



## Uncanny Spaces of Transformation: Fabulations of the Forest in Finland-Swedish Prose

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The forest is a special space for the people of Northern Europe. As Emily Brady (2003, 22) has argued, the forest has a significant meaning in definitions of cultural identity in all Nordic countries; the forest is a space for solitude that enables (urbanized) people to encounter not only nature but also themselves. In Finnish literature the forest has been a recurrent theme for centuries. Depictions have varied from romantic notions of the woods as a magical environment to describing it as an important natural resource and commercial commodity. The Finnish forest is not only a holy site but also an environment of hard labor and a marked element of modern capitalism.

Finland is a country full of forests. The state economy depends on the success of forest industry to export, for example, the knowhow of forestry, products manufactured in pulp mills and paper factories; the forest industry is still the main natural resource in Finland. Forests, however, have always been important to Finnish citizens in other ways as well. The woods engender mythologized meanings dating back to the folklore gathered in

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*Kalevala* (1849), the Finnish national epic, and the poems of the *Kanteletar* (1840). This forest mythology, varying from a place of solitude to a natural resource to be profited from or to be exploited, is still reproduced in literature today. Because of its huge national importance, the forest has been written about a lot, whether focusing on the aesthetics or philosophical aspects of the woods (see, e.g., Sepänmaa et al. 2003), forest conservation (see Roiko-Jokela (ed.) 1997; Lähde 2015), or the literary depictions of the forest in climate poetry (see Lummaa 2008)—to name but a few examples. In this chapter, however, I will be discussing the ways in which the forest is regarded as an important space not only for humans but also for non-humans.

The starting point of this chapter is to elaborate on the ways in which the chosen examples of recent Finland-Swedish fiction depict the forest. I discuss the actualizations of this thematic in three works of Finland-Swedish prose fiction: *Gräset är mörkare på andra sidan* (2012; “The Grass is Darker on the Other Side”) by Kaj Korkea-aho, *Camera Obscura* (2009) by Johanna Holmström, and *Martina Dagers Längtan* (1998; “Martina Dager’s Longing”) by Henrika Ringbom. They all testify to the enduring significance of the forest as a spatial image in Finnish literature. My discussion will take up similarities in the depictions of the forest in these texts, but it will also show how forests are understood as having special and multiple functions.

According to Pertti Lassila (2011, 20), who has studied depictions of nature and especially forests<sup>1</sup> in Finnish literature from the eighteenth century till the 1950s, Finnish literature regards nature and the forest as an alternative, as a contrast or as a counterforce, to human beings and their culture. In folk poetry the forest is seen as a holy place that differs from the sinful world of human beings (Tarkka 2005, 259). During the nineteenth century the poetry of Zacharias Topelius depicted forests and nature in connection with loving the homeland and as a metaphor and promise of the afterlife; Johan Ludvig Runeberg described nature as a book where God’s greatness is manifested (see Lassila 2011, 126). Both Topelius and Runeberg have been canonized as national Finnish authors and their representations of forests are filled with nationalistic overtones.

In these literary depictions, which date back to past centuries, Finnish forests undergo a bifurcation, pointing either to other-worldly dimensions (whether to Christian or pagan beliefs) or to the material world inhabited by humans. This chapter argues that today forests are presented as a site to

negotiate between the two poles of human and non-human entities, but instead of treating them as oppositions, contemporary fiction problematizes them by attaching itself along the moving line between them.

The title of Pertti Lassila's study is "The Blissful Forest" (*Metsän autuus*). In the introduction Lassila says that his main interest lies in the historical changes that have taken place in Finnish literature and its world-views regarding nature. Lassila argues that in the literature of the latter half of the twentieth century—the period this chapter deals with—nature and forest have lost their credibility as an existential, spiritual, or ideological alternative to the culture of human beings. Lassila maintains that instead of remaining as an important existential and ideological site, nature has become commercialized, and it is treated as a place of recreational activities, adventure, and consumption in post-war fiction (Lassila 2011, 20–1).

Lassila's views are, however, strikingly anthropic and anthropocentric, since for him the forest is merely a human space, a reflection of human mentality. The three works of contemporary Finland-Swedish prose fiction I discuss in this chapter contest Lassila's views. They are works of literature that bring forth existential questions, ideological and even spiritual issues, while pondering on the relationship between "nature" and "culture." It seems that all three texts are also moving away from the anthropocentric perspective and changing the focus to see the human condition side by side with non-human existence. And they elaborate on these questions in connection with Finnish forests. One of the main questions of this chapter is: How do these literary texts problematize anthropocentrism by placing the forest as the focal point of narration?

I argue that in recent Finnish prose fiction written in Swedish, the forest is materialized as a space of and for transformation—and in here I discuss these transformations in detail. Additionally, it seems that by focusing on the depiction of the forest, literary expression can also tackle the question of manifold encounters between human and non-human creatures (such as animals or monsters)—these encounters are filled with various affects. This chapter asks questions such as: How is the forest depicted as an affective space? How do the characters perceive forests? What is the relationship between the characters and the spaces in which they are situated? In order to answer these and other questions I turn to the geophilosophical concepts of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari and then proceed to an analysis of the novels.

THINKING LITERARY FORESTS WITH DELEUZE  
AND GUATTARI

I tackle the transformative nature of the forests in these novels by thinking about literary space using the geophilosophical concepts of Deleuze and Guattari. To start with, the prose fiction by Kaj Korkea-aho, Johanna Holmström, and Henrika Ringbom exceed the limits of the representational regime by creating such forests that cannot be experienced in our everyday reality: they do not invest in re-presenting existing Finnish forests but create new forest lands through imageries of transformation, liminal spaces, and human–non-human encounters. While giving expression to the spatiality of the forest, they thus emphasize the imaginative forces of literature. To use a concept created by Gilles Deleuze alone and in collaboration with Félix Guattari, they explore *fabulation* (see Deleuze 1989, 133), of telling stories of new spaces, creating new spatialities of the forest. These forests can only be imagined; they are the result of literary fabulation. Conceptually, fabulation emphasizes imagination and the creation of something new, which does not stem from reminiscence or fantasy (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 171). According to Ronald Bogue (2010, 18–20), the concept of fabulation also presents itself as deeply political, since Deleuze connects fabulation with the invention and creation of a social collective. Deleuze calls this collective that authors and other artists fabulate in their works *people to come* (peuple à venir). Deleuze (1989, 216) writes about *a people who are missing*, and therefore it is the task of the artist to invent a people. As Gregory Flaxman (2012, 227) points out, the force of fabulation lies in the affirmation of a people and politics that is yet to come.

