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## Dreams and Themes in the texts of the “Reaalifantasia” group: Unnatural Minds in Anne Leinonen’s *Viivamaalari* and J. Pekka Mäkelä’s *Muurahaispuu*

Minttu Ollikainen

*Abstract:* This article deals with the unnaturally functioning and frame-breaking dreams and the unnatural minds they are connected to in the novels *Viivamaalari* (2013) by Anne Leinonen and *Muurahaispuu* (2012) by J. Pekka Mäkelä. The dreams in the novels are discussed as examples of the poetics and thematics of Reaalifantasia, a young Finnish group of authors who in their writings combine fantasy elements with features of other genres. These minds and dreams as well as the ideologically charged themes they foreground are analyzed using the concepts and viewpoints of unnatural narratology.

*Keywords:* reaalifantasia, magical realism, unnatural narratology, dream, Anne Leinonen, J. Pekka Mäkelä.

*Biography:* Minttu Ollikainen is a doctoral student at the University of Jyväskylä. She studies the fiction of the Finnish group of writers, who label their texts as “reaalifantasia”.

During the past decade, fantasy and science fiction elements have become more common in Finnish literature. For example, in year 2000 the Finlandia prize, the most esteemed literature prize in Finland, was awarded to a speculative novel about a man and a troll, *Ennen päivänlaskua ei voi* by Johanna Sinisalo.<sup>1</sup> In 2014 it was given to a novel that contains science fiction elements, *He eivät tiedä mitä tekevät* by Jussi Valtonen, and in 2015 to a novel about the limbo between life and death, *Oneiron* by Laura Lindstedt. The increase in the number of novels that combine fantasy and science fiction elements with prose that otherwise draws on the conventions of realism has spurred discussion on narrative techniques in the Finnish literary field (see Hirsjärvi 169–170).

A relatively new group of writers, which call their texts “reaalifantasia”<sup>2</sup> participates in this discussion (see Jämsén 1–2; Heikkinen 14–15). The group consists of four authors: Pasi Ilmari Jääskeläinen, Juha-Pekka Koskinen, Anne Leinonen and J. Pekka Mäkelä. Their so-called manifesto, “Reaalifantastikot ja reaalifantasia”, was published in Jääskeläinen’s blog<sup>3</sup> in 2006. It

<sup>1</sup> Translated to English as *Not before sundown* in 2003 and *Troll* in 2006.

<sup>2</sup> In this article, I refer to the texts of this group of writers as “reaalifantasia” and to the group itself as “Reaalifantasia”.

<sup>3</sup> The manifesto, “Reaalifantastikot ja reaalifantasia”, was originally published in Pasi Jääskeläinen’s blog, *Jäniksenselkäläisen Kirjallisuuden seura*, which has since been taken down. A summary of the manifesto and of other Jääskeläinen’s blog texts about reaalifantasia can be found, in Finnish, in Hanna Matilainen’s book, *Mitä kummaa* (30–34).

stated that the members of the group wish to foster a new way of writing that mixes features of different genres and combines fantasy elements with storyworlds that resemble the world their readers encounter daily (Jääskeläinen, "Reaalifantastikot ja reaalifantasia"). According to the manifesto, the term "reaalifantasia" consists of two words, the first of which refers to reality and the way fiction depicts it while the second one refers to fantasy and the different ways fiction can alter the depiction of reality (Jääskeläinen, "Reaalifantastikot ja reaalifantasia"). In this article, I use the original Finnish term of "reaalifantasia", since any combination of words such as "real" or "reality" and "fantasy" would fail to convey the same tone and meaning contained in the original neologism. By sticking to the Finnish term, I also want to highlight the nature of reaalifantasia as a particularly Finnish phenomenon in the field of Finnish speculative fiction, although it is also connected to more global phenomena such as magical realism (see Jääskeläinen, "Reaalifantastikot ja reaalifantasia"). Namely, I will use it to refer to the texts written by this specific group of writers who themselves describe their texts as reaalifantasia.

