

Suomenruotsalainen kirjallisuus 1990-luvusta alkaen

Contemporary Finland-Swedish literature

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JOHANNA  
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JÄLÄRNAS

FÖRLAGET



UNDERFÖRS



# Kuka olen?

- Hanna Samola, PhD, Senior Lecturer in Finnish literature at Tampere University. / Suomen kirjallisuuden yliopistonlehtori Tampereen yliopistossa.
- Research interests: fairy tales, dystopian fiction, intertextuality, contemporary literature. Tutkimusalat: sadut, dystooppinen fiktio, intertekstuaalisuus, nykykirjallisuus.
- Doctoral dissertation (2016): *Siniparran bordelli. Dystopian ja sadun lajiyhdistelmät romaaneissa Berenikes hår, Huorasatu ja Auringon ydin.*
  - Pirkko Lindberg's *Berenikes hår* (2000) as a satirical dystopia criticizing exploitation of women.

# What do you know about Finland-Swedish literature?

Do you know any Finland-Swedish authors? Have you read Finland-Swedish literature?

What do you know about the history of Swedish-language literature in Finland?

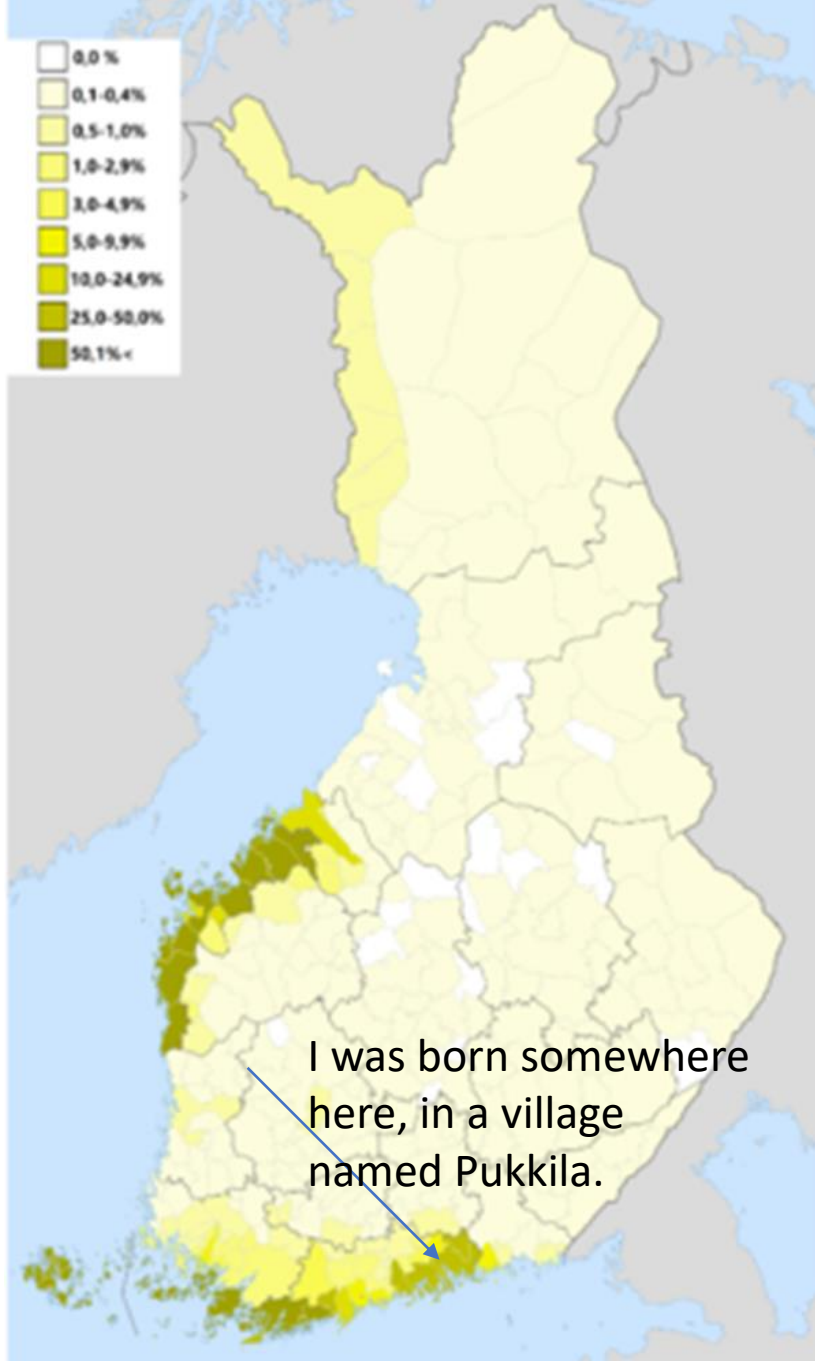
What kind of position Swedish-language literature and culture has in Finland?

