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LANGUAGE IN CONTEMPORARY LITHUANIAN NARRATIVE

VIOLETA KELERTAS
University of Wisconsin — Madison

The Prague linguist L. Doležel makes the valuable theoretical distinction that the verbal structure of any narrative consists of a narrator's discourse and the discourses of characters; each of these discourses has its own distinct speech level which may vary with historical progress. Thus, in traditional fiction the narrator's discourse was typically formulated in a 'neutral' standard language, while the characters', mainly direct, discourses tended toward colloquial or even dialect usage.1 This is a fair description of traditional Lithuanian prose, although some examples of consistently colloquial discourses do exist; e.g. *Palangos Juzė* (1869) involves a Foreword, presumably by the author Bishop Valančius, and the main texts of Juzė, the traveling tailor, both in colloquial language. Lithuanian has perhaps a greater number of such texts due to the fact that the language was not standardized until the 1920's, while some prose fiction was composed in the 19th century. With the advent of modern fiction writing techniques the distinction between the narrator's and characters' speech systems generally breaks down, as they come to mingle through *style indirect libre (tiesioginė menamoji kalba).* A concomitant development is the more frequent occurrence of subjective first person or I-narration, whether the same text-length "I" or a series of different "I's" as in a multiperspective novel. Such an "I"-narrator communicates his experience in his own highly differentiated language, a complete blend of the narrator's and character's discourses, which the writer can now exploit to full advantage.

From sociolinguistic research we know that while there is only one generally accepted standard language, many varieties of substandard language exist, and some of the most interesting modern linguistic creations have investigated levels of language most removed from standard; e.g. lower class, lower intelligence or younger generation speech, as in works like Faulkner's *The Sound and the fury, Boell's Ansichten eines Clowns,* Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye,* etc. However, I feel that literary language has another available speech distinction that is not open to spoken language, and that is the ability to suggest a suprastandard variety through the use of a poeticized speech level. This is particularly useful to the creator of an I-narrator who wants to distinguish him with higher intelligence, moral superiority or the like. Certain Lithuanian writers both here and abroad have recently taken advantage of this possibility.

Sophisticated first person narratives are scarce in the body of Lithuanian prose. As late as 1973 the Soviet Lithuanian critic, A. Bučys, still deplored their lack.* While the form itself is not totally absent, it was limited to the kind of I-narrative which in essence is only a transformation of the third person, useful merely to keep the objective narration going: who of us can remember, for instance, that strictly speaking *Algimantas* or *Aukštųjų Šimonių likimas* or even the more modern *Užuovėja* are I-narrations? We don't remember because their I-narrators do not express themselves in a vivid linguistic style of their own and moreover are neglected for enormous parts of the story, typically appearing late in the beginning and perhaps again at the end. The two contemporary Lithuanian works whose use of language I would like to examine in some detail, the Canadian exile writer's Juozas Kralikauskas' novel *Tautvila* (a proper name, 1973) and the Soviet Lithuanian Romualdas Granauskas' tale, "Jaučio aukojimas" (The Offering of the Bull, 1975) are examples of modern I-narrations which blend the narrator's and character's discourses in order to express them in poeticized or what I am calling suprastand-ard language. Both works are historical, turning to the 13th century, to choose an epic moment — the conflict between two clashing ideologies — pagan and Christian. Tautvila, a Christian convert, the nephew of the Grand Duke Mindaugas and by rights the true ruler of Kernavė, has been cheated out of his crown by his pagan cousin Treniota, the murderer of Mindaugas, and has spent 26 lonely years in exile in Polockas. Receiving an invitation from Treniota to return to Kernavė "to divide Mindaugas' lands," Tautvilą yields to the attraction of the homeland as much as to the hope of regaining his domain. Treniota's idea of division of land, however, is for Tautvila to make war on another relative and thus conquer lands other than those to which he has a legitimate claim. When Tautvila refuses, his cousin throws him into an underground pit to die. The book opens with Tautvilą in the pit and reliving his early and recent past from this perspective. The native Granauskas' tale is a seeming attack on religion and turns to the land of the now extinct Couronians and the

Teutonic knights' bloody extermination of the natives whom they had recently baptized by force. As my other book conveniently explains, the pagans believed that when a Christian stepped on their soil, it became barren, and in this tale the Couronian women, the countryside and even the sea are infertile, so in desperation the new converts seek out their pagan priest to ask him to offer a bull to the sea in the traditional way in hopes of bringing back fertility.