The way of writing described in the reaalifantasia manifesto – the mixing of fantasy elements with features of other genres – creates storyworlds that appear quite unstable. (Jämsén 65, 71, 75; Heikkinen 87; Ollikainen 132–134). It is hard to tell whether the strange things that occur are real or belong to a dream (see Jämsén; 4–5, 65, 75; Ollikainen 132–134). Here I will focus on dreams and the minds of their dreamers as examples of fantasy elements that cause this kind of instability. The way I see it, dreams are one of the most easily distinguishable example of the way the commonplace, the natural, the conventional, and the real are combined with fantasy, the unnatural, estranging, and the unreal in the poetics of reaalifantasia. In the actual world, human beings dream every night. Even though the contents of these dreams may be pure fantasy, there is nothing strange in the act of dreaming. But something strange must take place in the storyworld for the events of a fictitious dream to invade the world outside the dream.

In my master's thesis (2016), *Fiktio on jumalallinen uni* ("Fiction is a Divine Dream"), I analyzed the way dreams function as fantasy elements in Pasi Jääskeläinen's fiction and the way these elements foreground the themes of their frame stories. I argued that in the works of Jääskeläinen, dreams operate as metalepses (Ollikainen 116, 122). By transgressing the narrative levels, dreams also break the boundaries between the minds of different characters and affect the time structures and narrative spaces of the stories (131–132). In Jääskeläinen's texts, this foregrounds the themes of mind, time, space, and fictitiousness (134–136).

This article will focus on the effects dreams have on their dreamers, the characters, and their minds in two works of reaalifantasia, *Viivamaalari* (2013) by Anne Leinonen and *Muurahaispuu* (2012) by J. Pekka Mäkelä. In the debut novel of Jääskeläinen, *Lumikko ja yhdeksän muuta* (2006), for example, the inhabitants of a small village repeatedly dream of the wandering undead corpse of the mysteriously disappeared author Laura Lumikko (81, 162–163, 243, 269).<sup>4</sup> The shared dreams raise questions about the boundaries between individual minds (Ollikainen 51–66). These questions in turn are connected to Alan Palmer's views on social minds, the social interaction of human minds, and their presentation in fiction (12, 130–131). I wish to broaden the perspective found in my MA thesis and to show that this theme is also prevalent in the works of other authors of reaalifantasia.

In my analysis, I will utilize concepts introduced by researchers of unnatural narratology, a branch of narratology that studies the unnatural and impossible elements of narratives (see Alber et al. "What Really is" 104). The viewpoints of unnatural narratology help to illuminate and interpret the way dreams as well as other fantasy elements of reaalifantasia both break the rules of the frame stories' storyworlds and fail the readers' expectations that are based on their real world cognitive frames and scripts (see Alber et al. "What Really is" 104–108; Alber, "Impossible Storyworlds" 80–

<sup>4</sup> Translated to English as *The Rabbit Back Literature Society* in 2014.

81, 93–94). One of the key concepts here is Stefan Iversen's "unnatural mind", a strategy of urging readers to anticipate a literary character to have a human-like mind and then failing these expectations (Iversen 98; Alber et al. "Unnatural Narratives" 120). Additionally, I will discuss the relationship between the conventional and the estranging in texts that include fantasy elements.

The manifesto of reaalifantasia can itself be regarded as a value statement about the importance of appreciating the diversity of strategies found in fiction (see Heikkinen 13). The way of writing that the authors of reaalifantasia wish to promote affects the way different ideologies are represented in their narratives. The hypothesis of this article is that the fantasy elements of reaalifantasia novels work as techniques to foreground ideological themes. I suspect that the unstableness of the rules, concerning the boundaries of the minds of the characters, that govern the reaalifantasia storyworlds affects the interpretation of the ideological thematics depicted in the novels. In his book, *Unnatural Voices*, Brian Richardson has indicated how in some cases we-narration and the changes in narration can represent the "oscillation between isolated individualism and a more collective consciousness" (38). Instead of the narrative structures or strategies of the novels, such as the we-narration, my focus is on the characters and their minds in general. One of my main concerns is the way dreams in reaalifantasia foreground ideological themes surrounding the human conception of the individual mind and its relationship with other minds, or in other words, the relationship between individualism and collectivism.

