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FINNISHNESS AS A SOULSCAPE REVISITED

A mind's journey into space, time and humanity

MOTTO

Time is porous,
it has holes –
it leaks.
The future sneaked into
the present in advance,
too soon.
Stepped in front of me
and looked straight at me.
I could do nothing
presence seeped away.

PRELUDE

Dawn, daybreak, refers to freshness, to the state of being new: to a moment when something is still constructing its own beginning. The inner universe of the travelogue – or, maybe, rather, travelogues – becomes an existential cord plaited from the strands of lived time, lived space, lived body, and the lived other. Somewhere in the background there is music, the resounding refrain of the modern world.

Time is young, as is the mind-person. The present is sought fervently, deliriously. The beautiful is adored, life is lived aesthetically. The 1920's with their Torch Bearers [Tulenkantajat] and machine romanticists emerge as a counter-echo to the deathly whisper of weapons of the previous decade. The 1930's bask in the sun of bodyliness, the proud extolment of the physical. A brave new millenium rises, and suddenly existence starts with the number two. Virtuality, artificial reality, lives its days of glory. Meanwhile beauty, machine aesthetics and bodyliness breathe on with vigour. How deep do the roots of this new present reach? How far is it possible to follow them?

Wishes and the reality of events do not, however, always reach out and touch. One year is unlike any other: the brightness of the morning and the clarity of midday light are followed by night's darkness.

Two more wars were yet to come. The cruelly cold winter had the feel of rigor mortis. In an uninterrupted flow people were to drift away from the land of their fathers. Homelessness would create a longing that spanned generations.

When life is full of anxiety, memories can be consoling. They bring the lost home a little closer. The journey of the mind-person into the Finnish soulscape is about to begin. Literature and photographs speak of feelings and ambiances from past decades. The traveller searching for humanity inhabits, at least briefly, language, the verbal dwelling of his own being. Perhaps he also has the ability to empathise and feel ennobled. He must also quieten down.

The travelogue, the cultural-philosophical tale, hurries forward and unfolds in front of the reader, in pace with lines spoken by philosopher and living person. Momentary snapshots and various echoes from past times give shape to these cross-sections of alternating sunrises and sunsets. The result is an existential montage of sorts, perhaps even a *pastiche* of the Torch Bearers, in which the assembly of the parts, the lay-out of the lived images, pays homage to impressionism. At the same time, it highlights slightly macabre attitude towards one of the fashion quirks of our times, writing intervention. Does this introverted self-study ultimately constitute an intervention and a form of warfare? They who read on, shall live and learn.

THE TOUCH OF DEATH – THE PARADIGM OF RESEARCHING THE (DEAD) BODY

The philosopher:

It is possible to misunderstand the claim that the body "acts as a mediator" in encounters between people. Encounters between people are possible due to the fact that, in a sense, a person *is* his/her (own) body. If a human being signifies his/her own body, an encounter with a fellow human happens without any mediation. Categories of ownership ("having") cannot be applied to the body (someone's body) without reservation. The object of "having" is there, to some extent, (and now the perspective of general humanity should be shifted towards the self-as-experiencer) in spite of me, as is for example my pen. I cannot organize my body or dispose of it, as I would organize or dispose of my stamp collection. "My body" does not refer to a dead body, a corpse, but to all that which embodies me, brings me to being. (In both his statements the philosopher is paraphrasing Luijpen & Koren 1987, pp. 156 – 158. See also Itkonen 1999, 2006a; 2006c.)

If the subject and the body cannot be told apart, one can think that I encounter the other as a real-life subject through his/her look, gesture, posture, or word. The body of the other is his/her body (as an other): he/she lives as a personality (a person, a being) in his/her look, gesture, posture or word. Thus I encounter others as subjects when they look at me lovingly, angrily or uncaringly; when they gesture towards me or address me. Their bodies with their postures and movements are the expressions, embodiments, of their subjectivities.

It is only to the extent, the scope, to which there is a non-identity, un-sameness between the subject and the body, that the body can be said to "act as a mediator" in human encounters. There is a non-identity in which I cannot fully recognize the subject who I am, with my feet, nose etc. In a sense I do *have* a body (or I even *own* a body), for if I *were* – without reservation – my own body I would be engulfed by a world of mere objects. "My body" refers to a change, to a transition from that which I *am* without a doubt, to that which I *have* without a doubt. I AM a subject and I OWN ("I have") a car. But as regards my body, neither "being" nor "having" can be proved beyond doubt. My body is situated between these two states, and it is only to this extent that the body can be said to act as a mediator (or transmitter?) in encounters between people.

Photograph 1. The sunset of today.

(Photo: Varkaus Museum photo archive, A. Ahlström Co. collection / Ivar Ekström. Photographer: Ivar Ekström 1918.)

