

Benedikts Kalnačs

(Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia)

TERRITORIES, MEMORIES, AND COLONIAL DIFFERENCE:
A COMPARATIVE INSIGHT INTO LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY
LATVIAN AND GERMAN LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on the ways in which an author's individual understanding of contemporary events at the turn of the twentieth century is portrayed through his participation in the developing literary landscape, and how the artistic innovations of the time were connected with both global processes and local peculiarities. The first part of the article examines three works of literature written at the end of the 19th century that characterise the processes taking place in Latvian and German literature – Andrievs Niedra's novel *The Smoke of Land Clearing* (*Līduma dūmos*, 1899), Theodor Storm's novella *The Dykemaster* (*Der Schimmelreiter*, 1888) and Rūdolfs Blaumanis' novella *In the Shadow of Death* (*Nāves ēnā*, 1899). In this article I will compare the central themes of each work, as well as their construction, message, and genre peculiarities. The second part of the article examines how each of these texts can be positioned within the literary processes of the time, accenting the genesis of contemporary Latvian literature and the use of territorial models for plot development.

A COMPARISON OF THE LITERARY TEXTS

THE SMOKE OF LAND CLEARING (*LĪDUMA DŪMOS*, 1899) BY ANDRIEVS NIEDRA

The novel *The Smoke of Land Clearing* is one of Latvian author Andrievs Niedra's (1871–1942) earliest, longest, and most significant works. Even if in the journal *Austrums* (*The East*), in which the piece was originally published, it was called a novella, the critics almost immediately positioned it as a novel, noting that "this novel is being recognised more widely than any other novel in the Latvian language"¹. The work, which addresses the relationship between the new

¹ T. [T. Zeiferts], *Līduma dūmos. Romāns*, in: *Jaunā Raža*, 1901, Nr. V, 178. lpp.

Latvian intelligentsia and Baltic German society, is interesting to both Latvian and German readers. By 1900 the newspaper *Düna Zeitung* had already commenced publishing it in German. In a letter to Pēteris Blaus on April 8, 1900, Rūdolfis Blaumanis wrote: “Niedra’s *Līduma dūmos* has begun appearing in the *Düna Zeitung*. I haven’t yet heard what the Germans have to say. It reads well”². Blaumanis later took over the work of translating the novel for publication that was begun by Pastor Karl Keller.

Biruta Gudriķe, a literary scholar who specialises in Andrievs Niedra’s work, emphasises that his “ideological intentions were different every time, but the direction of his artistic endeavours was unchanging – [a confirmation of] the New Nationalism that had grown out of the New Latvians movement and was influenced by a modern aesthetic”³. We can say that New Nationalism was a continuation of the Latvian literary tradition that began in the middle of the 19th century, which, in his book *Latvian literature*, Guntis Berelis called the literature of awakening; its primary goal was raising the self-confidence of the people⁴. Berelis considers that in continuing what the New Latvians began, Niedra transformed the poetry of the awakening into practical theory – “*The Smoke of Land Clearing* can also serve as a handbook for beginning entrepreneurs”⁵. The distribution of characters in this *Bildungsroman* also corresponds to the ideological emphasis of the genre – the novel portrays two German families, that of Baron Westphal and that of the local pastor, mirrored by two Latvian families, that of the miller Grieze and the Strautmālis family⁶. In his portrayal of Germans, the author introduces both the outgoing older generation and its ideals, represented by Baron Westphal, as well as the more pragmatic younger generation, colourfully represented by Baron Wolfgang Sanden, whom literary historian Andrejs Johansons compared to Niedra himself⁷. The novel fuses the economic propaganda of the New Nationalism with Niedra’s moral ideas. In this way Niedra continues both the so-called German folk tradition of imparting practical advice⁸, as well as his discourse on religious and pedagogical themes; if up until then others had taught the Latvians how to live, now they were taking on this role themselves.

A number of themes are explored in *The Smoke of Land Clearing* that reflect the growing activity of the Latvian intelligentsia on the cusp of the new century. This testifies to the fact that Niedra was an observer of contemporary society thinking on a broad scale, paying close attention to the attempts of the emerging Latvian middle class to position itself. A manifestation of these attempts can be seen in spiritual ideals and the economic programme that are introduced in the novel, as well as in their relationship to the chosen literary genre. Let us look at these three aspects more closely.

² R. Blaumanis, *Kopotī raksti*, 7. sēj, Rīga: Latvijas Valsts izdevniecība, 1959, 391. lpp.

³ B. Gudriķe, *Andrievs Niedra – rakstnieks un mācītājs*, Rīga: Zinātne, 2007, 7. lpp.

⁴ G. Berelis, *Latviešu literatūra. No vissenākajiem rakstiem līdz 1999. gadam*, Rīga: Zvaigzne ABC, 1999, 21. lpp.

⁵ G. Berelis, *Latviešu literatūra. No vissenākajiem rakstiem līdz 1999. gadam*, 38. lpp.