You can either write your answers in chat (in Finnish, in Swedish, in English or in Czech) or raise your hand and open your microphone and tell your answers aloud.

# Swedish language in Finland

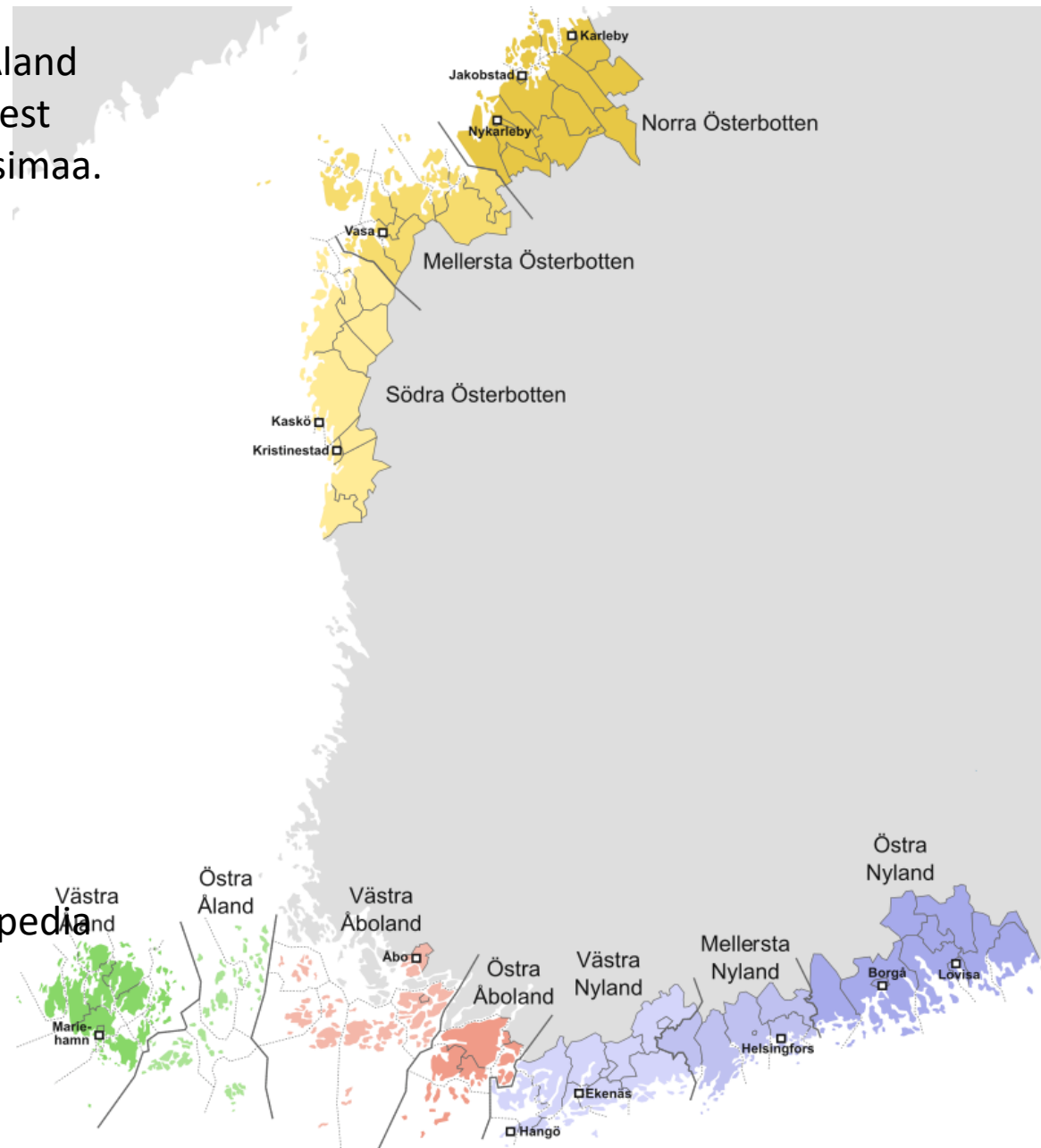
- Swedish is an official language in Finland (Finnish and Sámi are the other official languages)
- Language: Finland Swedish. Has different dialects: Swedish spoken in Ostrobothnia differs from Swedish spoken in Helsingfors.
- About 5,2 % of the population in Finland has Swedish as an official mother tongue.
- Swedish was the only official language in Finland until 1863. Swedish was the language of administration until the year 1901.
- Today, Swedish-language literature is one of minority literatures in Finland, although it has a high status in institutions.
  - Svensk litteratursällskapet i Finland (Society of Swedish literature in Finland)
  - Kulturfonden (a foundation that funds projects with a connection to Swedish in Finland)
  - Finsk Tidskrift (a scientific journal publishing articles on literature)
  - Hufvudstadsbladet (a newspaper in Swedish)
  - Förlaget, Schildts & Söderströms (publishing houses publishing Swedish language literature)





