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"You Were There, Oh Soul"*: Color Manifestation of the Sacred and Metaphysical Treatment of Flora in the Poetry by Sigitas Geda, Leonardas Gutauskas, and Jonas Juškaitis in the 1970–1980s

"Biji, ak dvēsele": svētuma manifestācija ar krāsu starpniecību un floras metafiziskais traktējums 20. gadsimta 80.–90. gadu Sigita Gedas, Leonarda Gutauska un Jona Juškaiša dzejā

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Atslēgvārdi:
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* The citation is from Sigitas Geda's cycle of poems "*Delčia rudenė deivė*" (The Waning Moon, the Autumnal Goddess) (Geda 1972: 7).

The philological translation of all fragments of the poems cited in this study is by Aleksandra Fominaitė.

Summary During the period of Stagnation the works by Sigitas Geda, Leonardas Gutauskas, and Jonas Juškaitis, with their inclination towards the poetics of visions and a theocentric worldview, notably differed from the prevailing themes in Lithuanian poetry. Due to this shared apperception, plants in their poetry were treated as having an essential characteristic of Being, which grounds metaphysically the related notions of the place and the transcendentality. An address taken from Geda's poem, "*Buvai, o siela*" ("You Were There, Oh Soul"), reveals an approach (common to all three poets) that sees the landscape of the homeland as a repository of past and future lives. Concluding my earlier research, this article aims to analyze how a) a spiritualized manifestation of Being, seen in plants and perceived as sacredness expressed by certain colors, b) an apprehension of the world as a perpetual metamorphosis, and, c) the images of harmonious existence, which draw their specific character from the archetypes of ancient Baltic culture, reveal the specific experiences of divinity and sacredness of the native landscape in the poetry of Geda, Gutauskas, and Juškaitis in the 1970–1980s, as well as to disclose the philosophical and theosophical ideas that influenced their thought.

Kopsavilkums Stagnācijas laikā lietuviešu lirikas kopējā tematu kontekstā izceļas Sigita Gedas, Leonarda Gutauska un Jona Juškaiša vīziju poētika un teocentriskie pasaules priekšstati, kuros augiem tika piedēvēts būtisks esamības raksturojums, kas metafiziski skaidro savstarpēji saistītās vietas un transcendentalitātes izjūtas. Raksta nosaukumā iekļautā Gedas uzruna augam "*Buvai, o siela*" ("Biji, ak dvēsele") atklāj visiem trim dzejniekiem kopīgo ainavas traktējumu kā bijušo un nākamo dzīvju krātuvi. Noslēdzot manus iepriekšējos pētījumus, šajā rakstā tiek detalizētāk aplūkots, kā minētie dzejnieki savā daiļradē dievišķīguma un Tēvijas sakralitātes pārdzīvojumu atklāj ar augos un svētuma izjūtu krāsās saskatītajām apgarotās esamības izpausmēm, pasaules kā mūžīgās metamorfozes izpratni un harmoniskās esamības priekšstatiem, kuriem savdabību piešķīruši senās baltu kultūras arhetipi.

Introduction During the first decade of the Brezhnev Era and Stagnation, the potential of Lithuanian literature was increasing. The poet Kornelijus Platelis has called the period 1971–1972 the threshold when "socialist realism was dealt a fatal blow" and the modernization of literature, especially poetry, gained momentum (Platelis 1997: 32). The poets who carried out this breakthrough – Judita Vaičiūnaitė, Leonardas Gutauskas, Jonas Juškaitis, Marcelijus Martinaitis, and Sigitas Geda – had debuted in the 1960s and, insted of writing about social progress or other ideological themes, sought aesthetic novelty. The second poetry collections of Vaičiūnaite, Gutauskas and Juškaitis (and the first collection of Geda) were characterized by an intense perception of the world through colors, while in the oeuvre of the authors discussed in this paper, the ecstatic experience of being in color linked to the poetics of visions and the religious treatment of the landscape. I have already written about the sacralization of the landscape of the homeland as a counter-cultural gesture and the recurrence of metaphysics in the poetry by Geda, Gutauskas, and Juškaitis in the 1960s and 1970s (Bernotienė 2018: 260–271). Using the method of comparative analysis of coinciding imagery, in this study I will investigate the ways in which color conglomerates of images participate in the experience of the sacred in the poetry of Geda, Juškaitis, and Gutauskas. My previous research highlighted the representation of plants related to colors and to the issues of reincarnation, embodiment, or guessing one of God's names. In this paper, I will explore the metaphysical treatment of flora and the association of plants with the soul. I will concentrate on the philosophical and theosophical concepts of existence and soul that underpin these poets' reflection of the sacred in the landscape during the period of Stagnation, when the landscape in literature was considered to be "a bourgeois relic, a manifestation of nationalism and aestheticism" (Baliutytė 2019: 447). In keeping with the consistency of ideas, this study is not structured according to the work of a particular author, but with the aim of uncovering the nature of this single contemporary phenomenon. It therefore focuses on the reconstruction of the worldview and the identification of the ideas that have inspired the metaphysical treatment of the world structure and the idealistic sense of a place. Lithuanian scholar Jonas Šlekys asserted that the religious aspect of Romanticism is still undiscovered by Lithuanian researchers (Šlekys 2001: 132). Scholar Aušra Jurgutienė states that in the studies of Lithuanian Romanticism and its lasting influence on contemporary literature we still lack a systematic examination of and "the reflections on the transcendentality in Romanticism, the Platonic worldview, and Christian mystics" (as quoted by Šlekys 2001: 132),

i.e., we still have not explored the substance which in the theocentric medieval thought grounded the considerations "about God, the human, and the Being, the unity of which was a main prerequisite of the mystics" (Žilionis 2007: 69). In this study I shall try to approach this issue at least partially.

