

*The Limits of Dreams' Kingdom:  
Contemporary Lithuanian Literature*

I. The identity of a *kingdom* and a *dream*  
in Lithuanian literature

In this article the concept of a *kingdom* is not a metaphor, not a joke nor a paradox, but it is rather an idea, on which the mentality of contemporary Lithuanian literature is based. Maybe I could put it more boldly and talk about culture, art, the nation's mystery, and so on. They would only support the idea. Yet I cannot cover it all. Being rather under the influence of contemporary Lithuanian poetry, I am contented with an abstract picture. The best prose works (written by Valdas Papiėvis, Giedra Radvilaviėiūtė, Danutė Kalinauskaitė and Laura Sintija Černiauskaitė) of recent years would complicate my discourse in some aspects. Other works (by Petras Dirgėla, Leonardas Gutauskas, Antanas Ramonas, Jolita Skablauskaitė and Jurga Ivanauskaitė) would not add anything to my discourse as they very specifically analyze the images of time, a city, a dream and a limit.

Observing the processes of contemporary literature, I trace some ideological lines whose beginnings go back to old religious Baltic imagination, oppose and take the challenges of European history, assimilate and adapt them in texts of modern individual and contemporary world-view. This is a tradition of a similar archetypal message. The prose by Riėardas Gavelis is maybe an example of the most extreme opposition to such a message, but the latter is still relevant and persistent. There is a great persistence in preserving an identity, in seeping into the beginning of the history, the prehistory and a myth of the Old Europe or the Balts, and in adhering to its eclectic, but not amorphous creative individuality. And in this context the works of the mythologists and the archeologists, such as

Marija Gimbutienė, Algirdas Julius Greimas, Norbertas Vėlius and Gintaras Beresnevičius have been important. Also the activities of Lithuanian ethnologists, etymologists, regional studies' specialists, linguists and literary theorists are relevant.

There is a possibility to contradict me, raising the question whether the *kingdom of dreams* anticipates the experience of a *limit*, for *infinity* would be more a more purposeful concept in order to outline an irrational and spontaneous state of dreams. And a limit defines a feeling of a form. But a *limit* of the kingdom or the *infinity* is already a negotiable question. What kind of *kingdom could be limited, have limits and a form*, and what kind of kingdom would point to infinity and liberation? The finalized and tangible Royal Palace in the centre of Vilnius probably does not allow us to question the possibility of disputing the deep question of the Lithuanian kingdom, but the confusion caused by that Palace is accompanied by certain simulacrum and fictitious feelings of the kingdom's *limit*.

The Royal Palace in the centre of Vilnius is a practical verification of a poetic Lithuanian kingdom. It is like Maironis' poetry translated into the language of everyday actions: "Rolling wind-driven breakers ashore from the west, splash my breast with the chill of your waves"<sup>1</sup> ("Nuo Birutės kalno", Maironis 1987: 178). About ten years ago the poet Sigitas Geda feared that if translated into the language of everyday words and actions, the verses which cause a particular poetic vibration would seem to be strangely straightforward and banal. The poet said that despite admitting the trivial part of life, poetry should still strive to give another meaning to the world view, to transfer and sublimate it.

The world of dreams is the language of imagination, and not just this. It is the language of imagination which surpasses and generalizes reality. In Lithuanian literature dreams usually can be associated with messages of deities. It is not important that in romantic poetry the poet according to Maironis (*poeta*) stands for an oracle and a mediator, and in modern, avant-garde, neoclassical and post-classicistic poetry the poet, on the contrary, just impersonates a

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<sup>1</sup> Here and in the following translation of quotations from Lithuanian is mine. A.P.

character or a subject in a mediate state. For Jūratė Miliauskaitė, “it’s just a dream, I tell to myself, just a dream” (“Tai tik sapnas...”) which turns into a repetitive obsession with home and sanctity (Miliauskaitė 1999: 279–280). For Kornelijus Platelis, dream is a tenement of Mnemosis and all archetypes of the Psyche. For Donaldas Kajokas, the logic of dreams is the continuation of the dream as life, its labyrinths, questions and answers. That logic has been analyzed in some of his essays. Or maybe it is just the absence of logic which leads to the secret of a superior logic surpassing the human mind: for example, travelling in life’s labyrinths in order to reach out for awakening.

