



## **Linnunaivot**

*Johanna Sinisalo*

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Extreme-kokemuksista kiinnostunut baarimikko Jyrki on lähdössä down under, kaikkien aikojen vaelluskierrokselle Uuden Seelannin ja Australian vaativille reiteille. Jyrkin yllätykseksi tyttöystävä Heidi tahtoo – omista syistään, joista ihastus Jyrkiin on vain yksi – lähteä mukaan.

Maapallon toisella puolella reissaajat saavat kokea luonnonvoimien koko armottomuuden rankkasateista ja sademetsien upottavasta mudasta aina kilometrien pituisten hiekkarantojen paahtavaan kuumuuteen. Mutta mikään ei riitä Jyrkille. Matkasta kehittyy vähitellen piinaava jännitysnäytelmä.

Kun alkaa tapahtua outoja asioita, huolellisesti tehdyt suunnitelmat murentuvat. Ja kun kaiken taustalla oleva totuus alkaa hahmottua, pariskunta on ehkä jo liian pitkällä matkallaan pimeyden sydämeen.

## Linnunaivot Details

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# From Reader Review Linnunaivot for online ebook

## Gretel says

I was underwhelmed by this one. Johanna Sinisalo is a popular author in Finland, known for her strange twist on the fantasy genre. Her novel *Ennen päivänlaskua ei voi*, published in English under two names; *Troll:A Love Story* and *Not Before Sundown*, is a work of art. This? Not so much.

It is about a young couple, Jyrki and Heidi, who go backpacking across Australasia. It isn't told in a linear fashion and flits back and forth in time, documenting how the young couple meet and what strange happenings go on during their excursion. Some of their equipment goes missing and they find it again. It's meant to be creepy and weird but it just felt mundane and not creepy at all; not the desired effect. The tension and twist came all too late. Also, a lot of the descriptions of landscapes were kind of tiresome. It felt like an overzealous person chucking their unvaried holiday photos at you.

What I did like were the short chapters detailing Heidi and Jyrki's meeting in Lapland and Jyrki's extensive backpacking knowledge. Sinisalo has done a good job with the research in that area.

To me, the novel is more *Birdemic* than *The Birds*. Knowing that the novel is based off of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (the albatross around my neck when studying for A-levels), I should've guessed that me and this book would never hit it off.

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## Sonatajessica says

I am not sure what to do with "Birdbrain", I liked it for the most part but at the same time I don't think it truly worked. The whole time I was waiting for something to make a bigger splash, to explode into a more insightful finale yet I was underwhelmed with how it wrapped up. Still, I enjoyed the journey.

I love backpacking stories, the hiking parts were well done. Tasmania is one of those places I really would love to go to, so extra points right here for setting the story there. We follow a couple meeting back in Finland, then onto their hikes in New Zealand and Australia to the hike it all centers around in Tasmania. The story is told switching between his and her perspective which is a really smart move, you will often get both perspectives on the same happenings which is always fun. What frustrated me was the lack of resolution in the end: we see how they meet and fall in love, how their travels put a strain on their relationship but no final stance in that regard. Also, the characters and their own personal arcs seemed to remain unfinished to me in the end. Additionally, the connection between her anarchic brother (who we get small snippets from intersecting the main arc) and the birds did not work, I understand what Sinisalo was trying to go for (at least I think I do) but I don't think she succeeded.

Overall the novel does get too preachy with its messages and forgets that it also has to tell a cohesive narration but that doesn't mean I didn't enjoy it. Sinisalo is a clever writer, our two leads are difficult and therefor interesting (especially Jyrki, I quite enjoyed the fact that he never referred to Heidi with her name but only as 'she', also being the hiking snob he is he does get on your nerves as much as on Heidi's). I still think both needed more of an ending than they got, some things were just left hanging too wide in the air for me.

But when all is said and done I have a hard time not enjoying a travel related novel, especially when it

throws around some interesting questions in regard to traveling into untouched nature, 3\* it is.

