



# Being reborn into the new family

Bibliotherapeutic values in contemporary Finnish autobiographical writing. *Kuka sinut omistaa* by Riitta Jalonen and *Adoptoitu* by Anu Mylläri

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## Abstract

Every child brought up outside the biological family suffered a loss, some of them were lucky to be “born again” for another family who accepted them with love. The experiences of children in this situation often remain secretive and emotions suppressed. In this case, literature can become a way of therapy, both for the author and the reader who perceive through the novel their emotions that were not previously named. After many years, two Finnish writers Anu Mylläri and Riitta Jalonen decided to reveal their stories. Anu Mylläri, born in Bangladesh, was adopted by a family of Finnish farmers, while Riitta Jalonen included in her novel autobiographical plots related to the admission of a new child to her family. I will present the image of the “second birth” and the associated emotions from the perspective of the child on the basis of the autobiography of Anu Mylläri *Adoptoitu* (Adopted, 2006) and the autobiographical novel *Kuka sinut omistaa* (Who Owns You, 2013) by Riitta Jalonen. The aim of the article is thus to present these perspectives with relation to the bibliotherapeutic values of the mentioned literary works.

Keywords: autobiographical writing, intercountry adoption, Riitta Jalonen, Anu Mylläri, bibliotherapy



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## 1. INTRODUCTION AND APPROACH TO THE STUDY

For BEING REBORN FOR THE NEW FAMILY in this paper I will understand the process of foreign adoption and foster care. The difference between those two types of custody are mostly connected with the law, less with the emotions of the child, thus in this paper I will refer to them both as NEW FAMILY. It appears to be an extremely tender issue, since every child who is placed either in adoptive family or a foster care has experienced the loss of biological family and has to start a completely new life, no matter if they are prepared for that change or not (see Ulasińska et al. 2008:161). Often these kinds of experiences result in various types of traumas, which are difficult to deal with. Literature comes as one of the ways of therapy, as so called BIBLIOTHERAPY. Since the foreign adoption is a relatively important phenomenon in Finland, the question of how to talk about these issues appears to be crucial. In this paper I will show how being reborn into the new family looks like from the perspective of the child on the basis of two contemporary Finnish books with autobiographical plots.

The considerations in this article will be divided into following topics: at the beginning I will present the authors with particular emphasis on their own experiences of intercultural adoption or fostering and the applications of them in the analyzed autobiography and the autobiographical novel. Subsequently I will give a short insight into the real situation of children living apart from their biological families in Finland to provide broader context, which will be followed by the actual analysis of the representations of being reborn into the new families in the analyzed books. These considerations will be concluded with introducing how contemporary intimate writing can function as a tool for therapy in terms of adoption and foster care system.

## 2. AUTHORS WITH DIFFICULT CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

### 2.1 INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION EXPERIENCE COMPILED IN AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Anu Mylläri was one of the first children participating in Finnish Interpedia Intercountry Adoption program. She was born in Bangladesh and at the age of two and a half was adopted by the family of Finnish farmers. During her time in Finland she experienced many acts of intolerance and humiliation, described with clear and strong words in her autobiography. At the year of publishing her debut book, 2006, she was invited by Tarja Halonen – the president of Finland of that time – to the Independence Day Reception, which is a great honor for people who distinguished themselves among others in cultural life. This shows how influential and significant her book became, her voice was important in the discussion of Finnish identity and the problem of immigrants.

According to Lejeune (1975) in order to create an autobiography, the author enters into a pact or contract with the readers, promising to give a detailed account of his or her life. The pact requires also the identity of the author, the narrator and the main character (Lejeune 1975:32). This pact can be applied here: Mylläri is the author, the narrator and the protagonist. She did write her book to give a detailed account of her life, especially the events connected with intercountry adoption and its consequences. She tries to present the events as exactly as possible – by citing original documents, even by sharing her personal photographs with the reader. She is not a professional writer, nonetheless she managed to describe the inexpressible pain of the rejected child and her book was an important contribution in the discussion on intercountry adoption and tolerance in Finland.

