

Negotiating Emancipation and Nationalism: Finnish Girls' Literature from 1889–1901

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That a woman is valuable in her own right and that she can find happiness and contentment at work also outside of the home, is too often forgotten
(Topelius 1889, 69).¹

INTRODUCTION

When early Finnish girls' novels were published in the late nineteenth century, Finland was in turmoil. The autonomous Grand Duchy was struggling to gain independence from Russian control to which it had been subjected in 1809.² Social structures were transformed in the nineteenth century, as the old estate society crumbled and eventually gave way to a new civil society (Markkola 2000).³ In order to found a nation, the Fennophile movement sought to unite imperial Finland. Public discussion concerning family, sex/gender, equal education opportunities, and society was heated, as was the debate on the role of the Finnish language (Sulkunen 2009; Valenius 2004). Finnish girls' literature tackling emancipatory and national themes emerged in this context. These texts

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are didactic; the early storylines are patriotic and religious: the protagonists' vocation is to love and wish to serve their family, homeland, and God. However, these early novels also discuss the evolution of girls' and women's rights in the Finnish context; the themes related to issues like equal education, career possibilities, family, and marriage are of the utmost importance.

In this chapter, I describe the development of early Finnish girls' literature published at the turn of the nineteenth century. The focus of my study is on investigating how the questions of nationality and emancipation are reflected in the novels. The number of fictional texts targeted at girls during the period was relatively small; only about ten novels were published between 1889 and 1901. I discuss how four of these novels, Toini Topelius' (1889) *I utvecklingstid* (In the time of development), Tekla Roschier's *Auringon noustessa* (At sunrise) (1898), and two that use girls' names as their titles—Hilja Haahti's *Helvi* (1900a, b), the first edition of which was published in two parts; and Immi Hellén's *Eeva Aarnio* (1901)⁴—that depict the adolescent years of their protagonists. I am interested in how the genre is reviewed and interpreted in Finland, so I discuss first the kinds of images of girls that are produced and reproduced in the novels, and consider the question of why this might be so. Second, I explore the ways in which the novels discuss the ongoing development of the contemporaneous society in which they are set.

All the novels take place in the late nineteenth- and/or the early twentieth-century tumultuous imperial Finland and are set in both urban and rural milieus. The protagonists are girls between the age of 13 and 18, except in Eeva Aarnio's case, in which the story of her development goes on until the age of 22.

TARGETED READERSHIP: FICTION FOR GIRLS

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, in Western countries such as Great Britain (see Foster and Simons 1995), the United States (see Sicherman 2010), and Germany (see Wilkeding 1990), "numerous inter-related social factors lead to the emergence of a literature marketed specifically to middle-class girls" (Redmann 2011, 14). These included a higher average age of marriage (from 13–15 years to 18 or 19), more leisure time, and greater educational possibilities for girls (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2005; Redmann 2011; Westin 1994). Since girls had more

time to read than before and literature was used as an educational tool (Reynolds 1990), and since what we read shapes us, it is hardly surprising that books for girls had pedagogical purposes. The novels produce stories about adolescent girls who were expected to grow up to be virtuous women, wives, and mothers. Because of the didactic aims to socialize the protagonists, girls' books are tightly bound to the prevailing conceptions concerning gender norms and society. Nevertheless, behind the didactic surface there are subversive traits in the genre (see, for example, Foster and Simons 1995; Westin 1994; Sicherman 2010; Lappalainen 2015).

Shirley Foster and Judy Simons (1995) have pointed out that the historical roots of girls' literature drew on "two important literary influences, the Evangelical tract and the sentimental/domestic novel" (5). Girls' literature has its roots in many genres. They have evolved from youth novels, developmental novels for a female audience—including the *Bildungsroman* (that deal with the protagonist's formative years), the *Entwicklungsroman* (that look at the protagonist's development), and influences from the female *Künstlerroman* (that chart the growth of an artist to maturity)—and in guidebooks on raising girls (Pratt and White 1981; Ørvig 1988). This makes the foundation of the genre considerably varied. Since storylines recount the growth of the protagonist, girls' literature is understood as developmental (Westin 1994). However, early novels especially—such as Susan Bogert Warner's *The Wide, Wide World* (1850)—have been criticized for taming the role of the protagonists by including a romantic closure (Pratt and White 1981; Westin 1994). Annis Pratt and Barbara White (1981) argue that early development stories seem to be about girls growing down rather than up. Surely, when a girl gives up on her dreams, decides to fulfill her perceived duties to her family and society, and acts in terms of the prevailing (gender) norms, this is growing down, not up?

However, as well as writing about virtuous characters, early authors depict ambitious and even educated girls, granting them possibilities other than marriage. The books offer portrayals of intelligent and, to some extent, independent girl characters, while promoting girls' and women's rights in stories that describe ambitious girls going to school (Voipio 2015; Westin 1994). Even if the female protagonist finally marries, she can still act as a fictional friend, a mirror, and a role model for real-life girls (Sicherman 2010). In this way girls' literature depicts normative growing up while offering the possibility of emancipative development.

This I have named the cross-draught, or collision, of a didactics of emancipation and one of normative advice that is already present in very early girls' literature (Voipio 2015).

