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## ARMENIA IN EDUARDAS MEZHELAITIS' POETRY

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The prominent Lithuanian poet Eduardas Mezhelaitis' works are well-known and highly appreciated in Armenia. He has been awarded the title of Honoured Worker of Culture of the Republic of Armenia and the Yeghise Charents Prize.

For Eduardas Mezhelaitis Armenia has become a second homeland in terms of poetry. However, it is not a blind and unconscious love but a noble feeling derived from his deep knowledge of the Armenian history and culture.

If a foreign country becomes an integral part of a writer's works, as for example Spain for Hemingway and Erenburg, or Armenia for Brusov and Mezhelaitis, it can have only one explanation – that very nation and the country have either become indispensable to the actual life of the writer (this was the case with Hemingway and Erenburg), or it has left an indelible, painful trace on the writer's spiritual life (this occurred to Brusov and Mezhelaitis).

Eduardas Mezhelaitis visited Armenia thrice (in 1969, 1979, 1982) and dedicated three series of poems to our country. The Lithuanian poet's perception of Armenia cannot be put down to his personal interest only. We should hasten to mention that Mezhelaitis' close contacts with Armenia go back

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to the long-standing interest of Lithuanian writers, literary critics and historians towards Armenia.

Even before Mezhelaitis many Lithuanian writers and literary critics dedicated their works to Armenia, translated writings by their Armenian colleagues. The cornerstone of our literary ties was laid down by the renowned writer, literary critic Antanas Krishukaitis-Aishbe, who published a series of articles under the headline "Armenian Novelists" in the journal "Varpas" ("Bell") in 1894. By virtue of those articles, the Lithuanian readers learned about the works by such outstanding Armenian writers as Khachatur Abovyan, Raffi and others. In 1897 the poet Marcelinas Shikshnis-Shjaulenikshis translated Rapael Patkanyan's wonderful poem "Tears of the Araks" into Lithuanian and published it in the journal "Varpas". Interestingly, according to Vayzhgantas, the translation of the poem inspired him to write the poem "Njamunas"<sup>1</sup>. Vincas Kudirka, Gabriele Petkevichaite-Bite, Jonas Biljunas, Juozas Tumas-Vaizhgantas, Yurgis Baltrusaitis and others were fascinated by the Armenian theme.

We are grateful to Petras Cvirka, Juozas Paukshtjalis, Albinas Zhukauskas, Antanas Vienuolis, Justinas Marcinkevichius and Sigitas Geda who dedicated many pages of profoundly inspiring words to Armenia.

A noteworthy literary work was A. Vienuolis' legend "The Sleeping Girl of Ararat", which is based on the Armenian epic tales. It suffices to say that this work was estimated very highly by Avetik Isahakyan.

Eduardas Mezhelaitis' works occupy a special place in the rich Lithuanian "Armeniana". His works are characterized by the unique and intense harmony of the features of his realistic perception, alert kind-heartedness, elevated, resonant symbolism, and the combination of extrinsic and intrinsic traits.

Let us first introduce Mezhelaitis' opinion: "Armenia has enchanted me. Despite the fact that Estonia and Latvia are close to me in terms of historical fate and spiritual characteristics, it is Armenia that captivated me long ago, and I study it with special interest. It is not Armenia's extraordinariness that fascinated me. During my short life I intend to understand the nature of the human being, try to find out who he/she is and create my own philosophical-poetic conception. To do this one needs to trace humankind's roots going back to the time when

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<sup>1</sup> A river in Lithuania.

they first made fire, reaching the current day - the era of space flights. One needs to see the beauty that throughout centuries has been created by the human hearts, human minds and human hands. One needs to feel, understand and give a meaning to it. But I never travel as a tourist. I wander around European countries, India, South America, and Africa.

I would draw parallels between Armenia, ancient Greece and Rome. I have found many noteworthy works here”<sup>2</sup>.

