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## On Hanging Laundry: The Place of Beauty in Managing Everyday Life

*Pauliina Rautio*

### Abstract

The data of my empirical research in the field of education discussed in this paper consist of letters produced through correspondence. I asked the participants to write about beauty in their everyday lives, giving substance to the concept as freely as they could. In this paper it is only the letters of one participant, Laura, which I limit my attention to. The aim is to find out what kind of place beauty, as defined and used by herself, holds in the managing of her everyday life. The concept of beauty is virtually missing from educational research or is misguidedly restricted only to formal art education. Beauty being for Laura an occasional checking of direction in relation to changes both in the context of her everyday life and in herself as a person sheds light to the relevance of beauty at the constitutive and perceptual level of growing as a human being.

### Key Words

education, everyday aesthetics, laundry hanging

### 1. Introduction

*"Whatever I find beautiful touches something inside me. It changes when I change."*<sup>[1]</sup>

The woman doing and hanging laundry in this paper is Laura, a mother of three in a village that has five children all in all. Laura is one of the four participants in my research of everyday life in a small northern village in Finland. The core data of this empirical research in the field of education consist of letters produced through correspondence.<sup>[2]</sup> Letters were exchanged once a month for one year. I asked the participants to write in these letters about beauty in their everyday lives. In this paper only to the letters of Laura I limit my attention.

The main question is to find out what kind of place beauty, as defined by the participants themselves, holds in managing their everyday lives. By the place of beauty I mean here both a function and a slot in time and space. That there is a place for beauty is evident in Laura's writing. Her letters throughout the year were long and meandering. The thoughts she wrote down kept deepening and became increasingly abstract as the year progressed. She has also repeatedly expressed in interviews that she found the thinking and writing of beauty rewarding. A place for beauty thus existed but what kind of place was it, what was its function and where was it located? This begins to be revealed in this paper through one recurring event.

Already in February when meeting together before exchanging any letters Laura talked about laundry hanging. She presented her thoughts with laughter and appeared amused by her own thoughts.

*"I notice that when I'm hanging laundry I think of*

*the colours. It's funny really... And then I think about whose sweater I can hang next to whose. When the girls have been fighting, I think twice before hanging their blouses next to each other [laughter] so as not to make them fight [laughter]."*

Laura was downplaying the significance of hanging laundry as an everyday aesthetic experience in February, maybe even to herself. But from May through September she wrote about the topic almost every month in increasing detail and reflection. This paper is a rewriting of my presentation at the International Institute of Applied Aesthetics Summer School in 2008. The focus on laundry hanging was inspired by noticing and considering of the significance that the task seemed to carry for Laura. It is also encouraged by hearing Yuriko Saito's presentation at the same summer school in which she reflected on laundry hanging.

I ask the reader to be oriented to an unfolding of this paper that follows the data chronologically. Laura's clothes-line became contextualised in both theory and practice as this paper moves from February to September. The background, objectives, theoretical connections, concepts and insights of this research are thus spread out and keep surfacing as the paper progresses. Each section presents data, highlights the progressing analysis and theoretical handling of them and builds towards the conclusion. The reason for such a structure is to convey everyday life and the writing of it as a process in time and as essentially bound to seasons and changes in one's immediate natural environment. This progressive structure also reflects the deeply contextual and processive formation as well as the analysis of the data. Laura's letters need to be read as a continuum as she keeps developing ideas and thoughts over time. The main argument of this paper – that beauty has a place relevant to orienting oneself in the *process* of managing one's everyday life – is brought forward also in the structure of this paper.

Through Laura's laundry hanging I will argue that beauty has a place in the managing of everyday life. I will discuss beauty in this paper in connection with education. While an analysis of beauty might not benefit from a connection to education, it is education that receives a new dimension through beauty. By education I refer to the constitutive and perpetual level of growing as a human being. I take such growing in everyday life to be about relating to one's surroundings in ways that allow for reflecting on change and one's place and direction in the midst of that change. As Laura's case will show, aesthetic relating to one's surroundings seems to offer such reflection.

The place of beauty in Laura's writing of laundry, I will conclude, is an occasional checking of direction. This checking happens in relation to changes both in the context of her everyday life and in herself as a person. She intentionally seeks or merely finds herself in these moments that could be thought of as tiny steering manoeuvres that we undertake daily but rarely notice. They are micro-level adjustments analogous to the long tradition of concepts such as Lefebvre's 'moments' or Nietzsche's 'Augenblick'. [3] These constitutive moments of Lefebvre and Nietzsche describe instances where

past and future collide and one is able to evaluate one's place and change one's direction, so as to grow as a human being. Such moments are memorable and critical and thus not obviously a daily occurrence. I concentrate here on the moments of orientation that take place in daily life and argue that beauty finds a place in them.

## 2. February – the state of things as they should be

*"Saturday. The children are outside. I'm doing laundry. Bright, sunny winter's day. Maybe the first one this winter that feels genuinely like beginning spring."*

The excerpts from Laura's letters presented in this paper are the five occasions when she talks of laundry or laundry hanging. They are quoted here as the fragments appear in Laura's letters. They are however read and interpreted in the wider context of each full letter and in the context of the whole correspondence as a process. Laura wrote eleven letters that varied in length from three to six sheets of typed text. In addition to her letters the insights in this paper are backed up by three individual life-story and thematic interviews. These were conducted with Laura before and after the correspondence. Finally, the everyday life in a small Nordic village that unfolds in Laura's letters is contextualised through views on the socio-historical background of life in Finnish Lapland.

Laura segments her letters with subheadings. The above quotation begins a segment titled "The Angel Window" where Laura depicts herself standing in the doorway of her daughter's room, looking in. She continues to write of a lead glass angel ornament hanging in the window. This ornament, she writes is beautiful because of the light that shines through it and because of her associations with angels as signifying joy, safety, hope and "everything being all right." Indeed, the above quotation that begins with three simple and curt clauses seems to reaffirm a certain state of things as all right. [4] The people in this Saturday picture are in their right places, children outside and Laura inside doing laundry. The winter's day is portrayed as ideal, bright and sunny and genuine in its feel of beginning spring. In an earlier segment of the same letter Laura has written about climate warming and observed the degrees of frost outside. Her observations reassure her of things being still the way they should be in her surroundings. She writes: "There's increasing frost (-31 degrees of Celsius), all as it should be at this time of the year. The greenhouse effect seems distant." She also writes in this letter of a scene that she witnessed one evening that reminded her of a childhood idyll: "A hut, full moon, snowy trees – only an elf is missing from this childhood Christmas card. No evil at sight". Like these portrayed examples the themes in Laura's February letter as a whole seem to repeat a strong sense of an ideal state of things.

