Rebuilding emotional ties for child evacuees returning from abroad: children’s literature and informal education in post-Second World War Finland

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ABSTRACT

During the Second World War, Nordic countries witnessed a large-scale displacement of the population as around 70,000 Finnish children were evacuated to other Nordic countries. While up to 15,000 of them did not return to Finland, the majority travelled back, carrying multiple ruptures in their close relationships: first from their biological parents and then from foster parents. Accordingly, a wide spectrum of feelings such as grief and sadness, but also joy, was felt during reunifications. This article examines how the emotional experiences of post-war reunifications were addressed in one particularly interesting Finnish children’s novel (1947). The book is analysed in the context of post-war advisory literature by paying special attention to its informal educational content. It is argued that the book, representing a classic story of an orphan girl, provided readers with a culturally meaningful way to reflect on their personal situations, thus advising families so they could cope better with the problems of reunification.

Introduction

During the Second World War, Nordic countries witnessed a large-scale displacement of the population as around 70,000 Finnish children were evacuated to Scandinavian foster families, hospitals and children’s homes. While up to 15,000 of these emigrants remained permanently in Sweden (or in some cases Denmark), the majority returned to Finland after the war. However, for many of them, readjusting to life with their biological families was not easy; many had stayed in Sweden longer than expected, become emotionally attached to the foster family, forgotten their language, and become accustomed to a different cultural and socio-economic environment. Indeed, these child evacuees’ experiences had been in so many ways

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1Johanna Sköld and Ingrid Söderlind, ‘Agentic Subjects and Objects of Political Propaganda: Swedish Media Representations of Children in the Mobilization for Supporting Finland during World War II’, Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth 11 (2018): 27–46; C. Heilala, ‘The Child in the Eye of the Storm: Unveiling the War Child Syndrome’ (PhD diss., University of Helsinki, 2016), 9, http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-51-2380-0; Aura Korpipä-Tommola, ‘War and Children in Finland During the Second World War’, Paedagogica Historica 44 (2008): 445–55.

2Tuomas Laine-Frigren, ‘Children on the Move: Psychiatric Encounters with Child Evacuees Returning to Post-War Finland’, in Social Class and Mental Illness in Northern Europe, ed. Petteri Pietikäinen and Jesper Vacz Kråg (London: Routledge, 2019); Perti Kavén, Humanitaarisuuden varjossa. Poliittiset tekijät lastensiirroissa Ruotsin sotiemme aikana ja niiden jälkeen (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2010), 174–176.
different from the wartime experiences of their parents (and other family members) that the families had to go through a more or less difficult phase of reunification after the war. The Finnish writer and novelist, Eila Kostamo (b. 1938), for instance, describes a sense of estrangement on her return: ‘my parents wanted to protect us from their trials by telling us nothing. My dad did not remember the war. His eyes were turned to the future . . . we were strangers to each other’s realities.3

This article examines how the emotional experiences of families reunited after the war were addressed in one particularly interesting Finnish children’s novel written in 1947 by Aili Konttinen (1906–1969), entitled Inkeri palasi Ruotsista (eventually translated into English in 1961 as Kirsti Comes Home). The story was enthusiastically received and relates how a six-year-old girl, ‘Inkeri’ (or Kirsti), returns to her biological family after four years in Sweden. Aili Konttinen, a teacher and already celebrated writer of youth fiction, received an abundance of letters upon the book’s publication from grateful readers who explained that if they had read the book earlier, they might have actually coped better as parents when their own children were repatriated.4 Konttinen was investigating themes that were immediately relevant to an audience across many countries in Europe at this time. Child transfers and evacuations had been organised and carried out all over the continent, and the aftermath of the Second World War in Europe saw huge numbers of orphaned and dislocated children.5 A testament to the wider appeal of the book in this period was that it was later translated into nine languages (e.g. German, 1957; Dutch, 1960; and Swedish, 1961).6

Soon after the war, concerns were being raised by many as to how children and teenagers would readjust to post-war realities. Their experiences were not only a painful reminder of the violence and upheavals of war, but they were also branded as powerful symbols in discussions concerning post-war reconstruction.7 To counteract the psychological legacy of wartime violence, children and families came to occupy a privileged position in many post-war societies.8 To date, a number of studies have stressed the agency of childhood experts (e.g. psychologists) in formulating welfare policies after the war and readjusting children to everyday life.9 At the same time, Finnish post-war

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3 Eila Kostamo, ‘Skänen i lumen’, in Sota-ajan lapsed. Kirjailijat kertovat lapsuudestaan sodan varjossa, ed. Leena Laulajainen (Helsinki: Tammi, 2006), 225. The first autobiographies written by former child evacues were published in the 1970s and 1980s. See Barbara Mattson, ‘A Life Time in Exile: Finnish War Children in Sweden after the War: An Interview Study with a Psychological and Psychodynamic Approach’ (PhD diss., University of Jyväskylä, 2018). See also Sue Saffle, To the Bomb and Back: Finnish War Children Tell Their World War II Stories (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2015).

4 On feedback from the readers, see Konttinen’s interview in the newspaper Maaeudun Tulevaisuus, November 1, 1966, 38.

5 See, for example, Lorind M. Danforth and Robert Van Boeschoten, Children of the Greek Civil War: Refugees and the Politics of Memory (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Veronica Sierra Blas, ‘Educating the Communists of the Future: Notes on the Educational Life of the Spanish Children Evacuated to the USSR during the Spanish Civil War’, Paedagogica Historica 51 (2015): 496–519; Vera K. Fast, Children’s Exodus: A History of the Kinder Transport (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011). See also Nick Baron, ed., Displaced Children in Russia and Eastern Europe, 1915–1953: Ideologies, Identities, Experiences (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

6 Päivi Heikkilä-Halttunen, Kuokkavieraista Oman talon haltijaksi. Suomalaisen lasten- ja nuortenkirjallisuuden instituutioita ja kanonisoitumisen suuntaus 1940- ja 1950-luvulla (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2010).

7 See, for example, Daniella Doron, ‘Lost Children and Lost Childhoods: Memory in Post-Holocaust France’, in Post-Holocaust France and the Jews 1943–1955, ed. Sean Hand and Steven T. Katz (New York and London: New York University Press 2015), 85–6.

8 Tara Zahra, The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe’s Families after World War II (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2011), 90.

