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ways into new
Finnish non-fiction

Non-fiction books from Finland: History, pop icons and Arabic erotica

 In Finland, over 3,000 non-fiction book titles are released by publishers each year, of which around 2,000 come under the category of general non-fiction. The total number of works published in Finland in 2009 that were designated as non-fiction books – a category which includes items as diverse as annual company reports and scientific publications – was around 8,000. The spectrum of non-fiction books is so broad because the category includes everything that is not classed as fiction. This is a very substantial quantity for a country with such a small number of people who speak its national languages.

Authors of non-fiction combine a passion for a particular field or subject with a desire to share that knowledge with a wider audience. That passion drives them to spend their nights, weekends and holidays writing, usually in addition to their regular job. I've had the opportunity to observe non-fiction authors toiling for over twenty years in my work as an editor and commissioning editor of non-fiction books. Time and again they succeed in getting me interested in their subjects, be they fun, serious or important in other ways. Their books may be about art or science, history, biographies, self-help books, practical guides – life in all its glory. While I can hardly bear to imagine life without literature, the thought of a world without non-fiction books is just as dreary.

We are now experiencing a critical period. The accessibility of the internet has meant that it has superseded traditional printed books when users want to find information quickly about something in particular. New technical innovations and experiments in e-books are being implemented all round the world. E-books do not necessarily herald the

death of non-fiction books; rather, they have come to exist alongside traditional books, as a complement to them. The status of non-fiction books is determined not by the form in which readers access them, but by their content.

There are a number of awards given to non-fiction writing in Finland. The most significant of these is the Finlandia Prize for Non-Fiction, which is worth €30,000 and is awarded annually by the Finnish Book Foundation. In 2010 the prize went to a book by Vesa Sirén entitled *Suomalaiset kapellimestarit Sibeliuksesta Saloseen, Kajanuksesta Franckiin* (“Finnish conductors. From Sibelius to Salonen and from Kajanus to Franck”). The books that have been honoured over the years provide an excellent sampling of what is published in Finland and what sorts of works people buy: domestic themes, primarily Finnish history and significant Finnish personages, are of particular interest. Nature and environmental topics have also won the Finlandia Prize for Non-Fiction on many occasions. The great Finnish outdoors seems to be an inexhaustible source of material for illustrated books and guidebooks.

The emphasis in non-fiction publishing is on domestic topics, but of course there are books written in Finland whose style and subject matter make them eminently suitable for translation into other languages. The brochure you are currently reading contains a selection of eight high-quality, very well-written general-interest non-fiction books that have been published in Finland in the last couple of years.



These books have been selected with overseas readers in mind; their subjects range from social and cultural history to current pop icons and trends. Each one of them has something to contribute to the wider world.

Fabergén suomalaiset mestarit (“Fabergé’s Finnish masters”) is a substantial illustrated work containing a great deal of information about the most beautiful creations of that house and the skilled craftsmen and -women who made them. It is also an account of the history of the Fabergé family and aristocratic life in Europe from the late 19th century until the Russian Revolution.

Another attractive illustrated work, *Von Herten Brothers – Lähikuvissa* (“The Von Herten Brothers – Close-ups”) tells the story of a band featuring three brothers who make outstanding epic rock music. In the summer of 2011, the British magazine *Classic Rock* included The Von Herten Brothers in their list of nominees for Band of the Year. This book is nothing like a typical fan publication; its honest dialogues and unvarnished illustrations convey these talented musicians’ thoughts on life and making music.

Tuhannen ja yhden yön erotiikka (“A thousand and one nights of erotica”) is a unique work about medieval Arabic erotic literature. This playful, unrestrained book opens up a Middle East to us that is very different from the narrow-minded, fanatical Islamist world we see in news footage.

Kuka omistaa Venäjän? (“Who owns Russia?”) is a wide-ranging survey of Russia’s history and its contemporary situation. Though its fortunes may have shrunk, Russia remains a powerful nation with great

riches, and this book’s analysis of who owns those riches opens up the inner life of that giant to us.

Written in a refreshing style with new interpretations of history, *Susimessu* (“Wolf mass”) presents a lively account of the religious wars of the 16th century, which also affected the Nordic countries and involved not only struggles for political power, but also the reach of Catholicism into Sweden and Finland. It is a story of loyalties, intrigue and looking out for one’s own interests.

