

Guro Slåstad

The Art of Friendship

Love and Freedom in Tove Jansson's Fiction

Master's thesis in English Literature

Supervisor: Domhnall Mitchell

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Preface: Tove Jansson in the United Kingdom

On a poster among brick houses in the south of London, a familiar children's literature figure stands on a threshold, staring into the darkness of an existential void (see fig. 1). Underneath, an arrow points in the direction of the Dulwich Picture Gallery, where some 150 works by Tove Jansson (1914-2001), ranging from paintings, illustrations and comic strips, are on display. Inside, the gallery is teeming with people: children, adolescents, parents, grandparents. How is it that this Swedish-speaking Finnish artist, creator of this dark, yet intriguing image, appeals to such a broad Anglophone audience, and where did her appeal begin?



Fig. 1. The illustration on the poster for the Tove Jansson exhibition at Dulwich, from Jansson's *Moominland Midwinter* (1957).

The retrospective *Tove Jansson*

exhibition at the Dulwich Picture Gallery (October 2017 to January 2018), is the latest stage in Tove Jansson's Anglophone reception. According to Charlotte Berry, writing about the British translations of Jansson's Moomin books:

A veritable *Moomin* mania is currently sweeping over the United Kingdom, with a proliferation of soft toys, stationary, board books, and comic strips available in bookshops across the country. New translations of Tove Jansson's work for an adult audience continue to emerge on a regular basis, alongside the recent appearances of Puffin gift-edition hardbacks of the *Moomin* novels and retranslations of her three *Moomin* picture books. The series is now an indisputably well-established global phenomenon, and the British translations have played a vital part in making these books widely available across the international literary community. (145)¹

¹ Berry refers to translator Thomas Warburton's article "Tretti år på Schildts" ("Thirty Years at Schildts").

It “woùld be awfully fun iff you saluted the Rulers of your ~~Can~~ Country!” (sic) Moominmamma says in badly formulated English to British children in the foreword to *Finn Family Moomintroll*, the translation of the third Moomin book, *Trollkarlens hatt* (1948).² This was the first Moomin book in English issued by London publisher Ernest Benn in 1950, only five years after the first Moomin book, *Småtrollen och den stora översvämningen*,³ had appeared largely unnoticed in Finland and in Sweden (Westin, *Tove Jansson* 172-173). Berry describes Benn’s venture with the Moomin books as “very much a journey into untested waters, both in editorial and commercial terms,” (147) as Jansson was entirely unknown to the English-speaking audience, and as it was only after *Trollkarlens hatt* that she had her real breakthrough to the Swedish-speaking audience. Nevertheless, reviewing the second Moomin book translated into English, *Comet in Moominland*,⁴ for *The Shields Evening News* in 1951, J. B. guessed that the Moomins “are here to stay” (4). This guess was right: throughout the 1950s and until the last Moomin book, *Moominvalley in November*,⁵ appeared in 1971, the books received highly positive coverage in British newspapers, regularly appearing in the section of recommended Christmas books for children.⁶

The popular and critical reception of the English-language Moomin books led syndication director of *Associated Newspapers*, Charles Sutton, to headhunt Jansson to create a Moomin comic strip for the London *Evening News*. This was the biggest-selling evening paper in the world at the time, and the first strips appeared in 1954 (Gravett 20). As the Moomin books made their debut in English prior to their translation into Finnish, Jansson actually became popular in the United Kingdom *before* she was even known to the Finnish-speakers of her home country. By the time the Moomins had made a tentative breakthrough in the Finnish-language market in the mid-1950s, they were already well-known in Britain and across the world through the playful and innovative Moomin comic strip, which became enormously successful (Karjalainen 154-155; Westin *Tove* 250-251, 259). It syndicated in newspapers in forty different countries, reaching some twenty million readers (Karjalainen

² Jansson’s books were originally published in Swedish in Finland, appearing in Sweden often simultaneously or shortly after their Finnish publication. The year that accompanies the titles of her books in my discussion refers to the original Finnish publication year.

³ Translated into English as *The Moomins and the Great Flood* in 2012.

⁴ Originally published in Swedish as *Kometjakten* in 1946.

⁵ Originally published in Swedish as *Sent i november* in 1970.

⁶ This observation is based on examination of the historical newspaper archives of the British Library, *The Times*, *The Observer*, *The Guardian*, the *Financial Times* and *The Economist*. For a list of Jansson’s Moomin fiction and its translation into English, see appendix A.

185). Jansson, in short, was part of Anglophone culture before the Moomins even reached the Finnish-speaking audience.

In biographer and Jansson scholar Boel Westin's words, Jansson became "a megastar" when her Moomin strip took off in England (*Tove* 18). Since this "Moomin-mania" started, the loving and tolerant hippopotamus-like characters have come to inhabit the hearts of children and adults worldwide: in addition to the novels and comic strips, there have been picture-books and TV adaptations. According to Scandinavian studies scholar W. Glyn Jones, the English translations of the Moomin books "have become part of English lore" (Preface), and the word *Moomin* has even entered *The Oxford English Dictionary*:

Moomin, noun /'mu:mn/: In the children's tales of Tove Jansson: a member of a race of small, shy, fat, hibernating creatures inhabiting the forests of Finland.

However, Jansson's Moomin fiction came to overshadow her wider artistic output. In fact, the Moomin books became increasingly complex, and in 1968 Jansson's first piece of non-Moomin fiction, her childhood memoir, *Bildhuggarens dotter*, was published.⁷ In the 1970s, Jansson turned her attention increasingly away from Moominvalley, but only three of her twelve non-Moomin fictional works were published in English during her lifetime.⁸ However, after her death in 2001, her visual artistic output and her non-Moomin fiction have come to receive increasing attention. The success of her non-Moomin fiction in the United Kingdom began with the independent London publisher Sort of Books' reissue of *The Summer Book* in 2003.⁹ With a foreword by British novelist Esther Freud, the reissue was a huge success: according to *The Guardian*, it sold fifty thousand copies within two months of its release in Britain (Daoust 55). The novel started off a wave of renewed interest in Jansson's non-Moomin fiction, reflected by the fact that major newspapers continued to review the following reissues and translations. A reviewer in *The Spectator* noted how *The Summer Book* had been published previously in Britain, but in 2003 the moment of "this extraordinary masterpiece" had come: "Something about its quality of rootedness, of unnarrated exploration of a tiny territory strikes a chord just now." In a busy modern society, the story about a grandmother and granddaughter spending their summers on a remote Finnish island, shoring "themselves up as best they can against the interruptions of the modern world" appealed to a

⁷ Translated into English as *Sculptor's Daughter* in 1969.

⁸ These were *Sculptor's Daughter* (*Bildhuggarens dotter*) published by Benn in 1969, *The Summer Book* (*Sommarboken*) and *Sun City* (*Solstaden*) both published by Hutchinson in 1974 and 1976 respectively.

⁹ Originally published in Swedish as *Sommarboken* in 1972.

British readership (“Magic in the Gulf of Finland”).¹⁰

Since *The Summer Book*, Sort of Books has continued to publish Jansson’s non-Moomin fiction, and at the time of writing, only the novel *Stenåkern* (“The Field of Stones,” 1984) and the collection of Jansson’s diary entries and Pietilä’s paintings, *Anteckningar från en ö* (“Notes from an Island,” 1996), remain untranslated, and *Sun City* remains to be reissued.¹¹ It is fair to say that the introduction of Jansson’s non-Moomin fiction in the 2000s to a British audience has been an overall success. Writing for *Financial Times* following the publication of the novel *The True Deceiver* in 2009,¹² Adrian Turpin noted how since the republication of *The Summer Book*, “the Finnish writer’s reputation has soared in the UK” (17). In her introduction to Jansson’s short story collection *Travelling Light*, Ali Smith commented on how Jansson’s earlier fame for the Moomins was “steadily matched by a fast-growing international appreciation of her light-footed, deep-resonating writing for adults” (11).

In addition to this enthusiasm for Jansson’s non-Moomin fiction, there has been a wider interest in Jansson’s life in recent years. For decades, the Puffin editions of the Moomin books have told British readers that Jansson “lived alone on a small island in the Gulf of Finland,” while in reality, she divided her time between her studio in Helsinki and her summer house in the Pellinki archipelago, sharing her life with the graphic artist Tuulikki Pietilä. The growing interest in Jansson’s life is reflected in the publication of Westin’s biography *Tove Jansson: Ord, bild, liv* (2007) and Tuula Karjalainen’s *Tove Jansson: Tee Työtä ja Rakasta* (2013) in English in 2014, appearing as *Tove Jansson: Life, Art Words* and *Tove Jansson: Work and Love* respectively. Both biographies were reviewed by major British newspapers.¹³ Eleanor Yule’s BBC TV documentary *Moominland Tales: The Life of Tove Jansson* (2012) also illuminated Jansson’s life to a British audience. In addition to revealing the story behind the Moomins, the documentary focused on Jansson’s wider artistic work and desire to be recognised as a fine artist.

The exhibition at Dulwich is emblematic of this shift in the view of Jansson as an artist *beyond* the Moomins: it was the first major retrospective exhibition of Jansson in Britain, and it aimed at reintroducing “Jansson as an artist of exceptional breadth and talent”

¹⁰ The recent rediscovery and popularity of Jansson’s fiction can be seen in relation to a larger Scandinavian trend sweeping over Britain, with several life-style guides on *How to Hygge* available in bookstores all over the United Kingdom.

¹¹ For a list of Jansson’s non-Moomin fiction and its translation into English, see appendix A.

¹² Originally published in Swedish as *Den ärliga bedragaren* in 1982.

¹³ See “Moomins’ Magic Maker” and Prideaux for reviews of Karjalainen’s biography; and Kellaway and Lovegrove for reviews of Westin’s biography.

(“First UK Retrospective”).¹⁴ The gallery’s director, Jennifer Scott, told *The Guardian* that Jansson “fits perfectly into one of the things we do best at Dulwich, which is to take a very unfamiliar name, or a name people think they know, and show a completely different aspect of their work” (Kennedy). The gallery clearly achieved what they set out to do; the exhibition was an eye-opener for those critics who had previously associated Jansson mainly with the Moomins, and it received general critical acclaim. Writing for *The Telegraph*, Lucy Denyer admitted that her knowledge of Jansson’s work beyond the Moomins was limited. She called the exhibition “a revelation,” noting how it showed “a fierce, strong-willed woman with wide-ranging talent.” Many critics were surprised at the boldness of Jansson’s satirical depictions of Hitler and Stalin for the Swedish anti-fascistic magazine *Garm*, found her self-portraits remarkable, and applauded her illustrations for Swedish editions of classics such as J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* (1937), Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *The Hunting of the Snark* (1876).¹⁵

However, some critics found it a contradiction that while the aim of the exhibition was to draw attention to Jansson’s wider work, her visual Moomin work still dominated much of the exhibition. In *The Guardian*, Maev Kennedy, for example, noted how the Moomins had “crept into half the exhibition space and taken over the final room.” The characteristic Moomin illustrations and comic strips were doubtless a major cause for the exhibition’s popularity, but in *Studio International*, M. K. Palomar argued that “art and its reception has changed markedly over recent decades and contemporary perspective takes a broader view.” Indeed, while Jansson “lived at a time when many critics had a narrow view of the arts, and were quick to denounce all things narrative as being of less value than those things, often inaccessible to many, abstracted, expressed or brutalised” (Palomar), contemporary critics appreciate her illustrations as art: “Jansson may not have considered her illustrations art, but they absolutely are” (Durant). Thus, many critics do not, as Jansson herself did, view the Moomin stories and illustrations as a distraction from her proper work, but rather, as Simon Willis puts it, as “a distillation of it.” Similarly, the exhibition’s curator, Sointu Fritze, emphasised that the Moomins had earned their place in the exhibition:

Although Tove Jansson was sometimes tired of the Moomins or frustrated to be known primarily as the “Moomin Mamma who can also paint,” she did the work on

¹⁴ The *Tove Jansson* exhibition was a touring exhibition, which was first held at Helsinki Art Museum in 2014 to celebrate the centenary of Jansson’s birth. It travelled to Japan, Sweden and Denmark before coming to London (“*Tove Jansson* Exhibition at Dulwich”).

¹⁵ See Denyer; Durant; McDonough; Sykes; Palomar; Williams; and Willis.

Moomins as seriously, with a strong devotion, as her painting. . . .

I think she was herself able to see her oeuvre as a continuum and a whole, the sources of inspiration being very much the same for everything she did.

(Kennedy)

For many critics, the exhibition gave context to the Moomin stories, as well as showing what lies behind them. Denyer, for instance, thought that what the exhibition did best was to show “what lies behind those cuddly creatures. . . . Just as, when you first read the Moomin stories afresh, you notice hidden depths in their seemingly placid tales, so their author was more complicated than she first might appear.”

The exhibition will serve as a key to my thesis, as our aims coincide. In the following, I want to show that Jansson was more than the Moomins; that these books, in turn, are more than books for children; that her *oeuvre* indeed should be viewed as a continuum; and finally, through a combined approach that includes the biographical, to shed light on the bold life behind this playful, but complex authorship. The exhibition will serve to structure my thesis, with each chapter having a picture as a starting-point. Attention to the core themes of Jansson’s fiction is an important aspect of my thesis, and by using the exhibition as a structure, I aim to show how her pictures and words are connected by the core themes of love and freedom.

Chapter 1: Introducing the Themes of Love and Freedom

The first room of the exhibition at Dulwich features several of Jansson's self-portraits and early paintings, among them *The Smoking Girl* (see fig. 2). The confident young Jansson is not looking at the viewer: her eyes are narrowing in on a point in the distance as she absentmindedly draws on a cigarette. She allows the viewer to study her, but she does not return the gaze. Is she unaware of being watched, or indifferent? Or is she engaging with the viewer in her own independent way? Listening to what he or she has to say, perhaps pondering on it? Or is she allowing her thoughts to wander?



Fig. 2. *The Smoking Girl* (1940).

In *Ways of Seeing* (1972), John Berger et al. discuss how in the tradition of the European oil painting, especially in the category of the nude, “women have been seen and judged as sights” (47). Whereas men look at women, women *watch* themselves being looked at, as a consequence of being born “within an allotted and confined space, into the keeping of men” (46). In this tradition of paintings of women by men, women are most often depicted in order to please the male gaze, and they repeatedly direct their gaze invitingly towards him (54-56). *The Smoking Girl*, importantly, is a self-portrait by a *female* artist, and this young woman looks *away* from the viewer. According to Berger et al., the way a woman appears to a man determines the way she will be treated, and in an attempt to control this process women contain and interiorize it: “That part of a woman’s self which is the surveyor treats the part which is surveyed so as to demonstrate to others how her whole self would like to be treated” (46). The young Jansson demands to be treated with respect: it is *not* accidental that she represents herself as fully clothed, her hand partly concealing her mouth and lower face, and that she paints herself as busy doing something – not at all dependent on others. She does not portray herself as a desirable object, but rather as an active, contemplating subject. That she is smoking further suggests that she is

inserting herself into a territory formerly considered male.¹⁶ In this manner, Jansson usurps the tradition of the male gaze by reclaiming representation of women for themselves.¹⁷ Moreover, it is in no way given that the viewer is a man: Jansson's fiction suggests otherwise, as she depicts relationships that defy gender and other hierarchical patterns.

This bold and colourful picture paves way for the refreshingly new take on relationships in Jansson's fiction, by displaying an *open* relation between the young woman and the viewer: a relation that allows for contemplation and differing opinions. The young woman might be interested in forming a connection, but she is determined to keep her independence. In his article on Jansson's art, James Williams makes a similar point:

You can pass time in the painting's company but it won't be spent locked into a cryptic exchange of gazes. Her eyes won't follow you around the room. If you are going to hang out with *Smoking Girl* it will be on a different footing. There is a sense of expectant potential, perhaps, because the girl is still drawing on the cigarette. She hasn't exhaled yet; when she does, she might say something. Perhaps it will be clever, or funny, or inconsequential as smoke. It's a painting about friendship because it's a painting that's open to friendship. And it is the self-portrait of an artist and writer whose great subjects were love and freedom, and how to love while remaining free: that is to say, the art of friendship. (*Apollo-magazine.com*)

Williams touches on an important aspect of both Jansson's fiction and life: the need for closeness and love, and the need for freedom, independence and the ability to explore the world by oneself. Jansson's short story "Travelling Light" (*Travelling Light*, 1987) illustrates the latter need, and its problems. In what follows, the narrator boards a ship bound for London:

I wish I could describe the enormous relief I felt when they finally pulled up the gangway! Only then did I feel safe. Or, more exactly, when the ship had moved far enough from the quay for it to be impossible for anyone to call out. . . ask for my address, scream that something awful had happened. . . Believe me, you can't imagine my giddy sense of freedom. [. . .] The sky was light blue, the little clouds seemed whimsical, pleasantly capricious. . . (Jansson, "Travelling" 80)

¹⁶ In the Moomin fiction, a pipe features as one of Moominpappa's male attributes.

¹⁷ Self-portraits form a central part of Jansson's paintings, and the way she presented herself to the public *was* in no way coincidental. According to Westin, Jansson "constructed her self through self-portraits, transforming it as she passed through a variety of poses: the busy girl, the highly strung embryo artist, the solemn young painter, the artistic aesthete" (*Tove* 25).

However, the little clouds are a sign of the complications to come, not least because they are described in almost human terms. Boats feature heavily in Jansson's fiction, and they often take on a symbolic value: they are "for the most part – but not always – a symbol of freedom, happiness and departure" (Antonsson 35).¹⁸ The journey in "Travelling Light" is one of the exceptions: as the story ends, the boat has become a crowded and claustrophobic nightmare. From the beginning, there are several suggestions that the narrator is not as free and unburdened as he wishes, and as the story develops, he gets entangled in other people's problems. According to himself, he *attracts* human misery: "Every single one of us is afflicted by some secret, insurmountable disappointment, some form of anxiety or shame, they sniff me out in no time. I mean, they know, their sense of smell leads them to me. . . ." (Jansson, "Travelling" 91). However, his actions suggest that he *seeks* this misery by not managing fully to disengage. Because he tries to avoid his emotions instead of dealing with them, they mount up like the clouds before the storm, which by the end of the story has blown up to full strength, and the boat's rolling movements become a metaphor for the emotions he so desperately tries to escape (cf. "Travelling" 93-97).

As Smith points out in her introduction to the collection *Travelling Light*, "what this story reveals is that there's no such thing as disconnection," noting how "it does this in its very form, not just in the funny, sad unfolding of its plot" (9). The short story echoes the epistolary novel in that it is written like a confessional letter: throughout the story the narrator is accompanied by a "you": "*you* can't imagine my giddy sense of freedom" (Jansson, "Travelling" 80; emphasis added). The reader is with him from the beginning, listening to his story, meaning that his ideal of disconnection and freedom is already compromised.

According to Smith, Jansson in these stories insists that:

no man or woman is an island. No matter how much we may long to escape others, we can't; and even the simplest daily act of existing in the world, living with others, never mind anything more intimate, is fraught with alienation. The collection revels in this paradox, the human longing for solitude versus the human need for contact. (10)

I would take this even further and argue that this paradox marks a considerable part of Jansson's *oeuvre*: is the ideal to let go of everyone and everything possible? Are we too attached to other people to let go of what we leave behind? Will we in the end go back and seek those we love? What is most important: to feel loved or to feel free?

¹⁸ All quotations from Norwegian and Swedish texts are my translations.

Thesis Statement

In what follows, I explore this tension between love and freedom through close readings and thematic analyses of the novels *Fair Play* (1989) and *Moominpappa at Sea* (1965), while making connections to Jansson's wider work where relevant to demonstrate the prevalence of this tension in her fiction. I also draw parallels to Jansson's life to show how this tension was something she as a twentieth-century female artist was acutely aware of, and to shed light on a bold life behind the fiction. My discussion of her life is informed by Westin and Karjalainen's translated biographies,¹⁹ and Tordis Ørjasæter's *Møte med Tove Jansson* ("A Meeting with Tove Jansson," 1985).²⁰ I also make use of Jansson's memoir *Sculptor's Daughter* (1968), as well as her essays and letters in which she reveals her views on her writing and life.

Although my approach is partly biographical, I do not limit the analysis to a discussion of authorial intention, but instead refer to her life only in connection with a more extensive close reading and thematic analysis. I identify themes, motifs and narrative patterns that can be found *across* Jansson's fiction to show that her authorship is best viewed as a continuum, and not easily separated into categories of "children's" and "adult" fiction. This is because of the extraordinary versatility she displays: in her Moomin fiction, she deals with "adult" topics such as death, mourning, the precariousness family life, as well as questioning gender roles and displaying the theatricality of everyday life. Displaying human relationships generally in all their depth and complexity – and the tension between love and freedom in particular – is one of these adult topics. Jansson continued to explore these themes in her non-Moomin fiction. Although my discussion of the short story "The Locomotive" (*Art in Nature*, 1978) will show that some of the non-Moomin fiction is dark, much of it is also marked by the playful childishness of the Moomin books. The characters, importantly, continue to include children left to their own devices: just as Moominmamma lets Moomintroll go on adventures

¹⁹ In a review of Jansson research published in the centenary year of 2014, Mia Österlund is critical of Karjalainen's biography. Although crediting her for a liberatingly broad approach to Jansson's work and life, Österlund criticises her for not engaging in "an open dialogue" with previous research, especially with Westin. While Westin emphasises the literary side of Jansson's *oeuvre* in her biography, Karjalainen as an art historian accentuates the visual side. Österlund points out that the literary side of Jansson's *oeuvre* is often linked to her illustrative art, and criticises Karjalainen for treating Jansson's fiction in an almost solely biographical manner (Österlund, "Tillbaka"). Despite these objections, I still find Karjalainen's biography valuable, especially as an introduction to Jansson as a painter, and in shedding light on the conditions that female artists had to face in the twentieth century.

²⁰ Ørjasæter's biography was written for a young Ø audience, and is based on a series of interviews with the author. Because the biography was aimed at a younger readership, Jansson was unwilling to reveal details of her love affairs, especially those she had with women. Despite these evasions, *Møte med Tove Jansson* remains an insightful portrait.

with his friends, Sophia in *The Summer Book* and the child-narrator of *Sculptor's Daughter* are at liberty to explore their surroundings on their own. The adults, in turn, can sulk or behave childishly. In *The Summer Book*, for instance, the boundaries between the child and adult states shift, as the child Sophia sometimes acts as the grown-up, and her grandmother as the child. In *Fair Play* too, Mari and Jonna often behave like juveniles. Thus, to separate Jansson's fiction into "children's" and "adult" literature is problematic.

