

*Poetics of Irrationalism in
A. H. Tammsaare's Work*

The article examines the work of A. H. Tammsaare (1878–1940)¹ from the aspect of irrationality that has not been paid much attention to yet. Some elements of irrationalism were pointed out in a few longer articles published on the occasion of the writer's 60th birthday.² The merely budding reception shoot was cut off already in 1940 as the topic was scorned during the Soviet occupation.³ This significant layer in Tammsaare's literary work, however, has been disregarded also in Estonia that has regained its independence.

¹ Anton Hansen-Tammsaare (1878–1940) is the most famous Estonian writer whose main work, the five-part *Tõde ja õigus* (Truth and Justice) is one of the most significant texts in the Estonian literary Canon. The newspaper *Postimees* (Courier) published his first stories already in 1900. Due to the social crisis – the First World War – he wrote critical articles on current social and political affairs, like his *Thoughts about the War*, for example. Simultaneously with writing original prose he started to translate books into the Estonian and kept on with publishing articles. His first play *Judith* heralded the highlights of his career in 1921. Next year the novel *Kõrboja peremees* (Master of Kõrboja) was published and the best-known *Tõde ja õigus* (1926–1933) followed suit. The 1930s witnessed the publishing of the novels *Elu ja armastus* (Life and Love, 1934), *Ma armastasin sakslast* (I Loved a German Girl, 1935) and the play *Kuningal on külm* (The King Feels Cold, 1936). His last novel *The Põrgupõhja uus vanapagan* (The New Vanapagan of Põrgupõhja; it has appeared in English translation with the title *The Misadventures of the New Satan*, Norvik Press 1978, 2009), written and published in 1940, a year before his death, attracted quite a lot of attention both at home and abroad.

² In the present article the most essential ones have been indicated. See: Annist 1938, Palgi 1938.

³ Erna Siirak's general overview in English about Tammsaare's life and work, carrying some new accents, should still be mentioned in this context: *A. H. Tammsaare in Estonian Literature* (Tallinn: Perioodika, 1978).

To begin with, I would like to make a transient introduction into the relationship of irrationalism and realism.

I define irrationalism as not rational (Latin *irrationalis*); as a concept that considers the cognitive possibilities of thinking and intellect limited. I deal with irrationalism as something beyond intellect (intuition, emotions, and instincts...) through which certain chaos and cosmic (obscure) will are expressed.

Realism in literature is generally understood as a style that seeks to present an unglamorized, unromanticized view of the world in precision of detail with the effect of reality.

In Estonian literary history Tammsaare has mostly been treated as a realist, is it neo realist (Tuglas 1918), critical realist (EKA 1984) or psychological realist (Annus *et al* in 2001). The image of Tammsaare has been, above all, bound with the realistic treatment of life. One can find a few admissions that we should not take him for a "pure realist" (e.g. Tuglas) but generally he has been understood as a writer describing rural life of the peasantry in a realistic panorama. The Soviet literary history specially emphasised his atheism. (It was a compulsory part of propaganda then to stress just that.) And all this may well create an impression that there could not be any irrationality in Tammsaare's work.

True enough, Tammsaare's work is generally realistic both in his characters and plot. But this realistic treatment conceals an unreal dimension; not to be avoided as it is an essential part of human existence.⁴ That is why I argue that the poetics of irrationalism has a key position in the writer's work.

Tammsaare has hinted at the relationship between the real life and the "irrational" in connection with Dostoyevsky. In an introductory article⁵ he has quoted Dostoyevsky: "In art I do love realism

⁴ According to Heinrich Rickert the empirical reality is "irrational". Not a single real object or process is precisely the same as another, only similar to a bigger or smaller extent; Rickert defines it as the principle of heterogeneity. Thus the transfers are heterogenic as well: the heterogenic continuity dominates everywhere and that is why reality is beyond grasping with notions "as it is", it is irrational.

⁵ Written as an introduction to the translation into the Estonian of Dostoyevsky's novel *Sortsid* (The Possessed).

that passes over to fantasy... What else can be more fantastic and unexpected than the real?" (Tammsaare 1988: 648).⁶ It certainly has to do also with the writer himself. Tammsaare was convinced that every idea has to be thoroughly processed and letting the conclusions go to the absurd was the only way to understand the world and the human being in it.