Ettekö te tiedä kuka minä olen? (“Don’t you know who I am?”) is a deliciously funny examination of the history of arrogance. Historical heroes, having let power and success go to their heads, have caused a great deal of harm, and this book topples Alexander the Great as well as Napoleon from their pedestals. It also reminds us that obnoxious behaviour is not the exclusive domain of rulers and magnates.

With spiky humour, *Huimaavat korot* (“Vertiginous heels”) whisks readers off to an exclusive New York shoe shop and forces them to question the entire culture of high-heeled shoes. What message are women sending out with shoes that cost thousands of euros but are ill-suited to walking in?

The world’s most amazing frauds have been collected in the volume *Miten miljoonia huijataan?* (Swindling Billions, 2011). Throughout history, people who dream of striking it rich have been duped into the craziest scams. What can you say about the fact that someone managed to sell the Eiffel Tower for scrap metal or that Bernard Madoff was able to swindle people from the very upper echelons of society for decades?

Introduction and reviews by

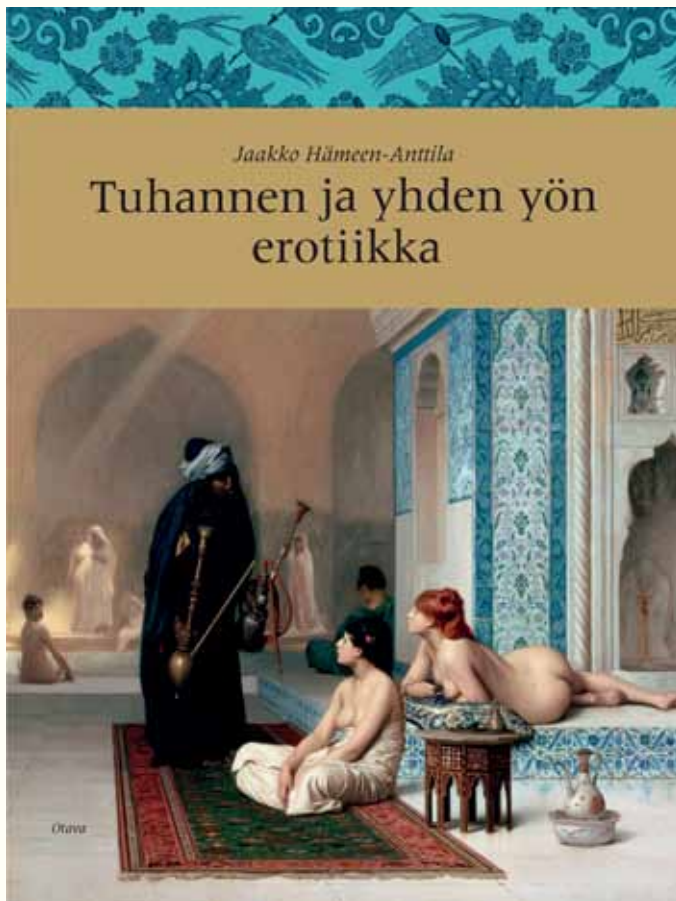
Tuula Kousa, freelance editor

A unique study of Arabic literary erotica

Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila

Tuhannen ja yhden yön erotiikka “A thousand and one nights of erotica”

Otava (2011), 240 pp., illustrated



Romanticism, eroticism and sex have always been part of Middle Eastern culture. People wrote a great deal of naughty stories as well as pure pornography when Arab culture was flourishing in the medieval era, about subjects ranging from the daily goings-on in brothels to the sultans' harems. Physicians drew up treatises on everything relating to sexuality: from venereal diseases to contraception, from penis enlargement to the psychology of love.

Professor Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila's *A thousand and one nights of erotica* is a book of rare quality, even when assessed on an international scale. Its scope encompasses medieval Arab eroticism and sexual mores, seduction skills, the secret and the forbidden – including within marriage. Reading erotic texts conveys a rather uninhibited impression of Arab sex lives.

Professor Hämeen-Anttila is also well-versed in the writings of religious scholars. They wrote about the way things ought to be, rather than the way they actually were. The truth about eroticism in that era may well lie somewhere in between the erotic and the religious writings.

Aided by Prof. Hämeen-Anttila's brilliant translations of authentic texts, the playful, sensuous side of the Middle East opens up to the





Photo: Imeli Jung

reader, expanding our understanding of Arab culture. The texts he has studied describe sex, eroticism, passion and desire easily and freely.

