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DESTINIES OF THE STATE AND ITS WRITERS IN HISTORY. DIMENSIONS OF THEIR TRAGEDY AND SUCCESS IN LITHUANIAN LITERATURE

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Abstract. The destiny of Lithuanian writers and the state carry intertwined meanings opening their dimensions to a painfully relevant aspect of history. Several compelling fate-fracturing cases emerged when the writer became an anti-hero or even a martyr in history as if being “swallowed by darkness” or possessed by forces hostile to the state. The signs of the literary success sinking into darkness marked the destinies of some Lithuanian writers like Salomėja Nėris (1904–1945), Petras Cvirka (1909–1947), and Kostas Kubilinskas (1923–1962), showing the decisive factor in the dramaturgy of the intersection between the state and the writer. It can be vice versa when the process of writing breaks into the light of historical openness, illuminating and changing the paradigm of literary processes with its fateful rise out of the depths of loss and the darkness of the grave. The fate of doctor Dalia Grinkevičiūtė (1927–1987) in exile can be such a particular case. The literary unfolding and flourishing in the media of Kristina Sabaliauskaitė (*1974) represents the culmination of the contemporary Lithuanian writers’ success on the international level in creative works about statehood. Her books, “Silva rerum” and “Petro Imperatore” [Peter’s Empress], with their unique expression of the modernisation of the past times, play the role of the renewal of the genesis of the state and the citizen in the present day leading to the dynamics of forgotten statehood. It has a crucial significance for the aesthetic dimension of the writer’s style, its passion for baroque, and the revival of statehood as a yearning for history.

Keywords: literature; history; writers’ destiny; statehood; terror state; dimensions of national Self.

Through the interaction of statehood and creativity, the destinies of Lithuanian writers become vital signs of historical paradigms. Here the concept of “writer’s creative success” can carry the fatalistic meaning of a break of destiny, which remains beyond the control of time and the author himself and leads the literary process to unforeseen anti-cultural, even anti-civilisational abysses. The aesthetic expression then loses its meaning. Lithuanian literature contains enough examples where the “writer’s success” is transformed into a fatal mistake in his or her strive, which submerges the scenic brilliance into darkness and controversies. Furthermore, on the contrary, the total darkness of the attacked and humiliated ones, which buried existential, not to mention the creative hopes, became a resurrection to the paradigmatic glow of the literary transformation of the classics’ stratum. In this characteristic to the thunderstruck Lithuanian history context, it is worth discussing several cases of classical literary novelists, the dramas of the creative path of these great writers, which took place reviewing the threshold of the concept of statehood, and losing the sense of its genesis, the ability to evaluate the significance of intellectual understanding of history for literature. What is crucial in the process of a writer’s creative success? This new discourse of contemporary literary criticism prevails in present-day Lithuania, including the assessment of the works of classic writers and poets, the analysis of the life path, and its impact on the existential-humanistic dimension, which becomes *responsible* for the creator’s place in the nation’s self-consciousness. It is a new concept of the genesis of statehood in creative works. Here, the words of the poet Algimantas Mackus (1932–1964), the representative of emigrants in America, the war fugitives pushed out by the Soviet occupation, come back: “Former citizens of the state...” (Mackus 1999: p. 144). Here, the actual threshold that every writer crosses in their contexts is accurately named – *the state’s citizens*. In this sense, Mackus raises a paradigmatic topic – the existential significance of the loss of statehood for creative self-consciousness.

It is worth highlighting a few particularly tragic cases of Lithuanian literature: poet Salomėja Nėris (1904–1945), called the Lithuanian nightingale, writer Petras Cvirka (1909–1947), children’s poet Kostas Kubilinskas (1923–1962). In the 21st century, the last two became the hostile Lithuanian literature heroes, their success experienced *vertigo* –

the reversal of the meaning of time into literary failure. Meanwhile, Salomėja Nėris (1904–1945) remained a tragic victim of history in the nation's self-consciousness. Her creative heritage was saved in the Lithuanian thoughts because of her repentance, which secretly awakened awareness of their mistake. The power of great talent and the understatement of statehood clearly intersected in these destinies, becoming a new source of modern sarcasm, an opening up, a merciless coup of historical significance.

Also, there is an opposite example of the resurrection from the darkness of the grave – the exilée, doctor, and writer Dalia Grinkevičiūtė (1927–1987). All these cases are subject to criticism. Nowadays, authors conducting in-depth investigations and evaluations of the texts and contexts of these authors, so brutally touched by history, provide new insights and step into a historically critical, inspiring discourse of the intersections of fate and creativity. They are the philosopher dr. Nerija Putinaitė in “Skambantis molis” [Sounding Clay] (Putinaitė 2019), prosaist Gasparas Aleksa in “Baik cirkus, Cvirka!” [Stop the Circus, Cvirka!], a novel about Petras Cvirka (Aleksa 2021), literary scholar Aldona Ruseckaitė (“Padai pilni vinių” [The Feet Full of Nails], a novel about Salomėja Nėris (Ruseckaitė 2019), director, poet, and writer Vytautas V. Landsbergis (“Bunkeris” [The Bunker], drama, 2006, “Poetas” [The Poet], a feature film about Kostas Kubilinskas, 2022), literary scholar, and journalist Indrė Valiukaitė (“Tamsioji K. Kubilinsko pusė: vaikų poeto eilėraščiai slėpė brolių žudišką išdavystę” [The Dark Side of K. Kubilinskas: the Children Poet's Poems Hid Fratricidal Betrayal], Valiukaitė, www.15min.lt March 27, 2022).