⁶ J. Akmenis Andrievs Niedra, *Latviešu literatūras vēsture*, 3. sēj, 353. lpp.

⁷ A. Johansons, *Latviešu literatūra*, Stokholma: Trīs Zvaigznes, 1953, 28. lpp.

⁸ More on this: P. Daija, *Apgaismība un kultūrpārnese. Latviešu laicīgās literatūras tapšana*, Rīga: LU Literatūras, folkloras un mākslas institūts, 2013.

Niedra's novel starts with a sermon given in church by a novice priest Kārlis Strautmalis awaiting his ordination. His speech is an ideological declaration and a challenge to the Baltic German society, both in its content and in its meaning as a compositional element in the novel. It is closely tied to the way in which Niedra portrays the parallel and opposing destinies of the families as they are revealed in the battle between the Latvians and the Germans. The speech is given from the pulpit, where Germans have preached for centuries; it is given by a novice, i.e., an unordained priest whose ordination is far from certain, and the old priest is displeased with the content. These story elements are characteristic of Niedra's position. The priest conveys his opinion to young Strautmalis in a conversation that follows on the priest's estate where Strautmalis is staying for the time being. Such differences of opinion are woven throughout the entire novel, and go far beyond the question of whether or not the young priest will be ordained. This issue, along with Baron Sanden's opposition, is one of the most important factors driving the plot.

The battle of the young engineer, Vilis Strautmalis, is another innovative element in Niedra's novel. He fights to realise his economic ideas, which could allow Latvians to gain their independence not only through the relentless work of tending the land, as is characteristic for his parents' generation, but also through new industrial opportunities that could come from building a cardboard and glass factory on the land where the old mill stands. Strautmalis envisions how forest resources from the surrounding estates could be processed there (by the end of the novel we find out that Strautmalis comes to own one of these estates). Niedra drew inspiration for the ideas he portrayed from his home county of Tirza (the Āži mill and its surrounding territory may have provided inspiration for the setting of the novel), and from his experiences working as a home schooling teacher in the 1890s in Puzenieki in Kurzeme for Baron Oscar von Grotthuss (whose features can be recognised in the character of old Westphal). From 1854 several production centres had been established on the estate, including a glass factory, a sawmill, and a water and steam powered mill for processing grain⁹.

The third aspect that demonstrates the changes occurring in literature at that time concerns the genre chosen by the author. Just as the engineer Strautmalis hopes to make nature submit to his ideas, the author expertly controls the artistic milieu he has created, allowing his characters to expound their opinions even where it may not be logical to do so, reminiscent of Andrievs Niedra's ministerial post and the popularity of his sermons. However, it is important that the author follows the example of the 19th-century European literature, for example, offering an epically complicated development in the storyline resulting in a work of epic proportions characteristic of the novel¹⁰. Here we might compare Niedra's creative achievement to the efforts of his characters, the engineer and the novice priest, to measure themselves against their peers, only in this case the author's battlefield is large-scale literature; in his opinion it is important to challenge the Germans not only economically, but also in spiritual development. In his book *Latvian*

⁹ M. Svarāne, Latviešu saimnieciskā iniciatīva Vidzemes un Kurzemes laukos 19. gadsimtā, in: A. Niedra, *Lūduma dūmos*, Rīga: Zinātne, 1992, 449.–452. lpp.; B. Gudriķe, *Andrievs Niedra – rakstnieks un mācītājs*, 61. lpp.

¹⁰ B. Kalnačs, *Rūdolfs Blaumanis un 19. gadsimta Eiropas literatūra*, in: *Aktuālas problēmas literatūras zinātnē*, 19. Atb. red. E. Lāms, Liepāja: LiePA, 2014, 162.–167. lpp.

literature, Andrejs Johansons points out that “Niedra’s shorter works of prose can be seen as studies for a large style composition, like his novel *The Smoke of Land Clearing*”¹¹.

THE DYKEMASTER (DER SCHIMMELREITER, 1888) BY THEODOR STORM

The novella *The Dykemaster* is German author Theodor Storm’s (1817–1888) final, most extensive, and most significant work. In this novella the author portrays the conditions in his home territories – the city of Husum in the region of Schleswig-Holstein on the northern shore of Germany – that he came to know during his time as a lawyer, following in his father’s footsteps (Storm worked as a lawyer in Husum from 1843 to 1853). In his youth Storm collected local legends and stories and published them¹². As a lawyer he dealt with important questions concerning the building and ownership of a coastal dam; and a legend concerning a mysterious horseman on the seashore from the 1838 journal publication was a direct inspiration for *The Dykemaster*¹³.

The setting of the novella can be identified as the village of Hattstedter and environs, north of Husum. A characteristic feature of the village is the dam, built incrementally, to protect the farmland from the sea and later used to acquire more land suitable for agriculture. The principal geographical features of the novella can also be identified here, including the city of Husum, the nearby village of Hattstedter, and the well-known farmstead of a local dam watchman, which, like other houses in the area, is built atop an embankment¹⁴.

