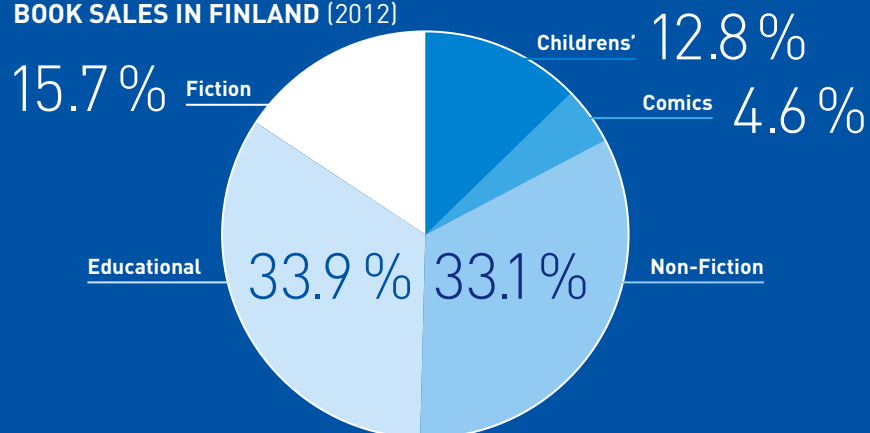


FICTION
POETRY
COMICS
CHILDREN

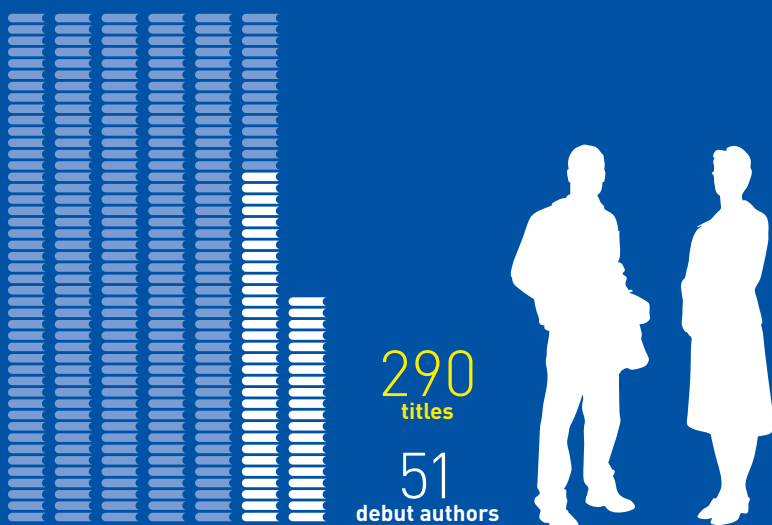
FINLAND
READS

FINLAND READS

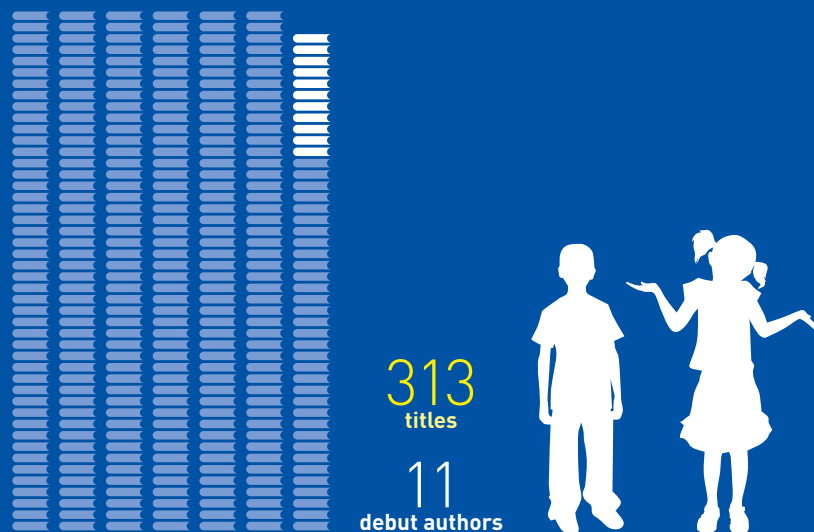
BOOK SALES IN FINLAND (2012)



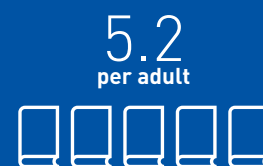
NEW FINNISH FICTION BOOK TITLES IN 2012



NEW FINNISH CHILDRENS' BOOK TITLES IN 2012



BOOK SALES IN FINLAND



* Estimate



READERS WRITE

Finns are a nation of readers. We have reason to be proud of our extensive library system and some of the highest loan rates in the world. A new trend for the 21st century is a flood of fiction and a burgeoning number of book clubs that are further fuelling our passion for reading.

Readers also write. You won't find a place too small to have a creative writing society or peer group. And social media seems only to be encouraging more people to take up writing as a hobby. The appearance of small publishers has lowered the threshold for publication and made self-publishing a convenient option.

The number of professional authors is also increasing rapidly. The Union of Finnish Writers, which connects authors of Finnish-language fiction, has increased its membership by a quarter since the turn of the millennium. The majority of new authors may be young, but age is neither a barrier nor necessarily even a hindrance. The average age at which authors publish their first book has risen to 33 and an increasing number of over-50s are launching writing careers. The youngest and oldest members of the Union may be separated by decades.

What do Finns write? Plot is still king when it comes to prose and the crime fiction boom is still going strong. Young people love fantasy. Although social criticism is on the rise, the traditional social realist novel is now a rarity. Authors are also finding inspiration in the history of Finland and its neighbouring countries. Young women's interest in Finnish war history has opened up completely new perspectives on the genre. The late 1990s saw the rise of poetry that examines and plays with language, and its popularity continues. Alongside it, we are also seeing the revival of personal and polemic essays and the short story — the latter now freed from convention.

Everyone wants to write, and the whole country reads, but who wants to buy books? As in the rest of Europe, this is also a burning question in Finnish literary life. The popularity of reading and writing proves, however, that literature remains a cornerstone of Finnish culture; a key shaper and enforcer of national identity.

The popularity of reading and writing proves that literature remains a cornerstone of Finnish culture; a shaper and enforcer of national identity.



MARTTI LEPPÄ / WSOY

Tuula-Liina Varis, Chair of the Union of Finnish Writers

A SELECTION OF LITERARY LINKS

All these sites are in English, at least partly, some in other languages, too.

www.booksfromfinland.fi

A literary journal, published by Finnish Literature Society

www.dekkariseura.fi

The Finnish Whodunnit Society

www.finlit.fi/fili

Finnish Literature Exchange, FILI, dedicated to promoting Finnish literature abroad

www.finlit.fi

Finnish Literature Society.

A research institute and a cultural organisation consisting of archives, a library, a publishing house, a research department and the Finnish Literature Exchange

www.kirjailijaliitto.fi/in-english

The Union of Finnish Writers

www.kirjakauppaliitto.fi/english

The Booksellers' Association in Finland

www.kustantajat.fi/en

Finnish Book Publishers' Association

www.sacred-texts.com/neu/kveng

An introduction to Kalevala

www.lastenkirjainstituutti.fi/in-english

The Finnish Institute for Children's Literature

www.libraries.fi

Anything you wanted to know about Finnish libraries

www.liwre.fi/etusivu_en

Lahti International Writers' Reunion

www.nuorenoivoimanliitto.fi/international

A literary society mainly for the young (translates as "Youthful Vigor")

www.sls.fi

The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland

www.suomentietokirjailijat.fi/en

The Finnish Association of Non-fiction Writers



*Mikael Agricola (1510–1557), founder of literary Finnish (1537 onwards)
Drawing by Albert Edelfelt*

*Turku Cathedral,
first centre of Finnish
cultural life
Painting by C.L. Engel, 1814*



*J.L. Runeberg
(1804–1877),
the national poet
of Finland*

*Scene from Runeberg's epic
poem the Tales of Ensign Stål,
by Albert Edelfelt, 1897–1900*



*Fredrika Runeberg
(1807–1879), writer
and spouse of
J.L. Runeberg*

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

Finnish literature is at once ancient and young. Compared to many Central European cultures, Finland's Finnish-language literature can even be called new — barely 150 years old — and its Swedish-language literature is only a hundred years older. While literary traditions reach back over 2,000 years in major Mediterranean cultures, and even a thousand years in Central Europe, Finland can boast maybe 300 years. However, when it comes to oral traditions, Finnish folk poetry is much older than Mediterranean culture — thousands of years old.

