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The *Gabija* Almanac:  
The Cracow Origins  
of Lithuanian Modernism,  
or Some Remarks  
on National Literature

Abstract

The article is an attempt to answer the question whether Lithuanian modernist literature of the first decade of the twentieth century falls within the category of national literature, and if so, what model of such defined literature it represents or shapes. In accordance with the assumption that this category takes on meaning only in the context of the place and time in which it is invoked, the understanding of the tasks of literature characteristic of Lithuanian modernists is reconstructed here in comparison with the concepts of literature dominating in the Lithuanian intellectual life of that period. The search for an answer to this question is also a pretext for reflection on the role of modernism in the history of Lithuanian culture and the process of the formation of Lithuanian modernity. The subject of analysis in this search is the first Lithuanian literary almanac *Gabija*, published in Cracow in 1907, and above all the texts of its editor, bilingual writer Józef Albin Herbaczewski.

**Keywords:** *Gabija* almanac, Lithuanian modernism, national literature, birth of modernity, Józef Albin Herbaczewski.

Was Lithuanian modernism really Lithuanian? I ask this question not without fear because it may seem paradoxical to some and, given the title of this study, even provocative, especially as it is asked by a Polish author. Therefore, I must explain here that it is not my intention in any way to reactivate the Polish-Lithuanian dispute, inaugurated in the public sphere—understood in the spirit of Habermas’s theory—by the editors of “Dziennik Poznański” and “Aušra”<sup>1</sup> in the mid-1880s, the subject of which was, among other things, the question of the national affiliation of artists incorporated today, on account of their biographies and achievements, into the history of both Polish and Lithuanian culture.<sup>2</sup> The writing of this text was inspired by Andrzej Mencwel’s deliberations contained in his book *Przedwiośnie czy potop* (*Early spring or deluge*), where he formulated a similar question referring to the work of Stefan Żeromski. It is a starting point for reflection on “what it means to be a Polish writer, and possibly also a Czech, Lithuanian, Russian, French, Irish, or English writer, what it means to be a national writer and what is the sense of this category at all”.<sup>3</sup> I have set myself a similar goal, albeit much more modest. For the purpose of this study, I use Ryszard Nycz’s systematising proposal and focus on the modernist literary formation that emerged in the first decade of the twentieth century. Sharing Mencwel’s conviction that the category of national literature “should always be related to time and place, to the shape of national self-knowledge, to the set of artistic roles proper to a given culture”,<sup>4</sup> I want to see whether and in what sense Lithuanian modernism thus understood falls into this category. More precisely, whether it fits into the notion of national literature in comparison with the trends and concepts that dominate in Lithuanian literature of that period. At the same time, the search for answers to this question opens a wider space for reflection because it leads to an attempt to make an initial recognition of what modernism was and what role it played in the history of not only literature, but also Lithuanian culture. As the material in this search, I will use “the first harbinger of modernism in the firmament of

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<sup>1</sup> “Auszra”—the first Lithuanian-language magazine addressed mainly to the public in Lithuanian lands under Russian occupation, published in the years 1883-1886 in Tilsit and Ragnit in Prussia and smuggled across the border to Russia. I write the name according to contemporary orthography. The original spelling of the title is provided at the beginning of this footnote.

<sup>2</sup> This dispute has a considerable bibliography in the Polish language. It is worth mentioning here the most important titles: *W kręgu sporów polsko-litewskich na przełomie XIX i XX wieku. Wybór materiałów*, vol. I, eds. M. Zaczyński, B. Kałęba, Kraków 2004; *My nie bracia, my sąsiedzi. Polska perspektywa stosunków polsko-litewskich. Antologia tekstów*, ed. A. Srebrakowski, Wrocław 2013.

<sup>3</sup> A. Mencwel, *Przedwiośnie czy potop. Studium postaw polskich w XX wieku*, Warszawa 1997, p. 73. If not stated otherwise, all the quotations were translated by Kaja Szymańska.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 74.

Lithuanian literature”,<sup>5</sup> that is the literary almanac *Gabija*, published in 1907 in Cracow.

According to Roger Chartier, a contemporary literary researcher is interested in the “holistic, physical form” of the book.<sup>6</sup> Let us then firstly take a look at the Lithuanian almanac focusing on its physicality, all the more so because this dimension reveals the modernist inclinations of its creators. At first glance, the publication seems to be modest, both in terms of volume and layout. The almanac has less than eighty pages in octavo format, which brings to mind an issue of a journal (which it was originally intended to be) rather than a non-serial publication (which it eventually became). There are no illustration either on the cover of a slightly rough texture and a shade of sepia took on with the passing of years, nor inside the volume. Therefore, in terms of artistic splendour, it could not have competed with such items as Warsaw’s “Chimera” or Saint Petersburg’s “Mir iskusstva” at the time of publication. Neither are there mythical symbols, commonly used as ornaments in later almanacs of the Lithuanian literary avant-garde. However, *Gabija* as an aesthetic object has its own style and taste. The title, printed in an elegant Antiqua, together with the subtitle and the information about the place of issue in the footer, printed in smaller font sizes, create a harmonious composition. Noteworthy is also the typographical design of the dedication, the layout of text blocks, wide margins on the following pages, and the way in which uppercase letters are used. The whole shows a similarity to the first editions of *Wesele (The Wedding)*, *Legenda (Legend)*, or other works by Wyspiański, whose visual form was designed by the artist himself.<sup>7</sup>

The association with Wyspiański’s work is not accidental. After all, the *Gabija* almanac was created in the circle of Lithuanian students of Cracow universities. It should be remembered that at the beginning of the twentieth century there was still no higher education institution with university rights in Lithuania. Lithuanian youth wishing to continue their education after finishing secondary schools had to look for a place for themselves in academic centres outside the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, mainly in Russian, German, and Polish cities. Those who were soon to co-create the modernist formation usually chose Warsaw or Cracow.

One of many Lithuanians who chose Warsaw to study and begin their career was Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, whose name is known today to art lovers all over the world. First, from 1894 to 1899, he was a student of the Mu-

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<sup>5</sup> A. Zalatorius, *The Beginning of Twentieth Century: Literature at the Turning Point*, transl. R. Dapkutė, in: *Lithuanian Literature*, ed. V. Kubilius, Vilnius 1997, p. 166.

<sup>6</sup> P. Rodak, *Pismo, książka, lektura. Rozmowy: Le Goff, Chartier, Hébrard, Fabre, Lejeune*, Warszawa 2009, p. 69.