It hardly needs emphasizing that the two writers in question are presenting in paradigm and transposing to their fictional correlatives their own bitter experiences — the one of unjust loss of the homeland and the pain of exile, the other of the threat of genocide by an alien force within the homeland. However, though they have the injustice of their fate in common, if one applies a Lévi-Straussian model of a nature-culture opposition to them, Kralikauskas and Granauskas come out on totally opposite sides. Kralikauskas accepts Christianity as a historical necessity, equating it with culture, morality, progress. For him the pagan not only lacks an ethical stance, but curiously has a socialistic awareness, seen in the comments of the pagan priest and others who remind Tautvila that his father's castle was built by serfs under oppression. Tautvila refuses to see the legitimacy of this charge; for him Communism, if I may use an anachronism, is a pagan distortion of reality. Granauskas, the native writer, on the other hand, associates culture, in the form of fire and the few iron tools and potsherds his priest cannot survive without, as the reason why his hands are contaminated by civilization; hence, his inability to make good on the bull-sacrifice. Whereas culture only brings sterility and death, nature is the source of life and freedom, as water has "an eternal undestroyable desire to be and be freely,[3] as he puts it. The heroes chosen also reflect the writers' own position in society, Tautvila is an individual acting alone, first in an alien society, then in his native society which does not share his humanistic values; Granauskas' priest, though acting alone as well, always feels himself by the morality of his actions to be an example to the Couronians and to future generations.

In spite of their diametrically opposite ideological stances and the different surface texture of their works, the two writers have similar formal problems to resolve which are presupposed by their choice of a historical period on the one hand and their use of a subjective mode of narration on the other. They both aim at an effect of authenticity. Kralikauskas achieves it through having Tautvilą, his I-narrator, intermittently use an imitation of an archaic kind of language, composed of various outdated grammatical forms and constructions and a lexis chosen with the etymological roots of words in mind. However, his choices cannot bear too close linguistic scrutiny, as for Kralikauskas any older form of a word will do regardless of the century of its currency; thus, he does not avoid a certain discord, when Tautvila's language sounds much more archaic than the quotations from supposedly contemporary Chronicles. Granauskas creates authenticity in a more subtle way, through his choice of striking narrative situation, that of the "you"-form, second person singular.[4] In the tale I see the "you" as a transformation of the first person in that the "I" here is present both as *actant-doer* and as speaker-observer, referring to the self as "you." Unlike other famous uses of the form, such as M. Butor's *La modification* or certain parts of C. Fuentes' *La muerte de Arlemio Cruz,* the *"you"* of the pagan priest is not the voice of conscience so much as Granauskas' attempt to portray a primitive consciousness, almost on a Homeric model, as a voice, originating outside the self and expressing the priest's inner thought processes as an uninterrupted flow or as R. Humphrey would define it, "direct interior monologue."[5] In Vilnius in 1975, I might add, this story was notorious as the tale with only three periods. But Granauskas makes commas and semi-colons do the normal work of periods.

Because Kralikauskas and Granauskas utilize subjective narrators who cannot credibly indicate their historical period themselves, both authors resort to what J. Kristeva has labelled intertextuality to structure their texts. In the novel Tautvilą in upper case inserts quotations from the Chronicles dispassionately describing his situation and his past. He also uses excerpts of what I assume to be a folksong; e.g. "KŪLIAU ŠIAUDUS BE GRŪDŲ" (I threshed straw without grain) and other similar examples to foreground Tautvila's epiphanies and to add another layer of evidence to support the truth of his position. Granauskas also quotes from the Chronicles, but rather than inserting, he juxtaposes brief citations to the last two parts of his text and makes the events his priest experiences an expanded version of history. However, his opening quote, on the horror of the pagans' not knowing God, is taken from Mažvydas and quickly becomes an ironic comment to the pagan priest's monologue, as he, in contrast to the Christians in the story, is the only one with a personal, though pantheistic, vision of a god.

In practice a subjective I-narration necessitates that the speaker.use an idiosyncratic language and that he characterize himself through this medium. The burden of characterization falls on the language because there is no objective third person narrator who can comment or evaluate the truth of the subjective narrator's position, In addition action or interaction which would normally reveal character are minimal or at best penetrate the I-narrator's consciousness only haphazardly, as the remembered dialogues with people living and dead do in *Tautvila.* Neither writer avoids the traditional bane of Lithuanian historical prose writing, unrelieved black/white stereotyped characterization; nevertheless, this flaw is not irritating to the reader as it was in *Algimantas* because the protagonists themselves become verbal artists in that they organize and express their experience and opinions which can hardly be objective. Tautvila and the Couronian priest both validate the morality of their respective positions through their poetic speech levels attained by the cumulative effects of a selection of stylistic devices.