Generally speaking, a typical Western girls' story is written by a woman, includes a middle-class girl protagonist negotiating her position in different fields of life, and is targeted at an audience of girls (Westin 1994). Moreover, as argued by Foster and Simons (1995), girls' fiction of the mid-nineteenth century takes domestic realism as its generic model on both sides of the Atlantic, although romance or fairy tale may feature subtextually. Home, education, relationships, and love are important issues in the stories; these are usually handled in a bright and hopeful tone. However, girls' literature has also discussed, and still does, difficult issues such as death, war, illness, and loss. Similar observations and definitions concerning girls' literature as a genre recur regardless of transnational borders, especially in relation to the earlier literature written in the nineteenth century (Voipio 2015).

The pioneering Finnish authors were familiar with international developments. The famous works by L. M. Alcott such as *Little Women* (1868) and *Eight Cousins* (1884), Susan Coolidge's *What Katy Did* (1872), and Johanna Spyri's *Heidi's Lehr und Wanderjahre* (Heidi's years of wandering and learning), published in 1880, influenced the Finnish authors of girls' literature. These Finnish writers followed generic models of Anglo-American novels, such as those depicting the friendship of two very different girls who were often orphaned characters, and those that explored artistic protagonists (see also Lappalainen 2012, 2015). Also, they used similar episodic structures. However, the Finnish authors, of course, included particularly Finnish milieus, details, and discussions of Finland in the novels. Besides the connections to contemporaneous international girls' literature, early Finnish girls' literature has similarities with nineteenth-century Finnish women's fiction. Girls' and women's rights, equality, education, and marriage in the Finnish (national) context are also central themes in stories of women's development (Voipio 2015).

NATIONALISM: SINGING "OUR LAND"

Questions of nationality, citizenship, social reform, and negotiations of gender and power relations are related to the production of an independent Finland, and to Finnish nationality. Moreover, the national identity

project is intertwined with representations of explicit gender roles (Sulkunen 2009; Valenius 2004). In representing and creating national identities, literature plays a particularly important role (Anderson 2003). As Christopher Kelen and Björn Sundmark (2013, 4) note, children's and youth literature can have a specifically central role in nation-making: "Nation and childhood are intimately connected through children's literature. It is perhaps for this reason children's literature tends to stay at home, securely rooted in a national context and in culturally specific perceptions of childhood." Early Finnish girls' literature participates in the nationalism project; by representing various national features and their meanings it creates and represents an imagined community of the Finnish nation (see Anderson 2003). It depicts beautiful landscapes and produces representations of virtuous, hardworking girls. The early novels are development stories set in a patriotic frame in which questions regarding Finnish independence are important to the growth of the protagonists.

Addressing issues that are considered to be Finnish is occasionally overtly emphasized in early girls' fiction. The novels include several episodes of singing and reading national-spirited songs and poetry: "Let's sing 'Our Land' once we reach the shore, Leeni proposed" (Roschier 1898, 39). "Irja began to sing so that the hills on the lake shore clamored: 'On the thousand shores, wake up, beloved motherland!'" (Haahti 1900b, 36).⁵ Depictions of ideal Finnish landscapes suggest the power of nature that speaks to one's soul and grants people healthy offspring.

"Healthy life and fresh air here in the countryside will soon make you as strong and rosy-cheeked as my children are," the judge said, and patted Elsa's rosy cheeks. (Roschier 1898, 9)

God bless Helvi! What would it matter if the hair of the mother becomes gray before its time and her cheeks become pale. *She* would come back [from the countryside] rosy-cheeked and fresh, bringing the summer breeze into the narrow sewing room, and a whole bunch of sunbeams. (Haahti 1900a, 80, emphasis in original)

Sun was shining on them as it did on birches and rocks, a mild breath of wind stroked them, they felt the same as the heathland and a young pine. Everything was living, breathing, and growing, even the moss on the rock. (Hellén 1901, 12)

Moreover, descriptions of specifically Finnish goods emphasize the importance of national identity: “But on the wall, over these goods, in the antler’s branch was hanging a kantele [a Finnish zither], the instrument of Finland” (Hellén 1901, 35), as does the speaking of Finnish instead of Finland-Swedish.

“I am happy indeed that we shall speak Finnish,” Arvi said. “Often have I been almost ashamed because I cannot speak the language of my people.”⁶

“There is a truth in your words, son,” answered the judge. “The one who wants to transact and act for the people is the one who has to love and know the language of the people.” (Roschier 1898, 15–16)

In *Eeva Aarnio* the eponymous main character even has Finnish taste when it comes to choosing furniture and decorating her home. “It indeed was a nice room, furnished with a Finnish design. The furniture was of a Finnish model, Finnish decoration textiles covered the walls, Finnish rugs were on the floor” (Hellén 1901, 55). The novel contains scenes that highlight the mythical history of Finland, based mainly on the national epic *Kalevala* (collected and edited by Elias Lönnrot in 1835), that go to the length of reciting a speech about “the blood of Väinämöinen that runs in our veins, at least a drop or two” (20). These descriptions represent the imagined community of Finland and can be seen as a way of producing and elevating the spirit of Finnishness in the adolescent readers’ minds.