<sup>7</sup> G.P. Bąbiak, *Piękna książka na ziemiach polskich u schyłku XIX wieku*, “Sztuka Edycji” 2013, no. 2, p. 23.

sic Conservatory in the class of Professor Zygmunt Noskowski. Later, in 1904, when music no longer satisfied the passion of the versatile artist, he decided to devote himself to the visual arts and attended the newly established Warsaw School of Fine Arts. Here, under the supervision of, among others, Kazimierz Stabrowski, the headmaster of the School, and Ferdynand Ruszczyk, who led the landscape class, his talents were fully developed and his national identity was formed. Although he was given the opportunity to present his works in Saint Petersburg and Vilnius, where only a few appreciated them, fate brought him back to the vicinity of the Polish capital city. He spent the last months of his life here, in a sanatorium for the nervously ill in Pustelnik near Warsaw. Returning to the main problem of this text, we should note that this most famous representative of Lithuanian modernism was recognised as a national artist in his home country only after his death.<sup>8</sup>

In Cracow, the Lithuanian student community was less numerous than in Warsaw, but the Lithuanians who came here were also guided, as it seems, by other reasons, aspirations, and expectations. Cracow could provide them with what Warsaw did not offer to a sufficient degree. Therefore, as the literary historian Leonas Gudaitis stresses, “at the beginning of the twentieth century, Cracow, although seemingly a poor city, became famous as a cultural centre thanks to its university, Academy of Arts and Sciences, excellent theatres, publishing activities, the press, and the abundance of circles and associations”.<sup>9</sup> The varied academic and cultural life of Cracow, enriched by the presence of a colourful and fascinating artistic bohemia, gave young Lithuanians a greater chance for individual development than Vilnius, provincial Kaunas, or even more “official” Warsaw, which was occupied by politics and poor in cultural institutions in those days. Above all, however, Cracow, like all the Galicia, “enjoyed autonomy and numerous national freedoms under the rule of Emperor Franz Joseph”.<sup>10</sup> For migrants from the Lithuanian provinces of the Russian Empire, where the ban on printing Lithuanian texts in Latin font was lifted only in 1904, accustomed to the dangers of having books in their native language and to the constant control of the vigilant police, Cracow was a real oasis of freedom and often the closest safe haven. Therefore, this place did not lack distinct personalities, which were to be permanently recorded in the history of Lithuanian culture. It included such characters as the writer Sofija

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<sup>8</sup> The Warsaw period in M.K. Čiurlionis’ life was discussed by, among others, Joanna Siedlecka in her book *Mikołaj Konstanty Čiurlionis: 1875-1911. Preludium warszawskie*, Warszawa 1996; a detailed discussion of his artistic output, its originality, and the evolution of its reception can be found in numerous works by Vytautas Landsbergis, a musicologist, art historian who specialises in this subject, and head of state of Lithuania as the Speaker of the Parliament in 1990-1992.

<sup>9</sup> L. Gudaitis, *Platėjantys akiračiai. Lietuvių literatūrinė spauda 1904-1917 metais*, Vilnius 1977, p. 74.

<sup>10</sup> A.Z. Makowiecki, *Młoda Polska*, Warszawa 1987, p. 15.

Kymantaitė, the soon-to-be wife of Čiurlionis, Petras Rimša, one of the most outstanding (and controversial from the Polish point of view) sculptors of his generation, the author of *A Lithuanian School 1864-1904*, a famous work of patriotic expression, the painter Adomas Varnas, as well as Józef Albin Herbaczewski, the Lithuanian “first modernist”<sup>11</sup> and the most active initiator of the activities of the community described here.

Herbaczewski, almost a peer of Čiurlionis (Čiurlionis was born in 1875, Herbaczewski in 1876), decided to come to Cracow, in a sense, by necessity. He was one of the many inhabitants of the Lithuanian province who took part in the fight for the right to print texts in Lithuanian and for this reason fell victim to the tsarist repression. This battle had its origins in the aforementioned ban on printing and having any publications in Latin font, introduced in 1864 by the Russian administration with the intention of punishing the Lithuanian community for participating in the January Uprising and definitively suppressing its national aspirations. This extremely severe restriction, which was in force until 1904, brought about the opposite effect to the one expected by tsarist officials. It gave birth to a unique form of resistance against the invaders, namely an informal movement of *knygnešiai*<sup>12</sup>, book smugglers, a peculiar, spontaneously formed circulation of the printed texts (or perhaps even a model of communication) in Lithuanian. Consequently, the circulation of Prussian prints in Lithuania grew on a previously unknown scale in this region. At least 6,000 people were directly involved in the movement, but its social scope was much wider. It also included those who had illegal publications, gathered them, and made them available to others. Herbaczewski belonged to this group. And he suffered the consequences of this, still as a student of the Marijampolė Gymnasium, which was highly valued by Lithuanians because of the lessons of Lithuanian language included in the curriculum. In 1894, he was expelled from school, and the reasons and consequences of this event he presented years later as follows:

But I wasn't supposed to graduate from secondary school. I was expelled from the sixth grade for keeping illegal books at my place. I had many such books and I read many of them. Once upon a time one of my colleagues wrote me a letter proposing to exchange books. The letter was handed over to the headmaster because

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<sup>11</sup> V. Narušienė, *Józef Albin Herbaczewski. Pisarz polsko-litewski*, Kraków 2007, p. 7. Due to bilingualism declared and practised by Herbaczewski and the tradition of notation adopted in Polish literature on the subject, I refer to his name in Polish. In the *Gabija* almanac it appears in a different form: Juozapas Gerbačauskis.

<sup>12</sup> I write more about this in the following papers: *Okres zakazu druku jako cezura w dziejach dwujęzycznego piśmiennictwa litewskiego*, in: *Zagadnienia bilingwizmu*, series I: *Dwujęzyczni pisarze litewscy i polscy*, eds. A. Baranow, J. Ławski, Vilnius, Białystok 2016, pp. 105-130; *Epoka zakazu druku jako geneza litewskiej nowoczesności*, “*Studia Interkulturowe Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*” 2018, no. 11, pp. 255-280.

the students' correspondence was controlled by the school authorities. [...] They did a search. They found forbidden books. They gave me a wolf ticket and send to the gendarmes. From now on, the doors of all the schools in Russia were closed to me. Formal proceedings were also instituted. The prosecutor himself defended rather than accused me. But the military policemen demanded that I leave Marijampolė.<sup>13</sup>

According to some Lithuanian researchers, certain details in the memoirs of Herbaczewski raise doubts (in the interwar period Herbaczewski willingly coloured his legend), while others report a slightly different course of events.<sup>14</sup> This does not change the fact that Herbaczewski felt the burden of national literature, in its primary understanding—that is written in the national language, painfully and quite literally. Equally dramatic episodes can also be found in the biographies of other representatives of the generation that began literary and artistic life in the first decade of the twentieth century.

