

*The Blaumanis Moment:  
National Literature Enters  
the Stage of Art*

My aim in this article is to discuss the literary field in Latvia slightly before 1900. More specifically, I want to focus on the particular situation when literature written in the Latvian language ceases to be a product of didactic intention and moralizing value, and makes the crucial step in recognizing its rights to submerge into primarily aesthetic issues. It is also the moment when the personality of the author cuts through the still mostly realistic surface of literary works, making him (or her) be perceived as unmistakably present, even if this move often remains unnoticed by most contemporary and even later observers.<sup>1</sup>

The author who in my article represents this departure, which undoubtedly is part of a broader tendency of the time period, is Rūdolfs Blaumanis (1863–1908) whose literary career roughly covers about two decades since his literary debut in 1882, most of his works being written starting in the late 1880s.<sup>2</sup> Along with him, the movement towards representation of modernity as it was first experienced by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century's inhabitants of the Baltic countries is visible in works of other Latvian authors, most notably Jānis Poruks and Aspazija. What in this context singles out Blaumanis is the simple fact that his texts at first glance still belong to an earlier period of literary development. In most of his plays and novellas, the location is that of familiar country

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<sup>1</sup> A couple of years ago, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia finished a project of creating the so-called canon of culture which would also include the most important examples of the Latvian literature. In the commentary upon inclusion of Rūdolfs Blaumanis's works in this canon, literary critic Guntis Berelis states on the homepage of the project: "Rūdolfs Blaumanis (1863–1908) was the founder of the realistic psychological narrative and drama in Latvia. After Blaumanis the question whether in a remote European and Russian province great literature can be created no longer existed. [...] In Blaumanis's fiction, Latvian literature for the first time wanted to see itself as literature instead of a moralizing commentary on various everyday situations." Even in this account, the characteristic of realist features in Blaumanis's art predominate. However, there are also clues that point towards his modernity.

<sup>2</sup> Blaumanis's early published pieces were written in German, and it is only in 1887 that his first publication in Latvian appeared.

surroundings, simple rural landscapes, cultivated country fields, yards of peasant houses, and inner rooms of the latter. In addition, some other social spaces, for example, country inns and in some cases manors, are portrayed. All this marks the realist mode of writing as it was understood by Blaumanis's contemporaries, and his works, even if their literary value was recognized almost at once (which did not spare him some unjust and even brutal attacks from the critics), were considered in terms of literary creation also characteristic of such representatives of an earlier generation of prose writers as, for example, Krišjānis Barons, Juris Neikens, Apsīšu Jēkabs, and, for that matter, Reinis and Matīss Kaudzītes, the authors of the first and widely celebrated Latvian novel published in 1879. In my reading, however, I attempt to deal with exactly those features which not only radically separate Blaumanis from all the above mentioned authors, but which provide his writing with a subtle touch of modern experience that is still relevant even for early 21<sup>st</sup> century readers.

In the following, I'll focus on two texts belonging to the initial period of Blaumanis's oeuvre, the novella *Thunderstorm* (*Pērkoņa negaiss*, 1887) and the later elaboration of the same plot in his drama *The Prodigal Son* (*Pazudušais dēls*, 1893). I'll first briefly discuss the literary scene prior to the start of Blaumanis's career, then also delve into some biographical details important for an understanding of the writer's concerns and efforts. Thus in my reading of the two mentioned texts I pay particular attention to how earlier models of reality interpretation have been subverted and transformed by Blaumanis in a highly personal and sophisticated manner.<sup>3</sup> My analysis of his literary works will focus on the attempts of the author to see and reveal in a problematic light the patriarchal and religious roots and principles of the society contemporary to him as well as the relations between life and art and, for that matter, life and the artist, as they are subjected to Blaumanis's scrutiny.

Readers of *Interlitteraria* hardly require an extended overview of the complicated history of the present-day Baltic States. Perhaps a short excursus into observations made by the authors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Latvian literary histories will be sufficient to provide characteristic features of the situation.

