

Freedom as a “Promised Land”

Marie Linder’s En qvinna af vår tid

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Abstract

The chapter discusses the female *Bildungsroman* *En qvinna af vår tid: karaktersteckning af Stella* [A woman of our time; 1867]. The novel was written by the Russian-Finnish author, countess, and feminist Marie Linder (néé Musin-Pushkin, 1840–1870), and it details the development of the protagonist, Lucy Suffridge. As Linder was a cultural mediator and a carrier of cultural transfer between Russia, Continental Europe and the Nordic countries, space assumes a great importance in her real and imagined life. Since we claim that Linder makes sense of the world by narrating – i.e. mapping it through both real and imagined places – we draw on literary cartography and a semiotic model as a system of spatial dichotomies that mediates non-spatial relations and ideological and moral values. Besides the interplay between the public and private spaces, the gendered cartography involves a personal space of intimacy that appears as a contradictory, even paradoxical phenomenon: it is both empowering and oppressing. The restless mobility characterizing the female *Bildung* destabilizes the geographies of power, even if the dual architecture of the horizontal and vertical plotlines can hardly be called inherently liberatory. Lucy’s journey to individual freedom is socially motivated, but it still appears as an abstract concept.

Keywords

transnational – intimacy – gendered space – Marie Linder – literary cartography

We begin with a quotation from Marie Linder’s novel, *En qvinna af vår tid* [A woman of our time; 1867]. The protagonist of the novel, Lady Lucy Suffridge, begins to long for a new kind of world:

[T]he world, which she had not ever seen, but which she imagined as infinitely large, great, and free. In her fantasy, she created a world in tune with her own strength, and she believed that it really was the way she hoped to discover.¹

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The quotation informs the framework of our research question of how this novel, which was one of the earliest, if not the first one, representing liberal-feminist ideas in Finland in the mid-nineteenth century understands and uses both literary conventions and spatial categories in modelling a female *Bildungsweg* between private desire and publicly stipulated norms of gendered mobility (Launis, *Kerrotut naiset* 290; Launis, “The Vision of an Equal Nation”). The heroine’s desire emphasizes the nexus of space, gender and imagination as constitutive of an intimate geography in both representational and historical terms. The protagonist desires to make sense of the “world” and the individual’s place in it. In *Putting Women in Place* (2001), Domosh and Seager trace the modern separation of social spheres into the public vs the private and connect the dichotomy of public as male vs private as female to limitations in women’s mobility (115–116). They state that the “unfettered freedom of movement through space” is a precondition for avoiding patriarchal control over women.² The ‘proper place’ of nineteenth-century Finnish aristocratic and middle-class women, who were to be enclosed in homes and marriages, is what the protagonist of Marie Linder’s novel explores and desires to challenge.

Simultaneously, the gendered cartography does not only involve an interplay between the public and the private social spheres. The spatial model of Lucy’s *Bildung* consists additionally of spaces that are intimate in the sense of personal space, including the level of personal contact and exchange with the public world:³ the sense of an intimate space of closeness and familiarity is connected to the awareness of a reciprocal relationship between hiding and (self-)disclosure. A personal space as an “intimate space”, where “exchange is a central feature of human existence” (Meares and Anderson

1 “[D]en värld, hon aldrig hade sett, men hvilken hon föreställde sig oändligt stor, mäktig och fri. Hon skapade i inbillningen en värld efter sina egna krafter och hon trodde den verkliga vara sådan, som hon önskade att finna den”. The quotations have been translated from Swedish into English by Viola Parente-Čapková.

2 For more on the subject of gendered cartography, see Ganser; Massey; Rose.

3 For more on the relations between the intimate, personal, private and the public, global see Pratt, and Rosner (eds)..

595) is characterized by "what happens in the space between us" (D'Erasmus), i.e. by what allows communication and the exchange of physical and emotional confidence and secrecy. Through its disclosure in communication, (the hidden and invisible) intimacy becomes a contradictory phenomenon. Our analysis will trace some of the moments when Lucy becomes aware of the private senses that make – and unmake – her identity and underpin her life's experiences.

According to the opening quotation, Lucy "imagines" and creates "in her fantasy" a world equal to her inner potential. This interplay between real/historical and imagined/inner spaces is connected to hidden affection and its public disclosure. Our main focus is on those spaces where Lucy feels that she has the right and the possibilities to defy any intrusion from the outside world into her individual site. At stake are those spaces and moments which give her both social and emotional freedom and integrity, but which are also "slippery". This is the word that Donovan and Moss (12) use to characterize intimacy, or "messy" and multi-layered, as Ustundag (181) puts it, as an intimate space can be both empowering and liberating but also oppressing and discriminating. Lucy is both an ordinary and an extraordinary representative of her epoch while negotiating conservative and liberal-feminist ideas. Accordingly, her spatial development is also multi-layered and complex. This search for a personal space serves our analysis, which is based on two concepts: intimate geography, marked in both physical and emotional as well as in cognitive terms; and a semiotic model of a specific nineteenth-century epoch designed as a system of spatial dichotomies that mediate non-spatial relations and ideological and moral values in the topos of the text (Lotman 231–232).

