

INTRODUCTION

The self-consciousness of Lithuanian culture faced with the civilisational struggle between darkness and light in the field of creativity developed the characteristic to gain insights about the state and its survival. It conveyed the geopolitical message of historical experience, which is crucial for the state's existence. It appears that here, a constant construction of restorations and fortifications of freedom, along with the dissemination of motives aimed at promoting the Baltic identity and restraining the imperial threat from Russia, is taking place—even directing the silent turn of the world in a missionary direction. This way of thinking reveals itself in various historical periods. Still, it proved to be incredibly alive and legitimate in the 21st century when the nation and the state became members of the Western Alliance. Therefore, it is valuable to look at the contextual spread of creative intelligence in this direction, which, after waking up in the Baltic countries, became a unique code of salvation inspired by their inner power of recovery—the *Baltic mind*. By constantly remembering the occupation factor, the experience of revivals and the example of resistance to Russian imperialism—Finland's unique defence against the invasion of Stalin's Red Army during the Winter War (1939–1940), which always caused a painful longing for the historical unfulfillment of the Baltic countries, the multi-meaningful concept of the *Mannerheim Line*¹ was formed, unfolding a paradigmatic intellectual projection that established itself in politics and cultural context.

The study of spiritual anti-empire landscapes, inspired by the concept of the Mannerheim Line, forms the core of Lithuanian defensive self-awareness that has evolved over recent decades and, as early as the second half of the 20th century, embodies a long-standing resistance impulse—a continual protest against historical injustice. Perhaps it is a delayed but essential breakthrough of the existential power of a united nation—the defence of the state, which remained as if belittled because it was not implemented during the Soviet occupation of Lithuania 'without a shot' in the 1940s, but deeply etched into consciousness like 'sleeping a red dream in the roots of oaks'² (Geda, 1968). So, this impulse of resistance resurfaced as the

¹ Carl Gustav Mannerheim (1867–1951) — a Finnish Field Marshal and commander-in-chief, who defended Finnish Independence in the Winter War, is known as the strategist of a unique line of defence, called the Mannerheim Line.

² Sigitas Geda. "Strazdas" [*Thrush*], 1968. Accessed at <http://www.tekstai.lt/buvo/tekstai/geda/strazdas.htm>

concept of historical truth and expanded its influence across intellectual, cultural, creative, and other spheres, manifesting in various artistic forms of geopolitical imagination. Meanwhile, the heroic Finnish resistance to the occupation of Soviet Russia in the Winter War became the new archetypal existential paradigm of Baltic Identity, named the famous *Mannerheim Line*, after the legendary Marshal Carl Gustav Mannerheim (1867–1951), symbolising a nation that made a conscious existential choice to challenge aggression and reflecting its desperate aspiration for freedom and independence. It mentally lit up and became a source of inspiration for the creativity and historical research of Lithuanian authors, awakening the nation's civic self-consciousness by revealing the historical truth of the remains of *sleeping* fighters in the ground.

Marshal Mannerheim's address to the heroic Finnish people itself contains words that correspond very precisely to today's geopolitical upheavals:

'Our army is small; reserves and personnel are insufficient. We did not arm ourselves for war with a great power. Our brave soldiers, defending the state borders, had a very difficult time obtaining what they did not have, building defensive lines that did not exist, and trying to get help that did not come. It was imperative to procure weapons and equipment at a time when all countries were urgently arming themselves, preparing to meet the storm that was currently raging over the world. The whole world admired our deeds, but even now, after a war that lasted three and a half months, we were left almost alone. When the history of this war is written, the world will recognise the heroic efforts we made. Unfortunately, the vast promises of aid made by Western powers turned out to be unfulfilled because our neighbours, out of self-interest, refused to allow the transit of troops.

Having endured sixteen weeks of bloody battles, day and night without rest, our army still stands undefeated against an enemy whose numbers, despite enormous losses, have only grown.

