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IN THIS ISSUE:

EMILY PLATER: 'FRONTISPIECE' FOR MARGARET FULLER'S *WOMAN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY*

VITA LAUMĖ'S POETRY

HIGHLIGHTS OF LITHUANIAN TEXTILE ART

THE IDEA OF THE GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA IN THE WORKS OF GINTARAS BERESNEVIČIUS

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF WOODEN HOUSES IN VILNIUS AND BALTIMORE

BOOK REVIEWS

ABSTRACTS

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CONTENTS

Patrick Chura	5	*Emily Plater: 'Frontispiece' for Margaret Fuller's* Woman in the Nineteenth Century
Vita Laumė	15	*Vita Laumė's Poetry*
Rasa Andriušytė-Žukienė	20	*Highlights of Lithuanian Textile Art*
Virginijus Savukynas	33	*The Idea of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the Works of Gintaras Beresnevičius*
Catherine Brown and Rugilė Balkaitė	43	*The Disappearance of Wooden Houses in Vilnius and Baltimore*

BOOK REVIEWS

Laima Laučkaitė, *Art in Vilnius, 1900–1915.*
Reviewed by Radosław Okulicz-Kozaryn
65

Laimonas Briedis, *Vilnius: City of Strangers.*
Reviewed by Dace Dzenovska
70

Vanda Juknaitė, *My Voice Betrays Me.*
Reviewed by Lina Ramona Vitkauskas
75

Abstracts
79

Photo by Rasa Žukienė

Neringa Kiselienė. *Gaze*.
Jacquard weaving, 41 x 53 cm, 2010.

Emily Plater: 'Frontispiece' for Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*

PATRICK CHURA

Portrait of Margaret Fuller, Fuller Family Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Early in 1844, as the American transcendentalist writer Margaret Fuller was looking for material she could use to expand her ground-breaking feminist essay, "The Great Lawsuit"[1] into a book-length manuscript, she came across a newly published biography of Polish-Lithuanian revolutionary Emily Plater (Emilija Pliaterytė). A careful reading of Joseph Straszewicz's *The Life of Countess Emily Plater*, translated from the French by J.K. Salomonski, apparently made a profound impression on Fuller, who immediately incorporated several admiring passages about Plater into the text that became her 1845 masterwork, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*.

One of the first passages Fuller added to her manuscript described Plater as an archetype of self-reliant female heroism

[1] Full title "The Great Lawsuit. Man Versus Men. Woman Versus Women," published in the July 1843 issue of the *Dial*, the transcendentalist journal cofounded by Fuller and Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1840.

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and placed the Vilnius-born countess in a prominent honorific position:

> The dignity, the purity, the concentrated resolve, the calm, deep enthusiasm, which yet could, when occasion called, sparkle up a holy, an indignant fire, make of this young maiden the figure I want for my frontispiece.[2]

Probably the fact that Plater's image was already in circulation – as the frontispiece of Straszewicz's widely read book – kept Fuller from actually inserting the countess's compelling portrait into her text. But the American feminist was decidedly stirred by the girl who became a captain in the First Lithuanian Infantry Regiment and a symbol of the 1829 November Uprising against imperial Russia. "Her portrait is to be seen in the book," Fuller pensively remarked, "a gentle shadow of her soul."[3] Adopting the woman warrior as the emblem of her treatise showed that Fuller had not merely noticed and admired the countess's likeness; she had read Straszewicz's biography, considered the meaning of Plater's life, and decided that she wanted readers of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* to do the same.

While Plater's courageous military exploits certainly impressed the American feminist, it is likely that her temperament and psychology touched Fuller just as deeply. A second important passage in Fuller's book recounts Plater's skill in dealing with jealous superior officers just before and after the decisive 1831 battles at Vilnius, Kaunas, and Šiauliai. During preparations for these engagements, Plater had been advised to withdraw from her regiment, relinquish her commission, and instead take up a "grand and noble profession" more suitable to women – that of nursing the wounded. Since Fuller abhorred such patronizing sexism, she gave special attention to Plater's handling of it: "The gentle irony of her reply to these self-constituted tutors (not one of whom showed himself her

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2 Fuller, 20.
3 Ibid. 20.

J. Penniman frontispiece to Straszewicz's *The Life of Countess Emily Plater* (1843).

equal in conduct or reason), is as good as her indignant reproof at a later period to the general, whose perfidy ruined all."[4]

Here Fuller alluded to two incidents that took place in Straszewicz's chapters ten and thirteen respectively. In the first, Plater rejected the argument that she was too delicate to endure the fatigues of camp life and cleverly undermined her would-be advisors. With a hint of sarcasm, Plater affirmed her resolve to remain in the fighting ranks: "Gentlemen, I am a woman, and as such, cannot overcome the curiosity which impels me to assist in your battles, and be an eye-witness of your courage; and, finally, to dress your noble wounds on the spot, at the moment you receive them." The sardonic retort disarmed her fellow officers, who "durst not oppose her views any longer."[5] Of certain significance to Fuller was the fact that Plater did not reject the tasks of nursing and wound dressing – she simply pointed out that she was better able to perform them on the battlefield. Plater's implication – that blind adherence to gender-based norms and preconceptions was self-limiting to both sexes – meshed seamlessly with ideas expressed by Fuller herself, who famously asserted that "Man cannot, by right, lay even well meant restrictions on woman."[6]

Plater's "indignant reproof" of a faithless general, the other incident Fuller found worthy of mention, took place just after the disastrous battle at Šiauliai where, despite Plater's

4 Ibid.

5 Straszewicz, 186-187.

6 Fuller, 16.

"great courage and intrepidity," her unit had been forced to retreat from Lithuanian territory toward the safety of Poland. When the tattered army reached the Prussian border, the commanding Polish general, Dezydery Chłapowski, abruptly decided to lay down his arms to seek the protection of Prussia, a power technically neutral but nevertheless "still hostile" to the Polish-Lithuanian cause. According to Straszewicz, Plater "could not bring herself to believe that all was lost beyond hope." Refusing to countenance what she saw as the general's disloyalty, she dared to address Chłapowski directly:

> You have betrayed the cause of freedom and of our country, as well as of honor. I will not follow your steps into a foreign country to expose my shame to strangers. Some blood yet remains in my veins, and I have still left an arm to raise the sword against the enemy. I have a proud heart, too, which never will submit to the ignominy of treason.[7]

Why this episode caught Margaret Fuller's attention as she scanned Plater's biography is not hard to imagine. Straszewicz describes the event as a "sublime scene" in Chłapowski's tent, one in which "a female, weak and timid" displayed startling bravery in challenging her military commander. The American almost certainly saw in the Polish heroine's defiance a powerful illustration of her own then-radical demand that women be allowed to "intelligently share" in the "ideal life of their nation." Moreover, the affair could well have been the basis for Fuller's declaration that "persistence and courage are the most womanly no less than the most manly qualities."[8] Among the most controversial concepts in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* was Fuller's claim that "Woman can express publicly the fullness of thought and emotion, without losing any of the peculiar beauty of her sex" – a concept perhaps best exemplified in Fuller's era by Plater.[9]

As these examples show, Plater's portrait would unquestionably have made an appropriate opening image for Fuller's

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7 Straszewicz, 246-247.
8 Fuller, 19.
9 Ibid., 15.

revolutionary book, the first major treatise of American feminism. But the reasons for choosing Plater as a figure who somehow captured the spirit of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* are neither simple nor superficial. Fuller's visceral response to the countess was grounded not only on the barrier-transgression she embodied as a female military figure – she is often referred to as a Polish-Lithuanian Joan of Arc – but on a number of biographical details that the two brilliant and forward-thinking women had in common.

Fuller could strongly identify, for example, with the conditions of Plater's upbringing in an environment dominated by serious study and devoid of stereotypically feminine interests. "From her earliest years," states Straszewicz, she "evinced tastes of a very different character from those generally displayed by young persons of her age and sex." Shunning dolls, dancing, "soft and feminine music," and "everything which belongs to a young girl," Plater pursued drawing, the study of history, horseback riding, and target shooting. Plater's biographer notes that as an adolescent she "would never act like other young persons of her own sex."[10] Later, as a woman of marriageable age, she was drawn to the study of mathematics, a science thought "little suited to the female mind," but toward which Emily herself "had exhibited a decided aptitude."[11] The culmination of Plater's radical gender nonconformity came in 1831, when she enacted a form of gender-passing on the battlefield, assuming a masculine persona by cutting her hair and joining the nationalist army fighting for Polish-Lithuanian independence.

Like Plater, Fuller received a strenuous education far beyond the norm for young women of her time. Under the relentless instruction of her father, she learned to read and write Latin at age six, and by her early teens she was studying the most challenging works of classic literature in Greek, French, and Italian. Fuller's precocity and intellectual seriousness isolated her socially, intimidated her classmates male and female,

[10] Straszewicz, 25, 26, 105.
[11] Ibid., 65.

and left her little time or desire for pursuits believed suitable for girls. Seeking what her biographers have referred to as "intellectual perfection," the future author of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* "strove to turn herself into an intellectual person worthy of a place at her father's side as an equal, rather than try to meet the contrary expectation... that she be an enlightened feminine lady."[12] By the time she discovered Plater, Fuller was breaking down gender barriers in her own way. In 1843, she was allowed to conduct research in the Harvard libraries, the first woman so privileged, and in 1844 she was hired by Horace Greeley to write reviews and criticism for the *New York Daily Tribune*, making her one of the first American women to earn a living at full-time journalism.

Despite their obvious talents, both women were sometimes scrutinized and judged disapprovingly on the basis of male-imposed standards of outward appearance rather than on their actual merits. Fuller especially was never thought beautiful and was often labeled derisively for what her transcendentalist colleague Ralph Waldo Emerson called her "extreme plainness." In his journal, Nathaniel Hawthorne denigrated Fuller's figure and claimed she "had not the charm of womanhood."[13] Oliver Wendell Holmes later published harsh judgments about Fuller's looks that were clearly based in part on his notion of her as a threatening feminist: sharp-witted, over-educated, and envious of male intelligence. Even during the twentieth century, Fuller's appearance seemed important to some. In 1957, Harvard professor Perry Miller thought it necessary to reiterate the slur that Fuller was "phenomenally homely."[14] In the opinion of one Fuller biographer, Miller was so troubled by Fuller's refusal to adhere to traditional gender roles that he "could not forgive [her] for being ugly."[15] Recent scholarly works identify the malice of the literary establishment toward Margaret Fuller

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[12] McGavran Murray, 55.

[13] Hawthorne, 1: 255. Quoted also in Urbanski 19.

[14] Miller, 99.

[15] Urbansky, 38.

as one source for the modern "feminist as unattractive woman" caricature that persists to this day.[16]

"Without being perfect in beauty," Emily Plater "was nevertheless well calculated to inspire sentiments of deep attachment; especially in a man who can value the qualities of soul and mind, more than those of the body."[17] Straszewicz's biography repeatedly described Plater's ability to transcend the narrow presumptions of male onlookers. One passage in particular addressed a distinction between appearance-based expectations and the actual capabilities of women:

> Romantic young men hoped to find in her an amazon of brilliant *parure* [ornament], a female warrior like those seen at the theatre; but how great was their disappointment at the sight of a woman dressed in a plain blue *casaque* [loose blouse] of coarse cloth, and entirely destitute of that brilliant exterior which is so imposing to the vulgar, and which is often mistaken for real merit![18]

That Fuller responded ardently to this passage is not surprising. In her several-paragraph treatment of Plater in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, she observed that "Some of the officers were disappointed at her quiet manners; that she had not the air and tone of a stage-heroine. They thought she could not have acted heroically unless in buskins; [they] had no idea that such deeds only showed the habit of her mind."[19] Fuller was clearly intrigued by Plater's triumph over chauvinism, a triumph based on the notion that although there was admittedly "nothing very striking in her person at first sight," Plater's courage and achievement were nevertheless recognized and celebrated.[20] What the American feminist seems amazed by is that Plater had found a biographer who understood her – who was able to penetrate an exterior that did *not* suggest heroism

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16 For an excellent overview of the gender biases that have informed Fuller's denigration as a writer, see Urbansky, 3-46.
17 Straszewicz, 65.
18 Ibid., 184.
19 Fuller, 20.
20 Straszewicz, 66.

in order to describe the real person who did. In her famous book, Fuller wistfully wrote: "But though, to the mass of these men, she was an embarrassment and a puzzle, the nobler sort viewed her with a tender enthusiasm worthy of her." Paraphrasing from Straszewicz, Fuller rejoiced that "Her name... is known throughout Europe" and announced, "I paint her character that she may be as widely loved."[21]

Assessing the plight of women in her time, Fuller declared confidently, perhaps with Plater in mind, that "the restraints upon the sex were insuperable only to those who think them so."[22] Surely the most legendary line in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* is Fuller's oft-repeated rejoinder to the question of what "offices" women may fill: "Let them be sea-captains, if you will."[23] Among the several historical figures mentioned with this passage as examples of "women well-fitted for such an office," Plater is the only one who was a nineteenth-century contemporary of Fuller.