The prose fiction of Korkea-aho, Holmström, and Ringbom invents new forests, but they can also be said to enter the area of *the powers of the false* (puissance du faux), another concept coined by Deleuze. Although, as Gregory Flaxman (2012, xvii–iii) has pointed out, Deleuze uses the concept sparingly, it is found throughout Deleuze’s philosophical thinking. The powers of the false cover a region of stepping over such thinking that is governed by a division into “the truth,” “the real,” “the wrong,” and “the fictional.” Instead of trying to find the truth, the powers of the false celebrate “the false,” and by affirming its existence the forces to create the new, to fabulate, are born. As Deleuze (1989, 133) writes:

(...) contrary to the form of the true which is unifying and tends to the identification of a character (his discovery or simply his coherence), the power of the false cannot be separated from an irreducible multiplicity. “I as another” [Je est un autre] has replaced Ego = Ego.

The logic of the powers of the false rests on the movement toward the creation of the new, that is, of fabulation, of telling stories. It gives several forms to the false/unreal, because its foundation is metamorphosis, becoming.

When literature is understood as Deleuzian fabulation and as an expression of the powers of the false, it also engenders a special way of studying literary spaces; unlike, for example, what Bertrand Westphal suggests in his geocritical approach, literary spaces are not discussed as re-presenting “real” spaces or as referential spatialities nor is literature seen as a mimetic art (see Westphal 2011, 3). Instead the emphasis lies on the potentialities of literature to fabulate new kinds of spatialities. In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari (1994, 85) write:

Subject and object give a poor approximation of thought. Thinking is neither a line drawn between subject and object nor a revolving of one around the other. Rather, thinking takes place in the relationship of territory and the earth. (...) the earth constantly carries out a movement of deterritorialization on the spot, by which it goes beyond any territory: it is deterritorializing and deterritorialized.

Drawing on this citation, thinking or studying literature means forming a spatial relation with the work of art. The book or literature is not considered a separate object of study onto which the subject (i.e., the researcher) reflects his/her perspectives and concepts. Instead, studying literature means thinking with literature. According to Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert (2005, 5) in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari configure new ways for spatial fields, which replace the tripartite division of spatial fields normally associated with “mental representations” such as literature: the field of reality (the world), the field of representation (the book), and the field of subjectivity (the author). Instead of these, Deleuze and Guattari think of literature as an assemblage of planes, of lines, and between these, points of variation (becoming)—in another words literature expresses the movements between chaos (*terra*) and socially, linguistically, bioethologically, and so on reframing territories. The earth, *terra*,

can be infinitely divided and framed (Grosz 2008, 17) into new territories through the movements of de- and reterritorializations. For Deleuze and Guattari the production of space is much less based on a history of labor and social relations—as is the case with, for example, Henri Lefebvre—than a history of desire and perception (Tynan 2016, 482). “Geography (...) is not merely physical and human but mental, like the landscape,” Deleuze and Guattari write (1994, 96).

Spaces are thus affective sensations, but spaces are also born with perception. A body or matter can be perceived and sensed as located in a certain geometrical space, which can be described as a set of relations formed by the body in its location. For Deleuze, however, as Claire Colebrook (2005, 196) insists, space is not constructed from sense, socially and culturally consisted, but spatiality opens sense, since “any location bears the potential to open up new planes, new orientations.” Deleuze does not see space as effected from sense, but instead spatiality is an opening to sense. To study spaces in this manner also means acknowledging them as always already different in themselves, constantly changing. It also means focusing on the potential of literature to produce, to fabulate, new spatialities. As Aidan Tynan (2016, 484) has written, the geophilosophy of Deleuze and Guattari “is a means of tracing the relationship between thought, politics and space that have dominated Western consciousness, but it also insists that our concepts and institutions have been geographically conditioned.”

In what follows I will discuss Kaj Korkea-aho’s, Johanna Holmström’s, and Henrika Ringbom’s prose with spatial concepts by Deleuze and Guattari.<sup>2</sup> The functions and actualizations of the forest in these texts take different forms, and it is thus necessary to consider them with different concepts. When discussing Korkea-aho’s novel, I focus on the ways the forest becomes territorialized as the space of the uncanny—the uncanniness of the forest is shared by all three depictions. The forest in Holmström’s prose undergoes a process of transformation effected by the movements of the characters—the concepts of territory, reterritorialization, and deterritorialization are useful in approaching this transformation. Ringbom’s novel builds on the juxtaposition of two spaces, the city and the forest, which I discuss with the concepts of the striated and smooth space. I will define these conceptualizations when using them. First, I will discuss Korkea-aho’s novel, then Holmström’s, and finally Ringbom’s prose.

## TERRITORIALIZING THE FOREST AS UNCANNY

In the beginning of Kaj Korkea-aho's<sup>3</sup> *Gräset är mörkare på andra sidan* (2012; "The Grass is Darker on the Other Side"), a sudden earthquake makes a peaceful forest tremble, shake, and wave like a stormy ocean. The earthquake lasts only 20 seconds, but afterward the inhabitants of Gränby, a fictional village located in Ostrobothnia in Western Finland, return to discuss the convulsive sensations of "(...) standing on the ground which no longer felt stable" (Korkea-aho 2012, 19).<sup>4</sup>

The earthquake is described in connection with the forest, as the narrator depicts shivering branches, rabbits running aghast, or a rumbling noise traveling fast through the forest resembling an underground freight train. By choosing to concentrate on the effects that the earthquake has on non-human creatures and on nature, the narrator also chooses to move away from an anthropocentric perspective. The scene appears as if the forest, or the whole earth, were at the point of transformation, which can be conceptualized with the concept of *deterritorialization* as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (see 1988, 310–50). The very beginning of the novel thus points to a forest undergoing deterritorializing movements: the area, the territory of the forest, formerly territorialized as a rigid, solid, and peaceful space, is turning into something else. The forest becomes dispersed through the process of deterritorialization. Situated in the early pages of Korkea-aho's novel, the scene also functions as a premonition of future happenings, which are again centered in the forest. Korkea-aho's novel consists of many storylines, several central characters acting as focalizers, and it covers a multitude of themes. The storyline in which the forest has a special function focuses on Christoffer, a young man who returns to Gränby, where he grew up as a child. Christoffer and his friends gather to spend time together and also to reminisce about their childhood, when they used to play in the forest. The forest now no longer appears as a happy space filled with joy and laughter, but a frightening space of violence and anxiety.

