

The Phenomenon of Memory in Leonardas Gutauskas' Novel A Wolf-Teeth Necklace and Marcel Proust's In Search of Lost Time

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Abstract. This study explores the phenomenon of personal memory as human experience in two modernist novels: Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* and *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace* by Leonardas Gutauskas. Using the phenomenological approach of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Edward Casey, Gaston Bachelard and Paul Ricoeur, the article aims to discuss the various interpretations of memory and its effect on human existence. Proust's prose provides one possible context for analysing Gutauskas' novel, confirming that no literary phenomenon is born in an artistic vacuum. A typological comparison between *In Search of Lost Time* (1913–1927) and *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace* (1990) is also possible due to the cultural influence of Proust as a person and artist on Gutauskas' writing. Both authors dedicate a great deal of attention to the theme of living personal memory, which belongs to the subjective reality of human experience. Both protagonists demonstrate how closely their sensory memory is linked to childhood living spaces (Combray for Proust's character and Vepriai in Gutauskas' case), attributing a privileged meaning to human existence. In both novels, childhood experiences re-emerge through sensory memories, such as the indelible scents of hawthorn (Proust) and water lilies (Gutauskas). Taking on the meaning of sacred closeness (Communion), these familiar sensations embody the protagonists' spiritual, sensory and emotional relationships with their loved ones. The reflective narratives of Proust and Gutauskas revolve around the living memory of the main characters' mothers and grandmothers – their true spiritual home. Both authors also focus on the subject of memory as aesthetic vision, with sunlit images of stained-glass windows emerging as living sensory memory in the childhood recollections of the protagonists. The effect is further reinforced by each of the writers exploring the phenomenon of objects as symbols in their novels. Proust and Gutauskas' characters see books as corporeal things and believe that reading, a corporeal process, can bring back the past. Reflections on previous experiences also extend to the relationship between life and art: both Proust and Gutauskas' protagonists are introduced to the

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world and magic of beauty (art) by their grandmothers. In Proust's writing, sensory memory is transformed into art, saving the main character from meaningless existence, as only literature can keep the past alive and ensure continuity. The same is true for Gutasukas' novel, where sensory memory morphs into an intense creative search and rescues the protagonist. This highlights the harmonising efforts of both characters/narrators to turn life into art and literature. Both Proust and Gutasukas acknowledge the power of art to immortalise the memory of those close to us.

Keywords: Gutasukas; Proust; memory; phenomenology; experience; art

Forgetting is natural (just as it is for animals to forget their past existence), while remembering is art.

Merab Mamardashvili 2014: 19

Introduction

This quote by the Georgian philosopher, phenomenologist Merab Mamardashvili (1930–1990) could provide a key to understanding the phenomenon of memory as art (creation) in two modernist novels: Marcel Proust's (*À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*) and *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace* (*Vilko dantų karoliai*) by the Lithuanian writer Leonardas Gutasukas. Attributing Proust's prose to the modernist Western stream-of-consciousness writing, Jesse Matz notes that "consciousness, already a focus for Flaubert, became fully elaborate in Henry James's psychological novels, and fully experimental in the stream-of-consciousness styles of Joyce, Woolf, Faulkner, Proust, Dorothy Richardson, and others" (Matz 2008: 220). Although Gutasukas' *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace* broadly falls within the same genre as Proust's magnum opus, a distinction should be made between the narrative techniques used in these novels. Gutasukas' book represents modernist stream-of-consciousness fiction, while Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* is written as interior monologue, which is considered a subtype of the stream-of-consciousness novel. Elaborating on this distinction, Aleksandras Krasnovas suggests that "... L. E. Bowling's definition of stream of consciousness as the whole – verbal and pre-verbal – consciousness is looser and more acceptable, therefore internal speech in this case is just one of the types of the stream of consciousness" (Krasnovas 1983: 16).

This study focuses on the central theme of individual memory as human experience in Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* and Gutasukas' *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace*. Both of these multi-volume works reflect incredibly authentic literary

worldviews created by two talented and very different individuals. Discussing the effect of Proust's novel on Gutasukas' writing, Viktorija Daujotytė accurately points out that "the proximity of Proust and his *In Search of Lost Time* to *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace* ... is not so much an influence but rather a series of traces" (Daujotytė 2023). Although modern comparative studies do not define influence as such, focusing instead on possible genetic and typological links, it is generally acknowledged that no literary phenomenon is born in an artistic vacuum. According to Nijolė Vaičiulėnaitė-Kašlionienė the Romantics were the first to recognise that "... it was no longer accurate to explain the literature or certain literary events of one country in isolation, so it was important to identify the connections" (Vaičiulėnaitė-Kašlionienė 2006: 327). Gutasukas' novel *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace* is a personal reflective narrative, an attempt to establish a dialogue with Proust's modernist writing that brings the phenomenon of memory to the forefront and highlights it as the essential way of giving meaning to human life through art (literature). This comparative study was prompted by another important idea that "when considering memory in Proust's literary sense, a very important role in Lithuanian literature is played by Leonardas Gutasukas' novel *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace*. We could call it a text of phenomenologically formalised experience" (Daujotytė 2003: 111).