Kralikauskas' [6] work, of course, displays a greater variety, though not necessarily a higher quality, because of the more ambitious scope of his work. Tautvila's identity is structured around his homesickness and love for Kernavė and the superior insight into existence this gives him. As Tautvilą reaches Kernavė from exile, he saves a mole from some boys who are cruelly tossing him about like a ball. When Tautvilą is thrown into the pit to die, he sees himself symbolically as the mole forced to dwell underground and buffeted about by a cruel, incomprehensible fate. As he loses touch with reality, the

mole becomes the addressee of some of his monologues, at other times the mole addresses him. This self-comparison to an animal demonstrates Tauvila's ability to symbolize and has been realistically premotivated by his linguistic habit, taken from colloquial speech, to see all humans in his past as animals; the choice of animal illuminates the character; e.g. his dead wife is the dark moth, his treacherous cousin is a hawk, and numerous others. Though Tautvila is a Christian, he receives his moral impetus not from his system of belief, but from his experience of loss of the homeland. Kralikauskas tries to bring out Tautvila's inordinate love for the homeland through his poetic language. The most acute moments that he suffers underground are not, as expected, the result of starvation, thirst or approaching death, but are moments of mental anguish, always related to his remembrance of the nature of Kernavė which in death he is losing for the second time. These are expressed in a created, folkloristic language of liquid formally meaningless sound, such as "TŪTOJ SADŪTO! LIO] LIOJ ŠALAVIJO! LIOJ LIOJ ŠALAVIJO!'" Balys Sruoga[7] defined cries of this type as "short, direct eruptions of mental anxiety . , . the first and oldest form of creative expression."* As death approaches, these cries increase in frequency and intensity and culminate in what is for Tautvilą his most desperate realization — that he is no longer useful to Kernavė.

Kralikauskas utilizes to the fullest the linguistic possibilities of contrasting the two cousins' speech systems in order to emphasize the moral distance between them. As all of us whose languages are endangered species know, in our culture linguistic purity is next to godliness; therefore, Tautvilą speaks an ultrapure archaic Lithuanian, while his deceitful cousin's speech is full of foreign borrowings and barbarisms* In the cousins' first dialogue, which Tautvila records verbatim almost without comment, as he does the rest of the dialogues, he himself engages in an analysis of Treniota's speech and from the latter's use of a Yotvingian greeting, "kails," rather than the Lithuanian "Sveikas" and other similar clues, Tautvilą deduces that he is not being received as one returning home, but as a guest and eventually an enemy. To indicate his evil nature Treniota is given a consistently low, coarse register; his favorite overworked expletive, for instance, is "Kad tau klynas iškristų!" (May your crotch drop out). As poetic in contrast as Tautvila's thinking may be, he too moves down the scale, when he has to deal with the basely portrayed pagans, particularly Kralikauskas' pagan priest, Žadvilas. Losing his patience at the priest's continuous insults, Tautvila retorts, "Nevalyvai kvaksi, perekšlė!" (You're squawking dishonestly, you brood-hen), and the priest's reply has to be lower yet to compensate, "Ką tu išvėmei?" (What's that you've vomited up?). Tautvila is forced to speak to the pagans in their own terms. His usual language, the greater part of the narrative, nonetheless, is so acoustically sweet and proper, replete with diminutives, that it skirts the sentimental and may be partly the unwitting cause of the critical neglect Kralikauskas seems to suffer among our literati.

Granauskas in "The Offering of the Bull" has to forestall the reader's dismissing his pagan priest as another example of the tired "le noble sauvage" idea by convincing us of his protagonist's moral superiority from the very start. Using almost unnoticeable flashbacks, the priest inserts the events of his past, catastrophe and devastation at the hands of the knights of the Order who burned entire villages, raided the pagan temples scattering priests and sacred serpents and herded the Couronian remnant into the sea to be baptized. The nameless priest has reached old age, living like a wild beast in the forest, occupied in looking out for his sustenance. But these are not the foregrounded points of his monologue. As Czeslaw Milosz has remarked, Lithuanians somehow excel at nature descriptions,[8] and Granauskas by grafting on a phenomenological understanding of consciousness has achieved something innovative in this genre, has "deautomatized" it in V. Shklovsky's term. For Granauskas as for G. Bachelard consciousness consists of layers of images which are always concrete and, therefore, describable. What finally validates the pagan priest's nobility for the reader is the acuity and beauty of his perceptions of nature, whose pace Granauskas slows down textually to approximate actual perception-time. The priest sensitively records minute changes around him in hue and color, light intensity, movement. Either an impressionist by nature or near-sighted, he often experiences his forest-universe in verbs of the "glittering, shimmering, trembling" variety. The layers of images the priest builds up always remain concrete; the loose structure of his monologue obviates the necessity of using full sentences with junctures or other discourse markers; consequently he can note visual impressions, as they strike him in series of object-nouns or at most event-nouns, coupled with all the metaphorical possibilities of language. Let me illustrate briefly Granauskas' method with a quote; this is the way he describes how the priest reads nature and knows that he is nearing the sea:

