

Two years ago at the Congress of Finno-Ugric writers in Hungary I had a speech on re-contextualizing of the Finno-Ugric literatures within the Finno-Ugric cultural frame, not in post-Soviet, non-Russian etc. context. It was just a suggestion for a possible reception abroad, a suggestion based in the general public opinion – my own assessment is irrelevant here – and based in awareness of the existence of the Finno-Ugric concept, since the concept of Finno-Ugric literatures has existed for relatively long time. The proof of existence of the concept is actually the fact that this Congress is taking place, and also the fact, that most of you, the Finno-Ugric authors, do read each other's works and knowingly or not are influenced by them. Within the history of the concept of the Finno-Ugric literature, the Kalevalaic movement or kalevalaism – as I call it – is probably the most distinct realization of the Finno-Ugric literary concept.

Kalevala has been many times used as an artistic, esthetic, social and political pattern in artistic production and other types of acting. *Kalevala* itself was intended in all these contexts, it was not only a piece of art, but also a political gesture. Even though one of its intentions has stayed unfulfilled, I mean cultural and political reunion of the Finns and the Carelians, exactly this so to say international or cross-national feature stays behind the great influence of *Kalevala* on literature of Finno-Ugric peoples.

Due to Kalevala's textual and extra-textual valences – e.g. the cultural and cultic contest between the people in the center of the world and the people at the periphery, the references to an actual social and political state of affairs and the ambition to change them – Kalevala has offered a genre opportunity for other national literatures and slowly built its own international canon. Kalevala has however remained the real canonic work. All the other kalevalaic works may be seen as mere apocrypha as in the case of the Script and all the other works using it as a kind of pretext.

The prestigious position of Kalevala within the Finnish literature may be perceived in the historiography speaking of pre-kalevalaic texts. We can again see an analogy with the position of the Script in the Western literature. At least since humanism, the person of Socrates from Plato's dialogues has been understood as John the Baptist *sui generis* and some of the dialogues as pre-evangelical texts.

It is well-known, that Elias Lönnrot used as the genre model Homeric epics, Aeneid and Macpherson's *The Poems of Ossian* from the middle of 18th century. *Ossian* inspired other preromantic and romantic imitations of older heroic epics too: e.g. the Czech *Manuscripts of Grünberg and Königinhof* and probably the Russian *Slovo o polku Igoreve* too. The social and political ambition of such texts, or at least ambition in which the text have been put in, may be clearly perceived from the tempestuous discussions about their authenticity.

The romantic pattern of Kalevala consists obviously of the effort to employ the complexity of folklore. In Kalevala and other followers of Ossian lyrical parts may be found, further verses devoted to the theme of love and perception of natural phenomena. The core of the epic plot are in *Ossian* wars between Caledonians, Irish, Scandinavian invaders etc., in the Czech manuscripts battles between Czech tribes on one hand and also between Czechs, Saxons and Tatars, two symbolic enemies of the Slavonic world, on the other hand are portrayed. What makes *Kalevala* outstanding in the context of national epics of that time is the absence of concrete historical enemy threatening the people from the textual core, the people of Kalevala. The people of Pohjola, albeit in Finnish nationalist interpretation perceived as the Sami people, are not even threatening the people of Kalevala. They are opposing them, but in another way. People of Pohjola and people of Kalevala are a complementary pair. These need from Pohjola their women, those need from Kalevala knowledge and handicraft. Such a co-operation inspired Longfellow to write his *Song of Hiawatha* and continued also in British New Zealand's writer Alfred Domett's work *Ranolf and Amohia* from 1872. In these kalevalaic works the proposed cultural clash is solved by marriage and in *Hiawatha* the arrival of Europeans and Christianity doesn't even cause Hiawatha's rejection, which is in opposition to Väinämöinen's reaction to the birth of the Lord. Kalevala is in comparison to many other kalevalaic works ahistorical. The historicity comes only at the end by the birth of the Lord. I don't know however, what is the situation in the last known non-Uralic kalevalaic epic, that is the Vietnamese *Children of Mon and Man*.