The first history of Latvian literature, or, rather, an attempt to write such a history, was made public exactly two hundred years ago, in 1812. The person behind this undertaking was a Baltic German school inspector, Ulrich Ernst Zimmermann, who titled his book *Versuch einer Geschichte der lettischen*

<sup>3</sup> Blaumanis's writing thus reaffirms characteristic tendency of introducing personal experience into literary texts as means of updating the representation of reality which marks decisive moments in the history and development of different European literatures (Auerbach 1968).

*Literatur* (*An Attempt at a History of Latvian Literature*). It was conceived and written in German, the language of the upper-class, and the author made it explicitly clear that he addressed those members of his own circles who as a part of their everyday duties (being, for example, priests or school inspectors as he himself was) had the necessity to confront local people and needed some basic knowledge concerning the cultural heritage of the natives.<sup>4</sup> Another example is provided by the statutes of the so-called *Literary Society of Latvian Friends* (*Lettisch-Literarische Gesellschaft*), established 1827, where there is an explicit appeal to those Germans who master the Latvian language to use it as tools of influence upon the minds of the natives.<sup>5</sup>

We have to wait for almost half a century until the publication of the next overview of literary achievements in Latvian; and this is also the first one to be written and published in Latvian. The author of this book, *Latviešu rakstniecība* (*Latvian Literature*, 1860) is Bernhards Dīriķis, representative of the newly emerging Latvian civic society who, like many of his contemporaries, also had cultural aspirations which complemented his successful economical activities. Despite his radically different social background, however, we do not see crucial distinctions in Dīriķis's approach to the evaluation of the cultural history of his own people. He not only pays tribute to the efforts of German pastors and *literati* who in the history of Latvian letters indeed were the early writers. More than that, he simply titles the last chapter of his book which covers about four decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century since the 1820s as "The Period of Freedom, or the Learning of Latvians", thus explicitly defining contemporary developments as trailing (or, for that matter, mimicking) marks left there by their German forerunners.<sup>6</sup> And indeed, most texts written between 1820 and

<sup>4</sup> The original introduction to the book says the following: "Der Verfasser will durch diese Schrift *allen denen, die durch ihr Amt oder anderweitige Verhältnisse dazu ausgefordert werden, sich mit der lettischen Sprache bekannt zu machen*, eine in möglichster Kürze gedrängte Uebersicht davon in die Hände liefern, was bisher in dieser Sprache geleistet worden." (Zimmermann 1812: Vorrede. My emphasis.)

<sup>5</sup> „Die lettische Nation bedarf, wie in religiös-kirchlicher, so in staatsbürgerlicher Beziehung, gleich jeder andern Nation, eine wissenschaftlich-gebildete *Sprache, als eines vorzüglichen Mittels, wodurch auch sie gewirkt*, und durch welches die einzelnen Glieder derselben in jeder Hinsicht ihrer Bestimmung als Menschen näher gebracht werden können." (Frīde 2011: 44–45. My emphasis.)

<sup>6</sup> One of the principal 18th century Latvian language authors of German origin was Gothard Friedrich Stender whose work also receives detailed discussion in Dīriķis's book. Stender wrote in different genres, and the main aim of his lyrical poetry was that of substituting the, in his opinion, obscene Latvian folk songs with more cultivated literary texts. This issue reappears in our discussion of Blaumanis's drama *Pazudušais dēls*. Obviously, this is not the place to provide an extended discussion of the term 'mimicry' as elaborated in postcolonial studies, following Homi Bhabha's use of the term (Bhabha 1994). I just want to pay attention to the fact that colonial relations play a crucial role in the formation of Blaumanis's world view.

1860 did not differ from earlier examples either in their content or language, notwithstanding the fact that their authors now were so-called native speakers.

