

Poor Theatre, Rich Theatre: Layers of Exchange in Two Adaptations of Ingmar Bergman and Paavo Haavikko

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ABSTRACT

The article analyzes two Finnish theatre adaptations of *Fanny och Alexander*, by Ingmar Bergman, and *Rauta-aika*, by Paavo Haavikko, premiered in 2010 and 2011 respectively. The key question is, how the two works brought the filmic originals' wealth of material to theatrically manageable proportions, and how the themes of poverty and prosperity were developed by their scenic machineries – a question of theatricality, but also, if you will, of a sort of theatrical exchange: “golden age” to exile or decline in the story-worlds, lavish film to theatrical constraint in production. The first two sections take a specifically economic perspective on the original TV projects and their central storylines; the two final sections address how these storylines were locally woven by the revolving stage and the revolving auditorium used in the theatre productions. On various levels, a playfully “monetary” distinction of metonymy and metaphor is suggested in which metonymic contiguity stands for contextual prosperity (as experience, community, immediacy), metaphoric substitution for relative deprivation (as distance, abstraction, exchange).

KEYWORDS

Ingmar Bergman, dramaturgy, Paavo Haavikko, metaphor and metonymy, scenography, theatricality

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INTRODUCTION

In the history of Nordic television, the year 1982 stands out with two specific works, both of a magnitude and material abundance not seen before and not likely seen since. In Finland, the first episode of *Rauta-aika* (*The Age of Iron*, hereafter R) was aired on 28 February, that is, the Kalevala Day and the Finnish Culture Day. Written by Paavo Haavikko and directed by Kalle Holmberg, the “miniseries” extends over 282 minutes in four parts. In Sweden, the 188-minute film version of *Fanny och Alexander* (hereafter F), written and directed by Ingmar Bergman, opened in cinemas on 17 December; the four-part, 312-minute TV version had its premiere on Christmas Day 1984.

Not long after the passing of Bergman (1918–2007) and Haavikko (1931–2008), both works were adapted for Finnish theatre by Seija Holma, resident dramaturg of the Tampere Workers’ Theatre, and performed in my home town over the 2010/11 season. R¹ remains the sole theatre adaptation to date, and at the time F was only the third, following the 2009 world premiere in Oslo and a Swedish-speaking version in Helsinki. (At the 2011 Tampere Theatre Festival, Holma was duly rewarded for her work by the Finnish Cultural Foundation.) The production of F was directed by Tiina Puumalainen and opened on the main stage of the Tampere Workers’ Theatre, on 4 November 2010; R was directed by Kari Heiskanen and opened at the outdoor Pyynikki Summer Theatre on 17 June 2011.² Size and lengthwise, the performances

1 Due to their repeated use as objects of comparison and exchange, I will resort to the same abbreviations for all versions of F and R: literary, filmed, adapted, or staged. The specific referent is defined or implied by the context, and where it is not, the argument applies to all variants.

2 Running for 32 (F) and 48 (R) performances, neither production did particularly

amounted to some 175 and 155 minutes respectively (including intermission) and drew heavily on the revolving stage and auditorium of their aforementioned premises.

I admit it was this happy set of coincidences – the same season, the same dramaturg, the same year of origin, the national value invested, and especially the two dramaturgies of revolving – that first led me to consider writing about these two productions, side by side, for *Nordic Theatre Studies*. However, it was not until the “money” themed call for contributions that I began to realize how they actually go together. Rationalizing quite a bit, if money is a function of *exchange* and of ensuing *distance* (from immediate use value),³ such dynamics can intriguingly be traced in F and R alike, both internally and externally (the latter including the notion of adaptation).

Internally, first, both pieces dramatize a conflict between a rich sphere and a poor sphere – one that would have appeared quite differently on the outskirts of the Cold War in the polarized 1980s than it did after the 2008 financial crisis. In terms of plot, F opens at the Christmas festivities of the bourgeois Ekdahl household, in 1907: the retired actress Helena and her three sons (Oscar, Carl, Gustav Adolf), wives, friends, maids, and children, all gathered around abundant food and the family theatre. After Oscar dies, his young widow, Emilie, remarries and moves with her children, Fanny and Alexander, to the austere parsonage of bishop Edvard Vergérus. This is a house of “punctuality, cleanliness, and order,” into which they are to settle “without possessions.”⁴ R, in turn, presents a paganized version of the *Kalevala* of the Finnish national epic (1835). Here, the main conflict is between the people of Kalevala – the shamanic Väinämöinen and other heroes now renamed in the diminutive, as Väinö, Ilmari, Jouko, and so on – and the North, or Pohjola, becoming ever wealthier as the former become poorer. In both works, these two spheres also engage in dubious attempts at trade. Where the Ekdahls and Helena’s Jewish friend, Isak Jakobi, try to buy their family back from the Bishop, in R many of the protagonists will woo the daughter of the North – and notoriously, in Haavikko’s version, the mythic “Sampo” that the North asks in return has itself become a blunt money-making machine. As summarized in one commentary of the TV version, R “aimed at a materialistic re-interpretation [of the *Kalevala* epic] from a monetary perspective.”⁵

Externally, apart from the ghosts of Bergman and of Finnish national identity, a key challenge in bringing these two works on stage would have

well with audiences, drawing 16,033 and 23,986 spectators respectively (<http://ilona.tinfo.fi>). R especially was so off target that for the next two seasons, the Pynnikki Summer Theatre opted for the safe, nostalgic rock musical *Hot Summer '85* (*Kuuma kesä '85*, Syrjä–Suokas–Vihinen).

3 Cf. Hornborg 2016: while only implicit in this article, the Swedish anthropologist’s theorization of money as “global magic” has been explicitly influential on some of my forthcoming work.

