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FINNISH VOICES — A DIVERSE LITERARY TRADITION



LITERATURE FOR THE WORLD

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- Our small language area – covering both Finnish and Swedish – provides literature for the world and is building a wider following.
- Every year, **300–400** Finnish literature translations are published abroad in about 40 different languages.
- In 2019 more than half (**53** percent) of export revenue came from children's and young adult's literature.



Literature exports, or income from the sale of rights to Finnish literature, are increasing rapidly:

3.71 million euros in 2019

3.14 million euros in 2018

2.37 million euros in 2017

3.14 million euros in 2016

2.34 million euros in 2015

2.16 million euros in 2014

2.24 million euros in 2013

1.98 million euros in 2012

1.26 million euros in 2011

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Photo: Olli Oilinki/Visit Finland



FINNISH LITERARY HISTORY

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- The beginning of the Finnish literature journey goes back to the 1540s when Finnish Lutheran reformer Mikael Agricola (1510–1557) published *Abckiria* (*ABC Book*) , which is the first book ever written in Finnish.
- The Finnish national epic *Kalevala* by Elias Lönnrot was compiled from Karelian folklore and published in 1835.
- The first novel in Finnish, *Seven Brothers* (*Seitsemän veljestä*) by Aleksis Kivi (1834–1872), was published in 1870.



FINNISH LITERARY HISTORY

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- Other notable works which were written in the late 1800s and early 1900s are, for example
 - *Meek Heritage (Hurskas kurjuus)* (1919) by Nobel Prize winning Frans Eemil Sillanpää (1888–1964)
 - *The Worker's Wife (Työmiehen vaimo)* by Minna Canth (1844–1897)
 - *The Unknown Soldier (Tuntematon sotilas)* (1954) by Väinö Linna (1920-1992)
- Minna Canth is also known for her work for equality and woman's rights and is the first woman in Finnish history to receive her own flag day, 19 March, which is also known as the day of social equality.



FINNISH COMIC BOOKS 1/2

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- In the 2020s the Finnish comic book industry is vibrant, multi-voiced and not afraid to cross genre boundaries.
- The small size of the country and its limited comic book market may help to explain why Finnish comic strips tend to be so artistically ambitious and go beyond specific trends.
- A considerable number of Finnish comic books have been published in Central Europe, and many artists are now working with international audiences in mind.





FINNISH COMIC BOOKS 2/2

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- Finland is well known abroad for Tom of Finland and Tove Jansson.
- In the 21st century the Finnish comic book business has gone global. A considerable number of Finnish comic books have been published in Central Europe, and many artists are now working with international audiences in mind.
- KUTIKUTI, a non-profit contemporary comics association that publishes the free *Kuti* magazine, has been attracting attention abroad and helping cartoonists break into the global market since 2006.



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Photo: Henry Söderlund/Helsinki Comics Festival 2018

✚ LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- Children's and young people's literature is also actively written in Finland.
- In addition to Tove Jansson, known as the creator of the beloved Moomin books, there are many other writers for children and young people in Finland, such as Mauri Kunnas and Salla Simukka.





The most translated works for children and young readers (11/2019)

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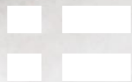
1. Simukka, Salla
As Red as Blood (Punainen kuin veri) 37 languages
2. Jansson, Tove
Finn Family Moomintroll (Trollkarlens hatt) 33 languages
3. Simukka, Salla
As White as Snow (Valkea kuin lumi) 33 languages



FINLAND-SWEDISH LITERATURE

- Finland is a bilingual country and the official languages are Finnish and Swedish, so Finnish literature is also bilingual.
- Well-known Finnish-Swedish writers include Tove Jansson, Zachris Topelius, Tua Forsström and Kjell Westö.





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LIBRARIES – MORE THAN JUST BOOKS

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- Finland is also known for its comprehensive library network, high rates of users and lending, and effective use of technology and information networks.
- In Finland there are over 300 central libraries, 500 branch libraries, and on top of that mobile libraries, which operate in sparsely populated areas.
- The library is a basic municipal service and the use and borrowing of library materials are free of charge.
- Libraries have a long history in society as an open, free-of-charge, low-threshold place to learn, work, study and organise events.



Around **80 percent** of Finns are regular library users.

Finns visit libraries **10** times a year on average,
borrowing **18** books, discs or magazines.

Library websites register over **57** million visits a year.

