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The Meanings of Vitality in the Prose Book "On the Other Side of the Lake" by Pulgis Andriušis

Summary

The article is devoted to the talented Lithuanian exile writer Pulgas Andriušis (1907-1970) and the analysis of his debut prose work "Anoj pusėj ežero" (*On the Other Side of the Lake*) (1947), which was awarded the Lithuanian Red Cross Prize and was praised by the Lithuanian literary critics. The article analyses the meanings of vitality in Andriušis's Expressionist short stories, with a view to Henri Bergson's notion of the *élan vital* and creative evolution, and Gaston Bachelard's concept of creative imagination and metaphor. The article explores the connections between organic phenomenological philosophy of life and the Expressionist short stories of Andriušis, which are revealed in the talented writer's poetic prose. The research employs the concepts of *élan vital* and creative dynamic imagination, and Bachelard's concept of metaphor.

The analysis of Andriušis's debut book originates in his autobiography "Septinton įleidus" (*After letting into seventh*). It is important that Andriušis's autobiography tells the story of the creator's life, and that while still studying at Kaunas University, Andriušis was intensely interested in Henri Bergson's philosophy of the *élan vital*, which emphasised the life-giving power of creation. The autobiography became the source of the writer's experiences and creativity, his birthplace embodied the world he lived in, the Bergsonian principle of life, the idyll of nature and the creator.

Andriušis's dynamic imagination creates a celebration of nature's vitality, embodies the principle of radical transformation typical of Expressionist poetics, and introduces a complex vocabulary of his literary worldview and original metaphors, linked to biblical and folkloric intertexts. It should be emphasised that Andriušis's Expressionist short stories reinforce the importance of speech as the affirmation of life, as *élan vital*, as vital energy. Speech, as a continuous flow of life, conveys the world of the main character, his openness to the living world, the true joy of life, the experience of the fullness of being,

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a poetic way of life, manifested in the natural harmony with his own earthly space, a meaningful existence in the natural world as if at home. In Andriušis's Expressionist short stories, not only human speech but also music embodies Bergson's principle of vital momentum, vital energy, and the order of vitality as the will to live.

Keywords: Henri Bergson, *élan vital*, Gaston Bachelard, imagination, metaphor, autobiography, the short story of Pulgis Andriušis, native place, vitality of spoken language, vitality of music.

VITALITĀTES NOZĪME

PULGA ANDRJUŠA GRĀMATĀ “EZERA OTRĀ KRASTĀ”

Kopsavilkums

Raksts ir veltīts talantīgajam lietuviešu trimdiniekam, rakstniekam Pulgam Andriušim (*Pulgas Andriušis*, 1907–1970) un viņa debijas prozas darba “Ezera otrā krastā” (*Anoj pusėj ežero*, 1947) analīzei. “Ezera otrā krastā” tika apbalvots ar Lietuvas Sarkanā Krusta balvu un guva augstu Lietuvas literatūras kritiķu novērtējumu. Rakstā analizētas vitalitātes nozīmes Andriuša ekspresionismam piederīgajos īsajos stāstos, balstoties uz Anrī Bergsona *élan vital* un radošās evolūcijas jēdzienu un Gastona Bašelāra radošās iztēles un metaforas koncepciju. Rakstā pētītas organiskās fenomenoloģiskās dzīves filozofijas un Andriuša ekspresionisma īso stāstu sasaiste, kas atklājas talantīgā rakstnieka poētiskajā prozā, izmantojot *élan vital*, radošās dinamiskās iztēles un Bašelāra metaforas jēdzienu.

Andriuša debijas grāmatas analīze balstās uz viņa autobiogrāfiju “Pēc iekļūšanas septītajā” (“Septinton ģileidus”). Nozīmīgi, ka Andriuša autobiogrāfija stāsta par radošo dzīvi un Kauņas Universitātes studiju laikā ierosināto interesi par Bergsonu un viņa *élan vital* filozofiju, kas uzsvēra radīšanas dzīvības spēku. Autobiogrāfija kļuva par rakstnieka pieredzes un radošuma avotu. Viņa dzimtā vieta iemiesoja pasauli, kurā viņš dzīvoja, bergsonisko dzīves principu, dabas idilli un radītāju.