## Reaalifantasia – the Poetics of Unnatural and Unstable Worlds

According to their manifesto, the members of Reaalifantasia want their texts to be considered as reaalifantasia instead of as representatives of a specific established genre (Jääskeläinen, "Reaalifantastikot ja reaalifantasia"). The authors wish to advance a genre-free approach to literature, in which all strategies found in fiction would be considered as equally valuable and could be used in any text (Jääskeläinen, "Reaalifantastikot ja reaalifantasia"). They believe that not all literature can or should be based on the very narrow reality construction of today (Jääskeläinen, "Reaalifantastikot ja reaalifantasia"). The aim therefore is to remind us that a fictive text is always a mixture of mimesis and fantasy (Jääskeläinen, "Reaalifantastikot ja reaalifantasia").

The idea of fiction being a mixture of mimesis and fantasy is not new (see Heikkinen 12). In 1984, Kathryn Hume stated in her book, *Fantasy and mimesis*, that there are two impulses in literature: one mimetic, the other fantastic (20). The idea that a text could be genre-free is also naïve. Nonetheless, the manifesto has a point: a book should be judged neither by its cover nor by its genre characteristics. Since the publication of the manifesto, there has been confusion about the essence of reaalifantasia (see Jämsén 2). As an approach that criticizes the power of genres, it demands not to be considered as either a genre or a sub-genre (Jämsén 75–77). The manifesto sees reaalifantasia as a western variation of magical realism with unique local qualities (Jääskeläinen, "Reaalifantastikot ja reaalifantasia"). Further study is required to assess reaalifantasia's place in the field of speculative fiction more accurately. It is, indeed, hard to draw strict lines between reaalifantasia and, say, magical realism and new weird, both of which share features with reaalifantasia (Jämsén 32–33, 71–83). Considering Reaalifantasia's critique of classifications, situating it and defining it thoroughly might defeat the purpose (see Jämsén 32–33, 71–83; Heikkinen 14–15). Reaalifantasia can nevertheless be taken to refer to texts by a group of writers who wish to forward a certain kind of poetics, which contains both elements of fantasy and realistic descriptions of the everyday world.

According to the definition Jämsén provides in her master's thesis, *Reaalifantasia fantastisen kirjallisuuden lajityyppinä* ("Reaalifantasia as a Fantasy Genre"), a reaalifantasia novel contains a storyworld that resembles the actual world of its prospective readers (81–83). This

storyworld includes at least one fantasy element that sets it apart from the actual world and therefore estranges the reader (81).<sup>5</sup> Jämsén points out that these fantasy elements also discomfort the characters who get in touch with them (44, 71). The fantasy elements render the laws of the storyworlds unstable and flickering (Jämsén 43–44, 71; Heikkinen 87). Both the characters and the readers of reaalifantasia can try to explain away these discomforting elements and sometimes they both stay unaware of whether the fantasy elements exist in the level of the storyworld or not (Jämsén 43–44, 71). I would like to highlight that the storyworlds found in reaalifantasia only resemble the actual world; their laws and structures may turn out to be very different from the first expectations of readers (see Ollikainen 132–134).

