This is the published version of a chapter published in *Migrants and literature in Finland and Sweden*.

Citation for the original published chapter:

Introduction: 'The Minoritarian condition': studies in Finnish and Swedish literatures after World War II
In: Satu Gröndahl and Eila Rantonen (ed.), *Migrants and literature in Finland and Sweden* (pp. 11-33). Helsingfors: Finska litteratursällskapet / The Finnish Literature Society
Studia Fennica Litteraria
https://doi.org/10.21435/sflit.11

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published chapter.

Permanent link to this version:
http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:umu:diva-154880

When people are in motion, it changes nations, national and ethnic identities, cultures, people and peoples. *Migrants and Literature in Finland and Sweden* presents new comparative perspectives on cultural transformations and depiction of migration in Finnish and Swedish literature. The volume provides a contribution to the production of new narratives of the nation during recent decades synthesising and comparing Finnish and Swedish literatures. The volume, thus, offers a unique comparative perspective to the study of Nordic literature, since Finnish literature, especially, is often separated from the Nordic literary studies and literary contexts.

*Migrants and Literature in Finland and Sweden* explores the ways in which intersectional identities and transcultural connections have affected the national self-understanding in the Nordic context and how they relate to concepts and conditions of marginal situations including race, gender, class and disability. Many articles of the volume tackle the issues of reception and classification and ask how experiences of migration have resulted in new modes of writing and generic innovations. Narratives of migration depict Finland and Sweden being lived not only transnationally but also transculturally. The latter signifies how individuals and social groups are no longer cultures but people. It is a question of what individuals and social groups do with culture in an increasingly globalized world (Schulze-Engler 2009, 93). In this volume, studies of fiction and autobiographies lucidly show how migrational processes, cultural transformations and transcultural connections are experienced on an individual level.

The volume demonstrates the complexity of grouping literatures according to nation and ethnicity producing such categories such as ‘Finnish literature’, ‘Swedish literature’ or ‘immigrant literature’, which recently been under discussion. For instance, in 2007, the Karelian Finnish writer Arvi Perttu strongly asserted that the missing pages of migrants living in Finland should be written. He also insisted that Finnish literary institutions should be more open to writers who have a migrant background. Another author, Somali-Swedish Mohamed Hassan, who works at the Scansom publishing house in Stockholm, defiantly proclaimed in 2008, ‘We are here, whether
you like it or not!’ at the ‘Kielten kudos [Tissue of Language] – textum linguarum’ seminar in Helsinki dealing with multicultural writing in Finland and Sweden. Perttu’s and Hassan’s proposals exemplify a call for more visibility of authors with a minority background. However, migrants are not a homogeneous category and the obstacles to being acknowledged by the dominant national literary field which the major literary institutions are part of vary. When considering issues of presence and visibility in relation to literary fields, it is important to have in mind the target groups of the works of authors with a minority background. To claim that migrants per se are marginalised is a simplification. It is obvious that there are barriers when it comes to language. Authors writing in minority languages such as Karelian and Somali, for example, are often not acknowledged by the dominant national literary field simply because they will not reach out to readers in the majority population, including those actors in the literary field, such as publishers, academics and critics, who may contribute to the visibility and success of a writer.

The fact that migration and minority status are diverse and multifaceted phenomena is illustrated by the authors mentioned above. Minority groups may be seen as more or less ‘strange’ and ‘alien’ compared to the ethnic majority. This is certainly the case in Finland and Sweden where black Muslim migrants from Africa often are seen as more different than white European immigrants. For immigrants themselves who have been violently uprooted, the contexts of upheaval vary. They may have been subjected to displacement due to shifting national borders as in the case of the Karelians, or as an effect of conflicts on geographically distant continents such as Africa.

The studies in part II, III and IV of this volume relate to different geographical and historical contexts, which are interconnected with the various forms of migration that have led to the arrival of people who have found themselves struggling to cope with Finnish and Swedish society, respectively. Experiences of encounters with the new country, which by and by may become the new homeland, are reflected in imaginative writing by authors with experiences of migration. The migration of Finnish labourers to Sweden is reflected in Satu Gröndahl’s and Kukku Melkas’s contributions to this volume, the latter also discusses material related to the placing of Finnish war children (‘krigsbarn’) in Sweden during World War II. Migration between Russia and Finland is discussed by Marja Sorvari, while Johanna Domokos attempts at mapping the Finnish literary field and offering a model for literary analysis. Transformations of the Finnish literary field are also the focus of Hanna-Leena Nissilä’s article discussing the reception of novels by a selection of women authors with an im/migrant background.

The African diaspora and the arrival of refugees to Europe from African countries due to wars and political conflicts in the 1970s is the backdrop of Anne Heith’s analysis of migration and literature, while Pirjo Ahokas deals with literature related to the experiences of a Korean adoptee in Sweden. Migration from Africa to Sweden also forms the setting of Eila Rantonen’s article about a novel by a successful, Swedish author with roots in Tunisia. Exile, gender and disability are central, intertwined themes of Marta Ronne’s article, which discusses the work of a Swedish-Latvian author who arrived
in Sweden in connection to World War II. As this brief survey indicates, migration is a heterogeneous phenomenon, and migrants do not share a common history or cultural background. However, there are experiences which migrants share, namely the encounter with a new country, a new language and new traditions. These encounters may be described as frustrating, but also as transformative when ideas of home and belonging change. It is not rare that authors describe feelings of multiple belongings and the shaping of new hybrid identities and cultural forms that emerge when the baggage from the past is intertwined or replaced with experiences of living in a new country, which gradually becomes more and more familiar.