The living person:

In his memoirs *Taistelu huomispäivästä. Isänmaan opissa 1918 – 1948* ["The battle for the morrow. Schooled by the fatherland 1918 – 1948"] Matti Kurjensaari (1948, pp. 14 – 15) depicts the first summer of his boyhood that stayed forever imprinted on his soul¹: "The first consciously lived

summer of my life had a famous, resounding, unforgettable name. Its colour was white, blood red, gold. The wondrous summer, a long rainless summer, vast and stifling, hot and shuddery. – I remember the smell in the kitchen of the Red Guard, what the first German soldiers looked like, the taste of the sweet foreign bread, I remember the man shot on the sports field with the red membership card and sugar cube placed on his chest. – The little boy who sees the sun shining as he is buttoning up his trousers in the morning does not ask how long it will be until the next rain. In his consciousness, the sun is as self-evident as the yard at home and the sky above it. Summer 1918.” The photograph tells the same story: the town of Varkaus, Pirtinvirta beach, the victors and the defeated, face to face. In between them, levelled rifles. And the bottomless chasm of eternity. The late winter of 1918 is bitterly cold. Long deathly shadows are cast on the snow; coats have been taken off, as well as caps. It is a humiliation, a deprivation of humanity, and a zealous anti-humanisation of self. The white innocence is dyed red; a state of non-brotherhood is established that lives and breathes on even today.

One of the subtitles of Sara Heinämaa's (1996) doctoral thesis *Ele, tyyli ja sukupuoli* [Gesture, style and gender] is "[Simone de] Beauvoir ja puolittuva ruumis" [Beauvoir and the halving body]. Taina Kinnunen entitles her text, published in the anthology *Kameleonttikuluttaja ikuista mielihyvää ja unelmaa etsimässä* [The chameleon consumer in search of eternal satisfaction and dream]: "Syövä, sekstaava ja rokkaava ruumis baarinäyttämöllä" [The eating, flirting, rocking body on the bar stage]. One of the set texts for Women's Studies at the University of Jyväskylä is entitled *Ruumiin kuvia: subjektin ja sukupuolen muunnelmia* [Body images: variations of the subject and gender] (1997). Moments after the photograph discussed above was taken, it ought to have been possible to begin the only kind of true "body search" that there is. The working class youths, killed, executed, act as mediators in the encounters between the Whites and the Reds wasting away in the prison camps. The next-of-kin are, supposedly, the owners of these corpses, the deceased; it is no longer possible to speak of 'bodies' or 'embodiment'. The mortal remains of the killed can be disposed of, precisely just like the stamp collection mentioned by the philosopher. The piled up corpses can only stand for the cruelty and vengefulness of fellow humans – or anti-humans.

Following philosopher Lauri Rauhala, Maija Lehtovaara (1994, p. 141) succinctly defines the concept of paradigm as a research orientation that can be philosophically justified. In this context, one could make the laconic observation that Women's Studies and the study of 'the body' in general seem to be misguided in their choice of existential terminology. [Translator's note: the author objects here to the Finnish word 'ruumis' being used instead of 'keho' in the context of 'bodyliness'. In Finnish, 'ruumis' can refer both to a living and a dead body, whereas 'keho' refers unambiguously to a living body.] Perhaps an acquaintance with the adventures of young Lauri in Oiva Paloheimo's (1942, pp. 136 – 137) novel *Levoton lapsuus* [Restless childhood] would correct and clarify these existential misunderstandings: "The companions set off. As soon as they had stepped into the street they encountered the first victim. His wrist had been crushed – as if a piece had been bitten off. Lauri thought that now it was easy to see the veins. Along the way they saw the corpses of men, women and horses. Valtteri rushed on from one corpse to another. He turned those lying on their mouth onto their back in order to see their faces. – Valtteri was tearing at the corpses like a madman. On Häme street there were piles of them and the boy rolled away the ones on top without hesitation. – It simply could not be that his [Lauri's] father, a fine and wise man, had turned into a bloody, stiff corpse." In the rigid posture of the dead body one does not encounter the other as a real subject, as a lived-in and living body. This is something we should all bear in mind.

In 1928, the working class magazine *Itä ja Länsi* [East and West] published three memorial albums of photographs taken of workers who had died in battle or had been murdered. Two photographs from the second album (I & L 13 – 14/1928, pp. 266, 268) are enough to reveal something of the