Andriušis ar savu radošo, dinamiski attēloto fantāziju rada dabas vitalitātes svētkus, iemieso radikālas pārvērtības principu, kas izpaužas ekspresionistiskā poētikā, sarežģītā literārā pasaules uzskata leksikā, oriģinālās metaforās, kas saistītas ar bibliskajiem un folkloristiskajiem intertekstiem. Jāuzsver, ka Andriuša ekspresionistiskajos stāstos tiek uzsvērtas runas nozīme kā dzīves apstiprinājums, kā *élan vital*, kā dzīvības enerģija. Runāšana kā nepārtraukta dzīves plūsma pauž īso stāstu varoņa pasauli, viņa atvērtību dzīvajai pasaulei, patieso dzīves prieku, pilnīgas esības pieredzi, poētisko dzīvesveidu, kas izpaužas dabiskā harmonijā ar savu zemes telpu, jēgpilnu eksistenci dabiskajā pasaulē kā mājās. Andriuša ekspresionistiskajos īsajos stāstos ne tikai cilvēka runa, bet arī mūzika iemieso Bergsona principu par dzīves spēku, dzīvības enerģiju un dzīves spēka kā dzīves gribas kārtību.

Raksturvārdi: Anrī Bergsons, vitālais impulss, Gastons Bašelārs, iztēle, metafora, autobiogrāfija, Pulga Andriuša īsa stāsts, dzimtā vieta, mutvārdu valodas vitalitāte, mūzikas vitalitāte.

Introduction. The prose of Pulgis Andriušis, an expatriate Lithuanian writer and talented storyteller, is somewhat forgotten and still awaits readers' attention. The object of the research is a book of short stories, "On the Other Side of the Lake" (*Anoj pusėj ežero*) by Pulgis Andriušis, published in 1947, for which he was awarded the Lithuanian Red Cross Prize. According to Antanas Vaičiulaitis, "Pulgis Andriušis with this work established himself in Lithuanian literature" (Vaičiulaitis 1992b: 250). Rimvydas Šilbajoris briefly described the general situation of the Lithuanian exile novel, stating that "some strayed into their native village, others into a land of fairy tales, yet others – into descriptions of the refugee's agony, and some even into a kind of spiritual desert" (Šilbajoris 1989: 525–526). According to the exile literary critic, with regard to the Lithuanian exile novel, "the reader must [...] strive to recognise the individual traits of his creative identity" (Šilbajoris 1989: 526). A strict esthete, Henrikas Radauskas, who critically evaluated both Lithuanian and global writers, assessed Andriušis's debut book in a letter to Algirdas Julius Greimas, noting one of its fundamental features – the dominance of naturalism: "Pulgis published a decent book "On the Other Side of the Lake", but it is only nature, without humanity" (Kuizininė 2003: 446–447). Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas, Henrikas Radauskas' literary companion and friend in America, a famous Lithuanian modernist poet and literary critic, emphasised the artistic value of the literary language of Andriušis's debut book "On the Other Side of the Lake", the writer's creativity, ingenuity, and his ability to control language, saying, "He uses language like a musician, like a virtuoso on his own instrument, producing a multitude of unexpected moods." (Nyka-Niliūnas 1996: 185) Nyka-Niliūnas was sparing with his praise, stating that "in his best works Andriušis shows an unquestionable and authentic talent" (Nyka-Niliūnas 1996: 185). In his next article, Nyka-Niliūnas once again described the authenticity and uniqueness of Andriušis's work in the general context of Lithuanian prose in a very imaginative way, *a la Proust*, using the metaphors of a literary house, of winter and summer rooms, of a woman with flowers and fruit: "On the other side of the lake, in an almost uninhabited house of Lithuanian fiction, with a lot of spicy and intense smells, like a woman bringing wild flowers and fruits in a fly. With all his flora and fauna, with his landscapes and characters, Pulgis Andriušis occupied the empty, mouldy rooms, settling there roads and lakes, winters and summers, poverty and joy, and at the same time killing many of the microbes

of banality and sentimentality that had taken root there.” (Nyka-Niliūnas 1996: 189) Again, Nyka-Niliūnas compared the novels of Andriušis to works of music: “His works there resembled pieces of music, perfectly instrumented and as solid as rivers.” (Nyka-Niliūnas 1996: 189)