When the middle-class nuclear family in its home developed into the basic unit of the state in Finland in the nineteenth century, it also became the ruling paradigm for other classes and it was used as an ideological tool in social debates (Häggman 1994). Educating and helping the lower classes to adopt the middle-class paradigm was believed to strengthen the nation (see Markkola 2000; Sulkunen 2009). Fictional characters were seen as important role models for readers—both middle-class girls and lower-class adults. For example, as Markkola (2002) points out, a fictional deaconess helps the rural poor and families in stories published first as a deacon pamphlet and then in the magazine *Koti ja kirkko* (Home and Church). The protagonists of early Finnish girls’ literature are also depicted as educators and helpers; this was a way of producing high-minded fictional role models for young readers, especially when the behaviour and agency of the protagonists demonstrate many august

qualities, such as modesty and diligence, in keeping with the Finnish female ideal of the time.

Love for the fatherland, family, and God are self-evident when the protagonists express their duty and will to live for Finland. The girls volunteer and are employed in the fields of welfare and education. “Home, nation and the fatherland! [To] those I wish to dedicate my life,” says Aini (Roschier 1898, 39). She begins her project by teaching the children of peasants; Eeva, for her part, teaches poor girls to sing (Hellén 1901). Even as a girl of 13 or 14, Helvi donates her savings to missionary work and teaches the Bible to children in the rural areas.

Mother and daughter had barely reached the first corner, when they were white as snowmen. ... You can have those pennies that I gave you, you do not have earn them. Choose for yourself. Will you use them for a horse tram ticket or will you donate them, rather, for missionary work? ... Helvi struggled, but soon she won. ... When her mother came back home about an hour later, Helvi went to her with sparkling eyes, holding the savings box for the pagan missions.

“Look, mother, there they went!” she said, while dropping all three five-penny coins into the box. (Haahti 1900a, 21–22)

...

Every other weekday evening, approximately ten little ones gathered on the largest veranda of Haapalehto, to whom Helvi taught reading. (101)

Later, after graduating, Helvi donates Christmas food to poor peasants and saves a, so-called, fallen woman. Moreover, she saves her cousin and uncle from the curse of alcohol (Haahti 1900b), something Hanna tries to do for a male friend (Topelius 1889). The girls also wish to help by making and giving clothes to the poor, and to pagans (Haahti 1900a; Topelius 1889). By describing the wish to help the poor along with the act of helping them, the novels draw a clear line between different classes (see also Lappalainen 2015); middle-class girls help lower-class people, the poor, and the peasants in imperial Finland, thereby participating in social reform.

While acting to help another, the protagonists sometimes cross gender boundaries. These boundaries involve normative behaviour and even literal concrete locations that were regarded as unsuitable for girls and women. “An honorable woman did not unnecessarily go outside home

alone so that her reputation should not suffer” (Ollila 2000, 22), and girls were under strict guidance and societal rules at home, which was seen as “the women’s region” (21), and, more especially, outside the home. The gendered norms were intertwined with a worry about girls’ sexuality, their nationally important role as future mothers, and all the changes taking place in Finland. The worry about young women and sexuality was shaped into public debate about virtue and morality (Tuomaala 2011), and since guidance, norms, and rules concerning girls’ behaviour and hobbies were seen to protect girls, guidebooks for girls discussed these topics. “Besides dancing, bad recreation habits were all things taking place inside that could stimulate the mind, such as watching theater, playing cards and reading bad novels. ... Good recreation habits and the best amusement, besides (proper) exercise, were observing nature and doing house work” (Männistö 2003, 70).

In the novels, places such as pubs and slums are (not surprisingly) described as dubious surroundings for a decent girl to find herself in. However, *I utvecklingstid* includes a plot line recounting Hanna’s attempt to help a male friend who, having drunk punch, is in danger of losing his reputation. Despite the warnings from other girls, Hanna enters the pub and asks the friend to leave with her. Later, this almost costs Hanna her own reputation and she is threatened with expulsion from school. However, her teacher and friends make it clear that her unselfish intention was to help a friend in need. A similar incident occurs in *Helvi* (Haahti 1900b) when Helvi, together with her friend Irja, tries to help the son of a violent alcoholic. This episode is, however, more a reminder of the temperance organization’s fight against alcohol and a call for social reform (see Markkola 2000; Sulkunen 1987) than an account of a noble act in and of itself. Interestingly enough, the only punishment for the girls is their being exposed to the other side of life. Presumably altruism and the girls’ unselfish intentions compensate for violating the norm: the act is acceptable because it serves to make the nation a better place.

The idea of the unbreakable bond between mother and child was crucial during the tumultuous years of founding the Finnish nation and state (Valenius 2004). Finnish guidebooks for girls published from 1890 to 1923 even state that their future reproductive role as mothers was the most important for girls. “[A girl’s] body’s work is to carry, give birth and nurse children” (Männistö 2003, 98). This gendered upbringing, aimed at raising girls as future wives and mothers, is thought to

be one of the main factors that led to the emergence of literature for girls (Lappalainen 2000, 2015; Reynolds 1990). Authors and publishers expected the readers of early Finnish girls' literature, at least when viewed from a nationalist viewpoint (see Kelen and Sundmark 2013), to also be the future mothers of Finnish citizens. That the representations of girls correspond to the ideal of the virtuous female is therefore expected. In the nationalist framework early Finnish girls' literature participates in the national identity project by creating representations of virtuous and diligent girls and young women who wish to live for their fatherland and its people. The novels also stress the significance of Finland and Finnishness by highlighting the importance of the Finnish landscape, Finnish music, Finnish poetry, and, as mentioned earlier, even a specifically Finnish way of decorating one's home.

