



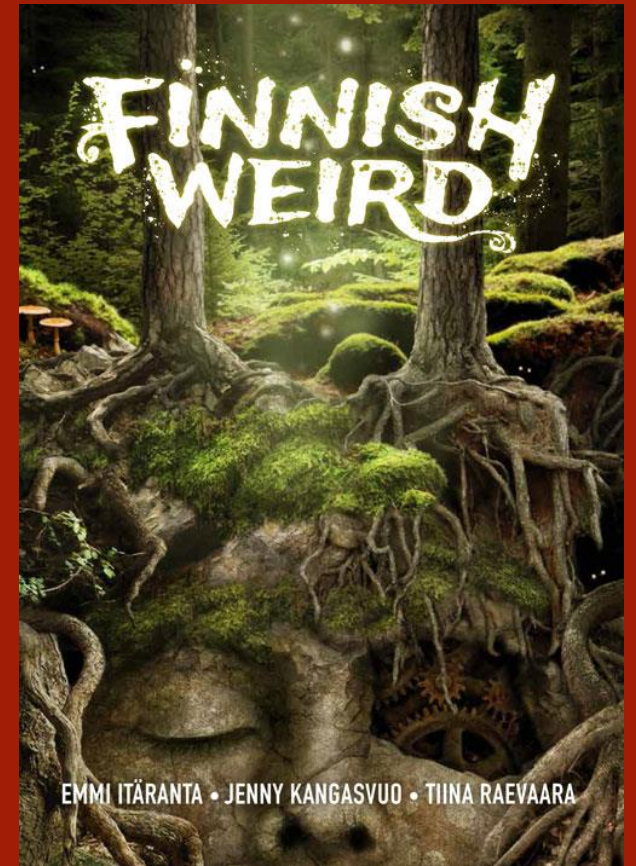
Finnish Weird

Fantastic
excursions to the
land of a thousand
lakes

Jenny Kangasvuo

What is Finnish Weird?

- emerged as a term in 2000's
- modeled after the British term "new weird"
- genrebending between fantasy, science fiction and realism
- countering the cliches of science fiction, fantasy and horror genres
- ambitious use of language and form
- originally peripheral movement, now entering into mainstream
 - international translations
 - national literary prizes
- Online magazine: www.finnishweird.net



Response to "the realism of the trenches"

- counter reaction to the Finnish mainstream literature canon
 - the genre of the post-war generation
 - realism seen as the "proper" way of writing
 - prose as documentary
 - emphasis on contemporary social problems
 - autobiographical texts
 - modernist minimalism
 - "non-realistic novels and stories are mere entertainment or written for children"
 - Tove Jansson and Moomins
 - Pseudonym Outsider and the adventures of Atorox, the robot



Meaning of science fiction and fantasy fandom

- originally fandom oriented and originated activism of writers and readers
 - local sf societies, sf writer's associations
 - writing competitions
- sf magazines
 - Tähtivaeltaja, Portti, Spin, Usvazine
- small publishers
 - Osuuskumma, Vaskikirjat, Robustos, Kuoriaiskirjat
- sf conventions
 - Finncon
 - Worldcon 2017 in Helsinki!



What makes Finnish Weird Finnish?