4 Bergman 1982, 106; 98.

5 Laine and Salmi 2009, 73.

been the sheer opulence of the originals. Hence my titular nod toward Jerzy Grotowski: “No matter how much theatre expands and exploits its mechanical resources,” the Polish director famously claimed in the 1960s, “it will remain technologically inferior to film and television,” and should consequently opt for “poverty” not richness by “artistic kleptomania.”⁶ Thus the poetics of exchange acquires further variables of quality and quantity: where Bergman’s and Holmberg’s films would be directly equated with their sheer cost, in the contemporary press, the Tampere adaptations could not hope to directly *represent* their value (as if in another currency) but only to *perform it anew*, in a new context.

In F, there was little leeway dramaturgically – the text could be cut but not changed any more than was necessary – but the big-stage epoch style was fully adhered to by a lavish set (by Hannu Lindholm, with the revolve and a huge upstage mirror), complete with costumes (Tellervo Helminen) and choreography (Osku Heiskanen).⁷ In R, both text and staging were handled more freely. Having played the part of Jouko as a young actor, in the TV version, Kari Heiskanen’s vision was of a scaled-down, more contemporary world of littered backyards and messy car repair shops. At the theatre in Pyylikki, defined by its huge revolving auditorium since 1959, this world was further outlined by Marjaana Mutanen’s comically anachronistic costumes, and set designer Markku Hakuri’s modernist volumes, epically out of place amid the surrounding nature.⁸ That both works were closer to “rich” than poor theatre, in Grotowski’s terms, is beside my point: simply in order to cut the approximate five hours of the originals⁹ to a mere two or three, the adaptations had to rely on explicitly theatrical means.

Accordingly, my article proceeds to analyze how the two pieces brought the wealth of material to theatrically manageable proportions, and how the themes of poverty and prosperity were developed by their scenic machineries.¹⁰ Alternating between more external and more internal “shots,” throughout, the first two sections take a specifically economic perspective on Holmberg’s and Bergman’s original projects, and on their central storylines as these would later appear in the theatre versions. With some inspiration from Roman Jakobson’s discussion of metonymy and metaphor, the two final sections address how these storylines were locally woven in the performances, their scenography and their dramaturgy together enabling the metaphorical dynamic of “exchange” that I argue largely defines all the works discussed

6 Grotowski 1968, 19; 41. See also Paavolainen 2012.

7 For a vague sense, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDHNJkVhPqg>.

8 For good images, see http://www.pyynikinkesateatteri.fi/lehdisto/rauta_aika_2011.html.

9 The literary versions that Holma used are much larger still: see Bergman 1982, Haavikko 1982.

10 On my framework for theatricality and scenography, see Paavolainen 2018, 91–127.

(“golden age” to exile or decline in the story-worlds, lavish film to theatrical constraint in production). While most engaged with the prose of money, the first two sections effectively function as exposition, and may even be skipped by readers already familiar with the material; toward the end, I trace more general dramaturgies of exchange, from the merest words and objects to problems of adaptation and national heritage. While only the extended third section focuses exclusively on the Tampere theatre productions, the naming of the “shots” is indicative: if the “internal” takes (INT.) define worlds of metonymic contiguity – of experience, community, immediacy – then “zooming out” (EXT.) is a function of metaphorical substitution: of distance, abstraction, exchange.

EXT. DEBATES ON MONEY AND SPECTACLE, CA 1982

Both R and F began production in the late 1970s; Haavikko’s and Bergman’s scripts are dated 1978 and 1979. From the first, however, the public discussion of both centred on the theme of money, and especially the amount of it: current approximates for the films’ production costs range between 3–4 (R) and 5–6 (F) million euros. While the first references to R’s cost were not entirely negative – rather, they aroused curiosity and sensational interest – Bergman was accused of “taking the bread from the mouths of his colleagues by draining the [Swedish] Film Institute of money.”¹¹ Given that F could only be managed as a huge international co-production, no wonder that Bergman’s Finnish producer Jörn Donner, then the head of the Institute, would later bemoan the Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE for its excessive spending on R. Claiming that it had cost some six times what had been officially stated, he presented the project as a reckless waste of both tax revenue and licence fees. Also, Donner hoped that other countries be spared “this parody of our history, in which the placing of famous faces in barren nature is expected to furnish content and meaning to Haavikko’s text.”¹²

Haavikko’s text, also published in book form in 1982, was prefaced by the provocative injunction, “Forget the *Kalevala*!”¹³ Whereas the “original” *Kalevala*, as compiled and published by Elias Lönnrot in 1835, was based on extensive folk materials that he claimed could have yielded him seven different epics, Haavikko explicitly wanted to cut through the gathered heritage of idealism and romanticism. Influenced by the situational “concreteness” of the Icelandic sagas, he dispensed with heroism, alliteration, and the *Kalevala* metre, and reduced both narrative and dialogue to their laconic bone.¹⁴

11 Ingmar Bergman Foundation; Steene 2005, 331.

12 *Hufvudstadsbladet* 19 March 1982, cited in Laine & Salmi 2009, 79.

13 Haavikko 1982, 5. Paavo Haavikko (1931–2008) began his career as a key poet of Finnish modernism in the 1950s; director Kalle Holmberg (1939–2016) was at the forefront of Finnish theatre from the late 1960s, through the 1970s and further. Ingmar Bergman, I presume, needs no introduction.

14 E.g. Sihvo 1984, 543; 546.

In stark contrast, the renowned production team opted for the spectacle. Director Holmberg, composer Aulis Sallinen, and set designer Ensio Suominen had previously worked with Haavikko in the opera, and this shows in the TV product as well.¹⁵ Each of the four episodes is drastically different in tenor, and the story of Kullervo was left unproduced altogether. Indeed – though in the genre of the fairy tale rather than the epic – this stylistic variety also defines the four episodes of Bergman’s series, only now the abundance was his own doing: a cast of fifty-plus actors, a thousand costumes, and some twenty-five hours of filmed material, of which, so the director lamented, the 1982 cinema version especially was but a diminished fragment.¹⁶

That the work had to be edited into two was again dictated by the risks inherent in its cost; the shorter film version was primarily intended for international release. As for R, being shown on TV first and not straight again because of its high rerun fees, it never became quite the *cinematic* monument its proponents thought it should have.¹⁷ In any case, the works were sold to roughly thirty and twenty countries, respectively – even though Haavikko wanted the film to scare foreigners away by showing them “the weather” (“There is no summer”)¹⁸ – and especially in Sweden, both were also very favourably received. A refined costume drama for a mainstream audience that might have quivered at some of Bergman’s darker work, before, F garnered honours in Sweden, France, and the United States, including four Academy Awards in 1984. In turn, the third episode of R (centred on the more coherent story of Lemminki) was awarded the 1983 Prix Italia for best drama.

