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7. Sports in Constructing Finnish Americanness in Terms of Transnational and Regional Identity in Two Finnish American Literary Texts¹

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Sports plays a prominent role in such Finnish American literary texts as the collection of short stories *Heikki Heikkinen and Other Stories of Upper Peninsula Finns* (1995; 32 stories) by Lauri Anderson, and the novel *Welcome to Shadow Lake* (1996) by Martin Koskela. The aim of this chapter is to analyze how the characters' sports practices function to construct their Finnish American identities. My chapter demonstrates that Finnish Americans of various generations² use sports to negotiate their identities with both Finland and the United States, and, more specifically, with their home region, the Upper Peninsula of Michigan (also known as the UP or "Yooperland"). On the one hand, sports holds a significant position in constructing their identities as transnational, since it allows them to maintain nostalgic connections to their old country as well as to manifest their affiliation with the United States. On the other hand, their sports practices are also involved in forming their regional, UP identities. The chapter illustrates that sports in the texts constructs the characters' Finnish Americanness as a combination of transnational and regional identity. I want to concentrate especially on three elements of this construction that are presented most prominently in the source fiction. First, I will focus on the roles of Finland's Olympic successes in the characters' identification

¹ This chapter was made possible by the research grant of the Kone Foundation.

² In this chapter, I use the word "first generation" to refer to migrants from Finland, "second generation" to refer to their children, "third generation" to their grandchildren, and so forth.

as the UP Finns. Second, the chapter will pay attention to the position of winter sports in creating their Yooper Finnishness. Third, the U.S. sports trinity will be analyzed in connection with the characters' identities.

The authors are either second- or third-generation Finnish Americans, and write about Finnish Americans in the UP of Michigan, the prominent center for Finnish migrants in the United States. Both source texts address the topic of how U.S.-born Finns, children and/or grandchildren and great grandchildren of Finnish migrants, construct their sense of self in the United States. Lauri Anderson is a well-known Finnish American author. He has written a novel, a memoir, a book of poetry, and seven collections of short stories,³ all addressing Finnish Americans. In *Heikki Heikkinen*, Anderson portrays the comic and tragic aspects of Finnish Americans' everyday lives, often with a great deal of irony, parody, and satire, as he revises popular stereotypes of the UP Finns. Most of the stories revolve around Heikki Heikkinen, a rugged second-generation Yooper Finnish American old-timer and a retired logger, but Anderson also writes about the third and fourth generation characters mostly doing blue-collar jobs. His short stories are mainly set in the 1980s and the 1990s, although they also describe Finnish Americans' experiences in the first half of the twentieth century. Koskela is a less known Finnish American writer, whose only novel has not been studied yet. *Welcome to Shadow Lake* focuses on the life of a Finnish American community in a small town in the UP during the Great Depression. It depicts the challenges, hardships, love, victories, and tragedies of the migrant-generation farmers and their U.S.-born children against the background of the economic crisis which stroke hard at their community.

I have chosen these texts because of their strong regional character. As the titles of both books allude, the focus is on the experiences and identities of Finnish Americans in this specific region, which has been historically strongly shaped by migration and transnationalism. Once a booming centre of mining and forest industry, Michigan (and the UP in particular) attracted thousands of Finnish men to do the low-paid, low-skilled, and hard jobs. The area has also become known for commercial fishing, outdoor recreation, hunting, and agriculture, in which local Finns have been active as well (Remlinger 2009, 122). As a result, the regional UP identity has strong connections to ethnicity, class, and gender. A stereotypical Yooper is seen as a rugged tough backwoodsman with a working-class background, who is also an independent and strong individualist (Remlinger 2006, 129–130; 2007, 96–98; 2009, 119–120, 122–123); Yooper stock characters are the legendary men of Finnish origin, Toivo and Eino (Remlinger 2007, 98).

In portraying the characters' experiences, both authors pay a great deal of attention to the role of sports in their lives. They describe in detail Finnish Americans' sports activi-

³ The novel *Impressions of Arvo Laurila* (2005), the memoir *From Moosehead to Misery Bay* (2013), the book of poetry *Snow White and Others* (1971), and the collections of short stories *Small Winter Wars* (1983), *Hunting Hemingway's Trout* (1990), *Heikki Heikkinen* (1995), *Children of the Kalevala* (1997), *Misery Bay* (2002), *Back to Misery Bay* (2007), and *Mosquito Conversations* (2009).

