

## The Dynamics of Crossing Borders. The Case of Hella Wuolijoki<sup>1</sup>

Anneli Saro

**Abstract:** The focus of the article is Estonian-born Finnish playwright Hella Wuolijoki (1886–1954). The article concentrates on the process of becoming the de-familiarized Own and subsequently the Other, i.e. on the process of acculturation. The change of language from Estonian to Finnish but also Wuolijoki's ethnic and political self-identity as expressed in her fictional works and memoirs illuminate these dynamics. The reception of Wuolijoki's first fictional works (written in Estonian) is analysed with the aim of understanding the communication between the writer and her audiences and the reasons behind her change of language and ethnic identity.

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**Keywords:** Hella Wuolijoki (1886–1954), acculturation, reception, Estonia and Finland

Throughout history the cultural connections between Estonia and Finland have been quite close. One has to admit that the relationship has not been entirely equal, and Finnish cultural influence on Estonia has been stronger than vice versa. But this remains a hypothesis. A current research project uniting Finnish and Estonian theatre researchers in mapping intercultural communication between theatre makers and audiences of the two countries may prove or disprove some part of this hypothesis. In this article, an attempt will be made to investigate intercultural communication and dynamics through a personal history.

The focus of the article is a well-known Finnish playwright, Hella Wuolijoki (1886–1954) whose plays helped build up Finnish national (and feminist) identity. Internationally she is often mentioned in connection with Bertolt Brecht's play *Mr Puntila and his Man Matti* that is based on Wuolijoki's original version. Wuolijoki was actually an Estonian, born Ella Marie Murrik, and she went to study at the University of Helsinki in 1904 because of the very limited opportunities for women in Tsarist Russia to acquire higher education. At that time Finland was also a part of Tsarist Russia, but it enjoyed political autonomy. Murrik, who was associated with the Estonian nationalist movement, became involved with social democrats in Finland.

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After graduation from the University of Helsinki in 1909, she married a Finn, social democrat Sulo Wuolijoki (1881–1957), took his last name, stayed in Finland and quite soon came to be viewed by Estonians as an outsider.

Wuolijoki's biography and literary legacy has been investigated thoroughly both in Estonia and Finland. In what follows, references will be made to the major works. However, no attempt has yet been made to use a theoretical framework to analyse cultural transfer and acculturation in Wuolijoki's life and career. This article concentrates only on the process of becoming 1) the de-familiarized Own and, subsequently, 2) the Other, i.e. on the process of crossing borders. The change of language from Estonian to Finnish in Wuolijoki's literary production can be considered the most significant sign of this acculturation process. Her ethnic and political self-identity as expressed in her fictional works and later memoirs also illuminates these dynamics. In what follows, the reception of Wuolijoki's first fictional works (written in Estonian) will be analysed with the aim of understanding the communication between the writer and her audiences, and the reasons behind her change of language and ethnic identity.



Hella Wuolijoki 1941.  
Photo: Estonian Cultural  
History Archives of the Estonian  
Literary Museum: EKM EKLA,  
A-37: 4797.

### Theoretical and cultural contexts

In her article “Ethnic Identity in Adolescents and Adults: Review of Research”, Jean S. Phinney has summarised various theories of acculturation. The concept of acculturation is usually related to changes in cultural attitudes, values, and behaviours that result from the contact between two distinct cultures. Phinney distinguishes between two different models: a linear, bipolar model and a two-dimensional model.

In the linear model, ethnic identity is conceptualized along a continuum from strong ethnic ties at one extreme to strong mainstream ties at the other. [ . . . ] The assumption underlying this model is that a strengthening of one requires a weakening of the other; that is, a strong ethnic identity is not possible among those who become involved in the mainstream society, and acculturation is inevitably accompanied by a weakening of ethnic identity. In contrast to the linear model, an alternative model emphasizes that acculturation is a two-dimensional process, in which both the relationship with the traditional or ethnic culture and the relationship with the new or dominant culture must be considered, and these two relationships may be independent. According to this view, minority group members can have either strong or weak identifications with both their own and the mainstream cultures [ . . . ]. (Phinney 1990, 501)

Table 1 is an illustration of this model. Strong identification with both groups is indicative of integration or biculturalism; identification with neither group suggests marginalisation. An exclusive identification with the majority culture indicates assimilation, whereas identification with only the ethnic group indicates separation from the majority (Phinney 1990, 502).

Identification with majority group	Identification with ethnic group	
	Strong	Weak
Strong	Acculturated Integrated Bicultural	Assimilated
Weak	Ethnically identified Ethnically embedded Separated Dissociated	Marginal

Table 1. Terms Used for Four Orientations, Based on the Degree of Identification With Both One’s Own Ethnic Group and the Majority Group (Phinney 1990, 501–502).

