Gender and Genre in Aino Kallas's "Eros the Slayer" Trilogy

This article focuses, through the work of one woman writer, on the connections between the genre of the historical novel and that of historiography. It also aims, however, at a more general exploration of the production of information in cases where gender is a significant factor in deciding what is valid knowledge and who has the means of obtaining or writing about it. The woman writer studied in this article is the Finnish-Estonian writer Aino Kallas (1878–1956), and the historical novel in question is the trilogy, subsequently entitled "Eros the Slayer", which Kallas wrote in the 1920s. The trilogy consists of three independent novels: *Barbara von Tisenhusen* (1923), *Reigin pappi* (The Rector of Reigi, 1926) and *Sudenmorsian* (The Wolf's Bride, 1928). Kallas's particular cultural position and her work serves to highlight both the relationship between the genre of the historical novel and contemporary official historiography, and the means provided by the former to dissolve and redefine this relationship.

Nowadays, the historical novel is a genre particularly favoured by women writers and readers (Juutila 2002, 172–193), even though historically it has been defined in ways that served specifically to exclude them. A good example of this is the commonly accepted idea in Finland after the mid-nineteenth century – at the dawn of the era of the historical novel – of the requirements for authorship. Markku Ihonen, who has studied the history of the genre in Finland, points out that "particularly the leading Fennicist, Yrjö-Koskinen, insisted in the 1870s that any author who writes about a historical topic must be a formally qualified expert and a historical scholar." (Ihonen 1992, 68.) Such authoritative views served to define and reinforce the characteristic qualities prevalent within the genre. These criteria at the same time rendered it virtually inaccessible to women. It was not possible, at the time, for women to become professionals let alone historical scholars. There is, however, one exception in the Finnish cultural tradition: that of Fredrika Runeberg, who was a pioneer in the study of history during the 1840s and 1850s. Because of her social standing, she had access to the kind of information that enabled her to write. Her pioneering position, however, has not been highlighted until the most recent research, and her work was not greeted with unanimous praise by contemporaries, as the genre was considered to be far too demanding for a woman. (Katainen 2000, 317–333; see also Hatavara 2001, 87–88.)

As exemplified by the criteria excluding female authorship, the socio-political era was marked by an ongoing debate over the necessity of education for women. This debate reveals the strategies whereby access to knowledge was deliberately regulated and limited. After the mid-nineteenth century, the debate was "governed by the argument over what sort of education and work was suitable for women, and what, on the other hand, crossed the limits and as such was excessive" (Uimonen 1999, 106, 105–112; see also Ollila 1997, 117–130). Girls were also mainly educated with the aim of usefulness: through their education girls were to become useful to others (for instance as teachers). Boys, in contrast, were encouraged to be ambitious and inquisitive and to build careers. These "selfish" aspects of the acquisition of knowledge were not allowed for women. (Ollila 1997, 123.)

Women gradually began to gain ground in the field of the historical novel in Scandinavia at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century, and women belonging to the intelligentsia were in the vanguard of this process. The Swedish writers Sophie Elkan and Selma Lagerlöf are both renowned historical novelists.[1] (Ulvros 2001, 126–142; see also Torpe 1996, 113–125.) I shall argue that the main reason for the popularity of the historical novel as a genre for women writers was the access it offered them, through the study of sources and familiarity with their material, to a knowledge and an expertise in a situation where traditionally only men were allowed such access. At the same time the genre offered the possibility of taking part in historiography and in cultural writing, which traditionally had likewise been a privilege reserved only to men. By writing historical fiction women participated in the official historiography, although without the status of professional historians. (See Katainen 2000, 324–329; also Leskelä-Kärki 2002, 394–396.)

By the 1920s the social situation had already changed, and women's issues no longer centred on the basic question of education. Women had secured both the right to vote and the right to a university education. The question was no longer one of simple access to knowledge, as had been the case at the turn of the century, but of the possibility of revising or rewriting that knowledge. This trend can be seen in a wide range of women writers of the time, in the form not so much of networks of influence but of contemporaneity in different cultural traditions.[2] Women in the intellectual classes began to pay attention to the ways in which cultural histories were produced, and to the invisibility of women in the literary tradition, the canon, and in history. Likewise the topics of historical novels shifted in the 1920s towards women's history, and their themes followed the contemporary debate on the position and rights of women in the changing gender system.