Of the nine subtitled segments in this letter Laura writes of light or the lack of it extensively in seven. At the end of winter in Lapland light is still a scarce resource after the long period of darkness. It can thus be easily conceived of as symbolic of hope and a new beginning, life in general. Laura indeed uses light, twilight, or darkness in her writing to reveal or contrast

living things: people and animals in this letter. She writes for instance of going skating with her daughter. The child is portrayed by Laura against the darkening evening: "She is all energy and movement. The surrounding dream world is all peace and quietness. This little red creature fills the entire world. Without her there would be a mere beautiful image. Now it is alive."

This segment about the angel window and the whole of the February letter seem to convey nothing less than rightness, brightness and life. Laundry then receives an elevated meaning read as part of such a letter. On an ideal Saturday the children are out and Laura is doing laundry. Indeed the act of washing clothes has been discussed in connection with purity or cleanliness as a virtue and cleaning in general has been associated with order and being in control of one's life. [5] The act of cleaning has been seen to follow the experience of an everyday aesthetic quality such as 'messy' and the balance between clean and messy has been pointed out to be a complex and context dependent phenomenon. [6] The aesthetic experience in such chores is located either in the noticed dirtiness (a negative aesthetic experience) preceding the cleaning or doing of laundry. [7] The purification and control of one's life are seen symbolically through the process of getting rid of dirty clothes. [8] While all of these views seem at first to fit well with Laura's accounts, the way they place beauty in connection with laundry is not congruent with Laura's writing.

The beauty that Laura seems to find in connection with laundry hanging is more complex and must be located a little differently. As a task, the doing of laundry has many phases. One notices and gathers dirty clothes to a specific place as the days go by. Come laundry time, the clothes need to be sorted according to color, the right amount and kind of detergent to be chosen and measured, the right temperature and type of cycle to be selected. Having waited for the cycle to end, the laundry is then either moved to a dryer or hung to dry. And finally dry clothes are folded, maybe ironed, and stacked away. Of all this the only part that Laura writes about at length is the hanging or taking down of laundry. And of all the times she hangs laundry, inside during winter months, she writes only of the times she is hanging laundry outside. This suggests that it is not just the balance between clean and messy where for Laura locates beauty in doing laundry. It also suggests that the surroundings in which the task is done are significant, as it is only when Laura is outside that she writes of hanging laundry. In light of Laura's letters I argue that the place of beauty associated to laundry hanging needs to be considered taking place in a particular setting, not in just any generic bathroom or a clothes-line in any setting.

This research is based on sociologically leaning approaches in education and the conception of place in human geography that favour the particular and the contextual in approaching questions at the core of our meaning-making processes. [9] In education as well as in aesthetics, everyday aesthetics in particular, there has been a move to emphasize the particular. According to this view, humans or humanity in educational research should no longer be approached only as universal phenomena but also as and through research of actual persons

in concrete social, cultural and historical contexts. [10] To follow the view in aesthetics is to balance out the analytical and art-centred approach. "The aesthetic" and as part of it beauty should also be defined referring to particular individuals and their everyday life context. [11] The value of such an emphasis is the resulting focus on the significance of self-environment relations and interactions. Such focus on locality and dwelling finds a niche in a world that seems to worship globality and mobility. According to validity criteria of qualitative research methodologies, I acknowledge and make known my subjective standpoint in relation to this research. [12] I confess to an agenda of advancing social and environmental awareness.

Laura's particular case is of relevance also in balancing the biased representations of the lives of people in small northern Finnish villages. Life in the villages is portrayed mostly either through the mythical rhetoric of tourism or is reflected in the depressing results of national statistical welfare research. [13] Between these poles there seems to be a gap in need of filling with accounts of everyday life from the viewpoint of the villagers themselves [14]. The representations produced by the tourist industry, mass media or even scholarly research appear also biased in that they draw largely from history instead of the present and mostly concentrate on nature-based livelihoods and thus on the men of the villages. [15]

The quotation from Laura's February letter offers us a glimpse of what is to come. It can be read as conveying an affirmation of the state of things as they should be. In the following letters in which she returns to the subject it is this very state of things that is addressed and assessed.

### **3. May – solemnity in things happening as if on their own**

*"There's always a sense of solemnity in the first set of laundry I hang to dry outside in the spring. Usually, as it happened this year as well, I just notice one day that laundry would dry outside now. This time I had washed only blue clothes having noticed that the new blue towels release dye. When hanging the laundry I had to tread through a pile of snow that is left in the dent under the clothes-line each year, even if all the snow around has melted already. It was windy and I had to reach for the line high up. Suddenly I realized a funny play of colours. Blue towels were swaying back and forth against white snow and the white cumulus clouds of the blue sky. It made me feel solemn, almost a bit patriotic. [16] Blue summer sky, white snow, white clouds, blue towels."*

In her May letter Laura celebrates the spring that has begun. She notices beautiful round buds in trees and writes of them as promises of the coming summer. She dwells on the first rain shower of the spring and marvels at the beauty of all that is changing around her in a multitude of ways. She then moves on to describe her children playing with soap bubbles and discusses the continuity in this that she finds beautiful, as well as the trust her children show in confiding to her later on

in the evening. The overall themes of beauty in the letter can be read as promises, trust, change, and continuity, all of which are oriented to the future.

The quoted segment from the end of Laura's May letter is titled "Blue and White Laundry Day". Laura describes the event of first laundry hung outside as solemn. It is interesting to compare Laura's writing with the insights of Yuriko Saito on laundry hanging. [17] Saito suggests that behind the negative responses, somewhere even prohibitions, to laundry being hung outside in the US is the attitude that the sight is associated with poverty and is considered an eyesore. This is a plausible, yet culturally and even geographically dependent an explanation. The few months that you can make laundry dry outside in Lapland are anticipated as a luxury in the course of a year. The solemnity that Laura refers to finds context later on in the quotation when she connects the colours of the laundry to those of the nation's flag. But the thematic context of all of Laura's letters suggests that the feel of ease is what should catch us here. This is something recurring in her writing.

The feeling of solemnity seems then best interpreted through the clause that follows in the quotation: "Usually, like it happened this year as well, I just notice one day that laundry would dry outside now". The moment that you can start taking laundry outside to dry, marks the beginning of spring and makes a concrete change on the level of daily chores. It is however not a set date when it happens but depends on a number of seasonal weather factors. There is solemnity in the concrete affirmation of spring approaching. There is also solemnity in the ease with which the changes in the season are noticed. Such an ease tells of being in tune with one's environment.

