



The Role of the Name in the Exile and Gulag Lithuanian Literature – the Specific Language of the Literary Expression

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LIETUVIŠKI ŽODŽIAI

*Maišelyje nešiojau savo duoną,
Dažniau – tik trupinius skurdžius,
Maišelin – tarsi grūdėlius aguonų
Rinkau lietuviškus žodžius...*

Česys Cemnolonskis
Tremtinio Lietuva (1990)

When analysing Lithuanian exile and gulag literature, one can notice that it often comes in various genres, from report and reportage – more literal and informative, through essay, novella, short story and novel – genres containing such elements of literary quality as fictionality or intended ambiguity, to the most personal forms of expression – diaries, memoirs and autobiographies. The choice of words, their arrangement and combination is what determines this variety of forms of expression.

In any of the above mentioned types of literary works, we can encounter various types of narration: chronicle, universal, psychological. These types can also be found side by side, separately, jointly or overlapping one another. From the point of view of the resources and type of expression of the exile and gulag works, some aspects of chronicle and psychological narrations should be interesting to discuss.

Chronicle narration, also called author's narration, closest to a personal report, clearly shows the narrator, describes them as a concrete person, with a real biography, judging and sharing their judgments with the reader. They use particular kind of language, choose appropriate words – signs. Above all, earnestness of self-description is found, expressing their anti-hero attitude. What is also important, graphic topics are discussed. In Gulag and exile works with this kind of narration, prison vernacular is a vital characteristic.

It seems logical to distinguish some keywords, symbolic names, that appear most frequently in works concerning a particular stage of exile, that reference

the place of exile, camp institutions, phenomena, categories of people, as well as words, proper names and terms, that are often untranslatable, left in their original form, usually in Russian, as they were spoken or heard by the author.

Taking the above criterion into consideration, we can notice that, when describing the moment of arrest, the most commonly used words will be: ‘search’, ‘interrogation’, ‘solitary confinement’. The travel stage will be characterised by terms usually describing the means of transporting the prisoners to their place of torment. Such words as ‘echelon’ should be mentioned.

„Sargybiniai su šautuvais ir šunimis tebestovėjo aplink ešeloną“ (J u c i ū t ė 1974, 114)¹.

„Birželio 19 dieną Tauragės tremtinių ešelonas buvo baigtas formuoti“ (G a r b a č i a u s k i e n ė 1989, 11)².

Accommodation and work are other two categories with their own sets of names, such as: ‘dugout’, ‘barrack’, ‘yurt’, ‘kolkhoz’, ‘foreman’. With no doubt we can find such expressions in nearly every book.

Here are some examples:

„Išeidama iš barako į darbą, pamačiau nuo medpunkto ateinančią seserį“ (Ibid., 114)³.

„Reikėjo skubiai pradėti statyti žemines, jurtas, barakus, nes žiema buvo čia pat“ (G r i n k e v i č i ū t ė 1989, 22)⁴.

All of these names are in same way neutral and common, can be found in other statements, but in gulag and exile memoirs they serve not only a documentary function, but also, or rather above all, they stress the expressiveness of gulag’s reality and convey a large emotional charge to introduce the reader to the camp’s hell.

Even more suggestive and effective are foreign terms, such as: ‘robkoop’, ‘raboce-krestyantskoye gosudarstvo’, ‘učastka’, ‘lespromkhoz’, ‘barabanas’.

Such examples can be found in Lithuanian memoirs:

„Sakiau viską, kaip buvo, juoba kad kaimietiška mano kilmė turėjo patikti pareigūnui valstybės, kuri didžiavosi esanti ‘raboče-krestjanskoje gosudarstvo’“ (G u s t a i n i s 1989, 172)⁵.

„Tą dieną, kai keletas mūsų vyrų buvo iškviesti į rajono karinį komisariatą, suti-

¹ Translation: “Guards with guns and dogs were standing around ešeloną” (J u c i ū t ė 1974, 114).

² Translation: “19th of April exile’s ešelonas was ready to go” (G a r b a č i a u s k i e n ė 1989, 11).

³ Translation: “When I was going out of barrack, I saw a nurse coming towards me” (Ibid., 114).

⁴ Translation: “It was necessary to start building dugouts, yurts, barracks, because winter was coming soon” (G r i n k e v i č i ū t ė 1989, 22).

⁵ Translation: “I said everything as it was. Guards should have been pleased with my peasant’s origin, being representatives of the state that proudly referred to itself as ‘raboče-krestjanskoje gosudarstvo’” (G u s t a i n i s 1989, 172).

kusi mane prie ‘rabkoopo’ durų Tamulaitienė paklausė...“ (Ibid., 175)⁶.