In a letter to her friend Caroline Sturgis written just after the publication of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, Fuller divulged that her public praise for the woman she referred to as "Countess Colonel Plater" had become controversial, garnering attention and disapproval in the popular press. After informing Sturgis where in Boston she could buy a copy of the "Memoir" about Plater, Fuller wrote, "The newspaper editors, who have *not* read the Memoir, are more indignant at my praise of Emily than at any of my other sins. They say it is evident that I would like to be a Colonel Plater!"[24] This interesting disclosure affirms not only that the editors in question considered the Polish-Lithuanian rebel girl to be Fuller's inspiration, but that Plater, who died in 1831 at the age of twenty-six, worried defenders of the American status quo as much as Fuller did. And

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[21] Fuller, 20.

[22] Ibid., 17.

[23] Ibid., 95.

[24] Fuller to Caroline Sturgis, 13 March 1845. Robert N. Hudspeth, ed., *The Letters of Margaret Fuller*, Vol. IV, 1845-1847. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987): 59.

while the antagonism of the press toward Fuller was reactionary and anti-feminist, its basic premise was accurate: Margaret Fuller did wish, on some level, to "be" an Emily Plater.

Three months after her letter to Sturgis, Fuller wrote to another close friend, Sarah Shaw, congratulating her on the birth of a daughter. "Heaven... must have some important task before us women, it sends us so many little girls," she mused, opening the way to serious reflection about gender politics. At the close of the letter, Fuller informed Mrs. Shaw that an alternate use had been found for the image she had wanted as her book's frontispiece. Alongside the "little crucifix" hanging on the wall above her writing table, Fuller explained, she had placed "a picture of Countess Emily Plater."[25]

In a way, a portrait of the countess did appear in Fuller's book, if only in the form of the American author's sensitive internalization of Plater's heroic model. As Robert Hudspeth recently observed, "Fuller found much of her own personality reflected in Plater."[26] Tragically, the epitaph for the "countess colonel" found in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* could apply as well to Fuller, who died at the age of forty in a shipwreck off New York's Fire Island: "Short was her career. Like the Maid of Orleans, she only did enough to verify her credentials, and then passed from a scene on which she was, probably, a premature apparition."[27]

Looking at *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* and *The Life of Countess Emily Plater* side-by-side suggests a Fuller-Plater bond that is deep and significant. It also offers ample evidence that Straszewicz's biography of Plater was a considerable influence on Fuller's pioneering masterwork, and therefore on the development of American feminist thought in its earliest stages.

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[25] Fuller to Sarah Shaw, 1 July 1845. Robert N. Hudspeth, ed., *The Letters of Margaret Fuller*, Vol. IV, 1845-1847. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987): 127.

[26] Hudspeth, 61.

[27] Fuller, 20.

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VITA LAUMĖ'S POETRY

She Dreams Only in Black-and-White

1.

Train stations, frightened people on platforms,
black suitcases, gray bundles, pushing crowds.
She is holding onto her father's coat sleeve.
I don't want to be lost! I don't want to be lost...
Children's faces, white as communion wafers,
slide by the window until the train snaps,
and she is stretched over the sky
unable to touch what she knows.
In the village below, old women are squabbling.
Black crows. With their shawled arms
they beckon her to come down.
No, no. she shouts, *the soldiers are coming!*
Her voice is turning into a white cloud.

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2.

White foxes are running over Siberian tundra,
large bones in their sharp teeth.
Nothing but snow, wind, barbed-wire fence.
Then she sees a huge pile of logs.
Good, she notes, *at least the deportees*
have wood to heat their frozen yurts. But
these logs are bones! Picked-clean skeletons
of adults and children. Stacked ten feet high.
This happened, this really happened...
an outside voice is drumming in her skull.

3.

Black sky and white sand stretch forever.
She is walking barefooted over thin bones
of birds. They crack and powder
under her foot soles. Wind coils the dust
into a dance. This must be the far edge.
Who has allowed her to walk here?
She fears, and any moment now,
she'll step upon her own white heart.

Slave Labor Camp in Siberia

The white violet on my desk,
with frosted petals and purple edges,
turns into the pale face of a child.
He is looking through his breath-circle
on a frosted window.
Mother is not back from the woods.
It is already dark.
His eyes are focused on the path.
The howl of the wolves is coming closer.
Hunger keeps him frozen
to this gray windowsill.

Out there, even children
had to make unthinkable choices.

Forced to choose,
would it be bread, or
the safe return of his mother?

After 55 Years I Regained my Ancestral Land

I take my sister Grief by the hand
and we walk the fields. Out loud
I say *kaimas, seklyčia, koplytėlė,*
Lithuanian words of places and things
long since gone. Not even a trace
of my grandmother's farm, the well
ploughed over, the orchard cut down.

At night, I stand in the middle
of my land. A dome of stars
all around me. I dip into the galaxies
with my home-keeper's ladle.
How many stars can this common spoon
hold? I scoop and scoop,
drink this black light, fill myself
with emptiness – *black-on-black*
soothing black
sailing through us
a black ship
guided by extinct light
of a black star

Where am I now? Where am I with my hands
full of stars? Am I with the ancestors
or the unborn?
There is no end of us.
We are all returning,
this much I know.

Nameless Maiden

In 1944, as Russian freight trains
were pulling their weight
between Poland and Lithuania,
deserters clung to boxcar roofs
no longer caring about front lines.

They saw you as an apparition.
You were their Holy Maiden.
They blessed you, were thankful
that your last moment was soft.
One of them, alive at eighty,
tells me: *I still see her so clearly,*
the way she escaped those rapists,
her bruised naked body climbing
to the top of the boxcar,
the torn comforter dragging behind her.
she opened her arms and
jumped...
Like an angel she was –
all the white feathers lifting,
like small birds around her,
flying upwards...
His hand reaches for his cheek,
eyes glaze over. *One stuck to my cheek...*
I can still hear that thud
as the train continued to move on...

A holy feather.
A white shroud
disappearing between
steel lines.

Highlights of Lithuanian Textile Art

RASA ANDRIUŠYTĖ-ŽUKIENĖ

For over ten years now, Lithuanian professional textiles have experienced a creative boom and won important awards at international exhibitions. Respect and admiration often accompany their presentations at various world exhibitions. They are characterized as "passionate," "inspiring," "entrancing" and "fantastic art." Lithuanian textiles have deep roots in the archaic folk culture of domestic life, but they also have made great strides in the professional art of textile. The formal training of textile artists started at the Kaunas Art School in 1940. Several generations of artists matured during the late Soviet period and after independence was restored in 1990. Although conditions have been quite different, valuable traditions cherished by the older generation, relative to a creative application of folk art, have been taken over by the new one.

A Fragment of Recent History

The fifty years of Soviet occupation brutally restricted creative options for several generations of Lithuanian artists. In the ideologically oppressed country, only openly supportive political or socially neutral decorative art could be created. Textiles were treated as an applied art whose purpose was to aesthetically furnish interior spaces. Rough weaving and monumental compositions dominated exhibitions and public

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interiors.[1] Although Lithuanian textile artists were restricted in terms of ideas, they had a good reputation throughout the Soviet Union. Artists Mina Levitan-Babenskienė, Juozas Balčikonis, and Ramutė Jasudytė were and still are appreciated for their professionalism, subtle colors, their sense for the artistic qualities of fabrics and fibers, and their contribution to the humanization of architectural interiors through their large format works.

The themes imposed on artists in the Soviet era amounted to a ban on thinking. The natural world, motherhood, sports, Lithuanian folklore, the idealized rural world, and the archaic Baltic culture presented with a tinge of a world lost forever were the approved topics.

Changing Motifs

In the 1980s, textiles, like painting and the graphic arts, were marked by reflections of subjective inner states, with signs of traditional modernist culture. In that decade, Lithuanian art underwent a change. Textile artworks created in the 1980s, *To Live* (1980) by Danutė Kvietkevičiūtė, *An Overtaking Express* (1980) and *Changing Motifs* (1982) by Salvinija Giedrimienė, and *A Black Cloud above My Valley* (1987) by Feliksas Jakubauskas, were clear examples of a changing, more meditative and mysterious art. Painterly weaving is a fascinating aspect of the works by Kvietkevičiūtė and Giedrimienė, while Jakubauskas created a tapestry composition together with the painter Dalia Kasčiūnaitė.

Open Doors

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, the highway of cooperation stretched westward between the former Eastern Bloc and the world in the west and north of Europe.[2] In the 1990s, textile's sudden escape from the grip of habit and tradition was crowned

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1 In Soviet literature, tapestries were called *gobelin*.

2 Scandinavian art curators were the first to take an interest in Lithuanian art after 1990. They organized exhibitions, invited artists to symposia, and Norwegian and Swedish museums acquired objects by Lithuanian artists for their collections.

by news of the victory of young textile artist Lina Jonikė's *Chasuble* (1996) in the Kyoto Biennial (1997). Jonikė's creative personality seemed to hide two artists – a textile artist, faithful to the subtleties of weaving, stitching and color, and a conceptualist who used the human body as a medium. This entwining of different arts, which had been unacceptable in Lithuania for decades, as well as an unusual and mysterious visual quality, projected the trajectory of development in textiles and soon became a characteristic feature of Lithuanian textile. The human body, visible and perceived, became the most important object in conceptual works by the younger generation of textile artists.

Independence

At the end of the twentieth century, artists were already creating impressive works of visual art. Stereotyped views concerning the place of textile in the system of the arts (textile as the self-expression of women with a ball of thread) and their attitude towards tradition (Lithuanian folk art as the basis for creation) expanded to include a larger, more global community of artists. The art of Violeta Laužonytė and Laima Oržekauskienė represents two different creative positions, but they are connected by a silent opposition to stereotypes and the expanded possibilities for artistic textiles.

Since the beginning of her creative career in the early 1980s, Laužonytė has firmly chosen the pure values of textile and composition in general. The abstract quality of her compositions conceals the artist's emotionally perceived reality reduced to optically vibrating linear rhythms in her tapestries. Laužonytė's style, formed long ago, has changed little. Yet, passing time links certain aspects by its own accord. These are the contexts or parallel creative worlds most often discussed by art historians. Kazė Zimblytė (1933–1999), a Lithuanian abstractionist painter, whose work was banned during the Soviet period, once wrote:

> Bet kuris gabalas iš mano pasaulio,
> Pateiktas viešam ar pusiau viešam dėmesiui,
> Yra mano "paveikslas."[3]

3 Kazimiera Zimblytė (Kazė). *Akimirkos. Tekstai. Piešiniai* / compiled by E. Lubytė. Vilnius: Lietuvos Aido galerija, 2005, 5.

[Any part of my world,
Introduced for public or semi-public attention,
Is my "painting."]

There are philosophical parallels between the worldviews and the art of Laužonytė and Zimblytė, who, among other things, also created textiles; the quality of reflection links their art.

A feminine attitude imbues the works by Jūratė Petruškevičienė and Danutė Valentaitė. Petruškevičienė's object, *Let Us Tie a Knot for Tradition* (2004), reflects a respect for the past, tradition, and values. Valentaitė raises ethical questions in short sentences. For example, in one of her works, she asks a sheep: "How are you, Dolly?" And she answers in a precise, haiku-style, three-line work made from fur with metal spirals. This feminine discourse links our textiles with relevant tendencies in contemporary art: the search for cultural and sexual identity by touching upon taboos of civilized society, such as privacy, inequality, old age or death, and the limits of the public and the private.

A large part of textile art has already become an interdisciplinary phenomenon. In terms of its significance, it has been compared to the new art in Lithuania that emerged in the 1990s with impressive works of object and post-object art created by such artists as Gediminas and Nomeda Urbonas, Eglė Rakauskaitė, Jurga Barilaitė, Artūras Raila, and Svajonė and Paulius Stanikas.

With an Apron or Without

Images of a woman's world, her passions, dreams and sometimes specific humor, dominate works by Vita Gelūnienė, Almyra Weigel (Bartkevičiūtė), Eglė Ganda Bogdanienė, and Lina Jonikė.

The issue of "the second sex" is hidden in the art of these artists working in different techniques. For Gelūnienė, Weigel, and Bogdanienė, the question of women's roles in life is fundamental. Gelūnienė is keen to bring it to the foreground in *Matrimony* (1997). The question of gender relations has acquired a shade of social and aesthetic provocation in Gelūnienė's textiles. The openness of her works leaves no one indifferent. Na-

ked bodies in the tapestry *Happy Days* (2005) are realistic, heavy and asymmetrical. People with their hands down look helpless but united. The colors of the tapestry are the bright images of television and the tension radiated by electronic equipment.