In his study *Dostoyevsky is Realism* Sven Linner presents another quotation from Dostoyevsky that repeats the same idea: "I have my own view of reality (in art) and what most people call almost fantastic and exceptional is for me sometimes the very essence of the real." (Linner 1967:54)

The same "essence of the real" has an important role in Tammsaare's own creation as well. Setting his characters in the rural milieu, the writer stresses the character's inner disharmony and antagonism with the environment. Tammsaare's hero is functioning in realistic environs but he is not realistic. He/she almost never proceeds from what surrounds him, seeing it as he would like to see it after something was done to it and people as he would like them to be. These are characters who are dreaming and planning, not considering the reality. Here the rational wish to keep the environs under one's control and the totally irrational attitude to it has got mixed up. According to Daniel Palgi, the most influential Estonian literary critic of prose in the 1930s, Tammsaare had a great amount of observations about people; he sympathised with them and never got tired of depicting the blindman's buff they were all playing (Palgi 1940: 97–98).

Tammsaare pays serious attention to the fact that building everything on machinery and mind may have changed the people's mode of life but has certainly not changed the human character. The perception of reality based on rationality is subjected to man's irrational urges. That is why it seems more up to the point to concentrate on the irrationalism when we discuss Tammsaare's work, this is the key-word to realism as Tammsaare sees it.

⁶ Here and in the following translation of quotations from Estonian is mine – M. V.

This is also the reason why Tammsaare's work was exceptional among his Estonian contemporaries in the 1920s and 1930s. This period in literary spirituality was dominated by the urge outwards, the striving for enfolding the reality but quite often the aspiration was too much chained to the mundane, and thus only the very common reality was depicted. Tammsaare endeavoured to penetrate the core of man's existence and inner life while the majority of literature at the time concentrated on extensive outside phenomena and topical novelty (Nirk 1985:85).

Tammsaare created the vertical axis next to the horizontal. This enabled him to penetrate the human soul in its hidden nooks and crannies through which he could measure the so-to-say cosmic depth of the soul and the position of the human being in the universe. Friedrich Scholz has seen Tammsaare as one of the first existentialist authors in the world literature (Sholz 2001:136). Rein Veidemann has also written about the existential level of Tammsaare's works (Veidemann 2010).

Irrationalism in Tammsaare's work is not only his personal spiritual perception but was rather typical of the period. The issue of the relationship between the scientific and intuitive perception of the universe was current in the first half of the 20th century society. The scientific mechanisation of the world brought along uncertainty and doubt.

"How long ago, say, was the wireless invented? A few decades earlier everybody would have taken it for a fairytale. Nevertheless, it is a plain fact today. Couldn't numerous fairytales like that still be hidden in nature and in ourselves as a part of the latter?" Tammsaare wrote in 1937 (Tammsaare 1990: 225.) Every next invention and discovery could revoke the previous one, science became relative and its achievements shook its base and the so-called absolute principles. August Annist wrote in 1938: "In this context Tammsaare as a thinker belongs to the great movement that could be called the crisis of intellectualism in all walks of life. The first period of it was already the romanticism at the beginning of the 19th century, the re-appearance being signified by the neo-romantic, mystic, intuitive and some other trends. So it has continued from Dostoyevsky's irrationalism, Nietzsche's imperialism of conations, Bergson's intuitivism,

Hamsun and others' psychoanalysis up to the theology of crisis creating mystery [---]. Looking upon the matter from European perspective, Tammsaare is a philosopher of this great crisis, his main problem being the deficiency of pure intellect (and the individualist-egocentric, why not even hedonistic, culture construed on its basis). He is not a philosopher due to some fashionable trend but because of a deep personal need." (Annist 1938: 2.)

Tammsaare paid a lot of attention to the discourse on the paradoxical character of the mind in his work dealing with current affairs. In the articles published in the 1930s Tammsaare is keen on discussing the relationship between religion and intellect and concludes: "For some time now we have believed that our intellect is the saviour but it seems to be more interested in the tickle of man's urges and the perfection of the war-machines than the earthly happiness, the terrestrial paradise. Some say that intellect has up to now been the stoker at the fire of the hell that life is. Would it not be natural to ask then: who or what could save us from the intellect?" (Tammsaare 1990: 223–224.)

Stressing just this controversy in man's character, Tammsaare describes life in its contrariness and absurdity but does not offer any solutions or evaluations. Endel Nirk says that Tammsaare's diverse life canvas, problems left open and rational solutions refused, all of which gave his novels a sense of incompleteness, was quite new in Estonian literature (Nirk 1985: 80–81).