Not that the situation changed much during the next quarter of a century. On the one hand, this period saw the establishment of the first major Latvian organization, the Riga Latvian Society, in 1868, followed by the first theatre production in Latvian the same year and, on an even larger scale, the first Latvian Song festival, in 1873. It was also a time when interest in the Latvian folk heritage rose considerably; the collecting of both the Latvian epic and lyrical heritage was started and interest in ethnographical issues promoted. All these developments, however, did not have a major effect on the development of Latvian literature. Or, if they had one, it was of a rather conservative nature which did not challenge the religious and pietistic roots of earlier literature.<sup>7</sup> As the attempts at collecting and preserving traditional ways of life were consciously promoted, this situation did not push the emerging authors of the period to look for new devices for their aesthetic expression.

The situation changed only towards the second half of the 1880s, and this move was to a great extent linked to a more personal approach to literary writing which the authors of the new generation now tried to keep in the foreground. As already stressed at the beginning of this article, the most important, indeed defining figure in this development was Rūdolfs Blaumanis.

Major relevant issues for newly emerging literary developments of the late 1880s were those of identity and belonging.

Even if Latvian society underwent a rapid process of modernization during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the development being influenced by, among other factors, the rise of national consciousness of a previously nondominant ethnic group,<sup>8</sup> there was a considerable pressure on any young author who intended to start a literary career by writing in Latvian.

This pressure was formed, on the one hand, by the rapidly increasing interest in issues and processes of world (and especially European) literatures, providing a challenge to integrate this new experience into the development of national culture, and, on the other, the presence of traditional local literatures

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<sup>7</sup> These religious roots are still referred to as substantial to the formation and present-day state of the culture of the Baltic States in the early 21st century. See, for example, Johnson 2007, especially chapter 3, "Estonia: The Lutheran Narrative – Writers' Theatre".

<sup>8</sup> This issue is elaborated in detail by Miroslav Hroch in his book *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe*, and, specifically in the Latvian context, by Kristine Volfarte in her investigation of the history of The Riga Latvian Society (Hroch 2000; Volfarte 2009).

in other languages, German being the most important among these.<sup>9</sup> Even if Blaumanis became one of the leading Latvian writers of the period, he still belongs to both Latvian and German culture. For him to become an author writing in Latvian was a personal and remarkably difficult choice.

He was educated in German, and his early acquaintances also were almost exclusively German. Among those close to him we find figures like the Lutheran pastor of his native Ērgļi parish, the editor of the German newspaper in Riga who employed Blaumanis as a theatre and literary critic as well as published his first story, and two Baltic German writers somewhat senior to him. Both of those authors (Eugene von Bergmann and Victor von Andrejanoff) he later somewhat categorically singled out as belonging to the most talented writers of the region.<sup>10</sup>

Blaumanis's early works were thus understandably conceived and written in German; and it took four years after his first publication (in 1882) to switch to Latvian. Still, his experience allowed him to develop a reasonably critical attitude concerning relevant issues dealt with on both sides of the cultural divide; and, even if his own later literary works were written in Latvian, he still depended on German examples as well as kept a critical eye on the provinciality of Latvian literature. His diary entries still remained partly German.

Characteristically enough, the first serious evaluation of Blaumanis's literary work was provided by his Baltic German contemporary, Victor von Andrejanoff. On the other hand, recognition by the Latvian press was much slower, partly due to Blaumanis's stance as a sharp-tongued literary and theatre critic of the German language newspaper, *Zeitung für Stadt und Land*, issued by liberal Baltic German circles in Riga.

All this confirms that in terms of the necessity of self-identification of Latvian culture at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Blaumanis is a case in point.

Let us now proceed with the analysis of the two previously introduced texts, mostly focusing upon Blaumanis's first major drama, *Pazudušais dēls*, staged in 1893, in itself an elaborated version of the topic already dealt with in an earlier novella, *Pērkoņa negaiss*, published in 1887.

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<sup>9</sup> Even if I focus on a case study of a particular writer, the more general argument of the article is that it indeed seems important to write a literary history of the region focused upon multilingual issues, a task, which hasn't as yet been undertaken by Latvian scholars.