Swedish dialects are spoken in Ostrobothnia, Åland Islands, Southwest Finland and Uusimaa.

Maps from Wikipedia



# Some canonized Finland-Swedish authors

- Edith Södergran: *Dikter* (1916), *Septemberlyran* (1918)
- Elmer Diktonius: *Stenkol* (1927) and *Janne Kubik. Ett träsnitt i ord* (1932)
- Tove Jansson:
  - Moomin novels – *Småtrollen och den stora översvämningen* (1945), *Kometjakten* (1946), *Trollkarlens hatt* (1947), *Trollvintern* (1957), *Pappan och havet* (1965)..
  - short story collections (*Dockskåpet*, 1978)
  - novels (*Rent spel*, 1989)
- Henrik Tikkanen: the "address trilogy" *Brändövägen 8, Brändö Tel. 35* (1975), *Bävervägen 11 Herttonäs Tel. 78 035* (1976), *Mariegatan 26 Kronohagen* (1977)
- Märta Tikkanen: *Män kan inte våldtas: Roman* (1975), *Rödluvan* (1986)
  - Johanna Holmström 2020: "*Borde hålla käft*". En bok om Märta Tikkanen.
- Bo Carpelan: Poetry, novels, children's books.
  - *Berg* (2005) won the Finlandia Prize in 2005. A group of people memorizes the summer of 1944 – the last summer of war.
  - *Urvind* (1993). Daniel Urwind writes a story for his wife. The importance of memories and nostalgia.

# The history of Swedish-language literature in Finland

- Finland-Swedish modernism: ideas from Russia, Germany, and Sweden, for example Edith Södergran
- Cosmopolitanism, multilingualism
- Urban culture: "dagdrivare" literature, for example Runar Schildt
- Finland-Swedish literature and writers have plenty of connections with Swedish literary field.
  - No language barrier -> easier to find readers in both countries.
  - For example Monika Fagerholm is well-known and highly appreciated writer in Sweden.

# Central milieus in Finland-Swedish literature

- Archipelago
  - Ulla-Lena Lundberg: *Is* (2012, Jää) – story of a family of a priest Peter Kummel, living in Åland island. Depiction of the community trying to survive the rough weather.
  - Tove Jansson: *Pappan och havet* (1965) – Moominpappa organizes a journey to the lighthouse island.
- Smalltowns
  - Christer Kihlman: *Se upp salige!* (1960) – a fictional town called Lexå, reminding of Borgå
  - Emma Juslin: *Ensamma tillsammans* (2009) – one of the characters lives in a small town Åborg, resembling Borgå
  - Monika Fagerholm – fictional small towns that are separated from their surroundings. Atmosphere that reminds of Twin Peaks. For example novel *Den amerikanska flickan* (2004, *Amerikkalainen tyttö*)
- Helsinki (Helsingfors)
  - Kjell Westö: *Drakarna över Helsingfors* (2006, *Leijat Helsingin yllä*). The history of Finnish capitalism narrated through one family.
  - Bo Carpelan's many novels are set in the capital of Finland.
- Ostrobothnia (Österbotten, Pohjanmaa)
  - Lars Sund: "Siklax trilogy": *Colorado Avenue* (1991), *Lanthandlerskans son* (1997) ("Son of a Country Shopkeeper") and *Eriks bok* (2003) ("Erik's Book")
  - A fictive village named Siklax in Finnish Ostrobothnia



