

Peculiarities of Actualizing the Subject of Festivities in Latgalian Poetry of Exile

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Abstract The present paper reveals the potential of actualizing the subject of festivities for expressing the life experience acquired in exile and in the land of settlement on the example of previously little known poetry by seven émigré authors born in Latgale (south-eastern part of Latvia). The mentioned traumatic experience in Latgalian poetry of exile is mostly treated within a binary opposition “native land (past) — foreign land (present)” that is brightly revealed by comparing celebrations of Christmas, Easter, and New Year as observed in Latvia, to the reality of the land of settlement. Lyrical hero provoked by an acoustic impulse (hearing festive tunes or toll of the church bells) carries out a dream journey into the past where s/he visits native home and recalls most important codes of one’s national festive culture (tradition of hospitality and cooking, lit candles, going to the church) that help surviving in the foreign land. It is noteworthy that, in the course of time, hope for the return of the Golden Age (past, native land), that is more characteristic of Christmas poetry, vanishes, hence the works under analysis — mostly Easter and especially New Year poetry — more and more often express the authors’ despair and doubt.

Key words exile; trauma; festivities; actualization; Latgale; poetry

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Conditions of Exile and Trauma Experienced

The word “exile” in the present paper is used with the meaning of a significant period of time in the history of Latvia from the end of World War II (autumn of 1944 to 1945) when, escaping the anticipated repressions of the Soviet regime and danger of death, 10% of the total number of residents left the country, to 21 August 1991 when Latvia regained its state sovereignty and emigrants had an opportunity to return to their native land (Celle 5; Daukste-Silaspoģe (2002) 5; Plakans). The given period, almost 50 years long, is divided into three main stages (Celle 5), during which the acquired experience and whole range of feelings accompanying it are registered in various kinds of documents, including the literature of exile:

1) the period of refugee camps in Germany (1944-1950) when literary works generally “expressed pain for the lost homeland, pain for the tragedy of Latvian nation” (Zalāne 257), as well as “feelings of alienation, inability and unwillingness to accept the other as one’s own” (Nollendorfs 222), hence the written text turns into “a document of spiritual resistance” (Daukste-Silaspoģe (2002) 5);

2) settling in more distant lands of settlement — Australia, USA, Canada, Great Britain, South America and elsewhere (starting from 1949) when literary discourse registers “strain not so much between past and future as between past and present” (Nollendorfs 225);

3) gradual passage of the leadership of life in exile into the hands of the generation born in the foreign lands (mostly the 1970s—1980s), when “treatment of the surrounding environment and people becomes thematically important in texts” (Nollendorfs 229).

Hence, this regards the traumatic experience registered by authors that arose by collision of two realities — past (the time spent in one’s homeland that is positioned in the majority of texts as a happy and harmonious life stage) and present (need for survival, both physical and moral, under hostile, as perceived by the authors, conditions of exile that they gradually adapt to, though are never able to fully accept), as well as the gradual shift of the perspective of actualizing this experience registered by the literary narrative:

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Because of her displacement, the migrant's identity undergoes radical shifts that alter her self-perception and often result in her ambivalence towards both her old and new existence. She can no longer simply or nostalgically remember the past as a fixed and comforting anchor in her life, since its contours move with the present rather than in opposition to it. (Mardorossian 16)

Literature as a Form of Registering National Culture Experience under Conditions of Exile

The reality of exile, along with the painful experience of loss of homeland and desperate search for the means of subsistence, gives rise to a sense of common mission, that is, necessity of preserving and cultivating one's national culture even in a foreign land, that at the same time means preserving one's selfhood: "[...] the community of exile consists of a proportionally large number of intelligentsia who experience the loss of their culture environment as an existential loss" (Nollendorfs 219).

In this context, literary activity of exiles is to be regarded as a major means of preserving and enriching national culture under the conditions of living in exile, along with book publishing, theatre, painting, fine arts, and other forms of representation of national culture achievements: "National self-awareness as a sign of identity was taken along by Latvians into emigration: willingness to think, feel, write in Latvian irrespective of the country of settlement" (Daukste-Silasproģe (2007) 7). In this respect, exile in many respects stimulates the process of writing that results in the development of a unique phenomenon of literature of exile:

Displacement, whether forced or self-imposed, is in many ways a calamity. Yet, a peculiar but a potent point to note is that writers in their displaced existence generally tend to excel in their work, as if the changed atmosphere acts as a stimulant for them. These writings in dislocated circumstances are often termed as exile literature. [...]. World literature has an abundance of writers whose writings have prospered while they were in exile. [...]. (Saha 186)

Peculiarities of Actualizing the Subject of Festivities in Literature of Exile

Festivities are traditionally regarded to be one of the most solid forms of the spiritual and social realization of the nation (Bennett, Taylor, Woodward 1; Korolova et. al. 544). However, according to recent research, under the impact of various factors (secularization, globalization, flourishing of commerce and digital technolo-

gies), they have gradually transformed: “Recent research in ritual studies has shown that rituals are not at all static, but, on the contrary, more often subject to dynamic changes, even if their participants continue to claim that they have been the same since time immemorial” (Kreinath, Hartung, Deschner 1).

