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Ethnofuturism and Place-Making

Bengt Pohjanen's Construction of Meänmaa

ABSTRACT The article examines the Tornedalian author Bengt Pohjanen's construction of Meänmaa [literally 'Our land'] through an analysis of a selection of texts in which the concept "Meänmaa" is used. Meänmaa refers to the border area between Sweden and Finland in the Torne Valley. The making of Meänmaa is related to ethnofuturism, an aesthetic program launched in Estonia in the 1980s. Its aim is to strengthen threatened Uralic cultures and languages. The conclusion presented is that ethnofuturism provides a framework for present-day identity-formation and the making of a specific place called *Meänmaa* against the backdrop of a history of assimilationist policies and marginalisation.

KEYWORDS ethnofuturism, place-making, Meänmaa, Tornedalian identity formation, ethnicity, minority status, Meänkieli

Ethnofuturism and Place-Making. Bengt Pohjanen's Iterative Creation of Meänmaa

The aim of the article is to analyse the Tornedalian writer Bengt Pohjanen's (b. 1944) construction of Meänmaa in various literary genres. Place-making is defined as "the set of social, political and material processes by which people iteratively create and recreate the experienced geographies in which they live" (see Pierce, Martin & Murphy 2011: 54). Texts by Pohjanen are analysed with perspectives from the ethnofu-

turist aesthetic movement founded in Estonia in 1989. Pohjanen has published in various genres for decades. He made his debut as a novelist in the 1970s with *Och fiskarna svarar Guds frid* ['And the fish answer God's peace'], whose protagonist feels shame and inadequacy because of his Tornedalian Finnish background (Pohjanen 1979; see also Heith 2018). By and by, other ways of perceiving Tornedalian Finnishness are introduced in Pohjanen's authorship. This is reflected in the volume *Tungan mitt i munnen/Kieli keskelä suuta* ['The tongue in the middle of the mouth'], which contains chronicles previously published in the local newspaper *Haparandabladet*. In the section "Meänkieli och Pänktti/Meänkieli ja Pänktti" ['Meänkieli and Pänktti'], Pohjanen discusses the local language Meänkieli and the question of whether it should be seen as a version of Finnish or a language of its own (Pohjanen 2011: 133-166).¹ When describing his development as an author, he mentions starting writing and publishing in Meänkieli, and also starting a publishing house for literature in Meänkieli. The time described is one of linguistic revitalization connected with the iterative creation of Meänmaa.

Ethnofuturism

The ethnofuturist program provides a backdrop for the discussion of a section of Pohjanen's autobiography *Smugglarkungens son* ['The son of the smuggler king'] (2007), the grammar book *Meänkielen kramatiikki* by Pohjanen and Kenttä (1996), and sections of the Tornedalian Finnish literary history, *Den tornedalsfinska litteraturen. Från Kexi till Liksom* ['Tornedalian Finnish literature. From Kexi to Liksom'], co-authored by Pohjanen and Johansson (2007). Furthermore, the iteratively created experienced geography Meänmaa is discussed from the vantage point of a volume entitled *Meänmaa* by Pohjanen and photographer Jaakko Heikkilä (1992), as well as the activities of the association Meänmaa.

Ethnofuturism aims at strengthening and supporting threatened Finno-Ugric and Uralic languages through the development of an aesthetic program which challenges assimilationist policies and processes of modernization which have marginalized a number of peoples, languages and cultures (Sallamaa 2006). Following Sallamaa, the most important task of ethnofuturism is to help small ethnic literatures to survive and to thrive (Sallamaa 2006: 238). The concept of ethnofuturism relates to:

ethnos—to minority peoples and ethnic groups with their own traditions and cultures, whose ethnic and national existence is at stake or threatened by state assimilation policies or multinational enterprises. *Ethnos* experiences pressure from larger peoples, for example Russians or, in the case of the Sami, the Nordic majority peoples in Finland, Sweden and Norway. (Sallamaa 2006: 238)

“Futurism” has a specific meaning in this context. It has nothing to do with the modernist aesthetic program launched by Marinetti in Italy and Mayakovsky in Russia. Sallamaa describes it as follows: “it refers to the development of an ethnic culture based on one’s own language and heredity” (Sallamaa 2006: 238). The aim of ethnofuturism is described as twofold, as the saving of cultural traditions, but also as the construction of a new urban ethnic culture for people who have previously been nomads and peasants (Sallamaa 2006: 238). According to Sallamaa, ethnofuturism is a “survival program,” which “guarantees a future to small languages and cultures” (Sallamaa 2006: 238).