ties and pastimes, and the impact of various sports events such as the Olympic Games and/or the local ethnic sport festivals, and of the famous Finnish and Finnish American athletes on the characters. Koskela's (1996, 213) novel features an athletic club as one of the notable ethnic institutions of the Finnish American community in the 1930s. In both texts, the characters are often portrayed as either participating in different sports or being spectators and fans. It is worth saying that both Anderson and Koskela mostly concentrate on the sports activities of the male characters, as the protagonists are generally men. As Anderson often uses parody and satire in his portrayal of the characters, their sports activities sometimes also are parodied or exaggerated for comical purposes. It is no surprise that sports holds such a prominent position in the source texts, as sports activities have historically been important in the life of Finnish Americans. In the early twentieth century, numerous athletic clubs and sports events, such as competitions and performances, played a highly visible role in Finnish communities' cultural life, and sports practices maintained the tie between the old and new country (Virtanen 1995, 2014, 198; Niemi 2000, 155). Various factions of the Finnish American diaspora such as church, temperance societies, and labor movement all established their own athletic organizations, sports facilities and events (Kero 1976). The peak of Finnish Americans' sports activities lasted from the early twentieth century to the beginning of the Great Depression. In the migrants' cultural life, sports activities were characterized more clearly by close connections to the old country than any other form of culture. These connections were "reflected in the American competition tours by Finnish athletes, in the quadrennial Olympic Games, and in the success of numerous Finnish American track-and-field athletes and wrestlers representing Finland in international competitions" (Virtanen 2014, 198). Although migrants' sports activities and clubs eventually faded away along with other ethnic institutions after World War II, there is still some interest in Finnish sports and athletes among Finnish Americans (Virtanen 1995).

Theoretical Framework

Sports can play a prominent role in relation to both personal and collective identity. Jeremy MacClancy (1996, 2) approaches sports as a strong vehicle of identity that provides people with a sense of difference and a way of classifying themselves and others. Sports is not just a marker of one's already established identity, but also a means to create a new identity for oneself (MacClancy 1996, 3). It can contribute to people's sense of ethnicity or nation and to their sense of community (MacClancy 1996, 9). Such sports events as the Olympic Games have been actively used by nations to project and refine national identity (Dyreson 2013, 262–263).

Sports has also held a crucial position in creating a sense of both Finnishness and Americanness. According to Mervi Tervo (2003, 47), sports has historically been a crucial

dimension of Finnish national self-definition and consciousness. For the Finns, various sports have functioned as important means of national identification and of putting Finland on the world map (Tervo 2003, 363, 366), and Finnish athletes have become strong national symbols (Sironen 2005, 104; Taramaa 2008, 78). Sports is also considered as an important component of Americanness. According to Roger Knight Bradley (1994, 19), one of the most fascinating aspects of the U.S. culture is a societal penchant for sports and physical exercise. Mark Dyreson (2005) emphasizes that sports has been prominent in developing the U.S. national identity and exceptionalism.

Moreover, sports holds an important position in the context of migration. On the one hand, the mainstream U.S. sports have functioned as a route to assimilation and acceptance in U.S. society for different migrant groups (Kirsch, Harris & Nolte 2000, xii–xiii). On the other hand, the sports of migrants have been crucial in forming their ethnic communities in the United States by bringing them together and keeping their heritage alive. Ethnic sports have also allowed migrants to maintain ties to their countries of origin (Kirsch, Harris & Nolte 2000, xiv–xv). Thus, migrants' sports activities can be a central component in the process of transnationalism. Steven Vertovec (1999) views transnationalism as a variety of interactions connecting people and/or institutions, communities, and other social actors across national borders. In Peter Kivisto's (2014, 298) words, transnational migrants can be seen as "attempting to live with one foot in the homeland and the other foot in the host society, in the process creating an ethnic community that transcends national boundaries." In this chapter, I understand transnationalism as defined by Alejandro Portes et al. (2007). According to them (2007, 251–252), migrant transnationalism is a subset of transnationalism and refers to the "regular activities across national borders conducted by the foreign-born as part of their daily lives abroad." Sports belongs to one of those cross-border activities that link migrants and their descendants with the old country. The theory of transnationalism can be applied to an analysis of the experiences of the U.S.-born characters whose sports activities can be approached as transnational practices, allowing them to be in contact with Finland and to interlink both countries symbolically.