Under the conditions of exile, festivities acquire additional symbolical meaning, as they are perceived as a central mechanism that stimulates the preservation of national identity and self-identification in a foreign environment. Respectively, in the course of time, a specific canon of festive culture of exile is formed. The newcomers often try, under the circumstances of the land of settlement, to observe also those festive traditions and customs that in homeland may have seemed insignificant and unimportant (Anikin). In fact, it is an attempt at keeping this important part of cultural legacy in memory unchanged and static as long as possible.

In the literary narrative of exile, festive traditions and customs, on the one hand, represent a part of folk national culture legacy — the one that is to be preserved and enriched by all means, and, on the other hand, make it possible to express nostalgic feelings in relation to festivities celebrated once in homeland. This picture of ideal festivities reconstructed in memories mostly does not comply with the celebrations observed in the land of settlement: “[in fugitive years — O. K.] many poems dedicated to Easter [...] and Christmas [...] are to be read, yet also in this poetry one can mostly find the opposition — that is Easter and Christmas in foreign land [...]” (Daukste-Silaspoģe (2002) 190-191). In other words, festivities actualized in the literary discourse of exile trigger off stable associations with the time spent in homeland that under present circumstances seems harmonious and ideal for exiles (treated as “the Golden Age”); under the impact of historical and political events it has been lost (treated as “the Iron Age”), yet, possibly, it will be regained in future (new “Golden Age”): “[...] he [exile — O. K.] is constantly striving to return to what has been, the foreign is associated with what has been witnessed in one’s homeland, and the experience of memories is stronger than the new impressions” (Daukste-Silaspoģe 188). It must be noted that, in the course of time, this spatial-temporal structure characteristic of early Romanticism may change, as the optimism and assurance of exiles turn into pessimism and scepticism.

Festivities in Works by Latgalian Poets of Exile: The Corpus of Texts under Analysis and its Specificity

Philologist and writer Paulīne Zalāne (married name Vallena; 1931-2018) in article “Latgales rakstnieku devums trimdā” [The Contribution of Latgalian Writers in

Exile] states that, as a result of emigration, at least 40 writers of Latgalian origin settled in western countries who continued writing literary works including poetry. As testified by the writer, in the time period between 1948 and 1952, Latgalian writers mostly moved to the USA and Canada, some of them remained in Germany, and only one went to Australia (Zalāne 257).

Of the number of writers mentioned by P. Zalāne (the contribution of 42 personalia is given closer characteristics), 17 authors in various periods of exile published poetry — in press periodicals, anthologies, and individual collections, some of which have become bibliographical rarities by now. Subject matter of festivities is not treated in all of these authors' works, and this condition even more limits the range of texts under analysis making the study exciting and unique.

Within the topic under study, seven literati born in Latgale deserve more scientific interest:

1) *Marija Andžāne* (married name Stroda; 1909-1988) — a writer born in Landskorona civil parish (present region of Kraslava) whose début in literature happened during her years of studies; in 1944 she left Latvia, lived in refugee camps in Greven and Langerfeld, together with her husband founded a school in Germany and worked there as a teacher, in 1951 moved to the USA, worked there in a factory and died in this land of settlement; the article analyzes M. Andžānes's poems first included in the collection "Namīra vōrtūs" [In Gates of Unrest] (Feldafing, 1951) and later republished in other collections and periodicals in exile;

2) *Janīna Babre* (1919-1983) — a poet and author of religious articles born in Daugavpils who in 1944 left Latvia, studied in Munich and Illinois where she acquired bachelor degree in pedagogy, worked as a teacher and journal editor, actively published her works since the early 1960s receiving several prizes; buried in Royal Palm cemetery, USA; in the context of treating the subject matter of festivities, the author's poetry collections "Meditācijas" [Meditations] (Chicago, 1968), "Ceļā uz Loreto" [On the Way to Loreto] (Chicago, 1972), "Meditācija naktī" [Meditation at Night] (Leuven, 1978) deserve special attention, along with poems published in press periodicals in exile (mostly newspaper "Latgolas Bolss" [Voice of Latgale]);