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Photo: Kuvio/Oodi





Most published languages in translation of Finnish literature (1900-2019)

1. German
2. Estonian
3. Swedish

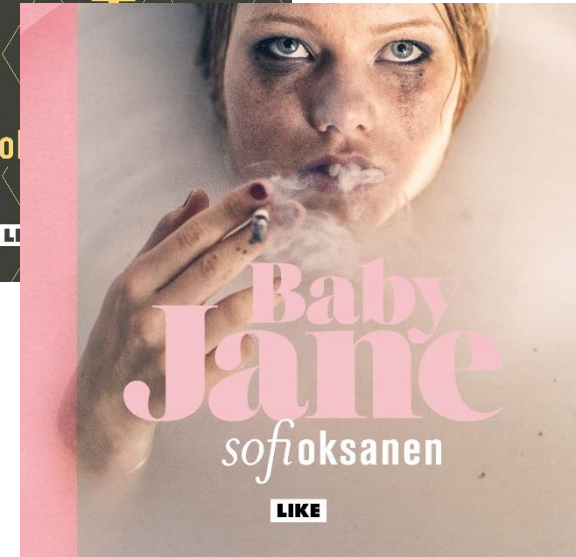


CELEBRITIES IN THE INDUSTRY

- **Sofi Oksanen** (1977–) is the most awarded contemporary Finnish author.
- Her works have been published in over 50 languages. Her most well-known novel, *Purge* (*Puhdistus*), has sold more than a million copies worldwide.
- *Purge* is one of the best-known and most praised Finnish contemporary books.



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CELEBRITIES IN THE INDUSTRY

- **Tove Jansson's** (1914–2001) books for children and adults have always found new readers from one decade to the next, abroad as well as in Finland.
- Jansson is best known for her Moomin books for children, which have also been made into multiple films and TV series.
- Jansson's Moomin stories have been translated into about 50 different languages.