The poem entitled “Tiger’s Fur” (probably a distant allusion to Shota Rustavelli) opens the first series of poems. The epigraph prefacing the poem is taken from Grigor Nareaktsi. We shall not cite the poems in translation but confine ourselves to introducing the plot. The airplane like an open-winged devil (which of course, is an homage to Lermontov) is clattering above the cross on which Prometheus was crucified<sup>3</sup>. Clouds are white like Solomon’s beard. The lasso of the Milky Way is thrown around the throat of the mountain. Ghazbeki, who is Taniel in Rustavelli’s poem, wrapped in a tiger fur and as proud as Jupiter, is looking down from his pedestal. He is suffering because of the devil’s love for Tamar and is ready, in a real fight, to thrust his icy fang in the heart of the airplane for the sake of beauty, truth and goodness. Ghazbeki is keen to take his revenge on the airplane full of passengers. “But you are a knight, Ghazbeki, aren’t you? Be ashamed of the vengeance which is not becoming to a knight”. Ghazbeki answers, “It is not me who takes revenge but the devil – the angel of malevolence. He does not take revenge on you but on me. And myself as a true knight must fight the evil. I am a tiger”<sup>4</sup>.

Of course, an explanation such as this might make the poem sound pointless, while in the original it is melodic and very subtle. However, this is not the point. The second poem “Impressionist Noah” is even richer in combinations taken from different countries, cultures and centuries. Mount Ararat is an iceberg which is identified with a Roman God. Then Noah and the Flood are introduced (which is quite natural). Noah brings his palette from Paris and puts up the huge, biped easel. And then syncopations, sharps and a violin tuner are mentioned. Noah portrays life – the chansonette for the world exhibition, alluding to the paintings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century world – famous French

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<sup>2</sup> Коммунист 1979, 13 Май.

<sup>3</sup> In one of the Greek legends Prometheus was crucified on Kazbek.

<sup>4</sup> Մեծեկայտիս 1976, 634–637.

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painter Henri-Toulouse Lautrec, who was representative of the post-impressionist movement. The painting is to be exhibited from flood to flood.

When the sun burnt itself out, Noah folded the easel and left. The author met him in a street of Yerevan and asked him about his achievements in the acoustic painting. Noah turned out to be Martiros Saryan.

Eduardas Mezhelaitis' inspiration is always verified by reason. His imagination is boundless, at the same time being wrapped in intellectual insight. Thus, his first series of poems is not much about the country, but rather for the occasion of his visit to Armenia. The insight comes later.

His second anthology is entitled "Stone Wine" (it is worth mentioning that due to the accuracy of its definition it is both unexpected and precise; the title is a matter of separate discussion). The composition of "Stone Wine"<sup>5</sup> along with its name, is built upon combined contrasts (indivisible, whole patterns), and is of cyclic nature (the word *cycle* signifies *ring* here).

Let us dwell upon the composition. The anthology consists of five sections – "Tabernacles; Khazes and Cross-Stones"; "Armenian Aero-Notebook"; "In the Byurakan Observatory"; "When Peach-Trees Blossom" and "Stone Wine". Each of them carries a specific semantic charge.

The "Prelude" introduces the physical description of the severe and majestic nature in Armenia. Stones are mentioned (they are referred to thrice) as well as the enamel blue of the sky. In the two key stanzas (according to the geography) the themes of the Armenian nature and the poet's inner world clash.

Քարեր, քարեր, քարեր:  
Էմալե բիլ երկինք:  
Առասպելներ, ասքեր, լեզենդացած դարեր...  
Եվ քնարն է ահա նորից հնչում ձեռքիս<sup>6</sup>:

In the subseries "Tabernacles" dedicated to books, stones are the recurrent topic; likewise in the subseries on Khachkars (Cross-Stones) books are the pivotal theme. This cruciform symbol comes to light in the unique personified literary image of the stone-parchments which do not surrender to the power of sword and fire.