This means that ethnic identity should not be considered as homogenous and monolithic, but can rather consist of different and sometimes also oppositional layers. Phinney (502) also stresses that ethnic identity is a dynamic process, achieved through an active process of decision-making and self-evaluation, i.e. it is an active process of creation and conceptualisation of one's personal identity. Most empirical research on ethnic identity is group-based and the level of individual change is ignored. Contrary to the general trends, my article concentrates on an individual. Before analysing Wuolijoki's acculturation process, a comparison should be made between the political, social and cultural contexts of Estonia and Finland at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Finland and Estonia are neighboring countries that are united by similar Finnic languages but separated by different histories. German crusaders invaded Estonia in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century and since then the country was ruled by Baltic-German landowners, mostly nobility, who exerted strong economic, political, and cultural influences. From 1710–1917, Estonia was a part of the Russian Empire and went through a severe Russification at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Until 1809, Finland was a part of the Swedish kingdom and enjoyed more liberal legislation than Estonia. During the years 1809–1917, Finland belonged to the Russian Empire as an autonomous duchy. Class and economic differences were not as strong in Finnish society as they were in Estonia, where the yoke of serfdom was only lifted at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the antagonism between the German-speaking nobility and the Estonian-speaking lower classes was a central force until the achievement of independence.

Intercultural communication between Finland and Estonia started to blossom in the 1860s in the tide of the national awakening movement. Finland became a paragon for Estonians, mostly in the cultural sphere, because Estonians had rather low political and economic ambitions. Finnish linguists and folklorists were the first to show their deeper interest in Estonia. The phrase "Finnish bridge" started to symbolize mutual collaboration (Alenius 1997, Karjahärm 1997).

As an example, the Estonian-language theatre was established a year after the first production performed in Finnish, Aleksis Kivi's *Lea* (1869), and partly in virtue of the encouragement of Finns. The mother figure of Estonian theater was the influential poet Lydia Koidula, who hesitated about the appropriateness of theatre in the context of national awakening movement. However, her friend, the Finnish journalist Antti Almberg reported about enthusiastic reception of the first production in Finnish and suggested to Koidula that she follow the example. As a result of the correspondence, Koidula adapted Theodor Körner's play *Der Vetter aus Bremen* (*The*

*Cousin from Bremen*) from German and staged it under the title *Saaremaa onupoeg* (*The Cousin from Saaremaa*) for the Estonian-speaking community in 1870.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Estonian national movement split into different political wings, and attitudes towards Finns became class-based; thus the utterly positive projection of Estonians towards Finland disintegrated. The Russian revolution of 1905 resulted in extended rights for local institutions in Finland and Estonia, and Finnish women were the first in Europe to win the right to vote and to be able stand as candidates in elections. In relation to the Russian revolution, Finland accepted Estonian political refugees and Helsinki gradually became the center of Estonian emigrants. Thus at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Finland was not only a cultural paragon, but it also became a political exemplum for Estonians. The other way round, Finns felt a certain superiority towards Estonians (Alenius 1997, Karjahärm 1997). This means that for Estonians, Finland was an object of identification, the desired Own, but for the majority of Finns, Estonia definitely remained the familiar Other.

### **Reception of Hella Wuolijoki's first literary works written in Estonian**

Like many other writers, Ella Murrik wrote her first piece of literature in childhood. Her father, Ernst Murrik earned a living as a teacher, bookshop keeper and legal adviser and supported the intellectual ambitions of his five children. Since at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the educational languages in Estonia were German and Russian and the language spoken in her family was also German, Ella imitated the games of German children and wrote a drama about a brave schoolgirl. Her father's criticism made her tear up the manuscript (Wuolijoki 1995, 25, 36).

Since 1902, during her studies in Tartu and Helsinki, Murrik published several short stories, articles, and poems in the Estonian newspaper *Postimees*, the women's magazine *Linda* and in the first albums of Young Estonia (Kruus 1999, 22, 27–28;



Dwelling house of the Lupe farm which belonged to Hella Wuolijoki's grandfather.  
Photo: Estonian Cultural History Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum: EKM EKLA, A-101:762.

Liivson 2008, 13–15). Most of these texts were published anonymously and did not elicit the attention of literary critics.

In 1904, Ella Murrik went to study at the University of Helsinki and quite soon she started to use the name Hella Murrik as her pen name. When Hella married Sulo Wuolijoki in 1909, she became Hella Wuolijoki. (In Estonian media, she was sometimes introduced also as Wuolijoki-Murrik or Vuolijoki-Murrik until the end of 1930s.) Thus marriage was the decisive point for Murrik to transfer her identity from an Estonian girl to a Finnish woman. Gradually, a certain estrangement from Estonia and her old friends took place during her years of study in Helsinki, because Wuolijoki had become a social democrat while her Estonian friends held a conservative bourgeois world view. In her memoirs written in the 1940s, Wuolijoki reports telling her friend Jaan Tõnisson about her decision to rip out her Estonian roots because she was unable to live with constant homesickness. She intended to become a true Finn (Wuolijoki 1996, 215). In her letters to her father from 1909, Wuolijoki expresses contradictory emotions: after a visit to Estonia she is concerned about her inability to settle in and acculturate in Finland; some months later she is euphorically enthusiastic about Finnish nature and people (Wuolijoki 2004, 51–53). After that, she did not visit Estonia for five years but when she did, she realized that “the wounds were not healed over” (Wuolijoki 1996, 2015).