Noticing the right conditions for taking laundry outside demands knowledge, as the timing is not obvious. Laura says it happens just like that: she just notices it one day. This is a statement akin to the by now classic theory of "tacit knowledge" whereby a range of conceptual and sensory information is used to make sense of something in a way that seems effortless but that can't easily be stated in formal terms. [18] It is as if Laura has followed the weather for a while before noticing the right time for taking laundry outside. But it all feels sudden and easy for her, for she has not consciously observed and recorded temperatures and spring winds. She continues in the quoted passage to describe in detail what the yard looks like each spring about this time: the snow in the dent under the clothes-line, and what it always demands of her. This is telling of the level in which Laura observes her surroundings in relation to her everyday chores. But she does this without realizing or contemplating it too much herself.

In another spring letter Laura reflects on her experience of skiing on ice and being in harmony with nature by writing: "Beautiful is that which is light [and] happens by itself, as if by the laws of nature." In this May quotation Laura seems to underline similar ease and spontaneity in the beautiful play of colors on the clothes-line. She does this through writing that the decision to wash blue clothes was due to a mere practical

observation of the new towels releasing dye. Therefore, she seems to affirm us that the resulting blue and white play was not of her making but was caused by a happy coincidence and some strong wind. The spring is there, the temperature and the wind are there to dry and sway clothes of a beautiful colour against the white background of nature. All this happens with no input or effort from Laura except from walking in the snow and reaching for the line high up. Laura writes herself to the beginning of the passage in the concrete grounding and laying out of the scene. The beauty then suddenly just appears for her to wonder over. In doing this she gives an impression of claiming little part in what constitutes beauty in her everyday life. It is as if Laura finds beauty in things happening on their own, quite objectively without her input or even meaning-making in the process.

But reading the quotation verbatim Laura not only notices but “realizes” the play of colours while at the clothes-line and starts then to reflect on where the beauty stems from. [19] Discarding in this following reflection the feel of serendipity, Laura redeems her agency by writing:

*“I think that in our beauty experiences there must be a lot of things we have learned and internalized in our lives. I have images in me for sure that are related to the Finnish flag and what it represents. They’re not necessary very conscious though.”*

Elsewhere in her letters she continues to make explicit her more subjective theory of what makes things beautiful: “Old and new together are beautiful. Beauty meets within me because I appreciate both.” Laura thus clearly associates beauty in her surroundings in a way as of her making, arising from her own valuations, be they conscious or not. We should be safe to assume now that Laura does not find beauty in things happening on their own but in things happening as easily *as if on their own*. When things are so “right” they seem to happen on their own is when they feel beautiful to her.

Running the risk of leaping too far in my interpretation I present a suggestion here as to where Laura’s feel of ease and lightness might find ground. Arne Naess writes of the distinction between moral actions and beautiful actions borrowing the concepts from Kant. [20] Without going into the analytic details of the distinction in the scope of the present paper, I present here Naess’ insight into the relevance of beautiful actions. An act is moral if it is motivated by respect for the moral law, performed out of duty and only duty. However, If an act is performed out of duty, but *also*, at least partly, out of inclination, Kant, according to Naess, calls it a beautiful act, for it does not conflict with the moral law. It is characteristic of beautiful acts that they appear to be accomplished effortlessly and without toil. [21]

Naess goes on to an example close to his heart and presents as widely accepted the duty of individuals and governments to act in an ecologically responsible way. He argues that in influencing ecologically beneficial actions with the urgency that is demanded it is beautiful actions rather than moral actions that we should foster. Acting from inclination is thus for Naess in this case superior to acting from duty. This is because if



people act out of inclination, a habit is formed. Should a moral act form a habit it would start feeling natural and thus by definition become an inclination. Naess argues that people are thus more likely to keep acting ecologically beneficially out of inclination than out of duty. [22]

Laura presents us with an example, in my view, of such a beautiful action. The underlying moral duty in this action is one that also Naess subscribes to, acting in an ecologically responsible way. [23] Her action to start taking laundry to dry outside seems to be performed out of inclination. It appears so natural for Laura that she does not even realize how she comes to decide when to start doing it; this has become as if tacit knowledge for her. She does not discuss laundry hanging as toil but on the contrary as having the feel of solemnity after a long winter. The small but apparent physical obstacle each year – tramping in the pile of snow – enhances the sense of achievement and the solemnity through the offered contrast. What gives Laura cause to celebrate and find the moment solemn, in fact, is the gladness and elevation that she feels over her action completed out of duty *and* inclination. [24]

#### **4. July – dwelling on colors, scents and sounds as adapting to change**

*“The beautiful yellow flowers [of courgettes in her garden] reminded me of doing laundry few days back. I was once again hanging laundry to dry. In the green-gray trousers of Pirkko there were pink linings around the pockets. I hung the trousers up with one grey wooden peg and one bright yellow. The yellow looked beautiful with green, pink and grey. And when I looked around me, my eyes started to register yellow here and there. Yellow plastic bucket on a grey chopping block in front of the sauna, in the background bright green raspberry leaves and yellow autumn hawkbits all across the lawn. I wondered why it was yellow on that particular day that suddenly felt so significant but I didn’t find an answer. Somehow the combination of yellow and grey, greenish and pink awoke me to notice colors and beauty around me.”*

Laura’s July letter is written up in August, on the name day of her middle name. She begins the letter with a story of how she got her name, linking her life with that of her parents. If the June letter was future-oriented in its themes of promises, trust, change and continuity, this letter is retrospect and introspect in its themes. Of the six subtitled segments of the letter, Laura writes of other people only in the beginning one where she thinks back of her parents. The letter mostly conceives of accounts of solitude and stillness, reflecting the past summer in retrospect.

Solitude and self reflection are obvious when Laura describes as beautiful the reading of a book by Eileen Caddy. The book is titled “Opening Doors Within” and has a chapter for each day of the year. Laura sets her alarm to ring a little too early so she can read her book in peace, writing: “In the midst of all this family rumble it is important to be alone with myself.” A habit of taking the family’s new puppy out for a walk is

portrayed as important for similar reasons by Laura: “[On these walks] I just am. I watch around, smell and sense the air and myself”.