After leaving Lithuania, Herbaczewski lived and worked in Warsaw, but the power of the occupant also reached there. He found the atmosphere of freedom and the possibility of further education only in Cracow. Here, the “artist of life”, as he defined himself, devoted himself not only to studying. He attended classes as an auditing student, and spent the rest of his time in the enclaves of Cracow's bohemia, having settled into this environment very well. The exact date of Herbaczewski's arrival in Cracow is difficult to determine, but he arrived there at about the same time as Stanisław Przybyszewski, at the end of the nineteenth century, so he could meet the latter (an apologist of the “naked soul”, by the way) in Jan Apolinary Michalik's “Cukiernia Lwowska” (a café), launched in 1895, which was just winning the interest of artists and university teachers. Herbaczewski was fascinated by Przybyszewski, whose ideas became one of his most important inspirations. However, despite the fact that Herbaczewski soon gained a certain fame as the author of improvisations presented in the “Zielony Balonik” cabaret (literally, the Green Balloon) and an eccentric not only in the artistic dimension, his ambitions and plans went far beyond recognition in the artistic circles of Cracow. He was still interested in current social and political problems, including Polish-Lithuanian relations. Isolated from the context of the epoch, Herbaczewski's views at that time could appear to be doubly and irrationally confrontational, as the writer criticised both Poles and Lithuanians in his speeches in the “Slavonic Club” and in political publications, including his programmatic text *Odrodzenie Lit-*

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<sup>13</sup> J. Keliuotis, *Pasikalbėjimas su J.A. Herbačiausku*, “Naujoji Romuva” 1932, no. 12, p. 266.

<sup>14</sup> See: V. Narušienė, *op.cit.*, p. 18; V. Daujotytė, *Gyvenimo artistas ir sau žmogus*, in: J.A. Herbačiauskas, *Erškėčių vainikas. Rinktinė proza, esė, kritika*, Vilnius 1992, pp. 8-9.

wy wobec idei polskiej (*The Rebirth of Lithuania and the idea of Poland*).<sup>15</sup> However, we should remember that he criticised both sides for fanatic—in his opinion—nationalism, and at the same time referred to the federal idea of the Commonwealth evolving in his works. All this considered, against the background of uncompromising attitudes of the circles most strongly involved in the conflict of two historically connected nations, his propositions can be considered almost conciliatory, although at the same time—as the not-too-distant future proved—utopian. Herbaczewski's political theses did not arouse the enthusiasm of either side, but they did have an impact on his own philosophical and literary concepts. And it was literature and culture, not politics, that was the basic area of the writer's activity. Like most of the other Lithuanian students gathered here, he wanted to have his share in the creation of modern Lithuanian cultural life and the promotion of knowledge about Lithuanian culture among Poles.

The “Rūta” Society, founded in 1904 on the initiative of Herbaczewski and Adomas Varnas, was to consolidate and realise common passions and aspirations. The Society was to gather and draw not only Lithuanians who lived in Cracow, but also, as stated in the “Statute” of the group, all “lovers of ethnographic Lithuania”,<sup>16</sup> especially Poles. This postulate was at least partially implemented: among others, professors of the Jagiellonian University, Marian Zdziechowski (who in the interwar period taught Czesław Miłosz, to some extent the ideological heir of Herbaczewski),<sup>17</sup> Jan Rozwadowski, and the linguist Jan Łoś were invited to participate in the works of the Society. The basic tasks of the group, first included in the statute, were later formulated by the group's originators as an ideological declaration “Rūtos” *atsiliepimas* (*Proclamation of “Rūta”*) published in one of the most influential Lithuanian periodicals, “Varpas”. So they wrote: “The most important task of our Society, or in other words, the aim of all our activities now and in the future will be to get to know the spiritual history of Lithuanians in the context of the history of all mankind”. In the next part of the text they emphasised:

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<sup>15</sup> J.A. Herbaczewski, *Odrodzenie Litwy wobec idei polskiej*, Kraków 1905. His another political publication, the article *Tragizm odrodzenia narodowego Litwy* (*The Tragedy of the national revival of Lithuania*), “Świat Słowiański” 1909, vol. V.1, no. 51, pp. 147-161, brought the continuation and updating of the thoughts expressed in this volume. Interestingly, although he was consistently bilingual, he usually published his texts on political issues in Polish. Apparently, he believed it was Poland that played a decisive role in establishing good relations with Lithuania.

<sup>16</sup> As cited in: V. Narušienė, *op.cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>17</sup> In one of his articles, Miłosz mentioned Herbaczewski, next to Mickiewicz and Oskar Miłosz, as a representative of the “family of romantics and mystics, who enriched the history of various nations and different literatures”. See: C. Miłosz, *Spojrzenie na literaturę litewską*, “Ateneum” 1938, no. 6, pp. 900-905. Most probably the writers also knew each other personally.

Together we will take care to support that part of the Lithuanian intelligentsia which does not control politics and does not waste pure elements of spirit in party battles, but conscientiously works on Lithuania's cultural revival, exploring its mysterious past and collecting the venerable remains of the past days. [...] The unbiased effort of foreigners (especially Poles and Ruthenians), undertaken in the name of the welfare of the Lithuanian nation, will resound in our hearts with a grateful echo.<sup>18</sup>

In order to achieve the Society's ambitious but not very precise goals, its members organised discussion meetings, seminars and lectures, often conducted simultaneously in Polish and Lithuanian, to which Polish scholars and writers were invited. The lectures presented Lithuanian writers (including those living, such as Maironis, presented to the listeners by Sofia Kymantaitė), poorly—if at all—known on the Vistula River. An important achievement of the Society, which served both Lithuanians and Polish enthusiasts of Lithuanian culture, was the organisation of a Lithuanian-language library, which had its seat in Herbaczewski's apartment in Cracow. Another, perhaps the most spectacular form of activity planned, was to issue a magazine.