existential atmosphere of the times: 1) "Emil Albin Behm, from Varkaus. Born 1897. Died of starvation in Kuopio prison camp 22 May 1918. 2) Otto Tiihonen, from Varkaus. Shot without trial in Varkaus 21 February 1918." The young men in the photos are dressed in their best outfits, with bow-ties and fashionable caps. I wonder if one of them is in the photograph of the Pirtinvirta tragedy, standing among the defeated party, bowing his head in surrender (see also Itkonen 2003). Both of these young men were no longer alive, either in their gaze or word; they were not staring at their near and dear ones lovingly, nor were they gesturing towards their victors angrily or begging for mercy and understanding. The existential expression of both men signified non-subjectivity, a corporeal *ex-bodiment*. The descriptions of the working class women who died for the freedom of the working class read for example as follows (I & L 2 – 3/1928, p. 28): "Martta Saarinen 16 years, murdered in Riihimäki." The beautiful thoughts voiced in L. Onerva's fine novel *Yksinäisiä* [Lonely People] which probes even our modern times and was inspired by an official declaration published in the "Rauhan Sanomat" [Peace News], seem to spring from an entirely different reality: "X. The members of large and small nations enjoy equal rights and freedoms. The people govern themselves according to the will of their Lord Jesus, guided by the principles of reciprocal love, freedom, brotherhood and equality." (Onerva 1917, p. 37; see also Mäkelä, 2003, on L. Onerva.) The poet's in-depth analysis of the spirit or essence of the times seems to point more to the 1920's than to its own moment in time. L. Onerva obviously had the ability to anticipate future moments, to act as the augur of the new dawn.

As early as in 1910, Juhani Siljo, who has been called a great ethical contender and a relentless seeker of selfhood (see e.g. Itkonen 2002) commits to paper a part of the existential mood of the Finnish civil war in his poem "Excelsior" (*Runoja* [Poems] collection, p. 19) as early as in 1910:

Like a drawn bow is this will of mine.
From the sun I received the order and command
to rise, enlightened, on the highest hill
and many a path so false to shun.

This Nietzschean ethicist died in May 1918 in Tampere, in the military hospital set up in a local primary school. The collection *Selvään veteen* [Into clear water] was published posthumously and edited by Ain' Elisabet Pennanen. The fourth verse of the title poem reads as follows:

Our way into the sea's emerald eye
was guided by a starry summer sky,
the grim road we survived.
– Only to be swallowed by the open green sea! (Siljo 1919, p. 93.)

Siljo's collection *Maan puoleen* [Towards the earth], published in 1914, bears a resemblance to the works of another Nietzschean seeker, the Norwegian Knut Hamsun, and particularly his novel *Markens Grøde* [Growth of the Soil] (1917). The human being, as *a* being, disappears, but the earth, being, remains in existence even after the visitors are gone. The final verse of the poem "Rotuorhi" [A thoroughbred stallion] depicts the nocturnal fantasies of a stallion that is lazy and submissive in the daytime:

it sees the battlefields
and hears the snorting steeds
and the trembling nostrils
and nimble death (Siljo 1914, p. 10).

”Excelsior” – ever higher and upwards – but towards what? A new humanity? Or the idolization of war?

In photograph 1, the white executors, or Ivar Ekström, the engineer of A. Ahlström Co. who was also present with his camera, were probably not thoroughly familiar with their own subjectivities; they merely owned a functional body that served a certain ideology and law-abidingness that was considered justified. They had the weapons and the obligation to punish that always falls to the winner (often accompanied by an alacrity or eagerness to punish). Perhaps they also had bodies, since the Reds who were to be disposed of were, in that context, mere objects, shells, externalities devoid of internality. Actually, both parties assumed the dual positions of being and having: the bodies of both were being *ex-bodied* reciprocally. The result of being a living correlate of hate and antipathy was death; the piles of bodies stood as artifacts, signs of human handiwork. Were these the summer stars [of the poem], acting as guides? The journey is short from humanity – being – to the state of being a murderer or killer – to having. Was it historical necessity that granted the justification, license or authority to perform atrocities? One explanation can be found in Aarne Mustasalo's novel *Kun itämyrsky vinkui* [When the East wind wailed], dedicated to ”the Mothers of those who fell in battle”. Yet, the comments have the ring of wisdom after the event in the background: ”On the smoking battlefields of the [Finnish] War of Independence, Finland's destiny was at stake. Driven away by the heavy blows of the peasant army led by General Mannerheim, the Russian troops fled Finland and the Red Finnish troops, brave but unfortunately misled, risked their own lives in protecting their retreat.” (Mustasalo 1930, p. 7; on Mustasalo's other works and significance, see Laine 2001.) The translated German hit song recorded by Finnish film star Tauno Palo in 1967 was right on target: the rose is red [”Die rose war rot”], blood-red even.

The philosopher:

Another reason for saying that the body ”acts as a mediator” in my encounters with fellow humans is that the other's body makes it possible for me to enter his/her world as well. The totality of meanings constituted by the other becomes a totality of meanings for me, too. When I, for example, am sitting next to the driver of a car, ”I step into” my companion's inner milieu via his/her body and its extension, the car: I enter the meaning that the road, the hills, the curves, the narrow bridge and the oncoming traffic bears for the driver. If I am nervous because of the car's excess speed, the driver has access, through my body, into the significance that an approaching narrow bridge bears for me. My friend's words place me in his/her world too when I listen to a description of faraway lands unvisited by me. Aided by these words, I step into my companion's world and that world thus becomes meaningful to me as well: my friend's world becomes my world, our world.