In the course of the novel the forest is depicted, for the most part, like any Finnish forest. The narration functions in terms of familiarity when describing the forest—in other words, the description *reterritorializes* those features of the forest that are known to most Finnish readers into the ways the novel builds the territorial area of the forest. The Finnish legislation with its legal concept of "everyman's right" gives everybody the chance to enjoy outdoor activities and the country's vast forests with few

restrictions. This freedom to roam in the forest is also actualized in Korkea-aho's novel. The forest is territorialized as an adventurous playground for the nearby village children. Adults go jogging on the pathways in the forest and yearly a big running competition takes place there. An isolated gravel road runs through the forest, where people pick berries and mushroom. All in all, the forest in Korkea-aho's novel appears to be a typical Finnish forest, filled with activities characteristic of the traditional Finnish forest-centered lifestyle.

At the same time, Korkea-aho's novel also invests in the forces of literary fiction to fabulate and imagine new kinds of spaces. The forest described in the novel is anything but typical, because a huge monster dwells there. The villagers have told stories about the monster for so long that it has become a mythical creature. In a fashion reminiscent of horror or ghost stories, the characters of the novel blame the monster for killing children decades ago as well as for deaths currently taking place.

Interestingly, though, the monster is neither illusory nor real, but something in-between. The villagers are convinced they have seen the monster, but for the most part the novel builds on the suspense created by the thoughts of the main characters as they ponder whether this dark, shadowy creature is a real, an actual material being, or has been born from the imagination. This suspense is heightened by the fact that one of the key figures, Christoffer, is completing his Master's thesis on a mythological figure called Raamt. Raamt belongs to the fictitious folklore oral tradition of the Ostrobothnian region, where it is taken to represent "pure evil," although, according to Christoffer's study, sometimes Raamt is also seen as a kind of guardian angel who protects young children. The monster living in the forest is juxtaposed with Raamt in the course of the novel. The creature is photographed sitting beside a woman in the front seat of a car just seconds before the car mysteriously crashes while she is driving through the forest. The novel hints that the monster causes the woman's death. The central characters of the novel also meet the monster on several occasions. Due to this, the monster becomes a real figure within the reality of the novel's storyworld.

Reading the novel, one becomes puzzled by the monster: How is it possible that a typical forest near a typical village might contain a creature normally reserved for fairy tales and horror stories? The reader experiences a sense of doubt especially because the novel's narration mostly builds on psychological realism and mimetic attitude in terms of reality. Thus, in Korkea-aho's novel, the most natural Finnish space, the forest—according



to the Finnish Natural Resources Institute forest or forest land covers 78% of the total area of Finland (see Metla 2015)—is turned into something unnatural or supernatural. In other words, the forest undergoes a process of deterritorialization and enters the area of *the uncanny*.

Korkea-aho's novel departs from "consensus reality" (see Hume 2014, 21) and proposes a world where the laws of our world are integrated with laws uncommon to us—thus his novel can claim to give expression to the powers of the false, which efface the hierarchical oppositions between "right" and "wrong." Following Tzvetan Todorov's (1987, 41–51) definition, Korkea-aho's novel can be placed in a specific genre of fantastic literature: the uncanny. As Todorov points out, the genre manifests itself in many variations ranging from Edgar Allan Poe to Dostoyevsky, but perhaps the one characteristic element common to all of them is that the existence of the supernatural is given a rational explanation. In Korkea-aho's novel the existence of the supernatural monster is linked to the personal psyche of the central character, Christoffer, and the being of the monster is given a rational explanation, but the reader still remains somewhat puzzled. The monster is born from Christoffer's anxiety and distress, which are combined with his knowledge of the mythical figure of Raamt. At the end of the novel Christoffer is finally able to recognize his depression and its manifestation in the monster. After that the monster disappears from the forest, but remains on guard inside Christoffer, ready to come alive again if necessary. Rosi Braidotti (2002, 201), upon writing on the monstrous as a dominant part of the social imaginary, argues that twenty-first-century horror and science-fiction literature and film show an exacerbated version of anxiety in the form of the "otherness within": the monster dwells in the character's embodied self, ready to unfold. Korkea-aho's novel manifests this.

In this chapter I do not, however, concentrate on the figure of the monster or on definitions of the genre of the uncanny. Instead, I focus on the forest, the monster's milieu, by posing the following questions: Why is it that in contemporary Finland-Swedish prose fiction the forest is inhabited by uncanny elements? Why is the forest a space in which the uncanny takes place? Korkea-aho's novel is not the only example of recent prose depicting the Finnish forest as a space to negotiate the relationships between natural and unnatural happenings, since Johanna Holmström's *Camera Obscura* and Henrika Ringbom's *Martina Dagers längtan* are also examples of the uncanny forest, as this discussion will later show.

In his study of the uncanny, Nicholas Royle (2003, 6) argues that the uncanny is a “means of thinking the so-called ‘real life’, the ordinary, the familiar and everyday.” For Royle, the uncanny is not a literary genre, but a critical elaboration bound up with analyzing, questioning, and even transforming what is called “everyday life.” Referring to Anthony Vidler, Royle (2003, 6) writes that the uncanny is a metaphor for a fundamentally unlivable modern condition. The uncanny is an expression of estrangement and unhomeliness typical of our times. The uncanny forest per se has a long tradition in Western literature, from Shakespeare’s forests to the fairy tales of the Grimm brothers, among others, and the Finland-Swedish prose fiction dealt with in this chapter also reinforces the uncanny forest.

