

ON SOME CHANGES IN KARL RISTIKIVI'S METAPHYSICAL TIME COGNITION UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE FATAL EVENTS IN 1939—1941*

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At the end of the 1930s a talented and original writer, Karl Ristikivi (1912—1977), came into the Estonian literature. In his first novel "Fire and Iron" (1938) the traditionally realistic treatment of time and the chronological development of events can be attested. In his third novel "The Garden" (1942) the author under the influence of the event fatal to the Estonian state and people, goes deep into the internal time of the hero, finds genuine values in the inner world of the man, in the realm of intellectual searches and ethics. Escapist conduct and nostalgic admiration of the past characterize the hero now. Substantial changes also take place in the author's literary point of view.

In the present paper I would like to deal with some characteristic features of Estonian literature in the 1930s, and with the influence that the outbreak of the Second World War and the events that took place at the beginning of the War, had exerted on the literary production of Karl Ristikivi (1912—1977), who was at that time a young beginner, but who soon attained a leading position as a prose writer and poet.

By that time the Estonian national culture had attained its maturity. The people who had freed itself from centuries-long oppression by the foreign powers, had started, in 1918, to found, despite all the difficulties, its own state, culture, a new life altogether. Literature had reached the level and extent unknown before, it was permeated with optimism and was in full swing, indeed.

In the literature of the period of the Estonian Republic we do not see such drastic decline of spirits or a revision of previous values characteristic of the Western European literature between the two wars, with all the demoralizing influence of the massacres of the First World War on the generation that had taken part in that War.

In our society, events of entirely different kind were taking place — namely the War of Independence, which gave the Estonians strength and durability, since they were fighting for their liberty, their national independence — in short, for the ideals the people had dreamt of for centuries. All this does not mean that critical attitudes were altogether absent from the Estonian literature of that period, but these critical

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notes were directed against social injustice, the ruling powers and human vices — the writers of the period tried to defend the suffering man tormented by poverty. However, we can say that we do not perceive deep pessimism or actual doubt in the primary values of life, we do not meet with the moods of weariness of life (*taedium vitae*) or of “radical metaphysical disappointment.”¹

It was just into such an atmosphere of intellectual rise that K. Ristikivi came when he appeared in Estonian literature in 1938. He belonged to the generation greatly influenced by the literary group of *Arbujad* (The Soothsayers), who defended intellectualism against naturalistic moods; they evaluated personality. Ristikivi's works are imbued with the same ideals — a belief in man in his own right, in moral values and a meaningful sense of living. Even in the conditions of international tension of the late 1930s *Arbujad* did not forsake human ideals.

In 1939, poet Heiti Talvik, one of the spiritual leaders of *Arbujad*, wrote as follows:

Give the last morsel of your last piece of bread
to your enemy /.../,
and take with a smile the heavy burden
from your neighbour's shoulders.²

Here the poet calls upon unconditionally doing one's moral duty, upon a self-denying serving a fellow-man. And it was an evil irony of history that just this poet, the one who had professed such ideals, was arrested in 1945 by Soviet occupants and deported to Siberia, where he perished in 1947.

When the Second World War broke out, K. Ristikivi was a 27-year old student of Tartu University. Estonia was living under the first Russian occupation, when mass deportations and executions took place. Then the German occupation followed. By that time K. Ristikivi had had his successful debut with his first novel “Fire and Iron”, which was published in 1938, and where the author described the life of industrial workers in Tallinn from the end of the previous century up to the 1930s.

In the complicated and difficult social conditions of the occupations Ristikivi published two more novels with two-year intervals, which depicted the same period. One of these two was “The Abode of a Just Man” (1940). This heading has different meanings, among them also an ironical one. The first edition of this book, however, had the heading “In a Strange House”, because the representatives of the new, Soviet power in the publishing house did not like the novel to have a title that reminded of the Bible. His next novel was “The Garden” (1942), dealing with the forming of the Estonian intellectuals. These three novels constitute the so-called Tallinn trilogy.