Lithuanian critics praised Andriušis's individuality as a storyteller and his talent too. One of the first reviews of Andriušis's debut book “On the Other Side of the Lake” was written by Jūratė Sprindytė, who described it as “geobotanical cosmology, embodied in the vivid images of a true master of words” (Sprindytė 1996: 202). According to Sprindytė, each novella in Andriušis's book “glorifies every manifestation of life. [...] Man is placed alongside the ant, the grasshopper, the dragonfly, the ladybug, the thrush, and the cornflower. This is a single sequence of life.” (Sprindytė 1996: 203) Vytautas Kubilius described Andriušis's debut book “On the Other Side of the Lake” as a “work of artistic prose with an unparalleled regional colour and poetic vitality...” (Kubilius 2001: 161–162). The Lithuanian literature critic emphasised the dynamic imagery characteristic of Andriušis's debut prose book, stating that the author's artistic narrative developed “from observational studies of nature, transformed into a chain of moving images” (Kubilius 2001: 161–162). Dalia Kuizinienė wrote that “the unexpected talent of the prose writer Pulgis Andriušis shone in Germany” (Kuzinienė 2003: 89). According to Kuizinienė, Andriušis's debut book “On the Other Side of the Lake” “takes its reader to Paradise Lost, left behind in a village of Aukštaitija” (Kuzinienė 2003: 89).

The hypothesis of this article is based on the assumption that there is a close connection between Henri Bergson's phenomenological philosophy and the Expressionist short stories of Pulgis Andriušis, published in his debut book. For instance, Antanas Vaičiulaitis, discussing the philosophical context of post-war Western European literature, stated that “in addition to the aforementioned Dostoevsky and Freud, Bergson had a significant influence on the latest literature [...] Bergson's teachings were appropriated in terms of a certain dynamism and sense of duration (*duree*), the eternal flow of things.” (Vaičiulaitis 1992 a: 15)

The theoretical approach of the research is based on Henri Bergson's theory of *élan vital* and Gaston Bachelard's phenomenological concept of imagination and metaphor. Bergson's notion of the evolution of creation and the vital impetus is important to understanding Pulgis Andriušis's short stories.

In the autobiography "Septinton įleidus" ("After letting into the seventh"), a playful and humorous account of his life story, Andriušis stated that while studying at Kaunas University he had been intensely interested in Bergson's philosophy: "We believed in the Bergsonian impulse of vitality (*élan vital*), creative evolution, and the redemptive power of beauty." (Andriušis 1968: 90) Bergson's philosophy of the vital impetus attracted Andriušis precisely because it emphasised consciousness and creativity, linked to the primordial life force, to the vital creative power: "Man is his own master in his own psyche, and not a toy of the unconscious. [...] For most of us, the only ideal to be aspired to in this world has been *the creative human being*." (Andriušis 1968: 90) Andriušis wrote that during his studies at the University of Kaunas, he and his classmates considered Balys Sruoga, Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas, Albinas Herbačiauskas, Kazys Pakštas, Augustinas Voldemaras, and Vydūnas to be such creative individuals. (Andriušis 1968: 90)

In his prose book "On the Other Side of the Lake", Andriušis understood and embodied the fundamental principle of Bergson's philosophy of *élan vital* or vital impetus: "[...] the coincidence of human consciousness with the living source from which it springs, the contact with the creative endeavour" (Bergson 2004: 396).