The emergence of these categories is the most important object of this research, especially in view of the fact that during the Soviet period, the ideas that underpinned the uniqueness of the poetry of Geda, Gutauskas, and Juškaitis could only be discussed in narrow circles of like-minded people, not in public (or literary) discourse, and were distributed in a latent rather than explicitly articulated and thematized form.

I will refer to the following collections: *26 rudens ir vasaros giesmės* (26 Songs of Autumn and Summer, 1972), *Mėnulio žiedai* (Moon Blossoms, 1977), and *Žydinti slyva Snaigyno ežere* (Blossoming Plum-tree in the Lake of Snaigynas, 1981) by Sigitas Geda, *Vartai po diemedžiu* (Gate under the Southernwood, 1976), *Svetingumo namai* (The House of Hospitality, 1980), and *Krantas* (The Shore, 1982) by Leonardas Gutauskas, and *Mėlyna žibutė apšvietė likimą* (Blue Hepatica Lit up the Destiny, 1972), *Tolimos dainos* (Far-away Songs, 1981) and *Dešimt žodžių jazmino žiedui* (Ten Words to the Jasmine Flower, 1984) by Jonas Juškaitis.

The soul and philosophical definitions of place

In the cycles of poems *"Ledynas baltas kaukaspenis"* (Glacier the White Thunderstone, with the subtitle *Summer Psalms. 14 Stations. In memoriam Hieronymus Bosch*) and "*Delčia rudenė deivė*" (The Waning Moon, the Autumnal Goddess), Geda treats plants as forms that embody different experiences of the divine (e. g, he associates the torment of Jesus Christ with that of the flax or the rye and the nettle with the mystery of love), the transmigration of souls, and an otherworldly existence that he imagines only in color rather than in a particular image: "Return for a moment to the nettle overgrowth by the fence, / to the distant Azure Purple, / to the clayey rose, to the voice of oriole / The mouth made of snow forever forbids me…" (Geda 1972b: 30). His poems mention many plants (lilies, lilacs, wormwood, burdock, rose, caltha, willow, pear-tree, hackberry, spruce, cherry-tree, nettle, rhododendron, cornflower, hepatica, calamus, thistle, flax, etc.), which we can relate to some form of the divine either directly as symbols (e.g., the rose, the lily), or merely by association (i.e., the violet reminds of the Holy Trinity with its three-lobed leaf). The poet speaks of plants as companions to the human existence, as beings related to humans by kinship ("In the land not that one / You were my sister, / Burdock. // The vegetal soul of the plant, / Which / Plato did not

recognize" (Geda 1981: 28). Here Geda refers to an important element in his perception of the world: Aristotle's concept of the soul which influenced the mysticism of early medieval Christianity. According to that, the soul has a nutritive level (characteristic of plants, which are capable of dying, growing and reproducing), a sensitive level (characteristic of animals) and a rational level (characteristic of human beings) (Aristotelis 1959: 89). Another element is Aristotle's summary of the idealistic Greek pre-Christian philosophy on the "transcendent nature of prime mover, that supreme form of all forms, to the world" (Sezemanas 1959: 23). The idea of God's transcendence to the world was based on the negative theology of the Neoplatonist Dionysius the Areopagite, and particularly relevant to the depiction of landscape was his assertion that it is not God who can be comprehended, but only the Place where it dwells.[1]

Not every peer reader or critic would have been able to trace the origins of the metaphysical thinking that stirred the imagination of these poets during the Stagnation years (the evidence of which was the reception of Geda's poems in Lithuania[2] (Kmita 2009: 109–114)). Actually, a public discussion of the existence of God and its reflection in the philosophical tradition, or any other theological question could have turned into an accusation for the authors and the reason for a ban on their works in general. Although censored, the collections were nevertheless published; their partial incomprehensibility, resulting from the authors' idealistic outlook, was "dismissed" as their tendency towards the esoteric and their idealistic sense of place. Therefore, it makes sense to look into the development of metaphysical ideas and to see what concepts and authors influenced these poets' worldview at that time.

Another aspect of Aristotle's reflections on the soul that must have entered

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1 "[T]he beneficent Cause of all is most eloquent, yet utters few words, or rather is altogether silent, as having neither (human) speech nor (human) understanding, because it is super-essentially exalted above created things, and reveals itself in Its naked Truth to those who pass beyond all that is pure or impure, and ascend above the topmost altitudes of holy things, and who, leaving behind them all divine light and sound and heavenly utterances, plunge into the Darkness where truly dwells, as the Oracles declare, that ONE who is beyond all. [..] Nevertheless, he did not attain to the Presence of God itself; he saw not it (for it cannot be looked upon), but the Place where it dwells" (Dionysius the Areopagite [s. a.]: 205).