<sup>10</sup> In a letter to Bergman, June 7, 1895, Blaumanis writes: "Für mich existieren nur 3 baltische lebende Poeten: Pantenius (unser Gotfr. Keller, nicht ganz aber doch...), Andrejanoff (unser Byron, – deckt sich vollständig), Sie (mehr Eichendorff)." (Blaumanis 1959: 323)

In both cases the plot includes a conflict between an older farmer, Roplains, and his son, Krustiņš, which ends on a deeply tragic note when Krustiņš who attempts to steal money from his father's cabinet is shot dead by the farmer. The conflict between the two characters is mainly caused by Krustiņš's attempt to break free from the patriarchal environment which influenced his formative years and by his doubts about his prospects as a farmer as well as lack of any other perspective. The situation mirrors that of Blaumanis to a considerable extent (with the principal difference of him aspiring to the career of a journalist and writer) as Blaumanis also had serious doubts about his prospects as an inheritor of the manor.<sup>11</sup>

There is a considerable difference in the way the author develops his chosen problematic in both versions. The earlier of the two, the novella, clearly begins from the perspective of the father. We are told his life story, a typical one for the time period, of hard work and slow economic advancement which has brought him considerable economic stability. This achievement is, however, threatened by the flippant lifestyle of his son that for a considerable period remains unnoticed by the father. He then accidentally overhears a conversation between two of Krustiņš's acquaintances and afterwards pays more attention to his son who, after some period of compliance with his father's wishes, returns to his earlier habits. Thus the tragic outcome is explained as an almost inevitable result of character weakness and departure from traditional ethical values.

The conflicts of the drama are much more complicated; and, even if the main juxtaposition between the father and son is immediately put into the foreground by the list of characters involved in the play, there appear to be many more different narratives and points of view which reflect the complexity of the matter as well as of the historical situation. From the very beginning, the perspective of Krustiņš is much more brought into focus, and it is indeed from his point of view that we start to experience the events of the play.

During half a year's absence in the manor of his father, who is hurt in an accident, Krustiņš becomes troubled by serious debts. After the father's return from the hospital in the city, Krustiņš tries to hide the problematic state of affairs at the manor, and also attempts to arrange a marriage with the daughter of his lender, the innkeeper, an alliance which, however, turns out to be unacceptable to his family. In the end he – also in this version – is shot dead by

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<sup>11</sup> Blaumanis, however, consciously tried to fulfill these duties after his father's death in 1894 (and even before that) and till the end of his own life.

his father, the accident being caused by Krustiņš's final unlucky attempt to steal money from a cabinet to risk his fortune at the card table.

There is indeed still a sharp and even a rigorous contrast provided by the two different moral perspectives; however, the case is now made to look much more complicated. There is a certain amount of sympathy or, rather, empathy towards Krustiņš, whose inability to set himself up as a reliable son and farmer, is to a great extent explained by his aversion for the peasant way of life as well as the impossibility to find any other reasonable activity for self-expression.

It is here that the troubled perspective of the author, himself an inheritor of a farm and an aspiring young writer at the same time, comes into play.<sup>12</sup>

In the following I will mostly focus upon one of the most interesting aspects of Blaumanis's work, namely, the presumably semi-conscious attempt of the author in his literary works to come to terms both with his own personal and social identity and with his art. The central recurrent motif in his early works is that of the prodigal son which I interpret as the writer's attempt to transpose a personal dilemma to the behavioral patterns of his substitute fictional characters.

I draw here to a considerable extent on the research carried out by Michael Fried, in particular his analysis of art and embodiment in the creative work of such 19<sup>th</sup> century painters as Gustave Courbet and Adolph Menzel (Fried 1990; Fried 2002). I argue that what Fried (in his chosen cases) sees mostly as a search for new aesthetic approaches, including attempts either metaphorically to put the painter into the painting, or at least to preserve the partial perspective of an artist at work on the finished canvas, can also be discussed in the context of social aspects of literary works.