Aggressive beauty and the tension of self-identification can be seen in Bogdanienė's *Happiness/less* (2006). Bogdanienė uses her own photographs of her face and her body. She conceptualizes the look at herself in her textile works with joy and pain, between laughter and tears.

Jonikė's work *Textile and I* (2001) has characteristics of a self-portrait. Yet it is not a "classical" self-portrait. It may seem like the simplest photograph of some body part. The artist uses photographs of her body to emphasise the unpredictability of feminine existence and her varied roles in reality.

The apron as attribute is the discovery of an original technique in the hands of textile artist Almyra Weigel (Bartkevičiūtė). It has become the main reference point in her reflections on the subject of femininity. The artist recreates the sensibility of a woman as seen by the eyes of the Other. She knows that the Other is interested only in the shell, but does not blame him. Elegantly, nonobtrusively and gently, she creates textile novellas about the roles of contemporary women (*From the Apron Series: Brides, Hairdressers, and Housewives*).

Women and Cars

Sonja Delaunay-Terk, who painted a car in squares at the beginning of the twentieth century. in Paris, could not even imagine that at the beginning of the twenty-first century in Lithuania Severija Inčirauskaitė-Kriaunevičienė would embroider the surfaces of cars with flower patterns (*Path Strewn with Roses*, 2007). Car parts embroidered in cross-stitches is a textile object conveying multiple meanings. At first sight it seems a bit frivolous. Yet after further consideration, the bouquet of associations and allusions and clashes becomes socially significant.

The visual structure of Monika Žalţauskaitės-Grašienė's *Skin Paintings* (2007) was created through digital photography and a digital weaving loom. Although she works with the most up-to-date technology, the artist thinks about the archaic func-

tion of fabric: to envelop, to protect, and to warm the body. She says, "A woven fabric is like a skin one cannot live without. It is related to various sensations and feelings."[4] Žaltauskaitė-Grašienė touches on the passage of time with her razor-sharp perception.

Sloughing Her Own Body

These textile artists weave classical tapestries, use digital jacquard and traditional folk weaving techniques and perfect wool felting and embroidery on silk, as well as various techniques of dying and thermal forming of fabrics they have developed and mastered. Various other materials are also used: silicone and glass, metal and plastic, coffee and bread, fur and human hair, and, finally, fruit peels and smoked pig skin. Lithuanian textile is sloughing its own body created from weft and warp, and becoming simply contemporary art. In works by L. Jonikė, Loreta Švaikauskienė, Žydrė Ridulytė, and Jolanta Šmidtienė, the perception of the possibilities of textile materials is so strong that the surfaces of their works, the transparency, structures and textures, become purified and independent elements of their artistic mirage.

Abstract illusory images obey Šmidtienė's will. Over many years she has perfected her original technique and created an aesthetic construction for her almost impalpable textiles. Constructive knowledge crossed with personal vision in Šmidtienė's works has become the embodiment of a fantastic mirage.

Instead of Conclusions

Thanks to a lucky accident, there are two textile centers in Lithuania: the Textile Department of the Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts and the Textile Department of the Academy's branch at the Kaunas Art Institute. Kaunas is an old center of the textile industry. During the Soviet period, nobody doubted that it was in Kaunas where artists had to be trained. However, the hum of the looms of the Soviet industry died one day. In 1996,

[4] "Monika Žaltauskaitė-Grašienė". *Kauno meno bienalė. Kaunas Art Biennial Textile 07*, eds. V. Vitkienė, E. Carroll, V. Gelūnienė. Kaunas: Kauno dailininkų paramos fondas, 2007, 262.

Oržekauskienė was appointed the head of the Textile Department of the Kaunas Art Institute. In 1997, the first international biennial Textile97 took place in Kaunas. In 2000, the Textile Artists' Guild was founded, the only specifically textile art gallery in Lithuania until 2008. "Kaunas is the new meeting place in Europe for textile artists of the world to meet." These are the words of the leader of the European Textile Network, Beatrijs Sterk.

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In 1997, at the fifth Kyoto Biennial International Textile Competition, Lina Jonikė won the Excellence Award. In 1997, F. Jakubauskas won the Grand Prize at the Pittsburgh International Tapestry Exhibition. Aušra Kleizaitė received the UNESCO-Aschberg Fund stipend in 2003–2004. In 2003, Jolanta Šmidtienė won a Special Sliperi Roke Prize at the Mini Textile Exhibition in the USA, and in 2005 she earned the Special Ancor Award from the Embroiderers Guild, UK, and became a member. In 2004, Laima Oržekauskienė received the Outstanding Honorable Award of International Fiber Art at the Shanghai Biennial. At the same biennial, Violeta Laužonytė won Outstanding Honorable Mention. In 2004, Lina Jonikė won a medal of the Polish Artists' Union in the Eleventh Lodz Triennial. Loreta Švaikauskienė earned a Special Jury Prize and the medal of the Lodz Muzeum at the Twelfth Lodz Triennial in 2007. In 2003 and 2005, Eglė Ganda Bogdanienė won special jury prizes at the Kaunas Textile Biennial. Almyra Weigel (Bartkevičiūtė) won the Merit Prize in the 2007 Riga Textile Triennial. In 2007, Inga Likšaitė won the Grand Prize at the Pfaff Art Embroidery Challenge 07 Exhibition in London and became an Excellence Award winner at the Kaunas Art Biennial Textile 07. In 2008, she also took First Prize at the Art of the Stitch International Exhibition in Birmingham, UK.

Translated by Agnė Narušytė

Photo from www.lithuanianart.org.

Feliksas Jokubauskas. *Blue Sky, Black Sky*. Wool, silk, synthetic fiber, 130 x 390 cm, 2002.

Photo by Arūnas Baltėnas

Lina Jonikė. *Textile and I* (detail). Photo image, plastic, embroidery, cotton threads, 2001.

Photo by Rasa Andriušytė-Žukienė

Violeta Laužonytė, *Route*. Tapestry. Weaving and embroidery in wool and synthetics, 155 x 180 cm, 2006.

Lina Jonikė. *Textile and I* (detail). Photo image, plastic, embroidery, cotton thread, 58 x 76 x 2 cm, 2001.

Photo by Oleg Bovsic

Almyra Bartkevičiūtė-Weigel. *Aprons*. Sugar, glue, hair, coffee, salt, spices, 80 x 37 x 20 cm, 2005.

Photo by Rasa Andriušytė-Žukienė

Severija Inčirauskaitė-Kriaunevičienė. *Rose-covered path.* Embroidery, metal, 2007.

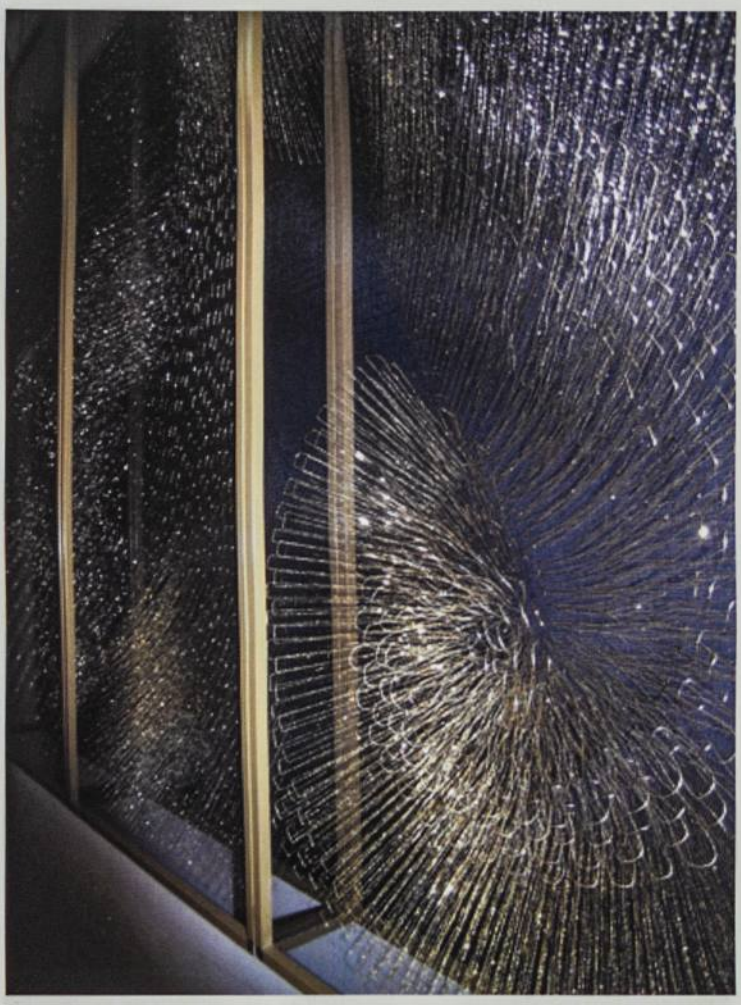

Photo by R. Penkauskas

Jolanta Šmidtienė. *Radiance*. Spatial embroidery, metal frame, tulle, silk, metallic thread, 40 x 110 x 8 cm, 2007.

The Idea of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the Works of Gintaras Beresnevičius

VIRGINIJUS SAVUKYNAS

One of the most original and least expected ideas to emerge recently is that advanced by Gintaras Beresnevičius of reviving the Lithuanian empire and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

The germ of this idea appeared in his book of journalistic essays, *On the Blades of Time*, and it reached full development in his booklet *The Making of Empire. A Sketch of Lithuanian Ideology.* Later on, he developed his thoughts in various journalistic writings.

Naturally, these ideas were not received with unanimous cheers of "Bravo." In narrow intellectual circles, especially academic ones, these books were frequently labeled charlatanism. However, among broader groups of readers – journalists and public relations, marketing, and advertising professionals – these ideas became hugely popular. This alone is good reason to take a closer look at what Beresnevičius wanted to communicate and managed to communicate in these writings. Ultimately an answer needs to be provided to the question of why there was such a radical divergence of opinion between academic and – for lack of a better term – general readers. This article will show that, as with myths, there are two ways to go about reading Beresnevičius's journalistic texts: a casual perusal reveals an illogical and chaotic narrative, but an examination of their deeper structures allows us to grasp their principal message.

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And it is here that the hostility of academic circles probably lurks. This, however, also explains the texts' popularity with a broader audience. The same is true of myths, which one must know how to decipher if one wants to understand them and extrapolate their meanings. However, at the level of intuitive understanding, the trappings of academic discourse aren't required in order to grasp those meanings.

Mythologies in the Modern World

First and foremost, Beresnevičius was a scholar of religion and mythology. His basic theoretical approach was based on Rudolf Otto's conception of holiness as well as Mircea Eliade's later researches into mythology. Incidentally, Eliade not only studied the various mythologies of the ancient world, but also examined the extent and the manner in which the remnants of that mythological world influence our thought and culture today (contemporary popular culture abounds with mythologies).

This vein can be recognized in the works of Beresnevičius. In an effort to explain the present, he very frequently casts his gaze on mythology. In explaining the Soviet cliché of the "stagnant West," he makes use of mythological imagery, according to which, in both the Slavic and Baltic mythologies, the west was connected to waters, swamps, and hell. (In old Lithuanian writings, the Christian hell was known as the flood.) One could provide many such examples.

But there is another aspect worth looking at. Modern mythologies were a topic of discussion with Roland Barthes – that is to say, myths that operate in our own time, but without a sacral dimension. To gain a better understanding of contemporary reality, the concept of mythology is used today in political as well as in marketing research.

Beresnevičius also addressed these modern mythologies. "History itself is capable of influencing the present when it is mythologized and ideologized, when it is presented as a set of worthy precedents (history as a teacher of life)", he wrote.

Myths serve many purposes, but they are most needed in nation building. After all, a nation is one big myth about the ties

that bind a community of people together. Why should I feel a sense of commonality with another individual living somewhere else, such as Raseiniai? Only because we are Lithuanians? And who are Lithuanians? The speakers of the Lithuanian language? But before Jonas Jablonskis's standardized form of Lithuanian based on the Suvalkian (Sudovian) dialect became the normative language, the dialects of the Žemaičiai (Samogitians) and, let's say, the Dzūkai (Dainavians) were fairly different. And this partly artificial construct – the Standard Lithuanian language that we use today – has significantly weakened these other dialects.

During the nineteenth century, the great heralds of our revival were essentially involved in creating such myths. They created narratives about the praiseworthy Lithuanian nation; narratives which made us Lithuanians.

