

The Trixter Children's Book Author · Den lömska barnboksförfattaren  
*Tove Jansson and the Metamorphosis of the Moomin Oeuvre* · *Tove Jansson och muminverkets metamorfos*

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## ABSTRACT

The present dissertation concerns Tove Jansson's (1914–2001) sixteen Moomin books and their definitive revision into the "Moomin suite" of 1968–1970. Its most important point of departure is Jansson's own essay "The Trixter Children's Book Author" (1961) and the psychoanalytically oriented self-understanding there expressed.

The fictional world Tove Jansson builds in her succession of Moomin books gradually changes, and has at length undergone a complete transformation: the chaotic world of *The Little Trolls and the Great Flood* (1945), the violently dramatic adventure world of *Comet in Moominland* (1946), and the wondrous idyllic world of *Finn Family Moomintroll* (1948), are all inverted by *Moominland Midwinter* (1957) with its dark winter; later, after yet another two books, *Moominpappa at Sea* (1965) divided in an inferno of ennui and a demonic island, and somewhat later still *Moominvalley in November* (1970) portrays an ordinary, even dreary quotidian world. The stories' foci also shift; from the carnivalesque idyll of the early books, with its tension between a benign, generous and inviting nature on the one hand and violent, unpredictable, and threatening forces of nature on the other, to the later books' themes of experiences and events on the borderline between inner and outer, illusion and reality. The dissertation demonstrates that these progressions in the Moomin work understood as a whole can be seen as resulting from a generative process, with the search for a lost world as its driving force, while a dialogue with the literary tradition and an iteration and inversion of Jansson's own motifs constitute the crucial artistic methods.

Two main strands of inquiry are followed. One of them deals with the Moomin oeuvre's progression. The row of original editions are seen as components of an at once artistic and personal project, showing how Tove Jansson's dialogue with literary precedents, especially the idyllic or pastoral tradition, plays a decisive role in her reconstruction of a blissful childhood which according to the writer herself was the main impetus behind the Moomin oeuvre. Another strand pays attention to Jansson's repeated reworkings of the early volumes of what would become the Moomin suite, emphasizing the sweeping effects brought about by the second full revision undertaken after the publication of *Moominpappa at Sea*. In the final Moomin suite Tove Jansson has not merely reshaped the earlier row of independent books into a coherent, ironic family romance. She has also subjected her books and her Moomin family to psychoanalysis, and shared her findings with her readers. In conclusion the dissertation illuminates the concept of self expressed by the metafictional *Moominvalley in November*.

Keywords: *idyll, grotesque, domestic novel, family romance, children's literature, mourning process, psychoanalytic aesthetics, narratology, Ricœur, Bakhtin, Winnicott, Melanie Klein.*

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