"Dear Mrs. President, The Forests Are in Peril"

Auto/Biographical Elements of Children's Letters to the President of Finland

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• **Letter data**

• nearly 9000 letters (years 2000—2009)

• mostly daughter-citizens

• letters are archived
Hei Tarja!

Minä pidän sinussa eniten siitä kun sinulla on ärrä vika. Mutta älä pahasta, vaikka sanon noih, sillä minulla itsellänikin onollut ärrä vika. Olen hännytsinä telkkäraja, ja sinulla on aina ollut vieraidenpukuja hienompi.  

T: Lotta 8v.

Muskut

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Writers introducing themselves ... as ‘writers’

“I like writing. Actually, I’m currently writing a fantasy trilogy. I’m irritated by the fact that people tend to form their opinions based simply on age. They think that, for example, no young person can write well. However, in reality, age doesn’t matter at all. They’re simply numbers. I myself have been writing long stories since I was ten, and in drawing I picked up shading even earlier than that. I can use the computer quite well, for example I’ve already learned HTML-code last year and now it’s easy as riding a bike.” (A 12-year-old girl)
“I am an 11-year-old girl. My hobbies are riding, horses, gymnastics, playing the piano, reading, swimming, roller skating and c-ponce. Oh yeah, c-ponce means correspondence. I have maybe 47-48 penpals. Yeah! I wish that you could start correspondence with me and my best friend. You can also write about your secrets to me. My best friends are Moona, Leena and Minttu. That’s not in any particular order.” (An 11-year-old girl)
- **Letters have ‘two parents’**

‘Letters may be said to have two parents, the writer and the recipient’. Consequently, every letter speaks not just of the writer’s world, but also of the writer’s perceptions of the recipient. Thus the social scientist should view a letter as an interactive product, and always enquire into the recipient’s role.’

(Plummer, 2001, 54; Ponsonby 1923, 2)
• **Nature spaces**

• how do children create, write and dwell in these nature spaces?

• ‘the risk society’ (Beck 1986; Giddens 1991)

• people are obliged to design their own life, to rewrite their biography, every day (Geldof, 1999, cited in Jans, 2004, 28)

• children in the West are encouraged to be authors of their own lives (see Jans 2004)
"I am an 11-year-old girl who has a problem. My problem is that houses will destroy the forests! I love nature and am afraid that it will disappear from the world! Think that plants and trees produce oxygen and without this we will not survive. In our village there is an ice hockey rink, where all the villagers used to go skating in the winter and play in the summer. There nearby was a forest nearby where young people met and children built huts. I also had a hut there but not anymore. The forest was full of these huts where we played and they were fine, so fine that even young people didn’t destroy them! NOW there’s only brushwood and silence. Houses will take the place of forests. I know people need houses but our village will soon be drowning in these houses! Row houses have been built here and now even a block of flats! Blocks of flats don’t suit our village! ...” (An 11-year-old-girl)
“Behind our house is a small meadow and there I go every day. I go along a footpath which no doubt will soon be covered over the houses. I go to the meadow to watch the little creepy-crawlies. It is so nice to do this. I don’t cause any harm to them otherwise they would harm me. These creepy-crawlies and flies never bother me. When I grow up I’m going to be an environmentalist and a photographer and I’ll take photographs of this meadow and other things of nature. There is a stone that the state has brought there and this is the second best and second most important thing to me. I also go there every day, whether it’s raining or shining.

Post scriptum. I’d like to thank the state so much for this stone. Could you to arrange for more trees and plants to be planted? Is that possible? With ♡ an 11-year-old-girl”
“Dear president. The forests are in peril.
Can the felling of trees be stopped?
I hope you’ll take this up at the parliament.”

(An 8-year-old girl)
Thank you!

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