The Finnish literary institutions mentioned by Arvi Perttu above are part of a literary field where mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion operate. In Bourdieu’s influential description of the literary field, the concept of ‘cultural capital’ plays an important role for analysing issues of power, inclusion and exclusion (Bourdieu 1996). People with the appropriate cultural capital have the power to make statements about literary value, which an author’s success or failure is based upon. If we accept Bourdieu’s model, it is hardly correct to claim that all authors with a minority background are marginalised. On the contrary, it is a significant feature of the contemporary literary scene both in Finland and Sweden that there are authors with a minority background who have been very successful when it comes to getting positive attention in major national newspapers, as well as other media. This means that they have been successful on the dominant literary field. To some extent, alternative literary flora has emerged in connection to possibilities for getting subsidies for publishing literature in minority languages. This development is related to political decisions aiming at supporting publishing in minority languages.
In Sweden, The Swedish Arts Council has granted support for literature published in immigrant languages since the 1970s, the decade when immigrant policy in general was reformulated by the Swedish government. When it comes to authors with an immigrant background, there are both commercially successful authors published by the major commercial publishers in Finland and Sweden, as well as writers published by small publishing houses with a specific ethnic, cultural or ideological profile. The status of these publishers varies. In a study of ‘immigrant’ and ‘minority’ literature in Sweden between 1970–2000, Lars Wendelius suggests that Swedish publishers of fiction form a hierarchy with four levels. The old, well-established, Stockholm publishers Bonniers and Norstedts are found on the most prestigious top level, while publishers with an ethnic profile are found at the bottom (Wendelius 2002, 25).

There are also transnational publishing houses engaged in publishing for diasporic groups. Scansom Publishers, mentioned above, describes itself as ‘the leading publisher and distributor in Somali language materials’ on its website. Considering the marginal status of Somali languages in Finland and Sweden, it is hardly surprising that literature in Somali languages receives little attention in the Finnish and Swedish literary fields, respectively. The target group of literature in Somali languages is a transnational, diasporic group of readers. As a rule, this type of literature does not get any attention on the dominant national literary field in Finland or Sweden. However, if an author of African descent writes in Finnish or Swedish in Finland and Sweden respectively, there is the possibility that s/he may be appreciated for providing new perspectives on the new homeland when depicting it from the vantage point of a stranger. This is the case, for example, in Swedish Sami Said’s successful first novel Väldigt sällan fin from 2012 (Heith 2016). Said, who was born in Eritrea, came to Sweden at the age of ten. The reception of Said’s novel shows that being black and a Muslim, and writing fiction about it in a predominantly white society, may prove to be positive assets when critics with a cultural capital that qualifies them as literary judges applaud the work as interesting and important. If an author with a migrant background and roots in a culture traditionally seen as alien to white European culture, such as African cultures, successfully writes about the particular experiences of being black Muslim and Swedish, there is nothing to indicate that this author will be marginalised on the literary field (Heith 2016).

However, there are different responses to how to deal with issues such as ethnicity and background. While Arvi Perttu and Mohamed Hassan seem to wish for more visibility of the authors with a minority and migrant background, there are also those who wish to dismiss the category of ethnicity altogether. In an essay from 2005, the Swedish writer Astrid Trotzig critically examines categorisations such as ‘suburban novel’ (‘förortsroman’) and ‘immigrant literature’ (‘invandrarlitteratur’, Trotzig 2005). The essay is included in a volume about Orientalism in Sweden and it is presented as an example of how authors with an immigrant background are exotified and
othered in Swedish mainstream culture (Matthis ed. 2005). But, there are also diametrically different responses to terms such as ‘immigrant writer’. Finnish Zinaida Lindén, for example, who has been described in reviews as an immigrant author, does not perceive this label negatively, declaring that ‘I’m definitely an immigrant author’ (Hämäläinen 2005).

There are many examples of successful author’s with a minority background, and experiences of migration, who extensively use themes related to migration and minority status in their work (Heith 2004, Heith 2012, Heith 2014). In fact, this forms a body of literature which transforms national literatures in both Finland and Sweden by introducing new perspectives, themes and modes of writing. It is obvious that themes like ethnicity, race, cultural – and not least religious – diversity, cultural encounters, as well as issues of transforming identities, home and belonging are explored in contemporary Finnish and Swedish literature related to experiences of minority status and migration. Backdrop of this volume is the fact that nations are transformed and that this calls for new modes of writing. The volume brings together researchers from various countries doing research on intersections between cultural transformations, transnationalism and migration in Finland and Sweden.

The focus of the contributions is contemporary fiction relating to experiences of transnational migration and changing borders as in the case of the Karelian migration to Finland. Other central themes are cultural transformations related to the displacement of groups of people and the emergence of new cultural forms. Migratory flows are discussed below in the section ‘Migration to Sweden and Finland: Refugees and labour immigrants’. Migration and cultural diversity are central themes of this volume, but it must be kept in mind that neither migration, nor cultural diversity, are new phenomena. A study of multicultural Sweden claims that Sweden, historically, has never been as cosmopolitan as it was in the 17th century, when political debates were held in Low German, Dutch and Swedish (Svanberg & Runblom 1990, 9).

The development of a body of literature by authors with experiences of transnational migration has been different in Sweden and Finland. In Sweden, this kind of literature has been part of the literary field since World War II, while in Finland this cultural phenomenon has become visible only during the last decades. As mentioned above, the aim of this volume is to offer perspectives on transformations of the nation, which occur when the Finnish and Swedish society and culture are narrated by transnational migrants, or citizens with an immigrant background.

---

1 Also see Magnus Nilsson’s study Den föreställda mångkulturen. Klass och etnicitet i svensk samtidsprosa (Nilsson 2010). Nilsson dismisses studies of ethnicity while proposing that class is a more relevant category to investigate. This perspective is not relevant for this volume, although Satu Gröndahl discusses ethnicity and class as relevant categories for analysing literature relating to the migration of Finnish labourers to Sweden.
Some Reflections upon Terminology

The time span in focus for this volume is the period after World War II. Naturally, the terminology for categorising and analysing literature related to migration has changed during the decades. Today there are a number of concepts and theories for analysing this literature. Concepts such as ‘multicultural literature’, ‘postcolonialism’, ‘transculturalism’, ‘transnationalism’, ‘migrant writer’, ‘migration literature’ and ‘migratory aesthetics’ are problematized in contemporary literary theory. The abundance of terms demonstrates that the concepts connected with immigration are socially and politically charged. For instance, the concept of ‘immigrant literature’ has been contested and new terms have been proposed. As the diametrically opposite views of the authors Astrid Trotzig and Zinia Lindén concerning the terms ‘immigrant literature’ and ‘immigrant author’ mentioned above show, there are different responses to terminology and there is no consensus that terms like ‘immigrant literature’ or ‘migrant literature/s per se are essentialising or marginalising.