As for criticism, Bergman’s focussed on his typical lack of social consciousness, or the way his idyllic story ignored its sexist and patriarchal overtones for more existential concerns.¹⁹ As “a country where nearly everyone owns a summer house and drives a Volvo,” a *New York Times* journalist suggested in response, “Sweden lacks the sort of problems that lend themselves to conventional dramatic representation,” so its dramas too are bound to be “interior.”²⁰ R, in turn, was criticized for its general disarray and its perceived cruelty, but also for its “Homeric lingering” and its sheer tediousness – that is, its monumentality, regardless of its stated intent of questioning the national monument that was the *Kalevala*.²¹

For present purposes, however, the most revealing attacks on R focused

15 For clips and imagery, see <http://yle.fi/aihe/artikkeli/2007/12/13/rauta-aika>.

16 Bergman 1994; Ingmar Bergman Foundation; Steene 2005, 332.

17 Laine and Salmi 2009, 82; 80.

18 Haavikko 1995, 88.

19 Steene 2005, 332.

20 Kakutani 1983.

21 Laaksonen 1983, 107; 112; Laine and Salmi 2009, 80. Adding to the effect of monumentality, there was an exhibition of R’s scenography at the Tampere Art Museum, and even a theme-park style effort at preserving its ethnographically detailed “villages” of Kalevala and Pohjola (Laine and Salmi 2009, 82).

on money, and on its dual distortion or misrepresentation, not only of the *Kalevala* (there were no beards and no *kantele* or Finnish zither!) but also, consequently, of the Finnish people. At first, the economic arguments concentrated on how the budget was counted, whose money it consisted of, and what else could have been done or bought with the same amount – how many houses built, how many *Turhapuro* films produced?²² Once the initial shame of sending R to compete for the Prix Italia began to fade, articles and letters to editors continued to lament how there was now “fame but no money,” wondering whom YLE had sent to Italy and how much that might have cost.²³ And most importantly, this “grotesque parody” of the *Kalevala* foundered on its interpretation of “the Sampo, cause of eternal prosperity and happiness: for Haavikko, a mint for real-looking fake money, for Lönnrot, the civilization and culture achieved by the human race.”²⁴ Where some perceived its reduction to “a capitalist hoax machine” as “communist propaganda” on YLE’s part, the major newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* took up the reference and dubbed Holmberg’s very project a “money-destroying machine.”²⁵

INT. PECUNIARY STORYLINES, 1982 / 2010–11²⁶

Paavo Haavikko had already coined his interpretation of the coin-minting, counterfeiting Sampo in his epic poem *Kaksikymmentä ja yksi* (*One and Twenty*, 1974). Arguing that the Kalevalaic North, “Pohjola,” was actually south – “*pohjalla*,” at the bottom – he presented the Sampo as a Byzantine mint that Finnish warriors tried to plunder from Constantinople in 1041. Whereas Byzantine money was “hard currency” of “full gold content,” the owner of the Sampo could mint “real-looking money from cheap metal.”²⁷ Even as his theory was met with disdain by folklorists, according to Pekka Tarkka, Haavikko “believed that he had found in the old records of oral poetry a real society and something that moved through that world: money and trade routes.”²⁸ So as to keep the mythic cornucopia “concrete” – the Sampo had previously been interpreted as a mill, a godhead, a celestial pole – R likewise is situated at the end of the Finnish Iron Age, before the first crusade,

22 Hukka 1994, 240; Laaksonen 1983, 105. *Uuno Turhapuro* was a very successful series of comic films, starring Vesa-Matti Loiri who now, scandalously for the time, was also cast as Ilmari, in R.

23 Hukka 1994, 243.

24 Väinö Kaukonen, *Kalevala* specialist, cited in Pentikäinen 2004, 181.

25 Oskari Kiiras, cited in Partanen 1982, 40; *Helsingin Sanomat* cited in Laine & Salmi 2009, 78.

26 Here and later, I only cite lines from the dramatizations Seija Holma kindly shared with me in April 2014, and which I later noticed were applied nearly verbatim in performance. For convenience, however, I refer to them through the published versions in Bergman 1982 and Haavikko 1982, cited parenthetically in the text, translated respectively by Alan Blair and myself.

27 Haavikko cited in Sihvo 1980, 79; 84.

28 Tarkka 1984, 534.

at the outset of a more monetary economy. Here, Haavikko's stated aim was to get through the text of the folk poem, to "the stage of history, technology, thought, economy, and society" it was about, which he now situated at about "850–1150, three hundred years, that's when the Karelians and the Finns become a borderland of world trade, world history, and grand ideologies."²⁹

Taking place in Uppsala, from 1907 to 1909, the world of F is ostensibly smaller, the still safe haven of Oscarian Sweden at the outskirts of a soon-impending world war. Here too, however, the very characters can be introduced in economic terms. Of Oscar Ekdahl's three sons – Helena's late businessman husband – Oscar Jr runs the family theatre and Gustaf Adolf is a successful restaurateur. Carl, by contrast, is a sadly indebted university professor, at pains to borrow money both from his mother and from her friend Isak Jacobi, a lender and a wealthy antiques dealer (55). The polarity widens when the Bishop wants Emilie and her children to "come to [his] house without possessions" (98): if the Ekdahls' is "a world of wealth, comfort, culture, all ashimmer," the shift "seems like a Dickensian fairy tale about cast-out children."³⁰