In Korkea-aho’s, Holmström’s, and Ringbom’s prose, the forest becomes a space for questioning the borders of everyday life. As “a strangeness of framing and borders, an experience of liminality” (Royle 2003, 2), the uncanny has an immense affective force, which in the works under scrutiny in this chapter seems to be connected with the problems of defining both the human and the non-human in the contemporary world. The uncanny appears as an affective encounter between humans and non-humans; this encounter is either embodied inside the characters as a form of “otherness within,” as in Korkea-aho’s and Ringbom’s novels, or with non-human creatures, such as the wolf in Holmström’s prose. Most significantly, these encounters take place in the forest. Korkea-aho’s novel moves away from anthropic attitudes by allowing the unhuman qualities to enter the scene in the figure of the monster. In bringing realistically depicted human characters together with a clearly fictional monster and by claiming that both of these are “real” characters, Korkea-aho’s novel exemplifies the uncanny. But at the same time, Korkea-aho’s novel follows the logic of the Deleuzian powers of the false, which celebrates the existence of the uncanny and questions the division into (hierarchical) oppositions.

### VANISHING POINTS IN THE FOREST DARKNESS

In Johanna Holmström’s<sup>5</sup> *Camera Obscura*, a group of friends, young adults living in the Finnish capital of Helsinki, discuss their options on how to most effectively oppose the capitalist system and consumer society. The topic of their discussion makes Holmström’s prose late modern. One of them, Ida, says that the only way to stop the capitalist apparatus is to destroy it. To her, the destruction of capitalism can only be achieved by

abolishing the part that is necessary for the continuation of the machinery: the consumer. Although as a group they cannot stop other people from buying things, they can at least stop themselves from consuming. Another member of the group, Anna asks: “What? What shall we do then? Shall we move into the forest and build a tiny cabin there and live off nature?” (Holmström 2009, 46). Ida’s answer to Anna’s provocation is an emphatic “no,” her own suggestion being that they should “quit existing” and commit suicide, fulfilling her idea by jumping off a balcony. Later, however, Anna, her boyfriend, and another couple move into an isolated forest, since as radical eco-activists they need to escape the police after performing a violent act against fur farmers. They literally live in and off the forest, a place in which to hide from the norms and ideologies of the prevailing society. From the perspective of the society, the group “quits existing” and vanishes into the forest.

To begin with, the forest is thus connected to ideological issues in Holmström’s book. In comparison to the long tradition of Finnish forest fiction, which focused on the peaceful bliss of the forest (see Lassila 2011, *passim.*), Holmström’s forest becomes a site to negotiate between various ecological and economic ideas concerning the prevailing world. The forest is territorialized as a space of politics and ethics—the forest is marked by them, since the characters of the novel return to discuss the forest in terms of different ideologies of consumer capitalism and ecological activism. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari (1988, 314–16) write about how territories are produced by repetitious rhythms; in Holmström’s novel the forest is depicted on several occasions as a space where eco-activists and conservatives fight each other. But at the same time the forest in Holmström’s prose is also reterritorializing traditional dimensions of the forest: for Anna and her friends the forest is a space to hide, to be alone, and to rest.

The title of Holmström’s book, *Camera Obscura*, can be understood in at least two ways. It refers to a literal “dark room,” and many dark and gloomy places are depicted in the course of the happenings, varying from Ida’s room in Helsinki to the forest where Anna and her friends hide. Anna, walking alone in the forest, faces an especially dark and gloomy room with elements of the uncanny when she comes across a tiny, run-down, seemingly inhabited cabin. Anna takes a look inside the cabin through a small window and is shocked to see a little baby, sitting alone at the kitchen table. Anna soon realizes that the baby is a doll, skillfully crafted to look lifelike. To meet this spooky figure in the middle of the

woods gives birth to an uncanny experience—a strange combination of the mechanical and the natural (see Royle 2003, 2). But the title of the book also refers to the functional optical medium, which, according to Friedrich Kittler (2010, 52) made the revolutionary concept of a perfect perspective painting possible. Camera obscura, starting from the eye of the observer, offered new combinations which involved the eye, pinhole images, paintings, mirrors, and the outside world (Kittler 2010, 57). Camera obscura enabled linear perspective in which the parallel lines of an image seem to converge to a vanishing point.

The functional camera obscura can also be linked to the genre of Holmström's book. The subtitle defines the work as a collection of "short stories," and it is indeed possible to read the book as seven long short stories. The title story "Camera Obscura" also takes up the optical device when the main character, a photographer called Laura, remembers "(...) an artist who believed he could see the world clearer with a camera obscura, the truth in a box, distorted but nevertheless exact" (Holmström 2009, 202). The stories or the chapters are all linked together through their characters. The Laura of the title story, for example, is the half-sister of the above-mentioned Anna; characters function as lines that connect chapters to each other. As the stories progress, they also shed light on the whereabouts and fates of the characters in the other stories. Holmström's work can thus also be seen as a novel in which chapters offer different perspectives, albeit sometimes briefly, on the happenings. As a whole, the composition of Holmström's hybrid work seems to function on the level of constant re- and deterritorialization, since the stories/chapters explain and complete previous happenings in different circumstances, forming a rhizome-like continuation of intersecting lines. Events are reframed in new territories.

More important, the novel seems to put forth an image of thought, which acts upon and fabulates with the various elements connected to camera obscura by thematizing and conceptualizing them. Most of the chapters are narrated by a third-person narrator, though focalized through a main character, which gives this character's perspective on what is narrated. In the chapters minor or major characters literally vanish, either by dying or by disappearing—this infatuation with death and disappearance (see Royle 2003, 2) also enhances the uncanniness of the work. In "The Children of the Dollmaker," at the beginning of the twentieth century in St. Petersburg small children are disappearing; in "Camera Obscura" Laura's girlfriend keeps on disappearing and returning; and in "Blue

Anemone Hill” (“Blåsippbacken”) a skater drowns in the icy sea. It is as if the narration forms a collection of lines, which converges into a hole, a vanishing point in the manner of the camera device itself.