Using the phenomenological approach of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Edward Casey, Gaston Bachelard and Paul Ricoeur, the article aims to discuss the phenomenon of memory, its various interpretations and its effect on human existence in the modernist novels of Leonardas Gutasukas and Marcel Proust. More specifically, Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* is used as an important phenomenological perspective for conducting a case study of Gutasukas' three-volume novel *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace*, providing an opportunity to explore one (but by no means the only) possible modernist context of this work. The literary parallel between the two authors is based on comparative typology. Gutasukas himself confesses his literary affinity for Proust's modernist writing in the third volume of *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace*. The novel's protagonist Tadas, a painter and poet, is writing a treatise on the freedom and responsibility of the artist. Tadas argues that only creating allows an individual to experience true freedom, the kind of force that echoes Proust's personal and literary life: "And Proust, nigh on plastering himself into the cork-lined coffin? Did he not experience the most divine freedom of creating?" (Gutasukas 1997: 131). However, as well as highlighting similarities, this typological comparative examination identifies certain differences between the two novels, because "let's not forget that comparative literature is first and foremost a study of differences" (Vaičiulėnaitė-Kašlionienė 2013: 68).

On the Reception of Marcel Proust's Work

One of Proust's biographers, Claude Mauriac, credited the French novelist with inventing a new method based on "revealing reality to the greatest depths" and possessing a style that "could be called 'tubular', made of multiple clarifications filed inside each other", with "images and memories slowly unfolding like the Japanese flowers Proust himself wrote about" (Mauriac 2008: 122). Mauriac quotes Proust's letters in which the writer suggests that his multi-volume novel follows a strict, well-thought-out architectural composition. This correspondence also presents the aesthetic idea of novel as cathedral (Mauriac 2008: 123).

Particularly relevant to the current comparative study is Georges Poulet's idea that "Proust's novel is a story of searching; searching is a series of attempts to find what has been lost. It is a novel about the existence on a quest for its own essence" (Poulet 2011: 64). Poulet, a phenomenologist, also notes that "memory in Proust's thinking performs the same role as grace in Christian thought" (Poulet 2011: 65). Gabriel Josipovici reads Proust's work as a search for identity, a relationship between 'I' and the voice in search of the subject's name: "The three thousand three hundred pages which follow provide the most subtle, tenacious and profound exploration of the problem ever undertaken as the 'I' of that opening sentence unfolds in search of his identity" (Josipovici 2003: 16). Meanwhile, Roland Barthes treats Proust's seven-volume novel as a "story of writing", expressing the "theory of the signifier-signified correlation" (Barthes 2007: 261–270).

Researchers of Proust's modernist prose in Lithuania (Galina Baužytė-Čepinskienė, Vytautas Bikulčius, Valdas Petrauskas, Tomas Venclova, Algis Mickūnas, Dalia Zabielaite) all agree that time is the main theme of his novels. According to Baužytė-Čepinskienė, Proust identifies "a specific lived through period which is the stimulus for his creative energy" (Baužytė-Čepinskienė 1979: 383). In Bikulčius' view, "we would not be wrong to say that *In Search of Lost Time* is a novel about the past. It is from the stream of the past that people, places, objects and various events emerge – all connected in one continuous sequence by the narrator" (Bikulčius 2007: 157). Equally accurate is Petrauskas' idea that "subjective consciousness is what matters most to Proust" and he "is only interested in reality in as much as it reflects memories", with the introductory part of the novel containing "several main themes: Time, Dream, Memory... Merging and intertwining are two main motifs: the all-destroying Time and the all-preserving Memory" (Petrauskas 2007: 45–48). According to Venclova, "in front of us are memories and confessions. Marcel speaks in first person, he is the author's double, and yet not the author himself" (Venclova 2007: 137). In Proust's multi-volume novel, "the repeating sensations, the

sudden surge of memory, a flash of intuition all help to recreate the individual's wholeness and find his identity" (Venclova 2007: 143).