And these were powerful myths. It was under their sway that the Lithuanian state was founded in 1918, and then built up over the ensuing two decades of independence. According to Beresnevičius:

> From 1918 until 1940, Lithuania's historical precedence was clearly oriented towards the era of the Grand Dukes that had been accentuated by Simonas Daukantas. And many Lithuanians at the end of World War II took to the forests and became partisan fighters under the influence of those myths. It was they – Daukantas, Basanavičius, Kudirka and others – who created the powerful narratives that have governed our society for over one hundred years. And it is utterly unimportant that these figures were viewed as eccentrics and social misfits in their own day: Jonas Basanavičius suffered from psychiatric illnesses; Kudirka was an odd provincial doctor. To their contemporaries they were not charismatic personalities. They only became so later on – in memoirs, in the works of writers, and in school textbooks. They were somewhat deified by the nation they created.

Ultimately, the Sąjūdis movement as well as the drive to secede from the Soviet empire were based on the myths created by those same nineteenth-century figures. Beresnevičius specified that interwar Lithuania appealed to Sąjūdis-era Lithuania. But after independence was achieved that myth

collapsed, and this was why an unexpected political force took the 1992 elections, the Democratic Labor Party of Lithuania, a new incarnation of the former Lithuanian Communist Party. Further on in his work, Gintaras Beresnevičius refers to the mythology of cells – that is, to the way social groups maintain their own mythologies, which collide with one another: "So, contemporary Lithuanian mythology is fleshed out in a very interesting way: programmed into it is a total and constant misunderstanding between tribes and other mythological groups, an ideological 'war of all against all' with the elimination of individual freedom."

So, in a certain sense, we can say that we have been visited by a crisis in national mythology. Do we have myths that we believe in today? It would seem none remain.

Does the myth of "Lithuania the land of forests," so beautifully described in song and verse by Daukantas, Maironis, and Baranauskas, have all that much to say to us? Nothing, because a forest is now a commodity that sells well in the West. And if it fronts onto a lake, then it's a good idea to privatize it. True, there's always the myth of Vytautas Magnus, but we're not quite sure where to put it now. After all, we aren't going to drive our horses all the way to the Black Sea for watering. Furthermore, this myth is hardly suitable for a nation that seeks greater integration into Europe. The vector of this myth actually points in the opposite direction – to the East.

We don't believe in the figure of the *Rūpintojėlis* or Worried Christ that's been foisted upon us as the best representation of our character. As the poet Jonas Aistis once said, that's just how it is – we are worriers, lamenters, and sufferers. Suffering is something that the nineteenth-century Romantics would probably have rendered sublime and used to enhance creativity. In its day, this myth was perhaps viable (even if sacriligious – a symbol of Christianity was nationalised and declared to fit the Lithuanian character. Poets have never lacked for insolence). Now this myth hinders us – it cramps oür actions, constrains us, and prevents us from forging ahead.

Incidentally, forty years ago, Algirdas Julius Greimas also spoke about myths and ideologies:

> If we accept the thesis that no truth can ever be uttered, that it is impossible to shake off myths, that ideology is stuck to us, that it is something that is imperative for our being human, then this leaves open only one path – as much for the individual as for the social person – the problematic of consciously created myths and ideologies. We can and must seek out ways to demystify ideologies, but only on the condition that we can and must come up with new ideologies that permit people and nations to get on with the task of living.

And it is precisely in this context that Beresnevičius's contribution is unfurled: he not only employs mythological material in explaining the archetypes that govern contemporary Lithuanian consciousness, and he not only speaks of modern mythologies and the crisis they have encountered, but he creates a mythology, or one might say a myth, that might confer some sense on the existence of today's Lithuanian nation.

The Bricolage Effect

In his analysis of mythologies, Claude Lévi-Strauss advanced the term *bricolage*. He explained the differences between so-called mythical thought and "our own" rational thought. According to this French anthropologist, rational thought proceeds from one structure to another. Mythical thought, meanwhile, creates structures from the "things" at hand: a river, a road, a rabbit, and so forth. In other words, mythical thought joins them together by exploiting differences in various taxonomies. This is how myths are born. And this manner of thought is no worse than any other – it readily finds solutions for the challenges placed before it. However, it is still a different type of thought.

Lévi-Strauss explains as follows:

> In addition, there still exists in our midst a type of activity thanks to which at a technical level we can quite clearly imagine that which might have become science at the speculative level, which I would tend to refer to as 'primordial' more than primitive. In France, this activity is called *bricolage*. Earlier, the word 'bricoler'

> was used in speaking of a game with a ball or billiards, about hunting or horseback riding, but it always signified an unanticipated movement, for example, a rebounding ball, a lost dog or horse that strays from the straight path to avoid an obstacle. In our day, a bricoleur is a person who uses their hands to do things themselves and, differently from tradespeople (specialists), who employs an array of frequently arbitrary techniques. It is common for mythical thought to express itself in manners that are heteroclite – the numbers of these, as large as they are, are nonetheless limited.

Beresnevičius is precisely this type of *bricoleur*. He uses terminology that was long ago dismissed by scholars in the fields of social and humanitarian studies. He writes about the "character of a nation" (What is that? It was still within the bounds of propriety to use such language at the beginning of the twentieth century, but after Nazism it became politically incorrect.) And he writes about some sorts of in-born qualities of Lithuanians. No serious scholar would ever use such concepts. And Beresnevičius knows this, yet he still dissects our past using these concepts, and afterwards boldly sketches his visions for the future.

Paradoxically, Beresnevičius intertwines ancient myths about our glorious past with new visions for the future. We're used to this – those who look to the past want to take refuge in it, scaring everyone with the dangers of denationalization and the loss of spirituality. But here everything gets turned on its head. Beresnevičius delves ever deeper into the past to sketch the widest possible vistas for the future. And so he essentially uses the *bricolage* effect (incidentally, he may have done so consciously because, beyond any doubt, he was very well acquainted with this idea of Lévi-Strauss's). He created myths, but rather than using the figures of the bear, the forest, and the rabbit, he used what the intellectual has at hand – psychoanalysis, religious scholarship, concepts drawn from political science – and he weaves them together like a *bricoleur*, and by doing so he provokes horror among some tradespeople. However, recalling the words of Lévi-Strauss, this manner is no better and no worse than any other – it is simply different.

Beresnevičius's journalistic texts are also different in the same way: he takes various theories and facts and uses them to create a structure, a new myth that outlines the trajectory of our nation. Beresnevičius breaks down our understanding of long-held stereotypes. He doesn't demystify them; he replaces them with new ones. In the weekly *Panorama*, Antanas Kulakauskas writes:

> For the time being, it is perhaps still difficult to believe that the legacy of Gintaras Beresnevičius for Lithuania's historical development within Europe and the world could end up carrying no less weight, perhaps even more, than the work of Simonas Daukantas in the nineteenth century.

Why is this so hard to believe?

Essentially, Beresnevičius did what Simonas Daukantas did at the end of the nineteenth century. Daukantas the historian also turned then-current stereotypes on their head. By his time, the stereotype of Lithuania the land of forests was already in play. And for Europeans it carried associations with barbarity.

Daukantas turned the forest into a symbol of Lithuania's greatness. This inversion proved quite convincing, because the metaphor was later taken up by Baranauskas, Maironis, and many other cultural figures. From days of old, the Poles' preferred nickname for Lithuanians was *Batviniai* (beets or beet-leaves). This widely used nickname was explained by Daukantas as follows: during military campaigns, Lithuanians ate fermented beet soup, and it sufficed for them because they were strong men.

New interpretations along the same lines laid the foundations for the Lithuanian nation that was being constructed at the time. Beresnevičius takes a similar approach. He too advances new conceptions and new models for national practices.

Greimas once wrote that we Lithuanians need new myths. Demythologizing is a very important undertaking. It would be, however, very cruel to leave people with no myths. The myths of nineteenth century nationalism – Vytautas Magnus, the ancient pedigree and beauty of the Lithuanian language, gold-

plaited Lithuanian girls – were demythologized long ago. In other words, we need new sources of identity and new myths to undergird them. But no one put forward any new myths. The first to do so was Gintaras Beresnevičius.

The idea of reviving the region of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, in my view, would help resolve many issues of Lithuanian identity. Lithuanians would be able to think about and contextualize themselves and their identity not in country-less Europe, which we will never be able to get a hold of no matter how hard we try, but in a smaller and historically cozier region. Second, the GDL epoch could become the "golden age" for contemporary Lithuanians, replacing the Soviet "paradise lost."

Without a doubt, at the present time this vision comes across as utopian. But let's think more carefully: at least a part of society (let it be a segment of the elite) is fired up by these ideas.

Historians long ago started writing and saying that the legacy of the Grand Duchy was not written in the Lithuanian language only. We are beginning to accept as part of our own legacy works that were written in other languages, and the creative output of other nations that lived under the Grand Duchy has appeared in our line of sight.

This desire to break out of the cultural frame delineated by the Lithuanian language can be observed beyond the workshops of historians. In his books and articles, Beresnevičius referred to the Grand Duchy as a potential space for action for Lithuania. And the popularity of his works demonstrates that people like his ideas.

Therefore, Lithuanians are longing for other identities and spaces, different from the ones set out by the nineteenth century builders of Lithuanian identity. And it's natural that we balance ourselves against the legacy of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania – after all, what else is there for us to balance ourselves against?

And this nostalgia is not a mere coincidence. It is bound up with the expansion of the European Union.

Obviously, Europe is too big and too diverse for it to be everyone's "own element" in an identical way. (Let's not count the Cold War period, when the EU was conceived as a counterweight to the Soviet Union.)

However, we cannot bolt ourselves inside the confines of a national state. The world is globalizing and the horizons of our lives have been broadening for some time now. This is why the old multicultural state constructs in which several nations got along together are becoming relevant again. We are not saying that the Grand Duchy needs to be restored. We are speaking about reviving and about acting within a certain region.

Such regions can make sense of our present endeavours and confer a meaningful direction on them. And so, just as the course of action in the nineteenth and at the start of the twentieth centuries was outlined against the backdrop of the achievements of Lithuania's pagan dukes, today a no less effective compass bearing could be the multicultural Grand Duchy of Lithuania of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

It is very probable that an expanding and unifying Europe will be very grateful for such regional revivals based on historical traditions. And this will appeal to more and more people, because those historical constructs in which different peoples and cultures got along with each other fit perfectly with the migration patterns of a world that is becoming ever more speckled. Also, as the walls come down, there is little attraction in living under the worn-out models proffered by nationalism. And so, old historical constructs confer a sense of historicity on new forms. Therefore, it is very possible that we are currently living through the reinvention and construction of a new region. Typologically similar processes occurred in the nineteenth century when "imagined communities" – nations – were constructed. To repeat, in this case we are speaking only of the construction of a new region; this process will not conclude with the emergence of a new state (because we know that the result of nationalism is the emergence of nation-states.) However, in this case what is important is the way meaning is conferred upon spaces under cultural formation, ones which

become "our own element" and which for others are "not their own element."

Of course, this is quite possibly a utopian project. But all projects seem utopian at the outset. After all, who at the beginning of the nineteenth century could have imagined a Lithuanian state? The educated "elites" of that time scoffed at individuals who expressed an interest in Lithuanian antiquity. And for most people, the "Lithuano-maniacs" came across as odd ducks out on the fringes. Yet it was precisely these "marginals" who created the modern Lithuanian nation and the contemporary Lithuanian state.

A reading of Gintaras Beresnevičius's essays against this context doesn't make his writings appear as "an anthology of nonsense"– just the opposite: they are an effort to mold a modern Lithuanian mythology that responds to the challenges of our global world. This is why it is not surprising that his ideas have captured the imagination of so many.

Translated by Darius James Ross

ERRATA

Lituanus, Volume 56:4 (2010)

The title for the poem by Rimas Užgiris̈ (p. 70) is **Return to Sender**. We apologize for the omission.

The author's name Dieckman (p. 96) should be **Dieckmann**.

The Disappearance of Wooden Houses in Vilnius and Baltimore

CATHERINE BROWN & RUGILĖ BALKAITĖ

At the recent height of redevelopment in the city of Vilnius, wooden houses on the right bank of the Neris River were torched to force owners to sell to developers of the city's new downtown, Šnipiškės. While preservation regulations are no match for criminal arson, the tragic event highlights an urgent need for successful protection policies and programs to ensure that these culturally significant resources are retained for posterity. There are five historical suburbs in Vilnius where wooden architecture dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is still prevalent today. Many wooden homes exist today due to the lack of development pressure and investment capital in Soviet times, which resulted in what can be termed "preservation by neglect," where homes and districts did not undergo extensive changes. While new independence-era city development has resulted in many positive developments, it is putting pressure on these vernacular structures, which are vanishing on a large scale, not only as a result of arson and neglect,

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but also as prescribed by adopted plans for city redevelopment. How and why it is important to preserve this kind of immovable cultural heritage can be explored by looking at the most unique district of wooden houses in the city of Vilnius: Žvėrynas.