Maybe we could discover the secret of the poet Kajokas in the Zen- or Shinto-image of emptiness? According to Ken’ichi Sasaki, in the emptiness there are the deities impersonating the centre of the world (Sasaki 2008: 202–211). Different aesthetic and philosophic truths (the Veda, Buddhism and Zen) which either spontaneously or deliberately have been reflected in the poetic work of Miliauskaitė, Platelis and Kajokas, explicitly point to dreams as surpassing and generalizing reality.

In Lithuanian literature the *dream* concept cannot be rivaled by the concept of *reverie*. A Lithuanian *reverie* never appears as the hermetic, closed and mysterious state of a dream. The observation made by Gaston Bachelard claiming that a substance is necessary for reverie, but not necessary for a dream, would be fundamental in order to understand the difference between *dream* and *reverie* (Bachelard 1993: 118–135). According to Bachelard, when linked to a substance, reveries are adding to human imagination the experience of reality, reaching out for personification and thus participating in the continuation of reality. Dreams develop in a hermetic space of spontaneous memory (ib.). Even *vision*, the essentially prevalent version of an intellectual interpretation of *reverie*, is not much present in Lithuanian literature.

For the Lithuanians, dreams would mostly meditate a secret and help to recognize and to contemplate hidden parts of the world. So what is the meaning of such a *dream*? Does it mean just infantile passivity and a gap in reality? Or maybe it means the mystic cycle of life and death, wherein a dream objectifies the meanings of life and

alertness and the meanings of death? There are many good examples illustrating that kind of meaning in the work of Donaldas Kajokas, Jurga Ivanauskaitė and Erika Drungytė, Renata Šerelytė and Marius Ivaškevičius, Rimvydas Stankevičius, Donatas Petrošius and Antanas Šimkus.

It is not surprising to find the *dream* concept and images in the writing of Aidas Marčėnas who was a Buddhist for some time. In his work there are many images of dreams and awakening often means to experience everyday life and also awaken in order to discover the deeper inside world of the self and a clearer "self" in everyday experience. In his multilayered *ars poetica* there are not just easily identifiable signs of writings by poets Henrikas Radauskas, Czesław Miłosz, Więsława Szymborska, there are also signs of Christian iconography, Baltic myths and miracle-fairytales in the symbolism of strange clothes and of becoming God. This symbolism is based on the language of the tradition of modern lyrics and imagination. The dream image in Aidas Marčėnas's work can be associated with the roots of Lithuanian mentality, the origins of traditional thinking and the tradition of literature. It does not matter whether the thirty-years-old poet wakes up as a child or he gets into an even more archetypical reality. It opens itself as authentic trauma and truth, in which the signs of God in the archetypical images of literature and culture are accepted.

The poet Kęstutis Navakas who maybe did not encounter much of the *distilled* (this is the word he used) forms of God experience, perceives his dream world as a version of secession – a parallel to the reality, as a strong burst of imagination and fantasy. But the idea of a dream which has been structured by poets is still more flamboyant in Lithuanian literature. Poetic prose also absorbs this idea. Talking about his writings, the prose writer Antanas Ramonas derives a dream from very similar sources and attributes to it similar equivalents of imagination. In Ramonas's story "Mikelis", a thinker, wanderer and writer Mikelis who always seeks the sense of eternity as a result of passing time, historical events and spiritual power surpassing the destruction of body, on one particular day experiences the great unity of the world and a secret which was unfolded to him

when seeing a strange and a very real vision or a dream. Mikelis compares that secret to a dream:

He wrote when looking at this shine in which divine beauty of the world and the universe unfolded. In this light he saw Great Unity of the World and he felt how he approaches it and how he'll join it now. Just one little step was missing: everything, every leaf of grass, a stone on a road, glimpse of river wave, the evening wind in albescent rye, a spoon on a table, the eyes of a child for the first time knowingly looking at the world which is waiting for him, missing him and suffering without him - they all talk about the Unity of the World. He knew that there is light which only he sees and that in this light he sees things which are hidden from the others; at any cost, even at cost of death and pain, he wanted this light to shine out to everybody who will read his writings, for this light, just like every light unfolds a part and even just a little part of great divine world. (Ramonas 1997: 175)