Early Finnish girls' novels analyzed in this chapter also engage with the ideology of the women's movement and depict goals other than those set by a purely nationalist and/or gendering agenda, as suggested by Lappalainen (2000). While participating in the production of ideal representations of Finnish girls and girlhood, the novels do not emphasize gender roles and reproduction in the way suggested by the general Finnish paradigm (see Markkola 2000; Männistö 2003; Sulkunen 1987). Rather, they stretch the boundaries of girls' agency. The wish to help Finland and be a good human being leads the girl protagonists to educate themselves and others, even when it means that they are bound to violate normative expectations. In the novels this forms a process of negotiation that concerns, first, the limits and boundaries of good Finnish girlhood (citizenship); and, second, an emancipative girlhood (agency). The novels appear to search for the ways, places, and strategies in which negotiating gendered boundaries, national ideal identity, and agency are flexible and/or possible.

EMANCIPATION: PRIMARILY HUMAN BEINGS

In the late nineteenth century educational possibilities for middle-class girls and women were under debate in Finland. The focus of the nobility's practice of schooling girls was seen to be insufficient; dance and music lessons and the ability to hold a civilized conversation could perhaps increase marital possibilities but they did not prepare girls for their future life as wives and mothers or for engagement in fields outside the home (Häggman 1994; Junila 2013; Sulkunen 1987). In the last

decades of the nineteenth century the dominant focus in the discussion on the educational possibilities of girls and women was on work outside the home (Jallinoja 1983). Besides education, the issues of female citizenship, marrying for love, the status of unmarried women, and the occupations and employment of women were central to public and women's movement's debates (Jallinoja 1983; Markkola 2000; Sulkunen 1987). Women writers also participated in the discussion about girls' education. Questions that are pertinent to girls' and women's lives are also crucial to early Finnish girls' literature that deals with education, occupational possibilities, dreams of falling in love, and the place of girls and women in society.

Early Finnish girls' literature describes various career options that female characters can consider and from which they can choose. Teaching and nursing, for example, are depicted as the usual options in girls' literature (see Redmann 2011; Sicherman 2010), and this also applies to Finnish women's novels (see Launis 2007). However, some of the careers depicted in early Finnish girls' books widen the possibilities described in international girls' literature, as well as those held correct for girls in Finnish society of the time. *I utvecklingstid* includes several episodes in which the main characters, Bella and Hanna, and their classmates ponder their future lives, both humorously and on a more serious note. "Maybe I will choose a career. What interests me the most is nevertheless that 'dry' law. Think, to able to dispense justice in the world, to sentence and punish" (Topelius 1889, 37–38).

"No, listen, are you going to be a registrar?" asked someone. ...

"I intend to become chief constable," said Sanna Wilhelmsson, one of the sportsgirls. ... "What do you think you are going to do, Bella?" asked Siri cunningly and drew at the same time with the handle of the umbrella in the sand the answer: *Mrs.* "Certainly not," laughed Bella a little annoyed. "At least I am not going to fight to become one."

"I think I will establish a co-educational school," Aina said shyly.

"Oh no, that you shall not!" cried Bertha ... "that is my idea, from when I was in a cradle." ...

"Bertha is going to be a veterinarian," said Agnes with emphasis. "She likes to touch carcasses so much."

“I believe I will become an artist,” said Jenny and squinted her eyes like she had seen artists doing. Lilli was declared to be a feminist/suffragette, since she wrote a diary and had the tendency to be sentimental, and Bibbi was going to be a confectioner.

“No, I will become a head gardener,” said Bibbi. “I like to dig.”

Hanna had sat quietly and her eyes had her usual look when thoughts were working inside her.

“Yes,” she said as she met her schoolmates’ eyes. “Surely we joke about our future now, but I hope that there is no one amongst us who does not seriously think about a goal to strive for. To work without a goal? That we cannot do, even though we are only girls.” (92–95)

Tekla Roschier’s *Auringon noustessa* (1898) describes a girl’s wish to graduate and become a teacher, Immi Hellén’s *Eeva Aarnio* (1901) focuses on music as a career and a calling, and Hilja Haahti’s *Helvi* (1900a, b) centres on the titular character’s vocation to become a missionary by graduating from grammar school and then engaging in volunteer work and attending a deaconess training program. School, homework, graduating, and further education form a central part of these novels, all of which can be taken as statements on girl’s rights to a proper education.

Roschier’s novel (1898) gives voice to a group of young girls and boys, but concentrates on 16-year-old Aini. Her hopes of serving Finland, falling in love, and graduating are at the centre of the developmental year depicted in the novel.⁷ Aini is described as a docile girl who helps her mother and takes care of her family and friends. Besides grammar school lessons, Aini has learned all the skills she needs to keep a household; her parents voice one side of the argument that girls need housekeeping skills to prepare them for domestic life. In Finland, like in many northern and Western European countries, the curriculum and the aim of education in girls’ schools generated fierce debate. The prominent Finnish feminists at the time forcefully criticized schools for neither enabling university studies nor offering proper education to earn one’s living after school. (Junila 2013, 189)

Moreover, girls’ schools were criticized for not providing the practical skills to manage a household (Häggman 1994). Even though Aini’s parents approved of the changes in women’s societal opportunities and roles, without doubt, they pictured her getting married in the future.