There is also Valentinas Sventickas with his monograph “Dalios Grinkevičiūtės dalia” [The Fate of Dalia Grinkevičiūtė], 2022. The writer Kristina Sabaliauskaitė (*1974) became an exceptional case in the field of literary success, currently, an active writer who, perhaps for the first time, launched such a bright international mission of recognition of Lithuanian literature with her historical novels (“Silva rerum”, 2008–2016, “Petro imperatorė” [Peter's Empress] I, II, 2019, 2021) paving the way to the European literary scene and the highest recognition. It is also a unique sense of the timeliness of the status of the state, giving Lithuania and its neighbours, countries like Poland, other Baltic countries, Ukraine, and all Russia's neighbours, a new historical

perspective, a sense of the epoch of becoming permanent brothers in arms, the revival of the deep strata of intellectual memory of statehood, or the archeology of memory, so necessary for the formation of a mature nation. The awareness of statehood and the writer's creative success is evident, and it confirms the new paradigm of Eastern European processes in literature – a deep connection with history or the genesis factor of citizenship in the literary process.

The controversy of writer's success: the case of Petras Cvirka

In Lithuanian literature, we can distinguish a few tragical examples of very talented writers who played an essential part in Lithuania's occupation by the Soviet regime. This group is known as people bringing "the sun of Stalin" because they were part of the Lithuanian delegation that sought Lithuania's incorporation into the Soviet Empire. These writers were Salomėja Nėris, Petras Cvirka, Liudas Gira, Antanas Venclova, and others. Only the first two are the most important classical cases of Lithuanian literature – Salomėja Nėris and Petras Cvirka. Nowadays, both names are at the top of the intensive public discourse regarding literature and state destiny, what writers' position meant during the occupation of Lithuania, and what drove them to induce the nation's suffering. They were greedy for success, naïve, or mistaken and failed to understand the concept of freedom, the value of statehood, the genesis of democracy, an existential condition essential for creativity.

The story of the writer Petras Cvirka (1909–1947) ended recently, in 2022, after a long media discussion. His monument was moved away from Vilnius' central square. Though his books about Lithuanian villages like "Žemė maitintoja" [Land the Nourisher] (1965) were included in classical literature studies, his position on the Soviet regime set a negative example and was ideologically inspired by pro-Stalinist Russia. His motivation was that he was very ambitious and greedy for power and success. Even more, he was a chairman of the Writers' Union organising committee and, collaborating with the Soviet regime and believing in Stalinist ideology, betrayed his colleagues and friends like poet Vladas Jakubėnas, who was sent to jail. He made a lot of pro-soviet changes in Lithuanian literature. I remember that at school, we had to read Petras Cvirka's novel "Lakštingala" [The Nightingale], 1963, about a boy helping the Soviet partisans. Emotional sympathy for a boy

was turned down because of his pro-Russian position and bloody images; flowing sentences could not help but only direct thoughts towards the hatred of incorrect Lithuanian history. He was the author of the famous sentence: “Don’t be sad, brothers, the mother Russia will take care of you!” (Cvirka 1983: p. 217). It became a critical turning point at the present moment – never forget and forgive – meaning the horrible mass deaths of Lithuanians as victims of Soviet occupation. Philosopher dr Nerija Putinaitė, who nowadays publishes books about the damages of Soviet ideologisation of Lithuania (Putinaitė 2019), expresses the opinion about widely discussed Petras Cvirka’s Soviet leadership and the fate of his monument.

It was built for him in Stalin’s times, and because of this, we have to make conclusions. The monument was erected for the fateful Soviet nomenclature leader, made in the style of the communist leader but not for the writer (Plikūnė 2017: p. 1).

Nobody discusses his literary work now, though he was a good novelist; his books were easy to read and written in a sensitive style, but his success has been damaged and disappeared. He died early, only 38 years old, because of alcoholism and bad fate.

Nerija Putinaitė adds:

Maybe there was some pragmatic motive for his admiration of sovietism: the money, the will to rule, to have power. Cvirka was a very ambitious person. <...> Indeed, he visited Russia more than once; he had to be blind not to see what was happening there. But he, maybe, did not want to see... I think P. Cvirka is one of the most negative examples in Lithuanian literature history (Plikūnė 2017: p. 3).

Contemporary writer Gasparas Aleksa, partly *sorry* for Cvirka’s misleading personality, publishes a book about him with a humoristic title: “Baik cirkus, Cvirka!” [Stop your Circus, Cvirka!]. The writer explains Cvirka’s complicated feelings of his guilt and Lithuania’s fate, and his loss in a new turn of history, when he failed for his homeland (Aleksa 2021).

Salomėja Nėris – the nightingale poet

Poet Salomėja Nėris (1904–1945), the most talented and beloved woman poet in all-time Lithuania, is another even more tragical example

of fractured destiny in the Soviet epoch. It is different from Cvirka's case as she has been forgiven of being a weak, soft woman. She did not lose the nation's love; she only received deep regret. Her mistakes were made because of her emotional life, disappointments in her love life, and the influence of her leftist friends. Somehow Salomėja Nėris remains in literature as an image of a pitiful, broken, feminine individual, easily misled and mistaken... She regained what could be called *her literary greatness* because she was forgiven and still beloved. Her talent allows her to remain at the top of Lithuanian literature even though the ongoing occupation and deportation have shadowed her life. Being one of the best Lithuanian poets, Nėris is linked to having a cheap and pathetic literary style or even a destructive taste as an admirer of Stalinist ideology, which presented her pro-Sovietic passionate poems about Lenin and Stalin in *grotesque and kitschy greatness*.