It makes sense to consider that these difficult topical issues were historicized because distancing them legitimised and simplified an objective view. Also, a typical feature of the historical novel is the use of analogy, as a technique whereby the author constructs a connection between her own time and that of the novel. It has been suggested that, paradoxically, the historical novel reveals more about the time when it is written than about the time it depicts (Ihonen 1999, 127 and Juutila 2002, 17). It is these connections that I shall identify in Kallas's trilogy, showing how through them

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In main-stream literary scholarship, Kallas's "Eros the Slayer" trilogy has until recently been seen almost invariably as belonging within the framework of the romance genre. Contemporary responses too focused on the romantic aspects of the novels. The story of *Barbara von Tisenhusen* was described as "a sad little tale of love" (IL 27.11.1923; see also Koskimies 1927, 336), *The Rector of Reigi* was seen primarily as a story of adultery (Koskenniemi 1926; Koskimies 1927, 333, 336; Viljanen 1929, 23), and the rather unusual love story in *The Wolf's Bride* was read as a mystical and trans-historical epic of love (Vaaskivi 1938). All the stories are variations on the theme of the narrating clergyman and the woman whose story is being told. In each one, the woman transgresses a norm and pursues knowledge that her society has decided is forbidden. In each one, the woman is killed as punishment for her transgression.

The trilogy has not been associated with the genre of the historical novel (Laitinen 1998), even though its component novels fulfill all the main requirements of the genre. The stories are set in the past, in the period between 1550 and 1650. The priest-narrators act as chroniclers of their time, and the style is archaic. Kallas had studied a number of historical chronicles, Estonian legends, stories of popular belief and folkloristic material, and took the subject matter for her novels from the chronicles. Her working methods were those of the authors of historical novels: she carefully acquainted herself with her source material (Laitinen 1998, 223–232, 228–229) and developed a new language, based on seventeenth-century books of homilies, which had a biblical-sounding rhythm. Both contemporary criticism and subsequent scholarship has seen Kallas's multi-layered historicity as ornamental, or as a sign of the author's emphasis on aesthetics and uniqueness of style (see e.g. Koskimies 1927, 331–336; Laitinen 1998). The claim I made at the beginning of this article concerning the gender-dependence of the production of knowledge also has to do with the context of research: the emphasis on the connection with the romance genre obliterates the woman writer's questioning view of history and its socio-political dimensions. On the other hand, Kallas's "unpatriotic" and non- or anti-nationalist historical themes also contributed to the tone of her contemporary reception as well as later scholarship. Her novels did not follow the customary nationalist line of historical novels in general, and were consequently excluded from the category. The connection between nationalism and the genre of the historical novel during the interwar years imposed strict rules on the way history was to be written, and critical voices were silenced. (Cf. Sevänen 1994, 138–157 and 1999, 21–22.)

As Markku Ihonen points out, the historical novel has traditionally conformed to the prevailing social order and has thus supported the unilateral, official historiography. "Especially during the early years of independence the genre was corrupted by patriotic fanaticism, religious and moral conservatism, and the datedness of literary style. Down to the end of the Second World War, mainstream Finnish historical fiction was governed by nationalistic ideals." (Ihonen 1999, 126; see also 1992, 53–54, 58–59; Syväoja 1998, 216–229.) Already at its emergence, the historical novel was firmly tied to historical scholarship and to the official historiography of the time, and it is through these connections that the genre conformed to the national ideology and served, particularly during the interwar period, to assert the politics of the newly independent Finland. (See Ihonen 1992, 48–55.) The historical novel and historiography, with their shared relation to power, both served the interests of the prevailing system.