Since the first scholarly treatment of the Moomin fiction (Hagemann), there has been a tendency to view the Moomin books as developing from episodic fairy-tales into novels of a more psychological nature aimed at adults, with *Moominland Midwinter* (1957) as a turning-point.²¹ Westin, however, finds this view reductive as it fails to appreciate each book's distinctive quality. Thus, in her doctoral thesis, *Familjen i dalen* ("The Family in the Valley," 1984), she investigates how Jansson plays with different genres and traditions in her Moomin fiction (Westin 15-16). While I agree that from *Moominland Midwinter* onwards the books *are* more psychological in their orientation and that the final two Moomin books convey a more complex picture of the family than previously, I still find that there are aspects that adults can relate to even in the early Moomin fiction. This view is supported by Hanna Dymel-Trzebiatowska, who has shown that even the second and third Moomin books, *Comet in Moominland* and *Finn Family Moomintroll*, "already include intertextual references indicating the multiple character of their appeal" (61).²² Barbro K. Gustafsson prefers the terms earlier and later literature in her doctoral thesis on erotic motifs and homosexual depictions in Jansson's later literature (1992), as she too finds this division inadequate. She sees *Sculptor's Daughter* as a watershed, as the plots from this point onwards mainly take place outside Moominvalley (Gustafsson 12). However, dividing Jansson's fiction into earlier and later literature may in fact *also* suggest a greater break than there actually is: it is true that the later settings are mainly located outside Moominvalley, but perhaps what Jansson is doing is bringing her once-child reader with her on another dangerous journey – into the world of adulthood. I thus choose to use the terms "Moomin fiction" and "non-Moomin fiction" to distinguish between the works that are situated in the world of Moominvalley and those that have other settings; the implication is that although place may differ, there is development and continuity rather than a break.

The versatility of Jansson's fiction is also a reason why a purely biographical approach

²¹ See Omland; Holländer *Från Idyll*; Jones; Rehal-Johansson.

²² See also Harju's discussion of Jansson's fiction as crossover literature.

would be limiting, as the themes of her fiction extend far beyond her biography. In writing about the tensions between love and freedom, she touches on issues adults as well as children can relate to, as this is a conflict experienced by child and adult characters alike in her fiction. To show this, I have chosen for study one work which is marketed as adult fiction, *Fair Play*, and one which is marketed as children's fiction, *Moominpappa at Sea*. Whereas in the chapter on *Fair Play*, I look at the tension between love and freedom in personal relationships, the chapter on *Moominpappa at Sea* will explore this tension in relation to the family. Instead of dividing plot summary and analysis, essential plot details are given along the way. Thus my analyses somewhat reflect the forms of the novels they describe: while *Fair Play* is written like a series of thematically connected vignettes, *Moominpappa at Sea* has a linear plot development. The thematic sections of the chapters do to some extent mirror one another to emphasise the cross-currents between Jansson's fiction for children and adults. In concluding the thesis, I theorise over how her fiction might speak differently to children and adults by looking briefly at the turning-point of the Moomin saga, *Moominland Midwinter* (1957).

I am aware that thematic approaches can sometimes be constricting: my aim here is *not* to try to fit all of Jansson's fiction into a pattern of freedom versus love, as this tension is only one of the many complex topics in her fiction. Nevertheless, I find it a fruitful gateway into the complexity of this *oeuvre*, because it is related to many other important themes and motifs. Connected to love is the need for closeness and security, but also the cost of commitment (especially for an artist), and the danger of jealousy and of losing oneself. Connected to freedom is the ability to pursue one's vocation freely, having personal space, the island motif, travelling (having freedom of movement and choice), but also loneliness and fear of intimacy – all of which are topics my comparative analysis uncovers.

Since Jansson's fiction is a long-established part of Anglophone culture, my analyses take the English translations as their starting point.²³ However, the Swedish versions are consulted to check compliance in terms of style and narrative technique, and difference are commented on when relevant. In selecting secondary literature, I have looked at Anglophone, Swedish- and Norwegian-language criticism, as well as translated Finnish criticism: Anglophone, because this is an English-language thesis; and Scandinavian because it is a thesis written in Norway as part of a programme at a Norwegian institution of higher education. Another reason for selecting these languages is to show some of the research that

²³ I refer to either Puffin or Square Fish editions of the Moomin books, which are reissues of Benn's original translations. For a note on Jansson's revisions of her Moomin books, see appendix A.

has been done on Jansson in English, and to present some of what has been done in Swedish and Norwegian to an English-speaking audience.²⁴ While there is now quite a lot to be found on Jansson's Moomin fiction in English, Anglophone academic treatment of the non-Moomin fiction is harder to come by, especially on *Fair Play*. Thus the English secondary material in the following chapter mainly consists of reviews that appeared in newspapers and journals.²⁵ This thesis therefore seeks to address a gap in Anglophone academic attention to Jansson's non-Moomin fiction, as well as viewing Jansson's *oeuvre* in a comparative light. Mine is one of few theses that compares Jansson's Moomin and non-Moomin fiction, and, to my knowledge, the first to combine readings of *Fair Play* and *Moominpappa at Sea*.

In the following two sections, I explain why I find employing Jansson's biography useful in understanding why the twin themes of love and freedom are so important in her fiction. As my thesis follows the progression of the Dulwich exhibition, the non-Moomin fiction will be discussed first, and the Moomin-fiction second.

Fiction and Autobiography

Next to *The Smoking Girl* hangs another self-portrait: *The Family* (see fig. 3). There is a play between light and dark in this depiction of Jansson and her family – an interplay she continued to explore in her fiction. While light usually symbolises security and togetherness, dark often stands for what is unknown and dangerous.



Fig. 3. *The Family* (1942).

However, Jansson plays with these associations in order to complicate them: although this is a painting of a family, it does *not* emanate security and warmth – the characters occupy the same space but are not fully together. Contributing to the picture's dark quality is the shadow cast by the ongoing war that

²⁴ Because of the language-barrier, I have had to rule out untranslated Finnish criticism.

²⁵ For a brief overview of the Anglophone Academic reception of Jansson's fiction, see appendix B.

the chess game alludes to: a war which one brother is involved in, and the other in danger of being pulled into. As Karjalainen points out, for “centuries, chess as well as various card games have been used as symbols of fate and its incalculable nature. In such paintings, mankind is playing its eternal game with death” (71). Jansson’s father, Viktor Jansson, served in the Finnish Civil War (1918), and his hollow expression bears witness to how a war continues to haunt its former participants. The tenseness of the political situation is reflected in this domestic setting – in the stiff and serious manner of this group of people, who all seem lost in their own thoughts. As in *The Smoking Girl*, the fact that the subjects do not return the viewer’s gaze, leaves our questions unanswered. In fact, Jansson and her mother are the only ones that appear to be looking at each other. Also a woman ahead of her time, with her thoughtful expression and cigarette, Jansson’s mother, Signe Hammarsten-Jansson, resembles the young Jansson of the *The Smoking Girl*. Does this exchange of glances between mother and daughter suggest a secret understanding between them? It is uncertain whether Jansson is on her way in or out of the half-open door in the background – whether she is taking on or off her gloves. Is the mother eyeing her newly-arrived daughter or anticipating her leave-taking?

The way Jansson portrays herself in this carefully composed painting suggests an ambivalence towards the institution of the family and its associated norms. Loneliness is a complicated theme in Jansson: while it may lead to isolation and despair, it may also entail freedom. It is thus not coincidental that Jansson has depicted herself in dark clothes that contrast to her parents’ white artist’s smocks, and that make her stand out against the rest of the group. While it may be a sign of her grief for the war’s annihilation of one of her life’s most important values, i.e. freedom, it may also signify that her longing for independence and solitude is a threat to the community of the family. Yet she has chosen to put herself in the centre of the group: it is as if she is *both* a participant *and* an observer; a part *of*, but also apart *from* her family. Significantly, between mother and daughter is a white stone block, contrasting to the dimly-lit room, resembling a canvas or a blank page ready to be filled with *new* pictures and stories.

Over the course of her life, Jansson would use art to investigate the possibilities for a love that respects the conditions of freedom. While her early Moomin stories depict a happy family in a valley, their portrayal became increasingly complex over the course of the novels, as if Jansson was steadily distancing herself from her own creation – becoming more of an observer than a participant. The constellation in *The Family* is repeated in an illustration in *Moominpappa at Sea*, reflecting how she became gradually more concerned with the family’s internal dynamics. Is it possible to be free and at the same time attached to a family? In her

non-Moomin fiction she became more interested in investigating the conditions of love and freedom in one-to-one relationships. Why was Jansson so concerned with closeness and distance, love and freedom?

The Family serves as a link between Jansson's art and life, by showing how she made art of her own life. As a young artist, she worked the motto *Labora et Amare* ("work and love") into her bookplate.²⁶ According to Westin, work for Jansson was always "intertwined with love, a processing of mental and physical emotion. Making life into pictures and words" (*Tove* 221). Thus, in both Westin and Karjalainen's biographies, Jansson's life and work are closely linked. For Jansson, both visual art and literature were means of self-expression:

Every still-life, every landscape, every canvas is a self-portrait. . . . (qtd. in Westin, *Tove* 21)

When you write a book you do it for yourself and you describe various sides of yourself in it. . . . Every seriously written book is a sort of self-portrait. (qtd. in Westin, *Tove* 487)²⁷

Thus, reading fiction by Jansson about others as also being about herself, albeit in mediated ways, is part of the method by which I explore *why* the tension between love and freedom is prevalent in her writing.

What Happens to Love if "Freedom is the Best Thing"?

As a young girl, Jansson drew a Moomin-like figure resembling Immanuel Kant on the wall of the outside lavatory at the family's summer cottage in Pellinki, and wrote the first words of Bishop Thomas' song of freedom, "freedom is the best thing" (Karjalainen 118; Westin, *Tove* 162). Retaining the freedom to pursue art remained of the utmost importance to her throughout her life. According to Jansson in her essay "Barnets värld" ("The World of the Child," 1984), "the dream of freedom is perhaps the most powerful of all our dreams. Sometimes it is nothing but a longing to live without responsibilities . . ." (67). During the harsh war-years, she experienced how it felt *not* to be free, and displayed it in *The Family*. The Moomins were born during this tense period, and the stories about their peaceful and

²⁶ Westin notes that it should perhaps have been *Labora et Ama*, "work and love" in the imperative mood of the verb (*Tove* 22).

²⁷ Where possible, I have consulted original sources, the exceptions being letters and unpublished notes by Jansson. Since these are not yet translated into English, I have made use of translated extracts from Karjalainen and Westin's biographies. I also refer to her letters to other researchers where relevant, and provided my own translations where necessary.

accepting community became a way for her to escape from the grim reality into the world of childhood:

It was the winter of war, in 1939. One's work stood still; it felt completely pointless to try to create pictures.

Perhaps it was understandable that I suddenly felt an urge to write down something that was to begin with "Once upon a time."

What followed had to be a fairytale – that was inevitable – but I excused myself with avoiding princes, princesses and small children and chose instead my angry signature character from the cartoons, and called him the Moomintroll.

(Jansson, Preface to *The Moomins and the Great Flood*)²⁸

The Moomin stories have their origins in Jansson's childhood: she was born into an artistic family in the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland; her Finnish-Swedish father was a sculptor, and her Swedish-born mother was a graphic designer and illustrator. Jansson grew up in Helsinki, and spent her summers in the Pellinki archipelago. Her happy childhood memories were a prerequisite for her Moomin fiction: "I should never have tried to write without the childhood I had; it was so free and self-evident" (Jansson, "Barnets värld" 67).²⁹

However, as a young aspiring artist, Jansson saw how her mother was forced to give up her dream of a career as an independent artist when she married and became a mother. In a marriage between two artists, it was the woman who was expected to look after the family's needs, also financially. According to Karjalainen,

Female artists were often discussed in relation to their husbands, and their work was often reviewed by comparing the two. It was convenient for critics to say that a woman had been influenced by her husband, and that the husband had all too obviously been the example she followed. Women's art was not viewed independently and really not taken seriously. Such a reception was unlikely to encourage women in their careers, and it did not encourage Ham [Jansson's mother] either. (13-14)

Both Westin and Karjalainen consider Jansson a feminist ahead of her time: knowing how marriage and family life could potentially ruin her artistic ambitions and limit her freedom,

²⁸ "The angry signature character from the cartoons" refers to the Moomin-like figure that first appeared as part of Jansson's signature on her satirical illustrations for *Garm*.

²⁹ According to Jansson, there are two characters in the Moomin fiction that have prototypes in real life: Moominmamma is based on her own mother, and Too-ticky on Pietilä (Westin, *Tove* 304). However, there are various aspects of her own personality to be found in the different figures in the Moomin world, and many of them also resemble other people from Jansson's life. Moominpappa, for example, shares Jansson's father's love for storms and adventure. For a discussion of "who's who" in the Moomin fiction, see Karjalainen 143-154; for an essay on Moominmamma and her resemblance to Jansson's mother, see Strömstedt.

she lived with her lovers out of wedlock, defying conventions (Karjalainen 118-119; Westin, *Tove* 123). As Jansson put it herself: “I’ve no intention of devoting my whole life to a performance I’ve seen through” (qtd. in Westin, *Tove* 123).

In her discussion of Jansson’s picture-books, Lena Kåreland argues that they can be read from a meta-perspective as treating the problem of the artist (94). Kåreland notes how *The Dangerous Journey* (1977), in which the protagonist Susanna has to break away from the family idyll of Moominvalley to continue her creative development, “illustrates Tove Jansson’s own problems and artistic goals. For an artist, the family becomes a threat and a barrier and in many of her works Jansson is preoccupied with roles, identities, the price of family bliss and the conditions of artistic life” (94). In the Moomin fiction, Moominpappa is the one at liberty to be a writer, as he has no responsibilities for the child-rearing: in the early books, he is a detached memoir-writer; in *Moominsummer Madness* (1954), he is a playwright; and in *Moominpappa at Sea*, he tries to write a book about the mysteries of the sea. Moominmamma, on the other hand, only becomes an artist when she is deprived of her role as a mother in the latter novel. In *Fair Play*, Mari and Jonna have to negotiate between their roles as lovers and artists.

But although Jansson valued her freedom and independence, she realised that “Freedom to be alone can both give insight and a desire to create, but it can also become absolutely sterile. A backwater” (Jansson, “Barnets värld” 67). The pursuit of freedom may lead to loneliness, which, according to Jansson, “may have a hundred faces”: while it “may be a luxury,” it can also “become something grim” (67). In her discussion of the Groke’s development and significance in the Moomin fiction, Marie Alming notes how “the Swedish word ‘ensam’ can both mean alone and lonely, and can thus stand for both negative loneliness and the positive freedom of being alone” (13). There is indeed a fine line between the positive, self-chosen solitude, and the negative loneliness that becomes isolating: in the Moomin fiction, the wanderer Snufkin, for whom loneliness seems to be a precondition for his artistry and creativity, and the Groke, who in her isolation longs for warmth and company, are opposite poles representing these different aspects of loneliness (Alming 13). Although having the freedom to be alone stands out as an important component in the relationship between Mari and Jonna, my discussion of a couple of non-Moomin short stories show that, as with the Groke, utter isolation can become dangerous. As a middle-ground between dependence and isolation, Jansson envisioned a freer love, a fellowship based on equality and respect: “Can we not be together without making demands on each other’s work, life and ideas, continue to be free beings without having to give away?” (Jansson qtd. in Westin, *Tove*

123). The following chapters will show how she explored this concept of a love that respects the conditions of freedom in her fiction.

Chapter 2: *Fair Play* – A Tightrope Walk Between Work and Love

The second room of the Dulwich exhibition displays some of Jansson's later, more abstract, paintings. Among them is the colourful *The Graphic Artist* (see fig. 4), which shows Pietilä absorbed in her work in a cramped Paris studio. Karjalainen notes how the portrait "conveys the artist's sense of freedom" (240) – the freedom to pursue artistic work in peace. However, there is more: this is a painting of a loved one, by a lover; of an artist at work, by an artist at work. This makes the situation ambiguous:



Fig. 4. *The Graphic Artist* (1975).

is Pietilä so absorbed in her work that she does not notice Jansson? Is she shunning her lover, thus rendering her irrelevant to her artistic process? Is Jansson's work more inclusive of her life, because she takes Pietilä for her subject, reflecting her feelings for her? Or is it rather that they are so comfortable in each other's company that their mutual presence makes them able to concentrate more fully on their art – that the sphere of their privacy extends to include each other?

As Westin points out, Jansson has "worked the vital concepts of work and love" into this painting, and by extension, the tension between these concepts in the lives of two artists working and living "separately but together" (*Tove* 460, 303). When Jansson met Pietilä in 1955, it was "a turning point in her life": Pietilä built her home and studio in an empty flat in the same block as Jansson's, and they were able to visit each other by walking along an attic corridor (302-303). Jansson had finally found her ideal form of a relationship in which she could keep her independence.

A similar preoccupation with the balance between work and love can be detected in Jansson's non-Moomin fiction, and according to Maria Antas, *Fair Play* "forms a central fixed point in the portrayal of tightrope walk between the freedom demanded by artistic creation and the communion on which life must be based." It is thus fitting that *The Graphic*

Artist is on the front cover of the New York Review of Books' edition of the novel: not only does it invite the audience to read it biographically, it also illustrates the tension between work and love that runs through it.³⁰ In the chapter "Viktoria," for instance, Jonna asks Mari why they never had time to ask their fathers about the important things in their lives, and Mari answers that they were too preoccupied by "Work probably. And falling in love – that takes an awful lot of time" (Jansson, *Fair Play* 90). In her discussion of Jansson's non-Moomin fiction, Madeleine LaRue observes that along with work and love, play is another concept that structures nearly all of Jansson's work. *Fair Play* is indeed like a game, as Mari and Jonna challenge each other constantly. On another level, however, "The real leading parts are played by work and love" (Westin, *Tove* 490). Work is connected to freedom: it is vital for Mari and Jonna to be able to choose when and where to work, and when they need to be alone. Already in the first chapter, "Changing Pictures," the narrator, through Mari's point-of-view, observes how Jonna enjoys to pursue "her work in blessed seclusion, free from interference" (Jansson, *Fair Play* 4). On the other hand, love is also important for their development as artists, as they confide in each other about their artistic pursuits.

In what follows, I explore the tension between love and freedom in *Fair Play*, and then draw parallels to a couple of non-Moomin short stories to show how Jansson explores the various aspects of this tension in personal relationships.

Separate, yet Together

Jonna had the happy ability to wake up every morning as if to a new life, opening before her clean and unspent right through to evening, rarely shadowed by yesterday's worries and mistakes.

Another ability – or rather a gift, always equally surprising – was her flood of unexpected and completely spontaneous ideas. Each lived and blossomed powerfully for a time until suddenly swept aside by a new impulse demanding its own undeniable space. (Jansson, *Fair Play* 3)

³⁰ In reviews and criticism, *Fair Play* is variously referred to as a novel and a short story collection, or something in between, see Antonsson 187; Battersby; Gunn; Jönsson 258; Karjalainen 262; and Westin, *Tove* 474. In writing about an unconventional relationship, Jansson needed a form that was *not* "hopelessly conventional" (cf. *Fair Play* 3): she needed to break the boundaries between the novel and the short story. In a letter to her publisher, she explained how she saw the book's format: "Not short stories; a kind of novel where every section constitutes a small entity, as in *The Summer Book*, more or less" (qtd. in Westin, Foreword x). Thus, I will refer to *Fair Play* as a novel, while acknowledging that each of its seventeen chapters constitutes a whole in its own right. Another reason for choosing this terminology is the arrangement of the chapters, which are thematically connected.

Space is a crucial concept in *Fair Play*, and it is introduced already in “Changing Pictures.” While rearranging, Jonna comments: “Look, here’s a thing of mine and here’s your drawing, and they clash. We need distance, it’s essential” (5). Mari and Jonna need their distance, and the tension between love and freedom is tangible from the beginning. In her introduction to the novel, Smith points to the paradox that proper and open love is a prerequisite for space and freedom in a relationship: “So many of these stories are about the giving of space to another person, the kind of space that only someone who loves properly and openly can give” (Introduction to *Fair Play* xii). As Mari watches Jonna rehang the pictures, their life together falls “into perspective and into place, a summary expressed in distance or self-evident clustering” (Jansson, *Fair Play* 6). The concepts of distance and clustering serve as a link to the following chapter, “Videomania,” which begins with a description of Mari and Jonna’s living arrangements:

They lived at opposite ends of a large apartment building near the harbor, and between their studios lay the attic, an impersonal no-man’s-land of tall corridors with locked plank doors on either side. Mari liked wandering across the attic; it drew a necessary, neutral interval between their domains. She could pause on the way to listen to the rain on the metal roof, look out across the city as it lit its lights, or just linger for the pleasure of it. (7)³¹

The attic *is* indeed a “necessary, neutral interval” between their domains: it serves as a place Mari can draw back to when she needs it. As the narrator points out, “There are empty spaces that must be respected – those often long periods when a person can’t see the pictures or find the words and needs to be left alone” (7). These empty spaces must be respected in any relationship, but become especially precious in a relationship between two artists who need both mental and physical space to work. The attic passageway functions as a symbol of how spaces must be negotiated, and throughout the novel, we see how Mari and Jonna understand this – as when Mari walks into Jonna’s studio, sees her putting up shelves, and instantly knows that she is approaching a period of work:

Of course the hall would be far too narrow and cramped, but that was immaterial. The last time, it was shelves in the bedroom and the result had been a series of excellent woodcuts. She glanced into the bathroom as she passed, but Jonna had not put printing paper in to soak, not yet. Before Jonna could do her graphic work in peace, she always

³¹ I refer to NYRB’s American version of Sort of Books’ English translation, thus the American spellings in the quotations.

spent some time printing sets of earlier neglected works – a job that had been set aside so she could focus on new ideas. (7-8)

Mental space is necessary for the creative process, but it diminishes the physical room in which the lovers can move – both literally and emotionally. Mari accepts both the physical and mental distance, because she knows from experience that it is necessary for Jonna and for their relationship to work. In fact, there is always a certain distance between them: when they watch movies they sit “in separate chairs”; when they discuss Mari’s short story they sit “across from each other at the window table”; and on their island cottage they sit “opposite of each other at the table without talking” (8, 37, 87). Mari and Jonna need distance to pursue their artistic goals, and their separate studios also function as places to return to after an argument.

Mari and Jonna’s living arrangements closely resemble how Jansson and Pietilä lived in real life. Having her own workspace was vital for Jansson, and when she finally moved away from her family and acquired her own studio at the age of twenty-eight, it felt liberating. No longer hemmed in by her father, she was “driven by a new freedom: a matter of really living, not just continuing to exist” (Westin, *Tove* 140).³² Jansson had several different work spaces throughout her life, but her studio tower at Ulrikasborgsgatan 1 was the most important. This was the studio she lived in for the rest of her life, and it was from here she could walk across the attic to visit Pietilä. Retaining her studio in all her relationships became a precondition for her (Karjalainen 77). According to Karjalainen, Jansson’s studio

was to her a symbol of freedom; it was like Virginia Woolf’s “room of one’s own,” a place where a woman could create and maintain a sufficient portion of independence. . . . No love and no relationship would have been able to make her give up her own workplace. Ultimately, to her, work meant freedom and real existence. (119)³³

Having “a room of one’s own” is also important to *Fair Play*, which, in her review, Courtney Gillette views as “a beautiful homage to the intimacy of space – living space, work space, outdoor space and emotional space.” The novel’s paradox is that the space between the two protagonists is what makes their relationship intimate: “In their two studios, the two women lead creative lives both linked and autonomous. The magical space of the attic is a place that keeps their intimacy alive” (Gunn). Thus, the living arrangements in the novel symbolise the

³² During the war, her pacifism differed from her father’s patriotic and anti-communist views and their relationship was strained (Westin, *Tove* 122; Karjalainen 9).