Our fate is bitter—we have had to leave to a foreign race with a different worldview and different moral values, the land for which we have worked so hard for hundreds of years. We are proud to realise our historical mission to defend Western civilisation; this is what we continue to do. This mission has been part of our heritage for centuries.³

Speaking of the evil that was not overcome in time, one can also recall the catastrophe of the image of greatness experienced by the German people due to their guilt for not resisting Nazism with all its consequences, after which the nation's Self seeks to endlessly establish its nobility over other nations, to provide protection to the foreign, abused refugee, and to unfold a paradigmatic spiritual controversy against Nazism as if an endless reckoning with the historical past is taking place. In part, the

³ Carl Gustav Mannerheim. *Žmogus, įveikęs Rusiją. Legendinio maršalo atsiminimai*. [The Man Who Conquered Russia. Memoirs of a Legendary Marshal.] Kaunas: Obuolys, 2022, p. 401, 402.

core that woke up in the depths of the Lithuanian nation's identity—the unfulfilled defence of the state from devastating aggression—became a code for the restoration of historical truth, even the consolidation of *Baltic civilisation* in the world, a longing for the expressiveness of the historical genesis of statehood, permeating thinking and creativity. Thus, the idea arose to combine these articles, born in the outcrops of cultural insights—inspirations for the cultural landscape of the Mannerheim Line—to provide them with a unifying field of ideas centred on a relevant concept: the creative dimension of defending statehood. It reveals several important leitmotifs that determine the structural dramaturgical whole of the book:

Chapter I, **Drama of Statehood and its Landscapes**, presents the *Lithuanian case*: a turning point in history through the catastrophe of occupation, the stopping of time for 'former citizens of the state'⁴, the change into a grey zone for the *all-alone* behind the Iron Wall, the destruction of the system, and breakthroughs leading into the distance like utopian *transcendental landscapes* of freedom—a paradigm of the infinity of space.

The other space is anti-imperialist creativity, a mission to spread the vision of a free world. In the first article, "The Concept of Lithuanian Homeland. Transcendental Landscapes", essentially, the very idea of a breakthrough to freedom—a spiritual and real idea of indestructibility is shaping up, embodied by the true heroes of this impossible mission: Captain Jonas Pleškys, sailor and radio operator Simas Kudirka, political dissident Vladas Šakalys, who were shrouded in then circulating legends silenced by censorship, telling of another, non-Soviet, dimension of Lithuanian life. These missions remain a magnet for writers, especially film directors (*The Hunt for Red October*, 1990; dir. John McTiernan, *The Jump*, 2020, dir. Giedrė Žickytė). Here, a true boundless infinity opens up—an image of the sea, the ocean that speaks for itself.

Only émigré writers and poets could experience the catastrophe of the occupation on a deep scale of expression. Their work is analysed in the article "Catastrophe of Lithuania in the Poetry of Émigrés: Apocalyptic Meaning of the Soviet Occupation and the Affected Archetypes (the Discourse between the Works of B. Brazdžionis and A. Mackus)" as a fundamental abyss of stopped time, an existential rupture that opens up in the loss of Lithuanian statehood (A. Mackus). Meanwhile, the poets who remained in Lithuania and brought the Soviet Stalin sun experienced another tragedy of their own historical rift and now, after several decades, encounter the

⁴ Algimantas Mackus. *Chapel B. VI*. (1965). In: *Trys knygos*. Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 1999, p. 145.

factor of recognition/non-recognition of values when their work and talent, which was then facing a path to success, is being re-evaluated in the context of betrayal of the state (article “Destinies of the State and Its Writers in History. Dimensions of Their Tragedy and Success in Lithuanian Literature”). This way, a complex and very edgy modern discourse is formed when the leitmotif of the struggle for freedom is awakened—the *ghosts* of marginalisation and modernisation of state betrayal. And yet, as if above everything, the pulsating life of the activity of visionaries, creators of free space, existing since the cemeteries of Soviet stagnation, emerges here, quietly changing the world of absurd schemes even then—the discoveries of Lithuanian and global eternity in monuments and photographs by Vilius Orvidas, Paulius Normantas, Juozas Valiušaitis, establishing a unique opening of the metaphor of freedom, a pilgrim walking through the world in search of the sacredness of the spirit, irresistible to primitive mentality.

This flow of imaginative discoveries of a breakthrough through the iron walls is illustrated in the article “Anti-Empire: A Visual Reconstruction of the World by Lithuanian Thinkers in the Spirit of Minor Nations Liberation”, which begins with the paintings of M. K. Čiurlionis, imbued with creative freedom, bold fleeting flights of imagination, and a longing for national identity, strengthened by the will of unoccupied Lithuania hidden in the stones, creating the corresponding features of artistic stylistics, and is ultimately clarified by the significance of historical research. Here, the dramaturgy of the cultural landscape practically encounters the land of bloodland—the specific historical Mannerheim line, emerging in situations of tragic events.

