

# LITUANUS

LITHUANIAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Volume 20, No.3 - Fall 1976

Editors of this issue: Antanas Klimas

Copyright © 1976 LITUANUS Foundation, Inc.



## KAZYS BRADŪNAS:

### *Eight Poems*

*Kazys Bradūnas was born in the village of Kiršai, county of Vilkaviškis, Lithuania. After graduating from the University of Vilnius where he studied Lithuanian language and literature, he taught in secondary schools. Later he was the editor of several youth, literary and cultural journals. He also edited several collective works on poetry and literature. Since 1961, he has been the editor of the Saturday cultural supplement of the Lithuanian daily Draugas in Chicago, Illinois.*

*Bradūnas started writing poetry in his high school days. Many of his poems have been published in journals and newspapers. His first book of lyrical poetry, Vilniaus varpai ('The Bells of Vilnius') appeared in 1943 (<sup>2</sup>1947). To present, he has published ten books of poetry, including one longer poem, Maras ('The Plague'), 1947.*

*The main trait of Bradūnas' poetic technique is the blending of opposites and the interpretation of logical processes in terms of emotional experience. His interest in Lithuanian folklore has bound him closely to the folk song, but he transforms this expression into unpremeditated imagery of his general world view. His poetry uses deceptively simple phrasing, graceful and lyrical.*

*We print here the translation of eight of Bradūnas poems. Some have appeared in his books, some in periodicals, and some are published here for the first time.*

*In 1965 several of Bradūnas' poems were published in Litanus (vol. 11, No. 4 (Winter, 1965), pp. 61 - 65).*

#### AT MIDNIGHT

*Every star —  
Eternity's dust —  
Is silent.*

*Only the heart —  
Universal presence —  
Is beating.*

*That is enough,  
No more is needed —  
Only to feet,  
How a song slumbers,  
Freezing into a snowflake...*

#### PLEASE REST

*Have a seat on the rock —  
We have come to the edge of the planet,  
To the limit of this earth,  
To the infinity of heaven  
Chewing the bitter crumbs  
Of a long and lean journey.*

*A cold wind blows from the sea,  
Hot gusts from the deserts;  
The sun, like a dandelion puff,  
Descends and rises, —  
But you, please rest.*

#### THE SCREAM

*Silence loves the mute rock.  
Cosmos is carved out of silence.  
Why do you feed the carnivorous beast?  
To stop his howl? With the holy sun*

*Peace descends upon the orchards.  
Now you kneel at the evening's source,  
As all star-studded infinity  
Shudders in your heart's scream.*

#### A SKETCH OF A NATION'S AUTO PORTRAIT

*I am a nation rooted in you,  
I'm not a nomad tribe.  
History has not uprooted me,  
And death is but a toy.*

*I'm not a flaming grass blade of the steppe.  
I am a flower of ice in the north.*

*Blown by God's breath,  
I shatter into millions.*

*But again I am welded by kindred spirit —  
It is me you receive at birth.*

#### SUN OF OUR FOLK SONGS

*Only the sun of our folk songs  
Ever visits your grave  
And so day after day  
On frozen hands it descends.*

*Those hands — our whole country —  
Unclenched to the bright sky,  
Lift from beneath the grass  
A heart, like a precious stone,*

*Which cleaves not with heat,  
Disintegrates not to white dust,  
But only in an ancient song  
Rises as the sun at dawn.*

#### EXILED POETS

*Exiled poets — desert cactuses,  
No moisture,  
Only sand all around,  
Yet they grow and bloom  
Spiny red blossoms.*

*Years fade,  
Sand covers their tracks.  
Only the exiled poets  
Remain,  
Grow  
And bloom  
With painful crimson flowers.*

*When your heart and mine  
Is pierced by a poem's spine,  
Let us not cry —  
Exiled poets — desert cactuses  
Feed on our blood.*

#### *BARBARIANS FEAR*

*Barbarians fear the letter:  
Burnt into the clay tablet of law,  
Into the parchment of prayer,  
Into a book of poems  
And into the samizdat fragment  
Of Holy Scripture.*

*Barbarians tremble before the letter,  
That fends off the dagger,  
Gently strokes the lyre  
And resonates the word  
In a hymn.*

*Barbarians ambush  
And strangle the letter,  
Trample its ribs under hoof  
And toss it into flames.*

*But the letter lives —  
Like a legendary bird,  
It rises on wings of flame  
And descends  
On a prison wall  
Inscribing — FREEDOM!*

#### *LITHUANIAN GRAVES IN SIBERIA*

*The taiga burns in northern flames.  
Graves clutch crosses.  
Above them, slowly winging,  
Glide hawks, black hawks.*

*A storm assaults the sky.  
Underground blows resound.  
The souls of the dead are tranquil,  
The homeland voices are calm.*

*Enough sod for the bones.  
Yet easier in ashes.  
Blooms a blood red flower  
In the palms of eternity.*

*There is no one around.  
No one ever comes.  
The earth is equally good,  
If in suffering you tired.*

*Northern flames dim in the taiga.  
Graves don't release their crosses.  
And upon them, slowly winging,  
Settle hawks, black hawks.*

*Translated by J. B.*