Wuolijoki established herself as a writer with the play *The Children of the House* (*Talulapsed*), published in Tallinn (1912), performed in Tallinn (1913), then in Helsinki (1914). She wrote the play while nursing her first-born child Vappu, and one of the impulses that motivated her to write in Estonian was penury and the hope to earn some money. *The Children of the House* was based on Wuolijoki’s earlier play *Madonna Marianna*, inspired by the Russian Revolution of 1905 and partly also by the author’s own life. She had sent the earlier play to the Vanemuine Theatre’s play competition but was not successful. Five years later Wuolijoki rewrote the text keeping the main characters and the central conflict. *The Children of the House* tells a love story between childhood friends Marianne, the daughter of Alaste farm (in Estonian ‘down’, ‘low’) and Peeter, the son of Mägiste (in Estonian ‘hill’) farm. After studies abroad, they have both returned home. Peeter leaves his rich Baltic German fiancée, saves the Alaste farm and proposes to Marianne. But class consciousness and socialist ideas awaken in Marianne and instead of marriage she chooses freedom and the fight against the inequitable system. In the play, socialism is opposed to nationalism, as represented by Peeter. Oskar Kruus (1999, 52) has interpreted the play as Wuolijoki’s literary response to the Estonian journalist and national leader Jaan Tõnisson, with whom she had an intellectual, maybe also a romantic relationship and who was probably the prototype of Peeter. Marianne can also be easily

interpreted as Wuolijoki's *alter ego*, because of their socialist and feminist sympathies and textual references to Ala tavern where Hella spent her childhood.

At first, Wuolijoki sent her play to Karl Menning, the artistic director of the Vanemuine Theatre, who found the piece to be too political and refused to produce it. But 1000 copies of *The Children of the House* were printed by the publishing house Maa in 1912. The play was relatively well received but critics pointed out that sketchy characters were subjected to political ideas and the overall atmosphere was more melodramatic than realistic (Kruus 1999, 52–53).

It seems that critics at the time missed or consciously hid the subtext of the play. Kaarina Leppänen (2013, 29) has recently pointed out how Wuolijoki harshly criticized the nationalist movements in Estonia and Finland in her play. Conflict erupts not only between a socialist woman and a nationalist man but also between the solidarity of the socialist and the egotism of the nationalist. The upward mobility of the nationalist movement is allegedly driven by the urge to accumulate material wealth (through marriage) or to make a fortune through education. Thus, in the play, the Estonian and Finnish nationalist movements that stressed the importance of education in building up the nation are confronted with the peasant class. Leppänen (30–31) concludes that *The Children of the House* offers an alternative to perceiving the nation and that it performs a discursively subversive act.

In 1913, the play was performed once at the Estonia Theatre. Unfortunately, the production was banned both before and after the first night because of the main character's leftist sympathies (Issakov 1983, 261). In Tsarist Russia, censorship of plays was regulated by an act adopted in 1876, according to which all plays had to obtain a performance permit from the Main Office of Publishing Affairs in St. Petersburg, and all performances required a permit from the police (Rahi 1992, 27). The Estonia Theatre just ignored the fact that the play had not obtained a performance permit and continued rehearsals, but had to stop performing after the first night.

Despite the ban, the play was taken into the repertoire of the People's Stage (Kansan Näyttämö) in Helsinki and performed once in 1914. The theatre was related to leftist circles and information about the banned play in Estonia had aroused its interests. Wuolijoki had already translated the play into Finnish before the Estonian performance ban and corrected the original version a bit, placing more emphasis on the importance of passionate love of the main characters. Finnish critics received *The Children of the House* more warmly than Estonians: they admitted the dramatic weaknesses of the play (lack of action and rhetorical speech) but found the content interesting, even exotic. Finnish censors substantiated the ban as follows: the play had been rejected earlier; the female character is involved with revo-

lutionaries and sympathizes with revolution; Estonia is treated as not being a part of Russia (Koski 2000, 38–39, 42–44).

Wuolijoki later reassessed her play as weak and amateurish but admitted that this was her most realistic text (Wuolijoki 2004, 124–125). *The Children of the House* has not been staged publicly since the 1914 Finnish performance; however, Marja Rankkala wrote a radio adaption in 1966.