Jo vardas plienas! Dievaži,
Jam visa žemė lenkiasi, –
Ir sklinda apie jį plačiai
Legendos po pasaulį:
Galingi Stalino pečiai
Laužia vartus į saulę.
[His name is steel! Indeed,
All the earth bows down to him,
And legends spread about him widely
All around the world:
The mighty Stalin's shoulders
Open the gates towards the sun.]

Salomėja Nėris "Poema apie Staliną" [Poem about Stalin], 1940 (Nėris 1957: p. 469).

Later, an unpredicted destiny turn was prepared for Nėris. The situation became so exigent that the poet tried to rescue her own life, regretting writing that verse, so she wrote a diary secretly from all-seeing KGB's eyes. In her secret diary, there is the verse "Maironiui" [For Maironis] (Ufa, January 15, 1942) (Nėris 1994: p. 3), where she appeals to Maironis, the prelate and great national romantic poet, praying for forgiveness for her betrayal of Lithuanian people and Christian catholic identity, like confessing before she died. It may have been a move that saved her literary fate for the 21st century.

History events, impacting states and writers' fate, constantly produce new shifts in contemporary creativity. Successful contemporary writer and playwright Marius Ivaškevičius (*1973), in his play drama "Madagascar" (Ivaškevičius 2012), because of good knowledge of history and sharp humour style makes a creative, sarcastic point about Salomėja Nėris' admiration of Stalin as *Übermensch*, linguistically playing with his father's name Vissarionovich, which sounds in Lithuanian like all-swallowing (Ivaškevičius 2012: p. 111). Ivaškevičius' play is famous for its sarcasm when he ridicules the authors, whose names became fools of Lithuanian literature of their admiration of barbaric tyrant, of the absurd of being stupid followers of the mass murderer. This regretful but truthful sarcasm is very popular nowadays and casts a dark shadow over Salomėja Nėris and her undoubtedly most remarkable talent and name in literature.

There are more similar tragedies of the Lithuanian writers from the *war after the war* period of Soviet occupation. How much the writer's attitude, motivated by literary success position, could change his historical identity? Is the choice of destiny to stay an Enlightenment or *bloodland person*?

What motives could be so crucial that the writer picks one road over the other, leading toward the sovereignty of his homeland and the state, his nation, and his own safety?

Possibly the worst example of such choice is poet Kostas Kubilinskas (1923–1962), the children's books writer, who nowadays is more known as a negative hero or "successful" KGB agent, a killer of his friends, Lithuanian freedom fighters. For him, the reason for becoming a KGB agent was the goal to be a successful and popular writer, create for children, and be published. To achieve this goal, he was invited to join KGB. As an agent called "Varnas", he, the "Crow", infiltrated into partisan groups, befriended, and later betrayed them, which triggered the liquidation of the partisans or even their suicides. He continued his life as if nothing had happened and created children's books. The post stamp was issued in his honour in 1959. Indeed, his poetry for children was good and popular, with folklore elements, cognitive, expressive, and contextual in comic and dramatic ways. He was a depressed alcoholic and died young because of an alcohol overdose or with some outside help in a Moscow writers' villa, being younger than 40 years. At present,

he is a particular example of a twisted destiny as “Kubilinskas – Crow” (Varnas), remembered as a morally finished, deeply depressed, constantly drunk man, lying under a table, who used to repeat the words: “dog’s place is under the table”. It is one most deplorable stories about the fate of the Soviet writers’ giving the ground for an exemplary drama of contemporary playwrights and film directors (V. V. Landsbergis and G. Tomaševičius “Bunkeris” [Bunker], 2006, “Poetas” [Poet], 2022).

Case of a Nobel prize winner

The dimensions of hell – darkness and enlightenment – are limitless, and they are in collision with the literary process. One more example of present-day history is a Nobel prize winner Josif Brodsky (1940–1996), known by chance for his anti-Ukrainian verse “On the Independence of Ukraine”, 1991. Human rights defender Matthew Omolesky wrote about Brodsky’s literary downfall in “American Spectator” on May 17, 2022 (Omolesky 2022) in memory of the killed in Bucha (2022) translator Oleksandr Kysliuk. Later the comment of Adam Michnik, a Polish dissident and editor, came out: “I don’t know who will lose the Ukrainian – Russian war, but one person will surely lose it at least for the next hundred years, and it is Josif Brodsky” (Michnik 2022: p. 2).

From the darkness to the light. The nation’s tragedy and the ascension to literary success

In literature, the deportation to eternal cold and *death on earth* transforms into a power of truth and vision. A miraculous example of such writing in a fatal circle of occupation is the destiny of one honest woman, a medical doctor, Gulag’s prisoner Dalia Grinkevičiūtė (1927–1987). The mystery enshrouds her manuscript and the book that appeared after her death. The novel “Lietuviai prie Laptevų jūros” [Lithuanians by the Laptev sea] (Grinkevičiūtė 2018) is the pivotal point of the historical paradigm, crushing pro-Sovietic narratives in Lithuanian literature at the end of the 20th century. Dalia was deported being a 14 years old teenager with her mother and brother to the freeze of the Stalinist Gulag near the Polar circle at Laptev sea. Under deadly circumstances, she secretly wrote her diary, describing death swirling around her, and was motivated by the purpose that her testimony would reflect on the

important points of witnessing the Soviet State's crimes over its people. Professor of literature in the USA, ex-dissident, poet, and translator Tomas Venclova states that

the experience of prisoners in Gulags and their suffering was inexpressible in words, that it was a limit of human language. Despite this, the silence was broken. Important accounts about the Gulag exist, notably from Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Varlam Shalamow, among many others. They made a significant contribution to the dissolution of the Soviet totalitarian system. I am convinced that the testimony of the Lithuanian Dalia Grinkevičiūtė ranks alongside their famous works (Venclova 2018: p. 203).