Whereas the manifesto and the project of Reaalifantasia can be seen as a value statement regarding the importance of the appreciation of the multiplicity of literature, so can the project of unnatural narratology. The researchers of unnatural narratology – for instance, Jan Alber, Stefan Iversen, Henrik Skov Nielsen, and Brian Richardson – wish to expand narratological categories to cover the entire spectrum of strategies that have been used in narratives throughout history (“What is Unnatural” 375, 380). These also include the strange, impossible, and estranging phenomena (Alber et al. “What Really is” 104). Unnatural narratology studies the way narratives differ from the frames that readers use to understand real-world phenomena (Alber et al. “Unnatural Narratives”, 115–116). It pays attention, for example, to the way minds of fictive characters and narrators can deviate from the parameters of the real world (Alber et al. “Unnatural Narratives” 115–116). In narratives, the minds of characters may, for instance, melt into one another (Richardson 12). The theorists of unnatural narratology often criticize the models that see fictive minds in terms of the way real-world knowledge considers real-world minds to function (Iversen 103–104; Alber et al. “Unnatural Narratives” 115–116, 120–124). As such, they disagree with the likes of Alan Palmer who insists that minds in fiction are to be read as if they were real-world minds (Iversen 103–104; see Alber et al. “Unnatural Narratives” 120–124; “Unnatural Voices, Minds”, 356–357). The researchers of unnatural narratology claim that these models should be broadened to meet, for example, the intrinsically fictive narrative minds (Alber et al. “Unnatural Narratives” 115–116, 120–124).

Theorists of unnatural narratology each have their own definition of the unnatural (Alber et al. Introduction 2–5). Jan Alber, for example, defines an unnatural element as something that is physically, logically, or humanly impossible and estranges readers (“Unnatural Narratology” 449; “Impossible Storyworlds” 80). According to Stefan Iversen, unnatural elements cause paradoxes between the rules of the storyworld and the actual events taking place in it (Alber et al. “What is Unnatural” 373). These paradoxes defy explanations (Alber et al. “What is Unnatural” 373). From this point of view, Gregor Samsa’s turning into a bug in Franz Kafka’s famous short story, “The Metamorphosis” (1915), is unnatural because the depicted mixture of the mind of a bug and the mind of a human seems to resist the rules of the storyworld (“What Really is” 102–103). According to Iversen, the mixture of minds in “The Metamorphosis” is one example of the way fictional minds can be unnatural (97). In Alber’s definition, this same metamorphosis would probably violate the physical and logical laws and the human limitations that belong to the readers’ real world frames, therefore making it unnatural and estranging. Here, I will rely on these two definitions of the unnatural, because the difference between them helps me to analyze the way minds in reaalifantasia can deviate both from the norms of the actual world and the norms of the storyworlds in which they belong.

Monika Fludernik has pointed out some of the possibilities unnatural narratology might have if it focused more on “the fabulous, magical, fantastic or supernatural” (“What is Unnatural”

<sup>5</sup> Jämsén analyzes only two novels in her master’s thesis, which raises the question whether her proposed definition is suitable for describing the poetics of reaalifantasia. However, I see it as accurate enough, regarding the subject matter of this article.

363–364; see also Petterson 77–81). Even though the researchers of unnatural narratology emphasize the unnatural as an intrinsic characteristic of all fiction and narratives, they tend to focus on postmodernist literature (see Marttinen 50). The interest is also often in finding unnatural elements hidden in realistic texts (see M. Mäkelä 142–143). Few of them are interested in the unnatural elements of fantasy or science fiction. When, for example, estrangement is mentioned in unnatural narratology, it is usually used in the Shklovskyan sense (Shklovsky 34) to refer to elements that distract and disconcert the reader (see Alber, “Impossible Storyworlds” 80; Alber and Heinze 11). It is not seen, for example, the way it is understood by Darko Suvin, who defines cognitive estrangement in science fiction as “factual reporting of fictions” by introducing novums, that is, innovations differing from the writer’s and the implied reader’s norms considering reality, in otherwise realistic contexts (6–7, 63–64). Nor is it connected to Todorov’s idea of fantastic hesitation between the natural and supernatural explanations of the strange events experienced by the implied reader (33). Alber, Iversen, Nielsen and Richardson state in their answer to Fludernik that “the fabulous, magical, fantastic or supernatural” is part of the conventionalized unnatural, as it is explicated in Alber’s definition of the unnatural (“What is Unnatural” 373).<sup>6</sup> There, many unnatural elements are conventional strategies of science fiction and fantasy (Alber “Unnatural Temporalities” 174–175, 185–187). In fact, Alber rules the elements of fantasy and science fiction out of the scope of the estranging unnatural (Alber, et al. “What is Unnatural” 373). Although they are impossible and unnatural, in the context set by the genre they do not appear as defamiliarizing (Alber et al. “What Really is” 103). Alber claims that when these kind of unnatural elements occur in the realist settings of postmodernist fiction, they do have an estranging effect (“Unnatural Temporalities” 174–175, 185–187; Alber et al. “What Really is” 103).