In the ongoing debate concerning the scope of ethnofuturism, it is discussed whether it should be seen as a global movement or as being restricted to the Finno-Ugric and Uralic world (Sallamaa 2006: 238–239). Sallamaa suggests that although the movement first spread among Finno-Ugric and Uralic peoples with language systems that differ from the Indo-European one, the program is well suited for indigenous and autochthonous peoples and ethnic groups all over the world (Sallamaa 2006: 238–239). While this discussion is a result of the development of ethnofuturism over the decades, the movement started as a rescue action for the preservation of threatened, small Finno-Ugric and Uralic languages and cultures. With a reference to Masing and Whorf, Sallamaa highlights the criticism of “Standard Average European (SAE) thinking” as a source of inspiration for the emergence of ethnofuturism:

SAE thinking is dominated by the illusion that there is a universally valid way of being human. According to this illusion, everything that has been invented in some ideological centres will one day become the international norm. (Sallamaa 2006: 245)²

Since the aesthetic movement called “ethnofuturism” was founded in Estonia in 1989, its activities have to some extent been co-ordinated with those of the Association of Finno-Ugric Literatures, AFUL (see Sallamaa 2006: 237 ff.). This connection provides a backdrop of Bengt Pohjanen’s deployment of ethnofuturist themes in his writings aiming at constructing Meänmaa and local culture and identity connected with the Finno-Ugric language Meänkieli, as well as with a status as a threatened minority at the fringes of the Swedish nation-state. When embedded in an ethnofuturist aesthetic, the small Meänkieli language does not appear as an isolated, marginal phenomenon, but as a member of a family with numerous relatives. The theme of shared origins and a family relationship is suggested by a graphic image showing a Uralic language tree in Bengt Pohjanen and Matti Kenttä’s Meänkieli grammar book, *Meänkielen kramatiikki* from 1996 (Pohjanen &

Kentää 1996: 16; see also Heith 2012a: 99). The heading reads “Sukulaiset” [‘Relatives’], and the original language is denominated “Alkuperäinen yraalin kieli” [‘Original Uralic language’] which, according to the language tree, has developed into a number of languages related to one another, one of them being Meänkieli (Heith 2012a: 99).