Lucy's development 'takes place' – it is spatialized through the chronotope of the road as a site of her complex transition. While discussing the plot's topos, we ask how one should interpret Lucy's *Bildungsweg*, which is mapped by her dual movements between the horizontal level in the social spheres, and the vertical axis, which is associated with Lucy's cognitive mobility within the innermost world of the private senses. What does this moving out and coming back again, shifting between the lofty heavens of ideas and the restricted circumstances of historical reality, tell us of the *Bildung* of an aristocratic woman ambitiously tracing the "road of her own" (Ganser 61)? The question concerns both Lucy and the cultural self-description of the author, Marie Linder, both resisting unequal gendered spatialities while pursuing a personal life in creative agency (see Launis *Kerrotut naiset*, 244).

1 The Author and Her Novel

Marie Linder (1840–1870), née Musin-Pushkin, was a Russian aristocrat by birth. From the beginning of her life, Linder's second home country was Finland. Her mother, Emilie Stjernvall, was Finnish, and her aunt was the well-known Finnish charity patroness Aurora Karamzin, who took care of Marie after both her parents died. Later, she married the Finnish Count Constantin Linder and moved to Finland. According to her biographer, Katri Lehto (1986), she was a figure both admired and disapproved of in Helsinki society. She was disapproved of due to her unconventional behaviour as a well-known nobleman's wife and mother of three children. She was keen on acting, debating, dancing, drinking champagne – and writing.

Linder started to write stories for newspapers in 1866. One year later, she published her only novel, *En qvinna af vår tid*. As was typical of the period, she wrote under a pseudonym, even though her authorship was known, as the reviews indicate. Her pseudonym, Stella, mentioned in the subtitle of the novel, was already familiar to readers of her newspaper stories. The novel was written in Swedish, which was the language of the educated classes in Finland up until the 1870s, when the Finnish language began to rise as a language of literature. Swedish was not so familiar to Linder, but she studied it eagerly. The novel sold well and was translated into Danish in 1868;⁴ a Finnish translation came out in 2009.

En qvinna af vår tid narrates the story of Lady Lucy Suffridge, a young English aristocrat. It tells about Lucy's childhood in the gloomy Abbey Hall, an ancient monastery, and her travels to America and France, her love for a Swedish baron, and finally her difficult choice: whether to choose freedom or marriage to the man she loves. The cosmopolitanism of the settings – England, France, and America – as well as the cosmopolitanism of the author herself, distinguishes both the author and her novel from other early female novelists and their works in Finland. The latter works are mainly situated in Finland or Sweden, like Fredrika Wilhelmina Carstens's epistolary novel *Murgrönan* [Ivy; 1840], which was the first novel published in Finland. In the figure of Lucy Suffridge – a name derived from 'suffrage' – Linder desires to construct the ideal new woman. The rebellious, strong-minded, intellectual figure of Lucy is described as a "bluestocking" or "a man in crinoline" by those around her who disapprove of her behaviour (Linder 7).

4 Information about the (anonymous) Danish translation *En Qvinde af vor Tid* can be found from various sources, e.g. the collections of the National Library of Denmark. We thank Eeva-Liisa Haanpää of the Finnish Literature Society for her assistance.

2 Lucy's *Bildungsweg* – Out and In, Up and Down

The novel provides a spatial pattern that has been confirmed by feminist literary scholars to be part of the "distinctively female *Bildungsroman*" of transnational nineteenth-century women's identity-making stories,⁵ which fuse with the mode of *Bildungsreise*.⁶ The plot follows the paradigm of Lucy's enclosure and escape from her life in her father's house, with its walls and gloomy halls as the 'Gothic' architecture of her experience. The story shows the inter-relations of space and the construction of a gendered reality; the challenge to change reality and space are integral to each other. Lucy wants to be "free":

No! A thousand times no! When we have strength, courage, and understanding, we should not sit at home like dolls and sew just to keep our fingers busy. ... I want to be free, free like a lion in the jungle!⁷

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She wants to go along "a new path", towards "limitless domains":

I raised my proud thoughts towards the *limitless domains* of the world's universe; I believed myself capable of *walking a new path*, on which so many others had failed.⁸

LINDER 197, our emphasis

This will and wish shows how the positioning in space has both a realistic and a symbolic meaning for subject-making. Lucy, as well as the other characters, are identified through the space to which they belong and characterized by the ways they act in that space, what boundaries they cross and how they do so, whether they are mobile or static in their movements, and what values and hierarchies bound to each space are reflected, confirmed, or transformed (Hallet and Neumann 25). At the same time, the spatially structured aesthetic model represented by the literary text mediates an insight into the ways the corresponding culture, referring to late nineteenth century Finnish

5 See Gilbert and Gubar; Rosenholm and Savkina 161–208; Kelly.

6 See Summerfeld.

7 "Nej! tusen gånger nej! när man har kraft, mod och förstånd, skall man ej som en docka sitta hemma och brodera i båge för att sysselsätta sina fingrar. ... Jag vill vara fri, fri liksom lejonet i skogen!".

8 "Jag höjde stolt mina tankar emot verdensalltets obegränsade regioner; jag trodde mig kunna inslå en ny väg, på hvilken så mången strandat".

high society, constructs the “world”. Since the non-spatial values and meanings inscribed in the spatialities are culture-specific, we get an understanding of Lucy’s outer and inner movements in the gendered world (Massey 179). The constant shifting between “the limitless domains” in the world of thoughts and the paralyzing ‘proper place’ reflects an affective struggle waged within social, ethical, and aesthetic ideas and private, intimate experiences.