In R, the economic through line is traced from the outset. At the beginning, the village smith, Ilmari is already "forging himself a wife of gold and silver" (15) to replace a deceased one, while Väinö – the prophet, turned businessman, in the theatre version – agrees to preserve the life of Jouko in exchange for his sister Aino (23–4). In other storylines, Lemminki, who married "higher" than his family with Kyllikki, promises to quit battles if only she stays home and away from the village (74–6). As the vengeful orphan Kullervo cuts the wood and ruins the harvest of his keeper Untamo, the latter decides to sell him to some old master with a young mistress (147): "They buy, they pay, but not for the same Kullervo. The master buys one, the mistress another."³¹

However, the central objects of exchange only appear when Aino drowns herself and her mother tells Väinö to go North for "daughters" (32). When Kyllikki goes out anyway, Lemminki also heads North for like "merchandise" (83). At Pohjola, the Mistress of the North first meets Väinö with scorn – possessing only "air and dreams," he doesn't "look a tradesman" – and asks him to make her a Sampo in exchange for her daughter (38–40). When the daughter herself asks for a metaphoric boat, "not touched by hand nor bought by money," Väinö takes this task upon himself and tells Ilmari to forge the Sampo, having made "a deal for their daughter, on [his] account" (47–8). As for Lemminki, the Mistress of the North tasks him with ever new braveries – hunting down the Moose of Hisi or the Swan of Tuonela – for it is now "a seller's market."³²

29 Haavikko 1995, 88.

30 Quart and Quart 1983, 24–5.

31 Haavikko 1989, 49, modified translation.

32 This appears to be Holma's own line; as in Haavikko's R, the chronology is arbitrary.

In F, meanwhile, Isak magically smuggles the children out of the parsonage in “a fine chest” that the Bishop had already offered him before (when the Jew declined to lend him money) but which he now is ready to buy “for almost any price at all” (160–1). Later, Carl and Gustav Adolf arrive to “compensate” for the Bishop’s “severe loss”; when he declines, Gustav promises to “spread so many incredible rumors” about his person and conduct that he may only hope to work “among heathens and Eskimos,” and finally tells “this puerile mental masturbator” that “Emilie is to have her divorce in a trice or [he] shall declare His Holiness bankrupt with a vengeance” (173–8).

In the end, things turn out rather differently in the two stories. In F, Emilie leaves the Bishop drugged in his sleep and he dies burning in a nocturnal fire that Isak’s nephew Ismael lets Alexander understand is caused by his own hatred and imagination (200). The “little world” of the Ekdahls is restored, with two new babies (Gustav’s and the Bishop’s), even as “the hour for robbers and murderers” is already upon them (208). In R, however, Pohjola has become “a tradesman, moneymaker” (192), richer by each autumn while Kallevalan money is reduced to mere “leaves on the ground” (189). Disdained by the Mistress of the North once more, Väinö’s people decide to take the Sampo back – the colloquial lines sound written for actor Anneli Sauli: “What are they squeaking about? What use is the gizmo if everybody had one?” – but their attempted raid is an epic failure: a failure, but therefore also an epic to live on. In the final equations, Väinö tells Ilmari to leave the world – “a door, a bed, and a grave” are all “measured to a man’s shoulders” (238) – and Kullervo concludes, “It was not a bad life. One has seen worse. It has taken all that it has given. It was even.” (253)³³

INT. METONYMIC MACHINERIES: TAMPERE 2010 / 2011

Coming now to the actual productions that I witnessed some seven years ago, and have now thoroughly reviewed through their scripts and DVDs,³⁴ my question was how the above wealth of material was brought to theatrically manageable proportions? The question is one of theatricality, but also, if you will, of a sort of theatrical *trading*: as Bert States once put it, “what the drama, of all the arts, requires is a way of allowing the stage to contain things outside of it and to make visible things that are invisible.” To elaborate, he introduces *metaphor* as “a device for getting in more world on the principle of similarity,” and *metonymy*, for “reducing states, or qualities, or attributes, or whole entities like societies, to visible things in which they somehow in-

33 Here, Kullervo’s line is taken from Haavikko’s Ilmari, others from his “Narrator.” In performance, Väinö would stagger on the “leaves” in mint summer-theatre condition: stumbling drunk.

34 Holma 2010; 2011; *Fanny ja Alexander*; *Rauta-aika*. I thank Seija Holma, Sari Andersson, and Hannele Sulin for providing me with these materials. The following is also influenced by various previews and reviews in *Helsingin Sanomat* (Lauri Meri, Suna Vuori) and the local *Aamulehti* (Mikko Husa, Juhani Karila, Panu Rajala, Sanna Sevänen, Jussi Suvanto, and Anne Välinoro).

here.”³⁵ States takes the distinction from Roman Jakobson, who famously also related the respective “semantic lines” of similarity and contiguity to “two types of aphasia” – blocking one or the other – as well as to certain artistic orientations (with metaphor and metonymy respectively predominant in symbolism and realism).³⁶ For States, more precisely, the “confinement of the action to [the] single loaded locale” of the *living room* was “one of the realistic theater’s greatest affective advantages,” or perhaps “the limitation on which it capitalized most successfully.” Suitably, not even the film could quite duplicate its metonymic quality of “still silent participation.”³⁷

While my above *comparison* of the original projects and my *tracing* of their storylines could thus be understood as relatively metaphorical and metonymic, in themselves, the theatre productions of F and R would obviously display both tendencies, yet in intriguingly converse ratios. In terms of mood, colour, and costume, F mostly retained the palette of Bergman’s film, moving from the warm reds of Christmas and the theatre to the blacks and greys of the Bishop’s quarters, to the golden mystique of Isak’s workshop, to the bright whites and greens of the summer pavilion – by way of metaphorical “selection and substitution.”³⁸ Likewise, the soundscape consisted of Bergmanesque pianos and cellos with the occasional touch of klezmer for “Jewish” scenes. In contrast, the world of R was quite a bit more fragmentary. While all the expected elements were displaced, metaphorically – swords by rifles and chainsaws, boats by pickup trucks, Väinö’s kantele by an Ibanez electric guitar suitable for “semigods” (207) – the stand-ins themselves would metonymically evoke a range of still further contexts. Hence the production’s eclectic idiom of “combination and contexture”: whilst dominated by the Balkan rhythms of the Polish klezmer band Kroke, the music jumped from humming schlagers to Pink Floyd to Fleetwood Mac to Finnish *humppa*. In terms of costume and stage figure³⁹, the shabby Väinö-plus-his-suitcase was joined by the army-clad figures of Lemminki and Untamo, an Aino in a red jockey outfit, an Ilmari in garage overalls, a B-movie rich-bitch cougar for the Mistress of the North (see Figure 1), and, fittingly, a daughter of hers that was perceptibly different in different scenes.