Articles in Chapter II move to the highly relevant intersection or interaction with metamodernism. Here, the Post-Soviet and Anti-Soviet aspects of modernism are examined.

If Chapter I reveals the scale of the occupation catastrophe, its fateful impact on literary creators and the state’s resistant spiritual maturation towards restoring independence and the dimension of the self-concept of statehood, this becomes a landscape of the homeland enriched with signs, penetrating various forms of creative expression. Meanwhile, Chapter II steps into the plane of ideological intersections, conflicts with history, and the discourse of the still restless struggle for the positions of Lithuanian statehood in the face of the occupations of the Soviets and the Nazis (article “Non-fiction from a Historical Perspective: Situation of Lithuanian Statemen Amid Tragic Events of 1940–1941”). Here, both the occupation of 1940 and the problem of the *Mannerheim line* itself are vividly brought to us with reproach.

Looking into the depths of the past several centuries, even traditional positional wars woke up, which we feel here, too.⁵ Although the identity dilemmas within the context of the Polish-Lithuanian Union state have been resolved, they remain alive for some. And particularly painful intersections, like unhealed wounds due to the Holocaust, continue to rupture in interpretations of the partisan war (*war after war*) and in the émigré statesmen's questions of the historical place in the present space.

Thus, Chapter II, **Historicism versus Metamodernism**, reveals not only the *battlefields* of these borderline situations but also the unity of the overall Lithuanian identity hidden in the historical depths through the spread of Baroque stylistics, the European continuity not obscured by the brutality of time ("The Visionaries of Vilnius and the Lithuanian Version of Metamodernism"). Here, an attempt is made to show the incompatibility of post-Soviet modernism and historicism ("Body and Soul: Controversies of Aesthetic of Postmodernism in Post-Soviet Space"); also, the emergence of new paradigms of historicism on the themes of dissident activities and exiles, opening up their universal discourse of human suffering and extreme experiences, remembering and discussing Dalia Grinkevičiūtė's memoirs *Lithuanians by the Laptev Sea*, 1986, and paradigms that change the value context of Lithuanian literature.

And finally, the article "Russia versus Europe: The Collision of Civilisations in the Works of Contemporary Lithuanian Writer Kristina Sabaliauskaitė" about K. Sabaliauskaitė's two-volume *Peter's Empress* based on a 2022 report at the International Congress of Comparative Literary Studies in Tbilisi brings to light a fundamental leitmotif of Lithuania's many centuries old historical memory and the present. Here, as if in response to European problems, a global Lithuanian-American identity dimension opens up, offering unexpected solutions to the book's dramaturgy—the Fluxus *invasion* into Lithuania, *which was quasi-occupied by the Soviet theatre of the absurd, through philosophers Algis Mickūnas, Alphons Lingys, Jonas Mekas, and Jurgis Mačiūnas*. So, the post-war liberation of Lithuania was achieved through artistic transformations and metaphors, marking an irreversible shift toward global self-awareness and its subsequent transformations ("Global Aspects of Lithuanian American Identity").

Chapter III, **Music Meets the Mannerheim Line**, after the intersection of modernism and historicism, rediscovers a continuity and horizontality—the paradigm of the flow of time—hidden in the very nature of music. This Baltic restrained minimalism, universalising the metaphor of infinity, sea waves, and free

⁵ Kristina Sabaliauskaitė "The Inconvenient Grand Duchy of Lithuania: Wars of Memory and Oblivion", *Naujas židinys – Aidai*, 2018, No. 5, pp. 27–35.

space, transforms into a vision of procedural dramaturgy with a geopolitical aspect. Here, the monotony of rhythm, stemming from the depths of folklore and Čiurlionis' transcendentalism, merges into the power of unity, announcing the breakthrough of the restoration of historical justice awakened by these impulses. So, first of all, the Baltic metaphor of the turn of the epochs and eternal return spreads its wings here (article "Metaphor in the context of Baltic music: The Idea of Eternal Return"), its transformation into a *world turning point* phenomenon with the features of a sacred ritual, which imbued the work of composers from the Baltic countries (Arvo Pärt (*1935), Bronius Kutavičius (1932–2021), Imants Zemzaris (*1951), Aivars Kalējs (*1951) and others).