“In their opinion, it was as if Aini was born to be a wife, a gentle keeper of her own house” (Roschier 1898, 71). Aini herself dreamed about love and marriage, but Arvi, the boy she likes, does not feel as she does and he falls in love with her cousin instead. Aini struggles with this even though she admits noticing that Arvi’s fondness was always purely platonic. Although several young men are interested in her, Aini concentrates on getting an education. This appears to mirror the actual options at the time, since the ideal of romantic love when not requited had helped increase the number of single women in the middle class (see Jallinoja 1983).

Aini is certainly far from the wild, imaginative girl characters that have been embraced in subsequent girls’ literature in Finland (Voipio 2015); she is not a rebel like Alcott’s famous Jo March, for example. Nevertheless, she can be seen as a sort of silent negotiator. After realizing that her dream of graduating and becoming a teacher could benefit both herself and Finland, she continues to perform her tasks at home even more carefully than before. Moreover, she begins to teach the nearby tenants’ children, and studies school subjects by herself. The novel has Aini ponder love and marriage and taking care of her elderly parents, and she compares her chores with the option of working outside the home. Through Aini’s actions and behaviour, Roschier depicts a girl’s slow awakening and something that could be called a silent or gradual empowerment. Since Aini’s parents finally accept her plans, she is a competent negotiator who tries and finds new agency in her social role. However, achieving her goal requires compromise and flexibility.

Toini Topelius’ novel, *I utvecklingstid* (1889) is tightly attached to international girls’ literature in its use of an episodic structure, the theme of what orphanhood entails, the depiction of the school milieu, and the portrayal of a friendship between two very different girls, Bella and Hanna. An intertextuality between *I utvecklingstid* and the stories of Alcott is apparent; some of her novels are named in this text (see also Lappalainen 2012). Topelius’ novel discusses critically certain issues that were topical for the women’s movement at the time; it analyzes the possibilities of girls studying and educating themselves, their different professional options, and the question of marriage. I believe that in Hanna’s character Topelius creates her own ideal girl of the time. Hanna systematically discusses education, manners, friendships, clothing, occupation, employment, equality, and humanity, even to the point of making declarations. “I hate the concepts of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ qualities,” she

states (230), addressing her belief that girls are primarily human beings. “And then, girls,” she continued with a certain energy in her voice, “we have to remember that we are *primarily* human beings and only *after that*, women; although the opposite is something we are usually made to believe” (237–238, emphases in original).

Compared to the gendered upbringing of the time and the stressed difference between the sexes in Finland, the opinions Hanna voices in the novel emphasize the equal abilities of girls and boys. However, the limits of emancipation are soon apparent. Hanna’s plans to travel and study are pushed aside towards the end of the novel when her elusive father asks her to take care of him. He is terminally ill, so even though he abandoned Hanna as a child, she considers it her responsibility as a human being to look after him. This choice corresponds to what Markkola (2000) and Ollila (2000) consider to be the Christian ideal that formed an essential part of middle-class upbringing in Finland.

Bella’s wealthy home and family are depicted as ideal, with loving parents and thoughtful children. Bella’s mother, Mrs Palmfelt, also voices opinions about marriage, equal education, gender divergent upbringing, and future options for girls. She is a pioneer parent in favor of co-educational schooling. “If she could, she would have put both siblings [Bella and her older brother Bengt] in a co-educational school, but those did not exist when they began their schooling” (Topelius 1889, 11). Even thirty years later, co-educational schools remained a crucial topic (Junila 2013). Moreover, as was typical of members of the women’s movement at the time, she thinks that women should marry only for true love. Mrs Palmfelt’s opinions broaden the ideas concerning girls’ and women’s education, equality, and agency in society. Some of the argument follows the views of the women’s movement in Finland at the time. I agree with Lappalainen (2000) that “the comment of Bella’s mother concerning marriage and the intrinsic value of women is like a straight quote from the public debate about women” (153). For example, Mrs Palmfelt tells her daughter that the fate of a spinster can be a satisfying one since a woman can also find happiness by working outside the home.

To get married without true, warm love is derogatory for both men and women, and it is a sin that no noble reason can atone for. But, unfortunately, the opinion that any marriage is better for a woman than the fate of “a spinster” is very common and deeply rooted in many people. That a woman has her own value, and that she can find happiness and contentment at work outside the home, is too often forgotten. (69)

However, this is generally connected to the idea of social motherhood, a concept favored by the women's movement that aimed to transcend the professional boundaries of unmarried middle-class women (see Jallinoja 1983; Markkola 2000; Sulkunen 1987). Instead of understating the value of family and motherhood, Topelius' novel aims to highlight girls' value, equality, and their possibilities of making a difference in the public spheres in society.

Because of the family-centred life of nineteenth-century Finland, only certain professions were suitable for middle-class women (Häggman 1994). Teacher, nurse, and deaconess were such occupations, (religious) charity work being something in which even married women could participate (Markkola 2000). These professions seemed "close enough to family life and the call of womanhood ... so the transition from private life into a more public one therefore did not include the crossing of any critical boundaries" (Häggman 1994, 198). Nevertheless, this concerned middle-class women since working-class women, rural and peasant girls, and women living in the countryside had to work anyway (see Jallinoja 1983; Sulkunen 2009; Tuomaala 2011). This is mentioned in Topelius' novel when Hanna says,

How many of us think something else than how to be "cute" and the possibility of getting married in the future? I do not speak about the people's children who will work, even be slaves, from when they have got up from their cradles. (1889, 95)

These norms, or professional boundaries, are also advocated in early Finnish girls' literature, even though they are questioned and even transcended to an extent. In these transcending features also lies the possibility of subversion.