1.3.2.1. Sukulaiset

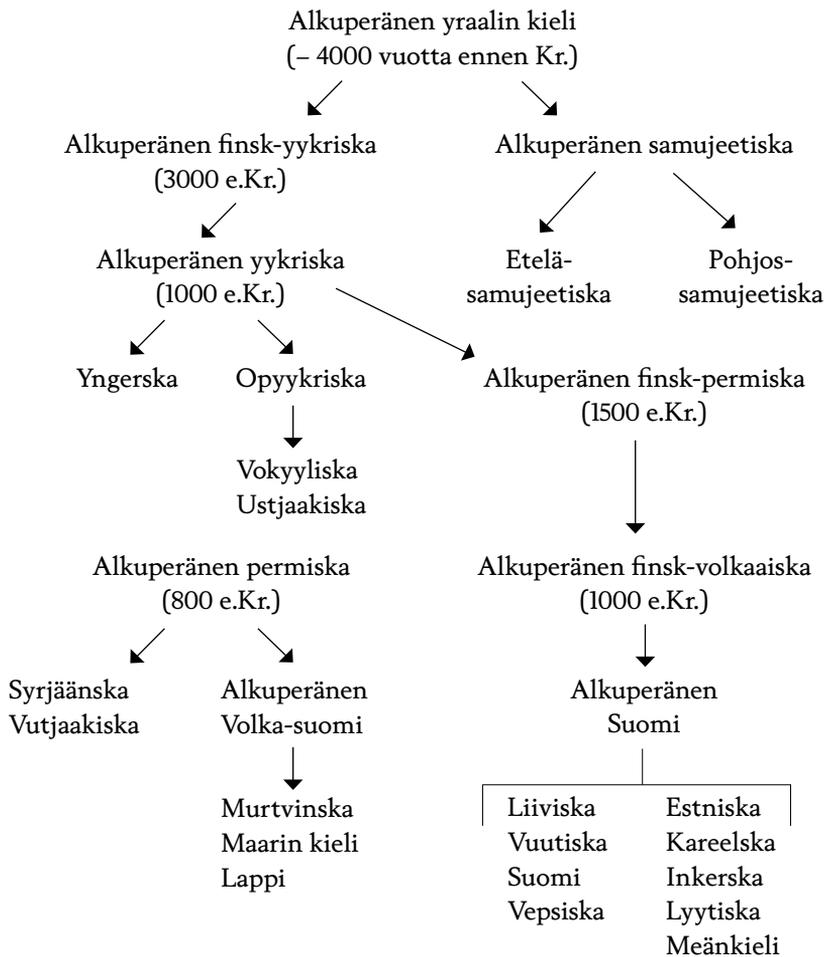


Fig. 1. Illustration from Bengt Pohjanen's and Matti Kenttä's *Meänkielen kramatiikki* (1996).

The Meänkieli language is connected with a specific local culture and mentality. This kind of connection is a privileged theme of ethnofuturism. One characteristic of ethnofuturism is the questioning of the dominance of certain Western European cultures and languages in the field of philosophy. In a discussion of *local thinking* and whether there can be a Finnish philosophy, Tere Vadén challenges the dominance of Western Germanic languages, in particular German, for shaping a philosophy of being and existence which he claims does not take into account that there may be alternative ways of thinking and experiencing related to Finno-Ugric languages. Vadén goes as far as to claim that: “At times the non-Indo-European Finnish and the Fenno-Ugric view of the human being are in tangible conflict with Europeanness” (Vadén 2006: 233). Far from suggesting that the kind of local thinking and experiencing that he is exploring is static or homogeneous, Vadén proposes that openness and impurity are vital elements for the construction of local thinking and local truth based on ethnicity and language. His point is that language is connected with living and experiencing, and if a language is lost, certain modes of experiencing and living vanish. This does not mean that people who belong to a group share exactly the same experiences: “As persons, as subjects and individuals we do not share experiences” (Vadén 2006: 233). While connections between place-making, language and ethnicity are central to the argument, Vadén emphasises that locality must not be thought of as a fixed, homogeneous and closed space: “Open locality needs the impurity, heterogeneity and non-foundationality of experiences, which, in its turn means that there is no absolute hierarchy amongst experiences” (Vadén 2006: 230).

In the autobiographical volume *Smugglarkungens son*, Bengt Pohjanen mentions the concept of “ethnofuturism” when depicting the circumstances surrounding his birth in the Tornedalian village of Kassa, on the Swedish side of the border (Pohjanen 2007: 16). The border, established at the conclusion of the Swedish-Russian war 1808–1809, is a central motif in the writings of Pohjanen. As a consequence of the division of the ancient Tornedalian cultural landscape, the Tornedalians on the Swedish side of the border became a minority, divided from their Finnish kin. The minority status of the Swedish Tornedalians and its consequences for identity formation are major themes of Pohjanen’s authorship in various genres. Already the early poem “Jag är född utan språk” [‘I was born without language’], first published in 1973, foregrounds the themes of identity loss and ambivalent feelings towards having a Tornedalian cultural background. The language and identity loss depicted are both connected with Swedish assimilationist policies and the modernisation of Sweden characterised by cultural homogenisation (see Arvaston 1999).