Still in the very same letter, a walk alone is reflected in writing having an air of melancholy over the end of summer:

*“The weather seemed to reflect my thoughts. Sun didn’t shine this morning either but blue sky was visible here and there between the clouds. On these short walks I’ve collected in me a vast amount of beautiful memories of this village. This summer has had plenty of dark, humid evenings when the air is good to breathe, the clouds heavy and ready to rain, or having just rained. Lots of soft, moist colors.”*

In such an introspective and in parts melancholy letter the quotation on laundry hanging as part of a segment titled “The beauty of yellow and the scents of herbs” seems first at odds with its brightness and vividness. Laura is walking in her garden, admiring her courgettes that are “oozing vitality” and comes to remember a recent laundry day when the color yellow seemed especially beautiful and significant to her. To aid us in the reading of Laura’s July letter the information that we have of the context of Laura’s everyday life at large is relevant. At the time of writing most of the July letter Laura was unemployed, her husband employed part-time and short-term, and all of her children on summer leave from school. The whole family had thus spent the summer together and entertained guests in their home. The population of the village had also doubled, as it does during the summer months.

Laura lives in the village of Suvanto located in the Eastern Lapland of Finland well above the Arctic Circle. Nearby rise the fells of Pyhä and Luosto, both thriving tourist centers and sources of income for the villagers. The river Kitinen, dammed downstream from Suvanto in 1990, runs along this picturesque and prize-winning village with its culturally and historically significant buildings. Laura lives in one of the oldest houses of the village, one dating back some 150 years. The 1960s structural changes in national policies concerning agriculture caused a drastic decline of population in this village and today it is inhabited only by about 30 people all year round. There are five children under 18 in the village. Laura’s children attend school in a nearby town and, because of how school transportation is arranged in these sparsely populated areas, their days are long. This part of Finland is also one of the country’s most rapidly depopulating regions. [25] The silence and solitude that Laura reflects in her letter is best understood as manifold and having a wider context than the year of this correspondence.

On the day of comprising the letter Laura writes that the family’s summer visitors have left and the schools had started a few days back. She is doing yoga alone in the middle of the living room floor of her old house and sensing the new state of things: “From somewhere far off I could bring the sounds of summer to my head. That had been beautiful also, a house full of life. Now I am enjoying the beauty of the silence that the approaching autumn has brought along.” As with the June quotation of laundry hanging, there is a concrete break in the

rhythm of Laura's everyday life approaching in late July that she addresses. In June it was the beginning summer manifested in the concrete changing of the routine of drying laundry. In late July it is Laura's surroundings turning silent of as people leave for work and school and she is left home alone. There is a sense of gaining balance in a new situation that the July letter brings forth. The quoted account at the clothes-line reads as central in this balancing act.

Laura begins by writing that she is hanging laundry "once again," emphasizing the routine nature of the chore. She writes of hanging her daughter's trousers to dry by naming them as hers. Knowing that Pirkko is back at school after a long summer home seems significant, as if holding on to her presence. Nobody is home. There is just Laura and the clothes-line. The time that Laura has to spare now that the pace of her daily tasks has eased is well evident in the quoted excerpt. She's strolling leisurely in her garden, stopping just to admire her plants and to reminisce. She is concentrating on small patches of color in the clothes she's hanging and contemplating the different pegs she uses. Laura seems to feel her new solitude through dwelling extensively on colors, scents, and sounds. And in doing so all that surrounds her routine task seems to unfold as if new. She notices her yard in a new way through a single color. The things she picks up as if new are plain and have been there all along. It is yet again as if a "state of things" was affirmed at the clothes-line, a new phase in her everyday life adapted to, and beauty found again in ways she had forgotten over the summer.

Beauty seems to serve Laura in adapting to change. How this happens is best approached through first defining the concept. I agree with Katya Mandoki that "beauty is a linguistic effect used by a particular subject to describe personal experiences and social conventions, [...] a linguistic categorization of a non-linguistic experience." [26] I take beauty to be an effect of the relation between the experiencing subjects and certain objects. And despite the ambivalence that surrounds beauty as a concept in scholarly discussion, it has remained in constant use in everyday conversation about common experience. When in common use, 'beautiful' still signals admiration, excellence, and that which is desirable. [27] Beauty is therefore future-oriented, bringing about replication, distribution, and protection. [28] As such a concept and a word of everyday use, 'beauty' orients us to concentrate on the desirable in our lives at present, evaluating it in light of the past, and replicating and protecting it for the future. And as the opening quotation of this paper by Laura suggests, beauty as used by a particular subject is not fixed but changes and mirrors the changing of that subject herself.

In the light of such a definition and use of beauty it is plausible to regard it as a valid concept for approaching the micro scale of managing one's daily life. The July quotation portrays a moment of adjustment in Laura's daily life, where beauty has a central function. It is not a steering manoeuvre on a grand scale. It will not change Laura's life course in a memorable way. But it serves a purpose on the level of daily life. Through retracing beauty in a changed situation Laura finds anew the rhythm and meaningful content for her daily life. Eventually such minute adjustments and orientations of

everyday scale contribute to one's life course and cumulate toward the more critical turning points.

Everyday life as such has been characterized in research by concepts such as 'time,' 'space,' 'rhythm,' 'bodily movement' and 'tradition.' [29] Such concepts embrace the idea of a continuum that I see as integral to an educationally oriented definition of everyday life: it is a continuum subjectively managed and experienced. Everyday life is a contextual process but one that nevertheless defies definitions bound in time and space. This is because as subjectively experienced it entails simultaneously the past, the present, and the future as necessary for managing it. By managing everyday life I mean a practice that consists of constant reflection, evaluation and steering, but one that we are mostly unaware of engaging in. In a way we are making our everyday lives. This makes the everyday a subjective construct instead of an objectively definable unit. And so, instead of an attempt to tame the very vague "everyday" as something universally shared, this research delves into particular individuals' everyday lives as uniquely managed continuums. [30]

This July quotation reads as a moment in Laura's managing her everyday life. Laura is faced with a phase of being alone for most of the day and she needs to adapt to this change. This means reconfiguring what is, if anything, desirable in this new state of things. I argue that beauty plays a role in adapting to change. I must stress that this adaptation is not to be taken as mere passive submission to changed circumstances. As beauty is essentially a value statement, the relation its use mirrors of one's surroundings is a value-laden one. In adapting to change, beauty thus functions in an evaluative way. Should Laura not find anything desirable in her changed situation we could imagine she would be alarmed into action in order to change things.