The social convulsions and the tragical events of the period were not yet reflected in these novels directly, but the indirect implications are indisputable. This is particularly true of the novel “The Garden”.

As to the general aspect of these three novels, we have here to do with a traditional realistic family and development novels (*Entwicklungsroman*), but owing to some new motifs, a deep psychological representation of the characters and a philosophical treatment of life, these novels were innovatory enough in Estonian literature of those days. The writer's general outlook was influenced by the national spirit as well as by the spirit of humanistic ideals of old Europe. The strong sense of reality coexists with the elevated, idealized depicting of man.

¹ Oras, A. Eesti luule vaimusust. — Tulumuld, 1956, 4, 132; in a newly-published anthology: Artikleid eestluse ajaloost. — «Loomingu» raamatukogu, 1988, 25/26, 102.

² Talvik, H. Luuletused. Tallinn, 1988, 132.

Now to the more concrete motifs of the novel in which the influence of the period is most clearly reflected.

The main character of "The Garden", the orphan son of a village schoolmaster, later a teacher of ancient languages, a sensitive idealist, reacts to the distressing conditions of his time with a kind of exile — namely, he creates a new and better world in his mind, an ideal world which exists only in his imagination. This world is ancient Greece, a sunny and idealized Fairyland, a harmonious and happy state of mankind in the bosom of nature, the land "where joy and beauty accompanied people from the cradle to the banks of Lethe."³ Arcadia becomes his spiritual, his real homeland, whereas his actual native country was tormented and cheerless.

Here we can draw the **first** conclusion: the nostalgic craving of the character for the past times acts as an idealistic reaction to the distressing conditions of his contemporary life. In addition to the existing reality the man creates another, alternative reality in his imagination, which, for him, is as real as the physical reality. Still, the author's strong sense of reality counterbalances the hero's idealistic striving for the heights: many a time does the author smile benevolently or sadly while following his hero's dreams.

Second. In the first two novels of the trilogy the characters' dreams are directed to the future — the main character of the "Fire and Iron", who has come from a village and has settled down to work at a factory in Tallinn, dreams of founding a real, patriarchal home in the country. The main character of "The Abode of a Just Man", the poor orphan Jakob Kadarik also dreams of future riches. In "The Garden", on the contrary, the ideals and values are no longer sought for the future, they are found in the past of mankind.

K. Ristikivi depicts the path of life of his characters as a circle. At the end they come to the beginning again, to where they, full of expectations, once started. Such principle of composition accentuates the meaning of human life. New generations begin their life-struggle from the beginning, new beginnings and endings repeat themselves again and again. The idea of mythical circuit of life, the idea of periodicity comes forth especially clearly in K. Ristikivi's later historical-philosophical novels. He does not adhere to the idea of evolution, he has no faith in the future perspectives of mankind. According to him, real values can sooner be found in the past. The nostalgic treatment of the past in Ristikivi's works shows the tendency to become ever deeper. But already here, in Tallinn trilogy the author finds stable values either in the homes of citizens of in the old Hanseatic town with age-long traditions, in patriarchal village life or even in the fairyland of ancient Greece.

K. Ristikivi's estimation of the reality is rather pessimistic — nobody of his characters fulfils his dreams. Together with his characters the author compensates the unsuccessfulness of the outer courses of life and the scantiness of the material side of life by placing the values into the inner life of his characters, to the sphere of moral and mental selves. What is important is the quality of life, the way life has been lived. The real values do not lie in achievements, in material flourishing of life, but in striving, in the moral journey towards one's aim. Here Schopenhauer's philosophy of life finds some reflection: what you are in your inner life is more important than what you possess or what you have achieved.⁴

³ Ristikivi, K. Rohtaed. Tallinn, 1985, 26.

⁴ Schopenhauer, A. Elutarkus. Tartu, 1940, 16.

As we can see, already in these Ristikivi's first novels there are tendencies, though hidden yet, to turn from the horizontal description of the outer world to the vertical axis, to the inner space of the character, to the sphere of subjective time. This turning to the cognitive mind, to the sphere of subjectivity can be taken as **third** proof of the influence of the period.