Following the tenets of the Lutheran religion was one of the most important aspects of bringing up girls and a self-evident part of their lives (see Markkola 2000; Ollila 2000), which can also be seen in the novels of early Finnish girls' literature (Lappalainen 2015). In Haahti's *Helvi* (1900a, b) Lutheranism is a defining feature in the protagonist's development. As in Topelius' novel, the story nevertheless includes characteristics familiar from international girls' literature such as depicting a girl's growing up, incidents and work at school, and the importance of friendship.

Helvi also has some cross-reading appeal, which means that it can be of interest to different kinds of readers. Here I agree with Shirley Foster

and Judy Simons (1995) who have argued that “[i]n the nineteenth century there was a far less rigid division between adult and youthful readerships than is accepted today” (8). Moreover, *Helvi* has also been scrutinized as a Finnish women’s development novel (see Aalto 2000). *Helvi*’s development follows a rocky path and she struggles between her Lutheran faith and worldly temptations. As mentioned earlier, because of this she constantly finds herself in situations where she has to choose; should she give her three fivepenny coins to the missionary box or take the tram in an awful winter storm (Haahti 1900a)? Should she wear her simple but clean apron at school, even though everybody will laugh at her, or hear her mother say that she will become vain and probably forget Jesus if she does not use the apron?

“But I will never again wear the apron,” said *Helvi* finally, with a determined voice. Then, mother’s gentle look became serious. “Yes you will, my girl, tomorrow morning, even. You cannot learn to be timid and vain.”

...

She felt that the vanity of the capital had already on this first school day captured *Helvi*. “My dear child,” she said sorrowfully, “soon you will probably be ashamed of your poor mother, too. ... Pray that God will give you a brave mind and humble heart!” (9–10)

However, *Helvi* represents a certain persistence. Besides her endeavours to become a better Christian, she dreams of becoming a missionary. Although religion was one of the rare fields in which women could work outside the home (see Häggman 1994; Markkola 2000), the novel considers the mission vocation as a male career, and advocates nursing as a role for girls and women. From the age of 14 up until her 20s, *Helvi* hears from her relatives, friends, and acquaintances that her dream is dangerous, if not impossible, because of her sex; for a girl, “[i]t is completely impossible and irrational” (Haahti 1900b, 86). *Helvi* herself uses the metaphor of a bird that cannot fly to describe the situation of women who are unable to follow their vocation: “I would not want to be a bird with cut wings!” (Haahti 1900b, 98). Otherwise, girls’ education is described positively throughout the novel; only *Helvi*’s uneducated uncle, a farmer, states that schooling girls is generally unnecessary.

Helvi’s representation and development have controversial characteristics. For example, the religious vocation and the nationalist themes are in

dialogue: for Helvi, religion means more than just serving Finland. This, however, also gives her feelings of guilt.

Irja had cried out, “Our whole life to Finland alone!” But at a moment that Helvi could not forget, another had spoken with a solemn, serious voice: “Take, Lord, her life, take her entirely!” The missionary director had given her to God. ... Could one not serve both God and one’s own fatherland at the same time? ... Then Ensio sat beside her and said with a friendly voice, “None of us knows where we are going. You will not betray Finland, even if you have to go to a foreign country sometimes.” (98–99)

Helvi is ambivalent. The controversy continues in her thoughts since love and marriage are in stark contrast with her professional calling. Like Roschier’s *Auringon noustessa* (1898), *Helvi* also includes a love plot that leads the protagonist to choose education and career after she loses all hope of her love for her chosen one being reciprocated. However, it is precisely the disappointment in love that sets Helvi free. At the end of the novel she travels abroad as an independent young woman. As Minna Aalto (2000) states, “*Helvi* represents the type of novel in which female development ends in the protagonist’s finding her religious vocation and working to benefit others” (68). Because Helvi decides to live for God, the ending “resembles the convention of women retreating into religion after being disappointed in love” (70), a theme familiar from some European and American nineteenth-century women’s novels, even though, in Helvi’s case, she had always had a strong religious calling. Nevertheless, in turning down the romantic closure, *Helvi* widens the narrative options for girls at the time. According to Rachel Blau DuPlessis (1985), female development in nineteenth-century novels is, in the end, “set aside or repressed, whether by marriage or death” (3–4). In addition to the traditional occupations of teaching and nursing, *Helvi* introduces the readers to a new career path.

Apart from wild girls, artistic characters have often been depicted in the best-loved girls’ literature (see Foster and Simons, 1995; Sicherman 2010). Immi Hellén’s *Eeva Aarnio* (1901) describes an artistic protagonist’s development and deep personal calling. Eeva is a singer of modest talent who grows up in a wealthy merchant home in the Finnish countryside. Alongside Eeva’s progress, the notions of friendship, love, nationality, and a search for the ideal life are important. Like *Helvi*, *Eeva Aarnio* includes the ambivalence essential to the protagonist’s development.

The ambivalence lies in Eeva's calling: she searches for a meaning and an ideal and believes that they can be found in art. However, her humble nature is the opposite of what is required for fame, the goal imposed upon her by her mother. Although Eeva is described as a young opera talent, she prefers simple songs and is repulsed by the vanity, hypocrisy, and egocentricity of her middle-class audience.