3) *Vladislavs Bojārs* (1905-1984) — a writer, educator, and journalist born in Bērzgale civil parish, his first publications appeared since 1928, in 1944 he left Latvia, lived and worked as a teacher in refugee camp schools in Germany, started studying in Munich, in 1950 moved to Canada where continued studies in St. Hieronymus' College Ontario province, is buried in Canada; within the topic under study, the author's poems included in the collection "Sirds smeļdze" [Heart Longing] (Munich, 1957) deserve special attention;

4) *Leonards Latkovskis* (1905-1991) — a linguist, folklorist, ethnographer, and writer born in Varakļāni civil parish who published his works since 1927, in 1944 he left Latvia, first staying in Germany and Bavaria where he founded and headed Latvian gymnasia and worked as a translator (having a command of 18 languages), later, in 1950, he moved to the USA where he was a professor of linguistics, scholar, participant of congresses and conferences, editor; buried in Louisville, USA; in the framework of the topic under study, L. Latkovskis' poetry included in the edition "Dzyimtōs zemes ļaudis II" [People of the Native Land II] (Munich, 1983) is investigated;

5) *Jōņs Leidumnīks* (real name Jōņs Mozga; 1909-1982) — a poet born in Varakļāni civil parish whose first works appeared in Latgalian periodicals since the end of the 1930s, in 1944 he left Latvia, lived in Neu Etting, Germany where he engaged in active public work among Latvian Catholics, in 1948 moved to England and in 1951 — to Canada where he worked as a secretary typist, compiled and edited periodical editions, worked in St. Joseph's hospital in Ontario where he later died; in the sense of treating the subject matter of festivities, J. Leidumnīks' poetry collection "Tāva pogolmā" [In Father's Yard] (Munich, 1959) as well as its publications in exile periodicals are of special significance;

6) *Francis Murāns* (1915-2001) — a writer born in the family of peasants from Viļāni civil parish whose first works appeared in the 1930s, in 1944 he left for Germany, in 1949 emigrated to the USA where he worked as a blue collar worker, yet in the course of time obtained a doctoral degree in economics at the University of Michigan, worked as a lecturer, assistant, docent, and finally — professor at various USA higher education institutions, took an active part in the social life of local Latvians, was buried in Stephens Point, USA; the present paper regards F. Murāns' poetry first published in the collection "Ilgu zeme" [The Land of Longing] (Bayern, 1946) and later included in the edition "Svešumā klīstot" [Roaming in Foreign Lands] (Rēzekne, 1993);

7) *Ontonis Zvīdris* (1911-1992) — a painter, sculptor and writer born in Makašēni civil parish (at that time a part of Rēzekne district) who was sent to Germany in 1942 where he worked as a farm hand near Flensburg, after World War II he stayed in Flensburg, studied at Dusseldorf Art Academy, in 1946 moved to England, in 1949 — to Canada where he graduated from art college and organized several exhibitions, died in Toronto, Canada; the present paper regards O. Zvīdris' poetry form collections "Tu" [You] (Munich, 1974), "Dvēseles ilgas un sāpes" [Longing and Pain of the Soul] (Rēzekne, 2001), as well as exile periodicals.

(<https://latgalesdati.du.lv/>; <http://literatura.lv/lv/post/index>; Paukšte, Rancāne,

Salceviča)

It must be emphasized that the present paper analyzes texts created both in the Latvian literary language and Latgalian dialect. These poems are available not only in individual collections but also in periodicals. In fact, these works have been and still remain little known to Latvian readers. In the context of treating the subject matter of festivities, texts of the mentioned corpus have not been previously analyzed by other scholars.

Festivals Occurring Most Often in Latgalian Poetry of Exile

Literary scholar Inguna Daukste-Silasproģe (1968), in her analysis of the period of refugee years, indicates that it is marked by “poetry as a dominant, yet quantitatively prevalent books of short prose fiction, not poetry” (Daukste-Silasproģe (2002) 168). According to the scholar, it is exactly “lyric that has always most directly reacted to the changes, events, and experiences of the epoch” (Daukste-Silasproģe (2002) 188).