Although *The Kalevala* (the principal collection of Finnish folk poetry) was only published in the 1830s, researchers estimate that the poetry itself is comprised of layers dating back at least 2,500 years. Recitation and sung poetry survived as living traditions, particularly in remote districts. While it is difficult to overestimate the *Kalevala*'s influence on modern Finnish culture, the worlds of the poem singers and the educated classes did not really coincide for centuries.

From the 1100s onwards, Finland became an increasingly integral part of the Swedish Empire in a gradual process that lasted centuries. The key elements of Western European culture arrived in Finland through its association with Sweden: the Church, the arts, and scholarship. Before the advent of universities in the North in the late 1400s, the Finnish educated classes had established quite close and direct links to European centres of learning, such as Paris and some German universities. In the first centuries of the Swedish Empire, Finland was a Catholic country, as was the rest of Europe, but it was one of the first to embrace the Lutheran Church. Many Finns studied in **Luther's** Wittenberg in the early 1500s, including **Mikael Agricola**, the first person to systematise the Finnish language.

Throughout the time of Swedish rule, Finland maintained fairly warlike relations with its gradually forming neighbour, Russia. There was no distinct border between Eastern and Western Europe running between Finland and Russia. Karelia was in many ways a place where two cultures collided,

similar to the Alsace region in France. Karelia was not completely Finnish, yet not Russian either. Just as the border between France and Germany shifted quite often over the centuries, so did the border between Finland and Russia.

The first Finnish university was established in Turku in the mid-1600s. It greatly altered cultural conditions in Finland with, for example, many printing presses springing up around it. There were also changes in language norms: Latin made way for Swedish, which took on an increasingly central role not only in administration but also in society. It's easy to understand why Finland's literature was initially written in Swedish. All of the major early authors and poets wrote in Swedish. The only things that were really published in Finnish were religious tracts and, from the Age of Liberty onwards, non-fiction texts intended to foster economic activity.

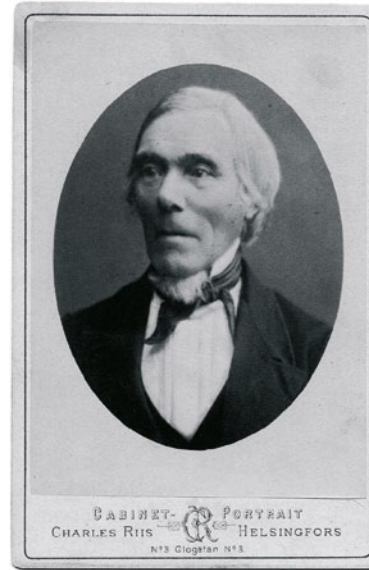
Finland's destiny was intertwined with Sweden's for almost 700 years, up until the early 1800s when Russia conquered Finland. Although Finland became part of the Russian Empire, it was for the

*University of Helsinki
To cut the ties with Sweden,
the University was moved from
Turku to Helsinki in 1828.
by C.L. Engel*



*Zacharias Topelius,
(1818–1898) author,
journalist, historian, and
rector of the University
of Helsinki*

*Elias Lönnrot (1802–1884),
creator of the epic poem
Kalevala*



*Aleksis Kivi (1834–1872),
one of the first authors
writing in Finnish. Author of
the Seven brothers
Drawing by Albert Edelfelt, 1873*

first time an autonomous area. This constituted a more fundamental shift than simply a change in the conquering army's native language. Finland developed as an historic unit, country and nation, until it finally became an independent state in 1917. The 1812 Diet of Porvoo can be considered the trigger for this development, as it was the first time a legislative assembly (a forerunner of Parliament) comprising entirely of Finns gathered in Finland. Although there were, of course, budding attempts to form a new country between Sweden and Russia during the last decades of Swedish rule.

THE BIRTH OF A NATION

For Finland, becoming an autonomous grand duchy in the Russian Empire enabled a new kind of development. Finland had been a backwoods of the Swedish Empire — in Russia it was a pioneer of progress. **Elias Lönnrot**'s major work, the collection and collation of *Kalevala* tales into a single poem, was completed within a single state. A significant proportion of Finland's treasure-house of

ancient folklore had been preserved in Russian-administered Karelia — the spread of Western culture through Sweden had not made it that far.

For the Russian government, Fennification could only be a good thing: previously close ties with the former motherland, Sweden, were gradually weakening. However, Swedish remained by far the most important language among Finland's educated classes right up until the early 1900s. The First World War saw the breakdown of Russia's multinational empire and many nations gained independence, including Finland, Poland and the Baltic countries.

Independence marked the end of Russian rule, but not the defeat of Swedish. In fact, Swedish still retains a strong position in Finland when you consider that only five per cent of the population currently speak it as their native language. Swedish was not even wiped out by the powerful surge of Fennification during the 1920s and 1930s, which could be seen in the fight to weaken the status of Swedish at, for example, universities.

Yet the new century did indeed see the rise of Finnish-language culture. Finnish-language literature had been strongly emerging already in the late 1800s, and had now established its position.

In the early decades of Finland's independence, the 1920s–30s, Finland was divided in many ways. One divide ran between the political right and left, another between traditional rural authors and the urban authors that fostered European connections (**Mika Waltari**, **Olavi Paavolainen**, **Katri Vala**).

In 1939, the last Nobel Prize before the war was awarded to **F. E. Sillanpää**, a rural Finnish author who took his inspiration from nature, almost as if to mark the end of an era. By 1945, everything had changed. Europe had been sliced in two and Finland was increasingly eager to open its windows to the West — and to remember its rural roots.

MATTI SOVIJÄRVI

FINNISH LITERATURE NOW

Finnish literature in all its diversity stands up well to international comparison, even though Finland does not boast a particularly long literary history. Aleksis Kivi, one of Finland's most esteemed authors, was the first master of Finnish-language prose and his output coincided with the post-Romantic decades after the 1850s. The Finnish national epic, the Kalevala, was compiled by Elias Lönnrot and published in 1835.

The stories and imagery of the *Kalevala* still wield a powerful influence on the collective Finnish imagination. Comic book artist **Mauri Kunnas'** *Koirien Kalevala* (The Canine Kalevala, new edition 2006) and a simplified version of the *Kalevala* for children

(2002, English version 2009) both remain incredibly popular. The *Kalevala* has been translated into over 60 languages and **Aleksis Kivi's** best-known work, *Seitsemän veljestä* (Seven Brothers, 1870) remains both a firm favourite and an exemplary model among Finnish authors. *Seven Brothers* encapsulates that tension between ruralness and urbanity, primitiveness and civilisation, that has long shaped the core of Finnish identity.