Let us ignore the implications of a branch of narratology claiming to give attention to the strange phenomena in fiction while taking the oddities of fantasy and science fiction for granted and look at Alber’s way of distinguishing the conventionalized unnatural of fantasy from the estranging unnatural of postmodernism. The distinction appears to be useful when describing the poetics of reaalifantasia. It raises questions about the nature of reaalifantasia’s fantasy elements: Are they estranging unnatural elements? Do they disconcert readers? Jämsén’s (81) definition of the fantasy elements of reaalifantasia resembles Alber’s (“What Really is” 103) view on the estranging unnatural elements of postmodernism: these elements occur in contexts and storyworlds in which readers do not necessarily expect to encounter fantasy elements, thereby functioning as a strategy of estrangement. This is not the only thing that reaalifantasia has in common with postmodernist fiction. According to Brian McHale, the dominant of postmodernism is ontological (9–11). That is, the diverse strategies of postmodernist narratives are means to foreground the ontological aspects and the structures of their storyworlds, their textual structures and the relationships between them and the world outside them (9–11). In my view, reaalifantasia is ontological in the same way McHale (59–60, 73–74) regards science fiction and fantasy to be ontological: the fantasy elements set the ontological structures of the storyworlds of reaalifantasia under stress because these elements do not seem to obey the laws of the storyworld (see Heikkinen 6; Ollikainen 134).<sup>7</sup>

For Alber, it is essential to try to understand and interpret what the unnatural elements of narratives mean (“Unnatural Narratology” 455–457; “Unnatural Spaces” 63). According to him, the unnaturalness of narratives always tells us something about human life (“Unnatural Narratology”

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<sup>6</sup> Please note that the articles Alber, Iversen, Nielsen and Richardson have written together are polyphonic. The researchers often discuss the different opinions they have on unnatural narratology, its concerns and especially the different meanings the term unnatural might have. Therefore, when I refer to these articles, I specify which scholar’s definitions and viewpoints I am referring to when these viewpoints do not match.

<sup>7</sup> In her master’s thesis, *Eriskummallisen muotoiset palapelinpalat* (“The Pieces of Puzzle of Extraordinary Shape”), Maarit Heikkinen discusses the elements of postmodern fantasy in Jääskeläinen’s first novel and their ontological consequences on the storyworld.

455–457; "Unnatural Spaces" 63). Alber describes altogether nine different strategies that readers can use to cope with and interpret unnatural elements ("Impossible Storyworlds" 79; "Postmodernist Impossibilities", 274–275). One of the strategies is to interpret the unnatural elements of a story as the mental states of its characters, such as hallucinations or dreams ("Unnatural Narratology" 452). It would be tempting to follow this strategy and claim that the strange dreams of reaalifantasia are nothing but dreams. This strategy, however, is hard to apply to the dreams in question, since they tend to transgress their own frames and affect not only the dreamers but other characters as well.

As another strategy, Alber suggests interpreting unnatural elements as representing the themes of the narrative ("Impossible Storyworlds" 82). According to Jämsén, the fantasy elements of reaalifantasia often represent the themes of their stories (75, 81). I have found this thematization strategy useful in interpreting the effects of the unnatural dreams in the fiction of Jääskeläinen (134). Even though Alber does not name "ideological reading" as a specific strategy, he does claim that it is possible to understand, for example, the social minds of we-narratives by thinking of the ideological functions they may have ("The Social Minds" 222–223). I am using Alber's reading strategies as a method of analyzing and interpreting the dreams found in reaalifantasia. I am also using his strategies to predict the ways a reader might interpret and explain these dreams. The hypothesis I shall demonstrate next is that in addition to their thematic functions, the unnatural fantasy elements of reaalifantasia can also foreground ideological themes.