In some of the case-studies the term ‘migrant literature’ is used. However, the term ought to be used with caution. Merolla and Ponzanesi highlight problematic aspects of the term, such as the issue of when an individual ceases to be a migrant (Ponzanesi & Merolla 2005, 25). Still, Merolla and Ponzanesi themselves use the term ‘migrant literatures’. Another potential problem with the term is its vagueness when used in an extended fashion for designating migration in a symbolic sense. If everybody experiencing flux and transformation is seen as a migrant, the term is no longer useful for categorisations of specific forms of literature. The articles of this volume deal with various forms of migration in a literal sense; thus, when considering the thematics, the terms ‘migrant literature’ or ‘migration literature’ are relevant. The term ‘migration literature’ has been proposed in order to define imaginative writing by textual, thematic and stylistic criteria (Gebauer & Schwartz Lausten 2010, 4).

In social and literary theory, new concepts that attempt to describe the migratory phenomenon, at the same time avoiding the concepts of ‘immigrant’, ‘migrant’ or ‘migration’, are constantly being proposed. For example, Simon Harel, among others, prefers the term ‘postexilic writing’ instead of migrant writing (see Lindberg 2013, 16.). This resembles an older term, exile literature, which describes the mental, political and social process of migration and writing literature in exile. Furthermore, Anders Olsson has underlined that modern ‘exile literature’ is intimately connected to a wide and sophisticated understanding of ‘world literature’, written by trans-border authors who do not ‘have a specific national foothold’ (Olsson 2011, 186).

Migrants oscillate between nations, cultures and languages, their presence can thus be seen as a questioning of the supposedly homogeneous nature of nations, cultures and languages. This view has gained ground in the discussions of postcolonial theory concerning alternative spaces, a third space, and contact zones. In the essay ‘The Commitment to Theory’, Homi K. Bhabha discusses ‘the Third Space’ as a ‘contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation’, which destabilises the ‘the narrative of the Western nation’
The concept of the ‘contact zone’ was developed by Pratt to describe social spaces where ‘disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of dominance and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today’ (Pratt 1992, 4). Both the idea of the third space and that of the contact zone has been used in analyses of fiction about encounters between migrants and their new places of residence in order to describe new hybrid cultural forms. For example, Søren Frank characterises the in-between-state of migrants and migration literature as a vibrant and hybrid space that challenges the dualisms with which we categorize the world; migration literature occupies a middle ground where the exclusive either-or can be transformed into an inclusive both-and (Frank 2010, 40–41).

In the present discussion about problematizing nation-building in Finland, the concepts ‘transnational literatures’ and ‘entangled literatures’ have been proposed (Pollari et al. 2015, 2–29). This reflects the fact that...
deficiencies have been observed in the terms ‘post-colonial literature’ and
‘diasporic literature’ in referring to cross-cultural literary writing (Ashcroft,
Griffiths & Tiffin 2009, 214). The concept ‘entangled literatures’ has been
gaining ground, not least in Estonian studies of national literature.2
Transnational writing can take place both inside and outside the nation. It
presents literature as a travelling phenomenon that changes the cultures of
the spaces it enters and is itself changed by them in return. Transnational
literature may free literature from the ideological baggage of national
concerns as Azaze Seyhan (2010, 13) suggests. The broad definition of
‘migration literature’ covers the studying of transcultural, transnational and
translingual aspects.

Another term that is relevant when considering literature related to the
dispersal and displacement of various groups of people is that of ‘diaspora
literature’. As mentioned above, some prefer the term ‘transnational writing’
or ‘entangled literatures’ when focusing upon cross-cultural writing. The
term ‘diaspora literature’ has in particular been used in analyses of the
dispersal of black people with roots in Africa (Beezmohun ed. 2016), but
also in connection to other groups that have been violently up-rooted from
their countries of origin. When discussing the emergence of black cultures in
locations where people with African roots have settled, Stuart Hall proposes
the term ‘diaspora aesthetics’ (Hall 1997; Heith 2014).

Recently more attention has been paid to the aesthetic distinctiveness of
‘migration literature’. For example, the ‘migrant novel’ has been defined as
a specific genre that has its own formal criteria and historical range. Frank
(2010, 47–48) emphasizes that through its form, the migrant novel expresses
the experiences of cultural relations and globalization. For example, Seyhan
(2010, 18) notes that national belonging appears as a trope, in the form of
an allegory or metonymy, in the work of many writers situated within and
outside a nation. This trope may take, for example, the form of a melancholy
longing for a specific city as a metonymy of the old homeland.

Theoretical Vantage Points: Postcolonialism, the Minoritarian
Condition and New Literatures

A central theme of postcolonial theory is how minorities and migrants
contribute to alternative narratives of the nation, which deconstruct cultural
homogenisation based on the notion that the majority has the preferential
right of interpretation and that the ethnic majority constitutes a norm, which
other groups ought to conform to (Bhabha ed. 2008). These themes have been
highlighted in discussions of postcolonialism in the Nordic Region; the role
of minorities in changing ideas of the nation is emphasised, including both
domestic minorities and groups with an immigrant background (Rantonen

2 The aim of the Estonian project ‘Entangled Literatures: Discursive History of
Literary Culture in Estonia’ which runs between 2014–2019 is to rewrite
homogenising narratives of Estonian literary history by drawing attention to input
from different cultural traditions and linguistic spaces.
In particular, ideas of Nordic exceptionalism have been challenged as well as implicit notions of Nordic superiority (Keskinen et al. eds. 2009; Loftsdóttir & Jensen eds. 2012). When discussing this theme in *Complying with Colonialism: Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Nordic Region*, Keskinen et al. appropriate Spivak’s concept of ‘colonial complicity’, claiming that colonising structures and practices which have marginalised and racialised minorities and immigrants have prevailed in the Nordic countries, as they have elsewhere (Keskinen et al. 2009).