##### **5. August – serendipity as openness to experience**

*"Yesterday, before the rain began, it was very windy outside. When I went to get the linen from the clothes-line I saw a beautiful play of nature. On a light green sheet there was a small yellow leaf of a bird cherry. Wind blew against the sheet so that the leaf stayed on it for a while. Only when the wind took a breath did the leaf slide from the sheet to the ground. It all happened light and soft. ... As I write this there is a storm outside. The world is filled with colors that you must see, smell, and breathe in. Autumn smells of moist, soil and earth. Of new potatoes and carrots, flying leaves and branches. Let us breathe in this beauty now that it is there. Good autumn to you all!"*

Laura presents the above quotation as an epilogue to her August letter. The letter at large is filled with varying accounts of beauty, resisting a unifying theme that the earlier letters seemed to hold. Laura writes of shopping, tablecloths, picking berries in the woods, scenery, making salad, and singing lullabies. In this meandering letter there is a sense of coherence and rhythm in this variety, as Laura writes: "Nights have become darker and the daily rhythms more precise. All

kinds of beauty still fit into these days." Laura's daily rhythms now evolve around her children's schooldays and harvesting her garden before the frost sets in. The accounts of beauty, however varied, seem almost all to involve Laura's doing something, attending to something or someone, all except for the epilogue on laundry.

In the above quotation Laura does not do much but merely arrives at the scene to witness a play of nature. The actors in this play are the wind, the leaf, and the sheet. Laura is in the audience. There is the same feel of serendipity in this quotation as in the June quotation of the blue and white sheets swaying in the wind. I use serendipity here as defined by Amia Lieblich and others when discussing the subjective experiences of agency, structure, communion, and serendipity. [31] Not just luck, serendipity is a coincidence that an actor uses for her benefit. Lieblich and others point out importantly that accounts of serendipity in telling of one's life do not equal lack of control but manifest openness to experience. [32]

In the light of such a definition of serendipity Laura's July quotation also receives further depth. It seems as if Laura is in fact looking for something surprising to open her eyes. When it does happen, it feels beautiful to her. The clothes-line, as a fixed place of a recurring routine, is beginning to form for Laura as a good place to meet with serendipitous beauty. This she can then use in reflecting and managing her everyday life. Elaine Scarry discusses the connection of beauty to education and locates a search for beauty such as Laura's as a basic impulse underlying education. [33] This impulse according to Scarry is "the willingness continually to revise one's own location in order to place oneself in the path of beauty," [34] and it works in Laura's letters in connection with an openness to experience, serendipity. Laura does not revise but fixes her location at where she has begun to catch moments of beauty. She leaves the variables to chance and changes in her environment, but by repeatedly arriving at the scene with readiness to new experiences, Laura demonstrates a willingness to learn.

At the clothes-line during August, Laura composes a play of the serendipitous events and features before her. And not only a play but a beautiful play. She goes on to contrast the light and easy play of wind and a single leaf by introducing the storm that follows. She aestheticizes the storm as representing the autumn by dwelling in its luscious colors and scents and combining elements into a vivid whole that begins to resemble an artwork. As the author of the work, she presents nature in suggesting that we, the readers of her letters, merely join in the experience of such beauty.

One of the core questions in everyday aesthetics seems to revolve around the distinction between everyday ordinary experience and one extraordinary experience – as if art. [35] The former is often presented as an underdog, having lacked attention for too long. Yuriko Saito claims justly that it is important to shed light on the aspects of our everyday lives that normally don't stand out in their experiential context but that have a considerable impact on our judgments and decisions over our daily actions. [36] In a similar vein Arto Haapala advocates the "familiar" instead of the prevalent

“strange” in aesthetics and makes a Heideggerian distinction between aesthetics of the everyday *per se* and the aesthetization of the everyday. [37] Such a distinction may well be plausible in theory but how does one research the familiar empirically without necessarily making it strange and extraordinary, through this attention to it?

Perhaps because of the method of data collection chosen for this research, the everyday objects or activities that are “strange” and “that make us pause and take a note” [38] are well represented in the research data. The participants admitted to writing the letters mostly at one go, once a month, recalling and rephrasing their mental notes or actual jottings here and there. This way the memorable, “stand-out” experiences might be over-represented at the cost of the more forgettable, fleeting, and ‘familiar’ moments. Perhaps, in practice unlike in theory, the line between familiar and strange is difficult to maintain without familiar always turning into strange. Laura reflects this insightfully in one of her letters: [39]

*“I feel it is impossible to depict genuinely the moment that we experience something beautiful. As soon as I start to write about it, to photograph it or to draw or paint it, all of my thoughts, experiences, emotions and memories are there changing and interpreting the image. The moment I think of something as beautiful is the moment when the game is already lost. It is already an interpretation of my mind. [...] I think that the writing of a beauty-experience is a whole other experience. It has to do with the beauty of telling a story, of combining things, the joy and beauty of reflection and interpretation. [...] Even if one is not writing beauty-letters the same thing happens anyway when noticing something beautiful. In a way you store it in yourself, either for your own use or for to tell someone about it.”*

Jeffrey Petts reviewed the first anthology on everyday aesthetics and found the distinction between familiar and strange unnecessary and incoherent. [40] Tom Leddy indeed called it dualism to separate the ordinary in the everyday from the extraordinary. For him there is no opposition but a dialectical relationship. Extraordinary exists as a possibility within the ordinary and each moment in everyday life is uniquely precious. [41] In the above quotation Laura struggles with the gap that she feels exists between her genuine experience of beauty and an attempt to communicate it. What seems to constitute this gap for Laura is reflection.

On one hand she feels that “the game is lost” and the genuine experience ruined when the possibility of extraordinary within the ordinary is actualized through thinking or writing. On the other hand such a pure experience seems impossible, and through reflecting and interpreting the ordinary into extraordinary, she arrives at another experience that she characterises as beautiful: the active contextualizing that happens in reflection, making connections conscious.

Akin to the definition of beauty that I take in this paper as

linguistic categorization of a non-linguistic experience, Laura recognises two related levels of experience in her passage. The first level is subjective and non-linguistic and the second intersubjective and communicable. There is a dialectical relationship in that the first experience brings about the reflected second and this reflection affects the future “firsts” as Laura writes and stores it for later use. To do something with beauty, to use it for the managing of your life, there must be reflection as Laura concludes in the quotation above.

The continuous alternation between ordinary and extraordinary requires relational reflection. By this I mean what Elaine Scarry writes when she portrays beauty as prompting one’s mind to move chronologically back and forth; back in the search for precedents and parallels and forth into new acts of creation. [42] And I mean also what Katya Mandoki states when she writes about the myth of aesthetic distance and introduces instead of distance the concept of “aesthetic swinging.” She is inspired by the plays of Bertolt Brecht in which identification and distancing alternate, making possible a vision of a whole and its parts. [43] The movement back and forth with relational reflection – considering the whole and its parts – echoes Laura’s insights on reflecting about the experience of beauty. She writes of this as combining and making of connections through interpretation so as to form a communicable whole.