## 2.2 THE LOSS OF A LITTLE BROTHER AS CONTRIBUTION TO THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL

Riitta Jalonen, unlike Mylläri, is a well-known and acclaimed Finnish writer who has a wide range of target readers. She writes children's and youth literature as well as prose for adults. Some of her books were translated into many languages, among others into Polish, Chinese and German. Her children's books are not infantile readings but all of them deal with the most serious problems of the child. Her trilogy about girls<sup>1</sup> shows the process of grieving after the death of the close one. This trilogy was a base for Kokko's (2012) dissertation *The grieving mind in words and images*. The study deals with the theme of death and representations of a bereaved child's grief, longing, and recovery in narrative fiction of Jalonen and pictures by Louhi.

In her novel *Kuka sinut omistaa* she combines her skills of writing for the wide variety of readers because the book is written for adults but it shows the world from the perspective of the child. The title seems to be a question but the writer deliberately did not put a question mark at the end. What is the reason? The author does not seek for the answer, instead, she wants to pay the reader's attention that it is an issue with no clear solution. Does the child belong to the biological mother, who gave the gift of life? Or maybe it belongs to the foster parents, who opened their home and gave the gift of love? Should only the judge decide? Or is there anyone who has the right to *own* a child at all?

The main character and the narrator is a young Finnish girl called Heidi, but the reader can find traits of Jalonen's childhood experience in the story. As Jalonen herself admitted, she used the story of her own family in the novel. When she was a little girl, her parents took into a foster family a 2-year-old boy, who eventually had to come back to his biological mother. For many years she kept the trauma after the loss of her little brother, the book was for her an opening of an old mystery and the wounds of the childhood. She wrote her memories after many years as well, but her distance is about 30 years longer than the distance of Mylläri, which might be one of the reasons why her narration is more distant from reality.

Jalonen maintained some authenticity of events, but presenting them exactly how it happened, was not her goal. In this case the author did not enter into autobiographical pact – Jalonen changed the name of the protagonist. In this way we could deal with “novelistic pact”, using category by Lejeune (1975) or “the fringes of autobiography” in the words of Lis (2006). Unambiguous classification of this literary work into a specific genre is not obvious, however. On one hand, the lack of clear identity in terms of the name between the author and the narrator would suggest that it is autobiographical novel, on the other hand Jalonen underlined in interviews that the story of Heidi is *her* story. We can wonder why she decided to hide her identity in the book but reveal it publicly in interviews. Maybe it helps to reduce the pain while seeing the story as another person or it can trigger the imagination to combine the reality with fiction. The author was trying to bring back her memories, share some impressions, feelings and dress up the inexpressible in words. In terms of the language it is closer to autofiction; the narration is on one hand quite simple – it is a child's language – on the other hand it is deep enough to convey the hidden emotions. The language of the novel is at times poetic, even surrealistic, there is a lot to read between the lines. Using the metaphor of Doubrovsky: the writer entered into “the adventure of language”. The chronology is distorted, when narrator comes back to the moment of the little brother arrival to her home. The disorder of chronology is regarded as another literary device for autofiction in terms of form, it creates the subjective order of the autobiographer (Lis 2006:9).

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<sup>1</sup> *Elisabet, nalle ja pikkuveli jota ei ole* (Elizabeth, Teddy and the Little Brother that Is no Longer, 1992) *Tyttö ja naakkapuu* (The Girl and the Jackdaw Tree, 2004), *an Revontulilumi* (Northern Lights on Snow, 2005).

Some literature researchers state that the distinction of autobiographical and autofictional writing is disputable, or that autofiction is a sub-genre of autobiography. Turczyn (2007) states that autofiction is the location of the autobiographical “me” as a language being that takes place beyond the real time and space. By creating himself as a protagonist, the author enters not into the world of literature but into the “world of desires” (Turczyn 2007:209).