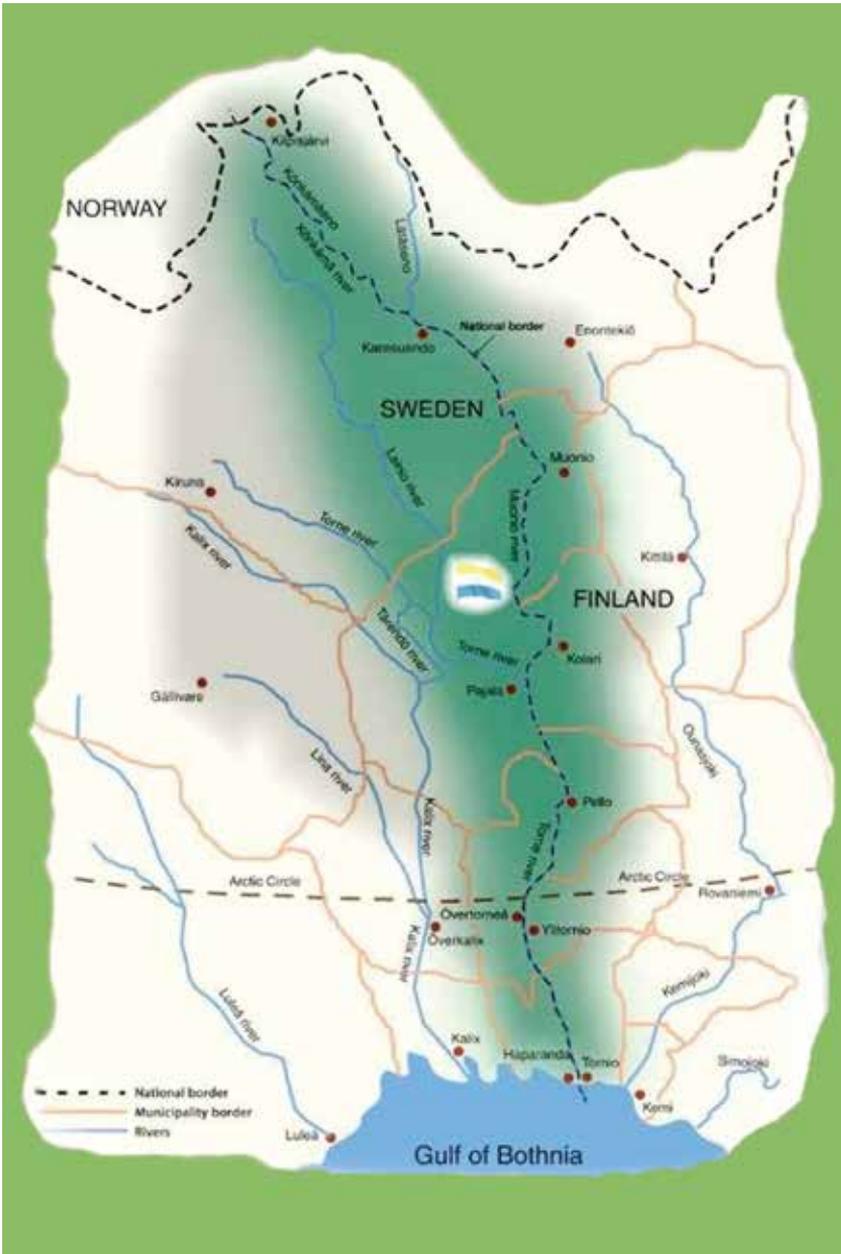
The Meänmaa Concept

The concept of “Meänmaa” refers to the ancient homeland of the Tornedalians on both sides of the border river marking the Swedish-Finnish border since 1809. The focus of this article is on the role ethnicity and ethnification play for identity formation. This implies that the framework for interpretation differs from that of analyses of Pohjanen’s writings as elements in the creation of regional identity (see Prokkola & Ridanpää 2011; see also Ridanpää 2017). “Meänmaa” is a concept which has been iteratively used in the writings of Bengt Pohjanen during the last few decades. In 1999 Meänkieli was acknowledged as a minority language by the Swedish Parliament. Furthermore, in 2000 Sweden ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. However, the road to official recognition has not been without obstacles. Because of a history of assimilationist policies, Meänkieli is threatened by extinction today. According to Pietikäinen *et al.* “all minority and indigenous languages in the North Calotte are presently endangered” (Pietikäinen *et al.* 2010: 2).

In addition to being the name of a geographical place, *Meänmaa* is also the name of an association founded in 2007.³ In 2008, the name of the association was changed to *Meänmaa* and it was also registered the same year. To a large extent this association is responsible for launching the concept of “Meänmaa,” denominating a place constituted by five Finnish and five Swedish municipalities on both sides of the Torne River. However, the name *Meänmaa* had been in use previously. In 1992, a book by Bengt Pohjanen and the Finnish photographer Jaakko Heikkilä entitled *Meänmaa* was published (Pohjanen & Heikkilä 1992). Fifteen years later, on 15 July, 2007, the association Meänmaa presented a Tornedalian flag. An image of this flag is reproduced on the covers of the two volumes of a Tornedalian Finnish literary history which have so far been published (Pohjanen & Johansson 2007; Pohjanen & Johansson 2009). Both volumes have a similar image on the back cover showing the flag with a yellow, white and blue horizontal band in the centre of a map of Meänmaa. Since 2009, the association has published a magazine, initially called *Meänmaan aviisi*. In 2010 its name was changed to *Meänmaa*.