Sports is also actively involved in the process of constructing regional identity. In my chapter, I will apply the concept of regional identity as defined by Kaj Zimmerbauer (2008). According to him (2008, 34), it can be understood as based on the sense of belonging to a region. Regional identity can refer to regional consciousness and identification with a region, and to characteristics of the region. Sports holds a prominent position in identification with the region, as various regional sports along with local and regional sports teams unite the residents, help form their community, and contribute to a sense of a local identity and pride (Tonts & Atherley 2010, 384). A place's sporting achievements (such as success by a local team) particularly evoke a sense of place attachment and pride. They are also actively involved in the celebration of community and connect with strong local identification (Bale 2003, 16–18). In both Anderson's and Koskela's texts, the authors demonstrate the characters' affiliation with Michigan in general and the UP in

particular through the imagery of sports. On the one hand, by their sports activities, the characters mark their presence in the region and manifest their belonging to it. On the other hand, through their sports, the characters also demonstrate their commitment to the characteristics of the region such as its landscape and environment as well as strong working-class masculinity.

Finland's Successes at the Olympic Games in Constructing Yooper Finnish Americanness

Despite the fact that the source texts are set in different time periods, both *Heikki Heikkinen* and *Welcome to Shadow Lake* present Finland's sporting achievements at the Olympic Games and other important championships, and Finnish athletes' prowess as playing an instrumental role in the process of identification of the characters. The Olympic successes of Finland evoke the shared sense of cohesion and pride to be Finns among Finnish Americans of different generations, link them with the old country, and, thus, bridge the distance between the two nations. This also constructs the characters' sense of Finnish Americanness in terms of both transnational and regional identity. Their attention to Finland's progress at the Olympics can be seen as an expression of transnationalism, as the characters geographically separated from the old country are interested in its sporting achievements and thus identify themselves with it. While for the first generation, Finland is their homeland, and supporting Finnish athletes is their way of maintaining contact with it, for the subsequent U.S.-born generations, it is their ancestors' country but their interest in its athletes and successes demonstrates that they still see Finland as important for their identification. At the same time, the characters are portrayed as using the Finnish Olympic successes as a common ground to unite around in order to construct a sense of a regional UP Finnish community. These achievements are also used to make the Finnish presence visible in the landscape and "sportscape" of the Upper Peninsula.

In Koskela's novel, the author demonstrates how the famous Finnish runners of the 1910s and 1920s, such as Paavo Nurmi and other "Flying Finns," become powerful symbols of Finnishness for migrants and their children in the early 1930s. To demonstrate their connection with these athletes, the characters name (or rather rename) their Finn Hall and athletic club after Nurmi (Koskela 1996, 20, 112). The Nurmi Athletic Club is what Atherley (2006, 348) calls the "heart of the community" as it belongs to the few prominent socio-cultural activities in their small town, along with the Co-Op Club and the amateur theatre (Koskela 1996, 213). The gesture of naming the hall and the athletic club after Nurmi functions to strengthen their sense of solidarity with Finland and to manifest their Finnishness. Besides Nurmi, the characters also see other famous ath-

letes, such as Hannes Kolehmainen and Ville Ritola, as heroes who boost their ethnic self-esteem as Finns (Koskela 1996, 20). At the same time, their interest in the “Flying Finns” can also be interpreted as accentuating the characters’ transnational identities as Finnish Americans, since the Olympic successes of Finnish athletes connect Finland with the United States in constructing the Finnish American community.

These athletes’ activities are a strong expression of transnationalism as they historically eroded the border between Finland and the United States for Finnish Americans. John Wargelin (1924) points out that Nurmi and the other “Flying Finns” were popular in and praised by the mainstream U.S. society in the 1920s. They crossed the border between the two countries back and forth as they either toured the United States like Nurmi did, or lived, trained, and successfully ran races there but were also sent to run for Finland at the Olympics with the financial help of Finnish American community, like in the case of Kolehmainen and Ritola. In Virtanen’s (2014, 195–196) words, Finnish Americans in the 1920s considered the runners’ success to be important for their community, as the athletes’ popularity in the United States elevated the Finnish American national identity among other migrant groups in the eyes of the mainstream U.S. society, created a more positive image of the Finns and Finnish Americans, and improved the migrant community’s self-esteem. Although Nurmi was not a migrant, the Finnish American community in the 1920s considered him as one of their own (Virtanen 2014, 195). The U.S. media also promoted Kolehmainen as both an exotic “Flying Finn” and an “American,” a model Americanized migrant, while the U.S. Olympic officials labelled him as a “Finnish-American” rather than a Finn (Berg & Dyreson 2012, 1039–1040, 1045–1046, 1050). Thus, he was hailed as a heroic figure for both Finland and the United States (Berg & Dyreson 2012, 1051–1052). This is in line with how Koskela portrays the role of the “Flying Finns” in the characters’ identification. By choosing Nurmi’s name for their hall and athletic club, Finnish Americans demonstrated symbolically that they considered him as one of their own to create their positive self-image in the mainstream U.S. society.