A Gentleman's recreation advises readers how a gentleman should purchase his slaves, as well as how a gentleman should eat and drink, sleep and make love. That guidebook maintains that women should not be touched beneath their harem pants until things have progressed to kissing and tickling. A man desirous of intimacy would do well to remember the saying: "Shower her in kisses and reap the harvest in bed." The author of the guide, Rabbi Samuel of Morocco, wrote in a refined style, but the unabashed vulgarity of many of the other examples cited may prove testing for contemporary readers. Readers may nevertheless become absorbed in the naughty stories, although as the 13th-century writer Tifashi stated, "the educated populace must be permitted to joke about even erotic themes among their own kind, but when common folk are present, it is advisable to refrain from excessive liberalism and to guard one's reputation".

The exotic, sensuous East was romanticised in the narrow-minded West. The lavish illustrations in this book include a number of works by Western artists whose imaginations were fired by the harem and other erotic subject matter.

Author and translator **Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila** (b. 1963) is a professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Helsinki. He has written a number of books as well as translating the Qur'an and the epic of Gilgamesh into Finnish. His book *Islamin käsikirja* ("The handbook of Islam", 2005) was awarded the State Award for Public Information in 2005 and has been translated into Lithuanian. Another of Professor Hämeen-Anttila's books, *Mare Nostrum: länsimaisen kulttuurin juurilla* ("Mare Nostrum: The roots of western culture", 2006), is the first Finnish non-fiction book to have been published in Arabic translation (Abu Dhabi Culture & Heritage, 2010). His version of *Tuhhat ja yksi yötä* ("A thousand and one nights", 2001, illustrated by Heli Hieta), which he translated directly from the Arabic, will be published in Estonian translation in 2012. Prof. Hämeen-Anttila has received numerous awards and honours, most recently the Wareljus Prize from the Finnish Association of Non-Fiction Writers in 2011.

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A fresh new analysis of political upheaval in the Nordic region

Mirkka Lappalainen

Susimessu

“*Wolf mass*”

Siltala (2009), 320 pp., illustrated section

“**I**n the summer of 1598, Finns invaded Sweden.”

Thus begins Mirkka Lappalainen’s *Wolf mass*, a study of the crisis in the Nordic region in the 1590s. With Sweden and Finland embroiled in a civil war, Protestant Duke Charles deposed Sigismund, the Catholic king of Sweden and Poland, and overthrew the power-hungry Swedish aristocracy. These events in the Nordic region determined the future of all of northern Europe.

Mirkka Lappalainen’s fluidly written book evokes the political upheaval of that era. Prior to the 16th century, the Catholic Church had been more powerful than nations, the Pope mightier than kings. The 16th century ushered in despotic rulers with large-scale armies. The Reformation eroded the power of the Catholic Church and threw Europe into chaos. Even the distant Nordic lands were caught up in religious wars.

Much has been written about the crisis of the 1590s and its bloody war, but no coherent overview has emerged until now. *Wolf mass* examines the story of the great civil war in its entirety, showing the links between political struggle, the Counter-Reformation





Photo: Laura Malmivaara

and events in Finland. How could it happen that strife-riven, religiously fragmented Sweden transformed into a uniformly Lutheran, rising superpower at the start of the 17th century?

Mirikka Lappalainen has written a highly analytical, fresh portrait of an era when the world was changing in many ways. She has managed to cast new light on the fabric of events of the 16th century. A number of chains of events culminated in the peasants' revolt that is known in Finland as the 'Cudgel War'. Lappalainen dispels the nationalistic mythology surrounding the Cudgel War and shows how a crisis that boiled over into a fully fledged civil war could have broken up the nation and torn Finland and Sweden apart as long ago as the late 16th century. Then Finland would have become part of Poland and would be a Catholic country today.

Wolf mass was selected as the Finnish history book of the year in 2009. In 2010 it was awarded the Lauri Jäntti Prize and the Urho Kekkonen Award, granted by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

Mirikka Lappalainen, Ph.D. (b. 1975) is a historian from Helsinki who is known as a bold, humorous writer. Her collection of essays entitled *Maailman painavin raha* ("The world's heaviest money", 2006) was honoured as the Non-Fiction Book of the Year in Finland. Lappalainen has received many other awards and honours. Her book *Suku, valta, suurvalta. Creutzit 1600-luvun Ruotsissa ja Suomessa* ("Clan, power, superpower. The Creutz dynasty in 17th-century Sweden and Finland", 2005) was awarded the prize for the best doctoral thesis of its year by the University of Helsinki, and the Swedish translation was awarded the Vasa Museum Prize in 2008. In 2009 Lappalainen was awarded the Finland-Swedish Culture Prize. She is also a columnist for the *Helsingin Sanomat* daily newspaper.