The rise of nationalism put Kallas in an awkward position in her own literary field: she felt herself an outsider with regard to both Finnish and Estonian culture.[3] (See also Leskelä 1998, 149–160.) In the nationalistic climate of her time, her position was problematic in the literary traditions of both countries. She was not fully appreciated in Estonia because she wrote in Finnish, and she was wrong for Finland because she wrote about Estonia. But even writing in Estonian did not win her the acceptance she wished for. Her play *Mare ja hänen poikansa* (Mare and her son, 1935) caused a scandal in Estonia in the 1930s, even though it was written in Estonian and was expected by Kallas herself to redeem her in the eyes of Estonians. Kallas was severely criticized because in the play she did not depict Estonian history "correctly", i.e. in accordance with the prevailing opinion. The loving bond between mother and son is seen as more significant than love for the Estonian people. (See Melkas 2006, 220–230 for more on the scandal.) The play was said to be both historically inaccurate and unjustified in terms of national feeling. The fierce polemic that arose from the play is symptomatic of the solid connection between historical fiction and official historiography, a connection which was carefully regulated during the nationalist era.

Kallas's contemporaries in Finland, Kyösti Vilkuna and Hilda Huntuvuori, were also writers of historical novels; but they were clearly patriotic idealists, whose heroic depictions of Finns rendered characters invariably conscious of their roles as representatives of their nation. In her historical novels Kallas calls into question this connection forged between heroic masculinity and nationality. Neither Paavali Lempelius in *The Rector of Reigi* nor the forester Priidik in *The Wolf's Bride* resemble the nationalistic heroes depicted by Vilkuna and Huntuvuori in their books. Paavali Lempelius, the priest of Reigi, fails repeatedly in his efforts and has considerable difficulty in getting both his congregation and his own wife to abide by the doctrine of truth dictated by the Church. Members of the congregation ignore the rules; and continue to carry out their heathen rites, and hold to their beliefs even in the face of punishment. The heroism of Priidik the forester is also questionable: his wife, the servant girl Aalo turns into a werewolf at night and in this guise takes control of the forest. To begin with, Priidik has no idea what has happened and assumes the role in the novel of a helpless bystander. The

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One of the qualities defining an intellectual, among whom Kallas was included, was a state of either real or imaginary "exile".[4] This exile involved a critical distancing of oneself from the phenomena in question, and as such it offered the chance to assume the important role of a bystander. It also made it possible to see not only how things *are*, as such, but the processes whereby they have *come* to be as they are. The intellectual must be constantly on guard, must be suspicious of half-truths, and must resist convenient, ready-made ideas and clichés. (Said 1996, 22–38.) It is through this otherness that Kallas's historical novel both writes itself out of the prevailing tradition and makes contact with it by redefining the genre. Mika Waltari's *Sinuhe Egyptiläinen* (Sinuhe the Egyptian), written in 1945, has been seen as the first historical novel in which nationalistic idealism was viewed from a critical distance (Ihonen 1999, 149). In Kallas's novels this distance is present already in the 1920s; it serves both to detach them from the prevailing definition of the genre, and to attach them to it through the critical response.

The Woman Writer as Chronicler

The means of producing knowledge and truth-related problems of knowledge become apparent in the relationship between the woman writer and the narrator-chroniclers in the trilogy. In defining this relationship we must bear in mind the technique of analogy employed in the historical novel. Here our focus falls on the time span between Kallas's own era and that of the novels. The connection between the two historical periods is that they are both periods of crisis of knowledge. While the turn of the 1500s–1600s has been seen as a time when the boundaries of legitimate knowledge shifted and were contested in different power discourses (see Heinonen & Tunturi 2003, 8–13), the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century has been seen as a similar time of crisis. The earlier crisis witnessed a splitting of knowledge into fact and fiction (Lehtonen 1994, 97–99, 106–113); the later one, on the other hand, was connected to the great cultural and intellectual transformation in which the prevailing social order and the certainty of knowledge was about to shatter. The massive political and societal changes of the nineteenth and twentieth century, involving the rise of the working class and of the women's movement, introduced the question of the masses into the hitherto very narrow political field both in Finland and elsewhere in Europe. This period has been also seen as one of the crisis of the omniscient subject and of the problematisation of the shared values of Christian tradition. (Braidotti 1991; Karkama 1994, 312–314; Giddens 1991, 100–101.)