The central plot of the novella is Hauke Haien’s path to becoming the custodian of the dam and his fanatical battle to realise his goal to build a new dam and to convince the local farmers of its necessity, which ends in his death while protecting the dam from destruction during the period of flood and storm.

During the writing process Storm used his own memories and experience, but also researched materials connected with the setting of his novella in detail. He referred to actual events that took place at the time, as well as to the history of the region that had been collected for over several hundred years. Research shows that he critically examined more than fifty written sources, which included historical chronicles, the accounts of travellers, the history of dam building and related discussions and suggestions¹⁵ (among these was the work of Johan Georg Kohl, well-known to Latvian historians, who published a study of the coastal lands and islands around Schleswig and Holstein, published in Dresden and Leipzig in 1846¹⁶). The essays of a journalist Theodor Mügge, published in 1846,

¹¹ A. Johansons, *Latviešu literatūra*, 217. lpp.

¹² Storm collected folklore material between 1842 and 1845. See: G. Eversberg (Hg.), *Der Schimmelreiter. Novelle von Theodor Storm. Historisch-Kritische Edition*, Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2014, S. 379.

¹³ G. Eversberg (Hg.), *Der Schimmelreiter. Novelle von Theodor Storm*, S. 379–381.

¹⁴ G. Eversberg (Hg.), *Der Schimmelreiter. Novelle von Theodor Storm*, S. 409–428.

¹⁵ G. Eversberg (Hg.), *Der Schimmelreiter. Novelle von Theodor Storm*, S. 429–432.

¹⁶ J.G. Kohl, *Die Marschen und Inseln der Herzogthümer Schleswig und Holstein. Nebst vergleichenden Bemerkungen über die Küstenländer, die zwischen Belgien und Jütland liegen*, 3 Bde., Erster Band, Dresden und Leipzig, 1846.

about his experiences from travelling around Schleswig-Holstein were also an important source¹⁷. Mügge published a novel *Sam Wiebe*¹⁸ in 1854 based on his experiences. Later these impressions, along with Storm's own, were also worked into *The Dykemaster*.

Storm's novella, which was innovative for the 19th century, showed the importance of efforts of the individual in achieving a goal, connecting Hauke Haien's efforts to become a dam custodian with the tradition of *Bildungsroman*, and the historical circumstances surrounding that goal, which here revolve around battling the elements on the shores of the North Sea and Haien's desire to convince his neighbours about the necessity of building the dam. The choice of genre also carries importance for the understanding and contextualisation of this work. More about that later.

From the very beginning Storm intended his novella to be the story of a hero who comes from the simple folk, and who engages all of his strength and willpower to reach a singular goal. Niedra's protagonist, the engineer Vilis Strautmalis in *The Smoke of Land Clearing* has similar characteristics. The German author took the local autodidact Hans Momsen, who devoted himself to making various specialised instruments¹⁹, as inspiration for his protagonist, Hauke Haien. From early childhood Hauke was fascinated by the sea. He studied the waves and the ebb and flow of the tides, trying to understand the natural laws underlying these events. In order to better understand the strengths and weaknesses inherent in dam construction he read books in Dutch left in the attic in his father's house. The boy's resourcefulness and skill help him fulfil his duties when he becomes the dam watch guard, he performs calculations and even gives useful advice to the dam custodian. This experience, along with his good relationship with the dam custodian's daughter, allows him to step into the dam custodian's shoes after his death and to marry his daughter, Elke.

Hauke Haien's dam building process in the novella closely follows the historical requirements for dam building in Northern Germany at the time. Along with Mügge's travelogue, it seems that two other sources that played an important role have been identified. The first source is the work of the hydro-engineer Christian Eckermann, known to Storm, concerning the history of technical building in the region. With the help of the engineer's daughter, Gertrud Eckermann, Storm came into possession of a copy of a carefully drawn map from the 17th century that depicts the dam system. Storm used this map to develop the topography of the setting for his novella²⁰. The second body of work that would have been an important source of information for Storm is the dam building plans of Harro Feddersen, Bürgermeister of Husum. Feddersen's manuscript is dated 1685 and describes ambitious plans for the development of a system of dams in the area, which were never realised due to the limited technical capacity of the time²¹. A comparison of Storm's novella and Feddersen's

¹⁷ Th. Mügge, *Streifzüge in Schleswig-Holstein und im Norden der Elbe*, Ersther Theil, Frankfurt am Main, 1846.

¹⁸ Th. Mügge, *Sam Wiebe. Ein Lebensbild aus den Marschen*, 1854. Also: G. Eversberg (Hg.), *Der Schimmelreiter. Novelle von Theodor Storm*, S. 390.

¹⁹ G. Eversberg (Hg.), *Der Schimmelreiter. Novelle von Theodor Storm*, S. 383.