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Taking stock of Russian capitalism

Arto Luukkanen

Kuka omistaa Venäjän? Omistamisen ja vallan dynamiikka Venäjällä
“Who owns Russia? The dynamics of ownership and power in Russia”

WSOY (2009), 232 pp.



Is it possible to own anything in Russia? Arto Luukkanen, a Finnish historian who specialises in Russian studies, provides an enjoyable distillation of the very core of Russianness by investigating the issues surrounding the question of ownership. In Luukkanen’s complex analysis, the excruciating difficulty of ownership in Russia stems partly from historical ballast. Russian tradition maintains that if there is no master, nothing works. That applies to ownership as well, because there is a particular Russian mindset which holds that in principle, everything is the property of the ruler. Luukkanen states that Western-style property law was in force in Russia during the period from 1785 to 1917, but not before or after.

Russia is a combination of unpredictability and staticity, which has always made it a challenging partner to do business with. Despite its sweeping economic reforms, the Soviet Union was drastically left behind in comparison to the economic growth achieved in the West. Even Stalin’s henchman Lavrentiy Beria stated, “If there is no private ownership, nothing works.”

Luukkanen illustrates how the policy of reforms initiated in the 1980s by President Mikhail Gorbachev was unavoidable, yet too cautious with regard to the scale of the problems. President Boris Yeltsin’s modern grasp



Photo: Juha Hankkila



slid into infirmity in 1996, and Russia's reforms remained unfinished. The triumphal march of capitalism did not materialise. The frantic redistribution of the 1990s took place nominally under the state's political control, but in reality a large proportion of Russian businessmen and entrepreneurs were operating in a 'grey zone' or on the fringes of illegality. In the subsequent era of Vladimir Putin and Dmitri Medvedev it has become standard practice for clans to maintain contact with the Presidential administration and to lobby for their own interests in the state Duma.

Luukkanen presents an in-depth analysis of how the new Russia is an interesting combination of the old structural jungle of the planned economy and the chaotic rules of the new capitalism. As a result of toothless laws and weak protection of ownership, traditional capitalism has been divided into three different segments: market capitalism, oligarchic capitalism and 'siloviki' capitalism. In modern-day Russia, many ownership structures exist on top of one another, but they are not strictly delineated from one another. Russia's current political system is based on control, not on ownership. Luukkanen maintains that freeing up ownership would also free Russian democracy from its current situation as a hostage, because there can be no democracy without ownership and ownership is a bulwark against the arbitrariness of the state.

Dr. Arto Luukkanen (b. 1964) is a Finnish historian who works as a University Lecturer in Russian and East European Studies at the Renvall Institute, part of the University of Helsinki. He has published several monographs and articles on Russian/Soviet history which are considered to be standard works in the field. His previous works include: *Hajoaako Venäjä* ("Is Russia breaking up", 2001), *Neuvostojen maa* ("The Soviets' land", 2004), *Projekti Putin. Uuden Venäjän historia 1996–2008* ("Project Putin. A history of the new Russia 1996–2008", 2008) and *Suomi Venäjän taskussa* ("Finland in Russia's pocket", 2010).

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Getting rich at any price

Kari Nars

Miten miljoonia huijataan: suurpetkuttajien värikäs historia

“Swindling Billions: An extraordinary history of the great money fraudsters”

Tammi (2009), 224 pp., B&W illustrations

Money makes the world go 'round – as we have seen in the economic upheavals of recent decades. Money also tempts crooks, and there is no one more inventive than a swindler dreaming up a get-rich-quick scheme. *Swindling Billions* (2011) gives an account of the world's oddest, biggest or otherwise most fascinating cases of fraud. It tells of psychopaths who have no conscience, yet possess the ability to charm their victims. Nars also provides an analysis of those who succumb to these scams. When reading the stories in this book, one can only marvel at how easy it is for swindlers to lure people into even the most far-fetched schemes in pursuit of money. Nars maintains that women do not fall victim to swindlers' scams as easily as men because they are not embarrassed to ask awkward questions.

The episodes recounted in this book range from Sir John Blunt's South Sea Company bubble in the early 18th century to Bernard Madoff's pyramid investment scheme in the United States, the world's largest ever fraud when it was uncovered in 2008. Madoff is currently serving a 150-year sentence for his fraud, which means he will be eligible for release in the year 2159.