Zabielaitė's (2006) research on how reality is linked to the temporal 'I' includes an observation that "in his novels, Proust develops an original concept of the subconscious which affects the individual's behaviour in unexpected ways ..., while Proust's analysis of internal time experience pre-dates the German philosopher Edmund Husserl's phenomenology of perceiving time" (Zabielaitė 2006: 21). Mickūnas also refers to Proust's prose while testing the adequacy of Husserl's phenomenology, proving that "both M. Proust and E. Husserl focused on the same theme – what Husserl calls 'the miracle of miracles', the subjectivity that manifests itself in the living present" (Mickūnas 2007: 208).

Theoretical Approach: the Phenomenological Concept of Memory

Sensory phenomenology highlights the correlation between human existence and time perception, so "we must understand time as the subject and the subject as time" (Merleau-Ponty 2005: 490). The discipline studies the feeling of time and sees it as "all our experiences ... because temporality, in Kantian language, is the form taken by our inner sense" (Merleau-Ponty 2005: 476). The sensory perception of time allows us to get closer to the way an individual understands the world, therefore "to analyse time is not to follow out the consequences of a pre-established conception of subjectivity, it is to gain access, through time, to its concrete structure" (Merleau-Ponty 2005: 477) as "we are the upsurge of time" (Merleau-Ponty 2005: 497). Examining temporality is part of understanding an individual as a whole: "Existence can have no external or contingent attribute. It cannot be anything – spatial, sexual, temporal – without beings so in its entirety ... the result that an analysis of any one of them that is at all searching really touches upon subjectivity itself" (Merleau-Ponty 2005: 471). The memory is the shaper of human experience: "it even excludes memory in so far as the latter spreads out in front of us, like a picture, a former experience" (Merleau-Ponty 2005: 96).

Andrius Kaniava (2022) notes that "Merleau-Ponty talks about space but makes no distinction between space and place.... Meanwhile, the philosopher E. Casey makes a very clear distinction between place and space, regarding space as empty" (Kaniava 2022: 17). Edward Casey's phenomenological concept of memory of place emphasises the importance of human experience as "places, like bodies and landscapes, are something we experience – where experience stays true to its etymological origin of 'trying out', 'making a trial out of'" (Casey 1993: 30). Casey argues that through memory or imagination one

can reclaim and rediscover the places of the past: “As Freud, Bachelard, and Proust all suggest, to refind place – a place we have always already been losing – we may need to return, if not in actual fact, to the very earliest places we have known” (Casey 1993: 10).

Discussing Edward Casey’s (1993) phenomenological concept of memory of place, Paul Ricoeur (2004) argues that the term *place* is used rather loosely and can also help describe lived spatiality, suggesting that we have to “recover the sense of spatiality” (Ricoeur 2004: 42). Gaston Bachelard takes this notion a step further and argues that the human “soul is an abode. And by remembering ‘houses’ and ‘rooms’, we learn to ‘abide’ within ourselves” (Bachelard 1994: 37).

Paul Ricoeur is also interested in the phenomenology of memory. Drawing attention to the ambivalent relationship between memory and imagination, the philosopher argues that “the problem of memory and imagination intertwining is as old as Western philosophy itself” (Ricoeur 2004: 7). This also means that the danger of confusing memories with imaginations remains as recollections turn to images. On the other hand, “human existence does not offer a better alternative to memory, the referent of which is the past” (Ricoeur 2004: 7). Describing the link between personal and collective memory, Ricoeur is critical of what he calls the “polarity” affecting the two phenomena. He claims that there is “an intermediate level of reference” between personal and collective memory, where concrete exchanges take place between the living memory of individuals and the public memory attributed to communities. “An intermediate level of reference” also refers to our closest relationships, to which we have a right to attribute our individual memory. These close relationships can vary in distance. Closeness can be both friendship and the Greek ideal of *philia*, as well as the phenomena of birth and death. In his attempt to reduce the divide between personal and collective memory, Ricoeur suggests “the hypothesis of the threefold attribution of memory: to oneself, to one’s close relations, and to others” (Ricoeur 2004: 132). In summary, contemporary phenomenology treats human memory as one’s individual relationship with oneself, with one’s closest family and friends, as well as with other people.

The Existential Vitality of Memory

Swann’s Way, the first volume of Proust’s novel *In Search of Lost Time*, opens with the famous going to bed scene that reflects the protagonist’s sensory perception of himself and the world. Marcel recounts the state of sleeping, when all the moments in time come together inside the character who is dreaming. Recollection pulls Marcel back from nothingness, returning to him marks of his identity and individuality. In the novel, Marcel’s narrative voice claims

that without remembering, “the help from above”, or what Poulet calls grace, humans would be poorer than cavemen with only a smouldering animal “inkling” at their disposal. Marcel notes very early in *Swann’s Way* that only memories can recreate the individual’s true self.