# Themes of contemporary Finland-Swedish literature

- Socioeconomic classes in the society
  - Closed communities of wealthy people (Holmström: *Hush Baby*)
  - History of Finnish socioeconomic classes (Westö: *Hägring 38*)
- Girlhood and feminism
  - Kristina Malmio 2008: Previously, the point of view in Finland Swedish literature was that of a middle-class and middle-aged man. Today, the perspective is often that of a young woman.
    - Contemporary Finland Swedish literature depicts life of girls and women living in the margins of the society. Examples: Malin Kivelä's *Du eller aldrig*, Emma Juslin's *Frida och Frida*.
  - Pirkko Lindberg: *Candida* (1996) and *Berenikes hår* (2000)
    - Satirical depictions of the society from the point of view of a woman.
    - *Candida* as a critical depiction of Europe in the 1990s – a pastiche of *Candide* by Voltaire.

# Research on Finland-Swedish literature

- Research project Senmodern spatialitet i finlandssvensk prosa 1990–2010. [https://blogs.helsinki.fi/latemodernspatiality/?page\\_id=18](https://blogs.helsinki.fi/latemodernspatiality/?page_id=18)
- Jan Dlask 2011: Finskans rika valörer eller svenskans subtila nyanser? Den tvåspråkige författaren och konstnären Henrik Tikkanen. *Både och, sekä että. Om flerspråkighet / Monikielisyydestä*. Helsingfors: Schildts.
- Nanny Jolma 2021: *Muisteleva minäkerronta Bo Carpelanin myöhäisromaaneissa*. An academic dissertation. Tampere: Tampere University.
- Kristina Malmio & Mia Österlund (ed. by) 2016: *Novel districts: critical readings of Monika Fagerholm*. [https://www.finna.fi/Record/sks\\_doabooks.19772](https://www.finna.fi/Record/sks_doabooks.19772)
- Kristina Malmio 2019: Postmodernismi ja sen “yli” kirjoittaminen 2000-luvun suomenruotsalaisissa romaaneissa. *Muistikirja ja matkalaukku. Muotoja ja merkityksiä 2000-luvun suomalaisessa romaanissa*. Ed. by Elina Arminen and Markku Lehtimäki.
- Hanna Samola 2015: Kvinnorna i glasbordellen. Skildringen av ett totalitärt samhälle och den feministiska dystopiens kännetecken i Pirkko Lindbergs *Berenikes hår*. *Historiska och litteraturhistoriska studier 90*. Redigerad av Jennica Thylin-Klaus och Julia Tidigs. Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland.