³³ In Woolf’s political essay “A Room of One’s Own” (1929) the main argument is that “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” (3), i.e. economic autonomy is a precondition for artistic freedom.

paradox that retaining one's space and freedom in a relationship is indeed intimacy, and that true love is what grants this freedom.

The View Towards the Harbour – a Symbol of Love and Freedom

In her biography of Jansson, Ørjasæter describes Jansson's childhood home at Loftsgatan 4 in Helsinki. Here, from the upper floor, she could see the rooftops and the boats, which gave rise to thoughts of freedom and travelling (Ørjasæter, *Møte* 12). As an adult, Jansson's studio at Ulrikasborgsgatan with its large windows also offered her splendid views of Helsinki (Karjalainen 76). Like the real-life studios of Pietilä and Jansson, Mari and Jonna see the harbour and the boats from their studios and attic passageway – a view that becomes a key to Mari's reply in "Fireworks," where she gets a letter from a lonely reader, Linnea, asking her to explain the meaning of life. The importance of work and love again comes to the fore: in discussing how to respond, Mari explains to Jonna that work cannot be the answer, because Linnea does not like her job. Jonna, in turn, suggests "How about simply love?", but is told that Linnea is "completely alone; no one loves her" (Jansson, *Fair Play* 72). Jonna beckons Mari to take a look at the harbour, which looks "lovely in the fog" (72). As the two discuss how to respond, they are interrupted suddenly by fireworks going off silently across the harbour:

The winter sky began to burst with repeated explosions of color that paused for a few seconds in their beauty before sinking slowly and giving way to multicolored roses, a lavish splendor repeated again and again, softened by the fog and for that reason more mysterious. (73)

Mari dismisses Jonna when she suggests that the fireworks may have cheered up Linnea, as she has a dominating neighbour who has got the view of the harbour: "a woman who just goes on and on about what [Linnea] should do and what she should wear and what food she should buy and how to file her taxes and so on" (73). Jonna, in turn, thinks "there's a lot of affection in all that" and suspects that Linnea got to see the fireworks after all, and that she is "getting along just fine" (73-74). When Mari goes back to her own apartment, Jonna shows the same affection for Mari as the neighbour apparently has for Linnea: she makes sure Mari carries a torch in the dark attic, that she puts on something warm when doing errands, and that she is careful on the icy street. Walking across the neutral space of the attic, Mari has an epiphany as she stops, as always, and gazes across the harbour, thinking "absentmindedly of Linnea, who knew nothing about love" (74).

According to Jansson, “Fireworks” is “an attempt to show that love also encompasses small everyday kindnesses” (qtd. in Gustafsson 83), something Mari realises while looking at the harbour. Showing that homosexual love is more than eroticism, is an important part of Jansson’s legacy: although homosexuality was decriminalised in Finland in 1971, there was still an *uppmanningsförbud*, i.e. it was a criminal offence to encourage homosexuality, when *Fair Play* was published in 1989. Hence, it was designated as a *vännineroman* – a novel depicting friendship between two women. Although there are no overt erotic descriptions, it is still evident that the relationship portrayed is of a lesbian nature, and the fact that Jansson received awards from Nordic LGBT organisations shows that she did reach out to her readers with her message even though she had to be discreet (Müller 17). Gustafsson acknowledges this, but, in her view, the description of the fireworks has erotic undertones, noting how “explosions” can suggest orgasms (83).³⁴ When Mari looks out towards the harbour on her way home, she reads the chapter not only as a tribute to small everyday kindnesses, but also to sensual love because of the harbour’s associations with the fireworks (84). However, in her study of Jansson’s non-Moomin fiction,³⁵ Birgit Antonsson applies a wider interpretation:

The fireworks across the foggy harbour are a complex and multifaceted symbol for Jonna and Mari’s love. It is intensely sensual, but it also expresses equanimity through the dimming fog. The powerful feelings have deepened with time, but the strength is still there, powerful and secretive. (199)

Antonsson supports her reading by noting how the fireworks are likened to roses, and refers to J. C. Cooper’s *Symbols* (1978), where the rose is “perfection; the pleroma; completion; the mystery of life; the heart-centre of life; the unknown; beauty; grace; happiness, but also voluptuousness, the passions and associated with wine, sensuality and seduction” (141). I agree with Antonsson’s wider interpretation of the fireworks as a symbol of the love between Mari and Jonna – a love which, like the fireworks in the fog, reveals itself indirectly in the

³⁴ Gustafsson bases her interpretations on a dream Jansson had in the 1930s, where she dreamed that she was being chased by large, black, wolf-like dogs on the seashore at sunset. A psychologist told Jansson that the dog represented repressed sexual drives and that the sinking light represented her denied sensuality and her personality (Gustafsson 17). According to Gustafsson, Jansson uses a covert figurative language: her texts are imbued with latent sensuality, for example in depictions sunsets, candlelight, electricity and wild animal imagery (17). While it is true that Jansson may have wanted to be discreet in dealing with erotic topics because of the strict Finnish policy, Gustafsson has, nevertheless, been criticised for tending to stretch her interpretations to fit her thesis, see Antonsson 27, 131-132, 190-191; and Björk 182-183. Although I agree with these objections, I still find some of the observations Gustafsson makes useful, and build on some of them in my own analysis.

³⁵ Except for Gustafsson’s doctoral thesis, Antonsson’s study (1999) is the only monograph on Jansson’s non-Moomin fiction I have come across. In her study, she uses the theme of human mental stagnation as opposed to possible freedom and growth, i.e. the metaphors of “The Closed and the Open Room” as a key to Jansson’s later fiction.

small everyday kindnesses and affections. Moreover, the view of the harbour and the boats emphasises the fact that the love between them also encompasses freedom. The fireworks can also be read as moments of insight or illumination, as they enable Mari and Jonna to ponder about the meaning of life. They recall William Wordsworth's "spots of time," i.e. episodes of emotional and intellectual intensity in a life that are retained in the memory afterwards.³⁶

"Fireworks" not only gives insight into the nature of the love between Mari and Jonna, it is also another chapter illustrating the importance of space in their relationship: it is the act of walking along the attic corridor and re-experiencing the moment of the fireworks that gives rise to Mari's epiphany, once again demonstrating how this neutral physical space affords Mari with the necessary emotional room she needs.

Islands – a Symbol of Freedom and Isolation

In her review of *Fair Play*, Sadie Stein includes the description of Mari and Jonna's living arrangements, and comments that "with separate apartments and an attic between them, anyone can live in harmony." However, she points to the fact that the two also cohabit "a tiny cabin on an isolated island." Like Jansson and Pietilä in real life, Mari and Jonna spend a considerable amount of time on a small island. The island is a prevalent motif in Jansson's fiction, and her *oeuvre* interacts with other literature where small worlds are used for bringing out larger truths about human experiences. For example, the raft in *Comet in Moominland* echoes Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), and elements of *Moominpappa at Sea* are reminiscent of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927). Jansson was drawn to the island as a simultaneously enclosed and open space, with the sea offering at least an *opportunity* for communication with the outside world:

The island; in the end the private, the remote, the intimate, a rounded whole without bridges or fence.

Protected and isolated by the sea, which at the same time is an open possibility to voluntary contact. ("Ön" ["The Island"] 6)

This notion of the island is reflected in her fiction, where it may symbolise both the freedom of blissful seclusion, but also a more destructive isolation.³⁷

³⁶ In his autobiographical poem "The Prelude" (1805), Wordsworth refers to his most important childhood moments as "spots of time" (Wordsworth 395; bk. 11th).

³⁷ A point also made by Westin ("The Silver Stone" 31) and Omland (211).

In “Stars” in *Fair Play*, the island represents a possibility for healthy solitude and contemplation. The setting is August, a month with a symbolic function across Jansson’s fiction. Jansson has revealed her love for the month as a time of transition and expectation:

I love boundaries. . . . August, the boundary between summer and autumn, is the most beautiful month I know. . . . Twilight is the boundary between night and day, and the beach is the boundary between sea and land. Boundaries are expectations: when both are in love and nothing is said. A boundary is to be underway. It is the road that is important. (Jansson qtd. in Ørjasæter, *Møte* 129-130)

This sense of hopeful expectation is reflected in “Stars,” where Mari receives a letter from an old friend and lover, Johannes, asking to spend a night with her under the stars on an uninhabited island. Mari reveals to Jonna that she and Johannes used to have “big plans and ideas, and one of the biggest was to live a natural life, peel away everything unnecessary, live in a cave or some such place – and try to grasp essentials” (Jansson, *Fair Play* 93). Finding hiding places in caves, uninhabited islands or other secluded places are recurrent motifs in Jansson’s fiction: in addition to providing safety from danger, as in *Comet in Moominland*, where the family has to take refuge in a cave in the face of an approaching comet (cf. Jansson 157-170), they are sites where one can be on one’s own so that the imagination can roam freely and new ideas develop.³⁸

Although already on an island, the letter from an old friend prompts Mari’s never-ending dreams of flight: this is an opportunity for her to relive old dreams and take a break for a while from her island life with Jonna. But she recalls how Johannes had once promised her to “live in a tent on Åland for a whole week, and [she] waited and waited but he sent word he had too much editing to do. . . .” (Jansson, *Fair Play* 94). Jansson uses narrative distance to emphasise Mari’s disappointment when it is revealed that their plans are called off once more: after a paragraph written from Mari’s point-of-view (“I know. I remember what he wants. To lie on his back in the heather and look at the stars a whole autumn night and listen to the sea without having to say a word. . . .” 94), the narration switches back to third-person, and the fact that Johannes has called the local store to cancel the plans is revealed through a second-hand repeat from Tom, Mari’s brother: “[Tom] jumped ashore and tied up. Johannes had called the store to say that he had too much work at the paper, unfortunately, and he was

³⁸ Before settling on the island Klovharun with Pietilä, Jansson continually dreamed of places that would offer her freedom from a Finnish society she found constricting, and both her plans to emigrate with her brother Lars to Tonga and to found an artist’s colony in Morocco together with her lover, Atos Wirtanen, is echoed in “Stars” (Karjalainen 17, 82; cf. *Fair Play* 91, 93). Although most of her plans remained dreams, they were important psychological means of escaping (Karjalainen 84).

sorry” (94). Jonna, knowing exactly how disappointed her partner is by Johannes’ cancellation, suggests that Tom goes with Mari, as she herself “never really understood camping trips” (95).

Instead of being jealous, Jonna shows understanding for Mari’s wish to go to an uninhabited island, even though she does not share the same need. Although the names *Jonna* and *Johannes* are similar, the two appear to be very different, but Mari’s attraction to them both is, nevertheless, not surprising: Johannes shares her romantic longing for solitude, while Jonna complements her romanticism with her practicality. She knows that Mari has had enough of unfulfilled dreams – she needs to undertake the trip in order to be content. In the novel’s last chapter, “The Letter,” this act is mirrored, when it is Mari who grants Jonna the freedom to go away. In the end, Tom and Mari head out to the island and spend a night where “Not one cloud disturbed the stars” (95). Antas argues that in Jansson’s work, “Grey is the colour of terror; but beyond the greyness something new awaits. Grey is therefore also a colour of hope and transformation.” Overcoming clouds and greyness is a recurring motif in Jansson’s fiction, and in “Stars” Mari has to overcome the clouds, i.e. the disappointments of the past, in order to see clearly.³⁹ In this chapter, the uninhabited island becomes a symbol of freedom: finally Mari has transitioned from the past to the present, expectations been met and unlimited insights are granted.

Although the dream of seclusion is a recurring motif in her fiction, Jansson was aware of the dangers of freedom and flight:

You must be aware of desert islands if your work isn’t going as it should. Because then the horizon can turn into a hoop of iron and the monotony of the days become merely a relentless confirmation of the fact that you can’t get started. It is as if existence on an isolated skerry involves a sort of intensification of what you are, what you feel and what you do. (Qtd. in Westin, *Tove* 485)

This intensification can be twofold: in “Catfishing,” Jonna experiences relentlessness and artistic stand-still before a storm comes and breaks the pattern of “implacably beautiful” summer weather (Jansson, *Fair Play* 19). By way of description, Jansson conveys the amplified experience of a magnificent storm on a little island far out at sea: “The storm came nearer, a huge alien backdrop never seen in such splendor and maybe never to be repeated” (22). Storms often have an actuating function, and in “Catfishing” it reawakens Jonna’s desire

³⁹ As noted in my discussion of “Travelling Light” in the introductory chapter, the “capricious” clouds functioned as warning signals of the obstacles the narrator failed to overcome.

to create.⁴⁰ However, the intensified existence on an island can also exacerbate loneliness, even when there is someone else present:

One may become silent when living for an extensive amount of time together, one does on an island, in any case. One talks about everyday matters and when everyday life is ordinary, one says even less. . . .

Every time the fog came in, we would tell each other that it is getting dark, the fog is coming, then there was nothing more to say about the matter. I grew tired of us, I thought we had become dreary. (Jansson and Pietilä, *Anteckningar* 82)

This sense of dreariness is conveyed in “Fog,” where Mari and Jonna find themselves trapped in an “ice cold and yellow” fog while out at sea, with no watch or compass (Jansson, *Fair Play* 33). The yellow colour of the fog foreshadows Jonna’s jealousy of Mari’s mother. The theme of jealousy recurs in Jansson’s fiction: in *Fair Play* it is a by-product of the freedom in Mari and Jonna’s relationship, as the allowance of freedom requires absolute trust and a willingness to let go of control.⁴¹ Jonna urges Mari to row a little to keep warm, but she pulls too hard to the right, and they go in circles. The action reflects their brooding argument about their mothers, which at first also seems to go around in circles. Jonna points out how Mari’s mother “cheated shamelessly” at poker: she did not take Jonna “seriously, and you have to in a serious game” (35). The theme of play surfaces here: although Mari and Jonna’s relationship is playful, they play by the rules. In contrast, Jonna did not feel properly respected by Mari’s mother, but she never dared to confront her or Mari. Outwardly, the arguments between Jonna and Mari’s mother seemed to revolve around ordinary matters, but deep down Mari knows they were fighting about “Important, dangerous things!” (35).

Westin makes an interesting observation in noting that: “The island is a throbbing life form, a place where one can seek out and renew arguments, a topos as in classical rhetoric” (“The Silver Stone” 29 and *Tove* 362). Most of the island chapters in *Fair Play* do indeed revolve around an argument: in “The Hunter,” Mari and Jonna discuss different types of human beings; in “Catfishing,” they discuss art and ambition; in “One Time in June,” Mari and Helga fight over the memory of Mari’s mother; and in “Viktoria,” Mari and Jonna discuss their fathers. Behind the argument in “Fog” lies a deeper conflict between Jonna and Mari’s mother – both a competition between them as wood-carving artists, and a competition for

⁴⁰ Gustafsson makes a similar observation (85).

⁴¹ In “Jonna’s Pupil,” it is Mari who becomes envious of Jonna’s pupil, Mirja, see Jansson, see *Fair Play* 79-83. Ørjasæter describes how Jansson at the age of six experienced jealousy as a part of love when she got a little brother (*Møte* 21). In Jansson’s childhood memoir, *Sculptor’s Daughter*, jealousy is an especially prevalent theme.

Mari's affection. Mari's mother is gone, but her presence continues to loom over the couple, similar to the "gigantic shadow" of a ship that glides past them in the fog "like a wall of darkness" (Jansson, *Fair Play* 34). Antonsson believes the argument between Mari and Jonna turns into a meaningless dispute when Mari accuses Jonna for causing her mother to stop carving little ships of wood (cf. Jansson, *Fair Play* 36). According to Antonsson, it is a serious accusation, because what Mari actually holds Jonna responsible for is causing Mari's mother lose the desire to create, which is so vital in Jansson's fiction.⁴² What reconciles them in her view, is the disappearance of the fog and the fact that the outburst of irritation has cleared the air between them (Antonsson 196). However, it is possible to interpret this scene in a different way: what Mari and Jonna's discussion reveals is that Jonna's jealousy may be unfounded – Mari's revelation that Jonna's ships were better than her mother's may be an indication that there was no need for jealousy. The chapter's ending contributes to a feeling of resolution, of leaving old arguments behind, as the fog lifts:

The heavy summer fog had rolled on north to annoy people on the inner islands, and suddenly the sea was open and blue and they found themselves a long way out toward Estonia. Jonna started the motor. They came back to the island from a totally new direction, and it didn't look the same. (Jansson, *Fair Play* 36)

In fact, such a resolution is hinted at early in the chapter: "A vertical tunnel opened directly above them, leading to an annoyingly blue summer sky . . ." (34). The open, blue sea and the fact that they are able to see their well-known little island anew, suggest that there are always new beginnings. As in "Stars," Mari and Jonna have to overcome the fog and greyness, i.e. the obstacles of the past in order to start anew. Islands, in other words, can be a place of isolation and frustration, but they can also open up to freedom and new horizons for those who withstand fog-bound and monotonous days.

The Need for Distance and Freedom to Travel

While Mari and Jonna are in a crowded bar in Phoenix, the barmaid yells: "Give these ladies some space! . . . They're from Finland" (Jansson, *Fair Play* 57). It is not only emotional space that is important in *Fair Play* – Mari and Jonna traverse geographical spaces too: in "Travels with a Konica," Jonna's film camera is described as a third travelling companion; in "The

⁴² Antonsson notes that in Jansson's fiction, desire is the most precious thing there is, not only to the artist, but also in the life of every human being (127). Gustafsson too calls attention to desire as a positive attitude to life in Jansson, see 92-93. Jansson herself has revealed that: "To me, desire is the most important, I believe entirely in the heart's desire" (qtd. in Gusafsson 92)

Great City of Phoenix,” they befriend the locals; in “Cemeteries,” Mari develops a sudden interest in the dead, and they visit the cemetery in every new place they travel to; and in “The Letter,” Jonna decides to go to Paris to pursue her art. Travelling features heavily in Jansson’s fiction: it is associated with both physical and mental freedom, and journeys often signify a character’s inner development. However, in the Moomin fiction, travelling is mostly a male privilege: in *The Exploits of Moominpappa* (1950), which is about Moominpappa’s “stormy youth” (Jansson, *Exploits* 7), it is Moominpappa and his male friends who get to go on adventures. Their travels end when they each find a female counterpart. The theme of the travelling father is echoed in the highly symbolic chapter “Viktoria” in *Fair Play*. Mari and Jonna are on the island as autumn, the season of death, is approaching:

Now, as autumn approached, the island was visited by exotic birds on their way south, and it sometimes happened that they tried to fly right through the windows toward the daylight on the other side, the way they might fly between trees. The dead birds always lay with their wings spread wide. (Jansson, *Fair Play* 85)

The autumn and the dead birds both point to the fact that Mari and Jonna are getting older and that life on the island is becoming more challenging. A storm rises, and they are unable to pull their boat, *Viktoria*, up on land. As mentioned previously, boats often symbolise freedom, happiness and departure in Jansson’s fiction (cf. Antonsson 35), however, in this chapter, as in “Travelling Light,” the boat takes on a more nuanced meaning. When carrying the dead birds down to the lee shore, Jonna says she understands what their friend Albert “meant when he said the lift of a hull is the same line you find in a bird’s wing” (Jansson, *Fair Play* 85). It is interesting that Jonna only understands what Albert meant when she carries the *dead* birds with their wings spread wide: in “Viktoria,” the dead birds and Mari and Jonna’s inability to handle their boat become symbols for the inevitable process of aging, and for limits on freedom and flight.

The boat in the storm makes Mari think of her father’s love of foul weather, and Jonna comments that unlike them “it was child’s play” for him to pull up the boat (87). Mari and Jonna’s fathers were both called Viktor and it becomes apparent that they had the privilege to travel “a great deal” (88).⁴³ Jonna reveals that when her father “came home he wanted to be off again” and Mari acknowledges that this was true for her father too (89-90). However, both

⁴³ Jansson and Pietilä’s real-life fathers were also called Viktor, and Jansson’s father had indeed a fascination for storms: “My father was a melancholy man, . . . but when a storm threatened he became a different person, cheerful, entertaining and ready to join his children in dangerous adventures. . . . these (fairly) minor catastrophes proved that in the end everything was really all right and that we were together” (Jansson qtd. in Westin, *Tove* 58). Jansson portrays this in the chapter “High Water” in *Sculptor’s Daughter*.

of them admired their fathers, and they realise that their fathers' need for travel and adventure was a result of finding fatherhood difficult. Moreover, they understand that their *own* need for freedom and travel is partly inherited: whereas their fathers may have been the ones granted the freedom to travel in the past, Mari and Jonna are now as free to travel as their fathers were. As the chapter ends, the wind dies down, and *Viktoria*, their vehicle to freedom, survives: "The wind died down toward morning. Freshly bathed and shiny, *Viktoria* lay bathed at anchor as if nothing whatever had happened" (90). The "feminization" of the male name Viktor can be seen as an act of appropriation, where Mari and Jonna grant themselves the right to do what their fathers could and their mother could not. The meaning of the name supports this reading: *Viktoria* comes from Latin meaning "victory," and Victoria was the personified goddess of victory in ancient Roman religion. The name is also associated with longevity and prevalence, as the strong-willed Queen Victoria was the longest-reigning monarch in Great Britain until Elizabeth II (reigning from 1837-1901).

For Jansson and Pietilä, travelling constituted an important part of their relationship. In 1971, they went on a journey around the world together – a journey that provided important inspiration for their artistic work. Pietilä has written about how they both liked to prepare for journeys, but how they also left room for improvisation: "If we were happy where we were staying we stayed as long as we felt like it; if we weren't happy we went on. It was a great freedom and we never once formulated it in words; it functioned automatically" (qtd. in Westin, *Tove* 426).⁴⁴ Travelling was, like their island Klovharun, a source of freedom: "just imagine *just travelling*, free!" Jansson wrote in a letter from their great journey together (qtd. in Westin, *Tove* 432). On her travels as a young woman, Jansson enjoyed travelling on her own, but in Pietilä she found a like-minded travelling companion (Westin, *Tove* 472). Travelling was important in that it enabled her to work for longer stretches of time, as well as giving her new perspectives (Westin, *Tove* 434). Nevertheless, travelling on one's own could still be crucial for artistic development, as reflected in "The Letter," the final chapter of *Fair Play*, where the tension between love and freedom surfaces once more.

