nature of the Finnish-Russian national border from an ontological point of view. The organizing argument of this article states that due to the varied and often controversial nature of the national state border between Finland and Russia (from now on, the Border), the Border can be represented as a character with multiple personalities, each of which has its own distinctive identity. The purpose of this paper is to explore how the Border has given birth to its multiple personalities through its interaction with people, and these people’s ways to conceptualize, imagine and create expectations for it, therefore, giving the Border its own identity. However, the Border’s identity formation is not a one-way process. While such identities are being formed, the Border simultaneously moulds its creators’ identity by structuring new realities. In other words, the Border’s characteristic of “being many” and also its continuous identity formation amidst the lived and on-going heterogeneous experiences of its creators, suggests a process of hybridization. Therefore, the paper poses the question whether the Border itself can be understood as a hybrid, in the same way as other traditionally defined hybrid entities in Border Studies such as borderlands and border-landers. When applying the concept of hybrid to the investigation of the identity of the Finnish national border, the complex relationship of power and hegemony that underlie both the ideology of hybridization and border identity formation is revealed.

The philosophical framework for the ontological inquiry in this study is based on John Perry's argumentation of "reflexive knowledge". Perry's ontological inquiry is based on Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger's phenomenological reasoning that starts from the premise that knowledge is not just accumulated information, but is gained through experience. Border researchers in various academic fields – history, political science, geography, sociology, and anthropology – have gathered vast amounts of knowledge about different borders. Their research has been mainly concerned with analyses of the constitutional, legal, social, and economic realities of borders. However, this type of knowledge, as valuable as it is for understanding such a complex phenomenon as "border", is, to use John Perry's term "subject level knowledge". According to Perry, the accumulated subject level knowledge is "physical" knowledge that has not been consciously experienced (Perry 2001: 15–19). Physical knowledge, even though efficiently applied to real life, with its emphasis on empirical predicates alone, is not able to entirely reveal the complex relation between knowledge and reality. What Perry is suggesting is that physical knowledge, through its scientific analysis, distances itself from the phenomenon it is investigating. Therefore, the acquired physical knowledge is not consciously aware of the ontological system or nature of the phenomenon, and consequently, is not able to provide a conscious experience of the reality that it represents.

Perry calls this knowledge of a conscious experience of reality "reflective knowledge": "Reflexive content places conditions not just on the objects and properties a thought or utterance is about, but also 'on the utterances or thoughts themselves'" (Perry 2001: 21). In other words, when a person consciously experiences for example, the border, something new is learnt, namely what it is like to know the border or have conscious experience of the Border. Perry continues his argument by stating that an ontological approach does not necessarily establish any new scientific fact, but rather deepens the understanding of the phenomenon: "The mistake is to think that when we learn something new about the world, we learn a new fact that we didn't know before, rather than knowing the same thing but in a different way" (Perry 2001: 16).

Examining the results that reflective knowledge can yield about the characteristics of the Border as a "being" or as "an experience" in ontological inquiry might open up different knowledge about the nature of the Finnish-Russian national border, thus challenging habitual ways of thinking of the Border and its relation to reality.

Accessing conscious experience of the Border and ontologically identifying its multiple personalities is accomplished by utilizing postcolonial investigations into the hybrid subjectivity. As well as scholarly work, identity narratives have strongly focused on the historical and contemporary hybrid identity of geographical and cultural borderlands and their inhabitants, but not on the border itself (see: Anzaldúa 1987; Bhabha 1994; Eker & van Houtum 2008). In these

studies, the metaphor of hybrid has been employed when people, cultures, languages and traditions are understood as being heterogeneous or “a composite” (see: e.g. Kapchan & Strong 1999: 240). Understanding the Border as a hybrid allows mixing of its political, cultural, ethnic, and geographical definitions, thus creating the Border as an offspring of diverse individual experiences (mental and physical) that resist any strict empirical explanation or description. The question is whether an inanimate object such as a border can live a life from birth to death, or otherwise undergo a development from beginning to end. Perhaps a more important and more difficult question remains whether the Border has its own distinctive identity in its own right, especially now when the significance of the existence of state borders is under dispute. The answer to this question is best found in personal testimonies – each telling in its own unique voice about distinctive personal experiences of the Border – witnessing the Border’s continuous and tangible presence in their lives. Therefore, the data collection for this study was primarily carried out through open-ended interviews with the exception of one question that was posed to everyone: “If you had to give the Finnish-Russian national border a descriptive name, what would it be?” Interviews were conducted in Finnish and English.<sup>1</sup> Additional research that paralleled the observations of the interviewees concerning the nature of the border and their border experiences was conducted by researching pertinent literature, biographies and newspaper texts. The objective was to identify border related patterns of feelings, thoughts, motivations and activities from various periods in history. These patterns were derived from 32 random interviews, conducted in the North and South Karelian provinces of Finland and in Seattle USA and Vancouver Canada. These patterns were then analysed and organized into six ontological levels. These levels were named according to the most commonly used nouns that expressed interviewees’ views of the Border. This analysis was used to gain an insight into the “psyche” of the Border, which has in turn unconsciously or consciously directed people’s reactions to their own social and physical environment and their behavior towards otherness. William Zartman’s eloquent comment that “[b]orders ran across land but through people” (Zartman 2010), or Schack’s (2000: 203) argument that “borders do not come and go, but they persist in people’s mind even if the political agenda changes”, both support the idea of considering the border as an ontological phenomenon. Furthermore, the mental process evolving from this ontological experience arises not only from arbitrary political contracts, but from the lived experiences of many.

### **Border as a Seeping War Wound**

The evolution of the national state border between Finland and the Soviet Union was long, complicated, and violent. The first national border between Finland and the Soviet Union was established when both countries were in the middle of civil

wars in 1918. The second national border was established in the chaotic conditions of the Second World War, the Winter War, and the Continuation War. A new border was drawn in 1944, which once again divided Finland from the Soviet Union but this time with the distinction that Finland had to cede 3.3 million hectares of its territory in Karelia and the Arctic to the Soviet Union. In consequence, a region that was home to over 400,000 Finns in the Karelian territory was incorporated into the Soviet Union, resulting in the Karelian Diaspora (Singelton 1981). This border, unlike the previous state border established in 1918, was a concession, established under duress, costing the lives of over 25,000 people (2% of the total Finnish population), and leaving 10,000 permanently injured. Yet, like the state border in 1918, the current state border signifies Finland's independence, and with the distinction that only by paying US\$300,000,000 to the Soviet Union for war reparations would the border finally be redeemed (Singelton & Upton 1998: 130–133). However, these clinical numbers represent the situation only on the Finnish side of the border. The trauma and the terrible cost that the Soviets had to pay for their war is not addressed in this paper, but what existed on both sides of the border was a reciprocal tragedy which has subsequently been separated by the drawing of the new state border.

It is well established that during the immediate post-war period, the Border was passionately hated. Although the terrible experience of the war was over, transforming the official statistics (i.e. physical knowledge) of massive casualties, land losses, split families, the permanently injured, orphans, evacuees, the tremendous shortage of daily necessities, and the overall uncertainty about the future into everyday life, meant a painful encounter with a new reality that the war, and consequently, the new Border had created. On the first ontological level, the Border is named, imagined, and identified as a Seeping War Wound. The word "seeping" demonstrates the war's continuous presence that is not manifested in battles, bombings or death, but in the new everyday reality that still penetrates through every level of Finnish daily life.

One of the seeping wounds that infected the minds of Finns was the massive level of reparations paid to the Soviet Union. For years, the borderlanders who lived through these times first-hand (e.g. in the Parikkala Municipality) had to witness how the Finnish trains "loaded with riches just vanished beyond the Border and returned clunking and empty" (Eeva 2013, pers.comm., 6 August). Eeva continues: "There was something unnatural and eerie about how they just disappeared. I mean, of course the trains disappeared from one's line of sight, but disappearing behind the Border, it was almost like crossing the line between life and death and disappearing into never ending, fathomless darkness." Enni, a seventy-nine year old woman from Parikkala, attested to the tone and atmosphere created by the Border: "We used to invent all kinds of stories about the Border. In the evenings we scared each other by speculating what would happen if we crossed the Border. We, as children, did not know the meaning of the Border, but

we sensed from our parents' talk that it was something terrible, something that kills you if you get too close to it." (Enni 2013, pers.comm., 6 August). Pirkko, an eighty-year old woman remembers how she as a child knew that it was the "Ryssä" (a derogatory name for a Russian) who lived on the other side of the Border and killed everybody who came too close to it (Pirkko 2013, pers.comm., 6 August). These dialogues offer valuable insight into the struggle to understand the nature and identity of the Border, its power and its ruthlessness, and how it is still "porous", allowing the horrors of the war to seep through, reminding people how hard they still have to work before the Border is secured.

The Border was to be demarcated on the ground and physically reconstructed. Border demarcation pillars were erected and fences were built to make the Border a visible authority that defines and enforces the political territorial legitimacy of the nation state. When the national border shifts, the land changes, and therefore a new geographical reality sets in. This new geographical reality in turn requires a new cartographic reality to show where the new Finland begins and ends in the east. The new geographical reality and the consequent factual cartographic representation of Finland demanded that Finns gained a new psychological and social self-understanding - a sense of belonging and a sense of distinctiveness – of their new nation-space and of their home region. The new geographical reality was especially hard to conceive for the evacuees, but also for over one thousand Finnish farmers whose land had been split by the Border. Rebordering and remapping resulted in these farmers becoming the landowners of a land mutilated by the physical, politically-imposed Border, whose static, unyielding personality was reflected in a new map.

How were the Finns able to grasp the meaning of this new geography? Heikki, an eighty-two year old borderland farmer from South-Karelia, told about an incident from his childhood that illustrates the difficulty to conceptualize the effects of the geographical displacement of land cessions, and the Border moving to his backyard and splitting his land in two. In addition, Heikki's story adds local perception to the understanding of space, and more particularly, to the understanding of land and its relationship to the international border (e.g., Flynn 1997; Lenz 2003). Heikki's family, and especially his father, can be defined as deeply indigenous to the region, meaning that the family defines themselves by their home region, their land, and the length of their residency in the area for many generations. Heikki describes his father as a man to whom the land had inherent power. His father knew each section of his land by its own name, characteristics, vulnerabilities, and strengths. The land was an essential part of him. Losing his land when the new Border was established was the same as losing part of himself: "He never talked about it, but he was never the same. It was as if he was sleepwalking, just repeating that 'we have to get by with less'" (Heikki 2013, pers.comm., 23 August). Heikki continues that it was only when his father had gone to the village to see the vicar that he literally came face to face with the

new geographical reality. In the rectory he saw the new government map of Finland hanging on the wall. Heikki, who had accompanied his father to the rectory, describes the moment:

Father greeted the Vicar first, but then forgot him when he saw the map on the wall. He just stared at it, and then walked to it, and with his finger he started to follow the newly inscribed eastern borderline all the way from the south end to the northern tip. He continued doing this for quite a while and then suddenly said: ‘Hard to believe how much weight the Maiden Finland has lost’. (Heikki 2013, pers.comm., 23 August)

Although cartographic knowledge of space is allegedly objective and based on the empirical science of cartography, a map, as John B. Harley has argued, “delimits the totality of experience” (Harley 1988: 59). Maps produce physical knowledge, and what they create is map space that is “a socially empty commodity, a geometrical landscape of cold, non-human facts” (Harley 1988: 66). The way Heikki’s father conceived Finland in the new state map was by visualizing the Border through “the wounded cartography”, through the metaphorical image of the Maiden Finland embedded in the collective imagination of the Finns during the oppressive years of the Russian colonisation of Finland. The new geographical interpretation represented by the new government map was confronted by the indigenous and familiar definition of land and the nation state. Simultaneously, the nation’s symbol of a Maiden Finland and Heikki’s father’s farm shared the same geographical fate: Land contraction equated to amputation on both national and private levels. Heikki’s father’s interpretation of the new geographical reality reinforces Harley’s argument that it is more fruitful to consider maps as “socially constructed perspectives on the world, rather than as neutral and value-free representations” (Harley 1988: 58). Heikki’s Father’s story can be understood not only as a timely historical record of the experience of border demarcation, but also as an emotionally sincere attempt to gain an understanding and establish order on an unreal and confusing situation that the Border had created. Heikki continues: “It was hard for my dad to believe that he was forbidden to go to his own fields or walk in his own forest. You can see them, but you are forbidden to go there or work the land. Dad left his best axe on the other side. That really stank” (Heikki 2013, pers.comm., 23 August). To Heikki’s father, the Border had created a land that was absent in hard political reality, but present in his loss.

### **The Border as a Police Presence**

Borderlands are generally thought to be challenging areas to live in. As Gloria Anzaldúa has observed, the borderlands are the “places of contradictions, [...] a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary” (Anzaldúa 1987: 19, 25). William Zartman argues that “the nature and conditions of the borderland is affected by the nature of the border itself (Zartman



2010: 5), and thus offers a justification as to why the Border can hybridize its residents. Anzaldúa's description of the difficulties of living in borderlands can directly be applied to the context of the Finnish Karelian borderland after the war. The Border had transformed from a Seeping War Wound into a relative Police Presence that through its aggravating presence, radically reconstructed the lives of the Finns and especially the lives of the borderlanders. Parikkala Municipality had lost 35% of its land and shared 30 km of the eastern border with the Soviet Union that had now become the new eastern borderland of Finland – thus its inhabitants became new border subjects. The newborn borderlanders, like any new species, were forced to evolve and adapt to the particularities of the new environment. Although the citizens of Finland were free to exercise their civil rights, the proximity of the Border posed challenges to these rights in everyday life. The borderland as a repressive environment was a reality that was further enhanced with rules and regulations strictly defined by the Finnish-Soviet treaty. In addition to the Border, the new borderlanders had to recognize a new frontier zone and frontier zone restrictions. The zone – three kilometres wide – was a highly restricted area which civilians were not allowed to enter without a special permit. In their daily lives, people were recommended to live quietly and carefully. It was illegal to drive with lights on after dark and taking photographs was strictly forbidden (Juvonen 1996: 622). Even the local Saturday evening dances were discontinued (Pekka 2013, pers.comm., 20 August).

Aili, an eighty-two year old woman from Parikkala remembers how she and her siblings, “almost whispered when we talked. We just waited for something terrible to happen ... like the Border not holding, and it [the War] starts all over again (Aili 2013, pers.comm., 20 August). The uncertainty in securing Finland's sovereignty was foregrounded by President Paasikivi who stated in 1949 that: “It is not impossible that the Kremlin, if the opportunity introduces itself, wouldn't finish off Finland, and invade Finland by making use of our own Communists, as it did in the Baltic states. Our war against the Soviet Union has not secured our position” (cited Talvi 1959: 129). The Border, drawn by the “winners” of the war, loomed as a defining presence over Finland's independence.

While the Border was being physically constructed, the Border became Finland's prime foreign policy concern. Borderlanders, Finns, and even some foreign citizens visiting the borderlands often indulged in transgressive behavior or enacted other forms of resistant agency. Illegal border-crossings (although not surprising because the Border was not yet completely built), damaging and even stealing the boundary markers, illegal photography, and shooting across the Border (Juvonen 1996: 656) contested the existence of the Border and its legitimacy as a means for the Soviets to exercise, control and reaffirm their power over Finland. Tauno, a ninety-two year old borderlander from the Parikkala Municipality looks back on those times a mischievous grin on his face: “Well, one had to needle the situation little, just to let the steam out. I don't remember any

serious conflicts. It was those *'desantti'*<sup>2</sup> that we feared the most as children (Tauno 2013, pers.comm., 22 August). Clearly these acts had potential to provoke further hostility, and therefore expedited the construction of the Border.

An uncomfortable silence shrouded the new borderland. The borderlanders in Parikkala Municipality did not fit into the traditional definition of borderlanders as have previously been described by Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) and Emily Hicks, as people who are “informed by two codes of reference” (Hicks 1991: 226) such as biculturalism, bilingualism, or who have a bi-conception of reality. On the physical level, the Border gradually manifested itself in a two-meter high barbed wire fence, watchtowers, warning signs, and the desolate buffer zone which followed the ragged contours of the Border. The Border became one of the most strictly controlled and monitored borders in the world. For over seventy years it was closed and silent. “It felt like the world is really flat and the end of the world is the Border. Sometimes it was easy to pretend that there was nothing beyond the Border. It was the Border who was our neighbour, not the Soviet Union.” On the ontological level of the Border as a Police Presence, the Border had created a controlled space where, in the controlled reality, people had to learn to accept the distinctive, institutionalized reality of the Border which was embedded in international law.