## **Unnatural Minds in *Viivamaalari* by Anne Leinonen and *Muurahaispuu* by J. Pekka Mäkelä**

*Muurahaispuu* by J. Pekka Mäkelä is about a lonely physicist moving back to his childhood home. During his stay there, Kari Länneheimo, the protagonist and first-person narrator of the novel, goes through the belongings left behind by his demented father, who has moved to a nursing home. Meanwhile, he also gets to know his new neighbors. *Viivamaalari* by Anne Leinonen comprises chapters with different first-person narrators. Several clues in the novel hint at a connection between the lives of the narrators and the life of the main character and main narrator, an isolated woman who has involuntarily accepted the post of a conceptual artist. Hoping to learn how to create conceptual art, she starts to follow a woman called Ursula, who paints a long white line through the city. After these crucial life changes, both the woman in *Viivamaalari* and Kari in *Muurahaispuu* begin to have strange and vivid dreams about people close to them.

According to Alan Palmer, human minds are connected to one another, their functioning is often visible to other human beings, and in some cases thinking is intermental, shared and communal (5, 11–12, 185). Palmer claims this to be also the case with fictional minds (5, 11–12, 200). He states that narrative theory has focused too much on the individual and subjective aspects of fictional minds (11–12). Alber has broadened Palmer's later perspectives on social minds in fiction and showed that fictional social minds may differ from the social minds of the actual world ("The Social Minds" 222–223). Some social minds in fiction may turn out to be unnatural, as Iversen (94) has also demonstrated. According to Iversen, the unnatural minds of fiction lure readers to imagine fictive characters to have humanlike minds but then fail these expectations in a way that cannot be naturalized or conventionalized easily within the given context (98–99, 104–107, 110).

I claim that the behavior of both the dreams and the minds of their dreamers in *Viivamaalari* and in *Muurahaispuu* is on the unnatural side of the spectrum of social minds in fiction. It is not necessarily unnatural if the dreams of a person are connected to the worries of those near him or her (see Alber, "The Social Minds" 217–218), but the dreams depicted in these two novels do not stay

within their natural frames. These dreams mix the minds of their dreamers with the minds of other characters in a manner that is impossible outside fiction. Both in *Viivamaalari* and in *Muurahaispuu*, the main character goes through thoughts, memories, and experiences of other characters in his or her dreams, causing the contents of other minds to blend into the main character's narration.

In *Viivamaalari*, the dreams of the main person correspond to the events of the lives of other first-person narrators of the novel. The woman dreams, for example, of making a blue painting while in another chapter Mr. Friedrich is painting one (178–181). One day the woman even finds out that someone has painted her kitchen wall blue while she was away (182–184). The woman has a strong feeling that these vivid dreams in which she is someone else, living someone else's life, are not her dreams (29–33, 66, 151–153, 178–179):

In fact, I don't want to fall asleep. My dreams are not mine. Sometimes almost a tangible feeling of alienation wakes me up in the middle of the night: I can smell strange aromas and see shades of colors that I didn't know existed. In my dreams, I do rather strange deeds, deeds of a kind that my subconscious can't make up by itself. That is why I hate sleeping. That is why I hate dreaming. (Leinonen 66)<sup>8</sup>

In *Viivamaalari*, these strange dreams seem to be connected to the protagonist's false memories and feelings of disorientation (28, 48, 57, 177, 194–195, 211–212). Handling new objects, such as a pizza slicer in a store, repeatedly conjures up memories that do not belong to her past (57, 106–107, 110, 113).

