

*Excerpts from the plays*

**“DUBLINERS IN MIERA STREET”**

**AND**

**“FROM FAITH TO NATIONALISM”**

**by Matīss Gricmanis**

**translated by Līva Ozola**

Rīga

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**ACT I | Scene 1**

**ACTORS' MEETING (from the JRT Theatre production 'Dubliners in Miera Street')**

*The ensemble of actors sit around a table, mugs of varying capacity in front of them. Krasts and Sabīne sit at a piano and sing. Lights come up slowly. Enters Daudziņš.*

**BROKA:** Well?

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** It is just like we thought it was.

**KRASTS:** But why do it at the theatre, I don't get it.

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** ...the doorman did not let her in...

**KRŪMIŅŠ:** And how did he know she was a prostitute?

**KRASTS:** You can tell. I don't know, a short skirt... red lipstick...

**KRŪMIŅŠ:** That describes every other girl in Miera Street.

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** That's what he said – that the woman was a prostitute.

**BROKA:** The new doorman must be a connoisseur then.

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** He's a good bloke, from Madona, I think.

**ZARIŅA:** Which one is that?

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** The one with the regional accent... and there's always a picture of Jesus in front of him.

**KRŪMIŅŠ:** A Catholic then.

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** In a word, our youngsters had somehow managed to get the girl in. The doorman did a walkabout of the theatre at night... established the fact... and reported the whole thing.

**KRASTS:** Oh bugger.

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** We have no choice. Any fuck-up by the youngsters is going to reflect on us. The theatre is like a family...

**KRASTS:** Please, not with the family thing again!

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** But it's true... and you don't take family stuff outside the family.

**KRASTS:** Unless you're taking it to a pawn shop.

**KRŪMIŅŠ:** And what if someone does?

*More emphatic piano music from Krasts; Sabīne sings.*

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** I found myself thinking a couple of days ago – how often I've had to play a father in my life.

**ZNOTIŅŠ:** We are both approaching a dangerous line.

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** Would you like to play a father?

**ZNOTIŅŠ:** I wouldn't mind. I will have to, anyway.

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** I wrote this little essay...

**ZNOTIŅŠ:** *Propitietur Deus omnium.*

*Pause*

**ZNOTIŅŠ:** God have mercy on us all.

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** Why have I never had to play a proper father? And I caught myself thinking about a role from a few years ago. Coleman from 'The Lonesome West'.

**KRŪMIŅŠ:** What's it to do with fathers?

**KRASTS:** A good show, by the way.

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** Coleman, of all the roles – Zakhar, Grandfather, Leonidik, whom I played for fifteen years.

**KRASTS:** And the play was about Irish people.

**KRŪMIŅŠ:** Why such passion for this little play?

**KRASTS:** Wait, you were the alcoholic, the Catholic priest, right?

**ZARIŅA:** They were all alcoholics.

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** Have you even seen the show? It was the priest who was the alcoholic, and he was played by Piņķis.

**BROKA:** Who is by no means an alcoholic.

**ZNOTIŅŠ:** He is not present here so let's not amuse ourselves at his expense.

**KRASTS:** He is not present anywhere! Where *is* he?

**ZARIŅA:** Family...

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** What do you mean by that? Varis, as a proper Catholic, would not say anything and just turn the other cheek but I'm always here to bite your head off. The theatre is family... and family is sacred.

**KRASTS:** *Walks up to Broka.* I don't like this comparison... The theatre as one's family?

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** Coleman was his father's murderer. A grotesque character who lives in an envious and jealous world. He is a universal example of what lies at the basis of any father-son relationship. Every son is in some way his father's murderer. A father raises his son through suffering: sleepless nights, getting hit with a stick in man's most vulnerable parts, endless battles about the inevitable pissing all over the toilet seat. (*to Znotiņš*) It is the cosmic origin of a man's world: hate. Being a father means raising someone who will eventually defeat you.

**ZNOTIŅŠ:** *Walks up to Sabīne.* Hardly an original theory – Kronos who eats his own children but dies at his son Zeus’ hand.

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** That’s what I said in this piece – that it is a universal truth.