Iteratively Creating Place. Using Ancient Lore and Criticising Homogenising Nation-Building

When depicting his birth in *Smugglarkungens son*, Bengt Pohjanen embeds the narrative in a mythological framework with ancient, local traditions passed on from one generation to another through thousands of years:



Map 1. Map of Meänmaa with a flag at the centre. Illustration on the back-cover of Bengt Pohjanen's and Kirsti Johansson's Tornedalian-Finnish literature history books (2007; 2009).

With words inherited from midwives who had helped children into the world for thousands of years, Hilma Krutrök [i.e. the midwife] with her Ugric gifts, was able to transfer the pains from the woman giving birth to the dancing and jumping sun-warmed wooden logs of the cottage. She might well do as an Ur-Icon or prototype of ethnofuturism. (Pohjanen 2007: 16, my translation)⁴

The use of mythological subject matter pointing to the existence of an ancient local Finno-Ugric culture is characteristic of ethnofuturism. In the same section, the concept of "l'Ugritude" is mentioned in a comment about the appreciation of oral performances in local culture when the newborn baby holds out his tongue to the midwife. This is said to be a sign of being born with the gift of speech. Both the terms *Ugric* and *l'Ugritude* connote ethnicity. Furthermore they connote ethnicity connected with non-Indo-European languages. One vital element in the Tornedal identity under construction in the writings of Bengt Pohjanen is the fact that the local language Meänkieli is not an Indo-European language but a language with Finno-Ugric roots.

While the references to ethnofuturism and *l'Ugritude* in Pohjanen's narrative of his birth evoke the themes of resistance and performative celebration of ethnic minority status, the narrative also introduces the motives of racism, marginalisation, language loss and exclusion (also see Heith 2016). The midwife is said to knead the head of the baby in order to make its shape rounder. The narrator describes the effect as that of making him look "like a real human and not like an Aryan egg-skull" (Pohjanen 2007:17, my translation).⁵ The place of birth is denominated as *gränsens tredje rum* ['the third space of the border'] and a margin, and the condition following from this as solitude, language loss, and being an outsider. The passage narrating the birth is concluded with comments on a Tornedal proverb: "My own birth is, after that of Christ, the most important thing that has happened to me, says a Tornedal proverb" (Pohjanen 2007: 17, my translation).⁶ The section ends with the conclusion: "My fate was to be born to Meänkieli, and such a fate is no event of importance, hardly an event at all" (Pohjanen 2007: 17, my translation).⁷

Bengt Pohjanen's depiction of his birth includes an explicit reference to ethnofuturism as well as implicit references in the shape of the motives of ancient, local myths and traditions drawn from a Ugric supply of lore and beliefs. While ethnofuturism provides means for dealing with the past in a manner positive for identity formation in the present, the references to racism, outsider status and language and identity loss evoke the history against which the present-day Tornedal cultural mobilisation evolves. The theme of the poem "I was born without a language" mentioned above

is language loss, identity loss and socialisation into a culture of poverty conveyed by the compulsory school which contributed to creating feelings of shame and inadequacy among Tornedalian children raised in families speaking Tornedalian Finnish. Compulsory education is connected with nationalisation, one of the aims of the school being to teach children about who “we” are, and what characteristics “our” country and history have. This theme is addressed by Pohjanen in *Den tornedalsfinska litteraturen* in a section discussing literature in Meänmaa. Using Selma Lagerlöf’s *Nils Holgersson’s underbara resa genom Sverige/The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* as an example, Pohjanen concludes that Lagerlöf contributed to the marginalisation of the Tornedalians by not acknowledging their existence and by ignoring their presence in a Swedish national context (Pohjanen 2007: 11).

Lagerlöf’s book, which was published in two volumes 1906–1907, was commissioned as a textbook in geography for the compulsory school (Heith 2009). Its aim was to teach children about Swedish geography, history and culture through the narrative of the boy Nils, who is shrunk to the size of a pixie. This allows him to fly on the back of a goose from southern to northernmost Sweden. Pohjanen concludes:

Nils Holgersson never saw us. The author missed a large part of the country: Meänmaa, whose first language during the first three thousand years was Meänkieli. Selma Lagerlöf simply gave us a Swedish identity. The Swedish language and the Swedes represented us. We existed through another people, another language and another culture in our own land, whereto the Swedes migrated long after us. (Pohjanen 2007: 11, my translation)⁸

Pohjanen’s narrative implicates that there is a connection between the ethno-futurism of the present on the one hand, and minority status and a history of marginalisation on the other.