9 See, for example, Michal Shapira, The War Inside: Psychoanalysis, Total War, and the Making of the Democratic Self in Post-War Britain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
childhood studies suggest that society as a whole was somewhat unprepared to meet the emotional and psychological needs of children left in the shadow of war;\(^{10}\) prevailing cultural norms emphasised self-control and the importance of holding back negative feelings, which would have thus influenced the way children’s emotional expressions were tackled. In this cultural context, any long-term ‘negative’ feelings in children might have even been considered a sign of abnormal personality.\(^{11}\)

As regards the challenges faced by those children returning from Sweden, it appears that they were not usually seen as a particularly vulnerable group. Children were generally believed to be highly adaptable and in many cases these returnees were treated as the ‘lucky ones’, since they had been offered the chance of a happier life abroad.\(^{12}\) Many in the paediatric profession expressed these opinions in the guidance they gave to mothers at child health centres. Arvo Ylppö (1887–1992), for instance, firmly believed that young children could and should be taught to adapt to the daily rhythms of family life. In her analysis of the Swedish wartime medical records of Finnish evacuee children, the historian Karin Zetterqvist-Nelson also notes that Swedish doctors were paying scant attention to issues of emotional well-being, preferring to focus purely on physical symptoms.\(^{13}\) This idea that children are naturally adaptable also had an impact on how adults perceived children’s capabilities to manage life changes and transitions, even difficult ones.

In this study, our aim is to critically reassess this historical narrative by focusing on the role of children’s literature in providing guidance for families struggling with post-war adjustment. ‘Inkeri’ was a story targeted at girls, and especially those children who were returning from Sweden where they had in most cases been living for years (Figure 1).

In August 1947, when Konttinen’s book was published, there were nearly 6400 child evacuees still in Sweden, and repatriation was still ongoing.\(^{14}\) In our view, Konttinen’s book also connects to a larger body of post-war advisory literature, which was trying to alert readers to the possible problems of demobilisation. One of the target audiences was the wives of homecoming soldiers – generally those with caring responsibilities. As previous research has shown, this advisory literature took various forms – newspaper

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\(^{10}\)Kirsi Laurén and Antti Malinen, ‘Shame and Silences: Children’s Emotional Experiences of Insecurity and Violence in Post-War Finnish Families’, Social History 46 (2021) 193–220. Antti Malinen and Tuomo Tamminen, Jälleenrakentajien lapset (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2017); Kirsi-Maria Hytönen and Antti Malinen, ‘Cos I’m a Survivor’. Narratives of Coping and Resilience in Recollections of Difficult Childhood in Post-War Finland, Ethnologia Fennica 45 (2018): 55–78; Jenni Kirves, ‘Sotalasten siirretty lapsuus’, in Sodan kasvattamat, ed. Sari Näre, Jenni Kirves and Juha Siltala (Helsinki: WSOY, 2010), 91–121.

\(^{11}\)Mikko Myllykangas and Kariina Parhi, The Unjustified Emotions: Child Suicide in Finnish Psychiatry from the 1930s until the 1970s, Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth 9 (2016): 493–99. As Myllykangas and Parhi point out, contemporary child psychiatry also tended to see children as naturally joyful beings.

\(^{12}\)Pia Pannula Toft, Merja Paksumiemi and Johannes Westberg, The Challenge of Returning Home: The Role of School and Teachers in the Well-Being of Finnish War Children, Finnebarn, during and after World War II, Paedagogica Historica 54 (2018): 747. One might also argue that in harsh economic conditions families would prioritise physical safety over emotional well-being. Indeed, those parents (especially working mothers) who had decided to send their children to the affluence and neutrality of Sweden during the war had no doubt experienced hardship themselves in the 1930s. See also Paula Fass, The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2013), 12.

\(^{13}\)Karin Zetterqvist-Nelson, ‘War Children, Evacuations, and State Politics in Europe During WWII: A Local Case of Sick Finnish Children in Sweden’, in Conflict, Violence and Peace: Geographies of Children and Young People, vol. 11, ed. Christopher Harker, Kathrin Hörschelmann and Tracey Skelton (Singapore: Springer, 2017), 327–48.

\(^{14}\)Heikki Salminen, Lappu kaulassa yli Pohjanlahden. Suomalaisen sotalasten historia (Turku: Siirtolaisinstituutti, 2007), 238.
articles, advertisements, propaganda leaflets, films and books. Indicative of the gendered character of much of this literature, women in particular were cast in the role of caregiver, and were duly advised as to the responsibilities, attitudes and behaviour deemed appropriate for civilians.\footnote{Cf. Susan Hartmann, ‘Prescriptions for Penelope: Literature on Women’s Obligations to Returning World War II Veterans’, \textit{Women’s Studies} 5 (1978): 224.}

We analyse the book in the context of post-war advisory literature by paying special attention to what might be called its \textit{informal} educational content.\footnote{Stephanie Olsen, \textit{Juvenile Nation, Youth, Emotions and the Making of the Modern British Citizen 1880–1914} (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 2, 7–11.} We argue that ‘Inkeri’ gave informal lessons to families so they could cope better with the problems of being reunited after so many years, especially the challenge of homecoming children. The novel also clearly represents a certain genre of girls’ fiction – the classic story of an orphan girl\footnote{For more on classic girls’ fiction see: Joe Sutliff Sanders, \textit{Disciplining Girls: Understanding the Origins of the Classic Orphan Girl Story} (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011). See also Stephanie Olsen, ‘Dickon’s Trust’, in \textit{Learning How to Feel: Children’s Literature and Emotional Socialisation, 1870–1970}, ed. Ute Frevert et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 40–56.} – thus providing readers with a culturally meaningful way to reflect on their personal situation. In Finland, this genre rose to prominence in the early twentieth century with the popular novels of Anni Swan. As in these books, Konttinen describes the emotionally difficult process of adjustment, and the experiences of a child in painful conflict with new circumstances. Konttinen’s books were also compared to Johanna Spyri’s famous ‘Heidi’ novels (\textit{Heidis Lehr- und Wanderjahre}, 1880; \textit{Heidi kann brauchen, was es gelernt hat}, 1881\footnote{The ‘Heidi’ novels by the Swiss author Johanna Spyri (1827–1901) have a canonical status in girls’ fiction and have been translated into many languages; they were also well known in Finland.}) in so far as they depicted children’s

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\caption{Finnish children evacuated to Sweden are coming home on 16 August 1945. Finnish Heritage Agency. Journalistic Picture Archive JOKA.}
\end{figure}
emotions in a similarly powerful way. Spyri’s description of Heidi’s homesickness, for instance, is clearly recognisable in ‘Inkeri’ too. By addressing current and realistic topics, Konttinen not only renewed interest in classic girls’ fiction but also made her stories relevant and easy to digest.

