

ARCADIA ON LASNAMÄGI

The Fitting of Chronotope into a Real Landscape

Ingrid Velbaum-Staub

The association of Arcadia and Lasnamägi, although it may seem shocking at first, is not an attempt to poeticise the so-called bedrooms of the city, but to analyse some motifs and chronotopes of the historical novel *Shepherds of Lasnamägi*.

About the novel and its background

In 1978, meritorious exiled writer Herbert Salu published a novel, *Lasnamäe lamburid* ("Shepherds of Lasnamägi"), in Lund, where he had undertaken to describe the milieu which had given rise to the first attempts at artistic poetry in the Estonian language. This novel can well be examined as a belletristic parallel to the author's research in the Estonian literature of the Swedish time, mainly to his article "Wedding Poetry of the Swedish Time. The beginning of Estonian belletristic poetry." ("The authors of other nationalities – mainly German or Swedish pastors, but also professors or gymnasium teachers – had suddenly begun pouring their poetical inspiration into the Estonian-language verse, despite their poor knowledge of the language." Salu 1965: 143.)

"Many years ago, on a summer afternoon, I was lying on the grass at my usual place of rest of that summer, by the forest edge near Villach in Southern Austria. A path led down to the bathing place, and farther away I could see the white snowy peak of Mitagskogel, the highest mountain of the locality. I had a book with me and I was reading in the sun. When I put my book aside, I remembered again the lively cultural life of our country, when the first Estonian-language poems had been written, when the first gymnasium had been created, and the university had been founded in Tartu.

I sketched the outline of a work on the writers of the first Estonian-language poems and their contemporary times on the cover of my book." (Oinas 1985: 180.)

This is how Salu himself describes the moment when the idea of the novel was born in 1966. The dozen years from the conception to the completion of the

novel levelled the original spontaneous picture in his mind's eye into a rather down-to-earth description of life in Tallinn. The pastoral that the title of the novel hints at is still there, but it has not remained on the foreground, although one might expect it would.

The novel *Shepherds of Lasnamägi* has been constructed as a diary of the author of the first known poems in Estonian, Reiner Brockmann (Reinhard in the novel), and it is introduced by a retrospective prologue. The diary begins with Reinhard's arrival in Revel from the Germany ravished by the Thirty Years' War; it ends with his marriage to Dorothea Temme. Between these two events are Reinhard's years as a tutor at the Temme house of merchants, his career as a professor of Greek at the town gymnasium, his acquaintance with the members of the Delegation of Gottorp-Holstein, including Paul Fleming and Adam Olearius, and the founding of the shepherds' society. He also writes about his reminiscence of his childhood and youth in Germany, and about his childhood friend and first love, Liise.

Pastoral, idyll, Arcadia

According to J.A. Cuddon's *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, *pastoral* is an idealised depiction of a shepherd's life, it displays nostalgia for the past, for some hypothetical state of love and peace which has somehow been lost. The dominating idea and theme of most things in pastoral is the search for the simple life away from court and town, away from corruption, war, strife, the love of gain, away from "getting and spending." In a way it reveals a yearning for a lost innocence, for a pre-Fall paradisaical life in which man existed in harmony with nature. It is thus a form of primitivism and a potent longing for things past. During the Renaissance period the expression of a longing for this Arcadian world was worked out in greater detail (Cuddon 1992: 686, 689).

Arcadia is a historical and geographical district in the Peloponnese Mountains, in mythology it is the home of god Pan. Due to the shepherding way of life and sheltered isolation of the mountains, this place has become the symbol of the harmonious golden age and careless country life, where different geographical realities have been added later: "*Bucolics* mixes the world of Sicilian shepherds, as seen through Theocritus's realistic eyes of a townsman, but the view is still somewhat idealised, with the Italian motifs, as described and roman-

ticised through Virgil's sensuous perception of nature. The result is an ideal no-man's-land in Arcadia, where there are the Italian river of Mincius and the nymphs of the Helicon grotto called Libertha..." (Unt 1992: 320.) Salu himself has also stressed the imaginariness of Arcadia: "In poetry, the imaginary land of happiness has sometimes been called Arcadia after the department of Ancient Greece, the inhabitants of which were mostly engaged in sheep breeding." (Salu 1972: 8–9.)

