

LITUANUS

LITHUANIAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Volume 12, No.2 - Summer 1966

Editor of this issue: Thomas Remeikis

ISSN 0024-5089

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LITUANUS

www.lituanus.org

BOOK REVIEW

ŠEINIUS' NOVEL IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Ignas Šeinius, REJUVENATION OF SIEGFRIED IMMERSSELBE. Translated from Lithuanian by Albinas Baranauskas (New York: Manyland Books, 1965).

"Es waere recht sehr zu wuenschen, dass es in jedem Staate Maenner geben moechte, die ueber die Vorurteile des Voelkerschaft hinweg waeren und genau wuessten, wo Patriotismus Tgend zu sein aufhoeret (G. E. Lessing)." Behind these words appear monumental figures of Immanuel Kant, Moses Mendelssohn, Goethe and closer to our times, also Martin Buber. If the reader happens to remember these names and the enlightening radiations of thought these personalities brought to our world of ideas and ideals, this novel should be a rewarding and memorable experience.

What happens to an apostle of Aryan racism after he is rejuvenated, in accord with his own free will, with an aid of Semitic hormones? How does his psychological and physiological composition react to this experiment, which is ironically proposed by a Lithuanian doctor ("if he were not a Lithuanian, one could call him genius" — words by Immersselbe) under the supervision of an Italian rejuvenation scientist and his foreign personal associates (a Frenchman and an American)?

In this novel the well trained pen of the author proceeds to explore a strange path of the "hero's" life. One might wish to extract a superficial comparison of it to a type of hormon inspired "Bildungsroman," where at the beginning a man exists enslaved by the obsession of a "pure Germanic race" and then slowly climbs to Parnassian heights carrying a "Weltanschauung" crowned with the glittering laurels of universal Kantian ideology. The author has built for his protagonist a spiral world. There appears a microcosmic biological beginning in the sphere of hormones, following familiar movements to the human history. The spiral continues to the intellectual, spiritual world, where the reason marked with familiar categorical imperative struggles with unstable human emotions. The hero survives all well, may be too well and may be too soon. The imaginary semi-circular line guides itself to the universe, to the worlds beyond more definite reach for the limited human mind. But even here the "newlyborn" modern man attempts to find his place in these limitless, seemingly timeless dimensions. Consequently, the novel does not possess a comfortable seal of an obvious end, but romantically opens itself to a beginning.

The author is brilliant in every respect, may there be an aspect as that of character's stream of consciousness, a majestic description of regional landscape, a scientific thought or the author's own philosophical clairvoyance. Thus the reader is more than willing to follow the author through the labyrinths of the hero's soul, which vibrates in a more life-like than fictitious manner. There is an aura of hypnotism in every turn of the novel's page, one is unable to stop, but anxiously follows the hero to the twilight of his new being. Even the author's occasional editorial intrusions proposed to the reader do not disturb this poetic magnetism but become acceptable as a significant part of the author's righteous and sacred duty. To no great surprise, the translator reaches a plateau of a true artist who understands every shade of the author's mood, every slightest motion of his thought and projects them well and with linguistic authority. Such a spiritual-literary union between an author and his translator cannot help but bring wide recognition and fame to this novel.

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