Bergson described life as "mobility itself" (Bergson 2004:148), as "ever-growing action", as "living forms", which "by their very definition are living forms" (Bergson 2004: 149). According to Bergson, "life is from the beginning the continuation of the same impulse, distributed along various divergent lines of evolution. Something grew, something developed through a series of contributions, each of which was also a creation." (Bergson 2004: 70) Bergson thus interpreted life as a "stream of life" which "flowed through the successive bodies which it organised, passing from one generation to another, divided itself among the species and dispersed itself among the individuals, and did not in the least slacken, but rather strengthened itself as it gradually moved forward" (Bergson 2004: 41). According to Pete Gunter, "the unity of life, Bergson argues, is derived from a *vis a tergo*, an impetus that pushes it from its primitive beginnings to its expression in the myriad species now extant. This impetus contains the basis for the emergence of the various forms of life." (Gunter 2007: 36) Life in Bergson's philosophy is compared with consciousness (Bergson 2004: 204). According to Adam Lovasz, "far from being reducible to the brain, consciousness is fundamentally delocalized. The universe,

for Bergson, is an infinite set of mediations. The individuated body itself is an image among images. There is no clear boundary between our body and the cosmos as a whole, but rather a difference of degree." (Lovasz 2023: 66)

According to Bergson, "life, like consciousness, can be said to create something every moment" (Bergson 2004: 44). Bergson thus interpreted the flowing stream of life as "incessant creation" (Bergson 2004: 38); "life also develops before our eyes as the continuous creation of an unforeseeable form" (Bergson 2004: 45). In Bergson's philosophy, "the origin of the impulse of life [...] is consciousness or unconsciousness (God, so understood, has nothing finite; he is endless life, action, freedom)" (Andrijauskas 2004: 415).

For Bergson, art also embodies the principle of the vital impetus: "[...] art is living creation" (Bergson 2004: 62). Bergson emphasises the creative individuality of the person. As Vaida Asakavičiūtė writes, "Bergson sees in the personality a great programme of self-expression and possibilities. [...] One must hear this voice to be oneself, and this self, according to Bergson, is *elan vital* within us." (Asakavičiūtė 2008: 70)

Bergson's notion of the vital impetus is also related to the phenomenon of music. The diversity of nature's species and the purposefulness of its existence are depicted in Bergson's philosophy of creative evolution in the grand image of a musical concert (Bergson 2004: 147). According to Antanas Andrijauskas, in order to explain "the principles of *elan vital* and the functioning of duration, Bergson constantly refers to music, its inherent volatility [...], which best conveys the irrational, becoming-oriented nature of duration, which is focused on the various metamorphoses of the organic and subjective life that unfolds in time" (Andrijauskas 2004: 416).

Bachelard's phenomenological concept of imagination and poetics (metaphor) is also very useful for the reading/interpretation of the prose works of Andriušis. Bachelard also mentions Bergson on several occasions, criticising him for not focusing enough on the imagination: "Bergson's *Matter and Memory*, which deals extensively with the notion of the image, contains only one reference to the creative, 'producing' imagination" (Bachelard 1993: 316). Bachelard proposes to interpret "imagination as the greatest power of human nature" (Bachelard 1993: 317). In the short stories of Andriušis, Bachelard's statement that "imagination turns where joy turns [...] shapes and colours, diversities and metamorphoses"

(Bachelard 1993: 119) is close to the writer's imagination. According to Bachelard, the soul of the creator is "the syntax of metaphors" (Bachelard 1993: 113), the creative imagination of the writer creates the meanings of images, which are precisely the meanings of literature, of poetry (Bachelard 1993: 313).

Bachelard's notion of metaphor is important for understanding the poetic language of Andriušis's prose: "Metaphors are not simple idealisations that shoot up into the sky like a rocket and explode without leaving a mark, but on the contrary, that metaphors relate and harmonise with each other much more than sensations." (Bachelard 1993: 113) According to Bachelard, one can distinguish "two imaginations: that which creates the world of forms and that which creates the world of matter" (Bachelard 1993: 118). The variety of expressions in Andriušis's work creates a multifaceted world of being. Bachelard's assertion that "expression creates being" (Bachelard 1993: 308) is therefore also relevant for the modern short stories of Andriušis. The short stories of Andriušis are characterised by "that art" which is "the doubling of life", the multiplication of life, "a kind of race of observation that stimulates, awakens the consciousness, preventing it from falling asleep" (Bachelard 1993: 316).