This is also the major theme of the volume *Whiteness and Postcolonialism in the Nordic Region: Exceptionalism, Migrant Others and National Identities*, which aims at problematizing notions of Nordic exceptionalism, the idea that the Nordic nation-states are more democratic, egalitarian, and modern than the rest of the world (Loftsdóttir & Jensen 2012, 1–11). The notion of Nordic exceptionalism is connected with the shaping of national self-images based on the idea that ‘we’ are more progressive, modern and enlightened than ‘them.’ This mode of thinking is presently being problematized in critical whiteness studies, which emphasise that whiteness is socially constructed and that there are various forms of whiteness. In the context of Swedish race biology, for example, which flourished in the 1930s, the so called ‘Nordic racial character’ was constructed as the superior racial category, while other groups, such as the Sámi and the Tornedalians were seen as ‘not quite white’ (Lundborg & Linders 1926; Heith 2012b; Heith 2015).

In the preface of the Routledge Classics Edition of *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha discusses a ‘minoritarian condition,’ which he claims is a kind of global citizenship (Bhabha 2008, xxi). Bhabha’s discussion is related to migration in the last two or three decades characterised by ‘more people living across or between national borders than ever before’ (ibid.). The reasons and backgrounds to the minoritarian condition vary. Bhabha makes connections to the transnational migration of labour and refugees, and internally displaced peoples, respectively. As a response to these new minoritarian conditions connected with migration, Bhabha proposes remapping, against the backdrop that unassimilated minorities historically have been seen as a threat to national unity (Bhabha 2008, xxii). In this context, Bhabha dwells upon the minorities’ right to narrate (Bhabha 2008, xxv).

Remapping is also a central theme of the study *Migrant Cartographies: New Cultural and Literary Spaces in Post-Colonial Europe* (Ponzanesi & Merolla 2005). The main conclusion of the volume is that new migrant cartographies are emerging in imaginative writing, and that these transform notions of home, belonging, space and identity. The cultural production of these emerging migrant cartographies are characterised by hybridity and blending, central traits of post-colonial literatures (Ashcroft, Griffiths

---

3 Ponzanesi and Merolla refer to the debate in France about the term ‘migrant literature’, which has been connected with marginalisation. There has also been a discussion about whether the concept of the ‘migrant’ is used metaphorically or not (Ponzanesi & Merolla 2005, 25). Against the backdrop of this discussion, some researchers have chosen not to use the term ‘migrant literature’ (Heith 2016).
Anne Heith, Satu Gröndahl & Eila Rantonen

In order to emphasise the emerging and diverse character of post-colonial literature, the term ‘New Literatures’ has been proposed. ‘– “New Literatures” stressed the emergent nature of work from post-colonised societies and connoted freshness and difference’ (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2009, 150). This definition suggests that ‘freshness and difference’ are characteristics of new postcolonial literatures – both are qualities that may be positive assets contributing to success in the literary field, where innovation and newness traditionally have been prerequisites for visibility and praise. These new literatures are connected with a ‘minoritarian condition’, to paraphrase Bhabha, and to themes related to migration. Being a part of Europe and the globalised world, Finland and Sweden are of course affected by transnational migratory flows, which transform the nation, and by how it is narrated in fiction.

One effect of migration from the African continent is that the issue of skin colour has become a prominent theme in European literature. This is reflected in the volume Continental Shifts, Shifts in Perception: Black Cultures and Identities in Europe (Beezmohun ed. 2016). This volume is part of the growing research field of African-European Studies, which focuses upon how experiences of the African diasporas are expressed in imaginative writing. In Sweden, this theme is explored for example by the successful writer Johannes Anyuru (Heith 2012; Heith 2014; Heith 2016). Prominent themes of this kind of writing is the racialisation of black (brown, or non-white) bodies, and bordering practices, which traditionally have defined the nation as white, Christian (or secular) and non-Muslim.

Migration to Sweden and Finland: Refugees and labour immigrants

Over the past decades, the Nordic capital cities have become increasingly multicultural. After World War II, Sweden especially has been a destination for labour immigrants and refugees from around the world. Its industry grew rapidly and required an expansion of the labour force. From the 1970s onwards, an increasing number of refugees from different continents have ended up in Sweden. Today Sweden receives more refugees than any other country in Europe per capita. Finnish immigration to Sweden has also been extensive since the World War II and especially in the 1970s (Reinans 1996, 69–71).

During the period of 1945–1980, roughly 400,000 individuals moved from Finland to Sweden as labour force immigrants. Thousands of political refugees sought asylum in Sweden during the 1970s, due to the activities and persecution of intellectuals by dictatorial regimes. A large number of Greeks also migrated to Sweden during the period of Greek military dictatorship, 1967–1974. After the military coup in Chile in 1973, a large number of Chileans came to Sweden as refugees. In Swedish immigrant history, the 1980s has nevertheless been characterized as the ‘decade of asylum seekers’ when refugees from many war-torn countries such as Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Eritrea and Somalia tried to come to Sweden. Also refugees from Kosovo and the former Communist Bloc joined the queues of asylum
seekers (cf. Svanberg & Runblom 1988). During the 1990s, ethnic cleansing connected with the collapse of Yugoslavia sent many people into exile. Sweden became a host country for more than 100,000 former Yugoslavians, mainly Bosnians. Many of the ethnic groups referred to above, such as Estonians, Sweden-Finns, Latin Americans, Kurds and Iranians, started to organize publishing activities collectively, even their own publishing houses and distribution channels, soon after arrival. The literature produced by these ethnic groups mirrors their specific political and cultural background, but also their socio-economic situation in Sweden.

An understanding of multiculturalism, as well as of ethnicity in general, in the 1970s was in the Swedish official policy connected to social movements and progress in terms of the liberal welfare state's ambitions to guarantee freedom of choice and equal conditions to all citizens, including immigrants. During this period, the Swedish government declared that immigrants and other ethnic groups required affirmative action in order to be integrated, in order to enrich the Swedish culture and finally, in order to promote cultural exchange with the former home countries (Lundström 1996, 45). What distinguishes Sweden from Finland and most other European countries is that the cultural and linguistic rights of ethnic minorities in Sweden were initially formulated from the perspective of immigrants' needs, alongside the need to define practices in what was generally understood as being a new 'multicultural' society. The introduction of what was termed 'home language tuition' in 1964 (called 'mother-tongue tuition' from 1996 onwards) at school level initially referred to immigrant languages, but the historical languages Finnish and Sámi were nevertheless included in the practice. These domestic languages were also included as recipients of public subsidies for literature published in other languages than Swedish, introduced in 1978 and managed by The Swedish Arts Council.4

