

LITUANUS

LITHUANIAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Volume 23, No.4 - Winter 1977

Editor of this issue: Antanas Klimas

ISSN 0024-5089

Copyright © 1977 LITUANUS Foundation, Inc.



ONE POEM FROM THE LITHUANIAN

by Tomas Venclova

TELL FORTINBRAS

*Time, voice and gesture they refused,
And so escaped the weight of unknown legacies,
They tucked captivity beneath the doorsteps
And never came to see the final act,
And Denmark, Denmark is no more.*

*So may they rest. White islands,
Rock salt replenish their blood,
Snow storms arise from shores of Connaught,
The forests wrapped in steam, the shaggy orchards,
And Denmark, Denmark is no more.*

*Eternity rejects, eternity protects them,
While summer guards the sandy shores,
The stained glass, the patience of rocks,
The orphaned field and the curse-withered willow.
And Denmark, Denmark is no more.*

Translated from the Lithuanian by Algirdas Landsbergis

ONE POEM FROM LATVIA

by Janis Rokpelnis

*in the springtime you can walk through people
a white flower lingers in your face
but soon it will move on
swallows dip the tips of their wings in your eyes
without meaning it
in the usual haste
but beware*

*soon the time will come
when you'll be impenetrable
and for a whole year
a butterfly or a flower may remain stuck in you
and they will try to break out
desperately so desperately
that you'll think their desperation is yours*



Drawing by Ivar Ivask for his Verikivi (Bloodstone; Lund, 1976)

THREE POEMS FROM ESTONIA

by Jaan Kaplinski

*WHITE CLOVER WILL NOT ASK ANYTHING
but if they should ask in whose name
I answer in the name of white clover*

*bones and brass buckles were left of the soldiers
resin blotted out the crosses from the pines
white clover white white clover*

*one bare branch three leaves father son and holy ghost
dark pine needles bark being torn by the wind
red color was the question green color is the answer*

*

*VERCINGETOR1X SAID: Caesar, you can
take from us the land where we live,
but you cannot take from us the land where we died.*

*I've thrown my sword down at your feet:
that is how we are, I and my people.
I know what is coming.
Dead are all those who deserved
to live in the Arvernian land
and with those who are left
I do not want to live.*

*I know they will, I can see them
learning the tongue of the masters, forgetting their fathers' speech;*

*I see them ashamed of the blueness of their eyes,
of their elders and of their uncouth talk;
I see them as Romans, clutching citizenship papers to their breasts.*

*So be it, emperor: let there be in your republic
one language, one faith and one people.
Let the road be secure and smooth
for your soldiers, merchants and crooks
as far as Ultima Thule
and up to the river Styx.*

*I shall be flogged to death on the Capitol,
but my love and my anger
cannot be put to death.
My anger will stay alive
to shout like an owl in the hollowness of the years
destruction to you and your insatiable city,
Caesar.
Revenge will rise like an oak
from the acorn of your own desires.*

*Your state will come and go.
Wheat will grow on your squares and goats will graze on the Forum.
It is my hand and the hand of my people
that will bring you down.
My hand wielding the sword of the Vandals.*

*The hour will come when the Roman pride
will not bend a blade of grass at the side of the Roman road.
The hour will come when the gluttonous city
will burst like a leech under the fists of those
who come from the East and the South and the North.*

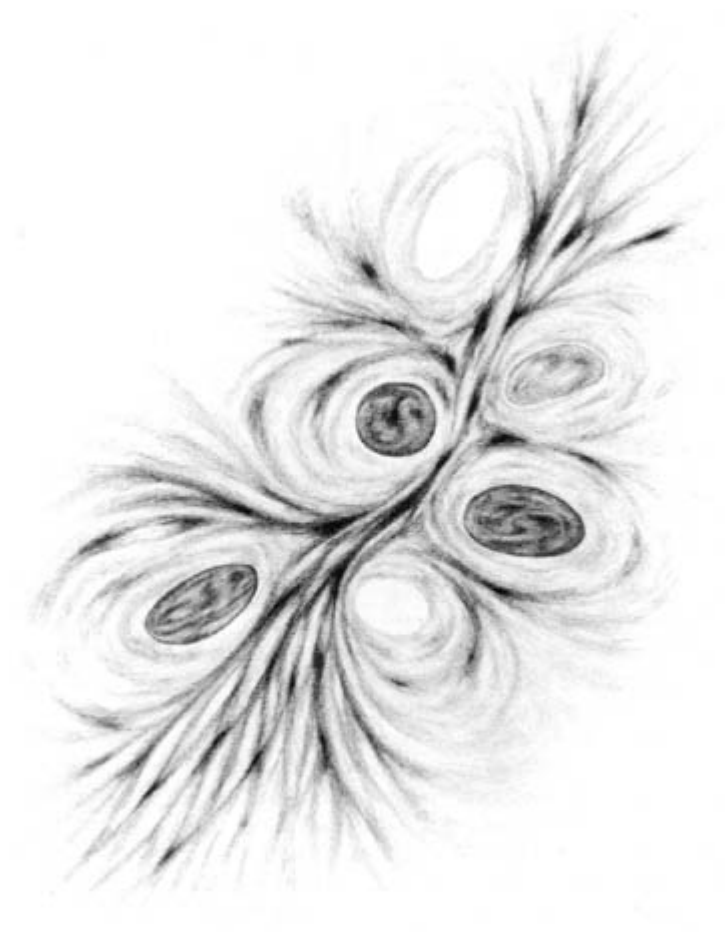
*Do then whatever you will.
I am ready for the club and the sword,
for dead are all who deserved
life in the Arvernian land.*

*

*If I wanted to go back
I should know that the thoughts
which I thought going through the empty houses
are as empty as the houses
where moths gnaw and fungus eats*

*the walls and where the spinning wheel stands alone
in the corner and where the spade stands alone
in front of the threshold — this emptiness is great indeed
as is the land — each one
is someone else from everywhere
leads the way somewhere else and no one could ever
walk through all this land
every beginning is different after its end
than it was before it ended and everything is always
something else — the houses remain empty
and I don't have the strength nobody has the strength
to live and die with everyone
to step across ail your thresholds sleep in all your beds
my abandoned land lifeless land how
I try to tear myself away from you how
can I be and live with all these new things
that have no known face or manner — thus I
put my hand against the moth-eaten beam
and get up and go the darkness lies equally on everything
and everyone the darkness is big enough for our land and for us all*

Translated by Use Lehiste



Drawing by Ivar Ivask for his Verikivi (Bloodstone; Lund, 1976)