# Merete Mazzarella and the narrow room (det trånga rummet)

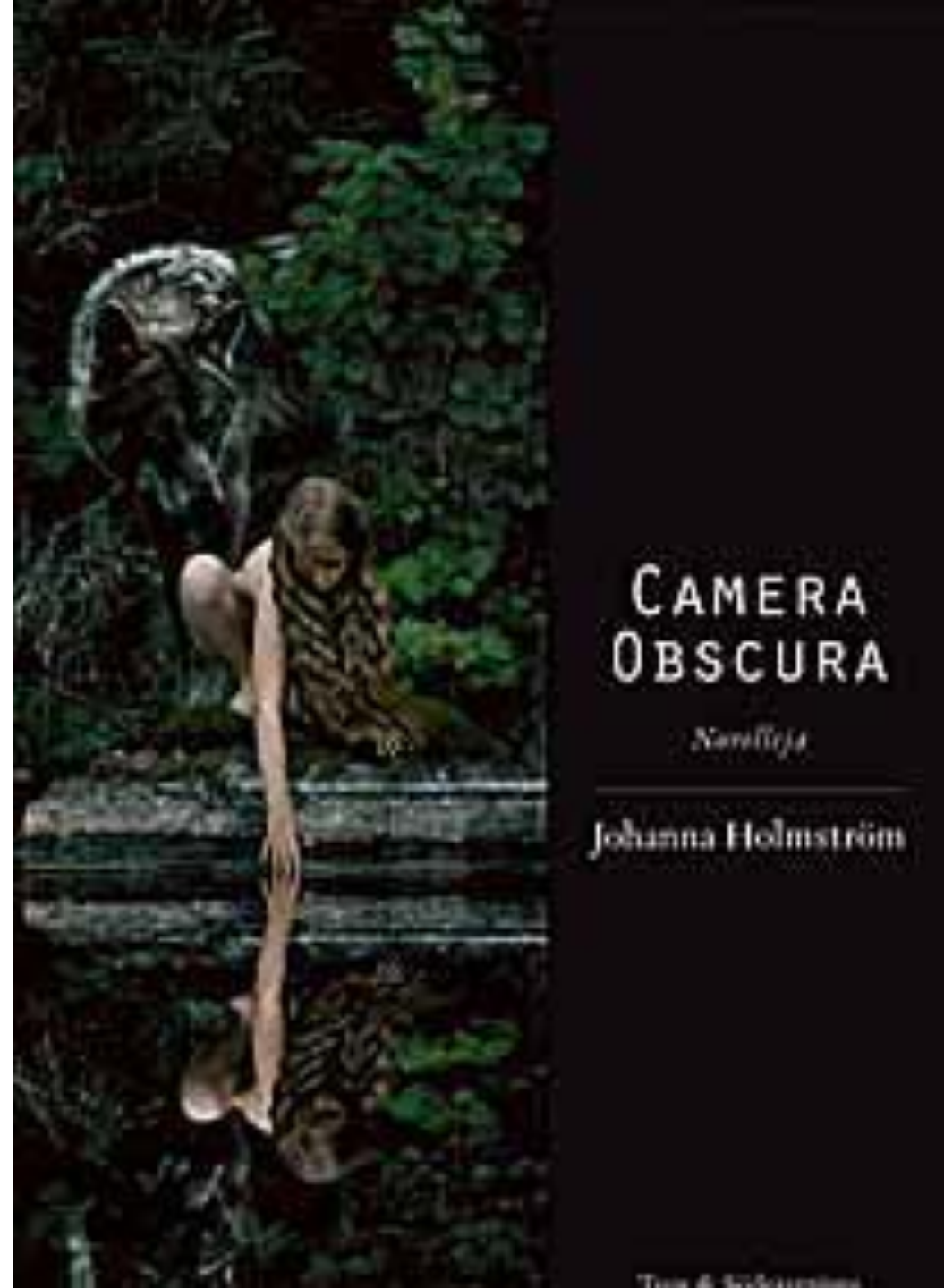
- Mazzarella 1989: *Det trånga rummet: en finlandssvensk romantradition*
- Mazzarella describes the tradition of Finland-Swedish literature with the concept of the narrow room.
  - Det trånga rummet: a narrow, claustrophobic space that Swedish-speaking Finns felt that they are trapped in.
  - An awareness of the minority position of the Swedish-language population of Finland.
  - A bourgeois reality and families that keep their secrets from other people. Clannish smalltowns.

# The narrow room has become wider

- According to Kristina Malmio (2013; 2018), the narrow room has become more open in postmodern Finland-Swedish literature
  - Global media culture and popular culture as an important background of contemporary prose fiction
  - The setting is no longer a narrow room but the whole world (works by Zinaida Lindén, Pirkko Lindberg etc.)
  - The variety of genres and genre hybrids: new weird, fantasy, magical realism.
  - Plurality of languages and dialects in Finland Swedish literature: Finnish, Russian, English etc. (Zinaida Lindén, Emma Juslin, Lars Sund)
  - Intertextuality, metafictionality, narrative experiments (Lars Sund, Pirkko Lindberg, Hannele Mikaela Taivassalo)