Koskela also emphasizes that the characters see Nurmi and others as important for their identities not only because of pride in Finland but also because of the “Flying Finns” popularity in the United States. In the novel, this is demonstrated through the fact that it is not Finnish migrants or their children but the local Irish American doctor Myles (who has many Finnish Americans among his patients and is therefore an enthusiast of all things Finnish) who comes up with the idea of naming the Finn Hall after Nurmi. This doctor also promotes other Finnish athletes among the younger generation — a gesture that manifests the mainstream U.S. society’s attitude to the sporting successes of Finland.

Dave recalled a speech the doctor had made to the school track team Dave was on, in reference to changing the name of Työväen [Workers’] Hall to Nurmi Hall. “The Finns are the world’s best long-distance runners. Starting with Hannes Kolehmainen in the 1912 Stockholm Olympic games and continuing with Paavo Nurmi and Ville Ritola in

the 1920 Antwerp games, the '24 Paris games and the '28 Amsterdam games, they won eighteen gold medals!"

It had been an inspiring pep talk at the time and Dave never forgot it. The name of the hall was changed. The doctor compared his campaign to the one the school children offered when they petitioned to change Poplar street to Hiawatha street, after studying Longfellow's poem. (Koskela 1996, 20, original italics.)

The younger U.S.-born generation's pride in the "Flying Finns" reflects their sense of self as both Finns and Americans or, in other words, as Finnish Americans. On the one hand, by seeing the Finnish athletes as their heroes, they demonstrate their interest in and express solidarity with the old country. On the other hand, they also want to increase their self-esteem in U.S. society by identifying with the runners who are popular in both Finland and the United States.

The renaming of the hall and athletic club are also involved in constructing the characters' regional identity. Through the Nurmi Hall and the Nurmi Athletic Club, Finnish Americans mark their presence in the landscape and sportscape of Michigan, unite the local UP Finnish community around the sports symbols of Finnishness, and, thus, contribute to their sense of local identity and pride. The characters' respect for Finland's Olympic athletes also illustrates their own Yooper working-class masculinity. The original name of their hall, *Työväen* (Workers') Hall, highlights the characters' class consciousness and their positive attitude to the labor movement. However, when the mostly working-class community of Shadow Lake decides to rename the hall after Nurmi, this can also be interpreted as the sign that the local loggers and farmers see the "Flying Finns" as their heroes who can represent the working class in the UP. Athletics is considered cheap and easy sport, as it needs little or no expensive equipment and facilities. Moreover, Nurmi and others all had working-class background (for instance, Kolehmainen and Ritola did manual jobs in the United States, like the majority of Finnish American men in the early twentieth century). By the act of renaming the hall, the characters symbolically make these strong male figures stand side by side with tough Yooper Finnish loggers, miners, and farmers.

In Anderson's stories about Heikki Heikkinen, set in the 1980s and 1990s, Finland's Olympic successes and famous athletes are also portrayed as playing an important role in the second-generation protagonist's identification. For him, such prominent Finnish ski-jumpers of the 1980s and 1990s as Matti Nykänen, Toni Nieminen, and Janne Ahonen⁴ are a source of pride in the old country and evoke solidarity with it. Heikki's interest in

⁴ Matti Nykänen won four gold medals in the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo and the 1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary. Toni Nieminen won two gold medals in the 1992 Albertville Winter Olympic Games. Janne Ahonen won several gold medals in the FIS Nordic World SKI Championships in the late 1990s and two Olympic silver medals in Salt Lake City in 2002 and in Turin in 2006 (Wallechinsky & Loucky 2006).

Finnish sporting achievements and internationally distinguished athletes manifests the transnational character of his identity. “Heikki had always wanted a world-class ski jump in Hancock, preferably right behind his house [...]. He would invite the great Finnish jumpers to compete locally – Nykanen, Nieminen, and Ahonen” (Anderson 1995, 48). Like in the case of the characters in Koskela’s novel, the protagonist identifies with and is interested in those Finnish athletes who are popular both in the Finnish and the U.S. sporting community. At the same time, Heikki’s dream to invite these athletes to Michigan to compete in the familiar UP landscape can be interpreted as a sign of his strong identification with the region where he lives. Although class operates differently in comparison with the 1920s and 1930s, there are still some connections with the Yooper working-class masculinity. Unlike the “Flying Finns,” Nykänen and others do not have any strong affiliation with or appeal to the working class; they are high-paid professional athletes and media celebrities. However, Heikki, who used to be a logger, still sees them as his heroes. A rugged Yooper backwoodsman, he praises these strong masculine figures by saying that they would fit perfectly to the UP with its traditions of hard working and hard drinking (Anderson 1995, 48-49).

