

Voices and Harmonies: Donaldas Kajokas, Aidas Marčėnas, and Rimvydas Stankevičius

Summary

Balsai ir sambalsiai (Voices and Harmonies) is a book about Donaldas Kajokas, Aidas Marčėnas, and Rimvydas Stankevičius; it is a book about the texts by these poets and about even more relevant contexts that evolved in the late 1970. Genre-wise, it is a study of literary criticism – analytical essays based on phenomenological aesthetics and sensual experience that is inseparable from language.

The trio of these poets are brought together by poetry principles, consciousness towards creative work and language, attention to the art of poetry that is also expressed through *ars poetica*. The work of these poets is linked by both the daily and metaphysical line of modern Lithuanian poetry: from the poetic shimmer of the surfaces of life to the asserting, inquiring, or doubting faith. It is creative work committed to the human and the human's life, even when the commitment is avoided or even rejected. Meditation that depends on the reception of existence, if only for a moment, is characteristic of all three of them. In the work of these poets, lyrical crystals of language seem to be enveloped by *impure shapes*: plots that are expanded or tightly clutched into a phrase, and sometimes by auxiliary or even applied genres.

One can imagine that today the poets discussed in the book are positioned in the centre – at least the implied centre – Lithuanian poetry. Implied, because it is always differently reborn, because it is mobile and moving. Even what appears distant or finite can approach this centre along one line or another.

The ontological and stylistic amplitudes of Donaldas Kajokas and Aidas Marčėnas are more or less levelled out. Rimvydas Stankevičius's poetic trajectory is still in motion: he published his first book as a student and made his debut in independent times, meanwhile Donaldas Kajokas's first book was still torn apart by censorship. At the outset of his creative path Stankevičius assumed the posture of a disciple and, edited by Aidas Marčėnas, found support in Donaldas Kajokas. When Kajokas smiles and Marčėnas is being ironic, Stankevičius makes the gesture or lands a blow of self-determination, choice, or direct moral commitment. *Buvėjas* (exister), *gautytojas* (catcher), *budėtojas* (watcher) are fragments of broader metaphors and contexts of these poets: *buvimo buvėjas* (an exister of existence), *bangų gautytojas* (a wave catcher), *poezijos (ar Dievo) kareivis* (a soldier of poetry (or God), a watcher). They are the poets who do not contrast creation and life. If life is void of poetry, it withers. If poetry is void of life, it suffocates. They sense the living *edge* and being *between* that Arvydas Šliogeris asserted in his philosophy.

Donaldas Kajokas's poetry is concentrated; consciousness impresses not by direct solutions or propositions but by what is called the 'inner ear', 'the eyes of the soul, spiritual experience', and even 'an instinct for self-explanatory things'. Consciousness is maturity of spiritual experience; it is liberating and consolidating. Donaldas Kajokas's angel is *a human with wings*. The poet seems to transpose universal or philosophical truths, he reduces their proportions and visualises them. *Visual wisdom* is the exceptional quality of this poet. The magic of repetition and the music of speaking are like deep hum of the soul. In contemporary Lithuanian literature Donaldas Kajokas is seen from different sides and from different genres, including the novel and the essay. Still, all of his creative work grows from the poetic core or from *poetic being* is at the top even when close to the ground.

Aidas Marčėnas is a poet of intense spontaneity who responds unexpectedly and accurately to 'the flow of life' that is inseparable from the zone of existence, from the vertical. He is a poet of strong spiritual *captures*, a catcher of poetic moments. He equally senses the flame of poetry and

the *order* of poetry with tradition as one of its sources. Marčėnas's *sonnet* best intercepts the signals of the order of existence. His poetry is rooted in the invisible contact of order and disorder. It moves from the flow into the sonnet and back. A poet of masterful versification, he is walking in a dancing step between syllabic-tonic poetry and *vers libre*, among spontaneous consonances opened in the depths, among banal and unexpected rhymes.

Rimvydas Stankevičius is expansively creative; he *writes in poetry* and his verses and rhythmic deftness level out the rough patches. He is a poet of lyrical development, and his abundant poetic cycles indicate the direction of expansion. Development does not cancel intensity that focuses on the phrase and the line. Expansion implies the possibility of repetition, which is sometimes of the syntactical-tonic kind. Intermediary states of consciousness – dream, waking – are of importance. His responses to language, to linguistic storylines, including biblical ones, are strong. Consciousness to language is inseparable from consciousness to poetry: 'Since long I've confessed / Only conscious / Poetry...'

The structure of *Balsai ir sambalsiai* highlights the profiles and *voices* of the individual poets and reveals their personal qualities, and at the same time it probes for common denominators – *harmonies*. Individual texts lead to attempts to discern broader poetry contexts that are inextricable from life changes and from the wave of the *Sąjūdis* that transformed Lithuania. Three decades of independent Lithuania is the time of poetry discussed in the book.