On a general level, Kirs t i Comes Back is a story about how a crisis befalls a Finnish family, and how they overcome it by restoring lost emotional connections in a healthy rural environment and through hard work. The healing power of work was perhaps the most important element in this culturally constructed and symbolically ordered narrative of ‘survival’ – a normative framework which highlighted the significance of Finland’s post-war transition from war to peace. But even though work is clearly a recurrent motif in Konttinen’s book, it manifests itself in a subtle manner; just as the traditional gender roles of her fictional characters are nevertheless nuanced by a comprehensive depiction of the everyday social realities of family life, in stark contrast to many of her contemporaries who instead usually followed an elitist top-down approach to advising their readers. She was not just providing women and other members of the family with ‘how to’ instructions, but also successfully capturing the range of difficulties which the reuniting families, both children and adults, experienced in real life.

Some of these subtle nuances illustrated how repatriated child evacuees in Finland had to cope with their emotionality in various social situations, highlighting both the gender and age-related differences in the emotional practices of family members. Konttinen’s writing is especially good at drawing attention to children’s non-verbal expression of emotions, and relates how non-verbal methods, such as working together, could reb uild emotional ties between family members. One particularly intriguing aspect of the novel is the depiction of Inkeri’s emotional journey, which starts with her homesickness and longing for the Swedish family left behind, passes through gradual healing, and finally to her empowerment. This journey, as a process of social healing, shows how the novel could serve as an informal means of education and guide for parents to better understand children’s emotional crises in the wider context (Figure 2).

These fictional descriptions of emotional experiences and practices were likely a big part of the reason behind the book’s success. Based on the letters of feedback that Konttinen received, it is clear that the book gave numerous readers the chance to understand some of what their own family members were experiencing, helping them to identify ways of coping that were most conducive to positive adaptation. Recent psychological research on the cognitive effects of reading suggest that, when novels do appeal, readers become immersed in the world presented to them and transported to new places populated with new people. In these narrative worlds, readers experience a simulated reality, but one that is convincing enough to stimulate real emotions in response to the conflicts and relationships of the fictional characters. These may then be transferable to the real world.

19Letter from Aili Konttinen to Ida Ritari, December 8, 1947. Archive of Aili Konttinen (1906–1969), Literature and Cultural History Collection, Finnish Literature Society (Helsinki).
20Heikkilä-Halttunen, Kuokkavieraista Oman talon haltijaksi, 383.
21Victor Nell, Lost in a Book: The Psychology of Reading for Pleasure (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).
22Raymond A. Mar, Keith Oatley and Jordan B. Peterson, ‘Exploring the Link between Reading Fiction and Empathy: Ruling out Individual Differences and Examining Outcomes’, Communications 34 (2009): 407–28; R. J. Gerrig, Experiencing Narrative Worlds (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).
23Keith Oatley, ‘A Taxonomy of the Emotions of Literary Response and a Theory of Identification in Fictional Narrative’, Poetics 23 (1994): 53–74.
and, as Mar et al. have also claimed, allow readers not only to maintain but also to improve social skills such as empathy and social understanding. Studied in light of these theories, Inkeri’s story reads as a fascinating small piece of ‘informal education’, which helped parents become more aware of their children’s emotional needs and mental states.

Children and families in turmoil

For many families the end of war did not mean a swift return to normal. In the summer of 1944, this was exacerbated by the need to evacuate Finnish Karelia as the Soviets advanced – leading to a further breaking up of families. When hostilities with the USSR

\[24\] Mar, Oatley and Peterson, ‘Exploring the Link between Reading Fiction’; cf. Vera Nünning, ‘The Affective Value of Fiction. Presenting and Evoking Emotions’, in Writing Emotions: Theoretical Concepts and Selected Case Studies in Literature, ed. Susanne Knaller, Sabine Schönfellner and Gudrun Tockner (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2017), 29–54.

\[25\] For more on the power of children’s books to instil empathy and identification, see Lynn Hunt, Inventing Human Rights: A History (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), 34; Olle Widhe, ‘Inventing Subjectivity and the Rights of the Child in Nineteenth-Century Nordic Children’s Literature’, in Nordic Childhoods 1700–1960: From Folk Beliefs to Pippi Longstocking, ed. Reidar Aasgaard, Marcia Bunge and Merethe Roos (New York and London: Ashgate, 2018), 279–80.
finally ended in September 1944 it was estimated that, in the space of the preceding
month, as many as 800,000 Finns (one-fifth of the whole population), had relocated and
were on the move. New opportunities certainly arose to bring families together, but long
wartime separations particularly affected those families where the men of the household
had served at the front. In new post-war circumstances family members might now be
living apart for many different reasons not directly related to the war, such as work or
housing availability, and the need to organise the care of children.

By the end of 1944 a substantial body of newspaper articles and literature was
being published regarding the problems of demobilisation, and the difficulties to expect
when readjusting to civilian and family life. Government actors and politicians took part in the social construction of family ideals, in which women played
an important role as caregivers. Many historians have highlighted the gendered
nature of such advice.26 Wives and significant others were commonly informed
that returning men had been living in isolated, strange realities, which would have
a profound effect on each of them.27 Soldiers had experienced unexpected shocks
that were too difficult for outsiders to imagine.28 One journalist interviewed
demobbed men and concluded that most of them were particularly afraid that
nobody at home would understand that they were ‘changed men, changed by the
war’.29 Women were advised to be tolerant, understanding and to subordinate their
own wishes to those of the returning servicemen. It was a wife’s duty to create a safe
atmosphere, in which men could share their stories if so inclined.30 Similar obligations
were imposed on women as mothers.

Post-war guidance was thus urging women to transform their homes into a safe
environment conducive to mutual understanding and the sharing of feelings. As these
demands were quite new and possibly often difficult to implement, it is surely no
coincidence that the Finnish Lutheran Church began to organise marital counselling
services for the first time after the war.31 For a variety of reasons, many people had
difficulties translating their wartime experiences into something they could share with
the rest of their families. This not only applied to demobbed soldiers, as many Finnish
children had also experienced a multitude of losses in wartime. There were around
a million children under the age of 15 at the end of the war in Finland, and roughly
a quarter of them were either orphans, evacuees, refugees or a combination of these. Half
(125,000) of them were refugees from Karelia, about 70,000 had been evacuated abroad
(mainly to Sweden), and 30,000 had lost their fathers in the war.32 The situation was
particularly hard for those child evacuees who had also lost their native tongue while
away, which made it much harder to communicate.