Winter Sports in Constructing Yooper Finnish Identities

Both Anderson and Koskela pay a great deal of attention to the characters’ winter sports such as skiing (including cross-country skiing and ski jumping) in forming their sense of Finnish Americanness. This is no surprise, as skiing has historically been one of the most prominent sports activities in constructing Finnishness, and has had an important role in the Finnish national imagery (Tervo 2003, 91–92). Finland has a strong tradition and success in winter sports, particularly in skiing (Koski & Lämsä 2015, 425, 429). Skiing and ski jumping have also been an integral part of the history of the Finnish ethnic community in the United States, particularly in the UP of Michigan. Through these sports, Finnish Americans have made their presence visible in the landscape and sportscape of the region. According to Niemi (2000, 156–157), the oldest U.S. ski jumping tournament of continuous existence was begun and perpetuated by Norwegians and Finns at Suicide Hill in Ishpeming, Michigan. One of the major ski jumps of the UP was later built there. The U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame is located in Ishpeming, and the ski jumpers of Finnish origin hold a prominent position in this Hall (Niemi 2000, 156–157). In *Heikki Heikkinen* and *Welcome to Shadow Lake*, the characters of different generations are portrayed as seeing their skiing as an inherently Finnish sports practice and a marker of Finnishness. In describing the sports activities of the Yooper Finnish Americans in the 1930s or in the second half of the twentieth century, both authors mention Suicide Hill and/or other ski jumps of the UP. Skiing and ski jumping manifest the characters’ continuity with the old country and demonstrates their connection with Michigan.

In Koskela's novel, the first- and second-generation characters' prowess in skiing evokes their sense of pride, unites them as Finns, and distinguishes them in U.S. society. To mark this sports activity as distinctively and identifiably Finnish, the author occasionally uses the original Finnish words referring to skiing and skis (Koskela 1996, 35). The first generation brings skiing to the new land, and together with the U.S.-born children, they maintain this sports practice to keep their old country heritage alive. The first-generation characters make Finnish skis (Koskela 1996, 137), teach younger Finnish Americans skiing, and, thus, pass this sports activity from one generation to another. The novel presents an annual cross-country skiing and ski-jumping tournament for the local youngsters as one of the important social events that bring the Shadow Lake Finnish American community together (Koskela 1996, 91). The whole community is involved in the tournament by either preparing it, participating in it, or spectating it. In the words of one of the characters, "[e]very kid in Shadow Lake gives it a try" (Koskela 1996, 87). However, this tournament is featured not only as a sports event but also a U.S.-style sports show and a part of an ethnic festival: the Shadow Lake winter carnival ski-jumping meet (Koskela 1996, 91). On the one hand, the role of skiing and ski jumping in the Shadow Lake Finnish community's life manifests the characters' cross-border connection with the old country, as they continue the Finnish sports activity in the United States. The ski-jumping meet as a part of the winter carnival also demonstrates the adaptation of the migrants' sports traditions to the new country. This ski-jumping meet connects the first and second generation symbolically with both Finland and the United States and, thus, functions as a marker of their affiliation with both.

On the other hand, by their skiing Finnish Americans also demonstrate the strong regional character of their identities. According to John Bale (2003), local sport is one of the institutions binding people to place through provenance and evoking of what he defines as "place pride." As Tonts and Atherley (2010, 384) point out, "in the context of most amateur rural sports, local and regional teams are usually drawn from specific areas and often represent those citizens who reside in such spaces." The citizens' pride and emotional attachment to "their team" are an important component of the local life and give rise to the symbols marking out certain spaces (Tonts & Atherley 2010, 384). In Koskela's novel, the characters' attachment to their ski club and the ski jumpers from their local ethnic community, as well as the pride of their sports event, accentuate their sense of affiliation with the region and its characteristics. By their old country winter sports practices, the Finnish community influences the landscape of their UP town as they turn the local crag into their sporting facility:

The western shore of Shadow Lake was buffered by the Bluff, a rocky crag that slanted almost vertically into the sky. On the lake side, the Bluff was as [sic] unscalable barrier, but on the other side, it descended somewhat more gradually and was made for a ski hill. (Koskela 1996, 85.)

