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RICARDA HUCH – AN UNFAIRLY FORGOTTEN “KINGDOM OF MIND DOMINA”

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During her literature working Ricarda Huch as a German writer, historian and active fighter for women's rights created the huge amount of books, including monumental historical works, bibliographies and literary treatise. Her writings are marked by unique balance between historical and artistic prose and stand on the board of established facts of the past and their refined incarnation in the books.

Ricarda Huch (1864 – 1947), the German writer of the 20th century, is a unique and multifaceted person in the literary history. Unfortunately, in the context of the sweep of literature she didn't become a famous authoress in comparison with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1782 – 1832), Hermann Hesse (1877 – 1962) or Erich Maria Remarque (1897 – 1970), but with her writings she did a lot for the development of German literature and culture in general. Gertrud Bäumer (1873 – 1954), a writer and politician who actively participated in the German civil rights feminist movement, called her a “torch bearer”, “ecclesiastically high-minded woman”, and a “new voice in women's evolution” [1]. Since 1930 she also became the first woman that was invited to join the Prussian Academy of Arts (Preußische Akademie der Künste), was honoured and loved by contemporaries. Moreover, she was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature seven times.

Except her literature records Huch was an active fighter for women's rights and showed with her own example a self-sustainability and independence from social prescriptions, norms and stereotypes. Ricarda went from her native town Brunswick in Germany to study in Zurich as one of the first young women in this country. She could not stay in her motherland, because universities were not yet open for women at that time. Her creative works can not be described as a typical kind of woman's literature with addiction to love stories and sensuous nature poetry from Romanticism. Huch's works are doubtlessly characterized as colossal and monumental, standing on the border between imaginative and historical writing. She worked on the historical research concerning the Thirty Years' War, the Revolution of 1848 and Italian fight for freedom in the 19th century. She achieved great success in traditional male genres of historical novels [2]. Ricarda Huch attained fame as a historical authoress thanks to her biographic works about outstanding people such as Martin Luther, Albrecht von Wallenstein, Giuseppe Garibaldi and Federico Confalonieri¹.

Her German history cycle of novels and fresh perspective to the survey of Romanticism period represent her as a toilsome historian and chronicler, who was able to transfuse research of historical findings to the poetical and artistic form. The fact of deep historicism in Huch's writings can be explained with the fact of her bachelor and master studies and then PHD carrier at university. She spent lots of time doing history and literature in the library and teaching at schools in different places of Germany and Austria.

Ricarda Huch made an invaluable contribution in observation and understanding of German Romanticism by creating the fundamental work “Romanticism” (1899 - 1902), that is a historical document and fascinating literature masterpiece at the same time, by extension each of her writings. This book gave momentum for revival of Romanticism at that time. But she refused both the biting criticism and frank assessments of this literary school, she depicted all of the dark and charmless sides and blemishes on the romantic canvas and its artists.

The interest to the men of character, difficulty to write about complicated historical events, particular qualities and appearance of revolutionary sentiments in Huch's writings can be retraced in her own biography and complex way of living. Born in a well-to-do aristocratic family she was brought up according to the highest rules of the swell society and was given home education. Ricarda's parents lived separately and her own relationships with men were far away from the ideal romantic love stories. Being in love with her cousin and having no opportunities to build a family with him, she tried to overcome these emotional experiences by her art writing and worked days on end at archives and manuscripts. The unhappy alliance with an Italian doctor and the birth of her daughter could not force Ricarda Huch to become a “pattern wife and mother” and she continued to create literature till her death at the age of 80.

¹ Albrecht von Wallenstein, Giuseppe Garibaldi and Federico Confalonieri - military leaders, generals and nationalists.

Linguistics, literature, philology

The authoress began her creative career with poems and partly bibliographical stories. In 1892 her first novel *„Erinnerungen von Ludolf Ursleu dem Jüngeren“* was published and it was completely build on the events of her own life and many characters dispatch a reader to the real people, friends and relatives in Huch's encirclement. After misfortunes and unlucky relationships with men Ricarda avoided the creation of the autobiographical novels, that could be another reminder of her unfortunate experience. Namely the historical genre and the research of the famous people lives helped her to fill the void and emptiness in her personal fate.

Ricarda Huchs's literary works are extensive and rich both thematically and stylistically. So she began with poems, but then increasingly wrote novels and, above all, historical works, which are partly episodically settled between history and literature. Her works on Romanticism (1899/1902), on the people of the Thirty Years' War and on the personalities of the German Revolution of 1848/1849 (*Old and New Gods*, 1930) are captivating due to their incredibly lively portrayals of persons who are not afraid of personal valuations.

One of her most important books is the work about the Thirty Years' War. It includes 3 bands and describes the period between 1585 and 1620 in the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. The plot is heavily centered on the religious background of the war. The second volume, 1620-1632, focused on the conflict between the imperial general Wallenstein and the Swedish King Gustav Adolf. Whereas the third volume, 1633-1650, depicts Germany, which was completely wracked by the war, impoverished and bled.

The concept of androgyny concerning all people of art and in particular writers and poets became another interesting theory, that was developed in her literature art. Ricarda Huch confirmed in her treatise about another important German authoress and composer Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, that it is impossible to assign male or female sex to the person of art, because each of them has an estimate part of male and female, that let them feel and create and make their works of art. In *„genius“* advantages and strength of both of the genders are impersonated. By male part she meant propulsion, figures and forms, something architectonical and plastic. What about female, she considered something artistic and musical what made these forms filled by empathy and emotions. She complained, that it was not accepted in the contemporary society and study of literature to notice the structuring and constructive quality of men's writings in women's works, in spite of the fact there are enough examples. At the same time Huch was sure, that the poet could not reach in his poetry the very high beauty without typical female traits inside [3].

As an example she provided Goethe, who according to her point of view, was an ideal incarnation of male and female together. Shiller in his writings was the embodiment of *„pure male part of a man“* and Peter Altenberg's works of art were completely based on female specific characters. A man is a woman to a certain degree, and a woman is a man thus everybody should find their own balance and harmony in it. In her books she tried to destroy the line between male and female art of writing.

Ricarda Huch was an evangelical since she was born with addiction to revolutionary sentiments, that is clearly remarkable in her art and daily life events. She also said about herself, that the freedom is a magical word for her, which can wear her heart on her sleeve [4]. It was the freedom to create and speak about really important things, do something what is worth. She always wanted to be a hammer instead of an anvil not only in relationships with men, but also in relation to the lifeway. We can judge according to her body of work that she managed to do that.

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