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## **Adam says**

One of several genres I'd like to tackle as a fiction writer is what I've been loosely thinking of as a "Weird environmental thriller." As far as I'd encountered, *Annihilation* was about the closest to what I had in mind that existed, but I was skeptical of that absence and periodically tried different google searches to look for other things in the same ballpark. This time I finally found a list that seems to have a promising selection, and *Birdbrain* blurred closest to the mark. It turns out that this was uncannily right--aside from the general approach of the work in crafting a horror thriller around environmental experiences and themes, *Birdbrain* has at least two explicit commonalities with ideas and drafts on my computer. I was excited to find it because it showed other people are on the same wavelength as me.

The plot is extremely simple, to the point that it's not really even a "tour" but just a ramp of the same unpleasant experiences and interactions getting worse until the end. No twists or decisions or inflection points to speak of. I think that's a bold approach to plotting but almost inevitable yields a lacking product. *Birdbrain* doesn't quite manage to be an exception, but it comes fairly close. The translation is a bit rough at the outset, but it soon creates a unique, very European voice for both POV characters that helps create the engrossing sense of how annoying it is for these people to spend time with each other. I'm not sure if there is a world in which "hikers get lost in the woods and (view spoiler) fuck with them but it's not a B-movie because nothing dumb and fun happens on screen, it's serious literature with *Heart of Darkness* quotes every other page" is a good idea for a book, but *Birdbrain* is a pretty good execution on it. The thing that surprised me was that the effective part was the thriller core. If you leave all the trappings aside, this is a compelling "people lost in the woods getting fucked with by a mysterious monster just out of view" story.

What doesn't work is pretty much everything else. The Conrad quotes, the nattering about littering and climate change, the (view spoiler) POV interludes (never presented as such, something you have to piece together yourself) and ecological entries, all of the stuff here that's meant to make it a smart, specific story rather than a generic one of its type . . . fail completely. The litter conversation makes good grit for the sanctimonious interpersonal conflict, but it feels a bit stilted. The (view spoiler) material is somewhere in the right territory, highlighting common traits like creativity, greed, cruelty, and littering, but without a sense of purpose or framing. It's like keeping the (fairly obvious after some point) secret was considered more important than doing anything interesting with it, because doing so would tip the author's hand too much. A cheap mystery box instead of a thoughtful exploration. That kind of thoughtful exploration would perhaps be best served by (how many times have I said this now?) a slow-burn community drama than a wilderness journey thriller, but still.

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## **DMS says**

<http://dms.booklikes.com/post/382094/...>

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## **Jane says**

I am a huge fan of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. *Birdbrain* is about a young Finnish couple hiking in

Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania; to keep their packs light they don't take much to read. The woman takes along *Heart of Darkness*, which is why I read this book.

Very little happens in *Birdbrain*. The narration alternates between the man and the woman, and it is somewhat interesting as a he thinks-she thinks psychological study. (There is a third occasional narrative of what is presumably her brother which adds absolutely nothing to the story.)

The man is a control freak, and there is a bit of tension as the relationship between this new couple develops on the trail and she begins a quiet rebellion of sorts.

The book ends abruptly and either what happens is supposed to be ambiguous or I just didn't get it. In any event, I did not like the ending. I knocked one star off due to the ending. This book is not a bad read, but it should not be mentioned in the same breath as *Heart of Darkness*, one of the greatest books ever written in the English language. (And I realize that I read this book in translation - perhaps it is better in Finnish.) If you want to read about civilized man traveling into the wild and madness, I suggest you read that instead.

Oh, and the main description here on Goodreads refers to the kakapo - it is actually the kea that is in the book. The kakapo is a flightless parrot the size of a chicken, hardly up to stealthy attacks on the belongings of humans.

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## **Jay Daze says**

Can a book cheat? Sure all novels are constructions. The author is building something to cause an effect. A book that effectively manipulates a reader is a successful one. But is there an onus to be honest?