All that has been stated above suggests that the other is present to me in a very special manner. My encounter with the other reveals to me that he/she is not a physical object, a corpse, (”*not a thing*”), but a being, a life, an existence, the birth and origin of meaning. He/she complements, (”*accompanies*”) me, is my companion, in a way that a mere physical object could never be. For this reason, I can speak of *us*. But is it, after all, correct to say that explicitly that the other accompanies ME, is MY companion? Am I not HIS/HER companion? What entitles me to empower myself first and the others after that – as if those others represented some kind of masses above which I lift, elevate myself? No, the others are like me, I cannot separate myself from them; they are those among whom I also am. We are companions, peers, comrades.

Photograph 2. Humanity torn in two.

(Photo: Central Finland Museum photo archive. Tampere Market Square 6 April 1918. Unknown photographer.)

The living person:

”Day by day the iron circle around the Red town of Tampere had tightened. The White army had approached the city from all four directions, slowly, but surely, intending to wrap it in a deadly embrace. The army had proceeded like a provoked natural force, a torrent bursting through a breached dam. Moment by moment, hour by hour the gunfire had intensified, and each forward step had to be paid for in blood. The guns had been pounding and the rifles had been rattling ever more implacably. Then there followed a silence that was even more hideous than the ringing of battle that had lasted for days. The knot was tied now.”(Pohjanpää 1950, p. 192.) ”Toivo had spoken in a quiet, toneless voice which bore no trace of bitterness or defiance. He had not offered his hand to the members of the reception party and they were actually relieved at that. For there was a stark stench exuding from Toivo's clothes, and the bright harbour lights plainly showed the ring of dirt imprinted on his pale skin, right above the neck of his woollen shirt. Despite all this, his figure had a fascination and mystery to it. A Red Guard boy returned from the prison camp, something which none of them had experienced. Many had died there. Toivo came back. He was dirty, but obviously healthy. His pale countenance concealed a tenacity which inspired awe in the reception party.” (Kivimaa 1948, pp. 11 – 12.) In photograph 2 there is Tampere Central Square (the caption says Market Square). Hundreds of Red prisoners have been assembled to await the resolution of their fates. It is the beginning of April, 1918. Does the body of the White guard-soldier who sits behind the machine gun really enable one of the prisoners to enter the world of the victors? And vice versa – will the subjugated and degraded body actually transport one towards an equal existence? I strongly doubt it. Neither a spontaneous nor a planned construction of a totality of meaning seems possible under such circumstances. Even the little boys in the photograph probably live this cruel reality in an adventure world of their own. Neither bodyliness nor weapons can function as routes into a mutuality, shared by both parties. The chasm that has opened up between humanities seems to be unbridgeable, forever uncrossable.

The author of the first excerpt, Lauri Pohjanpää, is a poet, aesthete, theologian and clergyman. He was also one of the key people involved in the conquest of Tampere. As a reader I am made to feel that Mr Pohjanpää is trying to offer me access to his own inner milieu through his words. Perhaps his aim was the same in relation to the suppressed working class people. Perhaps he is also trying to justify to himself the necessity of the actualized past. Yet it still remains unclear why Pohjanpää had to do what he did: was it under the orders of a right-wing God? For the cattle-like crowd in photograph 2, Pohjanpää's world of meaning also remains out of reach. Words written in hindsight do not place the opposing party in the other's inner reality. Meanings do not become shared. Being is still stamped by two distinct worlds and by the various separate sub-universes that exist within them. A similar thought is inspired by the second quoted passage, from Arvi Kivimaa's fine novel *Purppuralaahus* [The Purple Trail]. Toivo is and remains alone among his class and school mates. Only the night sky, the brightly burning stars and love are his guides. Torch Bearer Kivimaa will receive the further attention and analysis he deserves in future studies.

”Toivo slowly released his hand from Matti's throat. Matti stayed lying on his back and kept staring at Toivo, at all that which was finally running away escaping, at childhood. Toivo humphed sarcastically and said in a low, grave voice that sounded like a hand gripped anew round his throat: – You bloody brat!” (Seppänen 1934, p. 85.) ”How disgustingly brutal and primitive people are! I never imagined I would end up in a position where I too would be forced to shed more blood and add to the wave – surely not: in the War of Independence I shot tens of people whom I only thought of as legitimate prey. And now the bullet was doing its bloody work because of a verdict uttered by me.” (Railo 1949, p. 240.) In Unto Seppänen's novel *Voittoon* [To Victory], the last part of a trilogy about the boy Markku's family, the worlds of the two boys are torn apart. Class division comes into existence at the same moment. It is interesting in itself to note that in both Kivimaa's and

Seppänen's works the working-class boy's name is Toivo (=Hope), like the dawning of a better future. In the intense scene, a former friend is presented as a mere object, a representative of his class, the enemy. It is perhaps precisely for that reason that he is present in a very special way: as an enemy, as an entity that can be *ex-bodied*. The only birth of meaning present in the situation is self-apperception, an awakening to one's separation from a childhood companion. The little boys are forced to grow up too soon. Childhood ends violently. The wounds are deep and will stay with them until the end of their days. Who is – or are – responsible for this?