In the story of Ramonas, Mikelis impersonates a typically subtle and contemplative character who mostly prefers meditation to action. He belongs to an epoch when freedom was absent. Mikelis is similar to characters in the work of Ričardas Gavelis or Jurgis Kunčinas, but at the same time he is different. Ramonas supposes that a character must personally find one's own centre of being, one's own religion – and that is possibly the *alter ego* of the writer himself. As a joint alternative to all known religious experiences, that religion is absolutely individual, eclectic, but honest, there are complicated contents and mixed forms of different experiences in it. The characters of the prose fiction of Gavelis approach philosophical and religious bases of life of an individual as persistently and intellectually as Mikelis in Ramonas's story. But as distinct from the prose by Gavelis, Mikelis handles the philosophical bases of his life in the ecstatic dream experience without any control of time. And even though in this point of view Gavelis is also inclined to avoid the reality we know, it is never a dream. It's rather a hyperreality, a Utopian, fantastic reality. Gavelis' prose is rather an intellectual structure which originates from the secret of the biological mechanism and of life-sustaining substance.

And even though there are no traces of nightly shadows, Psyche and other moments of irrational sense dominate Gavelis' prose. Day-light and intervals of rational time, light and rhythm only sharpen the uncontrolled process of human nature and the chaos of nature, so that nobody can fight against this process or have comfort. History cannot master that chaos (as basilisk, the spores and allurements of Eros). And even a vision which the character in Ramonas's work (just like a character in Gavelis) has at the moment when the main character grasps his material nature, is rather similar to a biological nightmare and maybe even to paralysis. This vision is not a dream of a prophet. At the moment of paralysis, unlike Mikelis in Ramonas's story, a character in Gavelis's work, for example, Vytautas Vargalys in the novel *Vilniaus pokeris* (*Vilnius Poker*, 1989) sees a physically stiff world in which at an untimely minute the soul does not function for some reason. That world cannot be regenerated. Also in the prose fiction of Gavelis there is no element of compassion. It only urges one: think!

On the other hand, it is interesting to pay attention to the fact that both writers, Ramonas and Gavelis, are remarkably concerned with Vilnius, especially its central part, the churches of the old town and monuments. But in Gavelis' writing on the sacred topography of Vilnius one cannot find any spiritual source adding to the spirit of an individual, the community or a nation, sought by the characters in Ramonas' work. And they find it. This spirit has an exhilarating and beneficial impact, it helps to fight against the destructive influence of time and enables one to experience the feeling of eternity. The prose fiction of Ramonas, and specifically the story "Mikelis", undoubtedly embraces the idea of compassion. Even though the story does not relieve anybody from responsibility for own's actions, there is something more, a belief that totality protects the human being in the face of chaos and destruction.

By the way, Ramonas' Mikelis is a thinker and a writer. He wanders and meditates in the atmosphere of Vilnius' aristocratic history. This atmosphere is also half a dream. Mikelis imagines historic characters and together with them he tries to relive the refined and subtle nuances of their individual historic experience. There are events of the royal Vilnius, the Lithuania of royalty, its

atmosphere and the characters experiencing it in all everyday nuances coming to life in half dream-like visions which are parallel to dreaming with one's eyes open (similar to the work of the poet Nijolė Miliauskaitė). Mikelis senses the aristocratic atmosphere of Vilnius as a symbol of values and history-based possibility of harmony.

The writer Petras Dirgėla has essentially reflected on the relations between the royal origins and the present in his writings. His *Karalystė / žemės kelevių epas* (Epos of the kingdom/ of wanderers on earth, 2004) needs some explanation, as it deals with stories and unrealized things which are important to Lithuanian culture and to European history.

Also in this case one is attracted by the free and intellectually noncommittal deviations of Dirgėla's storytelling. When a character of his novel gets confused in complicated circumstances and faces a situation of paradoxical conflicts – even though the novel constantly deals with the situation of Christian death and the Resurrection –, the dreams as a medium zone between death and life are important for the process of storytelling. And also there the character of Dirgėla masters time and space which are not under the control of human being: the ducal hall, a porch or a cellar is replaced by a meadow in moonlight and winter transforms into summer (the novel *Litorina, Litorina!* (Litorina! Litorina!, 1997). Of course, the concept of this epic is more complicated, but the tactics of storytelling's composition reflects a collision of aesthetics and the world-view. From this point of view *Arklių novelės* (*Horses' Novel*, 2005) seems to be more consistent.