The study of Latgalian poetry of exile has led to a conclusion that, firstly, from a broad range of festivities and holidays, Christmas and Easter are mentioned in these texts most frequently. This is accounted for by the fact that, in both cases, there has been synthesis of both ancient Latvian traditional, i.e., heathen, festivities and later inherited Christian festivities and traditions. In other words, this concerns the national culture code characteristic of exiles and simultaneously the evidence of deep religious feelings characteristic of Latgalians (mostly Catholics) that are manifested in the poems under analysis by means of the subject matter related to Christmas and Easter. In this context, special importance is attributed to the idea of spiritual elevation and rebirth that poets often include on the acoustic level. Most often, the initial acoustic impulse in this kind of poems is given by church bell tolls, festive melodies and other phenomena of audial register. These sounds provoke self-reflections of the lyrical hero/heroine on the life in foreign land and the lost paradise of homeland that, in turn, makes it possible to form a kind of a portal through which one can mentally, if not physically, return to past and linger in the scenes of festivities celebrated long ago. This short journey that is made by heroes in their mind causes sense of harmony and happiness.

Secondly, it must be noted that New Year appears in a similar context that in the reality of the land of settlement assumes a specific semantic of a point of reference, with constant regularity (due to its annual occurrence) evoking consideration of the opportunity of return to homeland. The more years are spent by poets in exile, the more pessimistic their self-reflections become, as they see

the current year off. Hence, cases of actualization of New Year, as compared to depictions of Christmas and even Easter, must be acknowledged as grim testimonial of inner pain in the corpus of poetry under analysis.

It must be noted that other festivals and holidays in works by Latgalian poets of exile occur much more seldom, they do not manifest as radically and emotionally as Christmas, Easter, and New Year.

Christmas

Despite the difficulties faced by Latgalian literati in various lands of settlement (status of a foreigner, psychological trauma, desperate search for a job, etc.), depiction of Christmas in their poetry is generally rather light and optimistic, as they mostly convey hope for return to Latvia some day.

Jōņs Leidumnīks in the 1950-1970s, in his poetry published both in collections and periodicals, associates Christmas with hope and peace of mind. In his interpretation, Christmas is the time when one has an opportunity to return in one's thoughts to one's homeland, thus having spiritual rest:

“Zīmassvātkus gaidūt...”

[...] Lyuk, Zīmassvātki pi vōrtim,
Un snīdzeņš kreit kai zvaigzneites
Pa pogolmu, uz dōrza kōrtim,
Kur seņdīnōs reiz gōju es...

Myrdzušais tōļumu gaišums
Naktī šai atspeid kai zalts.
Svātki dūs cereibas mums
Reitam, nu Dīva kas calts. [...].
(Leidumnīks (1959) 30)

“Expecting Christmas...”

[...] See, Christmas is near,
And snow is falling like small stars
In the yard, on garden fence,
Where once upon a time I walked...

The glistening lightness of afar
Shines as gold in this night.
Festivity gives us hope
For the morrow raised by God. [...].

“Zīmassvatkūs”

[...] Sirds soka: ir atgōjuši Kristus svātki!
Tymša zuduse, gaisma vysur mirdz... [...].
(Leidumnīks (1969) 1)

“At Christmas”

[...] Heart says: Christ's festivity has come!
Darkness is gone, light shines everywhere... [...].

“Zīmassvātki”**“Christmas”**

[...] Kristus prīcu vēsteis [...] Christ will bring a joyous message
 Vysam pasaulam un tev dzimtene [...]. To the whole world and you homeland [...].
 (Leidumnīks (1971) 1)

Christmas scenes included in poetry collections by Janīna Babre published in the 1960s—1970s in the USA and Belgium greatly remind of meditations and mysteries. The author who had religion as an important source of inspiration in her texts willingly sets on dream journeys to homeland and this usually happens at the time of celebrations of the birth of Christ. In this context, a sound of sleigh bells ringing becomes an acoustic stimulus, whereas the colour of white gains specific semantic as a symbol of purity and innocence — e.g. white clothing, white snow, etc. Christmas miracle conveyed in the author’s poetry is revealed in an opportunity, even if in one’s mind and for a very short while, to visit native land that suddenly becomes close, as well as to see father’s house that is the most consequent association with the lost homeland. However, it is essential that the visit of father’s house is not described in these lines:

“Sapņu brauciens”**“A Dream Journey”**

Ziēmassvētki, Ziēmassvētki,
 Skanošs brauciens divjūgā!
 Agri rieti, vēli lēkti,
 Zvaigznes saplaukst brīnumā.

Christmas, Christmas,
 A sonorous ride in a sleigh!
 Early sunsets, late sunrises,
 Stars flourish in a miracle.