The ordinary, when once reflected and made extraordinary, even for a brief moment, is never the same again. One has created something new, moved on, in a word: grown. In the words of Elaine Scarry again, partly indebted to Simone Weil:

*“[T]hey [beautiful things] lift us (as though by the air currents of someone else’s sweeping), letting the ground rotate beneath us several inches, so that when we land, we find we are standing in a different relation to the world than we were a moment before.” [44]*

So far I have argued and interpreted Laura’s writing in a way that shows how beauty now holds a place in her everyday life in asserting and assessing the status quo. When things happen as if on their own, Laura writes of them as beautiful. There is no need to adapt or to reorient herself. When faced with changing circumstances, Laura finds her bearings through retracing beauty in her surroundings. But beauty also has a place in challenging the status quo. For this purpose beauty is something to be sought after. Laura expresses openness to experiences that present surprising and sudden events, finding them beautiful for her. This is significant for her as she finds in these instances a mirror for the changes in herself. Through reflecting on the situations and things that she finds beautiful, she is reflecting herself, her own change – growing.

## **6. September – aesthetizing as creating space for reflection**

*“I continue to take laundry outside to dry, at least on the few fair days. Even if it doesn’t dry completely, the linens straighten out and get a lovely scent. I wash bed sheets and hang a wide light green double sheet next to a narrow white*

*sheet. The sheets wave in the autumn wind like sails. Against a cloudy brownish green landscape they look like light signals, one a messenger of the summer and one of the coming winter. White and green sheets on the line are beautiful because they are clean, easy and clear. And as such, also a little surreal. They are symbols of the summer gone and the winter to come. From afar everything looks clear and simple. The naked autumn landscape around is much more complex and demanding. Together they are beautiful. There is the whole spectrum of life."*

Daylight is beginning to disappear from Laura's days. The September letter reads as a farewell to lightness and preparation for the beginning period of darkness that will last more or less half a year. The months when hanging laundry outside is possible are thus also the months when there is daylight in Laura's surroundings. The seven segments of the September letter all deal with light and dark on a concrete but especially on an abstract or symbolic level as Laura writes: "Little by little I have begun to realise that the light that has disappeared from outside could be found somewhere within me."

"I am like an Amaryllis bulb of which the tiny beginning of a green leaf is barely sticking out" begins Laura in the second segment of her letter. She continues on to describe the dense fog one morning, when walking her dog, as if walking inside a bubble: "Maybe this says something about my feelings: sometimes you live as if in a bubble from where you can't see or hear the outside world." Laura also harvests bulbs of garlic and in writing about this plays with the word (in Finnish, white onion) and its connotations: clean, white, bright and strong onions in the darkening day represent vitality for her. She concludes, "Power is beautiful. Everything in garlic is powerful. One just taken from the ground is a plant with a life force that you can feel. It has not turned into mere spice or remedy yet."

This September letter reads as if Mandoki's aesthetic swinging is in action, albeit in a very concrete manner. [\[45\]](#) Laura writes of things up close and at a distance, of pieces and of wholes and of her aesthetic enjoyment in relating the pieces to their context:

*"The window [that I have just washed] reflects parts of the yard and parts of the living room inside. In the nine old squares of glass there is my whole world [...] Old glass refracts images differently from different angles. The faulty refractions, images in overlapping glasses that don't quite meet [...] make this nine-squared window very beautiful, dreamlike".*

And describing the starry sky to a friend over the phone, Laura writes

*"...where I left she carries on [describing]. Only then I realise that she sees the same sky while sitting in a middle of a town in her apartment on the balcony of the seventh floor. It feels as if all the distances have shrunk. We look at the same*



*scene. We can't be far from each other."*

The segment on laundry hanging in this letter is again an epilogue. It is subtitled "Light signal" and is an epitome of the symbolism in the letter. There is no serendipity at play this time. Instead, Laura's conscious persistence is emphasized as she writes of continuing to take laundry outside in spite of the approaching winter. She hangs the sheets and describes them waving in the wind much like the previous passages. This time there is no sudden revelation of beauty in the swaying but the reflection she engages in seems more sought after. In the context of the letter as a whole, of diminishing daylight and approaching winter, the symbolism of life and light that the letter and this last passage hold seem in place. Laura seeks to reflect the changing seasons and holds the sheets as light signals of them. The aesthetic swinging that Laura engages in occurs by looking at these symbols from up close and from afar, in the perspective of her felt everyday life and in that of the changing seasons and shifting winds, alternating between clarity and complexity.

Compared to the previous passages on laundry hanging there is a feel in this last one as if Laura had come to the clothesline already intending to find beauty. It is as if she had decided to look at the swaying laundry as symbolising something that she needed to address. In addition to beauty as asserting, assessing, and challenging the status quo of one's everyday life, beauty seems to also serve in constructing everyday life. By this I mean that, having found reflecting on beauty rewarding, Laura starts using it actively for a specific need. [46] In the approaching darkness and cold of the winter, she seeks beauty to reflect on. She knows that in addressing something as beautiful she can reflect herself in relation to it. In this September quotation she seems to reflect her place in cycles of both changing seasons and her life as a whole. She is using beauty intentionally to construct further meanings in her daily life. She engages in aestheticizing her surroundings.

Aesthetics of the everyday is aesthetics of the ordinary. As such it is usually set against or compared with aestheticizing the everyday as the making of the extraordinary. [47] In her letters Laura has both come across beauty and sought for it. She has aestheticized her surroundings necessarily when writing in letters of the beauty in her everyday life. One might reject the dualism of ordinary and extraordinary and propose a dynamic or dialectical relationship between the two. It is still often pointed out that the ordinary in everyday life has received less interest than the extraordinary in everyday life. [48] According to Haapala aesthetics of the everyday has fundamentally to do with an existential account of the everyday: the lived familiar, comforting and safe. [49] Paradoxically, then, the beauty of the everyday according to his view depends on our not noticing the beauty of the everyday. Should we stop a moment to appreciate the sunlight dancing on the floor, let alone tell someone about it, we would aestheticize our everyday, making it extraordinary.

