



# Формирование реалистической традиции изображения войны в финской прозе XX в.

Новикова Ярослава Владимировна

Санкт-Петербургский государственный университет (СПбГУ), Санкт-Петербург, Россия

## The realistic tradition of war depicting in the Finnish prose of the 20th century

Novikova Iaroslava

Saint Petersburg State University (SPSU), St. Petersburg, Russia

### Аннотация

В статье рассматривается история развития одной из семи традиций изображения войны в финской прозе — реалистической. Обзор дан на материале военных романов второй половины XX в. Основное внимание автор уделяет тому факту, что к концу XX в. главными героями произведений этого жанра становятся представители гражданского населения.

### Abstract

The paper deals with the genesis of one of the seven traditions of the Finnish fictional war prose — the realistic one. The overview is given on the material of war novels, created during the 2nd half of the 20th century. The author emphasises the fact, that towards the end of the 1900s the main stress in the prose was made on the civil population.

**Ключевые слова:** финляндия, война, роман, реализм, линна.

**Keywords:** finland, war, novel, realism, linna.

There are seven traditions of war depicting in the Finnish literature: mythical and lyrical; idealistic and epical; documentary; realistic; modernist; postmodern; neo-mythical [Niemi, 1999. P. 118–121].

### Väinö Linna and canonization of the genre

Realistic tradition represents the main stream of the Finnish war literature: it is stated, that the tradition began with the novel «Wood War» («Korpisotaa», 1940) by Pentti Haanpää (1905–1955) telling about the Winter War. The genre was canonized and became known to the wide audience due to the work «The Unknown Soldier» («Tuntematon sotilas», 1954) by Väinö Linna (1920–1992) being the most significant war novel in Finland of all times. The realistic Finnish war novel has



especially stressed the experience of the lowest military stuff of the Army of Finland and individual heroism.

According to the Finnish historiography the country took part in four wars during the 1900s: the Civil War of 1918, the Winter War of 1939–1940, The Continuation War of 1941–1944 and the Lapland War of 1944–1945. The very first war revealed the deep crisis of the Finnish society [Rapatti, 2013. P. 168].

The open discussion of the events of the Civil War started only at the beginning of the 1960s due to the works by Linna. The writer came from the big family of the Finnish landless peasant, participated in the Continuation War and became famous after the publication of the novel «The Unknown Soldier». This text launched the reassessment of the events of the Winter War and the Continuation War throughout the whole country.

The reality, depicted in the novel, generally corresponds to the events of the Continuation War, some little episodes are figured out. Dates are not mentioned, but the story contains links to the events. Germans are mentioned neither, the enemy is not depicted. The main character of the novel is a collective, a platoon representing the whole Finland, its main dialectic and cultural zones. Privates and the headship of the Army are in the opposition to each other on the basis of political and social division. The composition of the novel has a plot. The platoon advances quickly, stops with the beginning of the trench warfare and retires chaotically. There is an adventure chronotope in the text: picturesque incidents and unexpected coincidences, turns of fate and rascal characters (e.g. Rahikainen) [Nummi, 1999. P. 99].

«The Unknown Soldier» was much criticized, since the novel was considered to have bad-mouthed the Finnish soldiers and officers. The book received however

a warm feedback from the majority of the readers because of its honesty. The work gave a new vision of the Continuation War. The War was lost and the Finnish veterans thought it had been their fault. The novel restored soldiers' honour [MTV, dig. resource].

Linna's next work, the trilogy «Under the North Star» («Täällä Pohjantähdenalla», 1959–1962) started in the 1960s in the national literature the detailed research work on the events of the Civil War.

The novels «The Unknown Soldier» and «Under the North Star» became the new epics of the Finnish nation, which were incorporated by the themes of collectivity, brotherhood and common responsibility [Nummi, 1999. P. 99].

### **The literary background of the phenomenon of Väinö Linna**

The beginning was laid with the programme by the national Finnish philosopher Johan Vilhelm Snellman (1806–1881). The programme had a political goal and claimed, that the literature written in the national language should occupy the central place in the culture.