„Oi, kaip keistai ir juokingai Sibiro daktarai ligas matuoja. O gal tik mūsų ‘učast-ke’ taip?“ (A l k s n i n y t è-G a r b š t i e n è 1993, 31)⁷.

„Tai buvo iškeltas klausimas: koks skirtumas tarp evakuotųjų ir ‘specperese-lencų’. Prelegentas sumišo ir pasakė, kad į tą klausimą atsakyti negalima. Tie raup-suotieji ‘spec.’ tai esame mes, lietuviai“ (Ibid., 31)⁸.

It is very difficult to find appropriate words in another language, for example, in English. We must notice, that in many cases these are literal translations from Russian, sometimes they consist of different Lithuanian and Russian words joined together and very often these names originate from people living for ages in the regions of Siberia.

Here are some examples showing that even in memories written in Lithuanian some words must be explained:

„Užkurdavome ‘barabaną’ (pusė geležinės statinės), užvirindavome vandenį, pašildydavom ligoniams plytas prie kojų...“ (G r i n k e v i č i ū t è 1989, 25)⁹.

„Išnešėm karstą iš barako ir padėjom į siaurą darbinį pagalbinio ūkio vežimą (ru-sai tokius vežimus vadina ‘bestarka’“ (G a r b a č i a u s k i e n è 1989, 113)¹⁰.

Using names in the language of their torturers and persecutors heightens the horror, stresses the terror and hopelessness of the situation in which the narrators find themselves. Even more suggestive are not only single words, but whole sentences. They emphasize the reality of narration. Valentinas Gustainis in his very suggestive memoirs often uses such Russian spoken expressions, sometimes entire paragraphs are in the oppressors’ language:

„Pas tardytojus kviesdavo iš ryto, tuojau po pusryčių, ir vakare, jau po signalo ‘Otboj’. Prasiverdavo kameros langelis, pasigirdavo kiek prislopintas vyriškas ar moteriškas balsas: ‘Kto tut na bukvu N?’ – atseit, kieno pavardė prasideda raide N? ‘Na bukvu R’ atsiliėpdavo Rastenis, ‘na bukvu S’ – Siumakas, ‘na bukvu G’ atsiliėpdavau aš“ (G u s t a i n i s 1989, 170)¹¹.

⁶ Translation: “On the day when some of our men were called to the district police station, I met Tamulaitienė in front of ‘rabkoop’ door, asking me...” (Ibid., 175).

⁷ Translation: “Oh, how different Siberian doctors cure. Or it’s maybe only at our ‘učas-tok’?” (A l k s n i n y t è-G a r b š t i e n è 1993, 31).

⁸ Translation: “The question arose: what is the difference between the exiles and ‘specperese-lency’. The confused speaker said he couldn’t answer that question. We, Lithuanians, are these leprous ‘spec’” (Ibid., 31).

⁹ Translation: “We set fire in the ‘baraban’ (an iron barrel cut in half), boiled water, heated bricks for sick people...” (G r i n k e v i č i ū t è 1989, 25).

¹⁰ Translation: “We took the coffin out of the barrack and put it on a narrow cart (the Rus-sians call it ‘bestarka’)” (G a r b a č i a u s k i e n è 1989, 113).

¹¹ Translation: “They called us to interrogators in the morning, right after breakfast and in the evening, right after the signal ‘Otboj’. A small window in the door would open, and a harsh man’s or woman’s voice would say: ‘Kto tut na bukvu N?’ – meaning, whose name starts with letter N? ‘Na bukvu R?’ Rastenis would respond, ‘Na bukvu S?’ – Siumakas, ‘Na bukvu G?’ I would answer” (G u s t a i n i s 1989, 170).

Landscape descriptions also play an important role in chronicle narration. Almost every author pictures the shape of their house, the look of their surroundings, workplace, etc. in great, almost architectural detail. One has to observe, though, that the vocabulary used is very limited. We are under an impression that it is always the same speaker, who describes the gulag reality to us, and this reality looks gloomy and spare. Such attributes as ‘thickening darkness’, ‘dark clouds’, ‘pale stars’, ‘howling wind’ speak directly to the reader and show how bleak the surroundings are and how harsh the powers of nature can be, which further enhances the mood of the camp horror.

