

Arvi Järventaus and the Hungarian “weeping willows”

The article describes the first Finnish-language travelogue about Hungary: Arvi Järventaus’s “Itkevien pajujen maa” (The Land of the Weeping Willows), published in 1939. This work is organically connected to Järventaus’s earlier work, which includes fictional descriptions of Hungarian history. Järventaus’s description represents the literary genre of subjective travelogue (as established in the Romantic period), and its merit is not so much its abundant and precise factuality but its lively and empathetic description. Järventaus was not only a writer but also an evangelical priest, and accordingly his work contains features of the anti-Semitism, prevalent among the Finnish clergy in the 1930s. The central image of the work turns out to be the weeping willow, which Järventaus sees as a listener and comforter for the Hungarian people suffering from the trauma caused by the Trianon Peace Treaty, in accordance with the tradition of Finnish nature descriptions. Within the context of Finnish culture at the time, Järventaus’s travelogue can be understood as part of the so-called ‘tribal work,’ which aimed to shape the attitudes of Finns and to bring the nation closer to their related peoples.

Keywords: *Finnish author Järventaus, travelogue, protestantism, anti-Semitism, trauma, tribal work*

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