In contrast to the number of wooden homes still in existence in Žvėrynas, wooden houses in Baltimore are now an endangered cultural resource. Wooden row houses were once a majority in the city landscape, a testament to the success of the shipping industry, which brought many families to settle in the east Baltimore neighborhood of Fell's Point. With the threat of fires in the late eighteenth century, many of the hundreds of original wooden row houses in Baltimore were covered in brick. Changes in city building codes prevented the construction of new wood frame homes in favor of masonry structures, and many homes were faced in brick to reduce insurance costs.[1] Today, the biggest threats to the preservation of Baltimore's wooden houses are weather conditions, like flood, rain, snow or wind, followed by termites and fires.[2]

Wooden houses in both Vilnius and Baltimore face similar challenges to long-term preservation. Small floor plans don't meet the needs of modern families. Maintenance is cost prohibitive in comparison to more energy efficient homes. In addition, new construction threatens to replace wooden houses. Baltimore City Planner Eddie Leon notes that making an "eighteenth-century living [space] work with twenty-first century necessities" is problematic when considering electrical, plumbing, and handicap access requirements, energy efficiency, HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning), and even furnishings.[3] In both cities, adapting historic wooden houses is a challenge, and maintenance can be cost prohibitive, which in many cases leads to neglect. Through a comparison of their histories and regulatory policies, the effectiveness of tools and

1 Patterson, "Early Wooden Houses in Fell's Point, Baltimore, MD."
2 Interview with Eddie Leon, Baltimore City Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation, June 17, 2009.
3 Ibid.

programs in each city can be highlighted and recommendations made for how wooden houses can be protected and preserved.

Žvėrynas, Vilnius

The Žvėrynas neighborhood has remained an example of the particular lifestyle of Vilnius country dwellers and a recreational area for the highest social classes, offering relaxing getaways from the city amidst a harmonious intersection of people, architecture and nature.[4] Žvėrynas is isolated by the Neris River, which bends around the southern edge of the neighborhood and has remained intact as a natural boundary since the beginning of the nineteenth century. At first, the land belonged to the Radziwill family, who used the area for recreational hunting. Private ownership was later passed to the Wittgenstein family in 1825. Prince Wittgenstein organized hunting excursions for noblemen and built the guesthouse known as The Residence. At that time, it was the only structure in the western part of Žvėrynas along the sharp bank of the river, and the southern part remained overgrown with forests.[5] In 1901, the land was incorporated into the city, and in the next year, streets were laid out on a grid plan. The Wittgensteins then sold Žvėrynas to the businessman Vasilij Martinson, who in turn subdivided the land and sold individual tracts to city residents. Similar to other suburbs, beautiful, cozy wooden cottages were constructed and the district quickly became an exclusive leisure and residential district.[6]

Along with their history as a rural area absorbed by the city, the most valuable part of these wood houses is their specific architectural features. In the nineteenth century, builders adorned these country and summer homes with traditional crosscut ornamentation or cut-out patterns, also known as gingerbread, on window hood moldings, cornices, gables and

4 Baliulytė, "Vilniaus miesto Žvėryno rajono istoriniai tyrimai "
5 Plašek, "Medinė architektūra" (Wooden architecture), 91.
6 Laučkaitė, "Užmirštas medinis Vilnius."

Poškos St. 61 *Photo www.bernardinai.lt*

porch features. This method of detailing wood buildings is also characteristic of traditional Russian architecture of that time.[7]

After World War I, Poland annexed Vilnius, and accordingly, a specific Polish style influenced architecture in Vilnius. Some small manor houses patterned after those from the Polish city of Zakopane remain from this period as examples of the Polish cultural traditions, found in Lithuania only in the Vilnius region.[8] Typical buildings reflecting these Polish traditions have hipped roofs and strict symmetrical facades; their main entrance is emboldened with columns and pediments, and accented in the Zakopane Style with a daisy pattern decoration.[9] There are also some influences from Art Nouveau and the Swiss Style, borrowed from the wooden mountain dwellings called chalets. Characteristic of chalet structure, the walls were not built from notched logs, but with framing beams faced with horizontal boards. This structure provided not only an innovative, simple and inexpensive method of construction, but also a new aesthetic: light, open spaces with colorful verandas, log-

7 Ibid.

8 Rymkevičiūtė, "Medinis Vilniaus paveldas" (The wooden heritage of Vilnius).

9 Plašek, "Medinė architektūra," 93.

gias, and balconies. Houses also featured double hipped roofs, dentils, gingerbread and numerous trim and crosscut ornaments specific to the Swiss Style.[10]

The wooden houses of Žvėrynas offer significant architectural diversity; the surviving buildings dating from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were influenced by the changing political climate. Their locations also reveal their varied historic uses, where some houses were built closer to natural areas like forests or fields as hunting lodges, while others were situated to fulfill their manorial ambitions. Properties and their structures ranged from the simple to the luxurious, from the summer homes of rich and noble officials to the cottages of peasants in adjacent villages. Therefore, the historical suburb of Žvėrynas accurately reflects the varied cultural and socioeconomic identities of the Vilnius countryside.

Zakopane-style house *Photo by R. Balkaitė*

Despite the diversity, uniqueness and global historic significance of the wooden architecture of Žvėrynas, this heritage is still disappearing. The successful preservation of these structures faces many threats:

- First and foremost, we are now living in a society with the fundamental notion that "time (and space) is money." Nerijus Milerius, a well-known Lithuanian philosopher, recalls that radical, rough additions to buildings or even minimal expansions in floor area, though seemingly insignificant, substantially raised property values, which are increasingly important in the new free-market economy.[11] Most owners

[10] Surgailis, *Medinis Vilnius (Wooden Vilnius)*, 9.

[11] Interview with Nerijus Milerius, Associate Professor, Philosophy Department, Vilnius University, May 20, 2009.

seek to modify and enlarge the residential area of the existing house to increase its capacity. The destruction of wooden architectural heritage was exacerbated by the invasion of capital during the recent construction boom, when owners strategically fought for financially attractive locations while negatively impacting the integrity of surrounding historic buildings and landscapes.

Lenktoji St. *Photo by C. Brown*

❖ In the district of Žvėrynas after World War II, many low-income people settled in wooden buildings because at that time they lacked modern comforts and, therefore, provided the cheapest housing, which is still the case. Nowadays most owners of wooden buildings do not have sufficient financial resources to maintain their homes, which are simply left to natural loss, also known as "demolition by neglect." On the other hand, this means they haven't been extensively altered,

which might be thought of as preservation by neglect as well.

- There are, however, a few advocates who want to move into and save wooden houses by implementing only minimal physical changes, but they are discouraged from doing so because they lack faith in the current policies for approving and distributing financial incentives. Most importantly, there is no clear hierarchy of values established for preserving wooden house components. There are no details specified to guide preservation priorities. The approach that ensures the preservation of everything with only limited funds, has demonstrated that over the long-term nothing gets done. Legislation and bureaucratic systems such as those created to coordinate permit approvals fully frustrate the intentions and willingness of even wealthy owners of wood buildings who want to modify and adapt their homes to modern needs. Clear guidelines must be adopted to coax modernization towards a balance between preserving the historic integrity of the building and allowing some flexibility, rather than blindly demanding that every detail be retained. "There is no common financial and legal policy for wooden architectural preservation," said Albinas Kuncevičius, archaeologist, the former head of the Cultural Heritage Department. Practice shows that even government-approved programs do not have specific allocated funding. Programs draw attention to the problem, but don't provide the tools to address the issues.[12]

- According to Vitas Karčiauskas, the head of the Cultural Heritage Division of the City of Vilnius, the disfigurement of historic properties can be related to a popular misunderstanding about the value of preserving objects of cultural heritage. Buildings should be preserved as they are, with only small changes. That there is no respect for a building's integrity, is demonstrated by the improvement of living con-

[12] Interview with Albinas Kuncevičius, Department of Culture Heritage, Vilnius University, June 12, 2008.

ditions through a wide range of unqualified and historically insensitive repairs.[13]

- The director of the Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency, Gediminas Rutkauskas, claims that one of the cornerstones of the destruction of wooden houses is the lack of responsibility for private home maintenance and its connection to land ownership.[14] After Lithuanian independence in 1990, the idea that no one has the right to interfere in one's private affairs was established in the backlash against Soviet-era top-down controls. Today, the right of property ownership is absolute, and each owner determines the maintenance needs and plans for his or her own property. Therefore, the private interests of property owners take precedent over and are often in opposition to retaining publicly recognized cultural values.

- Lastly, wooden houses are also influenced, like other structures around the city, by a now ingrained culture of government responsibility for housing maintenance. After over half a century of Soviet rule, these attitudes are difficult to change, especially for residents on fixed incomes or older residents on government assistance.

Legal Protections and Programs in Žvėrynas

Amidst the controversy over the wooden houses of Žvėrynas, the responsibility for and authority over their architectural significance and value should be assumed by not only art historians and architects, but also cultural heritage professionals. It is important to note that, currently, 108 of the 439 wooden buildings in Žvėrynas are entered on the List of Cultural Property, providing a record of a significant urban ensemble, and the listing of individual buildings is ongoing.[15]

According to a 1990 survey by the Vilnius Gediminas Technical University and Restoration Institute, more than 80 percent

[13] Vitanauskienė, "Vilniuje klesti nelegalios statybos" (Illegal construction is flourishing in Vilnius).

[14] Interview with Gediminas Rutkauskas, Director, Old Town Renewal Agency, July 4, 2009.

[15] Rymkevičiūtė, "Medinis Vilniaus paveldas."

Vytauto St. 63 renovation project, before (above) and after (below), from the Implementation Program for the Wooden Architecture Heritage Strategy.

Photos by R. Balkaitė

of protected buildings are in particularly poor condition and need urgent repair.[16] Now, almost twenty years later, the status of these buildings has not improved, but worsened. To stop the loss of this architectural heritage, the Lithuanian Cultural Heritage Commission[17] issued a decision in 2002 on "Lithuanian Wooden Cultural Heritage"[18] and adopted a resolution in 2006 to preserve wooden houses.[19] That same year, the City of Vil-

[16] Vanagas J., "Žvėryno rajono urbanistinės raidos," p. 6.

[17] The Cultural Heritage Commission is the expert on state policies on cultural heritage and implementation issues for Parliament, the president of the republic and the government.

[18] Decision Nr.88 was announced on Sept. 13, 2002.

[19] On April 27-28, 2006, a scientific-practical conference on "Lithuanian Wooden Heritage" was held at the Lithuanian Folk Museum in Rumšiškės and a resolution was signed.

nius published a decision entitled Toward a Program for the Implementation of the Wooden Architecture Heritage Strategy"(2006).[20] This program establishes a high priority for the protection of Vilnius wood buildings and their complexes (districts) in order to triage the preservation of a unique heritage. Under this program, in 2008 two wooden buildings, Traidenio St. 35 and Pušų St. 16, were renovated and incorporated into the Immovable Cultural Heritage List. Both houses were restored in cooperation with financial preservation funds from the City of Vilnius and a 50 percent contribution from the owner.[21]

The foundation of the Program for the Implementation of the Wooden Architecture Heritage Strategy and its mechanism of formation started in 2005, when the first decision to provide financial preservation incentives was amended to the Immovable Cultural Heritage Law.[22] In accordance with this amendment, the owner completes restoration, repair, or adaptive reuse in accordance with preservation requirements. The owner may then apply to the Cultural Heritage Department or the local municipality for compensation for the cost of the completed work. In accordance with legal requirements, all work must meet official standards (estimates, projects, planning conditions), although the official knows that in reality work is completed by "economic means," the cheapest bid.[23] Also, because rehab work was partially paid for with public money from the city budget, the owners are required to sign a Security Agreement to give the public access to view the completed work. Consequently, owners who don't want to give public or tourist access to their private space cannot apply for compensation. Finally, since the Lithuanian government has an evolving finan-

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[20] Vilniaus miesto tarybos sprendimas Nr. 1-1117.

[21] Medinės architektūros išsaugojimo programa (The wood architecture preservation program).

[22] Lietuvos Respublikos nekilnojamojo kultūros paveldo apsaugos įstatymo.