Mari notices an "imperceptible" change in Jonna: afraid that she is leaving her, she says "as nicely as she could that Jonna meant so much to her that it would be completely impossible to get along without her" (Jansson, *Fair Play* 97, 98). The narrative distance, i.e. the use of indirect discourse, is significant. As discussed above, the love between Mari and Jonna reveals itself indirectly in the small, everyday kindnesses, and thus Mari's declaration

⁴⁴ For the original source, see Pietilä 231.

is conveyed in a distant manner. Jonna's reaction, however, is the opposite of what Mari hoped to achieve: "Don't say that! You don't know what you're saying to me! You're driving me to desperation. Leave me in peace!" (98). Waking up the next morning in her own apartment, Mari relives their argument. The reader gets a glimpse of her distressed thoughts through free indirect discourse and first-person narration, fusing her voice with the narrator's: "She had to repeat endlessly every word Jonna had said, the way she'd looked, the tone of her voice. And, mercilessly, how could she have said the things she's said? Why, why, why? She wants to be rid of me" (99). Throughout the novel, though the third-person narration is mainly focalised through Mari, it also provides Jonna's perspective, enabling the reader to see that there are always two sides to an argument – allowing a fair play between its protagonists. However, although the narration is distanced and balanced, there are instances like this when it suddenly slips into the first-person, disrupting objectivity and instead allowing the reader to connect with the character emotionally.

When Mari rushes over the attic into Jonna's apartment to confront her, Jonna shows her a letter revealing that she has been awarded a studio in Paris for a year, "meant for her use alone" (99). Jonna does not know what to do, and suggests that she should turn the offer down. Mari, in turn, is relieved. She quickly runs through their options in her head: "sharing the studio secretly; renting something nearby; coming to Paris later . . ." (99). Then she suddenly understands that "Jonna really wanted to work in peace, a whole year, now that she was working really well," but at the same time that this suits her as well:

A daring thought was taking shape in her mind. She began to anticipate a solitude of her own, peaceful and full of possibility. She felt something close to exhilaration, of a kind that people can permit themselves when they are blessed with love. (100)

Jonna is in need of solitude and distance in order to pursue her work freely. This distance, however, is dependent on love: Mari is able to grant Jonna distance *because* she loves her, and she knows it is vital for Jonna both as a human being and for her artistic development. Interestingly, this is paralleled in the Moomin fiction by the relationship between Snufkin and Moomintroll: Moomintroll lets Snufkin go *because* he knows Snufkin's happiness depends on it. However, in the relationship between Mari and Jonna, the freedom goes *two* ways: by granting Jonna the freedom to go to Paris on her own, Mari too feels exhilaration at the prospect of being able to work on her own. Mari and Jonna belong together *through* their shared interest and need to pursue art. Thus, giving Jonna the distance she needs to create becomes "an act of love" (Westin, Foreword xi). This is why Mari is able to grant Jonna the

freedom she needs, and the chapter forms a contrast to “Stars,” where, in her relation to Johannes, Mari was the one who was constantly abandoned by the other.

Antonsson notes how some Swedish reviewers thought that *Fair Play* lacked the excitement of the Moomin books, and found the relationship between Mari and Jonna “polished” and “domesticated” (see Antonsson 202-203). It is against these objections she reads this final chapter: by virtue of their love, both Mari and Jonna manage to leave “The Closed Room” and enter “The Open” (203). I agree with Antonsson’s objections: Mari and Jonna’s relationship is the opposite of domesticated – by portraying their alternative life-style, Jansson shows that there exist other models than the classical nuclear family. However, although Mari and Jonna have their moments of crisis and disagreement, I would not characterise their relationship prior to “The Letter” as a “Closed Room.” In her introduction to *Fair Play*, Smith draws a parallel between the novel’s open form and the “open travelling companionship” depicted: where the novel ends, a new phase in the relationship between Mari and Jonna begins (xii).

Gustafsson, on her part, thinks there is a power imbalance in the relationship, and applies the so-called butch and femme pattern. According to her, Mari assumes the submissive role of a woman and Jonna the dominating role of the man, and she reads the final chapter as depicting a liberation process in which Mari finally manages to break free (cf. Gustafsson 75, 98). She thus views the chapter as a positive parallel to the short story “The Great Journey” (*Art in Nature*, 1978), where the dominant Elena gets a travel grant and wants her girlfriend Rosa to follow her. Rosa, however, is too attached to her mother, and is torn in a conflict of interests. In the end, Elena suggests that she travels with her mother, but this may be at the cost of their relationship (cf. “The Great Journey” 68-69).⁴⁵ Gustafsson notes that whereas Elena’s travel grant is a threat against Rosa, the content of Jonna’s letter is a relief for Mari” (98). I partly agree: Mari is afraid that Jonna wants to be rid of her, and compared to the prospect of Jonna revealing that she does not love her anymore, the offer to go to Paris is a relief. However, this relief is not a result of Mari finally breaking away from the dominating Jonna: it is because she eyes new artistic opportunities for them both. As my discussion has shown, Mari and Jonna’s relationship allows for personal freedom: their arguments and artistic disputes reveal them as equals.

⁴⁵ The conflict depicted in “The Great Journey,” echoes the situation in Jansson’s life: although she was close to her mother, Jansson never felt she could talk openly about her own homosexuality with her (Karjalainen 169). According to Westin, her dream of a secluded life with Pietilä at Klovharun, as well as their passion for travelling, “created a competitive love between the women she loved,” as Jansson’s mother was afraid of abandonment (*Tove* 368).

The Need for Distance versus Enforced Distance

As we have seen, distance is a complex motif in Jansson's fiction, something Gustafsson also discusses in her thesis. In addition to her comparison between "The Letter" and "The Great Journey," she also draws parallels between this final chapter of *Fair Play* and the short stories "The Squirrel" (*The Listener*, 1971) and "The Locomotive" (see Gustafsson 97-99). While we saw that Rosa in "The Great Journey" was torn by a conflict between her mother and her lover, the protagonists of the latter two stories are torn between the longing for solitude versus the need for human contact (i.e. freedom versus love). Because Gustafsson only makes brief comparisons, and as they offer interesting perspectives on love and freedom in Jansson's fiction, I discuss the latter two in some detail here.

Jansson's attention to life's, at times, irresolvable problems may explain why she favoured the short story form with its unresolved, enigmatic endings, as both "The Squirrel" and "The Locomotive" exemplify. As an artist, she was preoccupied with the fine line between inspirational solitude and oppressive loneliness, and she explores this tension in "The Squirrel," where a female author spends autumn on a solitary island to write.⁴⁶ It turns out not to be as she expected: there are no storms providing inspirations, and the sea merges with "the sky in a grey nothingness" (Jansson, "The Squirrel" 139), the greyness symbolising her lack of artistic desire. Thus, when a squirrel suddenly appears at the landing place, disrupting her solitude and obsessive routines, it turns her existence on the island upside-down. She is ambivalent towards it: she repeatedly decides not to care about it, but still sets out food and timber so that it can build itself a nest.

What the woman seeks in her dealings with the squirrel is a relationship that requires no commitment: "They would live their separate lives and just observe one another, in mutual recognition and tolerance. They would respect each other but otherwise continue doing their own thing in complete freedom and independence" (142). This simultaneous longing for and dread of company is confirmed by her reaction when a fishing boat approaches the island: she instinctively hides, but she is also disappointed when the men do not come ashore: "How can this be? Why am I beside myself because they're coming and then terrifically disappointed when they don't come ashore?" (150).

As elsewhere in Jansson's fiction, a change in the grey weather signifies an approaching turning-point: "A belt of clear sky had opened up at the horizon, a narrow,

⁴⁶ In the Moomin fiction, this story has a parallel in "The Spring Tune" (*Tales from Moominvalley*, 1962), where Snufkin's perfect artistic solitude is disturbed by a little creature who longs for company and a name.

glowing band of sunset” (151). Prior to this, the protagonist has lived in darkness to avoid being seen by the squirrel, but after the change in the weather, she lights all the candles she can find, and finally hangs a paper lantern outside the door. As noted in my discussion of Jansson’s family portrait, light is often associated with togetherness in Jansson’s fiction, and the fact that she turns on the lights may be an indication that her subconscious longing for company is stronger than her apprehension. The light attracts the squirrel, and when she returns from a walk, she discovers it on the table and reaches out a hand, but “quick as lightning, sharp as scissors” it bites her and forfeits her confidence (152). The squirrel is, after all, only a wild animal: it lacks human emotions and the ability to form a meaningful relationship. It is not before she suspects that the squirrel has left, that her subconscious longings surface as she feels “a sudden wish for company” and listens in her walkie-talkie for voices (155). Soon after, the squirrel drifts away on her boat.⁴⁷

That the squirrel cannot replace human contact, is evidenced by its description: its eyes are likened to “glass marbles” (141) and when sailing away on the boat it looks like a “piece of cardboard, a dead toy” (156). After the squirrel’s departure, the protagonist feels “a great, elated relief. All decisions had been taken from her. She no longer needed to hate the squirrel or worry about it” (157), and is finally able to write. On the one hand, the relief can be a sign of her contentment at being alone again, and since the squirrel has gone off with her boat, her isolation is complete. Another factor supporting this interpretation is that as she watches the squirrel leave, she loses her torch in the water, leaving her in a complete darkness that underscores the lonely state she is left in. Jones is of this opinion: as the protagonist sees the squirrel leave on her boat, he considers her “cut off from all kinds of contact, real or imagined, with living beings” (126). Although Gustafsson too thinks it is by virtue of her total isolation that the protagonist is able to write again (98), she also observes that the ending suggests “that the experience with the squirrel has had a cathartic effect. The woman dares to express her longing for human beings” (37). Antonsson agrees with Gustafsson that the squirrel’s visit has had a cleansing effect, but interprets the sinking torch as giving the protagonist “a glimpse of the new depths that now reveal themselves in her life.” She thinks that the encounter with the squirrel has released the woman’s repressed longing for company (Antonsson 28). In my view, it *is* indeed possible that the confrontation with the squirrel will eventually lead the protagonist towards encounters with people. When she sits down to write,

⁴⁷ Jansson revealed that the story was based on a real event: “Yes, the squirrel actually existed. It came all the way to the outermost island on a piece of tree-bark. I put out food for it, and it spent the winter on the island. And when spring arrived it found a piece of plank and sailed away again” (qtd. in Karjalainen 236).

she begins her narrative exactly the same way as the short story began, except that the word *squirrel* is replaced by *person*: “On a windless day in November, shortly after sunrise she saw a *person* at the landing place” (157; emphasis added). The self-reflexive ending of “The Squirrel” provides a metaperspective on the creative writing process: the protagonist has not only learned to come to terms with her own solitude in order to write (cf. Westin, *Tove* 431), she has also realised that she might be in need of human contact and support *as well as* artistic freedom and solitude. The person at the landing place may be a foreshadowing of her readiness and need for human contact in the future.

The protagonist and narrator in “The Locomotive” is also afraid of intimacy while at the same time longing for contact: in this case someone to share his way of understanding the world. The first paragraph reveals him as a highly unreliable narrator, asserting his “single-minded devotion to objectivity” (Jansson, “The Locomotive” 103) – even shifting to third-person narration to seem more objective (106). As the story develops, it becomes clear that he lives in his own head, and uses his imagination as a form of control. Overall, there is both a tension between imagination and reality, and between being in control and losing control at play in the short story. The narrator is absorbed by the idea of the locomotive – for him a perfect image of force and power, of being in control – and he spends his evenings trying to capture its essence by making illustrations. Despite his carefulness “not be drawn into any kind of relationship” (108), he does long for a form of attachment that requires no commitment:

Sometimes he played with the idea of focusing on one traveller – a *Traveller*, that beautiful, old-fashioned word – and attach himself ever so lightly and with no strings to someone about to undertake a long journey. It could be a pure, free starting gate to an attachment, a longing that needed never become contaminated or come too close.
(110)

The discrepancy between his imagination and reality is apparent: in his dreams he is in control of life and death, in reality, his belief that “Actual experience can never be the same as imagined experience,” stops him from taking an active part in life, and he has never been on a train (110). As always in Jansson, travelling is associated with freedom: “as you are carried off, everything you leave behind becomes irreparable, final, and what you’re approaching has not yet made its claims. You are a Traveller. For a short time, you are free” (114) – what the protagonist needs is to dare to undertake a real journey in order to escape his obsessive thoughts.

He meets Anna, a lonely woman who also comes to the railway station to watch trains,

and he thinks he has found a like-minded companion, but is mistaken: he creates an image of her that does not correspond with reality. Despite of his wariness of women, he cannot stop himself from sharing his idea of the locomotive with her, and he shows her his drawings. Anna, on her part, seems to be searching for a real relationship. However, as the story is narrated from the protagonist's point-of-view, we can only guess what her motives are. What follows is a clash between imagination as a form of control and imagination as a way of reaching out: Anna tries to play along with the protagonist in order help him. She sees another lonely human being, and eyes an opportunity to form a relationship.

Similar to the narrator of "Travelling Light" and the protagonist of "The Squirrel," the narrator's ideal is disconnection and indifference, like a locomotive he wishes to be "utterly indifferent to whatever comes in its path and to everything that coils along behind it, those anonymous cars forever filling and emptying and filling again, of no interest whatsoever, like women" (111). His comparison between women and "those anonymous cars" suggests that, in his twisted perception of reality, women are like parasites: impossible to get rid of once they have attached themselves. He becomes increasingly tired as he feels that Anna now owns his "private autonomy" (120), what Jansson herself valued highly in real-life, and what Mari and Jonna maintain in their relationship. Thus, when Anna suggests that they should go on a real trip together, he decides that "she would die" (124) – thereby rejecting an opportunity for real intimacy and freedom from his obsessive thoughts. He pictures several ways to get rid of her, but ultimately decides to leave the train to buy cigarettes at the last minute.⁴⁸ In this way, he has surrealistically fulfilled his idea of attaching himself to someone going away, however, whether he will feel "silence and liberation" (110) remains to be seen: his compulsive retelling of the story suggests otherwise.

I agree with Gustafsson in viewing the distance Mari grants Jonna as a contrast to the more neurotically conditioned distance found in "The Squirrel" and "The Locomotive" (cf. Gustafsson 99). Whereas both protagonists in the short stories long for a connection with other people, their isolation prevents them and becomes dangerous. As in "Travelling Light," complete disconnection seems impossible: in the end, even hermits seek meaningful connections with other people. Isolation and loneliness do not necessarily foster freedom, it may on the contrary lead to obsessive behaviour. In *Fair Play*, it is by virtue of her love that

⁴⁸ As the protagonist is an unreliable narrator, it is difficult to say whether this is the actual ending of the story, or whether the event (or the whole story for that matter) only takes place in his imagination.

Mari grants the distance she need and imagines her own freedom.⁴⁹ Thus, in *Fair Play*, the tension between love and freedom is solved: in a relation based on mutual affection and understanding, distance needs not be damaging. On the contrary, it may be necessary.

Conclusion

Maintaining personal freedom remained important to Jansson throughout her life: she knew that her art would suffer if she were to marry. She needed to escape: in her studio and art, on the island and by travelling. However, family and feeling loved were important values for her as well: she never broke the bonds with her family and the relationship with Pietilä offered her *both* freedom and love.

My discussion shows that these values are reflected in her portrayal of personal relationships in her non-Moomin fiction – letting go of everyone and everything *is* difficult: as noted in the introductory chapter, although he tries his utmost, the narrator of “Travelling Light” simply cannot prevent himself from caring about other people. The protagonist of “The Squirrel” seeks freedom and solitude on an island, but the confrontation with the squirrel makes her realise that she needs human contact as well. The narrator of “The Locomotive” has isolated himself from the world to such an extent that it has become difficult for him to break out of the isolation of his imagination and take part in the real world. What these examples show, is that there is a subtle balance in Jansson between the freedom of solitude and loneliness: having space and freedom of movement are vital, but a total isolation can become dangerous. This is illustrated by the motif of the island in Jansson’s fiction: they are both epitomes of freedom and isolation.

Like the real-life relationship between Jansson and Pietilä, the relationship between Mari and Jonna is based on equality, and offers them *both* love and freedom: they live separately, yet together, they live on the island and they travel. This gives them opportunities for both artistic collaboration and solitude, for affection and personal space. However, allowing another person space requires real intimacy and complete trust, and jealousy and insecurity are inevitable. This applies to any intimate relationship, but *Fair Play* shows how the tension between love and freedom is an especially precarious matter in the lives of two artists, where development requires personal freedom. Mari and Jonna respect the conditions

⁴⁹ Smith makes a similar observation in her introduction to *Fair Play*: by granting Jonna the necessary space she needs to work, Mari “reveals not just the size and truth of the love” between them, but “the revolutionary freedom that comes with such love” (xiii).

of freedom, as exemplified by the openness of the ending, where Mari grants Jonna the freedom she needs to pursue her artistic goals, while eyeing an opportunity for a healthy solitude of her own. One might argue that the separation at the end suggests that freedom comes before love in the relationship. However, judging on the basis of the rest of the novel, the connection between them is such that it cannot be broken. The ending signifies a new phase in their relationship where they continue their lives separately, yet together.

While this chapter has dealt with the tension between love and freedom in personal relationships, the next considers this tension in the context of a family. Jansson got the ideas for the melancholy *Moominpappa at Sea* far away from the familiar archipelago life, while on a journey to Spain – the geographical distance sharpening her sight and bringing “a deeper understanding of what was otherwise too close” (Westin, *Tove* 434). In *Moominpappa at Sea*, a wish for freedom and a new purpose as a father makes Moominpappa long for a new existence on a weather-beaten island, far removed from their secure and happy Moominvalley. Their new existence, however, becomes fraught with alienation and loneliness. But, like Jansson who made new discoveries about home while on a journey, the Moomin family makes important discoveries about love and freedom while away on the island.

Chapter 3: *Moominpappa at Sea* – A Family at a Border

While the third room of the exhibition at Dulwich displays Jansson's illustrations for classic children's novels, the fourth exhibits her well-known Moomin illustrations. Here a draft sketch for a drawing which appears in the final chapter of *Moominpappa at Sea* can be found (see fig. 5). It shows the Moomin family shortly before the



Fig. 5. The Moomin family, Little My and the Lighthouse-keeper. Illustration from *Moominpappa at Sea* (1965).

novel's resolution, and reflects the difficulties they experience on an island far out at sea, having left the sanctuary of Moominvalley behind.

The image resembles *The Family* in several ways: again, Jansson plays with light and dark, as the light from the candles contrasts sharply with the darkness outside, and creates ominous shadows. There is the same feeling of a distance between the subjects as in Jansson's family portrait – especially between mother and father, who once more are situated at opposite ends of the room. At one level, Moominmamma and Moominpappa provide a secure frame for the rest of the family. At another, their looming shadows further emphasise the distance between them, and represent their opposing positions in the novel. Included in the tight circle of the nuclear family are two non-biological members: Little My and the lighthouse-keeper. Like Jansson herself in *The Family*, the lighthouse-keeper's relation to the others is conflicted: he treasures his solitude and freedom, and has up to this point kept away from them, but his terrible loneliness has made him realise his need for company. Another significant detail is that he and Moominpappa are wearing each other's hats, pointing to the novel's concern with role-play, and the difficulty of fulfilling one's assigned role. Thus the drawing reflects significant issues in Jansson's Moomin fiction, and in *Moominpappa at Sea* especially: self-realisation versus duty; community versus the urge to be alone; and the

compromises one makes for a loved one.⁵⁰

Whereas a main theme in the previous chapter was that the tension between love and freedom is prevalent in the life of the artist, this chapter will reveal its universality. I begin with a discussion of the concept of the family in Jansson's Moomin fiction. I then discuss the short story, "The Secret of the Hattifatteners," which gives insight into Moominpappa's innate wish for freedom yet need for love, before turning to my main discussion of *Moominpappa at Sea*.

The Concept of the Family as Community

Being a member of a family *may* offer love, community, freedom and encouragement to develop. However, it *may also* mean being confined to a certain role, or the encouragement to develop in a *prescribed* way. Thus the family may both foster and hinder freedom. As discussed in the introductory chapter, Jansson knew that marriage and family life could potentially ruin her artistic ambitions. In her Moomin fiction, she investigated the opportunities for love and freedom within the family: is it possible to be attached to a family, while at the same time be free?

Already from the very first Moomin book, *The Moomins and the Great Flood*, Jansson thematises the cost of self-realisation within a family, as Moominpappa goes off with the Hattifatteners to seek adventure, leaving Moominmamma and Moomintroll to look for a place where they can build a new home. However, the way they welcome the lonely Sniff to join them shows that Jansson operates with a looser definition of the family from the beginning, as this is the first instance of many where the Moomin family welcomes strangers in need of protection and closeness (cf. Jansson, *The Moomins and the Great Flood* 17). Snufkin's departures show how the family grant each other personal freedom: knowing that his happiness depends on it, Moomintroll lets him wander despite the sorrow this brings him; the children are allowed to leave when they want, knowing that there is always safety and a meal awaiting when they return; and, Little My freely chooses when to affiliate herself with the family. Like the unconventional relationship between Mari and Jonna, the usually extended Moomin family also offers its members both love and freedom. According to Jansson herself, in her Moomin fiction she tried to tell a story

⁵⁰ Whereas the illustrations in Jansson's early Moomin fiction depict concrete situations, in *Moominland Midwinter* and onwards they depict moods and feelings, reflecting the change from the threat of physical dangers in the earlier stories to the more psychological-oriented later books. For an account of this development, see Holländer *Från idyll till avidyll* ("From Idyll to Non-Idyll").

about a very happy family. The Moomin family is happy in such a natural way that they do not even realise it. They enjoy each other's company and they give each other freedom. Freedom to be alone, freedom to think in their own way and to keep their secrets to themselves until one wants to share them. Not to give each other a bad conscience and experience responsibility as something nice and not just a duty. It may sound close to a utopic family, but most of it is quite simply what I remember from my own childhood. ("Barnets värld" 67)

Although Jansson insisted that she was never socially critical or ironic in her Moomin fiction (cf. letter to Westin, "Könsroller" ["Gender Roles"] 33), she does, whether consciously or not, shed light on social and contemporary issues. This is evidenced by the number theses that focus on the treatment of gender roles in the Moomin fiction, and in *Moominpappa at Sea* especially.⁵¹ Over the course of the books, her depiction of the family became increasingly complex and nuanced, and in the final two, she investigated the problematic aspects of this boundless freedom: the strain on the family when they follow Moominpappa in his search for freedom and self-realisation in *Moominpappa at Sea*, and the sense of abandonment Toft and the other characters in search for company feel when they find the Moomin house empty in *Moominvalley in November*. As Moomintroll grows up (a development that begins in *Moominland Midwinter*), Moominpappa experiences a mid-life crisis, the image of Moominmamma as the ideal mother is problematised, the idea of the family as a community is questioned.