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Readers are also introduced to General Gregor MacGregor, the self-proclaimed prince of a fictitious colony called Poyais, who sold parcels of land in an uninhabitable, non-existent state in Central America in the 19th century. His scam was such a success that several ships filled with his dupes who were looking for a better life voyaged across the Atlantic, only to discover that they had purchased worthless swamps.

The slippery con man Victor Lustig managed to sell a 'money-printing machine' to a gullible man in the United States, and the Eiffel Tower to another in Paris for scrap metal. By the time Lustig's victims realised they had been scammed, the con man himself had already fled the country. Swindlers who acquire a taste for the good life generally get cornered and end up behind bars, or they decide to end it all themselves – which is the route chosen by Ivar Kreuger, the Swedish 'Match King.'

Nars spins a cracking tale with a wry smile. It is difficult to put this book down until you have found out how every one of the stories ends. With a doctorate in economics and a long career in economics and finance behind him, Kari Nars knows the world of money inside and out. He warns that if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is: unfeasibly vast profit margins simply do not exist.

Kari Nars (b. 1940) holds a doctorate in economics and a degree in political science. He has worked in senior positions at the Bank of Finland and in the Finnish Ministry of Finance as well as in other banking institutions in the United States, Britain and France. Nars' previous book, *Raha ja onni* ("Money and happiness", 2006), received a great deal of attention. He has also written a memoir, *Mahtimiesten matkassa* ("A life among the powerful", 2001).

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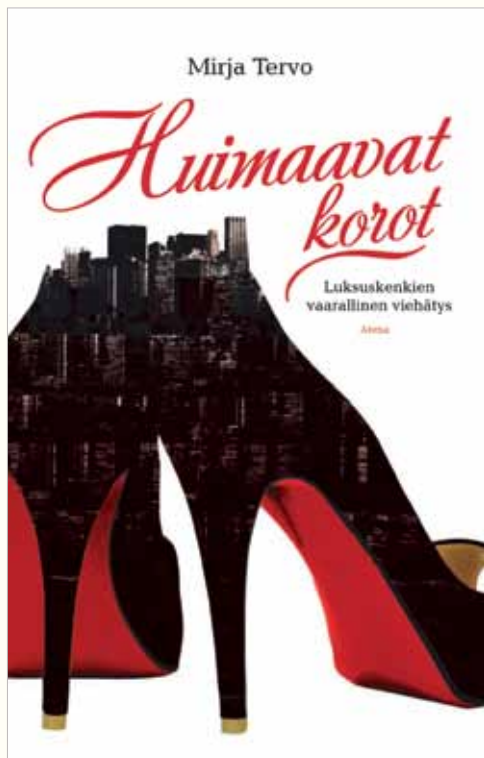
Footwear, status symbol or barometer of sexual allure?

Mirja Tervo

Huimaavat korot – luksuskenkien
vaarallinen viehätys

*“Vertiginous heels – The dangerous allure
of luxury shoes”*

Atena (2010), 233 pp.



Even readers who are committed wearers of sensible footwear will be unable to resist being carried along into the world of a luxury shoe shop in New York, which was ethnologist Mirja Tervo's life for over a year. Having made it through an exacting search process, she became a shop assistant in an exclusive shoe salon, where a typical pair of high heels sells for \$560. The job in the shop lost its glamour after only a few months, but Tervo the researcher wanted to observe the shoe shop throughout an entire annual cycle.

With sharp humour she recounts her place of employment. It was a place redolent with the odours of refined perfume as well as stinky socks, corns, wealthy yet boorish customers devoid of taste and basic manners, bossy old crones and nasty girls, “prima donnas in sunglasses bigger than the dogs they carry under their arms.” And she had to fight to serve these customers because she was paid on a commission-only basis.

A strange, captivating world is revealed to the reader: why are so many women – and a few men – prepared to spend thousands of euros to acquire high-heeled shoes that are so unsuited to walking in? Why do women agree to pay three thousand dollars for a pair of shoes with heels so high they can only sit down while wearing them? Do high heels constitute footwear,



Photo: Jan-Åke Schultz

status symbols or a barometer of sexual allure? What do gnarled toes tell us about their owners or about changes in footwear fashions? What does foot fetishism tell us about women, men and society? What messages do we send out with our shoes? Mirja Tervo maintains that when we put on a pair of high-heeled shoes, we are putting ourselves voluntarily into the stocks. We drag around a symbolic tribal tradition of femininity on our feet like a millstone, without thinking of anything but the visibility of our shoes and legs. We don't even have a sense that we are being shackled under a cultural yoke – quite the reverse, in fact.