By doing so, the local Finnish American community marks Finnish presence in the landscape and sportscape of the UP. Their winter sports also highlight their Yooper working-class masculinity. Cross-country skiing and ski jumping are presented as cheap activities, open for all, as the characters make their own skis and prepare their sports facilities themselves. They are portrayed as unelite and working man's sports which are enjoyed by rugged loggers and miners and their descendants during the break between their daily hard work. Through these sports, the characters demonstrate the "manly art" of ski making and such masculine traits as the bravery of ski jumpers and the endurance of cross-country skiers.

In Anderson's stories, the author pays a great deal of attention to the role of winter sports in the process of identification of Finnish Americans in the second half of the twentieth century. Skiing and ski-jumping are portrayed as both the markers of Finnishness and Yooperness of the characters. For instance, in the story "The Author," the U.S.-born narrator humorously describes skiing as being important in his process of "becoming a Finn" (the title of the section in which this story is in the collection) in his little town in the Upper Peninsula:

Very early in life, I became aware of my Finnishness. Our little Upper Peninsula town was full of Finns. [...] In my boyhood, I had only two national flags on my wall — Finland's and the Upper Peninsula's. [...] I learned Finnish sports early, so when the other kids in school talked about skiing, I knew what they meant — to run as fast as you could across a flat field with long sticks tied to your boots. (Anderson 1995, 1–2.)

For the protagonist, skiing connects Finnishness and Yooperness, and brings together the country of his ancestors and the U.S. region where he grows up. First, as a part of the old country heritage, skiing is passed from one generation to another and functions as their common tie to Finland. Second, it constructs the sense of community not only with Finns but also with the protagonist's fellow Yooper Finnish Americans who maintain this sports practice in Michigan.

In other stories, Anderson presents the characters' ski jumping as a transnational activity that crosses the borders between Finland and the United States and is simultaneously involved in forming regional UP identities. The central protagonist of many stories, Heikki Heikkinen, demonstrates a great interest in this sport. Although ironically, he prefers such modern U.S. commercialized winter sports as snowmobiling to skiing, he is also an enthusiastic spectator of ski jumping (Anderson 1995, 33). He both watches on TV the championships and tournaments in which Finland participates, such as the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer (Anderson 1995, 49), and attends the local UP ski jump.

Heikki really enjoyed watching the ski jumping in Ishpeming. He especially liked to watch from a safe distance in the parking lot on a sunny day when he could sit on the tailboard of his pickup with a case of Old Milwaukee beside him [...]. (Anderson 1995, 33–34.)

He is equally proud of both Finnish ski jumpers of the 1980s and 1990s such as Nykänen, Nieminen, and Ahonen (Anderson 1995, 48), and the local UP Finnish American jumpers of his youth. For Heikki, this winter sport is also strongly connected with the working-class Yooper masculinity. Although he admires and praises the modern Finnish ski jumpers (see the previous section), he is nevertheless very critical towards the way ski jumping is done today as a sport. He contrasts the old and new ways and nostalgically prefers the rugged Yooper ski jumping of the “good old days,” when miners and loggers competed without fancy techniques and special outfits, and often not for any reward but for pure challenge. However, a once cheap sport has now turned into a more expensive one. This modern commercialized ski jumping with fancy equipment and well-paid professionals in their colorful uniforms covered with ads is dismissed by Heikki as not manly enough.

Heikki also did not approve of the new V-style jumping in vogue. He preferred the windmill method. He especially looked back on the old days, when Ishpeming iron miners would be out with the guys on Saturday night and would set a new North American record jumping at Suicide Hill on Sunday afternoon, then be back in the mines on Monday morning. “They were real men,” said Heikki, who scoffed at the jumpers who competed at Lillehammer. Heikki hated their form-fitting, brightly colored, silky-sissy outfits all covered with ads. “They might as well jump wearing a Nancy Kerrigan skirt,” said Heikki. He had fond memories of the great jumpers of the past, such as Rudy Maki, Coy Hill, and the Bietila brothers.⁵ Decades before, Heikki owned a camp near the Bietilas. “They were good old boys,” he said fondly. (Anderson 1995, 49.)