The unconventional and archaic chronicle style of Kallas's trilogy has so far been analysed only in terms of traditional stylistics: its details, and its

use of old vocabulary and biblical language, have been excellently mapped (Laitinen 1998; Talasjoki 1986). But it is also possible to view Kallas's style in relation to the production of knowledge; in other words, a particular style can be seen as a specific means to produce information. The style of historical chronicles involves a certain prestige and the concept of an impartial scribe. Historical chronicles have provided information and a context for the recording of historical knowledge. In the Middle Ages chronicles were the most important source of historical knowledge and – as already noted – Kallas had studied in depth large numbers of different chronicles of Baltic and Estonian history. These chronicles provided not only historical facts, but also religious and poetic descriptions.

Chroniclers were originally highly educated and respected members of the clergy and shared a position of authority as representatives of truth and of the values of their own era. This is exactly the position given to the chronicler-narrators in Kallas's trilogy. The chronicler's voice holds a monologic position throughout the story; almost everything in the text is told through his perceptions. The first story in the trilogy, *Barbara von Tisenhusen*, is told by the Vicar of Rannu, Matthaeus Jeremias Friesner, who records the story of the damsel Barbara in the chronicle. The learned chronicler in *The Wolf's Bride* records "The story of Aalo, wife of Priidik the forester, who was changed by Satan into a werewolf" (TN 159). *The Rector of Reigi* describes himself in the beginning as follows:

> Theology have I studied, likewise Latin, Greek and Hebrew, first at Uppsala, and then at the Academy of Rostock in Germany, for there was at that time no academy at Åbo, and with all due meekness and humility can I declare that I have been weighed in Christian knowledge and not found wanting. There is no Father of the Church, no writer on sacred matters old and new, but I have gathered honey from his cells. (TN 53)

The discourse used by the chroniclers is one church had spread and made valid. It is made clear to the reader that the chroniclers have good command of Christian knowledge: the rector of Reigi refers both to the Church Fathers and to the (male) writers on sacred matters whose texts he has gone through. Previously, especially round sixteenth and seventeenth century, the Christian tradition functioned as the ultimate foundation for "true" knowledge. The discourse of religion was thus considered to be the discourse of power. It is a question of rules and practices, such as religion, that produced legitimate statements and regulated discourse during this particular historical period. (Foucault 1978; Hall 1997, 43–44.) The chronicle style in the novels underlines the way in which a certain discourse has the power to produce legitimate knowledge, and especially the link between on the one hand the means of knowing and the production of knowledge, on the other the chronicler's high status in his society. Likewise the use of detailed lists establishes the position where actual power operates. There are several passages in which the order of power is made explicit and which at the same time show how this agency is gendered:

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> of the Bench, Thomas Gentsenen, squire of Hiiumoisa, and Wolmar Uexkull, squire of Essu, at the command of the Lord Governor of Estonia, Erik Oxenstierna. (TN 218)

What draws our attention in this extract from *The Wolf's Bride* is the careful listing of the members of the Common Court of Justice. It becomes clear that the position is an exclusive one, not open to many. It can of course be claimed that the era depicted in the novel requires the writer to abide by its norms, which did not include women or peasants in the ranks of public representation. On the other hand, it is through the meticulous depiction and the various emphases that the very foundation of the system is revealed. The system within which one operates defines the limits and conditions for action, and for authorship of action. It shows clearly how impossible it is for women to act: the system invests its-chosen with the power of action, and only they have the right.

It is remarkable and significant, then, that in each book of the trilogy the female character does "act" in spite of the limitations placed on her. This action has a dual function: on the one hand it is an escape from set patterns. Barbara von Tisenhusen elopes with her beloved, the socially inferior scribe, thus defying her brother and the Pärnu agreement which was a real legal decision to control upper class women's marriages. Catharina Wycken, the wife of the priest of Reig, also elopes with her lover, the curate Jonas Kempe. The action of Aalo in *The Wolf's Bride* is based on metamorphosis. In the form of a wolf she acts against her "docile nature" and leaves the sphere of home and marriage.