Moominpappa's Need for Freedom (and Love)

While Moominpappa, with his top hat, newspaper and pipe, is an archetypal father, Moominmamma, with her handbag and apron, is an archetypal mother: while he mainly sits on the veranda reading, she cares for the children, the garden and performs her household duties.⁵² Jansson considered her Moomin figures "a camouflage for typical human behavioural patterns while at the same time providing an expansion of the margins of action" (qtd. in Westin, *Familjen* 106). Creating these imaginary yet recognisable figures provided

⁵¹ See Antikainen; Berggren; Ellingsen; Hane; Lindberg; Lindster; Schönbeck; Simonsson; Westin "Könsroller"; and Winbergh.

⁵² I use the term *archetypal* in the sense that Moominpappa and Moominmamma with their physical attributes are types, i.e. representatives of the traditional gender roles associated with father- and motherhood. For a discussion of *Moominpappa at Sea* and archetypes in the Jungian sense of the term, see Rönnerstrand and Simonsson.

her with an opportunity to play with given roles, and to investigate the possibilities for freedom within these.

Although he enjoys veranda life, Moominpappa sometimes feels trapped in his role as he has an innate need for freedom and adventure. In *The Moomins and the Great Flood*, Moominmamma explains thoughtfully and sadly that he has always been “an unusual moomintroll. . . . He was always wanting to move, from one stove to the next. He was never happy where he was” (Jansson 23). While Moominpappa describes his meeting with Moominmamma as the “remarkable turning-point of [his] stormy youth,” from which point his “follies have been supervised by her gentle and understanding eyes,” Moominmamma views their unification not as ending his adventures, but as when “everything *started*” (Jansson, *Exploits* 125, 127). Viewing family life as an adventure, is something Moominpappa repeatedly fails to do.

In “The Secret of the Hattifatteners,” Moominpappa, like the narrator of “Travelling Light,” embarks on a journey of freedom and he re-joins the Hattifatteners. That the family as a community grants each other personal freedom is revealed in the narrator’s observation: “No one felt worried, and that was a good thing. They had decided never to feel worried about each other; in this way everybody was helped to a good conscience and as much freedom as possible” (Jansson, “The Secret” 121). Within the Moomin family, Moominmamma especially embodies the capacity to facilitate both love *and* freedom: she always lets Moomintroll go on adventures, and when Moominpappa leaves, she is assured that he will “be back in due time. . . . That’s what he used to tell me from the beginning, and he always came back, so I suppose he’ll return this time too” (121).⁵³ However, as in *The Moomins and the Great Flood*, she is not unaffected by his departure: she is “bewildered and sad” and in need of “the comfort of an explanation” (120). Moominmamma’s sorrow is, like Moomintroll’s melancholy at Snufkin’s departures or Mari and Jonna’s jealousy, the flip side in a relationship that allows for freedom. In *Moominpappa at Sea*, her own restricted movement in the role as a mother, as well as her need for personal space are important themes.

In the Moomin fiction, Hattifatteners are an embodiment of the total disconnection and freedom the narrator of “Travelling Light” longs for. However, because of their anti-social behaviour, they are considered “outsiders, half-dangerous, different” by the Moominvalley

⁵³ In an early Anglophone response to the Moomin fiction, Nancy Huse also notes how Moominmamma “exemplifies the ability to let people alone,” thus providing “both freedom and absolute security” (46).

community (“The Secret” 122). Moominpappa is nevertheless drawn towards their carefree life-style:

Moominpappa had heard that hattifatteners never quarrel, they are very silent and interested only in travelling onwards, as far as possible. All the way to the horizon, or to the world’s end, which is probably the same thing. Or so people said. It was also said that a hattifattener cared for nothing but himself, and further that they all became electric in a thunderstorm. Also they were dangerous company to all who lived in drawing-rooms and verandahs and were used to doing certain things at certain times. (123)⁵⁴

Leaving with the Hattifatteners, and feeling that the moon, the sea, the boat and the horizon are the only things that exist, Moominpappa feels “free at last” (125). As in Jansson’s non-Moomin fiction, the sea and boats are usually associated with freedom, and, as shown in my discussion of “Viktorija,” with the male privilege of travel especially. The Hattifatteners lead a “wicked life”: since nothing ties them to normal life, their freedom is in a sense limitless (125). They thus represent the sort of irresponsible masculine behaviour that both the narrator of “Travelling Light” and Moominpappa are drawn to, but cannot yield to, because of their sense of responsibility and need for company.

Moominpappa soon experiences a need to “say something chummy” (125), but feels left out because he does not understand the Hattifatteners’ silent communication, and the first of the steep and slippery islands they visit strikes him as “an unfriendly island that told everyone quite clearly to keep out” (128). Again, islands in Jansson’s fiction can symbolise both freedom and isolation. In going away with the Hattifatteners, Moominpappa thinks he sets out for freedom and adventure, but the grim islands described in the short story only strengthen the sense of loneliness, which the free, but alienated Hattifatteners emanate.

Over the course of the journey, Moominpappa gradually comes to resemble these emotionless creatures:

His thoughts glided along like the boat, without memories or dreams, they were like grey wandering waves that didn’t even want to reach the horizon.

. . . He sat staring seawards, just as they did, his eyes had turned pale like theirs, taking the colour of the sky. (134).

⁵⁴ As the Moomin books have different translators, inconsistencies in spelling occur. In my discussion, I spell *veranda* without an *h* and *Hattifatteners* with a capital *h*.

As previously noted, grey is associated with terror, but also anticipation and change, as there is always something new *beyond* the greyness (Antas). Storms also have a prominent place in the Moomin fiction: a thunderstorm is the turning-point of the story, as it allows Moominpappa to see beyond the greyness, like Jonna in “Catfishing.” As the mist clears and the evening sky reddens, hundreds of Hattifatteners gather on an island, making “a lonely and yearning sound like the wind of a bottle-neck” (139). In her doctoral thesis *Beyond Identification* (2003), Yvonne Bertills notes how in Swedish *hatifnattarna* (from the verb *fnatta*, “to flutter around”) encapsulates the Hattifatteners’ behaviour: the Swedish expression *få fnatt* (“to go crazy” or “to get excited over something”) fits with the way they react in thunderstorms (105). At first, Moominpappa feels “an irresistible desire to do as the hattifatteners did,” but as the thunder breaks, and he grips a familiar fixed point – his hat, a gift from Moominmamma – he realises he is “no hattifattener, I’m Moominpappa. . . What am I doing here?” (139). Although there is, as Hattifatteners’ name suggests, a thematic connection between these creatures and Moominpappa, as *hati* may be an allusion to his top hat (Bertills 107), Moominpappa nevertheless realises that he is, after all, fundamentally different from these creatures as he discovers their secret.⁵⁵ They lack the abilities to think and feel, and there is no use in being free when one cannot *feel* free:

He grasped that only a great thunderstorm could put some life in hattifatteners. They were heavily charged and hopelessly locked up. They didn’t feel, they didn’t think – they could only seek. Only in the presence of electricity they were able to live at last, strongly and with great intense feelings. (139-141)

The journey with the Hattifatteners makes Moominpappa understand that “at home he could be just as free and adventurous as a real pappa should be” (143).⁵⁶ As in Jansson’s non-Moomin fiction, freedom is not freedom if it means total disconnection – it then becomes isolating. After having gone through this tumultuous inner and outer journey, he decides never to have electric lighting at home, and the paraffin-driven hurricane lamp becomes an important symbol of security and community in *Moominpappa at Sea*.

⁵⁵ For further discussions of this thematic connection between Moominpappa and the Hattifatteners, see Jones 76; Omland 176-180; Westin, *Familjen* 129; Witt-Brattström, “Nummulitens hämnd” 121.

⁵⁶ This is also a theme in Jansson’s comic-strip “Moomin and the Sea” (1957), which served as a synopsis for *Moominpappa at Sea* (Westin, *Tove* 278). Moominpappa wants to write a great novel about the sea, but after their struggles on the island (which are comical rather than traumatic), he discovers he misses his old life, and ends up writing “an intimate little volume called: ‘How I miss my own secure verandah’” (Jansson, “Moomin and the Sea” 83). For a comparison between the novel and the comic, see Sundmark.

Separate, yet Together

Moominpappa at Sea is dedicated “to some father,” but it is just as much a novel about parenthood in general, and what happens when the child in the family grows up. While Jansson wrote the novel after her father’s death in 1958, the illustrations for *Moominvalley in November* were finished after the death of her mother in 1970 (Westin, *Tove* 419-421). As Ingrid Valle Ellingsen points out in her master’s thesis *Fra idyll til modeller i det virkelige liv* (“From Idyll to Real-Life Models,” 1992), by this time, Jansson could finally liberate herself from childhood’s ideal picture of her parents and portray them more realistically (30).

Moominpappa at Sea was the first Moomin book to be published as a “novel”: it is less episodic than the earlier books, and Jansson intended it for an adult audience, but her attempt at publishing it as an adult novel failed (Westin, *Tove* 372). This may have been a blessing in disguise: while it is true that *Moominpappa at Sea* is a story about a family in crisis, children might still enjoy it, not only because it includes the humour and wonder of the earlier stories, but also because it shows how and why conflicts arise, and how they might be solved.⁵⁷

The opening chapter, “The Family in the Crystal Ball,” outlines the positions of the family members in the novel: already from the beginning there is a sense that although they are gathered in the same space, they are mentally separated – a sense that only strengthens over the course of the novel. The Moomin family has shrunk to the nuclear family of Moomintroll, Moominmamma, Moominpappa and the adopted Little My, allowing Jansson to examine the Moomin family’s internal dynamics more closely. A stark existentialist mood is conveyed from the beginning: it is the end of August, and Moominpappa is pottering “aimlessly” about his garden, “feeling at a loss. He had no idea what to do with himself, because it seemed everything there was to be done had already been done or was being done by somebody else” (Jansson, *Moominpappa* 1).⁵⁸ As previously noted, August is a month of change in Jansson’s fiction. Here, it signifies the transitions they experience as a family: Moomintroll is entering puberty, and his parents struggle to adapt to this change.

The green and fertile Moominvalley has been transformed into a suffocatingly dry and confined space for Moominpappa: “Here, down in the valley, the heat was scorching; everything was still and silent, and not a little dusty. It was the month when there could be

⁵⁷ For a discussion of how Jansson’s Moomin fiction might contribute to a young reader’s personality development, thus the importance of viewing the books (also the final two more complex novels) as suitable for both adults *and* children, see Ellingsen.

⁵⁸ For existentialist readings of the Moomin fiction, see Alarcón and Laajarinne.

great forest fires, the month for taking great care” (1). Already here, the novel’s play between light and dark, safety and danger is established. Moominpappa regards it as his responsibility to protect his family, and warns them about the danger of forest fires, but the image of him guarding a little dry, black spot in the moss (the result of a small forest fire the others have managed perfectly well to put out without him) is one of utter redundancy (cf. *Moominpappa* 5).⁵⁹ Once more, veranda life has become meaningless to him: he is stuck *both* literally in the valley, emphasised by his paws getting stuck in the varnish and his tail in the wicker chair (cf. *Moominpappa* 2), and metaphorically in life.

According to Jansson, men must at least be allowed to *believe* in the tasks assigned to them by nature, which according to her are “to defend, decide and protect” (qtd. in Westin, “Könsroller” 33). In Moominvalley, although Moominpappa likes to think he is the one in charge, it is actually Moominmamma most characters turn to in need of help and advice. In this opening chapter, Moominpappa is annoyed at his wife for lighting the veranda lamp without consulting him: “In some families it’s the father who decides when it’s time to light the lamp” (Jansson *Moominpappa* 9). According to Jansson, Moominmamma made a mistake when she took the responsibility for the family from her husband, “depriving him of his male pride” and consequently he lost what was so important to Jansson, namely desire (qtd. in Westin, “Könsroller” 33). In a way, Jansson’s view seems surprisingly conventional and essentialist, considering the bold and unconventional choices she made in her own life. However, she also points to an aspect that might be overlooked: in the strive for women’s rights, it has been forgotten that men, who are *expected* to be strong because of their biological disposition, may find it difficult to live up to this expectation (33). This is a main theme in *Moominpappa at Sea*: at one point Moominpappa exclaims: “It’s so very difficult being a father!” (95), echoing “Viktoria” in *Fair Play*.

To seek consolation in his meaningless existence, Moominpappa looks into his crystal ball: watching his family’s “forlorn and aimless” movements makes him feel that they all need his intervention (8). The scene foreshadows both Moominpappa’s self-centeredness in the novel: “At the centre of this glass world he saw himself, his own big nose” (6), and how each family member is absorbed in her or his own private world. Moominmamma bustles around the house performing daily chores, and he observes how “Every time she did it, she

⁵⁹ As previously mentioned, Jansson’s father loved minor catastrophes (cf. footnote 43). In *Sculptor’s Daughter*, Jansson describes his obsession with fires, and how he at night used to take his children with him to watch fires every time he heard the fire engine. As in *Moominpappa at Sea*, there is a contrast between light and dark, safety and danger in the memoir, as Jansson contrasts her father’s fascination for big and dangerous fires with the security of her mother’s storytelling by the log-fire, see *Sculptor’s* 16-17.

looked as though she was walking down a completely strange and exciting path” (7). My previous chapter showed how work is vital to the lives of Mari and Jonna, and having a purpose is an important theme in *Moominpappa at Sea* as well: while Moominpappa moves his family to the island due to his *lack* of it, Moominmamma suffers on the island because her house and garden in Moominvalley *are* her vocations – once they move, it is her turn to feel displaced and redundant.

On the verge of puberty, Moomintroll is “aloof, and keeping himself to himself” (8). This is an age where the tension between love and freedom becomes especially acute: Moomintroll’s urge to detach himself is in conflict with his continuing need to be seen. Later in the novel, the narrator points out that “He had become quite a different troll, with quite different thoughts. He liked being all to himself. It was much more exciting to play games in his imagination . . .” (117). When he plays the “Rescue” game before going to sleep, he is not saving Moominmamma as before, but a sea-horse he becomes infatuated with (cf. *Moominpappa* 131). Throughout the Moomin fiction, the bond between mother and son is very strong – it is similar to the low-voiced love between Mari and Jonna, expressed through little gestures and affections, rather than direct declarations. Moomintroll enjoys collecting little gifts for his mother, and his developing detachment is therefore symbolised by him taking back a silver horse-shoe he gives to her, in order to impress a sea-horse (cf. *Moominpappa* 109).

Little My is “just a glimpse of something determined and independent – something so independent that it had no need to show itself” (Jansson, *Moominpappa* 8). Like Snufkin, she *chooses* her affiliation to the Moomin family, and has an open relationship with them. Similar to Mari and Jonna, Little My decides when to socialise and when to be alone. Whereas the other members of the family struggle with isolation on the island, she is the only one who seems unaffected. When Moomintroll accuses her of thinking that she is superior and knowing everything because she is adopted, she replies “You’re dead right. . . . Of course I’m superior!” (14). Throughout the novel, it does seem as if her ability to opt out provides her with another perspective: on several occasions, she helps the Moomin family’s recovery process by putting their feelings into words. However, as the narrator hardly provides her perspective (“What Little My saw and thought, no one knew,” 105), my following discussion will focus on how life on the island affects the other family members.

In my discussion of Mari and Jonna’s relationship, I described their way of living – separate, yet together – as vital for their relationship, as they need both physical and mental space. This need figures in the Moomin fiction as well, but over the course of *Moominpappa*

at Sea, the distance between the characters increases to such an extent that it is reminiscent of the destructive loneliness of “The Squirrel” and “The Locomotive.” While being able to grant each other freedom is also important in a family, the novel explores what happens when the distance family members claim becomes alienating. What are the consequences when one gets *lost* in one’s personal space, and what is the cost of this claim to space on others?

Travelling Heavily

Moominpappa’s recurring wish for freedom is reflected in his longing to sail “right out at sea, as far as [he] can go” (Jansson, *Moominpappa* 3). He projects his longings for the sea and his need to protect his family into the building of a model lighthouse.⁶⁰ It is Moominmamma, however, who understands that his dream must become real in order for him to regain his sense of purpose in life, and she is willing to give up her own happy existence in the valley to fulfil it:

That’s where we’re going to live a wonderful life full of troubles. . .

[. . .] Pappa is going to look after us there. We’re going to move there and live there all our lives, and start everything afresh, right from the beginning. (13)

By thematising Moominpappa’s redundancy, *Moominpappa at Sea* complicates the assumption that traditional gender roles make it easy for the father whose responsibility has mainly been financial, and the lack of a meaningful vocation may be why he seeks adventure in earlier stories. This time, however, he does not leave the family (perhaps he has learnt from his encounter with the Hattifatteners), but longs for an opportunity to feel needed *as a father* instead. However, the Moomin parents’ increased isolation on the island, as well Moomintroll’s growing independence, force them to find new occupations that are independent of traditional gender roles. Thus the journey to the lighthouse signifies the beginning of a difficult, yet formative experience for the family.⁶¹

They leave at night, because, according to Moominpappa’s metafictional comment, “Setting out in the right way is just as important as the opening lines in a book: they determine everything. . . . Making a journey at night is more wonderful than anything in the

⁶⁰ As shown in the previous chapter, a longing for the freedom and solitude only an uninhabited island can give was part of Jansson’s own psychology. Like Moominpappa, she dreamed of owning a lighthouse island: “I was very little when I decided to become a lighthouse-keeper on Kummelskär [an uninhabited island in the Pellinki archipelago]. Admittedly, only a flashing light exists there, but I planned to build a much bigger, a powerful lighthouse that would oversee and keep track of the entire Eastern Gulf of Finland – when I became grown-up and rich, that is” (Jansson and Pietilä 8).

⁶¹ This recalls Woolf’s *To The Lighthouse*. For comparisons between the novels, see Holländer “Familjen”; and Berggren. Strömstedt also draws parallels between the novels, see 24.

world” (Jansson, *Moominpappa* 19-20). But he has to “sniff in the wind for a while” to get his sense of direction (21). As previously discussed, images of getting stuck and wandering aimlessly recur in the novel, and it takes a while before he “*felt* that he was sure” (21; emphasis added) – the journey in the darkness thus foreshadows the family’s difficulties in finding their way in the novel.

In contrast to the narrator in “Travelling Light,” the family is burdened by luggage: the narrator, coloured by Moominmamma’s point-of-view, explains that a “whole family needs such an awful lot of things in order to live through a single day in the proper way” (Jansson, *Moominpappa* 20). This motif recurs both in *Comet in Moominland* and in *Moominsummer Madness*: when their home is threatened by natural disasters, Moominmamma insists on bringing with them the furnishings, including the bath tub and the drawing-room suite (cf. Jansson *Comet* 158; *Moominsummer* 35). These examples show how Moominmamma has always been responsible for the family’s well-being, and not had the same privilege of “travelling light” as Moominpappa. However, a sense of finality is attached to her preparation for this journey: this is her last duty as the head of the family – from this point onwards Moominpappa insists on taking care of everything. As she loses her vocation as carer, she disappears into a heavy depression. This is foreshadowed already when she embarks on the journey: exhausted by her obligation to make sure they have everything they need, she very sleepily, drags herself to her feet. Although this responsibility tires her, when Moominpappa relieves her from it, it is *her* turn to feel stuck: she feels like someone in “a slow, fantastically lit dream in which one walks through heavy, heavy sand without getting anywhere” (Jansson, *Moominpappa* 21). Moomintroll senses this change at once: when they arrive on the island, he watches in surprise as his mother, obeying her husband’s orders, lies down to sleep “without unpacking, without making their beds and without giving them a sweet before they went to sleep” (31). That Moominmamma abandons her role as a mother on the island, is symbolised by her leaving her handbag behind on the sand – “the symbol of her identity as *Moominmamma*, the closed space in which everything needed can be immediately stored” (Westin, *Tove* 381).

The Island – Freedom or Isolation?

At the island, the family is both literally and metaphorically situated at multiple borders: at the border to the unknown, at the border of freedom, and yet they are together in a confined space. This can be seen as a metaphor of their state of transition. Life on the island affects the

relations between them, and, as in the island chapters of *Fair Play*, the tension between love and freedom becomes especially pronounced.

As we have seen, islands “take on various guises, shapes and expressions” in Jansson’s fiction, being “the site of adventure, rejuvenation and transformation, a place where one can build a life and create a world of one’s own” (Westin, “The Silver Stone” 29 and *Tove* 362). Moominpappa is drawn to the island in the hope that it will revitalise him and give him a new sense of purpose, symbolised by him replacing his top hat with the lighthouse-keeper’s old battered hat, and insisting on taking on the lighthouse-keeper’s responsibilities. However, both Moominpappa and Moomintroll’s expectations about their new life are challenged by *actual* experience. Moomintroll imagines the island as “green with red cliffs,” as the island he has “seen in picture books, a desert island, inhabited by pirates” (Jansson, *Moominpappa* 14). The lighthouse island, however, resembles the “sad and lonesome” islands described in “The Secret of the Hattifatteners”: with its “poor soil” and stony landscape, it forms a sharp contrast to Moominvalley, which, except for its dryness at the end of summer, is luscious and green. Nothing turns out the way the family had expected: the lighthouse is not working, and although Moominpappa sees it as his duty to fix it, he eventually gives up – a parallel to how he continues to fail at his role as a father.

Nothing lies beyond the lighthouse island, and Moominpappa muses: “We’re looking the sea straight in the face, so to speak, and far behind us are all those people who live on islands much nearer to the mainland. It’s a wonderful thought don’t you think?” (33). The ideal is again one of total disconnection: on the island, away from the obligations to the community of the valley, the family can finally be free. However, the fact that the island is situated farthest out is also a cause of loneliness. The island’s destructive influence is foreshadowed already by the sinister imagery used to describe its first sighting:

And then out of the night loomed an enormous shadow: the island itself was towering over them, looking at them carefully. They could feel its hot breath as the boat struck the sandy beach and came to a standstill: they felt they were being watched, and huddled together, not daring to move. (28)

The island is personified, both here and later as “a big grey cat stretching itself” (32).⁶² Like the lonely lighthouse-keeper, the island wants to be left alone, and tries to shake the family

⁶² In *Anteckningar*, Jansson reveals how she considered Klovhara a living being: “Sometimes it could feel like being unhappily in love, everything becomes magnified, I could imagine that this incredibly spoilt and badly treated island was a living being that did not like us or felt sorry for us, depending on how we behaved . . .” (Jansson and Pietilä 73).

off.

Meanwhile, the wild rose-bushes Moominmamma tries to plant in her new garden on the island look “most uncomfortable,” mirroring her own discomfort in her new habitat (141). She ponders on the difficulty of changing the nature of the island: “Perhaps one shouldn’t try to change things so much on this island. . . . Just leave it as it is” (95). Moominpappa has the same need, and poses the question: “Can strong emotional disturbance in a person transfer itself to his surroundings?” (160). The novel’s answer to this question is yes: as shown previously, weather is an important indication of the characters’ inner state of mind in Jansson’s fiction, and in *Moominpappa at Sea*, this becomes especially clear.⁶³ Except for the two opening chapters and the ultimate, the remaining are named after natural phenomena.