Today, 18.5% of the population in Sweden was born abroad (ca 1.9 million people) and every fifth child born in Sweden has at least one foreign-born parent. According to the demography statistics from 2017, the most common countries of origin for foreign-born people in Sweden are Syrien (172,000), Finland (ca 151,000), Iraq (140,100), Poland (92,000), the former Yugoslavia and Somalia (66,000), Iran (74,000), Bosnia-Hercegovina (59,000) and Germany (51,000). Next come countries such as Afghanistan and Turkey (44,000–48,000); and Eritrea and Thailand (38,000–41,000). (SCB 2018) During the last years, the number of Syrians has increased and

---

4 From 1999, when Sweden ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection on National Minorities, there has been an official separation between integration policy and minority policy, the latter directed to national minorities. National minorities and minority languages in Sweden are Jews/Yiddish, Roma/Romani Chib with all varieties, Sámi/Sámi with all varieties, Sweden-Finns/Finnish, Tornedalians/Meänkieli. Even though Finnish is officially defined as a national minority language in Sweden, Sweden-Finnish literature can also be understood as migration literature since the contemporary Sweden-Finnish population consists of first, second and third generation immigrants.
the number of asylum seekers from the war-torn Syria was, during 2015 until November, ca 149,000 (FORES 2016).

Migration has not been as widespread a phenomenon in Finland as in Sweden. Still, migration is not a new phenomenon in Finland either. Historically, the largest group of people immigrating to Finland consisted of the evacuated Karelians from the Karelian Isthmus, Ladoga Karelia and East Karelia, areas that Finland lost to the Soviet Union after World War II. The estimated number of evacuated Karelians was around 400,000 and the total number of evacuees constituted 11% of the entire Finnish population in 1944. Finland has even been considered the most multicultural country in Scandinavia in the beginning of the twentieth century. In the first decades of the twentieth century, most migratory waves came to Finland from Russia and the Soviet Union, as well as from the Baltic countries. Then numerous immigrants and refugees from the neighbouring regions, such as Ingrians, Karelians, Russians, Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians moved or escaped to Finland. Many of them already belonged to different groups of minorities when still living in Russia or the Soviet Union.

Later on, the largest immigrant groups in Finland have been the refugees from Chile and Vietnam in the 1970s and from the 1990s onwards especially from Somalia, Iran, Iraq and from the regions of the former Yugoslavia, in particular from Bosnia-Herzegovina. Due to the collapse of the Soviet Union, most contemporary immigrants in Finland originate from Russia or the Baltic countries. Consequently, Russian and Estonian are the most spoken languages among immigrants in Finland, followed by Arabic, Somali and English. As Russians in Finland constitute an old minority group and Russian has been spoken in Finland for a long time, it is not surprising that Finnish-Russian literature today seems to constitute the largest ‘migration’ literature in the country. Regarding the country of origin, the largest immigrant groups in Finland at the end of 2017 were those born in the former Soviet Union / Russia (approximately 75,000), Estonia (50,000), and immigrants born in Iraqi (20,000), Somalia (19,000) and former Yugoslavia (12,000) (TI 2018). During recent decades, immigrant groups from India and China, in particular, have found work in the information technological companies.

At the end of 2017, about 385,000 persons of foreign origin, were living in Finland. This makes up ca 7% of the whole population (TI 2018).

Short survey: Research on Migration and Literature in Finland and Sweden

After the end of the war, there was a flow of refugees to Sweden from countries such as Germany and the Baltic States, comprising considerable numbers of intellectuals and cultural workers. Even though we tend today to understand the 1970s as a constitutional decade when migrant and ethnic writing started in Sweden, such literature was in fact already under way after World War II. The existence of this literature has been discussed by
Introduction

critics in Sweden at least since the late 1940s, when Nelly Sachs (1981–1970) published her first volume of poetry in Sweden, *In den Wohnungen des Todes* (1947, [In the Houses of Death]). Sachs was of Jewish origin and was born in Berlin. She arrived to Sweden as a refugee in 1940 and was awarded prestigious prizes in Sweden and Germany, the most famous of which is The Nobel Prize in Literature 1966. To a certain extent, one can say that Sweden has offered significant political support to many exile authors – as well as ‘migrant’ authors – and Sweden has also afforded support and residence to them. Another example is Latvian Zenta Mauriņa (1897–1978), discussed below in chapter IV.

Literature written by refugees from war-torn Europe and the Baltic States does nonetheless exhibit a difference in character compared with what was later often to be known as multicultural, ethnic, migrant or migration writing. These earlier authors were already well acquainted with European literature and possessed a fair amount of cultural capital, which could immediately be adjusted and used under Nordic circumstances. As the debate on multicultural society started on a larger scale during the 1970s, the writing of authors with their roots in other countries became more visible during this period and from then on. After the end of the World War II, there was a shortage of labour in Sweden and many immigrants of working age found jobs in an expanding market. Immigrants came chiefly from neighbouring Nordic countries, plus Italy, Greece, the former Yugoslavia and Turkey. During several decades, the most famous author of foreign origin in Sweden has been Greek-born Theodor Kallifatides (b. 1938). He writes in Swedish, made his debut as early as 1969, and has published more than 30 works. Kallifatides’ extensive production has without doubt contributed to the concept of the (im)migrant author in Sweden – it has been said that he indeed embodies ‘the immigrant author’ – and he has contributed to the growth of this concept in scholarly debate relatively early on. During the late 1990s, the anachronous term ‘second generation immigrant author’ was launched and Jonas Hassen Khemiri’s novel *Ett öga rött* (2003), in particular, generated a widespread discussion about the authenticity and representation of ‘immigrant literature’ (cf. Boije 2010).