On the other hand, the authorship of action these women claim is also based on the acquisition of new, dangerous or forbidden knowledge. Barbara von Tisenhusen starts to socialise with the wives and daughters of peasants, collecting heretical information:

> She also began to spend her time in such vain, not to say sinful, ways as to listen to the pagan incantations and songs of these same non-Germans, which they sing while at work and at all times in their homes. For, alas! in the secret chambers of their hearts they are still naked heathens, albeit they have given ear to the teachings of Christianity and received Holy Baptism. Further, she attempted to set down on paper and write down in letters these ribald jingles which have neither rhyme nor reason and are, from beginning to end, the work of Satan. (TN 18)

Aalo too finds herself able, in the guise of a wolf, to gain access to information she is not willing to part with. In a way, the women characters slip out of the established order of things, and by doing so they also slip through the fingers of the chronicler-narrators. This destroys the knowledge-based dignity and assurance characteristic of the chronicle style. This also calls

into question knowledge itself: the reader is made aware of the means by which the ranking order of different types of knowledge is defined. The relationship between the chronicler-narrator and the woman writer culminates in the employment of the chronicle style: Kallas assumes the role of the chronicler, displays the locus of knowledge-production and explores the possibilities of creating alternative knowledge. I shall be looking at this process in the next section.

Breaches of knowledge take place within the novel but also in the relationship between the novel and its context. What I mean by this is that the position of authority enjoyed by the chronicler-narrators was based on their theological discourse, which in the historical context of the 1920s was beginning to crumble and lose its autonomy. At that time, particular articulations developed between the theological discourse and that of the medical science. They related to gender-based upbringing, the "machinery" that produces acceptable definitions of gender, definitions, which because of the authority of the "machinery" came to be regarded as universal truths (Tiihonen 2000, 171, 180–183; Räisänen 1995). The combination of moral and health perspectives in various manuals on marriage and sexual behaviour legitimised the knowledge contained in them and rendered them beyond doubt. Their aim was to regulate girls' behaviour in various ways, and to steer women towards maternity. These manuals mushroomed in the 1920s, and the debate on the subject was particularly active. (See also Vehkalahti 2000, 130–168.) These phenomena can be interpreted as a panic reaction in the face of a pending cultural change, in which women's attempts at emancipation were perceived as threatening the prevailing order. (Hapuli 1995, 153–221; see also Koivunen 2003, 273–285; Melkas 2006, 174–181.) Here we have another link between the time of writing the books and the time they depict.

The Politics of Re-scripting

I will look at the possibilities of creating alternative knowledges by Kallas as a strategy of re-scripting. The significance of the term 're-script' is based on a relation of opposition to the definition of rewriting. The rewriting of stories or of historical narratives occurs for example when the characters of a familiar story are changed or the context of the story is rewritten as new (cf. Purkiss 1992, 455). Re-scripting is a more radical action, in the sense that it also actively shatters those institutions or conventions upon which the whole story or traditional ways of knowing are based.[5] Re-scripting makes it possible to reveal or even challenge prevailing cultural modes of thinking.

The main character in *The Wolf's Bride*, Aalo, and her metamorphosis can be seen as a typical example of the revelation of alternative histories and the thorough re-scripting of historical "knowledge". The character of the werewolf allows one to trace the different layers of traditions and belief systems, but it also serves a function in the creation of new ideas. Tracing popular beliefs about werewolves has been a process of both information

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> the unprintable, of which professor Eisen gave me the transcriptions (folk tales). Besides that, I have examined especially Estonian trials of witches in different chronicles and publications. At the British Museum I was given, on my brother's advice, one German scholar's (I cannot unfortunately remember the name now)[6] special research on popular beliefs in werewolves, where I found valuable information. It contained extracts from older writings on werewolves. (Cited in Laitinen 1998, 223; translation K. M.)