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<sup>5</sup> Մեծեկայտիս 1980, 518–558. All the poems were translated by Vahagn Davtian. As all of them are taken from the same book, from now on only the pages of the poems will be referred to.

<sup>6</sup> Մեծեկայտիս 2013, 35:

The first poem is characterized by severity and repose.

Այս սուրբ գրքի էջերում թևավորներ կան այնքան...  
Եվ թևավոր այդ մարդիկ հրեշտակներդ են բարի,  
Այդ նրանք են գուշակել քո թևավոր ապագան,  
Երբ բախտը քեզ է պարզել իր գավաթը թունալ<sup>7</sup>: (37)

The idea of being winged and able to transcend from the variable life, which is the crucial theme of this series, will be referred to more than once because of its luminosity and the depth which avoids recurrent ideas. The penman – the creator of the tabernacle could see in his insight the flapping of the wings, rising from the rattling sabre.

Here for the first time the author, in a wider sense, refers to the consistent topic of crucifixion and resurrection – the theme of the Holy Book. His understanding of the important role of Christianity which functioned as a symbol of consolidation for our nation in its heroic, almost hopeless fight for its unity as a conscious whole is quite objective and realistic. The spiritual consolidation of the Christian faith played a similar role in the history of Russia during the centuries of the unbearable Tatar yoke. Before the present day there were eras when powerful ideas of unifying nations simply did not exist. Such is a true reflection of history.

The following two poems state that a noble soul has to stay awake, without falling victim to the deceptive sweetness of existence. One of them is the reproduction of a legend the plot of which resembles Irving's famous "Rip Van Winkle". The priest is fascinated by the sweet song of the bird and returns to the monastery at dawn. It turns out that centuries have passed, and when he realizes it, he immediately ages and turns to dust, and "honey starts seeping from the amphora of his heart".

The series of poems entitled "Tabernacles" ends with a unique anthem dedicated to books:

Երբ Հայաստանում զինվոր էր զոհվում մարտի մեջ ահեղ,  
Նրա աճյունին դնում էին գիրք,  
Եվ այդ պարճառով այս մատյանների ուժը փառահեղ  
Չի ընկճել կյանքում ոչ մի արհավիրք:

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<sup>7</sup> The poem dwells upon the spiritual characteristics of human beings, who are able to foresee the future.

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*Եվ Հայաստանում երբ մեկի տանը չէր ծնվում զավակ,  
Գիրքն էին առնում ու որդեգրում,  
Եվ մինչև հիմա գիրքը այս երկրում որդու պես է թանկ,  
Ու որդու պես են գիրքն այսպեղ սիրում<sup>8</sup>: (44)*

In the opening poem of the series entitled “Khazer” the voice of Lithuania sounds full and resonant. It is a well-thought out structural technique as Lithuania is depicted after the reader already has some idea about the author's perception of Armenia. Hence, from now on the thematic intertwinement Armenia-Lithuania-lyrical hero becomes a counterpoint in the whole series.

The key motif of the poem “Khazer” is sobbing.

In the second poem entitled “Don't Cry Armenia” sobbing reaches cosmic dimensions<sup>9</sup>:

The following poem is endowed with profound optimism. It illustrates such renowned names of Armenian writers as Mesrop Mashtots, Grigor Narekatci, Nahapet Kuchak, Sayat-Nova, Hovhannes Tumanyan, Avteik Isahkian, Yeghishe Charents, Paruyr Sevak<sup>10</sup>.