Now, when she taught about all that, the feeling of disgust made her whole delicate body shudder. She felt as she had deceived herself and all others during all that time. ... Her name had travelled on the wings of fame from town to town, and the directors of the opera houses had become rivals over her. (195–196)

...

It was evidently visible that the applause was repulsive to her, and when she came to thank the audience, her smile was sad and listless. (207)

...

She saw with her mind's eyes a salon in Berlin, filled with a self-indulgent, sophisticated audience. Limp, tired features she could invigorate, for a while. (215)

According to Kimberley Reynolds (1990), “[f]iction for middle-class girls ... was seized upon as having a potentially beneficial function, that of keeping girls pure by deflecting them from inappropriate reading matter and the knowledge of the world it might imprint” (xviii). The innocence of girls is also considered valuable in guidebooks for girls. Since their readership is represented as sleeping little women whose inner feelings should not be awakened too soon, works targeted at girls should therefore not stimulate these feelings (Männistö 2003). The representation of Eeva concurs with these ideas. Innocence and purity are underlined in Eeva's relationship to Finland, art, and love. She represents modesty, she loves her country, is seemingly unaware of the earthly passions, and dedicates herself to music although, at the end of the novel, when she hears, from a window, a priest talking she understands that the ultimate ideal beyond art is God.

At once, she fell into a curious charm. She heard every word clearly.

“I will give my peace, I do not give as the world gives.”

Peace, that she did not have, nothing else did she need.

“Come to me all ... I want to refresh you” ...

It was certain that from that night on, she belonged to them. (Hellén 1901, 219)

Even after conquering the Berlin Opera, Eeva remains the “forest violet” (143) with “childishness in her eyes” (180). Also, from the viewpoint of producing national girlhood, Eeva fulfills her role as a modest, talented girl who is interested in serving a greater good (see also Kelen and Sundmark 2013). In Hellén’s representation of her the controversial values, norms, and goals of Finland of the time are intertwined. Although Eeva gives up her career at the end of the tale in order to find inner peace, the novel describes new options for girls. Eeva’s talent, musical education, and short-lived opera career transcend the home-centred boundaries of work and question the limitations set on career options for girls. This is made possible by Eeva’s innocence, modesty, and love for Finland; a girl can be talented as long as she is pure at heart, and she can step on to the stage if it benefits her homeland.

A central emancipatory idea behind the early novels for girls is said to be the way they present the readers with a variety of life options other than marriage (Westin 1994; Foster and Simons 1995). In Finland, this idea can be seen partly to intersect with one of the main goals of the women’s movement that was to “achieve independence for all women” (Jallinoja 1983, 60). In light of early Finnish girls’ literature, the different representations, the girl characters’ successful negotiation processes, and the increasing takeover of public spheres and locations, it is tempting to declare that early Finnish girls’ literature has been a vehicle of emancipation. However, this would be an overstatement since some ambivalence remains in all the four novels I have discussed. For example, love and marriage is not an option for a girl planning to work outside the home. This reflects the actual possibilities for girls and young women at the time. For most of the Finnish middle-class females, education and a professional life meant that they would not marry since it was unusual for such a woman to work outside the home (Jallinoja 1983). The representations of some of the girls in early Finnish girls’ literature can be seen to mirror the public negotiation process regarding gender roles that took place in late nineteenth-century Finland.

In the context of producing the Finnish nation, early girls' literature negotiates the limits of equality and emancipation that are met and revealed in the girl characters and their agency. In the novels, girls can educate themselves and even work outside of the home as long as they are, first, decent and modest, second, wish to work for Finland, the poor and/or God, and, third, give up romantic love and marriage. Transcending boundaries and crossing normative expectations is possible but it requires negotiation and compromise. Furthermore, when it comes to the protagonists depicted in girls' literature, based on the early Finnish girls' fiction studied here, I want to suggest that not only the wild and witty girl characters whom we encounter in later girls' literature transcend boundaries. Even though the more obedient or docile girls, such as Eeva and Aini, may appear to be silenced, their agency and representations are revealed as transgressing the norms, at least to the extent that the well-known wild girl characters do.

The emergence, simply, of early girls' novels can be taken as an emancipative (writing) action. Kukku Melkas (2007) states that the novels of the Finnish female author Aino Kallas represent a strategy of re-scripting. Re-scripting is a more radical action than re-writing (for example, of familiar stories or historical narratives) since "re-scripting makes it possible to reveal or even challenge prevailing cultural modes of thinking" (Melkas 2007, 60). Based on the strategies of re-writing and re-scripting, I suggest that early Finnish girls' literature could be called a forth-writing or anticipatory writing/scripting strategy. The novels lift girls on to the stage as main characters, deal with girls' lives and are produced specifically for girl readers.⁸ The writing and producing processes of early girls' novels represent precisely forth-writing. Even though girls' literature does not emerge out of nothing and has literary roots, when the purpose is to make girls visible subjects and actors by systematically using certain types of narratives and themes, the process is not that of re- but forth-writing and/or scripting. Writing itself is then an action; writing these novels is a way to introduce girls to Finnish literature as important and worthy, and as subjects. When it is done for the first time, the pioneering authors discussing girls (of that specific country), write the girls to be seen, to make them visible. Furthermore, by describing the different options available for girls, early girls' literature reveals and challenges the prevailing cultural thinking. These novels can also re-write traditions of writing about girls and their lives and possibilities. Finnish girls' novels produce representations that simultaneously maintain and transcend the normative ideals (Voipio 2015).