This article aims to discuss the meanings of vitality in the debut book "On the Other Side of the Lake" by Pulgis Andriušis, based on Henri Bergson's conception of the vital impetus and creative evolution and Bachelard's concept of imagination and metaphor.

The Native Place as the Meaning of Home Life and The Self-creation of the Creator

The talent of Andriušis, his creativity and his ability to tell a vivid story, intertwined with a subtle sense of humour, playful irony and self-irony, were brought to the fore in his autobiography "Septinton įleidus" ("After letting into the seventh"). According to Antanas Vaičiulaitis, the best place to start an analysis of Andriušis's work is his autobiography, which "reflects not only the author's life's varied path, but also his literary roots and development" (Vaičiulaitis 1992b: 245). For Andriušis, his native place – the village of Gaidžiai – embodied the Bergsonian principle of life, which was permanently imprinted on the writer's consciousness: "Shrubs, glades, groves, mounds, soil, [...] hills, [...] riversides, [...] as living creatures, were imprinted on the mind forever" (Andriušis 1968: 31). In the autobiography of Andriušis, his native place is not only a linguistic

sign inscribed in the text of his personal memory, but his true being, the writer's living world, the source of his experiences and his creativity: "Gaidžiai are not only a name, but also a certain style of life, a certain way of life, a worldview." (Andriušis 1968: 88) In the autobiography of Andriušis "Septinton įleidus" ("After letting into seventh"), the significance of home life dominates – it was only in his native Gaidžiai that the writer felt "truly at home" (Andriušis 1968: 82). Using the metaphorical parallel of the magical fairy tale "The Twelve Brothers Who Walk on Black Locusts", Andriušis "appeared as an ordinary Gaidžiškis, one of his own among his own" (Andriušis 1968: 82). Andriušis's self-creation as a person and a writer was shaped by the experience of his birthplace. The native place became the personal space of the creator in his interiority, and the return to the native places became a sacred experience for the future writer, uniting the human being with the natural world: "Arriving home, the next morning I would climb up as if to a shrine in Kazio Gojun and sink into the northeastern areas, the silas, with Lake Silias almost sparking under my feet in the sun." (Andriušis 1968: 85)

The native place in the writer's consciousness also embodies a distant past, becoming a place of national memory: "The land walked by heroes, the land inscribed by glaciers on cliffs." (Andriušis 1968: 85) In his autobiography, Andriušis also gave a vivid description of his attempt to paint his native place, which ended in his failure as an artist. In his debut book "On the Other Side of the Lake", Andriušis succeeded in capturing the idyll of his native place through lively, dynamic and expressive language. According to Vaičiulaitis, "he applied his experience and art as a writer most beautifully in telling the story of his native village of Gaidžiai – its history, time, soil, people, their language, birch trees, flowers, birds and beetles" (Vaičiulaitis 1992: 262). Andriušis' "On the Other Side of the Lake" consists of nine short stories (the writer himself, not knowing what to call them, described them as "lyrical short stories", although his prose is expressionistic). The definition of lyricism here should therefore be understood as the specificity of his prose, as implicitly described by the writer himself, as the work of a "child of Aukštaitija", conveying the colours of his native land, the colour of Aukštaitija through language.

The Celebration of Natural Life

The short story "Santa Lucia" by Andriušis depicts the expressionistic frenzy of natural life, the God-given celebration of the

morning, employing the Italian song "Santa Lucia". Thus, for Andriušis, life is sacred because it is given by God – in this unexpected way, the Expressionist novel continues the tradition of both Kristijonas Donelaitis and the 19th-century Christian Lithuanian literature, which considers the entire world of life as an act of God's creation and grace.