Dalia (in Lithuanian, “dalia” means “fate”) went through the most difficult way for literary creativity: as a fourteen-year-old girl, she found herself at the morbid area for exiles by the Laptev sea at the Arctic Ocean. Many of Dalia's fellow exiles died in this icy hell without proper shelter from cold, starvation, or disease. Dalia survived and not only survived but constantly wrote her secret diary about the horrors of Gulag. She even escaped being 21 years old. She was arrested in Kaunas, moved to an internment camp, then sent into exile again, but she managed to save her secret diary. During that short period, she hid her diary under the earth of her home garden, which was found and first published in 1987, when Dalia was 60 years old – the year she died. After Stalin's death, she returned to Lithuania, finished her medical studies, and worked as a doctor. Dalia's testimony has been translated into many European languages and published as one of the most incredible literary testimony of the terror state. Hidden Soviet Union crimes of genocide over other nations (when *the people's quilt was national identity*) are also described. Grinkevičiūtė portrays many deaths of Fins, Poles, Ukrainians, Jews, and Baltic people, asking where was their fault for dying so young. How was it possible to be killed only for being a person of another nationality? After translating and publishing her book in Germany, the editor Meike Ziervogel comments:

There is only one word to describe this book: extraordinary. It blew me away when I first read it in German. Dalia's account goes far beyond a memoir. It is a unique outstanding piece of literature which should be read by anyone who wishes to understand the Soviet repressions (Grinkevičiūtė 2018: p. 12).

Dalia's testimony is rich in details, full of documentary precision, and envisaged by robust and truthful expression. She remains objective and emotionally balanced but not self-censored, accurate, and genuine; she only comments on the injustice and reflects on the regime's crimes, constantly asking why?

The moment of injustice is elevated to the high point of self-awareness, which makes her book exactly a turn toward human rights. After WWII, many testimonies were made "politically correct" under the pressure of politicians, the winners of the war, and aliens of Stalin, like an exceptional book "Mein Bericht für, die Welt" about the Holocaust in Poland by Jan Karski, though regrettably he himself had to censor under the pressure of politicians not to offend Russians, deleting the crimes of the Soviet side in Poland, only describing the horror of the Nazi reign (Karski 2012: p. 12). Grinkevičiūtė was not censored this way because her testimony book was *unknown* for many years during *the dark* occupation regime, properly hidden under the earth. The fate of the manuscript is truly exceptional. Vytenė Muschnick describes the process of hiding the diary in the introduction of Grinkevičiūtė's book:

Dalia dug a hole in the concrete floor of the cellar in her parents' house in Perkūno alėja no 60, in Kaunas, telling only her mother a secret about the burial. She was illegally taken back from Siberia very ill and died on May 5, 1950. Sensing that she was under surveillance, she stuffed her sheets of paper into a preserving jar and buried them in the garden. She trusted her memoirs to the earth, and not too soon, for in late May 1950 she was finally arrested <...> and was sent back to Siberia via countless prisons and camps (Grinkevičiūtė 2018: p. 8).

Dalia's manuscript was saved during occupational times by a miracle. Now people can read about the journey that changed the paradigm of Lithuanian literature forever:

The riverbank is steep. A barge carrying bricks has docked along the front. I see people unloading the bricks and carrying them ashore on their backs. Several tents and two small, unfinished wooden structures – without windows, roofs, or floor – stand on the summit. It is August 28, 1942. I watch more barges being maneuvered toward the shore. So, it is America, I suppose (Grinkevičiūtė 2018: p. 37).

The rumors have been making the rounds regarding the Lithuanians, who were transported earlier to seagoing ships in Tiksi, an Arctic Ocean harbour, and then taken... where? “To America, of course”, say the “Americans”. Some of the rumours are very specific, like the one about people tossing their work clothes into the sea because they won’t be needing them in America. It was supposedly reported by a sailor from Tiksi. What is going on there?

Only later, after I’d swallowed the “American theory” whole and left for Tiksi myself to attend school, I finally understood. There had been some truth to the rumors, but those seagoing ships transported our countrymen only to the mouth of the Yana River, where they died, just like us on the Lena. And yes, people did toss things out because they thought that they were heading to America. The barometer of hope always went up after rumors like those (Grinkevičiūtė 2018: p. 39).

<...> A bitter wind is blowing in from the mouth of the Lena, and the river is white with foam. Not a hint of vegetation anywhere. A cold, bleak, and barren coast. It has been our destination all along.

<...> The sand pulls us backward; we slip and fall with our belongings. No one feels like talking; we are all depressed. Four hundred and fifty Lithuanians are standing on the polar tundra, looking for the city.

I look around, and I am chilled to the bone. Far and wide, tundra and more tundra, naked tundra, not a spring of vegetation, just moss as far as the eye can see. In the distance, I notice something that looks like a small hill of crosses. Later we learn that there were the graves of the Finns.

<...> Suddenly, I am gripped by fear. What if this becomes a “death factory” rather than a “fish factory”? <...>

Oh, horror, I want to grab and hold on to a barge and scream. “Wait, don’t leave us! Where have you brought us?” But the line of barges recedes, leaving us behind on this uninhabited island of Trofimovsk, where the polar winter that lasts ten months of the year is about to begin (Grinkevičiūtė 2018: p. 37, 39–40).

<...> The Finns sought shelter in dark, windowless tents... which did not protect them from wind or rain. The tents and lean-tos were full of sick people lying on the wet tundra, completely neglected and dying. <...> It was September. The surface of the tundra got colder by the day. It would soon freeze, and then the first blizzards will arrive (Grinkevičiūtė 2018: p. 42, 43).