26See Hartmann, ‘Prescriptions for Penelope’; cf. Rebecca Jo Plant, The Veteran, His Wife, and Their Mothers: Prescriptions
for Psychological Rehabilitation after World War II’, in Tales of the Great American Victory: World War II in Politics and
Poetics, ed. Dieterik Oostdijk and Markha Valenta (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2006), 95–105.
27Newspaper ilkka, October 15, 1944, Sanittu: ‘Mitä kuuluu?’ [How are you doing?].
28Kotiliesi Magazine 20 (1944): 588.
29Newspaper Suomen sosialidemokraatti, October 21, 1944, ‘Ymmärrättekö meitä kun me palaamme’ [Will we be
understood when we return?].
30Kot Magazine 1 (1945).
31Antti Malinen, ‘Marriage Guidance, Women and the Problem(s) of Returning Soldiers in Finland, 1944–1946’,
Scandinavian Journal of History 43 (2018): 112–40.
32Eeva Riutamaa, Maan korvessa kulkevi. Evakkolasten kasvukokemusten tunnemuistot ja hyvinvointi, Annales Universitatis
Turkuensis C: 424 (Turku: University of Turku, 2016), 13.
This was readily visible in Vihti, the small town in Southern Finland where Aili Konttinen worked as a primary school teacher, and where up to 10% of the local population were Karelian evacuees.\textsuperscript{33} Observing these local families and children up close and being well aware of their everyday challenges as their teacher, she received plenty of real-life material with which she could elaborate on their various situations. In fact, Konttinen also collaborated directly with the children while writing her novels. She read parts of her manuscript out to her students, listened eagerly to their comments and made revisions based on their feedback, in a similar way to Enid Blyton (Figure 3).\textsuperscript{34}

As well as writing about the problems of children returning to their biological families in Finland after years spent abroad, she also covered the plight of the displaced Karelian families in her fiction.\textsuperscript{35} Because families were often forced to move in wartime, children changing schools could result in problems of adjustment and weak results, but parents did not always make this connection.\textsuperscript{36} as children (especially younger ones) were generally considered to be highly adaptable. Furthermore, this was not the first time in history that children had been transferred to escape warfare, poverty and hunger.\textsuperscript{37} Just after the Finnish Civil War (1918), for instance, there had been a social welfare operation to transfer the fatherless children of ‘red’ families to ‘white’ homes in agrarian areas where foodstuffs were more readily available.\textsuperscript{38} It was also fairly common at this time to send one’s children away to a summer camp or to stay with a relative – indeed it was often seen as necessary for their physical well-being. Aili Konttinen received praise precisely because she managed to convey children’s perspectives on adjusting to such new environments so well in her novels.

Moving children across borders for various humanitarian, political, ideological or social reasons was thus already quite common in Europe before the Second World War,\textsuperscript{40} but the evacuation of children in the Nordic countries had certain peculiarities – for instance, well over half of those moved came from poor working-class families and the majority of them usually ended up in middle- or upper-class Swedish foster families in the countryside.\textsuperscript{41} As

\textsuperscript{33}Pasi Saarimäki, 2021, Tuliko meistä karjalaisista vihtiläisiä? Evakkokertomuksia uudelta kotiseudulta (Vihti: Vihdin Karjalaaseura, 2021).

\textsuperscript{34} Eero Kiviranta, ‘Eero Kiviranta käy tapaamassa Aili Konttista – ammattimaista nuorisoromaanikilpailujen voittajaa’, Nuori Voima 8–9 (1948): 6–7; Heikillä-Halttunen, Kuokkavieraista Oman talon haltijaksi, 382.

\textsuperscript{35} Aili Konttinen, Marketan seitsemäs koulu (Helsinki: WSOY, 1948); Aili Konttinen, Iloinen, surullinen hyvä kesä (Helsinki: Valistus, 1946); Aili Konttinen, Suupellon väki sodan jälkeen (Porvoo: WSOY, 1941).

\textsuperscript{36} Mervi Kaarinen, ‘Jätimme kotimme ja astuimme junaan. Kahden kouluutön kirjeenvaihdo 1942–1945’, in Kirjetä sodasta. Kirjoittamisen tavat ja merkitykset kriisiaikoina, ed. Marko Tikka, Ilari Taskinen ja Seija-Leena Nevala-Nurmi (Tampere: Tampereen Historiallisen Seuran julkaisuja XVIII, 2015), 188–99.

\textsuperscript{37} The First World War and its aftermath saw tens of thousands of children transferred from Central Europe to safer areas in Europe (such as Denmark and Sweden). See, for example, Monika Janfelt, Stormakten i människokårleken. Svens och dansk krigs-barnshjälp (Åbo: Åbo Akademi förlag, 1998); Andrew Donson, Youth in the Fatherless Land: War Pedagogy, Nationalism, and Authority in Germany, 1914–1919 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 170–2.

\textsuperscript{38} Mervi Kaarinen, ‘Red Orphans’ Fatherland: Children in the Civil War of 1918 and its Aftermath’, in Lived Nation as the History of Experiences and Emotions in Finland, 1800–2000, ed. Ville Kivimäki, Sami Suodenjoki ja Tanja Vahtikari, Palgrave Studies in the History of Experience (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2021), 172–3. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-69882-9_7.

\textsuperscript{39} Heikillä-Halttunen, Kuokkavieraista Oman talon haltijaksi.

\textsuperscript{40} Ann Nehlin, ‘Building Bridges of Trust: Child Transports from Finland to Sweden during the Second World War’, War & Society (2017): 134–136, 134–6. For a dramatic example of a large-scale transfer of children taking place before the twentieth century, see Geoffrey Sherwood and Chris Jeffery, Fairbridge: Empire and Child Migration (London: Woburn Press, 1998).