2 Many readers did not fully grasp the esoteric references in Geda's poems "The Waning Moon, the Autumnal Goddess" and "Glacier the White Thunderstone," but the censors of the literature clearly sensed the "radical otherness" of these poems, their absolute opposition to the socialist realist paradigm, and their anti-ideological direction. As Rimantas Kmita has summed it up, "Geda's *26 Songs of Autumn and Summer* were the most radical challenge to the canon of socialist realism, which met with great ideological resistance [..]" (Kmita 2009: 111, 112, 114). Geda believed that even at that time "[t]here [were] still men and women alive who understood that it [the poem "Glacier the White Thunderstone" – GB] was a poem about the Northern Christ [..]. With this only key, by the way, it can be unlocked" (Geda 2002: 96).

Geda's field of vision was the purposefulness of action (entelechy) attributed to the soul, and its connection to form, rejecting the earlier Pythagorean idea of the separation of the soul from the body (transmigration and immortality of the soul). This idea goes back to the beliefs of ancient civilizations (Ancient Egypt and India) about the existence of the soul after death, i.e., reincarnation. Geda did not abandon the controversial treatments of the immortality of the soul that inspired the theologians of early Christianity, while he apparently was partly influenced by the native religion of the ancient Balts. Without departing from the issue of the soul, it is useful to recall Plato's adoption and rationalization of the Orphic-Pythagorean esoteric perspective, based on Egyptian soteriology where

> [T]he soul (*psyche*) is no longer considered a ghost (*phasma*) or a ghostly double (*eidolon*), as Homer depicted it, but is thought to be immortal (like the Egyptian *ba*, destined to be transformed into a pure intellectual light, *akh*), which is the authentic existence, an immaterial and divine essence, transferred out of the illusionary prison-like body and reintegrated into the divine sphere of eternal archetypes (Uždavinys 2016: 30).

In the autumn of 1972, after the esoteric poems by Geda had already come out, he was filling out a questionnaire compiled by poet Nijolė Miliauskaitė and listed the early medieval Christian metaphysicians that had influenced him and his circle of friends, including Gutauskas. Geda also described his own profound experience, which reflected metaphysicians' viewpoint, as follows:

> "Sometimes I'm sure that once upon a time, somewhere [*emphasis by Geda* – GB], I have seen and experienced another reality where the forms of all plants and animals and people were different. This has to be said with human Melancholy, and Longing. Then I want to depart from here with my soul for an infinite and strange Journey. [..] The Grasshopper, the Lamb, the Cow, the Rooster, the Hen are beautiful to me. Of the herbs – Nettle, Stellaria, Equisetum (as reincarnated souls – how beautiful the people who turned into them must have been!)" (Geda 1972a: 3–4).

Landscape animation: visions of endless journeys and time

Geda's cycle of poems "The Waning Moon, the Autumnal Goddess" is a vision of such an infinite journey, beginning with an exclamation after an address to the death: "Oh golden gleam, / who played with our souls! Heaven / without end... Oh, the lure / of the distance!" (Geda 1972b: 7). In the first poem of this cycle Geda discloses the perspective of the universe, and the speaker of the poem names the reincarnated souls as we should understand them – [the gods'] grasshopper, [the friend] pigeon, nettle overgrowth, calamus, [sister] sedge, bindweeds, southernwood, and roses. What unites the speaker with

them is a passion for togetherness, and Geda describes the natural forms in terms of color and light that has the characteristics of both the light of the sensual reality and mystical light (Uždavinys, 2016: 29). The speaker conveys the greatest intensity of existence by the flowering state of the plant, which Geda imagines as the crown of a deity ("A diadem in bloom and a voice / you promise to the gods, / oh land!" (Geda 1972b: 8), while the voice indicates the origin of the soul at a higher level. Following Aristotle, the criterion of voice as transmission is another manifestation of the soul's inherent purposefulness: "[T]he transmitter of sound [is] a being with a soul, and, moreover, one whose activity [is] accompanied by certain images, since the voice is a sound which has a certain meaning" (Aristotelis 1959: 108). The phrase "a voice you promise to the gods" refers to the eloquence of multiple forms, which are spoken by that which transcends them and which, through them, is linked to a place (cf. Gutauskas's lines: "Oh voice that molders in a reedpipe of alder" (Gutauskas 1982: 21)). In the mysterious pilgrimage of Geda's poem, the recognizable landscape is characterized by longing ("You Were There, Oh Soul"), while the former connection to the place as a form of remembrance is evidenced by the spirit of a deceased embodying the affection for the inhabited place. The expression of the relation between soul-spirit and place is revealed by the disembodied spirit. Geda's attribution of plant forms to it provides the preconditions for animating the landscape ("What else are you saying / at the well, you surly spirit?... / From wild southernwood, from bird cherries / her neck, / her eyes are turned, / awake she looks, her head / tilting... She knows everything" (Geda 1972b: 8)). By depicting this spirit (the ghost of a deceased person) as a dryadic being, Geda not only anthropomorphizes it, but also exaggerates it, achieving the impression of a huge being floating above the ground. This change of scale helps him to depict a spirit enveloping the world, for them the earth is merely a flowering diadem, promising to reveal the knowledge – to transmit it through the voice. It has been mentioned that in the Ancient Egyptian religion the recognition of the immortality of the soul led to the rejection of those interpretations that associated the soul with external appearances such as *phasma* and *eidolon*, which we also see in Geda's poem as a shadow-like figure (a disembodied shape) and a bloom in the darkness ("Rivers, / their shadows do not die and fall, / in the night, they're rustling summer, that oversubtle bloom / of the bindweeds..." (Geda 1972b: 7–8)). In addition to the intense experience of place and the experience of a great being (spirit) enveloping the place, Geda in his cycle of poems also reveals visions of time through the place, appearing in the conventional symbolism of the seasons, but also as abandoned landscapes (Geda 1972b: 12), fire abysses (Geda 1972b: 11), sandy outcroppings (Geda 1972b: 13), or bones that the silver seas have washed ashore (Geda 1972b: 24) – the latter image containing a hint of a transformative alchemical process.