It is true that Tammsaare gives up rational solutions and prefers to create some mystique, a weird situation that allows the subdued emotions, hidden urges and passions of human nature to emerge or at least peep out for a moment.

It has not been researched in greater detail yet how Tammsaare makes use of this category of irrationalism in the poetics of his novels.

My article concentrates on drawing attention to five key words that expound Tammsaare's poetic methods of using irrationalism in his text. These so-called agents recur in the bigger part of Tammsaare's work. I think that these words are the most essential ones in Tammsaare's description of the man as an irrational being. These key words are *secrets* (A1), *landscape* (A2), *music* (A3), *eternal femininity* (A4) and a *jester-type character* (A5).

A1: Secrets

Mysterious atmosphere, best revealed in secrets kept between the characters is typical of Tammsaare's work. Daniel Palgi was the first to draw attention to this feature, concluding that creating mystery was the continually developing artistic method in the writer's work (Palgi 1938: 32).

One of the expressions of this mystery is certainly the secretiveness of the characters. They have secrets that can be divided into two groups: first the ones between the characters or secrets of a certain character. These secrets are real and contain nothing unreal in them. However, they can be the starters for the characters' irrational conduct.

The second type is made up of unexplained secrets about which Tammsaare has remarked: "Might there be something really mysterious in the man himself, something that we know nothing about, just like we do not know several things in nature?" (Tammsaare 1990: 225.) This mysteriousness is perceived by the characters in themselves and in their environment but they can neither explain nor realise it as it is expressed in phenomena that they cannot control even if they try to.

The different types can sometimes blend and the characters may not be able to acknowledge why they are hiding something or, vice versa, want to expose it. Or why, after having taken a decision, they still behave contrary to it.

On condition that we take truth as rational, based on the intellectual world image and secrets as irrational and unexplainable, we can see the secrets of Tammsaare's characters as a crossroads of intellectual paradox: the intellect strives for explaining the world and the truth but simultaneously creates new secrets and puzzles, rejecting one explanation after another. Thus the secrets become mainsprings for actions and starters for events, even when the characters try to keep their life and destiny under control. These secrets may be mundane but the stress caused by concealing them creates a peculiar atmosphere and brings about situations where the characters do not behave rationally at all.

It is significant that secretiveness appears to be one of the main characteristic features of Tammsaare's heroes. Thus, for example

Tiina, whose character is woven into the fabric of the whole novel-saga *Tõde ja õigus* (Truth and Justice), would not reveal her secret that becomes an essential part of her. Karin, whose maid Tiina is, contemplates about her: “/.../ there it is, you live with the person a whole year under the same roof /-/ but you do not know that she has a secret that she shares with nobody. Karin would so much have liked to learn such a secret that somebody had shared with nobody.” (Tammsaare 1983: 218.)

Almost all Tammsaare’s heroes and heroines have their own big secrets that often determine their destiny. The birth or revelation of the secret often means a turning point in the plot, the beginning of new events.

One of the most fateful secrets in the novel *Tõde ja õigus* is connected with the main hero Indrek and his mother Mari.

Indrek is Mari’s first child fathered by Andres, the master of the Vargamäe farm, who asked Mari to help him with his children after his wife’s death. Mari went to the farm and stayed there, causing Juss, her husband, to commit suicide. That is why for Mari Indrek was always connected with death. Indrek has perceived his mother’s feeling of guilt and the stone he inadvertently throws at his mother becomes the symbol of this guilt for him. Owing to this the adult Indrek agrees to give his suffering mother a lethal dose of painkiller, as the most severe pain is just where the stone had hit her.

The secret so carefully kept – the stone and the matricide – is revealed in the hope of redemption only to his wife, the above-mentioned Karin. This secret is a sort of sacred foundation for Indrek and Karin’s marriage. As the marriage has run upon the rocks, Karin reveals the secret to a stranger. Affected Indrek shoots at his wife and is taken to court.

This is only one of the examples of the complicated relationships between the characters, shaded by secrets and guilt. The example gives us at least three starts of events:

- Mari’s secret conviction that Indrek is the child of sin due to Juss’ suicide induces in Indrek an unexplainable feeling of guilt. Indrek becomes even more convinced of his guilt when the stone he throws causes his mother pain.
- Indrek’s secret guilt makes him help his mother to die.