The contribution of migrants to Finnish and Swedish society has been large and its effects on culture, as well as literature, have not yet been properly estimated. ‘Migration literature’ has been studied increasingly in Sweden since the 1970s. The earliest works and studies of immigrant and ethnic minority authors published in Sweden consist of general mappings and presentations of the works and authors, such as Helmer Lång’s *Svenska europeer. Essäer om invandrarförfattarna Martin Allwood, Karl H. Bolay, Jörgen Nash, Alexander Weiss* (1976, [Swedish Europeans. Essays on the Immigrant Authors Martin Allwood, Karl H. Bolay, Jörgen Nash, Alexander Weiss]). Since the 1980s, the mapping of the various immigrant literatures continued, such as Anneli Eriksson’s *Grekisk invandrarlitteratur i Sverige* [Greek Immigrant Literature in Sweden, 1982] and Mana Aghaeë’s *Lexikon över iranska författare i Sverige* (Aghaeë 2002a, [Lexicon of Iranian Authors in Sweden, 2002]). Surveys have also been made of Kurdish, Estonian, and Polish exile or migration literatures in Sweden.
When it comes to general presentations of diasporic literatures as autonomous literary fields, the scholars often seem to fetch their descriptive models from the traditional, canonized literary histories of their home lands, based on the idea of a relatively homogenous nation. These literatures – such as the Estonian, Persian and Kurdish literature in Sweden – are connected to the old homeland and native language; literature written in Swedish by the descendants of these groups is understood as a special category. Because the implicit model for these presentations derives from the concept of national literary history, the exile or diaspora literature described can rarely be thought of as complete, sufficiently aesthetically attractive, or viable in the long term. Estonian first-generation exile literature in Sweden has, for example, been characterized as an offshoot of Estonian national literature, written in Estonian and related to the political situation of Estonia itself. In Sweden, some overviews that focus on Estonian writing in a Swedish national context have been published and included in anthologies concerning larger mappings of ethnic groups in Sweden (Nõu 1988; Warfvinge 2002).5 After the independence of Estonia 1991, the exile Estonian publishing activities of the first generation came to an end in Sweden (Warfvinge 2002, 257). The production of Estonian authors has been characterized as of high quality and modern, this reflects the fact that the group of refugees from Estonia included one third of the members of the Estonian Writers Union.

Furthermore, Mana Aghaee's (2002b) presentation of Persian writing in Sweden locates this particular literature in an Iranian and international context, rather than a Swedish one. Therefore, in Aghaee's article 'Den persiska litteraturen i Sverige' as in some other overviews, there is an inbuilt contradiction when it describes exile literature of today as an incomplete literary form, defined through deprivation. This description is motivated with comments on the varying literary quality, lack of certain genres such as children's literature, lack of continuity etc. On the other hand, Aghaee also pays attention to the rich and varied flora of magazines published in Sweden, with, for example, a focus on gender related issues. It is also emphasized that publishing in Sweden offers opportunities for freedom of speech in a way that is not possible in Iran.

Kurdish literature, especially literature written in North Kurdish, Kurmanji, attracted particular attention in Sweden during the 1990s and 2000s. As opportunities for the development of Kurmanji and writing in the language have been greatly limited even criminalized in Turkey, Sweden with its subsidy system for literature in immigrant languages became an important residence for authors and scholars from North Kurdistan (Tayfun 1998). M. Tayfun's (1998) analysis of literature production in Kurmanji can be seen as a typical example of research produced outside the academic world. The point of departure is clearly the politics of identity and the Kurds' situation in their homeland. Tayfun considers Kurdish literature published in Sweden to be part of the ethnic and national movement of the Kurds.

5 The Eesti Kirjanike Kooperatiiv, Sweden-Estonian cooperative publishing house in Lund, has also published overviews on Estonian literature (for example, Kangro 1989).
The anthology *Litteraturens gränsland: Invandrar- och minoritetslitteratur i nordiskt perspektiv* (2002, [The Borderlands of Literature: Immigrant and Minority literatures from the Nordic Perspective]), edited by Satu Gröndahl, includes several surveys of migration literatures in the Nordic countries. Even though studies on this type of literature have never occurred on a larger scale in Sweden, it is obvious that the interest has grown considerably over the years.

The earliest works and studies of immigrant and ethnic-minority authors published in Sweden before the 1980s were practically and pragmatically orientated, rather than theoretically. During the 1990s, the surveys of such literatures written in other languages than Swedish were more often than not included in diverse anthologies, frequently in historical or interdisciplinary volumes. Alternatively, they were products of individual cultural workers outside of academic circles, and were published by small publishing houses with an ethnic profile. These surveys endeavoured to situate and analyse immigrant and ethnic literatures as relatively autonomous fields, taking account of the specific group’s history, culture and socio-political circumstances.

The monolingual paradigm prevails in Swedish literary histories, and one can say that literature written in ‘other languages’ are still waiting for surveys and more comprehensive expositions in Sweden. However, literary anthologies such as *Den osynliga litteraturskatten* (2010, [The invisible treasure of literature]) offer valuable insights into exile and migration literature written in Sweden today. Interestingly, the editors Anna Franklin and Reza Rezvani have used relatively strict criteria when choosing the authorships – the authors should be members of The Swedish Writers’ Union, preferably use an established publisher, and use their mother tongue as their literary tool (Franklin & Rezvani 2010, 9). The carefully edited anthology includes, in addition to translated texts, comprehensive interviews with Leonardo Rossiello (Uruguay), Farhad Shakely (Iraq), Helga Nõu (Estonia), Morteza Rezvan (Iran), Rafik Saber (Iraq), Kostas Koukoulis (Greece) and Ak Welsapar (Turkmenistan).

Comprehensive studies of migration literature have not yet been published in Finland although many journals and anthologies contain discussions and surveys on migration literature as well as research on specific authors. One of the earliest theoretical discussions of migration literature in Finland is Kai Mikkonen’s article ‘Muukalaisten kielellä. Maahanmuuttajien kirjallisuus ja monikulttuurisuuden merkitys’ (2001, [In the Language of Strangers. Migrant literature and the Meaning of Multiculturality] in the journal *Kanava*. In his article, Mikkonen discusses the applicability of the concepts ‘migrant author’ and ‘migrant literature’ to the Finnish literary field. He emphasises the shifting multi-ethnic and multilingual contexts of the ethnicity and nationality of authors with migrant background. Mikkonen also points out that their texts should not be read only as an expression of cultural identity. Moreover, Eila Rantonen (2006, 2010) has written overviews of migration literature in Finland, and co-written with Hanna-Leena Nissilä a survey of international writers in Finland as well as the representation of migrants in Finnish literature in *Suomen nykykirjallisuus*
Furthermore, Rethinking National Literatures and Literary Canon in Scandinavia (2015) includes Olli Löytty’s critical discussion on the use of the concept of ‘immigrant literature’ in Finnish literary studies. He prefers, instead of ‘immigrant literature’, the term ‘transnational literature’ (see also Nilsson 2010; Löytty 2013).