\textsuperscript{41} Margit Jalo, ’Tilastoa lastensiirroista Ruotsiin vuosina 1941–1946’, Sosiaalinen Aikakauskirja 30 (1950): 111; Paul Epäillys, Fosterförhördrag. En studie av de finska krigsbarnens svenska fosterförhördrag 1939–1947 (Göteborg: Göteborgs Universitet). See also Johanna Sköld and Ingrid Söderlund, ’Finska barn i svenska hem. Om mobiliseringen av familjer att ta emot främmande barn under andra världskriget’, Scandia 82 (2016): 35–65.
a consequence, many children had experienced quite a different way of life during the war, in many cases receiving lots of positive attention before they were repatriated to live with families they quite often no longer knew. There were also some Finnish families who, even after the end of hostilities, actually wanted their offspring to stay in Sweden – at least until the general economic conditions improved⁴² – and although the post-war Finnish government declared that all healthy children sent to Sweden during the war should be promptly returned to Finland, many children would indeed not travel back until much later.

The evacuation to Sweden and return to Finland meant a double rupture for each child – first from their biological parents, and then from foster parents to whom they had very likely become attached. As a consequence, they were exposed to an unusually wide spectrum of feelings such as grief, sadness and longing that differed in intensity and duration. As such, child psychologists and other experts were concerned that these homecoming children might have trouble with ‘rather drastic changes in their

⁴²This becomes abundantly clear from the high volume of letters that parents sent to the so-called Child Evacuation Committee after the war: Kansallisarkisto (Finnish National Archives), Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriön lastensiirtokomitean arkisto. Saapuneet kirjeet 1945–1948 L4 Ea:37.
environment’. By raising these concerns, they encouraged parents (especially mothers) to think about the children’s return in advance and prepare for an emotional rollercoaster. Parents were going to need information about their children’s emotional lives and how best to react, so as to eventually win the child over so they would feel at home once again. All this, however, would require a lot of love, understanding and patience.

A pervasive theme in recent studies and oral histories of post-war childhood is that children were often left alone to cope with their experiences and feelings of distress. These studies suggest there was some kind of tacit agreement not to bring up the difficult experiences they had gone through. This notion would also seem to apply in our case of repatriated children, as a typical Finnish family of the 1940s was most likely not very well equipped to talk openly about difficult experiences and feelings. Indeed, the distinguished pedagogue Martti Hela pointed out in 1948 that it was a ‘great tragedy’ that Finnish children at that time were often having to deal with ‘even the most dangerous and sensitive problems by themselves, without any support or empathy’.

However, by using the figure of the ‘war child’ as a kind of lens, Konttinen was able to train light on some of the more difficult silences. Through the narrative method of presenting the same family encounters from different perspectives (usually mother and daughter) she allowed the reader to see the same situation from several and often contradictory standpoints – most importantly, this technique made it easier for the reader to reflect on the perspective of the child. We will next look at how Konttinen portrayed Inkeri’s non-verbal communication of feelings, then turn to how she portrayed the mother’s perspective.

Children’s non-verbal communication of feelings

At the beginning of the book Inkeri is in Sweden, happily oblivious to the austerity of wartime Finland. She is living in an elegant home with her foster parents – a wealthy couple who have their own servant and chauffeur. When Inkeri returns to her home in Finland, a fairly small farm, she and her biological family are equally unprepared for the demanding changes this heralds and several tensions arise. Inkeri is afraid she will never see her Swedish foster parents again, while her Finnish mother, who has been missing her daughter for a long time, is afraid she may have lost Inkeri. Their first crisis occurs at the airport when the mother is shocked and upset by the fact that her little daughter does not

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43 Sylvi Melander, ‘Naapurimaastamme kotiutettujen lasten kouluongelmia’, in Lastensuojelun vuosikirja, ed. Viljo Rantasalo (Helsinki: Suomen lastensuojelun ja nuorisohuollon keskusliitto, 1945), 47.
44 Margit Borg-Sundman, ‘Eräitä tutkimuksen tuloksia suomalaisen lasten ulkomaille suuntautuvasta adoptoimisesta’, Huoltaja 5 (1947): 90–1.
45 Elsa Pipping, ‘Lasten palauttamiseen liittyvät kasvatukseelliset probleemiat’, in Lastensuojelun vuosikirja 1945, ed. Viljo Rantasalo (Helsinki: Suomen lastensuojelun ja nuorisohuollon keskusliitto, 1945), 42–3.
46 Malinen and Tamminen, Jälleenrakentajien lapset; Hytönen and Malinen, ‘Cos I’m a Survivor’, 55–78.
47 See, for example Janne Haikari, Latu auki elämää. Sippolan kouluoksien historia 1909–2009 (Kouvola: Sippolan kouluotki 2009), 101; Kaisa Vehkalahti, ‘Se virallinen tarina? Lastensuojeluratkaisujen ilmiöitä’, in Salattu, hävety, vaiettu. Miten tutkia piilossa olevia ilmiöitä, ed. Antti Hääkinen and Mikko Salasuo (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2015), 234.
48 Martti Hela, ‘Kansakoulu luonteenkasvatuskouluana’, in Kansakoulun työtapoja I. Yleistä ja alkuopetus, ed. Kaarlo Saarialho et al. (Helsinki: WSOY 1948), 36–44.
recognise her biological parents and clearly sees them as strangers. Indeed, for her part, Inkeri is equally shocked at meeting her parents because she has no memory of them at all.

Konttinen describes Inkeri’s emotions during her first weeks back in Finland as being those of pain, uncertainty, longing and fear. The grief Inkeri experiences over the loss of her foster parents and her ‘real’ home in Sweden takes on a concrete and physical form when Konttinen, for example, describes her struggling to make sense of the out-of-place furniture and where everything is supposed to be in her new but previous home. Konttinen also describes these feelings in sensory terms: Inkeri finds the siblings she had forgotten not only smell strange, but their loud squabbling and fighting upset her too, as she is now so used to being an only child in Sweden. Konttinen gives clear cues to the reader that Inkeri experiences disruptions and loss related not only to people she has left behind in Sweden, but also to the place itself. Interestingly, this fracturing of a sense of spatial belonging is strongly present in Finnish war children’s own autobiographical oral accounts of their displacement, too. As Anna-Kaisa Kuusisto-Arponen has shown, these include not only vivid memories of places, smells and sounds, but also a peculiar sense of placelessness.