*Եվ ապա մոգի կրակված ձեռքով նա իր կտավին  
Դրոշմեց հավել տղերերգական դեմքը Չարենցի,  
Այն բանաստեղծի, որի ոգին է կենդանի շրջում,  
Որի տողերը սրնգի թողած արձագանքի պես  
Թափառում են դեռ այն սեզ լեռներում, որ դար ու դարեր  
Հողմահարվել են աշխարհի բոլոր փոթորիկներից,  
Չարկվել աշխարհի բոլոր շանթերից ու որոտներից,  
Եվ որոնք հիմա այն մեծ վարպետի սուրբ կտավներին  
Դարձել են քարե զոհասեղաններ, որոնց ոտքի տակ  
Մեծ Նարեկացին, Եղիշե Չարենցն ու Սևակը դեռ  
Հեկեկում են լույս բանաստեղծությամբ... (50)*

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<sup>8</sup> In the poem the author describes the Armenians' reverential attitude to book, saying that books accompany dead soldiers, and can occupy the place of a child in childless families as books are treated with similar love and attention.

<sup>9</sup> The poem describes the infinite sorrow of Armenians, the length of which may reach divine ears. The author also alludes to Komitas' (Armenian composer) sad tunes which are compared to “mournful groan”.

<sup>10</sup> In the poem the author compares the verses of the famous Armenian poet Ye. Charents to the echo of a fife which is still heard in the mountains. He also mentions such renowned Armenian poets as P. Sevak, and G. Narekatsi.

Thus, the secret of Armenia's immortality lies not only in the nation's intransigent spirit, but also in the insurmountable height of its culture. Culture is seen as crucial, for bravery cannot be the only stronghold, culture is another one.

The poems of the series "Khachkars" (Cross-Stones) thematically unite and complete the concepts of inspiration, flight, the constancy of stones and, most importantly, the pivotal role of culture promoted in the previous two poems. These poems bring forth the idea that culture is a reliable bastion which embodies the nation's consciousness, and that cultural heritage is the guarantee of its immortality.

The historical part of the "Stone Wine" series ends with these poems.

Then in the first poem the poet again refers to the topic of winged flight which has already been introduced in the series entitled "Tabernacles". However the given symbol is imbued with a new meaning.

*Լիզվա առաքեցեք մի թևավոր խաչքար,  
Այստեղ ննջում է խոր Հայաստանի որդին՝  
Գառնիկ Հակոբյանը... Պատերազմը այն չար  
Սև կապարով այստեղ դիպավ նրա սրտին<sup>11</sup>: ( 51)*

Then quite naturally the theme of eternal resurrection follows. It turns out that the eagle identified with the cross-stone is a fairy phoenix rising from its own ashes.

*Զարդանախշն այս՝ բաղեղ ու խաղողի ողկույզ,  
Կյանքի հիմն է ասես, դողանջում է...  
Բարձր սարեր: Երկինք: Եվ այս խաչքարը կուռ  
Դեպի երկինք թևող մի թռչուն է... (52)*

This poem is crucial in terms of the motif of the whole series. First of all, it focuses on the topic of our nation's struggle for survival. Thence, the steady path of advance which is the underlying basis of our culture will be referred to (the given theme has already been mentioned with a dotted line in the last poem of the "Khazer" series).

The poem "Small Noah" being written in free verse, is the culmination of not only this group of poems, but also of the whole series. This style is

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<sup>11</sup> The poem focuses on the Armenian victims of WWII. Here the author asks for a cross-stone for an Armenian soldier who died in Lithuania during WWII.

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characteristic of modern Lithuanian poetry, thus, its impact is the strongest in the context of the series.

These poems have been woven in one breath; the poet's acute thinking shines in them with diverse hues, while remaining true to his style. It is worth mentioning that certain clarifications (ones that might seem unpleasantly verbose and weakening the aesthetic impact of the poems) are quite natural as the poems are meant for Lithuanian readers, and considering their unawareness of the history of Armenian art, the author refers to the latter. Hence, they are touchingly educational. The poet, without annoying his readers with the power of his emotion, appeals to them to learn about the greatest heights of spiritual achievements where the genius of the Armenian people roosts.

What astonishes in this poem is the unyielding, passionate power of the conviction that a person, dedicating his talent and spirit to his nation, in his highest self-expression becomes equal to the nation itself. Saryan is equal to Armenia just as he is equal to the woman picking grapes. There can be no barrier between an individual (an artist) and a collective (a nation) if the person does not pursue individualism.