Additional clues towards an understanding of this kind of embodiment are provided by two of Fried's essays devoted to the American painter, Thomas Eakins, and the writer, Stephen Crane, respectively (Fried 1987). In the latter one, the focus upon the very fact of writing is especially relevant to the present attempt to disclose dilemmas which tormented Blaumanis, and the kind of solutions he was eager to look for.

It has already been mentioned that in the fate of Krustiņš we notice a number of differences from the writer's personal circumstances, but also find

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<sup>12</sup> Let me state that also the richness and precision of everyday details characteristic for Blaumanis's works is very much due to this very personal approach to his subjects. On the other hand, from the contemporary perspective of the new historicist approach this also allows us to delve more deeply into the state of affairs revealed by the author (Gallagher & Greenblatt, 2000).

important parallels. The state of turmoil of the character as well as that of the writer is also mirrored in the constant doubling of important motifs in the play.

Let us examine two of those motifs in order to discuss the possible influence of two principally contrasting forces, the traditional patriarchal and paternal, on the one hand, and that of the unfamiliar or *the other*, represented in this case by the feminine and the foreign, on the other.

The first of those motifs is the motif of the *walking stick* linked to paternal authority. After Krustiņš's father returns from the city and due to his injury caused in part by his son's inattentiveness, the father is forced to use the support of a walking stick. This detail adds to his authority, especially when he is referred to as walking along the fields together with his troubled son. The presence of the stick as a marker of the father and son relationship can certainly point towards hierarchical relations, and the stick in this context also acquires the meaning of a potential instrument of control.

This possible representation of authority is, however, disqualified to a considerable extent by the second stick used by another character in the play, an older man who lives at the manor who is the father of a young servant, Mikus, described in totally positive terms. Thus we face two fathers who have very different prospects, at the same time they share a common fate, that of ageing people.

The image of the walking stick simultaneously embodies the power and the loss of it; apart from additional meaning which I'll touch upon shortly.

Another motif is that of the unfamiliar or *the uncanny* which to a certain extent links the two principal female protagonists of the play, Ilze and Matilde. Different in almost every respect, the one being blond and almost embodying virtue, and the other dark-haired and irresistible in her passion, they in fact share one common feature – both of them are of an uncertain origin. Ilze is an orphan who has been raised by Krustiņš's parents, and seemingly represents an ideal image of patriarchal upbringing. Matilde is the daughter of the innkeeper Inķis; however, it is rumored that her real father was a gypsy, and indeed the whole appearance of Matilde provides her with the flair of exoticism rare in Blaumanis' fiction. Thus the relationship between her and Krustiņš also points towards the attraction and the threat provided by *the other*.

I now want to proceed further to show how the author uses the unfamiliar and the attractive in Matilde and her relations to Krustiņš to provide a link towards the interpretation of the relationship between Blaumanis himself and Baltic German culture.

It happens through the representation of the mechanisms of *reading* and *writing*, important for the play.

Several characters at Krustiņš father's manor are shown reading a book of popular songs, *Ziņģu lustes*, which dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and represents an effort of German pastors to improve the taste of the local population.<sup>13</sup> The book appeared to be so popular that it experienced several reprintings during the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well. Characteristically, these popular songs are universally approved of by the characters we meet in Blaumanis's play, and provide a relish for male and female servants alike. The sentimental kind of popular poetry is equally appreciated by comical as well as positive characters like Ilze and Mikus.

More than that, one of the servants, Andžs, who eventually enters a conflict with the master, and is fired, later proposes his services to Matilde who needs someone to write a letter to Krustiņš's father explaining the really troubled circumstances of his son; she thus hopes to extend her power over Krustiņš and finally to fulfill her aim to marry him.

It turns out that the servant mentioned is a local correspondent for the Latvian newspaper who himself writes poetry in the manner of the 18<sup>th</sup> century German authors which sounds really outdated a century later. The conflict between different language and culture spaces is underscored by the fact that Matilde presumably accepts Andžs's efforts as characteristic for a native Latvian *man of letters*.