The revolving stage and auditorium also highlighted the metonymical intertwining of scenography and dramaturgy, neatly literalizing Christopher Baugh’s conception of scenography as “the principal dramaturgy of performance-making – perhaps close to a direct translation of *scaena* and *graphos*

35 States 1985, 65.

36 Jakobson 1971, 90–2. On Jakobson and cognitive metaphor theory, see Paavolainen 2012, 8–9.

37 States 1985, 68. On the theatricality of this, and Tim Ingold, see also Paavolainen 2018, 267.

38 Jakobson 1971, 77; cf. Quart & Quart 1983, 25.

39 On Jiří Veltruský’s metonymical concept, see Paavolainen 2012, 42.



FIGURE 1. *Mistress of the North* (Anneli Sauli). Photo Leena Klemelä.

‘drawing with the scene’.⁴⁰ Combining the “rigid omnipresent space” of Bert States’s “theatre” with cinematic mobility, the scenographies of F and R become metonymic machines for “drawing with the scene” – weaving together the very dramaturgies of place, narrative, and audience attention.⁴¹ In this theatrical *transaction*, the metaphoric question becomes how the epic whole of the filmed originals would have been *traded* for their much-reduced counterparts; I return to this in the concluding section. Here, I focus on the more metonymic question of how the “poor” parts thus retained could still weave a novel kind of “richness.”

As indicated in Figure 2, the few constants in F’s scenography were the huge revolve and the huge upstage mirror, with two two-tiered theatre boxes on either side; for scenes in the theatre, a red theatre curtain would also be lowered from the flies. In the early part of the performance (a), a dominant stage element was a very bourgeois but also very metonymic scrap of wall,⁴² housing the children’s bedroom on one side, and complete with a doorway for choreographies of entrance and exit – often against an opposite movement by the revolving stage itself. Akin to Alexander’s magic lantern but escaping the realism of film, the Ekdahls’ whirlwind of a Christmas-fest was braided from strands of intrigue and family ties, coming and going and even dancing through the door frame, momentarily centred on a Christmas table,

40 Baugh 2013, 240.

41 States 1985, 68; Baugh 2013, 240. On the figure of weaving, see Paavolainen 2015; 2018.

42 The aesthetic notwithstanding, this is an outright Brechtian device: cf. Paavolainen 2018, 102–3.

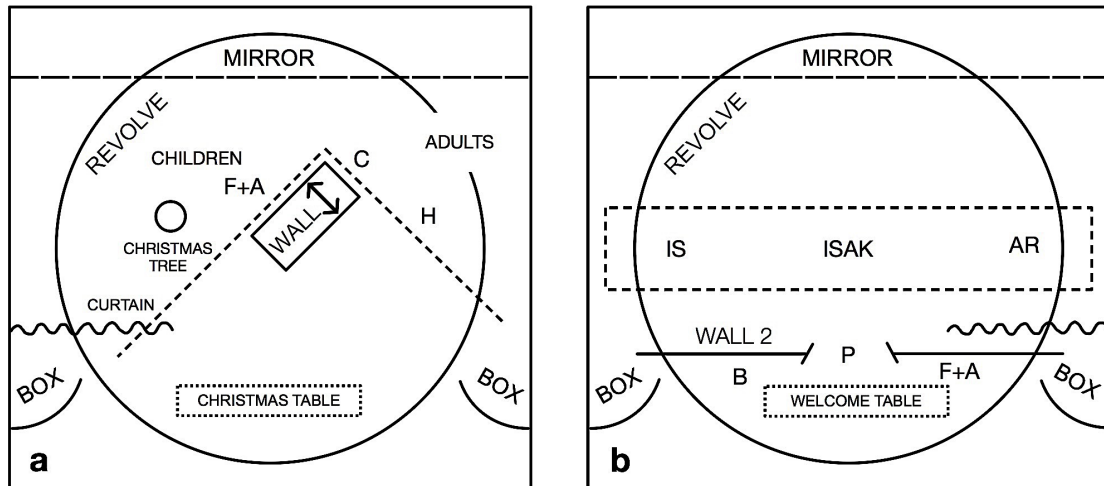


FIGURE 2. Scenic design of *Fanny ja Alexander* (not in proportion).

downstage, whose upstage reflection would largely compensate for its relative lack of culinary excess.

During Christmas night, the revolve would alternate between its two “faces” for the children and the adults, as indicated by the dashed lines in the figure. The “adult” face was centred on Helena and Isak on Helena’s sofa (H), her comments on her three sons intercut with respective spots on Carl and Lydia, brawling by a divan at one end of the wall (C), and Gustaf and the maid, Maj, cavorting about in the various theatre boxes. After Oscar’s death bed was slowly revolved off against the full Chopin pomp of his funeral cortège – ending with him and Alexander alone on the revolve – the stage was left black and empty but for the budding “family” of the Bishop, Emilie, and the children, reflected in the mirror, and silently observed by Oscar from the loge stage left.