Theocritus's *idyll* was identical to pastoral, in everyday speech it has come to denote a careless state of wellbeing, or such an environment. Mikhail Bakhtin has given the idyll a specific spatial-temporal meaning in his division of chronotopes.

"The types of idyll that have emerged in literature, starting from ancient times up to the latest times are very different. We distinguish the following clear types: love idyll (here, the main class is pastoral), rural idyll, artisan idyll, family idyll. [---] Although the types and subclasses may be very different, they all ... have a number of common features, conditioned by their similar relations with the total unity of the folkloristic time. It is primarily expressed in special relations between time and space, characteristic to the idyll, its organic ties with the location – life and events and the locality (place) have organically been knitted together: home with all its nooks, familiar mountains, valleys, fields and meadows, familiar river and forest, home itself. [---] The levelling of all aspects of time, conditioned by the unity of place, favours the development of rhythmical cycles of time, which is characteristic to the idyll." (Bahtin 1987: 157.)

This also specifies the relations with simplicity and everyday life: "Actually, the idyll does not know everyday life. Everything routine in relation with unique biographical and historical events is the essential side of life in the idyll." (Bahtin 1987: 158.)

Nostalgia in landscape

"A great joy of reunion fills my soul when I again stand facing this long-forgotten scene. [---] But now, the deep tolling of bells is melancholic, the shine of the setting sun is not the jubilant glitter of older times, which I used to gaze at from this high point and which inspired my verses. The company of young and jolly friends has long gone, some of them are already resting in their graves, and I am a stranger in the places that once gave me pleasure. The leaves of aspens that stand between the high coastal cliffs and the sea are already red; birches that grow among pines are yellow. The heavy and punishing hand of illness has not left me unmarked in the years of the autumn of my life. A stranger, the greying pastor of Tristvere, I stand here, among my old memories, and my heart is

heavy. [---] My gaze travels over the familiar places and over the sea, glittering in the sun. This is the sea of my *memories*." (Salu 2000: 9.)

This passage comes from the beginning of the novel, reflecting the hero's mood on the top of the cliffs of Lasnamägi. This view over the town and the landscape, which is probably the most emotional, is characterised by the peaceful coexistence of joy and grief, and beauty and fading. The narrator's lookout resembles to a certain extent the place where the author opened his novel. Tonality is, naturally, different; instead of afternoon, there is evening; instead of summer – autumn; instead of activity, there is resignation. But still, the first overview of the town ("The town, together with its towers and bastions, red roofs with whitewashed ridges made of Dutch tile, is curled up like a hedgehog on the sea. [---] This is a refined harmony. All noise and futile human bustle, hoofbeats and the rattle of carriages, calls of the merchants and people crowding the streets stay there, between the houses and walls of the town. Here we can hear only harmony and the elevating sounds of music." – Salu 2000: 8), and some reminiscence of the doings of poets and shepherds ("How often did our merry company of shepherds stand at the same beautiful lookout on Kivimägi! How many verses in German, Latin and Greek, dedicated to the town and its beauties have been written right here, where we sat on some tussock or a large stone! [---] In one idyllic evening, the first song in the language of this country was sung here, accompanied by a ship's orchestra." – Salu 2000: 9) most of all correspond to our expectations of the novel. This is harmony between the environment, youth, love and poetry.

The landscape described in the prologue represents an emotional version of the view over Tallinn and its environs, enjoyed at the lookout described in the diary. As the diary offers Reinhard's, not the reader's (if we suppose that the reader has not seen Tallinn) first glimpse of the town, and he does not yet have personal relations to the place, the scene is rather dominated by a dispassionate listing of towers of the town wall, resembling the text of a tour guide. The main hero even admits: "She [Doora] could as well explain the town to foreign travelers at this wonderful lookout. All important buildings of the town can be seen at a glance." (Salu 2000: 85.) His guide dwells only on the blunt spire of St. Olaf's Church for a longer time, as she seems to have some personal memories of the fire that had destroyed it. The prologue only touches upon the restoration of the

spire. Considering that Salu has much drawn from Adam Olearius's popular travel story *Offt begehrtte Beschreibung der Newen ORIENTALischen Reise* (1647), his description of the townscape probably originates from an engraving which was published in a new edition of this book in 1656 (Leimus 1996: XV) – this picture again depicts the proud high spire of the church (Olearius 1996: 114–115).

