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КАНДИД (ОТКРОЕННЫЙ) МУМИТРОЛЬ ПОЗНАЕТ ЖИЗНЬ.
Интертекстуальные отношения между Муми-троллем
и Кандидом Вольтера

Во второй книге Туве Янссон «Комета в Мумидален» (1946) мы встречаемся с самозванным философом Выккохолем, настоящим певцом пессимизма. Его нигилистическое восприятие мира в свете надвигающейся катастрофы является своеобразным продолжением спора о «лучшем из всех возможных миров», начатого Вольтером в его известной сатирической повести «Кандид, или Оптимизм». Написанная примерно на 200 лет раньше книги Туве Янссон, повесть Вольтера обладает интертекстуальными характеристиками для рассмотрения Муми-троллей. В данной статье утверждается, что Кандид и Муми-тролль имеют очень похожи — оба забавны и располагают к себе читателя. С самого начала им многое предстоит узнать об мире. Но не следует недооценивать их мужество!

Ключевые слова: компаративистика, интертекстуальность, Рай, созревание, герои Туве Янссон, Вольтер.

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THE CANDID MOOMINTROLL LEARNS ABOUT LIFE.
INTERTEXTUAL RELATIONS BETWEEN MOOMIN
AND VOLTAIRE’S CANDIDE

In Tove Jansson’s second Moomin book, Comet in Moominland (1946), we encounter a self-appointed Philosopher — the Muskrat, a veritable prophet of Pessimism. His nihilistic view of the world in light of threatening disaster mirrors in a peculiar way the continuous discussion on “the best of all possible worlds” in Voltaire’s famous satirical novella Candide, or Optimism. Written roughly 200 years earlier than Tove Jansson’s comet story,
Candide can serve as an intertext when taking a closer look on the Moomins. The article argues that young Candide and Moomintroll are heroes of the same kind — a bit ridiculous but very likable ones. When they start out, they have a lot to learn about the world. But we should not underestimate their courage.

*Key words:* comparative literature, intertextuality, Paradise, maturation, heroes, Tove Jansson, Voltaire.

They commit what is regarded a Sin and, as a consequence, the protagonists are expelled from Paradise. That is what happens in the first book of the Bible, and that is the point of departure in Voltaire’s *Candide* (1759). The hero, whose very name describes his character, is chased out “with great kicks to his backside” from his edenic existence at the castle Thunder-tronch, “the most beautiful and delightful of possible castles” — a Paradise of sorts [5, p. 5]. His beloved Cunégonde is soon afterwards forced to leave the castle in the strong hands of a Bulgar captain, and she is put through afflictions no less horrible then the ones that awaited Candide. When encountering trouble in strange countries, Candide repeatedly conjures the castle in Westphalia that until recently formed the known world to him — and also the best of all possible worlds!

Paradise may be a nice place, but you can’t stay there forever if there shall be a story to tell, and if some exciting adventures are to take place. A brilliant storyteller like Tove Jansson is of course aware of that fact. So her protagonists won’t stay put in Moominvalley all the time, they go out on various expeditions.

The Moomin book in focus here is an early one, *Comet in Moominland*, which originally appeared in 1946 under the Swedish title *Kometjakt*. This story (Tove Jansson’s second Moomin book) was launched in three steps, like a rocket, *Comet in Moominland* being the first stage. A revised version by her own hand was published in 1956, “Moomintroll on a Comet hunt” (*Mumintrollet på kometjakt*), and finally in 1968, *Kometen kommer*, “Comet Approaching”. Unfortunately, only the first version has been translated into English (by Elizabeth Portch — but it’s a good enough translation, and it’s the one I quote from).