The point of view of a conqueror, somebody who struggles with a stranger outside his homeland for the sake of a woman was used in the Sami writer Anders Fjellner's epic *The Son of the Sun's Courting in the Land of the Giants* from the second half of 19th century. Also in another Sami kalevalaic epic written by the South Sami author Erik Nilsson-Mankok in 1970s the main plot is an endeavor to win a woman's heart. Mankok wrote in the foreword to his *Epose*, published in the anthology *Aama gatterh*, following words: "Kalevala is the Finnish-Carelian epic. According to *Kalevala* I have adapted the tale *The Student and Nilles Bryngele*, which I heard from my godfather Neila." Strangely enough, there is scarcely any other feature common to both, the *Epose* and *Kalevala* – except the search for a woman. The poem is relatively short – about 62 stanzas. The plot has explicit historical, temporal and spatial frame – the middle of the 17th century in Swedish Vilhelmina County. A national collective identity is rather fractured than constructed, since the Sami collective is very diversified and the main character is in fact immodest and he assaults on the symbol of the Saminess, the reindeer herders. All the actants of the plot are Sami, therefore the question, who are we and who are the others, is irrelevant here. I cannot decide even about the inspiration of Kalevala in term of the rhythm: for the Sami languages the natural metre is also trochee. In the *Epose*, the trochee is used, but the stanzas consist of five or six, not four feet like in Kalevala.

It would be interesting to examine the problem of metre in other kalevalaic works. E.g. Mikhail Khudyakov's Udmurt epic *Dorvyzhy*, originally written in Russian is in kalevalaic eight syllabic trochee too, but in the Udmurt translation the final foot of the trochee is reduced and the stanzas have only seven syllables. It is hard to say, what has been the motivation for such change in the rhythm. In translations of Finno-Ugric epics written originally in Russian I would expect rather a kind of "kalevalaization" of the rhythm as a reference to the specific Finno-Ugric prestigious genre and its strategic potential in terms of nation and national literary canon construction.

The nation construction role of the genre has been expressed on the level of language standardization, by creating one national cultural language and bridging idioms, and on the level of the plot, by answering the question who we are and who we are not. Therefore the plot is mostly built upon a struggle with "the others" that brings the negative definition of who we are. Sometimes the plot has been set in historical, sometimes in ahistorical frame like in Kalevala. In most of the kalevalaic epics of the eastern Finno-Ugric peoples, the others are Russians (sometimes Tatars). Interesting enough is the case of Pet Pershut's Mari poem *Kytky syan* from 1937, an epic depicting the quest for a kidnaped bride of an ant. It might be linked to the Homeric epic of *Batrachomyomachia / The battle of frogs and mice*, however in the Homeric pattern, there is not the theme of otherness, since the perspective of the frogs and the mice is in the narrative equal. In my opinion in *Kytky syan* the theme is the erosive effect of outsiders on the traditional Komi society and thus it carries a nation constructing purpose too.

In terms of the nation construction strategy of the epic, most significant is the appearance of women writers during the 20th and 21st centuries. Writers like Anne Vabarna, the author of Setu epic *Peko*, Nina Zaitseva, the author of Vepsian epic *Virantanaz* and Mirja Kempainen, the author of Ingrian epic *Liekku* have introduced a female element to the Finno-Ugric national epics. The female element doesn't stand in opposition to the masculine element, but is complementary to it. This is in fact a strategy to complete the compact national picture. In *Peko*, *Virantanaz* and to smaller extent also in *Liekku*, the focus lays on the women's destiny in the myth of creation of a nation. The main characters are actually women: mothers, wives, daughters, daughters-in-law. The stories are told from their perspective.