<...> And to think that it's only autumn, and that winter has barely begun. I wonder what is waiting for us ahead. How many of us will survive? (Grinkevičiūtė 2018: p. 49).

The brigade of two shuttles moved nonstop between the barracks and the graveyard, carrying dead bodies. Most of the bodies are naked, a few wrapped in sheets. There is no way for the burials to keep pace with the arrivals. Bodies lie piled up like frozen logs. The Arctic foxes, which are also starving, gnaw on the cadavers. Every night, Misevičienė, a high school principal's wife in Lithuania, goes to our little hill and pushes cadavers pulled out by the foxes back into the pile.

Gamzienė has died. She was a beautiful forty-year-old Jewish woman in the seventh Jewish barrack. Her family was industrialists. Back in the Altai territory, we shared the same barracks. She was a warm and charming woman who adored her son, Nolia – a tall, slender, exceptionally bright eighteen-year-old. Every evening we would sit huddled together by the stove. In those days, we had not yet experienced hunger and were fed by the illusion of an early return home. Nolia would close his eyes and sing in a deep baritone.

Tamulevičius and his corpse brigade enter the seventh barrack to collect Gamzienė's body. Nolia is lying by his mother's side, he is sick too, and because he has not been able to get up, his toes have succumbed to frostbite, and gangrene has set in. Lice crawl across Gamzienės face and chest, then cross over to her son and their neighbour to the right. Tamulevičius notices a chunk of bread the dying woman was hidden between the rags on her chest. It is also crawling with lice. Tamulevičius reaches out quickly as a flash, snatches the bread, flicks off the lice, and pops it into his mouth. Gamzienė's tattered clothes have frozen to the icy brick wall (Grinkevičiūtė 2018: p. 90–91).

Dalia's memories open the experience of "no hope", "*no America*", and the worst conditions of human existence. This one survival story changes the Lithuanian pro-Sovietic literary narrative forever. Everybody, even Tomas Venclova, the son of Antanas Venclova (one from the Lithuanian delegation to the Kremlin), acknowledges her dominant literary position after 1987 when Grinkevičiūtė's diary in the form of the book "Lithuanians by the Laptev Sea" was published for the first time. It was a miracle that could be named a *success* coming back from areas of death where the majority of deported died. The miracle

happened to Dalia, letting her survive, building up her bravery to escape, and preserving her manuscript under the earth in that long-lasting stay.

The miracle of truth in history – the manuscript that was not burnt, changed the course of the literary process.

After the emergence of Dalia Grinkevičiūtė's testimony, Lithuanian literature took its historical turn in the existential visionary perspective of the nation's Self and transformed it into the new poetry of transcendental landscapes, like the poem by Leonardas Gutauskas (1938–2021), the painter, poet, writer, the son of deportees, dedicated to Dalia Grinkevičiūtė "Veidrodis žiemą" [Mirror in Winter] (Gutauskas 2016).

Dalia Grinkevičiūtė took this road of "literary success" not because of her wish or thirst to be popular but of her Lithuanian national fate and being close to death with existential honour, bravery, and heroism of documentalist, the witness of the terror state. Her testimony obviously crossed some "red lines," dividing a deep dimensional difference between the writers in the Soviet occupation times and changing their fates, even post-mortem, into another perspective of the Lithuanian literary process.

New Century: History as the space for greatness

An actual example of great literary success in Lithuania is undoubtedly the particular one that fully, with all its content, got smoothly integrated into statehood history processes that had happened a long time ago and up to the contemporary existence nowadays. Art historian dr. Kristina Sabaliauskaitė (born 1974), who entered literature with her scientific research experience, carefully describing the artefacts of ancient arts, wrote exceptionally successful literary pieces. She used the past events happening two or three centuries ago as the epochal scene for her literary work. As a writer, Kristina Sabaliauskaitė opened an exclusive Lithuanian phenomenon to the historical process of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (Commonwealth of Two Nations established by the Union of Lublin in July 1569). Sabaliauskaitė took a personal journey over this three-centuries-old statehood processual dramaturgy because she was an active European citizen, and her thoughts were integrated with the 21st century's narrative and contemporary national self-awareness. As if being able to foresee the future, she predicted Lithuania and Poland's political reunion to some degree after two

centuries in her unbelievably successful historical novel “Silva rerum” in four volumes (2008–2016). In “Silva rerum”, the literary narrative differs hugely from modernism or post-modernism literature. There is an unquestionable return back to old-fashion style concerning the feeling of Lithuanian statehood identity, rising in Eastern Europe that means certain old-fashioned baroque-style expressionism, available to open hearts to the “sunset epoch” ruled by Stanislaw August Poniatowski, called “The Sunset King” as being the last king of Poland in late 18th century. Even then, when the Russian Empire, together with Austria and Germany, divided the Commonwealth in 1795, the relations of the prominent Lithuanian–Polish aristocracy, clergy, and royal families with the European States remained solid and efficient. In her comments, Sabaliauskaitė, based on research, constantly states what severe and long-lasting damage Russia inflicted on us and explained that the Commonwealth (bi-confederal state) with the second Constitution (May 3, 1791) in the world had been a premonition to the future EU. This prospect was torn apart, absorbing us into the slavery of the Russian Empire, where people and nations suffered from absolutism and tyranny. The writer explains how much it changed our historical paradigm. This knowledge creates a healing impulse for European self-awareness of the Lithuanian people and the state. And it all begins with the phenomenal literary message.