Ziēmas sniega miera klāsti,
 Baltās drānas, Betlēme, —
 Atkal dzīvi senie stāsti,
 Tuva tuva dzimtene!

Peaceful loads of winter snow,
 White clothes, Bethlehem, —
 The olden tales are alive again,
 The homeland is near by!

Ziēmassvētki, Ziēmassvētki
 Sniega klāju baltumā. —
 Aizslīdu uz tēva māju
 Zvanu skaņu vieglumā...
 (Babre (1968) 116)

Christmas, Christmas
 In the white of the plains of snow. —
 I glide to my father’s house
 In the lightness of the sounds of bells...

In J. Babre's poetry, a trip to homeland in one's mind is provoked also by the tunes of Christmas luxuriantly celebrated in the land of settlement — both well known to the author and totally new and unknown. The joyful scene of celebrations observed by the lyrical heroine in the foreign land is contrasted to her serious thoughts and prayer sent to God for retrieving the lost paradise that is in fact a prayer of all Latvian nation and her greatest dream:

“Zīmassvātki svešumā”

Ir skaisti Zīmassvātki svešumā,
Daudz krāšņu guņteņu un rūtu
kūšu,
Bet skots maņ klejoj kaut kur
tālumā
Kur voska sveces gada līsmu
spūžu.

Ir skoni Zīmassvātki svešumā,
Skaņ ilgi tyvas, senās melodijas
Un jaunas vēstē Svātku tyvumu
Un tūmār — dūmas vysam pōri
vejās:

Kaut kur aiz guņteņu un skaņu
klaigom,
Kur apsneguši egļu syli
Vēļ šudiņ speitej tundrom, taigom,
(Tū zemi, Kungs, Tu labi zyni!)
Uz turīni myus' ved, mes lyudzam,
Kungs, myusu zemi prosom,
lyudzom!
(Babre (1969) 1)

“Christmas in the Foreign Land”

Christmas is beautiful in the foreign
land,
Lots of bright firelights and flowers,
But my look wanders in the far
distance
Where wax candles burn with a bright
flame.

Christmas is loud in the foreign land,
Familiar, old tunes are sounding
And new ones herald the coming of the
Festival
And yet — thoughts meander above all:

Somewhere beyond the clamour of
fires and sounds,
Where fir forests are covered with
snow
Keep spiting tundras, taigas,
(Lord, You know that land well!)
Take us there, we pray,
Lord, we pray, we beg for our land!

Similar praying for the Latvian people in exile is found in Marija Andžāne's poetry where main accents are placed on spiritual light that, as a result of God's beneficial interference, like white snowflakes, might cover the doubts of the exiles:

“Zīmassvātkūs”**“At Christmas”**

[...] Lai gaišums šys uz myusu
sirdim mōj!

[...] May this light wave to our
hearts!

Lai apskaidroj un pasorgoj nu grāka,
Lai paceļt skotu augšup spātu mes,
Lai trymdas ceļūs napītryuktu spāka,
Lai stypri gora gaismā tveramēs! [...].
(Andžāne 43)

May it clarify and safeguard from
sin,
So that we would be able to raise our
eyes up,
So that we would not lose strength in
exile routes,
So that we keep strong in the light of
spirit! [...].

The symbol of spiritual vertical, faith, and hope — the burning Christmas candle — used by Janīna Babre in poem “Christmas in the Foreign Land” appears also in M. Andžāne’s poem where the desperate mother of exile is looking at it:

“Saruna ar dālu”**“Talking to the Son”**

Pleiv voska svece uz golda,
Ir Zīmsvātku vokors vāls.
— Tev līgta nūskaņa solda.
Muns svešumā asūšais dāls. [...].

Wax candle is flickering on the table,
It’s late Christmas night.
— You are forbidden the sweet air.
My son in the far-away land. [...].

Ar klusu dvēseles vaidu,
Kod Zīmsvātku sveceite mirdz,
Es tevi pōrnōkam gaidu,
Lai mīru atrostu sirds. [...].
(Andžāne 147)

With a soft moan of the soul,
When Christmas candle is shining,
I await for you to return,
For my heart to be at peace. [...].