²⁰ G. Eversberg (Hg.), *Der Schimmelreiter. Novelle von Theodor Storm*, S. 381.

²¹ G. Eversberg (Hg.), *Der Schimmelreiter. Novelle von Theodor Storm*, S. 436.

manuscript reveals that many of the Bürgermeister's ideas are reflected, and indeed quite closely copied, in the ambitious building plans of the protagonist Hauke Haien of *The Dykemaster*²².

Theodor Storm succeeded in creating two separate trajectories of events to tell the story of the dam custodian. In the first, readers can participate in Hauke's enthusiasm and conviction about the necessity of the realisation of his plan, and flow along with the detailed planning and realisation of the dam building that takes place during the course of the novella. In the second, the author devotes rather a lot of attention to the drama of Hauke's personal life, which is connected to Hauke's ambitious dream followed by his disillusionment and inability to communicate the importance of his plan, which, in turn, is influenced by the greed and jealousy of the local people. His inability to fully realise his dreams has both subjective and objective reasons. These two distinct directions in the development of the plot that determine Hauke's fate also determine the planning of the novel in two parts. The first part culminates in Hauke Haien's marriage to the daughter of the late dam custodian and his taking on this role, but as the second part of the story continues we see the realisation of Hauke's plans, their partial destruction, and the death and destruction of the protagonist and his family.

One of the innovations Storm's artistic expression brings to the tradition of the novella is the way in which the perspective of the narrator changes. In this way the plot develops without the reader being completely sure of the circumstances surrounding events. He also allows time periods to merge. This approach permits the author to include local history and legend and to give historical perspective to the end of the 19th century, avoiding historical generalisations while retaining a critical distance. The use of the oral tradition was also important for Storm; it specifies the message and gives it natural expression.

Although Storm chose to use the novella form, which was characteristic of him, in comparison with his other stories, *The Dykemaster* is much longer, so much so that the literary historian, Gerd Eversberg, considered it to be "on the threshold to the novel"²³. Storm's success was guaranteed by his experience as an author of novellas, transforming events connected with traditional regional or village tales (*Dorfgeschichte*) into an innovative work of art. In so doing he transported local events into the realm of existential inquiry and not only achieved their generalisation within an organic literary form, but also retained the peculiarities of the author's place of origin.

The resolution of the conflict shows that the willpower of the individual can only partially influence the end result, and despite his fanatical devotion to the realisation of his project, Hauke Haien nevertheless is unable to achieve his goal and suffers a personal defeat by the power of nature.

IN THE SHADOW OF DEATH (*NĀVES ĒNĀ*, 1899) BY RŪDOLFS BLAUMANIS

The Latvian author Rūdolfis Blaumanis (1863–1908) also wrote a novella at the very end of the 19th century in which, alongside other motifs, intensified relationships between people and nature are portrayed.

²² G. Eversberg (Hg.), *Der Schimmelreiter. Novelle von Theodor Storm*, S. 438–440.

²³ G. Eversberg (Hg.), *Der Schimmelreiter. Novelle von Theodor Storm*, S. 402.

Blaumanis' style of literary portrayal differs significantly from that of his contemporary Andrievs Niedra. Like Storm, Blaumanis has an ethnographic interest in the circumstances about which he writes, starting with the attention he gives encyclopaedias and Latvian folklore collections in his work, but also his conscious, but inconspicuous way of discerning the differences in the life experience of his characters from that of the German environment, with which he is also very familiar. Niedra also emphasised the importance of national interests for Blaumanis: "Blaumanis was a cultural nationalist who was also very willing to learn from other cultures, but always with the motivation and goal of transforming the foreign, so that the foreignness would eventually evaporate leaving only that which is kindred to Latvian nature so that he could use it for his Latvian characters. Blaumanis was not consciously aware of his nationalistic nature, but he followed it intuitively"²⁴.

From this perspective, we can say that the emphasis in *In the Shadow of Death* is placed on the precision with which Blaumanis portrays the environment, relationships between people, and their destinies. The author's brother, Arvīds Blaumanis emphasised: "The characters are all drawn from the rural municipality of Ērgļi. Rūdolfs put them all on a great block of ice to see what they would do." The author did not attempt to monumentalise the destinies of his protagonists, but trusted the specificity of his observations. This can also be seen at the end of the novella in the meeting with the foreign fishermen, whose language is unintelligible to those who ended up on the ice. Blaumanis was interested in the experimental study of his characters in specific circumstances. Furthermore, his attention to detail precisely reflects the topographical realities as well. For instance, in her research project *Blaumanis' Gold (Blaumaņa zelts)*, Līvija Volkova offers proof that the setting of the story is unmistakably the Gulf of Rīga on the coast of Kurzeme. The first sentence, about the direction of the wind, is already indicative of this and it is later confirmed by the biographical details of the characters, even though the author does not comment on this particularly.