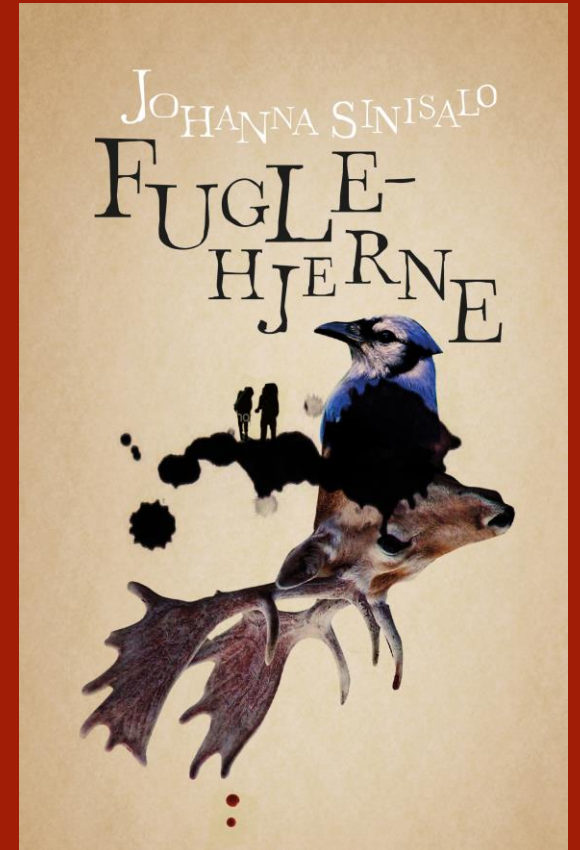
- reinterpretations of folk stories and tradition
 - rewriting Kalevala
- relationship with nature: "*luontosuhde*"
 - eco-dystopias and steampunk
- gender and sexuality
 - prominent female writers

(Illustration for my short story *Flow my tears, fall from your springs*, Markku Metso 2014)



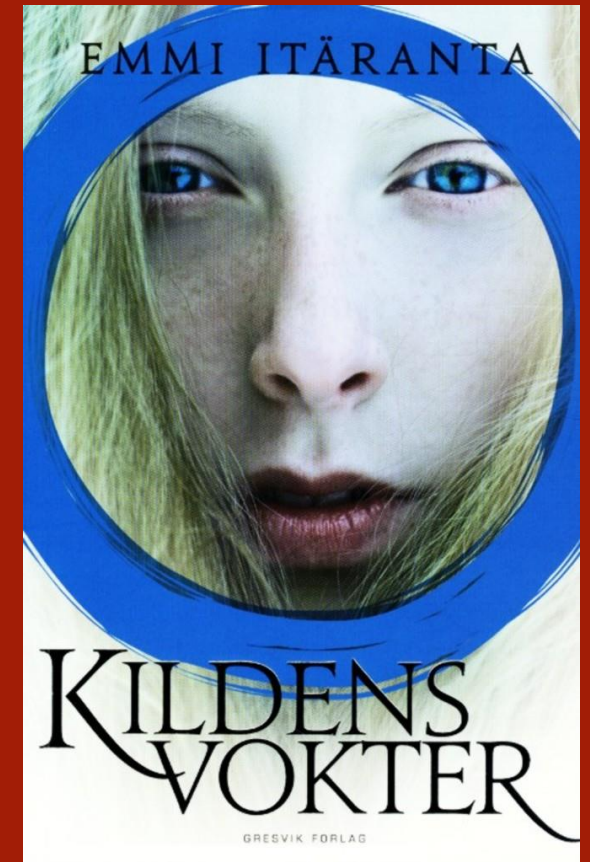
Relationship with nature

- woods, swamps and lakes as milieus for stories
 - winter as a season of silence, not struggle
- nature as a safe haven
 - Jenny Kangasvuo: *Sudenveri* (Wolf's Blood, 2012)
 - Sari Peltoniemi: *Hirvi* (Elk, 2001)
- humans and other animals
 - Johanna Sinisalo: *Linnunaivot* (2008); *Fuglehjerne*, (2012)
 - Marko Hautala: *Itsevalaisevat* (Selftranslucents, 2008)



Eco-dystopias

- What happens after an ecocatastrophy?
 - Emmi Itäranta: *Teemestarin kirja* (2012); *Kildens vokter* (2015)
 - Johanna Sinisalo: *Enkelten verta* (2011); *The Blood of Angels* (2014)
- Combination of eco-dystopia, Finnish folklore and steampunk
 - Anne Leinonen: *Vaskinainen* (Bronze Woman, 2016)