The variety of intimate affections allows us to take up the space Gillian Rose (1993) has termed “paradoxical”, as “the possibility of a space which does not replicate the exclusions of the Same and the Other” (137). This space involves a “sense of space which refuses to be a claim to territoriality and thus allows for radical difference” (150). The “paradox” draws on the view that many women find themselves in several spaces simultaneously; while occupying both the centre and margin, they are given the opportunity to go beyond the Same/Other dichotomy. Lucy does this, as she is positioned within a clash of several spaces, places, and cultures – private and public, male and female, secular and spiritual – as being both socially privileged (being an aristocrat) and subjected to patriarchal control. As we are going to show later, the restless mobility destabilizes the geographies of power (151) that are inscribed at the plot level in dual structures embracing both spaces (horizontal/vertical) and configurations (villains/benefactors).

As we suggest that literary spaces indicate real spaces and are performed through culturally dominant concepts of space (Neumann 116), cultural subjects are also spatially socialized. The geographical and topographical ‘world’, also corresponding to Marie Linder’s own travels,⁹ is mapped along the continents (Europe and “America”), countries (England, “America”, France, Finland), cities (Liverpool, Paris), buildings (Abbey Hall), and landscapes. The *topographic* constructs are identified as *topological* constants that give a system of spatial relations, “the structure of the topos [which] emerges as the language for expressing other, non-spatial relations in the text” (Lotman 231–232). The escape plot is translated in the spatial semantification of abstract terms structured into a dual model of private-public. Two spatial plotlines intersect, namely the horizontal inside-outside and the vertical high-low. Equally fundamental non-spatial concepts with ideological values of social, cultural, and religious life are projected onto them in the form of semantic opposites. The spatial concepts “open-closed”, “near-far”, “demarcated-not demarcated”, and “up-down” construct a gendered model of the “world”. They come to mean “valuable-not valuable”, “one’s own/personal-another’s”,

⁹ See the map (Figure 1).

“accessible-inaccessible”, “dynamic-static”, “oppressing-liberating”, “virtuous-indecent/improper”, “cold-warm”, and “profane-sacred” (see Lotman 218). The events brought about by Lucy and other characters are represented in the form of movements resulting in changes of location (233). An examination of the constraints and opportunities afforded by certain spaces illuminates the ways by which Lucy and Alice (a secondary character, an imprisoned and dying woman) as mirror-figures are invited to certain destinies at the given moment.

Finally, the text itself can be imagined as an intimate spatial dimension. Literature and writing denote an imaginary space parallel to that of the “promised land” of America, onto which Lucy projects her intellectual ideals. It is especially in this space of “fantasy” that the paradoxical implications become productive: Lucy’s journey of discovery is parallel to writing and publishing when referring to the real-life situation of Marie Linder. On the one hand, writing and imagination can serve as an intimate shelter for reflecting one’s desires. On the other hand, a woman who publishes texts in mid-nineteenth century Finland transgresses from the private sphere to the public sphere of authorship and publishing (Grönstrand 37–107). It follows that both Lucy and the author fall ‘out of place’, and as ‘public women’ grow vulnerable as objects of suspicion as enunciated by the Finnish literary authorities.

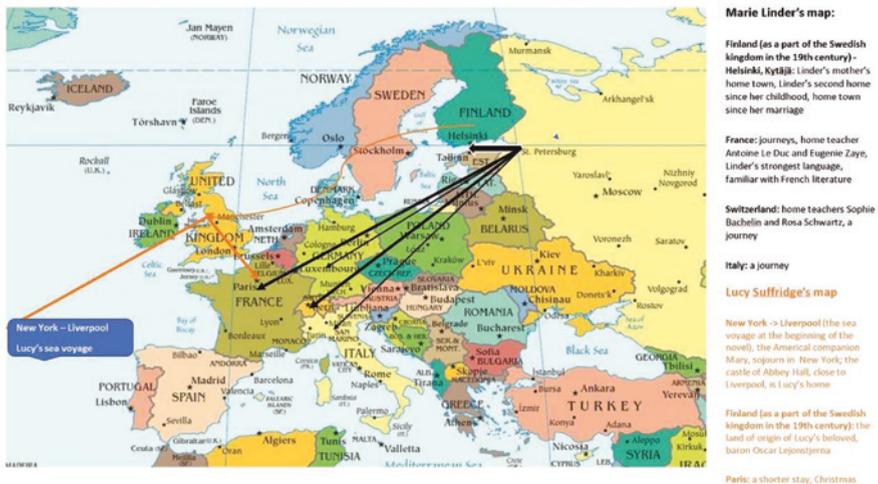


FIGURE 1 The map (made by Natalia Mihailova, Kati Launis and Jasmine Westerlund) of Lucy Suffridge's travels from Great Britain to America and France (on the left) and Marie Linder's travels from Russia to Finland, France, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy (on the right).

Note: See Katri Lehto, *Kytäjän kreivitär. Marie Linderin elämä* [The Countess of Kytäjä: The Life of Marie Linder]. Otava, 1986.