Each of the authors discussed were innovative for the literature of their time. An analysis of Rūdolfs Blaumanis' novella shows that his artistic innovation stems from the circumstance that he is looking back in hindsight from the perspective of one who has solved the problem, and therefore he is free from "Andrievs Niedra's tendency to combine a solution with a programme for the future"²⁵. In discussing where to place Blaumanis' works in the literary process, the German literary scholar Heinrich Bosse posits that "Enlightenment speaks to the people, but Romanticism wants the people to hear themselves speaking"²⁶. This characterisation, not directly connecting it with literary directions, also describes the difference between the approaches taken by Niedra and Blaumanis. Niedra *speaks to his readers*, but Blaumanis lets his characters act while the *reader listens in and hears them speaking*.

²⁴ *Blaumaņa un Niedras sarakstīdānās*, 32. lpp.

²⁵ P. Daija, *Blaumaņa vācieši, Blaumaņa latvieši*, in: *Rūdolfs Blaumanis: teksts un konteksts*, Sast. I. Kalniņa, Rīga: LU Akadēmiskais apgāds, 2013, 275. lpp.

²⁶ H. Bose, *Rūdolfs Blaumanis un vācu ciema stāsts*, in: *Rūdolfs Blaumanis: teksts un konteksts*, 300. lpp.

THEORETICAL CONCEPT

To continue, we will turn our attention to the aspects of literary development mentioned in the title, identifying territories, memories, and colonial difference as questions for continuing exploration in Latvian literary research.

First, we will examine the change in perception at the turn of the century concerning the role literature was understood to play in manifesting national identity, which themes become increasingly relevant for the 19th-century European society and culture, and we will pay some attention to the territorial aspects of identity. After the French Revolution at the end of the 18th century, the self-creation of the nation-state grows increasingly important so that a unified social cross-section can be established that would include and legitimise not only the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, but the farmers and the proletariat as well. The ways in which time and space are portrayed in contemporary literature become formational components of the common experience of European nations²⁷.

The literary theorist Franco Moretti demonstrates a number of models essential for the creation of setting in 19th-century novels in his research project²⁸, which he calls an atlas of European novel. An important factor is the consolidation of the empire, which is given significant expression in Jane Austen's work. The events that take place in her novels, which significantly affect the fates of her characters, are all concentrated in central England – the setting for the development of the story. Problems, conflicts, encounters with undesirable and unknown phenomena are localised in the borderlands – most often frontier areas and seafronts – in an attempt to characterise the inner territory of England as a safe whole, separated from the conflicts of the outside world. Another model for 19th-century literature comes from the so-called *Bildungsroman*. Here spatial structure is revealed in the protagonist's journey to the capital city and his eventual return home having enriched himself with knowledge that can only be gained in the imperial centre (Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, George Eliot, Stendhal, Honoré de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, Gómez de Bedoya, Ivan Goncharov). The structure of the city space is also important. Honoré de Balzac's novel *Lost Illusions* (*Illusions perdues*, 1837–1843) reveals Paris to be the kind of place where the opponents of a young hero who has come to city to seek his identity are localised in the centre, while his supporters, who generally have a lower social status, are localised on the outskirts.

The literatures of Central Europe experience rapid growth during the 19th century and tend to follow the European examples. The tendency to incorporate significant examples of literature (the novel), painting (historical depictions), theatre and music (national operas based on folklore materials which become an important identity-shaping element), is one basis for proving difference. The 19th-century art and literature is not only of aesthetic interest; they also play an important role in shaping and creating social and national identities.

²⁷ J. Neubauer, *The Historical Novel. Introduction*, in: M. Cornis-Pope and J. Neubauer (eds.), *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe. Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Vol. 1, Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2004, p. 463.

²⁸ F. Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800–1900*, London & New York: Verso, 1998.

Traditionally, the authors who participated in the creation of a Latvian national identity through literature are thought to be followers of the movement initiated by the New Latvians (Jaunlatvieši) in the middle of the 19th century. The national economy was growing, as was political self-awareness, and the literary contribution of Latvian authors grew as well. However, it is important to pay attention to the increasing self-reflexivity of the literary process and the great variation between authors in response to this phenomenon. It was important for each author personally to find answers to such questions as: What does it mean to be a Latvian author during this period? To what extent is it possible to view the processes taking place in Latvian society and literature with critical distance? How can the relationship between local tradition and European experience be merged? Which relationship models determine the interaction between national identity and individual experience?

The examples from this article show that such questions may be answered theoretically and declaratively, but the answers can also come primarily through the practice of creating literature. Rūdolfs Blaumanis' novella provides the opportunity to delve into the actual problems of the time just as much as Andrievs Niedra's novel does. His work is similar to the work of other significant European authors involved in turn-of-the-century literary processes, expressing his generalised existential understanding of his time, as well as Blaumanis' perception that the creation of modern Latvian literature must primarily be associated with a reflection of specific local circumstances. Blaumanis approaches the psychology of his characters, his choice of genre, and his use of language with great care.