Actually the closer to Finland and the further in time the epics have arose, the more they differ from Kalevala. However, Mirja Kempainen's *Liekku* from 2013 is surprisingly very close to the kalevalaic pattern in many ways, starting with mythological, cosmogonic verses or relying on collections from 19th century. Compared to Kalevala *Liekku* has probably a little bit more stress in the woman's destiny and the wars are not described from the heroic point of view. Interesting point is the struggle with Estonian magicians, i.e. the magicians from the South/South-West, that is in opposition to the common Nordic axiology of the Northern cardinal direction bearing the negative magic value. We may compare this not only to

Kalevala and its struggle with Pohjola and to Kalevipoeg and his struggle with Finland, but also to the value of Nilfheim or Ginnungagap in the Old Norse mythology.

An axiological perspective complementary to Kalevala from the masculine point of view may be found in Bengt Pohjanen's historical novel from 2013 *The Realm of Faravid* with the toponymical subtitle *Kvenland* referring to the toponymical title of *Kalevala*. Pohjanen identifies kalevalaic Pohjola with the homeland of North Scandinavian Finnic people and attempts to switch the north-south oriented axiology of Kalevala for the sake of creating the Golden Age of Kvens and founding their collective identity. Already the prosaic form of the text reveals the redirection from the Homeric inspiration of Kalevala to the Biblical one. The old new king of Kvenland has to bring his people to the Promised Land. Also the ethnic essentialism, typical for the genre of national epic, is softened in the text. Kvens, their history and histories are result of mixture of different nations and their traditions. This is also mentioned in the preface to the book.

Prefaces or other paratexts, primary narratives directly linked to the implied author are important signals within the genre of national epic. They don't bring only the instruction for interpretation, and information about folklore sources of the text, but implicitly also reveal particular genre inspiration going back to the classical literature, first stanzas of the *Iliad*: "Sing, O goddess, the anger of Achilles son of Peleus..." and of Vergil's *Aeneid*: "I sing of arms and the man, he who, exiled by fate... Muse, tell me the cause: how was she offended in her divinity." Even though in Kalevala there is not similar addressing of a Muse or a Goddess, other sources of inspiration are mentioned: the cultural tradition and also the cultural landscape and natural phenomena like frost. Thus Kalevala as the pretext may be identified mainly at the beginning of the kalevalaic texts. In *Biarmija* by Kallistrat Zhakov, the first stanzas start with questions about the origin of songs: "Where are you, the purple of songs, Izumrud of ancient tales?" "Kde ty, kde ty, purpur pesen, / Izumrud skazaniy drevnikh?" It is the primary perspective of the narrator, the collector of already existing songs, that is in common of most of the kalevalaic epics. Similarly is the position of the narrator to the implied audience and the folk background of his songs expressed in Vasili Radayev's *Siyazhar* and *Tyushtya*. In *Siyazhar*, there is an epigraph taken from a Mordvin folksong implying the narrator's role: "What songs shall we sing / what tales shall we tell?" In *Tyushtya* the role of the narrator is expressed as the one, who remembers the nation's history and who is going to teach it to those, who have forgotten it. The kalevalaic essential relationship between the landscape and the people living there as the source of folklore tales is present also in Khudyakov's *Dorvyzhy*: "In the country with swift rivers / where is the blue river Tchepca / where are bears in woods / where bold courageous people live / there these songs have arose / these ancient legends / these glorious tales." "V tom kraju, gde reki bystry / Gde reka Tchepca sineet / Gde v lesakh zhivut medvedi / gde otvazhno smely ljudi / tam vznikali eti pesni / eti drevnie legendy / eti slavnye skazanja." The intention of such metalyrical texts is obvious. They construct the link between the country, the people and

the tales. Only the indigenous population is able to understand the message from the country, from the landscapes and the nature.

The genological, genre oriented criteria are heterogeneous. A particular genre may be defined upon metrics, length, strophic division, voice, perspective, relationship between fictional and non-fictional world, theme, sujet, function etc. Taking this in consideration we may appoint different types of kalevalaic works and different ways of periodization of this literary and cultural movement. The common feature however remains the primary inspiration by Kalevala.