In “The Year of the Wolf” (“Vargens år”), Anna acts as the focalizer on the plane of composition. As such, her perceptions and affects have a strong impact on the ways the forest is expressed. It is as if the description is set on a line creating a kind of beam of light analogous to Anna’s affects. When she feels threatened, the forest is depicted as a violent environment, where “stones are sharp and relentless” and “the spruce stand high like spearheads” (Holmström 2009, 58). When walking in the forest and leaving the cabin behind, Anna “feels safe again in the clear-cut area” (Holmström 2009, 62). Sometimes “the forest is a tunnel of a spanning light” (Holmström 2009, 91). These depictions of the forest are thus always connected to the ways that space affects Anna; the literary expression of space cannot be separated from the senses and sensation of the person perceiving them—in one sense Anna herself functions as the mechanical camera obscura: the perspective is restricted only to cover her affective observations. The forest is deterritorialized into an affective space when Anna wanders there alone: the political aspects linked to the forest no longer prevail. In this way the forest is deterritorialized into a regime of subjective signs as Anna’s passions and consciousness color the space (see Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 508).

The events of the story take place in the forest, where Anna and her three friends have hired a small cabin with only basic amenities, such as an outdoor toilet. They have no nearby neighbors and the only visitor they meet is their landlord, an elderly man. Their car is parked hidden behind the cabin, because they do not want to leave any signs of themselves living in the cabin. The gravel road or rather the path leading to the cabin has no name, nor has the cabin, and for Anna they are both “pieces of a world that has been forgotten” (Holmström 2009, 54). At the very beginning of the chapter Anna is depicted at a point of becoming something else, at the edge of transformation: she sits alone in the kitchen looking at the ceiling, the walls, and the kitchenware, but slowly she starts to breathe heavily, exposing her teeth while sensing a spatial image inside her mind. She imagines the Big Bang taking place at that very moment, and she realizes that the empty space is expanding more and more, and there is no way to escape it. Anna feels small and insignificant.

Right after this scene Anna is depicted as “having the look of an animal”<sup>6</sup> (Holmström 2009, 56). In the totality of “The Year of the Wolf” an animal, namely a wolf, and human beings are intertwined in a complicated

manner. The landlord comes to warn Anna and her companions of a pack of wolves that has been seen and heard in the forest, and he is about to form a team to hunt them down. This causes a serious conflict between him and the eco-activists, for whom the wolves have every right to live and wander in the woods. They argue fiercely about the wolves and their rights with dramatic consequences. Lotta and Markus, two of the cabin dwellers, call some other eco-activists, who arrive in the woods with drums and horns to warn the wolves, causing the local hunting group to become very upset and angry.

The wolves also play an important role in the ways the chapter builds the territory of the forest. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari (1988, 310–50) discuss how a territory is constituted as an area with boundaries separating it from the outer milieu. A *refrain* or *ritornello* (ritournelle) marks the boundaries of the territory. A refrain is not just any borderline, but it draws an expressive relation between the territory and its milieu. The territory itself is an assemblage and its maintenance and cohesion is also regulated by the refrain. The refrain is a rhythmic feature because it keeps on framing the territory again and again. Refrains also mark new territories through de- and reterritorializations. The territory can be transformed into a new or expanded area or be stabilized again. In Holmström's "The Year of the Wolf," a wolf becomes an expressive element delineating the territory of the forest, or rather a more-than-human assemblage, formed by Anna and the wolf, becomes the refrain defining the contours of the forest. The wolf and the pack formed by Anna and the wolf function as a refrain—their assemblage, as Deleuze and Guattari (1988, 232) note, "draws a territory and develops into territorial motifs and landscapes." The encounters between Anna and the wolf are also deterritorializing the forest into the space of the uncanny, since these encounters between them are fabulated in a manner which expands over natural laws and everyday life: wolves and humans rarely intertwine in such friendly ways as Holmström describes them. Producing an eerie atmosphere, these scenes also engender the potentiality of founding a new kind of collective consisting of wild animals and humans interacting with each other in a non-violent way. The uncanny forest opens up a new set of spatial relations that enable the "more-than-human" people to come.

When Anna meets the wolf for the first time, she takes the creature to be a skinny and shaggy German shepherd. The wolf stands at the corner of the cabin's outdoor toilet and stares at her. After realizing it is a wolf Anna is startled. The wolf keeps returning to the cabin yard always when

Anna is alone, and soon she is so used to the she-wolf that she even feeds her. When Anna wanders alone in the forest, the wolf is always near her, making herself both seen and heard:

Då hon [Anna] når snårskogen och letar efter en väg runt det täta gallret hedjas hon för andra gången den eftermiddagen, då den långa utdragna tonen når henne. Den ensamma vargen vänder nosen mot himlen och ylar. Hon ylar högt, längtande, länge, och i dag får hon svar. (Holmström 2009, 93)

When she [Anna] reaches the brushwood and looks for a way around the thicket she is stopped for the second time this afternoon when a long, drawn out sound reaches her. The lonesome wolf turns its nose towards the sky and howls. She [the wolf] howls loud, longing, for a long time, and today she gets a reply.

In Holmström's novel the territory of the forest is described as a space where more-than-human encounters are made possible in the manner of "otherness within"—by letting human animosity surface. In the many scenes where Anna undergoes metamorphic changes, the forest is pictured as a manifestation of *affect*. As Deleuze and Guattari (1994, 169) write: "Affects are precisely these nonhuman becomings of man." Slowly, Anna is described as increasingly developing the gestures and appearance of an animal, sometimes feeling a strong urge to "growl and grasp their [her friends'] throats with her teeth" (Holmström 2009, 89). The wolf, on the other hand, is sometimes depicted as a docile pet-like creature. But Anna's friends, Sebbe, Lotta, and Markus, also become juxtaposed with wolves. The narration gives special attention to the fact that the she-wolf forms a pack with three other wolves, just like Anna forms a pack with her three friends. In this way the forest is deterritorialized into a space in which human beings become animals. In the case of Anna her transformation also helps her to escape from the despair and sadness she has felt ever since her best friend Ida committed suicide. Becoming an animal is the vanishing point for Anna.