Next, we will consider artistic innovation during the time period in question and its relationship to individual and collective memory. An essential expression of the contemporary consolidation of cultural self-assurance at the time seems to be taking on large-scale literature, following the example of foreign authors. It is possible to identify analogue situations in significant Latvian literary works from the turn of the 20th century for all three of the above-mentioned models of spatial organisation used by European authors. Reinis and Matīss Kaudzītes' novel *The Time of the Surveyors* (*Mērnietu laiki*, 1879) creates opposition between our space/other space. The action takes place within two neighbouring regions that are engaged in conflict, but are simultaneously influenced by mutual circumstances. The most important threats the protagonists face come from the outside world through a storyline that revolves around false surveyors measuring the land for redistribution. A tendency toward local patriotism is apparent and the Piebalga region is shown to be one of the early centres for Latvian cultural/spiritual awakening²⁹. However, Andrievs Niedra's novel *The Smoke of Land Clearing* makes use of a dialectic between Riga and the provinces; and although the actions of engineer Strautmalis and his brother, the novice priest, take place for the most part in the countryside, it is their [city] education and personal growth and development that allows them to look at familiar circumstances with critical perspective. Augusts Deglavs' novel *Rīga*, which was published at the

²⁹ A. Cimdiņa, "Mērnietu laiki" un Piebalgas mīta reminiscences tagadnes kultūrtekstā, in: *Piebalgas teksts. Brāļu Kaudzīšu romāns "Mērnietu laiki"*, Sast. A. Cimdiņa un O. Lāms, Rīga: Zinātne, 2011, 16. lpp.

beginning of the 20th century (Part One *The Patriots*, 1912), is undeniably a city text according to the author's choice of title and aspiration. The opposition between a Germanic Riga and a Latvian Riga takes centre stage; this is also manifested in the topography of the city through opposition between the centre and the periphery and the author's portrayal of the relationships between the people who live there.

When compared to the corresponding examples of European literature (Jane Austen, the 19th-century *Bildungsroman*, Honoré de Balzac) alongside the essential similarities, there is a noticeable delay before Latvian authors adopt the new topographical models. They are no longer as topical for the turn-of-the-century European literature, because those goals for social cohesion and individual growth have been achieved at some level, and the artistic interests of the authors have moved on to questioning earlier ideas and challenging their aesthetics.

We can conclude that the architects of the new Latvian literature (specifically Niedra and Blaumanis) were plainly following the significant tendencies in European literature. However, there are noteworthy differences in the approach these authors take – they are testing the traditional European literary models and genres, contending with them on their own turf, they critically evaluate what they have read and are conscious of transforming it through a local perspective, and they unabashedly make use of the seemingly marginalised novella as a vehicle for change. There are certainly many points of similarity, but each of the authors brings his own distinctive approach and style to the literature of the day.

Thus, in the context of national and territorial identity, and artistic innovation, we can speak of differing emphases in the works of the three authors considered here.

Andrievs Niedra's novel *The Smoke of Land Clearing* continues the tradition of *Bildungsroman*, affirming the efforts of the central character in reaching his goals. He meets with both support and opposition, but in the end the hero wins the day. The panorama of developments likens Niedra's composition to those of the author's predecessors in the 19th-century European literature, and is significant for the development of the plot and Niedra's stylistic variety.

Hauke Haien, the central figure in Theodor Storm's novella *The Dykemaster*, has a number of characteristics that are similar to those of Niedra's character, the engineer Vilis Strautmalis, and there are grounds tying this work to the *Bildungsroman* tradition. But the differences are significant: Hauke learns everything through the process of self-education and never leaves his home environment during the course of the events. So, the breadth of his activities notwithstanding, the events are specifically localised in the writer's native environment, with which both his identity and the identity of his literary hero are closely linked.

Another difference is the fact that in the end Hauke is defeated. This shows a marked divergence from the *Bildungsroman*, and reflects one of the most significant themes for the turn-of-the-century literature – the marginalisation of the individual and his alienation from the developments that shape and influence the course of history. The tendency to expand developments toward monumentalism, characteristic of German literature during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, is linked with the unification of Germany in 1871 and its subsequent economic boom is caught in a dialectical tension with the local character of all plot developments in the novella. Here the author shows himself to be a forerunner in modern aesthetic tendencies and the divided psychology of characters,

without losing the feeling that he belongs to a stable cultural tradition and is writing in the context of an economically flourishing state, which is indirectly connected to the scope of Hauke's intended dam.

But it is a modern psychological portrayal providing the reader with insight into developments in the periphery that dominate Rūdolf's Blaumanis' novella *In the Shadow of Death*. Blaumanis reframes the seemingly marginalised genre, the novella, in a new aesthetic quality, and distinguishes himself with his close description of local conditions. The plot plays out in complete isolation from broader societal processes and it is not within the power of the characters to change their external circumstances.