Epitexts clearly enrich the understanding of the plot line in terms of autobiographical or autofictional interpretation, the text alone does not reveal it, however. In this paper, as we deal with therapeutic values of the books, the literary work of Jalonen will be referred to as an autobiographical or semi-fictional novel.

### 3. SITUATION OF FOSTER FAMILIES AND FOREIGN ADOPTION IN FINLAND

The tragedy of the family who loses foster child after years is not an unusual situation. The law about foster families in Finland, as well as in other European countries, states clearly that the return of the child into the biological family is the objective and foster family has to enable the contact with biological parents. In its essence the foster family might be temporary. The foster parents preparing for the new role during special compulsory courses are advised not to get too attached. It seems contradictory: on one hand they want to provide a stable home and loving family, on the other hand they are supposed to keep the distance. Nowadays Finnish law confirms, however, that if the custody was long, the child’s opinion should be taken into account, the biological family reunification should not be placed over the child’s interest (*Termination of Foster Care*). At this point the title question – who owns you – appears to be still unanswered. Are always the blood ties stronger than attachment and love towards the new family? In this context the Jalonen title question is a hot issue.

Nowadays in Finland there is about 18,5 thousand children placed outside the biological family, out of which about 7,7 thousand stays in foster families, and just slightly less (7,2 thousand) in institutional care for children (*Child Welfare 2018*). The family care is obviously a better option than the institutional care but the attachment is inherent. As it comes out from the presented data there is not enough foster families. The other worrying fact is that the number of children placed outside the biological family have almost doubled since 1995. Other controversial problem is that in Finland it is relatively easy to lose the biological child, if the Child Welfare Agency decides so. It is an often discussed issue in Finnish press and politics. The reasons of taking the child into custody are questioned by the parents and the rest of society. The child can be taken away without asking about its opinion until it turns 12 years old (*Child Welfare Law, 2007:9 § 43*).

The situation of foreign adoption is not an easier issue either. The main difference is that the new family is not temporary and that the child does not have the contact with biological family. Mylläri presented many of the problems that occur when a child from abroad is being raised up in Finland. The biggest obstacles are for the children whose outside appearance shows that they are of foreign origin. Among others she drew the readers’ attention to such problems as:

- expectations of adoption parents, their immaturity
- lack of professional help and supporting groups, especially when one of the adoption parents dies (as it happened in Mylläri’s case)
- feelings of rejection
- facing the racism from the Finnish society.

The problems that she had shed light on, might affect many other children. According to adoption statistics by Interpedia<sup>2</sup> (through which Mylläri was adopted) since 1985 over 2070 children of foreign origin have been adopted in this way (Interpedia Statistics). Most of them come from South Africa, India, Thailand and China. This means that those children can easily be recognized as of foreign origin and be confused with emigrants, as well as the author of *Adoptoitu*.

On the presented chart it is visible that intercountry adoption for over a decade (14 years in a row: 1996-2009) was even more popular than adoption of Finnish children (OSF). One of the reasons is that usually Finnish children are put into foster families because their real parents are alive, but have their parental rights restricted temporarily – in this situation adoption is not possible. The number of foreign adoptions was increasing quite steadily until 2006 when significant decrease in the number of adoptions can be noticed. This correlates with the fact that the same year the new legislation about assisted reproduction treatments has been introduced (*Act on Assisted Fertility Treatment* of 2006). Since that time a single woman can become a mother with the use of artificial insemination, which brings a lot of controversy. It seems that the new reproduction methods have slightly limited the interest in intercountry adoption, on the other hand the number of domestic adoptions<sup>3</sup> has grown. Nonetheless children (and now adults) adopted through intercountry adoption still are a part of Finnish society and their rights need to be pondered upon.