In *Muurahaispuu*, Kari also has vivid dreams of being someone else in a different apartment in the same building. In his dreams, Kari is often an immigrant woman washing the dishes or a Finnish woman starting a relationship with another woman (38–40, 73–75, 92–94, 108–114, 175–176, 180–187). Kari is particularly discomfited by the dreams in which he is a frustrated Finnish man planning a terrorist attack:

I have been wrong in the sense that the good vibes of the past few days haven't made my dreams any better. Last night I was once again planning an attack, examining the map and pictures of Kontula, keeping in touch with anti-Islamic networks from across Europe, preparing a bomb that fits into an ordinary backpack so that there also remains enough space for a water bottle. These dreams have once again felt so real that I have momentarily considered whether I should contact the police. (J. Mäkelä 235–236)

Kari sometimes tries to affect the actions of the people in his dreams, with poor results (152). When he gets to know his neighbors better, he finds out that they lead lives that resemble his dreams (41, 75, 266, 148). For example, one of his neighbors ends up getting arrested for planning a terrorist attack (250–252).

As is characteristic for a reallifantasia novel, the storyworlds of both novels resemble the world of their prospective readers (see Jämsén 81). Therefore, there is not much in these storyworlds that would, at least at first, naturalize the dreams or make readers expect their behavior to deviate from the behavior of real-world dreams. This makes the dreams unnatural according to Iversen's definition of the term (see Alber et al. "What is Unnatural" 373). The story of *Muurahaispuu* is situated in Helsinki in the 2000s. The storyworld of *Viivamaalari* contains some oddities, but nothing suggests that these oddities have something to do with the nature of the dreams. All in all, the storyworld of *Viivamaalari* resembles a quotidian city, apart from an unusual system in which different jobs and posts are given to citizens by lottery and the existence of mystical creatures called "angels" that tend to appear in crowded places and explode (13–20).

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<sup>8</sup> The translations of the quotes from Anne Leinonen's *Viivamaalari* and J. Pekka Mäkelä's *Muurahaispuu* are my own.



As is typical of the reaalifantasia novels, the characters are desperate to find explanations for the fantasy elements they encounter in the storyworld (see Jämsén 43–44, 71). This is also a typical characteristic of fantastic texts where the implied reader may, in addition to his or her own hesitation, identify with the characters' or character-narrators' hesitation between the natural and supernatural explanations of strange events (Todorov 31–32, 37, 82–86). In *Muurahaispuu*, Kari repeatedly takes into account the possibility that he has lost his mind (200, 230, 236). In the novel, however, he never gets an explanation for his unnatural dreams. When Kari's older sister tells him that she used to have similar dreams of her neighbors in her childhood, the siblings start to speculate possible reasons for this phenomenon (126–127, 289–292). Kari starts to suspect that their childhood home in the apartment building might be some sort of an anthill (128–130). Ants indeed have social, intermental minds (128). Their ability to communicate with each other and to work in an anthill as a single organism is quite efficient and markedly different from the social capacities of humans (81–87, 128–129). Kari tries to explain his capability to see his neighbors' lives in his dreams as being a consequence of a mutation that gives him ant-like abilities (128–131). He also suspects that the structures of the apartment building might have something, such as a mold or microbes, that activates these abilities (149–150, 230). His suspicions are never confirmed nor rejected.

The woman in *Viivamaalari* has been hospitalized in the past because of her hallucinations (31, 205). There she has been told to concentrate on her individual and unique life (205). Her dreams make her fear that she has lost her mind again, yet she refuses to take the medication prescribed to her (31, 194–195). This does not prevent her from eventually getting an explanation for at least some of her dreams. She has dreams in which she is living the life of, for example, Mr. Friedrich because he lives inside her mind, without being simply a figment of her imagination (236). In the end of the novel, she receives a recording from Mr. Friedrich – only to hear her own voice on the tape (231–231). According to the tape, the planet Earth was destroyed a long time ago by an alien race called "the angels" and another alien race has tried to save humanity (232–233). According to the tape, humans of the day are living in an ark built by this benevolent alien race (234). The cities of the ark and their citizens lead a parallel existence, meaning that different minds share the same body: there is usually one fully aware main personality and a group of unaware, "sleeping", side-personalities who live in the dreams and daydreams of their host persona (233–236, 240). Later, the woman finds out that some other people in her city are also aware of their sleeping side-personalities and some have even managed to get rid of theirs (240–241, 248–251). These "new" rules of the storyworld of *Viivamaalari* offer some sort of an explanation of its unnatural dreams and minds. As a result, the dreams fail to fill Iversen's definition of the unnatural. Yet, I would claim that the explanation given in the last pages of the novel is still relatively estranging from the readers' point of view.