East and West (13 – 14/1928, p. 266): "The grave of comrades shot in Varkaus. About 400 workers have been piled in the grave." In Eino Railo's contemplative novel *Silkkihuivi ja virsikirja* [The silk scarf and the psalm book], the Reds are called or compared to legitimate prey. An image of the other perceived as a mere physical object emerges. Were the workers piled in the long, narrow crib of a grave mere animals that could be slaughtered quite legitimately? In a war situation, murder acquires a strange justification and acceptability of its own. Between the warring parties, an uncanny, mutually complementing existence, a symbiosis, is born: the good can only be good in its relation to the other's evil. When killing, the good is not doing anything wrong – merely removing the evil. In other words, the good is only doing (what is) good. Perhaps, in some utterly peculiar way, it is possible to speak about an 'us': companions existentially linked to each other, the condemned and the condemners.

The defeated were isolated inside barbed wire fences, guarded by machine guns standing victoriously in the corners. Inside, stomachs were churning, chests were wheezing in planned revenge; there was whining, praying and swearing in the hands of bloated death. That death itself looked at them like a swollen and fat-necked bourgeois. That is why they feared and hated it a hundredfold. – – The country was free." (Haarla 1932, p. 7.) Lauri Haarla, the author of the novel *Varjojen sota* [War of the Shadows] is also one of the victorious White. That might be the reason why he first empowers himself and only after that each of the vanquished Reds, his existential supplements or complements. The Reds gathered in the Central Square of Tampere are only a mass to him: a nameless herd in which insignificant nobodies are distinguished from each other by numbered patches. As a victor, Haarla is placed above that enraged and unwarrantedly free cattle herd. In our modern age of Web existence, it is fashionable to talk about writing intervention: an intervention in place and time made by an outsider. Perhaps Mr Haarla, too, is unconsciously practicing a method of intervention, since he chooses to explain the gruesome past in a self-flattering light and to his own advantage. Simultaneously, the entire dimension of Red otherness is suppressed and totalized to become a part of one's own dimension of victorhood and rampant murdering. The logic appears to be ruthless: All that was done had to be done! Now the country is free! This freedom had a price: there's nothing more to it. The truth has been written and bound within a single cover. It is there for anybody to read. The case is closed.

In the second part of Elsa Hästesko-Heporauta's *Ursula Keivaara* trilogy, *Siipeen satutettu* [Wounded in the wing] (1929, p. 483), the main character reads a letter, muses on the spirit of the times, and sketches out future dawns: "Would the day ever come when anger-poisoned people understood that this nation is not divided into two races, the Red and the White, but is one: the Finnish people, guilty at present of shedding its own brother's blood. This war has shown how even the heirs of Ilmarinen [translator's note: a mythic hero from the Finnish national epic *Kalevala*] can lose their way in tumultuous times. But if nothing else was learnt from this, the youth that went to war in the spirit of self-sacrifice, the purest part of the nation – mostly children – should have taught their guilty parents that this war was the result of hatred and injustice! And the message from the fallen youth to the survivors is the message of love: a new and better generation will rise, and it will create a brighter future! It shall rebuild in love that which has been destroyed in

wrath by their parents!” Extraordinarily wise and pertinent words: a unique time of brotherhood was already looming on the horizon. A future that would seek the beauty of the spirit, rapture, zest for life, the present moment, companionship and human fellowship – sisterhood and brotherhood – was about to breathe itself to life (see also e.g. Lilja 1972; 1989). The young generation of the Torch Bearers raised a glass to a new and bewitching existence and saluted the 1920's with the slogan that aimed to bury the bloody past for good (Kurjensaari 1950, p. 16): *”Never again war!”*

SHORT IS THE SPACE BETWEEN TWO DARKNESSES

The truth shall not burn in fire, nor will it fade as words on paper. Learning is not life-long: circular time tends to be as identical with its own lived past as possible. And the human being is as blind as ever. A prayer poem, a confessional testament of a traveller resounds in the Finnish soulscape:

Today I am weary,
held in waiting.
What comes is about to come;
only sleep is missing –
and the positive dark
between two lights.

The call was answered. The Golden Twenties arrived. It meant dreaming day and night. The opening of windows to Europe was like a dream come true in contrast to the previous dismal decade. The period also witnessed the powerful surge of a new generation of artists. (See Itkonen 2006b.)

The 1920's can be defined as the anti-night that gleamed brightly between the gloomy days of war. The early 1930's can still be counted as part of the same period of brightness. Not even the severe economic depression could change that. In that sparkling time of youth even the nights were a time of enlightenment: in other words, between two lights there was no darkness, unlike in the war years. The entire reality, the human being's quality of existence, was realized as a kind of non-night, a nightless night, so to speak. That is why the light between the two darkneses was, at the same time, a constant positive darkness. It was easy to breathe that air.