Vallgårda et al. have pointed out that when a child moves from one developmental context to another, they will also need to cross emotional frontiers. Homes, schools, child welfare institutions and peer cultures all form specific emotional environments in which children are expected (and indeed trained) to behave in certain ways, expressing and enacting their emotions according to prevailing rules and norms. Konttinen emphasises in the book that Inkeri’s siblings – especially her brothers – are confused by Inkeri’s appearance and manners and give her the nickname ‘the Swedish princess’. Inkeri has regular nightmares in her first weeks back that wake her up screaming and crying, and when her brothers react to this by calling her a cry-baby, it clearly shows they consider crying and screaming to be inappropriate behaviour. Ilona Kemppainen has shown how keeping up a ‘cheery’ appearance and locking away negative feelings was a cultural norm at this time – especially among Finnish boys – and these expectations became even stronger during wartime, when they often had to become the ‘man of the house’ if their father had died. In comparison, Inkeri’s sisters are portrayed as being more understanding of her needs and sensitive to her emotional troubles, reinforcing the idea that sensitivity and emotional awareness were naturally feminine attributes.

49 Alli Konttinen, Inkeri palasi Ruotsista (Helsinki: WSOY, 1947), 35.
50 Anna-Kaisa Kuusisto-Arponen, ‘Self, Place, and Memory: Spatial Trauma among British and Finnish War Children’, in Harker et al., Conflict, Violence and Peace, 307–26. See also Pirjo Korkiakangas, ‘Kaksi kotia ja kaksi kotimaata – suomalaisen lasten kokemuksia sotalapsuudesta Ruotsissa’, in Rajaamatta. Etnologisia keskusteluja, ed. Hanneleena Hietta et al. (Helsinki: Ethnos, 2017), 150–83. Arponen-Kuusisto, in particular, uses the concept of ‘spatial trauma’ and she argues that wartime evacuees tend to be affected by ‘ties and practices of belonging’ later in life as well.
51 Karen Vallgårda, Kristine Alexander and Stephanie Olsen, Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood, in Childhood, Youth and Emotions in Modern History: National, Colonial and Global Perspectives, ed. Stephanie Olsen (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 23–34.
52 Ilona Kemppainen, ‘Isänmaan toivot – käsityksiä lapsista ja vanhemmista sotavuosien Suomessa’, Historiallinen Aikakauskirja 104 (2006): 165, 168; Laine-Frigren, ‘Children on the Move’, 96–7. See also Myllykangas and Parhi, ‘The Unjustified Emotions’, 493–4.
Trauma psychologists have analysed the unique ways in which children and adolescents deal with violent and emotionally challenging situations. The age of an individual has an effect on how experiences can be managed, and feelings articulated, while each developmental stage offers both protective self-healing processes and vulnerabilities. Konttinen, in turn, chose to portray Inkeri as a child who had forgotten her mother tongue, which puts even greater emphasis on her non-verbal expression of emotions – not just via facial expressions but also in her actions. Inkeri is homesick for Sweden, and by keeping her facial expression sad at all times she is trying to get her Finnish family to understand how much she misses the home she left behind. She also tries to communicate this by getting dressed slowly in the mornings and by eating reluctantly, so that she begins to turn into ‘a white ghost.’ By drawing the reader’s attention to these overwhelming physical manifestations of Inkeri’s loneliness, the author is clearly hoping that parents reading the book will make an effort to learn more about their children’s feelings. In fact, the emphasis on Inkeri’s vulnerability differs quite drastically from typical portrayals of returning child evacuees in Finnish newspapers at the time. Although articles might acknowledge that some children experienced grief and missed their Swedish ‘mamas’ and ‘papas’, most went on to stress how children would rapidly overcome these feelings and reconnect with their Finnish families. For example, when the columnist ‘Mikki’ interviewed war children and their family members in November 1946, he reported how six-year-old Eero (after two years and three months in Sweden) was quite upset for the first three days, but then, once the crying stopped, he was actually able to play quite happily with his little sister (Figure 4).

However, Konttinen is keen to show that Inkeri is not just a vulnerable victim but also has some agency – even if this consists of clinging on to the photo of her foster parents or holding letters they have sent close to her chest. These objects comfort her as they provide her with a memory of the material presence of the mother. In one such letter, Inkeri even catches a whiff of her foster mother’s perfume. Inkeri also finds solace in her family’s newly born foal – the novel shows how, by taking care of the young horse and developing a relationship with it, she is able to gain better control of her emotions. This resonates with existing research on post-war childhood, which shows how a relationship with animals (both pets and farm animals) could provide much-needed moments of acceptance and attachment, especially for children without supportive family relationships or who were missing their families. Irene Virtala has analysed autobiographical and fictional stories about Finnish child evacuees and found that many would find solace in an endless

53Kirsii Peltonen, Children and Violence: Nature, Consequences and Interventions (PhD diss., University of Tampere, 2011), 14; Raija-Leena Punamäki, ‘The Uninvited Guest of War Enters Childhood: Developmental and Personality Aspects of War and Military Violence’, Traumatology 8 (2002): 181–204. See also Kaarninen, ‘Red Orphans Fatherland’, 169.
54Konttinen, Marketan seitsemäs koulu, 74.
55Etelä-Suomen Sanomat, October 20, 1946.
56Cf. Dorothy Burlingham and Anna Freud, Young Children in War-Time: A Year’s Work in a Residential War Nursery (London: Allen & Unwin, 1942), 51–2.
57Konttinen, Inkeri palasi Ruotsista, 108.
58See also Ulf Boethius, ‘Hemma längtar jag bort, borta längtar jag hem.’ Andra världskrigets finska krigsbarn i svensk barn- och ungdomslitteratur’, Barnboken 33 (2010): 26.
59Hytönen and Malinen, ‘Cos I’m a Survivor’.
variety of other transitional objects too – these could be dolls, scraps of paper, a piece of wood or magazines in Finnish. Some might even make a secret den to represent the home they had left behind.\textsuperscript{60}

**Mother as an understanding and resourceful character**

Earlier studies of Finnish children evacuated during the war have argued that Finnish psychiatrists were less inclined to believe that separation from a caregiver would cause permanent psychological damage – at least in ‘normally’ developed children\textsuperscript{61} – as children were thought to be more adaptable than adults.\textsuperscript{62} Nevertheless, authorities and professionals were expecting there to be some friction when families were reunited after the war. For example, a renowned Finnish psychologist Arvo Lehtovaara (1905–1985) was suggesting as early as 1942 that home was the most important arena for child development and that five-year-olds and above might suffer painful homesickness when separated from it.\textsuperscript{63} Emotional difficulties were also being anticipated and discussed in the popular press as well.\textsuperscript{64} A special ‘Committee for the Aftercare of Children Returned from Sweden’ was established in 1948 to deal with the various problems of homecoming