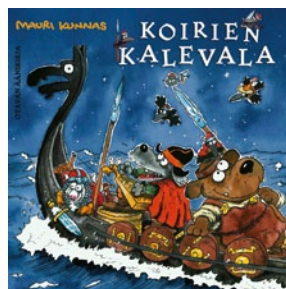
In Finland as elsewhere, the highest sales figures are achieved by crime novels (**Leena Lehtolainen**), thrillers (**Ilkka Remes**), family sagas (**Laila Hirvisaari**) and even chick-lit-influenced portrayals of young urban women (**Katja Kallio**), of which there is, among others, a Finnish rural version set

on a farm (**Veera Nieminen**). The Finnish comic book is also enjoying unprecedented success in the best-seller lists with characters such as *Viivi & Wagner*. And although it might not be topping the sales charts, essayistic literature is a strong and otherwise interesting genre (**Tommi Melender, Antti Nylén**).

There is also other high-quality prose that, thanks to its style and subject matter, is finding its way across the nation's borders with increasing frequency.

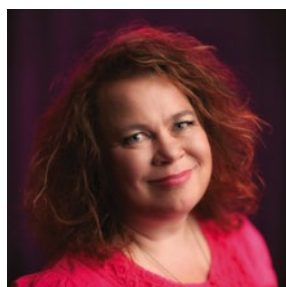
HISTORY TODAY

Finnish literature has always exhibited a powerful sense of historical awareness. During the post-



KATJA LÖNNROT / OTAVA

| Leena Lehtolainen

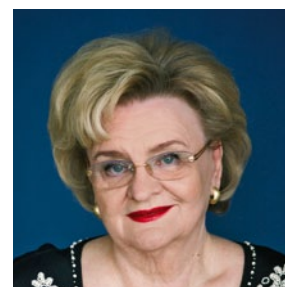


THOMAS WHITEHOUSE / TAMMI



MILLA VON KONOW / WSOY

| Laila Hirvisaari



JOUNI HARALA / OTAVA



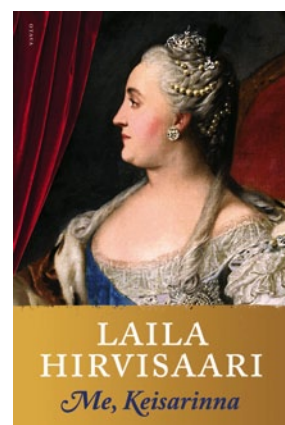
JOUNI HARALA / OTAVA



| Mauri Kunnas



| Ilkka Remes



| Katja Kallio

war years, when Finland was growing and forging a national unity, literature had ideological tasks to fulfil. Right up until the 1970s, it contributed to the debate surrounding the establishment of the welfare state. Prior to this, **Mika Waltari** wrote his 1945 classic *Sinuhe egyptiläinen* (The Egyptian), which has since been translated into dozens of languages. Although many of Waltari's novels are set in the past, they are read as depictions of the societal climate at the time of their publication. *The Egyptian's* status as a classic is largely founded on its fundamental humanism, and Waltari remains one of Finland's best-known authors abroad. The adjective 'Waltarian' is unquestionably positive and is often used to describe, for example, **Asko Sahlberg's**

acclaimed novel *Herodes* ('Herod', 2013), which broadly tells the story of the birth of Christianity. **Sofi Oksanen's** *Puhdistus* (Purge, 2008) was one of Finland's biggest international breakthroughs of the 2010s. Its Estonian-Finnish framework, set against a backdrop of recent European history, has spoken to readers as far away as the USA, and its success can be explained in many ways. It takes a bold approach to the recent history of Finland's sister nation, and its interpretation of the events surrounding the Second World War, especially the relationship between conqueror and conquered, has sparked off much debate. Oksanen's narrative is not anchored in traditional realism; it is carried along by a profuse flow of lush

and lingering verbs. It gives voice to those who have been silenced, to the distress that no one cared to listen to. A story revolving around three generations of women fleshes out the novel's themes of nationalism and womanhood. Sofi Oksanen continues to explore these same themes in *Kun kyyhkysen katosivat* (When the Doves Disappeared, 2012), which is also set in Estonia during a period spanning the 1930s to the 1960s. This novel cements her reputation as a guiding light of her generation. Infidelity, adaptability, and the choices people make in extreme conditions are embodied in the novel's ruthless character Edgar Parts. Sofi Oksanen is also a good representative of the

| Veera Nieminen



MARKUS GRÖNFORS / TAMMI



LOTTA DILPUND / SAVUKEIDAS KUSTANNUS



| Antti Nylén

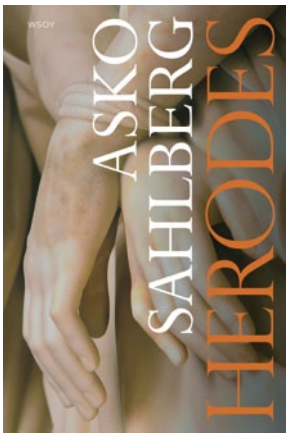
| Tommi Melender



PERTTI NISONEN



WSOY



PETER SVENSON / WSOY



| Asko Sahlberg

| Sofi Oksanen



TONI HÄRKÖNEN / LIKE



| Katja Kettu



OFER AMIR / WSOY



LAURA MALMIVAARA / SILTALA

| Leena Parkkinen



HEINI LEHVÄSLAHO / TEOS

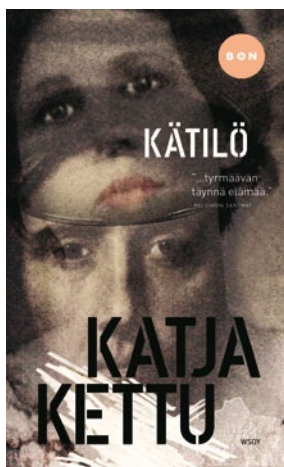


TONI HÄRKÖNEN / LIKE

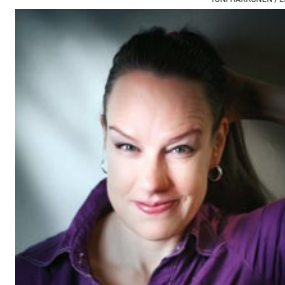
| Katri Lipson



OLLI TURUNEN / TAMMI



| Aki Ollikainen



| Riikka Ala-Harja



FINNISH LITERATURE NOW

younger generation in that she is happy to meet her readers, continually travels abroad to speak about her work, and raises topics of current interest when she makes an appearance. She understands the importance of marketing. The media is increasingly writing more about authors as phenomena than about the literature itself, but general shifts in the publishing industry and seemingly dramatic changes of publisher only serve to fuel this approach.

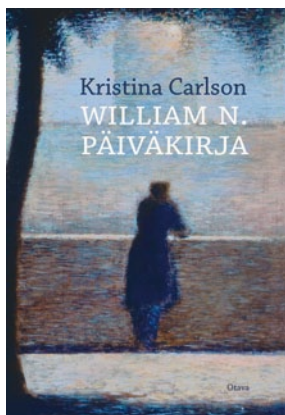
In recent years, there have also been examples of historical novels that deal with the more problematic aspects of turning points in Finnish history and the construction of the Finnish identity.

Katja Kettu's *Kätilö* (The Midwife, 2011) bears some relation to Oksanen's work. Kettu also writes about suppressed events from the Second World War, that is, the Lapland war and a Finnish woman's love for a German soldier. Erotic allure and sexual tension are powerfully present in this asymmetric love story. Kettu's knowledge of Lapland is bolstered by her distinctive use of dialect and neologisms, as she reveals both the personal and universal cruelty of war and military camps.

Aki Ollikainen's novella *Nälkävuosi* ('A Year of Famine', 2012) describes a poor family's long journey to beg for food during the Finnish famine of 1867. It is a microhistory, the story of one fam-

ily's fate under extreme conditions in which the only thing that remains is the struggle for survival. **Jenni Linturi's** second novel, *Malmi, 1917* (2013), is a skilful representation of the tense atmosphere on the eve of the Finnish Civil War. The gulf between the Finnish- and Swedish-speaking sections of the population is revealed through young people's dealings with each other — although love still crosses borders. Linturi's narrative is a combination of tragic events and precise language that leaves readers plenty of room for interpretation.