In his modernist novel *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace*, Gutasukas (1990) spells *memory* with a capital letter, stressing the importance of written memory to human existence. Whispering, speaking memory becomes a living phenomenon of sensory perception and human experience, the story’s central axis: “Even tonight, with my consciousness preparing to welcome the summer of 1980, Memory whispers to me: close your eyes and you’ll see the summer evening of 1946...” (Gutasukas 1990: 5). Proustian involuntary sensory memory is even more powerful in Gutasukas’s novel, described vividly as “a mill that looms inside your head ... completely uncontrollable and independent of your will” (Gutasukas 1994: 163). The vital energy of memory is pulsating like a constant stream, its vigour and spontaneity captured by a series of metaphors (waves, foamy peaks, floods) and the Lithuanian mythologem of blood froth: “and so the waves of memory surge, their foamy peaks lick the sky now and then, sometimes even stinging the tired feet with the froth of blood” (Gutasukas 1990: 98). This Proustian phenomenon of memory as spontaneous vitality reappears in the second volume of *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace*:

Tadas has long known about the water mill in his head. It looks like many other mills, perhaps even similar to the one in Vepriai ... Memory floods over whenever it feels like it, and the wheel starts booming. And you don’t know if it’ll stop, because you don’t know when that memory will exhaust itself or when it will get bored turning the wheel – after a day? Two? ... Alas, it is the memory itself that raises the lock, whenever it remembers to do it” (Gutasukas 1994: 163).

As in Proust’s prose, the existential vitality of memory dominating Gutasukas’ novel belongs to the subjective reality of the individual.

Experiencing Childhood as a Living Existence

Both Proust and Gutasukas give particular attention to their protagonists’ reflective narratives and their childhood experiences. The moments both characters live through as young boys are narrated from an adult perspective, therefore returning to their past becomes a sensory experience on both characters’ living existence. In *Swann’s Way*, Marcel’s childhood experiences become his spiritual and emotional confession, conveyed as a narrative of sensory reflection. Meanwhile, Gutasukas uses snippets of the past to transmit his character’s

stream of consciousness, a constant flow of language as verbal and memorial vitality.

The sensory memory of both protagonists is closely linked to their childhood living spaces, which could be considered “intimate spaces that do not just open to anyone” (Bachelard 1993: 382). Both Proust and Gutasukas start their character’s sensory narratives of reflection in provincial locations. In *Swann’s Way*, Marcel reminisces about his childhood in the town of Combray, which becomes the true home of his human existential experience, the centre of the individual world he lives in. Recollections of Combray as Marcel’s childhood living space reappear in various shapes across the different volumes of the novel, notably in *Time Regained*. The reflective narrative of Gutasukas’ protagonist Tadas also begins with naming his childhood home. It takes on the privileged meaning of human existence in the consciousness of the main character. Pakapiai, a settlement just outside the church village of Vepriai, on the edge of Lithuania and the world, becomes a much loved home for Tadas’ memory. His consciousness often returns to this “felicitous space” (Bachelard 1994: 35): “In a small parish village of Vepriai on the edge of the world, in Lithuania, an old woman called Ieva Marija lived with her eldest bachelor son Jokūbas and her grandson Tadas Šimas, the offspring of her youngest son Simonas. They lived outside the town, in Pakapiai” (Gutasukas 1990: 5).

One of Marcel’s strongest sensory experiences as a child is his love of hawthorn, its intense smell, which is associated in the character’s consciousness with both velvet and Gothic lace. Describing it as a Catholic shrub, Marcel remembers inhaling the scent of hawthorn in an effort to unlock the secret beyond his reach. Similarly, in Gutasukas’ novel, childhood as living existence comes to Tadas through sensory memory. The character reminisces about the gentle scent of the water lily floating in the lake at Vepriai, which “used to have this indescribable fragrance, you’d lean over the edge of the boat, bury your nose inside the blossom ... and inhale, you could spend the whole day inhaling only this lily scent ..., inhaling and inhaling” (Gutasukas 1994: 397). The above examples illustrate that in both novels the past returns through the main character’s sensory experiences, such as unforgettable scents.