Rhythms of the Universe The sequence of deaths and rebirths depicted in these autumn songs, or as Geda puts it, the manifestation of beings (Geda 2002: 98), is a part of the great mysterious rhythm of the Universe in which the outlines of timelessness (eternity) and time cover each other up. In obedience to a mysterious rhythm, existence renews itself ("The frosty shell / is already splitting; / the landscapes, they / have been abandoned / but in the Distant Waning Moon, / in the fire, awakens / Speechless of the Plants [..] It is / the humming mystery of sands…" Geda 1972b: 11–12). Still, there is a certain threshold beyond which the interconnectedness of the emanations[3] is only confirmed by recognition[4]: the imagery in those Geda's poems that refer to snow, frost and ice, as well as shininess, embodies the experience of the irreversibility of time. On this occasion, we can recall the lines that conclude the first poem of the cycle "The Waning Moon, the Autumnal Goddess": "The white shadow of a rose / could be enveloped by the mystery of the soul…" (Geda 1972b: 8), where the oxymoronic epithet "white shadow" does not refer to the characteristic of the shadow of the rose, but speaks of the rose as a state of a possibly reincarnated soul whose previous existence has sunk into oblivion and transformed into shadow. The color white is the closest to the impression of luminosity, i.e. the radiance that is the manifestation of holiness. Geda's depiction of time involves the whole spectrum of colors, but Geda (and also Gutauskas) expresses the aforementioned experience of irreversibility and the associated experience of oblivion as extinction in the metaphor of snow – which already marks another cycle of existence (that of a plant). An example of this can be found in the following lines of Geda's later poem "The Lamentations of the Koehne Mountain Ash" from 1981 – "the speechless silence / of my leaves / you summon it / with snowy names…" (Geda 1981: 98). Similarly, Gutauskas in his poems conveys one of the signs of the singularity of existence by using the metaphor of snow and of the highest manifestation of vegetation – the blossoming: "On the blade of darkness, / Between snow and fire, / How briefly our hearts blossomed." This three-line miniature from the collection "The House of

3 This, as Geda puts it, "procession of beings" (Geda 2002: 98), in the light of the idea of the One which was deepened by early Christianity and which influenced his worldview, is most accurately described as emanations. According to Rasius Makselis, "[e]manation explains the relation between the transcendent source of being and the changing, emerging and disappearing beings" (Makselis 2010:381).

4 It was about this recognition that Geda wrote: "I don't like pantheism, I have never adored nature. If I recognize in it [in nature] a grasshopper, an ant, a squirrel, a tree, that is recognition. My meeting with them is fatal, as with that little Lamb in the unforgettable soil of my childhood. In such cases, the light bursts forth at the very top of the brain… I hope that they too will recognize me somewhere" (Geda 2002:99).

Hospitality" (Gutauskas 1980: 88) has a commonality with the duration of being in the presence of God ("on the blade of darkness"), which he perceives in terms of eternity, as highlighted in the analysis of the aforementioned poem by Gutauskas, *"Tėvyne, šiaurės augale"* ("Homeland, you northern plant" (Gutauskas 1976: 57–59)). Meanwhile, the equation of the plant and the animal through the metaphor of a blossoming of the hearts or of the heart as a blossom suggests that the Aristotelian invariant of the treatment of the soul (the life of a human being is represented as a synthesis of animal existence (heart) and plantal existence (blossom)) has taken hold in Gutauskas's imagination as not contradicting the Romantics' organology, towards which the further analysis of the images related to the color blue leads.

Geda and also, as we shall see, Gutauskas relied more on the Neoplatonists, while Romanticism – the last epoch of metaphysical European culture when the authors imagined that the real world was not the visible, audible, and perceptible one, but rather the eternal and infinite world of the soul – also had an impact on all three poets' worldviews. I could give a number of quotations in which they use the broad spectrum of the color blue – the key to Romanticism – to represent indescribable mysteries. Geda writes: "All the peaks of the world are light blue, all that you cannot reach" (Geda 1981: 54), Gutauskas: "The threatening wholeness of time will be continued by a glassy light blue shore" (Gutauskas 1980: 77), and the more earthly Juškaitis: "Love, a blue angel, flying out of our eyes" (Juškaitis 1972: 34). In the context of the soul and the development and influence of metaphysical ideas, it is important that the idea of the One, which the Neoplatonists and their followers developed, was most impressively conveyed by Novalis in his novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* as a vision and symbol of the Romanticist longing for the blue flower, the celestial bloom in which "the world's spirit" and the "noble prototype of woman" (Novalis, 2004: 247) unite.