## The Border as a Protector

It is notable that when asked “What does the Border mean to you?”, Uuno Kailas’s poem “*Raja*” (Trans. The Border, Kailas 1932) was recited from beginning to end by eight different interviewees. The first and the last stanza of the poem are the same, and they were strongly emphasized and recited by the interviewees:

Raja railona aukeaa (Like a chasm runs the border)  
Edessä Aasia, Itä. (In front, Asia, the East)  
Takana Länttä ja Eurooppaa; (Behind, Europe, the West)  
varjelen, vartija, sitä. (Like a sentry, I stand guard) (Kailas 1932: 247.)

The Border referred to in this poem is the original state border between the Soviet Union and Finland established in 1918. The Border of 1918 provides a distinctive social and cultural construction for Finland as a nation, and as a political entity whose self-definition is constructed against Russia. Kailas’s poem shows a strong antagonism between East and West, portraying Finland as the guardian of Western culture against an invasion from the East on the Finnish-Soviet border. In the 1930s, “*Raja*” illustrated commonly held discursive constructions of the East and the West, peculiar to European imaginations of Russia and the Soviet Union. In Kailas’s poem, the Border is understood to hedge against the Soviets who, at the time, were seen as a diabolic entity, irremediably outside the western civilized world. Although the state border between Finland and the Soviet Union shifted in

1944 due to the treaty of settlement, the *Raja* (the Border) in Kailas's poem also created the ontological reality of the current Border with its confrontational stance and self-aware defiance. The interviewees reminisced how they had heard this poem recited repeatedly during and after the war by their parents and grandparents. At the end of World War II and at the beginning of the Cold War, they learnt to recite it themselves. The Border had thus shifted from its position as a Police Presence to an understanding of the Border as a sovereign line, the Protector. In so doing, the Border continued to confirm the status of Finland as an internationally recognized independent nation-state.

During the Cold War, once again, "*Raja*" (the Border) manifested itself as a dividing line in a drastically polarized world that was divided between East and West politically, culturally, militarily and economically. This new geopolitical border, both physical and mental, was personified by the metaphor of the Iron Curtain, and on the eastern front of the West, it descended on the Finnish-Soviet national border. However, for small countries such as Finland, this new geopolitical binarism was not a simple black and white issue. Finland had to re-invent itself in a way that was non-threatening to both the East or the West. While the Soviet Union was moving halfway across Europe executing its imperialist and ideological aspirations, and the West was doing the same on the other side of Europe, Finland started to promote its new foreign policy that was later known as Paasikivi-Kekkonen line. The name refers to Finland's two successive presidents, Juho Kusti Paasikivi (1945–1956) and Urho Kekkonen (1956–1981), who both saw neutrality as the only way for Finland to survive as a sovereign nation in a divided world.

After the war, Finland found itself geopolitically in an in-between position, balanced between the Eastern and Western blocks, not wanting to belong to either one but acknowledging that diplomatically sound relations with the Soviet Union must form its political basis for both international and domestic politics. As early as in 1944, President Paasikivi comprehended that Finland's most difficult and challenging task was to invent a new form of interaction with the superpowers but, especially, with the Soviet Union. Paasikivi described Finland's predicament as follows: "Finland's problem, relating to its foreign policy is our relations with the Soviet Union. Everything else is politically secondary to this. [ ...] Finland must avoid anti-Soviet and hostile politics toward the Soviet Union. [...] We must strive for this regardless of all the disappointments we have already and will have to endure still" (Paasikivi 1985). Paasikivi created a framework for a comprehensive philosophy and strategy for a national effort to retain independence – the problem was, how to achieve these ends?

The new, but precarious establishment of the political, military, and ideological order in Europe and the rest of the world resulted in Finland finding a way to politically assure that it wanted to be a neutrally sovereign nation state. However, Finland's neutrality as well as its sovereignty was questioned by both the

international and domestic community. One reason for this was perhaps the treaty of the *Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance* between Finland and the Soviet Union in 1948 – also known as the YYA Treaty – that simply made Finland appear as an ally to the Soviet Union. There were many political scientists and international politicians in Europe and the USA who anticipated that Finland would most likely slide “behind the Iron Curtain” (Wuorinen 1954: 657; Karsh 1986: 265). The interviewees described the Border as “a tightrope on which the Finns had to dance without any safety net” (Tauno 2013, pers.comm., 22 August); or as an “unfamiliar bog where bog holes were impossible to pinpoint” (Aili 2013, pers.comm., 20 August). Ralf Törnngren, a Finnish-Swedish politician, called the situation “a puzzling phenomenon” or “exceptional”, because Finland’s position during the Cold War was impossible to describe with any of the conventional labels of international politics (Törnngren 1961: 161; Holsti 1986: 643). The YYA Treaty and the Paasikivi-Kekkonen line offered complex considerations on the issues of sovereignty and created a relativistic ambience that questioned the exercise of overt political power, influence and intimidation in an asymmetrical power relationship such as existed between Finland and the Soviet Union. The Border found itself running between Finland and the Soviet Union, but with two shadowy, parallel borders. The YYA Treaty from the Soviet side and Kekkonen-Paasikivi Line from the Finnish side flanked the Border as its “personal bodyguards” (Heikki 2013, pers.comm., 22 August). The outer wall of defence –*Raja* – the Border in Kailas’s poem, had changed into a diplomatic template where political, economic, and cultural borders were negotiated.

The Border as such represents the state, and it either confirms or contradicts expectations bestowed upon it. The Paasikivi-Kekkonen line and the YYA Treaty divided opinions in Finland between those who saw these foreign policies as state failure, forcing Finland to accept a submissive posture toward the Soviet Union (see: Krosby 1960: 234), and those who acknowledged them as the only reliable and reasonable course of action to take, in order to retain Finland’s independence (see: Wuorinen 1954; Spencer 1958; Treverton 1982). The YYA Treaty and Paasikivi-Kekkonen line as national imperatives, however complex and compromising they were in detailed application, were able to create and maintain a reasonable balance between Finland and the East-West partition. As a marker of sovereignty, the Border between Finland and the Soviet Union was founded on the principle of building strength through appeasement and cautious diplomacy. It went entirely against the superpowers’ accelerating rearmament programs and their race to establish ideological, military, and economic hegemony. However, the Border outlasted the Cold War protecting if not overall sovereignty of Finland, then at least the political status quo.

## The Border as a Neighbour

The impact of time on identity formation is fundamental. Time has a ripple effect on everything that exists physically or mentally. From the point of departure, time allows people and their entire individual existence to immerse in a larger, ever expanding history of human consciousness that both delineates and blurs, century by century the evolution of human forms, activities, and the language that signifies their reality. This is also the case with the phenomenon of borders. Borders evolve through time, demonstrating a trajectory that reacts to and reflects socioeconomic, ideological and global political conditions. As Paasi and Prokkola term it (2008: 17), this “historical path-dependence” of borders creates a contextualized empirical, historical, and cultural reality for the Border. This in turn influences the ways in which the Border’s identity forms, the way people experience the Border, and the reality it creates. Although it is certainly a valid argument that “borders do not exist merely in space but also in time” (Paasi & Prokkola 2008: 17), it does not mean that “historical path-dependence” – a contextual approach – permanently affixes borders to any discrete historical moment or period. Rather, the borders serve as a time corridor where memory narratives, such as nationalist practices, iconographies and personal narratives can travel freely between the past and present, thus refuting Hegelian conventional thinking of the past as a linear forward movement governed by the clearly defined laws of causality.

The last years of 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s created drastically new configurations of identity formation for the Finnish – Russian state border. The YYA Treaty was dissolved, the Soviet Union collapsed, Russia was reborn, and Finland joined the EU. The ontological reality of the Border as a “defence line” changed into a commonly institutionalized and internationalized frontier. Efficient and professional border control policies on both sides of the Border were standardized, and the border officials started to cooperate more closely with one another, displaying an understanding that managing the overall security of the Border is a mutual task. The Border itself became more porous. Cross-border traveling for private citizens of Finland and Russia became relatively easy, and trade, scientific and technical cooperation formed new opportunities for authentic and unguarded interaction between Finns and Russians after decades of silence and non-activity.

From the 1990s to the present, the Border, although not anymore the ultimate divider and guardian between Finland and the Soviet Union, maintains its solid political identity as an agent of sovereignty for both Finland and Russia. On the other hand, ambivalent emotional and psychological associations with the Border fragment any efforts to define the Border unequivocally. Heikki describes this more lenient and liberal attitude toward Russia that illuminates the open or unfinished identity of the border’s ‘being-in-time’:

Of course it is a relief that the Soviet Union is no more, but the token of its existence is permanently branded on my land, country, and in me. I am older than the Border. In my earlier childhood, it did not exist. Then it came and separated us from the Soviets; and now us from Russians [...] The wise say that time makes history of us. Well, I am almost history ... [a long pause] I am just wondering ... how my 'pal' over there [motioning with his hand toward the direction of the borderline] fares throughout history. (Heikki 2013, pers.comm., 23 August).

Heikki's comment echoes Wilson and Donnan's observation that borders can eventually serve as a physical record of a state's past and present relations with its neighbours (1998: 9). The records that can be accessed through accurate documentary evidence (physical knowledge) create but also limit the Border's identity, as well as the reality it creates, in a sequential or temporal manner, thus resulting in erecting a hard-and-fast boundary between the past and present. Heikki's comment shows that temporal dimensions of the Border form a continuum where the past can be drawn into the space of the present, and where even the future may be speculated. From an ontological perspective, Heikki's observation attests to the validity of the insight that as important as accessing the factual accuracy of the Border is, to access individual accounts of the Border based on experiences, attitudes, and stories of the Border is also important. These individual accounts or 'ghost histories' of the Border illustrate the manifold relationship between the Border and the memory. They interrupt the movement of coherent and ordered historical progression by introducing discontinuous, repetitive, contradictory and fragmented data that contests the belief that the past can be pinned down, or that there can be a singular historical truth of the Border at any given time.

Sometimes the Border carries narratives of memory that emerge from the past so strongly, that they cannot be contained in history books or historical documents. They emerge in the midst of the present like spectres, with the power to 'spectralize' or haunt the present reality. One of the most powerful spectres that came to fore in interviews was the first nation state border between Finland and the Soviet Union, established in 1918 when Finland declared its independence from the Soviet Union. Kaisa, an eighty year old North-Karelian Finn elaborates: "This border [meaning the Border of 1918] is a real border of Finland [...] Yes, I know it doesn't exist anymore, but it is nevertheless a real border of Finland ... [a long pause] hm ... at least in the way I understand Finland. That it doesn't exist anymore, doesn't make it less real" (Kaisa 2013, pers.comm., 26 August). Kaisa's comment raises the question of the role and significance of these 'ghost histories' of the Border, and how they permeate through people's lives, experiences, and understanding of the current Border.

'Ghost histories' of the Border operate both on conscious and unconscious levels, as can be seen in Arvi Perttu's novel, *Skumbria* (2011). In *Skumbria*, the undercurrent theme is Finland's relations with Russia, but perhaps more specifically, the relationships between people living in the Karelia borderland that



straddles the current international border between Finland and Russia. The novel is situated in the era after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but reflects upon and flashes back to Soviet times. The more open border allows transnational processes such as cross border traveling and collaborating in economic, cultural, and scientific arenas. However, the historical legacy of the Communist regime and the two consecutive wars between the Soviet Union and Finland during the Second World War exerts influence in the background.

The spectre of the first nation-state border between Finland and the Soviet Union is raised in a dialogue between a Finnish speaking Russian-Karelian Pauli who has married a Finn and now lives in Finland, and Hannu, a Finn.

Hannu: "Nature in Finland is the best there is the world."

Pauli: "Well, the nature in our Karelia [Russian Karelia] is exactly the same."

Hannu: "No wonder. It is the part of the Old Finland."

Pauli thinks to himself: "I didn't start correcting him." (Perttu 2011: 193)

In this awkward dialogue, the historical pattern of the Border and its spectral dimensions become evident. The 'Old Finland' with its ghost national border with Russia has not yet found its place between its historic-political representation and the contemporary Finnish reality. The border between past and present is blurred, indicating that the past is not finished and left behind. The 'Old Finland', left on the other side of the current Finnish-Russian national border, is still embedded in Finland's geographical memory and the understanding of Finland's territory. The 'Old Finland' with its ghost Karelia, demarcated by the Border of 1918, still represents a cultural-aesthetic utopia, a birth place of Finnish identity and origin, but the on other hand, it represents a geographical utopia which was lost in the war. Hannu sings the praises of the beautiful nature of Finland, extending it quite naturally, to include the 'Old Finland'; politically distant and unattainable, but not so historically or culturally. Using Amy Novak's concept, this "historical gaze" penetrates the boundaries between past and present, and transgresses the state border (Novak 2004). What has been, in this case 'Old Finland', does not necessarily mean that any meaning or value has been lost or dislocated. In the dialogue, Hannu's unconditional and absolute view of the source of the beauty of 'Old Finland' is established through a confirmation of what he already knew to be "true". His knowledge is based on those meaning-making images – the life experiences and Finnish mythology of Karelia as an ancestral land and a homeland of Finnish origin, which formed Karelia into a national collective and enshrined it in the cultural imagination. Hannu is so certain about his authoritative knowledge that he casts a suspicious, if not out-rightly contemptuous, eye on anybody who claims to know different. His peremptory attitude, unfortunately, renders Pauli silent.

Somehow, the historical, topographical and geographical reality of Karelia is negotiated between the real and imaginative, between the current nation-state

border and the ghost nation-state border. As much as 'Old Finland' is real to Hannu as a part of Finland's historical totality and existential reality, it is unreal to Pauli as a Russian-Finn. Hannu's view is countered by Pauli, who understands Karelia not as a historical, lost utopia still culturally belonging to Finland, but as a real geographical and physical space in Russia, where real people live and exist in 'real time'. Is Pauli's comment, "I didn't start correcting him" a disarticulation evoking the postcolonial strategy of "the East is speaking back to the West" and conveying his sense of not belonging, or simply his unwillingness to belong to a Karelia as defined by Finns? What is there to be corrected? What does he know that Finns do not know, and how does he know that what he knows is correct? Pauli's countering-silence brings forward the competing Russian discourses of personal experience of the contemporary Karelia, and confronts the Finnish collective national history and memory of 'Old Finland'. Pauli's confrontation, although through silence, destabilizes the reader's (if not Hannu's) conventional ideological and political constructions of Karelia as an undifferentiated historical, psychological, and sociocultural collective space for Finns. Ghosts – be they spectral borders, phantom lands, people, ideas, or beliefs – are real in the sense that they always evoke response by forcing the present to encounter the past.

### **Border as a Wailing Wall**

As demonstrated above, state borders do not exist in a contextual vacuum but are embedded and shaped in ethno-national distinctions, and geopolitical and socioeconomic influences. They are linked in many ways to the past, as they are simultaneously constitutive of the present and the future. The next ontological level – the Border as a Wailing Wall, is perhaps the most personal level where the Border creates an ontological reality and where encounters with the Border become an intimate and private experience, a kind of personal psychological biography. The Border's identity as a Wailing Wall (also known as a Western Wall, so providing an interesting parallel to Kailas's *Raja*) denotes a separation from something beyond our senses; promises that are yet to be fulfilled; regret and lamentation; the longing for something deeply felt but rationally unattainable; and finally, atonement. Although Finland had survived the war, and Finns were restored to their geographic and political nation, they had yet to be restored to their relationship with death, life after the war, themselves, and with the 'enemy'. The mental world projected by the Border through the metaphor of a Wailing Wall, manifolds the constructions of presence, splitting into 'normal' chronological time and psychological time, both of which both run parallel to each other. Psychological time refers to the time that addresses the degree of significance a certain person assigns to his past, present, and future. This entwined awareness of inner-outer, present-past, known-unknown-becoming are so strongly emphasized in encounters with the Border, that they become core constituents of

the psychological structures of the Border, as well as of the person who experiences the Border either consciously or unconsciously.