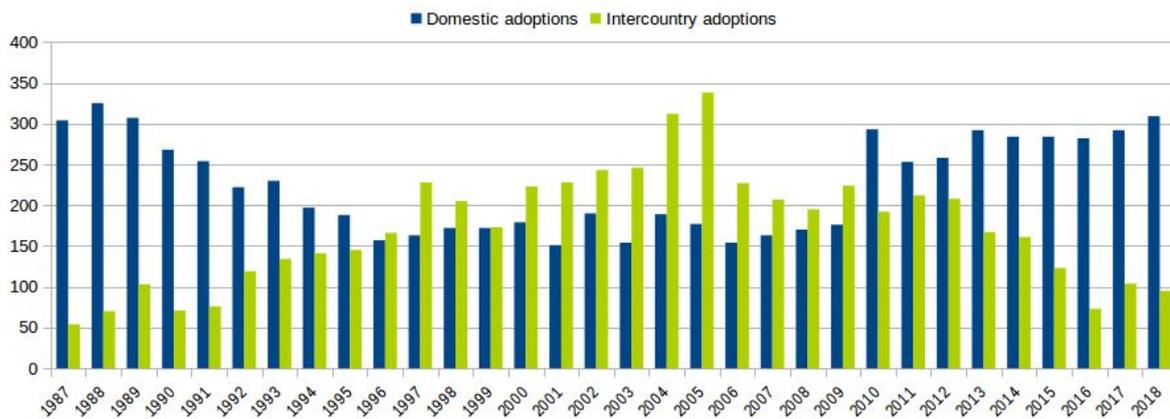


Figure 1. *Adoptions by place of birth. Source: OSF*

## 4. “SECOND BIRTH” FROM TWO PERSPECTIVES

### 4.1 FROM BANGLADESH TO FINLAND. NEW IDENTITY

Mylläri starts her narration by presenting the document from 1981:

The District Court has investigated this matter and since adopting Anu Orvokki Rohima is in the best interest of the child and it has been determined that the child will receive good care and upbringing (...) the District Court confirms the adoption relationship between the farmer Seppo Mikaeli Mylläri, housewife Aino Liisa Mylläri and the child Anu Orvokki Rohima Mylläri (Mylläri 2007:11).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Interpedia is one of the two non-profit organizations working in intercountry adoption in Finland.

<sup>3</sup> It is noticeable that since year 2009 *domestic adoptions* include children adopted by a partner in same-sex couples, where the child was a biological child of one of the partners.

<sup>4</sup> ”Kihlakunnan oikeus on tutkinut tämän asian ja koska Anu lapseksi ottaminen on lapsen edun mukaista ja on selvitetty, että lapsi tulee saamaan hyvän hoidon ja kasvatuksen (...) kihlakunnanoikeus vahvistaa ottolapsisuhteen

These words had a causative power for the whole future life of the autobiographer. The adoption is confirmed and there is no way back both for the parents and for the child. It was just a couple of sentences but they constituted the completely new beginning for the little girl. After presenting the document, the author comes to the first photograph taken right after her arrival to Finland. The simple black and white photograph is so precious because it helped to keep the memories. Nobody could tell her about her biological birth so her *second birth* is the only one she can know about. Using this picture Mylläri tries to recreate her birth.

At the moment of taking the first photo of me, I was born into this country and my past was left somewhere outside. A little girl from Bangladesh became a Finnish citizen. A new future begins, but the past would be present every day of my life. My complexion, my brown eyes, and the culture of my birth, which I never came to know, would always accompany me (Mylläri 2007:13).<sup>5</sup>

This first moments of her new life seem to be happy and exciting, but from the perspective of time she knows that her external appearance, as the only thing of the past, would bring her many challenges and difficulties. Mylläri focuses on the recipients of her birth, she lists that she was born *for*: for Finland, born for the new home, and for the new mother. She comments that her new birth for the Finnish couple had its beginning in love and huge longing for a child, but on the other hand she feels as if she were a tool to fulfill the new mother's emptiness, it was not just for her own sake. The new baby changed the social status of the mother, she could finally feel herself a real woman. Her dreams of a child after unsuccessful trials and miscarriage have finally come true. "The desire was quenched, her womb ceased to be empty"<sup>6</sup> – Mylläri (2007:17) comments.