Home

Nostalgia for the past is described at two levels in the novel. The prologue looks with emotion back to Tallinn (the first person narrator has by that time become the pastor of Kadrina parish), but the real *centre of the idyll* of *The Shepherds of Lasnamägi* is placed outside the present time and space of the novel. This centre is placed at the home of Reinhard's brother on the bank of the River Neebel: "He had a nice house in the middle of an orchard and lime trees. My brother's farm and mill were the paradise of my childhood – a river near the house, the babbling of the water wheel, men with their cartloads of grain in the yard, the surrounding meadows and fields, and the deep old forests of Weitendorf not far away." (Salu 2000: 37.)

After this idyll has been destroyed in the war and plague, it is transferred, or at least an attempt is made to transfer it into the Temme townhouse of merchants in Tallinn. Bakhtin writes: "In a better case, the unity of place is limited to the *town house* of the family *resp.* family lineage in a family novel" (Bahtin 1987: 162). But this is a much harder process; although Reinhard fits easily into the merchant's family, the house is not Temme's hereditary property (while the idyll required organic ties with the location), but it has been purchased several decades ago, and the shadows of the previous owners have not yet left it. The line of love is also transformational – at least in the beginning, his love for Doora, the daughter of the merchant, grows because he sees her as a double of his childhood companion, Liise.

Natural circle

According to Bakhtin, one of the characteristics of the idyll is the *joining of the life of humans with that of nature*, their common rhythm, and a common language for both nature and the events of human lives. The truth is that predominantly,

this common language has changed into a purely metaphorical one in the idyll (Bahtin 1987: 157). In the beginning, it seems that Salu sticks to this rule in his novel. Reinhard arrives in Tallinn early in the spring, and the beginning of his new life is accompanied by the awakening of nature in the town and its environs. "It is elevating to observe the rapid arrival of spring. Only a few days ago there were high snowdrifts in the yard, but the powerful noonday sun visibly melts them, and we have had a couple of sunny days so far." (Salu 2000: 35.) The beginning has been made, and hints have been given.

Besides nature and human relations, parallels have been found in poetry as well, when Reinhard teaches the son of the house, Vidri, Horace's poem, *Diffugere nives*, and Doora enthusiastically follows it. Doora comments: "This [poem] tells us just about the present awakening of spring in our gardens and behind the town wall, on town pastures and the meadows of the gymnasium." (Salu 2000: 62.) But just as Horace's poem stops with spring, without mentioning the following circle of the year, the idyllic space-time is lost in the novel when Reinhard becomes a teacher at the gymnasium. The primary idyll still visits him once before he starts his work at school, but only in a dream. "But today, the world of my dreams was entirely different – I was wandering in the places of my childhood joys, the sun was shining and summer was everywhere." (Salu 2000: 111.) But this dream is invaded by an erotic motif that is inappropriate for a sublimed idyll – instead of children who would play in the river, Reinhard sees Liise, who steps out of the water, revealing the charms of her beautiful young body. The meaning of this scene is saying good-bye to Liise, who is the main character of the idyll (Reinhard learns soon that Liise has died of the plague), and to some extent, also saying farewell to Doora, who helplessly tries to oppose Reinhard's leaving the house.

Imaginary Arcadia

After the abrupt ending of the chronotope of the idyll (at the level of the plot, Reinhard's move is seconded by a "bad dissonance" – Doora's sudden illness at his introduction party), it is gradually substituted by a cultured and valued image of Arcadia, which we could call an *imaginary Arcadia*, as there is no better term. Rector Vulpius encourages Reinhard to take the professor's job with the words: "Yes, one could achieve something in the *prima*, if there were talented and sensi-

ble students, – the Rector was lost in a reverie. Greek lyricists – Alcaeus, Sappho, Pindar! [---] For them alone could one become a teacher of Greek and bear all other miseries. *Et ego in Arcadia.*" (Salu 2000: 105.)