Wuolijoki's next work, the novel *Those Behind the Fog* (*Udutagused*) was published in 1914, again by Maa. In her letter to the publisher, Wuolijoki admits her urgent need for money and lack of time to rewrite the text (Kruus 1999, 55). In genre terms, *Those Behind the Fog* is the author's memoir based on her childhood recollections from Mulgi parish. First of all, the title refers to the temporal distance between experience and the act of storytelling. Since the novel depicts the decline of a large patriarchal rural family signalling the end of an era, the title also alludes to Valgemäe farm as a lost world and to the physical and mental isolation of the characters. The reception of the work was quite lively, despite a considerable range of opinions. It seems that the topic, unusual for Estonian literature, and the point of view fascinated readers. The main criticisms of the novel were related to its form (poor composition and style, weak characterisation and descriptions) as well as to its melodramatic attitudes and the author's overt ideological (both national and socialist) aims. Eduard Hubel (pen name Mait Metsanurk) was the severest critic of the work. He pointed out that the beginning of the story was beautiful and elaborate, but the rest seems to be written in haste. For example, 72 pages out of 180 were dedicated to the description of the wedding. Hubel compared Wuolijoki's style and language to that used ten years ago in stories about village life. "Achievements of language and style, hailed here from Finland, have not affected Wuolijoki living in Helsinki," is his final conviction (Hubel 1914).

As an outcome of her studies of folkloristics at the University of Helsinki, Wuolijoki compiled a 856 verse long metric poem *Song of War* (*Sõja laul*) based on approximately 500 variants of the theme in Jakob Hurt's collection of Estonian folk songs. The poem was published in the newspaper *Tallinna Kaja* (1914) and as a separate book (1915), but it did not draw much attention because of the First World War. The text was republished in 1984 with a German translation in Finland and in 1986 in Estonia, and in 1987 performed at Schauspiel Köln in Germany (Kruus 1999, 61). In 2007, the poem was also published in English under the title *My brother is going off to war—Variations on a Theme* together with Kristiina Ehin's variation of the poem and a short story (Ehin and Wuolijoki 2007). However, Wuolijoki's most famous international contribution with respect to this poem is hidden in Bertolt Brecht's play *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (*Der kaukasische Kreidekreis*, 1948). Brecht used 17 lines ver-



batim from the part of the poem commonly referred to as “The sister’s advice to the brother” and some lines from the segment “The brother’s account of the horrors of war” (Kitching 1982, 314). Wuolijoki herself was translating parts of *Song of War* to Brecht when she hosted him as a war refugee at her manor house in Finland in 1940.

Wuolijoki’s intentional efforts to establish herself as a writer spanned the years 1911–1914, when she was nursing and caring for her small child, translating and studying law at the same time. Her motivation at that time was not only financial but also psychological: a hiatus in her relations with Estonia, her extended family and the years of her youth, and the country and people who were “behind the fog”. Wuolijoki had studied literature at the university but this knowledge did not particularly help her in mastering literary techniques or following genre codes. The Estonian literary context had also changed considerably during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: realism had nearly achieved the central position in the literary canon, and although there were modernist experimentations, these sometimes also merged with realism. But Wuolijoki’s drama of ideas (*The Children of the House*) and her novel, which combined national romantic ideology with realistic descriptions of life (*Those Behind the Fog*) contained anachronistic as well as nostalgic effects, and had an alienating effect as well as a mesmerizing effect on readers. Almost all of Wuolijoki’s works center on a strong, educated and independent female character, thus contributing to laying a foundation for Estonian feminist literature. Unfortunately, Wuolijoki’s Estonian language was a bit outdated. Mentally she wanted to return to the lost world of her youth, but the fact that she chose the style and language of that lost era (as was also true of many Estonian refugee writers after the Second World War) made Wuolijoki’s works seem strange to modern readers. Finally, the breach between the writer and her audiences was deepened by Wuolijoki’s socialist views and Tsarist Russian censorship. All these aspects weakened Wuolijoki’s sense of belonging to the Estonian community.

### **Wuolijoki’s return to the Estonian cultural field**

During the First World War Wuolijoki started her business career. Her husband became more and more addicted to alcohol and this led to a divorce in 1923. After that, Hella needed to provide an income for her family. She started as a secretary at Kontro & Co but soon established her own limited-liability company trading in coffee beans, sugar and grain. This process is also illuminated in her memoirs titled *I Became a Business Woman*, the second, posthumous printing of which was titled *I Became a Finn* (1987). After World War I, Wuolijoki settled in her Marlebäck manor and started a sawmill business across the Finnish-Soviet border. However, the

world economic crisis drove the company into bankruptcy in 1931. Wuolijoki had to scale down her business ambitions and could concentrate on literature again.

In the first half of the 1930s, Wuolijoki started writing (actually dictating to her secretary) fictional works, alternately in Estonian and Finnish, often translating them subsequently from one language to another. In 1931, she wrote a play in Estonian with the bold title *The Minister and the Communist* (*Minister ja kommunist*, later also *The Minister and the Devil*) that was reminiscent of *The Children of the House* in its plot and ideological stances. The new play was based on an actual court case in which Aleksander Oinas, the Minister of Home Affairs, was accused of private peace negotiations with Viktor Kingissepp, the leader of the Communist movement in 1919, during the Estonian War of Independence. The Estonia Theatre started rehearsing the play in 1932, but the rehearsals were stopped for political reasons.<sup>2</sup> It is unclear who gave the order, but it was probably Minister Oinas himself, who had friends active in theatre circles. Basically, Wuolijoki had ignored and simultaneously offered a provocation to current Estonian politics. The play was staged in Helsinki in 1933 (one guest performance was given both in Tallinn and Turku), after that in Stockholm and Norway under the title *It happened in Estonia*.