Depicting Meänmaa. The River, Stillness, and God versus the Sweaty Embrace of Earth

Pohjanen’s iterative contribution to place-making is manifest also in the book *Meänmaa* [‘Our land,’ Swedish title *Vårat land*] mentioned above. The volume consists of photographs of Tornedalian people and the local landscape by Jaakko Heikkilä accompanied by brief texts by Bengt Pohjanen. It is divided into sections marked by headings referring to the motives of the photographs and texts. The images include shots of lonely, elderly men, aged women sitting together, wintery and summery rural landscapes, traditional farming, Laestadian prayer meetings, drunken youngsters, sexually charged encounters in the open air, and the river. One section’s headline reads “När

du kommer ska jag visa dig älven, stillheten och Gud" ['When you arrive I will show you the river, the stillness and God']. The emphasis on the river, stillness and God is one way of making place, which distinguishes Meänmaa from modern, secular, urban society in Finland and Sweden. Although references to Laestadianism dominate, the volume also includes comments on Communism, another ideological movement which has shaped the worldview and ideological landscape of Meänmaa.

While the references to the river, stillness and God conjure up a place marked out by its landscape, nature and spirituality with the river as the primary natural monument, and God as the spiritual one, the contrast between these elements and other images in the volume of drunk people engaged in sexual activities present a dichotomous image of Meänmaa as both a land of spirituality, unworldliness, and stillness, on the one hand, and carnal passions, and excessive outbursts on the other. This dichotomous representation is a *leifmotif* in Bengt Pohjanen's construction of Meänmaa, iterated in the Tornedalian Finnish literary history co-authored by himself and Kirsti Johansson, *Den tornedalsfinska litteraturen. Från Kexi till Liksom* (Pohjanen & Johansson 2007; see also Heith 2008; Heith 2012b; Heith 2012c). One of the authors presented in a section entitled "L'ugritude – vår andes stämma i världen" ['L'ugritude—the voice of our spirit in the world'] is Timo K. Mukka (1944–1973). In the chapter "Participation mystique – möte med Timo K. Mukka" ['Participation mystique—encounter with Timo K. Mukka'], Pohjanen gives a subjective account of the great impact Mukka's novel *Maa on syntinen laulu* ['The earth is a sinful song'] had upon him when he came across the book as a boy (Mukka [1964] 1975).

In particular, Pohjanen dwells upon the existential dimension of Mukka's novel, which describes the human condition as encompassing both spiritual yearning and earthbound desires. However, it is not a universal human condition that Mukka describes, although it may sound like it from the characterisation so far. In Pohjanen's text, Mukka is attributed the role of somebody who represents a local condition embedded in a local truth. As the title of Mukka's novel indicates, this local condition is shaped by Laestadianism's focus upon unworldliness and its subsequent emphasis on the sinfulness of a worldly life with carnal excesses related to the human body. Neither Mukka nor Pohjanen denies the earthly dimension of human existence. Rather, they foreground it as an intrinsic part of being human. Mukka's novel juxtaposes poetical texts in the form of stanzas and prose sections, thus depicting a tension also in the use of language and literary mode. The first lyrical section of Mukka's novel, "Min älskades land" ['The land of my beloved'], is reproduced in Bengt Pohjanen's Swedish translation in the article on Mukka in *Den tornedalsfinska litteraturen* (Pohjanen & Jo-

hansson 2007: 70–71). The song includes both the motives of men standing on their knees praying to God in heaven, and the earth as a sweaty embrace. The song concludes with the confession of the lyrical I: “I confess—I am human” (Pohjanen & Johansson 2007: 71). This tension between body and spirit, and earth and heaven, is embedded in a poetical, mythical landscape resounding of ancient folk songs, with the “scent of fragile flowers” (*veka blommors doft*), “melancholy crying” (*vemodig gråt*), and “the shy bird of love” (*kärlekens skygga fågel*).

From the vantage point of ethnofuturism, Mukka’s novel *Maa on syntinen laulu* is exemplary as a depiction of a minoritarian condition in a spiritual and ideological landscape with tensions between a local religious movement which has shaped people’s worldview and a harsh life in which momentary breaks may be experienced through excessive drinking, ecstatic prayer meetings and sexual encounters. In Pohjanen’s narrative, Mukka depicts a condition connected with a specific space which he experiences from the inside. This specific mode of experiencing is connected with ethnicity, language and locality.

