

LITUANUS

LITHUANIAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Volume 14, No.3 - Fall 1968

Editor of this issue: Anatole C. Matulis

ISSN 0024-5089

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LITUANUS

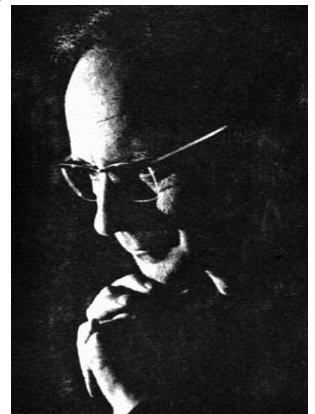
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AMENS IN AMBER

Poems of Leonardas Andriekus

Priest, poet, editor, Leonardas Andriekus (b. 1914) is at present the Provincial Superior of Lithuanian Franciscans in the United States and Canada. Born and educated in Lithuania, he pursued his studies in the Austrian Tyrol, Milan, Rome. After acquiring doctorate in Canon Law, Father Andriekus declined the honor of teaching at the Franciscan University in Rome and chose instead to minister the needs of his people in refugee camps. He came to the United States in 1946.

The journey of the Lithuanian diaspora and Andriekus' pilgrim's progress through his own dark night of homelessness form the main outlines of his three published books of poetry. Recently selected poems were translated into English and published in the collection entitled *Amens in Amber*. (The volume is reviewed in the book review section of this issue of *Lituanus*.) [[Book Review; Leonardas Andriekus, *Amens in Amber*](#)]



The central image of *Amens in Amber* is contained in its title. Amber (for Tacitus, Lithuania's "gold") evokes of poet's homeland, as well as the sweep of millennia. Christ himself, like an insect in amber, is everpresent in the poet's universe — in midnight moonlight, in the frozen earth and birches of "the harsh north", in the innocent complaints of the corncrake and the cockoo. He sings of angels and of God Himself. But he also sings of the human condition in its multiform varieties, both joyous and otherwise. As a priest he sees all as, in some profound sense, one, created by One and looked after by the same One.

The poems published here are from *Amens in Amber*, with permission of the publisher: Manyland Books, Inc., 84-39 90th St., Woodhaven, N.Y. 11412.

AMBER

I cannot weep
I cannot wail,
My spirit is empty like a dried-up inlet.

Weep for me
Wail for me,
Little Baltic amber
Cast out by the sea in darkness.

Now only God—
With wind, wave, fishermen asleep—
Can hear you.
The sea does not love you
The earth does not love me,
Mourn, mourn, little amber,
For the fate that is ours.

BLESSING

You guide the old man's hand
Lest it falter

Gravely lifted
Before death
For the last time to bless
His kneeling children,
The hour come
For life's tough regrowth
In still another springtime.

The testament's completed,
To each—his due;
But can the loving heart
Be silenced?
Alone, they'll plod to furrow fields,
Sow fallowland with crops,
In springtime harvest wheat,
Their father in the silent hill
Restless with pinetrees.

Unless he's blessed his children,
He will not rest,
He will hear their weary footfalls
Hard on paths to planting;
Upon his coffin, drop by drop,
Through sultry harvesttime
Their sweat will fall.
Nohow, from the grave, will he contrive
To summon them to noon's siesta.

You guide the old man's hand,
So sensitive a hand,
Before the sowing, it blessed fields,
And even clouds before the storm—
That it might ultimately bless
Man's weary footfalls,
Man's harsh days,
Perennial springtimes
Destined for another greenness.

LAND OF CROSSES

Long will you wail and hide your head
If the last of your crosses fall;
While they're steadfast, the sun turns back in winter,
Grasshoppers frolic each year in the rye.

Rue and lilies have been nourished under crosses
Where grain let free young shoots;
Your days hung low like a great bronze bell,
You found solace in your pain.

You had faith in the providence of the Lord,
Not in the sowing and harvest of the earth,
Even as the crucified Lord's five wounds
Reopened in your being.

Innumerable the days, your wounds dripped blood
Into the earth through chalices of flowers;
The oakgroves sing new psalms to you,
Evening grasshoppers sing your consolation.

The sun grows weary, seas wail deeply.
Crosses swerve, ray break off—
You, forgiving deep trespasses,
Stride the highway of tears to your destiny.

PRAYER

You know how fragile our minds are,
Lord. In your unlimited wisdom,
Strengthen me that, when grasshoppers fiddle in the fields,
My heart won't break with grieving.

The dream and the reality, to me, are one—
I yearn for storied names and places;
Strengthen me, Lord, that before death awhile
Grasshoppers and I might be merry together.

DIALOGUE

We talk together
As if from two planets,
One south,
One north;
We speak
Of cursed todays
And blessed tomorrows,
We do not understand each other.

You tell me:
Look, what a clear dawn
Brightens the horizon
Of our fatherland's gloomy depths.
I say to you:
You dream! This is not dawn
But a glow
Signaling new flames will consume us.

You protest:
Enough of your theories—
Already we cannot see the full moon
Through our tears.
I reassure you:
Tonight we wash the full moon
With tears
That others tomorrow
Might see more clearly.

We talk together
As if from two planets—
All night we sit side by side
Before the same fire.
Tell me:
What separates the heavens
Of the north and south
To fork such lightning in your eyes?