In this story we are allowed to accompany Moomintroll and the little animal Sniff, who dwell happily in Moominvalley, “the most wonderful valley in the world” as Moomintroll assures us (chapter VIII), echoing Candide’s recurrent praise of the Westphalian castle where he was brought up [1, p. 112].
In the original version of the Comet book, they start their journey on their own accord, while in the last version they are sent out by Moominmamma in order to get something else on their minds than the sinister visions of disaster that the Muskrat has put into their heads. — Muskrat, the great philosopher, who appears as an inversion, as it were, of Doctor Pangloss in Voltaire’s Candide. While Pangloss proclaims a philosophy of Optimism in absurdum, the Muskrat is a pessimistic prophet, “a person who knows that everything is unnecessary”\(^1\). The Muskrat also demonstrates with an eloquence that is perhaps uncalled for, how utterly small and unimportant the planet Earth is in view of the vastness of universe and the darkness of Space.

The young explorers, Sniff and Moomintroll, have observed several signs in the neighbourhood, signs forming the ominous shape of a Comet. In order to learn more about comets, especially the dismal outlook of a comet crashing into the Earth, they plan to visit the Professors in the Observatory on the Lonely Mountains.

Moomintroll and Sniff are heroes of the same kind as Candide and his companions — they are “low” heroes in an intertextual play with genre, in this instance the classical adventure story, as well as the idyllic, pastoral tradition. These “low heroes” are basically unheroic, but in some ways really admirable protagonists. In the case of the Moomin heroes, this play with genre is pointed out by the prominent and pioneering Swedish Tove Jansson researchers: Boel Westin who laid out the foundation-stone with her dissertation in 1988. And, even more fruitful for my attempts, Agneta Rehal-Johansson’s dissertation 2006, Den lömska barnboksfrälsaren: Tove Jansson och muminverkets metamorfoser (“The Trixter Children’s Book Author: Tove Jansson and the Metamorphoses of the Moomin Work”). In the works of these (or other) researchers, however, I haven’t found any discussion on intertextual connections with Voltaire’s Candide, which I propose to try out a little more.

I just pointed out Sniff and Moomintroll as low heroes (I hope they wouldn’t mind!). They are very likable, but a little bit ridiculous. Candide, on his part, is already in chapter two appointed a “hero of the Bulgars”. That means that he in a twinkling of an eye has been made a soldier,

\(^1\) Quote from chapter II in the Comet book. Candide for his part, makes in chapter 19 the acquaintance of a disillusioned scholar, Martin, whom Candide chooses to take on board. Thus he is able to keep up discussions with a kind of “Muskrat philosopher”.
as an effect — you know, Doctor Pangloss talks a lot about the cause and the effect — of a dinner with too much drinking and toasting and, thereafter a couple of irons attached to his feet. Soon after that quick transformation, he finds himself “completely bewildered”; he “had not yet figured out quite what was meant by his being a hero” [5, p. 6].

But Candide and Moomintroll are the same kind of hero. When starting out they are young and inexperienced. They are profoundly good-hearted, but when challenged, they are able to show a fine fighting spirit. Now Candide, who as early as in the second chapter becomes a soldier, is put to the test throughout the story, in nearly every one of the 30 tumultuous chapters of the book. When forced to use the sable on his adversaries, Candide is terrified, but in spite of his “gentle disposition”, he is indeed apt and skilful in the Martial Arts [5, p. 22].

In the world of Moomin, on the other hand, dangers are plenty but weapons few. In chapter VII of Comet in Moominland we encounter a paramount scene of warfare on the part of Moomintroll (and speaking of intertext, he fights side by side with one of the foremost heroes in Western Canon, Hercules!). Moomintroll rescues Snork maiden from a poisonous bush with the appearance of a hydra — it’s got twining arms and glaring flower-eyes:

A howl of terror was heard from the spectators when one of the green arms twisted itself round Moomintroll’s nose. But it changed into a triumphal war-cry when he chopped off the arm with a single blow [1, p. 102–103].

And among the spectators is Snork maiden, full of admiration. We can be sure that Moomintroll goes considerably strengthened from that battle!

A trait of character that young Candide has in common with the little animal Sniff, is a good appetite. In chapter 20 it is said about Candide:

When he thought of what remained in his pockets, and when he spoke of Cunégonde, especially at the end of a good meal, he still inclined towards the system of Pangloss [5, p. 56, my stress].