This idea appeared shortly after the creation of "Rūta". According to Leonas Gudaitis, referring to a letter from Adomas Varnas to Povilas Višinskis, "at the first meeting it was decided to publish a monthly in Lithuanian in Cracow".<sup>19</sup> The project was not implemented, though. Gudaitis gave various reasons for this, related to the decisions of the members and friends of the Society, but the most serious of them probably originated outside this circle. Varnas's letter was dated 12 March 1904. In the second half of April, the printing ban was lifted. Lithuanians were now able to publish books and press in Lithuanian on the territory of the Russian Partition, which they willingly and quickly used. The Lithuanian publicist and historian Stasys Matulaitis called the Lithuanian press market eruption "an epidemic of newspapership".<sup>20</sup> As a result, the editing of the Lithuanian magazine in Cracow was no longer necessary.

The concept of their own title reappeared in the Rūta community in the following months, to take on a concrete shape in the second half of 1905. In April, "Vilniaus žinios" published information that Rūta was preparing an evening in memory of Antanas Baranauskas, who had died in 1902, to be filled with "readings, recitations, fun, and singing".<sup>21</sup> The person chosen to be thus remembered could not surprise anyone who knew Herbaczewski's views. Antanas Baranauskas, a "poet, songwriter, herald", as the Lithuanians regard him

<sup>18</sup> "Rūtos" *atsiliepimas*, "Varpas" 1905, no. 1-2, pp. 21-23.

<sup>19</sup> L. Gudaitis, *op.cit.*, p. 76. I had not managed to read this letter before I finished the text. V. Narušienė (*op.cit.*) quotes it in a slightly different version, from which it appears that the magazine was supposed to appear both in Lithuanian and Polish.

<sup>20</sup> A. Zalatorius, *op.cit.*, p. 111.

<sup>21</sup> A. Baublys, *Krakuva*, "Vilniaus žinios" 1905, 30.4, p. 4.

to this day,<sup>22</sup> the most prominent representative of Lithuanian Romanticism and bishop of Sejny. He was for the “Cracow” group and especially for Herbaczewski, a particularly important role model as one of the authors of the revival of Lithuanian culture, who referred to the work and worldview of Polish Romantics, as well as a strong opponent of both bias in literature, and—on the political level—fuelling Polish-Lithuanian antagonisms. He actually longed for a union and proved to be an advocate of its revival in a form appropriate to the new times. The evenings dedicated to the poet were actually held, and the artists who belonged to the company celebrated him with their works of art according to their artistic specialties.<sup>23</sup> The crowning achievement of these efforts was to be the publication of a collective volume, edited by Herbaczewski. In a letter to Adomas Jakštis, firstly a co-author and later an implacable critic of the volume, he reported with enthusiasm:

Our Society—“Rūta”—intends to publish in Cracow (precisely in Cracow—as a special historical sign that in the oldest capital of Jogaila—after so many years of silence—[...] the thunderous voice of the rising Lithuanian spirit begins to resound again. Therefore, it intends to publish a book dedicated to the memory of our greatest nineteenth-century bard, Antanas Baronas-Baranauskas [Baronas is another form of surname used by Baranauskas, sometimes written together with the more famous one—M.N.]. In this book, we want to combine literature with art in order to testify that in Lithuania, too, the oak of artistic culture is beginning to grow and show green.<sup>24</sup>

Jakštis was one of the writers whom the editor of the publication asked to submit texts. In addition, “Vilniaus žinios” and “Lietuvos ūkininkas” published announcements calling on Lithuanian authors to submit texts on the subject. As at least some of those interviewed replied to the requests, the texts came but the publication of the book was delayed. It was originally planned for the middle of 1906 (as mentioned in the quoted letter from Herbaczewski), but financial and personnel problems made it impossible to comply with this timeline. The question of finance was simple and could be the subject of a chapter in the unofficial history of literature: Janusz Niedziałkowski, the new vice-president of the Society, elected in July 1906, did not arouse Herbaczewski’s sympathy. The reason for the conflict was the “Rūta” funds, which Niedziałkowski allegedly tried to appropriate. Less than a year later, Niedziałkowski died, and the money could not be found. As the result, they lacked the money for financing illustrations for the publication. The second reason for the delay was more

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<sup>22</sup> E. Aleksandravičius, *Antanas Baranauskas. Szlak wieszczka*, transl. J. Rogoża, T. Błaszczak, Sejny 2014, p. 27.

<sup>23</sup> For more details on this subject, see: L. Gudaitis, *op.cit.*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>24</sup> A. Jakšto-Dambrausko ir J. A. Herbačiausko laišakai, “Naujoji Romuva” 1938, no. 9, p. 225.

serious. The Society started to disintegrate, not even as a result of internal conflicts, but as an ordinary turn of events—its members pursued their academic plans and began to search for individual ways of development. It can be assumed that the final editorial work was done by Herbaczewski himself.<sup>25</sup> Eventually, the *Gabija* almanac was transferred to the Cracow bookstore of Gebethner and Wolff's publishing house in July 1907.

The title alone attracts attention. Vaiva Narušienė simply translates it as a “votive fire”,<sup>26</sup> according to the dictionary definition (which also includes a torch and a lantern). But *Gabija* also belongs to the sphere of sacrum, it is a creature from the depths of Lithuanian mythology, a pagan goddess of fire, which is mentioned by many nineteenth-century researchers of Baltic beliefs, including Kraszewski and Basanavičius,<sup>27</sup> as well as in contemporary studies, which confirm her presence in ancient written sources.<sup>28</sup> The members of *Rūta* undoubtedly knew the mythological context of this word. The use of it in the title of the volume referred to two orders close to its initiators. The first was the fascination characteristic of early modernism with the “flame of progress”, symbolised by *gabija* in its lexical meaning, and on the other hand, with the first-fruits of culture, explored in search of mystical experience. And there is no paradox in this juxtaposition. After all, as Benjamin wrote, “only a thoughtless observer can deny that correspondences come into play between the world of modern technology and the archaic symbol-world of mythology”.<sup>29</sup> The second order is the pre-Christian, mythological and mythologised Lithuanian tradition, the domain of the people, elevated by the Romantics, and by the luminaries of the national movement in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries cited as the foundation for the reconstruction of national identity on the threshold of modernity.

When interpreted in this way, the title did not contradict the subtitle indicating the patron and protagonist of the book—a Catholic clergyman. The subtitle read: “A collective book dedicated to the memory of a songster [org. *dainius*—M.N.] of Lithuania, the Bishop Antanas Baranauskas”. It was developed in an extensive dedication (written, as I have already mentioned, in a refined typographical arrangement) and placed just after the title page. We read in it that “writers—young sons of Lithuania”, having lit a “torch of love” (“*Meilės*

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<sup>25</sup> This is confirmed by the note printed on the last page of the book: “The text was proofread and prepared for printing by Juozapas Gerbačauskis”, see: *Gabija. Rinktinė knyga paaukota Lietuvos dainiaus vyskupo A. Baranausko atminimui*, Krakova 1907.