A terminological excursus

I offer this terminological digression to discuss the complexities and genesis of Romanticist ideas as revealed and developed in the prominent work of Leif Weatherby *Transplanting the Metaphysical Organ: German Romanticism between Leibniz and Marx*. Although the Romanticists were a throwback to the cultural imagination of the Middle Ages, they drew heavily on the Greek author Plotinus who argued that all the stages of reality are emanations of the One, and who developed the theory of divine reality as one of the levels of the soul. In the theoretical considerations of the Romanticists, the soul was overshadowed by the questions of the relationship between life and the divine (i.e. the debate about preformation or epigenesis). Gottfried Leibniz in his ouevre *The New System* stated that "true substances have always existed," and this doctrine forced him "to confront the

problem of the transmigration of souls". As he raised the question: "[I]f the soul always exists, could it be that it is attached to different bodies at different times?", he rejected this possibility and developed "the notion of a substantial unity which he called an 'organic' machine: the preformed and always-existing animal" (Weatherby 2016: 56).

Admitting that the soul and the body are linked, Leibniz agreed to discuss not the transmigration of souls (i.e., metempsychosis), but a kind of transformation of the always-present essence, a passage from one state to another. As Weatherby states,

> "[the] problem of the emergence of organic beings from seemingly 'dead' matter thus drove scientific debate squarely into a philosophical register, one in which Leibniz participated from the 1690s onward, arguing that vital force was a metaphysical principle that had to be included, although only partially, in physics for its results to sync up with that of philosophical investigation [..]. The borrowings of the terms 'preformation,' 'epigenesis,' and 'organ' in Leibniz, Kant, and Herder all center around questions of force and our knowledge of it" (Weatherby 2016: 66).

Romanticism reformulated the question of the soul as the part that cognizes the existence into the question of the organ which is also characterized by cognition. Romanticist organology developed a number of concepts related to the problem of the mediator: it took from Aristotle's treatise *On the Soul* the concept of the senses as instruments of perception, the treatment of the body as an instrument of the soul and the treatment of the soul as an organ. The human being was called by Friedrich Schelling the organ of God – and poetry was praised by the romanticists as the organ of cognition (Weatherby 2016: 216). Friedrich Schleiermacher said the following: "[W]here imagination reigns, there you have a God. Exactly right: imagination is the organ of the human for the divine" (Weatherby 2016: 216 quoting Schlegel 1958: 257). Therefore, when Novalis refers to the ecstatic fusion with the One, we have to imagine the difference between his discourse and that of Plotinus. The Romanticists' image of the cosmos has changed; it is no longer a solid universe, but an incomplete, emerging entity; a schematic diagram of a universe with a kind of a hole in it: "[A]nd because the human is in the world, but has a sense (a religious sense) for the universe, the world is incomplete. It is a discrete totality, or a nontotal entirety" (Weatherby 2016: 219). This hole in the scheme of the universe presented by Novalis, i.e. the attempt to spatialize the continuity of knowledge about the world, was justified by "Schleiermacher's revisionist anthropological theology" (Weatherby 2016: 213), which exalted the powers of human perception and made the question of God dependent on the type of imagination. Various authors of the time sought to describe its various forms by offering original definitions of the "tool" or organ of that cognition. Thus "the nature of knowing became a methodological problem, indeed, a metaphysical problem" (Weatherby 2016: 67).

Cycles of returns and disappearances Not all of those changes in thought influenced the poetry in question, even though they belonged to the same tradition of metaphysical thinking that acknowledged the interconnectedness of the world. Going further only into plant-related imagery, I will at least mention Gutauskas's conglomeration of constant, related metaphysical images (light blue time, light, wind, shore, flower, blossom, bird, garden) that convey, through visions of time, a belonging to the infinite rhythm of the Universe and the great cycles of disappearances and returns. In this perspective, plants embody a more universal form of existence than human beings. When Gutauskas writes: "Beyond the boundary of believing that our home is / Eternal like time, wandering on the seas, / Given over to the blooming of white gardens, / Beyond the boundary rimmed with the charred tracery / Of the shores of the hours that have flamed before our eyes" (Gutauskas 1976: 108), the vegetal vision of white gardens in bloom emerges as an image of timeless transcendence. The shortness of existence that the speaker mentions here – the shores of hours that have flamed before our eyes – contrasts eternity and the ephemeral, passing existence as the negative of each other, or the shadow of each other – the charred tracery – which implicitly suggests that one can see the extinguishing existence and its changing forms on the other shore as eternity. In his poem "But life is restless: it visits in flames" in the collection *The House of Hospitality*, Gutauskas does not focus only on human existence, but speaks of the rhythmic eternity of life which, irrespective of its specific forms (plant, animal, or human), is also characterized by a passive phase, that of the deadening that he imagines indefinitely as something with a barely tangible reality, like an old memory: "You, azure in the face, joining the shores, / For the cry of the soul we'll turn gray in the mouth of heaven, / Like an old memory, like rain, / reigning over the seas" (Gutauskas 1980: 124). The enigmatic reference to "azure in the face" prompts us to question whether the face, as an anthropomorphic detail, may refer to the Creator himself (let us recall the second painting of the cycle "The Creation of the World" (1905–1906) by the famous Lithuanian painter, composer, and visionist Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (Čiurlionis, il. Nr. 63)). Yet, more likely, it is the identification of the face with the element of sea[5],