According to Jūratė Sprindytė, "the writer sees real dramas of fate in nature" (Sprindytė 1996: 203). In Andriušis's creative imagination, the skating/skating of the red beetle "like a diamond of glass" across the surface of the lake without leaving a mark also acquires an unexpected metaphorical juxtaposition with the Jews crossing the Red Sea (Exodus 19: 5–7), The "steel-coloureds" that dive up and down the death loops around the meld are transformed into the characters of a magical fairy tale – they are "fairy-tale fools, carrying the sun with sieves to the windowless bathhouse", or they embody the fundamental plot of magical fairy tales – the search for happiness ("the mare's mare" moves "to another underwood to seek happiness" (Andriušis 1996: 33), the beetle with a bundle of suckers in the writer's vision becomes a hydra polymath whose daily adventures are metaphorically juxtaposed with the fate of the biblical prophet Jonah, who disobeyed God's command and spent three days and nights in the belly of a whale (Mt 12: 38–41).

As it is typical of the Expressionist literary imagination, Andriušis creates an ambivalent vision of the joy, horror and death of nature. The existence of natural beings is not idealised – the struggle "for space and joy in a sunny glade" takes the form of mass slaughter, expressed in the transformed image of the biblical Herod ("the erods of the deep of the lake will carry out the greatest slaughter of the innocent infants"), the short life of dragonflies, which are attributed the metaphors of nymphs, daughters of Zeus, goddesses of nature's vital powers, is depicted both as possessing a special ability to "enjoy the summer heat" and engaging in a "mad rampage", the most horrific act of "slaughter". This intense frenzy of life of natural creatures, which takes on various transformations in the writer's imagination, is juxtaposed with the archetypal situation of a childhood dream – a flight through the garden: "Isn't this how we used to dream in childhood? It seems that behind the house you get up in the air and fly through the garden" (Andriušis 1996: 33), but in the Expressionist poetic novel, the natural and human worlds do not meet (as they do in Romantic literature), but each of them exists as parallels that do not intersect, as separate worlds.

Only at the end of the short story, as if among other things, there is a reference to the “noise of the festivities, drunken staggering at the tavern” (the picture is reminiscent of the chaos of the festivities described by Žemaitė in “Journey to Šidlava” (*Kelionė į Šidlavą*). The narrator's plea for the Lord's grace and intercession is skilfully woven into the text of the poetic prose, because through general confusion, a man fails to notice the music of natural life: “Lord, have mercy on them, when they are at the melting pot, in the paludinous Santa Lucia!” (Andriušis 1996: 37)

Spoken Language as the Embodiment of Vital Energy and Reality

In the short story “No Letting In” (*Neįleido*) by Andriušis, human life is depicted as a narrow path. The story revolves around one external event – the only remaining “journey” in life, the moving of a horse in the back yard by the unmarried farmer Mykola, who was already “letting little news come to him” (Andriušis 1996: 64), the journey that took “a good half a day”, but which made the octogenarian “traveller” very happy. The revival of the character's vital energy is associated with the ability to move through space and to experience even a small change in everyday life, thereby reviving the freshness of the protagonist's speech. Mykola's vital energy is revived when he returns from “his great journey”, and his small living space is filled with the fresh vitality of his speech.

The unstoppable flow of speech, the flow of life, the return to the journey, the moving of the horse express the true joy of the novella's protagonist, Mykola, when living with nature, being in the world of nature and the world of domesticity, of the farming routine, is experienced as a way of existing in the home of being. The character's speech compensates for his physical disability and adds zest to his life. Mykola's speech manifests itself in his openness to the world he lives in, his escape from loneliness; it is a way of being in the world and communicating with it.

This union of the protagonist Mykola's life with the agricultural world, with nature, with the land could be called a poetic way of life. A poetic, meaningful existence could be understood as the character's ability to enjoy a simple, earthly existence in which no external stimuli affect human consciousness.

The loud voice while thinking, the unstoppable flow of Mykola's speech, which makes up the entire narrative of the novella, expresses the character's relationship with reality and language.