\textsuperscript{60}Irene Virtala, ‘Tystnaden talar. Om finländska krigsbarn i skönlitteraturen’, Web Reports No. 5 (Turku: Migrationinstitutet, 2004), 83.
\textsuperscript{61}Laine-Frigren, ‘Children on the Move’, 92 2019, 92.
\textsuperscript{62}Borg-Sundman, ‘Eräitä tutkimuksen tuloksia’, 87 1947, 87.
\textsuperscript{63}Arvo Lehtovaara, ‘Kasvavien sosiaalisesta kehityksestä’, Kasvatus ja koulu 2 (1942): 41–9. See also Einar Böök, ‘Lasten siirtäminen Ruotsin hoidettaviksi’, Huoltaja 30 (1942): 55.
\textsuperscript{64}See Eila Jokela, ‘Pienten lähettiläiden kotiuduttua’, Kotiliesi 21 (1945): 554.
children, and although it seemed to have been mostly focused on ensuring the material well-being of the children’s biological families, the authorities did acknowledge that some children might have problems, even if they were convinced that most would successfully readjust. Psychiatrist Martti Kaila, for instance, argued that even if separation from the beloved social environment (in Sweden) caused ‘psychological disturbances’, these would not last long or influence the later development of the child, as long as the home was well organised and suitable.\(^\text{65}\) Kaila’s optimistic evaluation was clearly influenced by the above-mentioned prevailing notions regarding the plasticity of children’s emotional well-being, which it was believed would allow them to withstand negative feelings and emotions.\(^\text{66}\)

According to ideals held at this time, women in particular were asked to facilitate communication between family members and empathise with their feelings and experiences, as common belief deemed them biologically more suited to taking care of the family’s emotional well-being.\(^\text{67}\) In Inkeri palasi Ruotsista, too, the biological mother is clearly portrayed as the emotional nexus of the home; whereas she comes across as very patient, understanding, and concerned about Inkeri and her emotional troubles, the father is portrayed as a man convinced that Inkeri will soon enough adapt to life in her new home, and that the mother should not worry so much.

‘Oh dear, oh dear’, Mother said to Father, ‘the child isn’t eating. Most children are always so hungry at this time in the morning. What on earth am I to do with her?’ Father answered for the umpteenth time with the same words: ‘Leave her alone, she’ll get used to it.’

‘If she doesn’t starve first’, said mother, her voice tearful again.

‘Oh forget it, woman. Nobody’s going to starve when there is plenty of good food on the table for them when they want it. She’s just got to get used to it; that makes all the difference with children.’\(^\text{68}\)

Inkeri’s mother does not appreciate her husband’s attitude but keeps her thoughts to herself. To her, he seems unable to understand the ‘soul of the child, or whatever it might be’.\(^\text{69}\) This reference to Inkeri’s soul or psyche indicates that the mother is interested in the inner workings of Inkeri’s mind, and her ability to empathise like this is seen to be the natural attribute of a mother who has brought up five children (Figure 5).

During the 1930s, a growing interest in the way Finnish children’s minds worked prompted child psychologists and psychiatrists to investigate the relationship between environmental stress factors and children’s psychological health.\(^\text{70}\) Yet it took some time for these new ideas to filter into the daily practices of parenting. Indeed, Konttinen makes

\(^{65}\) Lastenkotiuttamiskomitean mietintö 1949 B:18 (psykiatri Martti Kailan lausunto), Liite 1, 1.

\(^{66}\) Myllykangas and Parhi, ‘The Unjustified Emotions’, 493–9. As the authors argue, the meaning and significance of emotions changed gradually during the post-war decades. Whereas in the 1940s emotionality was still considered closer to nineteenth-century ideas of ‘passions’ that needed to be ‘tamed’, from the 1960s onwards emotions came to be seen as important expressions of the self and its relation to society – children’s depression became articulated as a living reality.

\(^{67}\) See Arja-Liisa Räisänen, Onnellisen avoiliton ehdot (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1995).

\(^{68}\) Aili Konttinen, Kirsti Comes Home: The Story of a Finnish Girl, trans. Oliver Coburn and Ursula Lehrburger (London: Methuen, 1961), 43–4.

\(^{69}\) Konttinen, Inkeri palasi Ruotsista, 49.

\(^{70}\) See, for example Margit Borg, ‘Lapsipsykiaatrisesta huoltotyöstä’, Yhteiskunnallispsykiatrinen aikakauslehti Sielun Terveys 1 (1939) passim.
it quite clear to the reader that the empathy Inkeri’s mother shows for her was not gleaned from reading books,\textsuperscript{71} as she has many other obligations and a considerable workload every day:

Never in her life had Kirsti [Inkeri] seen anybody with so much work to do as Mother, and so much in a hurry all the time . . . Mother’s day started at sunrise – no, even earlier, for the room was still half dark when she got up, careful to make as little noise as possible. Kirsti had already found out that she spent a lot of time in the shed and the stable. Obviously the cows and horses were just as important to Mother as her own children and her house, perhaps even more so. . . \textsuperscript{72}

All the family members work hard, and the father sees this as being the best solution for Inkeri’s homesickness as well. He asks his wife to give Inkeri ‘some work to do, just like the others’.\textsuperscript{73} Konttinen’s portrayal of (hard) work – seen perhaps as a means of regaining psychological strength – affirms the wider cultural ideals of post-war reconstruction that prevailed in Finland directly after the war. Research has previously pointed out that in post-war Finland state actors promoted a culture of resilience and self-restraint, and citizens, including children, were encouraged to put aside their personal baggage (from both the past and present).\textsuperscript{74} This advice could be construed as an attempt to lay down ‘rules about feelings’ – imposing expectations on people’s internal states and regarding what they should feel in the face of adversity. However, the recurring motif of work throughout the book does suggest that Konttinen may

\textsuperscript{71}Konttinen, Inkeri palasi Ruotsista, 48.
\textsuperscript{72}Konttinen, Kirsti Comes Home, 40.
\textsuperscript{73}Konttinen, Marketan seitsemäs koulu, 48.
\textsuperscript{74}Ville Kivimäki and Kirsi-Maria Hytönen, eds., Rauhaton rauha. Suomalaiset ja sodan päättyminen 1944–1945 (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2015).
indeed also want it to be seen as having some ‘therapeutic’ value, i.e. in helping the family to rebuild broken emotional ties. Keeping in mind that nature, outdoor activities and rural environments had also already been given therapeutic meanings in the Finnish medical discourse for decades, it does not seem so far-fetched to think that she might also have considered the role of work in this context – as a kind of culturally meaningful way to mentally readjust.\textsuperscript{75}