> you already feel the approaching soul of the sea; from the whiteness of the clouds; from the difference in their rocking, than back there, in the gloomy spruce and alder universe, from the change in the birds' fluttering in that whiteness and in that clear height;
>
> from the voice of the rivers, from the slower pattern of their bends; from their concentration and hurry into the distance,
>
> toward the great water, toward the place of the coming calmness;
>
> from the density of the wind, from the blooming of the flowers, from the richness of the colors, from the desire of each flower to blossom more deeply than the entire meadow, to sparkle more brightly than the entire array; from the warmth of the soil; from the color of the sand and its heat; from the shadow of a reed, from the clarity of the air, from the trembling of the stones, from something, tearing your soul and calling you to return, to stay and never again leave.[9]

The priest's thoughts speak for themselves: one cannot but be persuaded of his dignity and the beauty of his soul in contrast to the brutality of the crusading Christians.

At other moments the priest uses metaphor for slightly different effect, when he sees the future generations "only blooming in the flowers, rustling in the trees or rolling closer in the breakers and being soaked up by the sand at the foot of the dunes."[10] For him this is no metaphor, but rather shows his awareness of the organic bond between man and nature and the continuity of generations for whose sake he feels he has to prove himself worthy of the present painful moment.

I have been discussing so far the priest in his natural habitat. The second and third parts of the story deal with his acceptance of the mission brought by the three Couronian representatives who ask him to offer once again a bull in the ancient way to counter the sterility the Christians have brought. Granauskas uses the same method of picking up the priest's narration at a moment close enough to the climax of each of the three scenes, so that he can recount seemingly all of the priest's perceptions. The sacrifice scene itself uses another, a visual, variation of his narrative situation which is acoustical, of course. As the self speaks to the self, here the self observes the self performing the offering; thus the priest can be both in and outside himself at the same time. He no longer believes in the efficacy of his own act on account of the contamination by civilization mentioned earlier, but he goes through with it in the hope that future generations may be inspired by his self-sacrifice: "someone has to sow," he says,"always sow, even then, when you know you will see neither the blossoms nor the fruits."[11]

The structure of the priest's story seems to share some of the symmetrical coherence of nature itself in order to suggest an analogy between the priest and the bull. In the second part, the night before his offering of the bull the priest spends with his arms raised praying for his Couronian people who themselves innocent have no fish left in the sea, no land to call their own as "the whole earth, all the fields and forests belong to the aliens."[12] In the final part the priest and the other participants of the sacrifice are herded into the town, he is given a chance to convert which he refuses. He spends the last night before his own death or sacrifice with his arms tied behind his back, and in his suffering contemplates his own will "like an insect — struggling . . . very slowly, now drowning in the red current, then again rising, and now you try to see everything close up ... the insect's thin legs, trembling like transparent wings, the tiny black head, no larger than a poppy seed, its hopeless efforts to move ahead in the swirling stream, at least to stay in place . . . the stream suddenly carries it back — perhaps it really is time, therefore, the premature condemnation appears pitiful — after all, it's much easier to yield to the stream and the red color of its current, for, regardless, you will inevitably be carried away."*[13] We can see the significance the color red has for Granauskas. For us it may have obvious connotations, but I must emphasize that Granauskas always has a vision of the continuity of human suffering: "red" is not time-bound but rather suggests all the physical torture that man has inflicted on man throughout history. The priest goes on to draw the final analogy between himself and the bull. He says to himself: "your suffering — that red blood of the bull."[14] In offering the bull, he had already chosen to sacrifice himself. Shortly thereafter with the sound of his followers being whipped assaulting his ears, he himself is burned at the stake at the same, now become relentless, pace of narration. Just as the reader had shared the priest's private vision of the forest, so he now experiences his agony. As Alan Dundes once wrote in another context, the history of the Lithuanian people has made the unhappy ending the only suitable kind of ending for their fiction.[15]

Turning away from the specific, almost political, use of language made by two writers, I would like to generalize about the state of linguistic experimentation in contemporary Lithuanian narrative in the exile and native branches.

In exile prose fiction I distinguish two tendencies in the use of language which are the extremes; these I would provisionally label as the nostalgic and the realistic.