3 Lucy's Individual *Bildungsweg*: From Inside towards Out

The setting of the plot, the characters, and the themes are mapped around the dual plot lines in between horizontal and vertical spatialities that organize the principles male vs female, private vs public, and profane outer reality vs the sacred inner world of ideas. The driving motifs – independence and the freedom of an inner world – are acted out in an interplay between a sentimental and realistic plot: Alice, as Lucy's mirror-character, represents the sentimentally vulnerable heroine passing through the paradigmatic stages by being seduced by Edvard, the rake-as-a-false-hero. She becomes a captive, then an invalid, and finally she dies. Contrary to Alice, whose inner and outer immobility is demonstrated by her captivity, Lucy's realistic upswing is motivated through her escape from the fate of her sentimental double: she does not become a seduced victim but undergoes a difficult and painful struggle for her spirit and soul as the true space for the 'new woman'. The struggle denotes her strength in spirit and willpower (63–64; 131–132), which resonates with the decentred love plot on the path to independence. Despite their differences, both Lucy and Alice share the same lexical referents of the soul and heart, which makes them alike; they are vulnerable as motherless daughters in a gendered world, ill-prepared to handle the menacing threats to female virtue. While Alice becomes a victim of a sexual catastrophe, Lucy's reaction to the threat is to rationalize her bodily awareness by moving into the world of abstract spirit and imagination, e.g. by studying the Classics and preferring Virgil to "everyday prose".¹⁰ While Lucy shows strength and self-control, Alice lacks the inner willpower that would show her an alternative beyond the marriage plot. While both are captives and controlled by historical limitations, Lucy acts 'improperly' by moving out of the 'proper place' offered to her by the sentimental plot. Alice remains its captive, and her "broken body was no more able to follow her broken volition" (Linder 242).¹¹

Linder's strategy of setting scenes produces various views on intimacy (cf. Donovan and Moss, 3). The opening scene already pre-empts the outcome in the ending: both scenes emphasize Lucy's strong spiritual orientation. On the very first page, we meet Lucy on board a ship sailing from America to Liverpool. The voyage resonates with Lucy's mobile character, and the metaphor of life as an "open sea" symbolizes her extraordinary but solitary state. Lucy is exceptional not only in the eyes of men; on behalf of the patriarchal

10 For the discussion of the intertextual features of the novel, see Kati Launis, *Kerrotut naiset* 311.

11 "hvars brutna kropp ej mera kunde lyda den brutna viljan".

order, women also disapprove of her independent travel without a male companion. Simultaneously, however, she is also admired for her capability of acting so "calmly" while comforting timorous passengers "like a true missionary" (Linder 5).¹²

This ambiguity in Lucy's character, which manifests in her self-control, will-power, and passion for independence, is equal to her mobility in crossing worlds. What she knows is the "cold reality" (Linder 196),¹³ the enclosed "circle of everyday prose" (Linder 126),¹⁴ where women "limit their talents for domestic happiness" (*ibid.*)¹⁵ The world of confinement is set in the haunted and gloomy Abbey Hall, a house plagued by an ancestral curse, suspense, and mystery. The "home" involves many of the possible clichés of the Gothic setting, dominated as it is by awe and isolation and saturated with family secrets and faked identities.¹⁶ This world is pervaded by a threatening feeling, a fear enhanced by the unknown and ghost-like father who is tormented by the past and a guilty secret. The stories of the lord and his dead wives are examples of the so-called Bluebeard Gothic (see Pyrhönen 311), referring to the narrative cycle based on the French folktale. Linder's novel shows obvious traces of this cycle, as well as an explicit reference to the lord as the "Knight of the Blue Beard" (Linder 69). Tormenting past, the feeling of the uncanny as well as the gloomy space evoke what we may call the chronotope of the haunted house, inspired by that of the Gothic castle.¹⁷

Lucy's father dominates the space in the house, and only very few places give Lucy the feeling of personal intimacy; alongside the library (63–64), the "green room" which belonged to her dead mother (31) becomes a refuge where Lucy can withdraw for hours on end (53–54). "Home" is far from being a private place but rather a nexus where public discourses and social relations flow together and shape the woman's place according to the Law of the Father and arranged marriages.

Lucy's resistance is marked by her moving out and challenging limitations in terms of both identity and space. Gendered spaces are contested by relocating female privacy outside. Lucy dares to go out, first into the garden nearby, then by wild riding in the forest, and finally by voyaging overseas. The world

12 "som en hel missionär".

13 "den kalla verkligheten".

14 "den hvardagliga prosans sfer".

15 "inskränka användandet af sina gåfvor till den husliga trefnaden".

16 On the Gothic elements in Linder's novel, see Kati Launis, "From Italy to the Finnish Woods" 169–186.

17 On the chronotope of the haunted house, see Ashleigh Prosser 1–19.

opens up, and the privacy and intimacy which Lucy desires is relocated outdoors. Inside, she favours the border zones that are semi-public, such as the transnational salons (in Paris) popular in nineteenth-century high society, but her favourite places she finds outdoors. Here, in the natural environments of the garden and the forest, Lucy also meets the male rivals, the false (English) Edvard, and Oskar, a Swedish man whose mother is from Finland, who becomes her male-equal soul companion. Both encounters denote the ambiguity of intimacy consisting of the text's awareness of sexually charged desire. This is encoded in both scenes by water imagery (wells and springs) symbolizing, with a fluid and ever-changing quality, the power of hidden desire projected onto and flowing through water (see e.g. Freud, *Die Traumdeutung*; Jung, "Über die Archetypen").