Just as the human characters are animalized, the she-wolf is humanized. The human and the non-human are set in a flipped, reversed order, which is a means to thematize the ways the camera obscura device functions: the user of the device sees the object upside down. The characterization in the text is thus based on "being double," the duplication of Anna and the wolf enabling the uncanny to be manifest as the ghost-like figuration of these creatures: Anna is doubled in her wolf-like gestures, and the wolf is given

a ghostly addition when she is described as resembling a human (see Royle 2003, 16). In many scenes in “The Year of the Wolf” the wolf is an anthropomorphic figure. A flashback takes the reader into Anna’s childhood. The narrator recounts how Anna’s mother, who suffers from severe mental problems, took her five-year-old daughter to the forest and left her there. Anna waited and waited for her mother to return and take her home, but she never did. After a long time Anna hears steps running toward her and soon sees the face of a furry dog with yellow eyes. Anna realizes that it is not a dog but some other animal, and begins crying and reaching out with her hands as if somebody was there to take her in her arms. Seeing Anna crying, the wolf—for that is what it is—stops its loud noises and begins sniffing Anna. The wolf looks into Anna’s eyes, turns and stands close by the girl. Anna, who is no longer crying, takes hold of the wolf’s fur and together they walk out of the woods.

In this flashback reminiscence the wolf is a guide or a surrogate mother taking care of the little girl. By narrating this scene from Anna’s past, the refrain of the more-than-human assemblage is enhanced in the story. This story of the past also brings new elements to the territorialization of the forest by deterritorializing it to fill it with affects associated with aloneness and abandonment. The refrain of the wolf turns into a *line of flight* (*ligne de fuite*), a way toward transformation and change—the wolf functions as a positive line of flight (see Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 133), since she enables Anna to literally escape from the loneliness and disappointment of being abandoned in the middle of the forest.

At the very end of the chapter the scene of the wolf leading Anna away from her childhood forest is reterritorialized into another setting, as the past event of Anna’s childhood is brought to the present day. Anna is alone in the cabin when she sees the wolf standing outside. Anna is no longer astonished by the wolf; she keeps looking at the wolf, she meets her yellow eyes and nods. Anna steps outside and for a moment it seems that the wolf will run away. But she remains standing still, waiting for Anna, and together side by side they walk deeper and deeper into the forest and vanish there.

The forest in Holmström’s prose undergoes several transformations, constantly deterritorializing into new assemblages. Holmström’s forests underline the fact that these are indeed places of high biodiversity in which many forms of life—both human and non-human—interact with each other in affective encounters. The forest for Holmström appears as a literal vanishing point, an escape from consumer capitalism and from life itself—



when Anna and the wolf disappear into the dark forest, it becomes a space of absolute deterritorialization, a space of death. Simultaneously, the forest also points to a potential future-to-come; the complicated manner of combining ethical and ecological issues in the encounter between Anna and the wolf also points to a potentially new kind of collective: an assemblage of humans and non-humans inhabiting the same space. In Holmström's book, however, this potential is only partially fulfilled: Anna and the wolf step into the vanishing point.

### DISAPPEARING INTO SMOOTH FOREST

Henrika Ringbom's<sup>7</sup> novel *Martina Dagers längtan* (1998; "Martina Dager's Longing") builds an oppositional spatial imagery between Helsinki and a small forest, reachable by local city buses, situated in the vicinity of the city. The described spaces of the novel do not function as a background to the storylines; instead spatiality comes to the fore, both in terms of happenings and in terms of textual spatiality. As the novel constructs its spatial imagery, it both creates an opposition between the city and the forest, and deconstructs this oppositional positioning. Both spaces are defined in relation to each other. In the course of the novel the city and the forest are both depicted in terms of transformation, but they both also function as spaces that enable the metamorphosis of the main character, Martina.

The first-person narrator of the novel, Martina Dager, is an economist working at the Bank of Finland, the most powerful monetary institution in the nation. The bank is located in downtown Helsinki, in one of the most prestigious quarters of the capital. The building is made of stone, and for Martina the building is "heavy and monolithic" (Ringbom 1998, 11). Martina lives at walking distance from her workplace, and every day she walks to the bank along the streets of Helsinki. When narrating her route, Martina names streets and street corners, buildings, bridges and statues, thus making her walk a literal cartography. She takes notice of buildings that represent the Finnish nation and its institutional power, such as the Presidential Palace or the Evangelical Lutheran Cathedral. When Martina travels by city bus, she carefully gives her starting points and end points according to their coordinates on a map.

The way in which Martina perceives the surrounding city can be regarded as an example of *striated space* (l'espace strié) in the manner of the geophilosophy of Deleuze and Guattari. In striated space one goes

from one point to another (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 478), the way Martina does every morning as she walks from home to her workplace. Striated spaces are highly organized spatial forms, such as the streets of Helsinki, which are structured according to a city plan. Striated spaces are divided into separate sections, like the quarters Martina mentions in her narrations. As Deleuze and Guattari (1988, 149) point out, striated space is one of measures and properties, and while walking in the city Martina's perception of the capital is based on measuring and the measurable visual qualities derived from her vision: striated space is a space that is seen.

Deleuze and Guattari (1988, 478–51) also define striated spaces as hierarchical spaces of institutional power, and the city of Helsinki for Martina seems to be filled with powerful institutions with their grand buildings made of stone. In Ringbom's novel, Martina's job emphasizes capitalist power, for Martina is building a successful career in the Bank of Finland. Inside the building, in the privacy of her working area, she feels safe. The striated spaces with their systematic organization calm Martina. If during her walking routes she is confronted with graffiti on the walls, litter on the ground, or garbage trucks, she becomes startled and distressed.

The Helsinki that Martina describes is recognizably the Finnish capital. But the referentiality of the depiction of the city is mixed with fabulation in the way that the novel enters the area of the powers of the false: real geoplaces are mixed with false and imaginary ones. In the novel a river runs through the city, whereas in the actual capital there is no such thing. On her walking tours in the mornings and gradually in the middle of her working days, Martina takes a walk along the riverside under the "Opera Bridge." Beneath the bridge Martina makes a space of her own: "Here under the bridge there are no sharp contours, colors or light, nothing moves or blinks. Only ice with its rough gray and white, spotty surface and the bridge vault overarching it" (Ringbom 1998, 39). Sitting there, Martina does not perceive the sharp lines and closed forms that are typical of striated spaces. Underneath the bridge Martina sees people different from those she encounters on the streets of Helsinki, such as small boys throwing snowballs or a woman who appears homeless.