As the story goes on, the reader is familiarized with the problems that the child experiences from the outside world. The biggest difficulty and a source of frustrations was the identity problem. Anu received a new family and new citizenship, she was brought up the Finnish way, her mother tongue was Finnish with a slight northern dialect (she has quickly forgotten the Bengali language) – as a child, she felt a normal Finnish girl. The people around her, however, saw her dark complexion and the majority of them did not treat her the way she felt – as a Finnish person. It meant a tragedy for a child who lost its first identity and never got fully accepted with the new identity, by people with whom it felt bounded. In the book, the author depicted many of the situations when she was humiliated or rejected. However she was strong enough not to give up, she wanted to prove that she owns Finnish SISU<sup>7</sup> and that she is a real citizenship of Finland by joining the Finnish army. Mylläri was the first dark-skinned woman in the history of the Finnish Army.

Anu's birth for the new country was just a beginning of an adventure and a chance. She has used her chance and despite the difficulties she tries to take the best out of her experience. As an adult she got involved in courses for adoption families and workshops for the children, she was fighting against racism and discrimination. Her book is also full of personal reflections on the topic of foreign adoption and ways of improving this system in order to help other children who will "get born for Finland", as she did. At the end of the book she beautifully depicted adoption as "just one of the ways to get born" (Mylläri 2007:214).

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maanviljelijä Seppo Myllärin ja emäntä Aino Myllärin sekä lapsen Annu Myllärin välillä." (All the translations by the author of the article)

<sup>5</sup> "Ensimmäisen valokuvan ottohetkellä minä synnyin tähän maahan ja menneisyyteni jäi jonnekin ulkopuolelle. Bangladeshilaisesta pikkutyöstä tuli Suomen kansalainen. Uusi tulevaisuus alkaa, mutta menneisyys olisi läsnä elämäni jokaisena päivänä. Ihonväriini, ruskeat silmäni ja synnyinmaani kulttuuri, jota en koskaan tullut tuntemaan, kulkisivat aina mukanaani."

<sup>6</sup> "Kaipuu oli täytetty eikä syli ollut enää tyhjä."

<sup>7</sup> SISU is a Finnish concept which describes the national feature of character, often translated as *resilience* or *grit*.

#### 4.2 THE SECOND BIRTH FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A SISTER

In this case, the second birth is not analyzed by the child itself but by a girl, whose parents accepted a little French boy, Jean, into the foster family. The narrator and the main character lets the reader inside the world of her mind. Her narration is not chronological, it is full of imagination and loose memories with strong emotional shade. She concentrates her narration on certain objects such as a fur coat and a photo with black frames, which become symbolic for her evoking strong feelings.

Heidi writes about getting Jean to their home in a similar way, as Mylläri did. She also calls it a “second birth”: “Jean was born twice, first for Mami and for the second time for the mother” (Jalonen 2013:16)<sup>8</sup>. The focus is on the recipients of the birth: *born for*: for Mami, for mother, as well as in *Adoptoitu*. Mami is the biological mother of Jean, she visits him and his new family every now and then, always bringing with her the atmosphere of fear into the house. Her inherent attribute, that Heidi draws attention to, is a winter fur coat, that she wears even in the summer time – she brings to mind Cruella de Vil from Dodie Smith’s *101 Dalmatians*. According to the girl’s narration, Mami does not fit there, she is an outsider in the house, she destroys the sense of security and stability both for her son and the rest of the family. When Heidi depicts the situation, in which Mami makes Jean repeat French words, in her story the boy becomes a puppet doll following the orders. As Eronen – in her master thesis about child’s mind in Jalonen’s works – points out, this metaphor of a doll with no own will expands into an imagination game in Heidi’s mind (Eronen 2015:66).