Let us, however, now give the floor to a man of the period, Matti Kurjensaari. In his work *Veljeni merellä myrskyävällä* [My brother at the stormy sea] he touchingly writes about the sunny 1920's: *”And what was the period that had been dreamed of, bitterly fought, suffered and died for? The time of independence. A new atmosphere embraced the country. The lift crane towering against the night sky was a symbol, the car speeding along a highway an emblem of the future. The new architecture attracted people. Technology and the machine had arrived to liberate humanity. – – [Mika Waltari] visited bars and brothels the length and breadth of Europe and had held up the poisonous blossom of a rotten tree, Paris, high above all the rest. Paris in the 1920's was like an old sinner, pagan and immoral through and through. It was the Goddess of Holy Decadence, to whom the young intellectuals of all countries handed precious gifts. It was the Paris of the Eiffel tower, absinthe, prostitutes, American tourists, and wine. – – Un peu d'amour, monsieur.”* (Kurjensaari 1966, pp. 22 – 23.) Another fine characterisation of the times can be found in one of Kurjensaari's earlier works entitled *Hyvä ja paha Pariisi* [The good and the bad Paris]: *”The young Finnish generation was enthralled by the indigo evenings by the river Seine, the fiery landscape above the city, the buzzing boulevards, the metro, the underground trains. The young authors made pilgrimages to the world's capital city. – – Travelling itself, seeing new things, experiencing, telling*

about them, was an end in itself, a part of modernism. The bars of Mika Waltari were spilling over with youth and wine. From the Seine to Istanbul; knowing the names of the two cats of the *Hotel de Suède*, the haunt of the Torch Bearers, was a part of the *culture générale* in literary circles, – – Arvi Kivimaa praised the city of light, Olavi Paavolainen described the nickel and neon of the bars. The new life had a strange and intoxicating air.” (Kurjensaari 1950, pp. 13 – 14.)

The year 2008 will mark the centenary of the birth of Mika Waltari, the Finnish author already mentioned above. Waltari was the youngest member of the Torch Bearers' generation. One of the most impressive descriptions of the 1920's was put into words in Waltari's collection *Muukalaislegioona* [The foreign legion]. The poem "Valtatiet" ["Highways"] is a kind of early, anticipatory testament to his entire Torch Bearer youth. It can also be read as an epilogue to the *Valtatiet* [Highways] collection of 1928 and its euphoric genesis. The text also addresses Waltari's fellow poet Olavi Paavolainen:

"Can you remember the fervent days of our youth,
the rapture of the first foreign travels,
the giant arch of the European sky,
the fountain of the Eiffel Tower at night.

Can you remember the metropolis of our dreams,
a world of strong men, of iron and steel,
the wonderful, tanned lustre of young men's bodies
at the stadium.

Oh Olavi, Olavi, our youth,
laughing at the bar table
strewn flowers,
intoxicated by colours, sounds, the sun!

--

So we departed on diverging paths
towards manhood, – each of us
heeding the call that is greater than ourselves,
the call: Forward!

Let stars rain on that which has passed."
(Waltari 1929, pp. 38 – 39.)

The brief moment of light between the two darknesses of war was a special time for travelling. There was a steadfast faith in technology. The hunger for exoticism, the mad craving for it, was also an essential element of existence. The cosmopolitan requirement was practically a *mot en vogue*. Also the Torch Bearer poet Yrjö Jylhä paid homage to the idea of cosmopolitanism, and perhaps simultaneously to tourism. In his second collection *Kurimus* [The whirlpool] there is a fine poem called "Saxophon" which plays a theme tune of the times:

"Do you remember Valencia still?
Today we may not hear it,
but yet more intensely enjoy
Alaska, Bombay and Billy boy.

The desert caravan road
leads towards Mecca far away
in the evening the jackals hear
how the flutes in the tents play.

From the mists and storms of the Arctic Sea
to the South the ship has managed to flee,
a new dawn looms on the horizon,
and merrily sounds the sailor's song.

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Across five continents,
through mountains, under waters,
there's a flash of engine eyes
and the incessant pounding of rails.

From your neck the powder dust
My mouth and nose inhales
can you hear tonight how they play
Alaska, Bombay and Billy boy!"
(Jylhä 1928, pp. 35 – 36.)

The monologue of the living person must be supplemented with one more dialogue. Otherwise the mind traveller will have leafed through his guide to Finnishness too casually.

THE SUN IS SETTING

Philosopher 1:

"'The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk.' [Hegel 1821.] With these famous words, Hegel meant that it is only when an era is approaching its end that we can grasp its true meaning and essence. This applies equally to the life span of an individual as to the eras we distinguish in history." (von Wright 1992, p. 7.)