The same intimate desire for change, encoded as an embodied mobility, is inscribed in Lucy's unmonitored horseback tour. The riding scene is an overwhelming bodily release of Lucy's emotional tension and points to a deep interpersonal affection:

She was incredibly excited, her small hands were clutching the horse whip spasmodically; she was holding her head high and panting heavily. "Fancy, Fancy!" she exclaimed suddenly; "run, as far as you can! Take me away, – freedom, that is what I need. ... I want to be free!"¹⁸

LINDER 137

The riding scene is likened to a catharsis of the body and soul brought together in the passion to become "free" and the bodily excitement associated with a sense of sexual intimacy. The riding scene and the horse are far from being unusual in nineteenth-century fiction, where horses serve as a generic symbol of sexuality and passion, especially in anglophone and Russian literatures. It is easy to adapt Dorré's (2006), argument that "[h]orses often signify beyond their literal function", and very often that signification is sexual (19). Riding in an unlimited 'openness', where Lucy is beyond any outer control, her growing awareness of herself and her private needs are allowed to become public; they are projected onto her horse, Fancy, who was "her friend, her companion during all her trips" (134).¹⁹ Lucy's horse is her equal 'partner' and represents

18 "Hon var särdeles upprörd, hennes små händer omfattade krampaktigt ridspöet; hon bar hufvudet högt och andades tungt".

– Fancy, Fancy! utbrast hon med ens; spring, så långt du kan! För mig bort, – frihet, det är hvad jag behöfver. ...jag vill vara fri!"

19 "hennes vän, hennes följeslagare på alla hennes utflygter".

Lucy's feelings and her internal world. The focal point of narration shifts over to Fancy, who mirrors aspects of Lucy's desire, and represents the internal feminine:

The mane flutters; a quiver races through all its muscles and now it is gliding through the space, it does not want to touch the ground, it seems it has grown wings; not only does it understand the wishes of its mistress, *it shares them*. It does not want to know anything about other people, it just wants to carry this person away, away!²⁰

LINDER 135–136, our emphasis

The horse enters Lucy's life after the story begins and appears synonymously with her awakening. According to Graysmith the horse "reflects a woman's social status, especially in regard to her level of repression or independence" (1–2). The horse also serves as "embodiment of an important change in her life, either social or psychological". Lucy finds herself in a transitional moment, and, as Graysmith has claimed, it is this partnership of the horse and woman that "indicates a transition for her into a state of greater independence, power, or maturity, and usually includes a sexual awakening" (59). Lucy's and Fancy's excited "flying over the earthen ground" anticipates the change brought in by Oskar and indicates a new kind of intimacy in Lucy's life – the introduction of the love plot. The intimate partnership with the horse serves as a symbol of Lucy's growing sexual awareness. That the intimacy is confusing, "lustful and intoxicating", is obvious from the identical rhetoric applied to both the horse and Oskar: both are objects of Lucy's affection. However, intimacy as an embodied experience is diminished by the idealization implied by their characterization as "noble" (Linder 134, 188),²¹ which raises the intimacy into sublime spheres. Lucy's galloping "away, away" is a notion of transgression. Simultaneously, the flight "above the ground" denotes the unpredictable and unruly routes of escape. No stable identity is achieved, but instead there is a momentary, unstable unsettling of fixed hierarchical spatial and emotional structures.

20 "Mahnen skiljer sig ifrån halsen; en darning genomilar alla dess muskler och nu genomfar han rymden, han vill ej vidröra marken, han synes ha vingar; han har icke blott förstätt sin ryttarinns önskan; han delar den. Han vill ej veta af andra menniskor, blot ten vill han fora bort, bort!".

21 "ädla", "ädel".

4 The Drive Upwards to the Other Spheres

The narrator sees a connection between Lucy's riding skills and "the work of a poet": "horse riding is similar to the creative work of a poet. The excited thoughts calm down, wild emotions become even and smooth in the intoxicating speed" (Linder 134).²²

The comparison indicates intimate affections reserved for personal freedom in both riding and creative agency. Both activities are also spatially marked along the positive/negative axis of upwards and downwards. The narrator emphasizes that for Lucy, it is impossible "not to aim high" (204).²³ The spatial subsets of high/upwards vs below/downwards resonate with the non-spatial values of freedom, creativity, and harmony. Just as Lucy feels being free while riding "away" and "flying" above the ground, in a similar way she seeks to move upwards, to the "other spheres" in order to escape from the material world of women's duties (125).²⁴ The vertical plot-line – up/inner world vs down/outer reality – denotes the stages towards the world of intimate self-reflection above the controlled social reality. The upper worlds are marked by the innermost desire reserved for intimate activities of the heart and soul:

In her thoughts, she began to empathize with *other spheres*, other circumstances. She was *walking back and forth* in her room; her *soul grew wings*, it seemed that her thoughts invaded the space; there, in the *unknown remoteness*, there lived other people, there was something great to be achieved. In her *imagination*, the air was full of political, scientific, literary, and great ideas; they were *crisscrossing*, they were fighting, they were embracing each other.²⁵

LINDER 125 our emphasis

All of these different "spheres" in Lucy's life turn out to be paradoxical in their simultaneous "crisscrossing", "fighting", and "embracing" of each other. The

22 "en sådan ridt likna skaldens dikt. Upprörda tankar lugnas, vilda känslor gifva sig luft i den berusande farten".

23 "för att ej syfta högt".

24 "andra sferer".