It should be noted that this is one of the oldest, best-loved inner motifs of Eastern philosophy (in the philosophy of Hinduism, Bodisatwa is identified with Buddha, while the holy spirit is connected with the world's spirit). Here, of course that mystic idea becomes the nation's body and soul.

The theme of the cross-stone, which also symbolizes the concepts of stone and gravestone, is interwoven with the themes of music and ordinariness, the unfastidious but everlasting life of nature.

The poem teems with peculiar Armenian symbols (which are complex and multifaceted), representing the profound interconnection between the cross-stone and the vine. Another book could be dedicated to the full interpretation of these symbols.

In Armenian art certain national and professional notions definitely refer to a sole significance. Namely, the symbol of cross-stones, in contrast with other Christian nations, has a different significance for co-habitant Armenians. The cross-stone does not symbolize afterlife atonement but rather perseverance in this life. Other symbols may get different interpretations, depending on the concepts with which they are associated. Thus, the cross-stone being "coupled" with water may signify one thing, whereas if it is used with vine it represents



another. When water as a symbol is connected with different concepts (for instance with stone or vine) it is not identical with itself. Furthermore, such associations may be of contrasting or attracting natures which precondition the interpretation of the symbols found in them. For an Armenian the language of these symbols is the mother tongue, and he understands it “going deep” into its grammar (even if he is neither a poet nor a painter) but to a European, especially to a northerner this language seems dead and strange, and he bypasses these deep senses, without even suspecting that they are there. Thus, more astounding is the unequivocal ability of Mezhalaitis by which he understands the complicated and unfamiliar language.

The stone means a lot to Armenians (in this country wooden dwellings were never or almost never built, the material of the building is almost alive, which we seem to have forgotten in a century when we do not build houses by ourselves, others do so for us). Perhaps that is why an Armenian may never think of “humiliating” the stone or grade it lower in the hierarchic pyramid. Since the stone is “almost” alive we just need to bring it to life, for instance to mould it into the shape of a vine or an eagle. It is not important what shape of “life” endows the stone. The stone in a master’s hands is the same as the clay in God’s hands by which he created Adam.

So we have four symbols – the stone (symbolizing death), the vine (eternal life, life as it is), the cross-stone (representing the integrity and ever-lastingness of the soul that fights against the destructive power of time) and the vine stone (awakened life which is ever changing, capricious, ephemeral and mortal). The fourth one with its bacchanal casualness evidently contradicts the first three symbols. Such a combination needs some power which will lead the latter to a harmonious reality (the reality is not a symbolic but rather a historical phenomenon, and sobbing serves as a means of its expression). Here music becomes a harmonious power. Thus, the initial role of the cross-stone is revived.

In this poem the subtlety and exactitude with which the poet manages to penetrate into a uniquely national symbol is just astounding. We think that any Armenian could perceive the poem as a translation from the Armenian language.

The last poem of the “Khachkarer” series takes us back to the styles (with new overtones), typical of the ones which E. Mezhalaitis wrote after his visit to

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Armenia in 1969. This, in fact, is the inclusion of the local Armenian characteristic features into the context of the global culture.

The author (more precisely the lyrical hero) identifies himself with Noah, however not with Noah as an ancestor but with Noah as the survivor of disasters.

The opposition Noah vs Hamlet seems to be unexpected. Nevertheless, it has its meaning. Hamlet as a character was born in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, he is as old and eternal as Noah growing the grapes that would cheer one's heart. Moreover, his question "to be or not to be" is also as old and eternal as the thoughtful, forever wandering and suffering humanity itself.

The subseries "Tabernacles, Khazes and Cross-Stones" include poems which highlight the characteristic features of Armenia, Armenians, the Armenian spirit and Armenian history, that is Armenia observed from inside, while the subseries entitled "Armenian Aero-Notebook" uncovers Armenia's "external" features. The transition to this approach has already been implemented (with a stroke of the artist's skilful brush) in the final poem of the subseries "Tabernacles, Khazes and Cross-Stones".