This book is a fun, entertaining and thorough excursion into the world of shoes, which Mirja Tervo reveals to us with an ethnographer's precision. The shoe salon – with its clientele, sales staff and unpleasant bosses – opens up beneath the researcher's analytical magnifying glass. In her job there, Tervo learned to understand the pecking order in the court of shoes, to recognise different types of customers and above all, to wear flat shoes herself.

Vertiginous heels has sold around 15,000 copies in its hardcover edition in Finland and nearly 10,000 in paperback. In the year of its publication, the paperback version was on the list of Finland's Top 10 bestsellers from May to September 2010.

Mirja Tervo (b. 1971) holds a master's degree and is a trained ethnologist. She has lived in the United States for six years. Tervo believes she is the only woman to have travelled across the Alaskan tundra with her Manolos and Louboutins along. She has also published a book entitled *Lehmä* ("Cow", 2004), which is a study of the cultural history of ideals concerning the physical appearance of the cow. She is currently working on her Ph.D. thesis, which deals with the notion of elite luxury in different cultures.

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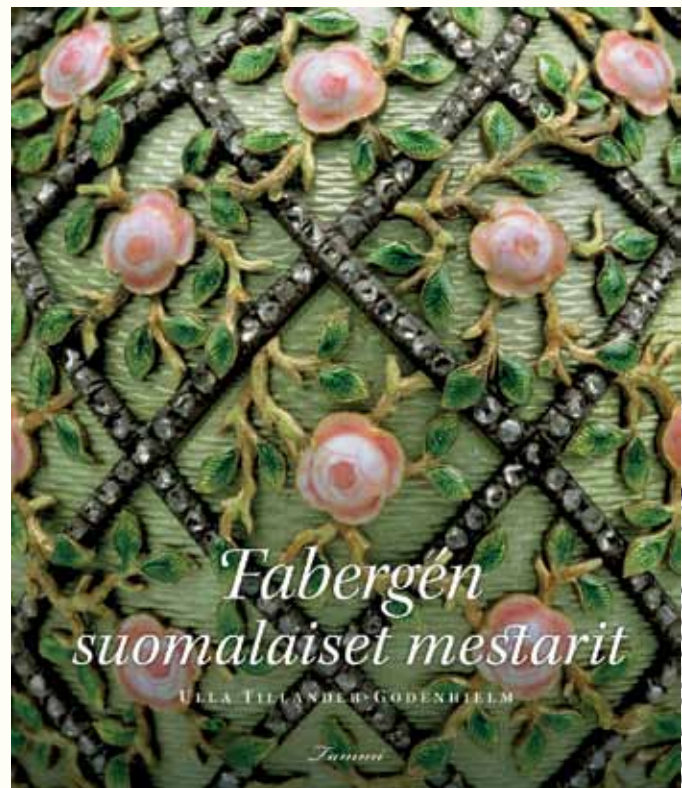
A book about the makers of the most coveted auction treasures

Ulla Tillander-Godenhjelm *Fabergén suomalaiset mestarit* *“Fabergé’s Finnish masters”*

Tammi (2011), 272 pp., illustrated

Karl Fabergé, the celebrated court jeweller of imperial Russia, created objects which many consider to be the world’s finest products of the goldsmith’s art. There have been previous accounts published of the history of the Fabergé family, but none of them revealed who the master craftsmen behind Fabergé were: in fact, of the firm’s 24 master goldsmiths and silversmiths, no fewer than 14 were Finns.

In this breathtakingly beautiful volume, Ulla Tillander-Godenhjelm, art historian and great-granddaughter of St. Petersburg goldsmith Alexander Tillander, tells the story of Fabergé’s success as well as the lives and art of the firm’s Finnish master goldsmiths. The biographies build up a portrait of a world in the late 19th and early 20th centuries where many left quite humble circumstances in Finland for St. Petersburg in Russia, and they describe how journeymen trained to achieve the esteemed status of master goldsmiths. August Holmström started out as the son of a bricklayer and left in 1845 at the age of 16 for an apprenticeship in St. Petersburg. He went on to become a master gemstone cutter for the Fabergé company. One of Holmström’s best-known works is the beautiful Imperial Easter egg of 1892, carved in bowenite and decorated with a delicate trelliswork of diamonds.