The character's lively speech reveals the diversity of colours and forms in the natural world and in everyday farming life, and the richness and beauty of this life. Andriušis's original narrative strategy in the short story is realised through the character's continuous speech, thinking aloud as if addressing another, implied interlocutor, conveys the need for a shared experience, creating an imaginary dialogue that expresses the vitality of speech.

The short story ends with the natural death of the elderly protagonist, but similarly to the moderate Modernist short stories of Antanas Vaičiulaitis, the end of the protagonist's life's journey is neither emphasised nor dramatised in "No Letting In" by Andriušis. The character's death is glossed over, using the vocabulary of phenomenology, as the narrative of the short story conveys an imaginary stream of colloquial speech flowing from the protagonist Mykola; according to the short story's narrator, "Mykola probably spoke to the saints on his return from the great journey to the eternal home he had been let into" (Andriušis 1996: 70).

The importance of the vividness of spoken language is also evident in the short story "The Nights of Fear" (*Baimēs naktys*), where a large part of the narrative is devoted to the depiction of a young child's fear. The beginning of the short story depicts, in an Expressionist poetic style, the terrifying demonic metamorphoses of Lake Sillis, and only halfway through the novella does it become clear that it is the fear of a child dreaming that creates the image of a terrifying lake, the colour of a rat, wandering loosely in the space, lounging, tormented, like a beast.

In the Expressionist poetic short story, the child's fright is depicted as a living being, "the lurking lord of the night, Maum" (Andriušis 1996: 60). The child is gripped by an "irrepressible terror" that creeps into the body and is metaphorically juxtaposed with the terror our ancestors supposedly experienced before the universal flood. The child's irrepressible terror serves as a metaphor for the biblical flood.

In Andriušis's Expressionist novella, the power of speech brings the protagonist (the small child) back to the world of human reality. At the end of the story, the child is saved from the terrible fright by a sudden voice of the "living, good mother" (Andriušis 1996: 62). According to Bergson, the mother's love, "which is considered by many to be the great secret of life, can perhaps itself reveal this secret to us" (Bergson 2004: 148). The mother's voice brings the child back into a harmonious relationship with the living reality,

with the warm and cozy space of the house, where he hears the wooden spoon clattering in the pancake and hears “warm coziness walking around the house” (Andriušis 1996: 63). The mother's voice embodies the vital energy, the sense of living language, of life. Hearing his mother's voice gives the child joy and a sense of belonging, an understanding that community and human connections are important in this world: “How good it is not to be alone!” (Andriušis 1996: 63)

The Meaning of Music as Vital and Creative Energy

The short story “Come back to Sorrento” (*Grižk į Sorrento*) by Andriušis depicts a marginal existential situation for the refugee in the face of war and death, and shows a fundamental change in the protagonist Julius Sirgėda's consciousness, which brings a desperate family man back to life. The protagonist of the short story faces a painful and humiliating experience of homelessness: due to the war, he and his family become refugees, people without a place to call home, without a homeland: “The narrator has lost his homeland. The lost paradise is a closed dimension – the possibility of return has been nullified.” (Sprindytė 1996: 2007) The situation of the war refugee described in the short story conveys the idea that for a person, losing their homeland means having no place, no home, and losing their very existence.

The character's search for shelter, “the terrible task of finding a room” (Andriušis 1996: 73), escalates into disillusionment with life, a threat of self-destruction, a shattering experience of darkness (the metaphor of black, iron water), and thoughts of suicide.

This destructive experience is suddenly replaced by the Italian *bel canto* tenor's “Torna a Sorrento”, a song heard by chance through the open door of a dirty car, which embodies the creative impulse of life described by Bergson, a huge wave of vital energy, expressed in the style of Expressionist poetry: “Sizzling with passion, the tenor churns with the cascades of lustful idleness.” (Andriušis 1996: 75) According to Antanas Andrijauskas, for Bergson music is “the mysterious power of intuitive cognition”, which “helps various dead forms of life to acquire a new vitality, to plunge more deeply into the processes of the world, of phenomena, of the human being, and of his or her own consciousness, and to see a flow in the processes of life that consists of a myriad of combinations, of a variety of rhythms at play, that conveys the dynamism and the multiplicity of the life processes” (Andrijauskas 2004: 416).