It is noteworthy that the author chose Armenian words for the title of the series where Armenia is exposed in terms of its "internal" features, while the poems which highlight its "external" characteristics are entitled by Lithuanian words (it should be born in mind that the book is written in Lithuanian).

Thus, "Khoranner" confirms the physical perpetuity of our indomitable and proud people; "Khazer" depicts our history drowning in the seas of blood; "Khachkarer" is our victory over the brutal force of the Genocide, though not the one observed in "Khoranner" but the victory of culture and genius over whatever is hostile to Armenians.

The opening poem of the "Armenian Aero-Notebook" is entitled "My Atlantida".

Is the juxtaposing of the stony, mountainous country suffering either from heat or cold with the deep underwater, peaceful kingdom not the embodiment of the country itself?

*Ես մեծությամբ կյանքում չեմ զարմացել երբեք,  
Խորությամբ եմ միայն ես զարմացել...  
Ճամփորդում եմ: Կարծես Ատլանտիդան իմ դեմ  
Աղամանդի պես ջինջ իր խորքերն է բացել: (54)*

Mountainous Armenia is seen as the channel to the sky. The reader has already revealed the idea about the symbol of the sky in the previous series. The poet is more explicit when at the end of the poem he mentions the name of “khachkar” (cross-stone) that managed to survive the decay of empires and the destructive effects of centuries.

The following poem is crucial in the series. Here Armenia, Lithuania and the lyrical character meet one another and remain inseparable throughout the whole series.

The other poems of this subseries surely deserve particular analysis. However, we want to introduce a general outline, while particular analysis requires a deep insight into the subtleties. The topics (blood, horror, death, suffering, sobbing) tackled in the poems of “Khacher” (Cross-Stones) are counterpointed with the themes of Lithuania and the lyrical hero in a novel way. The lyrical hero’s truly personal attitude becomes more and more apparent (in the poem “Genocide” the given theme is objectively highlighted) and develops up to the condemnation: “I curse”.

The poem where the name of Lithuania is not alluded to even implicitly should be mentioned as well. Lithuania is ever present there in its physical palpability found in the farmer’s innate world vision which excludes the possibility of life without the fertile soil. Interestingly, the given worldview is overwhelmed by a more fundamental principle according to which, work in essence is comprehensive and powerful, revealed not only in ordinary ways, typical of familiar places.

The composition of the poems in the book “Stone Wine” is characterized by a truly well-thought out and indivisible structure. In fact, it is rather a living organism with its inner intertwinement and rich feedback.

One wonders why he has dedicated a whole subseries of poems to the Byurakan Observatory instead of just a single poem.

It goes without saying that Armenia prides itself on achievements in astronomy. Academician Victor Hambardzumian’s theoretical approaches to the physics of stars and nebula are the fundamentals of this field of study. However, the whole subseries of poems on the Byurakan Observatory cannot be accounted for by this fact. The point is that just at the beginning of the subseries the inner motif unfolds and, like a thread lining the invincible intentions of the

author stretches from the observatory to the sky, so close to mountainous Armenia.

In these poems E. Mezhelaitis finally “frees the genie”, widely introducing the theme of universal culture (this being his favourite topic, through which he has reached great artistic heights, combining the heated emotions of passion with the inquisitive philosophical mind).

The notion according to which, music (which is based on numerical succession) rules the universe is very old and dates back to Pythagorean times. Nevertheless, the poet's reference to Chopin gives rise to a new shade of meaning in the concept of harmony not only in the human being but also in different spheres of culture, since Chopin is “human, all too human” while the harmony among spheres is perfect and permanently complete”.

The poem “Margarian's Galaxy” testifies to this.