Leena Parkkinen's novel *Galtbystä länteen* ('West of Galtby', 2013) is an exemplary period piece set in the Finnish archipelago during the ravages of the



TOMMI TUOMI / OTAVA

| Rosa Liksom



PEKKA MUSTONEN / WSOY

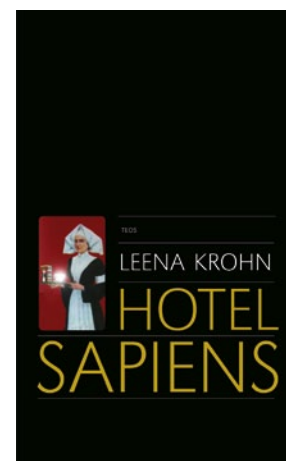


MILLA VON KÖNIG / WSOY

| Hannu Raittila



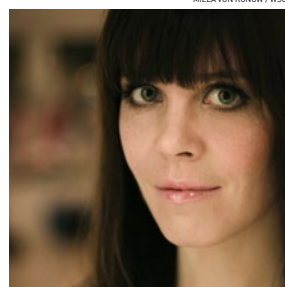
LAURA MALMIVAARA / SILTALA



KATRI LASSILA / TEOS



| Kristina Carlson



| Riikka Pulkkinen



| Leena Krohn

Second World War. There is a shortage of everything, of both concrete and spiritual building materials. Parkkinen's insight also sheds gentle light on changing attitudes in the sexual climate.

OUT INTO THE WORLD

When searching for a common denominator in the Finnish literature of recent years, we find among Finland's mid-generation, largely heterogenic prose writers a distinct openness to reaching beyond their nation's borders, and an effortless shift from one country and culture to the next. Contemporary Finnish literature is thereby linked ever more strongly to the literature of other countries and strengthens confluences in our collective his-

torical experiences, such as the ceaseless movement of people in the post-industrial world.

Riikka Ala-Harja's *Maihinnousu* ('Normandy Landing', 2012) depicts a marriage in France in which there is not only conflict between spouses but a battle against serious illness. **Katri Lipson's** *Jäätelökauppias* ('The Ice-Cream Man', 2011) takes the reader through war-torn Czechoslovakia. Lipson's prose deftly lingers between events and has a firm grasp of the interface between human interactions. **Kristina Carlson's** *William N. päiväkirja* ('The Diary of William N.', 2011) continues the author's musings in a European milieu through the fragmented memories of a Finnish scientist. While Carlson's novel takes us to France, **Rosa Liksom's**

episodic description of a railway journey, *Hytti nro 6* (Compartment Number 6, 2011), whisks us off to the former Soviet Union. In her novel *Vieras* ('The Book of Strangers', 2012), **Riikka Pulkkinen** — who has rapidly risen in popularity — takes her protagonist, a young woman priest, to New York. For the young girls in **Hannu Raittila's** acclaimed novel *Terminaali* ('The Terminal', 2013), the airport becomes both a place to hang out and a metaphor for globalisation — a place where the constant flow of passersby is juxtaposed with tentative meetings. The girls' first trip together coincidentally falls on 11 September 2001...

Journeys can also be made to alternative worlds: **Leena Krohn's** extensive oeuvre borders on philo-

FINNISH LITERATURE NOW

sophical essays. During her lengthy career, she has created completely new worlds and examined various aspects of life using a variety of science fiction elements, often through mathematical and natural scientific analogies. Krohn's latest novel, *Hotel Sapiens* (2013), revolves around the residents of an institution that is at once jail, research institute and mental hospital... Globally acclaimed author **Johanna Sinisalo** has examined topics such as the gender roles of the future and a world in which bees have completely disappeared.

Open literary competitions have traditionally been popular in Finland and provide a convenient way for publishers to screen for new talent: **Emmi Itäranta**'s debut novel *Memory of Water* (2012) is set in a dystopian world in which water has run out. It

appeals to readers of all ages and has won a top science fiction and fantasy writing competition.

FAMILY, EVERYDAY LIFE, AND GENDER

Depictions of family and everyday life are enduring themes in Finnish literature. These themes are encapsulated in changing values and social economics. Religious issues have also been admirably handled in acclaimed debut novels, such as **Niina Miettinen**'s depiction of a blended family in *Israeltyttö* ('Israeli Girl', 2013) and **Pauliina Rauhala**'s *Taivaslaulu* ('Heaven Song', 2013), which examines Laestadianism — a strong yet narrow-minded religious sect — in Northern Finland.

Perennial favourite **Kari Hotakainen**'s *Luonnon laki* ('The Law of Nature', 2013) criticises the

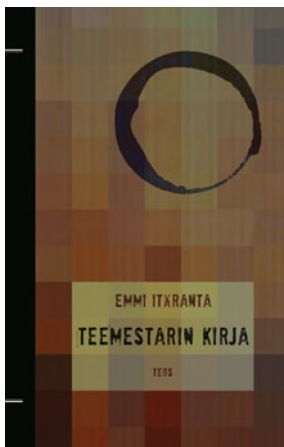
condition of the wellbeing state. Hotakainen has also critically addressed the Nordic lifestyle in his earlier works, and this time the protagonist is a middle-aged man who, while in hospital recovering from an accident, wonders who is really paying for his treatment and for how long. Hotakainen is an empathic storyteller who understands human weaknesses and underlines the power of love with oblique humour.

Esikoinen ('Firstborn', 2013) is the latest novel from another Finnish favourite, **Jari Tervo**. The novel is set in the recent past, at the turn of the 1950s–60s, in the town of Rovaniemi in Northern Finland. Firstborn also holds great personal significance for its author. It is a depiction of family life — told with distinctive laconic humour — that not

| Johanna Sinisalo



KATJA LÖSÖNEN / TEOS



HEINI LEHVASLAINO / TEOS



| Emmi Itäranta

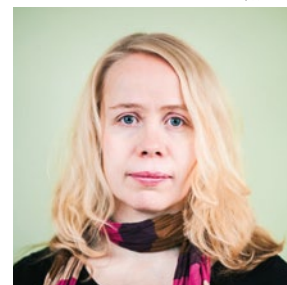
| Niina Miettinen



KATJA LÖSÖNEN / TEOS



PEKKA NIITYVAARA / GUMMERUS



| Pauliina Rauhala

| Kari Hotakainen



LAURA MALMIVAARA / SILTALA



only provides a picture of small-town life and living conditions in Lapland but also contains a raw and touching story of a child coping with his younger brother's serious illness.

Hetken hohtava valo ('Momentary Glow', 2012) is a family saga by acclaimed author **Juha Itkonen**. It covers five decades and three generations set against a backdrop of modernisation. The characters are used to interpret changing gender roles in Finland's industrialising society: new technology excites the father, whilst the mother yearns for an independent life — and eventually a divorce.

A middle-aged woman's harrowing tale is told in **Mikko Rimminen's** *Nenäpäivä* ('Red Nose Day', 2010). Its protagonist is Irma, who pretends to be a market researcher in a quest for company and friendship. Irma can be considered a typical Finn: she thinks more than she speaks, and her shy-

ness appears almost rude. Irma is, however, the universal modern human: confused and lonely, yet reaching out to others. For Rimminen, the Finnish language is not merely a tool but an essential object of reflection in itself, and plot is not a central element either. In his latest novel, *Hippa* ('Tag', 2013), the protagonists are brothers who work as removal men.

Minna Lindgren's *Kuolema Ehtoolehdossa* ('Death in Twilight Grove', 2013) presents a broad range of sympathetic elderly characters, as its setting is the Twilight Grove retirement home — a place where strange things happen. But what are its residents like? Sprightly and fun, with a taste for company and a drop of red wine.