<sup>26</sup> V. Narušienė, *op.cit.*, s. 8.

<sup>27</sup> *Lietuvių mitologija*, ed. N. Vėlius, vol. 1, Vilnius 1995, vol. 2, Vilnius 1997.

<sup>28</sup> For example: G. Beresnevičius, *Trumpas lietuvių ir prūsų religijos žodynas*, Vilnius 2001, pp. 87-88; *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai*, vol. I: *Nuo seniausių laikų iki XV amžiaus pabaigos*, ed. N. Vėlius, Vilnius 1996, p. 42.

<sup>29</sup> W. Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, transl. H. Eiland, K. McLaughlin, Cambridge, MA, London 1999, p. 461.

Gabija”) in their hearts, offer this book to the bishop and at the same time the “Songster of Lithuania, follower of Krivė [a pagan priest or fortune-teller in Prussian and Lithuanian legends—M.N.], defender and guardian of the bonfire of the national spirit”. Then the tone changes from apology to prayer of supplication, but far from catechism: “[...] beg the Lord, mighty Singer, that he may remove the thorn wreath from Lithuania’s head, the chains from her arms and legs [...] and bestow upon her the garland of Aurora, the Harp of Mercy, and the wings of the Tempest”.<sup>30</sup> The prayer is mixed with a magic formula and the hierarchy of the Church is no different from a pagan sage. In this way, Baranauskas—who for the authors of the publication, remained primarily a poet—was inscribed in the same symbolic system as *Gabija*. At the same time, the reader received a sample of the language which dominated the pages of the volume.

One may wonder about the meaning of particular symbols mentioned in the dedication, but the continuity of tradition emphasised in it (and on the title page) seems more important. It is about literary tradition, which tells Herbačzewski—as he was probably the author of this short but dense introduction to the volume<sup>31</sup>—to pay homage to his great predecessor and to the national romantic tradition. Thus, names and paratexts in it allow us to state that its authors considered the Lithuanian question as the main theme of their work and wanted to cultivate national literature, but in their own understanding of this category, different from that prevailing in the Lithuanian writings at that time. The content of the almanac brings clues as to how this category was understood and from which definition of national literature it differed.

*Gabija* consists of two parts, which I distinguish myself, because the volume is in no way divided into sections. The first one contains formally diverse texts referring to the figure and work of Baranauskas, while the other one is a fairly freely composed collection of works, mainly poetic and mainly by young artists, presenting a different artistic value and associated with an innovative approach to the art of the word, inspired by modernist models. The first part is more interesting from the point of view of the subject of these considerations. I would like to discuss the texts in it in the order consistent with the logic of this study, so not necessarily in accordance with their place in the almanac.

One of them, sent in response to Herbačzewski’s invitation, was a statement by Adomas Jakštas, entitled *Kas įkvepė A. Baronui “Anykščių Šilelį”?* (*Who inspired A. Baronas to write “The Forest of Anykščiai”?*).<sup>32</sup> This arti-

<sup>30</sup> *Gabija*, op.cit.

<sup>31</sup> See: E. Vaitkevičiūtė, *J.A. Herbačiausko asmenybė ir kūryba XX a. pradžios literatūrologiniame-kultūrologiniame kontekste*, “Lituanica” 2001, no. 1, p. 79.

<sup>32</sup> A. Jakštas [Dambrauskas], *Kas įkvepė A. Baronui „Anykščių Šilelį”?*, in: *Gabija*, op.cit., pp. 24-25.

cle was very short, contained on just two pages, and had nothing to do with the ideas of modernism. However, it occupied an important place both in the structure of the almanac and in the Lithuanian journalism of that time, as it was probably the basic source of a literary legend, which is still alive in the collective memory of Lithuanians to this day.

Aleksandras Dambrauskas (as this was Jakštas's real name, although in the history of literature he is commonly known under a pseudonym<sup>33</sup>), a Catholic clergyman and theologian, writer, philosopher, critic and theoretician of literature, born in 1860, belonged to the first generation of Lithuanian artists who tried to define the objectives of literature in a systematic way. Jakštas's contemporaries formulated this concept in special circumstances: under the ban on printing, which was to complete the Russification of Lithuanian lands, in the context of the nationalist efforts of the still small Lithuanian-speaking intelligentsia centred around the "Aušra" magazine (incidentally, Jakštas began his literary career publishing there), the bottom-up processes of awakening consciousness broader than local, and finally the social changes which intertwined with national transformations in the mechanism of the birth of communal modernity characteristic of Central and Eastern Europe. They were also burdened with the responsibility of precursors aware of their role. No wonder that in the opinion of most of them "firstly, it was necessary to ensure that there was a Lithuanian literature at all, while the question of what it was supposed to be like was less important".<sup>34</sup> According to this superior principle, Juozas Andziulaitis-Kalnėnas, a poet and translator slightly younger than Jakštas, argued that the desirable attributes of literature include its accessibility and utilitarianism: "[...] books should be written in a comprehensible language, cheap and, most importantly, useful",<sup>35</sup> while Povilas Višinskis, a representative of Herbaczewski's generation, but ideologically linked with the previous one, appealed to critics: "[...] we must not discourage from writing, but encourage and point a way [for new writers—M.N.] in all possible manners, and may everyone write as they see fit. We can only benefit from this: we will have an abundance of various texts from which we will select and publish the better ones."<sup>36</sup>

Back in 1901, Jonas Biliūnas supplemented the list of demands with a precise instruction: "[...] the most important task of a fiction writer is to give

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<sup>33</sup> I will continue to use the pseudonym of the writer, in accordance with the principle practised in the history of Lithuanian literature.

<sup>34</sup> J. Girdzijauskas, *Srovių bei krypčių problema lietuvių literatūroje*, in: *Lietuvių literatūros istorija. XIX amžius*, ed. J. Girdzijauskas, Vilnius 2001, p. 269.

<sup>35</sup> As cited in: A. Zalatorius, *Estetinės samonės lūžis XX a. pradžioje*, in: *XX amžiaus lietuvių literatūra*, [ed. V. Kubilius], Vilnius 1994, p. 9.

<sup>36</sup> As cited in: V. Daujotytė, *Lietuvių literatūros kritika. Akademinio kurso paskaitos*, Vilnius 2007, p. 87.

a true picture of the community he/she describes”.<sup>37</sup> The so motivated Lithuanian writer at the turn of the twentieth century, “felt called and obliged to serve something higher than literature itself—the stratum, the nation, the further fate of society”<sup>38</sup>, as the literary historian Vytautas Kubilius summed up this attitude. However, attitudes were not shaped solely by the demands of critics; a model was needed. And Jakštas proposed one in *Gabija*.