Memory as a Bond with the Loved Ones

The childhood memories of both Proust and Gutasukas’ protagonists embody their spiritual, sensory and emotional relationships with their loved ones. Remembering past experiences is an important element of *In Search of Lost Time* but “these traces in themselves do not refer to the past: they are present, and, in so far as I find in them signs of some previous event, it is because <...> I

carry this particular significance within myself” (Merleau-Ponty 2005: 480). An example of this phenomenological, subjective meaning of “past experiences” in Proust’s *Swann’s Way* is the anticipation of mother’s kiss, which is described by the protagonist as offering the Host, the act of Communion, to a child looking into the loving face of his parent leaning over his bed. This physical touch is described by Proust as a chance to “drink” in some real presence which he compares to the sacrament. To Marcel, the time he spends with his mother is therefore their true spiritual and emotional closeness. Furthermore, “just as the sacrament not only symbolizes, in sensible species, an operation of Grace, but is also the real presence of God ... in the same way the sensible has not only a motor and vital significance but is nothing other than a certain way of being in the world ... so that sensation is literally a form of communion” (Merleau-Ponty 2005: 246).

The significance of Ieva Marija’s ever-present memory in the reflective narrative of the protagonist is evident throughout all three volumes of Gutasukas’ *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace*. Vivid recollections of his grandmother represent Tadas’ spiritual home. Unlike Marcel, Gutasukas’ character is deprived of motherly love and the childhood of this spiritual orphan is punctuated with painful experiences (the aftermath of war, poverty, Soviet reality). But Tadas has Granny Ieva Marija, so she replaces his biological mother, a woman of loose morals, and his father, who had been exiled to Siberia, as well as his lost physical home. This grandmother figure is not only the central axis of Tadas’ childhood world but also his strongest spiritual and emotional support, felt throughout the rest of his life and always present in his memory. The spiritual bond between little Tadas and Ieva Marija bears similarities with another Lithuanian author, Vincas Krėvė, whose short story *Antanukas’ Morning* captures the unconditional love of a boy for his grandmother.

Memory as a Living Aesthetical Vision

The protagonists of both *Swann’s Way* and *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace* feel spiritual and sensory closeness to their childhood churches. One of Marcel’s most vivid memories comes from the bell tower spires of Saint-Hilaire, while Tadas is attached to the stained-glass windows in the church in Vepriai. This particular image emerges as a living sensory memory in the childhood recollections of both characters, preserved in their sunlit aesthetic vision. To Marcel, the Church in Combray he loved so much as a child is still as alive today. He remembers it being beautiful inside, the stained-glass windows glistening even on the gloomiest day. In Marcel’s memory, the sunlight streaming through the windows would often create the illusion of a sparkling peacock’s tail,

gentle turquoise waves, or a shimmering gilded carpet of glass forget-me-nots unfolded by the smiling sun and comforting the child. Similarly, Gutasukas' protagonist Tadas also reminisces about the glistening, stained-glass windows of his childhood church in Vepriai. In Tadas memory, the windows are flooded with light that takes on a personified meaning of sacredness:

The sun spared only one thing: those tall stained-glass windows in the hundred-year-old church of Vepriai, flooding them with green, blue, golden and purple light every morning, the light that would sometimes reach even the windows of Ieva Marija's little house on the edge of the woods, in Pakapiai. And so it was on that morning ... that the sun, brighter than ever before, came down on the church's stained glass and spread her wings: I will not let anyone break them (Gutasukas 1990: 153).

In *Swann's Way*, Marcel remembers that it was his beloved grandmother who first drew his attention to Saint-Hilaire's bell tower, often stopping her grandson so that he could really look at it and in this way introducing him to the world of beauty. In young Marcel's imagination, the tower becomes a huge celebration cake dripping with sunny glaze. Childhood memories as images of magical beauty emerge in Gutasukas' novel too. Young Tadas also possesses a powerful imagination and his life in Pakapiai awakens the boy's creative nature, as illustrated by the scene of the character watching his Granny embroider two silver lions on a drab piece of cloth with her thin withered fingers like tiny zips. Ieva Marija is the first person to introduce little Tadas to the world of aesthetic beauty, indirectly laying the foundation for her grandson's existence as an artist. This contact with beauty Tadas experiences as a child awakens in his soul an inexplicable longing that will later manifest itself in his intensive creative search, expressed differently in each of the artist's paintings.

Writing down Memory, or on the Relationship Between Life and Art

Both Proust and Gutasukas' novels could be read as the protagonist's existential search for their identity which is linked to the creative process. In *Search of Lost Time* and *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace* both explore how various life experiences can cause changes in one's personality. The process of shaping oneself as an individual is constant and could be metaphorically likened to creating a work of art. In *Time Regained*, the protagonist argues that only a work of art can bring back the past, return lost time. A similar idea is expressed by Gutasukas' main character in *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace*. Narrating his life story through stream of

consciousness, Tadas believes that the process of self-creation constitutes art in the same way as painting and poetry.