However, Ramonas, Dirgėla, Kajokas, Platelis, Miliauskaitė, Marčėnas, Marcelijus Martinaitis, Leonardas Gutauskas, even Sigitas Geda, Kęstutis Navakas, Kazys Bradūnas, Tomas Venclova, Judita Vaičiūnaitė, Vladas Braziūnas and others are not interested in dreaming as such. They are rather interested in the frontier, a limit. Once found, this frontier is a sign for entering the world of deities (but not the nightmarish shadows of Psyche).

## II. Dream: time and place of origin of the *kingdom*

Starting with the poet Maironis there are constant attempts to look for “something more” in Lithuanian literature and all contemporary Lithuanian literature. The power of imagination and objectivity is beyond doubt in Maironis’s best verses. He did not speak up for dreaming, sleeping and closing the eyes. To the contrary, Maironis invited grandfathers, fighters and heroes to wake up. But there is an essential apotheosis of power of dreams in this invitation. It enables all nation, not just an individual, to seek imagination, divine creation and action: “Ancestors’ country / suffered much / and missed sunny days / wake up and get up, enjoy public face: / my regeneration chant is for you. // My song of patience and hope is for you / After tough night of yesterday!” (“Iš Danutės akių”; Maironis 1987:57).

According to Maironis, reality’s action without any shadow of dreams has no figurative meaning and no possibility of poetic impact (no possibility of transformation and deep metamorphosis). Such an action would not have any substance for the reconstruction of a deeper national identity: “I would like to raise from the dead at least one old man / From the glorious past / And to hear at least one live word / From old times! // Maybe I would find new source of poetry / but not that of today / Which got accommodated clothes and spirit, / but it’s not its own, not its own” (“Aš norėčiau prikelti”; ib. 53). Maironis perceives reconstructive action not as a simple architectural restoration of the past, not at all! The poet conceptualizes the dream as something more than the pit of Psyche, a path to complexes or distress (though sometimes it is). Maironis perceives the dream as a key to collective experiences of societies. This experience is identical to the religious catharsis. It claims for humans the ability to personify the objective world. In this context a dream is a way and precondition for authentic and metaphysical thinking.

In the poetic world of Maironis a discontinued or intermitted dream means interrupted religious communication: “And what is the glory in a song so exalted? / A shadow that’s tuning along! / When man is no more, all the dreams he has haunted / Will fade soon like thick crimson dawn!” (“Išnyksiu kaip dūmas”; ib. 60). We could also say that Maironis imagined the dream world as the highest reality



which colligates the troubles of this life and raises human imagination to a higher level. According to Maironis' logic, a dream is equal to poetry. In his programmatic poem "Poezija" (Poetry) a poet takes the role of the poet who transforms reality in his imagination and the role of the moderator-oracle, the mediator between two spheres ("I saw her when evening / Star was purely shimmering in the sky...", in "Išnyksiu kaip dūmas"; ib.).

Maironis formulates the role of a poet who protects the altars of eternity and historical values in contemporary Lithuanian poetry. This role has been taken over by several Lithuanian poets, especially Justinas Marcinkevičius and Kazys Bradūnas. In such poetry dreaming is like a vision, a spontaneous perception of things which maybe could be seen in the eyes of heroes who have passed away. After Maironis defined the historical role of the poet as the oracle-visionary and reader of dreams, in Lithuanian literature poetry (and also the best poetic prose) is like a national religion throughout the whole history of Lithuanian literature of the twentieth century.

Because such an important status has been attributed to a poet in the discourse on poetry, there is a strong civic-political spirit in the lyrical and epic poetry, as well as drama of Justinas Marcinkevičius. After Lithuania became independent, his political engagement became an object of discussion and there was some ambiguity in its rating until Marcinkevičius published his book "Carmina minora" (2000). It was about returning to nature and meditation, and the reception of this book was more favorable. In "Carmina minora" the agricultural epic is transformed into an archetypical program of life. It accrued meaning in the light of the new epochal events. Actually, the public discussion of Marcinkevičius's work was not worthless, for it made possible to contemplate the limits of the impact of an individual and society, of a poet and a nation.

