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Klimas, Antanas. *Kalbos puošmenos ir pabiros*. Vilnius, 2000, 82 pages.

In his foreword, the author of this charming little book writes that it has long been recognized that the Lithuanian language is the most archaic and conservative of all the living Indo-European languages, preserving conservative characteristics on all levels—phonetic, syntactic, morphological and lexical. On the other hand, Lithuanian is not a dinosaur. It is a living, vibrant, interesting language that has innovated forms unknown in the other Indo-European languages.

The book is divided into twenty-one chapters with the headings: (1) The Age of the Lithuanian language, (2) The Sounds, (3) The Stress Pattern, (4) The Noun, (5) The Adjective, (6) The Numeral, (7) The Verb, (8) Participles, (9) Prepositions, (10) Twelve Verbal Prefixes, (11) The Sounds of Nature, (12) Word Order, (13) Adverbs, (14) Diminutive Nouns, (15) Prof. Wolfgang P. Schmid and His Trojan Horse, (16) The Devil, (17) One Hundred Interesting Sayings (idioms), (18) Puzzles of the Lithuanian Language, (19) Smiles (jokes), (20) What is Difficult for Foreigners (i.e., non-Lithuanians) to Learn, (21) The History of a Certain Book. There is also an index.

The entire book is interesting and amusing, but in order to be brief, I will comment on only a few chapters. In the chapter on the sounds of nature (11), we learn the following: *gegutė kukuoja* 'the cuckoo cuckoos'; *karvutė mukia* 'the calf moos,' *avelė mekena* 'the lamb bleats'; *šunelis amsi* 'the pup yelps'; *šunelis urzgia* 'the pup growls'; *varna kranksi* 'the crow caws'; and *vėjelis ošia per lapus* 'the breeze rustles through the leaves.' Even though English and Lithuanian are many millennia apart, several of the onomatopoeic words sound very much the same in both languages, e.g., *mukia* and moos, *kukuoja* and cuckoos

The Lithuanian diminutives (chapter 14) are a source of wonder for speakers of English and we encounter, e.g., *brolis* 'brother' and its diminutives: *brolelis*, *broliukas*, *brolytis*, *brolužis*, *brolužėlis*, *brolutytis*, *broliukėlis*, *brolutaitis*... It would be very difficult, if not impossible, to find English translations showing all the nuances of these diminutives.

Although there is no chapter devoted to angels, there is a chapter (16) on *Velnias*, 'the Devil,' where the author lists 152 expressions in which *velnias* figures prominently. They begin with the expression *be velnio* 'very many; properly, not badly' (literally: 'without the devil, in addition to the devil' and end with the expression *velnias žino kiek* 'many' (literally: 'the devil knows how many'). It can be seen from these and other expressions that the devil is frequently associated with large quantities.

Chapter 17 contains 100 interesting idioms, e.g., *akis draskyti (išdraskyti)* 'to upbraid in an impudent manner, to attack someone impolitely, etc.' (literally: 'to scratch the eyes [out]', *kaip inkstas taukuose* 'good, easy life in which everything is taken care of (literally: 'like a kidney in fat'), *bijai vilko, neik į mišką* '(if) you are afraid of the wolf, don't go into the forest.' One of my favorites is *kaimo Jurgis* 'a stupid peasant; naive person' (literally 'a village George'). Some sayings are surely ancient and go back into the mists of European prehistory, e.g., *dovanotam arkliui į dantis nežiūri* '(people) don't look a gift horse in the mouth.' According to Bartlett * (1944: 13), the proverb occurs in Rabelais and elsewhere. Bartlett also quotes Archbishop Trench, who says that the proverb is as old as Jerome of the fourth century. (Jerome's *On the Epistle to the Ephesians*, Bartlett, 1992). When someone found fault with certain of his writings, Jerome replied that they were a free offering and that it did not behoove anyone to look a gift horse in the mouth.

Chapter 18 discusses a few of the many puzzles of the Lithuanian language. One is why the Baltic words for 'nest' have an initial /-, that is Lithuanian *lįzdas* and Latvian *li(g)zdas*. The word nest seems to have derived from a prefix *ni-* 'down' and a form of the root **sed-* 'to sit,' without the medial vowel. Something like **ni-sd-* 'a place to sit down,' from which we have the English *nest*, Latin *nidus* (and Russian *[g]nezdo*. In the face of the initial *n-* in Germanic and Italic, the Baltic words seem aberrant. There are various theories involving their contamination or confusion with other words, but there is no generally accepted explanation.

Chapter 19 contains a few Lithuanian anecdotes, one of which was told by the famous Lithuanian linguist, Prof. Antanas Salys. It seems that during supper, one time, a young fellow took out his pocketknife and showed it around the table. The

tip of the blade was broken off, but the young fellow said: *Peilis be galo geras* 'The knife is good without an end.' This is a play on words in Lithuanian, since *be galo*, which I translated above as 'without an end,' can also mean 'without end, very, extraordinarily.' Thus another interpretation of this sentence might be 'The knife is extremely useful.' Another joke concerns a Lithuanian who had recently arrived in England, where the term 'single' can denote a 'one-way trip' as opposed to 'return' which means a 'round trip.' This Lithuanian got on the bus and the attractive lady conductor asked him: 'Single or return?' Understanding *single* in the sense of 'unmarried,' the Lithuanian said eagerly: 'I am single, single, single,' a reply which evoked smiles from the other bus passengers.

Chapter 20 is a brief survey of some of the elements of Lithuanian that make it difficult for foreigners to learn. This includes the correct pronunciation of the palatized *r*, the correct intonations, the complicated declensional system, the correct use of the verbal prefixes and the appropriate word order.

In sum, the author is to be congratulated for having produced an excellent book for enjoyable light reading.

William Schmalstieg

* Bartlett, John. 1944. *Familiar Quotations*. Garden City, New York, Garden City Publishing Co.