In psychological narration, one has to point out one of the structural elements, which plays an important role in building the world of the gulag horror. Namely, the use of animalistic metaphors, that better express the authors’ attitude towards the topic they present. Such metaphors, relating to people’s behaviours as ‘to scowl at each other like wolves’, ‘to behave like beasts, like wild animals’, ‘to be at each other’s throats like animals’ show the brutalization, animalization of human beings in harsh exile conditions, and the dark side of their souls. By choosing such similes, a specific form of expression is created, that more clearly shows the narrator’s attitude towards various aspects of human existence. One of the author’s willingly using such metaphors in his novels is Kazimieras Markauskas. We can read:

„Girdėjau kažkokius balsus, kurie virto triukšmu, rodos, žemė virpėjo <...> girdėjau žmonių verkimą – lyg moters klyksmą...“ (M a r k a u s k a s 2001, 111)¹².

Undeniable proof of the leading role played by names in the Lithuanian exile and gulag literature is titles of each particular work. *Šiaurės eskizai* (Sketches from the North) by Vladas Vyšniūnas, *Kai buvau miręs* (When I was Dead) by Kazimieras Umbražiūnas, *Žodžiai iš pragaro* (Words from Hell) by Bronius Antanaitis and others, such as *Ešelonų broliai*, *Ešelonų sesės* (Brothers of Eshelons, Sisters of Eshelons), *Kryžius šiaurėje* (A Cross in the North), *Tremties kelias* (The Road of Exile) are examples of many similar titles. One can notice the huge emotional power of such names. They want from the first step to acquaint the reader with the atmosphere of grimness, danger, awe, threat and terror. They talk about harm, injustice, fear and death.

It is worth mentioning one more name, and that is Lithuania. This word is present in nearly every short novel, essay, and memoir. It always delivers kind of excitement. It is connected with feelings of homesickness, nostalgia, but also means hope and faith. For all deported people leaving their homeland for 20-25 years and in many cases forever, living in inhuman conditions, the name of Lithuania has become a nearly holy word, the symbol of freedom and human dignity, always said with respect and adoration.

¹² Translation: “I heard some voices that changed into a harsh noise, it seemed as if the earth was shaking <...> I heard people crying – as if a woman screamed...” (M a r k a u s k a s 2001, 111).

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Pavadinimo ypatumai lietuvių tremties ir lagerių atsiminimuose

S a n t r a u k a

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: lietuvių tremties ir lagerių literatūra, trėmimas, lageris, atsiminimai, dienoraščiai, psichologinis, istoriografinis bei universalusis pasakojimo modelis.

Stripsnyje siekama atskleisti pasakymų įvairumą ir jų funkcionavimo sąlygas lietuvių karo bei pokario tremties ir lagerių literatūroje. Žodžių parinkimas ir jų vieta sakinio struktūroje lemia pasakymų įvairumą, jų tipą. Lietuvių literatūra, susijusi su šia problematika, yra labai įdomi, daugialypė ir turtinga. Tremties ir lagerių tekstai – tai daugiausia atsimi-

nimai, dienoraščiai, laiškai, taip pat esė bei romanai. Kiekvienoje iš šių pasakojimo formų galima aptikti įvairių pasakojimo modelių: psichologinį, istoriografinį ir universalųjį. Visi jie reikalauja ypatingo kalbos kodo, žodžių-simbolių vartojimo.

Straipsnyje bandoma atkreipti dėmesį į žodžių, simbolių pavadinimų, taip pat į beveik neišverčiamų frazių, paimtų iš kitų kalbų (dažniausiai rusų), vartojimą. Tai yra tipiška tremties literatūrai. Dėl tokių žodžių, dažniausiai vartojamų atsiminimuose, pasakojimas tampa ypatingas, nepakartojamas.

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The Role of the Name in the Exile and Gulag Lithuanian Literature – the Specific Language of the Literary Expression

S u m m a r y

Keywords: *Lithuanian exile literature, exiles, labour camp, gulag, memoirs literature, oppressors' language, chronicle, universal, psychological narration.*

In this article, the variety of expressions and their function in the Lithuanian exile literature is shown from the literary point of view. It is obvious that during the last decade of the 20 c. there was a massive publication activity concerned with the exile literature. The development of the memoirs literature was manifested not only by a large number of titles but also by diversified forms of expression. The most popular were memoirs, but also diaries, letters, essays, short stories, and novels. In any of the above mentioned types of literary works we can encounter various types of narration: chronicle, universal, psychological. These types can also be found side by side, separately, jointly or overlapping one another. They use a particular kind of language and choose appropriate words – signs. It seems logical to distinguish some keywords and symbolic names that appear most frequently in works concerning a particular stage of exile, that reference the place of exile, camp institutions, phenomena, categories of people, as well as words, proper names and terms, that are often untranslatable, left in their original form, usually in Russian, as they were spoken or heard by the author.

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