Heidi speaks about the “second birth” of Jean, which means that something had changed also for her. She feels that she became a sister for real: she took care of the little brother, she loved him with all her heart. She was protecting him at school and teaching the new way of life in Finland. After years spent as a brother and sister, the biological mother takes the boy back for ever, against the boy’s will. This situation is a complete disaster for Heidi, who is not able to understand it. If Jean *was born for* her family, it means that now he *died for* this family. Heidi experiences deep suffering and grief. The sisterhood has turned into an emptiness inside of her heart. Jalonen made her main character finish the story with dramatic words: “I will never ever tell about me and Jean. Nobody can get to know that he ever existed”<sup>9</sup> (Jalonen 2013:159). As it turns out, these words could be actually the ones of the author herself. Riitta Jalonen shared her experiences in an interview for the magazine of the Federation for Child Welfare in Finland. She explains that before writing her novel she deliberately did not check any reports nor documents about the foster family’s situation, according to her it is equally valuable to show just how the child feels: “I wanted to write clearly what was going on inside me”, she sums up (Palokari 2013 – interview with Jalonen). Jalonen admitted that she had suppressed her emotions for many years and writing the novel was for her a kind of therapy, she faced the emotions from the past. After the book was released she decided that she is ready to find the lost little brother. Unfortunately it turned out that the brother had just died for a serious disease. Jalonen sent the novel to the widow after him. Despite an inconceivable disappointment, later, she realized that she had been close to him as she wrote about them two. She broke the little girl’s resolution not to tell ever about them and she felt set free from her past.

<sup>8</sup> ”Jean on syntynyt kaksi kertaa, ensimmäisen kerran Mamille ja toisen kerran äidille”

<sup>9</sup> ”En aio kertoa Jeanista ja minusta koskaan. Kukaan ei saa tietää, että häntä oli olemassakaan”

## 5. BIBLIOTHERAPEUTIC VALUES OF THE ANALYZED BOOKS

As it was shown in previous sections the adoption and foster care is a phenomenon affecting thousands of children in Finland – not only them but also adoptive parents and other relatives who suffer after the terminating of foster care.

According to Bowlby's THEORY OF ATTACHMENT<sup>10</sup> people have "propensity to make strong affectional bonds", thus the separation or loss of the mother (or other significant attachment figure) in the first months or years of a child's life causes emotional disorders in children (Bowlby & Bowlby 2010:151). Ulańska et al. (2008) notice that behind every adoption process there is a trauma of losing the bond with the biological parents. They also claim that children taken into the new family often bear the bitterness of abandonment and hatred towards the biological parents which is passed onto the new family (Ulańska et al. 2008:167). Another difficult situation is also the fact that the decision of taking the child into the family is often preceded by mourning over own dead or even *unconceived* child. The new parents have later their own expectations towards children which often remain unfulfilled – bearing new frustrations for the whole family.

Moreover, the attachment theory gives hope that during the first years of life of the child the negative emotions can be replaced by the positive ones, thus *second birth* for the new family creates a chance to build a new close attachment and to create a safe environment of healing. This requires, however, the maturity and understanding from the new parents.

Healing from traumas and emotional disorders is a long process, which can be assisted by various methods. BIBLIOTHERAPY is one of them, it involves the use of literature in the therapy process, especially in situations of experiencing stress, after traumatic events and in emotional disorders. Molicka (2011:10) shows that literature is an easier way to deal with specific emotions:

The world of the book appears as a place of peace, a place of meeting with each other, without overwhelming time pressure (...). At the same time, the meeting in the world of literature is different than in the real world, because it is primarily a meeting with your own thoughts and feelings. Too much is happening in real life, relationships with others are unclear, they have too many conditions, implications, and often strong emotions accompany them.

She claims that in the world of the book it is easier to understand others and find and interpret oneself. Joseph Gold (as cited in Molicka 2011:134) goes even further and he indicates literature as a therapy basis. The advantages of using literature listed by Gold can be applied to the narratives presented in this paper:

**Identification with the protagonist** leading to catharsis and reflection on what kind of person one wants to become.

**Possibility to try out a new role**, where the process of modeling occurs in a sense of security. Books bear the burdens of the readers and let them see the larger picture that they would not normally see because they offer another perspective.