According to Bikulčius (2007), Proust “highlights the calling of creator as the crowning glory of life ... and creator’s journey, perceived as the story of true vocation, becomes the foundation of the novel” (Bikulčius 2007: 150). Proust explores this constant search for the self as an artist in *Swann’s Way*, with Marcel’s writer/painter identity finally solidified in *Time Regained*. The narrator muses on the fact that a writer’s dream of becoming a painter comes true without him consciously realising it, because literature is a sketchbook born out of the writer’s memory: “And the writer discovers that if his aspiration to be a painter could not be consciously realised, he has nevertheless filled his notebook with sketches without being aware of it” (Proust 2016: 2557).

Gutauskas’ *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace* could also be read as the story of a creator’s life and calling – the novel’s protagonist Tadas is an artist, painter and writer/poet. The narrative is built on Tadas’ sensory memory, his personal relationships with the people he is (or was) close to and who continue to exist in the artist’s reflective realm. Such a complex narrative structure is very effective as it allows us to see the text’s deepest layers, its emotional and psychological content, and the complicated character of the protagonist and how it is shaped by profound experiences (Bražėnas 2010: 144). The two realms – literature and painting – constantly intertwine in Gutauskas’ novel: Tadas starts creating poetry as a child, and later writes a book and paints at the same time.

Just like Proust’s protagonist Marcel, Gutauskas’ main character Tadas is writing a memoir, the story of his living memories, in an attempt to understand the effect of being a post-war child and his relationships with others. In *Time Regained*, Marcel argues that only the life experienced is real and that it can be captured solely in literature. Only literature can reveal the purpose of human life and only artists have the capacity to see this existential meaning (Proust 2016). Gutauskas’ novel contains a prominent, recurrent leitmotif of writing memory down, turning the past into the living present: “Everything is connected by written down Memory, for nothing can polish the shards of bones and time more perfectly than letters, those righteous, hardworking ants” (Gutauskas 1990: 16). The image of Granny Ieva Marija emerges in the context of capturing recollections in writing. The protagonist feels the urge to record this sensory memory in order to immortalise it, “to write down and protect from oblivion the image of his father’s mother and most beloved person Ieva Marija” (Gutauskas 1990: 109). This conversation Tadas is having with himself reflects his efforts to trace the impossible beginning of writing. *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace* therefore explores the question of how to start narrating memory and where personal recollection should begin.

Both Proust and Gutasukas also contemplate the ambivalent relationship between art and life in their novels. In Proust's work, life becomes the reality of art. For example, Marcel sees young lady Swann in front of the cathedral door, the serious tenderness of the light emanating from the Duchess de Germant is juxtaposed with a painting by Carpaccio, with Wagner's Lohengrin, with Bodler's sweet trumpet. He reminisces about how as a young man he would see the women of his dreams through the light of art with the Bois de Boulogne and the Allée des Acacias reminding him of the myrtle alley in Virgil's *Aeneid*. Marcel sees the light of Michelangelo's *Creation* in the ray of sunshine, after the trees drop their leaves, while Swann observes Giotto's *Charity* embodied in a pregnant maid. On the other hand, Proust believes that only art can help us glimpse traces of human reality both within objects and people. To Marcel, the steeples of Saint-Hilaire become an artistic image carrying a human imprint, while Swann sees familiar faces in paintings, his infatuation with Odette becoming increasingly stronger after the love-struck character finds similarities between her and Botticelli's Zipporah. Swann's tendency towards aestheticising is further illustrated by the musical phrase from the Vinteuil Sonata, the thread running through his romantic relationship with Odette, and the way the secret, unknown part of her life remind the character of Watteau's paintings.

Similarly to Proust, Gutasukas also gives art the power to immortalise the memory of those close to us. In *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace*, Tadas commemorates his beloved Granny Ieva Marija in one of his paintings. After numerous attempts, the character eventually manages to preserve his grandmother's memory in the reality of art and Ieva Marija continues to live on in the painted shape of a magical grasshopper:

And so, after twenty days, having covered the head of the white grasshopper with tiny bluish dots using the smallest paintbrush, he peers into it as if looking at white ash, and sees Ieva Marija clearly, sees her and whispers: oh Lord, who knew she would turn into a little white magical grasshopper? ... He looks at the painting and realises: that is the true essence of his art, the first time he'd captured the essence of his art, its natural force" (Gutasukas 1994: 136–137).