In her historical novels Kallas uses and quotes different written sources. It has been acknowledged in earlier research that Kallas's source material was undeniably rich and diverse. What has not been commented on, however, is why she uses these extracts.

The werewolf theme in Kallas's novel is a complex one. It is connected with stories of popular belief, which traditionally have to do with problems of social order and morality. In these popular legends, the werewolf has special powers and the ability to transform people or objects into something else. Primarily, however, the werewolf, in both legends and folk tales, is a serious threat to the community and a symbol of manifold evil. These beliefs and tales served traditionally as warnings, and werewolves were often linked with the powers of Satan and witches. Likewise the Christian tradition in different parts of Europe supported this view of the werewolf as the embodiment of evil. (See Kilpinen 2002.) What is special about *The Wolf's Bride* is that it uses these stories of popular belief but transforms them into something different from the original stories.

The narrator in *The Wolf's Bride* warns against forming a pact with the devil, saying that thence comes all evil. In all stories about werewolves, this union – and the inevitable ruin it brings about – is always emphasized: "And as it is the devil's only object to destroy, so is the werewolf devoid of any other interests but those of murder and destruction. He assumes the guise of an animal only to cause havock." (Hertz, cited in Laitinen 1998, 231; also Lehtonen 1933, 332, 335.) In Aalo's case, however, the pact with the devil does not result in a mere thirst for destruction. As a wolf she can enjoy an unheard of sense of joy and power, of equality, sisterhood and ultimately the highest ecstasy, in a passage where she copulates with the Spirit of the Forest. The assertive warnings of the narrator are thus contradicted by what he says of his subject's experience:

> And with the outward form of a wolf there came to Aalo, like an awakening, all the passions and lusts of the wolf, the thirst for blood and the lust to tear and mangle, for even her blood had turned into the blood of a wolf, and she was of their number. So with the savage and joyful howl she entered into the company of the wolves, like one who after long search has found her rightful kin, and the others, howling in chorus, did welcome her as their sister. (TN 180)

Even though Aalo, in wolf's form, does maul sheep, she also enjoys her new sensory experiences – her acute senses of smell and hearing, and a new way of seeing the world:

> And in herself and in the world around her she felt a deep change, and all things were strange and new, as though she now saw for the first time with her bodily eyes, like our first mother Eve, when at the snake's bidding she ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in Paradise. (TN 181)

In this passage, where all things are new to Aalo, the connection between "our first mother Eve" and the new is essential. According to Susan Friedman, Eve's tasting of the apple from the tree of knowledge is an important symbol:

> Eve's desire for knowledge prefigures the drive for literacy, for access to books and education, that runs as a powerful current through the long history of intellectual women, as well as of women who struggle for the basis of literacy. (Friedman 1995, 31–32.)

Eve's desire also represents woman's sexual desire; and the myth of Paradise raises the question of female sexuality, which has been seen as dangerous and therefore as needing to be controlled. Aalo's character rescripts the prevalent ideas of marriage and idealized motherhood in the context of its own time. In the shape of a wolf the woman's desire, both sexual and intellectual, is presented outside the naturalized heterosexual order.

The significance of the acquisition of new knowledge is underlined in the wolf-form, but the quality of this knowledge is enigmatic. The novel often emphasises the superiority of the wolf's vision to that of a human. The wolf is laden, both in the Christian tradition and in various stories of popular belief, with the symbolism of evil and destruction; in this light it is significant that in pre-Christian tradition the wolf, particularly the female, was symbolic of divinity and knowledge. (See Rojola 1992, 139; see also Peltonen 1992, 211–212.) Aalo's character both embodies the burden and bears the potential role of a seeker after knowledge. The werewolf can be seen as an indicator of varying levels of "knowledge" and a tool for redefining it. Kallas uses the wolf's character to expose the various mechanisms in the prevailing discourses for defining a woman and the truth about her. Ideas about femininity are the result of past variation in what was perceived as feminine, and these perceptions have also contributed to the said ideas. (Bailey 1993, 104–105.)