**Developing the emotions**, the negative ones as well. Literature allows to recognize the feelings of the characters first, and then the own ones.

**Developing resistance to demanding life situations**, reading prepares for the future (Gold, as cited in Molicka 2011:134-135).

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<sup>10</sup> Attachment is a process by which a child creates a bond with the initial caregiver.

In *Adoptoitu* the identification with the protagonist – a little dark-skinned girl raised up in the Finnish society might be an important step for other adopted children, whose color of the complexion reveals their background. They could see that the problems they face are not unique, that somebody else had to go through the same or similar hardships – such as problems with being accepted in a group of peers, being treated as an emigrant or even trouble with make-up due to lack of cosmetics for dark-skinned women in Finnish stores of that time. The identification with the main character is also possible for children in domestic adoption. Anu Mylläri showed general problems of adoption as well, she presented the expectations of new parents which she was unable to fulfill, difficult relationships with other family members and the death of adoption mother.

This novel is also an excellent tool for the couples considering adoption to try out the role of adoption parents. Before they start the process they can see how it looks like from the perspective of the child and they could rethink their motivation, or even discover the ulterior motives, that they were unconscious about. The events presented by Mylläri definitely prepare the adoption parents-to-be for demanding life situations, that are likely to occur while bringing up an adopted child. It is a chance to reflect on how they would react if they experience the anger and frustration of the child or if the child experiences the acts of intolerance among the groups of peers.

Nowadays new books about foster families or unusual family situation appear on the market, but usually their goal is to help the child itself or the new parents, hardly ever they are addressed to the foster siblings – they are left outside the focus. Jalonen's novel fills this gap. She puts the inner life of the new sister on the first plan. The girl did not make the decision about taking a child into the family, she was not being prepared on any courses, as parents are, nonetheless she had to bear all the consequences. This book gives a rare chance for siblings of foster children to identify with the protagonist and develop and name the emotions. Termination of foster care is not an unusual case, the biological family reunification is the desired final, but the feelings of the family who loved and took care of the child (sometimes for years) are left behind. The emotions that arise at that time are hard to deal with and reading Jalonen's novel can help to work through them. The reader is an observer of a little girl's mourning, mourning that was unspoken for years. The book appeared to be therapeutic also for the writer herself – as Jalonen admitted – after having written the book, she has gained the courage to find her lost little brother and face the shocking truth that he had already died.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

All in all, it can be stated that both the autobiography and autobiographical novel concerning *second birth* gives an entirely new insight into the problems of adopted and fostered children. Social research and statistical data indicate the scale of the problem but they cannot convey the inexpressible – the inner life of the child. Here comes the literature, which not only provides the new perspective, but as it had been presented in the article, the literature offers the chance to work through issues – both for the readers and writers.

Anu Mylläri's autobiography written after years, shows the life of a child seen from the perspective of the adult. The events of the past are associated with comments of the narrator, who already knows how the story would continue. This perspective gives the sense of security to the reader – one can think: “It was a difficult situation but the girl got over it” – the reader already knows that there would be a positive continuation. The perspective of a child in Jalonen's novel is much more challenging. The narration led in present tense keeps the reader right in the middle of the events. There are no commentaries by the “adult” narrator, no explanations – the reader is shown only what the child knows and feels, he has to guess the unsaid parts of the story.

It seems that in terms of advantages of using literature in therapy, semi-fictional material has a bigger potential in developing the emotions due to its narration style. The application of autobiographical material, on the other hand, has prospects on rationalization of one's own experiences by showing that similar situations happened to somebody in reality. The presented autobiography and the autobiographical novel have bibliotherapeutic potential not only for the Finnish society. Translation of the books into other languages would expand their potential and make available to the wider audience.

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