As in Proust's novel, Gutasukas transforms various fragments of life into the realm of art. While trying to understand death, Tadas is more interested in the linguistic and artistic expression of this phenomenon. What starts as the protagonist's reflection on why Lithuanians are so scared of death, eventually turns into musings around the different meanings of the word and which of them is most accurate. Tadas is more concerned with the phenomenon's verbal expression and its transformation into an artistic reality that is identical to Memory: "Naturally, he likes the White Lady best, because She comes from Dürer's print,

from art, and to a dauber everything that comes from art is as important as Memory, or non-oblivion, to him even death itself is more important when it comes from non-oblivion and not from life" (Gutauskas 1994: 245). Gutauskas returns to the subject in the final volume of *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace*. While writing his text, the protagonist Tadas suggests that art could help one find the "road to oneself" and urges the reader to see Čiurlionis' painting *The Offering* (Gutauskas 1997: 137).

Things as Symbols of Memory

Emphasising the phenomenological, i.e. sensory, experiencing of an object, Merleau-Ponty argues that temporality can be expressed through the relationship between an individual and a thing: "Time is, therefore, not a real process, not an actual succession that I am content to record. It arises from my relation to things" (Merleau-Ponty 2005: 478). The phenomenon of objects as symbols can be clearly observed in both *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace* and *In Search of Lost Time*. According to Merleau-Ponty, a person without symbols "would, like an inarticulate cry, fail to achieve self-consciousness" (Merleau-Ponty 2005: 496). The link between an object from the past and human memory is described in the opening section of Gutauskas' novel. Here, memory becomes a symbolic bridge between material vision and immaterial reality:

Tadas understands that the wolf-teeth necklace is a post-war gift, a souvenir from Vorkuta, a symbol of Memory, a sign hanging above the headboard, underneath Father's photo, dictating everything, tracing the steps of the pencil, teaching the laws of the flying crumbling resurrecting time, proclaiming independent truth that does not succumb to either consciousness or sub-consciousness (Gutauskas 1990: 5).

A symbolic embodiment of both his father's exile and Siberia, the wolf-teeth necklace reappears in various forms in Tadas' memory, running throughout the entire length of the novel. Another symbol of object memory is a little psalm book that belongs to Tadas' grandmother Ieva Marija. As Daujotytė accurately notes, "Leonardas Gutauskas has tried the stylistic approach of phenomenologically describing objects in his novel *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace*.... An old psalm book which belonged to Granny Ieva Marija. The book's body ..., coming into contact with an old woman who has long been dead" (Daujotytė 2003: 142). In *Time Regained*, Proust's protagonist Marcel argues that a book is an object that becomes "something immaterial" and that any past events or feelings experienced by an individual are inextricably intertwined with the

book-object (Proust 2016). The way Marcel understands it, books not only affect us as things, they also help preserve memories that are as alive as one's desire to travel to Venice, or as alive as phrases in books (Proust 2016).

Similarly, the little psalm book Gutasukas' main character Tadas inherits from his Granny Ieva Marija is a tangible object that becomes in Proustian terms "something immaterial within us" (Proust 2016: 2545). It mingles with Tadas' living sensory memory, connecting his "current" self with his childhood past and his dearest Granny. In *Time Regained*, Marcel describes the link between a childhood book-object and his own experiences. When as an adult Marcel picks up *François le Champi* in the library, he becomes aware of his "inner child awakening" and once again experiences the same vivid impression he had had when reading the book in the past (Proust 2016). A similar effect is achieved by Gutasukas when his protagonist Tadas, now a grown-up, takes his Granny's little psalm book into his hands and kisses it like a sacred object, an action that transports him back to his early life. Tadas starts reading the book again like a little boy, "tracing the lines with his finger". This physical act of reading triggers the character's auditory memory: "He can hear her voice as if she was still alive, more than alive, and sees those tiny little blood threads around each finger" (Gutasukas 1990: 124). So the psalm book is the material embodiment of Granny's permanent existence in Tadas' soul. This device is used by Gutasukas again in the second volume of *A Wolf-Teeth Necklace*, where an object's power to preserve the past is conveyed through an old prayer book. Becoming the symbol of bodily and spiritual salvation, his Granny's prayer book allows Tadas to return to the lost paradise of his childhood and hear the sound of the water mill in Vepriai.