Place-Making and Bordering

Ethnofuturism is based on the notion that there are ethnic groups that may be distinguished from one another. However, ethnic groups are neither self-evident nor static phenomena. When analysing this theme, the Norwegian social anthropologist Fredrik Barth emphasises the role of bordering for the shaping of ethnic groups (Barth 1998; see also Heith 2012c; Heith 2012d; Heith 2013). Exemplifying with the situation of the Sami in Norway, Barth argues that a minority group may accept its minority status while at the same time challenging the stigma and “minority disabilities” connected with this status (Barth 1998: 32–33). This may result in a choice to emphasise ethnic identity for the purpose of developing new positions and patterns to organise activities for new purposes (Barth 1998: 33). In the case of ethnofuturism, the choice of suppressed and threatened minorities to emphasise ethnicity is connected with an aesthetic program aiming at rescuing endangered languages and cultures. However, Barth also foregrounds a political potential, as “political movements constitute new ways of making cultural differences organizationally relevant [...], and new ways of articulating the dichotomized ethnic groups” (Barth 1998: 34).

The twofold objective of aesthetic renewal and the influencing of public opinion (and thus possibly creating political pressure) are manifest in Pohjanen’s literary authorship, on the one hand, and his activities as a publisher, debater, and key person in the Meänmaa association on the other. In both instances, the objectives are connected with the idea that there is

a specific ethnic group, the Tornedalians, which Pohjanen belongs to and which he represents. As indicated by the reference to “round and Aryan egg-skulls” in the quote from the episode depicting his birth discussed above, the status of the Finno-Ugric Tornedalians has been connected with inferiority in the context of Swedish race-biological research. This historical subject matter provides a backdrop of present-day cultural revitalisation. In 1922, the State Institute of Racial Biology was founded in Uppsala following a parliamentary decision. Its first director, Herman Lundborg, travelled extensively in northern Sweden for the purpose of collecting biometric data about the Sami and Finnish-speaking minorities. Following Curt Persson, the “research” carried out by Lundborg and his colleagues had a great impact upon Hjalmar Lundbohm, founder of Kiruna and the first director of the LKAB mining company (Persson 2013). Persson claims that Lundbohm was a believer in the “science” which constructed the Sami and Tornedalians as racially inferior to the “Nordic-Germanic racial character” (see also Kemiläinen 1998). This is a historical backdrop for the emergence of negative attitudes connected with Finno-Ugric ethnicity, which Pohjanen refers to in the comment concerning the shape of Tornedalian versus Aryan skulls.

Another stigmatising theme Pohjanen dwells upon is that of speaking a language that is discouraged in the compulsory educational system. In a survey of linguistic measures which have affected the use and status of Meänkieli (*Tornedalian Finnish*, previously also called *Finnish*), Wande highlights that from 1888, all-Swedish schools received economic support from the state (Wande 1990: 442). He also mentions that the prohibition against speaking Finnish during breaks was revoked in 1958, and that a reminder was issued in 1968 that the prohibition was no longer in force (Wande 1990: 442). These measures indicate that there was a conscious policy of Swedification implemented in the educational system. They also indicate that while a rigorous attitude towards Finnish being spoken at school was in theory alleviated in 1958, the practice of prohibiting its use continued during the decade after that. These measures and practices provide a backdrop for the negative consequences of language and identity loss explored by Bengt Pohjanen in his authorship.

Ethnofuturism as a Framework for Positive Identity Formation

While Pohjanen uses motives connected with a negative history of stigmatisation and loss, he also explores affirmative and positive aspects of Tornedalianness. The conclusion of this article is that the aesthetics of ethnofuturism provides a conceptual framework for an orientation away from negative modes of experiencing ethnicity towards positive affirmation.