However, to come to understand or even identify the psychological structures of the Border and the barriers that hinder them from being realized (e.g. ideologies, beliefs, bias) is a complicated psychological process that requires both chronological time and psychological time to renounce exact time frames. Consequently, when existential certainty – produced by framing human existence and experience within exact time frames – disappears, the interpretation of experience is no longer bound to an objective or empirically defined reality, but yields to a new way of interpretation through perception, emotion, and imagination. Furthermore, what makes this process even more difficult, is that the effects of the Border on one's psyche may occur unnoticed, and, consequently, remain abstract and 'impersonal'. They might never be realized or perhaps after many years, may return unexpectedly. They can be directly felt through a personal encounter, or indirectly through somebody else's experience or through family history (Hirsch & Miller 2011: 6). In the following example, the primary encounter with the Border had happened two generations before, but the role of the Border's psychological effect can still be felt after decades have passed. Frank, a fifty-seven year old Canadian, reflects on his father's encounter with the Border:

Dad visited Finland about ten years ago. He comes from Karelia, I don't know the name of the place, but it is now on the Russian side of the Border. He really had wanted to see this place for years [...] You know .... Dad is a tough guy (chuckles) ... he has that *sisu* ... see, being a real Finn and all (more chuckles). But a few years back he told me that he had cried like a baby when he had visited their old homestead back in Karelia. It wasn't the old home that made him cry; he didn't remember it actually. It was that darn Border and everything it entails (Frank 2013, pers.comm., May 27).

What did the Border entail that caused such a strong emotional reaction in Frank's father? The root-seeking phenomenon of Frank's father and his effort to connect with the past entailed crossing the Border, but crossing to what? His roots, the point of origin and his family history were technically located simultaneously in two countries, Finland and Russia. He did not have any exact memories about his old home; his memories about Finland were based on general facts, a few photographs of his relatives, stories about his parents' experiences of Finland, and the Finnish language he was still able to speak. His sense of remembering and belonging, together with vague memories only pointed to the past but were unable to be manifested.

Did Frank's father really visit Finland when he visited their old homestead in Karelia? To do this, he must have temporarily reversed chronological time in order to re-enact the sense of proximity to the reality he wanted to revisit. If he was successful, then he crossed the Border from Finland to Finland. If he failed to reverse the time, he crossed the Border from Finland to Russia. In psychological

time, he therefore exists in two mental planes: past and present. Marita Struken argues that the purpose of re-enactments such as time reversals, is not to represent the past events, but to produce an effect that is independent of the accounts of the others, such as eyewitnesses, photographs or other material objects. What is left is the effect – an aura of historical reality– that the re-enactment process presents (Struken 2011: 287). In other words, Frank’s father does not participate in these past events, but rather in the transmission of the effects which emanate from the events. In this context, the Border, no matter whether it exists in either chronological or psychological time, becomes a Wailing Wall as it is always present in externalizing the pain associated with the past.

Other interviewees expressed similar accounts to Frank’s father. The next example shows how the Border affects the subconscious. Liisa, a forty-year old Finn, living in the USA comments:

My family comes from Turku. As far as I know, we do not have any family ties with Karelians. I have always taken the Border as a self-evident fact. I feel gratitude for sure but as I said, I have never thought about it, really. But my son is now an exchange student in the Helsinki area and visited St. Petersburg with his friends. It is amazing how close it is to Finland ... you just cross the Border ... and there it is. Never thought about it. My son has experienced something totally unknown to me... crossing *that* (Liisa’s emphasis) Border. I think I cried a little ... I somehow feel upset for no reason, right? (Liisa 2013, pers.comm., May 25).

“*That* border” is a loaded expression that sparks an affective response in Liisa. Where does this response come from? Liisa’s response, although not understood cognitively, demonstrates the Border’s centrality in individual and collective consciousness and memory. What happened in the bordering process in Finland after the war, is tantamount to the Finns’ understanding of themselves and the world around them. “*That* border” being physical, is also psychological. Liisa’s affective response that she is not able to reason reveals some unacknowledged issue, feeling, or experience associated with “*that* border”. Like the Wailing Wall, the Border is multi-layered in the way that personal, interpersonal, political, and social aspects come together, thus inducing different mental states. Will people such as Liisa repress, remember, transcend, or forget the Border? This is an open question that does not have any correct answer. These interviews support that the borders become psychological i.e. they create a personal mental spaces. They also reflect Graham Green’s observation of power of the borders to create the bizarre atmosphere created by the psyche or inner recesses of the mind:

The border means more than a customs house, a passport officer, a man with a gun. Over there everything is going to be different; life is never going to be the same [...]  
The atmosphere of the border – it is like starting over again; there is something about it like a good confession: poised for a few happy moments between sin and sin. When people die on the border they call it ‘happy death’ (Green 1971: 14).

On a psychological level, the Border and a Wailing Wall are alike, separating but bringing together, becoming a threshold or a passage, an instructor or a

messenger that gives us a perspective on how understandings of human intersubjectivity or relationality are crucial for human survival.

## **Border as a Dream Maker**

The last ontological level of the Border as a Dream Maker is still evolving. The main issue that repeatedly emerged from the interviews concerned the burning and current question of establishing an open border between Finland and Russia. The question of the open border is acute, especially, in the Parikkala Municipality<sup>3</sup> where an old border-crossing checkpoint is planned to be transformed into an international border crossing point. Furthermore, discussions of signing a visa-waiver program between Finland and Russia have raised concerns in Parikkala. On the other hand, these debordering developments would ensure “easy” trans-nationalism (a reality that paradoxically preceded nation states and national borders (Vertoveck 1999), which could ensure economic growth on a national level and create the influx of needed revenue for local businesses in peripheral areas. While these developments offer undisputedly valid argumentation for improving economy, they also produce counter arguments. Questions of security on individual, national and global levels, ecological threats, and the fear of land confiscation for the purposes of cross-border logistics have caused people to view the new debordering plans with a degree of caution. Heikki views the situation as following: “We get along with Russians. They can now travel freely to Finland. Why do we have to change the situation by insisting on creating a visa-free zone? It is the same as asking for troubles” (Heikki 2013, pers.comm. 23 August). Pirkko continues in the same vein: “If we open the Border, does it mean that we will have the same rights in Russia as Russians have in Finland? Can we travel to Russia without visa, buy land, and expect service in Finnish? I don’t think so, and therefore, we should proceed cautiously” (Pirkko 2014, pers.comm. 13 October). Uncertainty; not knowing about potential impacts the open border could have, and not knowing whether the more permeable border occurs only in one direction – thus furthering asymmetrical relationship between Finland and Russia – perpetuate some of these fears and suspicions. Ambiguous and overly optimistic comments from politicians, local administrators and businesses have not mitigated fears or elicited trust in decision-making procedures, but rather made the borderlanders irritated. For example, Sirpa Pietikäinen, Member of the European Parliament, promotes debordering processes in her interview for *Parikkalan-Rautjärven Sanomat*<sup>4</sup>: “I would compare exemption from visa to the end of the rainbow. It is very close and worth travelling towards. It has a great impact on regional economy and on the whole EU” (“Viisumivapaus ja raja-asema tukevat toisiaan” 2013: 4). The issue in the Parikkala borderland is not the desire to tighten the border controls and make the Border less permeable. Rather the problem is to determine a degree of porosity of

the Border. Tauno comments on Sirpa Pietikäinen's interview: "Russia is an opportunity, but it cannot provide any economic miracle to Finland. What is it exactly they [politicians] try to sell? Some kind of a fairy tale? Our Border enables us to proceed cautiously; we don't have to leap (Tauno 2014, pers.comm. 13 October). The Border as a Dream maker reveals the need to include a more locally participatory approach to decision making concerning the Border even if the Border is now heavily impacted by the forces of globalization.

## **Conclusion**

In this study, the research goal was to identify the multiple personalities of the Border (the Finnish-Russian national border). These draw mainly from socio-historical origins, evolved in response to external pressures, economic incentives, societal and legal demands, and modes of ideological conditioning. Although the Border has been described as a living entity that bears specific names that illustrate its ontological nature, this does not mean that the Border's identity is fixed at the moment of the conception of these names. The names are not rigid designators, and so do not dictate ways of thinking about the Border and its character through the changing apprehensions of time. Rather, the names help move the Border from an empirical or physical reality, to a more volatile and humane space which allows disparate identities of the Border to become more visible, easier to reflect upon, and consequently allows us to understand the reciprocal relationship between the Border and people. This reciprocity also enables us to explore the processes of hybridization which arises from contact. Names help to identify each hybrid occurrence that the Border goes through, and also the hybridizing processes people go through when they attribute these names to the Border. These processes revealed contesting ideological and political narratives that both established and dismantled the Finnish state border, depending upon the speaker's viewpoint.

The interviews and texts strengthened the notion that the concept of border (be it conceptualized in topographical, political, symbolic or aesthetic manifestations), "cannot, however, be taken only at face value" (Schimanski & Wolfe 2010). In that case, can they then be taken at their hybrid value? The ontological identity of the Border is emphasized at each of these hybrid levels. Once experienced and reflected upon, the hybrid nature of the Border shifts or relocates the Border from being an epistemological object to a subaltern agency, which enables us to create a site where individual voices have both recognition and significance. The Border between Finland and Russia serves as a medium for these voices – it can and will talk, if we are willing to listen.



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### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The author does translation from Finnish to English.
- <sup>2</sup> They were paratroops who worked behind enemy lines. They often worked as spies or saboteurs (e.g., Haapanen Atso (2013): *Viholliset keskellämmme: Desantit Suomessa 1939–1944*).
- <sup>3</sup> Parikkala is a border town in South-east Finland.
- <sup>4</sup> *Parikkalan-Rautjärven Sanomat* is a regional newspaper issued twice a week.

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Research materials include personal comments from and interviews of the following anonymized informants:

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# Displaced Borders: The Written Traumatic Borderline between Pskov Province and Chechnya

By Mari Ristolainen

## Abstract

This article examines the narrative construction of borders through an analysis of “non-professional writing” produced by the residents of Pskov. It discusses the construction of national borders and the symbolic meanings invested in them, with the empirical focus being placed on the symbolic Russian-Chechen border. The theoretical essence is the realization that due to the constructive and narrative natures of border production, the creation of a national borderline does not necessarily pre-suppose that the two sides share a geographical border. The article also addresses questions of traumatic memory and links border production with the concept of cultural trauma. By asking where Russia’s borders currently located, this article provides an example of the cultural construction and symbolic displacement of the “national border”, and a representation of how the national b/ordering processes differ when viewed from both “bottom up” and “top-down” perspectives in the contemporary Russian Federation.

**Keywords:** Russia, Chechnya, Pskov Province, Chechen wars, cultural trauma, b/ordering, border displacement, non-professional writing

## Introduction

Открывайте, ангела, в небеса ворота...  
к вам с поклоном навсегда в храм шестая рота.<sup>1</sup>

Angels, open the gates of heaven...  
The sixth company is humbly coming to your sanctum forever.<sup>2</sup>

National borders territorialize our thinking and provide parameters that we need to live within. Nevertheless, borders are not just territorial lines that can be drawn by governments and maintained by politicians with “top-down” policies. Borders are dynamic processes of cultural production and negotiation that take place far away from the parliaments and cabinets. Focusing on “local texts” about Chechnya from the Pskov province (Pskovskaia oblast) in Russia, this article looks to show how traumatic events have delocalized the notion of border and turned it into a shifting and multi-layered concept. The concept “local text” in this article is understood as non-professional writing (poems, short stories) by the residents of Pskov, self-published in self-paid books, newspaper articles or on the internet. The main research questions posed by this article are: Where are Russia’s borders currently located? What signifies a border? How does a border come into existence and become meaningful? What makes borders significant and relevant? This article argues that “national borders” are no longer perceived as geographical locations and physical lines on the map. “National borders” exist in certain topographical location – de jure – but their de facto symbolic location differs from the topographical location. For instance, “national borders” can be drawn up or constructed between areas that have no geographical connection between them, but due to for example a traumatic event, a symbolic national border and border-crossing processes are formed between these areas. This article provides an example of the cultural construction and symbolic displacement of the “national border”, and a representation of how the national b/ordering processes differ when viewed from both “bottom up” and “top-down” perspectives in the contemporary Russian Federation.

## Where are Russia’s Borders Located?

“Russia starts here!” – an advertising slogan plastered on city busses in Pskov (Amos 2011). Both the Soviet and contemporary Russian local history books lump together modern Russia and the medieval Rus when constructing the image of Pskov province as a strong historical border region, emphasizing that the city of Pskov was involved in 123 wars between 1116 and 1709 and has only been occupied twice: in 1918 and in the 1940s (Bologov: 1970; Ivanov, 1994). Today Pskov province borders the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia, (the European Union and NATO) and Belarus (the Commonwealth of Belarus and Russia). The geograph-



ical location of Pskov at the border has strongly influenced the economic development of the region after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Alexseev & Vagin 1999: 46).



Pskov province and its bordering nations © Wikimedia Commons.<sup>3</sup>

Pskov province has been a major defensive outpost on Russia's western border for centuries. The geographical location has also influenced the positioning of the Russian Armed Forces. Today, Pskov province is famous for its 76<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division that has been a part of hostilities in Chechnya, South Ossetia, Georgia, and Ukraine, and which suffered heavy casualties, especially during the Chechnyan conflict.

Pskov province is undisputedly a geographical border region, but one may ask if in fact the post-Soviet border formation has really taken place in the minds of Pskovians and what has influenced this "bordering" and border formation process. The Russian Federation's national border, EU border, and NATO border all exist with border poles, fences, border guards, and passport controls. Yet, it seems that in people's minds that this post-Soviet border is still rather vague – in a way it has been either not recognized or not signified. This observation is based on my ten years' experience of researching Pskov Province – its people and texts (cf. Ristolainen 2008). Comparatively, several studies have shown that in Estonia (on the other side of the border), the state border with Russia has a totally different political and symbolic significance than in Russia. Estonia is a small country that regained its independence after almost fifty traumatic years of Soviet occupation and started a whole new nation-building process with the border construction (for more on the border formation from the Estonian point of view see for instance: Merritt 2000 and Assmuth 2005). The actions of the Russian Federation have demonstrated great power complexes, for example by prolonging the signing of

the border agreement, arguing about the proper location of the borderline, strongly protecting the rights of the “cultural Russians”<sup>4</sup> in Estonia and Latvia, and insisting upon its rights in the “near abroad”<sup>5</sup> atmosphere. These actions have served to diminish the meaning of the border and their neighbour as an independent country. The border agreement between Russia and Estonia was finally signed in February 2014, some 23 years after it regained its independence in 1991.

Consequently, from the point of view of Russia, it is important to ask where Russia’s borders are exactly located and asserted in people’s minds, and how they become established. One approach to this question is to take border mobility and dislocation as a hypothetical starting point. Already in the late 1990s, Etienne Balibar offered a provocative opening for the discussion of the presence/ absence of borders by arguing that “borders are no longer at the border” (Balibar 1998: 217). According to Balibar, borders are vacillating – “borders have stopped marking the limits where politics ends because the community [contract/origin] ends” (Balibar 1998: 220). Recently researchers have again started to speak about the dislocation and relocation of borders. Hastings Donnan (2010) has observed how borders have become more porous, and observes how the “visibility” of state borders has begun to diminish. Henk van Houtum (2013: 173–174) declares that the word border is a verb and that borders can be drawn anywhere. According to Chris Rumford (2006: 156–157) borders are no longer national but may take many different forms, and the important borders in people’s lives do not remain fixed. Personal circumstances influence how we experience borders and where we locate them (Rumford 2006: 159). Contemporary border producing practices seem to be analysed increasingly through the concepts of dislocation and/or relocation (e.g. the instability of European borders since the disintegration of the Soviet Union; the post-Cold War world order; global work force mobility; human trade; the alleged crisis of the nation state, etc.).