5 In 2008, Gutauskas published a collection *Švytintys kūnai* (Shining Bodies), a new set of poems created from fragments of his poems from different periods of time. In this work his poetic motifs – objects, phenomena, and reflections upon the landscape – radiate with the secret connections between things, and their proximity to the sphere of the sacred is the subject of the poem's title. The author of illustrations of this book was his son Tadas Gutauskas. The treatment of color, brought to light by the creative dialogue between the two Gutauskas, is worthy of special consideration. Here I will only point out that one of the images in the poem "*Šiaurės pašvaistė*" (Northern Lights) refers to an invariant rewriting of the quoted lines from the collection *The House of Hospitality*: "But life is restless, it visits those who are sheltered at the Earth's boundary by its flames. You, the

which embodies the infinity of time (and the non-finite disappearance). Its semantic field in Gutauskas's poetry is characterized by this and similar images: "That we'll return here as the bark of the rough seas – / The brightest light above our heads – / Like the salty grasses of the tide / Or the fearful traces of the gods" (Gutauskas 1976: 33). Likewise, the incarnate forms, the reincarnated souls or, as Geda described them, "the manifestation of beings", one way or another were included in his poems as having something in common with the narrative of the passion of Christ or the sorrows of Mary.

Gutauskas's poetic visions are not bound by any character or story, but are based on the very anticipation of such an unrecognized existence that spiritualizes the visual forms and greatly expands the field of the sacred. Here, the entities are no longer united by a kinship that is common in Geda's poetry ("We are two, we are brother and sister, / You are where I am not now, / Tomorrow I will be where you are not, / Sister, daughter, and mother in light blue" (Geda 1981: 87)), but have a much more distant, impersonal and indirect relationship, which the Romanticists (in their problematization of the relationship between life and the divine, the question of the form and potentiality of life which Aristotle referred to as entelechy) have also dealt with. Gutauskas is sensitive to this potentiality of the appearance of existence – not to the occasion, but only to the opportunity that one form of existence can offer to another ("Is it not true / That a mysterious coolness is close to you, / Which foreshadows the paths to seeds?" (Gutauskas 1980: 123)). We can find the same entelechal sense of participation in the nameless flow of life in the lines by the poet Gediminas Jokimaitis, who was a deportee (Gutauskas's father was also exiled): "Even if all the seedlings burst into leaf, / I will only be the wind that has brought them [the seeds of the tree]" (Jokimaitis 1988: 246). Important to note that the future tense that appears here suggests a suspended existence in the present and highlights situations of postponement and non-participation. From a historical rather than

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Azure Voice, connecting the shores, your power comes from old memory, like the refreshing rain that reigns over the seas." (poem "Northern Lights" in: Gutauskas, Gutauskas 2008: 84). Having juxtaposed these images denoted by azure (Azure in the Face; You, the Azure Voice), I would see the interpretive shift from face to voice as a more precise formulation of the image of the creative being hovering over the Earth. It highlights the connection of the voice with meaning, emphasized already by Aristotle that "the voice is a sound which is the sign of something", with the implication that "that which causes the impact must have a soul, and accompany it with some phantasm (mental image)" (Aristotle [s. a.]). Gutauskas's collection *The House of Hospitality* also includes the poem "Isn't the flame from the poet's mouth..." (Gutauskas 1980:122), which also became a part of the poem "Northern Lights". Interestingly, his lines "Oh, you, muffled and dusky voice" in the new version invoke: "You Lord." This change only confirms that the phrases "azure in the face", "azure voice", and "muffled and dusky voice" are substitutes, and that their constituents (the color azure, the face and the voice) are employed by Gutauskas to represent holiness.

a supra-temporal perspective, Gutauskas incorporates these situations into esoteric reflections on the human condition (i.e., the fall out of allotted possibilities), e.g.: "Calm down, my heart, we are full of desire, we will sink into the crystal wind, we will remain / Unnamed, silent, and in the fire of the past / Indistinguishable from the flaming blossoms of a southernwood" (Gutauskas 1976: 23). They equate human and plantal existence ("indistinguishable from the [..] blossoms of a southernwood"), with the plants in blossom elevated as the state of highest fulfillment. The projection onto the plantal state contrasts it with the unfulfilledness of human existence ("unnamed," "silent") and refers to the experience of generational loss.

Being yourself: the apotheosis of sedentariness

Compared to Geda or Gutauskas, the poetry of Juškaitis – especially his landscape verse – is rather down-to-earth. It is derived from real impressions: the places around the village of Kuturiai where Juškaitis was born and where he returned in order to escape persecution shortly after his studies in Vilnius and before his first book was published. In his poetry, the images of the land are expressive and colorfully striking, and they also serve as witnesses to history, as he uses them to speak boldly about the recent past – the war and resistance. Even today, it is hard to imagine how the Soviet censors passed over a poem that captures this kind of experience. In the landscapes of Juškaitis, the human states of being dissolve and merge into the vast picture of the surrounding nature and of the earth under the Sun, which has its own intense rhythm and its own life, and gives the appropriate scale to human activity: "Lay down – // Happy around the head / The rye in the green great / Rhythm of joy was lingering / Under the swirls of the stars / In the elegiac light" (Juškaitis 1984: 84).

In his landscape poetry, the problematics of the soul lack the element of reincarnation. Juškaitis was the most consistent of the three poets analyzed here in adhering to the Christian doctrine. He did not express any pantheistic feelings about being reborn in another body, or about an existence that keeps changing its forms. However, even without transgressing the canon, Juškaitis, when depicting the land or seeing it in his memories, often catches in these visions the glimpse of a being, a spirit or emanation, hovering above the earth ("The wind blows in nobody's whistle / Blowing the jingliness off the jingles" (Juškaitis 1984: 98)), which he has explained in words that are highly rational, but at the same time deeply faithful:

> "[..] On quiet evenings in September, I used to watch the sown and ploughed fields, where suddenly a column of swirling dust would rise up and run like a human

through the fields until it disappeared into the twilight distance. It seemed that the spirit, who breathed wherever it wanted, would catch the dust of the ground for the human body who was passing through life with his soul" (Juškaitis 2002: 146)[6].