One of the key elements of a novel — the ability to question itself — is exhibited by **Riikka Pelo's** *Jokapäiväinen elämämme* ('Our Everyday Life',

2013), which won one of Finland's most prestigious literary awards, the Finlandia Prize, and firmly propelled its author into the front ranks in one fell swoop. Pelo's narrative follows two personal histories: the fateful lives of the Russian poet Marina Tsvetaeva and her daughter Ariadna Efron. As it reveals the difficult mother-daughter relationship, some parts of this novel read almost like prose poetry. The mother, uncompromising in both her work and lively love life, makes her daughter wish for 'a normal childhood' — and a stinging slap on the cheek from her mother. Life between the wars leads the family to Berlin, Paris and Czechoslovakia; yet their return home to Stalin's Soviet Union only accelerates the circle of destruction. Historical details are woven into Pelo's narrative to create a multilayered novel with irresistible appeal.

NINA PAAVOLAINEN



VEIKKO SOMERPURO / WSOY

| Juha Itkonen



JOUNI HARALA / OTAVA



HEINI LEHÄSLAIHO / TEOS

| Minna Lindgren



HEINI LEHÄSLAIHO / TEOS



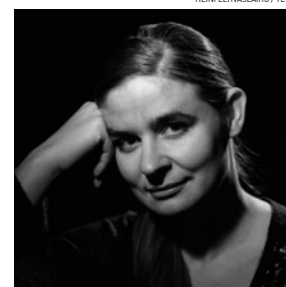
HEINI LEHÄSLAIHO / TEOS



| Jari Tervo



| Mikko Rimminen



| Riikka Pelo



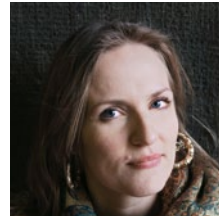
| Philip Teir



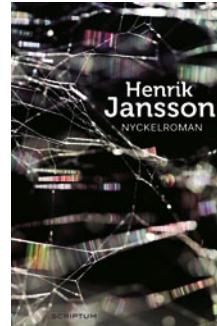
VICTOR GÄRDSÄTER / SCHILDTS & SÖDERSTRÖMS



| Johanna Holmström



| Sara Razai



| Kjell Westö



CHARLOTTA BOUCHT / SCHILDTS & SÖDERSTRÖMS

THE RICHNESS OF TWO CULTURES

*The last few years of Finland-Swedish fiction have seen a shift towards greater social awareness. Many authors' depictions of society have become clearer and more critical. This is clearly evident in books such as *Asfaltsänglar* ('Asphalt Angels', 2013) by Johanna Holmström, one of the most celebrated authors of her generation in Finland. It can also be observed in the finely tuned background in the novel *Vinterkriget. En äktenskapsroman* ('The Winter War. A Marriage Novel', 2013) by Philip Teir, for instance.*

Works of fiction which vigorously introduce a multicultural reality to Finland-Swedish literature are also on the rise. *Asfaltsänglar*, about young female Muslims in Helsinki, is a good example of this. In her novel *Jag har letat efter dig* ('I've Searched for You', 2012), Sara Razai also writes about young people striving to find their own way in a contemporary society in flux. Books such as these are

broadening and deepening the debate on xenophobia and multiculturalism in contemporary Europe. One forerunner of this type of literature is **Marianne Backlén**, whose fiction consistently passes on observations and experiences of pluralism. Anyone wishing to acquaint themselves with her works can read the novel *Karma* (2001).

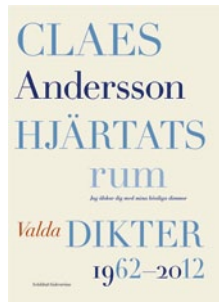
Besides the authors already mentioned, some Finland-Swedish authors have been demonstrating social awareness in their books for a long time already. These include **Henrik Jansson**, whose latest books are an anthology entitled *Brev till min K* ('Letters to My B', 2011) and the novel *Nyckelroman* ('Roman à Clef', 2013). Jansson can be viewed as a pioneer of a new, community-oriented tendency.

Kjell Westö, one of the biggest names in Finland-Swedish literature, continues his examination of Finnish society in his most recent works, focusing on the capital city of Helsinki. His latest novel is titled *Hägring 38* ('Mirage 38', 2013).

DYNAMIC POETRY AND NEW FANTASY

Finland-Swedish poetry has been dynamic for well over a century now, ever since the time of **Edith Södergran** and other groundbreaking modernists. A comparatively large amount of poetry in Swedish continues to be published in Finland; fifteen anthologies were published in 2013. Readers were able to enjoy new anthologies by big names such as **Gösta Ågren**, **Henrika Ringbom**, **Ralf Andtbacka** and the late **Bo Carpelan** (a giant among poets), but works by new poets such as **Johanna Boholm** were also published.

Poetry has again begun to turn towards society and politics, as is clearly apparent when reading poems such as *I stället för grindcore* ('Instead of Grindcore', 2013) by new poet **Petter Sandelin** and *Passport Somaliland* (2012) by established popular poet **Peter Mickwitz**. Without a doubt, the grand old man of Finland-Swedish political poetry is **Claes Andersson**, and a huge collection of poems from



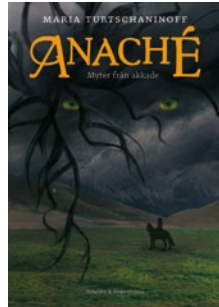
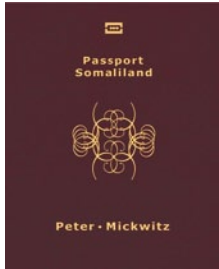
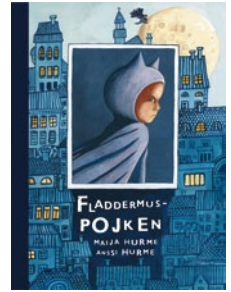
| Jenny Wiik



ROBERT SEGER / SCHILDTS & SÖDERSTRÖMS



RASMUS TÅG / SCHILDTS & SÖDERSTRÖMS



| Kai Korkea-Aho



ONE COUNTRY, TWO CULTURES

Finland has two official languages with equal rights; Finnish and Swedish. Novels, poems and essays are written in two languages, published by separate publishers. Although less

than five per cent of the population speak Swedish as their first language, Swedish still has a prominent role in Finland's cultural life, both in literature and in theatre, for example.

his extensive opus was published in 2013: *Hjärtats rum*. *Valda dikter 1962–2012* ('Selected Poems 1962–2012').

One relatively new genre in Finland-Swedish literature is fantasy, which has become something of a trend in a short time. First was **Maria Turtschaninoff** with her iconic youth novels, which include *Underfors* (2010) and *Anaché* (2012). To the delight of both readers and critics, popular author **Hannele Mikaela Taivassalo** has written the vampire novel *SVulten* ('Starved', 2013), which combines a historical perspective with a depiction of contemporary Helsinki.

New authors in this genre include **Mia Franck**, with her debut novel *Martrådar* ('Mare Threads', 2012) and its independent follow-up, *Maraminne* ('Mare Memory', 2014). The action in both of these is played out in the fictitious small town of Björknäs. Franck's prose is suggestive and restrained, and her work has been compared with authors such as

H.P. Lovecraft and **E. T. A. Hoffmann**. Last but not least, **Jenny Wiik** has found her niche in fantasy with the novel *Bildbindaren* ('The Image Binder', 2012). **Kaj Korkea-Aho** can also be mentioned in this regard. Certainly, he does not write 'proper' fantasy works, but his two novels have rapidly established him as one of the most popular young Finland-Swedish authors.