Hanna-Leena Nissilä’s dissertation ‘Sanassa maahanmuuttaja on vähän kitkerä jälkimaku’. Kirjallisen elämän ylirajaistuminen 2000-luvun alun Suomessa (2016, [‘The word migrant has a somewhat bitter aftertaste. The transnationalization of literary life in Finland at the beginning of the 2000’s]) focuses on four female migrant authors’ novels and how transnational and cross-border writers are situated in the literary field in Finland. So far, Nissilä’s work is the most extensive study on migrant or transnational literature in Finland.

Only a few mappings of specific migrant literary groups and their historical developments exist in Finland. Sorvari’s chapter in this volume, for example, presents a cartography of works by writers with a Russian background in Finland. Eila Rantonen (2009) and Anna Rastas (2014) have written about writers of African descent in Finland. Rastas has also edited a book dealing with multicultural issues in children’s literature Kaikille lapsille: lastenkirjallisuus liikkuvassa monikulttuurisessa maailmassa (2013, [To All Children: Children's Literature in a Moving Multicultural World]).

Suomen nykkykirjallisuus I and II (2013, [Contemporary Literature of Finland]) includes chapters that discuss contemporary writers with a migrant background, as well as multicultural themes in Finnish literature such as children’s literature, detective novels and science fiction. Anthologies, for example Både och, sekä ett: Om flerspråkighet – Monikielisyydestä (2011, [A bit of both: About multilingualism]) edited by Heidi Grönstrand and Kristina Malmio, also discuss the new multilingual and multicultural conception of ‘Finnish literature’. The most fruitful and multifaceted studies about ‘migration literature’ in Finland and Sweden of today seem to be produced in the intersection between contemporary, multilingual literature and the extended concept of a national literature.

During recent years, studies on what is called the ‘monolingual paradigm’ have been introduced both in Sweden and Finland, with inspiration from amongst others, Yasemin Yildiz’ critical study Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition (2012). According to Yildiz, the appearance of the monolingual paradigm around 1800 and its continuing impact have changed the meaning of multilingual practises. In his thesis, Markus Huss studies Peter Weiss’ (1916–1982) bilingual authorship in Sweden as a literary reflection on how human language ‘might be imagined, what it means to “possess” a language, but also the existential as well as aesthetic consequences of having one’s language “taken away” from you’ (Huss 2014, 217). Julia Tidigs underlines in her study of multilingualism in the prose of two Finnish-Swedish authors, Jac Ahrenberg (1847–1914) and Elmer Diktonius (1896–1961) respectively, that the author’s multilingual background is often used as an explanation for textual strategies (Tidigs 2014, 315). Tidigs argues for recognition ‘of the diversity and variety’ of the effect of multilingualism
as a literary phenomenon (Tidigs 2014, 320). The language situation and discourses of multiculturalism are also topicalized in Literature, Language, and Multiculturalism in Scandinavia and the Low Countries (Behschnitt et al 2013).

Since the mid-1990s, there has been a renewed interest among the literary readership and within scholarly studies in what is termed ‘working class literature’ in Sweden (cf. Furuland & Svedjedal 2006, 372). In many respects, Swedish working-class literature had withdrawn from the literary scene, i.e. media and research, during the period characterised by liberal market ideologies during the 80s, which undermined the significance of this traditionally important genre in the Nordic countries. The renewed interest in ‘working class literature’ and class-related theory construction might, on the one hand, be seen as an attempt to find analytical tools for the social critical novels of a group of authors who started publishing their works from about the mid-1990s. These authors, such as Sweden-Finnish Susanna Alakoski (b. 1962) and Eija Hetekivi Olsson (b.1973), deal with the experiences of growing up in the Swedish welfare state during the 1980s, when the proud national social engineering project, ‘folkhemmet’, was already beginning to show signs of cracking, inequality in society grew and segregation became more apparent. On the other hand, this interest might also be linked to the critical view of the concept of multiculturalism and influences from intersectional approaches, launched mostly within gender studies during this very period.

The institutionalizing processes within the field of migration literature are different in Finland and Sweden. While there in Sweden have been literary magazines, publishing houses and authors’ organizations for several migrant groups ever since the Estonian refugees and asylum seekers found their way to Sweden during the 1940s, it seems that in Finland, authors of specifically Russian origin have organized themselves into a literary group. The cross-cultural literary journal LiteraruS – literaturnoe slovo was founded in 2003 and it publishes works and texts by writers living in Russia and Russian-Finnish writers. One reason for the discrepancy between authors’ organizations in Finland and Sweden is without doubt the considerably higher number of migrants in Sweden. One has also to bear in mind that since the 1970s, the Swedish Arts Council has administered a special allowance for literature written in languages other than Swedish. This in turn, has encouraged the organization of migrant authors and publishing houses. The Immigrant Institute, a non-governmental organization, was founded in 1973 in Borås7 and The Institute of Migration in Turku was founded in 1974. These

---

6 Moreover, the project ‘Multilingualism in contemporary literature in Finland’ (2014–2016) is likely to influence the description of Finnish literature; the project analyses multilingual elements of Finnish literature within a relatively broad scope. The project is funded by Kone Foundation and the project leader is PhD Heidi Grönstrand.

7 During the 1970s, the Immigrant Institute started to publish bibliographies of immigrant and exile authors in Sweden. While the first volume Lexikon över invandrarförfattare i Sverige ['Lexicon of Immigrant authors in Sweden', Diehl & Strömberg 1977] deals with authors of different ethnic backgrounds, the following
institutes have also documented the works of immigrant writers in Sweden and Finland.

The migrant experience as an impetus to writing and creativity is frequently featured in migration and transnational literature. (Kongslien 2013, 133.) This volume explores multicultural writing and the position of a writer between cultures. It also discusses less studied contemporary literary groups from a historical perspective. Further, it presents comparative aspects on the reception of literary works and explores theoretically the intersectional perspectives of identities (e.g. class, gender, ethnicity, ‘race’ and disability).