- Sharing the secret of his mother's death with Karin who reveals it brings on the shooting.

The domino effect that caused so many fatal events was actually a trifle – throwing a stone in a burst of frustration. It all happened in a realistic atmosphere, the characters and plot are true-to-life and alluring. But the episode gives birth to secrets that cause the next dominoes to fall in turn. This is a good example of Tammsaare depicting various levels in human life that are not subjected to the *ratio*.

The next example comes from the novel *Ma armastasin sakslast* (I Loved a German Girl) The turning point in Erika and Oskar's love is the moment of their meeting in the park. Erika is ready to compromise herself for the sake of love but Oskar does not want to do it. Erika has a secret on that evening that she refuses to share and that is revealed only in the letter she writes to Oskar before her death. She says, “[---] I do believe that if I then, when you were kneeling in front of me in the park, trying to beg and entice me to be sensible would have honestly told you what we had been talking about with grandfather and what we had agreed upon, you would have taken me up into your room and I would never have been so ashamed and humiliated as I was then and will probably be until I die. [---] Nobody, a third person, should have stood between us two, not even God or Jesus Christ. [---] But I could not forget and had no heart to break my promise and so everything followed that had to.” (Tammsaare 1984: 190.)

The culmination of the love is thus a situation when the secret remains hidden, indicating the moment when the fate of the young people becomes resolved. Erika married another man and died when giving birth, having just before it written down the secret she was so sorry about not revealing before. The secret becomes a kind of metaphor in the writer's treatment of the subject – a seemingly random matter becomes fatal. Erika's grandfather sums it up, saying, “[---] I rather blame myself that I, at my old age, smelling of the dirt already, still attempted to guide life and love.” (Tammsaare 1984: 173.)

More similar examples could be found in Tammsaare's other novels. What is essential about all these concealed secrets, though, is the fact that they formulate "the truly secretive in the man himself". It is the human dimension that signifies the limits of the rational self and cognisance.

Mystery is also present in the landscape (A2) of Tammsaare's work.

A2: Landscape

Landscapes are an essential part of Tammsaare's work. The main venue of the novel *Tõde ja õigus – Vargamäe* – (two farms on an elevation amidst bogs and swamps) has become a meaningful and comprising keyword in Estonian culture. Although the plot carries the characters to urban environment even more than to the rural landscapes, the latter have obtained an especially powerful meaning.

"Everybody, however, is born in a certain landscape and atmosphere that create a special environment. [...] The postpartum environment of growing up gives roots to the inner being of a man, his spiritual, mental and corporal self," Tammsaare writes (Tammsaare 1990:18). The scenery he describes is often a reflection of the hero's state of mind or may be presented as factors that determine his fate; they are certainly an embodiment of some cosmic power or will that the human being is unable to control.

I am going to concentrate now on the two main toponyms in Tammsaare's fictional landscapes – Kõrboja and Vargamäe.

Vargamäe

Vargamäe has become the stage for an archetypal Estonian to perform on. Toomas Liiv has compared Vargamäe to biblical landscapes, where the first people are Andres and Krõõt who start to make order in the chaos (Liiv 1997). Andres has been seen as Abraham, the forefather of the Jews, but also as Jacob who is fighting with his God. Thus Vargamäe is not only a real but also a sacral landscape with its so-to-say eternal people. We could take Vargamäe also as a kind of *michelfoucault-like* heterotopia that contains other

localities; as a place that contains all the past times and is beyond the time in a universal archive where the accumulation of time has no end (Foucault 1997).

Vargamäe is definitely not only a landscape but also an essential character in the first and fifth part of *Tõde ja õigus*. Tammsaare has given the first part of the pentalogy the subtitle “Man’s fight with the land”. This shows that Vargamäe is a symbol of the forces that cannot very well be dominated by man. The fight of Andres is not merely a fight that the farmer has to carry out with stones, boulders and excess water in his fields but much more – it is man’s fight with irrational forces.