In Wuolijoki's earlier works, Estonian and Finnish worlds had probably already begun to blend. Later, in her memoirs Wuolijoki (2004, 129) admits that when reading the novel *Those Behind the Fog*, she recognized scenes she had borrowed from Häme county in Finland and passed on to Estonian literature. Oskar Kruus (1999, 76) has criticised the depiction of life in the Minister's farm, Hiidna, in *The Minister and the Communist*, which is more reminiscent of Finnish manors and seems implausible to Estonian spectators. Contrary to criticism, the play was accepted in Finland and regarded as topical for Finland at the time (Koski 2000, 52). A contemporary Estonian review merely pointed out the scandalous reputation and dramaturgical weakness of the play (K. B. 1933).

Wuolijoki's next play, *Koidula*, subtitled *A Play About a Woman Who Wanted to Be Like All the Others* was about Lydia Koidula, an Estonian poet and playwright of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, who also became a symbol of national awakening. The text was provocative because it drew on the rather subjective biography of Koidula, written by the Finnish-Estonian writer Aino Kallas, and interpreted Koidula's life from a feminist perspective. Wuolijoki wrote the play partially as a reaction to the romantic

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<sup>2</sup> The Communist Party was banned in Estonia from December 1918 onward; nevertheless members of the party continued their activities, leading in turn to the major political lawsuits in 1920–1924 resulting in the conviction of several hundred communists of crimes against the state. In the Estonian republic communism was an underground movement; all communist or leftist propaganda was officially prohibited.

depiction of Koidula in the play titled *The Father of Song and the Penmaiden* (*Lauluisa ja kirjaneitsi*) by Artur Adson, performed at the Estonia Theatre in 1931. But Wuolijoki definitely also wanted to tackle the more general problem of the different, sometimes contradictory social roles of female artists and to integrate her own experiences in the character of Koidula. Another aspect that united these two women was the fact that because of marriage both of them moved to foreign cultural surroundings. After her marriage to the military physician Eduard Michelson, Koidula moved from Tartu to the military city of Kronstadt, 30 kilometers from St. Petersburg, but she never fully integrated into the German-speaking bourgeois society there. In contrast to Wuolijoki, Koidula's acculturation process might be characterized by terms such as "ethnically identified", "ethnically embedded", "separated" or "dissociated". Wuolijoki (1932, 43) describes this feeling using the metaphor of a hungry, lonely wolf abandoned by others. In the play, she also stresses Koidula's longing for her Finnish friend Antti Almberg (implicit in the character of The Unknown) and explores her idea of Estonian-Finnish transcultural society (59–60).

*Koidula* won the highest honours at the play competition of the Estonian Learned Society, premiered in two different cities and was published in autumn 1932. The play represented Koidula as a hypersensitive or a hysteric woman (her husband's diagnosis) with the social role of housewife, a victim of her Russian-minded chauvinistic husband, Doctor Michelson. Koidula is torn between conflicting expectations: her husband accuses her of not being a truthful wife and mother, while The Unknown states that Koidula has killed the artist in herself. The first production at the Estonia Theatre immediately caused a scandal because of the dramatic representation of Koidula by Erna Villmer. A heated media debate took place with the participation of literary critics, psychiatrists, and intellectuals. Wuolijoki was accused of ignoring historical "truth" as it was expressed in Koidula's own letters and the memoirs of her children's nanny, and of disrespectfulness toward a national symbol. Despite its aesthetic failures (stylistic eclecticism, sentimentality, defective composition), the play risked demolishing the national myth about Koidula. The Vanemuine production that opened eight days after the Tallinn premiere was more realistic in style as well as in its depiction of the main characters, and therefore it did not anger spectators as much.

In addition, two literary court hearings of fictional characters took place in Tallinn and Tartu respectively. Wuolijoki herself participated in the first performances and literary court sessions. In Tallinn, she performed the role of Koidula's mother and in Tartu, that of a witness. Both courts ruled that Koidula should divorce her husband. An anonymous critic admitted the influence of performativity over the historical "truth", pointing out, for example, that Rasmus Kangro-Pool performed

so ingeniously in the role of Michelson's attorney that he brought the house down. Though the trial was held against the fictional Koidula, the real person also came under fire. The critic alleged that the trial clearly had business aims during which spiritual values were sacrificed (Postimees 1932). With *Koidula*, Wuolijoki definitely crossed not only national borders (becoming the Other, outsider) but also the borders of decency in breaking gender and national stereotypes.