Obviously, the system of Optimism seems more convincing when one’s appetite has been satisfied. Now, you can have an appetite for food as well as for valuable materials. And what exactly was it that remained in Candide’s pockets? Some gold and diamonds from the promised land of Eldorado! Just the stuff that little Sniff has an inclination for — especially glittering stones that one can use to buy things with. In chapter IV of the Comet book, the vagrant Snufkin (who for his part doesn’t care at all for owning things) shows
Moomin and Sniff a cleft where myriads of glowing garnets are lying on the bottom. The glittering stones lure Sniff to climb down and try to collect as many as he can carry.

Unfortunately — but very typically for saga and myth — the treasure is guarded by a giant lizard, you could well call it a dragon! Sniff escapes from the cleft, but isn’t able to bring any of the shining minerals, to his great sorrow — just as Candide is forced to leave behind most of the earthly goods that he collected during his journeys. But when you lose things that glitter on the outside, you may, on the other hand, gain some experience and knowledge of life. I’m certain that can be said of Candide, but I suspect that Sniff still has some more lessons to learn on that subject.

However that may be, we are now well into the “learning about life theme” I propose in the title of this article. The gaining of experience and independence is at work not only with Candide, but also with Moomintroll — and, in fact, even the little animal Sniff. Agneta Rehal-Johansson demonstrates in her dissertation how this theme is a bit further developed and enhanced by Tove Jansson in the revised versions, especially the last one from 1968, “Comet Approaching” [3, p. 193–212]. According to Agneta Rehal, “the journey motif is now put to use in order to thematize Moomintroll’s own development and his new relationships beyond the family” [3, p. 400, quote from English summary].

Sniff, the most inexperienced of our heroes, has yet to learn some tough things about the world. He asks Moomintroll:

“What’s a catastrophe?”

“It’s something as bad as it can possibly be”, said Moomintroll. “Like earthquakes, and tidal waves, and volcanoes. And tornadoes. And plagues” [1, p. 159–160].

The cataclysmic theme is present throughout the Moomin work, already from the first little Moomin story, conceived during the Winter War of 1939, The Moomins and the Great Flood (published 1945). Catastrophes is a crucial theme in the Moomin stories as well as in Voltaire’s Candide. War prevails, often dominates life on Earth — a fact that Voltaire certainly doesn’t try to conceal. Our heroes are forced to learn about life while being put through troubles, obstacles, hardships. How do the respective authors deal with this?

Voltaire’s Candide is a satire, a castigation, a furious attack on the things that Voltaire dislikes — the Church, societies governed by greed, founded on the exploitation of the weaker. Although hilariously funny and filled with
adventure, Candide may not be considered suitable reading for children. The irony of Voltaire is a very sharp instrument. Tove Jansson, on the other hand, who has children readers in mind (let's say children of every age) applies her humorous perspective in a more forgiving way.

Paradise is lost. Even the existence of the protagonists is at hazard. But paradise may be regained, in a way, when our heroes have learned to appreciate the small things in life. After their adventures they settle down — if not exactly in the Garden of Eden, at least in a place they can call “home”.

The novelle Candide goes on in a furious tempo, until it slows down a bit in the last chapter, and finally comes to a full stop after the word “garden” — one of the most well-known endings in Western literature. The Moomin world is rendered in a calmer way, a bit contemplative in a Nordic tradition; often with an air of melancholy. In the end Tove Jansson achieves, by other means, nearly the same sense of relief.

In the last chapter, Candide, chastened by all his hardships and travail, also more mature, doesn’t stay very long listening to the sermons delivered by Pangloss. He has reached a conviction of his own — we must cultivate our garden.

When Comet in Moominland comes to an end, the last noun but one is the “the kitchen-garden”.
(Moominmamma:)

“Do you think the wood is still there, and the house, and the kitchen-garden?”

“I think everything is still there”, said Moomintroll. “Come with me and have a look” [1, p. 192].

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