We could take Andres of Vargamäe for a mythical figure, a hero in a landscape that he wants to subordinate and change. His plans are practical – to dig ditches, dredge the river and irrigate the soil. His starting position is that the land has been given to man to make use of for obtaining necessary resources. Yuri Lotman considers Prospero in *The Tempest* by Shakespeare as the concentrate of this type hero. He is the ruler of natural forces who is to do away with the chance (Lotman 2007:74). Prospero managed to do it thanks to his awareness of the future. Andres tries to avoid the happenstance with his plans for the future, “trying to foresee what the soil, the dwarfed birch or pine and the scrubby spruce would be like when there are so and so many ditches in this and that direction.” (Tammsaare 1981:13.)

Andres cannot control the happenstance or exile the future. He soon becomes aware that his will does not matter much and there is always something more hidden at Vargamäe the existence of which he had not even guessed. Good examples are the stones that Andres is picking up in the fields where new ones keep rising as if from nowhere.

The landscape has become the man’s great opponent, like fate or God.

Kõrboja

Kõrboja peremees (The Master of Kõrboja) might be called a landscape novel as well, that is a novel, where the topical connected

with the landscape gives the main message. Tammsaare himself compared Kõrboja with the Republic of Estonia that just recently had gained its independence. The land of Kõrboja in the novel has acquired a sacral undertone that is rather common when speaking about one's homeland.

The point is that instead of the real landscape imagined ideal landscapes are seen. Villu, the son of the Katku farmer, imagines how his hard work would put the farm in order; the owners of Kõrboja have only been dreaming and planning without realising any of their plans. The differences between the real and the ideal landscape are best revealed in the dreams of Rein, the master of Kõrboja.

“He has been dreaming of Kõrboja as of some wondrous fairyland with limitless possibilities and he has totally forgotten about the stones and swamps that are still waiting for being broken or irrigated. He has always felt better on the farm of his imagination than at real Kõrboja.” (Tammsaare 1980: 31.) Both characters, Andres of Vargamäe and Rein of Kõrboja, treat their efforts and ideas about arranging the landscape more than merely aesthetic or having a practical purpose. For them it contains the meaning of life, furthermore – the redemption of the human being even.

The supernatural character of the landscape is emphasised in rather mystic components, like the heath and the lake. The heath is a sort of middle zone, where the characters are in between their real life and expectations or imaginations. They go there when they are bothered about their restlessness. Anna of Kõrboja, on the other hand, remembers that her aunt-in-law, the bride of her Uncle Oskar never went to the heath “as if it were the sojourn of wraiths and spirits” (ib. 5). The weird atmosphere connected with the heath influences the whole tone of the novel. The same mysterious veil hides the true story of Villu's eye – “Villu's first eye was gone in an intriguing and mysterious way. [---] And it becomes more important when the reader understands that it happened accidentally and Anna of Kõrboja was to blame.” (Palgi 1938: 25.)

The heath being almost timeless, the lake would be a catalyst between different periods. The novel's most decisive events and the transformations of the main characters (as well as their relationships) take place at the lake.

Both components of the landscape emphasise the mysteriousness of nature, the purpose of which is to reflect the human character – the landscape stresses and reveals the unexplainable urges in human spirit, be it Villu's restlessness that drives him to drink and fights, Anna's insensible obsession that Villu must become the master of Kõrboja or Rein's image of the ideal Kõrboja.

In his article Toomas Haug treats the landscape in the novel as a sacral one “that is an Estonian backdrop to the birth of the Redeemer” (Haug 2010: 37). Haug attempts to prove it with a quotation from the end of the novel where the landscape becomes alive. The music that Rein of Kõrboja hears adds more mystery to the *genius loci* – “Kõrboja itself is chiming, the heath is sounding its pine trumpet on a spring evening; even the bog is ringing [---]. And the lake seems to echo it all, so that there is nothing else to do than go walking and listening how everything is stirring and ringing.” (Tammsaare 1980: 134)

The third agent carrying the poetics of irrationalism is the sound of music.

A3: Music

Music (*resp.* sound/resound) has a fixed meaning in Tammsaare's poetics. It signifies harmony between the inner and the outer. He has emphasised that in Goethe's work, for instance. “Goethe's realm kept expanding, becoming more spacious, reaching beyond the borders of the temporal, so that the outer sound of the language and the inner sound of the spirit fused evermore.” (Tammsaare 1988: 225.)