Katya Mandoki seeks to shed the negative tone of the term 'aestheticizing' by pointing out that it refers to aesthetic as a label that adds value. [50] Who would not want to add value to their daily existence? In this educational research it seemed

crucial to embrace just the aestheticizing. Joe Winston discusses human learning as a process of aligning language and world. He argues that beauty as an evaluative concept (for Plato and Aristotle as signalling desirability) aligns our valuations and desires to world in a deeply personal and formative manner. [51] In the opening quotation of this letter Laura is also clear on this. What she finds beautiful touches something inside her and it follows that what she finds beautiful then changes when she changes. For Laura then to concentrate on what she finds beautiful in her everyday life is to concentrate also on how she herself is changing. She is concentrating, in short on how her desires and valuations change: how she grows as a human being. If this conscious concentrating on beauty turns aesthetics of the everyday into aestheticization of the everyday, it is exactly the aestheticizing that is educationally relevant.

### **7. Conclusion – just how does it happen?**

Laura writes of laundry in five of her eleven letters. Apart from the first brief account of simply “doing laundry,” she is hanging or taking down laundry in the rest of her accounts. These take place in her yard at the same clothes-line each time. Of the whole process of doing laundry Laura does not discuss the sorting of clothes or the actual washing or indeed anything taking place elsewhere other than by the clothes-line. Of all the times that she hangs laundry, also inside during the winter months, she discusses only the times when she is doing it outside. The ideas discussed at the beginning of this paper of doing laundry as a process connected with symbolic purity or with being in control of one’s life do not quite meet with what Laura is writing. It seems that the environment surrounding Laura’s laundry hanging has a significant role in the equation. This has been a key insight in clarifying *how* beauty has a place in the managing of Laura’s everyday life.

When read in sequence, these four accounts by the clothes-line reveal that, after the introduction of the line as a physical object in the May letter, (the dent under the line, reaching for the line high up) it receives little description afterwards. The clothes-line and the physical routine around it seem to become a constant and as such invisible. Only the variables are noticed and addressed against this constant. In writing about laundry hanging Laura does not write much about the task itself but more about all that changes that go on around it: the seasons, the weather, the laundry items, colors, time, her feelings and in a word her everyday life. If one would hang laundry to dry inside there would be fewer variables to account, virtually none relating to one’s natural environment. There would be less opportunity to observe and acknowledge changes.

It follows that situations where there is both familiarity and change appear to Laura as sites for beauty. Changes provided by her natural surroundings seem relevant to Laura because they are serendipitous. A sudden gust of wind can bring about something that Laura then reflect on beautiful. It is against this constant, the clothes-line, that changes both in Laura’s surroundings and within her become evident. It is difficult to observe changes in oneself. It is easier to observe changes in what one finds beautiful as mirroring the changes within one.

This is what Laura does. This is how beauty works in the micro-scale steering of her everyday life.

I have carried my discussion through February to September in search out the place of beauty in Laura's writing. I will now conclude that such a place seems to be an occasional checking of direction in relation to the changes in both the context of Laura's everyday life and within her as a person. As an evaluative statement, beauty works in asserting, assessing, and challenging the status quo of one's life. Through aesthetic relating to one's surroundings, one's place in life can be evaluated and the direction changed. Questions around aesthetics are thus central to education. Everyday aesthetics and the concept of beauty, in particular, are virtually missing from educational research or are misguidedly restricted to only formal art education. [52] The case of Laura sheds light on the relevance of beauty at the constitutive and perceptual level of growing as a human being.

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### Endnotes

[1] All quotes from the data in this paper are from the letters of one participant, Laura (a pseudonym), unless stated otherwise.

[2] Pauliina Rautio, "Finding the place of everyday beauty. Correspondence as a method of data collection," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. In Press.

[3] Stuart Elden, "Rhythmanalysis. An Introduction," in Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis. Space, time and everyday life* (London: Continuum, 2004).

[4] The clauses appear as strikingly simple and curt here when compared with Laura's meandering and contemplative style of writing elsewhere in this and the other letters.

[5] Ildikó Lehtinen, "Identiteettiä etsimässä – perinteiset arvot muuttuvassa ajassa," *Tieteessä tapahtuu* 7/2008 and Ildikó Lehtinen, "Everyday life in a Mari Village – Modernisation Process of Mari Woman," *Ethnologia Fennica* 33 (2006). Also Yi-Fu Tuan, *Passing Strange and Wonderful* (Washington D.C.: Island Press), 100. See also Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger. An analysis of the concepts of pollution and taboo* (London: Routledge 2002).

[6] Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007), 152-153.

[7] Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, 152.

[8] Lehtinen, "Everyday life in a Mari Village".

[9] In education my approach is associated with symbolic interactionism. See, for example, K. Plummer, "Symbolic Interactionism in the Twentieth Century," in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*, ed. B.S. Turner (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996). In human geography my approach is related to the so-called "new human geography" as described, for example, in Ilkka Luoto, *Paikan teksti ja niiden henki. Johdatus geosemiotiikkaan – matkakertomus paikan kulttuuriseen ytimeen* (Oulu: Nordia Geographical Publications 37:2, 2008).

[10] Christoph Wulf, *Anthropology of Education* (Münster, 2002), 1-3.

[11] Arto Haapala, "On the Aesthetics of the Everyday. Familiarity, Strangeness and the Meaning of Place," in eds. Andrew Light & Jonathan Smith, *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005) 43; Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*; Katya Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics. Prosaics, the Play of Culture and Social Identities*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Andrew Light & Jonathan Smith, eds. *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Susan Sontag, *At the Same Time. Essays and Speeches* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2007) 3-13.

[12] Luis Cohen, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison, *Research Methods in Education* (London: Routledge, 2000).

[13] Sanna Hakulinen, Raija Komppula and Salla Saraniemi, *Lapin joulumatkailutuotteen elinkaari. Concorde-lennoista laajamittaiseen joulumatkailuun* (Helsinki: Matkailun edistämiskeskus). J. Malmsten, "Maaseutu mediassa," *Maaseudun Uusi Aika* no.1 (2004), 5-19. Anne Ollila, "Luonto Lapissa, menestys muruina maailmalla – Alueet lappilaisten nuorten tulevaisuuskuviissa," in *Samaan aikaan toisaalla... Nuoret, alueellisuus ja hyvinvointi*, ed. P. Paju (Helsinki: Nuorisotutkimusverkosto, Nuorisosiain neuvottelukunta, Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden tutkimus- ja kehittämiskeskus STAKES).