Moreover, modern warfare no longer crosses borders in the strict sense. To defend one’s Motherland is to undertake something other than just attacking an enemy’s expansionism at the border (Balibar 1998: 218). A good example of the relationship between modern warfare and the dislocation of borders is the global “War on terror” and the United States’ naval base in Guantanamo Bay that holds prisoners of war captured in Afghanistan (Vaughan-Williams 2009: 29–32). After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the border between a “safe home” and the “unsafe world” has become confused – dislocated. Furthermore, new technologies have enabled new targets for warfare and made borders even more dislocated. For instance, the increased use of unmanned aerial vehicles in contemporary conflicts (see, Kreps & Kaag 2012), and the cyber wars and assaults that operate in cyberspace cause more and more disruption and further the dislocation of borders.

These notes on “border dislocation” could also be applied to the context of post-Soviet “border formation”, where Pskovian soldiers have been part of war operations far from their home and the closest state border. Moreover, the Pskov

76<sup>th</sup> Airborne division suffered heavy casualties during the wars in Chechnya, so bringing a certain contact, perception and reality to events that occur away from the geographical proximity of “home”.

### **What Signifies Russia’s Borders?**

In order to clarify the statement that borders have become displaced, the signifying factors that construct borders and/or make borders relevant for people need to be determined. In Russian tradition, the concept of “border” (*granitsa*) has a distinctive socio-psychological meaning. The “Russian border”, either artificial or natural, is initially a defence line protecting us, from the hostile them (others). (Solomeshch 2001.) The Soviet Union had both international and internal borders located in the country’s territorial periphery, often inhabited by non-Russian nationalities who were considered to be hostile to the Soviet rule (Chandler 1998: 10–11). After the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Soviet people were deliberately taught to think of themselves as being surrounded by enemies, “the imperialists”, who would crush them if they could. The perception of “enemy” has been repeatedly deployed, both to mobilise against actual external danger, and also to justify the struggle against a supposed enemy on domestic ground (Fateev 1999: 102–104; Solomeshch 2001; Gudkov 2005: 14–15). The concept of enemy (or rather the “lack of enemy”) could also be used to explain the Russian behaviour in the prolonged negotiations concerning the Estonian-Russian border agreement. As Sergey Lavrov, the Foreign Minister of Russia, stated in the border agreement’s signing event: “We never considered Estonia our enemy” (Lavrov 2014). Perhaps this is a reason why it has been so challenging – both officially and in people’s minds – to recognize the national border between Russia and Estonia. Moreover, the “lack of enemy” concept could be used to comprehend the “transferring” of the border in Crimea, and the extremely disrespectful attitude of Russia toward the borders of a sovereign Ukraine.

Consequently, it can be stated that in order for the border to be “real”, i.e. “to exist”, there needs to be an “enemy” behind it. Therefore, the concept of “enemy” can be seen as one signifying factor in both the external and internal border formation processes in Russia. Moreover, it has to be noted that especially during the Cold War, the concept of “enemy” was present in many countries national consciousness and thus influenced their border formation (see, for instance: Robin 2003). After the events of 9/11, “enemies” were brought back to peoples’ everyday lives on a global scale and accordingly, the concept of an “enemy” in border formation processes could perhaps be more globally applied.

## Where is the Enemy – There is the Border?

Where do enemies emerge from and who are they? In the Soviet Union, enemies were created as a product of state propaganda and used as a tool for controlling timid people (Fateev 1999: 70). War creates enemies. Just as with the Soviet Union, Russia has undergone many wars and border disputes during its Post-Soviet existence. The Chechen wars – the first Chechen war 1994–1995 and the second Chechen war 2000–2009 – serve as an example of both how to create an enemy and of dislocated borders.

In general, foreign military observers consider the Chechen wars poorly planned operations initiated under horrible conditions. Poorly trained Russian forces were fighting in cities against Chechen fighters who knew the city layouts by heart. The Chechen fighters had also been part of the Soviet armed forces and thus had an excellent knowledge of Russian military tactics and procedures. Moreover, they spoke Russian and could easily listen to communications. These mounting difficulties created a significant degree of combat stress among soldiers whom it was felt that nobody really cared about (Thomas & O’Hara 2000: 46; Oliker 2001; Oushakine 2009: 180–181; Sieca-Kozlowski 2013). These “unreasonable” circumstances created a hatred and enmity among many of the Russians. Enmity creates enemies – Enemies create war – War creates enemies, and so a vicious circle is created.

Pskov province is located about 2,500 kilometres from the Chechen Republic and has no geographical connection with Chechnya. Nevertheless, Pskov province’s militarily strategic position has brought the border of the Chechen Republic close – closer than many Pskovians ever wanted. Consequently, we can ask if an enemy is identified, then does this define the existence or perception of the border?



The Caucasus region and Chechnya © Wikimedia Commons.<sup>6</sup>

Chechnya is located on Russia's south-western border squeezed in between Ukraine, Georgia and Kazakhstan. The country and its people have been defined by war and issues of recognition over centuries (Evangelista 2002: 1–2).

Under the cover of heavy fog, late in the night of February 29 in 2000, Chechen fighters overtook a company of paratroopers from the Pskov Airborne Division near a village called Ulus-Kert in a remote mountain valley. In four bloody hours, the Chechens destroyed the company, killing 84 paratroopers who were mostly originally from the Pskov province. Only six survived. At first, Russian military officers declared that a military victory had been won and did not admit this, the heaviest single loss of the entire second Chechen war (Wilmoth & Tsouras 2001: 91–93; Blandy 2002: 14–15).

However, only a week earlier, 25 soldiers from another Pskov detachment had been killed in a mountain battle – Pskov had suffered more than a hundred dead in one week. For comparison, in the first Chechen war of 1994–1995, a total of 120 men from Pskov had been killed (Blandy 2002: 16). A week after the battle of Ulus-Kert, the Russian military officials admitted the heavy losses. It was impossible to ignore them because the casualties were from one unit, from one province, so the inhabitants of the province all knew about the losses. (Wilmoth & Tsouras 2001: 96; Blandy 2002: 22). Consequently, conditions of collective trauma grew among the Pskovians, resulting both from this terrible war episode and also from the insult given by the ruling power.

### **How do Borders Emerge from Traumatic Conditions?**

The battle of Ulus-Kert formed a cultural trauma that the Pskovians began to narrate immediately after their sons returned home in caskets. For the Pskovians, Ulus-Kert became a focal point that appears as a border between a ground of death and their own living space. In many frontier areas, e.g. in Europe, North America and Australia, a border crossing may be associated with death (Houtumn & Boedeltje 2009: 226; Weber & Pickering 2011). According to Weber & Pickering (2011: 5), border related deaths occur at the physical border, *en route*, in offshore or onshore detention, during deportation, on forced return to one's homeland, and even within the community as a result of a hate crime, labour exploitation, withholding of subsistence, or the promotion of conditions of legal and social precariousness. Through deaths, the displaced border may be experienced as both universal and continuously present. The perception of this type of dislocated border as a "landscape of death" can be observed at the US-Mexican border, where border crossings, death and disappearances are becoming a form of cultural trauma for migrants, their families and communities. Moreover, recent Latino and Mexican literary representations (i.e. border writings) are "cementing" the border as a space associated with death and loss. (Caminero-Santangelo 2010: 308, 310.)



How did certain events become widely represented and thus regarded as a cultural trauma? According to Jeffrey C. Alexander (2004: 8–10), cultural trauma is constructed by repeating and mutually reinforcing a particular event. A historical event (or something similar) must “be remembered, or made to be remembered” (Smelser 2004: 36), i.e. it must be “narrativised” to the point where it becomes an essential part of memory associated with profound collective pain (Caminero-Santangelo 2010: 310). In this case, cultural trauma becomes a phenomenon in which the primary carriers of the actual trauma (i.e. the eyewitness soldiers, mothers and relatives who lost their sons, etc.) are extended to the larger society, and how this society (and in particular the non-primary carriers of a traumatic event) reinforce the memory of the event. Jennifer Yusin (2009: 459–460) has formulated a so-called “geography of trauma” in which, according to her, border becomes “a trope for understanding how historical specificity and trauma exist simultaneously, and how our historical understanding equally emerges from the realities we cannot deny and from the traumas that we cannot know”. Consequently, border writing supports the “geography of trauma” and offers a new form of knowledge: “information about and understanding of the present to the past in terms of the possibilities of the future” (Hicks 1991: xxxi). This also explains how “new” and “displaced” borders may emerge, like those in the case of the Pskovian paratroopers.

Following the battle of Ulus-Kert, several publications and internet pages containing poems and short stories dedicated to the event emerged. Pskovians were seeking, through writing, to understand and rehabilitate the traumatic events. In this case, such writing can be considered as a “contact zone” between borders and traumatic events. As a result, expressing a traumatic event in writing becomes a significant new source of border formation and dislocation for the Pskovian collective consciousness.

## **A Written Borderline**

The following section aims to explain how the borderline between Pskov and Ulus-Kert is expressed in the texts written by Pskovians, and how “border displacement” occurs in this local non-professional writing. The main research material consists of a book called “*A step into immortality*” (*Shag v bessmertie*) edited by Oleg Dement’ev and Vladimir Klevtsov, first published in August 2000. In addition to this publication, internet texts, newspaper-published poems, and songs have been used as research material. These texts are written both by the relatives of the deceased soldiers and by other citizens of Pskov. Similar types of local commemorative books to the deceased soldiers of the Soviet-Afghan and Chechen wars exist for instance in Altai, and these types of books can be characterized as being textual equivalents of portable memorial sites dedicated to traumatic events (Oushakine 2009: 237–238).



The first edition of the book “*A step into immortality*” was compiled only a couple months after the battle of Ulus-Kert and contained only a short article and the biographical details of the deceased paratroopers. The first edition was presented as a gift to President Vladimir Putin when he visited Pskov on August 2, 2000, on the Day of the Paratroopers<sup>7</sup>. The second edition was published following the president’s visit in in 2001. It contained extensive new material and some texts written by relatives. New editions followed and the book became both broader and more versatile. The latest, 6<sup>th</sup> edition (2007) of the book contains a detailed description of the battle of Ulus-Kert, and the names and pictures of all the deceased paratroopers. In addition, the editors have collected more texts, poems and photographs from the relatives and other Pskovians that needed to work out their collective sorrow, for example by looking for explanations for why their sons died:

Alexander did not know that failing commanders had asked to fire at themselves (kill themselves). The soldiers panicked and random shooting started. And one of the enemy bullets took the life of a soldier. (Dement’ev & Klevtsov 2007: 178)<sup>8</sup>

The whole village cried. The fellow villagers did not know that the commandoes from the 76-th Airborne Division had got on the trail of bandit formations that were going to break into Dagestan. Ninety soldiers battled against almost three thousands warriors. Nobody supported the commandoes, because the “businessmen of war” from Moscow had forbidden it. When will the names of these people will be published? (Dement’ev & Klevtsov 2007: 180)<sup>9</sup>

His gun was overheated from the shots. And suddenly a bullet hit him in the chest. The soul of a soldier-commando departed to eternal rest, to the white sun... (Dement’ev & Klevtsov 2007: 187)<sup>10</sup>

The 6<sup>th</sup> edition is both a critique of the aftermath of the battle of Ulus-Kert, and a longing obituary by the bereaved who demand explanations and recognition from the State. Oleg Dement’ev stated that the facts contained in the 6<sup>th</sup> edition are about 80% correct and he had received “no complaints” from the Army (Dement’ev 2013).<sup>11</sup> It has to be noted that there is a tenacious rumour that the Chechens offered to spare the paratroopers’ lives if they let the rebels pass on their way to Dagestan, however the Russians are reputed to have refused (Osborn 2006). The slow and misleading explanations and unpleasant rumours made the process of grieving even harder for the relatives of the deceased soldiers. Many Pskovians wondered what they were fighting for and for what cause did they die. “Everybody cried. Many questions were thrown in the air: Why in peaceful Russia are young men dying, and the main thing – for what? There are no answers yet.”<sup>12</sup>



Picture 1: *“Under the protection of two fathers”* (courtesy of Oleg Dement’ev 2013). Irina Panova – a girl who was eight months old when she lost both her father and godfather. (Dement’ev & Klevtsov 2007: 256–257)

Most of the texts connect the battle of Ulus-Kert to the battlegrounds of the Second World War, and some as far back as the “border disputes” of the Napoleonic wars. Here, the factual geographical location of the Pskov region on the frontlines of WWII is connected with a mental frontline with Chechnya – connected with unresolved mourning resulting from significant losses. The concept of border as “a ground of death” joins these battlegrounds together and forms an example of the displacement of borders in written form; as borders which emerge from traumatic conditions.

For centuries  
You were proud of your shield  
Also during troubled years  
On father’s land and father’s house.  
During the days of Napoleon  
And in the forty-first there was no paradise.

Almost three burning years  
The Pskov Province resisted,  
It did not bend in front of the enemy.  
So it was, and indeed will be.

From old soldiers you learned –  
You have not lost your honour!  
You covered yourself with high glory,  
Your arrows have now been laid down.

The two-headed eagle did not flee  
Its wing-bearing regiments.

The boys will go, with other eagles,  
But the battle will not be forgotten,  
In the name of the servicemen's Motherland  
On the turn of the two centuries...  
We bow without words.<sup>13</sup>

Many of the studied texts connect, combine, compare and find familiar aspects between two geographical locations, such as Pskov and Ulus-Kert, or the Caucasus area and different Russian cities. These examples endorse the suggestion that borders are indeed vacillating and unpredictable. Borders are present everywhere as “enemies” surround us and have become more invisible and volatile (cf. the global rhetoric on the “War on Terror”).

Winged infantry  
I didn't leave fire ...  
Forgive, the sixth company,  
Russia and me.

Lost, immortal  
You became real  
In the fight under Ulus-Kert,  
As in the fight for Moscow.

Forever guilty  
In front of you is the country,  
That didn't save  
A Russian soldier

Farewell, the sixth company,  
Gone for centuries, –  
Immortal infantry  
Heavenly regiment.<sup>14</sup>

Local memorial events have been organized all over the Pskov region where local music ensembles play and amateur poets present their poems dedicated to the diseased soldiers and so share the sorrow in the community. Through these events, the symbolic national border and also a border-crossing becomes a shared experience, and these performances recognize and validate the displaced border.

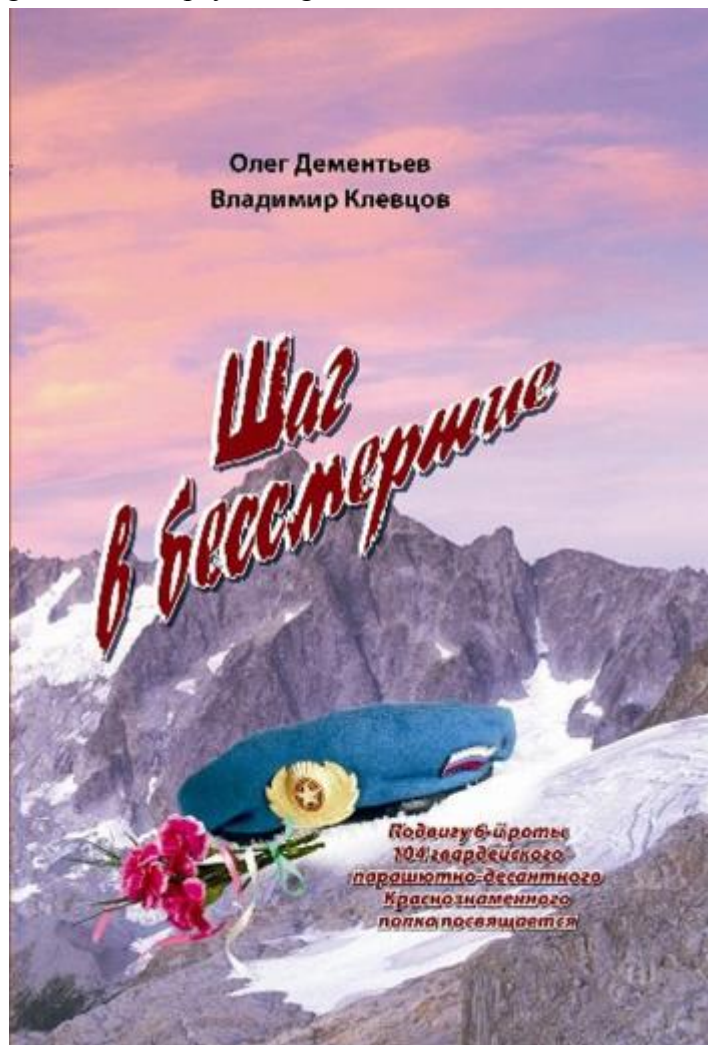
Argun gorge ... Death and hell ...  
A paratrooper doesn't have a way back.  
Also the battle-order is short,  
The last in life – this time.