The nostalgic grows out of the exile's love of the Lithuanian language as an end in itself and his attempts to preserve aspects of the language which he sees disappearing. This tendency can then encompass Kralikauskas' archaic language experiments, as well as the colloquial/rural lexis of M. Katiliškis's *Užuovėja* (1952) which is a veritable dictionary of farm-related terms and deserves a concordance more than any other work we have. Katiliškis has preserved and exploited all the refined distinctions that Lithuanian makes: e.g. there is not just one word for harvest, but every item that can be harvested has its own unique term: "bulvienojus, apynojus" and so on.

In contrast at the other extreme is the realistic tendency which appears to come to terms with the linguistic status quo, that is the growing encroachment of American into spoken Lithuanian, seen already in the first truly modern work in Lithuanian, A. Škėma's *Balta drobulė* (1952). Increasing the number of characters who are non-Lithuanian predisposes toward more anglicized Lithuanian forms. Škėma reproduces the speech of Garšva's American companions, and Garšva himself creates his only poem to Elena in English. K. Almenas' book *Gyvenimas tai kekė vyšnių* (Life is just a Bowl of Cherries, 1967) records the speech of Lithuanian and non-Lithuanian students; often even their grammar is organized in nonnative patterns. Then in 1975 Katiliškis' *Apsakymai* also tried to indicate discrepancies in Lithuanian-American speech habits and mimicked for comic effect, but correctly, the mispronunciations in their speech.

The native branch of Lithuanian, of course, does not share this dichotomy. On the whole Soviet Lithuanian writers are also engaged in expanding the possibilities of integrating more varieties of substandard speech, as one of the requirements of that curious blend that they have, the socialist realist multiperspective novel, which they incorrectly call stream of consciousness — mostly these are variations of interior monologue, according to the definitions current in the West. Although this type of novel has been popular since the early sixties, it is only since 1972 that a change can be detected, the use of more and more varied narrators who bring their own language. The trend began with a writer who has been rather ignored both here and over there, V. Martinkus and his *Akmenys* (1972). Martinkus is a struggling sociology professor who in his novel portrayed a broad social spectrum of narrators — the dean of a University, a farm-woman, a truck driver, a PhD candidate in architecture who brought technical language with him, etc.

Another work that has had an influence using a new kind of hero was S. Šaltenis' story, "Riešutų duona" (1972) which has a young cynical protagonist who has already produced a literary offspring in M. Sluckis' newest novel, *Saulė vakarop* (1976). The most differentiated speech level here belongs to the youngest of the four equivalent narrators and the only I-

narrator whose name is Rigas (short for Rigoletas), a clown who has the task of criticizing his elders' lifestyles and the social ills of his parents' generation, yet has to convey moral inferiority through his cynical, hip language in order to disguise the truth of what he is saying.

The language of Soviet Lithuanian fiction has the added requirement of being referential. In spite of the fact that we have no such legislated requirements, I see no great rush on the part of our prose-stylists to take advantage of it. The only nonreferential recent work spans both continents, but originated in Vilnius; that is, I. Meras' *Striptizas arba Paryžius-Roma-Paryžius* which first appeared in the Soviet Lithuanian Journal *Pergalė* and in book form only in the West in 1976 after its author emigrated to Israel.

1 Lubomir Doležel. *Narrative Modes in Czech Literature.* Toronto, 1973. p. 93-97.
2 Algimantas Bučys. *Romanas ir dabartis.* Vilnius, 1973.
3 Romualdas Granauskas, "Jaučio aukojimas" in *Duonos valgytojai,* Vilnius, 1975. p. 6. All translations are my own.
4 This rare form seems to be enjoying a vogue in Soviet Lithuanian writing currently. See, for example, Romualdas Lankauskas, *Prisiminimai po vidurnakčio,* Vilnius, 1977.
5 Robert Humphrey. *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel.* Berkeley, 1968,
6 Juozas Kralikauskas. *Tautvila.* Chicago, 1973. p. 123. 38
7 Balys Sruoga. "Dainų poetikos etiudai." Diss. Munich, 1924. *Kralikauskas. p. *57,*
8 Czeslaw Milosz. *The History of Polish Literature.* New York, 1969. p. 525.
9 Granauskas, p. 22-23.
10 Ibid- p. 39.
11 Ibid. p. 22.
12 Ibid, p. 16.
13 Ibid. p. 56-7.
14 Ibid. p. 64.
15 Alan Dundes, "The Binary Structure of 'Unsuccessful Repetition' in Lithuanian Folktales" in *Western folklore,* XXI (1962). p. 165-174.