*Բայց երբ մոլոր չորից վարագույրը կախի,  
Այս ճերմակած մարդը՝ Շոպենի պես արդար,  
Պիպի իր մարները հուր աստղերին բախի,  
Պիպի աստղենային նորաները կարդա<sup>12</sup>: (63)*

The tragic poem about a small country lost in infinity sounds like a logical continuation of the topic.

The incredible emotional intensity of the previous subseries gives way to some placidity which is expressed in the poem “When the Peach-Trees Blossom”. The book overflows with cruelty and ruthlessness. The overflowing cruelty is not only due to our historic reality but also the fact that it pursues us like a nightmare. Thus, tender and sensitive poems follow, and the scent of peaches reminds the reader of the rosy lips of an Armenian girl and exudes the fragrance of the fertile soil. In these poems the peach is compared to the letter of the lovers who are lost in red flowers. Such an Armenia also exists, doesn't it?

Armenia is also expressed through Lusine Zakarian's voice, as clear as crystal.

*Ասում եք՝ մեզ մոտ սոխակներ չկան...  
Լուսինեն ի՞նչ է... Ես նրա ծայնից  
Ձկան պես ասես ընկնում եմ ոռկան  
Եվ չեմ կարենում փախչել ոռկանից<sup>13</sup>: (68)*

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<sup>12</sup> In the poem “the grey haired, just man” Chopin is present, and music notes are compared to stars, via which the great composer plays music.

The tragic mood again emerges when the poet describes Sayat-Nova's fate who suffered in Haghpat Monastery for seventeen years. Nevertheless, compared to the horrors of the Genocide this tragedy is indeed depicted in milder overtones. The poem merely makes us reflect on the fate of poets, the eternal prisoners of eternity.

In the concluding subseries entitled "Stone Wine" the poet's favourite topics – art and poetry – sound even more logical. It is not random at all that "My Yerevan" ends in the following way.

*Երևանը - դա Սարյան է, որ բուրյան է,  
Որպես հողը ու ծաղիկը ու ցորյանը,  
Երևանը հարազատ է իր արյանը,  
Երևանը նախնական ու հավիտյան է... (70)*

This theme is more profoundly developed in the following two monumental poems of the previous subseries "Lusine is Warbling" and "The Prisoners of Eternity". As far as the original poem allows us to infer, Lusine Zakarian's singing in the Holy Cathedral of Etchmiadzin served as a source of inspiration for the author to write the first poem (on the wings of the poem "The Angel of Etchmiadzin" the doors of heaven can be opened). The wide range of associations evoked in the poet's heart by the songstress's clear, crystalline voice are remarkable here. In her voice the poet can see and hear the toll of the bells of Sardarapat, the call of the stones, the lamentation of Komitas, the purple of the peach-trees and the white blossoms of the apple trees.

In the poem "The Prisoners of Eternity" three motifs unfold in parallel. The first one is reality. It is the impression made on the poet by the ancient Haghpat Monastery. Upon the Lithuanian, accustomed to the Baroque architecture with the exuberant luxury of the décor, Old Armenian monasteries must have made an odd impression as the latter are characterized by cubic unity. Only scrutiny allows a distinction between larger units, whose triple geometric structure (between two large fragments, the dome covered with a tent becomes visible) recreates the image of the landscape widespread in Armenia. Mezhelaitis has illustrated his impression in vivid and warm colours and with ardour.

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<sup>13</sup> The poet compares the famous songstress' voice with that of "a nightingales" which is so enchanting that everybody is entrapped.

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The poet belongs both to his time and eternity. Such a combination closely resembles the statement worked out by Pasternak. The captivity to both time and eternity may at first sight seem contradictory. In essence, they represent a dialectic unity of two opposing poles in counterbalance.

The well-planned complex structure of the poem "Stone Wine" is characterized by a peculiar harmony of the shades of colour where the poet travels through the tragic to the majestic.