What is most important in this memoir is how closely the Christian imagery (the breathing spirit moving the dust of the earth, the human form emerging from that dust, moving not only in place – across a field, but also in time – through life with the soul) merges with reality in Juškaitis's imagination.

It was this kind of imagery that was similar to the poetics of the visions by Geda and Gutauskas: in the proximity of the land they observe an animated, usually vegetal form. The Christian worldview restrains Juškaitis from claiming that he sees the plant as a separate being with a soul. Compared to the work of Geda or Gutauskas, the sense of divine presence pervades every substance of Juškaitis poetry. In his landscapes, the connection with the depicted reality is so close that we can recognize the sacred elements in the realistic (and sometimes aestheticized) picture of reality only by the intense accents of color or light that permeate it and which Juškaitis uses, as if he were painting, to create an impression of radiance ("Like in the fields that will get cracking / To spread the silver on to the sun" (Juškaitis 1984: 103). The experience of the sacred has its roots in his mindful awareness that the creation exists thanks to the Creator, which colors his every line.

In my previous research (Bernotienė 2018) I discussed in more detail a short poem by Juškaitis, *"Auksinė giesmė"* (Golden Chant), in which he conveys the difficult situation of post-war survivors' endurance by a concise image in quite a short sentence: *"Dilgėlė žydėjo"* (Nettle was blooming). I mentioned that the stoic survival in the place where one lives and the focus on the highest purpose of being (blossoming) that Juškaitis chooses as a characteristic of a plant for his trope, echoes the idea of the famous sermon *The Lily of the Fields and the Birds of the Air*[7] by the pioneer of existentialism Søren Kierkegaard: about the situation of enduring whatever God has allotted for you, i.e., the situation of being yourself. Through plants, Juškaitis repeatedly reveals the human condition of someone who can not choose their position and

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6 Juškaitis rewrote this in poetic language in his poem "*Arimuose*" (In the Ploughed Fields): "The pale purple fields of September / Are harrowed in the glow / Before the wind that runs by them into the distance, / Who is weaving a thick rope out of the dust" (Juškaitis 1984: 88). This kind of a blending and even repetition of images is typical of Juškaitis.

7 In my previous study (Bernotienė, 2019) I have paid some attention to the parallelism between the lily figures in this poem by Juškaitis and in the sermon *The Lilies of the Field and the Birds of the Air* by Kierkegaard. With the image of the lily, Juškaitis conveys an existential experience of being in one's own place, – that is, of fulfillment of one's fate given by God. This kind of experience, in his poetry, is also characteristic to other plants (the corncockle, the nettle).

fate, and who patiently endure what they are destined to. Thus, in the poem *"Kaimo kapinaitės"* (The Small Countryside Graveyard), he likens the song of the landless beggars to the blooming of thistles ("In the same way that thistles blossom, / The beggars were chanting there" (Juškaitis 1984: 85)). In his poem "*Vasaros kaitros*" (Summer Heat), the "happy corncockle blooms, pink and sweet, / standing in its own hump" (Juškaitis 1972: 18). The semantic similarity of nettle, thistle and common corncockle as weeds or plants that choose to seclude or marginalize themselves allows Juškaitis, through the parallel between a human being and plant, to thematize and to put forward as a value the very presence of an entity in its place, and its remaining settled, even if it suffers from a miserable, painful existence. Through the juxtaposition of blossoming and chanting, he transfers to the thistle the ability to express oneself with the voice which, let us remember, was used by Aristotle as a feature to distinguish beings with a soul.

Juškaitis does not base his treatment of soul-bearing plants on direct analogy and identification like Geda and Gutauskas do in their poetry, but rather mediates it culturally. Thus, in his poem "*Eglė vasaros naktį*" (Spruce on a Summer Night), the spruce tree which serves as a matricentric prototype of Baltic culture ("in the mound, a spruce – / Queen of the Serpents[8]"), in the lightning appears to be a saint. He supports this connection phonologically by the rhyme ("Beautiful, before the lightnings burn out, / In the mound a spruce – / Queen of the Serpents. The mists were fogging / For her and the day was changing / For night. Like a miracle one / Star. Serenity lightnings!... As an almond // The time when the water is white / And the herbs are blooming beneath her. / In the hour of the owl's eyes / It's in the old country of the north – / Darker than dark" (Juškaitis 1984: 74). He visually supports it by the similarity between the dark shape of the tree shrouded in lightning and fog and the mandorla ("It was the time of the almond"). In Christian art, the mandorla has been used as a means of focusing and framing the sacred, and mandorlas often depict the saints Jesus and Mary. In depicting the saint spruce tree, Juškaitis repeats the same pattern as in his poem "*Vasaros kaitros*" (Summer Heat) where he depicts the lily ("the herbs are blooming beneath her": "beneath the shrine pillar / That's wrapped in grass like a tongue of flame, / The lily of the fields with purple hair" (Juškaitis 1972: 16)) and even the mother ("The herbs have surrounded your shoulders, / And their shadows are at your feet" (Juškaitis 1984: 48)). The epithet "darker than darkness" that Juškaitis gives to the spruce tree is, on the one hand, an indication of its mysteriousness and