The full meaning of colonial difference in the turn-of-the-century Latvian literature is a question that has yet to be resolved, however, the answer is closely connected to the differences in the treatment of literary experience and each author's individual approach. Both Andrievs Niedra and Rūdolf's Blaumanis concerned themselves with the status of Latvians in contemporary society and the ways in which they worked to establish their place in it.

It is important for Niedra to underscore the idea that Latvians were becoming the bearers of a new ethnic and economic identity, endeavouring to take their place next to the Germans both in education and as an economic power. He sees winning this new position as the only path to overcoming the earlier colonial difference; it is a battle that could potentially lead to the inheritance of valuable Baltic German cultural and ethical norms, as well as an appreciation of economic pragmatism and competitiveness. This ideology may help to explain the conciliatory ending of Niedra's novel. He is aware of the difficulties inherent in working to reach an understanding, and that hurdles lie on both sides, but even so, he maintains that it is possible.

In comparison with Niedra's early works, Blaumanis' characters often find themselves in situations where they lack support. In the example here a piece of ice in the sea becomes a metaphor for the interpretation of colonial difference in Blaumanis' work as a whole. But the emotional energy of the author's characters contains the potential to overcome insecurity and difference. Andrievs Niedra emphasised: "He [Blaumanis] is not ashamed of being Latvian, but it hurt him that Latvians had not yet reached the same cultural level as the Balts [Baltic Germans]"³⁰.

The turn-of-the-century Latvian literature is focused on the search for original ideological solutions and forms of artistic expression precisely because of the colonial difference and the social and psychological inequalities they portray. This can also be seen when comparing the work of Andrievs Niedra and Rūdolf's Blaumanis. In one case a transformed version of the 19th-century rational discourse is used to decode difference, encouraging Latvians to let their work take a place next to European social and literary manifestations; in the other case we can recognise the intuitive search for answers to big questions characteristic of the era; on the one hand we have the artistic independence of the literary text, and on the other we have the unexpected artistic transformation of seemingly familiar literary forms.

³⁰ *Blaumaņa un Niedras sarakstīdānās*, 32. lpp.

CONCLUSION

According to the literary works and writing process examined in this article, there is significance to the commonalities and differences between the German and Latvian literary spaces and the various geopolitical views held by the authors inhabiting these worlds.

Rūdolf Blaumanis demonstrates the idea that people need to search for their own solutions to everyday problems and simultaneously suggests that it is impossible to avoid disappointment and unintentional and unforeseen situations, that nevertheless must be resolved in a respectful manner. In his novella *In the Shadow of Death* he depicts intensified relationships between people and nature (both internal and external); the ability or inability of those involved to overcome their weaknesses is both tied to personal experience and determined by social and national contexts.

Similar to the train of thought that appears in Blaumanis' work, the focus of Theodor Storm's novella *The Dykemaster* is human willpower in contrast to the influence of circumstances. The author reveals this interplay by observing and reflecting social contexts and their significance for the way in which an individual's life story plays out. In comparison to the Latvian author, the German writer identified the cultural-historical aspects that allow the events depicted in his story to incorporate a historical perspective, while simultaneously he reflects on the historical roots of the events with a great deal of self-awareness and signifies their regional belonging (and, indirectly, their imperial context), while still emphasising the boundaries of a person's abilities and opportunities.

The goal of Andrievs Niedra's novel *The Smoke of Land Clearing* is to uncover ideas that were significant for the process of development of a Latvian national consciousness and to provide a philosophical, socio-political, and economic vision for the future that is a dominating feature of each character's psychological characterisation. The author's choice of genre, the novel, is significant because by using the novel form not only is the variety of conflicts revealed, but so are the social tendencies toward national, societal, and territorial consolidation. The seemingly tidy conclusion of the novel is in alignment with Niedra's hopeful, confident vision of the future. Even so, the author does not oversimplify the problem of national and social classes and the difficulty in overcoming such borders.

An attempt at actualising the novel – the dominating literary genre of the 19th-century European literature – as a vehicle for demonstrating the power of contemporary young Latvian authors can be seen in the works of the Latvian authors examined in this article. But at the same time these works challenge the hierarchy of literary genres by recognising the value of the novella and in so doing they also show their respect for precedents from German, Scandinavian, and Russian literature. For example, the potential for artistic innovation in the novella genre for the turn-of-the-century Latvian literature added a new dimension to the seemingly already well-understood conflicts, signifying the potency of new forms of cultural interpretation. This idea is precisely expressed in the assessment of German literary scholar Rolf Füllmann, who emphasises the innovative significance of Rūdolf Blaumanis' novellas for European literature in general:

“Blaumanis’ novellas simultaneously endorse two conflicting positions: on the one hand they stand for national emancipation – the freedom of Latvian literature from conservatism, joining the European (short story writing) tradition, and, on the other hand, they stand for the emancipation of Latvian modernism from tradition (of short story writing)”³¹.