25 "började hon i tankarne lefva sig in uti andra sferer, andra förhållanden. Hon gick hela timmar af och an i rummet; hennes själ fick vingar, hennes tanke liksom genomträngde rymden; der, i det okända fjerran, lefde andra menniskor, der fans någonting stort att utträtta. I hennes inbillning var hela luften uppfylld af politiska, vetenskapliga, af litterära och stora ideer, de korsade hvarandra, de stridde med hvarann, de omfamnade hvarann".

discrepancy characterizes Lucy's "free nature" while struggling between self-restraint and "those feelings fighting inside her" (Linder 128):²⁶

There are people whose souls are without wings; there are other unlucky ones, who, because of their education and unfavourable circumstances, have had their wings cut; let them feel happy in the sphere of everyday prose, let them speak of a woman's duty to use her skills for the good of domestic happiness.²⁷

LINDER 126

Lucy becomes aware both of "individual liberty" (174),²⁸ represented by the new world of America which should guarantee women equal rights, education, and useful activities, and of "individual freedom" as an intimate world of hidden desires. The horizontal/physical movement of social liberty is complemented by the direction upwards into an imaginary space inhabited by creativity, aesthetic beauty, and philosophical and spiritual ideas. The vertical orientation, however, alienates Lucy, making her 'out of place' in terms of moral virtues or rather vices, embodied by her 'boundless' imagination contesting the physical borders and the restrictive reality. Specific power is given to two realms, the worlds of creativity and religion, both lived in the imagination and experienced as an intimate expression.

Religion and spirituality play an important role in Lucy's *Bildung*, as is typical of the genre of *Bildungsroman* in general. The 'flight' from material reality into a spiritual world was a permitted channel for women's projections of resistance. In this sense, Lucy's spiritual world is both a moral shelter and an extended space of her intimate desire for mental agency. Lucy is termed as a "true missionary" while declaring her faith in equality between men and women, according to true Christian virtues, morally, socially, and spiritually. Her relationship with God shares the intimate complexity of a love-relationship; Lucy trusts her most private feelings to God while expecting God to know her better than anyone. She trusts God, and she seeks acceptance for her deviancy from Him. The relationship is based on her innocent idealism. The declared innocence in the form of Lucy's "free nature" involves reciprocal

26 "fria natur", "de känslor som stredo inom henne".

27 "De finnes menniskor, hvilkas själar sakna vingar; det finnes andra olyckliga, hvilka genom uppföstran och ogynnsamma förhållanden fåt sina vingar afklippa, må de trifvas inom den hvardagliga prosans sfer, må de tala om qvinnans pligt att inskränka användandet af sina gåfvor till den husliga trefnaden".

28 "individuella friheten".

sharing with and coming to know about the private, innermost aspects closely connected to Christian authority and the ultimate confidant. Lucy's private faith in her God is a source of power that reflects her cognitive and emotional process on the way to cohesion and finding freedom that is not to be imagined without spiritual ideals.

"Soul" and "heart" are referred to as the spaces of imagination. Lucy "imagines" herself in a world which she has never seen but which she "creates in her fantasy" (Linder, 124).²⁹ By the power of imagination, she can see alternatives to gendered inequality, and, as the empathetic narrator states, from time to time she is happy being able to live "outside cold reality" (183) with the help of "fantasy" and "illusions" (182–183).³⁰ However, the "products of her fantasy" are empowering but also deceptive, causing a fragmentation of Lucy's self-image; she sees herself acting in "her imaginary world", but, as it happens, "the vision disappeared and – she was a woman again" (175).³¹ The imagination correlates with creative ability, which is implicit in Lucy's search for beauty and harmony in the fine arts, but she also states that the imagination is dangerous: "I believe that the worst danger lurks in imagination" (142). The imaginary world is a refuge but also a dangerous place, since the boundless desire of imagination may flow into the spheres of intimacy with prohibited ideals, ideas, and objects of love that thus pollute the purity of the soul. Lucy's father asks her, "Do you believe that there is happiness on earth?" (130),³² which makes the fragmentation obvious: the distance between her real possibilities for agency and the dreamworld that she nurses in her imaginary world is far too big to catch up, and the inner freedom as a private alternative is an illusion, albeit intermittently empowering.

5 Back and Down to Abbey Hall – the End of Lucy's *Bildungsroman*?

After spending time in America and Paris, Lucy returns home to Abbey Hall, a confined space – a "gloomy prison" (Linder 225)³³ – surrounded by "walls that imprison both her body and all her "mental capacities" (210).³⁴ Her return on the horizontal axis correlates with her vertical 'fall' from the lofty spheres

29 "skapade i inbillningen".

30 "ofvanom den kalla verkligheten", "inbillningen", "illusioner".

31 "i ett nu var hägringen borta och – hon var åter en kvinna".

32 "Tror du då att lyckan finnes på jorden?".

33 "dystra fängelse".