IN BETWEEN: NEGOTIATING EMANCIPATION AND NATIONALISM

In this chapter I have discussed, first, what kind of images of girls are produced, created and maintained, and why this was the case; and, second, the ways in which the novels deliberate on the ongoing development of the society in which they are set. My focus has been on investigating how the issues of nationality and emancipation are reflected in the novels.

In the national framework, early Finnish girls' literature participates in the national identity project by creating representations of virtuous girls who wish to live for Finland and its people. The novels also emphasize Finnishness by highlighting the importance of Finnish landscape, arts, and goods, which can be seen as a way of producing what we might call a specific spirit of Finnishness. Nevertheless, while participating in the national project, the novels do not impose strict gender roles as did the societal and cultural paradigm (see Markkola 2000; Männistö 2003; Sulkunen 1987). In the national context, early Finnish girls' literature challenged girls' normative roles, including the gendered national ideals set up for them, to some extent. The novels I have discussed engage with the emancipative goals of the women's movement and stretch the boundaries of girls' agency in several ways. For example, while performing tasks like educating and helping others, the protagonists can cross gendered boundaries and defy normative expectations through their agency. Also, the novels describe various career options for girls and transcend boundaries by allowing female characters to work outside the home. Then, by highlighting the value, educational rights, and equality of girls, the novels widen their chances of reaching out to public spheres in society. Furthermore, the novels transcend the traditional boundaries of the depiction of girls and young women that can also be found in international girls' literature.

In the light of the novels explored in this chapter, early Finnish girls' literature seems to discuss and represent the important topics and norms of their time very directly; the novels are tightly bound to their cultural, historical, and social contexts. They embody the spirit of the time since they participate in the discussions regarding the production of independent Finland and the questions concerning equality and the position of girls and women in society. Early Finnish girls' literature thus engaged in the public negotiation of gender roles that was going on in late nineteenth-century Finland. This literature can be seen to be part

of both national and emancipative projects, and the novels pivot on a fulcrum between the different options described as possible and impossible for girls and women. In the context of producing the Finnish nation, early Finnish girls' literature negotiates the limits of emancipation. The dilemma between the nationalist and emancipatory goals is solved through negotiation: girls' educational plans, occupational paths, and the crossing of normative boundaries are intertwined with nationalist and/or religious aims. Challenging the norms is possible, but only to a certain point; compromises are necessary, especially when love and marriage is the option that is opposed to that of having a career.

To conclude, I draw attention, again, to my suggestion, based on strategies of re-writing and re-scripting (see Melkas 2007), that the writing (action) of early Finnish girls' literature could be called a forth-writing/scripting strategy. In early Finnish girls' literature, girls and their lives have a central role, strategically written forth. Literature offered new alternatives; adolescent girls were now the ones whose thoughts, lives, and stories mattered, who developed and found a variety of options in life.

And in her heart, a new thirst for life arose, ... there she had the whole world in front of her, as rich and brightly glimmering in the light of the rising sun. (Roschier 1898, 98)

NOTES

1. This extract is from Toini Topelius' novel, *I utvecklingstid*, originally written in Finland-Swedish. The translation is my own.
2. Before the Russian imperial period (1809–1917), Finland was part of the Kingdom of Sweden. Swedish was the official, governmental, and educational language for centuries and it remains an official language, together with Finnish, even today.
3. As Irma Sulkunen (2009) argues, unlike in many other Western countries, “the corporative parliamentary system in Finland broke down exceptionally slowly. The Diet of Four estates (Nobles, Burghers, Clergy, and Peasants) that had been inherited from the time Finland belonged to the Swedish realm still remained in force with a few extensions at the beginning of the twentieth century” (86). However, all citizens, including women, obtained both the vote and the right to stand as candidates in parliamentary elections in 1906. Independence from Russia was declared in 1917.

4. These novels were originally written in Finnish and Finland-Swedish. Throughout this chapter all translations of the texts are my own. The translations do not completely catch the original meaning but this is always the case. However, here it has been even more difficult since the Finnish and Finland-Swedish novels discussed here were written over 100 years ago.
5. The song *Vårt land* was originally a poem (1848) by Johan Ludvig Runeberg, translated into Finnish (*Maamme*) twice, first by Julius Krohn (1867) and then by Paavo Cajander (1889). Later it was chosen as the national anthem of Finland.
6. This translation does not completely catch the original meaning of *Oikein iloitsen siitä, että nyt todellakin ruvetaan suomea puhumaan*. Also, *kansa* could be translated as people, folk, or nation. Here, Arvi is a young man whose mother tongue is Finland-Swedish. However, he, as do the girls in the novels, wants to act for Finland and its “poor people” so this is also about producing class differences, even though the idea behind it is probably noble.
7. The name of the novel can be seen to represent the rising of youth, and of Finland as a nation.
8. According to Päivi Lappalainen (2000), pessimistic development stories about young girls growing up were popular in Scandinavian and Finnish literature in the 1880s. Later, they were even called breakdown novels. This pessimism (and supposedly different target audience) separates them from girls’ literature that has some brightness, even when it deals with dark and difficult themes.

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