Marcel, the protagonist of the *Time Regained*, reflects on the advantages and disadvantages of the bibliophile's profession, arguing that the book as a corporeal object preserves the essence of the sensory past and maintains the connection of human existence between the past and the present 'I'. In Gutasukas's novel, objects that connect the protagonist's sensory past with his present, are photographs of icons, reproductions, Rembrandt's *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, a photograph of Faulkner, and a photograph of Ieva Marija that hangs on the wall opposite Tadas' work desk, "that altar of his" (Gutasukas 1990: 127). The symbolism of things in both Proust and Gutasukas' novels therefore conveys the characters' sensory connection to the world and embodies the phenomenon of memory, past experience as a living existence.

Proust and Gutasukas end their multi-volume novels in a similar way, portraying the intention of both protagonists to preserve in time the memory of their loved ones. Proust's *Time Regained* concludes with Marcel's attempt to finish his artistic pursuit:

I would therein describe men, if need be, as monsters occupying a place in Time infinitely more important than the restricted one reserved for them in space, a place, on the, contrary, prolonged immeasurably since, simultaneously touching widely separated years and the distant periods they have lived through – between which so many days have ranged themselves – they stand like giants immersed in Time (Proust 2016: 2671).

Proust therefore argues that only art is capable of resisting temporality. A *Wolf-Teeth Necklace* concludes with three poems written by protagonist Tadas. Dedicated to three women, the poems symbolise the journey Tadas has been on both as a person and an artist, with beside him “three Women ... who have witnessed his life: Ieva Marija was there when little Tadas’ Faith was born, Emilija ... as if giving birth to him for the second time”, pulling him out of his spiritual and moral decline, while the hunchback Zabelkutė “instilled in little Tadas’ soul the love of his native land” (Gutauskas 1997: 370–371).

Conclusions

The individual content of Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* and Gutauskas’s *Wolf’s-Teeth Necklace* present a phenomenological perspective on the reading of these works. A typological comparatist phenomenological analysis is made by the phenomenological concept of memory as a sensory experience, which is shared by both authors. The different narrative techniques of these modernist novels (Gutauskas’s prose represents the modernist stream-of-consciousness novel, while Proust’s prose can be considered an inner monologue, a subspecies of the stream-of-consciousness novel) lead to a dissimilar interpretation of subjective memory.

In both prose works, the existential significance of the liveliness of memory dominates, which in Proust’s work conveys the ability of recollection to recreate a vivid image of the past, while in Gutauskas’s modernist prose, the protagonist’s incessant flow of language as a speech, the poetics of water, depicts the subject’s spontaneous and uncontrolled process of giving birth to memory.

Both Proust’s and Gutauskas’s narratives of sensory memory are united by the experience of childhood as an entity, manifested in the memory of the living space of childhood and the intense connection with loved ones. In Proust’s prose, Combray, the living space of childhood, is constantly remembered. In Gutauskas’s novel, the experience of childhood is intense, but not as all-encompassing as in Proust’s prose.

Both novels are characterised by the importance of preserving living memory, i.e. the connection with our loved ones. In Proust’s prose, one of

the strongest memories of childhood embodies the sacred communion of the protagonist with his mother, which has taken on a sacramental expression. In Gutasukas's prose, the protagonist, a spiritual orphan who has not experienced his mother's refreshing love, finds his grandmother to be the protector of his life and his spiritual support.

The narratives of modern novels are united by the significance of memory as a living aesthetic vision (the stained-glass windows of the Combre and Vepri churches are vivid images of childhood memories), but in Proust's work it is dominant, and the narrator's tendency to aestheticise everything is pronounced.

Both novels are characterised by the symbolism of object memory, evoking the past as a living entity. In both Proust's and Gutasukas's works, the book – the object of memory – expresses the depth of subjective reality. In Proust's work, a book read in childhood awakens and allows us to relive the vivid experience of reading the past. In Gutasukas's prose, the object – his grandmother's prayer book – becomes not only a bodily act of reading, but also a symbol of the main character's salvation of body and soul, allowing him to experience a sensual living memory, to return to the lost paradise of childhood and to hear the voice of his grandmother.

Both novels are dominated by the significance of art memory. Proust's work translates various phenomena of life into art, arguing that only a work of art is able to bring back lost time, while Gutasukas' prose is dominated by the principle of recording memory: the protagonist writes the story of his memories, the memory of his life, not so much in an attempt to recover past time, but rather to understand what the post-war period of his childhood and the relationships with his relatives and other people meant to him. In Proust's work, art offers the possibility to see humanity in the reality of both people and things. Gutasukas' cycle of novels expresses the protagonist's journey of consciousness towards himself, and includes a poetic dedication to the three women who gave birth to the creator.

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