However, as in *Fair Play* and “The Secret of the Hattifatteners,” a storm has a cathartic effect – rendering the sky as white “as if it had been newly washed” (198). Battling the storm and saving the lighthouse-keeper brings them together: Moominpappa is finally provided with an opportunity to be a paternal role model for his son, Moomintroll is given a chance to show that he is no longer a child, and Moominmamma feels needed as she is the one who manages to bring the lighthouse-keeper home (cf. 178-183, 206-207). Moominpappa’s speech to the angry sea can be read as indirectly aimed at himself and his aloofness towards his family in the novel: “There’s something you don’t seem to understand. . . . It’s your job to look after this island. You should protect and comfort it instead of behaving as you do. Do you understand?” (195).⁶⁴ When driftwood is washed ashore, he asks the family for help, and the salvaging operation helps them throw “off the melancholy of the island and the loneliness of the sea,” with the sky above them “sparkling and cloudless” (196). The storm can be seen as a manifestation of the inner turmoil the characters need to overcome in order to reunite as a family again, and is one of the novel’s turning-points. As mentioned elsewhere, cloudless weather is an indication of mental clarity in Jansson’s fiction: the joint salvaging operation makes them realise their need for each other, and helps them find their way out of the fog of their separate worlds.

⁶³ For a discussion of the role of landscape in the formation of narrative in *Moominpappa at Sea*, see Sizikov. In her discussion of Jansson’s Moomin fiction, Janina Orlov also reflects on how nature mirrors the family’s feelings, see 93-95.

⁶⁴ Orlov notes too that Moominpappa’s dialogue with the sea is implicitly addressed to himself, thus becoming “a confession and a plea for reconciliation” (95).

The Need for Distance versus Enforced Distance

In the previous chapter, I agreed with Gustafsson that the relationship between Jonna and Mari is an example of positive distance, as opposed to the more neurotically conditioned distance in “The Squirrel” and “The Locomotive.” The Moomin family has (up to the point of *Moominpappa at Sea*) been able to grant each other the distance each member needs, and to respect “the empty spaces” between them (cf. Jansson, *Fair Play* 7). However, it is in “The Fog,” that it really becomes apparent how existence on the island threatens their sense of togetherness: as in “Fog” in *Fair Play*, the family suddenly find themselves “wrapped in a pale-grey mist” and life becomes difficult.

The narrative technique Jansson employs in her Moomin fiction, contributes to the books’ multi-layered quality: as in her non-Moomin fiction, she utilises shifting point-of-views, sudden shifts from third- to first-person narration, and slips into free indirect discourse, thus providing the reader with both an inside and an outside perspective, allowing both sympathy and identification, but also distance and objectivity.⁶⁵ Maria Nikolajeva has discussed the narrative pattern in the Moomin fiction, and observed that the narration in *Moominpappa at Sea* differs from previous novels: the omniscient narrator is withdrawn, and instead Moomintroll, Moominmamma and Moominpappa are “focalised internally, one at a time,” and the “final picture is assembled by the reader from the three consciousnesses, in a puzzle-like method” (242).⁶⁶ “The Fog” is a good example of how this polyfocalisation mirrors the family members’ isolation: as they become increasingly estranged, the dialogue decreases, and the reader is instead caught in the characters’ thoughts and misconceptions of each other.

Moominpappa – Lost in His Broodings

The “Fog” begins from Moominpappa’s point-of-view: wanting to provide for his family, he becomes obsessed with fishing. His irritation at Moominmamma, who tentatively suggests they have more than enough fish, is conveyed through his recollection of the event:

“Suddenly Moominmamma had said, *not looking at anyone in particular*, that she just didn’t know what to do with all the fish he had caught” (Jansson, *Moominpappa* 112-113; emphasis

⁶⁵ Whereas adults perceive these nuances, children relate more uncritically to the characters, and they are unlikely to understand the underlying social criticism in *Moominpappa at Sea*. Linnéa Hane touches on this in her rhetorical analysis of the construction of femininity in the Moomin books.

⁶⁶ As Nikolajeva notes, and as my following discussion reveals, a puzzle is indeed one of the novel’s many potent images (242). For other discussions of the narrative technique in the Moomin fiction, see Orlov; Rehal-Johansson (p. 167 for *Moominpappa at Sea*) and Westin, *Familjen* 106-108.

added). This exemplifies how the family fails to communicate with each other, and how even on the island he feels superfluous. Like Jansson's real-life father, he longs for a storm so that he "would have to rush round saving things and making sure that the family wasn't swept away" (113). Little My's comment that giving up fishing must have been a relief for him, is an example of how she is able to see the family from outside, understanding them better than they do themselves: "'You're quite right!' said Moominpappa, surprised. 'It did become terribly boring. Why didn't I notice it myself?'" (113).

In a desperate attempt to fill his existence with meaning, he decides to get "to the bottom of this" (114) – a problem that he does not fully understand. He becomes obsessed with a black pool on the island, which, with its "mirror-like surface," becomes a symbol of this ignorance. Like a mirror it gives no answers, but only reflects what is already there, namely his own hopelessness and lack of purpose (cf. 70-71). Moominpappa's fixation with the mirror-like pool echoes the Greek myth of Narcissus, and can be seen as another expression of his self-absorption in the novel. It forms a dark contrast to the lighthouse, which when finally lit, contributes to his illumination. Throughout the novel, he feels a pressure to explain natural phenomena to his family so as to "be able to keep his self-respect" (169). Moominmamma's sight of him "emerging from the fog and disappearing again, his nose resting on his stomach, and lost in thought" is a literal image of how he gets lost in his own broodings (121). Part of his release at the end of the novel, is realising that the sea and the island have a life of their own – he must accept that one cannot explain everything.⁶⁷

The increased distance between him and Moominmamma is a result of this obsession to figure out these "big things," as he explains to her that "Jetties and paths and fishing are for small-minded people . . ." (121). This is an example of his constant failure to see the importance of the small things that matter to his wife. When the isolation on the island becomes too pressing in the following chapter "The Waning Moon," Moominmamma calls for an emergency picnic, trying to recreate the communal adventures the family undertakes in the earlier Moomin books. For a moment she becomes her old self, symbolised by the fact that it is the first time she has the handbag with her since they came to the island. Even though the rock they travel to is, like the lonely Hattifatteners islands, "merely a bit of grey nothingness," they are finally able to talk to each other, although they avoid the difficult

⁶⁷ Westin notes how *Moominpappa at Sea* "can easily be described in Jungian terms as a journey through the unconscious in a search for the 'Self', towards an initiation" (*Tove* 380). Jansson was familiar with psychoanalysis (Westin, *Tove* 355), and in her thesis, Ellingsen notes that by shedding light on the potential for life-long development and the importance of working through repressed feelings in her Moomin fiction, Jansson's psychological view seems influenced by Jung (35).

topics, such as the sea, the island and Moominvalley (143-144). For a short while they become a family again, and the picnic scene is an example of how the simple things in life are important in Jansson's fiction.⁶⁸

Moomintroll's Glade – Protection and Freedom

After Moominpappa finds a new sense of purpose in investigating the pool, the perspective shifts to Moomintroll: his steps towards adulthood are symbolised by him making his own home in the forest glade, and by entering a world of relationships outside of the family. In the descriptions of the thicket in which the glade is situated, there is a tension between safety and suffocation: it is “low and tangled,” and while Moomintroll thinks that it appears as if a spruce is “holding a little birch tree in its arms to protect it,” Little My thinks it looks as if “she’s strangling it” (61-62). When he enters the thicket, Moomintroll feels “himself choking with panic, shut in and being strangled by the trees,” but as he creeps farther in, this “unpleasant shut-in feeling vanished. He just felt protected and hidden by the chilly darkness; he was a tiny little animal who was hiding and wanted to be left in peace” (63). As mentioned previously, hiding places are recurrent motifs in Jansson's fiction, and for Moomintroll having “a really safe hiding-place had always been one of his most serious ambitions”: in finding the glade, he has found “perfection. . . . It was both hidden and open” – i.e. he has found security, protection *and* freedom (64). It is like a cocoon: an intermediate space between childhood and adulthood.⁶⁹ He is free to leave the lighthouse when he wishes to be alone, and to go back to the community of the family when that is what he needs.

His need for love as well as freedom is reflected at the end of the chapter: upset that the family does not understand him, he decides to move to the glade, “an exciting prospect, new, dangerous and wonderful. It changed everything. It seemed as though he was suddenly surrounded by a new melancholy, by strange possibilities” (135). When he boldly announces his decision, Moominmamma absent-mindedly gives her consent, while Moominpappa, like a confused Robinson Crusoe, is desperately trying to keep track of time. Moominmamma is not listening when he with a dry throat tries to explain that this is not “as usual”: it is not a matter of simply wanting to spend one night out of doors – he actually wants to leave the family and

⁶⁸ In “Fireworks,” Mari suggests to Jonna that the simple things make up the meaning of life, see Jansson, *Fair Play* 73.

⁶⁹ Alexander Sizikov, who reads the glade as a sanctuary topos, also notes that Moomintroll is “Enwrapped in the thicket as in a cocoon” (35). Agneta Rehal-Johansson too sees the glade “as an expression for a longing for independence and integrity” (154).

move by himself (135). That he wants to assert his distance while still feeling the need to be seen, is revealed in the next chapter, when he cannot decide whether he is “relieved or disappointed” because no one “had made a fuss about his leaving home” (138).⁷⁰

Ebba Witt-Brattström, who reads the Moomin fiction psychoanalytically, argues that the “special, exclusive relation between mother and daughter – which contains incestuous elements, camouflaged as tenderness” governs Jansson’s authorship. According to her, Moomintroll’s separation from his mother plays an important part in the development of the Moomin books, from the primal scene where Moominmama is the only one who recognises her bewitched son in *Finn Family Moomintroll* to Toft’s de-idealisation of her in *Moominvalley in November* (“Nummulitens hämnd” [“The Revenge of the Nummulite”] 127-128).⁷¹ According to Jansson, the round figure of Moominmamma is indeed created by our dreams of being allowed to continue to rest inside the safest of places – inside the warmth of the womb: “Muuminmaha means grandmother’s stomach, and it is the safest place that exists. Maybe that was the reason I called him Mumin [Moomin]” (qtd. in Strömstedt 21).⁷² It is true that mothers have an important place in Jansson’s fiction, and I agree with Witt-Brattström that there are jealousy and erotic undertones in “The Great Journey” (cf. Witt-Brattström, “Nummulitens hämnd” 128). However, although Jonna is jealous of Mari’s late mother in *Fair Play*, my discussion showed how the novel is about breaking *away* from the memories of the past, rather than a dream of symbiosis. It is also true that independence is important for Moomintroll’s maturation, but I maintain that Moominmamma provides her son with both love *and* freedom: she accepts that he is growing up, and understands his need for personal space. Margareta Strömstedt makes a valid point in noting that whereas in the early books, Jansson views Moominmamma as an image of her own mother through the dream of symbiosis, the later books portray her from an adult daughter’s searching, loving – and we might add – realistic perspective (25). Moominmamma’s problem is not failing to let her son go, but rather to find new purposes in life as she is not needed as a carer to the same extent as before.

⁷⁰ Little My too has her own home in the thicket, but as noted above, her independence is nothing new (Jansson, *Moominpappa* 126).

⁷¹ Witt-Brattström also makes this argument in “Motståndets utopi” (“The Utopia of Resistance”). Nikolajeva (232) and Rehal-Johansson (159-167) make similar points.

⁷² *Mummi* means “grandma” and *maha* means “stomach” in Finnish.

Mothers Have the Right to Claim Their Personal Spaces Too

Following the scene with Moomintroll in his glade, the perspective shifts to Moominmamma, who no longer has a role to fulfil: there is not much cleaning or cooking to do, and “so the days came to seem quite long in quite the wrong way” (Jansson, *Moominpappa* 118). On one of the first rainy days on the island, she suggests that they can solve a puzzle she has found in the lighthouse (92), but the pieces will not fit, mirroring how the family members fail to understand each other (except Little My). The abandoned puzzle is a symbol of the family’s dissolution, and the narrator reveals that Moominmamma “didn’t want to do the puzzle because it reminded her that she was so much alone” (118).⁷³ Collecting wood gives her solace, as it makes her “feel as though the island was a garden that could be cleaned up and made to look beautiful” (118). What Moominmamma misses most is her garden in Moominvalley, and the image of her gradually disappearing behind the woodpile is a metaphor for her increasing alienation and loneliness: “The wall of wood round her grew higher and higher, until she stood there sawing in an enclosed space all her own that gave her a lovely feeling of security” with the smell of wood reminding her of home (119). She opposes Moominpappa when he wants to collect the wood himself – she needs a purpose of her own in this new existence.

Isolation eventually drives her to draw flowers on the window-sill (cf. Jansson, *Moominpappa* 104), and by and by, these sketch-drawings turn into paintings of “large, substantial flowers” on the wall. No one is “more surprised than Moominmamma herself” by the fact that she can paint so well (145) – busy earlier with her roles as wife and mother, she has been deprived of the opportunity to discover her artistic abilities. The painting empowers her: she says “This is my wall” when Little My asks if she can paint as well, showing that, like the woodpile, the mural is her own personal space (148).⁷⁴ Mistaking a peony for a rose, and then the blue veranda railings for the horizon of the sea and sky, Moominpappa shows that he neither understands the painting nor the painter: when Moominmamma replies “There’s no sea here at all” she implicitly rejects a place deeply associated with Moominpappa’s (self-) interests and perhaps even him (152). Even so, she tries to please him by painting a boat, but as it represents the male privilege of travel which excludes and oppresses her, it does not turn out well. Unlike Mari and Jonna, for whom we saw that the

⁷³ For a discussion of the puzzle as an ekphrasis of a meta-picture reflecting the family’s identity formation, see Alarcón 41-46.

⁷⁴ In the Swedish original, it is clearer that Moominmamma refers to her mural as hers: “Nej, dethär är mitt” which translates “No, this is mine” (Jansson, *Pappan och havet* 123).

view of the horizon and boats reminded them of the importance of freedom of movement in their relationship, the seascape does not fit into Moominmamma's world-view, represented by the mural, which increasingly resembles Moominvalley.

One evening at sunset, Moominmamma is frightened by "an enormous black bird" which circles round the lighthouse, "like a fury, beating its wings relentlessly" (154). The black bird against the red sky symbolises the fragility of family life – both the physical and psychological dangers that lurk in the shadows and is another image of light and dark, safety and danger in the novel. It is also one of the recurring images of going round in circles, pointing to the helplessness of their existence on the island: "We're surrounded!" Moominmamma thought in confusion. 'It's a magic circle. I'm scared. I want to go home and leave this terrible, deserted island and the cruel sea. . .'" (Jansson, *Moominpappa* 154). Flinging her arms round her painted apple tree, she disappears into her picture and is transported to her garden in Moominvalley.

The fantastic elements of children's fiction allow Moominmamma to *physically* disappear into her painting: the rest of the family has to go looking for her. However, since the novel is aimed also at an adult readership, her disappearance can be read as a *psychological* refuge. Critics are opposed as to whether Moominmamma is oppressed or happy in her role as wife and mother: while some argue that Jansson displays how the Moomin parents struggle in their traditionally assigned gender roles to show how they are limited by these,⁷⁵ others maintain that although Moominpappa believes he is the head of the family, the strong and wise Moominmamma is really the one in charge.⁷⁶ In my view, Jansson both extends and questions the boundaries of actions within the traditional division of gender roles in *Moominpappa at Sea*, by making Moominpappa realise that he and Moominmamma can share the wood-pile ("I must make enough room round the wood-pile for us to work there together"; 205), as well as by showing how Moominpappa struggles to fulfil his duty as a father. However, Moominmamma's intense homesickness strongly suggests that she *does* find meaning in her role as a wife and mother in Moominvalley. Jansson has emphasised that Moominmamma is "satisfied with her life and what she sets out to do is never dictated by duty, only by desire" (qtd. in Westin, "Könsroller" 33). As previously mentioned, desire – doing what you feel inclined to and not what you are forced to – is important in Jansson's fiction, and Moominmamma is happy as long as she finds her vocation as a mother and

⁷⁵ See Antikainen 54; Hane 71; Laajarinne 84; and Lindberg 39-40.

⁷⁶ See Ellingsen 66; Orlov 86; Simonsson 6; Westin, "Könsroller" 13; Winbergh 12-14; Witt-Brattström "Motståndets utopi"; Österlund "Muminmamma" 59.

keeper of the household purposeful. In *Feminism* (2003), Lena Gemzöe provides an interesting gloss on her plight, pointing to a cultural *devaluation* of women and their experiences that contributes to the structural inequality between the sexes:

Women's caring and domestic work is carried out unpaid at home and for low pay in the public sector. This expresses a devaluation of women's work and experiences. The picture conveyed to young girls and boys at school of culture and history is a picture where women's efforts are made invisible and regarded insignificant. (18)⁷⁷

However, as Yrsa Winbergh notes in her analysis of gender, power and motherhood in Jansson's Moomin fiction, the female-coded experiences Moominmamma represents are *valued* rather than *downgraded* in the Moomin fiction: she is the centre of the valley, the wise character whom Moomintroll and other characters trust to put things right (13-14). Thus, in her portrayal of Moominmamma, Jansson renders the efforts behind caring and domestic work visible.

Another important, but overlooked, aspect of women's lives that Jansson sheds light on in her portrayal of Moominmamma is the lack of direction women experience when their children grow up, as they have been given the sole (or the bulk of the) responsibility for child-rearing. It is only when Moominmamma is able to readjust, *and* to find independent occupations in wood-chopping and painting – something that is hers alone, that she is able to generate a degree of purpose and meaning in life, and to rediscover her equilibrium. Similar to Mari's attic and Moomintroll's glade, the woodpile and the mural offer Moominmamma her own personal spaces, which mothers too have the right to claim.

While Moominmamma finds compensation and solace in painting, it can be argued that her absorption in it becomes dangerous, as art takes precedence over reality. Escaping into the world of art or the imagination when real life becomes insufferable is a recurring motif in Jansson's fiction, and like the narrator of "The Locomotive," Moominmamma takes refuge in her own imagination to cope with solitude. It is often ambiguous whether this is a healthy solution: while the narrator of "The Locomotive" and other characters of Jansson's fiction are *trapped* in their own thoughts, imagination is also portrayed as a positive creative force, for instance in *Sculptor's Daughter* and *The Summer Book*. While some critics have seen Moominmamma's disappearance into the mural as an instance of madness (Ellingsen 79; Rehal-Johansson 149), Ørjasæter considers the painting as a process in which

⁷⁷ Gemzöe discusses the situation in Sweden, but her comments on the cultural devaluation of women's caring and domestic work is clearly applicable to Western culture generally.

Moominmamma works her way *out* of her depression (*Inn i barndomslandet* [“Into the World of Childhood”] 57). I agree with Ørjasæter and those who view the entrance into the mural as an affirmative act of female empowerment (Druker 79; Alarcón 40). Not only does the mural provide Moominmamma with a new sense of purpose and personal space, it also makes Moomintroll realise that “She was so lonely, she just disappeared” (Jansson, *Moominpappa* 157). Her restricted movement as a mother is shown when Moominpappa scolds her for frightening them when she reappears – they are used to her always being at home (159). Earlier, when thinking about Little My and Moomintroll sleeping outside, Moominmamma muses: “What a pity mothers can’t go off when they want and sleep out of doors. Mothers, particularly, could do with it sometimes” (138). Her disappearance, however, gives her an opportunity to say to the others that she too “needs a change sometimes,” and she points to the heart of the family’s problem: “We take everything too much for granted, including each other” (159).

In her discussion of how the Moomin fiction appeals to adults because of their philosophical intertexts, Dymel-Trzebiatowska notes how in his theory of creative evolution, Henri Bergson does not exclude the freedom of a human being, but, as he argues, if somebody wants to experience it, they have to surmount pragmatism and utilitarianism. When individuals break free from collective practises, conventions and automatisms, they can become capable of creative activities. (67)

It is only when Moominmamma manages to break free from performing only the duties ascribed to her as a mother, which are limited on the island, that she discovers her artistic abilities and experiences a feeling of freedom.

Moominmamma’s absorption into her painting coincides with the storm previously discussed, and is another turning-point: the disappearance prompts Moomintroll to let her into his private the glade, and confiding in her comforts him. Moominmamma, in turn, points out to Moominpappa that he never seems “to realize that [Moomintroll’s] growing up” (201). Although this takes Moominpappa by surprise, the realisation helps him to adapt his role as a father to the new situation; thus he includes Moomintroll in the rescue of the lighthouse-keeper. As the family comes together again, Moominmamma’s homesickness disappears, and she can no longer enter her painting (198). Thus *Moominpappa at Sea* demonstrates not only how isolation drives the family apart: it also portrays how, when enforced distance becomes threatening, the members recognise their need for love and company.

The Play between Light and Dark, Safety and Danger

According to Jansson, “the world of the child is a landscape with strong and clean colours, where safety and catastrophe run parallel and give each other meaning and life” (“Barnets värld” 68), and one of secret and unconscious motives of “the deceitful writer of children’s books” is to restore this fragile balance between “the excitement of the everyday and the safety of the fantastic” (Jansson, “Den lömska barnboksförfattaren” [“The Deceitful Writer of Children’s Books”] 10).⁷⁸ However, Jansson also notes that, although in the traditional fairy-tale “what is white is clearly white and what is black is night-black,” it exists “shades” between them. What she refers to here is “the unsaid, the thinkable and the hidden,” and according to her, the narrator should give “the child a chance to think further and feel their way” (“Barnets värld” 68). This is reflected in *Moominpappa at Sea*, which is filled with imagery of light and dark. While light is often associated with safety, love and the family; dark often signifies the unknown, danger, but also potential freedom:

The lamp sizzled as it burned. It made everything feel close and safe, a little family circle they all knew and trusted. Outside this family lay everything that was strange and frightening, and the darkness seemed to reach higher and higher and further and further away, right to the end of the world. (Jansson, *Moominpappa* 9)

However, as Jansson hints at in “Barnets värld”, and as touched on in my discussion of her family portrait, the *interplay* of images suggests that reality is not always black-and-white: what is dark is not necessarily dangerous, and what is light is not necessarily secure. This becomes especially clear in the figure of the Groke, the novel’s tension between safety and suffocation and in the ambiguous symbolism of the lighthouse.