The scene where Martina sits under the bridge marks a change in the novel and in its depiction of the city. This change can be conceptualized as the transformation of striated space into *smooth space* (*l'espace lisse*). Deleuze and Guattari (1988, 474–5, 478) define smooth space as a counterpoint to striated space. Smooth spaces are intensive spaces without borders or limits. Smooth space cannot be divided into separate sections or

hierarchical divisions. These two spatial variations, the smooth and the striated, can also reflect each other in such a way that the connection between them becomes a process of metamorphosis. In Ringbom's novel many striated spaces, such as her room in the bank, begin to become something other, for when Martina sits there her thoughts and mind begin to fill up with images of smooth spaces, of the running river and other watery images rather than the previous calculations and statistics. For Deleuze and Guattari (1988, 481) the ocean with its waves and flows is a smooth space par excellence. In the course of the novel Martina feels ever more frequently an urge to live by water. Flowing water in the form of the river or night-time dreams filled with the flow of soft water mark the process of Martina's transformation: she is becoming something other than a highly organized economist. Martina's metamorphosis is given spatial expression in the novel.

In Ringbom's novel a concrete spatial turn takes place when striated space is turned into smooth space, though this turn can also be linked to fabulation and the uncanny. At the beginning of the novel, Martina appears as a literal cartographer who maps a Helsinki which is recognizable to those who know it. The novel is a map; it is easy to follow its trails. But the reader also gets lost in the city, since Martina adds strange elements to the landscape, thus causing the map of the city to change. In Ringbom's novel Helsinki becomes a space of the uncanny, a space of estrangement not only to Martina, but also to a reader who is familiar with the "real" Helsinki. Fabulating the city in this double manner, by bringing the strange and the familiar together, by combining referentiality with the imaginary, points to the potential of Helsinki becoming something other. Tom Conley (2005, 258), writing on Deleuzian spatial concepts, argues that it is the task of the artist to make non-places visible through creative manipulation. Ringbom is doing precisely this by making the non-places at the borders of everyday spaces visible, whether they are imaginary or express the potentiality of referential spaces.

Deleuze and Guattari (1988, 491) define striated space as an optical space, referring to how it is usually perceived through vision and mostly from a distance. Smooth space, on the other hand, is a haptic and tactile space; it is sensed through touch. In Ringbom's novel, Martina's narration of these separate spaces changes accordingly. These differences in the narration of the spaces are connected to the changes taking place in Martina's personality. This points to Eric Prieto's (2011, 23–4) idea of spatial orientation in which spatial narration is connected to themes of

personality. In striated spaces Martina orientates on the basis of visual perceptions. The transformation from striated to smooth space is depicted especially through hearing. By the riverside Martina hears noises from afar and close at hand, and this simultaneously distant and close auditory sensation makes Martina one with the riverside.

The novel gives no explanation for the changes that Martina's personality undergoes; they just seem to happen. And this, of course, adds to the uncanny atmosphere of the novel. Slowly, Martina begins to have strange sensations, as if a forest outside Helsinki is calling her. She interrupts her everyday routines to take bus trips to the suburbs, and during one of these trips she steps out of the bus and takes a walk in a small forest. This first trip to the forest takes place by accident, since for no particular reason she decides to hop out of the bus. She begins to walk toward the forest as if it was her original destination, although she has never been there before.

Martina cannot remember the last time she visited a forest, and thus she feels puzzled and a little frightened when she moves deeper into it. She pushes the branches aside, and in the middle of the trees and brushwood sees a meadow in which stands a lonely stump. She touches the stump and senses its moisture when a sudden tapping breaks the silence of the forest. The knock sharpens Martina's senses: "I hear my heart beating in my breast and blood pounding in my temples." (Ringbom 1998, 71) In the middle of the forest Martina can even hear her own blood running, she smells the decomposing soil and the sprouting leaves; sitting on the stump she feels its sharp edge against her thighs. In this scene the meadow in the forest is perceived in haptic and tactile terms, and the forest is narrated not through vision but by hearing, smelling, and touching. In other words, the forest appears as a smooth space.

Martina returns to the forest many times. Every time there she narrates her perceptions and sensations by means of touching and hearing. Along with the changes in Martina's sensations, the depiction of the material spatiality of the forest changes. Once Martina describes herself urinating in the forest, which makes her feel like a little girl again. In the middle of the forest, in the middle of the smell of her urine and the different scents of the forest, Martina is able to lose all the restraints of her age, her sex, and her professional identity. This moment of sensations is also filled with the event of Martina's becoming other. This process of becoming is also made clear on the level of textual spatiality, by the positioning of words and lines. In other words, this scene effectuates a deterritorialization in the

totality of the novel's composition as the textual spacing of the lines changes in radical ways:

Ut glider en kropp på huk bakom en enbuske. Den vädrar  
i den fuktiga, svala luften, stirrar på skogen som badar i  
månsken och ser  
fält av mörker och ljus  
och i dem minsta rörelse.  
Dofterna böljar som moln utan namn (...). (Ringbom  
1998, 127)

Out glides a body crouching behind a juniper bush. It smells  
the moist, cool air, gazes at the forest which bathes in  
the moonlight and sees  
a field of darkness and light  
and the tiniest movements in them.  
Scents flow like clouds without name (...).

In this scene a transformation takes place as Martina's prose narration turns into verse. Martina also becomes other, something else, something uncanny, something moving away from human contours: she becomes a body with no other restraints but an emerging relationship to the surrounding spatiality sensed by smelling, hearing, and seeing. The contours referring to her human body or appearance or to her professional or sexual identity disappear, but the emerging body cannot be categorized as any non-human creature, such as an animal. This scene gives expression to the *movement* between human and non-human entities that is without categorization. The transformation in the textual spatiality of the scene gives expression to *metamorphosis as a spatial event*, enhancing the differences between prose and poetic writing.

After this scene, Martina returns to the forest to encounter a totally different kind of spatiality. The forest is no longer a smooth space, since it is filled with machines and spotlights and workmen about to cut the forest down. The demonstrators gathered there to oppose the decimation play drums and sing, but all in vain. This scene actualizes the beginning of the transformation from smooth forest into a striated space, as if to denote that the capitalist culture Martina has tried to escape is entering the forest, profiting from the cut down trees. Throughout the novel the forest is depicted as an oppositional and distinct space in relation to the urban Helsinki, but this scene actualizes how capitalism invades every space.