I think I came into this with too much in the way of genre expectations. The book is set up like a thriller. There is much forboding. There are endless *Heart of Darkness* quotes. There is a little brother who is a complete anti-social little fuck. Even at 50 pages from the end I was waiting for the various threads to collide. But in the end the book doesn't cohere except in the most random, understated, pat way: nature will have its revenge. Frustratingly, the little brother turns magically into the kea bird or a merciless, angry symbol of nature. The problem is that it feels so much like a writerly creation that it didn't resonate for me. Sinisalo is a wonderful author and watching the characters circle around each other and survive is worth the read, but the end is a cake that didn't rise, a gun that didn't go off, an acorn that didn't grow.

I was gripped all the way through, but I feel like Sinisalo did a bait-and-switch on me at the end. Ha, ha! It was nature all along! How surprising! Not really. The constant bits about the Kea bird drove home that much of the mischievous disappearances were possibly benign, but Sinisalo countered that with the possibility of sociopathic little brother shadowing and fucking with the couple. That at the end she waved her authorly wand and combined bird and brother to make nature have its revenge on these two hikers was far too convenient to make a satisfying story.

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## Janice says

Holy carp, what to say about this book...

First off, it's my second book by a Finnish author in a fairly short time. The two authors, Sinisalo and Emmi Itäranta, couldn't be more different in style or subject.

Birdbrain tells the story of two Finnish eco-tourists hiking in Tasmania and New Zealand. The timeline is a bit fragmented. There's some jumping back and forth in time and place. I actually sat down at one point and started a linear timeline, just to get the events to line up clearly in my head.

Jyrki, the male of the party, is a hard-core hiker, seeking out places farthest off the beaten track for his travels. Heidi is more rooted in the modern world. She basically joins Jyrki's trip on a whim. Each one relates what happens from his/her own point of view. That's actually an interesting way to tell the story, because Heidi and Jyrki tend to see things VERY differently.

The hikers' narratives are interspersed with quotations from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and with little accounts told from another viewpoint. (view spoiler) These accounts from a third viewpoint are disturbing, and add to a building sense of dread through the book.

In the end, I can't say for sure whether I think the book was successful or not. The whole situation of the hikers got in my head a bit and worried me, so the storytelling was effective in that respect. I can't say I really **LIKED** the characters, but that doesn't seem to have been as much of a deal-breaker in this book as it sometimes is for me. I think it might be worthwhile to go back and read it again and see if I understood more things better now.

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## Bettie? says

Don't forget to pop a book in your backpack

Translated from the Finnish by David Hackston

Opening quote is from The Raven by Poe

Clapper Board: **SOUTH COAST TRACK, TASMANIA**

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### **HEIDI**

**Hanging around a modest distance from the Tassielink minibus terminal is a group of guys, their shorts boasting rips and tears, their T-shirts with stains, their armpits and backs with patches of sweat, their hiking boots with layers of dried mud.**

GAH! Something of a nothing that was perched on an environmental soapbox. In the form of a diary there is a paragraph from him and a paragraph from her intersperses by Heart of Darkness quotes. It does state in the Author Box that Sinisalo enjoys hiking, so this could be construed as a personal rant about litter.

Stark contrast to the first book I read of hers...

5\* Troll: A Love Story

1\* Birdbrain

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## Georgie says

This reminded me of Scott Smith's 'The Ruins', Katy Gardner's 'Losing Gemma' and the films 'The Blair Witch Project' and 'The Beach' and though I haven't read 'Heart of Darkness' by Joseph Conrad (though this book encouraged me to buy it on Kindle) I know the basic premise, and as there are quotes from that novel throughout this book, its influence is pretty clear. 'Birdbrain' is a classic 'exotic paradise turns nasty' and 'backpackers get in trouble' story, but is distinctly its own book, with its own odd and creepy little twists.