In her novels Kallas also subverts the normative power discourses, which are tools in legitimizing the truth of a given knowledge. The discourse of Christianity has been undeniably instrumental in defining and giving shape to western culture, but it has proved to be problematic with regard to information about women. The misogyny of Christian tradition has been demonstrated by many feminist thinkers (see e.g. Vuola 1994). In this respect too, Kallas's trilogy fulfils a requirement of the historical novel, in that it attempts to interpret the present by looking at the past, through the

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The image of the wolf can also be read as a powerful and positive symbol of the new woman. In the 1920s, the 'New Woman' as a discursive category opened up new possibilities of agency for women, but was perceived as a threat to the dominant masculine culture. (See Melkas 2000, 73–74; Hapuli & al. 1992, 104–109.)

From Historical Ornaments to Socio-critics

The difficulty of knowledge acquisition is often referred to in the trilogy by emphasising the possible existence of several source stories. The chronicler interrupts his story by saying that it is possible, even easy, to tell different versions of the story. This possibility of various versions is also mentioned towards the end of *The Rector of Reigi*, where the narrator's wife has already eloped with her lover and their whereabouts are not known, even though "both the law and the church were after them":

> For although the hands of both the Church and the Law were groping after them thus, no news was brought, neither had anyone seen them in the flesh from the hour when they fled from the rectory of Reigi in the dead of night. And some there were who surmised that they had sought to drive over the ice to Haapsalu, and that the snow had hidden their tracks. But others swore as stoutly that they were still hiding on Hiiumaa, waiting for the spring and the melting of the ice, to pass over to Sweden across the sea. There were likewise those – and they were many! – who believed that these miserable sinners were dabblers in black magic, and had flown through the air on the wings of the Prince of Darkness himself, like the witches on their brooms on Walpurgis Night. (TN 119–120)

Besides being an indication of the various layers in folkloristic material, and its recyclability in culture in general, the coexistence of various different story versions can also be seen as symptomatic of the problematic nature of knowledge acquisition, and the relativity of truth itself. It also refers to the lineage of things and phenomena: ideas are created at the junctions of various contemporaneous knowledges, and their ultimate source can no longer be identified. Thus the lineage of knowledge erodes the idea of the possibility of a universal truth:

> But in what manner the Wolf's Bride nourished her body and protected it from the cold while in her human shape, that no one could tell. And there were those who said she found sustenance in the berries and roots of the forest and slept at night in old limekilns and tar-pits. While others (and their number was greater) believed that she dwelt in the wolves'

> dens, and that the wolves brought her fresh meat, as to their own cubs, whenever she did not seek it herself as a werewolf. (TN 198)

The passage from *The Wolf's Bride* can also be seen as testimony to Kallas's own work, to the fact that she had carefully acquainted herself with different werewolf stories in the Baltic tradition, where they are found in abundance (see Laitinen 1998, 223–232; Kilpinen 2002, 30, 30–32).

Kallas's novels can be seen as a comment on the official historiography, because each book clearly brings into question the concept of "truth" and who has the right to decide what is to be held as officially true. This impression is emphasised in the trial proceedings at the end of each novel. In these trials the women have a chance to tell their own version of the story. In the eyes of the system, however, they are guilty to start with; their right to be heard is a mere formality. Ultimately, justice is in the hands of those who have the power to distribute it. In these court proceedings history reveals itself as a battlefield of power. This is closely related to the way in which historiography creates a certain, unified picture of a given era. Kallas's trilogy can be read as a comment on this sanctioned way of writing history; the contradictions in the work make us wonder about the ways in which the idea of an era has been created and whose purposes this serves. By what means has this creation been possible?

Nor does the trilogy subscribe to the Topelian idea of history typical of the era between the wars where nationalist idea of history was prevalent. This idea embraces rational progress, synthesis, and a linear view of time (see Ihonen 1992, 56). More characteristic of the work is a view of history as a series of movements back and forth and as a struggle for power. This movement muddles the idea of linearity, since it cannot support the idea of uniform progress. It also presents us with varying ideas about valid knowledge. Historicity, in my view, is present in Kallas's trilogy not as a mere stylistic device, but as questioning of history through the chronicle style of writing. A certain style allows a writer to assume the power to tell a story, as is the case with the narrators in the trilogy, but the author has the possibility of use this style towards different ends, to shake the foundations of this power. The style exposes the mechanisms of the synthesis, achieved through violence: to make uniformity possible, any information that can threaten the homogeneity of the story must be excluded from the synthesis.