He, therefore, spoke in a storytelling tone about how Baranauskas was provoked to write the most important poem of Lithuanian Romanticism. When he studied at the seminary in Varniai in the late 1850s, Baranauskas attended the classes of Father Gabšys (Gabszewicz, which the author of the article emphasised), who taught literature. In one of his lectures, he was supposed to have stated that Lithuanian literature would never be enriched with a work equal to *Pan Tadeusz* (*Sir Thaddeus*) by Mickiewicz, because the simplicity of the Lithuanian language, in which “no one can express any sublime thought”, did not allow it.<sup>39</sup> Outraged by such an observation, Baranauskas decided to prove with his own pen how wrong his teacher was and what lyrical potential lies in the Lithuanian “folk” language. And so the poem inspired the heirs of Baranauskas not only with its poetics, but also with its very existence.

Jakštas’ story contained a certain model of understanding the functions of national literature, which I call a romantic model. A bard and his work were the epitome of it. The bard did not create for artistic motives but in the name of a higher cause, in defence of language and national pride, in order to prove “not only to his school colleagues, but to the whole of Lithuania, that our language is not worse than Polish, but on the contrary, it seems richer and more perfect”.<sup>40</sup> The work, on the other hand, did not represent the current, but the creative attitude mentioned above, determined rather by identity than profession, by ideas rather than aesthetics. The poem was a proof of the existence of Lithuanian literature, which in turn confirmed the existence of the nation. The understanding of national literature expressed in this text is perhaps the deepest reflection of a certain property—I would go so far as to call it attributive—of Lithuanian literature in the first phases of its development, which was synthetically expressed by Paweł Bukowiec:

[...] the effort to create a literary communication model is accompanied in the history of the literature I am discussing here [Lithuanian—M.N.] by the effort to use (and at the same time abandon) the Polish literary tradition, which is one of

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<sup>37</sup> As cited in: V. Kubilius, *XX amžiaus literatūra*, Vilnius 1996, p. 23.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 106.

<sup>39</sup> A. Jakštas [Dambrauskas], *op.cit.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 25.

the most important roots of Lithuanian literature written in the nineteenth century and later.<sup>41</sup>

A different model of national literature, although based on the same assumptions, appears from a text by Jonas Basanavičius, which opens the almanac. This model can be called a political one. The presence of Basanavičius in the almanac may have raised the rank of the book in the eyes of Lithuanian readers. A medical doctor by profession, man of success, who managed a foreign hospital for many years, and at the same time an historian, linguist, and ethnographer by passion, in 1907, he was perceived not only as an authority in the national movement, founder and first editor of “Aušra”, but also as an efficient politician who was able to obtain from the tsarist administration the permission to organise the “Grand Parliament of Vilnius”, a half formal assembly of more than two thousand delegates from all over Lithuania, which took place in December 1905. Herbaczewski could, therefore, be satisfied that the article entitled simply *Prakalbos vieton* (*In Place of the introduction*) contained such a recognisable name.

But Basanavičius’ statement was far from the homage paid to Baranauskas in the dedication. Indeed, Basanavičius, the future first signatory of the Act of Independence of Lithuania saw the beauty and importance of the work of Baranauskas, called him “the immortal singer of Lithuania”,<sup>42</sup> and with sentiment recalled the beginnings of their acquaintance, emphasising the subject of their conversations with each other: “[...] as far as I remember, our conversations mostly revolved around the issue of Lithuanianness, as it was understood at that time, the revival of the Lithuanian language, its beauty [...]”. But this personal confession was only an introduction to the most vital paragraphs, in which Basanavičius accused Baranauskas of refusing to cooperate with “Aušra”, fought against the magazine, and finally, although indirectly, “contributed to its fall”. Moreover, according to Basanavičius, Baranauskas-the poet neglected his duties towards Lithuania, choosing the career of Baranauskas-the clergyman, and when he began to climb the church hierarchy, “the friendship with Poles became more important to him than defending Lithuanianness and caring for the welfare of the people”.<sup>43</sup>

Basanavičius’ allegations were formulated from the perspective of the political discourse which he initiated himself in the space of the Lithuanian language. Therefore, the poet, who “remains a part of Lithuanian literature as long as this literature is called literature and until the sounds of our speech cease to

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<sup>41</sup> P. Bukowiec, *Dwujęzyczne początki nowoczesnej literatury litewskiej*, Kraków 2008, p. 232.

<sup>42</sup> J. Basanavičius, *Prakalbos vieton*, in: *Gabija*, *op.cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 3.

resound in Lithuania”,<sup>44</sup> has his obligations towards society and must fulfil them. Part of his literary role should be to support the first Lithuanian magazine reaching its homeland, to choose the side in the Polish-Lithuanian conflict decisively and correctly, to devote his own ambitions to the service of the national and social cause. Only in this way, as Basanavičius suggested, can one fully deserve to be called a Lithuanian writer. For a political activist and ideologist, being a writer meant being involved.

Herbaczewski saw the problem in a completely different way. In the almanac, apart from the dedication, he published two of his texts, this time so extensive that they took up much more than half of the volume of the book. The first one, “thrown” between Basanavičius and Jakštas’ articles, was entitled *Genijaus meilė* (*Love of the Genius*).<sup>45</sup> It is not directly devoted to Baranauskas but its content suggests that the poet is a patron of Herbaczewski’s argument. Gudaitis describes this work as “a literary etude written in a metaphorical language in the style of F. Nietzsche”.<sup>46</sup> It may be added that the text could also be called a philosophical poem, and it also echoes the works of Wyspiański and Przybyszewski. The genius in the title is “the mystical union of the souls of the earthly shepherd and heavenly warrior”,<sup>47</sup> which can be found in the “ruins of our culture”, “Lithuanian blood”, “the depths of the lakes”, “our nature”, and “finally in our hearts—like a lamenting voice”.<sup>48</sup> I interpret this notion not as a person, a metaphor of a brilliant writer, but rather as a mystical, spiritual disposition of the nation, defining its identity—here the identity of the Lithuanian nation. So where does the writer, especially the national writer, appear in this poetic exultation? Herbaczewski continued in the following way:

Let us love our Genius! Let us love those who prepare paths for It among forests and gorges, among swamps and sands—like the first spring birds prepare the nests for their hatchlings! Let us not wish to be followers of the people of Israel, who killed the majority of their prophets only because they disturbed the Pharisees and merchants, tyrants and bloodsuckers!<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>45</sup> In my earlier analysis of this work, I translated its title as *Geniusz miłujący* (lit. *loving genius*), see: M. Niemojewski, *Zwierciadła i drogowskazy. Litewskie almanachy literackie w I połowie XX wieku*, Warszawa 2005, s. 80. Years later, I am inclined to accept the proposal made by V. Narušienė (*op.cit.*, p. 52) as better reflecting the ambiguity of the title. With this one reservation, that I choose the form of *geniuszu* instead of *geniusza* (in Polish, these two different declination endings denote either an impersonate object or a person, respectively—K.S.), because in my opinion the title genius is not a person, but a mystical, spiritual disposition of the nation, as I write above in the paper.