Such treatment of Arcadia naturally reaches its peak with the founding of a shepherds' society on the initiative of Paul Fleming from the Delegation of Gottorp-Holstein.

"In the first days of the delegation's residence in Tallinn a society of poets was formed, similar to that "shepherd's society" ("*Schäfergesellschaft*"), which Fleming had founded in Leipzig before he left the city and fled from the plague. This was a narrow intimate circle, all its members chose a characteristic pseudonym, as was the habit in the literary circles of the time. Of Tallinners, Brockmann and Polus joined the circle. Pastoral poetry – an imitation of the ancient pastoral school, but with an unconcealed erotic undertone – was the literary trend of the period, and it was already emphasised in the names of such circles." (Salu 1965: 157.)

Imaginary and poetic Arcadia requires an entirely different approach. Instead of presupposed innocence, the knowledge of mythology, Greek Pantheon, Greek and Roman poetry is required. "The world of Greek gods prescribes that a shepherd, the poet of our time, know the language of his spiritual forefathers and naturally, Greek poetry. [---] Romans, who adopted Greek poetry along with Greek gods, sometimes only changing and Romanising their names, wrote pastoral poetry too." (Salu 2000: 215.) As long as the idyll was within reach, such things were not essential. Reinhard recalls how nice it had been to listen to Liise's "reports" on ducks swimming in the mill pond and crayfish burrowing holes into the banks of the pond, while studying Greek (Salu 2000: 38).

"The poetical landscapes of the shepherds – in our little circle, as well as elsewhere – are close relatives to those of the shepherds of Ancient Greece as they might have looked like in Hesiod's and other poets' home mountains. Not the plants – we do not write about palms, olive trees or cypresses; but the Greeks' elves and gods – nymphs, centaurs – live in our Nordic woods, and Pan – the protector of sheep herds and nature, plays his flute in the bushes." (Salu 2000: 214.)

We can see that the landscapes are rather characterised by imaginary mythology than by real and concrete relief, trees or plants. In the novel, poetical landscapes are placed into different locations in the environs of Tallinn (Pirita, Kopli), mainly concentrating on Kivimägi – another name for Lasnamägi. Paradoxically, this is an industrial landscape, as the shepherds are attracted by the quarry

opened by the Swedish military engineers, which is not much used during peacetime, but where the whole town of Tallinn could be fitted back again, since it has been taken out of it. In a sense, this is an *original home*, too.

It is no accident that a fateful muse, Elsabe Niehusen, first appears on the stage in the end of the above-mentioned scene of the introduction party, which marks the end of the idyll. In the last third of the novel, the protagonist's love that had begun in the fashion of an idyll is entirely left aside, (it flames again in the finale of the novel at a fabulous wedding party), and much more attention is paid to the relationship between Paul Fleming and Elsabe, which has an important place in literary history. "She represents the Baltic Sea and the Baltic shores, the most beautiful and most powerful that we have; she is the 'siren of the Baltic Sea' for our prince of poetry." (Salu 2000: 213.) But in this novel, the sea is beautiful only when watched from solid ground. At a distance, it shines in the sun, but direct contacts with the sea are everything but beautiful. Reinhard's journey from Germany to Tallinn onboard a ship is like a fight with the "fury of the elements": the future is "only as long as the next wave" (Salu 2000: 17). The journey of the delegation towards the east is also interrupted by a shipwreck near Suursaar, rendered into poetic form by Paul Fleming. A kind of parallel can also be drawn with Philip Sidney's classical pastoral novel, *Arcadia*, where the sea with its storms, shipwrecks and pirates embodies a hostile environment opposed to the life of shepherds. On the other hand, the inner logic of this particular novel declares that real love originates from the idyll, and that Arcadian love remains a game. "The unachievable dream of the king of the shepherds had irrevocably abandoned him, the spring joy was short and it burned out like a straw fire." (Salu 2000: 216.) The logic of the text specifies the remark made by the professor of poetry, Polus: "...the one to whom you wrote your immortal odes and hymns was only the product of your imagination. [---] Everything was a game, a heartless game for the earthly and carnal Elsabe. Who could capture a dream and keep it until daylight? Who could make the game a reality?" (Salu 2000: 218.)