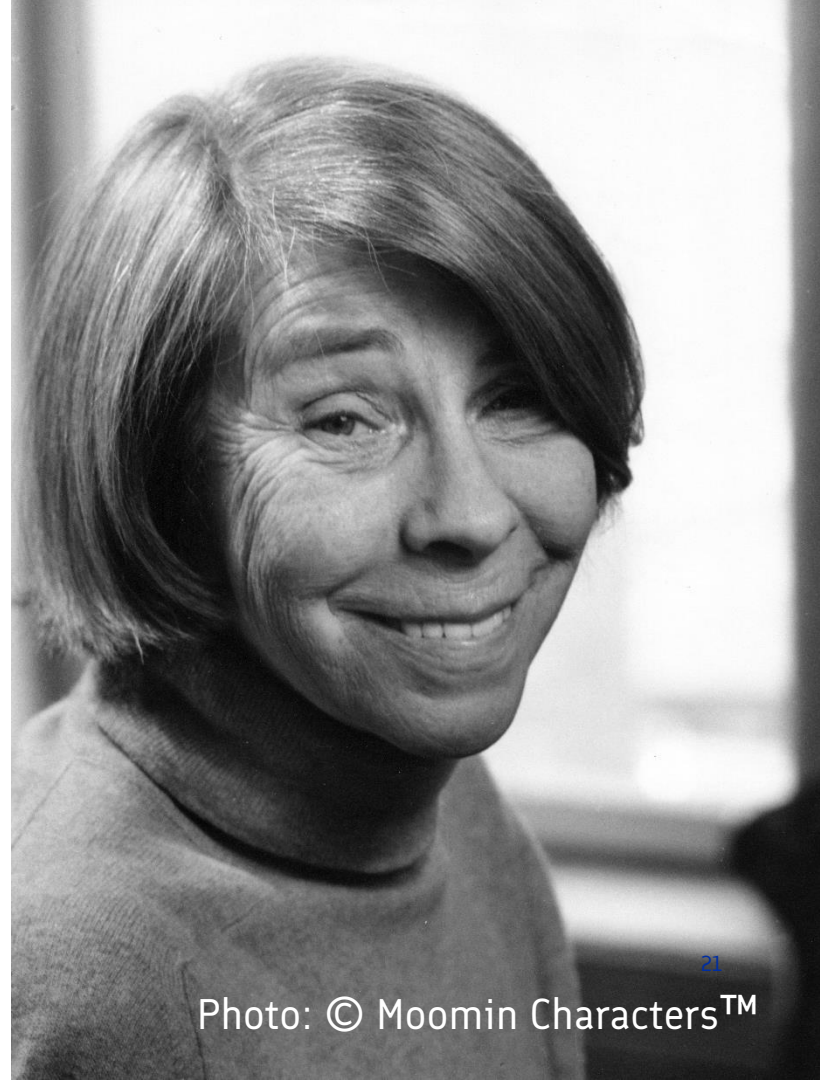


Photo: © Moomin Characters™



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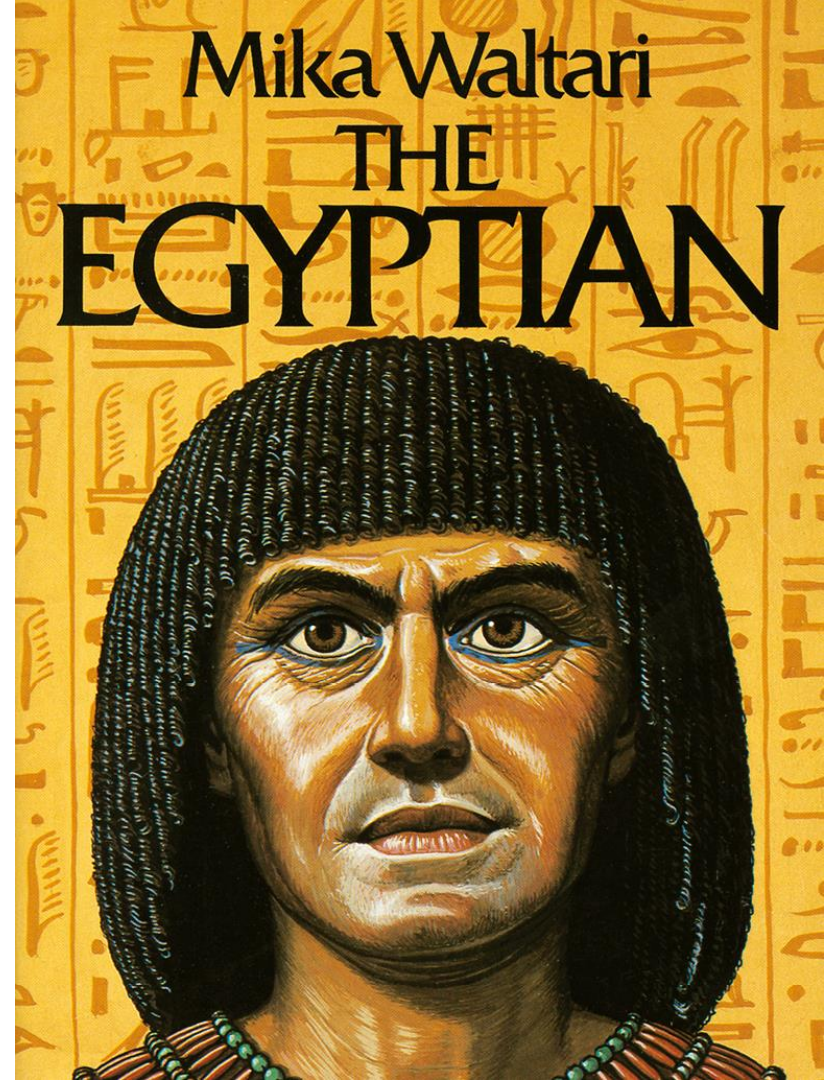


Photo: Tea Åvall/Finnish Literature Exchange



CELEBRITIES IN THE INDUSTRY

- **Mika Waltari** (1908–1979) was a Finnish multi-skilled writer.
- He was best known for his best-selling novel *The Egyptian* (*Sinuhe egyptiläinen*), which is often regarded as one of the best works of Finnish literature.
- *The Egyptian* is a historical novel and has been published in at least 36 countries.





CELEBRITIES IN THE INDUSTRY

- **Salla Simukka** (1981–) is a Finnish writer, translator and literary critic.
- The rights to Salla Simukka's trilogy for young adults have been sold to 52 language areas.
- Simukka's most well-known book, *As Red as Blood* (*Punainen kuin meri*) (2013), is the most translated book for children and young readers.





FINNISH LITERATURE AWARDS

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- Finnish authors are annually awarded the Finlandia Prize (*Finlandia-palkinto*), which is the most prestigious literature award one can get in Finland.
- Other Finnish literature awards include the Kalevi Jäntti Prize and Helsingin Sanomat Literature Prize.
- Finnish authors have also received awards abroad. The best known of these is probably F.E. Sillanpää's Nobel Prize, which he won in 1939.



THE MOST TRANSLATED FINNISH LITERATURE WORKS (FILI, 11/2019)

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1. Lönnrot, Elias: **The Kalevala** 55 languages
2. Waltari, Mika: **The Egyptian** 40 languages
3. Oksanen, Sofi: **Purge** 38 languages



FINNISH LITERATURE ABROAD

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- Finnish Literature Exchange, FILI, promotes the export of literature by acting as an intermediary for professional contacts.
- FILI brings together translators of Finnish literature and arranges training for them.
- Among other things, Fili distributes translation grants, travel grants and promotional grants of approximately 700,000 euros annually to more than 400 different projects and maintains a database of translations of Finnish literature.



LEARN MORE ABOUT FINNISH LITERATURE

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- [FILI – Finnish Literature Exchange](#)
- [this is FINLAND: Finnish Contemporary Literature: A Wealth of Voices](#)
- [The Union of Finnish Writers](#)
- [Public libraries in Finland](#)
- [The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland \(SLS\)](#)



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Thank you!

Photo: Henry Söderlund/Helsinki
Comics Festival 2018