<sup>46</sup> L. Gudaitis, *op.cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>47</sup> J.A. Gerbačauskis, *Genijaus meilė*, in: *Gabija*, *op.cit.*, p. 6 (I write Herbaczewski’s name in the footnotes concerning *Gabija* in accordance with its spelling in the almanac).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 9.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 12.

From metaphors and symbols, numerous historical, mythological, and philosophical references, praises of the people and their traditions, and finally references to Mickiewicz—all these traces can neither be quoted, nor even mentioned—an image of the writer as the exponent of this essence of Lithuanianess emerges. Herbaczewski does not burden him with political duties, but considers him as the trustee of the “national soul”, who prevents “spiritual decline” and “makes Genius’ love famous”.<sup>50</sup> Above all, the writer, together with others, is supposed to introduce “our spiritual language into universal culture” against the “narrow nationalism of the twentieth century—the true enemy of freedom” and “erect our temple on a high hill, which will be seen by all nations”, because thanks to this it will be possible to build the power of his nation. “This is true nationalism”,<sup>51</sup> added Herbaczewski at the end of this appeal.

Herbaczewski probably guessed that his etude-manifesto, which gave the tone to the book devoted to the controversial bard, would not be welcomed by critics. Perhaps he meant himself and Baranauskas when he intertwined between the lines the Latin sentence: *Nullus propheta in patria sua!*, as if a sub-heading. However, he was faithful to his vision, and if we consider the etude to be an exaggerated but coherent ideological declaration, the next piece by Herbaczewski was its artistic incarnation. *Lietuvos griuvėsių gimnas* (*The Hymn of Lithuanian ruins*) is a three-part intricate and satirical spectacle in which Herbaczewski gave a symbolic picture of the history of Lithuania and its present day. The first two parts, in sublime and dark tones, show the dramatic past of Lithuania, presented by allegories referring to Lithuanian mythology; the third part is a perverse satire on the omnipresent politicisation of contemporary Lithuanian everyday life. Again dense with contexts, allusions, and invocations, the work would require a separate analysis. Here, I would only like to draw attention to what is intriguing from the perspective of considerations contained herein. Well, first of all, the central figure of the first two sections is the poet, namely Dainius Jaunutis, the Young Singer, the incarnate Genius, who speaks only once, but the presented events take place in his dream. When he wakes up and confronts dreamlike visions with the reality, he chooses death out of the sense of loneliness and alienation. This act of despair can be read as a very personal confession by Herbaczewski himself, who, as Narušienė notes, used a pseudonym similar to the name of a hero (“Jaunutis Vienuolis”, Young Monk).<sup>52</sup> At the same time, this does not preclude the recognition of this act as a metaphorical expression of the alienation of Herbaczewski, a modernist, who constantly dreams of his homeland, but different from the one in which he lived.

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 14.

<sup>52</sup> V. Narušienė, *op.cit.*, p. 54.

Secondly, it is a thoroughly modern text. It is characterised by a multidimensional syncretism, characteristic not only of romantic or modernist drama, but also of contemporary drama. Languages and styles interweave here: *daina* coincides with the choir's song, prayer with shouting, pathos with colloquiality. The whole is extremely musical, and this is owing not only to the "musical" names given to particular fragments of the drama (subtitled *The Singer's Symphonic Dream*),<sup>53</sup> but also to the rhythm of the poem, the accumulation of verbs and exclamations. In terms of content, Herbaczewski's mysterious spectacle touches on blasphemy, especially in fragments where the author contrasts the power of pagan Lithuania with the weakness of Christian Lithuania. And it is not at all obvious whether the elements of the grotesque are introduced by the author only in the third, mocking part of *Gimnas*, or whether they are present in the whole work, which can be interpreted as permeated by irony. In addition, detailed didascalies stimulate visual imagination. If we ignore the issue of the unequal literary value of the text, the performative potential of this work could be appreciated by many contemporary theatre directors.

Herbaczewski's modernist attempts are undoubtedly part of the category of national literature, regardless of the criterion we adopt: language, subject, author's self-identification, or ideological message. However, it is a model that differs from the two previously mentioned ones. It is based on the affirmation of one's own culture, not on the negation of a foreign culture. It does not have a confrontational dimension, but it does have a universalising one. According to Herbaczewski, national literature is such literature that is able to gain its rightful place in the circle of European literature, without losing its identity, which, after all, is not lacking in Lithuanian tradition. And the writer's individualism and critical attitude towards the national reality does not deprive him of the right to be "national". On the contrary, it is a clear sign (which is evident in Herbaczewski's case) of "the existence of a correlation between the modernist breakthrough and the modernisation processes taking place in [I cut out the original 'Polish', and insert 'Lithuanian' here in order to support myself with the words of Ryszard Nycz—M.N.] society".<sup>54</sup>

It is worth remembering that in his later works Herbaczewski repeatedly argued that the concept of national literature was very important to him. The fundamental differences between him and his opponents concerned not the question of whether such literature was necessary, but in what language it was

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<sup>53</sup> J.A. Gerbačauskis, *Lietuvos griuvėsių gimnas (Dainiaus symphoniškas sapnas)*, in: *Gabija, op.cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. R. Nycz, *Język modernizmu. Prolegomena historycznoliterackie*, Toruń 2013, p. 24.

to be written. To substantiate this, it should suffice to recall his next programmatic text, published one year after the publication of the almanac: *Tautiškos literatūros klausime žodis* (*A word on the question of national literature*).<sup>55</sup>