August's son, Albert Holmström, was an elegant young man who dreamt of a career as a musician, but followed in his father's footsteps as a jeweller. In its heyday, his workshop employed 60 goldsmiths, apprentices and journeymen. Holmström's niece Alma Pihl was a talented young designer who already had an impressive career at the age of 25 in a male-dominated field. She is best known for her decorative objects featuring winter motifs; the most famous of these is the Winter Egg, which was designed for the Dowager Empress in 1913. The idea occurred to Pihl as she sat at her draughting table, watching how the sun's rays sparkled through the frost on the window. Pihl's career ended with the Russian Revolution. Every master craftsman's story is worth telling, and the objects they created have survived as evidence of their unique talents.

Fabergé's Finnish masters takes the reader along to the workshops of the St. Petersburg goldsmiths, as well as into the lives of the elite and the showroom of the Fabergé company, where wealthy clients – including Russia's richest oil magnate, Ludvig Nobel – came to place their orders for jewellery, some of which were to be fabricated in a very short time. For the finest pieces commissioned by the Tsar, a special imperial chamber was opened to allow the master craftsmen to choose gems and precious metals, which they would then transform into magnificent creations.

The unparalleled illustrations in this volume have been sourced from all over the world, including from private collections, just for this book. Most of the objects pictured are not on public display. The photographs give the impression that one could almost touch the objects in them. The reader can only marvel at how anyone could have created something so beautiful.



© Tammi

Ulla Tillander-Godenhjelm, Ph.D., has been researching Fabergé's oeuvre for many years. Her doctoral thesis was on the award system of imperial Russia. She lectures, serves as a consultant for art exhibitions and writes for exhibition catalogues and art publications in Finland and abroad. She has published several works on the art of the jewellers of St. Petersburg in Swedish, Finnish and English.

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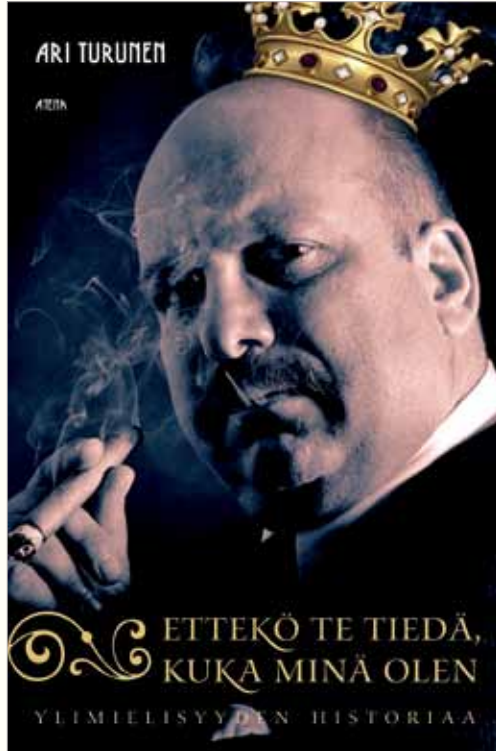
A hilarious book about a very serious subject

Ari Turunen

Ettekö te tiedä kuka minä olen:
Ylimielisyyden historiaa

*“Don’t you know who I am? A history
of arrogance”*

Atena (2010), 200 pp.



“**T**his is probably the best book you’ll ever read...” Yes, well, we humans have always had a very high opinion of ourselves.

Ari Turunen’s hilarious book takes the reader to the sources of arrogance and opens up new perspectives on the relationship between cause and effect in events from world history. We all know arrogant, obnoxious know-it-alls from our circle of acquaintances, from work, politics, corridors of power, world history – wherever there has been space for megalomaniacs and ruthless behaviour. There is even a name for this phenomenon: hubris syndrome, a personality disorder that concerns the possession of power.

Self-important men and women dazzled by their own brilliance have caused untold destruction, as we know all too well from history, and they disrupt their environment without even trying. ‘Letting things go to one’s head’ is a chemical process that has its own dramatic arc. This book tells how Alexander the Great conquered all of Central Asia, and this was clearly too much even for him. In Egypt he declared himself to be the son of the god Amun. In Persia, while drunk, he set fire to the capital Persepolis and killed his right-hand man Cleitus, because Cleitus had praised Alexander’s father Phillip too much. Alexander developed an allergy to



Photo: Tommi Anttonen

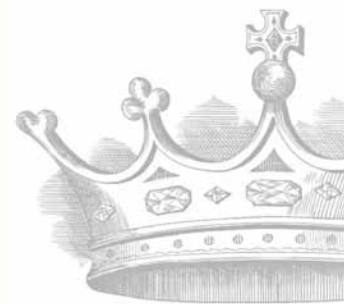
any sort of comparison or criticism. It is astonishing that history's brutal tyrants continue to be lionised and statues are erected in their honour which must be "kept free of bird droppings".