In tenebrous Soviet times readers in Lithuania took a lot of interest in forbidden literature. In the present day Lithuania, readers are interested in different literature. One of the most important civic and political writing of Marcinkevičius – the trilogy "Mindaugas" (1968), "Katedra" (1971) and "Mažvydas" (1977) first of all relates to Lithuanian history in which the concepts of *kingdom*, *sanctity* and *book* lead to freedom and responsibility. This situation means that an

individual is fully devoted to the nation. These devoted individuals comprehend the concept of the entire nation in a certain dimension, which was defined by Rimvydas Šilbajoris as “half a dream, half a vision” (Šilbajoris 2001:232).

The experience of life which is fragile like a dream in Maironis’ poetry (yet life itself is not an illusion) is one of the main sources of creation for Marcinkevičius. He thus continued the tradition. According to Jacques Lacan (Žižek 2005: 57) that kind of experience is the Reality of longing. It is a difficult task to approach and define such a reality. Slavoj Žižek claims that such a reality is a precondition for a true awakening. It has nothing in common with the conception of life which is just an automatic dream or an illusion of non-authentic life (ib.). In Marcinkevičius’ lyrics the concept of the dream was formulated step by step. Its semantic completeness was developed in a programmatic totality of a philosophic world-view. Marcinkevičius’ concept of the dream unfolds consistently and clearly in his *Raštai* (Papers, vol. 2) which were published in the independent Lithuania (2000). It is about life measured by the power of seeds’ cycle and nature’s revival. There is an ideology of perpetual regeneration in life’s genesis.

Regeneration’s ideology which in Soviet times was important due to the efforts and ability to philosophically construe the reality, became notably popular with poets, artists and especially with researchers of regional studies and mythologists. On the other hand, the interwar experience of the Orient and the writings by Vydūnas, Vincas Krėvė and Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis have been authentic bases in analyzing the world in the light of chthonic metaculture, as defined by Regimantas Tamošaitis (Tamošaitis 1998: 93). Research of this culture was professionally organized in Soviet Lithuania. Its impact and interpretations mixed with the Christian experience coming from allegories containing philosophical signs. It resulted in a Lithuanian version of perpetual regeneration.

At most unexpected moments the dream’s genesis unfolded – the idea of *kingdom* which is and constantly emerges from all regenerations of life, surpassing geographical place and historic time: “At an appointed / hour/ of the Sun/ denominational / members / of the God’s / horses / under the leadership of / stableman Gediminas / of

fubsy / Vytenis / to the horror of / German captives / began to kill / all / cultivators / from Vilkija / where Gediminas / saw / hawling / iron / wolf / Northern / horses / with emblem / of dragon-flies / were sprinkling / diamond / seed” (Sigitas Geda, “Perversmas šiaurėje 1316”; Geda 1998: 18). In emigration writings, the philosophic focus was much more related to the Christian ideology.

Just because of the possibility of a metaphysical rest, an underlying precondition of philosophy, the semantics of luminous seed-stars was taken over by the generation of the metaphysical poets of the 1960s: Onė Baliukonytė-Baliukonė, Gražina Cieškaitė and Kornelijus Platelis. Baliukonytė-Baliukonė, first unfolded the feminine secrets (unusual for that time) in her book *Iš kelio dulkių* (From dust of the road, 1982). In *Bokštai* (Towers, 1996) and *Elgetaujanti saulė* (Mendicant sun, 1998) her poetic path led from Christian ascetic life to the eclectic mix of different religious truths, namely the *chthonic metaculture* of Lithuanian paganism, signs of the Vedas and the Tao actively mixed with Egyptian and Christian ideology, thus creating the same idea of the world's regeneration and metaphysical rest.

The gnostic world of Cieškaitė, with its seeds and stars, is related to the Buddhist period of the author. It can be easily recognized as beginning with the book *Skrendu virš labirinto* (I fly over labyrinth, 1989). In her book *Auka žvaigždžių vainikui* (Sacrifice to coronal of stars, 1991) Cieškaitė made stand forth the idea of a volitional vision which also means knowledge. According to the poet, such a vision can overcome the reticence of dream, as if entering the laboratory of the creation of the world. As the secret of eternity has already vanished from there, only one thing is left to do – to state that there is a primary link between eternity and dream: “subsistence – a system or a view, from particles of dream / forever consists of mind's action – a thought” (“Efemerija”; Cieškaitė 1991: 49).