In the novel *Kõrboja peremees* the ringing sound appears together with the image of the farm's rebirth. Rein is dreaming of how his entire farm would ring the sound reaching up to his heart and fill it. It could happen only when the inner (Rein's ideal landscape) and the outer (reality) would fuse and form a harmonious whole. It does happen at the end of the novel when “the golden days of Kõrboja begin” (Tammsaare 1980: 134). The Italian literary historian Celia Conterno Guglielminetti wrote about the novel in 1976, “I would not like to call the work a novel but a song, an

ancient folk song that has been revived by the author. This was my impression when I was reading the elegantly translated pages.” (Teder 1978: 734.)

In *Tõde ja õigus* the bogs and swamps are often alive with the ringing sound.

The motif of music appeared quite early in Tammsaare’s work and it is especially noticeable in his *Miniatuurid* (Miniatures, published in 1915 as a book). Here music is connected to myths and the Bible and this might be seen as an attempt to get closer to the human being’s mythical way of thinking that is not so much language- but symbol-centred. In the symbolist miniatures the writer strives for the world beyond the language, the world that tells it with music. Music becomes a poetic means for the writer to depict an elusive cognition or situation, as it cannot be explained how it influences the human soul. We might even say that in his miniatures Tammsaare experiments with transforming music as a transcendental phenomenon into literature.

Considering music as a motif, the best examples can be found in the story *Varjundid* (Nuances) that was produced in the same creative cycle as the miniatures. Anton Petrovich, one of the main characters of the story, who also has several features in common with the author himself, sketches a scheme that could represent Tammsaare’s own philosophy of music. “He spoke about the wondrous influence music had over the sick and the healthy, over the humans and the animals. [---] Or could you really think that the realm of stones is deaf to music? Sprinkle some sand onto a thin plate then draw the bow over the edge of the plate and you will see what happens to the sand. What a miraculous rhythm it obtains when shifting! [---] But what is our Earth amidst all the other worlds in the universe if not a tiny speck of mud a piece of grit that begins to dance to music? Or what are the Sun, the North Star, the Pleiades, Ursa Major, and the Milky Way if not a piece of grit or a collection of specks of dust? Why then shouldn’t they also be dominated by sounds of their cosmic music, their symphony, the music that makes the very space and everything in it shivers rhythmically. [---] Only music with its refinement and variety, its uncountable nuances can be used to explain the diversity of the visible world, the unique varie-

gation of the stones on my palm. Music was ringing in the space when our Earth had not been born yet and it will ring on after the human beings and their abodes will have been destroyed and gone, the Sun cooled down and the lodestar shifted..." (Tammsaare 1979: 62–63).

In this passionate speech A. P. sketches, among other things, the Pythagorean image of the music of the spheres (*musica universalis*) to which some of Tammsaare's keywords are also bound. The cosmic dimension even in a microcosm, the tiniest speck of dust, is essential in Tammsaare's world perception.

A biblical allusion can also be detected. The entire image of music as "a new gospel" that A.P. presents is the axis of the story (Tammsaare 1979: 109). And the music that sounded in the space before the Earth was born can be associated with the Spirit of God that moved upon the face of the waters before the light was created. (Genesis 1:1,2). A. P.'s point of view is that human beings can perceive the cosmic and the eternal through music. His concept of music also reveals the Schopenhauerean understanding of music, as the most direct expression of the universal will.

The short story *Viiul* (Violin) has something of it, too, but indirectly. The heroine of the story, Miss Mardus, is like A. P. sure that the musical instrument has a soul of its own. She argues that her violin "is full of spirit [---], it has several souls and several spirits and these several souls and several spirits have all come upon me". (Tammsaare 1979: 47.) A. P. is really passionate in his explanation, "But wood and metal are influenced by sound, how else could one tune the violin or make the horn blare wrong. Who can say what happened to the shuddering violin when Paganini was bowing on it!" (Tammsaare 1979: 62)

The question whether objects "can hypnotise and suggest things to the living" (ib. 37) shows that Tammsaare is above all interested in the issue of freedom. How free can the human being actually be? Has he any control over his life or even over himself? What happens to him when Paganini touches his bow to his violin?

It seems that Miss Mardus is the mouthpiece of Freud here. She is an unconscious being, totally dependent on her insensible urges. Even the name of the heroine shows it – in Estonian *mardus* is a

banshee, a ghost of the dead. Or, in other words: the shadow side of the consciousness.