8 Etymological connections: Lithuanian word for spruce, *eglė*, relates to the Lithuanian mythological tale *Eglė the Queen of Serpents* (*Eglė žalčių karalienė*). The tale features not only human-reptile shapeshifting, but also an irreversible human-tree shapeshifting.

similarity to the iconographic type of the Black Mother of God – namely, Hodegetria – the one who shows the way. On the other hand, the context of the old Baltic theogonic myth featuring the Queen of Serpents (especially one of its aspects, the transformation into a tree) is also relevant here, which justifies the rise of this conglomerate of images (mother-tree-saint) and the related phenomenon of a "northern country" – the ability to represent the sacredness manifested by a plant.

There are not many such examples of sanctity in plants. However, Juškaitis also expresses feelings of rebirth in a plant similar to those that Gutauskas or Geda developed, though without touching upon the question of the soul ("Existence beyond beings. In it, the threads of destiny / Intersect to renew the old. The grassland / Is rustling gently / Daily life in winding each other…" (Juškaitis 1984: 150)). He conveys the continuity of existence through the image of the land weaving a wreath – an object with no beginning or end – while at the same time emphasizing the temporality of beings through the similarity between grass and humans. In the title of his poem "*Prieš amžiną žemės rytojų*" (Before the Eternal Tomorrow of the Land), Juškaitis seems to be simulating the optimistic tomorrow of the Soviet rhetoric, but the emphasis here is on the eternity that he mentions. As he develops the images of the poem, he presents the blooming wreath of the land and the image of mankind bending down for working the land as a bowing down to something greater and definitely unnameable. Also, by shifting his perspective to a cosmic one, he sees the wreath of the land as if it were woven by the hand of the unnameable one which we can read, with a reference to the poem "Harvest (Autumn)"[9] by Rainer Maria Rilke which Juškaitis has translated, as God's hand[10]. This image of the strands of life woven into an infinite form suggests that Juškaitis based it not on the transmigration of the soul but, to recall Leibniz, on a certain notion of the transformation of an always present entity.

9 "We all are falling. This hand falls, as it extends. /And take a look at others. It's in them all. / And yet there's One, holding this fall / With endless gentleness in both his hands" (Rilke [s. a.]).

10 Later, when Gediminas Mikelaitis asked him about faith, Juškaitis gave a parable of a meadow in bloom to understand the closeness of God: "Once during a sermon I heard a priest explaining this Gospel passage with difficulty – whoever keeps my commandments abides in me, and I abide in him. When I looked at the flowers in the meadow, how they mingled together – pink, yellow, purple, blue, white, in complex blossoms, blooming and not disturbing each other, and the light staying in them, unlocking the blossoms – they are different, but all in the same light, which is really white. It seemed to me to be so fitting for that place and people in the Gospel that I used it in my poem "*Prieš amžiną žemės rytojų*" (Before the Eternal Tomorrow of Land)" (Juškaitis 2002: 146).

Conclusions The texts that Sigitas Geda, Leonardas Gutauskas, and Jonas Juškaitis created during the Brezhnev Era were a bold and conscious step in the opposite direction to the Socialist Realism in terms of themes and ideas. In this study I have tried to shed light on the philosophical and theosophical concepts of existence and soul that underpinned these poets' reflection of the sacred in the landscape – at a time when landscape in literature was considered to be a bourgeois relic and a manifestation of nationalism and aestheticism. The rich layers of world culture, esotericism, and Christian faith, which were subject to exploration when small groups of like-minded people discussed pre-war publications or art albums successfully brought from other countries, formed a specific perception of the world as an eternal metamorphosis – a picture of harmonious existence based on the poetics of vision, the genesis of which took on a distinctive quality from the archetypes of the ancient Baltic culture. In the poetry by Geda, Gutauskas, and Juškaitis in the 1970s and 1980s, the metaphysical treatment of flora was a counter-cultural gesture against the atheistic and impoverished world-view of the Soviet era. This was an unexpected continuation of the metaphysical thought that had characterized Lithuanian poetry between the two world wars and in the diaspora, and brought back to poetry the dimension of the sacredness of the landscape of the homeland, the sense of the great cycles of the Universe, and the connection of the individual with their native place, which was strengthened by the reiterations of extinction and rebirth. It must be admitted that during the 1970s spiritual practices, mysticism, Oriental religions, and meanwhile also the revival of native ethnic traditions was characteristic not only of Lithuanian, but also of Latvian and Estonian cultures – as a sign of those times.

For the title of this paper, I have chosen Geda's line "You Were There, Oh Soul" which reveals the common treatment of the landscape as a repository of past and future lives shared by these three poets. The sense of the sacredness of the landscape in the poetry by Geda and Gutauskas, and possibly in the poetry by Juškaitis as well, was supported by the statement by Dionysius the Areopagite that it is not God who can be known, but only the Place where God dwells. The theocentric rather than anthropocentric images of the world that Geda, Gutauskas and Juškaitis created in their poetry during the Brezhnev Era were distinguished by the essential characteristic of existence attributed to plants, which underpinned the metaphysical senses of place and transcendence.

Translated by Aleksandra Fominaitė

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