In each volume in Kallas's trilogy the female protagonist is killed. Barbara von Tisenhusen is drowned, by order of her brother, in a hole in the ice on Vörtsjärvi; Catharina Wycken is beheaded on Tallinn Square; and Aalo is burnt in a sauna along with her new-born child. The detailed emphasis on the killings can be seen as a violent exclusion of women from society. Their stories die with them; thus they are silenced. The killing of these women can be seen as part of a larger discourse, namely the cultural crisis, prevalent between the wars, in which a female character often represented conflicted hopes and even destruction. (Felski 1995; see also Hapuli & al. 1992; Hapuli 1995, 154–171.) On the other hand, women writers and intellectuals were often seen, during that period, as a threat to the system. The woman writer, however, has the possibility of re-scripting cultural narratives, of become heard and of questioning the prevailing order.

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stances, suppressed knowledge can point out defects of the system, and can even call into question the mechanisms within its knowledge production, mechanisms which serve to perpetuate injustice. Kallas's strategy of situational knowledge shows how knowledge assumes its position of authority by means of *power*: and how this knowledge can be changed by revealing the power behind it, and by challenging it as part of a new knowledge system.

In the 1990s the historical novel has had a renaissance; and once again it is women writers who have taken part in this process. The themes and subjects in these new historical novels resemble those I have noted in connection with Kallas. The female protagonists in these recent novels take up similar questions and problems as Kallas's protagonists: the right to gain and to hold knowledge is essential to them. (See Juutila 2002, 187–192.) These novels also elaborate the same ambivalent narrative techniques and comment critically on the insistence on a single truth in historiography (see Leskelä-Kärki 2001, 119–120) – similarly to the renewer of the genre, Aino Kallas.

NOTES

1 Lagerlöf even tried to rewrite history from a woman's point of view at the turn of the century in her *Queens of Kungahälla 1895–1900* (Stenberg 2001, 269–270).

2 Good examples of these kinds of confluences are the conversations traced in a Finnish context between two Finland-Swedish women-writers, Hagar Olsson and Edith Södergran (see Koli 1997, 131–155) and in England through the works and essays of Virginia Woolf.

3 Kallas was the daughter of the famous Fennicist Julius Krohn, and was considered as a "traitor" in national circles when she married the Estonian folklorist Oskar Kallas in 1900 and her four children were raised as fully Estonian. But in Estonia too there were many who thought Kallas used only Estonian culture and subjects, although she wrote in her mother-tongue, Finnish, and for the Finnish literary market.

4 "Imaginary exile" here refers to Kallas's situation when she was married and had to move first to St Petersburg in 1900 and then to Tartu in 1903. She also lived in London during 1922–1934 and then again in Estonia. Her "real" exile refers to her situation as a refugee after the Soviet Union's attack on Estonia during the Second World War, when she was exiled with her husband to Sweden.

5 The term re-script is derived from the feminist literary criticism and has been used to examine romances. It is a political term, whereby certain social conventions and "great narratives" giving shape to our culture are called into question by showing how they have been construed and how it is always possible to construe them anew. (Pearce & Wisker 1998, 1–3.)

6 The German scholar whose name Kallas did not remember was Wilhelm Hertz; the book in question was his doctoral dissertation, *Der Wehrwolf,* written in 1826. (See Laitinen 1998, 230.)

7 Already at the beginning of the twentieth century Kallas had become acquainted with the first publications which introduced psychoanalytic ideas and early works on the sexual sciences that were connected with psychoanalysis. The misogyny in these theories and the dualism of their images of women were long at the center of Kallas's speculation, both in her diaries and in her short stories in the 1910s. (See Kjellberg 1989, 41–48 and *The Diary* 1907–1915.)

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