Anderson also features ski jumping as mingling Finnishness and Yooper Finnish Americanness of the characters when it comes to such an iconic Finnish trait as *sisu*. *Sisu* is often constructed as an important component of the essence of being Finnish for both Finns and Finnish Americans. According to William Aho (1994, 1), *sisu* is “a tough-to-translate, near spiritual quality which Finns everywhere seem to know about, believe they possess and practice. [...] ‘Sisu’ is a Finnish word for guts, grit, determination, and the capacity to endure any hardship.” This trait is strongly connected with the iconic image of Finnish masculinity, as the term *sisu* has often been used in relation with Finnish soldiers fighting the enemy or with Finnish (and Finnish American) workers

⁵ The Bietila brothers (Anselm, Leonard, Walter, Paul, Roy, and Ralph) of Ishpeming dominated the American jumping scene from the 1930s to the 1960s (Niemi 2000, 157). Walter competed in the 1936, 1940, and 1948 Olympics and served in 1960 as the coach for the U.S. Olympic team. Ralph won six national titles and was a member of the U.S. Olympic teams in 1948 and 1952. Other prominent Finnish American ski jumpers from Michigan were Rudy Maki and Coy Hill of Ishpeming. Walter and Ralph Bietila, Maki, and Hill are U.S. Ski Hall of Fame members (Niemi 2000, 157).

and farmers doing back-breaking jobs. In Anderson's stories, through their ski jumping, the characters manifest this trait in terms of bravery. Ironically, although Heikki is not a ski jumper himself, he identifies with his UP heroes such as the Bietilas and other strong men, who were not afraid of hard sports and hard jobs.

He insisted they weren't afraid of anything. [...] Tears filled Heikki's eyes when he talked about the old days, but there was a lot of pride in his eyes, too. Clearly, he saw himself, who never leaped higher than the running board of his pickup, as equally fearless. (Anderson 1995, 49.)

In the story "Turfy Turpeinen," featuring an eccentric Finnish American youngster, ski jumping is yet again presented as being connected with *sisu*. "Because Turfy was a Finn, the coach assumed that Turfy had *sisu*, which he defined as a kind of foolhardy courage [...]. All of the guys with *sisu* were assigned to the jumping team" (Anderson 1995, 94, original italics). This trait in ski jumping also accentuates the transnational and regional character of Finnish Americans' identities. By expressing this iconic Finnish *sisu* in the old country sport, the characters demonstrate their cross-border ties with Finland. Moreover, they bring *sisu* to the sportscape of the Upper Peninsula and enroot it there, and, thus, involve it in their regional consciousness and identification with Michigan.

The U.S. Sports Trinity and the Construction of the Characters' Identities

When describing the characters' sports life, both Anderson's and Koskela's literary texts also feature what Dyreson (2005, 941) calls "the national trinity of American football, baseball and basketball." These characteristically U.S. sports demonstrate both U.S. identities of the second and subsequent generations of Finnish Americans, as well as their strong identification with Michigan. In Koskela's novel (1996, 112), the sporting activities of the Nurmi Athletic Club include basketball. This can be interpreted as a sign of gradual Americanization of the younger generation through their sports practices. According to Virtanen (2014, 197), in the 1930s "[t]he younger generation of Finnish Americans tended to be more interested in typical American sports, such as basketball." Although in *Welcome to Shadow Lake*, the younger generation also shows interest in Finnish sports, the inclusion of basketball into the activities of the Finnish American ethnic athletic club manifests the influence of the mainstream U.S. society on the U.S.-born Finns. Koskela (1996, 77) also mentions briefly the interest of some second-generation characters in baseball, more specifically, in the local Michigan team Detroit Tigers. This interest in the iconic U.S. game also accentuates the Americanization of the younger generation

through their sports and simultaneously highlights the strong regional character of their identities. According to Warren Goldstein (2010, 105),

more than any other American game, baseball was built on a geographical and psychological sense of localism — if we take localism to be an attachment to one place and fear, antipathy, or competitiveness toward other places. There had always been a “home club” or nine and a “visiting” club or nine in baseball, and the action of the game alternated between the home and visiting sides. From the earliest days of the organized game, nearly every club had its own home ground.

Thus, the characters' interest in the baseball “home club” of Michigan is a marker of their regional consciousness and identification. Although Koskela does not elaborate much on the characters' class and masculinity in relation to the U.S. sports, baseball is considered one of typically masculine sports (Klomsten, Marsh & Skaalvik 2005, 626), which can also accentuate their rugged Yooperness.