Latvian literature achieved a hitherto unseen level of artistic innovation at the turn of the 20th century. However, the consciousness of colonial difference was still in the developmental stages and influenced by the need for recognition of national achievement and historical circumstances.

TERYTORIA, PAMIĘĆ I RÓŻNICE KOLONIALNE: STUDIUM PORÓWNAWCZE DZIEWIĘTNASTOWIECZNEJ LITERATURY ŁOTEWSKIEJ I NIEMIECKIEJ

Streszczenie

Artykuł podejmuje kwestię rosnącej autorefleksyjności zauważalnej pod koniec XIX w. w literaturze łotewskiej poprzez porównanie trzech przykładowych utworów, przedstawionych w kontekście historycznym: powieści *Līduma dūmos* (*W dymach karczowiska*, 1899) łotewskiego autora Andrievsa Niedry i dwóch nowel – *Der Schimmelreiter* (*Jeździec na siwym koniu*, 1888) niemieckiego pisarza Theodora Storma i *Nāves ēnā* (*W cieniu śmierci*, 1899) łotewskiego autora Rūdolfsa Blaumanisa. Każdy z wymienionych tekstów został poddany analizie z uwzględnieniem intencji autorów, gatunku oraz cech charakterystycznych narracji, jak również ich pozycji w procesie literackim. Autor położył szczególny nacisk na genezę współczesnej literatury łotewskiej, poruszył również tematykę transferu kulturowego. Analiza porównawcza poprzedza teoretyczną dyskusję o *fin-de-siècle*’u w odniesieniu do trendów w literaturze oraz specyfiki ich występowania w różnych kontekstach. Artykuł omawia kwestie dotyczące literackiego przedstawiania poszczególnych terytoriów fizycznych, jak również wykorzystania pamięci indywidualnej i zbiorowej w celu wykazania wpływu różnic kolonialnych na omawiane teksty.

Analizując powieść Andrievsa Niedry zauważyć można jego dążenie do stworzenia powieści w nowoczesnym, europejskim stylu. Autor śledzi związki między arystokratyczną klasą niemiecką i jej odpowiednikiem – powstającą łotewską klasą średnią. Autor otwarcie manifestuje swoje ideologiczne przekonania dotyczące tzw. nowego nacjonalizmu, który jest podstawą konfliktów przedstawionych w powieści.

Psychologiczne cechy protagonistów są podporządkowane temu głównemu celowi. Niedra umieszcza swoje postacie na tle wiejskich i miejskich krajobrazów Łotwy końca XIX w.; stosuje utarte konwencje dziewiętnastowiecznej powieści europejskiej, zwłaszcza tradycji *Bildungsroman*, która służy ukazaniu potencjalnej siły rodzącej się klasy łotewskich przemysłowców i literatów.

Istnieje wiele podobieństw między nowelą Storma i utworem Niedry. Autor opisuje lokalne życie w okolicy swojego rodzinnego miasta Husum w niemieckim regionie Szlezwik-Holsztyn.

³¹ R. Fīlmans, *Latviešu modernisms: noveļu tradīciju revolūcija Rūdolfa Blaumaņa novelēs “Raudupiete” un “Romeo un Jūlija”*, in: *Rūdolfs Blaumanis: teksts un konteksts*, 24. lpp.

Bohater jego noweli, Hauke Haien, charakteryzujący się silnym charakterem oraz idealistycznymi aspiracjami, wymyślił nowatorską groblę, mogącą poprawić jakość życia lokalnej społeczności. W opisywaniu głównych bohaterów można zauważyć wiele podobieństw do powieści Andrievs Niedry. Jednakże w noweli *Storma* widoczne jest bardziej sceptyczne podejście do możliwości poszczególnych jednostek w osiąganiu celów tylko dzięki silnej woli. Przedstawiająca historyczne tło ciągłej walki człowieka z Morzem Północnym nowela jest zarówno powodem do dumy dla jej autora i jego zwolenników, jak i historycznie ważną manifestacją rosnącej pewności siebie odradzającego się narodu.

Porównując nowelę Rudolfa Blaumanisa *W cieniu śmierci* z dwoma pierwszymi tekstami, jasno widać wątpliwości i poczucie niepewności, jakie towarzyszyły autorowi w pojmowaniu odrębności narodu łotewskiego. Mistrzowskie przedstawienie grupy rybaków, którzy znaleźli się na tafli lodu na otwartym morzu, może być uznane za metaforyczny portret kruchej egzystencji grup podrzędnych w społeczeństwie podzielonym kolonialnie. Blaumanis wykorzystuje poetyckie cechy noweli, by w nowatorski sposób przedstawić analizę wewnętrznego przeżywania *fin-de-siècle*'u przez mieszkańców Łotwy.

Tłum. Izabela Ślusarek