Jykri and Heidi are a young Finnish couple who are backpacking through New Zealand, mainland Australia, and Tasmania. Jykri is one of those annoying eco-snobs, and a hiking-snob as well. He insists on planning every moment of their hike, determined to get away from the 'tourists' and find somewhere untouched by humanity. The harder the going, the better, as far as he's concerned. And he's an eco-snob as well, lecturing Heidi on the importance of not leaving any rubbish. While this is important of course, Jykri takes it to an insane length. As they trek through the ever more 'perfect', untouched, and threatening wilderness, their relationship comes under strain. Heidi becomes irritated at Jykri's lectures and his determination to have as few luxuries as possible. Jykri is irritated by her lack of experience and her attitude to his ecological monologues. It also seems that someone, or something, out in the wilderness is playing a game with them - their possessions keep disappearing only to reappear in some impossible place later on. It seems as though their desire to conquer 'untouched' wilderness, however well-intentioned and eco-friendly they consider themselves, the wilderness is resisting them,

I loved the descriptions of the wilderness in this book. I also loved the encroaching sense of the strains forming in Jykri and Heidi's relationship which seem to be both caused by and a result of the wilderness they find themselves pretty much isolated in. Then there's the increasing sense of menace and creepiness as their things go missing and turn up in strange places.

What I admired about 'Birdbrain' is that while it made an excellent point about how human beings and the tourism trade are responsible for the slow destruction of areas of supposedly unspoiled natural beauty and the planet in general (particularly due to waste disposal methods or the lack of them), by setting up Jykri as an almost laughable example of that annoying eco/hiking-i'm-not-a-tourist-even-though-I-am-one snob who many of us are familiar with, the author Johanna Sinisalo prevents the book from becoming preachy. She makes the point that eco-snobs like Jykri aren't much better than the four-wheel-driving, softy, litter-dumping types he so despises, and that he's just as vulnerable to the wiles of nature as anyone else.

Excellent story, very creepy and thought-provoking, and a fairly quick read as well.

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## Ryandake says

two young backpackers and an unspecified and deeply creepy “T” head out for a long backpacking trip across NZ, Australia, and Tasmania. “T” is perhaps an uninvited guest. or possibly not present at all. or perhaps both present and ubiquitous.

the synopsis of this book (the back cover/flap copy) is horrible, but i’m not sure how one could have written it better. this is not a traditional Man-vs-Nature story such as “To Build a Fire,” and yet it is perhaps (two small, environmentally-conscious) backpackers vs. Nature? or ultimately Us vs. Ourselves?

one of the things i like very, very best about Sinisalo’s books is that you absolutely cannot predict them. they *will* defy your expectations, and be like nothing you’ve read before. and yet despite their lack of a standard plot, they hang together perfectly, like a quilt that somehow manages to happily wed acid green and scarlet. it’s hard to imagine, but in skilled hands, it can be done.

this book lacks many of the things that normally propel a plot: a conflict, a mystery, a desire as yet unfulfilled. there are conflicts, mysteries, and desires in this book, but none presents itself as the spine that holds the creature upright. instead these small, often petty disturbances weave themselves together, becoming more and more unsettling as the pair traverses distance and meanders further from “civilization.”

and civilization in the rear-view makes up one of the more intriguing shades of this book. those who love the wilds--who are not city creatures, entirely--are very ambivalent about the dichotomous civ/wild pair. one can loathe traffic and the monad-creating effects of technology, and still love pepperoni on a trail.

and where to land along this continuum? does a human presence necessarily imply waste and destruction and large, cancerous cities? is it even possible to live truly green? Sinisalo’s book suggests the possibility that we may not be given leave to answer these questions ourselves--another might be in the process of taking them from us, one slab of pepperoni at a time.

Conrad’s Heart of Darkness is heavily quoted in this book--i haven’t read it for years, but i am betting a close acquaintance with that book would reward the reader of Sinisalo’s creepy little offering greatly.

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## Eija says

Kirja on vaellustarina, missä ollaan luonnon armoilla ja pitää tulla toimeen niukalla ravinnolla ja ilman mukavuuksia. Ympäristöä kuvataan tarkasti. Tarinaansa kertoo patikkamatkalle lähteneet Heidi ja Jyrki ja nimeämätön kolmaskin kertoja on mukana. Se kuka tai keitä tämä kertoja edustaa selviää viimeistään kirjan loppupuolella - rinnastus ja pointti on aika ovela.