The Graces, nymphs...

The first appearance of the imaginary Arcadia in the text of the novel in the above-mentioned scene of *Diffugere nives* is accompanied by Reinhard's com-

mentary: "Horace, too, makes young girls, the goddesses or spirits of his contemporary pagan time, dance in circles against the idyllic background of a spring landscape. [---] The graces, nymphs, naiads, the idealised images of nude young women dance on the blossoming spring landscape of the Mediterranean; their hair flows in the wind, their lithe limbs move in the rhythm of the dance, young uncovered bodies of women complement the budding and blossoming of the Arcadian nature." (Salu 2000: 64.) But the landscape full of mythology that the protagonist has evoked in his mind's eye is suddenly disrupted by pieces of reality. "The ideal women of the artists of Ancient Greece and Rome – nymphs on the canvas and in marble – were mixed up with the local living nymph in my mind's eye. [---] The dancing circle of shadowy figures rose in front of my eyes for only a moment, but the original model of the graces and nymphs was Doora, disrobed of her Sunday best." (Salu 2000: 65.) Such a version frightens Reinhard so that he has to reprimand himself: "Stop, the teacher of Christian youths!" (Salu 2000: 65.)

A Grace or a nymph could be uncovered on a meadow, or on the canvas and in the form of a marble sculpture. We can also add poetry, pastoral poetry, which, differing from idyllic innocence, willingly depicted erotic motifs – eroticism could as well mark, in a sense, the transformation from the idyll into the imaginary Arcadia in a novel. The problem of innocence haunts Reinhard and later makes him constantly assert to himself and all the others the innocence of the actions of the poetical society ("Our party is an *innocent and pure* party of joy, it is a shepherd's dance to the music of a ship's orchestra, clad in red velvet coats, it is an innocent merrymaking of poets" – Salu 2000: 213).

Returning to Doora as a symbol of a mythological being, (who, when depicted as a nymph, could well represent nature itself), we should note that her cover – the clothing – that disappeared in the imaginary picture, has an important meaning of its own. In almost all meaningful scenes, where Doora appears, she is wearing one and the same garment – her greenish glittering best gown (even when wearing a more ordinary dress would be justified), that again and again makes Reinhard compare her to a nymph or a naiad.

Good weather

Although Doora immediately relates *Diffugere nives* with the arrival of spring in Tallinn, she makes one point against it, which actually unleashes Reinhard's imagination: "Only the Graces and nymphs are missing here. How could they dance naked in the cold wind in Nunnakoppel, or on the town pasture?" (Salu 2000: 62.) But Reinhard argues: "If there ever will be a Nordic poet, whose work will be as good as that of the masters of the ancient pagan times, wouldn't he, too, depict the spring idyll as the circle of dancing girls on an open meadow?" (Salu 2000: 64.) (Switching from the viewpoint of a character of the novel to that of the author, we could notice an indirect hint to Kristjan Jaak Peterson's pastoral poems.) At the same time, it really seems that the novel is engaged in creating an environment that would suit elves from southern countries. Or, in other words, it is searching for the existing conditions that would enable pastoral poetry to be written.

Differing from all other novels written by Salu, where the real shepherds play some role, the novel titled "shepherds" has nothing to do with the real ones. The author has not described the metaphorical shepherds as dummy shepherds, since such treatment would have degraded them and their world. In this novel, he does not permit anything like in his first novel *Õnneraha* ("Lucky penny"), where he inserted a slightly malicious reference to pastoral literature ("A poet might write songs about the pastures of Palupera, because in his eyes the pastures are even more beautiful: sheep gambolling in the sun, with sky blue silk ribbons tied around their necks. And two young shepherds, wearing curling wigs and expensive silk garments – maybe Reinhold and Dorothea – and singing love songs." – Salu 1953: 89), which was meant to contrast the reality of the shepherd's life (hot weather, horseflies, and lost cows in the woods).