Now, the revolve and the mirror alike gave way to a very different wall (b): the static grey of the Bishop’s mansion, cutting apart the whole downstage area from on high, only briefly alleviated by a sparse “welcome table” in memory of Christmas past. Framed by its high Gothic doors and windows, grim shades of vertical light would pick out the Bishop’s study (B) and the children’s new bedroom (F+A), audience left and right, remaining so even as the central part occasionally opened for the bright white of the Ekdahls’ summer pavilion (P), and the glimpse of green it enabled on the mirror.⁴³

Finally, the dashed rectangle stands for Isak Jacobi’s mystic curiosity shop, conjured by a set of high golden chandeliers gliding to place in the dark – the baroque workshop and bedroom of his nephews Aron (AR) and Ismael (IS), at its extreme ends, alternating on the revolve with scenes in the parsonage now reduced to bare black. When Aunt Elsa dashes across

43 In fast forward, one notices that the parsonage walls are also replaced in these scenes.

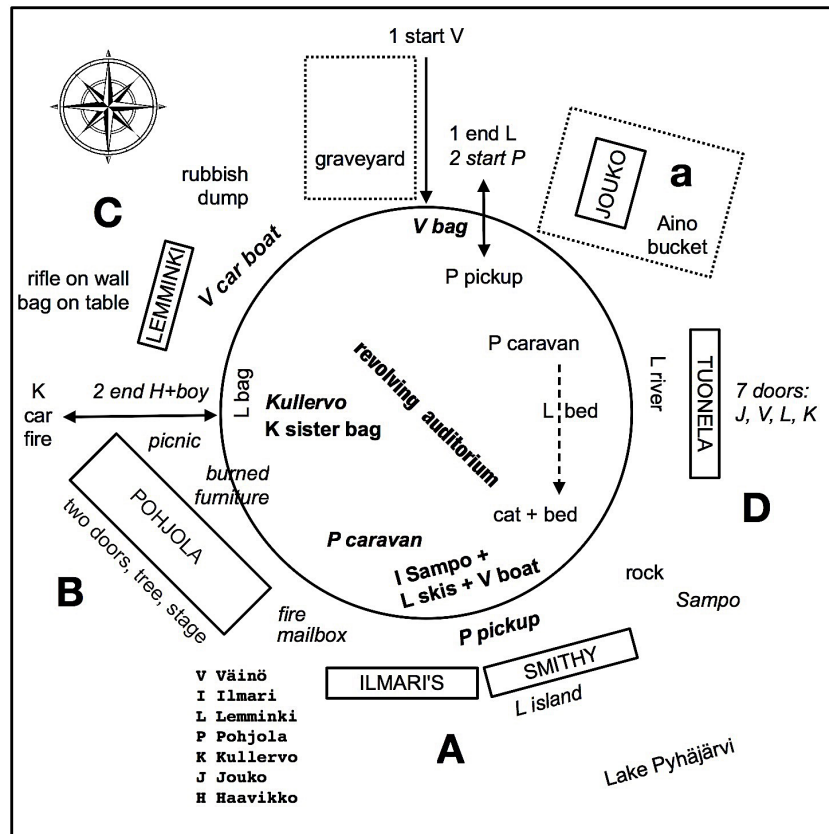


FIGURE 3. Scenic design of Rauta-aika (not in proportion).

the nocturnal stage in real flames, the audience see themselves reflected in the upstage mirror, which is then taken over by the summer again; the final image finds Helena and Alexander, in the central summer pavilion (P), observed, from the two theatre boxes, by an Oscar in white and the Bishop in black. Altogether, even while the revolving platform could roll things and scenes on stage and off – exchanging one for the other, drawing figures together or drawing them away from one another – F’s was “a geography of places rather than one of traveling.”⁴⁴

Not so with R: the performance began with Väinö walking down the northern footpath of Figure 3, a suitcase in hand, and then along the perimeter of the playing area – with the revolving auditorium at its centre – to Ilmari’s smithy by the lakeside (A). A half-turn later, Lemminki was found standing by his respective quarters (C), another bag on the ground, starting his story in which “one had to leave, and fast” (73); at the end of Act One, he would barrel away up the northern path, on Pohjola’s pickup truck, after having slain the Master of Pohjola in its back with a chainsaw. Kullervo, for his part, entered through the western pathway (Figure 3) from a car in flames and a

44 Kalin 2003, 184; the original comment is in relation to Bergman’s filmic oeuvre.

torch in his hand. Trying to inhabit most houses along the perimeter, he then proceeded clockwise, occasionally passing by his sister with her big red bag, doing her rounds the other way, presumed dead with the consequence of incest and revenge.

In Figure 3, the bold font identifies full rounds of circulation – clockwise if italicized, conversely if regular; act one within the circle, act two outside its confines. Accordingly, the “shit lot” of Pohjola repeatedly hurtled past Ilmari’s base (A) on their caravan or their pickup, bragging about their money. In Act One, the Kalevalan trio (A) dragged their heavy currency to Pohjola on foot, the long way, while in Act Two, they would punt themselves there on a car (C), to plunder the Sampo if only to finally toss it over the rock at (D). Toward the end, Ilmari as Haavikko would pick up a 1960s newspaper from a mailbox by (A), take his leave of his dying wife by (C), and exit through the western path with his son, on piggyback, identifying him as “such a cheapskate.”

As Seija Holma suggests in the programme for R, her first job was to weave the protagonists’ many vain journeys together into a more collective thread that the audience could then follow while seated on the massive turntable of the Pyynikki theatre: “Let them chase their women together, stalking each other’s love affairs with the audience.” For his part, Kari Heiskanen wanted to “reduce the scale” as James Joyce did in *Ulysses*. Hence the backyard aesthetic of scattered refuse dumps and mundane objects found planted into the landscape – one of the more reduced being the bucket of water (a) into which Aino would drown her head instead of romantically wading into the lake (some of these objects are indicated in regular font, in Figure 3, italicized for Act Two). Where Haavikko wanted to depict Kalevalan people “at the mercy of themselves, each other, nature, fate, their technology, their ruthless time, and the narrative, history,” the performances at Pyynikki were defined by the time of day and the changing whims of weather – the general decay of Act Two, accentuated by remains of burned-down furniture on the ground and the odd fires set to barrels and tyres (B/A). Instead of some distant past, Heiskanen imagined a future after the deluge or a nuclear meltdown.⁴⁵