VIBRANT CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Finland-Swedish authors writing books for children and young people continue to be very active and produce output of very high quality. This is evidenced not least by the many national awards and honours bestowed upon our authors and illustrators over the past few years. **Annika Luther**, **Tove Appelgren**, **Maija** and **Anssi Hurme** and **Anna Härmälä** are just a few of the people active in this field.

MATHIAS ROSENLUND

A book that stirred heated debate is *Kopparbergsvägen 20* by Mathias Rosenlund (2013), an autobiographical depiction of poverty. The title of the book alludes to Henrik Tikkanen's five classic address books, and has been received with both praise and harsh criticism.



POETRY LIVES ON

Poetry is currently the most flourishing branch of contemporary Finnish literature. It is not only growing in popularity but developing in different directions. As many as half a million Finns say that they are in some way involved with poetry.

A couple of hundred printed poetry titles are published every year — which is a staggering number when you consider that Finnish is a relatively small language group. However, only a few per cent of these publications come from traditional publishers. A variety of small publishers, cooperatives, and poetry collectives have harnessed modern technology to control a key position in the field. Book-on-demand and digital publishing have made it financially viable for poets to self-publish, either alone or as part of a collective. Many of the most interesting works in contemporary poetry are freely available to download and read online.

Poetry runs deep in the Finnish language and the melancholy song may well be the archetypic

cal form of Finnish self-expression. Oral poetry based on *Kalevala*, the national epic, was still being sung by ordinary people as late as the early 1800s; it is not farfetched to think that this tradition is the root of many of the communal practices adopted by modern poets. Alongside texts published in either printed or digital formats, the 21st century has seen the birth of performance poetry, which has become increasingly widespread as part of spoken word culture. Nowadays, poems are performed both on large theatre stages and in small clubs. A wide range of poetry is performed at the events that form around this combined use of space and voice: you can hear poets reading from their own published texts as well as recitations of spoken word pieces akin to occasional poetry.

The 21st-century poetry boom shows how younger generations of Finnish readers and writers continue to make poetry their home. It can also be considered a sort of 'gateway' for the youngest writers — those born in the 1990s — in which to

debut. They may later seize upon other genres, yet it is quite normal for different generations of Finns to write both prose and poetry in tandem.

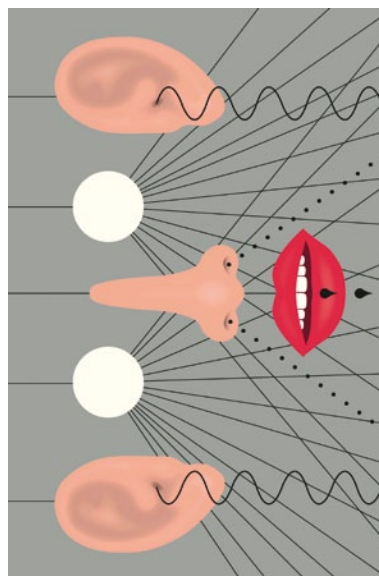
The different genres of contemporary poetry also clearly show how the most active poets born in the 1970s–90s have grown up immersed in information technology. Finland is a pioneer in digital technologies and media culture, and this is also evident in the country's poetry. A variety of digital platforms and writing techniques utilising the Internet serve as a springboard for poetry. A familiar concept from the visual arts, the 'found object', can also produce poetry through the use of, for example, search engine results. Browsers collate material from the online worlds of speech and language, ready for the poet to work with.

THE BOOK AS ART

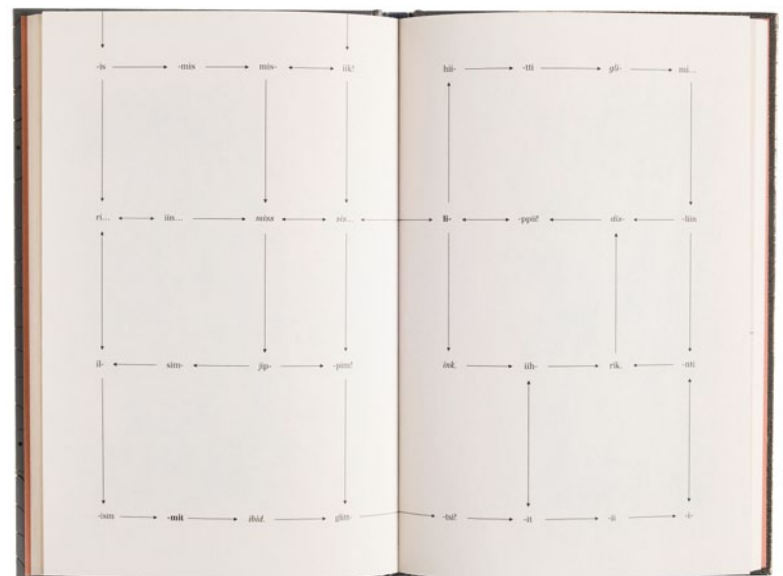
Visual poetry encompasses everything from poetry videos to printed books based on a broad range of printing techniques and graphic artists' work. It is



| Harry Salmenniemi: *Kivirivit*



| Harry Salmenniemi: *Runojä*. Selected as the most beautiful book of the year in 2011



wonderful to note that in contemporary poetry in particular, Gutenberg's printed book — the book as object — shines alongside digital techniques. The title of The most beautiful book of the year by Finnish Book Art Committee has been consistently awarded to a poetry book that has been designed, and even printed, through collaboration between a poet and graphic artist — an impressive artwork in which visuality and textuality meet.

There is a tendency to compare the poetry revival of the 21st century with the 1950s, a decade when modernist poetry flourished in Finland. The roots of contemporary poetics lie on the one hand in the modernist concrete poetry that has now become mainstream and, on the other hand, also in newer sources of inspiration.

PLAYING WITH WORDS

Many poets of the younger generation have been inspired by American-influenced language poetry, in which language itself is a topic, and post-structuralism — placing subjective interpretation at the core of thinking. These poets do, however, focus on topics other than language. Their poems have highlighted, from a personal perspective, many of the issues surrounding the post-modern real world and its accompanying lifestyles. They have, for example, sought to penetrate our modern culture, which is dominated by visuals and the media. Poetry has made a critical examination of how media culture and its modes of speech have become a direct extension of the modern person's senses.

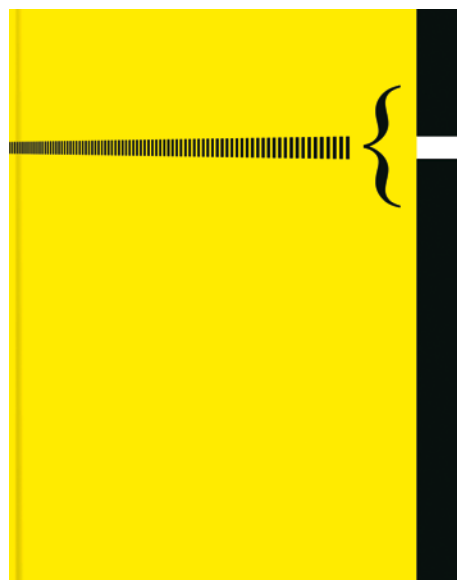
However, many 21st-century poets are still reinterpreting modernist expression, and the poetry field is currently dominated by divided opinions on poetics and all the keen debate that goes with it. These days, the majority of these discussions are already occurring online; and a number of exclusively online poetry sites and e-zines have sprung up alongside the quality printed poetry journals. They are currently playing a highly significant role, as the number of printed newspapers and magazines is contracting all the time. A beloved yet low-circulation artform like poetry needs criticism and literary debate to support its unique position within the field of Finnish literature.