# Genres of contemporary Finland-Swedish literature

- Dystopian fiction
  - Annika Luther: *De hemlösas stad* (2011, *Kodittomien kaupunki*)
  - Pirkko Lindberg: *Berenikes hår* (2000, *Bereniken hiukset*)
- Thriller
  - Johanna Holmström: *Hush Baby* (2015)
- Historical novel
  - Kjell Westö: *Drakarna över Helsingfors* (2006)
  - Ulla-Lena Lundberg: *Is* - (2012, *Jää*. Won Finlandia prize in 2012)
  - Johanna Holmström: *Själarnas ö* (2017, *Sielujen saari*)
- Fantasy
  - Maria Turtschaninoff: *Underfors* (2011, *Helsingin alla*)
- New Weird, magical realism
  - Johanna Holmström: *Camera Obscura* (2009)





# Swedish-language children's literature in Finland

- Tove Jansson
- Irmelin Sandman Lilius
- Bo Carpelan
- Camilla Mickwitz
- Linda Bondestam

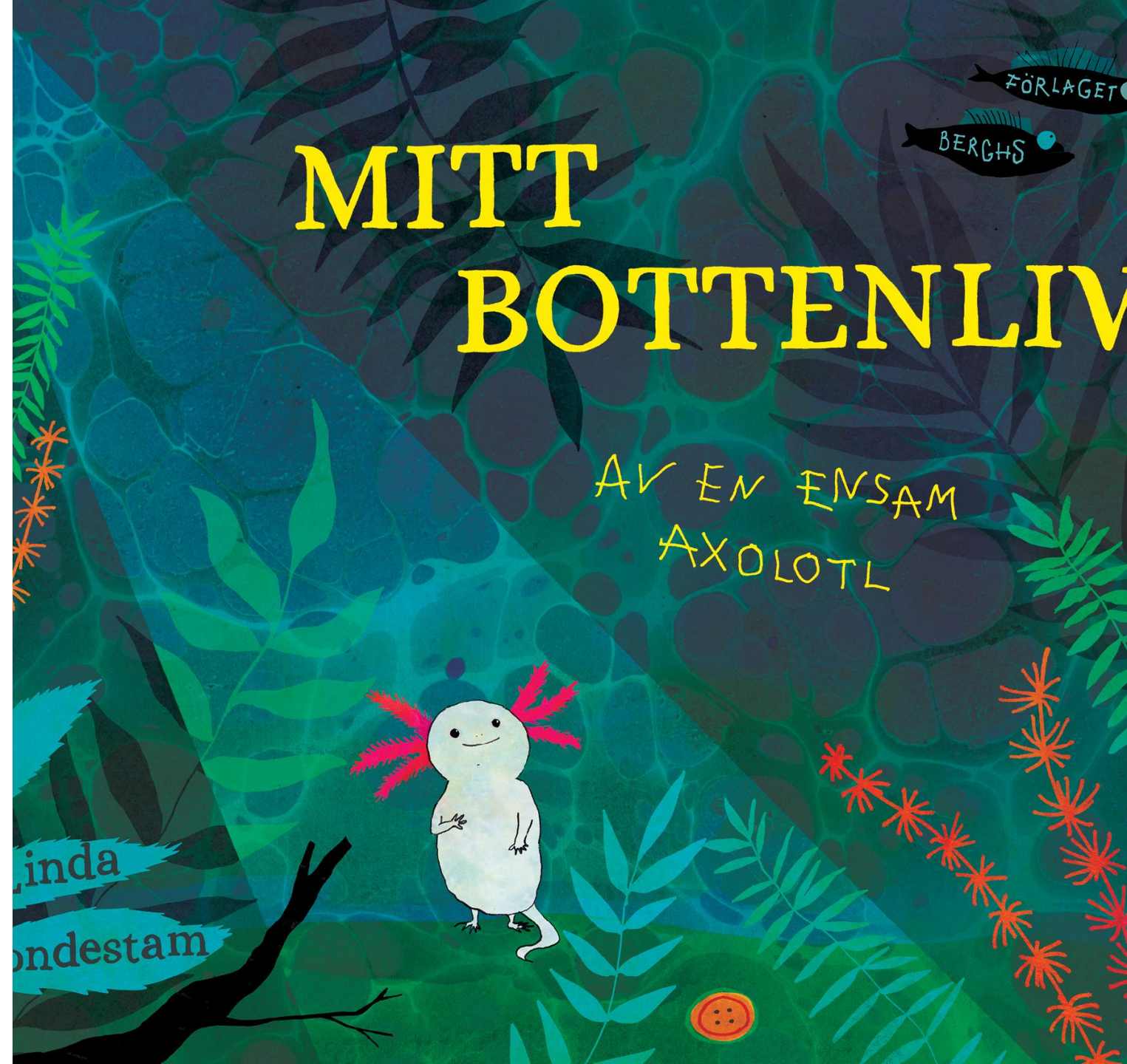
Illustration of the story of  
Mimosa by Camilla  
Mickwitz