The search for a new language was the common theme of most of the other texts contained in the almanac. The part with Baranauskas as its protagonist included his poem *Daina* (the name of the genre of folk song), which reminds of the sources of inspiration of both the nineteenth-century poet and the modernists who commemorated him. The nostalgic poem was the only work by Baranauskas in the volume.<sup>56</sup> Further poems dedicated to him were sent by Justinas Zubrickas (in the almanac under the pseudonym J. Turčiniškis) and Motiejus Gustaitis. Zubrickas, an author of mostly occasional poems, who never published a separate volume of his poetry, made his debut in the nineteenth century, and a piece *Atminčiai Vyskopo Baranauckio* (*In the memory of Bishop Baranauskas*), accepted for the volume, can hardly be considered as an example of Lithuanian modernism in its nascent form. Such an example may certainly be Gustaitis' *Vyskupui A. Baronui rauda* (*Rauda for Bishop A. Baronas*), an extensive work, although in *Gabija* it was published only in fragments. This funeral song (because that is what a Lithuanian *rauda* is), modern in form, heralded the bloom of Lithuanian symbolism. Gustaitis is today considered to be one of the precursors of this current, very strongly present in Lithuanian literature in the interwar period. Strophes contained in *Gabija* were the first such serious a presentation of his work and enabled him to publish his other works at a later time.

Of the pieces that make up the mosaic collection not thematically connected with the person of Baranauskas, the works of Jovaras, and above all of Sofia Kymantaitė, are noteworthy. Jovaras (Jonas Krikščiūnas) offered the editor of the almanac two lyrics, stylised as folk songs. These poems were unusual in the output of this independent poet of clearly left-wing views, as they did not contain any political accents characteristic of his other works. Interestingly, it was these two simple, stichic, melodic poems that were later considered the best in his oeuvre.

Kymantaitė's work was also represented by two pieces, which were definitely the closest formally and ideologically to the works of Herbaczewski. The poem *Vėlė-Kibirkstelė* (which I shyly translate as *Soul-Sparkle*, although this translation does not reflect either the songfulness of the original or the play of words) is, in spite of the "carefree" title, a serious and—"in a Lithuanian way"—melancholic lyric poem. A short prose work, left untitled in the

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<sup>55</sup> Zob. J.A. Herbačiauskas, *Tautiškos literatūros klausimo žodis*, in: *idem, Erškėčių vainikas...*, *op.cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>56</sup> All the subsequent quotations and titles of the songs are quoted after the same edition of the almanac. That is why I am leaving them without footnotes in the rest of the text.

almanac, corresponded to the themes of the poem. In both texts, one of the most eminent Lithuanian modernist women undertook motifs representative of this current: the interpenetration of the emptiness of the universe and the insignificant, small human worlds, human relations with nature, as well as the juxtaposition of the noble past with the despicable present, which was already a clear, though probably unintended, reference to the motifs taken up by Herbaczewski. It was actually Kymantaitė's debut (previously, one work had been published without her consent), which drew to her the attention of—initially unfavourable—criticism.

The poetic prose of Kazys Puida's *Spindulys (Beam)*, who appeared under the pseudonym Kazys Žegota, was closer to romantic than modernist aesthetics, but the accumulation of allegories and the subject of the struggle for freedom, here understood metaphysically, not politically, brought the proposal of this well-known journalist (and in the near future a representative of literary avant-garde) closer to the poetics of Herbaczewski. The poems of the Biržiška, Vaclovas and Mykolas brothers, who wrote under pseudonyms, were kept in modernist, impressionistic tones, but they were rather creative experiments, because their authors were both supposed to be famous as scholars of literature and folklore.

If Herbaczewski anticipated that the almanac would not arouse the enthusiasm of critics, then his intuition did not deceive him. Adomas Jakštas harshly evaluated the book, despite his own participation in it, especially accusing Herbaczewski and Kymantaitė of decadence and disrespect for the rules of literature.<sup>57</sup> Numerous similar evaluations appeared. The essence of the majority of the critical reviews was expressed in the most concise way in the words of Jonas Biliūnas, the originator of the almanac as a form of presentation of literature, concerning Herbaczewski's texts: "[...] the author speaks of pure, independent, true Lithuanian poetry, and yet he himself uses a misty form borrowed from Polish modernists, which is hardly clear for all (not to mention simple people)."<sup>58</sup>

Such judgments indicated that some Lithuanian critics of that period, especially those originating from the circle of "Aušra" and "Varpas", were not yet ready to reflect on the possible scope of the category of national literature, on the functions of the texts distinguished by this category, and finally on the relationship between literature and national identity. By accusing the authors of the almanac of the mistiness of phrases (not groundlessly) and borrowings from Polish literature (unwisely, given the earlier history of Lithuanian literature, for example the case of Baranauskas), these critics did not usually try to find out whether the layer of controversially chosen metaphors did not conceal a proposal for the renewal of the language, criteria for the qualifi-

<sup>57</sup> Druskus [A. Jakštas-Dambrauskas], "Gabija", "Drangija" 1970, no. 10, p. 209.

<sup>58</sup> J. Biliūnas, *Raštai*, vol. II, Vilnius 1955, p. 490.

cation of the work and the role of the author, which would help Lithuanian literature to participate more fully in the discourses of European literatures. *Gabija* had to wait many years for such a deepened reception until the Lithuanian independence was established and generations free from the dogmatism of protoplasts entered the literary scene. It was not until 1938 that the editors of the magazine “Naujoji Romuva” announced: “Herbaczewski, trusting only his heart and intuition, was right. Today, looking at his *Gabija*, published in 1907, and especially at his own articles, we perceive it as the first bold attempt at redirecting our literature to the tracts of Western Europe.”<sup>59</sup>

But the significance of the almanac was not limited to inspiring one literary community after many years. *Gabija* was the first Lithuanian literary almanac, after which—even before World War I—more came, mainly as collective presentations of the avant-garde, and in which “the Lithuanian literary press originated”.<sup>60</sup> It also initiated a process that led to the transformation of Lithuanian modernism—like other modernisms—from a current assigned to a given period into an ideological and aesthetic paradigm unlimited by chronological caesuras. It also created the conditions for moving and expanding the boundaries of what is known as national literature, and thus for a debate on its understanding. This debate has come to life in the recent history of Lithuanian literature many times, to mention the discussions on Kazys Boruta’s novel *Baltaragio malūnas* (*The Mill of Baltaragis*) and its dramatic fate or the recent disputes about Kristina Sabaliauskaitė’s novels. One of its sources can certainly be found in Cracow in 1907.

*Translated by Kaja Szymańska*

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<sup>59</sup> *A. Jakšto-Dambrausko ir J.A. Herbačiausko laiškai*, *op.cit.*, p. 224.

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