MERVI KANTOKORPI

” A couple of hundred printed poetry titles are published every year — which is a staggering number when you consider that Finnish is a relatively small language group.



| Vesa Haapala: Kuka ampu Ötziä?



| Harry Salmenniemi: Texas, sakset



| Jarkko Laine: Tähtien harjalta

Poetry books
designed by
graphic designer
Markus Pyörälä.



| Tommi Musturi. From Comic Atlas Finland, 2013

THE ART OF WORDS AND IMAGES

There is nothing so serious that it cannot be made even more serious or turned about and made amusing. The comic strip brings out the blackest features of Finnish humour, whether it's a question of working life (Ilkka Heilä's B. Virtanen), the imaginary city of Fingerpori with its puns, double entendres and rude language (Pertti Jarla), or the demystification of great heroes (Matti Hagelberg's Kekkonen).

The Finnish comic is hard to squeeze into a single mould. The stories are strong and strange, the drawing styles distinctive and highly personal. While **Tommi Musturi** uses weird characters and bright colours to get his message across almost without words, **Timo Mäkelä**'s strips are built upon an inner monologue, that is, words.

The first Finnish comic strip was published over 100 years ago: **Ilmari Vainio**'s *Professori Itikaisen tutkimusretki* ('Professor Mosquito's Exploration'). **Ola Fogelberg**'s *Pekka Puupää*, a relatively urban chap for the times, started his adventures in 1927; **Tove** and **Lars Jansson**'s *Moomins* in 1945.

The real rise of the comic did not, however, begin until the baby boomers grew up and began yearning for something more adult to go alongside *Donald Duck* (Aku Ankka in Finnish), which has long enjoyed immense popularity in Finland. The topics are usually quite serious: from **Ville Ranta**'s reli-

gious musings to **Marko Turunen**'s surrealist modern world. **JP Ahonen**'s *Perkeros* opens up doors to both metal rock music and the worlds behind it.

Finnish publishers have appreciated the value of their comic strip artists.

Both traditional major publishers (eg Otava, WSOY) and new ones that have sprung up around the comic (eg Arktinen Banaani) have brought out albums.

"Finnish expertise in this area can also be seen in our international success. For example, numerous albums by Finnish comic strip artists are published in France and Germany every year," says **Kalle Hakkola**, director of the Finnish Comics Centre.

The world of the Finnish comic is exceptional and enthralling. It is only natural that a green-party feminist lives with a pig that wears pants (**Juba Tuomola**'s *Viivi & Wagner*). The pig's attitudes are as serious as those of his partner. When he makes a list of things he still wants to do in life, it starts with 'eat pizza and drink beer'. It doesn't matter that he's already done that countless times before.



| Reetta Niemensivu. From Comic Atlas Finland, 2013

MATTI SOVIJÄRVI

RULERS OF THE IMAGINATION

"They say that there is an expanse of water that separates the living from the dead. A ferry travels across it, steered by a ferryman. There on the shore, there is a border guard, the Maid of Death. It doesn't matter whether this story is true or not, because people have believed it and continue to believe it."

TRANSLATION KRISTIAN LONDON

The final chapter of **Seita Vuorela's** award-winning novel *Karikko* (The Reef, 2012) begins with a passage that not only rounds off her tale but also gives a perspective on contemporary Finnish literature for children and young people: stories that have been — and still are — believed in.

Fantasy literature aimed at young people is not only thriving but thriving with its own distinctive style. As in *The Reef*, **Maria Turtchaninoff's** *Underfors* (Underville, 2010) moves between the worlds of the living and the dead, but in its own unique way. Many writers' narratives are dark and more closely tied to Nordic mythology than to international fantasy literature. Good examples of experts in traditional Finnish mythology are **Reeta Aarnio's** *Maan, veden ja tulen väki* (The Denizens of Earth, Wind and Water, 2008/2013) and **Sari Peltoniemi's** *Kuulen kutsun metsänpeittoon* (I Hear the Forest Calling, 2011).

Alongside fantasy — which is often as good a read for adults as it is for young people — there is a rich tide of books aimed at schoolchildren and younger



JUSSI HELTUNEN / LEHTIKUVA

kids. Many of these books are also part of a series: when you have a good character, a single story or book is in no way sufficient. Good examples are **Timo Parvela's** *Ella*, **Riitta Jalonen's** and **Kristiina Louhi's** *Aatos and Sofia*, or **Aino Havukainen's** and **Sami Toivonen's** *Tatu and Patu*.

Imaginative illustrations in a broad range of styles also support powerful, believable stories. Some illustrators use digital techniques, while others are very traditional — and some use various combinations of both.

A lot is written for children and young people. Over 1,500 new titles appear every year. Durable cardboard books that can stand rough handling are produced for the youngest readers — and a large proportion of these in Finland, too.

Characters from books also live on in other media. **Sinikka and Tiina Nopola's** *Risto Rappääjä* (Ricky Rapper, first book 1997) has already appeared as the lead character in four feature-length films.

MATTI SOVIJÄRVI



” The book will most probably retain its position as the most important user interface.

PÄIVI HEIKKILÄ-HALTUNEN
Researcher of Finnish literature
for children and young people

REVOLUTION IN PUBLISHING

The publishing industry is in flux. New technology will inevitably change business models, even though, for example, ebooks only account for a few per cent of the Finnish book market. However, the entire traditional route taken by the printed book through bookstores to readers' shelves is changing. The book is too easy to order online, either as a solid entity or electronically. Globalisation also threatens the position of literature in translation; why buy the translation when you can read the original?

In spite of all these upheavals, publishing is still going quite strong in Finland. Yet the changes have been — and will continue to be — radical. **Leena Majander** from WSOY (large traditional publisher) and **Touko Siltala** from the new quality publisher Siltala both have faith in the printed book in spite of technological revolutions. The book's status is, however, changing from valuable to utility article — a bulging bookshelf is no longer a necessity in the culture-conscious home. And encyclopaedias have long gone the way of the dinosaurs.

In Finland, several major publishers are continuing either independently (Otava) or under foreign ownership (WSOY and Tammi). New, ambitious publishers such as Siltala and Teos have risen alongside them. However, the greatest change

has been the rise in the number of small publishers, partly through the ease of new technology. They have been born literally in their hundreds. This has in turn led to a growth in the number of new titles published every year. Global players cannot silence national and local voices, which are themselves reaching out to new friends across the nation's borders. Globalisation is a multidirectional process.

"This revolution in the world of publishing has strengthened the position of the author. Authors no longer stay with a single publisher from their debut novel to the bitter end — now they shop around for the best offer. A publisher's professional skill lies in finding both the right author and the right project," says Touko Siltala, Managing Director of Siltala.

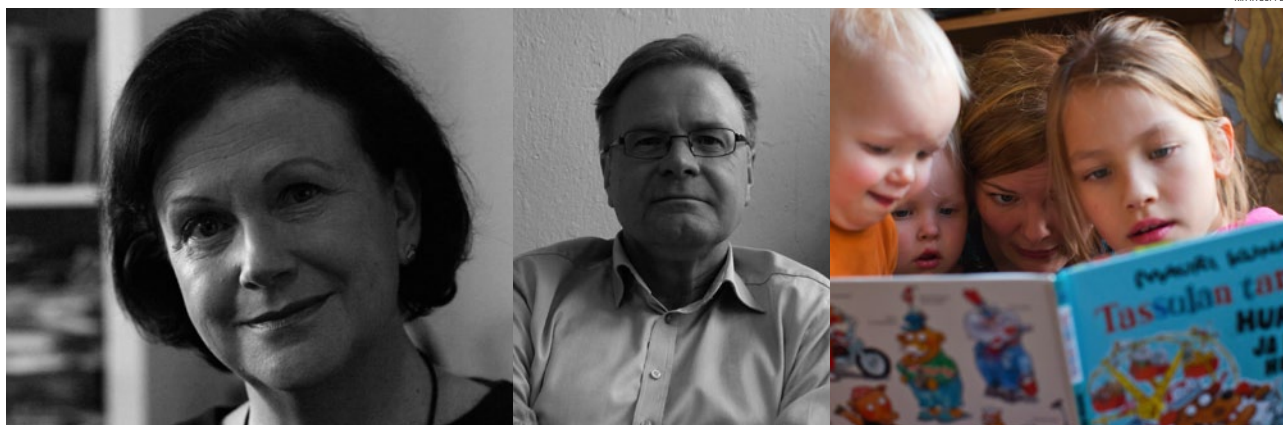
WSOY is a well-established publisher and its decades of output — dating back to 1878 — are an asset. Finns love their classics. For example, new editions of Mika Waltari's works are continually being printed. That is in itself a national resource.