Wuolijoki's play about Koidula has not been produced since (Liivson 2008), even though Koidula as a dramatic character has appeared on the stages of Estonian theatres several times since in the following plays: Aino Undla-Põldmäe, *Viru Bard and Koidula* (1967, Pärnu Draamateater; 1969 and 1982, Draamateater; 2013, Pärnu Koidula Museum), Mati Unt, *The Witching Hour in Jannsen Street* (1984, Pärnu Draamateater; 2008, Endla); Kulno Süvalep, *Summer Nightingale of the Emajõgi* (1993, Vanemuine); Urmas Lennuk, *Koidula* (2003, Emajõe Suveteater); Loone Ots, *The Blood of Koidula* (2008, Vanemuine).

At the same time as *Koidula*, Wuolijoki also finished the sequel to the novel *Those Behind the Fog* titled *Udutaguste Leeni in Tartu* (*Udutaguste Leeni Tartus*, published in 1933 by the author) but the work attracted very little attention, because Wuolijoki's



Production of Hella Wuolijoki's *Heta of Niskavuori* at the Tampere Workers' Theatre; Heta – Rauni Luoma, Loviis – Elsa Turakoinen.

Photo: Estonian Cultural History Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum: EKM EKLA, B-37: 5719.

Estonian language and romantic style were utterly outdated. Also, the love story of a heroine who crossed social borders through marriage was considered farfetched. Dating from the same period is the manuscript of Wuolijoki's symbolist play about the Estonian national poet Juhan Liiv—*Dr Lucius and the Poet* (*Dr Lucius ja Luuletaja*, published in 2013; a new version of the play was performed under the title *The King and the Jester* in 1945 in Helsinki [Koski 2000, 162–165]).

A turning point in Wuolijoki's career were her plays written in Finnish. *Law and Order* (*Laki ja järjestys*, staged in Helsinki in 1933) depicts the Finnish civil war; *The Blazing Land* (*Palava maa*, staged in Tampere and in Tallinn in 1936) represents the suppression of the Russian revolution of 1905 in Estonia). Wuolijoki's breakthrough play, *The Women of Niskavuori* (*Niskavuoren naiset*), opened in Helsinki in 1936. After this success Wuolijoki concentrated her literary works around Finnish women and life in the countryside, and she became an influential Finnish writer. Later on, she never stressed her Estonian roots, despite retaining a heavy accent in Finnish until the end of her life. For Finnish audiences, Wuolijoki was first and foremost a politically engaged writer.

Over two years (1931–1932), Wuolijoki had written three plays and a novel in Estonian. Two plays never saw Estonian productions, and the novel received really negative criticism. It was only with *Koidula*—despite, or even because of causing a scandal—that Wuolijoki achieved wider recognition (not even full success) in Estonia. Critics did not discuss the source of her unconventional cultural ideas—the context of the playwright—, but great efforts were made to analyse the meanings and aims of the provocative encounter and to include or reject these new perceptions of the customary value system. Nevertheless, *Koidula* opened an important discussion about the representation of national symbols and basic functions of art.

In the 1930s, realism was the dominant artistic style both in Estonia and Finland. However, Wuolijoki's Estonian plays from the 1930s bear Ibsenian influences: strong and educated women as main characters, conversations and conflicting ideas dominating over action, and the enrichment of realism by symbols and symbolic characters (*The Devil*, *The Unknown*, *Dr. Lucius*, *The Poet*). This type of realism did not fit well with the local literary canon and was severely, perhaps unjustly belittled. (See an example of the critical rehabilitation of *Dr Lucius and the Poet* in Talvet 2013.)

Wuolijoki probably also perceived the growing emotional, linguistic and mental distance between herself and her compatriots and decided to withdraw from Estonian culture. At the same time, the Finnish environment, people, languages and

stories, i.e. the context<sup>3</sup> which was close to her physically and emotionally, nurtured her creative works. Thus her closeness to the subject matter guaranteed a feeling of authenticity to her works written in Finnish, and this was the main secret of Wuolijoki's success in the Finnish literary and theatre field.

### Conclusions

This article has analysed Hella Wuolijoki's transfer from Estonia to Finland, from the Estonian to the Finnish cultural and political field. This process can first be tracked through the usage of language in her fictional works: Wuolijoki's Estonian became gradually anachronistic and inadequate as a creative language. She first dictated her works to an Estonian secretary and later switched to Finnish, asking somebody to translate her works into Estonian. The transfer from the Estonian to Finnish cultural world can also be explained by the rather tepid or even negative reception of her idiosyncratic works in her homeland. In Finland, Wuolijoki quite soon became a politically engaged citizen, while her Estonian compatriots and critics did not welcome her political affiliations. Besides, Wuolijoki had to be aware of the restrictions of censorship both in Tsarist Russia and in the Estonian Republic. She decided to test the limits of this censorship and as a result, two of her plays were banned in Estonia. Thus the reasons for Wuolijoki's transfer from the Estonian to Finnish cultural field are geographic (related to her place of residence), linguistic, artistic, and ideological/political.