Finally, the scale was reduced to the perimeter of the turning auditorium. For a change of space, it was enough to ride over to the neighbour’s plot: clockwise, Pohjola (B) was within steps from Kalevala (A), the other way around it was more of a journey. As compared to the poverty of the Kalevalan houses – Jouko’s was a net-fenced shed (a), Ilmari’s, a metal-framed container in two floors (A) – the other “stages” bordered on cubic abstraction, in moderate hues of cream, blue, and white. Where the relatively massive Pohjola (B) had the majesty of a temple about it, Lemminki’s place (C) was virtually but a floor and a wall, framing his rifle like a painting. The white unit at (D) could be interpreted as Tuonela, or the Land of the Dead: here was the river where Lemminki went hunting for the swan; here his mother would stitch his pieces together on a white hospital bed; hereabout Väinö and then

45 This is based on the programme for R; Haavikko is cited from 1995, 88–9.

others would occasionally meet with Death herself in the luring mime figure of a white female cat. Toward the end, Jouko, Väinö, Lemminki, and Kullervo also took one of their many exits through the narrow, rectangular niches in this volume, side by side through its hidden doors on a knock from the cat. While the configuration was reminiscent of a men's lavatory, the niches certainly also evoked the door, the bed, and the grave of Haavikko's text (238).

EXT. GOLDEN AGE AND METAPHORIC EXCHANGE, 1982 / 2010–11

In terms of not money precisely but a certain economy, what defines the very dramaturgy of both F and R is the trading of some harmonious, primary reality for its substitutes – including the tricky trade of adaptation from “rich” film to “poor” theatre. In F, that which is being traded is explicitly identified. The safe “little world” of the family and the theatre is thematized in pivotal speeches by Oscar, Emilie, and Gustaf Adolf alike, and also by the stage machinery itself: the slow revolving movement and the sparsely populated upstage mirror are both cut off during the children's exile. In R, the “lost” referent is made explicitly so, both by the surreal scenography and the layered injunction to “forget” the *Kalevala* and now also the TV version of *Rauta-aika*. As Johanna Pentikäinen notes in her in-depth study of Paavo Haavikko's Kalevalaic works, the motto represents the relationship of the two epics not as one of metonymical continuity, but as one of metaphorical substitution.⁴⁶ Borrowing her terms from Roman Jakobson, she defines the metonymical as a part-whole relation to some hypothetically primary reality, whereas metaphor combines two irreconcilable ones: the “primary reality” of myth and the “heightened secondary” reality of the story.⁴⁷

In F, the fall takes place sequentially, as it were, with a view to what is being lost and what is restored at the end; in R, the fall has already taken place, and left us doing mere circles in its aftermath. This is a world in which everything only ever repeats itself, so overlaid on its occluded subtexts that not recognizing them might, ironically, leave the occasional summer theatre attendee wanting his or her money back.

With Pentikäinen, the lost referent of R can explicitly be identified with the mythical “golden age” of gods and heroes, as imagined by the Greek philosopher Hesiod, and also imposed on Kalevalaic folklore by the “golden age” of Finnish art in the nineteenth century. In comparison, *the age of iron* (the official translation of R instead of the historical “iron age”) signifies a mythical age of imminent death and destruction.⁴⁸ In F, the “little world” of the Ekdahls is identified with the theatre – the world of “orderliness, routine, conscientiousness, and love” (26) that they “draw over [their] heads like a mantle of security” (85), in Oscar's and Emilie's important speeches – and the domestic sphere of childhood, secured by bourgeois routine and punc-

46 Pentikäinen 2004, 180.

47 Pentikäinen 2004, 324; 23.

48 Pentikäinen 2004, 165; 182; Laine & Salmi 2009, 80.

tual tradition: “the golden age of lost innocence when human closeness and contact were possible,” its “bourgeois standards and values” reflecting “the ideals of a vanished era.”⁴⁹ From this world of mythic (metonymical) unity and belonging, the chain of (metaphorical) exchange and displacement proceeds through stages of full reversal and biblically accruing isolation – the Bishop’s “fatherly love” taking the form of a vicious beating (138–9); the very name of the locked-up Ismael signifying “estrangement and exile”⁵⁰ – to its final restoration, in Gustaf Adolf’s closing speech, as a little world of small pleasures to be enjoyed and cultivated even as “evil is breaking its chains” (207–8).

Keeping with Pentikäinen, the “secondary” nature of R comes about as a continuum of making and trading.⁵¹ Instead of domesticating the novel substance of iron, as he should as the village smith, Ilmari forges himself a wife out of “dreams and silver” (25); after repeated attempts at some primary union, the Sampo itself only coins fake money, as such only reiterating what already exists.⁵² In the performance, Ilmari’s wives are mimed robots, the Sampo, a black box that consumes the characters’ old Nokia telephones – throughout, they repeat the key line, “there is nothing in [this] world a man would not exchange for a sackful of darkness, or a fistful of ash” (122).

Väinö, for his part, is a man of words, lost in whatever situation he actually finds himself in. When he meets the Pohjolan people at their caravan by (D), in Figure 3, and the daughter asks him to make her a boat, he proceeds to consult with Death (dashed arrow), leaving the daughter wondering why he wants to buy her as she is already there (48). “It would have been yours if you hadn’t asked for it,” Death tells him (56), and so will the daughter, adding that a woman is “the most unwieldy merchandise, buy or sell” (64). When Lemminki asks for “everything under the roof” (109) on the island of women (A), he gets it all, but Väinö’s attempts at regaining the Sampo leave him bitter: “If you ask for too little, or for what is yours, it is not given to you” (212).