**KRASTS:** Hey, but we still haven’t found out who called the prostitute to the theatre.  
*Broka goes to stand behind the bar.*

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** I think it was Stephen.  
*Everybody laughs.*

**ZARIŅA:** Who is Stephen?

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** The guy who plays Stephen Dedalus. The boy is...

**KRŪMIŅŠ:** Quiet, calm and inconspicuous.

**ZARIŅA:** And promising...

**BROKA:** Some would even call him talented.  
*Krasts joins Broka.*

**KRŪMIŅŠ:** Alright, we’ll see in ten years.

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** It must have been him. He is the most similar to Znotiņš.

**ZNOTIŅŠ:** Stop dragging my name into this, you *ignobilis mutantis*.

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** You are the only one who has ever been to a prostitute.

**KRASTS:** No, it was me!

**ZNOTIŅŠ:** I have never in my life been to a prostitute!

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** How on earth did you play the Devil then? You told everybody that you were too nice, too proper, and that you needed to cross a line beyond which you wouldn’t know what was good and what was evil.

**ZNOTIŅŠ:** Right, but it turned out that there was no need to do it literally. That’s what we have imagination for.

**ZARIŅA:** I do not have to kill my children to play Medea.

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** I say it was Stephen. And I am willing to bet any of you...

**ZARIŅA:** Bet me. I know these quiet types.

**DAUDZIŅŠ:** Let’s shake on it. Who’ll come and break it?

**KRŪMIŅŠ:** *(Walks up and parts the hands)* What are you betting on?

**BROKA:** Let’s cut the banter and start working.  
*Broka taps a decanter with a spoon like a bell.*

*Lights change... DARKNESS.*

*Znotiņš pulls out a fold-away bed. Puts a box with props on the table.*

## FROM FAITH TO NATIONALISM

ACT I

SCENE 2

### FIRST MEMORY

VOICE: I became a nationalist as a teenager. My worldview was formed by my family, but they didn't raise me as a nationalist – it happened differently...

EXALTED AND SMILING PEOPLE SINGING PRAISES

PEOPLE: (*Singing*) He – the vine, we – the branches; the tree loves his branches. Yes, the tree does love his branches.

VOICE: My mother is very religious. She searched long for the right denomination. At first, she was Lutheran. When I was four, she took me to camps. This song was the main ritual there.

In the Soviet times, my mother wasn't a Christian.

When the Soviet ideology turned out to be another delusion, people, including my mother, searched for God again.

For a while my mother was carried away by different evangelists. She took me with her to one service – I was seven or eight years old.

### NEXT MEMORY

AN AMERICAN EVANGELIST IS PREACHING ON THE STAGE.  
A TRANSLATOR TRIES TO MIMICK HIS EMOTIONAL  
EXPRESSIONS BUT SOUNDS STRANGE.

EVANGELIST: The cowl of the miltrum is this:

VOICE: I was seven or eight years old and I didn't understand English then.

TRANSLATOR: The law of the Kingdom of Heaven is this:

VOICE: But there was an interpreter.

EVANGELIST: Garvest eponds only to shold.

INTERPRETER: Harvest responds only to seed.

EVANGELIST: Let me hear it: Garvest eponds only to shold.

INTERPRETER: Let me hear it: "harvest responds only to seed".

EVANGELIST: Not to prayder.

INTERPRETER: Not to prayer.

EVANGELIST: Not to sigling.

INTERPRETER: Not to fasting.

EVANGELIST: Fling a purch of money. You flirt torn God. He prosn maid you money. You i met at landern...

INTERPRETER: Find a piece of money. You don't do it for God - he doesn't need your money. You do it for your own good.

EVANGELIST: Sip this playder with me! (STARTS PRAYING)

INTERPRETER: Say this prayer with me! (STARTS PRAYING)

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MOTHER: Matīss...

VOICE: And during the prayer my mother asked.

MOTHER: Do you have those two Lats you didn't spend at the store?

VOICE: I had them and I said that she'd allowed me to buy chips when going home.

MOTHER: But what's more important – chips or your eternal soul?

VOICE: The event happened in Riga, but my family lived in Talsi; we had a soviet style suburb house and I had two brothers and two sisters.