Fourthly. Again, in the model of reality in the novel "The Garden", we frequently come across such metaphysical categories as "reality", "here and now" (*nunc et hoc*), "space" and "time", "timelessness", "eternity", "memory"; such symbols as "man's journey" "circuitry of life". We also meet with the image of a train which takes us "farther and farther from reality"⁵.

There are metaphysical motifs in nature descriptions, too: "The evening light is falling as a golden rain and suddenly everything that was real, that was here and now, is lost. Only a kind of mirage has remained in the space and light, and time has stopped. Everything has become eternal"⁶.

It was only recently that these metaphysical motifs in our literary treatments have been given attention, and this thanks to the scholar and poet Toomas Liiv⁷.

So the fourth conclusion is that into the model of the reality of the novel came now a metaphysical dimension.

Fifth. The hero of "The Garden", who during his whole life had sought values high in the sky or in the faraway past, finds them at last close at hand. He finds his God not in the Arcadian groves, but in the homeland Nature. However, the experience gained in the world does not lead him into the world of unearthly ideas — on the contrary, he begins to seek his roots, his connexion with this place and his people, and he comes to understand that homeland and one's nation is a value in itself.

The author came upon this idea of nation owing to the catastrophes that the Estonian people had to go through during the War.

Here the transcendental dimension, the idea of God comes into the novel, although at the beginning of the novel the main character presented himself emphatically as a God-denier.

Sixth. And finally, it can be noted that the aspect of the universe in the novel also changes the visual angle — we can see that the point of view is shifting ever higher. Perceiving how distressing human life was in this world, how one was deprived of liberty, how everything was based on violence, and how one had to continue living despite one's disappointments in everything, including world politics, the author occasionally felt a need to take a universal standpoint, that is almost a divine standpoint, which, being neutral and righteous, would bring corrections into human partiality.

To sum up, we can say that the politically very tense atmosphere of the time when the novel was written and published, has left its marks in the novel. Still, the obsessions of that time have not given birth to moods of total hopelessness: the older generation of the intellectuals dominates with their faith in man and God and the durability of human values.

The pessimistic view that the ideal world will never arrive, changes in the author's treatment into a positive, categorical imperative — every man's duty is to strive after ideals.

⁵ Ristikivi, K. Rohtaed, 239.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁷ Liiv, T. Karl Ristikivi kirjanikuna. — Looming, 1987, 9, 1247.

MUUTUSTEST KARL RISTIKIVI METAFÜÜSILISES
AJATUNNETUSES ÜHISKONDLIKE SÜNDMUSTE MÕJUL
1939—1941

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1930. aastatel eesti kirjandusse astunud prosaist ja luuletaja Karl Ristikivi (1912—1977) oli enne Teise maailmasõja puhkemist jõudnud avaldada Tallinna triloogia esimese romaani «Tuli ja raud» (1938). Saabunud keerulistes ühiskondlikes oludes valmisid kirjanikul kaheaastaste intervallidega triloogia järgmised osad: «Võõras majas» (1940) ja «Rohtaed» (1942). Just viimases on ajastu mõjuna jälgitavad muutused kirjaniku metafüüsilises ajatunnetuses.

1. Füüsilise reaalsuse kõrvale loob tegelane alternatiivse reaalsuse, ideaalmaa Arkaadia, mis eksisteerib tegelase unistustes. Tegelase elupagulus toimib idealistliku reaktsioonina kaasaja ahistavate olude vastu.

2. Romaani reaalsusmudel is valitseb minevikuline ajatunnetus. Kui triloogia kahes esimeses romaanis olid tegelaste unistused suunatud tulevikku, siis «Rohtaias» otsitakse ideaale ja kõlbelisi väärtusi inimkonna minevikust. Tulevikuväljavaadetes hakkab kirjanik suhtuma üha ilmsema skepsisega. Ühiskondlikes protsessides ei anna tooni madalamalt kõrgemale astmele arenemine, vaid kordumine, müüdiline ringkäik.