Anderson writes much more about the role of the U.S. “sports trinity” in the lives of the characters in the second half of the twentieth century. The prominent position of these sports illustrates the characters' identities as Americans and Yoopers. Their belonging to the region is manifested through their loyalty to the “home clubs” and competitiveness toward the clubs of other states. For instance, this competitiveness is demonstrated in the story “The New Barbeque Grill” when Heikki is contrasted with his granddaughter in the preferences in American football. She becomes a “fanatical” backer of the Green Bay Packers and “a kind of Wisconsinite by default, despite her Copper Country origin” (Anderson 1995, 71). Heikki, in turn, stubbornly refuses to go to the Packers' games (Anderson 1995, 71). In several stories, the author highlights the rugged masculine Yooperness of the second-generation characters through their interest in Detroit Tigers (Anderson 1995, 49, 57, 113). Heikki Heikkinen nostalgically remembers listening to Detroit Tigers games in logger camps in the woods together with other Yooper Finnish “real men” back in the good old days (Anderson 1995, 49). This connection between Detroit Tigers (and other Michigan teams) and the UP Finnish masculinity is portrayed most prominently in the story “Uncle Leon,” an eponymous eccentric Finnish American hermit in the 1950s, who is a strong fan of Tigers and other Michigan teams, such as Detroit Lions (American football) and Detroit Red Wings (ice hockey).

He quickly fell into a routine typical of Old Finnish men from the UP. He had a small but powerful radio by his bed, and, every day from spring to early fall, he would listen religiously to Detroit Tigers' games. From fall to winter, he would listen to Lions' games, and from winter to spring to Red Wings' games. The Pistons had only recently moved to Detroit from Fort Wayne and were not yet worthy of deification. Of the holy sports trinity, Leon much preferred baseball.

[...] On October 1, 1961, at the precise moment when Roger Maris stroked his sixty-first home run into the right field stands of Yankee Stadium, which, simultaneously, was the precise moment when Norm Cash finished the season as a Tiger with a league-leading .361 batting average, Leon died of a stroke. He had just consumed his two-hundred-thousandth cup of strong, black coffee. In Old Finnish Man terms, he had about as perfect a death as one could have. (Anderson 1995, 113.)

Although Leon is portrayed as lacking many Finnish manly traits such as *sisu*, his passion for strong coffee (another iconic Finnish and Finnish American quality⁶) and for Michigan sports teams compensate for this and still make him a tough Yooper “Old Finnish Man.”

According to Tonts & Atherley (2010, 387–389), “home teams” are important in the construction of place and local community and building a sense of pride and cohesion. For the characters in Anderson’s stories, Detroit Tigers are such a “home team” which is involved in constructing their sense of affiliation with Michigan. The characters’ “home teams” also accentuate their Yooperness in terms of class and masculinity. For instance, in the story “The New Wal-Mart,” Heikki Heikkinen watches the baseball game on TV and is upset when the game is cancelled because of bad weather. He dismisses modern high-paid professional baseball players as sissies and contrasts them with amateur UP school baseball teams of his youth when children of Finnish loggers, miners and farmers all had *sisu*, as they were so tough that they played in any weather at the diamonds of Finnish American communities of Michigan backcountry such as Toivola (Anderson 1995, 57). Through baseball, the author demonstrates not only the characters’ Americanization and belonging to Michigan through their presence in the local landscape and sportscape, but also their Yooper working-class strength and ruggedness as well as their specific Finnish American identity as they demonstrate the iconic Finnish trait of *sisu* in the iconic US sport.

Conclusion

My analysis illustrates that in Anderson’s and Koskela’s fiction, sports is presented as an important component of the Finnish American community’s life both in the 1930s and in the second half of the twentieth century, despite obvious differences in the level of activity of their ethnic institutions in these two different time periods. In both texts, sporting practices of Finnish Americans of different generations demonstrate similar tendencies of transnationalism and regionalism. By their sports participation and spectatorship, the characters transcend the borders between Finland and the United States, their old

⁶ For more information about coffee and masculine Finnish Americanness, see Kushnir 2016.

country and their country of settlement. For Finnish Americans, various sports connect them with Finland and manifest their iconic Finnish traits such as *sisu*. At the same time, their sporting activities draw a boundary of their region by distinguishing them from the other states. Through their sports, the characters express their thinking of themselves in terms of Michigan and the UP, and demonstrate their strong local community spirit and place pride. By their sporting activities, facilities, and athletes, the characters mark out their presence in the region. Through their sports, they also demonstrate their belonging to such characteristics of the region as strong working-class masculinity. Sports is a key site for masculine identities (Messner 1988), and the characters in the source texts tend to prefer sports that, according to Koivula (2001) and Klomsten, Marsch, and Skaalvik (2005), are typically characterized as masculine: involving danger, risk, speed, endurance, strength, and challenge. Finnish American men are portrayed as equally strong and tough as athletes and workers. Although the U.S.-born Finns have not been limited to hard manual jobs like the migrant generation, in the texts the sports activities of different generations in different settings promote the similar ideal of working-class rugged Yooper Finnish masculinity. On the whole, sports in the source texts demonstrate how the characters' Finnishness, Americanness, and Yooperness overlap together.

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