At the very end of the novel, Martina stands by the river with the homeless woman. Martina opens her handbag, pulls out her keys and ID card, her wallet, and throws them into the running water as if she is throwing away all the emblems of capitalist society. In this scene Martina herself chooses smooth space rather than remaining in the striated spatiality of the city center, but by choosing it she also chooses to situate herself outside the prevailing society. The small forest, however, marks the beginning of Martina's choice. The forest is depicted as the actual space of her metamorphosis, and the final scene by the riverside appears merely to be the logical ending of her transformation, of getting rid of all strings attached to being a citizen of the city. The forest is the space for opening up Martina's senses—there she begins to turn into a creature with other senses besides vision.

Ringbom's novel actualizes a multitude of spatial perceptions, since it includes both optical and haptic ways of perceiving spaces. The novel also shows how various spaces are defined in relation to each other, as is the case with the urban space of the city and the space of the forest land. The novel also highlights the reciprocity of affective processes and especially the ways they are connected to spaces; spaces, whether the city or the forest, affect Martina's personality but these spaces are also affected by Martina: the fabulative faculty of literature makes it possible to narrate this interrelatedness of affections by means of changes in the narration.

#### CONCLUSION: UNCANNY FOREST AS THE EXPRESSION OF LATE MODERN ESTRANGEMENT

In this chapter I have discussed the uncanny forest in recent Finland-Swedish prose fiction. All three works describe forests as spaces of transformation and metamorphosis. The forests themselves are set in the middle of transformative processes. By using spatial concepts as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari, such as re- and deterritorialization and smooth and striated spaces, I have captured the spatial changes taking place in the forests. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, I have proposed that spatiality, perception, and affectivity are tied together. I have moreover shown how spaces are not merely perceived visually but in a multisensory way by hearing, smelling, and touching.

The three chosen texts—Kaj Korkea-aho's novel, Johanna Holmström's "hybrid" fiction, and Henrika Ringbom's novel—bring forth questions and themes that are linked to notions of human subjectivity. They all

describe human and non-human encounters and place them within the forest, which then becomes *the* location of these encounters. If such a space as “a typical Finnish forest” ever existed, these texts neither represent nor recreate it. These texts are filled with ethical, ideological, and spiritual problematics. My reading thus disagrees with Pertti Lassila’s view when he defines post-war depictions of Finnish forests and nature as “commercialized.” Instead of representing and referring to “real” forests, these novels rely on the fabulative forces of literature and the powers of the false to imagine new spatialities as well as spatialities anew. By bringing together elements from “real” and “imaginary” forests, these texts also point to spaces to come, to the potential of forming new spaces, where non-human and human creatures are imagined as living together in peace. I suggest that these three texts point to a new “people to come” in the Deleuzian sense of the concept, a collective that allows both humans and non-humans to exist side by side. Although this new collective is not achieved in the novels, it nevertheless exists as a potentiality.

I have argued that these three texts participate in the genre of the uncanny. By describing the forests as uncanny spaces, the novels give expression to the experiences of estrangement and unhomeliness pertinent in late modern societies. The forest enables the depiction of uncanny otherness that human subjects often experience. The recent return to the uncanny that seemingly takes place in the forests of Finland-Swedish fiction is perhaps connected with the predominantly urban character of late modern society. Although Finnish people today would appear to have a close relationship with the forest, it still persists as “the other,” and very many Finns have a nonchalant relation to the forest and many urbanized Finns are even estranged from it. In the works discussed in this chapter, the uncanny becomes doubled: as works of art they carry on the long tradition of the uncanny forest, which is one way to express the experience of unhomeliness. At the same time, the three novels themselves express the experience of estrangement typical of late modernity by depicting forests as uncanny spaces.

The three works interconnect these experiences in spatial terms, but they do it in different ways. In Korkea-aho’s novel the Other is situated within the human subject, since the non-human monster reflects the main character’s despair and anxiety. In Holmström’s text the uncanny is manifested as an encounter with a literal Other, as Anna and the wolf become so close to each other that the human no longer appears as human and the wolf is no longer just an animal. In Ringbom’s novel the uncanny Other actually *is* the human subject, with Martina experiencing a metamorphosis

into a bodily creature beyond categorization. The fabulation of the uncanny forest critiques the human condition in late modern capitalism but simultaneously participates in it by reterritorializing its features.

## NOTES

1. Although the forest has always been an important theme and setting in Finnish literature, there hardly exist any detailed and systematic studies on it in the field of Finnish literary studies besides Lassila's volume. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the forest with its various meanings (economic, national, recreational, sacred) is taken for granted; the meanings have become "shared property," almost stereotypes, and it is only recently, with the development of ecocriticism, environmental studies, and posthumanism, that researchers have begun to question the traditional approaches toward the forest and its meanings.
2. My readings focus mainly on the contents of the storylines, since it is not possible to analyze the linguistic forms and expressions of these texts in this chapter, although they are crucial in shaping the spatialities of literature.
3. Kaj Korkea-aho (b. 1983) is the Finland-Swedish author of three novels. His first novel (*Se till mig som liten* är) was published in 2009 and the latest (*Onda boken*) in 2016. With Ted Forsström Korkea-aho has published two humorous juvenile novels, of which the first *Zoo! Viral Geniuses* (2017) was nominated as a candidate for the Finlandia Junior Prize.
4. All translations from Swedish into English are mine.
5. Finland-Swedish author Johanna Holmström (b. 1981) has published five novels as well as collections of short stories since 2003. In 2009 *Camera Obscura* received a Prize in Literature issued by the Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet*.
6. The metamorphosis of a woman into a wolf is not a rare theme in Finnish literature and Holmström's text is another variation of it. Perhaps the best-known example of this tradition is *Sudenmorsian* (1928; "The Wolf's Bride") by Aino Kallas. Henrika Ringbom's novel, on which I focus later, can also be linked to this tradition. Ringbom's novel even places a quotation from Kallas' novel with another citation from *Der Steppenwolf* (1927; "Steppenwolf") by Hermann Hesse as mottos for the novel. Within the limited length of this chapter it is unfortunately not possible to discuss the tradition of "were-wolves" or she-wolves as part of the depictions of the forest.
7. Henrika Ringbom (b. 1962) is a Finland-Swedish poet and novelist who has published five collections of poetry (since 1988) and two novels. Ringbom also works as a translator.



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