Fire isn't ceased,  
And after the fight – a bad dream ...  
Our boys, why did you have to go to Chechnya to die in war?  
Beautiful, strong, young  
To shoot and fall in scorching heat, in smoke?<sup>15</sup>

These examples also demonstrate how local writing presents us with an insight as to the effects of trauma on the individual and community. Local writing identifies what is destroyed by war and also indicates the new borders and structures, such as patriotic education, that emerge from the traumatic or post-traumatic condition.

## **B/ordering from Local Trauma to National Entertainment and Patriotic Education**

The two Chechen wars have been both a tragic and much disputed topic in Russia for the past 20 years. Motives to speak about Chechnya have been very different, including political, ideological, social, psychological, or even commercial aims. There is little official public discussion of the Chechen wars. However, the internet provides a new forum in which these “painful topics” may be discussed (Ristolainen 2014). Still, the image of the “Chechen enemy” has been deliberately constructed and maintained, for instance by the mass media and especially by the State controlled main TV-channels. Many Russians consider the Chechens to be bloodthirsty barbarians, and the Russian government has certainly used this image for their own advantage. (Zvereva 2005: 303–304.) It seems rather deliberate that Chechnya has remained one of the world’s most poorly understood conflict zones.<sup>16</sup>



Picture 2: Cover of the 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2000  
(courtesy of Oleg Dement'ev 2013)

The interpretations and uses of the book “*A step into immortality*” have changed considerably over the years. This can be demonstrated clearly just by



looking at how the cover pictures have changed from a peaceful mountain scene with flowers, to a picture of a “Rambo” style soldier of fortune.

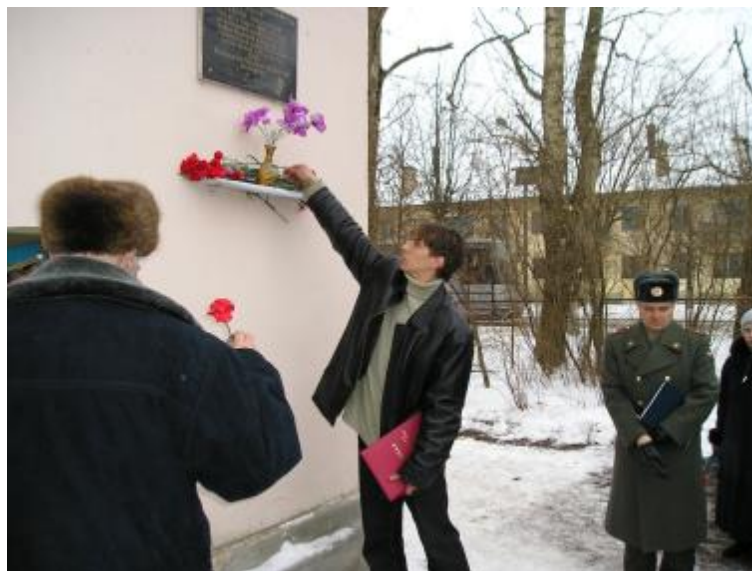


Picture 3: Cover of the 6<sup>th</sup> edition, 2007 (Dement'ev & Klevtsov 2007)

In general, the battle of Ulus-Kert has been interpreted in Russia in two ways: firstly, as a defeat for the Russian military, and secondly, as a glorious last stand

made by the paratroopers. The latter confirms the Pskov Airborne Division's reputation as an elite force whose war efforts and sacrifice were quickly preserved in heroic myth. Officially, the battle of Ulus-Kert has been seen as an example of bravery and sacrifice, with the paratroopers made to look like heroes and martyrs who fell in the name of the Motherland, antiterrorism and the soldier brotherhood. Twenty-two of the fallen were posthumously awarded the highest title of honour in the Russian Federation – the Hero of Russia, and the rest received the Order of Courage state decoration. The five survivors were also awarded the Order of Courage. (Dement'ev & Klevtsov 2007: 24–64.)

In honour of the sixth company, a massive parachute-shaped monument was erected in Pskov in 2002. In addition, a column in a Pskov square named “The Hero-Paratroopers” (*Ploshchad' Geroev-desantnikov*) and several other memorial plaques around the Pskov region (cf. Picture 4) have been dedicated to the Pskov paratroopers. In Moscow, an illegal memorial obelisk dedicated to the sixth company was erected in a street named after the first officially recognised Chechen President Akhmad Kadyrov in 2007. To top it all, one of the streets in the Chechen capital Grozny was also named in honour of the Pskov paratroopers (Chadayevev 2008). These monuments can be seen as symbolic “boundary pillars” and a confirmation of the border displacement – to form a borderline of their own from Pskov, through Moscow, to Grozny. Moreover, remembering death in these “living places” crosses the border between life and death, and thus the traumatic border becomes continuous (cf. “the landscape of death” at the Mexico-US border).



Picture 4: A memorial plaque on the wall of a Novorzhevian school (Pskov province) in honour of a local soldier killed in the battle of Ulus-Kert.  
© Pavel Mikhailov.<sup>17</sup>

The entertainment industry arrived after the “monumentalisation” of this displaced border. A bizarre musical “*Warriors of Spirit*” (*Voiny dukha*) had its prem-



iere in 2004, and was based on the heroic deeds of the Pskovian paratroopers, where the protagonist fights *Superhero*, a henchman of the evil *Provider* (Rachkova 2004; Dement'ev & Klevtsov 2007: 300–301). In addition, several oversimplifying films were made of the battle of Ulus-Kert (Regamey 2007).<sup>18</sup> For instance, a film called *Breakthrough* (*Proryv*) 2006 was Kremlin-funded and although the battle ends in defeat, it represents the battle of Ulus-Kert as an example of sacrifice, bravery and patriotism. In the film the Chechens are characterised as an army of extremists, mercenaries and drug-addicts, with an intent to take hostages and harm innocent civilians in the near towns and villages. (Osborn 2006.)

The book “*A step into immortality*” was also included in a national program entitled: “*Patriotic education of the citizens of the Russian Federation for 2006–2010*”. “Patriotic Education Programs” demonstrate a revival of the policy of State Patriotism in Russia that includes many Soviet features, such as centralized control, curricular rigidity and political-ideological functions (Rapoport 2009, 141–142). According to Oleg Dement'ev (2013), he was offered 1.1 million Rubles for printing 10,000 colour copies of the book on high grade paper. However, this tempting offer would have meant that he would have lost the copyright of the work. Dement'ev refused and was offered 600,000 Rubles for a black-and-white version. He refused again and took out a personal loan – the 6th edition was published in 2007. (Dement'ev 2013.)

Being included as part of the patriotic education program changed the nature of the book. It shows how the Patriotic Education Program uses the book to portray how the “enemy” fighting on one side of the border can be represented, by way of a contrast to “us” – the heroes fighting on the other side. The enemy “other” is from particular place, Chechnya, that promotes terrorism, and the terrorist threat is global and interconnected. Within the Patriotic Education Program, the book becomes a boundary narrative emphasizing the evil nature of Chechens and thus represents a border that divides the Russian state and the anti-Russian (Chechen) narratives that should be “educated” through patriotism.

This new explication of the book cements the image of Chechnya as an enemy and validates the written borderline between Pskov and Chechnya. The “bottom to top” texts about the battle of Ulus-Kert and the faith of the Pskovian paratroopers are used in creating “top-down” b/ordering processes. All in all, this is a striking example of how a local trauma has been turned into a vehicle of national entertainment and patriotism.

## **Conclusion: Unreasonable War and its Displaced Borders**

This article has defined a paradigm that reshapes the representations of borders in the contemporary world. It provides an example of cultural construction and symbolic displacement of a “national border” and a representation of how the national b/ordering processes differ when viewed from “the bottom up” and “top-down”

perspectives in the contemporary Russian Federation. A geographical border, although real and supported by national policies, has a diminished meaning when not support or honoured by a “written border”. The tragic case of the Pskovian paratroopers reveals how Russia’s borders have become displaced. Traumatic events tend to indicate the existence of borders, beyond mere geographical lines or political policies. In this case, borders become meaningful in peoples’ minds through the unreasonable conditions of war that cause traumas. These traumas are written “from the bottom up” by ordinary people. Their literary representations (i.e. border writings) reinforce the border as being a space associated with traumatic events, and with the enemy on the other side of what has become a displaced border. These representations have then been used by agencies including the government and entertaining industries, by reinforcing the heroic myth and strengthening the notion of a displaced border for their own advantage. “Top-down” agencies alter the social perception of national cohesion and belonging by turning local trauma into national entertainment, and a form of patriotism that leads to a clear differentiation between “us” and the “enemy”. A written borderline between Pskov province and Chechnya, also represents a symbolic national border and has been established and signified by a collective adoption of a traumatic event. There are not many borders that can’t be crossed, yet this type of displaced border may be so momentous and resilient that it may seem insurmountable.

#### **Unreasonable war**

Draw me a world that is like day,  
That it would be possible to look at it from above.  
Draw me a world where there is no evil,  
That there was no death from the cruel war.  
Never to collect broken windows,  
Not to re-implant the pulled-out hair.  
The killed people – the forgotten question,  
And in hearts of mothers the intruded fear.  
Burning tanks here and there,  
To understand nothing, totally ludicrous, totally ludicrous ...  
On a shoulder a machine gun, you run at random,  
Only the knock of a machine gun is carried far away.  
To see a bird flying far away,  
But only smoke and carrion crows, only carrion crows,  
The injured faces of the killed friends ...  
More and more crosses, more and more crosses.  
Draw me a world that is like day,  
That it would be possible to look at it from above.  
Draw me a world where there is no evil,  
That there was no death from the cruel war.<sup>19</sup>

**Dr. Mari Ristolainen** is representative of the new Russian Literature and Culture scholars who are applying cross-disciplinary approaches to Border Studies. During the past years she has been working as a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Eastern Finland. Starting from November 1, 2014 she is working as a researcher at the UiT Norway's Arctic University. E-mail: [mari.ristolainen@uef.fi](mailto:mari.ristolainen@uef.fi) or [mari.ristolainen@uit.no](mailto:mari.ristolainen@uit.no)

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### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> A quote from a song called *Shestaia rota* (Sixth company) by Stanislav Konopliannikov, album "*Nikto krome nas!*", 2009.
- <sup>2</sup> *Note on transliteration and translation*: With the exception of some commonly occurring names, Russian words are transliterated according to the Library of Congress system. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are by the author.
- <sup>3</sup> Wikimedia Commons: File: Map of Russia – Pskov Oblast (2008-03).svg, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Map\\_of\\_Russia\\_-\\_Pskov\\_Oblast\\_%282008-03%29.svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Russia_-_Pskov_Oblast_%282008-03%29.svg) (accessed 08 May 14).
- <sup>4</sup> 'Cultural Russians' is a term for the 'Russian speakers' living in Estonia used widely in academic literature. It refers to the dominant language and cultural association of these people without political connotations. See more in: Merritt 2000.
- <sup>5</sup> 'Near abroad' (*blizhnee zarubezh'ee*) is a post-Soviet term for the independent republics which lie near to or border Russia. 'Near abroad' also refers to Russia's political and economic influence on these countries that belong to Russia's 'sphere of influence', and are strategically vital for Russia. (Humphrey 2009: 41–42.)
- <sup>6</sup> Wikimedia Commons: File: Chechnya and Caucasus.png, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chechnya\\_and\\_Caucasus.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chechnya_and_Caucasus.png) (accessed 08 May 14).
- <sup>7</sup> Most specializations in the Russian armed forces have their own annual holidays.
- <sup>8</sup> "Александр не знал, что гибнущие командиры вызвали огонь на себя. В рядах боевиков началась паника, поднялась беспорядочная стрельба. И одна и вражеских пуль оборвала жизнь гвардейца." (Dement'ev & Klevtsov 2007: 178.)
- <sup>9</sup> "Плакало все село. Не знали односельчане, что десантники из 76-й воздушно-десантной дивизии встали на пути бандитских формирований, которые прорывались в Дагестан. 90 гвардейцев сражались почти с тремя тысячами боевиков. Десанникам не было никакой поддержки, так как ее запретили оказывать «бизнесмены войны» из Москвы. Когда будут обнародованы имена?" (Dement'ev & Klevtsov 2007: 180.)
- <sup>10</sup> "Его автомат раскалится от выстрелов. И вдруг пуля ударила в грудь. Душа гвардейца-десантника улетала в вечный покой, к белому солнцу..." (Dement'ev & Klevtsov 2007: 187.)
- <sup>11</sup> I interviewed Oleg Dement'ev via e-mail on February 2, 2013. All photographs reprinted from the book "Step in immortality" are republished here with his permission.
- <sup>12</sup> "Плакали все. И носились в воздухе вопросы: почему в мирной России гибнут молодые парни? А главное – за что? Ответа пока нет." (Dement'ev & Klevtsov 2007: 177.)
- <sup>13</sup> Памяти псковских десантников погибших в Чечне // С. Макашин // На протяжении столетий // Гордилась ты своим щитом // Когда дожилось лихолетье // На отчий край и

- отчий дом. // Во времена Наполеона // И в сорок первом был не рай. // Почти три года опаленный // Сопровивлялся Псковский край, // Перед врагами не склонившись. // Так было, будет, так и есть. // У старых воинов учились – // Свою не уронили честь! // Покрыв себя высокой славой, // Легли сейчас твои стрелки. // Не уберег орел двуглавый // Свои крылатые полки. // Пойдут парней, других орлов, // Но не забудутся сраженья, // Во имя Родины служенье // На перекрестке двух веков... // Склоняем головы без слов. (Dement'ev & Klevtsov 2007: 307.)
- <sup>14</sup> Крылатая пехота // Не вышла из огня... // Прости, шестая рота, // Россию и меня. // Погибшая, бессмертной // Ты стала наяву // В бою под Улус-Кертотом, // Как в битве за Москву. // Навеки виновата // Перед тобой страна, // Что русского солдата // Не сберегла она. // Прощай, шестая рота, // Ушедшая в века, - // Бессмертная пехота // Небесного полка. (Dement'ev & Klevtsov 2007: 6.)
- <sup>15</sup> Аргунское ущелье... Смерть и ад... // Десанту нет пути назад. // И краток боевой приказ, // Последний в жизни – в этот раз. // Не прекращается огонь, // А поле боя – страшный сон... // Мальчишки наши, почему // В чеченскую вам умирать войну? // Красивым, сильным, молодым // Стрелять и падать в пекло, в дым? (Dement'ev & Klevtsov 2007: 237.)
- <sup>16</sup> Just recently a book was put together and published called “*Everyone’s silent memories*”, where a network of young civic activists collected personal memoirs in several Russian cities about life before the Chechen wars, life at war and the aftermath of the wars. The book is available for download on the site of the Civic Assistance Committee and should soon be translated into English (cf. *Kazhdyi molchit o svoem: istoria odnoi voyny*. Moskva, Grahdanskoe sodeitstvie, 2013).
- <sup>17</sup> Originally this picture was published in Ristolainen 2008 (Picture 90, colour photograph attachment). For more on the Novorzhevian monuments see: Baschmakoff & Ristolainen 2005 and Ristolainen 2008: 87–98.
- <sup>18</sup> Films: *The honour is mine (Chest’ imeiu)* 2004; *The Storm Gate (Grozovye Vorota)* 2006; *Breakthrough (Proryv)* 2006; *Russian sacrifice (Russkaia zhertva)*, 2008.
- <sup>19</sup> Непонятная война // Нарисуйте мне мир, что похожий на день, // Чтоб можно было посмотреть на него с высоты. // Нарисуйте мне мир, да чтоб не было зла, // Чтоб не было смерти от жестокой войны. // Разбитые окна никогда не собрать, // Вырванный волос не вставить назад. // Убитые люди – забытый вопрос, // А в сердца матерей вторгшийся страх. // Горящие танки то там, то здесь, // Ничего не понять, полный бред, полный бред... // На плече автомат, бежишь наугад, // Лишь стук пулемета уносится вдаль. // Увидеть бы птицу, летящую вдаль, // Но только дым, да воронье, лишь воронье, // Разбитые лица убитых друзей... // Все больше крестов, все больше крестов. // Нарисуйте мне мир, что похожий на день, // Чтоб можно было смотреть на него с высоты. // Нарисуйте мне мир, да чтоб не было зла. // Чтоб не было смерти от жестокой войны. (Dement'ev & Klevtsov 2007: 272–273.)