The Groke – An Embodiment of the Human Need for Contact

Described like “an enormous, lonely grey shadow,” the Groke is associated with darkness and coldness in the Moomin fiction; appearing at night and turning the ground into ice (Jansson, *Moominpappa* 11). The impact on her surroundings is exemplified by her first appearance in *Moominpappa at Sea*, when Moominmamma lights the veranda lamp. From the Groke’s

⁷⁸ This dynamic is a much-discussed topic in the Moomin criticism, see Holländer, *Från idyll* 37-39, 47-49; Omland; and Westin, *Familjen* 113. Jansson’s essay “Den lömska barnboksförfattaren” is her most well-known essay on children’s fiction. It is clearly influenced by psychoanalysis, as writing is described as a form of “abreaction”, i.e. as a process in which one can write oneself free (Westin, *Tove* 338) – not unlike Moominmamma who paints herself free. Both Westin and Rehal-Johansson use the essay as a starting-point in their doctoral theses, *Familjen i Dalen* and *Den lömska barnboksförfattaren* ([“The Deceitful Writer of Children’s Books”] 2006) respectively.

perspective we learn how, when looking through the window at the family having their evening meal,

the quiet room was suddenly filled with screams and panic-stricken movement, chairs fell over and someone carried the lamp away. In a few seconds the veranda lay in darkness. Everyone had rushed inside the house, right inside where it was safe, and hidden themselves, and their lamp. (11)

The Groke's Swedish name, *Mårran*, is associated with fright: according to Bertills, it derives from the Swedish verb *morra*, meaning "to growl; to grumble" (119). Bertills notes how the lexical meaning of *morra* imitates the sound the Groke makes, arguing that the onomatopoeic function of the name contributes to the feeling of fear she arouses. It also fits with the Groke's behaviour: she is often heard or sensed before she is seen (Bertills 119-121). According to Karjalainen, *Mårran* comes from the Finnish *mörkö*, which designates "a bugbear or bogeyman" (137). However, as Bertills points out, "although the sense of the literary character is rather intimidating, she is not an evil character" (119), and in *Moominpappa at Sea* it becomes apparent that she is not dangerous: she is rather an embodiment of the destructive loneliness Jansson also deals with in "The Squirrel" and "The Locomotive." While the Hattifatteners represent reckless masculine behaviour, the Groke is a female character, who repels the characters in Moominvalley.⁷⁹ However, she is not like the Hattifatteners, an image of extreme disconnection: her search for light in *Moominpappa at Sea* is a search for human closeness.

Alming criticises the English translation of *Mårran* for designating "a title more than a name, and for failing to reflect the somewhat tender and feminine qualities of this character" (9). While I agree with Alming in her observation, it is nevertheless interesting that the English translator has chosen *the Groke* as her English name, as it connotes another aspect of this character: *to groke* is an old Scottish term that means "to stare wistfully at somebody while they are eating in the hope that they will give you some of their food" (Forsyth 126). While the Groke is literally groking at the Moominfamily in this scene, what she is longing for is not food, but company. As pointed out above, the family welcomes every creature that seeks them out, but the Groke is an exception. Moomintroll is the only one who tries to

⁷⁹ In the illustrations, she appears hairy, and there are echoes of cultural disapproval of female body hair found, among other places, in T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915; see Eliot 2525; par. 9). This disgust is patriarchal, and the Groke can be said to represent older women who are no longer found sexually attractive. Several critics have in fact seen her as an abjected version of Moominmamma, see Ellingsen 84-85; Lindberg 36; Nikolajeva 246-249; Orlov 87; Rehal-Johannson 160; and Witt-Brattström "Motståndets utopi," "Nummulitens hämnd" 129-130.

imagine how it is to be her, and when he does, he feels like “the loneliest creature in the world” (Jansson, *Moominpappa* 15). Although Moominmamma shows some degree of understanding for her by pointing out that “she isn’t dangerous. . . . even though she might be frightful” (11), she fails to realise that her search for light is a wish for warmth and company, not destruction: “You seem to imagine that she longs for everything that’s alight, but all she really wants to do is to sit on it so that it’ll go out and never burn again” (25).⁸⁰

The Groke follows the family to the island, and becomes part of Moomintroll’s secret world: he wakes up every night and goes down to the beach with hurricane the lamp which she seems so attracted to. Her ugliness is contrasted to the beauty of two sea-horses, who are associated with light as they come to the island to dance in the moonlight: “They were indescribably beautiful, and they seemed to be aware of it. They danced coquettishly, freely and openly . . .” (80). Ignoring the Groke in order to win the admiration of the sea-horses, Moomintroll lies in bed listening to her howling for him and the hurricane lamp, giving a powerful insight to her solitary pain. In describing his response to her suffering, we see Jansson’s deft movement between third-person narration (“he couldn’t shake it off”; “why should he”) and free indirect discourse (“There it was again”; “It wasn’t fair”; “You *couldn’t* help her get warm”):

There it was again. It crept up and he couldn’t shake it off. It was so easy to imagine somebody who could never get warm, somebody nobody liked, who destroyed everything wherever she went. It wasn’t fair. Why should he have the Groke round his neck all the time, no one else had? You *couldn’t* help her get warm! (131).

Because of his bad conscience, he resumes the ritual with the hurricane lamp. In “Den lömska barnboksförfatteren,” Jansson wonders whether it is the feeling of guilt that transforms the delight in catastrophes one experiences in childhood into something negative when one gets older (9). Moomintroll’s developing conscience may in fact be a sign that he is growing up, and the Groke may be seen as a manifestation of the darker aspects of his conscience.⁸¹ Although he tells himself he is doing the ritual for the sake of protecting his family, the act

⁸⁰ Note that this semantic meaning of the English translation *may* be a coincidence. In her master’s thesis on the English translations of names of characters and places in the Moomin fiction, Yvonne Grönlund does not make a connection to the Scottish term, but rather sees the translation as retentive, i.e. *the Groke* echoes the meaning of the Swedish original, namely “to growl” (45). Whether coincidental or not, I maintain that the semantic meaning of the term *to groke* is fitting: when the Groke makes her first appearance in the Moomin fiction, she is represented as standing outside the Moominhouse, staring inside at what she cannot have – a family (Jansson, *Finn Family Moomintroll* 113).

⁸¹ Hane too sees a connection between Moomintroll’s coming of age and his relationship to the Groke, noting that in *Moominpappa at Sea*, it is evident that the Groke has been transformed from a concrete antagonist in earlier books to “a figure who symbolises [Moomintroll’s] inner anxiety, fear and loneliness” (39).

becomes important to him.

The sea-horses, in turn, are only interested in his praise, not his company. While Moominmamma is partly wrong in her assumptions about the Groke, she is right when she points to the sea-horses' shallowness: "I don't really think it's possible to be friends with a sea-horse. . . . It's not worth while being disappointed with them. I think one is only meant to feel happy when one looks at them . . ." (161). Moomintroll's encounter with the Groke and the sea horses is symbolic of his coming of age and entering the world of adult relationships. He learns that beauty comes from the inside: while he cannot befriend the pretty but vain sea-horses, he is, against all odds, able to make a meaningful connection with the Groke. When they run out of paraffin, he has to face her without the protection of the lamp. To his great surprise, she is delighted to see him: she sings and dances, and when she leaves, he notices that the ground is not frozen: she has finally found what she seeks – a human relation. Moomintroll, in turn, no longer feels "that he *must* think about her. He would see her later as usual, but he didn't have to. Somehow he knew that she wasn't afraid of being disappointed any longer" (211). Although the Groke is associated with darkness and unsafety, in the end, she is the one Moomintroll can rely on. Without having to say a word, they understand each other, and form a relationship similar to the one the female author wanted to have with the squirrel: they respect one another and can live freely and independently of each other.

Safety and Suffocation – The Ambiguity of the Lighthouse

Another factor contributing to the complex interplay between light and dark in the novel, is the tension between safety and suffocation: while the sunny Moominvalley means safety for Moominmamma, it has become a scorchingly hot and suffocating place for Moominpappa. In this regard, the lighthouse takes on an ambiguous symbolic meaning. On the one hand, with its thick walls and purpose of guiding boats in the right direction, it can be interpreted as a symbol of protection. Lighthouse-keepers are usually male: as noted above, once the family arrives at the island Moominpappa insists on being their sole protector. Westin notes that "the lighthouse has been described as a last outpost against the modern, as a landscape from a bygone era" (*Tove* 379). It is thus fitting that Moominpappa drags his family to a lighthouse in his attempt to re-establish old gender patterns, where he as a man and a father is the one in charge. On the other hand, the fact that the lighthouse no longer functions is a sign of danger: like boats without the guidance of a lighthouse, the members of the family lose their way on the island. While Moominpappa finds the lighthouse's round room with the four windows "big and airy," Moominmamma finds it "*overpoweringly* big and airy" (Jansson,

Moominpappa 48; emphasis added). The tension between safety and suffocation can be tied to the fact that family life can be claustrophobic when one fails in one's assigned role within it. This is reflected in Moominpappa's thoughts (note the use of free indirect discourse in the fourth sentence, making it ambiguous whether it is Moominpappa or the narrator who poses the question):

Moominpappa stood in the middle of the room thinking. This was the time he ought to go up and light the lamp, but if he climbed the ladder the others would know exactly what he was doing. And when he came down again they would know if he hadn't been able to make the lamp work. Why couldn't they keep out of the house until dusk and leave him in peace to try and light it? Sometimes there was something about family life that Moominpappa didn't like. His family wasn't sensitive enough at times like these, although they'd lived with him for so long. (73)

However, Moominpappa's encounter with the traces of the life of the old lighthouse-keeper makes him realise that being *without* a family may cause a more destructive solitude. While trying to fix the lighthouse lamp, he discovers the poems the old lighthouse-keeper has written on the walls:

Out there on the empty sea,
Where only the moon appears,
No sail has been seen to pass
In four long dreary years. (86)

The lonely lighthouse-keeper that writes poems echoes the speaker of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (1798), also a solitary figure who relays his miseries in a poem. The mariner kills an albatross: "'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay, / That bring the fog and mist" (Coleridge 446; pt. 2), bringing him and his crew misery, and the mariner is the only one who survives to tell the story. Birds take on various symbolic meanings in literature, and one of them is death or "ascent to heaven" (Cooper 20). In "Viktoria" in *Fair Play* the dead birds were reminders of the inescapable aspects of aging, in *Moominpappa at Sea* they have a similar warning function: Moominmamma sees a black bird before she disappears into her picture, and on their first day on the island, the family finds a dead bird on the steps of the lighthouse. Later, Little My and Moomintroll discover that the lighthouse-keeper has buried the birds, and Moomintroll comments that the birds "must have flown into the light. [. . .] It's what birds do. . . And killed themselves" (Jansson, *Moominpappa* 127). The deadly effect of the lighthouse contributes to its multifaceted symbolic meaning, and shows the complex interplay between light and dark in the novel. Like

Coleridge's speaker, the lighthouse-keeper is traumatised by death and loneliness, and even in his new role as fisherman, he shies away from the family.

The character of the failed lighthouse-keeper, like Moominpappa, a figure who is often pictured on a boat at sea, can be read as a commentary on Moominpappa's crisis. Both struggle to fulfil their roles: both are solitary, but more in need of society than they care to admit. Like the protagonists of "The Squirrel" and "The Locomotive," the lighthouse-keeper seems to be simultaneously longing for company and afraid of it, while Moominpappa, in his insistence on being in charge of the family, isolates himself only to become increasingly frustrated.⁸² However, after the cathartic rescue in the storm, the family finally manages to trick the lighthouse-keeper into coming back to the lighthouse in order to celebrate his birthday – and we are back at where this discussion started. The lighthouse, a former place of trauma, has been transformed into a safe and secure space, emphasised by the three candles that are "burning steadily," while the storm rages outside (209). Parties have an important function in the Moomin fiction, as they seem to "efface both individualism and loneliness" in unifying different characters (Happonen 185) – i.e. they help to solve tensions between freedom and love. Moominpappa's old top hat is given to the lighthouse-keeper as a birthday gift, but after having "contemplated his own unfamiliar face in the mirror" (Jansson, *Moominpappa* 209), he solves the jigsaw puzzle, and the pieces finally both literally and metaphorically fall into place: he remembers that he is wearing the wrong hat, and he and Moominpappa exchange "hats without saying a word to each other" (210). This is a symbolic act, as their proper roles are assigned back to them.

Moominpappa at Sea is a novel about finding one's way, and the working lighthouse, like the fireworks in *Fair Play*, can be read as a symbol of illumination. The most important discovery is the one the family discovers together: their isolated existence on the island has made them realise that they need each other, as well as their own personal spaces. The seemingly harmonious ending of *Moominpappa at Sea* is a much-discussed topic in Moomin scholarship, and several critics maintain that a new kind of harmony is established built on acceptance rather than convention.⁸³ However, in her doctoral thesis, Rehal-Johansson argues that Jansson, by virtue of being "a deceitful writer of children's books," has both "told a wish-fulfilling story for the reader that wishes to retain the image of the Moomin family as the kind and happy family, and another story about the price of good parenthood and the happy world

⁸² For other comparisons between Moominpappa and the lighthouse-keeper, see Ellingsen 104-108; Lindberg 38.

⁸³ See Jones 79; and Westin, *Tove* 384.

of childhood and family idyll depicted in earlier novels” (143). As the lighthouse is lit, light ostensibly wins over dark: the family members seem to have learned to appreciate what has been taken for granted in the past, and come to a greater understanding of each other. And yet, the darkness is still there, thus the ambiguousness of the illustration discussed at the beginning of this chapter: after their experiences on the island, none of the characters can be what they once were, neither to themselves nor to us.

Conclusion

In both *Fair Play* and her Moomin fiction, Jansson dramatises relationships where the tension between love and freedom is balanced: while Mari and Jonna’s living arrangements provide personal space, the open community of the Moomin family allows its members to come and go as they please. However, like the relationship between Mari and Jonna, providing space can be problematic: although both Moominmamma and Moomintroll accept Moominpappa and Snufkin’s need for freedom and adventure, it causes them pain. In *Moominpappa at Sea* and in *Moominvalley in November*, Jansson explores the true cost of self-realisation within a family: although Moominpappa for once includes his family in his quest for self-affirmation, the last couple of Moomin books explore how this affects his family and those left behind in Moominvalley.

The tension between safety and danger is reflected in *Moominpappa at Sea*’s complex imagery of light and dark, which suggests that a family can offer both love and security, but also suffocation and constriction. That the tension between love and freedom is something that is experienced universally, and not only in the lives of artists, is shown in Moomintroll’s conflicted feelings of wanting independence *and* care, Moominpappa’s innate need for freedom *and* family life, and Moominmamma’s wish for a personal space *and* company, as well as a role. Little My is the only character who seems to reconcile these tensions perfectly in her chosen affiliation with the family.

By moving the Moomin family from their familiar setting in Moominvalley to the island, a symbol of both freedom and isolation, Jansson investigates what happens to a family in a new situation, both literally and metaphorically: the family’s precarious existence on the island reflects their precarious status *as a family*, with a child growing up and parents who suffer redundancy and displacement of the self. Their increased alienation from each other, the confrontations with the traumatic life of the lighthouse-keeper and the Groke who longs for warmth and community, lead them to realise that they need each other as well as their

personal spaces to survive. It also makes them understand and respect each other's roles within the family. However, as family roles are necessarily temporary, they realise that self-worth has to be found in different ways: Moominmamma through art, Moominpappa through science and exploration, and Moomintroll through the establishment of new relationships. As in Jansson's non-Moomin fiction, complete freedom from human relations, as in the case of the Hattifatteners, the Groke and the lighthouse-keeper, is dangerous as it leads to alienation and madness.

While *Fair Play* ends with a separation and a new-found freedom granted by love, *Moominpappa at Sea* ends in a unification based on a new understanding and respect for the needs of each family member. Thus *Moominpappa at Sea* is in line with the classic definition of a comedy, despite its melancholy aspects and adult problems. The ending is also in agreement with Jansson's own view of children's fiction: according to her, although the genre allows for mixing the irrational and the logic, the nightmare and the everyday, "little by little, things ought perhaps to be settled, because there is always comfort in an obvious justice" ("Barnets värld" 68). However, this does not make *Moominpappa at Sea* irrelevant for adults: my discussion has shown that Jansson deals with the same complex issues in her Moomin fiction as in her non-Moomin fiction – the demands of being in relationships; the wish for ideal disconnection and freedom, the need for companionship and how loneliness can become destructive – these are all recognisable from my previous chapter. Although the novel ends happily, Jansson does not stop the bleeding: if the family returns to Moominvalley, they return as thoroughly changed. This is best illustrated by Moominmamma, who in the compromises she makes for her husband, experiences a breakdown that forces her to invent new duties – a breakthrough brought about by pain.

Concluding Remarks: When Fiction Speaks Differently to Children and Adults

My aims here have been to show, through an approach that combined biography, close reading and thematic analysis, that Jansson was more than the Moomins; that the Moomin books are not simple tales for children, but imaginative multi-layered works that appeal both to children and adults; and that her pictures and words are connected by the core themes of love and freedom.

I wanted to employ a partly biographical approach to shed light on Jansson's bold life: for her, having the freedom to pursue her art and to love whomever she wanted were of vital importance. My thesis has shown that she investigated the opportunities for different and unconventional relationships and family models in her life as well as her fiction. As a female artist who lived through the war, keeping her private autonomy became a maxim in order to pursue her art freely. The search for a relationship that respected the conditions of freedom was thus something that marked her life, and she used her fiction to explore this concept: prevalent motifs can be found across her *oeuvre* to illustrate the subtle balance between love and freedom, destructive loneliness and healthy solitude in relationships; physical spaces as an expression of the need for mental space; nature as a reflection of the characters' feelings; the island as a symbol of freedom and isolation; and journeys as a strive for both physical and mental freedom.

By using the exhibition at Dulwich as a starting-point for my discussion, I have shown that Jansson's work is, and has been since the mid-1950s, an important part of Anglophone popular culture. I have drawn on both Anglophone and Scandinavian criticism to show how she is, slowly but surely, also beginning to be an established part of Anglophone academic



Fig. 1. The illustration on the poster for the *Tove Jansson* exhibition at Dulwich, from Jansson's *Moominland Midwinter* (1957).

culture, and to introduce a selection of Scandinavian criticism to a wider Anglophone readership. The diversity in the approaches to Jansson reflects the versatility of this extraordinary authorship. Although a lot has been done on the Moomin fiction, there is still much more to discover in relation to the non-Moomin fiction, as well as comparative studies – like my own. An interesting topic for future research would be to investigate how child and adult readers might experience her fiction differently, for instance by interviewing different groups of readers. Hence, in conclusion, I wish to return to the poster for the Dulwich exhibition (see fig. 1), as it reflects many of the complex themes that appear across Jansson’s fiction – illustrating how this diverse *oeuvre* might speak differently to children and adults, and thus the difficulty of dividing it in terms of “children’s” and “adult fiction.”

For a child, it is both a scary and intriguing image: while the darkness which Moomintroll stares into can be seen as something disturbing, it can also be viewed as a blank page ready to be filled by the imagination with new, exciting adventures. To an adult, however, it is as if he is staring into the abyss, which threatens to invade the comforting interior of the home behind him. *Moominland Midwinter*, which the illustration for the poster is taken from, is like *Moominpappa at Sea*, a deeply existential novel; in waking up from his winter hibernation while the rest of his family sleeps, Moomintroll faces loneliness and anxiety: “The world’s asleep. . . . It’s only I who am awake and sleepless. It’s only I who have to wander and wander, day after day, and week upon week, until I, too, become a snowdrift that no one will even know about” (Jansson, *Moominland Midwinter* 16). His meeting with the cold winter becomes his first encounter with mortality in the shape of The Lady of the Cold, a creature whose stare personifies death, and Moomintroll learns about the precariousness of existence in a world “made of thin glass” (41). Jansson continued to explore the themes of death, mortality and the passing of time in her later fiction: in *Moominpappa at Sea*, she describes how a family must adapt when a child grows up, and in “Viktoria” in *Fair Play*, Mari and Jonna are forced to come to terms with age when they realise that they are no longer able to draw their boat, their vehicle to freedom, up on land.

Yet in the picture, the interior of the Moomin house, which with its stove-shape is elsewhere an epitome of warmth and security, is a mess. This reflects another adult theme in *Moominland Midwinter*, namely migration: as food is sparse in the cold winter, streams of creatures come to the Moomin house for nourishment and shelter. As the situation becomes increasingly chaotic, Moomintroll thinks that “This terrible. . . . Very soon the jam cellar’ll be empty. And what shall I say when the family wakes up in spring . . . and the house is thronged with people?” (76). Though this chaotic situation is portrayed somewhat comically – jam is

after all surplus food, and Moomintroll does get a perspective: “‘What troubles people have,’” Moomintroll thought. ‘Perhaps the jam isn’t such an awful matter, after all’ (77) – children are likely to sense his unease, especially because of his continued longing for his sleeping mother’s assurance (cf. Jansson, *Moominland Midwinter* 5, 25-26, 46-47). The refugee situation echoes *Comet in Moominland*, in which, due to the threat of the approaching disaster, the Moomins are forced to flee their home and take shelter in a cave. For adult readers, these scenes recall the wartime situation the Moomins were born out of. Thus *Moominland Midwinter* is another example of how Jansson’s fiction relates to her own social context and life: Jansson not only used art as a means of refuge, like the narrator of “The Locomotive” with his perfectionist illustrations; similar to the way Moominmamma works her way out of a difficult situation by painting the mural, she used art as a means of working through difficult aspects of the recent historical past, as well as her own life’s irresolvable tensions.

The tension between love and freedom is one of these tensions. As I have shown, having one’s own personal space is central to Jansson’s fiction, and it is a need felt by children and adults alike. In *Moominland Midwinter*, Moomintroll releases the family’s ancestor from a cupboard, and the ancestor builds himself a thicket out of old furniture to protect his new home in the stove. He rearranges the family’s pictures in a scene recalling “Changing Pictures” in *Fair Play*: “Those he liked least he had hung upside down. (Or perhaps they were those that he thought the best of, who knows?)” (70). The remark in parenthesis reflects another adult theme, namely that we cannot always know people’s motives. Venturing out in the snow, Moomintroll meets the practical and sensible Jonna-like character, Too-ticky, and she states that “All things are so very uncertain, and that’s exactly what makes me feel reassured” (19).⁸⁴ Unlike Moominpappa who wants to know everything in *Moominpappa at Sea*, Too-ticky is comfortable with uncertainty, and learning to accept this is part of Moomintroll’s maturation process. Crawling inside the thicket, Moomintroll feels safe for the first time in the novel, despite the chaotic situation around him:

As a matter of fact he had never felt really secure in the dim-lit drawing room with its empty windows. And to look at the sleeping family made him feel melancholy.

⁸⁴ As previously noted, Too-ticky is a portrait of Pietilä. *Moominland Midwinter* reflects the turning-point Jansson experienced in her own life when she met her partner, who helped her through the stressful period when the “Moomin-mania” took off: “Tooti [Pietilä] made me write that book about what it’s like when things get difficult, and I believe that here, at last, Moomintroll was able to break free and become something like his real self” (Jansson qtd. in Westin, *Tove* 305).