[23] Pociūtė, "Paveldosauginikai ir visuomenė" (Historic preservationists and the public).

cial profile, guarantees for the effective functioning of the compensation program are not created through tax incentives, but through the availability of government funding. Therefore, there is no guarantee that projects fulfilling program requirements will be truly compensated. The program, through flaws in its design, seeks to reduce government compensation rather than create a policy to encourage restoration of historic wooden houses. There is no coherent legislative framework for the preservation of wooden houses in Žvėrynas on a comprehensive scale, only isolated attempts not adequately promoted by the financial sector or state policy. With an increasingly grim outlook for success in future preservation and a dwindling number of existing wooden houses, it is necessary for preservationists and government agencies to adopt new solutions, using targeted methods and proven ideas from other cities, like Baltimore.

Fell's Point, Baltimore

Wooden houses in Baltimore's Fell's Point neighborhood are significantly older than those in Žvėrynas and much fewer in number. Baltimore, an American port on the Chesapeake Bay, was established in 1729 and had expanded eastward by 1737 to where William Fell owned over 180 acres of land.[24] The Fell lots were annexed to Baltimore in 1773, creating what is known today as the Fell's Point Neighborhood.[25] This historic neighborhood benefits from impressive waterfront views and a prosperous maritime history that has attracted many residents over many years.

Today, the Fell's Point street grid, first laid out in the eighteenth century, remains intact. The original houses range from one and a half to three and a half stories, although most were two and a half-story residences constructed for seamen, ship's carpenters, and sail-makers. The larger three and a half-story dwellings housed more prosperous shipyard owners, merchants, and sea captains. The earliest houses in the area fea-

[24] Shivers & Hayward. *The Architecture of Baltimore*, 4.
[25] Ibid.

tured wide, beaded clapboards.[26] As the area prospered from expanding commerce and industry, houses in the neighborhood were renovated and faced in brick and the gambrel roof was often lifted to create a full second or third story.[27] These original mid-eighteenth-century wooden houses were the most modest homes in the city. Typical wood homes were twelve to fourteen feet wide, one room deep and only two bays wide, usually with one dormer in the roof, but some wooden dwellings were somewhat larger, with taller gambrel roofs and three or four bays. Most of the wooden homes in existence today in Baltimore are found in Fell's Point.

713 Ann Street in Baltimore. Formstone faced homes flank wood clad house.
Photo by W. McMahon

This style of narrow townhouse was common in Philadelphia and London, cities that greatly influenced the design and materials of vernacular buildings in the Baltimore area. In 1798, the tax assessor's records listed 626 houses in Fell's Point, 67 percent of which were wooden. Today, there are only eight clapboard examples remaining, plus a few that have been refaced in brick, stucco, formstone or vinyl siding.[28] Reacting to the devastating 1904 fire that caused mass destruction, Baltimore adopted building standards that included fireproof materials and mechanisms. Building codes helped change the cityscape from mostly wood to brick hous-

26 "National Register Listings in Maryland."
27 Patterson, "Early Wooden Houses."
28 Ibid.

ing. The largest concentration of surviving wooden houses in the city is located in Fell's Point because the new city codes were applied late to this neighborhood.[29]

Fell's Point Preservation Regulations

The preservation of wooden houses in Fell's Point is important not only for aesthetic reasons, but to preserve an understanding of how eighteenth-century shipping industry workers lived. With only a few wooden dwellings known to remain in Fell's Point, it is valuable to look at the policies, designations, regulations, and programs that protect and promote these architectural and cultural resources.

The national preservation program as it exists today in the United States began with the adoption of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) in 1966, which established a partnership between the federal preservation agency, the National Park Service, and State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs). In addition, NHPA created the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, a committee appointed by the President to review federal agency decisions and their impacts on historic properties, and to comment on Section 106 review of federally funded projects.[30] SHPOs carry out federal historic preservation programs and review nominations to the National Register of Historic Places and National Landmarks. They also maintain data on historic properties not yet listed on the National Register and consult with federal agencies during Section 106 review. The State also manages programs whereby a conservation easement that runs with the property, not the owner, restricts alteration of the structure for its life, by requiring review and approval by the SHPO. Easement agreements are often executed by the State and the landowner when State grants are awarded for a specific preservation project, but can also be executed as a gift to the state. There are also Certified Local Governments (CLGs) established at the municipal level to carry out the national preservation program with financial support from federal agencies.

[29] Belfoure & Hayward. *The Baltimore Rowhouse*, 22.
[30] "The National Historic Preservation Program."

At each level of governance, preservation tax credits encourage the rehabilitation of National Register listed or eligible properties and compensate owners for the additional costs of maintaining the historic integrity of their structures. The National Register of Historic Places (NR) is a federal list authorized by the NHPA to create an inventory of significant historic sites across the country and it serves as a litmus test for projects participating in tax credit programs. Work must not be completed before starting the tax credit application process so the SHPOs can comment, before changes are made, on renovation plans prioritizing the preservation of features contributing to the building's historic integrity.

While there are few individual designations for wooden houses in Fell's Point, it is a national, state and local historic district that has over 161 buildings on the National Register.[31] The seventy-six-acre historic district is significant as an eighteenth-century planned residential neighborhood, featuring most of its original town plan, and as a prosperous shipping community, famous for its War of 1812 clipper ships that fended off the British.[32] The Fell's Point National Register Historic District, established in 1969, is a designation that does not impose restrictions on any properties. It does not prevent individual property owners from altering or even demolishing their buildings, and normal city building codes and local housing standards still apply. The National Register Historic District was established to protect Fell's Point from the planned construction of a new highway that would have bisected the historic neighborhood. Because a federal transportation agency was implementing the highway project, Section 106 review was initiated. This review is required under the NHPA to evaluate the impact of federal undertakings on significant cultural resources and to take steps to avoid, reduce or mitigate any adverse effects. The proposed freeway was found to have adverse effects on the historic integrity of the neighborhood and the project was terminated.

[31] "Fell's Point Neighborhood. Live Baltimore."
[32] "Historic Districts in Baltimore City."

Owning a structure contributing to the National Register Historic District allows the property owner to apply for federal rehabilitation tax credits. These credits are issued for approved historic rehabilitations to offset the additional costs associated with preservation work and encourage historic renovations.[33] The federal program offers a tax credit equal to 20 percent of the total cost of rehabilitating income-producing properties. It does not require full restoration, but allows flexibility within the scope of work as long as the historic integrity of the building is maintained.[34] The National Park Service has established a clear set of guidelines for the preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction of historic properties known as the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, which are administered through tax credit programs at all levels of government.[35] The State of Maryland additionally offers a 20 percent tax credit for qualifying capital costs of the rehabilitation of owner-occupied residential or income-producing properties. To encourage large scale projects, the rehabilitation costs for owner-occupied residences must exceed $5,000 in a twenty-four-month period.[36]

In December 2007, Fell's Point became a Baltimore City Historic District, a designation that provides increased protection from inappropriate development and demolition. The most protection a building can have is a local landmarks listing or historic district designation.The City of Baltimore requires that construction permit requests be reviewed by the Commission for Architectural and Historic Preservation, which holds public hearings to determine if a notice to proceed can be issued.[37] To further encourage restoration and rehabilitation of historic properties, Baltimore offers a Property Tax Credit for Historic Restorations and Rehabilitations to Baltimore City Landmarks,

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[33] Ibid.
[34] "National Park Service Incentives."
[35] "The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties."
[36] "Maryland Tax Credits."
[37] "Article 6: Historical and Architectural Preservation."

properties eligible or listed on the National Register, and structures contributing to either a Baltimore City or National Register Historic District when work completed costs more than 25 percent of the property's value. The Baltimore City preservation tax credit is distributed over ten years and is transferable to a new owner for the life of the credit. It applies to all renovations, interior and exterior. The credit is the most comprehensive and generous in the nation, with 100 percent applied to construction costs totaling less than $3.5 million. For construction costs in excess of $3.5 million, 80 percent of tax credits are distributed in the first five taxable years and the percentage rate declines by ten percentage points in each of the remaining five years. The City is able to administer the credit based on the increased taxes gained from a higher property value after rehabilitation.[38]

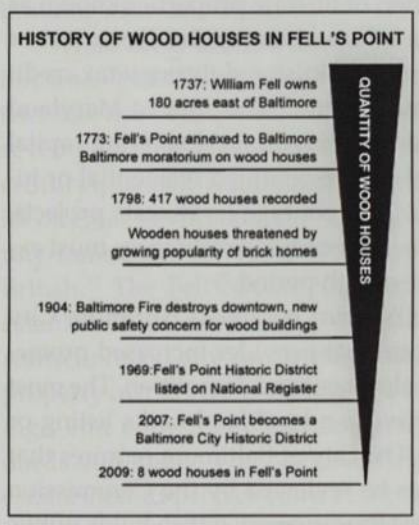

Chart by C. Brown

Significant to increasing the success of preservation efforts, the city's comprehensive approach includes educational and cultural programs to reinforce the significance of historic resources for locals and tourists. Adopted by the State legislature in 1996, the Baltimore City Heritage Area promotes heritage tourism, preserves historic resources, creates business opportunities, and revitalizes neighborhoods, as well as manages collaborative efforts among numerous local heritage preservation organizations.[39] In March 2009, President Obama signed the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, designating the Balti-

[38] "Historic Restoration and Rehabilitation Tax Credit."
[39] "Baltimore City Heritage Area."

more City Heritage Area as a National Heritage Area. The national designation provides access to up to $10 million in federal funding over fifteen years to develop education programs and exhibits and to protect and restore Baltimore's historic sites.[40] Although this program does not directly ensure the preservation of wood houses in Fell's Point, it does promote the significance of the shipping neighborhood in general. Special attention given to the Fell's Point neighborhood, such as new pedestrian way signage, historical society neighborhood tours, and partnerships with local museums, indirectly promotes preserving its historic wooden houses. In addition, there are numerous preservation advocacy groups at national, state, and local levels, such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation Maryland, and Baltimore Heritage, which provide education, advocacy, and resources to preserve historic places.

In reviewing the regulations of the various tiers of historic designations and regulations, it appears that there are clear protections working in Fell's Point. Despite this, many original wooden row houses have been lost. These protections and regulations do not necessarily ensure that wooden houses are not lost to neglect. Left at the will of the free market, it is up to the owners and real estate investors to determine the value of these small old houses in a neighborhood with a competitive real estate market. The best protection available is through a local landmarks listing, but you can see from the example set by the Wolfe Street homes, listed in 1976, how this approach may save the building from demolition, but is wholly inadequate for preventing neglect. The historic wood dwellings in Fell's Point are obsolete by modern housing standards, but are a valuable part of the maritime history of the city. At last resort, when preservation in situ has failed, these structures will at least be well documented by the photos and detailed descriptions included in the National Register listings and state inventories.

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[40] "Baltimore Heritage Area Designated as a National Heritage Area."

600 block of Wolfe Street. The Preservation Society recently purchased these early wooden homes for renovation into a museum and academic research site.

Photo by W. McMahon

Recommendations

Reflecting on the significance of historic wooden houses and the effectiveness of preservation policies in both Fell's Point and Žvėrynas, the following recommendations are offered to better protect, preserve and restore these threatened cultural resources:

- The public must recognize the importance of preserving early wooden houses and take ownership for retaining these cultural resources. In a bottom up approach, outreach to the community could create more support for preservation. It is, after all, in the interest of the public good to maintain these significant historic artifacts to better interpret our local histories. Along with installing signs on site to identify and interpret buildings and their significance, historic tours should be encouraged to reinforce the significance of these dwellings.

- The local preservation authorities must identify a hierarchy of priorities for the preservation of a structure, items of the house from most to least significant, as well as a priority list of the most important structures to save. For limited municipal budgets, the latter is important to best utilize what in many cases is not enough funding to cover everything.
- In Vilnius, laws must be revised to eliminate the public access requirement to qualify for city financial subsidies, following the Baltimore example, where financial incentives for preservation do not mandate public access to private homes.
- In both Fell's Point and Žvėrynas, the historic grid street plan, at the very least, must be maintained along with the forms of lot coverage and building setbacks, organizations of space that create the specific character of each neighborhood.
- Historic preservation is more costly; therefore, if the government mandates specific controls on building repairs and restoration work, the additional expenses above what a regular renovation project might require should be compensated. In Žvėrynas, it is clear that compensation after the completion of work does not successfully encourage restoration. The tax incentive programs available in Fell's Point are more successful, and the easier distribution of compensation instills more confidence in owners to pay high costs up front. These programs, however, have not produced outstanding results in either neighborhood, and local governments must continually revisit potential financing techniques.

The preservation of historic properties can only be as successful as the regulatory tools enacted to protect them from alteration, deterioration, or demolition, and the systems in place to enforce those policies. Community interest must be fostered to engage the public to preserve its cultural history. It is in the public interest to preserve immovable cultural resources, and it is the duty of the government to promote their impor-

tance and significance through educational policies and programs. With the right combination of protections, programs, and financial tools, cultural heritage objects can be maintained for the enjoyment of future generations.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Laučkaitė, Laima. *Art in Vilnius. 1900–1915*. Translated by Diana Barnard, Alfonsas Laučka. Vilnius: Baltos Lankos, 2008, 199 pages, 234 illustrations, ISBN 978-9955-23-183-7.