With this shift to an ever more secondary reality – one of money and power, and the unabridgeable hierarchy between rich Pohjola and poor Kalevala – the very narration of R also becomes more layered, transparent, and conspicuous.⁵³ As compared to Elias Lönnrot’s “authorless” hiding behind assumed folklore, the late storylines of R are interwoven in a tangle of parallel narratives: of how it was and who gets to tell it; of who was there and who therefore knows and remembers; of how it was “written” as opposed to how each narrator makes the story up for himself. With this final exchange, of how it “has been told” for how it “was” or how it “happened” (48, 98, 116, 213), we come to the more monetary side of metaphor and metonymy.

When it comes to Haavikko’s and Bergman’s language, in short, it is the

49 Long 1994, 170; Törnqvist 1995, 182.

50 Kalin 2003, 178; Long 1994, 170.

51 Pentikäinen 2004, 173.

52 Pentikäinen 2004, 176; 190; 192.

53 Pentikäinen 2004, 206; 212; 256–7.

former that tends to get metaphorical, while the latter abounds in metonymy. Indeed, I am tempted to compare them to the two kinds of aphasics that Jakobson studied: for example, “contiguity disorder” leads to “infantile one-sentence utterances and one-word sentences. Only a few longer, stereotyped, ‘ready made’ sentences manage to survive.”⁵⁴ This virtually defines the poetic sparsity of Haavikko’s declaratory dialogue, teeming with simple riddles in which two one-word options are contrasted and exchanged: man or woman (51), bread or rock (157), woman or sister (171), land or sea (201). Seemingly blind to whatever is close at hand, the characters use few narrow words but use them repetitively, often resorting to the same laconic aphorisms across situations: *In your words you shall be hung; It would have been yours if you hadn’t asked for it.*⁵⁵ (Admittedly, they speak and move fast in comparison to the starey-eyed lingering of the TV version, some clearly evoking director Kari Heiskanen’s trademark diction.)

For “selection-deficient” aphasics, on the other hand, context is indispensable: “When presented with scraps of words or sentences, such a patient readily completes them.”⁵⁶ In F, the overwhelming wealth of the Ekdahl household is doubled over not only by its reflection in the huge upstage mirror of the scenography, but also in the recurring lists of abundance in the dialogue – from that of Christmas treats (*pâtés, galantines, au gratins, meatballs, steaks*; 30) through bedtime prayers (*God bless Papa and Mama [...] sisters and cousins, uncles and aunts, Vega, Ester, Maj, Siri, Berta, Alida, and Lisen, and Uncle Isak*; 36) to what is left behind in moving in with the Bishop (*your clothes, your jewels, your furniture, your friends, [...] your habits, your thoughts*; 98) and Alexander’s mumbled profanities – *bastard pecker shit hell cock cunt damnation fuck sod stuff bugger arse piss prick* (80) – blending into the fabric of sound at Oscar’s funeral, until the revolving platform is empty but for the two of them facing each other on its fringes, spinning around the bulging emptiness.

In my “monetary” distinction of metonymy and metaphor, in sum, metonymic contiguity stands for contextual prosperity, metaphoric substitution for relative deprivation: where the scene of metonymy is rich in detail (parts and wholes), that of metaphor trades it for something else, on the dubious basis of implied similarity. Perhaps, then, “the acceptance of poverty in theatre” will reveal, if not “the deep riches [...] of the art-form” that Grotowski envisioned, a *synoptic sense of overview* that is inevitably lacking in the cinema, yet much dependent on metonymic intimacy.⁵⁷ Even if only the people of F seem able to grasp it, there is an important sense in which both F and R emphasize

54 Jakobson 1971, 85–6.

55 Haavikko 1982, 5; 22; 160; 173 / 45; 56; 64; 168; see also Pentikäinen 2004, 176.

56 Jakobson 1971, 77.

57 Grotowski 2002, 21. On the “synopticity” of theatricality, see Paavolainen 2018, e.g. 270–2.

the “little world” of experience over that of abstraction – of changing roles and situations, over all the more metaphysical bargains being attempted. For Haavikko, “people live and act in the little world of their eyes and their senses, of memory and talk,” subject to “themselves, their genetics, and also their roles.”⁵⁸ For Bergman, as opposed to the larger world outside and the unknown world beyond life, “the small world is equated with *this* world, *this* life, the only one we know.”⁵⁹ Far from the harsh, prosaic nature of R, however, F’s is a theatrical world of abundant properties, moving freely between “what a lie is and what truth is” (90); between the nested realities of ghosts and spirits (194) in which the masks of God amount to thousands or only one (Emilie 101, Edvard 188); in which Alexander and Ismael may freely “flow into each other” (199); in which the dead Oscar holds hands with his living mother, at length and slightly worried, an elder and a child simultaneously (128–9).

The quote from Strindberg’s *Dream Play*, read by Helena at the end of F, sums up the complex intertwining of poor reality and rich imagination that I have examined: “Everything can happen, everything is possible and probable. Time and place do not exist; on an insignificant basis of reality the imagination spins, weaving new patterns.”⁶⁰ In the case of R and F, the “basis” may be construed as somewhat more significant – consisting of national mythologies and acknowledged achievements in the cinema – yet it cannot be simply *restored* or *represented* in its performative adaptations. Internally, all notions of direct substitution are voided in both works: threatened by future “robbers and murderers,” or the very prospect of retelling, the restored abundance in F, and the narrative of loss in R, are both revealed as mere performances of comfort. Externally, the paradoxical poverty and richness of theatre – which Grotowski dreamt in contrast to the luxury of film – might itself be understood through the distance of exchange. While both money and film offer themselves as ultimately “representational” media – the former claiming to represent value, the latter restricted by the very iconicity of its technology – the theatrical situation is one of performing it anew again, in metonymically contiguous, irreversible time and space. If time is money, you may invest it in sitting the show through, but you will never get your money back.⁶¹

58 Haavikko 1995, 88; 87.

59 Törnqvist 1995, 184.

60 Strindberg 1973, xix. Curiously, this is missing from the English translation of Bergman 1982.

61 Playing on the theoretical contrast between representation and performativity, I am not arguing against performative theories of money or film; on Grotowski, see also Paavolainen 2012.

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