Finnish mythology

- Finnish myths in contemporary setting
 - Johanna Sinisalo: *Ennen päivänlaskua ei voi* (2000); *Bara sedan solen sjunkit* (2003)
 - Essi Kummu: *Karhun kuolema* (Death of the Bear, 2010)
- rewriting Kalevala
 - Johanna Sinisalo: *Sankarit* (Heroes, 2003)



Rewriting Finnish history

- alternative Finnish history
 - Helena Waris: *Pohjankontu*-trilogy (Northshire 2009-2013)
 - Samuli Antila: *Vasalli* (Vassal, 2016)
 - not necessarily understandable for international audiences
- steampunk with a Finnish flavour
 - J.S. Meresmaa: *Naakkamestari* (Master of Jackdaws, 2016)



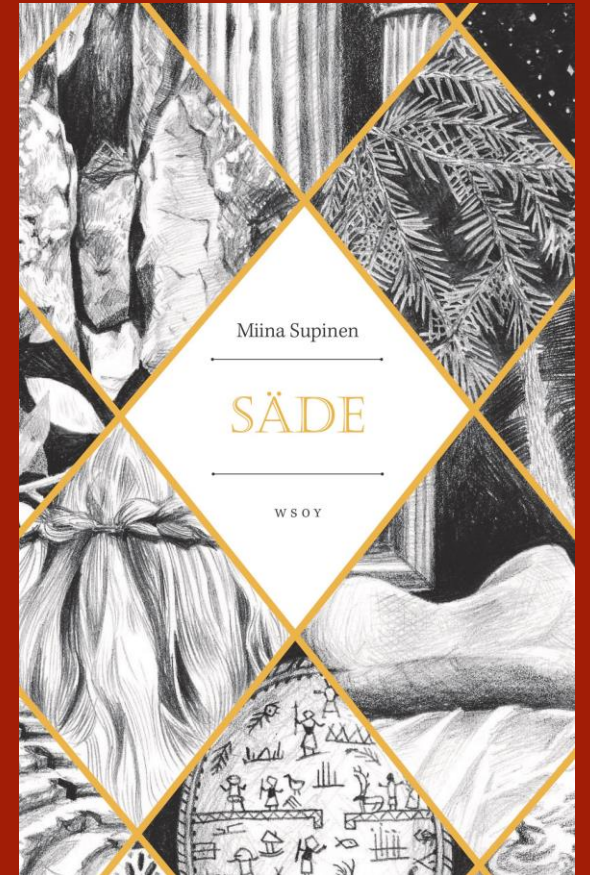
Fantasies and nightmares of gender and sexuality

- What happens in ultimately gender segregated society?
 - Johanna Sinisalo: *Auringon ydin* (2013); *The Core of the Sun* (2015)
- women's communities and the chance to defy inequality
 - Maria Turtschaninoff: *Maresi, krönikor från Röda klostret* (2014); *Naondel* (2016)



The ultimate horror is between people

- the family is the cruelest unit
 - Tiina Raevaara: *Eräänä päivänä tyhjä taivas* (One day an empty sky 2008)
- religious communities
 - Pasi Ilmari Jääskeläinen: *Sielut liikkuvat sateessa* (Souls walk in rain, 2013)
 - Miina Supinen: *Säde* (Ray, 2013)
- there are no good or evil people, no heroes or villains
 - outsiders and onlookers



Jenny Kangasvuo

- background in cultural anthropology and gender studies
- the debut novel *Sudenveri* (Wolf's blood) 2012
 - realistic story about generation gap, Finnish contemporary history – and werewolves
 - attempt to write as realistically as possible
- 15 published short stories since 2002
- English translations:
 - Chasing Digital Shadows, 2016
 - Flow My Tears, Fall From Your Springs! 2014
 - Cuckoo's Egg, 2011
 - Riding Wolfhood, 2006
- Currently writing a fantasy novel set to Baltic iron age



Central themes

- gender and sexuality
 - bisexuality, power and violence in gender relations
- transformation of the body
 - werewolves, selkies, joining bodies and minds
- prehistory and Finnish folk traditions
 - Kalevala, combware stone age, iron age
- identity in a constant change