Linda Bondestam  
2020: *Mitt  
bottenliv. Av en  
ensam axolotl*

- The main character is an endangered axolotl who lives alone in the bottom of the lake.
- Themes: the climate change, extinction of species, evolution of the species.
- The under-water surroundings of the axolotl are full of trash from the human world.
  - The weird combination of fantastic surroundings and realistic illustrations of garbage.





# Bondestam 2020: *Mitt bottenliv. Av en ensam axolotl*

Vad tråkigt det blev.

Jag torkade alger från min samling.

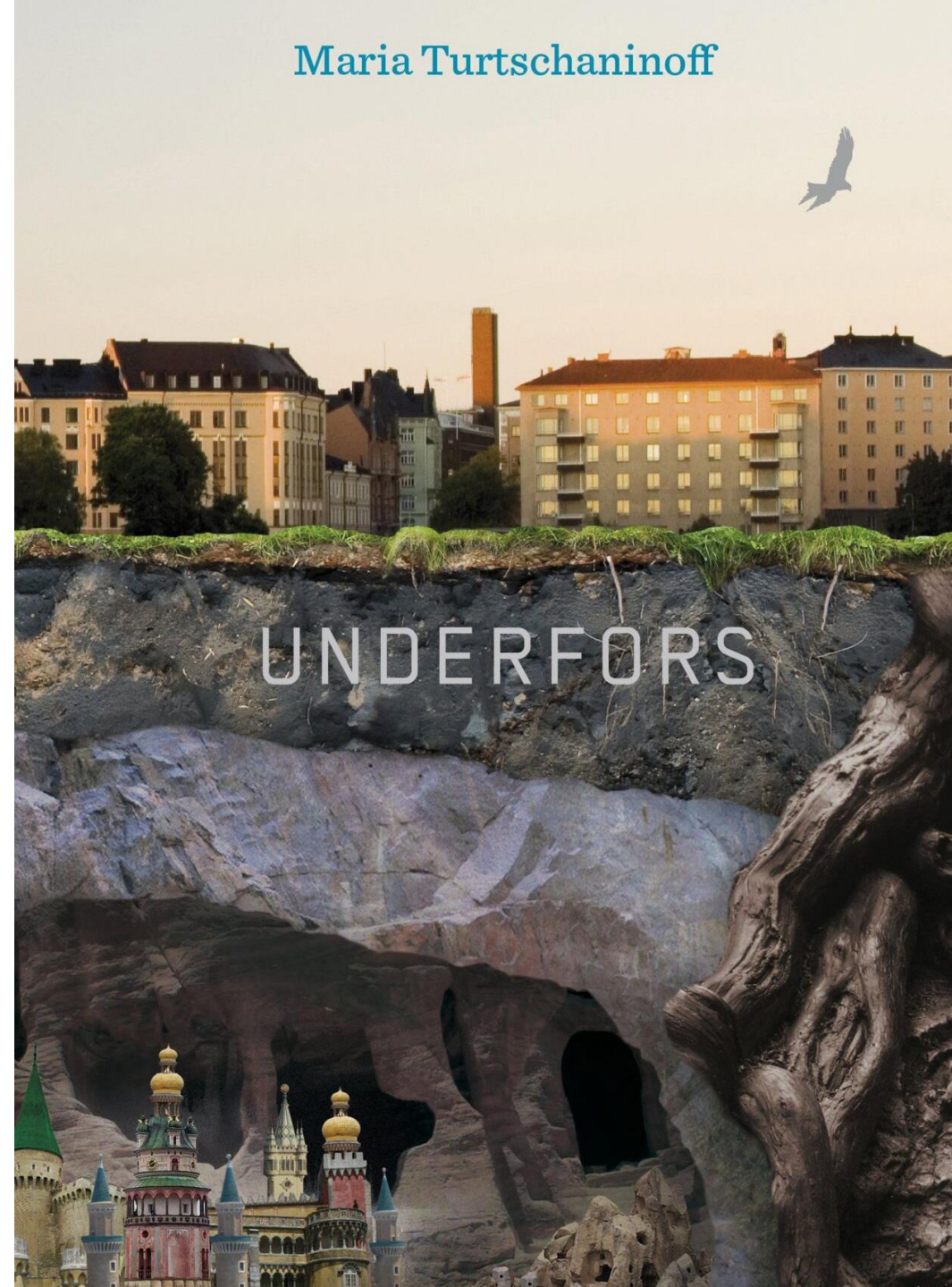




# Young adult literature

Maria Turtschaninoff

- Annika Luther: *De hemlösas stad* (2011, Kodittomien kaupunki)
  - Dystopian novel: ecodystopia, climate fiction.
  - Parts of Finland, including Helsinki, have been drowned as a consequence of rising sea levels.
  - The capital of Finland is Jyväskylä after the drowning of Helsinki.
  - The protagonist travels to Helsinki in order to find her mother.
- Maria Turtschaninoff: *Underfors* (2010, *Helsingin alla*)
  - Fantasy novel with fairy tale allusions.
  - Mythological creatures living underground (maahiset)
  - Two worlds: an everyday Helsinki and the underground world Underfors.
  - The protagonist Alva finds a portal into the underground world and finds out that she is descendant of underground living trolls.



# Theme: Flickskap = tyttöys = girlhood

- Monika Fagerholm: *Diva* (1998)

- The narrator is a thirteen-year-old girl called Diva who describes herself as astonishingly beautiful and clever, Lucia type girl who loves eating.
- The narrator has a subjective point of view but she knows what happens later in the novel.

”Phoenix-Marvel Girl

Jag är Diva, allt jag berättar är sant. Slut ögonen, dröm om det vackraste som finns. Öppna ögonen igen. Se mig. Flickkvinnan. DivaLucia. Tretton år, strax fjorton. BabyWonder. Hon man trodde att inte fanns.” (Diva, 11.)

”Olen Diiva, kaikki mitä kerron on totta. Sulje silmäsi, uneksi kauneimmasta mitä olla saattaa. Avaa silmäsi uudestaan. Katso minua. Tyttönainen. Diiva-Lucia. Kolmetoista vuotta, kohta neljätoista. BabyWonder. Hän jota ei uskottu olevan.”