Sometimes self-importance comes at a high price: Sir Richard Branson launched a search for a director of his Virgin business empire on a TV programme called *The Rebel Billionaire*. The competitors were driven to Branson's mansion in a taxi. The driver was always Branson himself, who disguised himself as a taxi driver. The driver chatted with the contestants during the journey. Once the taxi reached its destination, Branson removed his disguise. He eliminated two contestants straight away because they had conducted themselves poorly during the taxi ride. Branson believed that a contemptuous attitude towards ordinary people was also damaging for his company.

Anyone might wonder how they would have performed in Branson's test. How often do we categorise people into winners and losers based on their behaviour, hobbies, clothing, appearance or jobs? Ari Turunen's book is about not only historical heroes but also all of us ordinary people. It can be read as a guide to kind, considerate behaviour. After you have read it, you will view yourself, your surroundings and power-brokers in a new light.

Ari Turunen (b. 1966) holds a degree in social sciences. He has written six popular books on manners, superstition, lying, resistance and intoxication. His books are full of vivid anecdotes about the reasons for human behaviour which are both informative and entertaining. His books reveal in a hilarious way why we behave the way we do. Turunen has worked as a science editor for 20 years. He has presented many radio broadcasts and lectures on cultural history and world views. Currently he is in charge of communications for a major European Union-funded science project which covers 19 countries.

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A revealing portrait of a hugely popular band

Denis Vinokur

Von Hertzen Brothers – Lähikuvissa “*The Von Hertzen Brothers – Close-ups*”

Johnny Kniga (2011), 140 pp., illustrated

One of the most intriguing Finnish bands at the moment are the Von Hertzen Brothers. The group, comprising three brothers – Mikko, Kie and Jonne – as well as two other members, play modern epic rock that still gives a nod to tradition. They have achieved gold-disc sales in Finland, and in 2011 they signed a global contract with Universal Music. In the UK, the Von Hertzen Brothers were nominated for the Roll of Honours Award 2011 (New Band of the Year) by *Classic Rock* magazine.

Denis Vinokur, the editor of this book, has accompanied the band on their journey for years with his camera and has compiled a cornucopia of interviews and photos in this book to create an honest, unpretentious portrait of a unique band. In the book, every member of the band gets a chance to speak about his role in a group where three brothers’ musical passions come up against one another. Mikko von Hertzen’s ongoing spiritual quest and their connection to the Indian mother and spiritual leader known as Mother Amma, are evident in this book and can be heard in the message of universal love in the group’s lyrics. There is a demand for that now in our conflicted world.

This book delves into the problems of doing things together, the difficult process of relinquishing your own ideas and coming up with new songs, stage fright and the degree of commitment the band show towards their work. Jonne, one of the brothers, has this to say: “It’s a hell of a lot easier to play in a band with people other than your own brothers.” The group’s musical ambitions can be seen and felt at gigs,





© Denis Vinokur

where, as their drummer puts it, “they get so totally into it, and then I get so caught up in the momentum that I can’t let the flow stop. Then both of my hands are swollen. I feel like smashing the sticks through the drum heads and going home.”

This book is not a typical book for fans; it is more of an open portrait of the difficulties and fruits of creative work. It provides food for thought for anyone who is looking to find their own path. Nor is this book short on self-deprecating humour. Mikko tells of his first appearance in India, where he ended up singing on stage, unprepared, in a voice that was too high-pitched. After two songs, the audience – including the laughing Mother Amma – had just about had enough.

Jonne talks about the difficulties of performing live, the inevitable fame that comes with their work and the liberating power that comes with being in a band. Kie, with 20 years’ experience of playing in bands, has discovered the relationship between his own sense of perfectionism and how to convey it to others when performing.

Candid conversations with the band members reveal the importance of following their own paths. They also had to rely on their own vision when top producers turned away these now extremely popular musicians early in their career.

Denis Vinokur’s stylish photography tells its own story in a way that is both tender and fierce. The photos effectively convey the atmosphere at gigs, the passion for making music, rehearsals, relaxing outdoors, and many people connected with the life of the band.

The editor and photographer for this book, **Denis Vinokur** (b. 1972), is a native of Helsinki and a long-time friend of the brothers. He has been accompanying the band to gigs with his camera for many years.

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