

LITUANUS

LITHUANIAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Volume 12, No.3 - Fall 1966

Editor of this issue: Thomas Remeikis

ISSN 0024-5089

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LITUANUS

www.lituanus.org

Book Review

A NOVEL ON BIBLICAL PAST

Mykolas Vaitkus, THE DELUGE. Translation from the Lithuanian by Albinas Baranauskas (New York: Manyland Books, 1965).

Poetic fantasy and the biblical past find their literary reflection in Mykolas Vaitkus' novel *The Deluge*. Its content is subdivided into three phases of the narrative: Vertigo, The Awakening, and The Throes of Death. Each of these segments forms an interesting string of pearls of striking hue — pale with intensity and red with violence, but mirroring with a translucent effect the birth and death of love. The explosive drama of the events is such as to arouse crucial questions in the reader's mind. Does the author wish us to assume that Itnah, the absolute ruler of Sunnar and "the rest of the world" stands as an image of vain human pride — the Greek *hybris* — so selfish and so stubborn that it fails to discover an adequate path to its own salvation? And what about Aninoth — could she possibly be a symbol of the restless human heart; charmed by a world of her own, where love is mostly the master and reason a slave? Reaching further into the pages of the novel, Jared, Sinth, Rem-mon, Noah and others appear in the swirl of the story, all well-outlined profiles of characters destined to carry the author's philosophical thoughts, whether they concern the past, the present or the future. At crossroads, where these figures meet, the reader cannot help but perceive the reflection of human spirit in the struggle between the spheres of good and evil, hate and love, jealousy and damnation, life and death. The author further intensifies the poetically real existence of characters by providing for them an environment dominated by the strange and destructive forces of nature. Neither the rays of the sun, nor the river Nehl appear in the aspect of gentle benevolence. Nature looms as a gray skeleton, a bloodthirsty force directed by the angry hand of the Great Spirit. Only in a moment of pity she removes her dark mask in order to radiate a few glittering flashes of warmth for the final survivors of the human race. In practically all of these aspects the author displays an unusual poetic and prophetic gift in unveiling with far-reaching perception the days of biblical past, where the Great Spirit, nature, and man walked a turbulent path to a mysterious destiny.

The style of translation, even if superb for the most part, becomes awkward in a few instances. The difficulty might rest with the transposition of Lithuanian idiomatic constructions into their English equivalents. The biblical tone is certainly recognizable and is maintained quite effectively throughout the novel. Furthermore, the sprinkling of a kind of "*leitmotif*" imagery in the flow of narrative also intensifies and strengthens the power of words in the imagination of the reader. One can certainly see that the translator has done a remarkable piece of work not only in forming linguistic patterns, but in faithfully attempting to recreate the original thoughts of the author. If one would sum up all these aspects, any reader, no matter how critical, may be assured of soon finding himself among the characters of the novel, captive and fascinated by the patterns of thought created by the author and mirrored by the gifted hand of the translator.

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