In the reality of post-war Finland, however, families tried to cope with the everyday challenges of being reunited in many different ways. Very often parents were preoccupied with work, making ends meet and their own war-related psychological problems, which may certainly have increased the risk of unresponsive parenting. In some cases, children’s caregivers discouraged them from expressing pain, sadness and anger in their presence.\textsuperscript{76} As Eila Kostamo recalled, her ‘days of sweet bread [in Sweden] were over’ and she now had to ‘earn’ her parents’ approval by being a good Finnish girl. She also had to face a new way of emotionally relating to children: ‘the aim of . . . upbringing was to toughen, to build resilience. But of course, they did what they thought was best. Parents also wanted their kids to survive adulthood.’\textsuperscript{77}

\section*{Conclusion}

Aili Konttinen published \textit{Inkeri palasi Ruotsista} in 1947, at a time when Finnish children were still being repatriated from Sweden. In this article we have suggested that by means of her book – belonging to the culturally recognisable genre of ‘girls’ fiction’ – Konttinen took part in the larger cultural production of advisory literature intended to acknowledge the problems that families reunited after a war spent apart were likely to face. As a primary school teacher, she was well aware of the very real plight facing many children in post-war Finland; indeed, it was probably due to this experience that she was able to capture the range of difficulties experienced by the children’s families reunited after demobilisation.

In the official advisory literature of the time, women in particular were expected to be the caregivers primarily responsible for the well-being of their children, but any more detailed advice as to how to actually care for their war children was often scarce. In a time when child psychology was not yet being widely discussed and psychology-based institutions of child welfare (e.g. the network of child guidance centres) were still in their infancy, there was now clearly a need for Finnish families to have access to tools for helping them deal with the problems of repatriation. Against this backdrop, it is interesting that Konttinen chose to pay special attention to children’s non-verbal expression of emotions. By exploring these physical and bodily manifestations of the emotions that war children were going through, Konttinen provided parents with cues as to how their children might react after returning to Finland and clearly reassured many that they were not alone in their struggles. Not having the verbal tools to express what they were

\textsuperscript{75}On the role of work therapy in Finnish psychiatric institutions, see Anu Rissanen, ‘Treatment and Rehabilitation: Patients at Work in Finnish Mental Institutions’, in \textit{Encountering Crises of the Mind: Madness, Culture and Society}, 1200s–1900s, ed. Tuomas Laine-Frigren, Jari Ellola and Markku Hokkanen (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 196–221.

\textsuperscript{76}Malinen and Tamminen, \textit{Jälleenrakentajien lapset}; Hytönen and Malinen, ‘Cos I’m a Survivor’.

\textsuperscript{77}Kostamo, ‘Skånen lumo’, 226.
experiencing was an acute problem, especially among those children who had been evacuated to Sweden at a very young age and had clearly forgotten their native tongue (Figure 6).

Konttinen also provided solutions for bringing family members back together after their long separation. Work, in particular, is portrayed as an activity that simply allows family members to spend time together in a natural and productive way, even if they cannot communicate very well. In her personal life, Konttinen cherished living in the countryside and appreciated farming as a source of livelihood. Indeed, it is easy to spot a certain romanticised view of rural life in Inkeri’s story; yet this does not detract from the fact that, by gradually taking part in the daily chores of farm life, Inkeri manages to gain her rightful status as a fully respected member of the family and by the end of the book is finally ‘cured’ of her homesickness. In this respect, the story reflects the wider post-war narrative in Finland of reconstruction and resettlement.

The case of Aili Konttinen suggests that contexts other than a strictly professional therapeutic relationship and discourse might have been more crucial for children’s post-war readjustment than previously assumed. To focus only on the role of medical professionals or psychology experts would be to ignore the important roles that so many others occupied in helping children readjust, such as teachers, civil society activists, families,

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78 The encounters between local teachers and the returning children (and children in general) deserve more attention from the historians of post-war Finland. In war children’s own reminiscences, the teachers are often bestowed with an important role (either good or bad). See, for example Pannula Toff, Paksunumi and Westberg, ‘The Challenge of Returning Home’. For other parts of Europe, see Beata Halicka, ‘The Everyday Life of Children in Polish-German Borderlands during the Early Postwar Period’, in Borderland Studies Meets Child Studies: A European Encounter, ed. Machteld Venken (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2017), 115–32; Machteld Venken and Maren Röger, ‘Growing Up in the Shadow of the Second World War: European Perspectives’, European Review of History: Revue européenne d’histoire 22, no. 2 (2015); Tuomas Laine-Frigren, ‘Traumatized Children in Hungary after World War II’, in Trauma, Experience and Narrative in Europe During and After World War II, ed. Ville Kivimäki and Peter Leese (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2021), 149–76.
children’s own communities and writers of fiction. *Inkeri palasi Ruotsista* is a particularly fascinating novel in this sense, and can be studied from many different yet pleasingly interrelated perspectives. For instance, as an example of girls’ fiction, where loneliness, sadness and homesickness are recurring themes, it allows us to study, as Juliane Brauer has pointed out, the protagonist’s processes of empowerment in overcoming these challenges.\(^{79}\) Interestingly enough, this process is clearly identifiable also in the second book in the ‘Inkeri’ series, which describes Inkeri’s summer holiday in Sweden. In the book, Inkeri and her Swedish foster mother have the following discussion:

- Will you at all miss Mummy and Daddy and Nygård? Asked Mummy.

- Oh, such pointless, tiresome adults’ questions! Why should a human being always be missing someone in a world where there is so much hustle and bustle and joy? In Nygård missing her old home at Matinoja, and in Matinoja missing Nygård – missing Mummy in Matinoja and missing Mother in Nygård, missing this and missing that – why keep thinking about that? Inkeri tried to be patient and to answer politely. Because of this same strange adult way of thinking, Mummy wouldn’t have liked it if Inkeri had answered her frankly that she would actually not miss her foster parents.\(^{80}\)

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\(^{79}\) Juliane Brauer, ‘Heidi’s Homesickness’, in *Learning How to Feel: Children’s Literature and Emotional Socialisation*, ed. Ute Frevert, Pascal Eitler, Stephanie Olsen et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

\(^{80}\) Aili Konttinen, *Inkerin kesä* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1950), 180–1.