Outline of the volume

Besides the introductory chapter, this four-part anthology consists of a selection of articles representing diverse theoretical, historical, thematic and analytical approaches to the study of contemporary Finnish and Swedish fiction related to the emergence of new literatures concerning migration and ‘a minoritarian condition’. The case-studies are divided into three chapters: II ‘Generational Shifts’, III ‘Reception and Multicultural Perspectives’ and IV ‘Writing Migrant Identities’.

The first article of chapter II, ‘Generational Shifts’, is ‘Sweden-Finnish Literature: Generational and Cultural Changes’ by Satu Gröndahl. The article presents a general, historical survey of selected works by different generations of Sweden-Finnish authors. Gröndahl’s conclusion suggests that a gradual shift has occurred away from narratives of language loss and conflicts with the Swedish society among Finnish migrant workers. This involves a move from an emphasis on Finnish ethnicity towards a hybridized understanding of Sweden-Finnishness, which in turn reflects a gradual integration into Swedish society. Furthermore, the article discusses a growing focus upon social class in later works by Sweden-Finnish authors, as opposed to questions of ethnicity, which predominated previously.

As suggested by the title of the second article of chapter II, Marja Sorvari’s ‘Native, Foreign, Translated? 'Russian' Migrant Literature between Finland and Russia’, the author examines literary representations of ‘in-between spaces’. These spaces are described as locations where migrants are caught up between languages, cultures and ‘homes’. Sorvari discusses how the works by Zinaida Lindén, Liudmila Kol’, Arvi Perttu, Inna Latysheva and Inna Patrakova may be related to the concepts transculturation, contact zone and diaspora, all known from postcolonial theory. The conclusion of the article is that the authors discussed can be subsumed under the concepts of ‘migrant or transnational literature in Finland’. Their work contributes to changing the
understanding of cultural identities, when these are constructed in a ‘contact zone’ where different cultures, languages and spaces operate.

The first article of part III is ‘Literature and Children In-Between – The Entangled History of Finland and Sweden in Svinalängorna, Mother of Mine and Ingenbarnsland’ by Kukku Melkas. The article discusses the reception of works by Susanna Alakoski, Eija Hetekivi Olsson and Klaus Härö with perspectives from trauma theory and research on transnational literature. Melkas proposes that Sweden-Finnish literature exists in a no man’s land, ‘in between two literary canons’. Further, the theme of an in-between status is reflected thematically in the story told by children in between childhood and adolescence.

The second article of part III, Johanna Domokos’s ‘Multicultural Dynamics and the Finnish Literary Field’ has a two-fold aim: 1) to discuss transformations of the Finnish literary field from the vantage point of constructions of ‘the multicultural’, and 2) to explore a theory and methodology of an écriture multiculturelle. Domokos aims to develop a structuralist methodology for the narrative analysis of texts categorised as multicultural. The article includes a close reading of ElRamly in the light of the proposed concept écriture multiculturelle.

The final article of part III is Hanna-Leena Nissilä’s ‘Transnationalizing Finnish Literature – Perspectives on the Reception of Debut Novels by Zinaida Lindén, Ranya ElRamly, Umayya Abu-Hanna and Alexandra Salmela. Nissilä discusses the reception of the debut novels of four female authors with an immigrant background, highlighting the role gender plays for the public reception of the novels. The article concludes that the discussed novels represent transnationalism and that they contribute to changing the Finnish literary institution.

The final section, ‘Writing Migrant Identities’, begins with Anne Heith’s article ‘The African Diaspora, Migration and Writing: Johannes Anyuru’s En civilisation utan båtar’. The article examines Johannes Anyuru’s autobiographical text from 2011. En civilisation utan båtar is analysed against the backdrop of Paul Gilroy’s discussion of the Black Atlantic, hybrid identity formations and literary aesthetics of the diaspora as formulated by Stuart Hall. The article concludes that Anyuru’s multifaceted text contributes newness to the Swedish literary field by exploring the identity-formation of a black Swedish Muslim, as well as exploring new modes of writing based on the blending of elements from different cultural and literary traditions.

This analysis is followed by Pirjo Ahokas’s contribution ‘Is Love Thicker Than Blood? A Bi-Cultural Identity Process in Astrid Trotzig’s Blod är tjockare än vatten’. Ahokas’s article deals with the themes of migration in relation to transnational adoption, the identity formation of a Korean adoptee in Sweden and a criticism of Sweden’s colour-blind multiculturalist ideology. The discussion is based on an analysis of Astrid Trotzig’s autobiographical novel Blod är tjockare än vatten. ‘Identity’ and ‘trauma’ are key concepts in Ahokas’s exploration of racialization in Trotzig’s novel.

The next article, Marta Ronne’s ‘Narratives of Exile, Gender and Disability in Swedish-Latvian Zenta Mauriņa’s Autobiographical Writings’, focuses
upon the interconnectedness between the themes of exile, gender and disability in the writings of Zenta Mauriņa. The article explores the theme of exile from various theoretical vantage points. It also introduces perspectives from disability studies. Ronne proposes that Mauriņa’s exile in Sweden was negatively inflected, that disability is conceptualised as exclusion, and that melancholy and sorrow are ever-present in her exile writings.

The final article of the volume is Eila Rantonen’s ‘Writing Biography by E-Mail – Postcolonial and Postmodern Rewriting of Biographical and Epistolary Modes in Jonas Hassen Khemiri’s Montecore’. Using perspectives from postcolonial theory and aesthetics, Rantonen performs a close reading of the epistolary mode in the novel Montecore. The article focuses on generic renewal, proposing that there are connections between migration literature and new modes of writing.

References

Gebauer, Mirjam & Schwarz Lausten, Pia 2010: Migration Literature: Europe in
Introduction


Keskinen, Suvi et al. (eds.) 2009: *Complying with Colonialism: Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Nordic Region*. Farnham & Burlington: Ashgate.


Rastas, Anna 2013: Kaikille lapsille. Lastenkirjallisuus liikkuvassa, monikulttuurisessa maailmassa. Helsinki: SKS.