Style of a deep state as a marker of success. Taking time in history

The unique figurative style of Sabaliauskaitė’s “Silva rerum” is comprised of very long sentences, integrating all life events, including old-fashioned Slavic or Latin linguistic elements, which makes “Silva rerum” a continuous time flow streaming from the title to the last word. This epochal style with specific eternal rhetoric value has a strong impulse to penetrate the contemporary reader’s soul and wake it up. Pure talent is to come straight to the point and affect the psychological core of historical identity. Such context revives the feeling of the genetic defensive force of Lithuanian people, analyses the statehood mentality from its roots to nowadays, and remains in the open battlefield of events. Sabaliauskaitė’s talent is to incorporate history in a contemporary (Sabaliauskaitė 2022a) and open the *no-end of history* point, contrary to

Francis Fukuyama's (*1952) *end of history* (Fukuyama 1992). It places her in the league of not only great writers with bestselling success but, even more, in the philosophy of contemporary geopolitics, human rights watch, and state's defender to build a new paradigm of feelings with the passing of time. The writer becomes an analyst of the *terror State* and Russia's relationship with the West. The mysticism of Russian culture and soul has completely changed its meaning to the West in the face of the new war against Ukraine. Sabaliauskaitė shifted the move of Lithuanian literature in the direction of rethinking the importance of freedom on the geopolitical statehood road intellectually. Her message wants to reopen this road with personal passion toward life and existential perspective in 2022 (Sabaliauskaitė 2022b). This special power to unfold the new perspectives in retrospect in the matters of state history is indeed based on a Lithuanian–Polish identity issue, which feeds the writer's imagery from the identity roots to the genesis of being a European citizen and the defender of the Free State. It is a heroic old-fashioned statement but reflects on the deep dimension of Sabaliauskaitė's personality as a citizen of Europe, which many writers do not possess. It is undoubtedly the source of global power for her exceptional talent and documentary knowledge, which impressively works together with a linguistically rich baroque-style textual format. Maybe, it was a deep unconscious long-lasting yearning for the Lithuanian literary process that now rose and flourished in her emancipated books.

They stood together in Vilnius' winter night as they stood ten or eleven years ago, as if they were students again, leaving a steaming tavern being drunk; just above them in the black sky rose the bell tower of St. John's University, dimly lit by street lanterns and window lights – tall, bright, strong, towering over the whole city, penetrating the night <...> (Sabaliauskaitė 2021: p. 86). Then dialog like an endless melody turns into a monologue: “Pranciškus Ksaveras, our Vilnius is beautiful, wonderful, this capital city of ours, this great land of ours, our glorious history and our state system, don't say, – it's not the worst, our Lithuanian nation is great but, for hell's sake, it is disappointing that there are too many stupid people in it...” And they both looked for a while in silence at the black, star-studded sky above the bell tower, above the winter city, and it seemed to them that this sky was as infinite and immeasurable as human folly; yes, indeed, the stupidity of man is inexhaustible, exclaimed Pranciškus

Ksaveras, and at the same moment, he realised that very clearly, unfortunately, he himself was no exception to this universal rule of the universe: the things that he half-perceived in this world were nothing against the magnitude of this expanding unknown. <...>

Christmas Eve in 1772 happened to be clear and frozen, and the chimes of the Cathedral bell seemed to reach for the lilac twilight. While leaving the sanctuary, Pranciškus Ksaveras looked around – you had to be careful not to let a brick fall on your head, so to speak, not just a brick – the entire tower, as it happened three years ago, it fell down, after the southern facade of the tower crumbled down, a gust of wind blew during the storm, and the graceful, slim turret built by Glaubitz, somewhat similar to that of the Missionary Church, clattered and with a crash turned into ruins, even piercing the largest hole in the Cathedral’s roof, which was now barely patched up, but the wind still whistled through the cracks, blowing around the strewn hay on the stone slabs: the Vigil crib set was arranged on the church porch, and several sheep and two donkeys were moved into the enclosure and were constantly bleating in the drafts as if begging to be released and utterly indifferent to the approaching miracle of the Nativity; a crib among artificial caves, and tiny mangers. The places of Saint Joseph with a cane, the Holy Virgin dressed in gold brocade, shepherds, peasants, robbers, and the Three Kings were still empty (Sabaliauskaitė 2016: p. 86–87).

The obvious baroque-ness of “*Silva rerum*” text is like a stream bursting from the deep underground spring feeding the land of Lithuanian memory, thirsty for the historical memory, which has been blocked for a long time:

In the dark Gothic nave, cluttered with gilded altars and altarpieces looking like a swallow’s nests, ancient tombstones of red porphyry with the figures of the dead were stretched out to their full height, and centuries-old monuments, white marble busts of bishops, hetmans and duchesses peering from the walls, through which not a single open area of the wall could be seen, the candlelight rippled and incense smoke lingered around as if the whole past, since the baptism of Lithuania, all the saints, rulers and queens, all the powerful ones of the dutchy and their beautiful wives and daughters already turned to dust, all that crowd of the dead, looked with a wondering question at the empty crib, unable to believe that the almighty Creator could really be that delicate, small and fragile like a newborn baby, and even he, that little one, is not here now (Sabaliauskaitė 2016: p. 87).