Laučkaitė, Laima. *Vilniaus dailė XX amžiaus pradžioje*. Vilnius: Baltos Lankos, 2002, 207 pages, 227 illustrations, ISBN 9955-429-71-2.

The book under review is both a stylish art book and a useful scholarly work published in two variants, Lithuanian and English. It is stylish because it is designed artistically, with carefully selected illustrations knowledgeably associated with the text. It is useful since, chapter by chapter, it systematically reveals the art of Vilnius in the early twentieth century.

The book discloses the artistic milieu and the activity of individual artists in the old capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Separate chapters are devoted to Polish art ("The Poles: 1. A Merry-go-round of Exhibitions; 2. Art as a Guardian of the Past"); Lithuanian art ("The Lithuanians: 1. The Activities of the Lithuanian Society of Art; 2. Collisions in the Art of Young Lithuania"); Jewish art ("The Jews"); and Russian art ("The Russians"). Incidentally, the author covers different interrelated issues of the perception of the traditional and modern national dependence of art ("The Duality of Lithuanian Art"), and at the end of the first chapter, she presents endeavours to unite artistic activities against the background of all kinds of national strife and generational discord ("Searches for a National Rapprochement"). This chapter is perhaps the most valuable in the book since integrative endeavours have been rarely dealt with, even by those investigators who were directly concerned with the interdependent knowledge and reconciliation of the inheritors and inhabitants of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, such as Andrzej Romanowski, who describes the relations among literary circles in a step-motherly, albeit

thorough, manner in his book *Młoda Polska Wileńska* (Kraków: Universitas, 1999).

In the second part of her monograph, the author presents the most influential personalities and artistic trends dominating contemporary Vilnius. Without obliterating their segregation and differentiation, without concealing their quarrels and without surrendering her right to evaluate artistic quality, Laima Laučkaitė conveys the picture in its entirety, thus exposing the then dominant cultural syncretism and the idea of integral Art, consciously writing the word with a capital A.

Various often contradictory undertakings create a pictorial panorama produced and united by the *genius loci* of Vilnius. The author warns that this picture is not complete, but this caution is largely redundant. If all details had been registered, the work would be overcrowded and the general picture fuzzy. Meanwhile, the author managed to find a proper vantage point enabling her to observe the situation, not only from the perspective of distance, but also against a wider European background and, wherever necessary, from a Central or East European perspective. Stating that "...today, the junction of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is seen as a period of the rise and renewal of European art" (p. 12), the researcher asks: "Was there a similar 'silver age' here?" Perceiving the breadth of the European background and being well acquainted with its materials, the author does not lose the specific quality of Vilnius; she manages instead to catch it carefully, perusing diaries, correspondence, and even the reports of Russian tsarist censors found in various libraries and archives. It is worth noting that the author successfully exploits these materials, and thus obtains a natural and convincing final result from her research. The enormous amount of work put into this study is also witnessed by the discreetly presented reference notes placed unobtrusively in the margins, but nevertheless worthy of attention.

The work is based on a thorough knowledge of modern comparative principles and methodologies. In her observations, the art historian applies them cautiously and manages to go

into the inner world of the period rather than merely describe it from the outside. One could even state that her vantage point is the suburb of Užupis in Vilnius, from the home of the painter Ferdynand Ruszczyc, whose house stands high on the slope with its magnificent view of Old Town. This view in some way coincides with the panorama of the book *Art in Vilnius 1900-1915*. The painter saw Vilnius as a work of art – asleep and waiting for its awakening and integration into the context of world culture. This vision was seen through the windows of Ruszczyc's salon, in which a group of people ready to serve the cause of Beauty gathered early in the twentieth century. In this milieu, partly cosmopolitan, but nevertheless bursting with love for this particularly beautiful city, there developed a spirit of cooperation, albeit not acceptable to everyone, in the name of the spiritual and aesthetic rebirth of the city. In the book, the discourse is conducted as if from that Užupis hill, at the foot of which today stands the Vilnius Academy of Arts. The culmination is reached in the chapter entitled "Ferdynand Ruszczyc's Artistic Activity: Between Aestheticism and Patriotism." Apart from a quite different chapter on a prominent art patron, "Józef Montwi and the Manifestation of Art Nouveau," this is the only chapter dealing with a single artist rather than an artistic phenomenon or a group of artists. Even Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis is not bestowed that honor, although he is the main (but not the only) hero in the chapter on Lithuanian symbolism, "Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis and Lithuanian Symbolism." As is well known, this artist did not reside in Vilnius for very long, and although he had far-reaching plans, he lacked the resources and time for their implementation. His gypsy-like way of life prevented him from maintaining an elegant home, living among beautiful (though modest) things brought from neighbouring estates, and engaging in book and magazine publishing, or setting up theatrical and quasi-theatrical events without, in large measure, any restraint, as Ruszczyc could. Ruszczyc was an artist "for whom there were no minor things," outside the boundaries of an integral and indivisible Art. Reviewing the artist's creative

initiatives, Laučkaitė recalls the sources of his projects, among them the creations of the Pre-Raphaelites and the postulates and works of William Morris.

A characteristic feature of Laučkaitė's style is to introduce the European context preceding each new theme. Thus, before speaking about *Tygodnik Wileński*, published by Ruszczyc, she points out other similar artistic magazines, among them *The Studio* (England), *Chimera* (Poland), *Ateneum* (Finland), and *Verotâjs* and *Zalktis* (Latvia). Introducing a new trend or an artist, she briefly identifies them so the beginner does not get lost or the specialist feel he or she is being drilled repeatedly, like a weak pupil. Maybe it is a feature peculiar to popular publications written in the "American" way, but *Art in Vilnius 1900-1915* combines the characteristics of scholarly works with those of popular books. The readers of the latter might find the introductory chapter complicated, which, with its copious footnotes, looks like a scholarly work. For some, this book will be an art guide, for others, interested in the footnotes, it will be a conscientious compendium of information about art in Vilnius at the turn of the nineteenth century.

With respect to scholarly balance and a lack of national bias, *Art in Vilnius 1900-1915* wins high praise from its introduction to its last chapter. The chapters on new trends ("The Rise of the Avant-garde") and a new style of city life ("Was there a la Belle Époque in Vilnius?") sum up the book. Laučkaitė's work is worthy of recognition merely for being written "without exceptions," i.e., without especially emphasizing the problems of certain nations. For instance, she notes that after 1864 the tsarist government imposed a ban on both Lithuanian and Polish books, whereas in traditional historiography, the grievances of only one nation are accentuated.

Some shortcomings could be noted. Some appeared in the book's translation from Lithuanian into English. The translation itself is rich in phraseology and well done, but sometimes the influence of the Lithuanian original is clearly felt in the use of certain words or senses. For example, an attempt is made to write surnames so their forms correspond to the national self-identification of their owners (the author states this on p. 20).

Nevertheless, *Wiwulski* becomes *Vivulskis*, even in the fragment about his "dual national engagement" (p. 57), and the names of personalities from a more distant past are presented only in their Lithuanian form, e.g., Kanutas Ruseckas, Mykolas Andriolis, Vincentas Smakauskas (p. 21) or Sluška (p. 29). The use of the Lithuanian word *verbos* in the English text in relation to Ruszczyc's collection of traditional Palm Sunday fronds is actually a double translation, requiring the addition of the Polish word *palma* or a more detailed description. There are also some factual errors. In Central and Eastern Europe of the period there were not two, but three, greedy empires: Austro-Hungary, Russia, and Prussia (p. 16). Supraśl, a Polish town in the county of Białystok, is attributed to Belarus (p. 100), and the Orthodox Jordan Feast, or Theophany, is treated as Catholic (p. 29). However, a full absence of mistakes would seem strange against the background of such an enormous abundance of facts, even though the author demonstrates a high level of competence and tact. As the exception endorses the rule, so these few inaccuracies prove the correctness of the author's statement that "The tendency to distinguish, in the dual centuries-old ethnically common cultural heritage, what belonged to the Poles and what belonged to the Lithuanians remained strong until the very end of the twentieth century" (p. 61).

Art in Vilnius 1900-1915, however, appeared at the start of the twenty-first century, in our time, which is more favorable (let's hope for a long while) to the search for what is common. The author, together with the visitors to Ruszczyc's salon, shares the belief that participation in the creation of universal culture, rather than isolation, was the real aim of national aspiration, and even more so, perceived as an objective appropriate to the whole of humanity. Similarly, the cult of Art was opposed to the exploitation of artistic creation for subservient and servile purposes. From this perspective, Vilnius could be seen as being abreast of the other European capitals of Beauty. One only needs to walk up the hill of Užupis with the author of this fine book.

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AT SEA IN VILNIUS

Laimonas Briedis. *Vilnius: City of Strangers*. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009, 296 pages, 76 illustrations. ISBN 978-9-63977-644-9.

Vilnius: City of Strangers, by Laimonas Briedis, purports to be more than just a book about Vilnius. It is also a book about Europe. Indeed, even as it can hardly be thought of as central to the contemporary European imaginary, save for its purely geographical centrality, Briedis finds that "the city gathers the history of Europe and streams it into uncharted channels. In this sense, Vilnius is more like a threshold than either a centre or periphery. ... not a place, but a condition" (13). Reading travel narratives, letters, official accounts, and journalistic reports, Briedis crafts a narrative of how strangers have moved through Vilnius and, in reflecting about doing so, have narrated themselves and their continent. While spanning seven centuries, in Briedis's assemblage of narratives about Vilnius, strangers-*cum*-locals and natives-*cum*-strangers narrate the emergence of modernity, its constitutive others, and the unruly spaces in between.

Briedis's book is beautifully written. Since he does not rely on over-theorized framings and uses authoritative references with caution, at times it reads more like a historical novel than a scientific work. Most of the heavyweight figures – Bakhtin, Dostoyevsky, Stendhal, and Tolstoy among them – appear as narrators of Briedis's object of inquiry, which through the course of the book variously emerges as Vilnius, Europe, or modernity. In sum, Briedis's book is a compelling, conceptually rich, and open-ended work, stimulating new questions and departures rather than providing definitive answers or resolutions.

Born of the Lithuanian wilderness rather than opposed to it, Vilnius emerges in the fourteenth century as "autochthonous, pagan, and unconquered" (23). With its symbiotic relationship to nature and Lithuanianness, Vilnius stands in sharp contrast to the colonial character of Riga, Tallinn, and Königs-

berg, fortress towns founded to "advance and strengthen foreign hegemony over the conquered lands and indigenous peoples" (23). Written in an inspiring, if somewhat romantic vein, the first chapter of the book chronicles Gediminas's premodern pagan commitment to religious tolerance and equality, and demonstrates the monarch of the Duchy of Lithuania's ability to stand strong in the face of Roman Catholic claims of supremacy: "Why do you always talk about Christian love? Where do you find so much misery, injustice, violence, sin and greed, if not among the Christians? Especially among those crusaders, who put on the robes of pious monks but only spread evil everywhere" (27). Surely, many would like to imagine themselves in place of Gediminas, speaking truth to power.

Vilnius's harmonious existence comes to an end with Catholicism and, subsequently, the Enlightenment moments by which Europe traditionally records her progress. The "cultural vastness and heterogeneity of Lithuania" remains hard for foreigners to grasp throughout the centuries. A Baroque city in every sense of the term, Vilnius never quite fits into neoclassical Enlightenment categories. Its multiple and therefore ambiguous political and national identities as Vilnius, Vilna, Vilno, Wilna, and Wilno, unsettle and confound many travelers well into the twentieth century. The city lacks a coherent national and state identity until the simultaneous Sovietization and Lithuanization of Vilnius following World War II.

For eighteenth century travelers passing through on their way elsewhere, Enlightenment is everywhere, except in Wilna or in its immediate surroundings. It is here that the story of Wilna becomes a story of the problem posed to Europe by its Eastern European half. Envoy *extraordinaire* of Louis XVI to the Russian imperial court in St. Petersburg, Count Ségur's travel narrative is especially telling in this regard. Upon entering Poland on his way to St. Petersburg, Ségur feels as if he has "left Europe entirely, and the gaze is struck by a new spectacle: an immense country almost totally covered with fir trees always green, but always sad, interrupted in long intervals by some cultivated plains, like islands scattered on the ocean; a poor

population, enslaved; dirty villages; cottages little different from savage huts; everything makes one think one has been moved back ten centuries, and one finds oneself amid hordes of Huns, Scythians, Veneti, Slavs, and Sarmatians" (68). For Ségur, Prussia's eastern borderlands escape what Jacques Derrida (1968) calls the Western metaphysics of presence. They are neither fully present nor fully absent. They are incomprehensible, a puzzle, a contradiction, a space in Europe, but not quite of Europe. As Larry Wolff has put it, "in spite of his overland intentions, Ségur was at sea" (1994:19).