With the sharp and satirical tones which Blaumanis repeatedly devoted to the dilettante efforts of his compatriots in mind, we have to come to the conclusion that the kind of writing revealed in the play cannot be taken as representative for the author himself. Blaumanis was looking for literary production that would be able to overcome the limitations of exactly the kind of texts ridiculed in the play. He was conscious in his own effort to become a writer of serious esteem, at the same time as he was uncertain about his abilities as a farmer.

And here we see the principal motifs of the play bound together. On the one hand, in the character of Krustiņš Blaumanis was trying to reveal the doubts of a young hero forced by his social environment to undertake the effort of becoming a farmer which he feels does not suit him well. On the other hand,

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<sup>13</sup> Postcolonial critics would call this kind of writing *master narratives* which are to be overturned or countered from a different perspective. In order to create his *counter-discourse* Blaumanis's drama, „like many other post-colonial counter-discursive plays, uses selected portions of master narratives, instead of concentrating on one rewriting project” (Gilbert & Tompkins 1996: 24).

the uncertainty of the main character concerning his task in life hides the real person behind the story, the author himself, who was indeed conscious of his own wish to fulfill his calling by overcoming old literary patterns and creating something new and valuable. Blaumanis was drawing his sword against the traditions of old sentimental literature, against any outlived form of self-expression as well as against the unilateral appreciation of such kinds of literature, characteristic of his contemporaries.

In this context, we can also reconsider the motif of the stick linked to the older generation in the play. As repeatedly argued by Michael Fried, the image of a stick can also be used both as representing the painter's brush or the writer's pen. The two bearers of the stick thus represent the old order inscribed on society; while the troubled efforts of Krustiņš (and his creator) to overcome this order reveal the opposite trend.

We can add to these considerations the link of the unclear origins of two female characters to the writer's own personal story. In his native environment, it was rumored that Blaumanis was the illegitimate son of a German landlord, a story which circulated widely and was familiar to the playwright himself. This small and otherwise secondary detail underscores the amount of personal experience put into the literary effort, and the intensity with which problems relevant for the main characters were also important for the writer himself.

There is more to say concerning *Pazudušais dēls*, and in the final part of my article I now turn to a discussion of the concepts of *immersion* and *specularity*, as discussed by Michael Fried in his most recent book, *The Moment of Caravaggio* (2010), in the context of two different phases which are faced in the creation of the work of art.

Let me quote a passage from Fried's book that comes close to explaining the above mentioned issues which are central to his enterprise:

Caravaggio's paintings can be shown to imply two distinct (and only notionally temporal) "moments" in their production, an initial immersive "moment" in which the painter is to be imagined as continuous with the picture on which he is working, of being "one with" it or, as I mainly want to say, immersed in it, and a subsequent, specular "moment" in which he finally separates or cuts himself off from the picture, which thereby is given up to visuality, to spectatordom, as if once and for all – but the feat of separation turns out to be difficult if not impossible to achieve, to make hold, and that too is readable in the paintings. The natural dynamic of Caravaggio's art, I shall suggest, consists largely in the mutual interaction of both "moments" and also between each of them and

relations of absorption and address as well as of other polarities, such as painting and mirroring. (Fried 2000: 3)

Fried then goes on to explain the crucial links of this double vision of Caravaggio, the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> century Italian painter, with subsequent developments in European art. It is not possible to summarize these complex issues here. However, what is important to stress is that at a crucial moment in the development of Latvian literature which in the title of this article I refer to as *entering the stage of art*, a similar juncture of contradicting aspirations, explained by Fried as the tension between *immersion* and *specularity*, *absorption* and *address*, can be detected in the artistic work of the most important representative of that literature.