According to Bergson, vitality can also be expressed as an order of volition, rather than as automatism or inertia. Bergson sees the order of vitality in the unpredictable nature of musical creation: "[...] vitality is oriented towards volition. The first kind of order can therefore be said to be that of vitality or volubility, while the second, on the contrary, is that of inertia and automatism. [...] And an equally marvellous order is to be found in Beethoven's symphony, which is characterised by genius, originality and, therefore, unpredictability." (Bergson 2004: 248)

In the short story, the sounds of music awaken the protagonist from the chaos of the subconscious, from the darkness, from his spiritual death, which is expressed through the black and red colour palette characteristic of Expressionist painting. In contrast, the song awakens memories of his birthplace, embedded in the poetic images of Lake Sils, filled with the playfulness of blue-feathered dragonflies. The vitality and rebirth of the protagonist's consciousness and body are expressed in Julius Sirgēda's will to live, to return to life, the liveliness of his native landscape, and the metaphor of the bells of life.

The song gives Julius Sirgēda hope for life, vital energy of life, the joy of living and acting, and the inspired refugee even manages to be playful and gallant in the difficult existential situation of survival and to find shelter for his family: "Sirgēda, like a student on holiday, jumped into the first hotel, cheerfully greeted the gray-haired hostess, paid a nice compliment to the raita. [...] And we already have a home! – Sirgēda hugged his son in the station canteen, who was kneeling on his suitcases." (Andriušis 1996: 76)

Conclusions

The article explores the possibilities of applying organic phenomenological philosophy of life to analyse the Expressionist short stories of Pulgis Andriušis, employing the concepts of *élan vital*, creative dynamic imagination, and Bachelard's concept of metaphor.

The analysis of Andriušis's debut book "On the Other Side of the Lake" is closely related to his autobiography, in which the future writer testified that while studying at Kaunas University, he was intensely interested in Bergson's philosophy of vitalism, which emphasised the vital creative power associated with the individuality of a creative person. Andriušis's autobiography reveals the source of his personal experience and creativity, in which his native place embodied the Bergsonian principle of the *élan vital*,

becoming the writer's living world and the idyll for the creator. The experiences accumulated in his native place shaped the writer's self-creation and his literary self-awareness and openness to the world of nature's vitality.

Andriušis's dynamic imagination creates a celebration of nature's vitality, embodies the principle of radical transformation embedded in Expressionist poetics, and introduces complex vocabulary and original metaphors linked to biblical and folkloric intertexts. It should be emphasised that Andriušis's Expressionist short stories reinforce the importance of speech as an affirmation of life, as the *élan vital*, as vital energy. Speech, as a continuous flow of life, conveys the world of his protagonist, his openness to the living world, the true joy of life, the experience of the fullness of being, a poetic way of life, manifested in natural harmony with his own earthly space, a meaningful existence in the natural world as if at home. Speech as a vital action enables the speaker to compensate for his physical disability. Speech also manifests itself through thinking aloud as if conversing with oneself as another person. This orientation of speech toward an implied interlocutor creates a dialogue and a shared experience, sustaining the vitality of speech. The vitality of speech and the sound of his mother's voice bring Andriušis's Expressionist novella's character (a small child) back from the frightening world of dreams to the living human reality, to the warm, cosy, and resonant space of home. The mother's voice, embodying Bergson's principle of vital momentum, gives the protagonist the joy of being and the realisation that, in this world, community, connection with loved ones, and human presence are important.

In Andriušis's Expressionist short stories, not only human speech, but also music embodies Bergson's principle of vital momentum, vital energy, and the order of vitality as the will to live. An unexpectedly heard song awakens the protagonist of the novella from the darkness of his subconscious (a desire to commit suicide). It restores the vitality of his consciousness, the will to live, conveyed by the metaphor of the bells of life and the expression of life in the landscape of his native land.

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