It is noteworthy that also in this poem journey to native land is carried out in one’s mind, while longing for reunion with native land, analogous to poem “A Dream Journey” by J. Babre cited above, assumes a shape of a sleigh ride, and this time again the destination of the journey taken in mind — the house — is never reached:

— Es gorā steidzūs uz sātu	I hurry home in my spirit
Kur svātku guņš vilinūt speid...	Where festive light shines alluring...
Uz bērneibas zemi svātku	To the land of childhood festivity
Maņ ilgas kai komonas sleid...	My longing glides as a sleigh...
Es sapnūs pi tevis tikšu,	I will reach to you in my dreams,
Kur čaukstādams smōrdoj sīns,	Where hay is fragrant and swishing,
Uz tō sovu smogumu likšu	I will place my burden on it
Un svešumā nabyušu vīns.	And won't be alone in the far-away land.
(Andžāne 147)	

The Christmas candle burning in the church becomes a central image also in the poem by Vladislavs Bojārs written in the 1950s where it helps overcome fear and darkness, becoming a landmark for the spirit of the lyrical hero wandering in the dark:

“Advents”	“Advent”
[...] Brīnūt pa snīgim, — tymsā nav baiļ,	[...] Wading through snows, — in darkness there is no fear,
Jo gaisma blōzmojās zaigōs. —	Because light is shining like dawn. —
Klausitēs, brōli! Advents ņyu klōt!	Listen, brothers! Advent is here!
Bazneicā aizdagta svece. [...].	A candle is lit in the church. [...].
(Bojārs 281)	

The situation when the lyrical hero “was in spirit in homeland” occurs in poetry by Latgalian authors of exile without any external acoustic effects. This approach is characteristic of Ontons Zvīdris’ poetry. The exile hero depicted by this author is able to spontaneously recall the Christmas lavishly celebrated in native land that cannot be fulfilled at present in the foreign land. This ideal festivity is associated with joy, smiles, lots of guests and treats, as well as traditions:

“Adventa laiks”

[...] Un dreiši satak pylna sābru
ustoba
Ar na jau lyugtim cīmenim,
Bet vīnmār eisti gaideitim.
Skaņ klusi smīkly, jautra bārnu
volūdeņa. [...].
(Zvīdris (1974) 218)

“The Time of Advent”

[...] And soon the neighbours' room fills
With guests not really invited,
Yet always really welcome.
Quiet laughter, merry children's talk is
heard around. [...].

“Zīmassvātki”

[...] I munā sātā sabrauce
Daudz meilu, meilu cīmeņu.
Skar munas rūkas augumus,
Kam prīca acīs — vaigā zīd
Un meily smaidi lyupōs plaukst.
[...].
(Zvīdris (1974) 162)

“Christmas”

[...] My home, too,
Is full of dear, dear guests.
My hands are touching bodies
That flourish with joy in eyes — in the
face
And warm smiles blossom on their lips.
[...].

The traditional Latgalian attributes for Christmas celebrations — hay placed under the table-cloth on the table, *kalada* (blessed bread), *kuchas* (dish made of barley or wheat grains stewed with a half of a hog's head), beer — are depicted by Leonards Latkovskis in his poem that in fact is a journey to the author's childhood made “by the memory tracks”:

“Zīmassvātķūs”

[...] Uz golda sīns, klōts ar goldautu
boltu,
Tur kalada, maize, kūčas un ols.
Tāvs lyugšonu skaita ar cīneibu
stoltu. [...].
(Latkovskis 8)

“At Christmas”

[...] Hay on the table, covered with a
white cloth,
Kalada, bread, kuchas, and beer there.
Father says prayers with stately respect.
[...].

It is noteworthy that such journeys are carried out by L. Latkovskis' lyrical hero, respectively, the poet himself, in complete silence with clear awareness that it is no more than just a dream:

“Zīmassvātku sapyns svešumā”

[...] Vyss klus kai dīvnomā.
 Ni vōvereite loksta, ni dzenis
 prīdē kaļ.
 Tik es pa snīgu brīnu kai gōju
 putnys spōrnim nūlaistim,
 Kas pazaudējis ceļu atpakaļ.”
 (Latkovskis 169)

“Christmas Dream in a Foreign Land”

[...] All is silent like in a church.
 Neither a squirrel hops, nor a
 woodpecker pecks in the pine-tree.
 Only me wading through the snow like
 a bird of passage with wings down,
 Who has lost its way back.

Easter

Easter is usually depicted in Latgalian poetry of exile in a different tonality, though the expressive means used by the authors are generally rather similar (acoustic impulse, the image of a candle). The longer the lyrical hero/heroine stays in the foreign land, the smaller his/her hope of “resurrection”, i.e. return to the homeland becomes.