The unexplainable bond between Miss Mardus and her violin is an essential component in Tammsaare's concept of music – the link between the woman and a musical instrument, hinted already before. Tammsaare is seeking the same theory of love in the woman that music has come to tell the world. The short story *Viiul* links together the theory of love, the violin (*resp.* music) and the woman, creating an unconscious and even fatal attachment that, nevertheless, has something redeeming in it.

Thus the fourth agent of Tammsaare's poetic irrationalism is the redeeming virgin/woman.

A4: Eternal femininity

The so-called virginity issue is directly or indirectly present in almost every piece of Tammsaare's work. The bond between the woman and the theory of love is emphasised most clearly in his short story *Matus* (Funeral), in which the dead author Vanakamar cannot be buried before a virgin has kissed him.

The virgin in this short story is thus the receptacle of redemption or its mediator. Next to the corporal the eternal has been stressed and this binds writer Vanakamar's yearning for redemption to meta-physical spheres.

Being a virgin has the pivotal place in Tammsaare's play *Kuningal on külmal* (The King Feels Cold), where "not being touched by man" is the most valuable quality of the heroine Angela.⁷ The image

⁷ The motifs of the play come from the Old Testament First Book of Kings. 1. Now King David was old and stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat. 2. Wherefore his servants said unto him, Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin: and let her stan before the king, and let her cherish him, and let her lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat. 3. So they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the coasts of Israel, and found Abishag a Shunamite, and brought her to the king. 4. And the damsel was very fair, and cherished the king, and ministered to him: but the king knew her not. (Holy Bible (authorized King

of the virgin comes from the tradition of the great goddess and the virginal perfection reflects her metaphysical dimension (Koivunen 2008: 54). Tammsaare has been thinking of “the romantic dream about the rebirth of mankind through an innocent and simple woman who should cherish the one who is cold and scared in the mess of contemporary European culture.” (Tammsaare 1993: 353.) The role of Angela in the play is rather similar to what we could consider the eternal femininity like Solovyov and Dostoyevsky saw it⁸. Angela’s virginity is suitable to represent also the redeeming image that is attributed to Virgin Mary, but not an asexual one. She is bound to the earth and fecundity. Karlo sees and loves in Angela “the would-be generation and the mother of his children” (Tammsaare 1985: 152). Thus Angela is also representing the cycles of nature that propel the human being in time.

Undoubtedly the source of this “eternal femininity” and the metaphysical wisdom of the woman is J. W. Goethe and his *Das Ewigweibliche* that have an important role in his *Faust*. Tammsaare came upon the idea of Sophia as the divine wisdom not only in Goethe but also in Dostoyevsky. A good example is the story *Varjundid*. With Dostoyevsky, especially his *Crime and Punishment* Tammsaare shares first of all the name of the heroine – Sonya. This is the diminutive of the Russian Sofija that comes from Greek Σοφία (Sophia, Sofia). Dostoyevsky surely did not choose this name for his

James Version, The World Publishing Company, New York) I Kings 1: 1,2,3,4.)

⁸ The Russian philosopher of religion Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900) considers Sophia the life-giving centre or the spirit of all the creation, the divine wisdom. One of the ways of her expression is the new cognition that appears when one falls in love, the human being changes and the change is reflected in his material environment and on the physical level. (Schipflinger 1997: 217–219). A Logos-centered man can recognize Sophia in the figure of a woman or some other elements, through the aesthetic experience of beauty or art. According to Solovyov, beauty is the appearance of Sophia and the recognition of the phenomenon inspires and exalts the man. In Solovyov's philosophy the world was neither unique nor dual but triadic. And Sophia is the third, linking or completing part, the transformative force, the link that creates the whole (Kornblatt 2009:27).

heroine haphazardly.⁹ Dostoyevsky's Sonya was the embodiment of eternal femininity and its elevating influence; and indeed, gives a new breath to the Sonya of Tammsaare's *Varjundid* as well.

The woman as nature and the woman as the bearer of the metaphysical (the mysterious, the revelation) wisdom can both be treated as the eternal femininity in Tammsaare's poetics. The uncontrolled "primeval" force enters the men's realistic world outlook just through women. Here some criticism can be detected – the men's world has become technical (machines and industry) in its rationality and thus also something that is destroying itself. The final points in Tammsaare's work illustrate this statement quite well. The male characters (Indrek, Villu, Oskar) who have all tried to control their lives with ratio and still come into a blind alley either commit suicide or trust their fate into the hands of a woman. Women are the ones to carry on life. The point is the clearest in the climax of the novel *Kõrboja peremees*, where two women start to bring up the true master (man) of the farm together.