Philosopher 2:

"We enjoy beauty, it gives us pleasure, it attunes us to a strong agreeable feeling. Is beauty perhaps created by love? Or is beauty the subject and reason for our love? Or is there a reciprocity in which love creates beauty and beauty in turn kindles love?" (Hollo, 1931, p. 94.)

"The home district, that place on earth to which our being is fixed with eternal roots, the environment of our childhood and youth, the eternal homestead of our hearts, the most beautiful and precious on earth, beautiful even if bare and more beautiful because of it, the object of our longing, if we have left it, – it is our natural sphere of life, outside of which we will somehow forever feel like mere wanderers." (Ibid., 57.)

Photograph 3. The evening approaches.

(Photograph: Museum of Central Finland photo archive. Photographer: Studio Päijänne, 1920's.)

The living person:

In photograph 3, a whole era rides forward in the shape of a man wearing the Finnish Civil Guard uniform. An image of the military uniform begins to imprint itself on the Finnish soulscape. Even though the present moment is the 1920's, the omens of the coming decade are already in sight. At the same time as the Torch Bearers travel abroad, reality is taking on a militaristic ring. A more explicitly bigoted ideology was to burst into flame in the early 1930's. The military goals were no longer concealed. In other words, Minerva's owl was already spreading its wings in the decade of the Torch Bearers. But the sun was still shining, the sky was still bright. It was not until years later that dusk fell and turned into night. Thus, we should concentrate on the 1930's.

Cosmopolitanism and the cautious opening of windows to Europe were no longer in fashion. The ideological atmosphere was clearly growing more tense. In a photo taken of the Harju hill [translator's note: situated in the center of the Finnish town Jyväskylä] the modern women descending the stairs resemble the modern femininities described by author Olavi Paavolainen: they represent the 'new woman' with short hair decadently shingled at the back. Another name for her is the 'jazz girl'. Thus, in the midst of light, darkness lurks. Two different soulscapes are simultaneously present: they exist inside each other, interlaced. The circumstances touch both the individual and the whole idea of Finnishness. The individual and the national world view, as a historical epoch, converge towards each other.

Kurjensaari continues his critical observation of reality in his distinguished memoir *1930-luvun vihainen nuori mies* [The angry young man of the 1930's]. He writes poignantly about the aesthetic ideals of the Akateeminen Karjala-Seura (AKS) [Academic Karelian Society, a Finnish nationalist organization of university students and graduates] and about the fervent love of ideology that marked the era: "Spring rejoiced as I stepped out into Erottaja Street. An ordinary spring in the 1930's. The country rushed forwards, filled with strength as well as fear. I passed some young students. Most of them were wearing the easily recognizable badge of the AKS on their coat collars. The badge distinguished the matriculated students even in wintertime, when their white plush student caps were waiting in wardrobes for the First of May. One half of the enrolled students were members of the AKS and it held indisputable sway over all the other student organisations. It was paramilitary in its organisation and it did not accept passive members. Everybody was given tasks and duties. The AKS was more than a society or organisation; it was a world view. And every member was one head taller than they actually were. They were lifted by a noble and concrete goal: Great Finland. They were dreaming in broad daylight. – – A young clergyman, fiery-eyed Elias Simojoki blazed like the burning bush in the Bible. When I was at school I had already heard him speaking about the shameful peace of Tartu. – – The flag of the AKS was black, but it was ablaze with fire, blood and gold." (Kurjensaari 1962, pp. 9 – 10.)

Did love create this blindness? Or did genuine commitment create beauty? Or did the AKS badge kindle love for the AKS flag? Everybody had, in any case, God's blessing – after all, it was a clergyman member of the organization who delivered the oath-taking sermon to the new recruits. Perhaps the beauty resided precisely in these rituals, so easy to attach to. Beneath the flag loyalty was sworn to the fatherland, to Great Finland. One more striation was added to the Finnish soulscape: preparation for a new war. Once again, strong exemplary models were needed, such that could be relied on without reservation. This role was granted, for the second time, to Baron Carl Gustav Emil Mannerheim.

Yrjö Niiniluoto has offered an interesting analysis of the metamorphosis of Finland's Marshal (1942) Mannerheim: "History is a swift stage setter. Has there ever been a quicker staging process than the casting of Baron Carl Gustav Emil Mannerheim, General Lieutenant in the Russian army

and member of the Czar's entourage, in his historical role in the cold and chaotic Finland of January 1918? The transformation was so abrupt that it would have posed a challenge even to the most skilful actor. He had to switch his Russian uniform, with epaulettes ornamented with the Emperor's initials, into a plain, hastily improvised Finnish military jacket. The atmosphere of the court and the *salon* around him had to be turned into the scent of spruce needles with him standing there and acting naturally in the snowy Finnish landscape.” (Niiniluoto 1962, p. 7.) Niiniluoto's *Suuri rooli* [The great role], which appeared posthumously, has not received enough attention in Finnish cultural history. Niiniluoto was one of Finland's best essayists and travel writers. His Mannerheim interpretation, too, is rich in meanings.