On the other hand, a deep connection unfolds between local Baltic minimalism and the universalist attitudes of Friedrich Nietzsche and Richard Wagner, the aesthetics of tragic modernism, its transformations through the narratives of literature exalting the creative impulses of Thomas Mann's genius, and the leitmotifs of the crumbling sands of the Curonian Spit (listening to Mindaugas Urbaitis' *Der Fall Wagner*, and in the article "Nietzsche's Shadow over the Baltic Minimalism Based on Mindaugas Urbaitis *Der Fall Wagner*"). In music, contemporary composers want to achieve a specific spiritual eclipse—the greatness of the past utopia, the undeniable continuum of time breaks—the Baltic civilisation (article "The Music of Lithuanian Composer Ričardas Kabelis: Signs and Four Codes", abstract "Creative Work with an Exit from the Music World"). The other context also delves deeper into the poetics of inner freedom of another genius of the Germanic spirit—the interdisciplinary sphere of R.M. Rilke's work (article "Diverse Intermedial Aspects in the Interpretation of R.M. Rilke's Poetry by Lithuanian Composer Onutė Narbutaitė").

The strong connection between Lithuanian music creators and Poland, not so much through the past but rather through current events and apocalyptic premonitions, is reflected in the article "Images of Apocalypse and War in 21st Century Lithuanian Music." It is followed by the emerging image of the *front line* in cultural discourses and the creation that appears long before the start of a new war in Europe (articles "Phenomenology of the Front Line in Lithuanian Contemporary Cultural Landscape", "A Premonition of War in Lithuanian Music and Literature, 2021–2022"). At the end of this sequence, the Ukrainian theme "Between Light and Darkness: Significant Projections of Lithuanian Music in the Context of the Present" (2024) appears. This way, the music reflects the transformations of the era as if returning from early Christian times to the struggle between light and darkness, the sacredness of the choral, and the intersection of demonism and enlightenment.

One of the final chords in this musical dramaturgy is the return of the present to history and history to the present—a reflection on the theme of the partisan war or *war after war* in Vytautas Germanavičius' work *Red Trees* (2018), dedicated to the legend of freedom fighters, General Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas (1912–1957), who was brutally tortured and murdered in the basements of the KGB (“Soundscape of Silenced *After War front lines: Music Images by Vytautas Germanavičius Red Trees* (2018), Dedicated to Lithuanian Freedom Fighter General Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas (1918–1957). His remains, like those of other heroes, were unknown for 60 years, but after careful research by archaeologists and historians, they were found, and a state funeral took place (October 5–6, 2018). This once again confirms that, alongside creativity, there is another irreplaceable and essential dimension—*nonfiction*, archival documentary research which changes paradigms and struggles to find its way, even in the present, still seeking to avoid overemphasising the unfolding of creative maturity in statehood and national identity. It is as if we are still debating the red lines in the field of our historical truth while at the same time stumbling into the swamps of the red fog of an undefeated empire that involves both Europe and all of humanity. However, the phenomenon of the *Mannerheim Line*, the silent yet fateful Northern horizon, initiates this awakening, primarily in creativity, from the strong-willed, winter-white landscape of Finland—the spiritual greatness of the liberating nations lying deep within the earth, capable of naming and defeating the enemy.

All these leitmotifs fit into the dramaturgy of the *Mannerheim Line* in their own way, coming to life, shining, and fading in the shadows of metaphors.

The important historical-geopolitical, artistic-creative, and existential-defensive Northern dimension becomes clearer, connecting the Baltic countries as a region of the European North and Baltic Sea region with a rich historical experience of relations with Russia, which provides an opportunity to more distinctly understand the threats facing the European Union. Naturally, these particular countries adequately responded to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which prompted Finland and Sweden to urgently join NATO. This hugely significant fact has already consolidated the strength of the *Mannerheim line* on another level. This decision of two neighbouring states has also made *our space* safer, the penetration of which into the creative consciousness of Lithuanian authors has been attempted to be felt in these articles and reports of the last decade, most of them born in the most active countries returning to Europe after imperial collapses—Georgia and Ukraine, as well as in the field of humanitarian discourses of Poland.