3. Välismaailma horisontaalteljeliselt kujutamisel pöörduv kirjanik vertikaalteljele — tegelase seesmisse ruumi, subjektiivse aja valdkonda. Tõeliselt väärtuslik ei peitu saavutustes, vaid püüdluses, kõlbelises teekonnas eesmärkide poole.

4. Metafüüsilise reaalsuse olemasolule viitavad kategooriad, nagu *tõelisus, nüüd ja siinsamas (nunc et hoc), ruum, aeg, ajatus, igavesus ja mälestus*. Esineb kujutus rongist, mis viib reisijaid *ikka kaugemale ja kaugemale reaalsusest välja*. (Neile metafüüsilistele motiividele on eesti kirjandusteaduses tähelepanu osutanud T. Liiv).

5. Peategelane esineb romaani algul rõhutatult jumalaeitajana, kuid elades läbi kõiksusekogemust, jõuab jumaladeeni.

6. Kõiksusliku aspekti ilmumine romaani teiseendab ka nägemisrakurssi — nii mõnigi kord on märgata, et vaatepunkt nihkub kõrgemale. Autor, kes tajus inimelu ahistatust vabaduseta ja vägivaldala rajatud maailmas ning elas üle pettumusi maailma poliitikas, tundis aeg-ajalt tarvet asuda kõiksuslikule, n.õ. jumalikule seisukohale, mis neutraalse ja õiglasena korrigeeriks inimlikku erapoolikust.

Sellest hoolimata, et K. Ristikivi kirjutas «Rohtaeda» erakordselt pimevates ühiskondlikes oludes, valitseb romaanis usk inimese ja jumalasse ning humaansete väärtuste püsimisse. Kirjaniku elutunnetus on kantud eetilise ja esteetilisest maksimalismist: kui ideaalne maailm kunagi ei saabugi, on iga inimese kohus selle poole vähemalt püüelda.

ОБ ИЗМЕНЕНИИ МЕТАФИЗИЧЕСКОГО ПОЗНАНИЯ
ВРЕМЕНИ КАРЛА РИСТИКИВИ
ПОД ВЛИЯНИЕМ ВТОРОЙ МИРОВОЙ ВОЙНЫ

Реет НЕЙТХАЛ

Прозаик и поэт Карл Рistikиви (1912—1977) вошел в эстонскую литературу в 1930-е годы. До второй мировой войны он успел издать лишь первый роман из т. н. таллиннской трилогии — «Огонь и железо» (1938). В изменившейся в связи с войной общественной обстановке он издал следующие два тома трилогии — «В чужом доме» (1940) и

«Сад» (1942). В последнем романе особенно наглядно отразились перемены, которые произошли в метафизическом познании времени писателя. Перечислим их:

1. Главное действующее лицо романа «Сад» создает наряду с физическим бытием альтернативную реальность, которая существует только в его воображении и мечтах.

2. Главный герой ищет нравственные идеалы и ценности человечества в прошлом, т. е. у писателя направленность течения времени изменилась. Он потерял веру в будущее и ход общественных процессов представляет не в развитии, а циклично, в повторении.

3. Писатель меняет описание внешнего мира с горизонтальной оси на вертикальную, он фокусирует внимание на внутреннем пространстве героя, углубляется в область субъективного. Первичным становится не достижение цели, а лишь стремление к ней и нравственный подход.

4. На метафизическое измерение времени писателя указывают такие категории, как явь, ныне и здесь, пространство, время, безвременность, вечность, воспоминание. В романе есть образ поезда, который везет пассажиров все дальше и дальше от реальности.

5. Главный герой проходит путь от отрицания Бога до осознания его всездущности. До идеи Бога он поднимается через измерение бесконечного времени.

6. Будничная и божественная точки зрения существуют параллельно.

Несмотря на перечисленное, в романе «Сад» чувствуется авторский оптимизм, а также этический и эстетический максимализм: хотя идеальный мир недостижим, человек должен к нему стремиться.