34 "de murar, som ej blott höllo min person fängslad, utan äfven alla mina själsförmögenheter".

of the ideal worlds down to the "dark chasm" of reality (232).³⁵ The return to her father's house is described as an immersion within the spatial tropes of confinement. There is a sense of claustrophobia where, according to Adrienne Rich (1972), a woman is not only placed into a "prison", but as Lucy predicts her "slow death" (Linder 210),³⁶ she herself becomes mortal, with her body turning into a "marble statue at a grave" (234).³⁷ The tropes mediate the painful struggle between the "will and heart" representing the fear that anticipates immobility and a life locked away from the dynamic world which Lucy has got to know during her travels (218).³⁸

The return evokes the question about the possibilities of Lucy's self-formation and the success of a female *Bildungsroman*.³⁹ On her way out into the "world", she has managed to transcend the gendered private vs public dichotomy, but in the last stages, Lucy is brought back to her father's house, which indicates that the conventional 'proper place' is to be restored. Unlike the *Bildungsroman*'s male counterpart, who leaves the family home in search of an independent life, Lucy is expected to act according to what is socially acceptable for an unmarried daughter in a nineteenth-century formation plot: she must marry a man to whom she cannot feel anything but loathing.

Lucy's inner maturation is a major part of her *Bildung*. Intimacy as a private sphere matter is emphasized, since her *Bildung* differs from the male formation process where the "male hero learns by reason and by basing decisions on previous knowledge" (Brändström 16). The female protagonist grows by learning from life itself, and as Labovitz maintains, her *Bildung* "would function from her life experience rather than from *a priori* lessons to be learned" (246). Unlike Oskar, who has studied and is engaged in the academic study of individual freedom, Lucy must concentrate on her internal world.

In this process of coming to terms with social expectations, Lucy "becomes", in the Beauvoirean sense, a woman,⁴⁰ provided that she internalizes a "woman's duty". By giving space for the debate on duty, the novel discusses contemporary arguments in the construction of gendered incongruence. Although Oskar admits that a duty may "limit our free agency" (Linder, 207–208),⁴¹ it is justified by "natural laws" (208),⁴² implying a moral assessment. Thereby, if

35 "mörk afgrund".

36 "långsam död".

37 "marmorstod på en graf".

38 "[s]trider emellan hjertat och viljan".

39 For the discussion of self-formation and *Bildungsroman*, see Labovitz; Fraiman .

40 See e.g. Butler 35–49.

41 "staller sig som en gräns för vår handlingsfrihet".

42 "[n]aturens lagar".

Lucy's "becoming" is equated to "nature"; her *Bildung* is predetermined against cultural alterations. The unavoidable ending of Lucy's plot would thus mean that she makes a sacrifice for her father's honour and accepts a marriage without love. The struggle of compassion, obedience, and submission confirms the "slippery" nature of an intimate space, as is made obvious by the close relationship between the father and daughter. Lucy's self-formation remains a dilemma: she is saved from an unhappy marriage by the interference of Edvard's mother, Lady Starling, but by her obedience in being prepared to sacrifice herself, Lucy also redeems her female honour. Lucy is rescued from an unhappy fate, although the narrative does not, and cannot, give any clear-cut alternatives for a "woman of her time". While struggling between independence and her love for Oskar, she vacillates between narrowing and developing herself.

Lucy's "becoming" a woman, which takes 'place' between two different worlds, the real and the imaginary, reaches its critical point in the open dénouement. The open ending calls back the dual value system corresponding to the horizontal and vertical plotlines and the double configuration: Lucy has her counterpart in the heroine of the sentimental plot, Alice, while the male characters Edvard and Oskar are also conceivable as mirror figures. This continuum of inter-relations with blurred binarities shows originality, but what makes the historical difference is the emphasis on the presence of women in Lucy's narrative. Mary as Lucy's travel companion is a devoted friend, Mrs Johns as the old house servant at Abbey Hall is her substitute mother, and Mrs Anna Rush, Mrs Johns, and Lady Jane Starling, Edvard's mother, act as female benefactors to both Lucy and Alice. Furthermore, the seemingly different heroines, Lucy and Alice, are connected by the strong female chain so crucial to the novel, suggesting the importance of intimacy among women in a broad sense of the word; as in many other nineteenth-century novels by women, an element of *Bildung* may be found precisely here (Downward 128).

The mirror images as well as the hybridity of crisscrossing spatialities resonate with the open ending of Lucy's journey. The openness can be interpreted as a permanent state of negotiation between the sentimental-romantic and realistic conventions. Although Lucy's navigations of space and her shifting between private and public, far and close, destabilize the opposition of a binary model of a safe home vs the public as potentially threatening, her journey to "freedom" faces an uphill battle to end in harmony. Since Lucy hesitates, the last word is taken by Oskar, speaking on her behalf: "United, inspiring each other, on the golden wings of freedom, let's strive to achieve the high goal: *The*

Truth of Life!" (Linder 269).⁴³ The upward movement to abstract freedom consists of the cognitive qualities of the imagination, which aids the process of self-discovery, but it also emphasizes the escape from the material world. The dissonance of "heart" and "mind" should be solved by turning to the higher assistance of the abstract Truth. It suggests that no emancipation in the present circumstances, or in the temporal world, is possible. If liberty as a human right equal for men and women cannot be achieved in the public world, individual freedom can be aimed for in the inner world of imagination and the spiritual intimacy of Truth.