During the years of the transfer (from 1904, when Wuolijoki moved to Finland until 1933 when she stopped writing in Estonian or about Estonia) from one socio-cultural context to other, i.e. in the process of acculturation, Wuolijoki's identity was also transformed. In the article cited earlier, Phinney (1990, 503–506) pointed out the main components of ethnic identity: ethnic self-identification, sense of belonging, positive and negative attitudes towards one's ethnic group, and finally ethnic involvement (social participation and cultural practices, including the use of language). Wuolijoki (2004, 128) has commented on her national transfer in the memoir *I Became a Business Woman*: "A person cannot have two fatherlands. I had to choose and I chose. Finland had become closer to me than Estonia during the years of studies and youth because maybe I have suffered here more than in Estonia. I have paid a high price for my new fatherland." It appears from this and earlier citations that

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3 Psychologists often rely on Erik H. Erikson's assumption of identity "as a result of the mutual interaction of individual and context; while individual interests and capacities, wishes and desires draw individuals to particular contexts, those contexts, in turn, provide recognition (or not) of individual identity and are critical to its further development" (Kroger 2018, 4).

Wuolijoki (1996, 215) did not consider acquiring a hybrid ethnic identity but intended “to become a true Finn”. One strategy for coping with the new situation was the transfer of familiar subjects from Estonia to Finland through sublimation. For example, Wuolijoki compares her father- and mother-in-law to her parents (Wuolijoki 2004, 30); the mother-in-law’s handmaiden to a great foremother (34); Professor Kaarle Krohn to his father (45); Wuolijoki’s farm resembles her home in Estonia (36), etc. Literary transmissions and sublimateions over cultural borders in Wuolijoki’s works were noticed by the author herself and also by her critics. Thus one can assume that even though Wuolijoki wanted to identify herself as a Finn, her sense of belonging was more ambivalent, at least until the beginning of the 1930s. Based on her memoirs, quite soon after she left Estonia for Finland, Wuolijoki started to share the Finns’ feeling of superiority towards Estonia as a smaller and younger brother, but on a personal level she did not seem to evaluate people based on their ethnicity. Throughout her life Wuolijoki had quite tight connections with her Estonian family (many relatives and her parents moved to Finland), and hosted Estonians at her Finnish homes which became salons of cultural and political life. Nevertheless, as stated earlier, having an international circle of friends and colleagues and being a practical woman, she usually did not stress her roots. In conclusion, one can state that Wuolijoki had quite a strong identification with both groups, the Estonians and Finns, during her period of acculturation and identity exploration (1904–1933), which is indicative of integration or biculturalism. Later on, when Wuolijoki’s ties with Estonia and the Estonians became rather occasional, the term “assimilation” might be considered appropriate to describe her identity despite strong hesitations, because Wuolijoki remained in many ways a rare bird (*rara avis*) (the subtitle of her book *I Became a Business Woman*) in Finnish society.

Wuolijoki’s role as a bicultural mediator between Estonian and Finnish cultures can be compared to the similar position of Aino Kallas<sup>4</sup> and Sofi Oksanen<sup>5</sup>. These empirical case studies exemplify the influential role of the de-familiarized Own or domesticated Others in cultural dynamics. The mediators, i.e. the persons in-between-cultures might come from the target culture itself, as was partly the case with Hella Wuolijoki, but they might also represent the Other. With respect to the Estonian context, Aino Kallas and Sofi Oksanen come from the so-called source

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4 Aino Kallas (1878–1956) was a prominent Finnish writer, who was born in Helsinki, married the Estonian folklorist (later ambassador) Oskar Kallas, lived in Estonia (1904–1918, 1934–1944) and wrote about Estonian history and mythology in Finnish.

5 Sofi Oksanen (1977) is a prominent Finnish writer, who was born in Finland, has an Estonian mother and has achieved her reputation mainly by works depicting Estonian history.



Production of Hella Wuolijoki's *Green Gold* at the Tampere Workers' Theatre. Vappu Elo and Edvin Laine. Photo: Estonian Cultural History Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum: EKM EKLA, B-37: 5736.

cultures, and thus the latter description may be more appropriate. But sometimes intermediators never find their "true home", remaining in an in-between position. Leppänen's (2013, 23) characterization of Kallas and Wuolijoki illustrates the following statement quite well: "They represented something foreign and dangerous, especially when the political climate became instable." Nevertheless, in the era of globalization and migration, the ambivalent role of the de-familiarized Own or domesticated Other in the process of cultural dynamics and diversification definitely deserves more thorough research.

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**Anneli Saro**—PhD, Professor of Theatre Research at the University of Tartu. Her research fields include European theatre systems, Estonian theatre history, theatre theory.

e-mail: [anneli.saro\[at\]ut.ee](mailto:anneli.saro[at]ut.ee)

**Piiride ületamise dünaamika. Hella Wuolijoki juhtum***Anneli Saro***Märksõnad:** Hella Wuolijoki (1886–1954), akulturatsioon, retseptatsioon, Eesti ja Soome

Artikli fookuses on tuntud Soome näitekirjanik Hella Wuolijoki (1886–1954), kelle näidendite varal ehitati üles Soome rahvuslik (ja feministlik) identiteet. Wuolijoki oli tegelikult Eestis sündinud Ella Marie Murrik, kes aastal 1904 läks Helsingi Ülikooli õppima, abiellus seal Sulo Wuolijokiga (1881–1957) ning jäi aegamööda eestlastele võõraks.