Janīna Babre constantly relates Easter and particularly Good Friday to the destruction of the town of Rēzekne in Latgale in the post-war time, when, as a result of Soviet aviation bombarding, almost hundred civilians died and several thousands remained without shelter. In the poem, this historical background is positioned as a stimulus for becoming a fugitive. Thus a parallel is drawn between the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the tragedy experienced by the Latvian people, as they had to leave their dear homeland:

“Stabat mater”

[...] Šo Lielo Piektadienu
 neaizmirsīs Rēzekne,
 kad ļaudis drupas pameta
 un izgāja uz lielceļa,
 lai bēgļu gaitas uzsāktu. [...].
 (Babre (1978) 90)

“Stabat mater”

[...] This Good Friday
 Rēzekne will never forget,
 when people left the ruins
 and went on the highway,
 to set on their fugitive way. [...].

Notwithstanding the Easter church sounds identical for homeland and similarly yellow sun of the land of settlement, the lyrical heroine of M. Andžāne’s poem realizes that she is no longer “the same”, that is, she no longer believes in the

miracle of resurrection and cannot be truly joyful:

“Leldīnas trymdā”

Duņ zvoni Leldīnōs
Un pīcas vēsti junda
Kai lobōs seņdīnōs,
Tik nanōk mīra stuņde.

Tei poša skaņa sleid
Kai seņōk Latvijā
Nu augstim tūrņgolim,
Tei poša saule speid

Kai dzymtā nūvōdā
Ap boltim dīvnomim...
Tik sirds tei poša nav —

Tei natic breinumim.
Šai gaišā svātreitā.
Duņ zvoni Leldīnōs

Un jaunu dzeivi junda
Kai lobōs seņdīnōs —
Bet nanōk pīcas stuņde.
(Andžāne 47)

“Easter in Exile”

Bells toll at Easter
And pass the joyous message
Like in good old days,
Just the hour of rest does not come.

The same sound is gliding
Like it used to in Latvia
From high tower peaks,
The same sun is shining

Like in the native land
Around white churches...
The heart is not the same —

It does not believe in miracles.
On this light holy morning.
Bells toll at Easter

And stir a new life
Like in good old days —
Just the hour of joy does not come.

Ambivalent feelings are caused by the remembered Easter celebration scene in the church of native Rogovka for the lyrical hero of Ontons Zvīdris’ poem. Observing streams and listening to their appealing sounds (another significant acoustic detail-impulse), he cannot really tell whether in this water his native land is washing or crying:

“Leldīnas svešumā”

[...] Īlejās burbuļoj strauti,
 klausūtīs līkās tik jauki,
 sudobra seiceni zvoni
 skaņ kai nu šļupsteigom mēlem.
 Nazynu eistyn, voi mozgojās zeme,
 voi osoras lelas tei raud...
 (Zvīdris (2001) 52)

“Easter in a Foreign Land”

[...] Streams gurgle in valleys,
 they seem so nice to listen to,
 tiny silver bells
 sound like from babbling tongues.
 I don't really know whether the land is
 washing,
 or shedding big tears...

The motif of suffering and tears of humankind is repeated by the author in a poem published in periodicals:

“Lelā Piktdīnā”

[...] Daudz cīšonu un sōpu apkōrt
 šudiņ,
 Kū cylvāks pats ir nataisneibā
 radējis.
 Nu jauna ašņa upes plyust
 Un osoras nu vaiga ciļvēces,
 Vēļ ilgi, ilgi nanūžyust. [...].
 (Zvīdris (1975) 3)

“Good Friday”

[...] Much suffering and pain are around
 today,
 That human has himself created in
 injustice.
 Once again blood rivers are flowing
 And tears from the humankind's face
 Do not dry for a long long time. [...].

Easter church bells make Francis Murāns think of Jesus Christ's sacrifice for the sake of humankind, agony experienced by Latvian people and opportunities of possible rescue in the “eternal light” of the netherworld. Hence, this concerns reflections of a believer who no longer hopes for a harmonious life in this reality and possible return to Latvia, yet, according to the canons of Christian faith, is certain that a different life is possible when the soul reaches heaven, that is, after one's physical death:

“Leldīnes reitā”

“On Easter Morning”

[...] Tod radzu es otkon kai sauli tū	[...] Then I see again that morning like
reitu,	the sun,
uz golvas kod zīdi nu ūbelem bērst,	when apple-tree blossoms fall on my
kai osorom acīs pret Tū ceļūs	head,
kreitu,	when I fall to my knees with tears in my
kas manis dēļ Golgotā nūmūceits	eyes at Him,
mērst. [...].	who dies at Golgotha for me in agony.
	[...].