After “*Silva rerum*”, Sabaliauskaitė wrote the absolute *bestseller of the prewar times*: two volumes of “Peter’s Empress” (Sabaliauskaitė 2019, 2021) about Russia in Peter’s I epoch in the early 18th century. This period was about the time of Russia’s Europeanisation, along with all the aggressive wars with their neighbouring states. The writer takes the readers into that epoch through the eyes of Peter’s wife Marta Skowronska, who was a beautiful girl, forcibly raped prisoner of war, then lover of the Tsar, mother of his children, and at least the wife, who became the Empress of Russia after Peter’s death. Marta is the storytelling key person, whom the author assigned to be *a writer of her last day in life diary*, which makes the text about her life journey very special and open. It accounts for Russia’s horror history and the fates of their own and foreign people. This Europeanisation takes a different direction to become the road to hell – Russia indeed enwrapped Europe in torture, drunkenness, and horrific war crimes. Clearly, the book was met with some intellectual scepticism by academic leftists, even protests or questions and mistrust that it is based on a real documentary. Interestingly, today Sabaliauskaitė’s text does not make people wonder anymore. Even the narrative about the worst cases is all comparable with the news from the war front. Sabaliauskaitė is very strict regarding the documentary precision and trustful knowledge and uses some mathematical methods (counting hour to an hour of Marta’s life in time flow) to describe the historical events of Peter the Great and links to Europe. The text opens paradigmatic lines about coexistence with Russia’s difficulties: helplessness and denial of human dignity – the must-accept condition for everyone who wants to survive... For instance, the All-Drunken Synod of Fools and Jesters had a special significance for Peter as a fiesta of humiliation – “tearing off the masks”, rising to the universal humiliation, so it was impossible to imagine what courage and self-respect those who resisted had to have... Sabaliauskaitė writes:

For those men of power who tried to resist such masquerade blasphemy, they pulled their pants off and were ordered to sit on the ice of the Neva with their bare bottoms being poked by the swords of the soldiers. So, I couldn’t resist – all I was left was to endure Peter’s will and live on...

<...> I realised that I couldn’t change anything here <...> Maybe I got used to squinting and not seeing what I was powerless to change.

Perhaps strabismus of the soul is also possible. Or maybe it just meant that we were all Peter's prisoners, and the imprisoned could not change the order of the prison.

Not one of the few survived who resisted Peter's will and refused to participate in the [mascarade] wedding [of Handicapped], so they were sat on ice – some froze straight in the place, others died after an illness (Sabaliauskaitė 2021: p. 85–86).

The context line followed the life events of Marta Skowronska as her own road to hell, paralysing the possibility of breaking Russia's deadly paranoid circle, pushing away Europeanisation, and leaving its European self helpless.

On the tenth day, Peter held a final assembly in the Senate, during which each guest was required to drink from the large cup with a double-headed Russian eagle. There were those who managed to escape after deceiving the guard, and there were others who did not survive. It's only later that we have learned that Henrich Keldermann, one of Peter's former tutors, a man highly educated in Paris, Oxford, and Padua, somehow had come home after drinking that cup and fell asleep, laying his head down on the table where he rested on. Only he did not wake up... In the morning, his wife and daughters found him dead. Peter, when he sobered up, paid for his funeral and ordered to hand a pension to his widow, but didn't grieve too long: a good party always requires sacrifices. Besides, he knew he could always buy another trained Keldermann from abroad.

Peter had a long and difficult recovery after the carnival, as if he was crawling out of a dark cave buried under the ground. Sometimes he was haunted that someone was trying to kill him, and more and more often, he imagined that it was his son, Aleksej" (Sabaliauskaitė 2021: p. 81–85).

This ascending line of Russian terror reaches its eclipse in Peter's most unbelievable deed: torturing and murdering his own son, who tried to escape his fate fleeing in Europe, but he was found and exposed, the son, whom he mistrusted for betrayal... Sabaliauskaitė, almost like Marta, refuses to believe such horror, which is almost unbearable, only revealing sparse details, which explain even better the hidden content of the true Russian horror story. The cycle of the killing in Marta's life with Peter is going in a spiral, each time coming closer and closer to Russia's contemporary image, breaking through the established long-lasting view

blocked by the rhetorical effects of disinformation. This breaking of the historical paradigm of “understanding Russia” is new in Europe (Sabaliauskaitė 2022c) and based only on the writer’s talent to open scientific, historical knowledge. She has reached the point of no return in the deep state concept. The virtue of Sabaliauskaitė’s book “Peter’s Empress” starts the beat of the apocalyptic global pulse of the *changing times*. The markers of success of Sabaliauskaitė’s books nowadays are mentioned by Estonian literature critics, where “Peter’s Empress” became a prize winner in the contest “The best book of 2022” (Sabaliauskaitė 2022d). The editor Pille Riin–Larm of the elite Estonian literary magazine “Sirp” announces the criteria for the best writer and comments on why Sabaliauskaitė is the prize winner. Criteria for the success of the writers of historical novels are a stream of substantiated narrative, historical truthfulness based on documentary, the message for humankind over lasting the times, and the author’s talent to master the language. All this is impressively breathtaking in Sabaliauskaitė’s “Peter’s Empress”. The other critic Andra Teede explains that the special quality in the author’s style is self-awareness, almost being in person in the line of events, which makes the new perspective for historical circumstances, including a powerful textual factor that overtakes matters of contemporary existence. For all these reasons, the book is impossible to put aside. It lives in its own cycles centralising the mainstream, the most important theme of the year – Russia *versus* the West. Sabaliauskaitė is a phenomenal writer in this matter, extraordinary and even confusing, the critic Anna Teede says in her review of “Peter’s Empress” for the “Sirp”. The author’s sense of actualising history – exactly in the times of the premonition of war, rearranges the literary process setting a new paradigm about Russia. It is the road of historicism, statehood, and culture as an endless, complicated melody of human strength and failure. Sabaliauskaitė makes a remark: “my weapon is my words, to defend Ukraine and Lithuania, freedom values of civilisation” (Sabaliauskaitė 2022b: p. 3). The translation is essential in Sabaliauskaitė’s case to open her texts in its international dimensions to other language speakers and the matters of statehood, this time – Estonian. Excellent translator and book manager Tiina Katel makes the author’s literary success possible, perfectly understands Sabaliauskaitė’s phenomenal old-fashioned linguistic aspects, their relation with other languages (Latin,

Polish, German, Slavic, and others) and historic human contexts, portrays secrets of royalty in linguistic detail. Such a translator must be in love with the literary process to open multinational textual fields. The translator Tiina Katel writes:

I am happy and enjoy it very much ... and I wait for the second “Silva rerum” book. Kristina’s texts make a hard job for the translator, but you get seriously addicted. Thanks! (Sabaliauskaitė 2022d: p. 2).