- Emma Juslin: *Ensamman tillsammans* (2009)

- Three protagonists: Olga, Stina and Tove – young urban women who are trying to find their place in the society.
- Fairy tale intertexts: ”The Little Mermaid” by H. C. Andersen

# The theme of violence

- Monika Fagerholm: *Vem dödade bambi?* (2019)
  - Sexual violence and its consequences in a wealthy community, "villastan"
  - Parents and other adults protect young men who commit sexual violence. The community tries to forget what happened.
  - Storytelling as one of the main themes: people trying to make sense of the past by repeating stories.
    - Stories and their repetitive narration is characteristic also of other novels by Fagerholm. -> different views of the past.
- Johanna Holmström: *Camera Obscura* (2009)
  - Violence in close relationships between people
  - Violence towards non-human animals



# Questions for the seminars

- Magister students: Tuesday Nov. 9th 10:05–11:30 (Czech time)
- Bachelor students: Thursday Nov. 11th 12:05–13:30 (Czech time)

Kjell Westö: *Hägring 38* (2013)

- How does the beginning of the novel depict time? What historical period the novel is set in?
- What happened in Europe in 1938?
- How would you describe the characters of the novel (Claes Thune, Matilda Wiik). What kind of relationship do they have?
- What happened in Finland in 1918?

Johanna Holmström: *Hush Baby* (2015)

- How would you describe the genre of the novel on the basis of its beginning?
- What kind of milieu the beginning of the novel depicts? What time of the year? What kind of environment?
- What do we know about Robin's family and her background on the basis of the beginning?
- How would you describe novel's narrator and narration?

Poems by Tia Forsström from the collection *En kväll i oktober rodde jag ut på sjön* (2012)

- How do you interpret the meaning of the rabbit (hare, jänis) in Forsström's poems?
- How would you describe the atmosphere in poems?
- How would you describe the speaker of the poems=