

SUMMARY

Ignas Šeinius is a twentieth-century Lithuanian bilingual writer who wrote in Lithuanian and Swedish. Scholars find Šeinius's work in Swedish to be an innovative bicultural phenomenon that covers a variety of genres: essays on Lithuanian culture, blank verse, novelettes, novels, journalistic writing, and dramas. Chronologically, his works are grouped into two periods: the early period from 1917 to 1927, and the late period from 1940 to 1959. This volume of *Raštai (Works)* includes the first two variants of Šeinius's first comedy *Diplomater (The Diplomats)*: (1) *Diplomaten*, which was written in Swedish in 1920 and exists as a manuscript, and (2) *Diplomatai*, written in Lithuanian and published in Kaunas in 1937. Material from newly-available archives shows that *Diplomatai* was written at about the same time in both Swedish and Lithuanian (1920–1921), predominantly anticipating its production at a Swedish theatre (in one of his letters to the Association of Lithuanian Art Creators, Šeinius hints at the play being accepted to be performed at the 'Intim Teatern' in Stockholm, but then the theatre suddenly lost its building and these plans were abandoned). The Lithuanian professional drama theatre was still in the process of development (the State Drama Theatre was established in as late as 1922), and, very likely, Šeinius did not want or was not able to write for an amateur theatre.

In the comedy *Diplomater* he takes an ironic look at the diplomatic corps of the time, its parlour-politics, arrogance, and careerism of the diplomats. In the context of Lithuanian dramaturgy of the period, the novelty of the drama consists in a different manner of a resolution of a conflict between the older and the younger generations. Although the conflict as

such is rather traditional, Šeinius looks at it not through the juxtaposition of conservatism and modernity but through the contrast of passivity and activity.

Scholars of later periods attributed *Diplomater* to Expressionism or at least claimed it to have expressionist elements that directed the reader towards generalising common human conditionality. The author avoids direct place references, and even the surnames of the characters have either a Lithuanian, Scandinavian, or Italian sound to them and some are totally neutral. Nationality as such is mentioned only once (Ritoldi, an American Italian, a beauty therapist). The attempt to avoid references to the acts of the play by calling them just A, B, C, and D, and bringing the whole plot of the drama to the formula $A B C A C B = D$ imparts certain conditionality to the play.

The Swedish variant, which is attributed to Šeinius's early creative period, has not been published before: its publication in this volume of *Raštai* is the first both in Swedish and Lithuanian (translated from the Swedish by Alma Braškytė). Like in the case of almost all of Šeinius's surviving works, the typewriter – of the play contains corrections and improvements (which, along with their translations into Lithuanian, are included in the commentaries).