It is important for the author himself that the Estonian contest was at the European level, and “Peter’s Empress” has won over such famous books as Jonathan Littell’s “Eumenides” or Valerie Perrin’s “Fresh Water for flowers”. The Prize winner was announced in Viru Keskus bookstore Rahva Raamat, in Tallinn, which in the London book market was elected the best bookstore of the year in the world.

The author’s position and her public statements about Russia for the Western Europeans, explaining Russia’s mystery of being great not only because of its culture but as a terror state altogether, add a special value to the book.

Russian dualism (state of culture and terror) is a particularly actual theme for discussion with the academic elite and many readers of Sabaliauskaitė’s books who managed to open the topic. The cultural paradigm of understanding the existential level of national statehood this time excludes a completely new Volter, who admires Russia *as a great civilisation taking care of Eastern Europe*.

It should be noted that the style of Sabaliauskaitė’s historicism fundamentally changes when she talks about Russia. If “Silva rerum” blends into the fullness of the flow of time with the baroque rhythm, the longevity of thoughts, and rich details of architecture and art artifacts, in the case of “Peter’s Empress”, it almost sinks into darkness, swamp, blackness, mud, and stagnation. The heavy fateful indifference of the gaze of icons – mercilessness for a helpless person instead of deserved comfort leads the epoch narrative to the modern horrors of the stupidity of the same state. Here, the writer becomes an even more radical statesperson, as if she “leaves to the front” from literature to current geopolitics through intellect, and language directs her activities to the most critical plane of events; she becomes a *state’s citizen*, covering

some of the most vulnerable parts of Europe, understanding the fundamental unity of the defensive coexistence of state and literature.

Conclusions

1) The few cases about the writers in the Lithuanian literary process show the crucial power of statehood issues impacting their talent and destiny. The meaning of success can be critically destructive and ruin the creative process, making paranoid actions, leading to betrayal or execution of the own people. On the contrary, the meaning of the author's tragedy and the nation could lift literary works and their context from the darkness into the enlightenment of history.

2) Lithuanian literature presents perfect examples of writers' destinies during the times of major events of the century. They stay in the darkness of the shadows of the terror state, rising later into the limelight of history. Their fate with the fate of their manuscripts will be exceptional examples of how the literature process is vital for statehood and statehood's dimension and enriches literature.

3) These exceptional fateful cases belong to the writers Petras Cvirka, Salomėja Nėris, Kostas Kubilinskas, Dalia Grinkevičiūtė, and Kristina Sabaliauskaitė, which tell us:

a) about talent and controversy of success,

b) about love for the nation as the crucial aspect of the actual, long-lasting literary existence,

c) about the failure of the intellect to understand the genesis of the state and its sovereignty as the perspective for a literary process to *become stupid* or *cowardly* in the face of history. It sometimes leads to the collapse of great talent, plunging its creative power into a shadow if intellect becomes a servant of a terror State.

4) Statehood and writers' destinies are very close in the historical process. Writers' mastery in the context of history includes not only talent but the ability to perceive events.

5) Dimensions of a writer's success depend on his will, his fate, and intellectual power. It remains vital not only for the literary process but for national self-awareness and raising it to safety. When the state's sovereignty becomes undying, almost endless, then writers' creativity can amalgamate with the epoch times, being able to reach the level of exceptional human greatness.

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ДОЛІ ДЕРЖАВИ ТА ЇЇ ПИСЬМЕННИКІВ В ІСТОРІЇ. ВИМІРИ ЇХНЬОЇ ТРАГЕДІЇ Й УСПІХУ В ЛИТОВСЬКІЙ ЛІТЕРАТУРІ

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Анотація. Акцентовано, що долі литовських письменників та їхньої держави переплетені, відкриваючи свої виміри до болісно актуального аспекту історії. Існує кілька переконливих випадків перелому долі, коли письменник ставав антигероем або навіть мучеником історії, ніби «поглинутим темрявою» або одержимим силами, ворожими державі. Виявлено, що ознаки занурення літературного успіху в темряву позначили долі деяких литовських письменників, таких як Саломея Неріс (1904–1945), Пятрас Цвірка (1909–1947) та Костас Кубілінскас (1923–1962), демонструючи вирішальний фактор у драматургії перетину між державою та письменником. Буває і навпаки, коли процес письма проривається на світло історичної відкритості, висвітлюючи і змінюючи парадигму літературних процесів своїм доленосним піднесенням з глибин втрат і темряви могили. Доля лікарки Далі Грінкявічюте (1927–1987) в еміграції може бути таким конкретним випадком. Літературне становлення і розквіт у медіа Крістіни Сабаляускайте (*1974) є кульмінацією успіху сучасних литовських письменників на міжнародному рівні з творами про державність. Її книги «Silva rerum» та «Petro Imperatorè», з їх унікальним вираженням модернізації минулих часів, відіграють роль оновлення генези держави та громадянина в сьогоденні, що приводить до динаміки забутої державності. Це має вирішальне значення для естетичного виміру стилю письменника, його пристрасності до бароко та відродження державності як туги за історією.

Ключові слова: література; історія; письменницька доля; державність; держава терору; виміри національного Я.

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