The originality of Gražina Cieškaitė's work consists above all in her striving to contemplate the world, including dreams, intellectually. Quite a few remarkable poets and writers belong to the generation of the fifties: Nijolė Miliauskaitė, Danutė Paulauskaitė, Vladas Braziūnas, Danutė Kalinauskaitė, Giedra Radvilavičiūtė, Valdemaras Kukulas, Gintaras Patackas, Antanas A. Jonynas,

Vytautas Rubavičius, Almis Grybauskas, Edmundas Kelmickas and others. They wrote of dreams in one way or another. Yet only the Oriental subject in the world-view of the *chthonic metaculture* confirms the essence of the Lithuanian dream. It becomes a particular discourse of allegoric language, a deep source of national identity. In addition, there are elements of shamanism in that discourse. In fact, dream is identified with intense an spiritual or inner life. It favors dialogue between different world-views.

### III. Problematic model of history in Lithuanian literature

One could ask if such a conception of time could be referred to as historic. The main element of Lithuanian time and Lithuanian history is the coexistence of several spiritual layers. In this context the experience of memory, the past, old times and the present, a moment and eternity do not connect with history which is a human act in linear time. They do not connect with dynamism either, since they are linked with peace and quietness. We could only talk about dynamism in the sense of inner life's intensity.

The mythic gyre and oval which emerge in the work of Lithuanian poets-mythologists of the twentieth century, especially in Sigitas Geda, is just an example of such a time shift: "and once upon a time an oval appeared in a dream!" ("Septynių vasarų giesmės", 1991). Of course, an oval for S. Geda is a component of the mythic gyre of time and in principle its nature is mythic-archetypical. There are more signs of such a mythic archetype in Lithuanian culture. They have been comprehensively analyzed by Nijolė Laurinkienė (Laurinkienė 1990: 130–138).

These archetypes are the basis of Baltic-Lithuanian storytelling. Donaldas Kajokas deals with the substantial forms of time and conservation of energy, but his underlying idea of Zen philosophy can possibly be linked with the same archetype from Lithuanian culture: the idea of cosmos' perpetual renewal.

In the way of comparison, let us look at Polish literature, beginning with Czeslow Milosz or Oscar Milasz, including Wiesława Szymborska, Zbigniew Herbert, to the youngest mature poets and essayists (also often recognized critics of art or literature), such as

Adam Wiencel or Krzysztof Koehler, Marzena Bogumila Kielar or Anna Pinkowska. A reader of Polish poetry of the twentieth century would not question the undeniable manifestations of linear, historic and Christian time in their work (though it may be more difficult to detect them in Szyborska's poetry).

The time's conception which was formed in Lithuanian literature hardly fits in the framework of linear and historical time. Essentially the poetic narrative (it applies both to poetry and prose) is a standard of contemporary Lithuanian literature: for example, the novel by Leonardas Gutasukas *Vilko dantų karoliai* (The beads of wolfish teeth, 1991, 1994, 1997) and the novel by Petras Dirgėla *Karalystė* (The kingdom, 2004) analyze the special features of Lithuanian history. The same applies to novels by the youngest authors – Renata Šerelytė, Marius Ivaškevičius and Julius Keleras. Jurga Ivanauskaitė who earlier wrote plot-structured prose, in her book *Sapnų nublokšti* (Swept away by dreams, 2002) turns from the linear conception of time and history to cyclic, dream-like, irrational and recurrent time. The historical, metahistorical or pseudohistorical novel *Žali* (Green, 2002) by Marius Ivaškevičius is quite complicated, too. Though in this novel time has the function of a character and there is the exploration of its nature, it turns out that time is not linear at all and not historical either. The process of time Ivaškevičius constructs is unpredictable, relative and spontaneous: successive moments can progress and return, responding to the laws of pain, happiness and intensity of inner life.

Time was also a basic category in the work of the poet Maironis. According to Zaborskaitė, to assign Maironis' poetry to romanticism is problematic. "First of all there is a question whether it is possible to define a poet belonging to the end of the nineteenth century by categories which were formed on the basis of literature of the beginning of the nineteenth century (---)? Is it possible to analyze Lithuanian romanticism applying the same categories that are used for the description of Polish, Russian or German literatures of the start of the nineteenth century?" (Zaborskaitė 1987: 379). Indeed, at present romanticism has been recognized as the dominant discourse of our culture.