Wande mentions external activities and artefacts, as well as external, environmental elements as examples of factors shaping cultural identity (Wande 2005: 206). Barth, too, highlights the role of distinguishing markers for the construction of ethnic groups by means of self-definition (Barth 1998). In the case of Bengt Pohjanen and the making of Meänmaa, references to external activities such as local customs, ceremonies, rituals, language etc., and artefacts such as ways of dressing, tools and architecture, as well as external environmental elements such as the river and the landscape, contribute to the making of Meänmaa in the autobiography *Smugglarkungens son* and the book *Meänmaa* with photographs by Heikkilä. The role of the images in the latter volume is to construct Meänmaa visually, while Pohjanen's text contributes through an emphasis on elements such as "stillness," "the river," and "God." The use of visual imprints is also found on the cover of both volumes of *Den tornedalsfinska litteraturen* in the shape of a map of Meänmaa and an image of Meänmaa's flag.

In the chapter on the literature of Meänmaa in *Den tornedalsfinska litteraturen* discussed above, distinctions are made between the history of the Tornedalians and that of the majority population in Sweden. By using Selma Lagerlöf's book about Nils Holgersson's journey as a target Pohjanen makes the claim that the culture of Meänmaa has been made invisible in Swedish nation-building. The focus of the chapter on Mukka's novel *Maa on syntinen laulu*, on the other hand, is that of making a specific Tornedalian place through an aesthetics using elements from ancient Finno-Ugric folk poetry, as well as emphasising the impact of the Laestadian revival for shaping a mentality with tensions between unworldliness and spirituality on the one hand, and momentary outbursts of carnal indulgences on the other. Thus, Meänmaa is shaped by a number of elements related to activities, artefacts, mentality, and the external environment, functioning as distinguishing markers. In the context of ethnofuturism, these distinguishing markers contribute to constructing Meänmaa as a specific place connected with Finno-Ugric ethnicity and a history of having become a divided cultural landscape at the fringes of the Swedish and Finnish nation-states.

When contributing to the construction of Meänmaa, Pohjanen uses naming, mapping and symbolic elements connoting Tornedalian culture, heritage and ethnicity. This is part of a decolonisation process. As Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin point out, naming and mapping are dominant practices of colonial and post-colonial cultures (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2007: 28). This notion provides an ideological backdrop of Pohjanen's claim that Selma Lagerlöf's classic book about Nils Holgersson's journey has excluded and made invisible the Torne Valley and its inhabitants. Pohjanen's critique highlights that the Torne Valley has been represented as a blank space, a

notion resounding of colonising narratives of empty spaces free for the colonisers to cultivate (see Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2007: 28). The rationale behind the present-day construction of Meänmaa, and the promotion of Meänkieli, is that far from having been an empty space, the municipalities of the Torne Valley constituting Meänmaa are an ancient cultural landscape with a language, culture, and history of its own. The conclusion of this article is that publishing and writing in diverse genres, the formation of associations on a local level and the activations of local symbols play a central role in Tornedalian ethnonational place-making.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

- ¹ *Pänkki* is the Finnish form of *Bengt*.
- ² Sallamaa mentions that the term *Standard Average European (SAE) thinking* was invented by B.L. Whorf (1972). Uku Masing is mentioned as the originator of the notion of "the illusion of a universally valid way of being human." Masing's book from 2004, which Salamaa refers to, is in Estonian.
- ³ The association Meänmaan yhistys has a website which contains information about its background, purpose and activities (www.meanmaa.net/mmy/start_mmy.htm; access date 11 January 2017). The website includes a document testifying that "Meänmaa" is a registered trade mark in Sweden. Bengt Pohjanen is presented as chair of the association.
- ⁴ *Med ord ärvda av jordemödrar som hjälpt barn till världen i tusentals år kunde Hilma Krutrök med sina ugriska gåvor flytta plågorna från föderskan till pörtets solvarma vedklabbar som dansade och hoppade. Hon skulle gott duga som en etnofuturismens ur-ikon och prototyp.*
- ⁵ *en riktig människa och inte som en arisk äggskalle.*
- ⁶ *Min egen födelse är efter Kristi det viktigaste som hänt mig, säger ett tornedalskt ordspråk.*
- ⁷ *Mitt öde var att födas till meänkieli, och ett sådant öde är ingen viktig händelse, nästan ingen händelse alls.*
- ⁸ *Nils Holgersson såg aldrig oss. Författarinnan missade ett stort område av landet: Meänmaa vars första språk under de tre första åren varit meänkieli. Selma Lagerlöf gav oss helt enkelt en svensk identitet. Svenskan och svenskarna representerade oss. Vi fanns till genom ett annat folk, ett annat språk och en annan kultur i vårt eget land, dit svenskarna invandrat långt efter oss.*

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