Hella Wuolijoki biograafiat ja kirjanduslikku pärandit on põhjalikult uuritud nii Eestis kui ka Soomes, kuid tema kultuurilist ülekannet ja akulturatsiooni pole teoreetilises raamistikus käsitletud. Käesolev artikkel keskendub eelkõige ülekandele, s.t piiride ületamise protsessile, sellele, kuidas Wuolijokist sai 1) võõritatud Oma ja seejärel 2) Teine. Kõige silmatorkavam märk tema akulturatsiooniprotsessist oli üleminek eesti keelelt soome keelele kirjanduslikus loomingus, aga ka etnilise ja poliitilise identiteedi muutumine, nagu see väljendub Wuolijoki fiktsionaalsetes ja hilisemates memuaarsetes teostes. Artiklis analüüsitakse Wuolijoki varaste, eesti keeles kirjutatud teoste retseptiooni eesmärgiga mõista kirjaniku ja tema publiku vahelist kommunikatsiooni ja põhjuseid, mis viisid kirjandusliku keele väljavahetamiseni ja etnilise identiteedi muutumiseni.

Wuolijoki püüdis kehtestada endale kohta eesti kirjanduses aastail 1911–1914 ning selle taga olid paljuski nii majanduslikud kui ka psühholoogilised põhjused – hüvastijätt kodumaa ja suguvõsaga. Kuigi Eestis oli juba kanda kinnitanud realism, mõjusid Wuolijoki ideedraama „Talulapsed“ ja rahvusromantiline romaan „Udutagused“ nii teema kui ka väljendusvahendite poolest anakronistlikult, kuigi teatud määral ka kütkestasid. Ka tema eesti keel oli vananenud. Wuolijoki vasakpoolsed ja feministlikud vaated ühelt poolt ning Venemaa tsensuuriaparaat teiselt poolt suurendasid kirjaniku ja tema publiku vahelisi mõistmisraskusi veelgi. Tema teoste vastuoluline retseptioon kodumaal nõrgendas ka Wuolijoki ühtekuuluvustunnet Eesti ühiskonnaga.

Teise katse end eesti kirjanduses kehtestada tegi Wuolijoki aastail 1931–1932, kirjutades lühikese ajaga kolm eestikeelset näidendit ja ühe romaani. Viimane sai üsna hävitava kriitika osaliseks ning näidenditest pääses lavale vaid „Koidula“, mis põhjustas küll skandaali, kuid tõi kirjanikule siiski ka tasu ja kuulsuse. Wuolijoki selle perioodi näidendites on tunda Ibseni mõjutusi: tugevad ja targad naised peategelastena, konfliktid ideid aredatakse vestluse, mitte tegevuse kaudu ning realistlikku elukujutust rikastatakse sümbolite ja sümboltegelastega. Need teosed ei sobitunud 1930. aastatel valitsenud realistliku kaanoniga ning said mõnevõrra ebaõiglase kriitika osaliseks. Kuna Wuolijoki ilmselt tajus ka kasvavat emotsionaalset, keelelist ja mentaalset distantsi endiste kaasmaalastega, otsustas ta eesti kultuurist tagasi tõmbuda, jätkates kirjanduslikku tööd talle Soomes emotsionaalselt lähedaseks saanud teemade ja motiividega, mis tagasid ta teostele ka autentsuse efekti.

Wuolijoki ületas Eesti ja Soome vahelise piiri ehk liikus teise sotsiaalkultuurilisse konteksti vähemalt neljas tähenduses: geograafiliselt, keeleliselt, kunstiliselt ja ideoloogiliselt/poliitiliselt. Selline mitmekordne ülekanne ehk akulturatsiooniprotsess mõjutas loomulikult ka tema identiteeti. Perioodil 1904–1933 identifitseerus Wuolijoki selgelt mõlema etnilise rühmaga, nii eestlaste kui ka soomlastega, nii et seda protsessi võib nimetada integratsiooniks või kakskultuurilisuseks. Hiljem muutusid Wuolijoki

# METHIS

S U M M A R Y

suhted Eesti ja eestlastega juhuslikumaks ning see juhataks justkui termini „assimilatsioon” juurde, kuid seda saab kasutada ainult reservatsioonidega, sest kirjanik jäi ka Soome ühiskonnas valgeks vareseks – kosmopoliidiks.

**Anneli Saro** – PhD, Tartu Ülikooli teatriteaduse professor. Uurimissuunad: Euroopa teatrisüsteemid, Eesti teatri ajalugu, teatriteooria.

e-post: anneli.saro[at]ut.ee