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## **Encounters along Micro-Level Borders: Silence and Metacommunicative Talk in Service Encounter Conversations between Finnish Employment Officials and Immigrants**

By Tarja Tantt

### **Abstract**

This article examines the interaction between Finnish employment officials and their immigrant clients in service encounter conversations. It employs the concepts of metacommunicative talk, silence, agency and asymmetric interaction situation. Such service encounters between native speakers of Finnish and immigrants going through the integration process and speaking Finnish as their second language constitute situations of institutional interaction, characterised by asymmetry. Asymmetry during the service encounter arises from the roles and power relations between the official and client, a familiarity with the routines associated with service encounters, and the use of Finnish as the language of conversation during the encounter.

This article examines two authentic service encounters, recorded in a Finnish employment office. The encounters are analysed using discourse analysis, combining micro-level analysis of language use and macro-level analysis of the situation. Interviews with the employment officials and background information collected from the officials and clients via questionnaires are used in support of the qualitative analysis.

Officials use different methods of interaction with their clients. In addition, the individual characteristics of officials and clients and their cultural differences influence the construction of interaction during a service encounter. Finnish officials can sometimes handle service encounters with very little talk – sometimes with hardly any talk at all. However, metacommunicative talk can serve as a vehicle for reinforcing the client's agency and supporting the immigrant in learning the language and customs, as well as in establishing a foothold in the new community, and thereby promoting the integration process as a whole.

**Keywords:** Service encounter conversation, institutional interaction, meta-communication, silence, Finnish as a second language, immigrants, integration

## **Introduction: Everyday Interaction Situations in Constructing and Dismantling Borders**

The path by which immigrants progress from being outsiders to becoming members of society and citizens of their new home country can be long-winding and involve several phases. After crossing the physical national border, newcomers face several other borders, such as language and various social, cultural and societal borders. Most people moving to Finland must learn a new language and new ways of interacting. They must learn to understand the underlying principles governing the way in which society functions, and also the services provided by society and its organisations in their new home country. To become a member of the community, they may need to find a place of study or a job, and establish contacts with the native population.

Ordinary interaction with people such as neighbours, study or work colleagues, or authorities forms a vital part of such integration into a new community. Micro-level encounters of this kind enable newcomers to learn the customs, language and communication culture of their new country of residence. The border between outsidership and belonging – or exclusion and inclusion – often becomes visible through interaction.

In recent decades, these partially invisible cultural, linguistic and social borders, the crossing of such borders and bordering processes have become a topic of interest in multidisciplinary border research, due to an increase in worldwide mobility and geopolitical changes (Newman & Paasi 1998; Paasi 2011; Newman 2011). Since the so-called spatial turn of the 1990s and the identification of the mobility paradigm, issues of place, space, borders and mobility have also become a focus of inquiry in linguistic and cultural studies (Blunt 2007: 684; Weigel 2009). In particular, central themes include issues related to the politics of mobility (including the mobility of labour), diasporic and hybrid identities, the processes of inclusion and exclusion, and the related exertion of power (Donnan & Wilson 2001; Sadowski-Smith 2002; Lan 2003; Vila 2003; Schimanski & Wolfe 2007; Berensmeyer & Ehland 2013). Also, the question of so-called dislocated borders, i.e. where the borders to be crossed are defined and located, when moving for example from one state to another, is still topical in border research (Balibar 1998).

This article considers the interactional situation between the official and immigrant client as one arena of border negotiation, where borders are crossed from one's own culture into a foreign culture. By using metacommunicative talk, i.e. by offering the client an explanation of the course taken by the service encounter and of the client's own actions, it is possible that officials could reinforce the client's agency and so facilitate their establishment of a foothold in the new community – 'crossing the border'. On the other hand, it may be asked whether the possible absence of talk by the official excludes the client from the handling of matters that concern him or her, and potentially turn silence into a boundary. This examination

focuses on authentic conversations between Finnish employment officials and immigrants during service encounters.

Such encounters between immigrants and officials involve the drafting of plans and decision-making, which is important not only for the immigrants' integration and future, but also from the perspective of the entire society into which they are being integrated. For this reason, encounters between immigrants and officials form an important research topic (*Kala kuivalla maalla* 2005; Pitkänen 2005; Hammar-Suutari 2006 and 2009). Such encounters mark the starting point of the building of the immigrant client's life in the new country. The early stages of integration involve charting the immigrant client's background and planning his or her future, as well as explaining the practicalities of Finnish society, for example the school system, health care, social services and the duties and responsibilities of various authorities. In particular, communication practices in various types of service encounter conversations in Finland have been studied as part of a project conducted by the Institute for the Languages of Finland (2002–2007). This project examined the practices involved in service encounters in the public and private sectors (*Asiointitilanteiden vuorovaikutuskäytänteiden tutkimus* [Study on communication practices used in service encounters]). Most of the data collected under the project comprises service encounters at the Kela (Social Insurance Institution of Finland) offices and at R-kioski convenience stores.<sup>1</sup> (Sorjonen & Raevaara 2006; Lappalainen & Raevaara 2009). Although relatively little research exists on the interaction between immigrant clients and officials in Finland, Salla Kurhila has examined service encounters and interaction between native and non-native speakers of Finnish in her publications (Kurhila 2001, 2006a and 2006b: 225–228; see also Kupari 2007). With respect to learning the Finnish language and integrating into Finnish society, it is important to note that (besides a Finnish teacher), over a long period of time various officials may be the only communication partners who speak Finnish with the immigrant. So, successful service encounters may play a significant role in the immigrants' integration process (Kokkonen 2006a, 2006b and 2010; Brewis 2008). Moreover, the study of service encounters involving immigrants provides perspectives on the learner language and the conditions of communication in such a language: with the communication partners entering the situation on very different bases – for example, one of them is in the position of just learning to function in a new language and in new situations – how well can communication succeed? It is therefore anticipated that research into this field can also yield more information on the special characteristics of official language and service encounters with officials from the perspective of immigrants.

## Conversation During Service Encounters and Key Concepts

This article examines interaction in conversation during service encounters, employing the concepts of ‘metacommunicative talk’, ‘silence’, ‘agency’ and ‘asymmetric interaction situation’. In an asymmetric interaction situation, the parties have different resources in terms of their knowledge or skills – for example language skills – which affects their abilities to participate in and influence the situation and also the course of the conversation. The parties may also have different rights and responsibilities that affect their participation in the interaction. This is typical of institutional interaction situations, such as service encounters with officials, where the professional and institutional identities of the parties have a bearing on the situation (Drew & Heritage 1992: 3–4; Raevaara & Ruusu-vuori & Haakana 2001: 16–23).

Recent critical research on institutional interaction situations such as service encounter conversations, has aimed to counter prevalent assumptions that clients visiting state offices possess uniform and sufficient communicative skills and the knowledge required to take care of their business. Officials, for their part are not always able to take account of their clients’ individual needs and life situations (Codó 2011: 725; Hammar-Suutari 2009: 62–63, 146–147). The asymmetry of the relationship between the expert and client can be analysed from existential, epistemic, legal and ethical perspectives. On the existential, human level, the expert and the client are equals and their encounter is symmetric. However, on the epistemic level or the level of knowledge and expertise, their relationship is asymmetrical. This also applies to the relationship at legal and ethical levels, since experts always have more responsibilities and power than their clients in terms of legislation, regulations and professional ethics (Gerlander & Isotalus 2010: 3–19; Hammar-Suutari 2009: 120). Asymmetry in institutional interaction has been studied using the concept of the gatekeeper (Erickson & Shultz 1982; He & Keating 1991; Chew 1997a; Chew, 1997b). For example, the official may be viewed as a gatekeeper who possesses knowledge of the administrative practices of the institution, practices related to service encounters and the structuring of interaction during the service encounter, accompanied by the power to either share or not share these resources with the client. Asymmetry is present in many forms in service encounters between immigrants and employment officials. It arises, for example, from the roles of the official and client, the language used (Finnish as a native language – Finnish as a second language), and from power relations (expert knowledge Vs layman’s knowledge, access to expert information).

Metacommunicative talk is used to explain and regulate interaction. This is usual in classroom communication and so-called ‘teacher-talk’, for example. The purpose of metacommunicative talk is to ensure that the matter is understood, to direct attention to either something or to the actions of the parties involved in the interaction, to regulate turn-taking, to summarise and correct, and to negotiate

meaning. Metacommunicative talk is usually employed by the person with the power to regulate interaction in the situation (Stubbs 1976: 162; Moutinho 2014: 119–120). In the analysis of examples cited in this article, metacommunicative talk (hereafter ‘metatalk’) refers to explaining actions and reinforcing understanding through talk: the official explains his or her own actions and structures the situation and the course of the service encounter for the client via talk. Broadly speaking, within this context metatalk belongs to the group of metadiscursive strategies (see Luukka 1992: 22–26).

Existing research provides several typologies of silence which occur during social interaction (Kurzon 2007: 1673; Ephratt 2008: 1909–1910). Within the linguistically oriented approach, silence has been viewed as a psychological, interactive or socio-cultural phenomenon (Bruneau 1973: 20; Kurzon 1995: 57). Psychological silence refers to very short pauses in a conversation, reflecting deliberation or thought, or deliberately slowing the pace of speech in order to ensure the addressee understands what is being said. Interactive silence is longer than psychological silence and is related to interaction, for example turn-taking, whereas socio-cultural silence refers to phenomena such as the social and cultural practices that underlie both psychological and interactive silence, and which influence their duration. Silence has also been examined as eloquent silence, a rhetorical silence that serves as a linguistic sign similar to speech (Ephratt 2008: 1910–1911).

In most Western cultures, talk is understood as something which connects people, however, such cultures may even view silence as intimidating. Silence can become a border that separates people and increases the distance between them by giving rise to emotional uncertainty, fear and feelings of inferiority, all of which can contribute to preventing integration into a new community. In other cultures, talk may be considered a factor which separates people, and silence may be viewed as safe. Features of both notions can be identified with respect to communication within Finnish culture (Salo-Lee 1996: 46; Carbaugh 2009; Wilkins & Isotalus 2009). Scollon & Scollon (1995) distinguish between two different types of linguistic politeness strategies, related to the amount of talk and silence: involvement strategies and independency strategies. Involvement strategies include being voluble, acknowledging the other person (for example, by using his or her language or dialect) and expressing mutual views, mutual knowledge and empathy. Independency strategies, on the other hand, include being taciturn or reticent and increasing distance, leaving the other person alone and respecting their privacy. Expectations with respect to the amount of talk vary in different situations, however, volubility is usually perceived as ‘warm’ and ‘intimate’, whereas taciturnity may be viewed as ‘cold’ and ‘unintimate’ (Scollon & Scollon 1995: 39; Salo-Lee 1996: 52).

Small pauses form a natural part of interaction. In natural everyday conversation however, such pauses are usually very short, with a duration of less than a second to a few seconds (see e.g. Jefferson 1984). In this article, silence refers to

pauses in the service encounter that have a longer duration than in everyday conversation. In a broader context, silence is understood as an absence of talk; a lack of talk in asymmetric situations, during which the official would be able to reduce the level of asymmetry by reaching out to the client and supporting the client's understanding of the situation by explaining it, rather than remaining silent. Within this context, silence refers to human silence, and silence as the absence of talk (Schmitz 1994). It is a period characterised by an absence of talk that can be measured in time, for example due to the official having to update the customer's information on the computer during the service encounter, print out various forms, or use the computer to search for the information required by the client. Sometimes the beginning of the service encounter can involve a long, silent moment, during which the client has arrived but the official is still entering the previous client's information on the computer before serving the new client. At other times, silent moments occur when the client is thinking of what to say – or how to express his or her thoughts in Finnish. In addition, the absence of talk can constitute 'thematic silence' related to a certain topic (in this context, knowledge concerning practices related to visits to the employment office) (Ketola et al. 2002; Kurzon 2007). In this context, silence does not therefore refer to absolute silence, since periods with no talk can be filled with other sounds, resulting from actions (see for example Kurzon 2007: 1683).

Within sociological research, agency is frequently used to refer to goal-oriented action by an individual, and the individual's free will and ability to act (Jyrkämä 2008: 191–192; Gordon 2005). According to Jyrkämä (2008: 193), the concept of agency is strongly linked to structures, i.e. social factors that create limitations and obstacles to human action, but which also provide opportunities. Agency is also contextual and tied to time and place; it is interactive and negotiable: agency is realised in relation to other people in a given situation (Jyrkämä 2008: 196). Within interaction situations, agency has been examined e.g. as the 'practical, contextual actions taken by an individual to influence the course of the situation in the moment, and its outcome' (Wallin et al. 2008: 157). In this article, agency refers to the opportunities the interacting parties have to participate in the handling of the matter in question, and to influence the course of action and decision-making. Despite the asymmetry that is present in the situation, immigrant clients are not passively subject to the official's actions; where possible, they are an active, equal party to the interaction, with the ability and free will to take goal-oriented action.

To be able enter the community of his or her new home country, the newcomer must understand how to behave in the new environment. Only those who master the discourse can take action or participate (Corner & Hawthorn 1989). However, on their own, newcomers cannot necessarily discern the practices and customs of their new home country. They may need the help of natives in order to understand the division of duties between various organisations in the new society, or how to



correctly interpret various communication situations. For this reason, silence, absence of talk or leaving things unsaid may create an invisible boundary to the newcomer's integration into the new community, and subsequently, his or her active agency. Metatalk, on the other hand, can provide the opportunity to cross this invisible boundary by means of interaction. Small talk on casual topics unrelated to the service encounter can also serve the same purpose (Salo-Lee 1996: 52–53).

## **Immigrants Integrating in Finland**

Immigrants with varying backgrounds can take highly different paths towards settling down and integrating in Finland. The reasons for immigration have also become more varied: in the 2000s, an increasing number of people immigrated to Finland due to work, study or family ties, while in the 1990s immigration largely occurred on humanitarian grounds. At the time, immigration to Finland particularly tended to consist of asylum seekers, refugees, and so-called returnees which refers to Finnish citizens living outside Finland or people of Finnish origin (expatriate Finns) who return to Finland, as well as people of Finnish origin from the former Soviet Union (*Return and expatriate Finns*).

It is clear that an illiterate refugee arriving in Finland needs a different kind of support and guidance compared to a person with a vocational or academic education who has moved to Finland for work-related reasons. Such divergent backgrounds have a major impact on the entire integration process and the immigrants' opportunities for engaging in successful interaction, including encounters with various officials. Account should therefore be taken of various immigrant groups and their needs during the provision of public services. In addition to services aimed at immigrants, a growth in immigration also increases the need for special measures promoting integration. In Finland, the integration of immigrants is governed by the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010). The purpose of the Act is to support integration and the immigrants' opportunities to play an active role in Finnish society, on equal grounds to the rest of the population (*Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration*).

A key point of contact offering public services for immigrants is formed by the employment and economic development offices or labour force service centres (hereafter referred to as *employment offices*). Integration services provided specially for immigrants include guidance and advisory services, initial assessments and the preparation of integration plans, as well as integration training. Study of the Finnish or Swedish language features strongly as part of integration training, in which the necessary literacy skills are also taught. Training can also involve vocational courses or practical training. Integration training aims to provide immigrants with the readiness to enter work or further training, as well as societal,

cultural and other abilities that promote their integration in Finland (*Public employment and economic services*).