Let us take a look at three particular scenes in Blaumanis's play. In the five act structure of his most important dramas, the author aspires to place the climax of the plot towards the end of the third act.<sup>14</sup> In *Pazudušais dēls*, this is the scene of a crucial conflict between Krustiņš and his mother who up to this point largely supported and even adored her son. But here, faced with unscrupulous rebukes concerning her own fault in the bearing of her son, at the top of their quarrel she feels so deeply hurt by Krustiņš's remarks that she damns him. It is the moment which provides, in Fried's terms, the fullest possible *immersion* of both protagonists in the dialogue excavating the deepest layers of their relationship. And it is also in this very moment that another person, Ilze, enters the room/stage, and apprehends that both her beloved Krustiņš and his mother are involved in this sort of violent argument. This discovery not only fills her with anxiety and horror, but also introduces a moment of evaluation of the importance of that particular action, a moment of making us aware of the irreconcilable conflict between the two protagonists, or, in other words, a moment of *specularity*.

It is from this point of being confronted with the uncompromising force of Blaumanis's artistic technique that we are able to look at the end and at the beginning of the play to appreciate the full scale of his achievement. The play ends with the scene where through the window at the rear of the stage Krustiņš enters a room in his father's house where the cabinet stands; this task requires most of his attention so that we are justified to speak about the character's full *immersion* in the process and *absorption* in his activities. Only as he has already taken money out of the cabinet and is ready to leave is he interrupted by the cry

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<sup>14</sup> He explicitly refers to his source for this opinion, the 19th century German writer and drama theorist Gustave Freitag (Freitag 1890).

of the mad Aža, an inhabitant of the house, and at this point his father enters the room with a weapon in his hand. Thus, at the highest point of the increase of dramatic action, a moment of *specularity* is again introduced which both interrupts Krustiņš's *immersion* and brings to a tragic solution the conflict between the two main protagonists. In the short scene which follows the father's deadly shot, a couple of other persons (or spectators) enter the scene; first Krustiņš's mother and then, at the very end of the play, Ilze who rounds out the whole event with her appreciation of the tragic outcome of the confrontation. She is only echoed by a short confirmation made by the mad Aža; and this brings us back to the very beginning of the drama.

In the first scene of the first act, which takes place in early morning hours, it is Ilze who sits in the yard of the farm waiting for Krustiņš to return home. Instead, the mad Aža appears; and in her strange behavior and remarks concerning the earlier death of her own son as well as obscure predictions concerning the fate of Krustiņš, we see the whole of the coming story virtually unfold before our eyes. Ilze thus is the first who in this sense experiences (or foresees) the events, in a way that is similar to her later appreciation of the outcome from the point of view of spectators in the final remarks of the play. Thus from the very beginning the *immersion* in her own thoughts is confronted by the *specularity* of the events still to come. And this is that very dialectic that is at stake here as we try to disclose the real intentions of the author, the complexity of his intended *address* to the public as well as the artistic mastery that helps to develop the portrayal of his characters as fully *absorbed* in the story.

There are only a few more remarks which I want to add to the above observations.

In the spring of 1893, the same year in which Blaumanis later finished *Pazudušais dēls*, his friend Victor von Andrejanoff in a generally sympathetic article wrote that Blaumanis's Latvian environment robs him of great ideas important for the development of his personality.

The response of the Latvian writer was an intensity of personal inquiry that in its novelty was a considerable step forward in the development of that very culture which was seen by his German colleague as an obstacle to Blaumanis's creative aspirations.

The relation between Blaumanis and Baltic German literature remained tense throughout. Blaumanis stayed generally critical of Baltic German authors, considering their work provincial and rootless. This gives us grounds to argue that he consciously remained outside Baltic German literature with its predominant topic of nostalgia and its urge to keep the status quo.

On the other hand, the psychological problems young Baltic authors of different backgrounds experienced at that time were to a great extent similar. According to their different personal and social perspectives, these authors describe transformations of patriarchal society, revealing to the reader a wide range of psychological close-ups of individuals facing changing times and social upheavals.

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