A contrast is still there in *The Shepherds of Lasnamägi*, but in a more hidden form. For example, the company of friends cannot go picnicking on the town pasture, because wolves hide there. A shepherd could not choose whether to go out with his herd or not. And a shepherd had to go out in any weather (in Estonia, it was mostly bad weather). The meetings of the shepherds' society require good weather. "Good shepherds' parties have been held on Kivimägi, with invited guests, common singing and shepherds' dances. But they would, of course, need good weather." (Salu 2000: 215.) Since all through the novel, the pleasant

activities, poetry recitals and shepherds' dances are held in good weather, we should not be surprised that in his novel Salu has declared that Brockmann's *Oda esthonica jambico-trochaica* (1638) was the first poem in the Estonian language, not *Carmen alexandrinum esthonicum* (1637), as the former opens with a description of good weather.

Arcadia and Lasnamägi in the Guild Hall. A conclusion

I would suggest that a generally arbitrary opposition, "the idyll *versus* Arcadia," which in itself sounds as peculiar as the conglomeration "Lasnamägi and Arcadia," is still appropriate when discussing the novel *The Shepherds of Lasnamägi*. The idyll, based on the poeticising of everyday life and the imaginary Arcadia, based on mythology, clash in the space-time of the novel and seemingly, the idyll has to give way. But the final chapter of the novel is a kind of attempt at synthesis or reconciliation. The wedding of Reinhard and Doora is in spring; again, everything is budding, titmice are chirping; a new circle begins in nature, and a new possibility for the idyll has appeared. On the other hand, the scene at the wedding where Salu dramatises the wedding newspaper written by Paul Fleming (Altof 1987: 1561) is the last powerful attempt of Arcadia to establish itself. To be precise, Arcadia and Lasnamägi do not invade the banquet hall, but they are substituted by the home of the Muses, Parnassus, and Kopli (the planes of meaning of these two places are almost identical). The young trees that decorate the hall have been brought from Kopli, and Kopli was the place where the Muses revealed themselves to Fleming – the same girls, who now, wearing wreaths of club moss and lingonberry stalks, bring greetings from the king of shepherds.

I have stated in the beginning of this paper that the pastoral motifs do not occupy the foreground in the novel. They are hidden in the text, but still, they do have an important role in the inner structure of the work. The title, *The Shepherds of Lasnamägi*, is certainly justified by the inner logic of the text.

References

- A l t o f, Kaja 1987. Reiner Brockmann Tallinnas ja "Lasnamäe lamburid". – *Looming*, no. 11, pp. 1556–1562
- B a h t i n, Mihhail 1987. Aja ning kronotoobi vormid romaanis. – M. Bahtin. *Valitud töid*. Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, pp. 44–184
- B r o c k m a n n, Reiner 2000. *Teosed*. Tartu: Ilmamaa
- C u d d o n, J.A. 1992. *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. London: Penguin Books
- L e i m u s, Ivar 1996. Tõlkija eessõna eestikeelsele väljaandele. – Adam Olearius. *Täiendatud uus reisikiri Moskoovia ja Pärsia teekonna kohta*. Tallinn: Olion, pp. VII–XVII
- O i n a s, Felix 1985. Kuidas kirjanikud kirjutavad. Herbert Salu. Ilmar Külvet. – *Tulimuld*, no. 4, pp. 176–180
- O l e a r i u s, Adam 1996. *Täiendatud uus reisikiri Moskoovia ja Pärsia teekonna kohta*. Tallinn: Olion
- S a l u, Herbert 1953. *Õnneraha*. Toronto: Orto
- S a l u, Herbert 1965. Rootsiaegne pulmaluule. Eesti kunstluule algus. – H. Salu. *Tuul üle mere ja muid lühiuurimusi eesti kirjandusest*. Stockholm: Vaba Eesti, pp. 143–187
- S a l u, Herbert 1972. *Utopia ja futuroloogia*. Lund
- S a l u, Herbert 2000. *Lasnamäe lamburid. Siiditee serval*. Tallinn: Eesti Raamat
- U n t, Jaan 1992. Saatesõna. – Vergilius. *Bucolica. Aeneis*. Tallinn: Hortus Litterarum, pp. 314–325