Jyrki on vähän tiukkapipo kaikessa, enkä tarkoita pelkästään hänen pikkutarkkaa ympäristön roskaamattomuus intoaan (mikä on hyvä asia toki), kun taas Heidi on suurpiirteisempi ja hänen kertomissa osuuksissa on huumoriakin mukana. Tarina vetää hyvin ja lyhyiden lukujen vuoksi kerronta on ilmavaa ja väljää, mutta tarina jäi tapahtumien osalta hiukan vajaaksi. Kirjassa ei ole spefiä oikeastaan yhtään. Miljöö olisi mahdollistanut ripauksen ylikuonnollista ja ehkä sellaisten tapahtumien lisäys olisi tuonut kirjaan enemmän mielenkiintoa ja potkua. Kirjan sanoma tulee kyllä hyvin esiin ja tällaisenakin kelpo luettavaa. 3½



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## Hannamari says

Yet another great novel from Sinisalo. In this story she has the two protagonists wandering the isolated Tasmanian trekking tracks in nature's terms. The text consists of interesting little bits: insides from both of the protagonists minds as well as one of their disturbed good-for-nothing little brother's thoughts, quotes from Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness (which I now want to read) and pieces of "scientific" text about kea birds. The mysterious, intelligent and corky kea birds that have an important role in the story.

Sinisalo makes interesting parallels in her text. It seems as in the book the intrusive nature and kea birds, a disturbed young man destructing everything just for fun and a western man with the urge to conquest and own are all deep down the same thing. They are doing the same thing: not caring about others just to amuse themselves.

In the end this is a disturbing novel about the state of the world as well as human nature - or just any nature. It is unordinary thriller that makes you think still a long time after reading it.

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## Merja says

Ei ihan auennut tämä minulle. En lukisi toiste. Hieman tylsä.

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## Dirk Janssen says

Okay, I get it. Conservationism versus conservatism. A couple goes hiking in New Zealand to find "unspoilt" nature, only to find nature "untamed" and amoral. There is some stuff about a brother who embodies the conservative archetype of an inherently evil human being that could have been chastised into a moral citizen, but wasn't. That should sort of fit in the idea, but it doesn't. It reads like somebody went on holiday, wrote down some blurbs and handed it to a lazy publisher that put a cover around it and called it a novel.

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## Ari says

Pidin kovasti Johanna Sinisalon kirjasta "Ennen päivänlaskua ei voi". Pidin melkein yhtä paljon myös tästä.

Itsekin rinkan kanssa vaellusta harrastavana pystyin monessa kohtaa tunnistamaan kuvatus kokemusmaailman. Vastaavaan extremeen en aivan ole päässyt tai varsinkaan pyrkinyt kuin aivan hetkittäin tai vahingossa. Jonkinlainen nautinnon hiven täytyy hommassa enimmäkseen olla.

Kuvaus oli hyvin todenmukaista ja oli ilman muuta selvää, että tarinassa oli paljon "been there, done that" - elementtejä. En jaksa uskoa, että taustatyöllä ja mielikuvituksella olisi mitenkään päässyt tuollaiseen reittikuvaukseen. Retki sijoittui suurelta osin Tasmaniaan ja etenemistä saattoi seurata kartalta. Kateellisin mielin paikoitellen - jos unohti ylenpalttisen suorittamisen, joka oli osa olennainen osa toisen päähenkilön olemusta.

Kahden hyvin erilaisen ihmisen näkökulmat vaellukseen oli mielestäni hyvä lähetymistapa. Vähän arkkityyppimäisiä ja sukupuoliroolitettuja hahmot ja heidän ajatuksensa paikoitellen olivat, mutta se ei haitannut. Mehän joka tapauksessa olemme sellaisia :-)

Hyvin kirjoitettu ja mielenkiintoinen romaani. Lopetuksesta en täysillä tykännyt. En sano miksi, koska se saattaisi latistaa jonkun toisen lukukokemusta.

Suosittelen. Huomatkaa myös ympäristöä ja ekologisuuutta sivuavat ajatukset. Niissä on paljon oikeaa asiaa. Olemme tuhoamassa tämän pallon.

Heräsi myös ajatus lukea Conradin "Pimeyden sydän" (Heart of Darkness) uudelleen.

Linnunaivot

Teos, 2008

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