The number of immigrants in Finland has grown steadily. At the end of 2012, there were 195,511 foreign nationals living permanently in Finland, in comparison to only 98,600 in 2001. Statistics show that the size of Finland's foreign population has nearly doubled during the 2000s. However, these figures do not include all people with an immigrant background who permanently reside in Finland. For example, people who have moved to Finland from abroad and obtained Finnish citizenship or asylum seekers are not included in such statistics. For this reason, the number of people with an immigrant background residing permanently in Finland is significantly higher than the figures provided above would indicate: at the end of 2012, 285,471 people who had been born abroad were living in Finland. Of these, 62% were foreign nationals, and Estonians and Russians constituted the largest groups of foreigners (*Maahanmuuton vuosikatsaus 2012, Annual report on immigration 2012*). In citizens' everyday lives, increasing immigration means that a rising number of native Finnish speakers encounter immigrants – as neighbours, colleagues and clients – who are learning Finnish. Alongside growing immigration, multiculturalism, multilingualism and a diversity of values and customs will become an increasingly visible element in Finnish society. Integration is thus a two-way process that requires commitment and interaction from both immigrants and members of the receiving society.

## **Two Service Encounters and their Analysis**

Two recordings of authentic service encounters between immigrants and employment officials have been created as part of a broader collection of data on service encounters in one Finnish employment office, particularly in the unit offering integration services for immigrants.<sup>2</sup> Most of the clients using this service point have not lived in Finland for very long, and are included within the sphere of integration measures, i.e. they participate in Finnish language training or apply for various vocational training or practical training placements in accordance with their integration plans. During the initial years in Finland, the aim is to learn the language, practices and customs of the new home country. At this stage, integration services provided by the employment office can be a vital source of support. When analysing recordings of service encounters within the unit in question, it should be borne in mind that the recordings were made during the early stages of the immigrants' integration process. This may therefore influence the extent to which clients require some explanation of the practices associated with the service encounter, or the division of duties between various authorities.

Two different service encounters have been selected for analysis in this article. These encounters are examined from the perspective of silence and metatalk, employing discourse analysis. The aim is not the broad generalisation of the observa-

tions; instead, a detailed qualitative analysis aims to picture and understand two different service encounters and the varying methods used by officials in encountering the client. The analysis combines observation of language use at micro-level and observation of the service encounter at macro-level. In addition, background information collected from officials and clients based on questionnaires is used in support of the qualitative analysis. The analysis also utilises interviews with officials in order to gather background information, and observations made in these interviews regarding interaction during service encounters. The interviews with officials revealed that officials too can view service encounters with immigrant clients as significant arenas of integration: meeting an official and speaking with him or her can provide the client with an opportunity to take a further step towards becoming a full member of society (See e.g. the interview dated 30 August 2012).

This article draws on both the interactional and constructionist traditions of discourse analysis. Interactional discourse analysis examines real, individual interaction situations and their progress. The aim is to understand and interpret situations based on what happens during the interaction situation (Luukka 2000: 148). Highly empirical and inductive in nature, conversation analysis takes an interactional approach to the study of discourse. As the analysis proceeds from the phenomena found in the data to a more common level, the approach is highly data-oriented (see e.g. Kurhila 2000: 360; Luukka 2000: 149; Raevaara & Sorjonen 2006). In line with the constructionist approach to discourse analysis, this article does not examine interaction situations as if they are detached from the broader contexts of language use. Instead, the micro-analysis of interaction is linked to the broader, social and cultural macro-level (Drew & Heritage 1992: 17–19; Luukka 2000: 151; Moutinho 2014: 213).

Interaction between the official and client is examined on the basis of two service encounters: do any problems arise during the interaction, and how are they solved? What roles do silence and metatalk play in service encounters? The chosen service encounters are typical examples of conversation between an official and an immigrant in such a situation. In both service encounters, the clients come to the office in order to provide the official with documents needed by the authorities in order to process issues relating to their clients. One client brings a certificate received on the completion of a course, and the other a contract for a practical training period. The official must process the documents brought by the client and record the client's information on a computer. In both cases, the official schedules the next meeting. These two service encounters provide fruitful opportunities for parallel examination, particularly due to them both representing a short, highly routine service encounter. However, for several reasons the interaction involved in the two situations develops in very different directions: while one service encounter involves plenty of talk, the other involves very little.

Silent moments due to the official's actions are particularly interesting to the study, as during such moments, the client must wait for the situation to progress. Moments of this kind render the routines related to the service encounter visible, alongside the power used by the official to structure the situation. Will the official allow the client to wait in silence – leaving the silence open to the client's own interpretations – or will the official fill the silence, for example by explaining to the client what she is doing and why? Instead of being an empty space in the conversation, a pause is filled with conclusions – and in an interaction situation, pauses and silences are also subject to interpretation. For this reason, a pause constitutes action, and silence is filled with action even if nothing is said. If the client is familiar with the routines of service encounters with Finnish officials and acquainted with the characteristics of Finnish communication culture, she is likely to be able to interpret the silences punctuating the official's actions in the right way: 'the person is concentrating on handling my matters'. If, on the other hand, the client is an immigrant who is unfamiliar with visiting Finnish offices, and based on her earlier experiences (for example, they may have left their home country to flee the authorities), then officials evoke feelings of fear or distrust, and the silence may be interpreted very differently.

The service encounters examined in this article are brief in duration.<sup>3</sup> In the first example, the total duration of the service encounters is 3 minutes and 15 seconds. The official and client are mainly silent: the service encounter includes only 45 seconds of talk. The official enters the client's information into the computer in silence, while the client waits for the situation to progress. In this example, the duration of the longest uninterrupted period of silence is two minutes. In the second example, the total duration of the service encounter is 2 minutes and 30 seconds. The second service encounter does not include any pauses lasting longer than a few seconds. Instead, the official continuously explains to the client what she is doing and why, or what the client must do next. In these examples, silence and metatalk can be viewed as two different approaches employed by the officials, each influencing the course of the encounter in its own way.

**Example 1** [see Appendix 1 for translation and Appendix 2 for notation glossary]:

Asiakkaana 29-vuotias nainen, äidinkieli venäjä, asunut Suomessa 1 v  
Virkaileija 1  
3 min 15 s  
27/06/2005

Asiointitilanteen alussa asiakas täyttää tilanteen tallentamiseen liittyviä tutkimuspapereita tutkijan kanssa ja juttelee niistä muutaman sanan myös virkaileijan kanssa. Kun tutkimuspaperit ja -lupa on täytetty, asiakas aloittaa varsinaisen asioinnin näin:

- 01 A: no niin. öö, minun kurssi (.) [on /loppu/, OJENTAA PAPERIN VIRKAILIJALLE  
02 V: [joo?  
03 A: (täs)se on /todistus/, OJENTAA TOISEN PAPERIN VIRKAILIJALLE  
04 V: kiitos? ALKAA KIRJOITTA Tietoja koneelle  
(120.0)  
05 V: ole hyvä, onko sinulla tällasta asiakas (.) korttia. OJENTAA PAPERIT TAKAISIN ASIAKKAALLE  
06 A: joo. OJENTAA ASIAKASKORTTINSA VIRKAILIJALLE  
07 V: olet kyllä hakenut syksyn kursseille mutta (.) kun ei vielä ole tietoa kuka pääsee  
08 ja kuka ei ni laitetaan sinne,  
09 A: minä haluu (.) suomi kaks? \*minä=en tiedä\*,  
10 V: niistä ei ole tehty vielä valintoja (.) ei ole valittu vielä (.) sinne suomi kaksi kursseille (.) siitä  
11 tulee tieto sitten kotiin. ALKAA KIRJOITTA Tietoja koneelle ja asiakkaan kortille  
(26.0)  
12 V: elikkä heinäkuun lopussa tulee kirje kotiin siitä että oletko päässyt kurssille vai (.) suomi kaksi  
13 [kurssille. OJENTAA ASIAKASKORTIN ASIAKKAALLE  
14 A: [joo? kiitos. /moi/. PAKKAA PAPERITA LAUKKUUNSA, NOUSEE JA LÄHTEE  
15 V: moi=moi. JATKAA TIETOKONEELLA KIRJOITTAMISTA

In this example, attention is drawn to two long periods of silence, during which the interaction between the official and client is broken – one period of silence lasts for two minutes, and the other for nearly thirty seconds. These silences are very long during a conversation. Action by the official conceals the absence of talk: the silence is filled by the tapping of the official’s keyboard, as she updates the client’s information. Prior to the two-minute silence, the official has uttered only two words to the client: *joo* (yes) and *kiitos* (thank you). During the periods of silence, the official types on the computer while the client is idle, sitting and waiting. The official does not inform the client of what information is being recorded and why. There is no further discussion about the client card either – to understand the purpose of the card, the employment office client needs to know that the date of the next appointment at the employment office is indicated on the card. On lines 7–8, the official seems to refer to the client card and the next appointment to be marked when she mentions that the client had applied for courses held in the autumn: ‘kun ei ole vielä tietoa kuka pääsee ja kuka ei ni laitetaan sinne’ [...] (‘there is no information about who will be selected and who will not so let’s put there...’); however, this sequence is not completed, and the official does not make either the next appointment date or what she was going to write on the card explicit.

The official’s explanation on course admissions, given on lines 7–8, seems initially unclear to the client, since she interrupts the official by beginning to talk about a Finnish language course she has applied for. This shifts the focus of conversation from the client card, to student selections for the Finnish language course. On lines 10–13, in her longest sequence, the official attempts to articulate the fact in two different ways in order to make the matter understandable to the client: that student selection for the course has not yet been completed (‘niistä ei ole tehty vielä valintoja’ and ‘ei ole valittu vielä sinne suomi kaksi kursseille’) (‘the selections have not been made yet for the Finnish Two courses’), and that a

letter will be sent to the client to inform her of the student selections ('siitä tulee tieto sitten kotiin and elikkä heinäkuun lopussa tulee kirje kotiin siitä että oletko päässyt kurssille') ('the information will be sent home and so at the end of the July, a letter will arrive home on whether or not you have been selected for the course'). Interestingly, the official breaks up this sequence concerning student selection for the course with a silence lasting nearly thirty seconds, in order to continue typing on the computer. At the end of the service encounter, although the official mentions the point at which information on student selection for the course will be sent to the client, no mention is made of the client's further plans or of the next date at which she is expected to report to the employment office – or of what she should do if she is not admitted onto the Finnish language course.

In the first example, the official serving the client is relatively inexperienced. At the time of the service encounter, she had been working with immigrants and as an employment official for only four months (Interview on 28 June 2005). The official's lack of experience may have resulted in the need to focus closely on the administrative tasks involved in the service encounter, for example updating the client's information in the client records. This may have created periods characterised by an absence of talk during the service encounter, as the official needed to take a 'timeout', so to speak, from their interaction with the client while focusing on typing. It also seems that the official and client do not know each other in advance, which may contribute to the situation's formal atmosphere. The client has just completed her first Finnish language course, and it is noticeable from the interaction during the service encounter that she does not yet speak Finnish very well. The client's language skills may therefore influence the amount of talk during the service encounter. However, attention is drawn to the fact that, despite having lived in Finland for only one year, the client seems fairly familiar with routines related to employment office visits. It seems the client knows that she must report to the office after completing the Finnish language course, and the routines related to the client card are familiar – so perhaps no further reference is made to the card for this reason. This may partially explain the absence of talk on the part of the official.

In the second example, the client is visiting the office for a second time on the same day. He is going to begin a practical training period in a car repair shop. On his previous visit however, he did not bring along the practical training contract to be signed before training begins, in order to render his insurance cover valid.



**Example 2** [see Appendix 1 for translation and Appendix 2 for notation glossary]:

Asiakkaana 21-vuotias mies, äidinkieli venäjä, asunut Suomessa 3 v 6 kk  
Virkailija 3  
2 min 30 s  
01/11/2005

- 01 A: LÄHESTYY VIRKAILIJAN PÖYTÄÄ, [OJENTAA PAPERIN JA ISTUUTUU  
02 V: [no /nyt/ on uusi paperi sulla (.) kiito:s? (4.0) eli nyt siä olet  
03 siellä sitten: marraskuun ja joulukuun.  
04 A: [mm, \*niinku pari kuukautta\*.  
05 V: joo? tästä päivästä.(.) ne vakuutukset ov=voimassa (.) sittev=vasta kun tää (.) sopimus  
06 on tää virallisesti tehty niin sen takia on nyt hätä saaha sulle (.) paperit kuntoon. ALKAA  
07 KÄSITELLÄ ASIAKKAAN PAPEREITA JA SELITTÄÄ SAMALLA  
08 A: mikä todistus mun piti vielä tuoda.  
09 V: no sitä et (.) kun se harjottelu loppuu (.) sitten sun pitää pyytää Pentiltä (.) todistus? (.) jossa  
10 Pentti kertoo et milloin sinä olet ollut harjoittelussa (.) ja mitä sinä olet siellä tehnyt.  
11 A: joo.  
12 V: ja siihen ei ole mitään lomaketta että Pentti voi (.) jos se löytää sieltä firmasta puhtaan  
13 >puhdasta< paperia niin kirjottaa [sille.  
14 A: [ASIAKAS NAURAA (- -) voi käsin kirjoittaa.  
15 V: mutta se nyt riittää kun sä tuot (.) näistä molemmista jaksoista sen saman todistuksen sitten (.)  
16 [tammikuussa. LYÖ LEIMOJA PAPERIEHIN  
17 A: [joo.  
18 V: onko sulla se meidän kortti? (.) työvoimatoimiston kortti.  
19 A: ei.  
(2.0)  
20 V: no missäs [se\_on.  
21 A: [no mä en >muista missä se\_on.<  
22 V: OTTAA UUDEN ASIAKASKORTIN JA ALKAA KIRJOITTA SITÄ ASIAKKAALLE (- -) no mä annan  
23 sulle (.) laitait sen lompakkoon? sitte=talteen ja (.) sit sä aina (.) joka ilta sä katsot sitte tähä et  
24 (.) mikä päivä se oli millon piti tulla työvoimatoimis[toon.  
25 A: [£joo£. NYÖKYTTELEE  
26 V: eikö [niin.  
27 A: [mm.  
28 V: ja täss\_on nyt sun uusi osoite SANOO OSOITTEEN ÄÄNEEN SAMALLA KUN KIRJOITTA SEN  
29 KORTTIIN (9.0) ja tuo on toi sun henkilötunnus? (.) ja ensimmäinen päivä tammikuuta  
30 toimisto on kiinni niin mä laitan tähän toinen ensimmäistä ja nollakuus? ja (.) kirjotan tähän  
31 todistus? (.) ja sitte=mä laitan tähän meidän puhelinnumeron? (4.0) jos tarvitsee soittaa? (.) ja  
32 nyt joka ilta katsot sitten (.) tähän kort[tiin,  
33 A: [NAURAA £joo£.  
34 V: ja muistat että [toinen päivä,  
35 A: [£muistan kyllä£.[NAURAA  
36 V: [muistat tulla työvoimatoimistoon [papereitten kanssa.  
37 A: [£joo£.  
38 V: okei? (.) mie annan tästä sinulle (.) sun oman (.) kopion (.) OJENTAA ASIAKKAALLE HÄNEN  
39 KAPPALENSA HARJOITTELUSOPIMUKSESTA ole hyvä? ja mie laitan sen koneelle ja mie  
40 lähetän Pentille postissa sen.  
41 A: joo (.) kiitoksia sulle. NOUSEE JA LÄHTEE JO OVEA KOHTI  
42 V: selvä kiitos /hei=hei/.

In the second service encounter, there are no long pauses. The longest pause (on line 29) lasts nine seconds, while the official prepares a new client card for the client. Even while writing, the official keeps reading the client information recorded on the card out loud to the client. This also serves as a revision of the vocabulary frequently needed in official contexts: ‘osoite’ (address), ‘henkilötunnus’

(personal identity code), ‘todistus’ (certificate), ‘puhelinnumero’ (telephone number), ‘työvoimatoimisto’ (employment office). At the beginning of the service encounter, attention is drawn to the official’s explanation to the client, regarding the reasons for the need to bring the training contract to the employment office before the practical training period begins – rather than merely entering the contract details on the computer. At the end of the service encounter, the official informs the client of what will be done with the practical training contract: the client will receive one copy, another copy will be sent by mail to the practical training instructor, and information on the practical training period will be recorded in the employment office’s client files. Based on the official’s actions, we can infer that, in addition to the actual matter at hand – receiving the practical training contract – the official aims to reinforce the client’s agency during the practical training period, by supporting the client in understanding what kinds of administrative procedures are related to the training.