Kod Leldīnes zvoni nu bazneicas	
boltōs	When Easter bells from the white church
par myužēigu gaismu un piļneibu	profess about eternal light and
pauž,	perfection,
es ceļūs tod gorā nu dzeives šōs	I rise then in spirit from this bleak life
soltōs	there in the distance where stars weave a
tur tōli, kur zvaigznes maņ vaiņuku	wreath for me.
auž.(Murāns 51)	

New Year

Poetry by Latvian poets in exile dedicated to New Year seems even more pessimistic against the background of other works. The motif of doom in it is closely related to the idea of cyclic repetition: starting each new calendar year, the lyrical hero/heroine concludes that nothing has changed in his/her life: another year passes, like many others, but the situation remains unchanged — he/she is still living in exile without any perspectives of the change of the status of exile.

“Dark veil of sorrow”, “unrest of heart”, and “mean sadness” saturate the poem by Marija Andžāne where the focus event is the need for the Latvian people to set on roaming “anew” without any prospects for stability and happiness in future:

“Jaunā godā”

Tymss bādu pleivurs apkōrt klōjīs,
 Kai ānas sōpes pōri gulst...
 Šķīt, laiks ar mīra vēsti stōjīs,
 Nu jauna namīram sirds mulst,

 Nu jauna ceļam kōjas aunam,
 Lai izkleistu pa tōlumim,
 Nu jauna sirdis skumem ļaunam
 Mes, moldūtīs pa svešumim.
 (Andžāne 44)

“At New Year”

Dark veil of sorrow lies all around,
 Pain like shadows falls upon...
 It seems that time has stopped with the
 tidings of peace,
 Heart is confused with unrest anew,

 We are setting on our way anew,
 To wander into far away,
 Anew we give our hearts to mean
 sadness
 Wandering in the foreign lands.

The idea of “Brīves Diena” [Day of Freedom] that most probably will befall only descendants of Latvian exiles is expressed in Francis Murāns’ poem dedicated to the subject matter of New Year:

“Jaunajā gadā”

[...] Kā lielā spogulī mēs tanīs skatus
 metam
 un skumji nopūšamies, redzot takas
 ietas,
 kad zinām, mīdīt tās būs lemts varbūt
 tik retam
 un atkal redzēt sapņu ziediem vītās
 vietas...

 Ies gads pēc gada atkal, daudzi zudīs
 dzīvei
 un mieru atradīs kaut kur zem
 svešām smiltīm,
 bet tie, kas paliks, ies arvienu tuvāk
 brīvei,
 lai celtu karogu par aizgājušām
 ciltīm. [...].
 (Murāns 56)

“At New Year”

[...] Like in a large mirror we throw
 our glances in them [memories — O.
 K.]
 and sadly sigh, seeing the paths
 bygone,
 knowing that only few will be destined
 to tread upon them
 and see the places twined with dream
 flowers...

 Year after year will pass again, many
 will be lost to life
 and will find rest somewhere beneath
 the foreign sands,
 but those who stay, will come nearer to
 freedom,
 to raise the flag for bygone tribes. [...].

The poems cited in the article were selected as the brightest testimonial to the contemporary epoch saturated with strong experiences of Latgalian poets of exile — psychological trauma after the loss of homeland as well as survival in exile. Further in-depth study of this literary narrative will provide for specifying other nuances of treatment of the subject of festivities and reveal new opportunities of its analysis.

Conclusion

After the end of World War II, with the institution of Soviet totalitarian power, approximately 10% of the total population of Latvia including many representatives of intelligentsia went on exile. Reaching various lands of settlement, there arose necessity to survive physically and continue acting in the sphere of culture. The acquired traumatic experience appears in diverse documents of that time, literary works among them. The contribution of poets in exile who were born in Latgale, south-eastern region of Latvia, in this context is significant with the peculiar actualizing of the subject of festivities. Festivities (mostly Christmas and Easter) as an important part of national legacy for these authors allow not only ascertain their belonging to their nation and culture but also form a binary opposition between the Golden Age of past in homeland (harmony, happiness, agreement, peace represented by the topos of house, richly laid table, lit candles and olden day traditions) and the Iron Age of present in the foreign land (unaccustomed sounds, crowds of people, incessant wandering, pain, impasse). Mental journey to homeland greatly stimulated by the sounds heard in the foreign land (festive bell toll, tunes, sleigh bells, running stream water) provoke diverse emotions of lyrical heroes: longing, hope, doubt, disbelief, despair. The change of the emotional state conveyed in poetry is conditioned by the number of years spent in foreign lands that grows at the moment of the beginning of the current New Year.

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