6 Conclusions

The way Lucy's narrative is told and the way in which the narrator approaches Lucy's individual space has an effect on how character-reader intimacy is conveyed. The narrator adopts the omniscient viewpoint of someone who knows everything about Lucy's story. This intrusive narrator conveys subjective comments on Lucy's outer and inner development by revealing a lot about Lucy's character – things that only she would know, the inner struggles and embodied feelings. We come close to Lucy when the omniscient voice reveals things about Lucy that she would not reveal or admit to herself, such as the awakening of her intimate feelings for Oskar or her psychological difficulty in opposing her father. Simultaneously, we also learn a lot about the narrator's own position. The voice, which occasionally identifies itself as "we" (e.g. Linder 182), reveals its gendered empathy with Lucy in commenting on her development. The narrator remains her devoted confidant, since the narrator knows even more, as if having already experienced herself what will happen to Lucy: "What I have said now, Lucy did not yet know. She had only an inkling of it: the experience was going to crush her illusions" (182).⁴⁴ The narrator knows that Lucy is taking the "first steps", that her drive for freedom cannot be fully realized because of the limiting circumstances. Closeness and familiarity implicate the narrator's emotional affinity and increase the character-reader intimacy as part of the implied voice hovering over the narrative. The intense connection to music and art, the presence of classic literature, and the debates in the contemporary society construct the world of the implied author whose preferences coincide

43 "Förenade, lifvande hvarandras mod, skola vi söka att på frihetens gyllene vingar uppnå det höga målet: *Lifvets Sanning!*"

44 "Det jag nu sagt hade Lucy ännu ej kommit till insigt af, hon hade blott en aning derom; erfarenheten skulle komma att gifva hennes illusioner hårda slag".

with many of Marie Linder's own positions and known facts from the author's own experiences.

This parallelism of voices and positions becomes strongly visible in the space of religion. What makes Lucy's formation complex, even 'paradoxical', is her mobility in several spaces simultaneously. On the one hand, Lucy represents the 'margin' as a new kind of woman while advocating the liberal and proto-feminist ideas of "liberty and independence"⁴⁵ (Linder 64) becoming increasingly popular in Europe and Russia at the time (Launis *Kerrotut naiset*; Rosenholm). On the other hand, Lucy's formation is strongly affected by her religious and spiritual commitment, which points to a more conventional female "becoming". However, Lucy shows her 'restless' mobility also in her religiosity. The space between Lucy and her God is intimate, since it is highly private and individual. Rather than being imagined as a (father) figure with a "long beard" (Linder 53),⁴⁶ as the narrator disapprovingly comments on how God is depicted, Lucy's – and the narrator's – God is generous towards Lucy's radical deviance. Her God is "merciful" and "fair-minded" (54).⁴⁷ While the religious discourse becomes a major cultural reference for nineteenth-century women's moral virtues, its central role in the novel may also resonate with the author's own struggle for religious freedom and Lutheran sympathies (Lehto, 172–173).⁴⁸ The criticized role of the pope as "the shameful stain of Christendom" may point to the traffic in indulgences within the Roman Catholic Church and the dogma of papal infallibility (Linder 54).⁴⁹ Religion is a 'paradoxical' space where Lucy is bound to follow tradition, but at the same time it allows her an intimate dialogue about her deviancy and nurtures her innocent idealism. The Lutheran ideals of labour and usefulness, as well as a private, unmediated relationship with God, coincide with the liberalist ideals of individual freedom.⁵⁰ Hence, *A Woman of Our Time* manages to extend the discourse on female privacy to issues conceived of as public, official, and far from intimate.

45 "frihet och självständighet".

46 "stort skägg".

47 "Guds nåd och rättvisa".

48 As originally of Russian citizenship and belonging to the Eastern Orthodox Church, Marie Linder wished to leave the Russian congregation for the Protestant Church as the faith of her Finnish husband and their children. She turned with this wish to the tsar, Alexander II, when he visited the Grand Duchy of Finland in 1863.

49 "skamfläck för kristenheten".

50 A woman's private relationship with God is central also in the adultery novel *Den Fallna, berättelse af Wendela* [The Fallen One, A Story by Wendela, 1848]. The novel, defending Pietism and written and published in Finland by a female writer, Wendla Randelin (1823–1906), was published two decades before Linder's novel.

The spatial multi-mobility corresponding to the non-spatial ideas of freedom as an individual right makes the narrative independent and radical in Finland’s nineteenth-century literature written in Swedish (Launis, *Kerrotut naiset* 295). We also suggest that the transnational marginality of the author offers her a “paradoxical” space to cross over both national and cultural borders, especially in the way the author avoids subordinating the gender question to national premises. The protagonist is a cosmopolitan, claiming individual freedom as a citizen of the world.

Mobility as a means of resistance challenges the dichotomous relations between the men’s world vs the woman’s place. The crisscrossing mobility can, in the imagination, go beyond the limits of reality – Lucy in riding and the author in creating a poetic work. The way Lucy moves in the dual architecture of the horizontal and vertical plotlines can hardly be called inherently liberating, but, nevertheless, it makes the world unstable and has contesting power.⁵¹ Lucy’s journey to individual freedom in “borderless domains” is socially motivated, but it appears still as an abstract concept. She knows she does *not* want to be like the women who “sit at home like dolls and sew just to keep [their] fingers busy”. However, she is unsure of where to go; this is as vague as the goal of her journey to America as the “promised land”, which lacks any experiential and tangible depiction. The dilemma is confirmed by Lucy’s self-reflection, her belief in being destined to be “a restless soul which wants to fly higher than its wings can bear” (Linder 212).⁵²

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51 For more on geographical imagination and its intersections with power see Rose 160; Tally 134–135.

52 “en orolig själ, som vill flyga högre än vingarne bära!”

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