The intermental social minds of *Muurahaispuu* and *Viivamaalari* are unnatural minds in the sense that the social minds of the actual world tend to have at least some kind of boundaries between them. As Alber claims, in fiction some social minds become more understandable if they are compared to the ideological functions they may have ("The Social Minds" 215). In my view, one can interpret the unnatural social minds in *Viivamaalari* and in *Muurahaispuu* as representations of the ideological themes prevalent in the two novels. By breaking the limits and separateness of human minds, these unnatural social minds highlight the fact that human minds are social and that to flourish, every mind needs connections to other minds.

The unnatural social minds and dreams of *Viivamaalari* and *Muurahaispuu* can be read as a critique of today's individualism, in the everyday meaning of the term. Extreme individualism, or subjectivism, is not good for a human being. The problems both Kari and the woman have in the beginning of the novels, their solitude and hesitations, ease after they accept their social and collective dreams as part of who they are. In the end of *Viivamaalari* (267–268), when the white

line has finally been finished, the woman is quite happy with herself and her dreams. She feels that the different personalities in her head are part of her and she learns to communicate with them and negotiate with their needs (267–268). In the end of *Muurahaispuu* (299, 302–303), after researching the history of his father's family and after getting to know his neighbors, Kari feels that his experiences and dreams have made him more empathetic and able to do his new work, to help other researchers at CERN solve scientific problems. Both novels end with their protagonists falling to sleep, waiting to dream (Leinonen 268; J. Mäkelä 303).

## Conclusion

According to Jan Alber, the unnatural in narratives usually seeks to tell us something about what it is to be human (“Unnatural Narratology” 455–457; “Unnatural Spaces” 63). The natural and unnatural social minds in fiction may in some contexts have ideological functions (Alber, “The Social Minds” 213–214; see Richardson 38). In this article, I have demonstrated how the fantasy elements of reaalifantasia foreground the ideological thematics of being human. The unnatural dreams and the unnatural social minds of their dreamers in *Viivamaalari* by Leinonen and *Muurahaispuu* by Mäkelä tell us something about the nature of human mind and how minds need other minds.

Reaalifantasia is a relatively new group of writers and a lot remains to be studied in its poetics. Dreams are only one example of its unnatural and estranging fantasy elements and the dreams in reaalifantasia novels do not always function as either fantasy or unnatural elements. Even the woman in *Viivamaalari* has dreams that do not originate unnaturally in the memories of her side-personas (151–153, 250, 253). Then again, the unnatural dreams in reaalifantasia do not always deal with the shared nature of minds and the ideological aspects of this type of shared minds. In Jääskeläinen's fiction, dreams sometimes break the temporal structure of the frame story and thus tell something about the human conception of time (Ollikainen 67–86). These kind of fantasy elements, however, tend to make the storyworlds of reaalifantasia both unstable and estranging – and the poetics of reaalifantasia fascinating.

The writers of reaalifantasia aspire to a new way of writing. This goal is in itself a statement about the value of the multifarious strategies of fiction (see Heikkinen 13). This statement relates to the questions of the way the world and the life of human beings are seen and represented and can be seen and represented in everyday language and in fiction. It is also connected to the question of which elements and strategies of fiction are considered to be estranging in what contexts and which are taken as mere conventions – a question, which I hope is going to be discussed more thoroughly in future research.

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