The earlier sunset in 1918 was a preparation for the imminent global conflagration. This time, the evening of the day assumed a different character because now Marshal Mannerheim's tall figure was seen as Finland's protector. The homeland, the homestead, was a beloved and indispensable life sphere, and to let it go seemed completely impossible. Without it, the world would no longer be a whole. For the cause of protecting this wholeness, people were ready to die – and they did.²

The heyday was, in other words, short-lived: it lasted less than ten years. People are quick to forget. They are blinded by presence and everyday life. They do not learn sufficiently from the content of their experiences. They do not notice the approaching twilight nor do they pay heed to Minerva's owl flapping its wings. Only loss opens our eyes and creates an everlasting longing. Homelessness turns a person into a beggar in being, an existential tramp.

Chief editor Niiniluoto offers an amazingly perceptive explanation of this phenomenon as he writes about Finland's situation and the nature of Finnishness at the end of the 19th century. His collection of essays *Mitä on olla suomalainen* [On being a Finn] is among the finest Finnish works of literature. Niiniluoto puts it brilliantly: ”Many of the great men in our literature and arts created their masterpieces at the end of the 19th century. The speed of the national blossoming can only be explained by the long and invisible ripening that preceded it. The last decades of the 19th century were a period of fervour when poets sang about lofty ideas, about the spirit and high principles. Now was the time for every noble hope and dream to be fulfilled. Time stood erect and held the flag. Or rather, it did not stand but rushed forward. And on the flag it read: freedom, ideology, fatherland. – – In these years of preparation the visionaries, the poets, of our nation created the immense body of symbolism connected with the East, the compass point of our nation's destiny. Our people faced this threat alone.” (Niiniluoto 1957, p. 146.)

After the Civil War there was a period of mellowing and ripening that took almost ten years: the spiritual harvest was preparing to be reaped, and then the dazzling Torch Bearer flower blossomed. The pinnacle of the fruition was achieved in two works of literature: Olavi Paavolainen's collection of essays *Nykyaikaa etsimässä* [In search of modern times] (1929) and the previously mentioned collection of poems co-authored by Mika Waltari and Olavi Lauri (aka Paavolainen), entitled *Valtatiet* [Highways] (1929). The Torch Bearers were visionaries of their own times, augurs of the future.

Two wars ensued.³ In the Finnish Continuation War, Finland faced the threat from the East with Germany as its ally. After that, Finland was up against Germany that had turned into an enemy. These events cast long shadows over the coming years. The second ripening took more time. Yet the day did arrive for another blossoming. Meanwhile, the Torch Bearer generation had aged and was surrounded by a profoundly altered world. The former trailblazers were now at the margin of existence. It was no longer as easy to breathe. Still it was necessary to adjust. A more thorough

The place is imbued with dignity.
 The spirit of the place is born of small
 things, of gusts,
 the wind of cultivation.

VIII

I yield,
 my criticism lapses,
 it melts into the architecture,
 into the flowing, harmonious
 form language.

IX

The river Charles gives
 life to everything.
 It also took lives,
 when bright-eyed youths
 journeyed
 into the purgatory of Vietnam.
 In the middle of the love decade.

X

There it ended,
 an existence hardly begun.
 They became eternal boys:
 in lead coffins, under the stars and stripes.
 Three shots fired for each of them.

XI

Charles, Charles,
 rising youth still
 inhabits your banks.
 Or was it left, after all,
 in Iraq
 or Afghanistan?

XII

A song to Harvard,
 to the one and only,
 to the alma mater.
 Only the best
 is good enough for you:
 in both life and death.
 It has been chiselled into the marble slabs,
 in the brilliant names,
 in glistening golden letters.

XIII

The short years
 and tearful eyes;

to the university, to the land of their fathers
 they gave their sacrifice.
 Far away from home,
 the ballot as their judge.
 Charles will not forget his children
 nor Harvard its offspring.
 Memories shall never perish.

NOTES

¹The Finnish Civil War took place in spring 1918 between the troops of the senate (the Whites) and those of the people's delegation (the Reds). The Whites were supported by Germany and Sweden. The Reds were supported by the Russians. The Reds lost the war.

²The *Winter War* began when the Soviet Union attacked Finland in November 1939. Finland lost the war and 10 % of its area, including the second largest city, Vyborg. Peace was made in March 1940. For Finland, it was a defensive war.

³The *Continuation War* was a war of invasion with Finland and Germany as allies. The aim was to reconquer only the lost territories. However, the Finnish troops went beyond the old border, and occupied the city of Petroskoi. The war took place in 1941–1944. The terms of the peace meant that Finland ceded the same areas to the Soviet Union as it had in the Winter War, and some additional areas.

The *Lapland War* was the phase of the war when Finland, in accordance with the armistice terms, expelled the German troops from the country. As they retreated, the Germans instigated a scorched earth policy and completely destroyed the city of Rovaniemi. The war began in autumn 1944 and ended in spring 1945.

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