"Publishing is, however, a handicraft not an industry. Cooperation between author and publisher lies at its very core. And that cannot be duplicated," says WSOY's Leena Majander.

MATTI SOVIJÄRVI

” This revolution in the world of publishing has strengthened the position of the author. A publisher's professional skill lies in finding both the right author and the right project.

TOUKO SILTALA



| Leena Majander, publisher, WSOY

| Touko Siltala, CEO, Siltala

FILI — FINNISH LITERATURE EXCHANGE

An expert and export organisation, which supports the translation, printing and publication of literature and promotes Finnish literature abroad. FILI has operated since 1977 and is part of the Finnish Literature Society, founded in 1831.

- Awards yearly over EUR 600,000 in translation and publishing grants
- Supports more than 300 different projects
- Maintains a unique database of translations of Finnish literature
- Provides grants to supplement authors' readings abroad, particularly in the promotion of newly published titles
- Publishes the online literary
- Publishes journal Books from Finland
- Organises seminars for translators
- Arranges visits for foreign publishers to Finland
- Takes part in major international book fairs

More info: www.finlit.fi/fili
www.booksfromfinland.fi

FINLAND READS

Literature is close to the Finnish heart, today perhaps closer than ever. Over 20 million books are sold in Finland every year. That's an average of four books per person, including children.

In Finland as elsewhere, readers are clearly divided into major consumers and others. Approximately one in every six Finns aged 15–79 buys at least ten books per year. Together, these major consumers buy over half of all books sold. Overall, book buying is quite common: three out of four Finns buy at least one book per year.

The Internet does not seem to have affected the popularity of books to any great extent. For example, in 1995 — before widespread use of the Internet — far fewer books were purchased in Finland than today. The popularity of the book has therefore grown in spite of the rise in electronic media. And book sales have grown even faster in terms of value than they have in volume — readers have therefore been willing to pay more for their books.

Finnish fiction remains the most popular genre in Finland, although translated fiction still accounts for a solid share of sales despite having seen a slight fall. Approximately one in every three Finns has read Finnish fiction during the past month. Finns also read books on history and home economics (mainly cookery books), and memoirs, crime novels and children's books. They are increasingly reading foreign fiction in languages other than Finnish.

The book has long been a traditional gift in Finland. In this respect, the world is changing, as people are more frequently buying books to read themselves. About half of the books purchased as gifts are given to a family member — and will perhaps also be read by the gift-giver.

A LAND OF LIBRARIES

Finland is full of libraries — there is at least one in every municipality. Finland's 300 plus central

libraries are supported by 500 branch libraries and, particularly in sparsely populated areas, also mobile libraries. Mobile libraries account for just under ten per cent of all loans. Finland even has a library boat. In practice, mobile libraries offer the same books as central libraries, at least through the reservation system.

The modern mobile library carries a selection of over 4,000 titles, and not only books but also a range of magazines, newspapers and audiovisual materials. Mobile libraries have dozens of stops on their routes. Even in a quite densely populated region such as Southern Finland, a mobile library may clock up 50,000 kilometres per annum — more up north.

By European standards, Finland's public library services are both substantial in terms of volume and technologically advanced. Libraries are free to use, although small fees are charged if, for example, books are not returned on time.

Finland's library services are quite popular and actively used — about 40 per cent of citizens are active users and visit the library about twice a month. On average, Finns borrow a book from a public lending library more than once a month. Or, looking at it from another perspective, libraries contain just over seven books per Finn and each book is read an average of 2.5 times per year.

Libraries are also significant book-buyers. They spend well over EUR 300 per annum per Finn on the acquisition of books and other materials. Libraries also benefit writers: authors and translators can apply for so-called library grants to fund their writing. These grants are also awarded to authors who are unable to work due to age or illness.

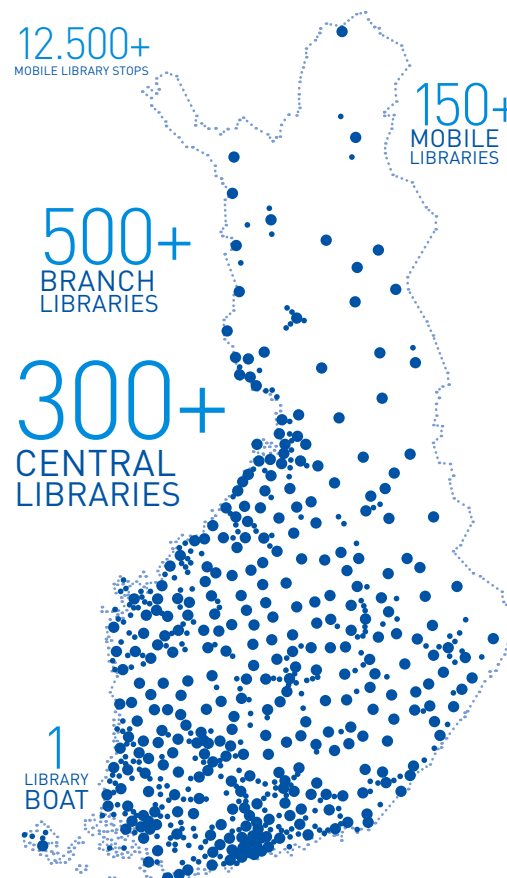
Although books account for a considerable proportion of public libraries' collections, there is plenty more on offer: magazines, newspapers and audiovisual materials.

MATTI SOVIJÄRVI



VIENA KYTJÖJOKI / LEHTIKUVA

LIBRARY NETWORK IN FINLAND



FINLAND READS FACTS

BESTSELLERS IN FINLAND FINNISH LITERATURE 2013



FINNISH FICTION

- 1 Laila Hirvisaari:** Me, Keisarinna (We, the Empress)
- 2 Ilkka Remes:** Omertan liitto ('The Omerta Union')
- 3 Kjell Westö:** Kangastus 38 ('Mirage 38')
- 4 Riikka Pelo:** Jokapäiväinen elämämme (Our Everyday Life)
- 5 Reijo Mäki:** Intiaani ('The Indian')
- 6 Leena Lehtolainen:** Rautakolmio ('The Iron Triangle')
- 7 Kari Hotakainen:** Luonnon laki (The Law of Nature)
- 8 Jari Tervo:** Esikoinen (Firstborn)
- 9 Pauliina Rauhala:** Taivaslaulu (Heaven Song)
- 10 Tuomas Kyrö:** Kunkku (The King)

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- 1 Mauri Kunnas:** Hullunkurinen kuvasanakirja (The Silly Picture Dictionary)
- 2 Soili Perkiö (toim.):** Soiva laulukirja ('Songbook with Music')
- 3 Aino Havukainen — Sami Toivonen:**
Tatun ja Patun kummat keksinnöt kautta aikojen
(Tatu and Patu's Odd Inventions Through the Ages)
- 4 Sinikka Nopola — Tiina Nopola:** Risto Räppääjä ja kaksoisolento
(Ricky Rapper and the Double)
- 5 Timo Parvela:** Ella ja kaverit menevät metsään
(Ella and friends go into the woods')



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