Following the defeat of Napoleon's multinational army in and around Vilna, Vilna becomes imperial Russia's frontier to Western Europe, yet is "plagued by disarray and an unruly spirit" (126). During the course of the nineteenth century, Lithuania acquires the highest Jewish population concentration in Europe. Jews enjoy communal autonomy and a rich cultural life, though Russian imperial rule tries to limit both from time to time. While imperial, Russian rule is also intimate since, "cultural and religious links between Vilna and Byzantium had been in existence since the historical beginnings of the city. Many wives of pagan and Catholic Lithuanian grand dukes, for instance, came from Russian princely families" (132).

This peculiar kind of intimacy marks other historical moments as well. European nobility intermarries, and the various travelers that come through Vilnius and occasionally settle there are plugged into broader European networks of nobles, intellectuals, and administrators. The translocal connections between people and places – rather than any positive content – are what ultimately constitute the identity of Vilnius in Briedis's book. The local residents of the city emerge as strange, sometimes savage nonentities that serve as objects of observation and reflection for the enlightened mind (144). While the resulting image of Vilnius as a strange, foreign, and exotic locale is a function of Briedis's well-substantiated conceptual and methodological choices (15), a demanding reader might nevertheless wonder if Briedis's book is not itself another form of travel narrative, and might find the reliance on foreign narratives to

be an easy way out of what might have otherwise amounted to overwhelming and arduous labor in local archives. Most, if not all, of Briedis's narrative is based on secondary published sources. He reads them well and crafts a compelling story, though the question of what new insights the book provides with regard to Western European narratives about Eastern Europe does come up (Wolff 1994, Todorova 1997).

How might an in-depth engagement with local narratives enrich and complicate this story? Briedis's treatment of the twentieth century brings the direction and relevance of the book's intervention into sharper focus. The end of World War I brings the expansion of the modern nation-state in Europe. Nationhood demands ordering the heterogeneous past and present in national and political categories, which, for the most part, remain strange to the residents of Vilnius. For modern travelers, in turn, Vilnius is hard to grasp precisely due to its unresolved political and national identity (210). The nation in Vilnius remains a new phenomenon. Yet, the material and symbolic violence that nationhood imposed on Vilnius's heterogeneous terrain during the course of the twentieth century is not only the doing of the Soviet or the Lithuanian states in particular, but also a function of the nation-state form in general. This emerges as one of the book's most salient contributions – namely, an invitation to critically consider not only particular states, but also their place in European modernity as a whole.

In one of his most interesting and intellectually satisfying moves, Briedis inverts the relationship of his protagonists in the second half of the book. While most of Vilnius's former Jewish residents perished during the Second World War or came to reside elsewhere, they still felt a part of the city. Its new residents, mostly Lithuanians and Russians, knew little about the city's recent past: "In a way, the line separating indigenous from foreign was inverted: a native became a stranger – a newcomer turned into a local" (229).

The conclusion of the book is not only interesting, but also well grounded. Briedis finds that the dead in Vilnius con-

stitute "sites of anti-memory, challenging every version of local history. Unable to fit within the memorial perimeters of Vilnius's soil, the local dead reach for the map of Europe" (245). Year 2001 brings the discovery of human remains of the *Grande Armée*, which perished in Vilna in 1812. Although the French assumed administrative responsibility for the military relics, it was difficult to claim them as part of French national heritage, since the vast majority of soldiers were not of French origin (246). After detailed scientific analysis, the remains of the soldiers of the *Grande Armée* were buried "in the most ideologically and nationally diverse cemetery in Vilnius.

Appropriately, this large cemetery, known as the Soldiers' Cemetery, contains the remains of soldiers of many wars and nationalities. But alongside German, Russian, Polish, Soviet, and now Napoleonic, troops, there are also graves of Lithuanian Communist Party officials, local cultural and academic elites, and the victims of the Soviet army attack on Vilnius in 1991" (248). Evidently, the unspoken centrality of the Unknown Soldier to the national imaginary described by Benedict Anderson in the opening pages of *Imagined Communities* (2000) runs into problems in Vilnius. Anderson argues that "many different nations have such tombs without feeling any need to specify the nationality of their absent occupants. What else could they be but Germans, Americans, Argentineans?" (2000:10) The Unknown Soldier in Vilnius has no self-evident nationality, for the multiplicity of soldiers lying beneath the earth exceed and elude national narratives and political identifications. It is precisely through contemporary attempts to recruit the dead of Vilnius in ongoing geopolitical dramas that we see how nations continue to be made and unmade. Reading about how some of the dead have been ideologically accredited in the post-Soviet European present, while others remain discredited, raises the question of whether state-based multiculturalism offers any solution at all to the challenge of reconciling a heterogeneous past with a national present (245). These are European questions. But at sea in Europe's "City of Strangers," they appear in sharper relief and acquire special urgency.

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Juknaitė, Vanda. *My Voice Betrays Me*. Translated and edited by Laima Sruoginis. Eastern European Monographs (Boulder, CO). Distributed by New York: Columbia University Press, 2007, 139 pages. ISBN 978-0-88033-606-2.

For a weaver, all the world
is textile. Look – do you see
the threads that bind us –
veins of color, textured
arteries? The weaver sees
us all twisted – arms and legs
entangled.

"Baltic Laima"
Laima Sruoginis

The poem above was written years before Laima Sruoginis's translation of Vanda Juknaitė's rich and vivid memoir/literary nonfiction book, *My Voice Betrays Me*, yet, this stanza of poetry parallels the intricate beauty and harsh truths of human dignity that her colleague, Vanda Juknaitė, encountered in post-Soviet Lithuania – specifically in taking care of the many displaced and homeless children after 1991, when Lithuania gained in-

dependence and meekly peeked from behind the Iron Curtain to face the overwhelming challenges of twentieth-century democracy and life.

This leads the reader to believe it was no accident that these women encountered one another and embarked upon this project together. Laima, in the above poem, is the weaver, since most Lithuanian myths equate her to the Greek's Athena, a woman of great wisdom who possesses the ability to see or weave the fates of mortals. The key to understanding the further connection to Juknaitė's book is to see Juknaitė's compassion for homeless children in starting a camp for them during and after "Utopia's collapse," and to read how artfully Sruoginis weaves these stories together with the rest of Juknaitė's book – a series of interviews and an essay on how life and art are inextricably linked.*

The book opens with a preface and foreword that accessibly present the specifics of a post-Soviet Lithuania entrenched in the complexities of a dysfunctional socioeconomic infrastructure. This is at the core of Juknaitė's memoir, for she is among the many Lithuanians who witnessed firsthand that "it took a long time before we [all] realized we'd internalized all the vices of the Soviet system" and "it would take a lot of work to change ourselves."

So Juknaitė, seeing the interconnectedness as well as the stark "twistedness" of all beings, as the poem also suggests, reached out to young homeless children in her country of dilapidated structure and hope. With several volunteers, she be-

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* The essay was written in 1991 by Juknaitė in response to Vytautas Kubilius's essay, which argued that "writers should be less involved with politics and should concentrate more on their art."

One of her responses to this in the essay (though the crux of the essay deals with new-found individual freedom and how to see and value it) was: "when after fifty years we were able to read the memoirs of people deported to Siberia... no one realized that we were witnessing... freedom."

gan the above-mentioned camp under the umbrella of a newly created organization, *Verus,* to care for these children – the collateral damage of a dismantled Soviet childcare system, failed and mafia-influenced business dealings, and a lack of state-funded clinics and shelters.

Juknaitė and her volunteers, completely untrained and unprepared to deal with "wild" street children, found that many of them, if not all, lived daily among the harsh realities of drugs and alcoholism, robbery, prostitution, and disease. Yet, exchanges between volunteers and the children eventually began a series of exercises in hope and trust – and this resulted in a multitude of touching, and often humbling, poetic stories that illustrate how survival and compassion are close compatriots.

One of the most telling, I believe, is a story of the children who participated in an "integrated" session of camp. Juknaitė asked children from "normal" families, as well as blind or visually impaired children, to take part. Juknaitė, who led by example, helped the blind children about the camp throughout the weeks. She noticed that it didn't take long before the street children immediately adapted and helped the blind children as well.

The children from "normal" families did not help those less fortunate on their own accord. They were eventually approached by volunteers and asked why. All of them responded with anger and accused the camp leaders of never "asking them to." The street children not only helped the blind children, they vehemently defended them against a nosy reporter who later visited the camp. As Sruoginis's poem invokes "threads that bind us" Juknaitė states later in the book, in her essay, "Burn All Philosophies," that "when we all went out and joined hands to form the Baltic Chain… we had all become hostages together."

Historically, Lithuania has been a nation of people whose perpetual past oppression yielded strong survivors and inno-

cent casualties. In *My Voice Betrays Me*, the multi-genre format is refreshing, but also reflects this notion of being simultaneously strong and weak, and therefore, in identity crisis – Lithuania's widely known "mental" state for years. There is a solid, satisfying mix of historical fact; a stimulating section of philosophy (perhaps individualism challenging nationalism); and the poignant stories of the street children in the camp.

The main segment of the book, the memoir, may be jarring for the new reader, since it is powerfully told to us by Juknaitė in oral tradition format. Sruoginis's translation impeccably preserves this genuine voice, as recollections of one child to the next jump a span of several years, within one or two paragraphs, chronologically. These moving memories come fast, pouring out of the author, and as a result, it's possible the reader may lose track of which child Juknaitė is telling us about. This, however, is no major distraction. Rather, it denotes the authenticity of the author's experience and somewhat represents the uncertainty of the street children's lives – of all Lithuanians' lives – at this moment in time.

Overall, this book engages the reader to reconnect with her own compassion and tenderness. It distinctly depicts a people struggling to live in a new, ambiguous world, and the outcome, though still unclear, is a beautiful portrait of the capacity of human kindness.

Lina Ramona Vitkauskas

ABSTRACTS

Rasa Andriušytė-Žukienė
Highlights of Lithuanian Textile Art

The author examines the most important works of textile art in present-day Lithuania, bringing out the personal contributions of many individual artists, a number of whom have gained high awards and recognition at European and world exhibitions. The article expresses the content of their accomplishments. It also analyzes the Soviet era, when artists were constrained by ideology in their thinking and selection of themes and ideas. Regardless of these circumstances, even then works of high quality existed, and a unique textile school formed during this period.

Catherine Brown and Rugilė Balkaitė
The Disappearance of Wooden Houses

The preservation of historic wooden houses is a challenge for cities around the world that struggle to adapt obsolete structures for modern needs and to fund costly restorations. These historic structures are important components for interpreting the history of our cities. A comprehensive approach to preservation must include good policies, predictable incentives and regular programs to encourage strong valuations of these cultural resources. Preservation policies and incentives must compete effectively to support private sector owners and developers in retaining historic structures and preserving cultural icons of our past. Comparing the preservation policies and incentives in Baltimore with those of Vilnius reveals more possibilities for the preservation of the immovable cultural heritage in both cities.

Patrick Chura
Emily Plater: 'Frontispiece' for Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*

Margaret Fuller's reading of Joseph Straszewicz's *The Life of Countess Emily Plater* in 1844 apparently made a profound impression on the American feminist-transcendentalist. In *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, Fuller included several admiring passages about Emily Plater and suggested an portrait of the Vilnius-born countess for the work's frontispiece. Selecting Plater as the emblem of her book showed that Fuller had considered the meaning of Plater's life and wanted readers of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* to do the same. Fuller's strong response to the countess was grounded not only on the gender

barrier transgression Plater embodied as a female military figure, but on a number of biographical details that the two brilliant and forward-thinking women had in common. Looking at *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* and *The Life of Countess Emily Plater* side-by-side suggests that Straszewicz's biography of Plater was a considerable influence on Fuller's pioneering masterwork and, therefore, on the development of American feminist thought in its earliest stages.

Virginijus Savukynas
The Idea of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the Works of Gintaras Beresnevičius

Gintaras Beresnevičius's writings on the revival of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania have been greeted by accusations of charlatanism from some in the academic world, while finding acceptance among other readers. The author examines Beresnevičius's writings in light of mythology, pointing out mythology's significance in creating identity, and drawing comparisons between the nineteenth-century writers who popularized the idea of Lithuania as a nation-state and Beresnevičius's attempts to sow the seeds of a new mythology for the future, of a multi-cultural region encompassing the former Grand Duchy.

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