This service encounter involves plenty of humour: this can be heard in the official’s expressive tone of voice and in how the official instructs the client on obtaining a certificate after the training period and carefully storing the new client card. The client is about to begin his practical training period in a car repair shop, which happens to be used by the official for car repair services. This explains the informal reference made to the client’s practical training instructor. Also, a potential conflict (on lines 18–37) is dealt with by employing humour: the client has apparently lost the employment office’s client card, and so the official has to prepare a new one. The official jokingly provides the client with instructions on the careful storage of the new card: humour is communicated by the exaggerated stressing of certain words, and the instructions make the client laugh. In the interviews conducted with her, the official mentioned that she deliberately uses small talk and humour to establish a connection with the client (Interview on 30 August 2012).

The official in the second example has long experience in the role: at the time of recording, she had been working as an employment official for immigrants for over nine years (Interview on 31 October 2005). As the client happened to be embarking on practical training in the car repair shop used by the official, this provided an opportunity to discuss the training on more familiar terms, in a more informal atmosphere. In addition, the official and client were apparently already acquainted, as the client had lived in Finland for a relatively long period and had visited the office on previous occasions. The official had an understanding of the client’s language skills: it seems that she was able to evaluate the manner and pace at which she could speak to the client.

## Discussion: Little or Plenty of Talk?

In the service encounters examined in this article, both clients' matters are handled despite clear differences between the encounters in terms of their structure and atmosphere. Different meanings can be attributed to silence during such situations. Provided that the client has sufficient knowledge of the routines underlying service encounters with Finnish officials, the functioning of Finnish society and its service system, and the division of duties between various authorities, explanatory metatalk is not required. In such cases, silence or absence of talk can be expected and considered unproblematic during a service encounter; it demonstrates that the official is focusing on taking care of the client's matters and not on supporting the client's integration via interaction. Nevertheless, silence or the absence of talk can form a boundary to integration if the client is unfamiliar with the customs and practices of his or her new home country, and if these are not explained. Metacommunicative talk can therefore provide support, and ease the entry into and learning required to understand a new culture.

In the first example, the encounter involves very little talk: the official does not explain her own actions to the client, nor does she explain what is being recorded on the computer or on the client card, or how the client should proceed during the autumn if she is not admitted onto the Finnish language course. Silence dominates the service encounter: its total duration is 3 minutes 15 seconds, of which talk accounts for only approximately 45 seconds and silence for 2 minutes 30 seconds. When the official has turned away from the client and is typing on the computer, the client silently remains seated, flicking through her papers. To an external observer, the silence feels uncomfortably long, since the official provides no explanation for the silence. Despite this, the atmosphere during the situation is friendly and business-like – it could be even described as formal. The official uses rather polished standard language (for example, 'onko sinulla asiakaskorttia', 'olet hakenut syksyn kursseille', 'niistä ei ole tehty vielä valintoja', 'oletko päässyt kurssille') ('do you have a client card', 'you have applied for the courses this autumn', 'the selections have not been made', 'whether or not you have been selected for the course'). The official seems to be solely focused on providing an answer to the client's question, and her actions are consistent with typical institutional interactions – conforming with expectations, characterised by task-oriented action and limiting the talk to certain, task-related topics (Drew & Heritage 1992: 24–25; Wilkins 2009: 78–81).

In the second example, the situation has a different atmosphere: while business-like, the encounter is friendly and relaxed. It includes more characteristics typical of normal everyday conversation: there are only a few, short pauses and some overlapping talk, dialectal expressions are used (for example 'mie', 'hätä saaha kuntoon'), and there is variation (for example 'siä' ~ 'sinä' ~ 'sä'; 'mie' ~ 'mä'; 'harjottelu' ~ 'harjoittelu') and colloquialisms (for example 'sulla', 'tää

sopimus’, ‘toi sun henkilötunnus’, ‘millon’, ‘nollakuus’). The use of humour also makes the atmosphere more informal. These features suggest a transition between so-called transactional and interactional speech: in other words, a transition from conversation centred on the exchange of information, to everyday conversation (such as discussing feelings and sentiments) which bridges the gap between the parties (Chew 1997b: 210). This is more atypical during institutional interaction (Drew & Heritage 1992: 24). The total duration of the situation is 2 minutes and 30 seconds, of which short pauses account for a total of 20 or so seconds. Despite the amount of talk and humorous use of language by the official, the atmosphere remains business-like and the main focus is on handling the client’s matters.

In the second example, in addition to solving the client’s problem the official seems to concentrate on explaining practices to the client. She explains the connection between the training contract and validity of insurance cover, provides instructions on preparing a training certificate, explains the purpose of the client card and discusses who will be informed of the training contract and how. Explaining one’s actions and practices to the client – why things are done as they are – instead of merely updating the client information and recording the reason for the visit without explanation, can create and reinforce trust between the client and official. Rendering the official’s actions and the employment office’s practices understandable to the client may increase the client’s agency in the handling of his or her own matters: when the information required is not merely in the official’s hands, the client has the opportunity to meet the official on more equal ground. By gaining an understanding of how Finnish society, services and organisations function, it is easier for the client to become a full member of society. The availability of information on visiting various offices, and the demystification of the practices and processes involved in dealing with the authorities and society at large, can therefore be viewed as an emancipatory process for immigrants (see Chew 1997b: 219–220).

Based on the examples presented, when examining them from the perspective of integration, in the first example, language – or more precisely the lack of it, the absence of talk, and silence may form a boundary to, or at least unnecessarily slow down the process of becoming a full member of society. How can a newcomer learn the practices related to dealing with authorities, or to navigating the maze of various interacting organisations, if such practices and connections are not explained? Moreover, explaining practices can reduce the asymmetry of interaction and support the newcomer in gaining a foothold in the new society.

When comparing the clients’ backgrounds, one’s attention is drawn to the fact that the client in the first example has lived in Finland for only one year, whereas the client in the second example has already lived in Finland for three and a half years. In the first example, the client is applying for her second Finnish language course. The second client however, has already obtained a practical training position in which he must be able to manage using Finnish. The clients’ Finnish lan-

guage skills therefore probably influence the amount and type of Finnish used by the officials in the situation. If the client speaks only a little Finnish, it is most probably rather difficult to explain the situation to the client in Finnish. In such cases, it can be practical and beneficial to the client if the official speaks just a little Finnish, using the most simple and unambiguous expressions possible. In most cases it is possible to use an interpreter, or use non-linguistic means of communication or any languages common to the client and official.

## **Conclusion**

In every situation, the parties to interaction have many borders to cross before a genuine encounter is possible. This particularly applies to interactive situations related to the integration process – in everyday encounters with neighbours or colleagues, or during service encounters.

In asymmetric service encounters, metacommunicative talk could function as a tool for reinforcing the client's agency. During her interview, the official in the second example mentioned that she first explains to the client why she is about to ask questions related to e.g. family relations, before actually posing the questions, and why such information was needed. She also pointed out that, by doing this, she gave the client the opportunity to prepare an answer and to consider how much he wished to reveal. The same official also spoke of the computer's role during the service encounter, saying that she provides the client with a great deal of description of what she is typing on the computer. She felt that it was important that the client understood what information was being recorded and why this was being done. With respect to the role of metatalk, the official brought up the aspect of learning Finnish: 'I find it important that the client hears spoken Finnish. This is extremely important, and I might be the only one who speaks Finnish to the client during that day.' (Interview on 30 August 2012).

Officials employ different methods when encountering their clients. In addition, the individual characteristics of officials and clients and their cultural differences influence the construction of interaction during a service encounter. Finnish officials can handle service encounters on the basis of very little talk – sometimes with hardly any at all. This can constitute an efficient and appropriate method: for example, if the client speaks only a little Finnish, then silence can provide relief, a break during which the client has no need to struggle to understand what the official is saying. On the other hand, some clients may consider an absence of talk on the part of the official to be rude and impolite. When examining various service encounters in a broader context, as part of the immigrants' integration process – as steps towards becoming a full member of society – metacommunicative talk can support the learning of the language and customs, and therefore the integration process as a whole. However, during asymmetric interaction situations in particu-

lar, silence, or a lack of explanation of new or foreign practices can exclude the newcomer from the community.

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### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> R-kioski is a chain of convenience stores mainly selling a range of everyday items.
- <sup>2</sup> The service encounters have been recorded on video for the author's ongoing doctoral dissertation. The data includes a total of 130 service encounters. The situations involve 145 different immigrant clients and three female employment officials who speak Finnish as their native language. The majority of clients included in the data speak Russian, Kurdish or Dari as their native language. However, the data features clients with a total of 35 different native languages from all over the world, for example Russia, Estonia, Iraq, Turkey, the United States, Spain and Germany. The clients included in the data comprise 60 men and 85 women. Since the language used in the service encounters is mainly Finnish, the data does not include immigrants who are in the very initial stages of their integration process, nor does it include service encounters in which interpretation is used. In addition, the data includes interviews with officials and questionnaires filled in by the clients and officials in order to provide background information. Most of the data was collected in 2005 and complemented with interviews in 2012. The data has been collected and is being stored by the author of this article and MA Tuija Särkinen from the University of Eastern Finland. All informants participated in the study on a voluntary basis.
- <sup>3</sup> English translations of the examples and explanations of the symbols used in the transcription are included as appendices.

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- Interview on 31/10/2005. Interview with official 3. Interviewer Tuija Särkinen. Transcribed. Stored by the interviewer.



Interview on 30/08/2012. Interview with official 3. Interviewer Tarja Tanttu. Transcribed. Stored by the interviewer.

Video recordings of the service encounters examined. Recorded 27/6/2005 and 1/11/2005 by Tarja Tanttu and Tuija Särkinen. Stored by the recorders.

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## Appendices

### APPENDIX 1: Examples in English

Abbreviations:

A = client  
V = official

#### Example 1

The client is a 29-year old woman, mother tongue Russian, has lived 1 year in Finland  
V1  
3 min 15 s  
27/06/2005

At the beginning, the client is still filling in the papers about video recording the encounter for research purposes. She discusses the papers with the official and the researcher. When the papers and permission for recording and research are ready, the client begins by saying:

01 A: well, uh, my course (.) [is /finished/, GIVES A PAPER TO THE OFFICIAL  
02 V: [yes?  
03 A: (he)re is /the certificate/, GIVES ANOTHER PAPER TO THE OFFICIAL  
04 V: thank you? STARTS TYPING WITH THE COMPUTER  
(120.0)  
05 V: here you are, do you have a client (.) card like this. GIVES PAPERS BACK TO CLIENT  
06 A: yes. GIVES HER CLIENT CARD TO THE OFFICIAL  
07 V: you have (.) applied for the courses this autumn, however (.) there is no information about  
08 who will be selected and will not so lets' put [there,  
09 A: [I want to (.) Finnish Two? \*I=don't know\*,  
10 V: the selections (.) have not been made yet (.) for the Finnish Two courses (.) the information  
11 will be sent home. STARTS TYPING INFORMATION USING THE COMPUTER AND ON THE CLIENT  
12 CARD  
(26.0)  
13 V: so at the end of the July, a letter will arrive home on whether or not you have been selected for  
14 the course or (.) Finnish Two [course. GIVES THE CLIENT CARD BACK TO THE CLIENT  
15 A: [yes? thank you. bye. PACKS PAPERS IN HER BAG, STANDS UP AND  
16 LEAVES  
17 V: bye=bye. CONTINUES TYPING WITH THE COMPUTER

## Example 2

The client is a 21-year old man, mother tongue Russian, has lived 3 years 6 months in Finland

V3

2 min 30 s

01/11/2005

The client has returned to submit a contract for practical training which he had forgotten on the previous occasion.

- 01 A: APPROACHES THE OFFICIAL'S DESK, [HANDS OVER THE PAPER AND SITS DOWN  
02 V: [well /now/ you have a new paper (.) thank yo:u? (4.0) so  
03 now you are there in November and Decem[ber.  
04 A: [mm, \*So a couple of months \*.  
05 V: yes? from this day on.(.) those insurances are=valid (.) only=after when this (.) contract  
06 is officially made here, so that is why we must hurry to get your (.) papers ready STARTS TO  
07 HANDLE THE CLIENT'S PAPERS AND EXPLAINS SIMULTANEOUSLY  
08 A: which certificate I had to bring now.  
09 V: well it is that (.) when the practical training ends (.) then you have to ask for a certificate from  
10 Pentti (.) certificate? (.) where Pentti explains when you participated in the training (.) and what  
11 you have done there.  
12 A: yes.  
13 V: and there is no form for it so Pentti can (.) if he can find clean >empty< paper in the firm, which he  
14 can write on [it.  
15 A: [CLIENT LAUGHS (- -) can write by hand.  
16 V: but it is enough if you bring (.) one certificate for both of these periods then (.) in  
17 [January. STAMPS PAPERS  
18 A: [yes.  
19 V: do you have our card? (.) the employment office card.  
20 A: no.  
(2.0)  
21 V: well where [is it.  
22 A: [well I don't >remember where it is.<  
23 V: TAKES NEW CLIENT CARD AND STARTS WRITING IT FOR THE CLIENT (- -) well I'll give you (.)  
24 you'll put it in your wallet? then=safe and (.) then you'll always (.) every evening you'll look  
25 at it so that (.) what day it was when I had to come to the employment offi[ce.  
26 A: [£yes£.NODDING  
27 V: isn't it [so.  
28 A: [mm.  
29 V: here's your new address SAYS IT ALOUD WHEN WRITING IT ON THE CARD (9.0) and that is your  
30 social security number? (.) and on the first of January the office is closed so I'll write the  
31 here second of January, zero six? and (.) write certificate here? (.) and then I'll write the  
32 telephone number here? (4.0) if you need to call? (.) and now every night you will look at (.)  
33 this ca[rd,  
34 A: [LAUGHS £yes£.  
35 V: and you'll remember that [the second of,  
36 A: [£I'll remember £.[LAUGHS  
37 V: [you'll remember to come to the employment  
38 office [with the papers.  
39 A: [£yes£.  
40 V: okay? (.) I'll give you (.) your own (.) copy (.) GIVES THE CLIENT HIS COPY OF THE CONTRACT  
41 FOR PRACTICAL TRAINING here you are? and I'll enter it into the computer and send it to Pentti  
42 through the post.  
43 A: yes (.) thank you. STANDS UP AND WALKS TOWARDS THE DOOR  
44 V: ok thank you /bye=bye/.

## APPENDIX 2: Symbols used in the transcription of data

### Intonation and vocal pitch

.	Falling intonation
,	Level intonation
?	Rising intonation
/	Sequence began or spoken at a higher pitch than surrounding talk
\	Sequence began or spoken at a lower pitch than surrounding talk

### Stress and pace of speech:

—	Underlining indicates stress or emphasis on the underlined word or part of the word (e.g. <u>joulukuussa</u> )
*	Sequence spoken more quietly relative to the surrounding talk
><	Sequence spoken more quickly relative to the surrounding talk
<>	Sequence spoken more slowly relative to the surrounding talk

### Word duration:

-	cut-off word (e.g. <i>tou- eiku tammikuussa</i> )
:	prolonged sound (e.g. <i>kiito:s</i> )
—	fusion of two consecutive words; legato pronunciation (e.g. <i>no sitä_et</i> )

### Pauses and overlap:

(0.9)	Pause duration in seconds
(.)	Micropause
=	Utterances linked without a pause
[	beginning of overlap

### Other symbols:

£	Speaker is smiling or laughing while speaking
()	Brackets indicate an unclear sequence
(-)	Brackets with one dash: unclear word
(- -)	A longer unclear sequence
NAURAA	Non-linguistic action is described using small block letters (e.g. OJENTAA PAPERIN)