During the national awakening in Finland in the 1800s the classical authors of the national literature appeared: Elias Lönnrot (1802–1884), Zachris Topelius (1818–1898), Johan Ludvig Runeberg (1804–1877) and Aleksis Kivi (1834–1872).

The 1940s were the period of the transformation of the narrative tradition in the Finnish literature. The novels of the time contain allegory, escape to the past, atmosphere of adventure and resignation.

The following codes of the Finnish literature of the 1940s can be highlighted: the awareness of death and the cult of death, the escape from the reality, the



rejection of the defeat and the crisis of the national identity.

The publication of «The Unknown Soldier» by Linna gave the green light to the flood of the war-themed fiction that has been continuing till nowadays. Since publication of Linna's epic all depictions of war in the Finnish literature have been placed on the axle before and after «The Unknown Soldier».

The Finnish popular culture, shown in Linna's novels, was a literary innovation of the time and is the reason of the popularity of the texts in the homeland. Popular mentality is the key to the Linna's novels' view of the world [Nummi, 1999. P. 102].

### Civil population in focus

After the end of the Continuation War the issue of refugees emerged. The Karelian Isthmus born Unto Seppänen (1904–1955) was the first to depict the evacuation of Finns in his novel «Refugee» («Evakko», 1954). Eeva Kilpi (born 1928) wrote about ceded Finnish Karelia, Karelians, Karelian culture and evacuation. Her works also concern the relations between militarists and civil population. Vyborg born Paavo Rintala (1930–1999) highlighted in his books also the theme of children's life during the war.

Hannu Raittila (born 1956) handles the events of the Continuation War and the Lapland War in the novel «The Series of Escapes» («Pakosarja», 1993). Such a soldier type as cheat «Rahikainen», familiar to readers from the novel «The Unknown Soldier» and known for his ability to combine warship and commerce, is also present in the stories by Raittila. In the literature of the 2000s, for example in the novel «For you, night» («Sinulle, yö», 2009) by Teemu Kaskinen (born 1976), modern soldiers not only kick up a row, as they do in the novel by

Linna, but also take drugs [Kirstinä, 2013. P. 52].

The characters of a drug addict soldier and a homosexual soldier appear also in the novel «The Summer on the Isthmus» («Kesä Kannaksella», 2009) by the writer and rock musician Kauko Röyhkä (born 1959). The previous novel by Röyhkä «Two Suns» («Kaksiaurinkoa», 1996) was a nominee to the literary Finlandia Prize. Röyhkä depicted in the novel musicians on the front of the Continuation War.

The depiction of history in the prose of the 2000s is dominated by individual experience and subjective narration, the main characters are more often representatives of the civil population. In the narration in the Finnish literature of the 2000s can be observed the greater need to tell about yearning for unity, be it understood as the lost collectivity or a possible new unity [Kirstinä, 2013. P. 47].

The majority of the literary works, composing the Finnish realistic tradition, are of a high artistic level and have been successfully tested by the time.

### References

- Kirstinä Leena and Turunen Risto.* Nykyproosansolmukohtiaaavauksia // Suomen nykykirjallisuus 1/Toim. *Hallila Mika.* Helsinki: SKS, 2013. 408 p. — P. 41–78.
- Niemi Juhani.* Sotakirjallisuus, sentraditiojauuutos // Suomen kirjallisuushistoria 3. Rintamakirjeistätietoverkkoihin /Toim. *Lassila Pertti.* Helsinki: SKS, 1999. 332 p. — P. 118–125.
- Nummi Jyrki.* Väinö Linnanklassikot // Suomen kirjallisuushistoria 3. Rintamakirjeistätietoverkkoihin /Toim. *Lassila Pertti.* Helsinki: SKS, 1999. 332 p. — P. 99–102.



*Rapatti Katriina and Kotilainen Larietal.*

Tekstitaituri 9. Helsinki: Sanoma Pro,  
2013. 288 p.

MTV —Tuntematon sotilas 60 vuotta –  
kriitikoiden lyttäämää klassikkoa  
myyty 750 000 kappaletta// MTV.  
URL:

<http://www.mtv.fi/uutiset/kulttuuri/artikkeli/tuntematon-sotilas-taytti-tasavuosia/4579268> (Last access date:  
26.06.2016)