The irrationality of Tammsaare's female characters does not express itself only through their virginity. The jester may also appear in a woman and this type is the last agent of irrational poetics in the present article.

A5: The Jester-type character

The archpriest in the play *Kuningal on külm* says that the world belongs to the woman and the jester.

The Jester as a character occurs in the play *Kuningal on külm* but several main characters also possess features typical of a jester. Some literary critics drew attention to the fact already in the late 1930s. They found that Tammsaare could reveal the unconsciousness – "functioning of the factors in real life" that prevents the logical cognition from dominating.

⁹ Dostoyevsky's warm relationship with Solovyov began in 1873, the philosopher has been considered as the prototype for Alyosha in the *Brothers Karamazovs* (Kornblatt 2009: 18).

Y. Lotman has created a triad – a fool – a wizard – a madman, in which the third element madness is expressed in the freedom to violate the rules and behave in a way that is not allowed for a “normal” human being. “Madman’s” incalculable actions are effective due to unpredictability that staggers the opponent. Stereotypical behaviour becomes senseless and the “normal” adversary is defenceless. (Lotman 2001: 52–54.)

The antics of the fool that are those of Lotman’s “madman” and venturing beyond borders are synchronous. Through the fool (or jester) unexpected events may penetrate into life and become starters for new processes. Tammsaare’s fools are provocative, talkative, naïve and simple, sometimes transcendental in their being – total antipodes to their adversaries (e.g. Jürka of Põrgupõhja, Pearu, and Maurus).

The relationship between the legendary characters of Andres and Pearu in the first part of the novel *Tõde ja õigus* serves as a good example of the fool’s behaviour. Pearu has a very special role: the archetype of the jester. The antagonism between Andres and Pearu becomes the axis that supports such antipodes of the following novels.

Andres arrives at Vargamäe as a creator, as somebody whose purpose is to put everything in order. He is convinced that his hard work will help him to control the world that he has created. Andres expects that he would be able to change and “improve” nature. Pearu is the embodiment of chaos that brings unpredictability and senselessness into Andres’s life.

Pearu’s antics in the novel start new events but also make Andres philosophise and think about the world. Andres and Pearu are like some Ancient Greek philosophers who argue in the agora and strive for finding the truth in their controversy.

Indrek and Karin, the married couple in the fourth part of the novel *Tõde ja õigus* are the same kind of opposites – Indrek wants to analyse and systematise the world, Karin doubts. Her aim is to get to the total truth, to reveal everything that is hidden and concealed, although she is never satisfied with any truth at all. Next to Angela in the play *Kuningal on külm*, Karin is another female jester in Tammsaare’s work.

Karin doubts Indrek’s truths and values. In her inability to understand she is actually the one who tells the truth that Indrek does not want to hear. She is not a standard character in the contemporary

society either as she makes Indrek's secrets and details of their private life public. Her uncontrolled behaviour only increases Indrek's inner crisis that finally is concluded in tragedy.

Karin is the embodiment of irrational urges (love, yearning for power and guilt) and she unleashes these urges in other people also. Her role in the novel could be described with the same words Mikhail Bahtin uses to describe the function of the fool in the development of the novel (Bahtin 1987).

Several other antipodes, "adversary pairs" can be found in other novels by Tammsaare.

These pairs give the writer an opportunity to create an existentialist confrontation: the human being on the one and the cosmic (irrational) forces on the other side. In this controversy Indrek and Andres are in the mercy of these uncontrolled forces and in their crossing point, being unable to anything as the human being is a part of the space/universe.

It goes without saying that the question: who is closer to the truth, the wise or the mad, naturally follows. The starters for the discussion and/or those to tell the truth are certainly those who are "queer", a bit mad, and who make public what the consciousness would prefer to repel or keep hidden.

Summing up

Tammsaare's realism is tightly bound with irrationalism. Many more examples could be found in his work to show the human as an irrational being. The agents I preferred are the most conspicuous and solid when speaking about the poetics of the writer's work. Using these five elements in different variations we arrive at the pattern of Tammsaare's method to depict reality. While composing his work Tammsaare uses a basis, one part of which is irrationality as a substantial component of human reality/life. In order to outline it, he uses the keywords that I drew attention to in this article, the keywords that are the main features of the writer's poetics.

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