But here, in the small space between a packing case, the rocking chair, and the back of the sofa, he felt at ease and not at all lonely. (Jansson, *Midwinter* 71)

Even though Moomintroll is still separated from his ancestor inside the stove, it comforts him to listen to his movements. An image of living separately, yet together is evoked once more: although the fact that the creature is an ancestor is a reminder of the importance of family in Jansson's fiction, the creature is a completely new individual to Moomintroll, and Jansson again plays with the idea of alternative family models. In *Fair Play*, Mari and Jonna liberate themselves from the shadows of their parents and choose each other as a family. In the Moomin fiction, the family is an open community that extends beyond biological bonds. Thus both *Moominland Midwinter* and *Moominpappa at Sea* reveal to children how Moomintroll is able to make new, equally important connections *outside* the close-knit circle of the family when it fails to fulfil his need for company.

These crosscurrents between *Moominland Midwinter*, *Moominpappa at Sea* and *Fair Play* show the symbiosis of Jansson's Moomin and non-Moomin fiction. The fact that readers of diverse age groups experience her works differently, suggests that the categorisation of fiction relates more to the reader than the writer. The Moomin books not only attract children because of their warmth, humour and wonder, they are also valuable because they dramatise complex issues and their potential solutions: my discussion of *Moominpappa at Sea* revealed how a painful experience of separation and loss can pave the way for a new respect for each member's need for personal freedom and purpose, as well as an appreciation of the importance of love and togetherness. Jansson plays with imagery of light and dark to compare and contrast the safe with the dangerous or unknown, and uses concrete figures (such as the Hattifatteners who embody the wish for complete isolation and the Groke who represents the longing for contact) to illustrate abstract phenomena. Not only do these techniques contribute to the thrilling quality of the stories, they make them reverberate on a deeper level: while adult readers are able to mirror their own feelings and experiences in the fiction, these literary devices might help children become familiar with and understand difficult, conflicting emotions, thus making them better equipped to enter the world of adulthood.

Jansson's non-Moomin fiction might at first glance seem simple, but like her Moomin fiction it is deeply layered. In *Fair Play*, this is exemplified by the portrayal of Mari and Jonna's living arrangements, which illustrates the importance of maintaining and respecting the need for "empty spaces" in a relationship, both physically and mentally. This is especially important to Mari and Jonna's individual development as artists, but as my discussion of the Moomin fiction has shown, having space and freedom of movement are important for any

person's development. Nevertheless, both novels do question the potential negative consequences of limitless freedom: in *Moominpappa at Sea*, we see how Moominmamma suffers in her attempt to help Moominpappa realise himself, and the family is on the verge of falling apart because of it; in *Fair Play*, jealousy is a potential danger. Although the lives of the characters of Jansson's non-Moomin fiction are often complex, as in the Moomin fiction it is the simple things that *really* matter: to do what you desire, to live a life close to nature, to go on big and small adventures, but most important of all, to be able to enjoy solitude *as well* as love. A paradox is that *Fair Play* is in fact lighter in tone than *Moominpappa at Sea*, and children might enjoy it despite the fact that they are unlikely to pick up all the subtleties of the relationship portrayed: not only might they find Mari and Jonna's childish behaviour amusing – as noted above, *Fair Play*, shows that there are alternative models to the traditional nuclear family.

However, there is still a crucial difference between the Moomin and non-Moomin fiction: according to Jansson in "Barnets värld," both terror and loneliness should exist in children's books, but these topics must always be followed by consolation (69). Like *Fair Play* and *Moominpappa at Sea*, a storm is a significant turning-point in *Moominland Midwinter*, as Moomintroll stops fighting winter and lets himself be carried away by the wind: "Frighten me if you can," he thought happily. 'I'm wise to you now – you're no worse than anything else when one gets to know you'" (100). He has conquered his fear of the unknown, something which perhaps prepares him for his acceptance of the Groke in *Moominpappa at Sea*. It is after this experience that he stares into the darkness (as the illustration on the poster shows), and thinks: "Now I've got everything. . . . I've got the whole year. Winter too. I'm the first Moomin to have lived through an entire year" (Jansson, *Midwinter* 114). At one level, this can be read as a positive remark in which Moomintroll acknowledges his defeat of the unknown. On another, however, it can be interpreted as insinuating that trolls do not live very long: Jansson seems to remind us of the fact that life is short, thus we must learn to take the bad with the good and live through life's winters as well as summers. At this point in the narrative, the narrator slips in and comments that:

Really, this winter's tale ought to stop exactly at this point. All about the first spring night and the wind rushing about in the drawing room makes a magnificent ending. And then everybody could think what they pleased about what happened afterward. But that wouldn't be right.

Because one still couldn't be absolutely sure of what Moominmamma had to say when she awoke. (114-116)

As this thesis has shown, Jansson's pictures and words are connected: in the context of the written story, the image of Moomintroll standing all by himself is less disturbing. To the child reader's comfort, Moominmamma *does* wake up to reassure her son that "Everything's going to be all right" (127). For adult readers, however, the narrator's metafictional comment is a reminder of the artificiality of fiction – it can deceive us, and things may be included or excluded.⁸⁵ As a "deceitful writer of children's books," Jansson once again soothes her child readers, while at the same time creating a more ambiguous ending for adult readers who understand that, similar to the family that undergoes change in *Moominpappa at Sea*, Moomintroll has gone through an experience that has altered him forever. Whereas the original simply states "the end" (Swedish: *slut*) when *Moominland Midwinter* finally ends, interestingly, the translator has chosen to add: "the end *and* the beginning," thus marking the end of Moomintroll's childhood and the continuation of his journey towards adulthood (116; emphasis added).

Further, Jansson argues that one can touch upon the subject of death in children's fiction "if one does it in the right way, as something completely natural," though she is "convinced that the author must not give the child the anxiety of adult life, it comes soon enough by itself" ("Barnets värld" 69). Herein lies the key to how a dark and existential book like *Moominland Midwinter* is still suitable for children: Jansson's view on how to treat mortality in a children's novel is reflected in an episode with a dead squirrel, where Too-ticky tries to explain to Moomintroll that death is a natural process:

"When one's dead, then one's dead," said Too-ticky kindly. "This squirrel will become earth all in his time. And later on still there'll grow trees from him, with new squirrels skipping about in them. Do you think that is so very sad?" (44).

In her non-Moomin fiction, however, Jansson often conveys the anxieties of adult life, and the dark and difficult issues are *not* always resolved (cf. "The Locomotive"). Nevertheless, I still find the terms "Moomin" and "non-Moomin" fiction useful, because they exclude no one from reading Jansson, and allow us to view her *oeuvre* as a continuum. I agree with Ellingsen, who argues that children should grow up with the Moomin fiction, beginning with the earliest books and proceeding to the later, more complex ones (180), and, by extension, advance to some of her non-Moomin fiction (e.g. *Sculptor's Daughter*, *The Summer Book*, *Fair Play* and selected short stories). Adults, in turn, benefit from returning to the Moomin fiction to

⁸⁵ In the Swedish original, instead of "But that wouldn't be right," it actually says: "Men det vore I själva verket att luras" (Jansson, *Trollvinter* 108), which in direct translation reads something like: "But that would actually mean to be fooled."

discover new layers there, layers that continue to emerge with every rereading and that complement the non-Moomin fiction.

Although employing biography has been interesting and relevant in that it has helped to explain *why* the tension between love and freedom was such a pressing matter to Jansson, my analysis has shown that her fiction stands on its own. My investigation of key themes has uncovered how she explored both the lightness and darkness of existence in portraying a *joie de vivre* approach to life, while also reflecting as the self's darker encounters with the stifling expectations of society, depression, melancholy and death. The evocation of powerful images and the use of effective literary techniques make us as readers identify with her fiction: the portrayal of Moominmamma's disappearance into her painting is so potent that *we too* experience her intense homesickness. The depiction of the Groke, who repels others by her mere existence, makes *us* feel desperately sorry for her. By focalising Mari as she runs through all the options in her head when she hears the contents of Jonna's letter, *we too* feel her liberation when she realises that it means a new freedom for them both. While we feel despair for the narrator of "The Locomotive" because of the twisted perception of reality we experience through his unreliable narration, we eye hope for the narrator of "The squirrel," because of the simple, yet crucial difference between the short story's ending and opening, as *squirrel* is replaced by *person*. In short, Jansson's fiction appeals to all ages because it provides insights into what it is like to be human.

In my introductory chapter, I posed the question: what is most important – to feel loved or feel free? Jansson's fiction is all about balance – it displays the tight-rope walk *between* love and freedom. The two concepts are co-dependent: love becomes stifling if it excludes freedom, while freedom becomes isolation if it rejects love. Keeping the balance is the art of friendship.

Appendix A: Tove Jansson's Works and Their Translations into English

Jansson's books were originally published in Swedish in Finland, appearing in Sweden often simultaneously or shortly after their Finnish publication. Here, the original Finnish and British publication details are provided, as well as important reissues in English.

A Note on Jansson's Revisions of her Moomin Books

Jansson continually reworked and republished her Moomin fiction. *Kometjakten* (retitled *Kometen kommer*, 1966), *Trollkarlens hatt*, *Muminpappans bravader* (retitled *Muminpappans memoarer*, 1968) and *Farlig midsommar* underwent the most considerable changes. For a detailed analysis and discussion of these changes, see Rehal-Johansson. The English versions available are for the most part reissues of Ernest Benn's translations, which, except for minor revisions, are translations of Jansson's original versions. For a detailed discussion of the British translations of the Moomin fiction, see Berry.

Moomin Fiction

Prose works

Småtrollen och den stora översvämningen, Helsinki, Söderströms, 1945. Translated into English as *The Moomins and the Great Flood* by David Macduff, Helsinki, Schildts 2005. Published by Sort of Books, London, 2012.

Kometjakten, Helsinki, Söderströms, 1946. Translated into English as *Comet in Moominland* by Elizabeth Portch, London, Ernest Benn, 1951. Reissued as paperback by Puffin Books from 1967, and as a collector's edition hardback by Sort of Books in 2017.

Trollkarlens hatt, Helsinki, Schildts 1948. Translated into English as *Finn Family Moomintroll* by Elizabeth Portch, London, Ernest Benn, 1951. Reissued as paperback by Puffin Books from 1961, and as a collector's edition hardback by Sort of Books in 2017.

Muminpappans bravader skrivna av honom själv, Helsinki, Schildts, 1950. Translated into English as *The Exploits of Moominpappa* by Thomas Warburton, London, Ernest Benn, 1952. Reissued as paperback by Puffin Books from 1969. Sort of Books' collector's edition hardback *The Memoirs of Moominpappa* is a translation of Jansson's reworked 1968 version, *Muminpappans memoarer*.

Farlig midsommar, Helsinki, Schildts, 1954. Translated into English as *Moominsummer Madness* by Thomas Warburton, London, Ernest Benn, 1955. Reissued as paperback by Puffin Books from 1971, and as a collector's edition hardback by Sort of Books in 2018.

Trollvinter, Helsinki, Schildts, 1957. Translated into English as *Moominland Midwinter* by Thomas Warburton, London, Ernest Benn, 1958. Reissued as paperback by Puffin Books from 1971, and as a collector's edition hardback by Sort of Books in 2017.

Det osynliga barnet och andra berättelser, Helsinki, Schildts, 1962. Translated into English as *Tales from Moominvalley* by Thomas Warburton, London, Ernest Benn, 1963. Reissued as paperback by Puffin Books from 1973, and as a collector's edition hardback by Sort of Books in 2018.

Pappan och havet, Helsinki, Schildts, 1965. Translated into English as *Moominpappa at Sea* by Kingsley Hart, London, Ernest Benn 1966. Reissued as paperback by Puffin Books from 1974, and as a collector's edition hardback by Sort of Books in 2018.

Sent i november, Schildts, 1970. Translated into English as *Moominvalley in November* by Kingsley Hart, London, Ernest Benn 1971. Reissued as paperback by Puffin Books from 1974, and as a collector's edition hardback by Sort of Books in 2018.

Picture Books

Hur gick det sen? Boken om Mymlan, Muminrollet och lilla My, Helsinki, Schildts, 1952.

Translated into English as *The Book about Moomin, Mymble and Little My* by Thomas Warburton, London, Ernest Benn, 1953. New translation by Sophie Hannah, London, Sort of Books, 2001.

Vem ska trösta knyttet?, Helsinki, Schildts 1960. Translated into English as *Who Will Comfort Toffle?* by Kingsley Hart, London, Ernest Benn, 1961. New translation by Sophie Hannah, London, Sort of Books, 2003.

Den farliga resan, Helsinki, Schildts 1977. Translated into English as *The Dangerous Journey* by Kingsley Hart, Ernest Benn, 1978. New translation by Sophie Hannah, London, Sort of Books, 2010.

Comic strips

The Moomin comic strips that originally appeared in London *Evening News* between 1954 to 1959 were published in book form by London publisher Allan Windgate in 1957.⁸⁶ The series went through a renaissance when Canadian-based publisher Drawn & Quarterly began reprinting them in 2006, and in 2014 they published a deluxe anniversary edition to celebrate the centenary of Jansson's birth.

Non-Moomin Fiction

Bildhuggarens dotter, Helsinki, Schildts 1968. Translated into English as *Sculptor's Daughter* by Kingsley Hart, London, Ernest Benn, 1969. Reissued by Sort of Books, London, 2013 as hardback and as paperback in 2015.

Lyssnerskan, Helsinki, Schildts, 1971. Translated into English as *The Listener* by Thomas Teal, London, Sort of Books, 2014.

Sommarboken, Helsinki, Schildts, 1972. Translated into English as *The Summer Book* by Thomas Teal, Hutchinson, London, 1974. Reissued by Sort of Books, London, 2003.

Solstaden, Helsinki, Schildts, 1974. Translated into English as *Sun City* by Thomas Teal, Hutchinson, London 1976.

Dockskåpet och andra berättelser, Helsinki, Schildts, 1978. Translated into English as *Art in Nature* by Thomas Teal, London, Sort of Books, 2012.

Den ärliga bedragaren, Helsinki, Schildts, 1982. Translated into English as *The True Deceiver* by Thomas Teal, London, Sort of Books, 2009.

Resa med lätt bagage, Helsinki, Schildts, 1987. Translated into English as *Travelling Light* by Silvester Mazzarella, London, Sort of Books, 2010.

Rent spel, Helsinki, Schildts, 1989. Translated into English as *Fair Play* by Thomas Teal, London, Sort of Books, 2007.

Brev från Klara och andra berättelser, Helsinki, Schildts, 1991. Translated into English as *Letters from Klara* by Thomas Teal, London, Sort of Books 2017.

⁸⁶ Jansson's brother, Lars Jansson, took over the comic strips in 1959, and they ran until 1975. Drawn & Quarterly has also published his strips.

Meddelande: Noveller i urval 1971-97, Helsinki Schildts, 1998. This is primarily a compilation of Jansson's earlier published short stories. Most of these stories are published in English in *A Winter Book* (translated by Silvester Mazzarella, David McDuff and Kingsley Hart, London, Sort of Books 2006), *Fair Play*, *Travelling Light*, *Art in Nature*, *The Listener* and *Letters from Klara*, and *The Woman Who Borrowed Memories* (New York, NYRB, 2014).

Works that Remain Untranslated

Stenåkern ("The Field of Stones"), novel, Helsinki, Schildts 1984.

Visor från Mumindalen ("Songs from Moominvalley"), songbook created in collaboration with Lars Jansson and Erna Tauro, Helsinki, Schildts 1993.

Anteckningar från en ö ("Notes from an Island"), a collection of Jansson's diary entries and paintings by Tuulikki Pietilä, Helsinki, Schildts 1996. Sort of Books' compilation of short stories, *A Winter Book*, includes a translated extract titled "Taking Leave."

Brev från Tove Jansson, a collection of letters, edited by Boel Westin and Helen Svensson, Helsinki, Schildts & Söderströms, 2014.

A Note on Ant O'Neill's Jansson Translation Projects

The Scottish cartoonist, writer, and translator Ant O'Neill has translated early work by Jansson, including her work for the satirical magazine *Garm*; her very first comic strip, *Prickina och Fabians äventyr* ("Prickina and Fabian's Adventure"), which originally appeared in the children's paper *Lunkentus* (Helsinki, 1929); her first children's book, *Sara och Pelle och näckens bläckfiskar* ("Sara and Pelle and Neptune's Children"), published under the pseudonym Vera Haij (Bildkonst, Helsinki, 1933); and the final Moomin photographic picture book *Skurken i Muminhuset* ("Villain in the Moominhouse"), a collaboration between Jansson, her brother, Per Olov Jansson, and Tuulikki Pietilä (Schildts, Helsinki 1980). O'Neill's translations remain unpublished (Heinonen; "Villain in the Moominhouse, ArchWay with Words").

A Note on Jansson's Fiction in North America

According to Berry, the Moomin series has had a more fragmentary publishing history in the United States (145), since the appearance of *Comet in Moominland* (published by Henry Z. Walck in 1951) and *The Happy Moomins* (i.e. *Finn Family Moomintroll*; published by Bobbs-Merrill in 1952). The Moomin books are now in circulation as Square Fish paperback

editions. The Canadian-based publisher Drawn & Quarterly has published the three Moomin picture-books that were reissued by Sort of Books.

As in the U.K., *Sculptor's Daughter* (published by Avon Books in 1976), *Sun City* (published by Pantheon Books in 1976) and *The Summer Book* (published by G. K. Hall in 1977) seem to be the only pieces of non-Moomin fiction published in the U.S. during Jansson's life time. The New York Review of Books has published Sort of Books' translations of *The Summer Book*, *Fair Play*, and *The True Deceiver*, in addition to a collection of short stories titled *The Woman Who Borrowed Memories*, also in connection with the centenary of Jansson's birth in 2014. *Sculptor's Daughter* was published by William Morrow in 2014.

Appendix B: Jansson's Anglophone Academic Reception

Some of the most important contributions to Jansson's Anglophone academic reception include Jones' *Tove Jansson* (1984), a popular scientific study of Jansson's works from *The Moomins and the Great Flood* to *The True Deceiver* (1982). To my knowledge, Jones is the only British scholar who has written a full-length study of Jansson's fiction. In 2007, a Jansson conference was held at the University of Oxford, and its proceedings were published in *Tove Jansson Rediscovered* (McLoughlin and Lidström Brock, 2007). In 2014, the children's literature journal, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, published a special issue on Jansson and, in 2018, the Northern European journal of philosophy, *SATS*, published a special issue on phenomenological approaches to Jansson. Otherwise, articles about Jansson's Moomin fiction are to be found in children's literature journals, and chapters on the Moomin fiction also appear in factual prose works on children's literature, for example: Maria Nikolajeva includes chapters on Moomin fiction in both *Children's Literature Comes of Age: Towards a New Aesthetic* (1996) and *From Mythic to Linear: Time in Children's Literature* (2000); Janina Orlov's "Creating the Eternal Farewell: Tove Jansson's Moomin Novels" in *Beyond Babar: The European Tradition in Children's Literature* (2006); and both Layla AbdelRahim and Zoe Jaques draw examples from the Moomin books in their monographs *Children's Literature, Domestication and Social Foundation* (2015) and *Children's Literature and the Posthuman* (2015), respectively.

While there are numerous theses on Jansson in Scandinavian languages, there are understandably fewer in English. In collecting material for my thesis, I have come across the following: *Bright Shoots of Everlastingness: Children's Literature as Secular Scripture* (2002), a doctoral thesis on how children's literature, for one because of its dual address, functions as a parable ("a secular scripture"), where Corinne Buckland draws on examples from the Moomin books. In her doctoral thesis *Beyond Identification: Proper Names in Children's Literature* (2003), Yvonne Bertills examines the characteristic features of the names of anthropomorphic characters in children's literature, using the Moomin books as one group of several source texts. It includes a chapter on translation, where Bertills looks at English and Finnish translations of the proper names in the Moomin fiction. Another thesis on the subject of translation is Yvonne Grönlund's master's thesis *Names of Characters and Places in the Moomin book Trollkarlens hatt and Their Translation into English* (2009).

Finally, Alexander Sizikov has written a master's thesis on *Landscape in Tove Jansson's Moominpappa at Sea* (2013).

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Figures

- Fig. 1. Illustration on the poster for the *Tove Jansson* exhibition at Dulwich. Photo-scan from Jansson, *Moominland Midwinter*. New York, Square Fish, 2010, p. 115.
- Fig. 2. Jansson, Tove. *The Smoking Girl*. 1940, private collection. *The New York Review of Books Website*, cdn.nybooks.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/jansson-smoking-girl.jpg. Accessed 01 Mar. 2019.

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Fig. 4. Jansson, Tove. *The Graphic Artist*, 1975, private collection. *Pinterest*, i.pinimg.com/originals/ff/8c/f2/ff8cf25d42fc00c2041c6c6ec62bb553.jpg. Accessed 1 Mar. 2019.

Fig. 5. The Moomin family, Little My and the Lighthouse-keeper. Photo-scan from Jansson, *Moominpappa at Sea*. London, Puffin Books, 2009, p. 210.

Abstract

While Tove Jansson's Moomin books have been an important part of Anglophone popular culture since their translation into English in the 1950s, interest in her life and wider *oeuvre* has been renewed in the last decades through TV adaptations, reissues, translated biographies, a BBC TV documentary as well as new translations of her relatively unknown fiction for adults. In 2017, a retrospective exhibition of her visual work was held at Dulwich Picture Gallery in London, aiming to reintroduce her as a versatile and highly talented artist. This latest stage of the author's Anglophone reception can be viewed as emblematic of a shift in the view of Jansson as an artist *beyond* the Moomins. The exhibition is key to this thesis, which also aims at displaying the depth and complexity of her life and fiction.

By employing a method that combines close reading and thematic analysis with biography, I show how Jansson used pictures and words as a means of working through her life's seemingly irresolvable tensions. By tracing one such tension – the human longing for freedom and simultaneous need for love – in a novel marketed as adult fiction, *Fair Play* (1989), and in another marketed as children's fiction, *Moominpappa at Sea* (1965), while also drawing on examples from her wider fiction, I demonstrate that her *oeuvre* should be viewed as a continuum despite its often being separated into categories of “adult” and “children's” fiction. I thus use the age-neutral terms “Moomin” and “non-Moomin” fiction to distinguish between the works that are situated in the world of Moominvalley and those that have other settings, to indicate the continuity and development of this simple-seeming, yet deeply layered authorship. My comparative analysis shows that Jansson explores variations of the same themes and motifs *across* her fiction: i.e. the importance of having a personal space and purpose, as well as community and support; the island as a symbol of freedom and isolation; travelling as a strive for both physical and mental freedom; nature as a manifestation of the inner lives of characters; art and imagination as a refuge from society's stifling expectations; and images of light and dark as representations of safety within the dangerous, the familiar within the unknown. In conclusion, I theorise over how her fiction might speak differently to children and adults by looking briefly at the turning-point of the Moomin saga, *Moominland Midwinter* (1957), and suggest that categorisations of her fiction relate more to the reader than the writer. Though employing biography is interesting and relevant in helping to explain *why* the tension between love and freedom was a pressing matter to Jansson as a twentieth-century female artist, my analysis shows that her fiction stands on its own: what makes her fiction appeal to readers of all ages is that it shows us what it is like to be human.