On the one hand, Lithuanian culture never doubted its European origins. It tried to become part of the generally recognized historical process. On the other hand, Lithuanian culture was facing difficulties in defining its individuality in the historical line of time. Yet it seems to be certain that we never doubted our right for individuality.

Also analyzing the process and the heritage of the second part of the twentieth century (Soviet and post-Soviet Lithuanian literature), there are possibly still important gaps. There is still a lot to be said about “silent modernism”, the unofficial modernization and other tendencies which reflect European tradition. In this sense, Vytautas Kubilius’ historiographic book *XX-ojo amžiaus literatūra: lietuvių literatūros istorija* (Literature of the Twentieth Century: History of Lithuanian Literature, 1995) is possibly the case when a literary theorist has to focus on and to generalize all those things which were deliberately not focused on and not generalized by writers. Instead of taking the stand of an objective critic and developing academic polemics, the Lithuanian literary theorist exercises the functions of a writer who establishes programs and manifestos. No wonder that a reader does not always recognize in the history of literature relevant and expected signs of literature.

Throughout the Soviet period, the Poles promulgated several manifestos and creative programs: the turpizm, avant-garde, neo avant-garde, post avant-garde, linguistic poetry, neoclassicism, “transformed, tragic classicism” (definition by Maria Janion), post classicism, “New Wave”, “Orientations of poetic hybrid” (I am using the translation of Polish terms which were presented by the Polish scholar Teresa Dalecka at a conference in 2006). Collections of reviews of contemporary Polish literature and academic interpretations, such as Jan Tomkowski’s *Dwadziescia lat z literaturą 1977 – 1996* (1998); *Literatura polska 1990 – 2000* (edited by Tomasz Cieslak and Krystyna Pietrych, 2002); Tadeusz Drewnowski’s *Literatura polska 1994 – 1989. Proba scalenia* (2004) and *Dwudziestowiecznosc* (ed. by Mieczyslaw Dąbrowski and Tomasz Wojcik“, 2004) are an interesting symbiosis of poetic programs and declarations of writers, academically evaluated. In this context, historiography relates to historical thinking, self-reflection and historical self-awareness.

In Czech history of literature such a tendency is even stronger. It is something natural and commonplace there to mention critics' works which had stimulated discussion and inspired polemics. I am referring to a very popular literary history (its volume comprising over 1000 pages) *Česka literatura / od počátku k dnešku* (2008) written by four authors: Jan Lehár, Alexandr Sich, Jaroslava Janáčková and Jiří Holý.

In our self-criticism, we should acknowledge that Lithuanian literature has been driven to a particular situation of past and bygone manifestos. Looking from the perspective of European history, history seems to be the weak spot of Lithuanian literature and our history of literature. That is so because of undefined or hardly definable processes in our literary creation. History of literature cannot arbitrarily name movements, if they are amorphous, if they were formed and unformed unofficially, if they had no consolidating signs of self-identification. Exotic *Svetimi* (Strangers) or *Betoniniai triušiai* (Concrete rabbits) are short-lived impulses of self-identification of young artists whose programs do not have succession.

The above said does not lack its positive aspect. For example, taking into account numerous Lithuanian adepts of the Vedas, Buddhism, Zen and others interested in the Orient (besides those already mentioned, the writers Vytautas Povilas Bložė, Vytautas Bubnys, the artists Inesa Kurklietytė, Birutė Mar and others), we could formulate a motive of a wrench in historical time. It has been resumed by a phrase of Donatas Sauka in *Fausto amžiaus epilogas* (The Epilogue from Faust's time): "Who in the bottom of senses, deeper than life's nonsense and presentiment of total solitude retained the doubt about the superiority of metaphysics of Western civilization over the metaphysics of Eastern civilization?" (Sauka 1998: 15).

We could say that Lithuanian literature and especially poetry is quite near to the fundamentals of consciousness of our nation. Instead of focusing on some art rally or movement, during the whole totalitarian period the writers and artists developed the spirit of individualism and an individual philosophy which was based on a personal religion. With no suitable support for spiritual experience in the cultural environment, Lithuanian poetry synthesized different

practices of Eastern and Western world-view and religion, in order to come close to its source of *dreams* – its very essence.

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