[14] I am conscious of the threat and simple appeal of blaming the media for "false" representations and offering "true" ones through this research. Such is not my intention. The rural North is an ever-evolving mesh of countless definitions, driven by countless interests and viewpoints. I argue that the viewpoint of the villagers' daily lives, especially that of women, contributes to this mesh, not that it would replace the mesh altogether as something truer and real. See especially Malmsten "Maaseutu mediassa" and also Heininen et.al. *Lapin joulumatkailutuotteen elinkaari* and Tim Ingold, "Conversations from the North: Scholars of Many Disciplines and Inhabitants of Many Places in Dialogue with One Another, with Animals and Plants, and with the Land," in *Knowledge and Power in the Arctic*, eds. Paula Kankaanpää, Sanna Ovaskainen, Leo Pekkala & Monica Tennberg (Rovaniemi: University of Lapland 2007).

[15] Päivi Naskali, Mervi Autti, Seija Keskitalo-Foley, Anne Korhonen and Mervi Kutuniva eds., *Tuulia. Feministisiä näkökulmia lappilaiseen sukupuolikäyttäytymiseen* (Rovaniemi: Lapin yliopisto 2003).

[16] The colours of the Finnish flag are blue and white.

[17] Yuriko Saito, "The Power of the Aesthetic," plenary lecture at Eighth International Summer School of Applied Aesthetics in Lahti, Finland, June 15-18, 2008.

[18] Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967).

[19] It is noteworthy that Laura doesn't refer to this play of colors as beautiful but as "funny." I have however interpreted it as an experience of beauty (or part of such an experience) for it is presented as a complete subtitled segment in a letter where Laura, according to my instructions, handles the theme of beauty in her everyday life.

[20] Arne Naess, *Ecology of Wisdom. Writings by Arne Naess*, ed. Alan Drengson and Bill Devall (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2008), 133-139. Naess cites Immanuel Kant from "An Attempt at Some Reflections on Optimism," in *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755-1770*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 71-83; and from *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals* [also titled *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*], transl. Thomas K. Abbott (New York: Prentice Hall College Division, 1949).

[21] Naess, *Ecology of Wisdom*, 134.

[22] Naess, *Ecology of Wisdom*, 136; Immanuel Kant, "Critique of Practical Reason," in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant. Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 206.

[23] Laura is never explicit about her ecological justifications for drying laundry outside, however. She simply notes in one interview that there is no dryer in the household and that she prefers drying laundry outside. But in her interviews and in the letters at large she does portray herself explicitly at times as someone who votes for a green party candidate, grows and gathers her food rather than buys it imported from afar and takes pride in getting by with consuming very little.

[24] Gladness as in Naess, *Ecology of Wisdom*, 136; Elevation as in Kant, "Critique of Practical Reason", 205.

[25] Sakari Karvonen, "The Desolation of Social Welfare in the North?" in *Knowledge and Power in the Arctic* eds. Paula Kankaanpää et.al. (Rovaniemi: University of Lapland, Arctic Centre Reports 48, 2007). Gissler, M., Orre, S., Puhakka, T. "Tilasto-osuus," In *Samaan aikaan toisaalla... Nuoret, alueellisuus ja hyvinvointi*. ed. P. Paju (Helsinki: Nuorisotutkimusverkosto, Nuorisosiain neuvottelukunta, Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden tutkimus- ja kehittämiskeskus STAKES, 2004). Suvannon kyläyhdistys [Suvanto Village Association], *Suvanto. Kyläsuunnitelma 2008-2013*, unpublished.

[26] Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 8.

[27] Winston, "'An Option for Art but Not an Option for Life'".

[28] Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just*, pp. 6-9.

[29] Kajsa Ellegård and Matthew Cooper, "Complexity in daily

life – a 3D-visualization showing activity patterns in their contexts," *eIJTUR (electronic International Journal of Time Use Research)* 1 (2004): 37–59, and Kajsa Ellegård and Bertil Vilhelmsson, "Home as a Pocket of Local Order: Everyday Activities and The Friction of Distance," *Geografiska Annaler, Series B: Human Geography* 86:4 (2004) 281-296, and Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis. Space time and everyday life.* (London: Continuum, 2004), and Eeva Jokinen, "Arjen kyseenalaisuus," *Naistutkimus* 1 (2003) 4-17, and Lehtinen, "Everyday life in a Mari Village".

[30] The idea of 'everyday' as universally shared is challenged by e.g. Ben Highmore in "Introduction: Questioning Everyday Life" in *The Everyday Life Reader*, ed. Ben Highmore (London: Routledge, 2002).

[31] Amia Lieblich, Tammar B. Zilber, Rivka Tuval-Mashiach, "Narrating Human Actions. The Subjective Experience of Agency, Structure, Communion, and Serendipity," *Qualitative Inquiry* 14, no.4 (2008).

[32] Lieblich *et al.* "Narrating Human Actions", 617.

[33] Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just*, pp. 7-8, 31.

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] E.g. Tom Leddy, "The Nature of Everyday Aesthetics," Light, A. & Smith, J., eds. in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*.

[36] Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, pp. 51, 186.

[37] Haapala, "On the Aesthetics of the Everyday."

[38] Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 104

[39] The correspondence between me and the participants was arranged according to their wishes in a way that everyone, including myself, wrote to everyone else. That is, each letter was copied five times and sent to all of us. Laura's quotation here is to be read knowing that I had in my letter from the previous month rhetorically wondered what happens to my experiences of beauty when I write them down.

[40] Jeffrey Petts, "Book Review," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 42, no.1 (2008), review of Light & Smith, eds., *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*.

[41] Tom Leddy, "Everyday Aesthetics and the Sublime," a plenary lecture at the Eighth International Summer School of Applied Aesthetics in Lahti, Finland, June 15-18, 2008.

[42] Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just*, pp. 30, 46

[43] Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 22.

[44] Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just*, 112; partly indebted to Simone Weil, "Love of the Order of the World," in *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), p. 180.

[45] Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 22

[46] She referred to writing about beauty as surprisingly rewarding in an interview after the correspondence year

ended. This is also easy to read in her letters, as they keep deepening in reflection as the year progresses.

[47] Haapala, "On the Aesthetics of the Everyday".

[48] Haapala, "On the Aesthetics of the Everyday"; see also Tom Leddy, "The Nature of Everyday Aesthetics" in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life.*, eds. Light, A. & Smith, J. pp. 17-18

[49] Haapala, "On the Aesthetics of the Everyday."

[50] Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics.*

[51] Joe Winston, "'An Option for Art But Not an Option for Life' Beauty as an Educational Imperative," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 42, no.3 (2008), 72, 74.

[52] Winston, "'An Option for Art But Not an Option for Life'"; Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*; Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (London: Duckworth 2006).