The "Stone Wine", indeed, seethes like champagne in a glass. With indescribable ease (evidence of the poet's exceptional mastery) E. Mezhelaitis plays with the highest forms of poetry. Sounds and words rise and fall effortlessly, spontaneously and become intertwined. Rhymes, internal rhymes, alliterations, assonances and consonances with imaginary, kaleidoscopic patterns sparkle literally in each line. However, the general sense of jovial play is not confined to the form. Even a topic like the solidity of a masculine palm, which grows even stronger with the unyielding, severe steadiness of the stone, is expressed in such buoyant overtones that there seems to exist no contradiction between the stone and labour.

Much has been said about the labour and feat of valour in this book. And now it is time to talk about the joy of labour.

And this is true. There are many cheerful, jovial and noble things in our life. Living Armenia is rejoicing and building, building and rejoicing. The creative mind is also expressed through games. Fountains with drinking water are as necessary as houses.

Mirth and humour are the topics with which the book "Stone Wine" closes.

The reader of this book will not see oneself as a tourist. One will not only see the earthly paradise in Ararat Valley but also enjoy the wild beauty of the Lori highlands and gorges, be enraptured by the severe grace of ancient monasteries. Moreover, one will see a country where on the mercilessly hot stones people grow transparent and tender grapes, where the refined and inspiring stone inebriates like pomegranate wine. One will understand the real soul of our talented nation that was shaped through endless sufferings and hard work, a nation that from generation to generation has created a wonderful culture which in its complexity and profundity is unique, a nation that neither at the most calamitous nor the happiest moments stops believing in honour, fidelity, the creative mind and the triumphant power of love.

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## АРМЕНИЯ В ПОЭЗИИ ЭДУАРДАСА МЕЖЕЛАЙТИСА

БАХЧИНЯН Ф.

### Резюме

**Ключевые слова:** Эдуардас Межелайтис, Межелайтис-Армения, «Каменное вино», Саят-Нова, Ваагн Давтян, Венуолис, Спящая дева Арарата.

Творчество народного поэта Литвы Эдуардаса Межелайтиса широко известно в Армении. Эдуардасу Межелайтису было присвоено почетное звание заслуженного деятеля культуры Армении, ему также была присуждена премия Е. Чаренца.

Для Эдуардаса Межелайтиса Армения стала второй поэтической родиной. Любовь поэта к Армении была основана на глубоком знании армянской истории и культуры.

Эдуардас Межелайтис посетил Армению трижды (в 1969, 1979 и 1982 гг.) и воспел ее в трех поэтических циклах.

## ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆԸ ԷԴՈՒԱՐԴԱՍ ՄԵԺԵԼԱՅՏԻՍԻ ՊՈԵԶԻԱՅՈՒՄ

ԲԱԽՉԻՆՅԱՆ Ֆ.

### Ամփոփում

**Բանալի բառեր՝** Էդուարդաս Մեծելայտիս, Մեծելայտիս-Հայաստան, Քարե գինի, Սայաթ-Նովա, Վահագն Դավթյան, Վենուոլիս, Արարատի քնած աղջիկը:

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Լիտվացի մեծ բանաստեղծ Էդուարդաս Մեժելայտիսի ստեղծագործությունը լայնորեն հայտնի է և մեծ հարգանք է վայելում Հայաստանում: Նրան շնորհվել են ՀՍՍՀ մշակույթի վաստակավոր գործչի պատվավոր կոչում և Եղիշե Չարենցի անվան մրցանակ:

Էդուարդաս Մեժելայտիսի համար Հայաստանը դարձել է բանաստեղծական երկրորդ հայրենիք: Դա ոչ թե կույր, զգլխիչ սեր է, այլ վեհ զգացում՝ բխած հայոց պատմության և մշակույթի խոր իմացությունից:

Էդուարդաս Մեժելայտիսը Հայաստանում եղել է երեք անգամ (1969, 1979 և 1982 թվականներին) և բանաստեղծությունների երեք շարք է նվիրել նրան: