LITUANUS

THE LITHUANIAN QUARTERLY VOLUME 59:1 (2013)

IN THIS ISSUE:

LITUANUS

THE LITHUANIAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
VOLUME 59:1, Spring 2013

Lituanus: The Lithuanian Quarterly (published since 1954) is a multi-disciplinary academic journal presenting and examining various aspects of Lithuanian culture and history. Authors are invited to submit scholarly articles, *belles lettres*, and art work. Manuscripts will be reviewed. Books are accepted for review purposes.

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Editorial Office: editor@lituanus.org
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Publisher: Lituanus Foundation, Inc., A. Tamulis, President
Address: 47 West Polk Street, Suite 100–300,
Chicago, IL 60605–2000 Phone/Fax 312/945-0697

Articles are archived and accessible at **www.lituanus.org** and in microform from University Microfilms (www.proquest.com/brand/umi.shtml) They are indexed in:
MLA International Bibliography; PAIS International;
International Political Science Abstracts; Historical Abstracts (EBSCO);
Linguistic Bibliography (Netherlands); Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts;
RILM Abstracts of Music Literature; Bibliography of the History of Art;
OCLC Article First.

Worldwide circulation per issue – 2,000 copies.
Individual subscriptions $30.00. Seniors/students $20.00.
Institutional subscriptions $40.00
 ISSN 0024–5089.
Printed by M & D Printing, Henry, Ilinois. Cover Design by Vincas Lukas.

Periodical non-profit postage paid at Chicago, IL and other locations.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to LITUANUS, 47 West Polk Street, Suite 100-300, Chicago, IL 60605-2000

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Mimic Realities: The Construction of Popular Identity in Contemporary Lithuanian Film

EDGARAS KLIVIS

Introduction

In his book *From Caligari to Hitler: a Psychological History of the German Film*, Siegfried Kracauer argues that film is able to reflect the mentality of a nation better than any other medium. There are two reasons for this: first, film is never a solely personal creation, but rather a collective one, where individual peculiarities are suppressed "in favor of traits common to many people."[1] Second, a film is supposed to appeal to a wide audience and satisfy the existing desires of an anonymous multitude. In this attempt to please, a film will inevitably reflect common national characteristics, inclinations, fears, and hopes – in short, the psychological state of a nation.[2]

Kracauer's book, published in 1947, was one of the first film studies that used the concept of "national cinema" as an analytic tool, grounding it on a coherent narrative that related the apolitical and escapist tendency of the German film industry from the Weimar period to the subsequent totalitarian Nazi

[1] Kracauer, *Caligari*, 5.
[2] Ibid., 5-6.

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regime. Many things have changed since then, and Kracauer's premises are now subject to criticism. For example, the idea of auteur film, of the director as primary author using the camera as a stylus, described by the critics of the French *Cahiers du Cinéma* and the filmmakers of the New Wave in the late twentieth century, has become institutionalized, at least when considering European film art as an alternative to the Hollywood entertainment industry. Also, the commercial motivation to foresee and resonate with the prevailing psychological states of the anonymous national audience does not appear as urgent in the framework of contemporary cinema. In Europe, eighty to ninety per cent of the income from film goes to Hollywood anyway, and it is obvious that the scale of a successful film industry today has long exceeded the limits of a national film market (and correspondingly national public). Commercially successful film projects, like the Swedish *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2009), are primarily the result of international distribution, which demands a certain degree of standardization and universalization.[3] A film culture, on the other hand, involved in particular problem issues, often seen as a niche for European film, in most cases aims at transnational festival audiences or distinct target groups (like emigrant communities, teenagers and their parents, etc.) that are diffused across European nation-states.

And yet, contemporary film researchers do not seem to be deterred from using the concept of "national cinema," and there are some good reasons why they should not. First, in most European countries, the film industry is, in one way or another, supported by the state, and this model of creative economy inevitably provokes regular discussions, often not so much concerned with legitimating the national film industry as centered on priorities and financing. The arguments used in these discussions always involve a certain definition of national film

[3] According to *Box Office Mojo*, the foreign lifetime gross of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2009) by November 2012 made up to 90.3 percent of the film's total lifetime gross.

culture.[4] Second, in many cases, the artists themselves strategically point out the relationship of their projects to national cultural interests (even if for no other reason than to attempt to meet the requirements of national film policy). And eventually it should be remembered that the concept of "national cinema" also works as a tool that furthers researchers' investigations of historical representations and popular memory, (neo)colonialism, migration, ethnic and religious conflicts, and local identity in the face of global corporate capitalism, among other issues. Even if Kracauer's psychologized and organicist understanding of the nation should be rejected, these issues can be successfully analyzed with the help of key concepts, such as national culture, nationalism, national identity, and nation-state.

Since I am going to employ the concept of "national cinema" as the basis for this analysis of contemporary Lithuanian film and its relation to its local public, I have chosen (out of many options) Jarvie's article, "National Cinema: A Theoretical Assessment," to refer to for a critical and systematic understanding of the term.[5] After sifting through the different material on this issue, Jarvie states three major arguments that serve as the bases of (the need for) national film policy. I

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[4] The revised version of "The Film Act of the Republic of Lithuania," in force since 1 May 2012, Article 8, concerning the criteria for state sponsorship, points out that a film production can be sponsored by the state if it meets at least two of the following criteria: the screenplay or the central subject of the film is based on events of Lithuanian or European culture, history, religion, mythology or public life; the film relates to a well-known personality of Lithuanian or European culture, history, religion, public figure or mythological character; the screenplay or the central subject of the film is based on a significant work of Lithuanian or European literature; the film gives sense to significant Lithuanian or European values such as: the diversity of cultures and religions, human rights and public spirit, democracy and solidarity, minority rights and tolerance, respect for the traditions of culture and family; the film examines the issues of national or European identity. "Lietuvos respublikos kino įstatymo pakeitimo įstatymas," p. 5.

[5] I find the article suitable mostly because the aim of the author is "to test the robustness of the idea of national cinema by pitting it against current thinking about nationalism." (Jarvie, "National," 70)

will introduce them briefly, changing their order for my own purposes. One of the three arguments Jarvie makes is called "nation-building," which claims that, although cinema is not necessary for nation-building, it nevertheless can be perceived as an important means "to socialize newly emancipated populations away from radicalism and towards acceptance of the mores, outlook, and continuing hegemony of the governing and cultural [national – E.K.] elites."[6] This works not only in relation to early twentieth-century politics, but also to the past twenty-five years in relation to the Eastern European countries that were able to rebuild their nation-states after the collapse of the Soviet empire and later entered international alliances and experienced the effects of globalized capitalism.

The second argument for national film support is "cultural defense," encompassing both the attempts to defend a fragile local culture from alien mores, outlooks on life, and values brought about by foreign films (and it is again valid for small and economically backward Eastern European countries, where culture is often perceived as fragile and requiring a political defense), and the attempts to foster local culture so that it could satisfy both the cultural and entertainment needs of local society.[7]

The author's third argument ("protectionist") is purely economic and culturally indifferent: the state can protect certain industries (infant industries, for example) in certain cases (as in economic dumping) and the film industry can be included among them. Later, however, Jarvie admits that "buried within the infant industry argument is a corollary about the acquisition and mastery of new technology,"[8] which also brings about a cultural version of the third argument for national cinema. According to Jarvie, film is "part of the nuts and bolts kit of modern communication technologies, especially those for dramatizing fiction, and for presenting news and information."[9] The ability, in other words, to master technolo-

6 Jarvie, "National," 74.
7 Ibid., 72.
8 Ibid., 75.
9 Ibid., 75.

gies (which are, in Jarvie's view, the ground, for both cadres and audiences, for moving forward towards the latest electronic and digital technologies so they can accommodate local skills, traditions of communication, local narratives and dramas) is vital to the modernization of society. Thus, according to Jarvie: "If movies are indispensable, or at least very instructive, basic communications technology, then building a node of the industry in or near each distinct modernizing cultural entity is warranted."[10]

At this point, Jarvie's argument can be extended by reference to other notable theorists of nationalism (Jarvie mostly relates to Ernst Gellner), such as Benedict Anderson, who has pointed out and analyzed the significance of earlier media, namely print, in the process of the rise and development of imagined communities into modern nation-states.[11] Anderson claims that the advent of the printing press, backed by capitalist mechanical reproduction and the market, created the particular common language fields for what used to be different vernacular groups, helped to build the image of antiquity vital for "the subjective idea of the nation," and in general "laid the bases for national consciousnesses."[12]

My own thesis is to combine the two arguments, pointing out that, at the end of the twentieth century, certain national societies experiencing (re)construction, for example, the nation-states of Eastern Europe, were crucially dependent, not only on press agents, but also on other media, including audiovisual new media and film, among others. Like print in the late nineteenth century, Lithuanian was used to unify vernacular language groups and construct a sense of historical continuity and community. Today, national consciousness and popular national identity are also supported and developed by new media (film, radio, TV, and the Internet). What is important is that it is not just the possession of the independent technical base for these media that matters, but also, according to Jarvie,

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[10] Ibid., 76.

[11] See chapter 3 of Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, 37-47.

[12] Ibid., 45-46.

the ability to master the content, "ways to construct exposition, whether of fact or fiction; [...] means of generating anticipation and excitement,"[13] etc.

I would like to look at certain recent developments in Lithuanian film over the past decade, searching for two basic functions that I think are crucial to "mastering" new media technologies: first, the ability to construct a polemical and critical picture of social reality through the use of cinematic devices, such as film narrative, genre, and style; and second, competence in using the same cinematic devices to reach a wider national audience.

The ill fame of Lithuanian art house cinema: an unrecognizable reality

In a critical survey of Lithuanian film during the Soviet period, the film critic Živilė Pipinytė points out that one of the most striking qualities of Lithuanian film culture of the seventies and eighties was its loss of contact with reality. According to the critic, the reasons for this distance from reality were manifold. First, the film artists, even in their adaptations of the national literature, were often looking for widely accessible, universal subjects rather than specific, locally oriented issues.[14] One can guess that the reason for this bias was the integration of local Lithuanian film structures into the broad film industry of the Soviet Union. Work proposals, wide recognition, and awards came from the imperial center (to say nothing about forced mechanisms of censorship control and regulation), and motivated the repetition of already approved successful narratives and stylistic models with some supplementary decoration called "national form."[15] Under such conditions, Lithuanian film directors and writers were producing mimic versions of successful Soviet films, or even more directly, produced films according to political orders from Moscow, such as Cold War

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13 Jarvie, "National," 75.

14 Pipinytė, "Lietuvių," 23.

15 According to Stalin's famous dictum, describing the intermediate stage on the way to the future General Culture: "National in form, socialist in content."

propaganda, industrial subjects, and psychological dramas centered on the reevaluation of bourgeois values. According to the author, such adaptations of foreign productions most often "were absolutely out of touch with reality, which therefore appeared in these films as beautiful and unrecognizable."[16]

Secondly, representatives of the "poetic film" trend, such as Algimantas Puipa and Gytis Lukšas, who were perceived as successors of the classic Lithuanian directors Arūnas Žebriūnas and Algirdas Araminas, also failed in reaching out for (social) reality. Pipinytė claims that although this trend could hardly be accused of following the settled propaganda schemes, it fell into the trap of:

> seeing and showing not what is, a reflection of reality, but rather trying to impress by the use of strange and inconceivable deformations. Poetry and beauty appeared in these productions to be merely supplementary, since they did not originate from the characters or the plot. It was a kind of direct and literal "poeticizing," going so far as violence against the objective nature of cinematic art itself.[17]

After independence, the poetic school of Lithuanian film turned into a dominant trend, because Puipa and Lukšas were, until recently, the most productive and institutionalized film producers. Furthermore, this trend was reinforced by the younger generation of film directors (Valdas Navasaitis, Šarūnas Bartas, Vytautas V. Landsbergis, Audrius Juzėnas, Tomas Donela, Audrius Stonys, and others), most of whom gravitated to the first independent film studio in Lithuania, Kinema. The productions of the Kinema generation openly rejected any references to the Soviet style and exalted the nationalist rhetoric of the national revival movement of the late eighties, as well as the new genre aesthetics of Hollywood productions that flooded theaters and video showrooms and rentals. The films made by Šarūnas Bartas and Audrius Stonys, for example, stood out in protest against the grand historical narratives (both communist and nationalist) and marked a turn towards

[16] Pipinytė, "Lietuvių," 24.
[17] Ibid., 25.

a radically marginal world that had never before been represented in Lithuanian film – mute zones of poverty, deserted city blocks, remote and isolated villages, extraordinary and exotic personalities from the social periphery, and situations removed from recognizable everyday middle-class reality (typical examples include Bartas's *Three Days*, Stonys's *Earth of the Blind*, and Navasaitis's *Autumn Snow*).

Within a more global contemporary context, the film aesthetic of the Kinema generation, together with the earlier poetic film school, can be defined as the basis of Lithuanian art house film culture, which was further developed in productions by Giedrė Beinoriūtė, Ignas Miškinis, Kristijonas Vildžiūnas, and others. A short characterization of this trend in contemporary Lithuanian film should point out, first and above all, the indispensable primacy of the auteur's vision – when a director primarily makes a film for himself/herself with little concern for the needs or interests of the public. This dominance of the concept of auteur in Lithuanian film makes itself manifest by a withdrawal from reality into a more or less exotic fantasy. These fantasies are most often inhabited by strange, outsider characters, which do not represent any recognizable type or social group, but are often distinguished by rare professions, an eccentric way of life, or unpredictable behavior. For example, the main character of Vildžiūnas's 2006 film, *You am I*, is an architect living in a tree house in the middle of the forest (which is not a frequent occurrence in Lithuania). Also, these characters often find themselves in made-up situations and unusual circumstances, to which they are brought by their own eccentric nature or the poetic imagination of a director or a writer. The film narrative's break from reality is often related to the interrelationships among the characters: deprived of the foundation of everyday life, the characters usually also fail at social relations.

Although these characteristics of Lithuanian art house productions can be seen as a reflection of the European approach to film as art, rather than a creative commodity, it can also be accused of isolation, of intentionally unpopular, hermetic, and mystifying qualities, sometimes acknowledged at small film

festivals, but rarely provoking any reaction from national art house audiences and openly ignored by the rest of the local public. The concept of national film in this particular context can only be related to Jarvie's argument of cultural protection, when the state takes the responsibility to support its film industry as a local alternative to the domination of Hollywood. The protectionist argument, based on the desire of society to reflect itself through the use of contemporary communication technologies, does not fit the case of the Lithuanian art house, since this trend is an illustration of exactly the opposite, namely the inability to address a wider audience with audiovisual representations of recognizable and important social issues. However, it is possible to find attempts in Lithuanian film aimed, not so much at a unique auteur vision, but rather toward the use of film to construct and negotiate a popular national identity.

Postcolonial Other: Indigène d'Eurasie

Šarūnas Bartas is an internationally acclaimed Lithuanian film director, whose audiences, in most cases, are primarily the public of international film festivals. Consequently, Bartas's subjects are cosmopolitical – he is a director who does not undertake any responsibilities for the local audience and obviously dissociates himself from the parochial local film industry for the sake of the European market. For example, the premiere of his last film, *Eastern Drift*, took place at the Sixtieth Berlin International Film Festival, Berlinale 2010. The financial support for Bartas's films also comes from European funds. Since the 1995 production of *The Corridor*, cofinanced by the German companies WDR and TV Ventures, all of Bartas's films were supported by German, French or Portuguese backers. *Eastern Drift* was coproduced by the independent film studio Kinema, established by Bartas himself, the French film studio Lazennec Films, and a Russian film company, mostly involved in distribution, Kino bez granits.

Bartas is known as a major representative of the auteur position in Lithuanian film. However, *Eastern Drift* is characterized by critics as his first attempt to turn towards a more popular

genre film style, because the focus of the story is Gena (played by Bartas himself), a drug trafficker who decides to make a last attempt to quit the criminal life and start anew with his French girlfriend (Elisa Sednaoui). Instead, during the last job, he finds himself trapped in Russia with a Russian prostitute (Klavdiya Korshunova) and persecuted by both Moscow drug gangs and the militia. His journey across Eastern Europe and beyond to France, where he eventually gets murdered, harks back to film noir, with its desperate atmosphere, cynical characters, and absence of values or any sort of humanism. Neil Young, the film critic for *The Hollywood Reporter*, has described Bartas's *Eastern Drift* as "a slow-burning underworld thriller that presents a bleak vision of crime-riddled twenty-first century Europe."[18]

However, Europe in Bartas's film actually refers to two quite different zones and different identities. The Eurasia that the French and Lithuanian titles of the film refer to can either be understood as the whole continent, comprising Europe and Asia, or as the special in-between space of Eastern Europe (inserted between Europe and Asia). In any case, there is a distinct binary quality between Western and Eastern poles (also present in the English version of the title) that is indicated in the film itself by its division into different settings for action and different social representations and identities.

The two territories represented in the film carry different and even opposite social meanings. Although both subjects who construct these meanings (the film narrator/main character, played by Bartas, and the director/author Bartas) are Eastern Europeans (we understand that Gena is from Vilnius, where he meets his father), the way they construct themselves seems to be strikingly negative towards their own social identity, as if seen from the opposite Western European position. We are presented with a character that has chosen an exclusively

[18] Young, "Eastern," lines 2-3. The English title of the film does not convey the colonial hint, characteristic of the French version, *Indigene d'Eurasie*, and the Lithuanian translation, *Eurazijos aborigenas*, or the special geopolitical references that the title *Евразиец* has in the contemporary Russian context.

dangerous and obviously lethal criminal existence, followed by a fatalistic voice-over commentary reflecting his own insignificance. As a criminal and a drug dealer, Gena is surprisingly alien to the contemporary modern international context and unable to take advantage of the possibilities of the contemporary world. Instead, it seems that the existence of Gena progresses backwards to the crucial episode, where we see him naked in a snow-covered swamp, cowering by the fire as if in some primordial prehuman state. What he represents is not-yet-human, and this state of being corresponds to the equally backward, primordial, chaotic, and dangerous Eastern European space constructed in the film in visual contrast to the comfortable, urbane, and relaxed Western atmosphere (and, as we should guess, the Western values that frame that atmosphere, like respect for human life and freedom, the spirit of creativity and enterprise, etc.). In other words, these cinematographic representations are a reflection of the culturally approved habit in which reality is divided into large collective categories (such as "Eastern European") each of which, according to Edward W. Said, are "not so much a neutral designation as an evaluative interpretation."[19]

Bartas's *Eastern Drift* constructs the identity of the indeterminate geographical region (extending somewhere to the East of Germany) in such a way as to "sell" to the Western festival audience its own stereotypes concerning the new member states of the European Union and their neighboring countries. The prevalence of criminal inclinations (probably rooted in the communist and fascist crimes of the earlier generations, as suggested by the figure of Gena's father), the poor treatment of women (Gena's lover on the Eastern side is a prostitute, while his French lover is only a girl), the violations of human rights (the behavior of the militia in the film has little to distinguish it from the criminals), and the general cinematographic representation of a devastated, backward world without values – this not the world on its own, containing internal values and

[19] Said, *Orientalism*, 228.

coordinates, such as we see in the earlier films by Bartas,[20] but rather the world existing only as a function of the West, as the Other.

The post-Soviet world as represented in *Eastern Drift* does not give birth to any values and subjectivities. Its only possibility is to wait until, in the course of time, the backwardness will be overcome and, eventually, Western values adopted. By internalizing the Western outlook and picturing Eastern European identity as marginal and backward (from the point of view of Western civilization), chaotic, brutal, and devalued (i.e., lacking Western values, which means lacking *any* values at all), Bartas and his team preserve a sense of irreducible distance between the two poles of Eurasia. Referring to Said again, it can be said that this film maintains the situation in which the West European remains the one who establishes value criteria and subjectivity, even (or especially) in cases where the East European is allowed to speak for himself, when he is recognized, financed, and admitted to the festivals.[21]

The scanty Lithuanian criticism of Bartas's film and some remarks by Russian critics notice and point out Bartas's turn from the auteur position towards genre film (choosing the framework of criminal drama) and the growth of the importance of dialogue (in comparison with Bartas's earlier, almost mute, films). The offense against auteurism in *Eastern Drift* was judged differently, although acknowledged primarily as a conscious turn towards popular film. However, the popular direction of the new film

[20] *Three Days* (1991) and *The Corridor* (1994), early films by Bartas, also focus on Eastern European reality. *The Corridor* presents deserted, black and white spaces of Vilnius from 1991, with their inhabitants submerged in a metaphorical dusk; the plot of *Three Days* takes place in exotic post-Soviet Kaliningrad (the film was shot in the old city and the harbor of Königsberg). However, the urban landscape represented by long shots in these films are characterized by a certain hypnotic beauty and the characters are authentic everyday philosophers of this geographical region, who have experienced a shocking clash with history, rather than Eastern European gangsters.

[21] Said, *Orientalism*, 229.

by Bartas is not based on the idea of "satisfying the needs of the anonymous multitude," pointed out by Kracauer, which is supposed to determine the national character of film culture. Rather, we see here a case in which the director is taking into account, not the anonymous national multitude, but rather a wider international public, which is why the construction of polemical representations recognizable to the local public is not the aim of this film.

Once again, we are presented with exotic rather than recognizable characters and situations – an ordinary Lithuanian filmgoer does not confront prostitution and criminal rage more often than any other European. It is possible that the reality constructed on the screen may correspond with the expectations of the local spectator (as he or she can also be certain that "we" Eastern Europeans are substantially inferior to the West), yet it is obvious that this mimic reality does not provoke any discussion, since it does not produce any familiar outlines of "our" reality, nor any complex of internal issues or conflict of values (there just are no values) that would serve as a basis for discussion. It is a film that is able to produce only a negative popular identity.

How to make a well-made movie: Tadas Blinda. The Legend is Born

My next example, *Tadas Blinda. The Legend Is Born* (2011), is exactly the opposite. After the President of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė, had attended one of its showings, director Donatas Ulvydas commented:

> Since the very start and until now, we declare that we have made this film for the people of Lithuania. This is why we are very sensitive to and interested in the opinion of every viewer. For two weeks now, the film has attracted full theaters, and many people, after seeing the film, write to us that it made them once more fall in love with Lithuania. This is the most precious compliment to us. We think it is extremely important to work for our own country, evoke patriotism, and prove that Lithuanians are a nation of fighters.[22]

[22] "Dalia Grybauskaitė", lines 13-17.

After seeing the film, the president herself described it is an important contribution to the development of patriotism and love for the motherland for the younger generation.[23]

The film, about a legendary Lithuanian outlaw of the nineteenth century, is the latest production in a series of works (including a play and a number of stagings, a film scenario, a novel, a musical, and most famously, a four-part TV film made in 1973) about the life of Blinda and his gang, who fought against the oppression of Lithuanian peasants by local noblemen or Russian czarist officials (the identification of the real enemy of Blinda was a political matter and differed in each historical period). Consequently, the film by Ulvydas was primarily seen as an attempt to revive the popular hero for a new generation (although numerous discussions took place in the press and on the Internet questioning whether the character of Blinda actually deserves revival). On the other hand, the film is important, not only as a remake of a narrative about a controversial criminal figure, but also as an unprecedented case of the commercial success of the local film industry, attained through mass publicity and new distribution strategies. The film was advertised from the start as the production of a new generation in national film that would eventually meet the Hollywood standard. Hollywood strategies and standards were not only used in the production stage, but also in marketing and distribution (the trailer for the film was produced by foreign professionals and the distribution applied a blockbuster strategy, based on market saturation, which is quite unusual for national films, because they are most often distributed only on the art house scale).

However, the blockbuster mentality reflected in the production and distribution of the film, of which the producers boast, also make it quite ambivalent and directly determines the lack of the logic of historical reality in its screen representations. First, contrary to the auteur cinematographic language

[23] Pipinytė, "Ką žiūri prezidentai," lines 29-30. The film critic notes that the director of *Tadas Blinda* was also the author of the documentary film about the president broadcast during her election campaign.

of Šarūnas Bartas, *Tadas Blinda* evidently aims at popular identity by laying bare its own entertainment and genre nature: the director, Donatas Ulvydas, is the author of numerous musical video clips and advertisements; the actor who portrays Blinda, Mantas Jankavičius, is a Lithuanian popular music star; and new marketing and publicity strategies were used to get the attention of the press. However, who are this public, about whose popular support the producers and distributors of the film are so troubled? The public statements about the patriotic value of the film, going so far as to involve the highest political leaders of the country, makes one presume that the broad addressee of the film is the national community. This is also supported by the public discussion accompanying the film about the authenticity of the figure of Blinda as a national hero. On the other hand, the producers of the film also pointed out that, contrary to the traditional art house trend in Lithuanian film, *Blinda* is aiming at a wider audience of consumers of the entertainment industry (represented globally by Hollywood), the same audience that flooded the theaters at the time to see James Cameron's *Avatar*. Even supposing that most people belong to both audiences (and their mutual relationship is not necessarily antagonistic; for in fact, in most cases, they can be perfectly reconciled) the interests behind choosing between a Lithuanian film or a Hollywood blockbuster can be quite different, and there is no reason to think that the consumer who has chosen to see a Lithuanian film is expecting to satisfy exactly the same needs that were, until now, perfectly well satisfied by the Hollywood productions dominating Lithuanian theaters.[24]

Although it seems that, according to the film's authors, the only way to make a popular well-made movie that would attract the Lithuanian public is to follow the Hollywood blockbuster model, this same model, as the critics point out, is not without shortcomings determined by its specific economic aims. For instance, according to the article "Creative Clusters

[24] It has to be noted that the secret of the film's financial success was not fast-travelling word-of-mouth information about the good qualities of the film, but rather market saturation and especially aggressive and wide-spread publicity.

and Governance: The Dominance of the Hollywood Film Cluster" by Laura Hypponen and Lisa de Propris, in Hollywood, where film is defined solely as a commodity intended for the global market and produced by conglomerate-owned studios, the creative work is absolutely limited and controlled by marketing and consequently produces only "recycled creativity,"[25] seeing innovation as an unnecessary risk. Also, by trying to satisfy miscellaneous American audiences and exporting its productions globally, Hollywood has to distill "a *culture-neutral* set of values, ideals, social norms, and behaviors that transcends cultural specificities."[26] As Mike Wayne points out in the introduction to *Understanding Film: Marxist Perspectives*, even in cases where a film uses non-American narratives, heroes, and folklore, the Hollywood model neutralizes them, removing any controversial or locally specific elements and fitting the film into a standard and universalized genre format that accords with corporate interests.[27]

Second, although the film producers were systematically aiming at popularizing the history of nineteenth-century czarist Lithuania and creating a contemporary, post-Soviet reinterpretation of the myth of Tadas Blinda (through the use of popular actors and music stars, a soundtrack by the hip-hop group G&G Sindikatas, contemporary cinematic language characterized by fast cuts and high visual quality, and dialogue that includes youth slang and catchwords coming from popular culture), the film consistently avoids any reference to the issue obviously present in the narrative of Blinda, namely the issue of class and social inequality.

Although corruption, poverty emigration, social isolation, the progressive tax, the standard of living, and similar questions never disappear from the pages of popular newspapers, political TV debates, and election campaigns, and are always on the horizon of the popular media, the new *Tadas Blinda* (the Lithuanian equivalent of Robin Hood, Ned Kelly, Jesse James, Juro Janosik, Yemelyan Pugachev, and other noble

[25] Hypponen, "Creative," 275.
[26] Ibid., 279.
[27] Wayne, "Introduction," 23-24.

criminals) eludes these issues, turning towards more secure, but also much less publicly exploited and popular ideas of national identity and liberalization from the colonial powers – ideas, in other words, that were relevant twenty years ago. For example, the film points out that the social difference between the former serfs, belonging to the lowest social position (that of Blinda) and the local Lithuanian noblemen is unimportant: it is obvious in the smooth love story of Blinda and the landlord's daughter, Kristina, and in the final reunion of the nobleman Gruinius with the bandits against foreign czarist rule. For the contemporary Lithuanian audience, the film can only be a reassurance that today the horrible position of the serfs and peasants, their exploitation and bad treatment, is a thing of the past and cannot be in any way repeated (because Lithuania is now independent and people are no longer publicly whipped, etc.)

It is interesting, as the researcher of the Blinda mythology, Tomas Balkelis, points out in his article "The Myth of Tadas Blinda,"[28] that in contemporary Lithuania this figure still represents "anarchic freedom and unfocused 'popular justice,'"[29] understood as social revenge and disappointment with the political elite. Naturally, this interpretation of the myth in contemporary Lithuania is most often used by politicians of the populist tendency (like Rolandas Paksas, Vytautas Šustauskas, or even the millionaire of Slavonic origin Viktoras Uspaskich), who usually identify with the legendary justice fighter and are supported by radical groups in society and the rural electorate.[30] It is possible that the producers of the film, who saw as their target audience the urban middle class and youth, were trying to dissociate themselves from such politically radical and populist discourse; however, the question of why this hero was chosen soon comes up again.

The new Tadas Blinda is a castrated figure: he is not allowed to be radical (due to the negative political associations that do not match well with the consumerist attitudes of the

[28] For an English presentation of the research see: Balkelis, Tomas, "Social Banditry and Nation-Making: the Myth of a Lithuanian Robber," in *Past and Present*, Volume 198, issue 1, November 2012.

[29] Balkelis, "Tado Blindos mitas," 90.

[30] Ibid., 89-90.

target group of the film), and yet, at the same time, he is expected to remain a mythological hero. This ambiguity is obvious in the film in its attempt to cover the empty content of a narrative devoid of any energy with beautiful landscapes, uniforms, and attractive actors. Turning away from reality (not only by choosing the legend over historical drama, but also by neutralizing any possible connotations with contemporary social reality), the producers of *Tadas Blinda* do not succeed in creating a polemical perspective. Instead, they turn towards Hollywood-like productions that are plentiful in Lithuanian theaters anyway. And, more importantly, they extinguish any social energy the story may have and the possibility of recognizing contemporary reality in the heroes and their fight. In fact, the only element of the film that maintains a certain energy is the text of the soundtrack by the hip-hop group G&G Sindikatas. However, without the cinematographic context, it is only a collection of vague slogans.

Conclusion

The idea that film is an important part of national culture may seem predictable and worn out. However, I am not referring here to the usual arguments involving "national identity" or representations of the country. Rather, it is important to note that the vitality of the statement is based on the idea of the importance of mastering media technologies, like film, as a way to construct a polemical field in society out of fictional dramas, narratives, and styles.

In contrast to Kracauer, who related cinematic representations to a national psyche (and was criticized for that, since nations are not individuals), today we could say that the very representations construct the nation as a subject of local public sociopolitical and economic strategies. The lack of skills in mastering new media languages and technologies, or just in mimicking the representations of other societies, means not so much the inability to reflect, but rather a failure to construct a popular identity.

The relation of film culture (and its underdevelopment) in Lithuania to the (miscarriages of) democratic procedures, public policy, and civil order during the post-Soviet period is

much too broad a subject for this article. However, it is obvious that, so far, Lithuanian national film is not participating in the popular negotiation of major social issues.

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Exploring New Territories, Creating New Languages: Theater in Lithuania and Latvia after the Turn of the Millennium

VALDA ČAKARE

Before the turn of the twenty-first century, one of the most exciting experiences for Latvian theatergoers and critics was regular pilgrimages to Lithuania. But despite the fact that, by the end of the last decade of the twentieth century, Latvian theaters seemed to have recovered from the deep economic and spiritual crisis that had emptied the auditoriums between 1991 and 1993, the viability of new artistic ideas was still fairly small. Unlike Latvia, Lithuania achieved a reputation as a country where theater thrives. Lithuanian stage directors had courage and an interest in analyzing sociocultural processes, reexamining national narratives and myths, challenging the existing modes of representation, and developing new staging strategies.

The idea of the stage director as auteur, the primary author of a performance, which appeared at the very beginnings of the modern tradition of directing, was successfully implemented by the best Lithuanian stage directors across generations: Eimuntas Nekrošius, Jonas Vaitkus, Rimas Tuminas, Oskaras Koršunovas, Gintaras Varnas, and Cezaris Graužinis.

It was Eimuntas Nekrošius whose productions attracted particular attention from Latvian audiences beginning in the 1980s. Nekrošius offered a highly emotional and visual theater, grounded in a series of powerful images and concentrated on

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the universal themes of life and death. He succeeded in creating visual and verbal metaphors that were evocative of Lithuanian culture and his personal experience, but also accessible to culturally diverse audiences. Nekrošius's art inspired multiple interpretations and was widely discussed in the Latvian theater press.

It has been noted by Latvian theater scholars that Nekrošius draws on four main sources: the harmonious universalism of a world outlook based on Lithuanian folklore and mythology, which makes his productions abound in folkloric and mythological symbols that contain globally-valid meanings; Catholic mysticism, with its belief in eternal life and resurrection of the soul; Russian culture, the influence of which can be traced in two aspects – his excellent knowledge of Russian literature, resulting in original metaphysical interpretations, and a combination of Stanislavskyan psychological realism with Meyerhold's and Vakhtangov's use of the grotesque in actors' work; and Polish culture – like the Polish romanticists, Nekrošius pays attention to dreams or premonitions and makes use of the form of the mystery play.[1]

However, alongside the theater scholars' focus on performance style and its relation to national and globally valid themes, there exists a popular view that the power and self-sufficiency of Nekrošius's art (in a broader sense – all Lithuanian theater, which Nekrošius stood for) was due, to a certain extent, to Lithuania's heroic past. Mindaugas, the medieval unifier of feudal Lithuania, established a strong centrally-governed state capable of fighting off Teutonic invaders in the early thirteenth century, and Lithuania retained its independence. To underscore, this view contained a hint that Latvia lacked the experience of being a powerful state, and that was one reason why it had not been able to establish a tradition of an influential stage director and evolve an original style of directing in the theater arts.

The turn of the millennium gave Latvian theater an added charge of energy. First, Alvis Hermanis, the artistic director

[1] Radzobe, "Eimunts Nekrošus," 580.

of the New Riga Theater, came to international notice, and the opportunity to share their national identity in an international arena augmented the self-esteem of the Latvians. Second, a new generation of directors entered the Latvian theaters.

At the core of Hermanis's success was an understanding of the manner in which theater makes an impact on the audience. Hermanis's performances could be perceived as stories about people's lives. However, they could also be perceived as stories about the theater, since the director was more interested, not in people's lives as such, but in how and from what these lives were constructed in the theater. Hermanis did not pretend that his performances were pieces of reality; he did not hide behind the "fourth wall," as if there were no spectators in the theater. The director made spectators look at themselves while watching the performance, or remember something that had never happened. In Hermanis's performances, actors filled the space with fictitious characters and events from both collective memories about the past and the lyrics of songs and films; there were also elements, *mise-en-scènes,* and props taken from the director's former productions. Under the cover of anthropological experiments, Hermanis obviously did what he liked best – studied theater resources. This study often resulted in a combination of seemingly incompatible features – the psychologism akin to Stanislavsky, based on the actors' emotional memory and striving for authenticity of environment; emphatic theatricality, with the characteristic rejection of the fourth wall in the style of Brecht; and Artaud's suggestive impact on the individual and collective subconscious of the spectators.

As to the young directors, they were free from biases with regard to the diverse forms of theater funding and management in conditions of economic globalization, and – equally important – they gave preference to the freedom of artistic expression and experiment rather than the security provided by a repertory theater subsidized by the state. Mārtiņš Eihe, one of the most talented graduates of the Latvian Academy of Culture, was welcomed as a director in several repertory theaters, but after working in Liepāja and Valmiera for a short period of

time, he set up his own project and called it NoMadI. As the title – which can be read both as *nomadi* (nomads) and "I am not mad" – implies, the content of the project means "wandering in the fields of culture" – producing theater performances, film shows, and exhibitions. Apart from that, Mārtiņš Eihe continued staging performances at independent theaters, such as Dirty Deal Teatro and Ģertrūde Street Theater, or accepted the invitations of repertory theaters to cooperate with them as a guest director.

Latvian theater makers seemed to have caught up with Lithuanian theater in terms of artistic expression as well. Jurgita Staniškytė points out that the emerging "new language" of contemporary Lithuanian theater is closely linked with its self-reflexive character, the redefinition of the role of text in the performance, and the use of the actor's body as a culturally coded sign.[2] In general, the same could be said about Latvian theater. However, it might be interesting to recognize that, despite the fact that the stage directors of Lithuania and Latvia share common modes of expression and representational devices conditioned by a similar socioeconomic situation, the hegemonic values of Lithuanian and Latvian theater differ.

This statement can be exemplified by two interpretations of Gogol's *The Government Inspector,* which premièred within an interval of one year – a production by Rimas Tuminas at Vilnius Small Theater in 2001 and Alvis Hermanis's version at the New Riga Theater in 2002. In May 2002, during the Days of Lithuanian Culture in Riga, both readings of the play were performed on the premises of the New Riga Theater. Setting them side by side in time and space produced a remarkable effect, since preconditions were created, not only for the examination of similarities and differences of two novel *mise-en-scènes,* but also for the reconsideration of the dominating aesthetic and ideological views of the two theater cultures.

It was obvious that in terms of the world scene, both productions form an emblematic pair: the vast, eternal, vertical

2 Staniškytė, "Rewriting the Theater Tradition," 83.

dimension of the Lithuanian performance as opposed to the spatially limited, mundane, horizontal aspect prevailing in the Latvian version.

In the Lithuanian production, the space is open. Beams of light slowly make dust glitter in the black above the stage. In the opening scene, the stage is immersed in darkness, while the actors, as the citizens of town N. wrapped in fur coats, are shifting from one foot to the other in the middle of nowhere. Whatever this place is, it has been deserted by God. It is a world in deadlock, struck by crisis. The vast open space creates a feeling of permanent danger, as if we were on a battlefield where a fight with an enemy or natural forces is expected. Or else the stage evokes associations with a way station or a crossroad – a place of passage to sacred space, evoking the significance of the ancient tradition of placing altars or funeral urns at crossroads. The set designer, Adomas Jacovskis, emphasizes the presence of the sacred element by marking two vertical lines in the otherwise empty space – a solitary milestone on the left side of the stage and a church tower in the background. The vertical dimension is also accentuated by the stylizations of orthodox chants composed by Faustas Latėnas. They rise and solemnly fill the space to evaporate into the universe.

The aesthetics of Hermanis's production brings up associations with the New Objectivism of the 1930s. Contrary to the early forms of modernism, which rejected the genuineness of the real world and were looking for more unreal ways of showing the true, genuine world, New Objectivism dealt with the depiction of the real world, emphasizing its fictitiousness, i.e., depicting unreal things exactly according to the pattern of real objects. Hence the emphatic realism: concentrated colors, plastic expressiveness, and an exaggeratedly careful reproduction of details.

The environment is precise to the degree of being grotesque: the kitchen of a Soviet canteen with rattling cash registers, abacuses, greasy aluminum spoons, ugly blue walls, the smell of onion, and fat-upholstered cooks with ruddy faces; a latrine with dilapidated walls; a shabby hotel room with the

tapestry depicting Shishkin's irksome bears on the wall. In Hermanis's production, the closed space helps the citizens of town N. maintain the unity of a corrupt society. It creates a refuge, an island of safety that can be threatened only by evil news from the outside.

The inhabitants of town N. are presented as butterballs, muffled in layers of porolone,[3] their physical thickness making their mental obesity visible. The polyurethane coat of fat is the body of the character the actor's body is wrapped in. To a certain extent, Hermanis has created a visual inversion of the definition of theater proposed by Eric Bentley: a situation is theatrical if A pretends to be B and C looks on.[4] Here, C looks at A, but sees B. The actor's body becomes transparent and allows the audience to see the body of the character portrayed. However, in *The Government Inspector,* the audience's attention is focused on the compound nature of the actor's body (animate + inorganic, synthetic); the image of the body is a rejection of the ideal body. The narrow-minded potbellies wrapped up in porolone flesh, which visualizes mental obesity, are extremely satisfied with their lives. They move to and fro between a canteen and a lavatory, and control the situation along this route perfectly. The prospect of losing their welfare is certainly frightening, but the fear can be mastered if one takes action and outpaces the course of events.

In the Lithuanian production, fear has quite a metaphysical character. The citizens are reminiscent of a monolithic group of comrades-in-arms who stand shoulder to shoulder facing an invisible enemy. They are waiting for the government inspector as the big unknown; like archaic societies, they attribute evil of a mysterious origin to the notion of "the Other." The behavior of the citizens indicates that metaphysical fear is not only caused by darkness; it creates darkness by itself. Cause and effect exchange places – it is not danger that arouses fear; it is fear that evokes danger. The object of fear is formed by gossip and anonymous rumors, which make the atmosphere of fear

3 Ed. note: A laminated polyurethane film reinforced with textile.
4 Bentley, *The Life of the Drama,* 150.

possible. Tuminas portrays a dismal and aggressive community that shapes their morbid dread by detecting dissidents and taking the law in their own hands.

The hotel staff is careless in rendering service to the inspector? – the heads of the negligent employees are immediately cut off with a giant axe. Who was the first to spread the rumor that Khlestakov is a government inspector? Bobchinsky and Dobchinsky? – the perpetrators are dragged to the scaffold without delay. Tuminas does not politicize specifically, although it is possible to recognize a reference to the political persecution of citizens carried out by authorities in the Soviet era. The director's main concern is the very mechanism of creating an atmosphere of overwhelming fear. His focus on the plight of the individual, as well as the whole community, in very specific circumstances evokes particular meaning, not only regionally, within post-Soviet countries, but within the broader human dimension as well.

The vengeance that befalls the citizens for their sins is also essentially different in both productions. In the Latvian version, they prepare their own downfall by finding a suitable candidate and making him blossom as a first-rate inspector in their own fashion. Throughout the performance, two live hens and a rooster make a constant bustle downstage. They draw attention to the unmistakable similarity between the fat citizens and the birds that would never overtop their given perch in the henhouse. After falling into the hands of the fatties, Khlestakov acquires their habits and lifestyle, and this change is reflected in his visual image. At the finale of the play, he returns as a true government inspector, wearing the mask of a rooster and ready to hold his schoolmasters up to ridicule.

In the Lithuanian version, the citizens are punished by an unearthly power. Khlestakov arrives in town N. from some unknown place. He appears on stage on top of an iron bunk bed of strange construction, dragged by his servant Osip. There he squats in his long white shirt, trembling and gripping a bowl of watery soup in his hands. When the fatal mistake of the citizens comes to light, Tuminas strikes them with a deluge – water

starts pouring down from above, and everyone seeks refuge on an improvised float made by pushing stools together. The stools, however, are soon transformed into a scaffold for the execution of the perpetrators. The small church Bobchinsky attempted to erect from white bricks, with an onion for a cupola, falls to pieces; whereas the big temple starts to sway and finally begins to dance. Unlike Hermanis, Tuminas succeeds in revealing the phantasmagoric dimension of Gogol's play – with the mysteriously deterrent atmosphere, with a puppet that starts wriggling in a clownish dance when Khlestakov leaves, and with the apocalypse at the end of the performance.

Alongside the many differences, there is one aspect in which Hermanis and Tuminas think alike. Both of them interpret Khlestakov as an infantile creature, an unprotected scared child who is longing to return to the womb. In Hermanis's production, Vilis Daudziņš's meager Khlestakov, dotted with pubescent pimples, seeks shelter with Andris Keišs's stately Osip, who dandles Khlestakov on his knee like a baby. In Tuminas's version, Arūnas Sakalauskas's Khlestakov feels as ill at ease as a boy who has to recite a poem standing in front of the Christmas tree, but cannot remember the text. The repertoire of Arūnas Sakalauskas's means of expression is surprisingly vast. However, there is one characteristic gesture among them that designates a range of contradictory feelings. Every now and then, Khlestakov draws a huge circle in the air, as if marking out the line of a nonexistent belly or demonstrating something big and bulky. This is what fishermen or hunters do when they tell tall stories, knowing that no one is going to believe them.

It seems that both directors make Khlestakov look childish for more than just the sake of contrast, to emphasize the blindness and narrow mindedness of those waiting for the government inspector. A character may signify many different things: death, a just sentence, or something as capacious as Becket's Godot. In both productions, a community overpowered by fear selects the most unprotected individuals from among their members to raise them to the position of the enemy. A child is a very appropriate candidate for this purpose. At the same time,

a child designates the future of the community. In the Latvian production, this future repeats the past; in the Lithuanian version, it brings about the apocalypse.

Both Hermanis and Tuminas have staged *The Government Inspector* as a tragicomedy, but there is more comedy than tragedy in Hermanis's production, and more tragedy than comedy in Tuminas's. The verticality of the Lithuanian production virtually meets the horizontality of the Latvian performance, creating a point of intersection – a symbolic equivalent to the reality of crucifixion, which is emblematic of suffering and the promise of resurrection.

So far, the examples discussed focus on two particular productions and the distinctive style of their directors. However, beyond these very concrete instances, there is an urge to find some essential quality of expression characteristic of Lithuanian and Latvian theater generally. The ten years that have passed since the two productions of *The Government Inspector* testify to the fact that both theaters have undergone considerable change, developing local versions of contemporary cultural forms. The paradigm shifts that started in the last decades of the twentieth century have developed a theater that is much more self-conscious, drawing attention to the constructedness of the theatrical performance, utilizing images and techniques that are unexpected and innovative, and delighting in the eclectic. Both Latvian and Lithuanian stage directors are aware of what E. Fischer-Lichte calls the transformative power of performance: theater's potential community building power – the creation of a community out of actors and spectators based on their physical copresence.[5] According to E. Fischer-Lichte, it plays a key role in generating the feedback loop.

To this end, a variety of strategies have been developed. To give but one example, a particular spatial arrangement may be used in different ways to release unifying energies. In *Atviras ratas* (The Open Circle) by Aidas Giniotis and *Jūlijas jaunkundze* (Miss Julie) by Vladislavs Nastavševs, the acting space is an

[5] Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 51.

arena surrounded by the seats of the audience. In *Atviras ratas*, the actors use the performance area as a memory space; they fill it with images from their biographical stories, encouraging the spectators to link what they see to what they themselves have seen and done. In *Jūlijas jaunkundze*, the playing area is used as a battlefield. The actors' stage behavior is extremely physical and aggressive, the tensions and relaxations that compose their motion, kinesthetically, make the spectators' bodies feel what the actors' bodies are feeling, thus uniting both actors and spectators in the experience of fundamental human emotions.

However, the dominating mood of the community based on bodily copresence continues to differ in Lithuania and Latvia. In the Latvian productions, renegotiating the relationship with memory and the past is characterized not only by a self-ironical shattering of cultural myths, but, first and foremost, by a particular nostalgia for lost cultural integrity, stable sources of identity, and the system of values and order within which human life acquires meaning. Nostalgia overshadows even those performances that attempt to establish a strong present-day perspective by reflecting today's fragmented and constantly changing world. An example is *Melnais piens* (Black Milk), Hermanis's apocalypse, where vanishing rural life stands for a cosmos that turns into chaos.

Melnais piens is a devised performance based on the stories of real people and structured as a journey into the past. Six actresses and one actor alternately represent their own selves and fictitious characters – either human beings, or cows and a bull. This is not a random choice: in Latvian folklore, the cow is associated with the gentleness of a mother's care and life-giving milk. Broadly speaking, the image of the cow helps Hermanis shape the contours of Latvian identity, which is threatened by globalization. The white wholesome milk has turned black. Black means decay and pollution, and moreover, encompasses the terrors of nonexistence. The old homesteads are disappearing; there are almost no people left; the cows are slaughtered. Step by step, the performance develops into a metaphor for a dissolving human society.

Lithuanian theater seems to deal with similar problems and use similar staging strategies. The story Oskaras Koršunovas evolves in his interpretation of Marius Ivaškevičius's *Išvarymas* (Expulsion) – a play depicting the life of Lithuanian economic emigrants in London – is no less cruel than that created by Hermanis, and the message of losing one's homeland is as painful as that of *Melnais piens.* However, images and techniques that have become a hallmark of Koršunovas's distinctive directing style – a fragmented structure, constant switching from the present to the past and the future, the expansion of space with the help of simultaneous actions and video projections, Brechtian comments and demonstrations of the constructedness of the stage reality, to mention just a few – contrary to the leading stage directors of Latvia, are not used to demonstrate and analyze the irreversible disintegration of the life of the nation, but to reevaluate contemporary experience and project the shape of a future society.

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Kaunas Architecture in Wood

NIJOLĖ LUKŠIONYTĖ

Numerous wooden buildings, such as small manor and garden estate houses, villas, cottages, summer homes, residential rental units, and military and railway complexes, have survived in Kaunas. Representative buildings of all the different types need to be preserved in each area, because they are exceptional in conveying local identity. This article aims to reveal the diversity of wooden architecture in Kaunas and to describe the cultural value of these buildings.

Although most wooden houses were built during the first half of the twentieth century, some date to before the end of the nineteenth. Timber is a relatively inexpensive building material, but it is not as durable as brick. Wooden homes deteriorate more quickly and face a greater danger from fire, especially in densely built areas. The oldest surviving wooden buildings are located on the edges of the historic city center and were built by the more affluent residents. The poorer strata of society were concentrated in the southern district of Šančiai and on the right bank of the Neris River, in Vilijampolė. Wooden buildings were also built in Žaliakalnis, which is situated on the upper terrace of the city, as well as in Panemunė, an area zoned for recreation. Žaliakalnis was considered a prestigious district, where administrative workers and military officers, intellectuals, and those in the creative arts resided. Unlike other areas

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of the city, only Lithuanians lived in this district. Houses were built on spacious lots with gardens, and wooden dwellings of many types were built there: traditional garden homes, with and without mezzanines; asymmetric villas; and two-story buildings intended for rental flats. All wooden houses were designed by professional architects or technicians and reviewed by the municipal buildings division in advance of construction.

Wooden houses and features of their construction and style

Ethnic traditions and professional architectural solutions were so intertwined in the nineteenth century that it is difficult to divide buildings into groups according to their formal architectural style. The buildings in the city generally have no distinct stylistic traits; therefore, they could appropriately be termed "local," prior to researching the more definitive tendencies they reflect. The concept of vernacular architecture, as defined by the *ICOMOS Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage* (1999), applies to this phenomenon as well.

Urban buildings in nineteenth-century Lithuania were constructed from hewn logs, and the external walls were planked with narrow boards placed vertically or horizontally. Roofs were covered with iron or tin sheets. The walls of the houses built during the interwar (1918-1939) period are either of log or timber frame construction, planked, and less decorated on the outside than the buildings constructed at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century.[1] The so-called Swiss Style, which was prevalent in other European countries,[2] was also part of the decorative design of Kaunas buildings. Sheets of roofing iron or clay tiles protected roofs during the interwar period.

Earliest examples

A look at the plan of Kaunas during the middle of the nineteenth century shows that the historic core of the city con-

1 Jurevičienė, "Medinė architektūra," 14.
2 Ross, "Architektura drewniana w polskich uzdrowiskach karpackich (1835-1914)."

sisted of numerous wooden houses. Residences, estate buildings, and outdoor stairways were constructed of wood, and fences were similarly equipped and erected. Unfortunately, only a few wooden buildings from that time have survived in Old Town. For instance, several one-story buildings still stand on M. Valančiaus Street, their rear facades facing the former Fish Market. The vaulted cellars of the wooden building at 9 M. Valančiaus have survived since the sixteenth century. Its structure, consisting of long, rough-hewn logs topped with a jerkinhead roof, was fashioned in the mid-nineteenth century and renovated in 1986. Buildings of this type, with high roofs and windows in six panes flanked by shutters, appeared in the provinces on the smaller estates of boyars.

As per the 1847 plan approved by the administration of Czarist Russia, Old Town was zoned for brick construction, and the construction of wooden residences was no longer permitted. The territory of Naujamiestis (New Town), which was a specific subdivision of streets planned in 1847, had several original farmsteads dating from as far back as the eighteenth century. The best-known was the since demolished Kartofliški Folwark Manor, near the present A. Mickevičiaus Street. Here Stanisław Dobrowolski, the chief officer of schools for the Kaunas Guberniya, commissioned a wooden house with a columned porch, which was completed about 1828. The residence, outbuilding, and wing formed a half-enclosed yard. The walls of the building were raised upon the vaulted half-cellar, with its kitchen and brewery; its jerkinhead roof is shingled in wood. Small manors in the classical style no longer exist in Kaunas. The last one, which stood at 30 Jonavos Street, was demolished a few years ago.

Another small manor is located at 4 K. Būgos Street. Built in 1850 for its owner, Barbora Matuševičienė, it has an elongated rectangular plan capped with a jerkinhead roof. The high foundation is made of stone and the walls are logs clad with boards. The windows, with six panes and shutters, have wide frames reminiscent of classical cornices. During the interwar period, it was remodeled into several rental apartments.

Demolished Kartofliški Folwark Manor (photograph from the collection of V. Chomanskis, around 1925)

Manor at 4 K. Būgos Street (photo by N. Lukšionytė, 2000)

Urban residential houses of the end of the nineteenth century

Homes on the regular blocks of Naujamiestis, facing the main streets, were required to be built in brick. Nonetheless, small wooden houses sprang up in the inner areas of the blocks

as well as at their edges (currently, K. Donelaičio and V. Putvinskio streets). They also predominated in the Karmelitai neighborhood, between Karo Ligoninės Street and the railway station. Because a home was built in wood did not mean the owner had limited resources to invest; it often simply reflected a preference for a traditionally-built abode. Owners would sometimes erect a two-story brick house along the street for rental purposes, and then build a wooden house in the rear yard for their own residence (such as the one located at 32a Laisvės Avenue). A good number of wooden, single-family homes from the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth centuries have survived in Naujamiestis. The asymmetrical ornamentation with a multitude of carvings, which is characteristic of villas, is nearly gone from the 1896 home owned by Aleksandras Makūnas at 43 Kęstučio Street. The largest group of wooden homes still surviving in Naujamiestis is on K. Donelaičio Street. The lots for houses at 7 and 11 belonged to Login Ščerbakov, a subcontractor for the military garrison's Orthodox Cathedral, and later to his son Fadej. The Ščerbakov family, who were members of the Old Believers Russian faith, acquired this land in 1895. The facades are clad with horizontal wooden boards and decorated with carvings reminiscent of crochet work, characteristic of Russian architecture. These carvings cover the foundation of the houses and the fascia and window cornices in several rows. The homes were built and decorated by master woodworkers from the Chernigov Guberniya. Three wooden houses stand next to them at 1, 1a and 5 K. Donelaičio Street. All of them were built around 1860 and belonged to Rudolf Marker toward the end of the nineteenth century. The house at 5 K. Donelaičio (1896) is distinguished by neoclassical forms applied in wood.

Wooden buildings from Czarist times can still be found everywhere along the edges of the city of Kaunas. A few remain in the Totorių outskirts (between the current streets of Birštono and I. Kanto). The foundation of the house on the corner at 5 D. Poškos Street (1910) is planked with vertical boards, while the walls are covered with horizontal siding. On the gables, the siding is laid out in a fir-tree pattern; an ornate band of pierced work runs under the cornice. The windows have six panes and are equipped with shutters.

Ščerbakov house at 7 K. Donelaičio Street (photo by I. Veliutė, 2009)

Marker house at 5 K. Donelaičio Street (photo by I. Veliutė, 2009)

The Jewish people who settled along the narrow pathways in Vilijampolė, between Jurbarko, Panerių, and Linkuvos streets, built modest homes containing small shops. The sides of some of them face the street (10, 14 and 47 Jurbarko Street), but the rear of others are towards the street (12, 27, 30, 43 and 52 Jurbarko). Their cottage roofs are covered in tin, and they lack mansards and mezzanines; their doors face the street directly; and the windows have shutters. There is an occasional

two-story building earmarked for rentals. Since construction is dense, the arched entrances face into the yards (25a and 49 Jurbarko Street). This does not occur in Žaliakalnis or other neighborhoods of the city.

The outskirts of Žemieji (Lower) Šančiai formed in 1862, when factories were established there. Laborers settled in the area after the railroad had been laid. The little streets that appeared along the shores of the Nemunas River were built up in stages, with wooden cottages on small lots. The earliest sprang up at the beginning of the twentieth century (117 A. Juozapavičiaus Prospect and 77 Kranto Avenue). Many, however, were built during the interwar period. Small, one-story garden cottages were the most widespread in Šančiai; some had open porches or verandas and window shutters (21 Mažeikių Street, 35 and 124 Kranto Avenue, 8 Sodo Street, 12 Kranto 2-oji Street and 18 Kranto 17-oji Street). The occasional home is more decorative, boasting a jerkinhead roof and elaborate carvings, such as those at 86 and 89 Kranto Avenue.

Houses for railway workers and military personnel

It is natural that tracery in the characteristic Russian Style was adapted to the buildings of the military fortress in Kaunas. Large barracks and smaller houses containing flats for officers in the military site in Šančiai (1895-1899) were built of red brick, while the oblong, one-story houses for noncommissioned officers were of wood. Low hip roofs were covered with roofing iron, and the friezes and bases of the walls were covered in carved bands (15, 40 A. Juozapavičiaus Prospect and other locations). Variations of these decorations were typical in military architecture. The military houses in the Freda neighborhood are smaller, and some display Swiss Style motifs (46 Lakūnų Highway). The houses built close to the railway station for railway employees at the end of the nineteenth century display a modified Russian Style decoration. Russian Style carvings and window trim are matched with the projecting molded ends of the rafters and interlocked cross trusses in the gables, characteristic of the Swiss Style (17 Tunelio Street; 124c, 125, 131 A. Juozapavičiaus Prospect).

Railway worker's house on A. Juozapavičiaus Prospect (photo by N. Lukšionytė, 2012)

Sergeant's house on A. Juozapavičiaus Prospect (photo by I. Veliutė, 2009)

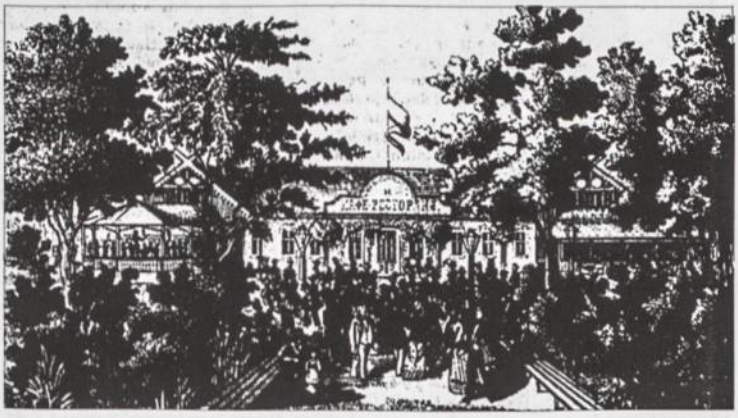
Quite frequently, wooden buildings with several apartments earmarked for rental units were built. A residential facility for railway workers was erected at 17 Tunelio Street by Gustav Lechel, the supervisor of railway buildings on the St. Petersburg-Warsaw line, in 1897-1899. The elongated symmetrical building was planned for six one-room rental units,

with the kitchens having private entrances off the porches, along with two more of the same type of unit on the mezzanine level. The house is generously decorated with Swiss Style elements – wide, molded window casings and decorative cornices resembling small shelves over the windows and framing the gables, porches, and verandas. Along what is currently A. Juozapavičiaus Prospect, homes were built for the employees of and laborers on the railway. These were of only one story, but lengthy (sufficient for several apartments), complete with porches decorated with pierced carvings (121 and 125 A. Juozapavičiaus Prospect). Although the buildings are similar to one another, they are not quite the same.

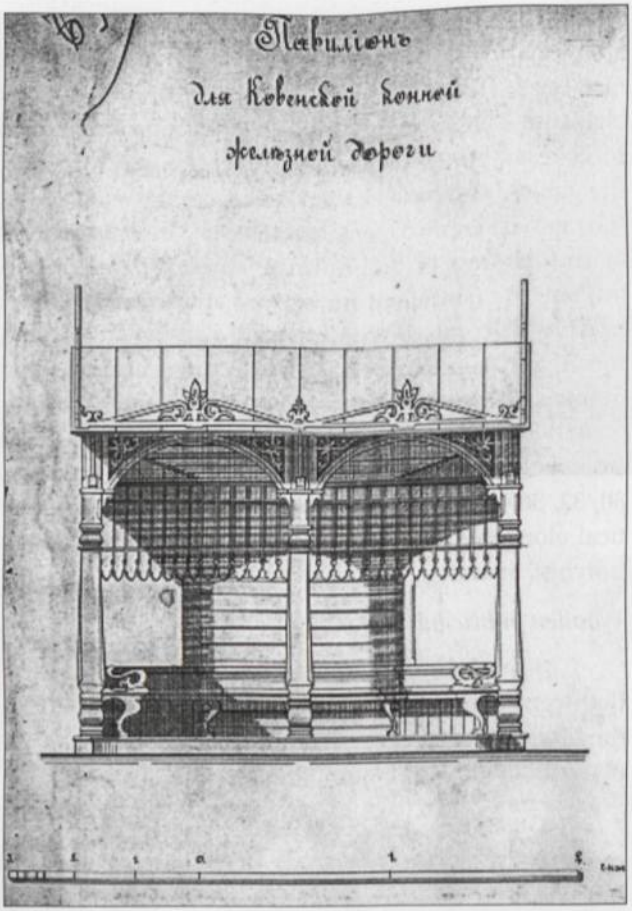
Between 1895 and 1899, wooden homes for noncommissioned officers in the military zone of Šančiai were built at 15, 30, 32, 36, and 40 A. Juozapavičiaus Prospect. These are identical elongated one-story buildings with metal roofs over the porches, as well as typical decoration.

Wooden public buildings

At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, various wooden structures related to entertainment and recreation were built within the urban environment of Kaunas. Unfortunately, with patrons' needs and level of



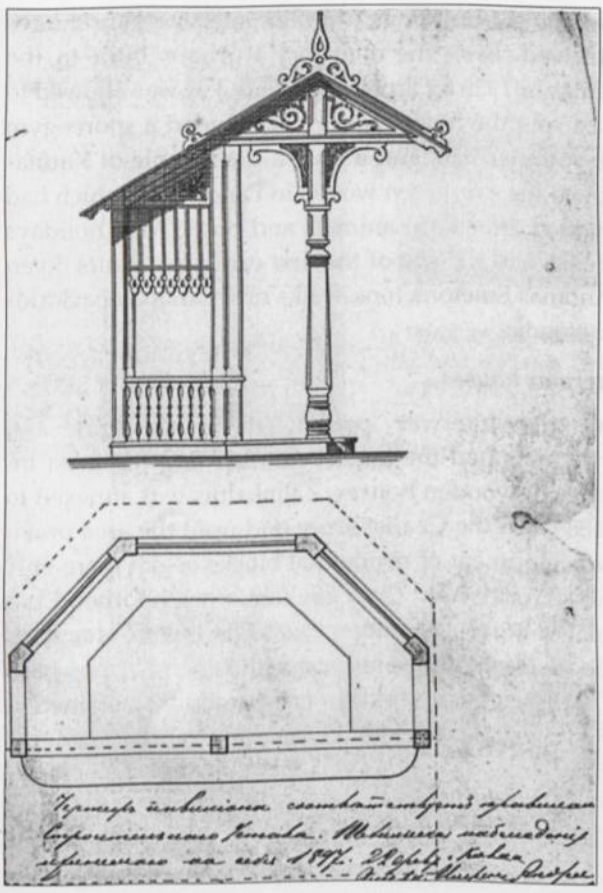
Wooden pavilion in the City Garden (demolished; from "Souvenir de Kovno," 1882)



Project design for passenger stops for the konkė, *from Kaunas County Archives, 1897*

comfort changing, they have all been reconstructed or demolished. We only know about these buildings from old photographs.

A splendid restaurant with an open terrace (1866) stood in the Municipal Garden (the locale of the current Music Theater). It was frequented by a colorful public that appreciated entertainment and dancing. In 1883, a wooden pavilion for concerts was built in this public garden; it had an elongated hall with



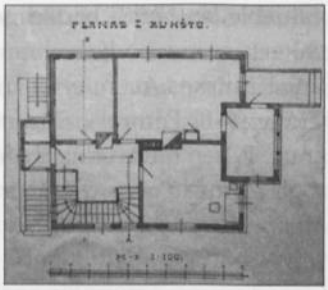
a stage and covered side galleries. A park designed for amusements and leisurely walks was established in Žaliakalnis in 1871. Its name was originally Petrovka or Petrovskaja gora, but in 1919 it was renamed Vytauto Park. It had a wooden buffet pavilion, a stage, tennis courts, and swings. A track for a horse-drawn tram (*konkė*) stretched across the entire city, from the railroad station to Rotušės Square. Wooden passenger stops for the tram were equipped and decorated with carved ornaments in 1897. None of these structures have survived.

Wooden public buildings from the interwar period have also not survived. Even the one-story Kurhaus built in the Panemunė Šilas in 1935 by architect S. Kudokas was allowed to deteriorate during the Soviet period. It included a sports gym for skiers, a summer hall, and a buffet. The people of Kaunas greatly enjoyed the evergreen woods in Panemunė, which had footpaths named after local animals and birds, May holidays with live music, and the site of the first camp for scouts. Even President Antanas Smetona took walks or went horseback riding in these woods.

Wooden interwar houses

During the interwar period, the Žaliakalnis and Panemunė districts had the largest number and the most interesting styles of wooden houses. Žaliakalnis was annexed to the city in 1889, but the Czarist army had used the area previously. The development of residential blocks began there only after the First World War. The Žaliakalnis neighborhood has been designated a protected area, due to its unique character. A historic locale near the Gėlių and Minties circles has been entered on the List of Cultural Properties and is maintained in accordance to the 2004 Rules on Protection. Another territory, listed in 2007, stretches from Perkūno Avenue to the Kauko Staircase. The City of Kaunas is currently preparing to declare it a cultural reserve.

The block next to Gėlių and Minties circles in Žaliakalnis, with its network of fanning streets and a planned landscape, appeared as a result of a grandiose 1923 plan for Kaunas. The ambitious city plan was designed by an engineer recruited from Copenhagen, M. Frandsen, and a Kaunas citizen, Antanas Jokimas, as per an order from the municipality. Although the project was unrealistic and utopian, it met with success in the empty plot of pasture land between Vydūno Avenue and Radvilėno Highway in Žaliakalnis, where garden cottages were built. The urban plan is reminiscent of those for a garden city. Here, however, each owner built in accordance to individual taste and means; there was no effort to achieve the stylistic



Project for the facade for the villa of Pranas Urbonas at 20 Žemaičių Street and first floor plan from the Kaunas County Archives, 1925

Villa of Antanas Jokimas at 17 Vydūnas Avenue (photo by K. Šilinytė, 2002)

integrity characteristic of garden cities in England and Germany. Additionally, some homes were built with several rental units. The buildings in this area were eighty percent wooden until 1940; about seventy percent of them survive today. Technically, it is impossible to save them all, although these modest wooden homes are the soul of this locale. Eleven of the more

valuable, authentic houses selected for protection represent architecture in wood: the homes at 7 and 20 I. Kraševskio Street, 6 V. Kudirkos Avenue, 45 J. Mateikos Street, 24 and 51 Minties Circle, 23 K. Petrausko Street, and 17, 49, 51 and 55 Vydūno Avenue. When renovating their exteriors, it is essential to recreate their forms in accord with surviving elements. There are other authentic wooden houses under protection, but more flexible regulations apply to them.[3]

The most popular garden homes in the Žaliakalnis area are one-story structures with tin cottage roofs. These are rectangular, single or duplex apartments. Some are raised with mezzanines and mansards, and others have glassed-in verandas. The open porches include shaped wooden columns. The occasional veranda features geometrically drawn window frames with colored glass panes. The shutters, cornices, chambranles, small pediments, pilasters, and pierced panels give the house its expressive style. The structures of the houses relate to Lithuanian ethnic tradition, but some of the decorative details were designed by professional architects, using simplified neoclassical, neo-Baroque, and Art Deco motifs. Villas were also built in asymmetrical compositions. One of the most impressive was a two-story villa designed by Vaclovas Michnevičius in 1925, which was owned by Pranas Urbonas. It was built on a slope of Žaliakalnis, at 20 Žemaičių Street. A turret with a dome, a curved pediment, and glazed verandas create its expressive style. Carved wooden elements, roof consoles, and frieze bands were used for decoration.

Neo-Baroque forms were used to style the villa at 17 Vydūno Avenue, which was designed by the engineer J. Andriūnas in 1924 and owned by Antanas Jokimas. At the time, this villa embodied the quest for a national style. (In the 1920s, Kaunas architects were obsessed with the idea of an original national style.)

Modernistic brick cottages appeared in Kaunas in the 1930s. They were two-story structures in a single mass with tile

[3] Lukšionytė-Tolvaišienė, "Kauno Žaliakalnio reglamentas."

roofs. Modernism is a less frequent style for wooden buildings; one example is the two-story cottage with a tiled roof at 51 Minties Circle, designed by the architectural technician J. Varneckis in 1935. The windows were large and wide, the siding horizontal, and there was no decoration at all.

House of Antanas Gedmantas at 44 Aukštaičių Street (photo by N. Lukšionytė, 2007)

The little streets running off Perkūno Avenue and the Kauko Staircase developed spontaneously in harmony with Ąžuolyno Park and the uneven contours of its slopes. The area near the Radio Station (by Perkūno Avenue and Vaižganto Street) is considered especially prestigious. This area, like Vydūno Avenue, was the residence of numerous artists, scientists, political activists, and military officers. Since rental apartments predominated between K. Petrausko Street and Kauko Avenue, the residents were less affluent. One way or another, during the interwar period, Žaliakalnis was ethnically homogenous – nearly all its residents were ethnic Lithuanians. Garden Style homes with yards, orchards, and gardens predominate there even today. Impressive villas are rare. There is a distinguished two-story home with a unique porch-terrace

at 44 Aukštaičių Street, built in 1927 at the initiative of Captain Antanas Gedmantas. At times, the wooden homes were stuccoed, for example, the house of the Daugvila family at 7 Kauko Avenue. This house was the home of folk artist Elžbieta Daugvilienė, who fashioned distinctive sculptures out of elm bark from 1925 to 1959.

Summer home at Gailutės Street 28 (photo by N. Lukšionytė, 2007)

When the area known as Aukštoji (Upper) Panemunė gained official status as a resort in 1933, a plan was drafted for a zone of summer homes and villas on A. Smetonos Avenue, Vaidilos, Pušų, Birutės, Vaidoto, Upelio, and Gailutės streets. This resort area also encompassed the village of Vičiūnai. The wooden summer homes in this resort were designed for the warm season only. There were mineral water and mud bath treatment centers and two beaches in service at the J. Basanavičiaus Šilas. Many of the common, one-story houses with mezzanines have survived in Panemunė. Some are graced with carved window casings and small veranda pediments (30 Upelio Street, 1920), others with ornate mezzanines (5 Vaidilos Street, 1933) and still

others with open porches and bay windows (75 A. Smetonos Avenue). The sizable, two-story summer homes are distinctive. The summer home at 28 Gailutės Street (1926) has hexagonal wings with cupolaed roofs. Similar wings frame the facade at 29 A. Smetonos Avenue (1928). Somewhat simpler two-story summer homes stand at 24 Birutės Street (1936) and 19 (1928) and 81 A. Smetonos Avenue (1932). There is a distinctive, asymmetric summer house with a small tower at 8 Vičiūnų Street (1933). Plain modernistic wooden cottages stand at 22 Birutės Street (1937) and 25 Gailutės Street (1937).

An original interwar villa with a small tower has survived in Linksmadvaris at 17 Sietyno Street (1935). The form of its mezzanine windows is unusual; the ends of the rafters, roof beams, window casings, and even the battens are profiled; the ridges of the roof are decorated with cresting; and the windows of the small tower have frames with elaborate drawings and carvings. There are instances where the traditions for small manors were followed – on Ąžuolų Hill, near the Art School, sculptor Juozas Zikaras selected the usual rectangular footprint for his house at 3 J. Zikaro Street (1933), complete with a studio workshop. It featured folding window shutters and a tiled jerkinhead roof.

The condition of Kaunas's wooden heritage and the difficulties of preservation

Neglected wooden buildings were demolished mercilessly during the Soviet years, and their demise continues even now. Today's neglected and deteriorated wooden houses can be said to be living their last days. Others are carelessly renovated: the decorative ornamentation removed; the profiled trim, roofing, and wall materials replaced, and plastic windows and doors added. The appropriate maintenance and restoration of wooden buildings is still not the norm in Lithuania. Owners are not interested, and there is a lack of woodworkers and architects sufficiently knowledgeable in the details of this craft. The restoration of wood features calls for reproduction of their original forms and elements, using the same materials and

finishes. New material can only be considered authentic when its type, structure, texture, and color correspond with the character of the original. In this way, although the reproduced parts are new and do not show signs of patina, the reconstruction is recognized as appropriate in terms of maintenance practice for safeguarding architectural heritage.[4] For example, following a fire in 2001, the granary of the Kurtuvėnai Manor was accurately reconstructed on the basis of old drawings with the help of this approach.

The originality and value of wooden architecture and the prospects for documentation

Wooden construction is a unique focus for the urban heritage of Kaunas: buildings made of wood reflect the professional architecture involved in the brick structures that followed and the transformed forms of ethnic architecture. Homes of wood were built on spacious lots surrounded by gardens and small orchards. The cultural traditions of the city, the village, and the manor intertwined in such garden homes and villas. Wood and brick construction blended into a natural, organic harmony in Kaunas during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

A database of Kaunas wooden architecture was begun in 2011 with the support of the Kaunas Municipality. It is available for use at this time through the website www.archimede.lt/. The 2012-2013 database development is sponsored by the Research Council of Lithuania. The historic structures are documented by a group of lecturers and Ph.D. and postgraduate students in the Art History Department, Faculty of Arts at Vytautas Magnus University. In this manner, the professional documentation of Kaunas's wooden architecture is being collected and shared. It is expected that this website will make information available to homeowners, district administrators, and municipalities, thereby gradually developing public understanding of the aesthetic value of wooden architecture. Expectations are that educational support will grow into a type

[4] Lukšionytė, "Miestų medinės architektūros išsaugojimo galimybės."

of public support group, helping people to share their knowledge and experience, and allow the formation of a community interested in the preservation of wooden houses.

Translated by Vijolė Arbas

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Lithuanian Cultural Politics: On the Move

INA PUKELYTĖ

For more than a decade, Lithuanian cultural policies were conceived as being inflexible and stuck between two systems: a pro-Soviet, or socialist one; and a pro-Western, or neoliberal one. Every effort by independent cultural operators to move towards a self-regulating market system was met by protests and discontent from established institutions. This was partly due to the transitional nature of the country at that time, when the move towards consumer economics and ideology was extremely rapid and society divided itself according to its understanding and attraction to a consumer life-style. Therefore, a unique postmodern condition was experienced, particularly permeated with ideology, in which competing models acted without any correspondence to the reality of the economic situation.[1]

In effect, this transitional situation is coming to an end, and a natural shift towards a new economic paradigm is taking place. The objective of this article is to define the new trajectories of cultural policies during the period from 2008 to 2012 and to evaluate its outcomes for a post-crisis society.

A significant move towards a new cultural paradigm in Lithuania was observable in 2009, one year after the parliamentary elections and the entrance of the Conservative Party into the governance of the country. In 2010, by an initiative of the president, Dalia Grybauskaitė, involving the preparation

1 Rubavičius, *Postmodernusis*, 99.

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of a guide for Lithuanian cultural policies, the Seimas adopted a document that sets a precedent based upon the new needs of Lithuanian consumer society and of the European Union in general.[2] By introducing the concepts of creative industries and the protection of author's rights into the document, a shift towards a new economic model, a creative one, was prioritized in Lithuania.[3]

However, this shift towards a new economic model is not always supported in everyday life. As many examples show, it is torn apart at the governmental (policy) level and at the operating (provision) level. At the governmental level, the model is confronted by ideological opposition: the agreement that culture should not serve ideological needs, but act as a catalyst to promote the most important freedom, the freedom to express one's opinion, has not yet been reached. Policy debates therefore center on exceptions and crises. For example, a measure to forbid a performance by the prominent Italian director Romeo Castelluci, *On the Concept of the Face of God's Son*, in Lithuania was initiated in the Seimas by members of the Conservative party on the 2nd and 3rd of October 2012.[4] This case illustrates the desperate attempts of certain conservatives to influence cultural processes at the political level, in spite of all the democratic pretensions they claim to have.

Declarations regarding ideological censorship are supported at an operational level by the segment of society that believes culture can still be divided into modern and postmodern, or in other words, into elite and mass culture, and that someone has the right to evaluate its sense and significance.[5] A sculpture by Vladas Urbanavičius, *The Tube*, conceived for Vilnius, a European Union Capital of Culture 2009, provoked numerous outcries from different strata of society. One segment of society, supported by local politicians, considered the

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2 Lietuvos respublikos kultūros ministras. *Lietuvos kultūros politikos kaitos.*

3 Howkins, *Kūrybos ekonomika*, 15-24.

4 Samoškaitė, "Pasipiktinusi konservatorė."

5 Horkheimer, *Apšvietos dialektika*, 217-159; Fiske, *Populiariosios kultūros*, 106-107.

sculpture offensive, and asked that it be demolished; another part considered it as provocative, proffering an invitation to reflect.

The reality is that, whichever ideology one declares in Lithuania, it ultimately serves the free market system agreed upon when entering the European Union. All the ideologies desire a culture that sells: the ideologies that get more attention in the mass media are presumed to be more successful than the others. The more controversial the story, the bigger the benefit for the mass media companies that nourish themselves on these ideological tensions, and they continue to multiply the stories until the public has had enough.

Cultural policy and government

Willingly or not, the postindustrial free market system penetrates Lithuania's governing mentality as it attempts to adapt itself to the strategic visions defined in EU documents regarding its development over the next decade. Therefore, there was a need for specialists to be put in charge to accomplish the tasks designed by democratic forces. One of the main achievements of the Lithuanian government in the 2008-2012 period, not without the insistence of the President, was that it managed to engage highly skilled professionals for governing the ministries, rather than politicians without the necessary competency. The delegation of the Ministry of Culture can serve as an illustration of Lithuania's aspirations for democratic change. At the beginning of the period under review, the Ministry was entrusted to Remigijus Vilkaitis, an accomplished actor with no administrative or managerial experience. During his time in office, the Ministry did not achieve the required goals, and it was decided in 2010 to replace him. Arūnas Valinskas, head of the former party of National Resurrection, presented himself as a candidate for the post, but was not accepted as minister by the President. Instead, a visual artist with the necessary administrative experience and a high level of professional competence was chosen. Arūnas Gelūnas became Minister in 2010 and was a member of the group that actively prepared the *Lietuvos*

kultūros politikos kaitos gairės (Guidelines for Lithuanian Cultural Policies), and who then became the person responsible for the implementation of the ideas defined in the guidelines.

As mentioned earlier, the guidelines promoted the necessity of adapting the country's cultural agenda to real democratic change. The first attempt to attribute a mission to culture was realized in 2001, at a time when Lithuania was still waiting for its entrance into the European Union. At that time, the government produced the *Nutarimas dėl Lietuvos kultūros politikos nuostatų* (Resolution on Regulations for Lithuanian Cultural Policy).[6] It defined four general directions for cultural development in the country: democracy, openness, identity, and decentralization. Nevertheless, the resolution was primarily conceived as a document to promote national values without direct correlation to the changing international surroundings. With the entrance of Lithuania into the EU in 2004, the country had to reconsider its relational aspect in the context of a new Europe. The new guidelines allowed for an elaboration of new cultural definitions.

Among ten main goals, which included the protection of author's rights, the development of creative industries, education, sustainability, and cultural heritage, the guidelines promoted such objectives as the need to open culture to auto-regulation and to ensure that culture could provide direction for the strategic development of the State. The latter aim needs to be discussed separately, since during the last twenty years, culture had never before been described as a strategic goal in any state legal document.

The aspiration to make culture a strategic part of state policy meant that the government had to take it into account while preparing the document *Lithuania's Progress Strategy: "Lithuania 2030."*[7] The document stresses such ideas as creativity and innovation. As different discussions progressed, it was

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[6] Lietuvos respublikos vyriausybė. *Nutarimas dėl Lietuvos kultūros politikos nuostatų.*

[7] State Progress Council. *Lithuania's Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2030."*

clear that integrating culture into state policy was not an easy task to fulfill, since culture was supposed to be covered under the notion of creativity. Nevertheless, culture is mentioned in the text of the strategy's plan more than once and becomes an important notion for defining Lithuania's aspiration to become a "smart society," two other notions being "smart economy" and "smart governance":

> Smart society: a happy society that is open **[openness]** to the ideas of each citizen **[creativity]**, to innovations and challenges, demonstrating solidarity, self-governance and political maturity **[responsibility]**.
>
> [...] Cultural life is of particular importance for each member of society. It is understood to be not only museums, exhibitions or theaters, but also a lot more: a culture of civic awareness and self-expression, generating added value in various sectors of society.[8]

In this statement regarding culture, Lithuania positions itself in the avant-garde of the European Union, since there are no definite statements in the strategy paper *Europe 2020*[9] regarding culture as an active agent of the discourse. This is pointed out in the European study *Use of Structural Funds for Cultural Projects*, done in 2012. The aim of this recent study is to show that culture should be allotted a larger share of money in the period 2014-2020 than in the period 2007-2013. One of the reasons why culture is threatened with a lack of attention is that it is not considered separately, and apparently can be understood only through other objectives, such as research and innovation, promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises, the information society, and human capital. As the European study points out, "...it is not possible to isolate investment in culture under these categories (either at the regional or European level), so it remains difficult to have a clear overview of the SF's money spent on culture and creative industries."[10]

As Lithuania set itself an ambitious goal to integrate culture into the state's strategic documents, it also needed to take

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8 Ibid., 8; 10.

9 European Commission. *Europe 2020: A European strategy.*

10 Directorate-General for Internal Policies, *Use of Structural Funds for Cultural Projects*, 35.

some steps on the operational level. Among the first of these was the attempt to separate two functions, i.e., the political and the administrative, which, until 2012, were regarded as belonging to the ministry. After two years of discussion, a law regarding the formation of a cultural council[11] was adopted. This law allows a shift towards decentralized management and, consequently, the decentralization of state money and its distribution in the sector according to the "arm's length" principle. The Lithuanian Culture Council is defined as responsible for administration of state money allocated to culture, whereas the Ministry of Culture's role is to define Lithuanian cultural policies.

Experience distributing money following an "arm's length" principle had already been acquired, it must be admitted, in the administration of the Soros Open Society Foundation, which was active in Lithuania during the first decade of independence, or the Lithuanian Culture and Sports Foundation, founded in 1994. The latter was split into two separate units in 2007, thus facilitating the administration of the sports and culture divisions. Following the example of Scandinavian countries, it accumulated money gathered from lotteries and alcohol and tobacco taxes and then distributed it for culture and sports. Soon, the first results of the newly established system for the distribution of public resources could be observed: it facilitated the creation of non-governmental societies, which started to demand similar rights to those given to cultural institutions established by the state during Soviet times.[12] The demand was especially supported by British neoliberal actions, such as the promotion of creative and cultural industries (CCI) at a conference in Lithuania in 2003.[13] Politicians and cultural operators realized for the first time that culture could not only

[11] Lietuvos respublikos Seimas, *Lietuvos kultūros tarybos įstatymas*.

[12] At the end of the nineties, independent cultural organizations, such as the Oskaras Korshunovas Theater, the Arts Printing House, the Theater and Cinema Information and Education Center, the Dance Information Center, and Eimuntas Nekroshius's theater, Meno fortas, were created.

[13] Ivoškutė, *Kūrybinės industrijos*.

have social or educational value, but also an economic one. The first steps were taken to articulate the economic significance of the creative and cultural sector, and to establish the tools that would allow for new financing models.[14] This meant that politicians at the state, regional, and local levels, for the first time since independence, had to articulate their position on the question. These articulations were more or less positive, since the new tools allowed the realization of ambitious infrastructural projects, such as the restoration of abandoned factories or residences for cultural purposes. Nevertheless, it was still difficult to accept and to prove that cultural goods could be an equal player in a free market.

The previously existing Culture Foundation will become a part of the new Culture Council, due to start its activities in 2013. The latter will also oversee the Ministry's programs for culture and art, stipends for artists, and research projects that were previously financed by the state. The new Culture Council is supposed to adopt the successful working model of the formerly established Lithuanian Research Council,[15] designated to promote research in Lithuania and to govern the sector's money. Nevertheless, there are some differences between the two organizations, since the newly established council will still depend on the Ministry of Culture, whereas the Research Council is a structure directly related to the Seimas and to the government. That is, the Culture Council is less autonomous in its decisions than the Research Council, which works as an independent unit in regard to the Ministry of Education. Although the government's intention is to democratize culture, the sector is confronted with the possible danger of a lack of objective evaluation. The new council would rely on experts and their opinions, but the number of Lithuanian experts is very limited, and most of the candidates are, in one case or another, related to cultural activities and, therefore, represent certain

[14] See: Lietuvos respublikos kultūros ministras, *Įsakymas dėl kūrybinių industrijų skatinimo* and Lietuvos respublikos ūkio ministras, *Įsakymas dėl valstybės planuojamų verslo inkubatorių.*

[15] Lietuvos mokslo taryba, "The Research Council of Lithuania."

interests and trends. Therefore, some doubt whether the newly formed Council can really achieve the goals of objectivity and transparency.[16]

Cultural policy and municipalities

Intentions to democratize culture can also be observed on the city level, where, during the last several years, municipal councils initiated local Councils for Culture and the Arts that represent cultural actors and work as an intermediary between artistic communities and politicians. Such councils were established in more than ten Lithuanian cities. Their objective is to analyze the cultural situation in the city and to put forward proposals to different government institutions.[17] As different examples show, the communication between politicians and representatives for culture still lacks reciprocity: politicians would prefer to use these councils to transfer the responsibility for controversial decisions that may spoil their political reputations. The Kaunas case, where the city administration tried to manipulate the Council for Culture and the Arts to close theaters and concert organizations, illustrates such intentions.[18] On the other hand, since they are quite new and local, the various Councils for Culture and the Arts do not really have the power they could actually have for cultural policy development and, therefore, do not support artists sufficiently. Recent activities on the European level, detailed in *Agenda 21 for Culture*,[19] permit the conclusion that common efforts effected by local governments and cities in different parts of the world can influence world development in the coming decades. Numerous cities of the world, joining their efforts together, agreed in 2004 that culture should be promoted – together with the environment, social inclusion, and economics – as one of the fundamental elements for sustainable development in the twenty-first century. According to the model of Australian researcher Jon Hawkes,

[16] Rauktytė, "Lietuvos kultūros taryba – diskusijų verpetuose."
[17] Kauno miesto savivaldybė, "Kulturos ir meno taryba."
[18] Bulota, "Kauno menininkai."
[19] United Cities and Local Governments, *The Agenda 21 for Culture.*

culture should become the fourth pillar of a model of sustainability.[20] One cannot neglect culture's importance for human development. As the research on culture and sustainable development initiated by the promoters of the *Agenda* indicates:

> In a society with a growing diversity (not only ethnic diversity), that needs to value knowledge and life-long learning, that is connected (at least potentially) to all the societies of the world... You, he, she, I, we... need to build a cultural pillar (...) that helps us to understand the world by discovering that our roots, our traditions, our cultures, (...) by building on our human development through access to, and practice with, cultural activities.[21]

Local governments in different European countries, such as France or Spain, are actually integrating culture as an important element of sustainable development, and thus forcing local and European politicians to recognize culture as a fourth pillar of sustainable development. However, this is still not the case in Lithuania: no city is represented in *Agenda 21*, and so far there is no city in Lithuania that directly promotes culture as an important means of urban development.

Although, as mentioned above, Lithuanian local governments do not formally recognize the importance of culture for sustainable development, they nevertheless follow the same direction that many other European local governments do. That is, they accept that cities need to create local cultural strategies, create culture councils, or assess cultural impact.[22] One of the first cities to create a guide for cultural strategy was the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius, in 2011. A cultural strategy is also being developed in Kaunas and is scheduled for implementation in 2013. These basic documents for cultural development will allow the cities to have new impulses and directions. They could become the rationale on which to base the movement towards the liberalization and democratization of the cultural sector on

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[20] Hawkes, *The Fourth Pillar*.

[21] Culture and sustainable development: examples of institutional innovation and proposal of a new cultural policy profile, United Cities and Local Governments, *The Agenda 21 for Culture*,17.

[22] Ibid.

a local level, and thus the shift towards a creative and innovative economy, as it is foreseen in *Lithuania's Progress Strategy*, could really be accomplished.

During the last four years, Lithuania has made significant strides toward achieving the objectives declared on the national and international levels. It has adopted several important documents that open new ways for democratic and innovative development; took steps towards the decentralization of the governing of culture by separating the political (Ministry of Culture) and administrative functions (Culture Council); and introduced state programs that strengthen the impact of CCI, and thus would make Lithuania more modern.[23] On the municipal level, the first steps were taken to democratize the culture sector and to open it for city communities and thus move toward a more locally autonomous system. New culture management models will be adopted, while recognizing the importance of city culture strategies and the importance of inter-sector cooperation.

Nevertheless, there is still a large gap between the aspirations declared in the EU documents promoting culture, CCI, creativity and innovation, and local decisions. Most of the time, they are not coordinated, and therefore EU cultural policy does not necessarily directly influence local cultural policies, or vice versa. There are several reasons for this: as many reports show, it is still difficult to promote culture, even on the EU level. Culture is still not universally seen as an important means for future EU development and, therefore, is not understood as such on a local level. In order to achieve this mutual comprehension, different tasks concerning education on this topic and the demonstration of its benefits (both social and economic) have yet to be accomplished, but Lithuania is on the right path in pursuing these goals.

[23] In 2008, the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Sciences opened a program called Lithuanian Creative and Cultural Industries. At the same time, a National Association for Creative and Cultural Industries was created.

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Uncle is Here

LIUDAS DOVYDĖNAS

Mama beckons me over with her finger. She tells me to run behind the barn and chase the young calves out towards the edge of the forest. We have to hide the sick ones because Uncle Augustas is coming. We could see his two-wheeled carriage from a distance, traveling on the road that leads to our house. Then we could see him stopping and talking with Father, who had been out plowing the fields.

"Uncle is coming!" my brother Juozas shouts, racing across the yard. He is not old enough for pants yet, and so his skinny legs poke out from beneath a yolk-colored shirt.

"Uncle is here! Uncle Augustas is here!" my sister Paulina babbles to my mother and rushes into the sitting room to put on her good scarf, the one Uncle Augustas gave her as a gift.

Mama is starting up the water heater. She tells me to blow on the fire. I put Father's boot into the opening of the heater and pump it. Ashes fall through the grate, but the embers don't flare up. Then I lean over the heater and I blow into it diligently, because Uncle Augustas likes to drink tea, and he always gives me a lump of sugar when he does.

Somebody gives me a playful slap on my backside. It's Uncle Augustas, standing in the doorway. He tells me I ought to mend my pants. I'm embarrassed. Mama scolds me. She explains to him that I am completely wild and climb trees all day long and cannot sit still for a minute.

My Uncle's wholesome face shines like a full moon. His head is bald like the moon too. He looks just like he did last year and the year before that. Only his beard is tangled about his ears, wild and yellow.

Often I think to myself: When I grow up, for sure I will have a beard just like Uncle's. I will twist my beard around my ears, and in the winter I will pull the icicles off of it, just like Uncle and Father.

Mama, who is Uncle's younger sister, leads Uncle into the sitting room, but he is not interested in sitting. He is more interested in taking a look at how the hops he brought from the Podžialaukės manor are doing and seeing how the big, yellow apples are growing.

But before he does that, he must sit down on the round chair in the center of our house and ask the three of us, Juozas, Paulina, and me, to dance a few steps for him. Then comes the good part: Uncle will play a game called "rubbing our ears." We all close our eyes, and he uses both his palms to rub the ears of one of us. The other two have to guess whose. The winner gets a candy.

Then Mama asks Uncle to stop fooling around with us and tells us to find something to do. That's once the kettle is already boiling, and she is rummaging around in the cupboard that stands in the sitting room. We can hear how she cracks a lump of sugar with a hammer. That's when the three of us leave Uncle and jump down, looking for bits of sugar that have fallen onto the floor. Meanwhile, Uncle watches us through the open door and says:

"What kind of rascals are you? After you gulped down my sweets you left me and went looking for more."

But the pieces of sugar are already on the table and the big chunk of sugar is safely back in its place in the cupboard. That means now the tea is coming. The three of us argue over our place at the table.

Then we hear Mama in the hallway. She is scolding the cat. It is an accident that has happened before. Our cat, while rubbing himself up against the warm kettle, managed to move the handle and most of the hot water drained away. Uncle laughs. We see the thin end of his tongue poking out between his perfect white teeth. It is my job to chase the cat out into the yard with a switch and to teach him that it is not nice to waste

all that hot water, just as Uncle Augustas is about to sit down to his tea, just after the feast day of Saint John the Baptist, when John the Baptist poured water over Jesus's bowed head in the river Jordan.

Mama pours what is left of the hot water and begs Uncle Augustas to sit down at the table, saying that he is probably tired and must quit playing with us kids because there will never be an end to our antics. But Uncle calls the three of us to the round chair where he is sitting and has a new game for us. Now we have to guess why he has come to visit us. The one who guesses right gets two pieces of candy.

Juozas, the youngest, blurts out the answer immediately. Paulina and I stay quiet on purpose. We know the answer already because we had been hearing the talk for a long time – Uncle will come, and there will be one spoonful less at our table.

"I see, Juozas," Uncle says, "did someone tell you?"

Mama hears it and stops him.

"It's alright, Juozas, you don't need to say anything more," Uncle says.

But our little Juozas just won't stop talking.

"Mama says that Uncle is going to take one of us so that the other two have more food at the table. Then we can eat and eat..."

That's when Mama interrupts and tells him to go to Mrs. Petrienė to borrow two glasses, because Uncle likes to drink his tea from a glass.

Father comes back home from the fields. He leaves his muddy clogs at the door and leads Uncle Augustas into the sitting room.

Uncle takes off his jacket, places a napkin under his chin, and combs his beard.

The three of us stand at the other end of the table, while Mama spreads butter on three slices of bread. Then she hands us the bread and sends us out to play. We are already rushing out the door when Uncle stops us.

"You children still have not guessed why I have come?" he asks.

"For the feast day," Mama says quickly.

"To see our calves," I say, although I already know that this year it is my turn to go with Uncle.

"You didn't guess right," he says. "You are coming with me to go haying in the fields of Karaliskiai manor. What do you have to say about that?"

"Will we be leaving soon, Uncle?" I ask. "I've already cleaned my clogs the day before yesterday."

"Child, go kiss his hand and stop bragging about your footwear," Mama says.

But Uncle holds back his hand.

"There is no need to kiss my hand; I am not a priest, nor a deacon." Uncle says. He slurps his tea from his saucer, holding it up to cool before his beard.

The three of us hurry out into the yard and climb up on the drooping hackberry tree limb that has been rubbed smooth by cows' necks and our bellies. I tell the others about how Uncle and I together will bring in the horses in the evenings. How in the evenings we will drink sour milk with potatoes and treat ourselves to bread and butter. I tell them about how, when I grow up, I will also balance a saucer of tea on three fingers and sip it through my thick beard.

I grow tired of crawling on the branch and run to the orchard, our orchard with the five apple trees. I do a somersault. Then I show off my best trick—I stand on my head with my feet in the air. I can't stand like that for long though. Paulina starts shouting. She is terrified that my shoulders will fall down over my head. Those girls are such cowards. They always get in the way.

The sun is already on Mainelis's lindens on the shores of the lake. We can hear the shepherd's pipe of Tarulis's son, Antanukas, near the garden. I hear the bucket being lowered into the well to fetch water to cook dinner in Petras's yard.

"You will have a good time," Paulina says. She knows, because she spent last summer there. While she was there, Auntie gave her a gift of thick woolen socks and let her eat as many cucumbers from the garden as she liked.

Paulina begins to cry. With her, tears are never far from her eyelashes. I give her my hand and say:

"You shouldn't cry, it isn't right; you have the socks, and you had the cucumbers, as many as you wanted."

"I'm telling you, you've got to catch me a live weasel," Juozas says. He had heard that Uncle's barn was full of weasels.

"Children! Where are you? Uncle is leaving!" we hear Mama's voice.

"Uncle is leaving!"

"Uncle is leaving!" we shout as we run back to the house.

From *Naktys Karališkiuose* (Nights in Karališkiai)

Translated by Laima Vincė and Jonas Dovydėnas

❖

Algirdas Landsbergis on Liudas Dovydėnas

Dovydėnas came early to the attention of Lithuanian critics and the reading public with his 1931 collection of stories, *Cenzūros leista* (Passed by the Censor). He established himself as one of the leading writers of his country upon the publication of his novel *Broliai Domeikos* (The Brothers Domeika), winner of the Lithuanian State Literary Award in 1936.

Dovydėnas's thriving literary career was interrupted by the Soviet invasion and occupation of Lithuania in 1940. He was picked by the authorities against his will as one of the deputies to the so-called People's Diet, a Soviet artifact established with the sole purpose of giving the official seal of approval to Moscow's absorption of an independent Baltic country. Yet this experience – culminating in the Diet's "vote" under armed guard – provided Dovydėnas with the unique opportunity of recording from the inside a dramatic episode of history and a classic case of Soviet duplicity, similar in many ways to the Soviet rape of Czechoslovakia in 1968. His memoir of those fateful days, *We Will Conquer the World*, was first published in 1943 and has been translated into English.

Active in the Lithuanian underground against the Bolsheviks and, later on, against the Nazis, Dovydėnas and his family joined Europe's millions of displaced persons at the end of the war. After several years of waiting in Germany's refugee camps, they finally arrived in the United States in 1949 and settled in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

During his time in America, Dovydėnas served as President of the Lithuanian Cultural Council Fund, editor of the cultural monthly *Nemunas*, and a moving spirit of many similar undertakings. Although he earned his living raising laboratory animals, he remained a writer first and foremost, in heart and in deed. He and his wife, Elena, returned to Lithuania in 1998, where he died on the Fourth of July, 2000. Eight volumes of his collected works have been published in Lithuania.

The range of Liudas Dovydėnas's writing is as richly varied as his life experiences. Both satirical and compassionate in his early short stories, a realist in his novels, he is a brilliant storyteller, with a rich vocabulary and an inexhaustible vein of humor. His numerous books for children are distinguished for their warm humanism, telling details, and sweeping imagination. His writings are known far beyond Lithuania's boundaries and have appeared in English, Russian, Finnish, Latvian, Estonian, and other languages. He has yet to be discovered by the American reader.

This text was written for Liudas Dovydėnas by Algirdas Landsbergis circa 1986 as an introduction to a collection of Dovydėnas's folk tales in translation, which were never published. I have made minor changes, like mentioning that Dovydėnas returned to Lithuania and that his collected works have been published.

Jonas Dovydėnas

The 2012 International Vilnius Book Fair: A Subjective Map of Lithuanian Literature

RAMŪNAS ČIČELIS

The International Vilnius Book Fair is a festival whose aim is to promote an acquaintance with literature published in the preceding year. The first such fair to be organized in the Lithuanian capital was held in 2000. Its main mission has been to encourage the public to read books and to help publishers maintain contact with the reading public. The very first fair saw more than a hundred publishing houses participating. Within a little more than a decade, the book fair has become an important social, economic, and tourist event, indeed the largest regional literary festival, inviting comparisons with the Gothenburg Book Fair. It has been visited by several hundred well-known authors from abroad whose work has aroused the interest of Lithuanian readers. The most famous of these include Dan Brown, Alessandro Barrico, Herbjørg Wassmo, and Sofi Oksanen.

The motto of the 2012 International Vilnius Book Fair, electronically selected by a majority of prospective guests, was *Open the World!* The fair's organizers, publishers, readers, and literary authorities are discovering ever more clearly that the tradition of the printed book is not only not dying, but in fact becoming increasingly significant, for both individual spiritual growth and society as a whole. This year, the fair was especially intent on attracting visitors by offering a chance to buy

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the newest books at reduced prices and holding a variety of events, including art exhibits, meeting and talking to authors with an opportunity to get their autographs, viewings of literary works transferred to the screen, educational shows for children, and public discussions.

According to the organizers, interest in the public discussions is growing every year. One such remarkable event this year was a conversation held between two former presidents – Lithuania's Valdas Adamkus and Poland's Alexander Kwasniewski – about the duties of the presidency as a profession and a vocation, with the historian Egidijus Aleksandravičius moderating.

Another important part of the 2012 Vilnius Book Fair consisted of workshops on illustrating children's books as well as the exhibit Iliustrariumas. The latter had been presented last year as Illustrarium at the Bologna Children's Book Fair, where Lithuania was a guest of honor.

This year's fair in Vilnius was attended by about three dozen writers from abroad, with the most prominent being Rūta Šepetys, who was born and lives in the United States. She presented her novel *Between Shades of Gray*, which called attention to the historical wound of Lithuanian mass deportations. People previously knew her only from articles in the Lithuanian press and the Internet, so a live encounter with her was even more inspiring.

Since Šepetys spent a large portion of her life around Hollywood, it was not surprising that *Between Shades of Gray*, translated into Lithuanian as *Tarp pilkų debesų*, displayed features of historical melodrama. Many Lithuanian readers were worried about the book's orientation towards popular culture. Readers from other nations apparently had fewer such reservations. Some Lithuanian critics pointed out the many historical inaccuracies to be found in the book. Even though they were right, one should not demand absolute factual precision from a novel that is only *based* on real events.

Šepetys's novel is a success because it broadcasts Lithuanian suffering during and after World War II on an international scale. During the book's presentation, the author recalled an American history professor telling her it was only from *Between*

Shades of Gray that he first learned of the deportations that had befallen so many Lithuanians. In this way, one nation's story becomes part of the general international postwar destiny.

Šepetys fosters a value contemporary society often forgets: moral sensitivity to another human being's pain. In telling the story of one girl's life, the author creates, as it were, a history of collective Lithuanian memory: in spite of all of history's wrongs, we have kept our pride and held our heads high. In this way, she has become a Lithuanian national by merging into a common experience that she lived through very compassionately. Exile and forced labor camps are burdensome and painful events which people tend to either discuss at great length or reserve in a proud silence: Šepetys manages to give voice to these silent ones and thereby makes their tormented lives meaningful.

Another specimen of exile literature heralded at this year's book fair was Vladas Kalvaitis's novel *Sustiprinto režimo barakas* (not yet translated, but potentially translatable into English as "strict-regime barracks"). To what extent does this work continue the traditional genre of exile literature, and to what extent should it be regarded as innovative? That was the main question that arose during the book's presentation. It is definitely a narrative of everyday life, not unfamiliar in Lithuanian literature. But Kalvaitis's narrator, unlike that of Šepetys, is perhaps the first to talk about exile with as little emotion as possible. *Sustiprinto režimo barakas* fluctuates between two sorts of viewpoints: a prisoner's individual experiences and a generalized objective appraisal. It is not easy to discern the boundary between these two modes because, in the very same paragraph, the first and the third person might speak. The result is not only a documentary, but also an artistically expressive book that is not dominated by traditional reflection or by psychology, but guided by a need to nail down the details of everyday existence. The narrative is very unusual: it is a story that aims to be objective, and by virtue of this objectivity, it doesn't degenerate into propaganda.

Thus Kalvaitis's novel, rather than continuing the tradition of Lithuanian realist literature, legitimizes the naturalistic

portrayal of reality. Its protagonist, being a deportee, doesn't experience the spiritual beatitude that suffering brings forth. In this respect, however, it is very difficult to equal, let alone surpass, the letters written by the venerable Monsignor Kazimieras Vasiliauskas from Siberia to Zina Žemaitytė. On the other hand, perhaps literature should not become an instrument for judging the weight of suffering.

The beatitudes of being were also a theme in the poems that Alis Balbierius, the Green Bard from Biržai, read at the fair. His lyric subject experiences the beatitudes arising, not so much out of suffering, as from closely watching Nature. There, in Nature, it is nevertheless heartrending to see the disappearance of the individual farmsteads that have given birth to so many Lithuanians. Balbierius recalls his fellow countryman Jonas Mekas, whose life-path and travails aren't too far from his own. In the countryside around Biržai, they both experience emptiness and plenitude at one and the same time. This is, in effect, tantamount to natural Revelation. Balbierius's lyric subject views Nature as sacred: it is the highest reality. But a pantheistic or impressionistic relation is avoided. Nature is not above human beings; it does not leave footprints on their souls. Rather the human being is a footprint upon Nature and the World, with which the human, forgetting himself or herself, ought to become one and merge. This attitude toward Nature and the World is akin to the Buddhist one, as the author himself half-admitted in discussion.

On the other hand, how can one talk about oneself when one is supposed to forget oneself. . . The lyric subject of Balbierius's *Skaidrumos* (Clearings) lives not for the sake of human reality or of social relations; it is the rock, the path on which it lies, the homestead, and the snow on and around it that are closer to him. The lyric subject wants to settle down on this side of the horizon and live just for selfless love. His eyes are wellsprings of memory. His story consists of images. In contemporary Lithuanian poetry, we occasionally find images of traumatic events that the viewer cannot change and therefore suffers from. The person of Balbierius's poems directs his calm and tranquil gaze, a premodern gaze, at peacefulness. Like

Mekas, Balbierius dreams in images. City people do that more often in words. The subject of Balbierius's book needs no titanic efforts, none of the currently popular spiritual exercises, to experience tranquility: small things disclose all the beauty of being in the world. This, if it has any purpose at all, we know only in part. Balbierius does not aim at universality.

The book fair also highlighted another book whose author acknowledges that life lacks grand purposes: *Sklepas ir kitos esė* (The Cellar and Other Essays) by Laurynas Katkus. This collection of essays is bound up with music: in the initial texts, the narrator talks about punk culture in late-Soviet Lithuania, and the book ends with a critique of popular music. What happens in between might be described as aesthetic jazz. Katkus, as a true jazzman, doesn't need a thesis; he doesn't want to illustrate an idea; he creates his texts spontaneously, live, on the spot. The author of *Sklepas ir kitos esė* is not a figure of the literary world, but a sensitive man open to reality. It's impossible to fake the jazzy intonations of his text. When writing about the Soviet period, literature, travels, whatever, though he doesn't shy away from improvising and changing styles, he still and always stays deeply personal.

On the other hand, Katkus obviously gives priority to those experiences that connect him with his social context and readers who have lived through similar events. Each essay is concluded not with a summary, but by sounding a note related to the one dominating in the next essay. Katkus's writings about other writers constitute a series of essays of a type very rare in Lithuanian literature. When he writes about other artists or about his cellar, where he does his writing because he finds peace and quiet there, he expresses his thoughts in crisp well-aimed details of everyday life, rather than long deliberations and logical arguments. His sociality allows one to discuss his book's life in the context of East European culture. The writer is capable of clearing up, in a few sentences, many a paradox of thought and behavior in Lithuanian society. Katkus does not moralize: his journalistic style serves him not as a method of rhetoric and persuasion, but as a method of deeper self-understanding. The varying rhythm and occasionally even rhyme of

semantic accents puts Katkus in the vicinity of one of the greatest of Lithuanian essayists, Rolandas Rastauskas. If we could dream a bit, then my dream would feature the aesthetic jazz duet of Rastauskas and Katkus at the next Vilnius Book Fair.

But even though dreams have not yet turned into reality, this book fair did allow us to hear Rastauskas read the verses of Czeslaw Miłosz and other poets. Rastauskas's reading is in a newly interpreted tradition of declaiming Greek poetry, marked by an inimitable voice and intonation that held its own with the music. Rastauskas spoke not from the mountain top, nor to the amphitheater, but intimately and personally. A traditional reading would have presupposed a mask, a hiding behind the writer's role and status. Rastauskas affirmed an openness and declared a genuineness. There was nothing artificial in this harmony of voice and music. Even the jazz sounded like it was played not on a musical instrument, but sung in a human voice. I have heard Rastauskas read his essays more than once. Every such experience is a performance with nary a break. Rastauskas creates the impression of a reading without interruption. Having come to the book fair and entered the hall, you get the feeling that, since the last time you heard Rastauskas, nothing significant has happened in life. The essayist was the author in Lithuania who read his work in an individual manner at a time when no one as yet was talking about any poetry "slam" contests. In reading his texts he does not show off, he only shows. Talking is the way for him – his life.

The Internet newspaper *bernardinai.lt* presented a book by its director, Dr. Andrius Navickas: *Laiškai plaukiantiems prieš srovę* (Letters to Those Swimming Against the Flow). Like Rastauskas, the author is concerned about communicating with a vibrant human being capable of experiencing wonder as (s)he walks his or her own path. Navickas's book is clearly theological: one of its main targets is human pride, one of the cardinal sins that hinder men and women from getting closer to God. The book argues for a life radically different from the one now in vogue. It invites readers to search for meaning instead of engaging in consumption or falling prey to sin. In this respect, Navickas is akin to the Austrian psychologist Viktor

Frankl, who developed his own brand of psychotherapy, called logotherapy, in the second half of the twentieth century. Both authors assert that paths of seclusion lead nowhere, and that it is better to live unburdened by guilt. Navickas beckons us to an active life and urges us not to close ourselves off in privateness. To the author of *Laiškai plaukiantiems prieš srovę* (and, one surmises, many of his readers), each day is a memorable event in itself. Navickas also endorses a currently unfashionable attitude towards life: waiting instead of impatiently rushing about. The person who chooses a Catholic way of life, says Navickas, lives not immersed and lost in a crowd, but takes on personal responsibility for himself and his neighbor. The book very much reminds one of the final scene in Tengiz Abuladze's film *Repentance*, with its parting words: "What good is a road if it doesn't lead to a temple?"

Somewhat more confusing are the roads traversed by Lithuanians in Great Britain, to judge from *Emigrantės dienoraštis* (The Diary of an Emigrant Woman), written and presented at the fair by Zita Čepaitė. Her words spoken there point to a Lithuanian woman's walking away from Lithuania, although paradoxically one cannot really walk away from oneself. The diary form is apparently the best vehicle for the author to engage in self-reflection. When reading this book and others written by Lithuanian migrants (calling them "emigrants" nowadays is perhaps inaccurate, for the possibility of return is both close and far away, yet by no means inconceivable), one is gripped by the idea that they are not seeking to save their Lithuanian identity, but to get used to – and then forget – it. Before he died, the poet Justinas Marcinkevičius said something interesting: "The task today is to make Lithuania interesting to the world." But can we spark the interest of others if we aren't even interesting to ourselves?

The International Vilnius Book Fair, already successful at bringing about quite a few individual encounters with literature and its creators, is a phenomenon that can arouse world interest both in Lithuanian literature and in Lithuanian culture as a whole.

Translated by Mykolas Drunga

BOOK REVIEWS

Baliutytė, Elena and Donata Mitaitė, eds. *Baltic Memory: Processes of Modernization in Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian Literature of the Soviet Period*. Vilnius: The Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, 2011. ISBN 978-609-425-042-2.

Probably one of the most important and intriguing topics in postcolonial Baltic criticism is the literary legacy of the Soviet years. Therefore, it was hardly by chance that a collection of articles on the subject appeared in Lithuania in 2011 designed to review efforts to counter Soviet ideology and the parallel process of modernization evident in the literatures of the three Baltic States. A group of literary scholars from Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia set about to categorize the strategies of opposition that arise in comparable social and historical contexts; they focused in particular on writers who looked for ways to challenge the obligatory Soviet conceptual and interpretative models for viewing the world. The collective effort, entitled *Baltic Memory: Processes of Modernization in Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian Literature of the Soviet Period,* highlights the most important paths taken towards modernization by the oppositional writers from about 1968 to 1988.

Structurally, the book is organized as follows: the first part concentrates on censorship and the means to evade it and the strengthening opposition to Soviet rule ("Literature between Aesop and Clio"); the second and the third parts focus on signs of modernity in Baltic prose and poetry ("Modernist Innovations in Prose" and "Modernist Transformations in Poetry"); the fourth and final part is devoted to critical discourse and documentary literature ("Signs of Change in Critical and Documentary Literature"). A work of such wide scope is most welcome, all the more so since, heretofore, there have been few comparable efforts to explore the uniqueness of literature in the Baltic region and in countries with related cultural roots.

One of the most impressive articles in the first part is "Censorship and Aesopic Language: An Analysis of Censorship Documents (1940-1980)" by the Latvian scholar Raimonds Briedis. Briedis has authored many studies on Latvian literature under the Soviets. He is a highly perceptive critic and, as can be expected, he skillfully lays bare the essence of Soviet ideology by linking it to censorship. His article in *Baltic Memory* explores various ways of "masking" texts as well as efforts made by Baltic writers to fashion fields of information impenetrable to the censor. Such efforts include subtexts, Aesopian language, and literary devices that play one ideological element off another, or attribute "truths" held by the author to the minor characters. Briedis claims that Baltic writers perfected a variety of strategies for circumventing the censor. Relying on Glavlit documents, he demonstrates that censors kept inventing new strategies for decoding texts and used harsher and harsher methods to maintain control. His article shows how censorship worked and how it was evaded by Latvian writers and, at the same time, offers models, albeit indirectly, for the study of similar phenomena in Estonia and Lithuania.

The year 1968 marks a watershed for Baltic literature in its efforts to undermine the coercive Soviet ideology. That year, it became increasingly clear that writers intended to turn their attention to the literature of the expatriates, and that Czech culture inspired by the Prague Spring had become relevant (see Donata Mitaitė, "Lithuanian Literature in 1968: Interstices of Meaning within Meaninglessness"). This was also the year when themes of hopelessness, absurdity, and disillusionment seemed to gain ground, as did textual strategies for circumventing the censor, ably analyzed by Loreta Mačianskaitė ("Meanings of Madness in Lithuanian Literature from the 1960s to the 1980s"). Mačianskaitė charts the typology of the rather frequent instances of insanity in the prose of such Lithuanian writers as Juozas Glinskis, Juozas Marcinkevičius, and Juozas Aputis. Some of these texts highlight insanity as a way of speaking oppositional truths; other writers, such as Kazys Saja, Icchokas Meras, and Ričardas Gavelis, to name a few, treat

insanity as a consequence of the repression characteristic of the Soviet system. Mačianskaite's typological approach is effective: it shows the essence of the oppositional stance and, in so doing, demonstrates the latter's validity. On the other hand, it is difficult to agree with her assumption that the theme of insanity, popular in Lithuania, was less so among Latvian and Estonian writers, or that this difference can be explained in terms of distance or proximity to the Protestant tradition. Prose works by the Latvians Visvaldis Lamas, Alberts Bels, Zigmunds Skujiņš, and Marģeris Zariņš refute Mačianskaite's claim, as do also the Latvian expatriates (Ilze Škipsna, K. Zariņš and others) in whose writing the theme of insanity is even more abundant than it is in Lithuanian literature. Linking instances of the prevalence of this theme to the Protestant tradition seems to be rather problematic.

Resistance to the canons of Socialist realism was particularly strong among Baltic playwrights. At the same time, their work shows unmistakable signs of progression towards such modernist modes of expression as irony, grotesquery, and ambiguity. As Benedikts Kalnačs claims, the critical adoption of literary models, their deconstruction and inversion were the three most important phases in the Baltic writer's campaign to undermine Soviet conceptual frameworks. Anneli Saro extends this idea and emphasizes the importance of a new element in Estonian theater of the 1990s, in both text and performance, that element being the use of silence as a marker of symbolic emptiness ("Estonian Historical Drama of the 1980s: A Form of Dissidence"). Opposition to Soviet ideology cannot be understood without a reference to the writings of one of Latvia's most important multigenre authors, Marģeris Zariņš, who revived themes associated with the West, especially those of Faust, Orpheus, and Hamlet ("Wandering Plots in Latvian Literature of the 1970s" by Silvestras Gaižiūnas). The first part of *Baltic Memory* maintains focus, successfully so, on the most significant tendencies in Baltic literatures that give evidence of their progressive liberation.

Articles in the second part of the book discuss innovations in Baltic prose. Jūratė Sprindytė concentrates on the minor genres, with reason, for though they generally receive little attention from the critics, they were gladly embraced in Soviet times by the silent modernists whose short stories, novellas, and other forms of brief narrative easily accommodated national themes and echoes of existentialism as well as a modernistic style ("The Symbolic Capital of Ideologically Untainted Writers: Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Small Novels"). Anita Rožkalne focuses on an aspect of modernity characteristic of Latvian literature – the ever more courageous efforts by writers to portray borderline situations, such as coercion, as well as tell as much truth as possible about the history of their nation. As one reads the articles grouped in the second part of the book, one is tempted to conclude that it was the women rather than the men who moved both Latvian and Lithuanian prose forward along paths of modernity.

However, *Baltic Memory* treats, in a rather fragmented manner, the powerful wave of poetry that marked the Soviet years. While it pays heed to a number of facts and phenomena, it does not convey a sense of poetry's potential for ideas, or the singular newness of its themes. For it was poetry, rather than prose, that inspired and sustained tendencies of inner freedom; poetry reached greater heights of popularity than did prose; it had the explosive force that fired away, breaking through the conventional surfaces. Poetry influenced prose, awakened it, not the reverse. Thus it would have been more logical to first discuss poetry, and then move on to prose. Furthermore, if one considers all the articles in this section, one notices an obvious shortage of overviews, as well as insufficient efforts to highlight the uniqueness of Baltic poetry. Many of the articles are quite interesting because of a specific theme or perspective chosen by the author, for instance, Eva Eglāja-Kristsone's article on intimacy as a distinguishing feature of Baltic poetry in the 1980s, Rimantas Kmita's treatment of symbolic links between nature and politics, or the Promethean and Don Quixotic echoes detected by Elena Baliutytė in the poetry of Eduardas Mieželaitis.

However, given their limited perspective, these essays do not reflect the scope or the quality of poetry during the Soviet years, nor do they take into account the deeper structural variations that signal a changing world view and thus, ultimately, poetry's power to undermine an imposed, foreign discourse by awakening national consciousness and memories of the past. Only one article in the book addresses (to some degree) issues related to memory, and it does so by examining memoirs of the former Soviet elite, who prefer to forget rather than remember ("The License to Forget" by Aare Pilv). One wonders why the book was called *Baltic Memory* when, obviously, memory is not the common thread linking articles collected in the present volume.

It is gratifying to see scholars from the three countries collaborate in compiling a book on the literatures of the Baltic region; a wonderful tradition has thus been maintained. On the other hand, the book seems to have been compiled rather haphazardly, considering it was meant to reflect the uniqueness of Baltic writers as well as their efforts to oppose the ideological models of the Soviets. The book's content gives a rather narrow view of a very complex process. It would have been better to present as comprehensive an overview as possible of the genres, the main literary tendencies, and the names of the participants, placing the three national literatures side by side to give a clearer view of the links and the differences between them. Such generalizing and analytical appraisals would have helped readers grasp the laws behind the literary processes as well as appreciate the accomplishments specific to each of the three countries, and the uniqueness of the creative efforts that marked the last two decades, from 1968 to 1988, of the Soviet years.

Inga Stepukonienė

Translated by Vijolė Arbaitė

Van Voren, Robert, *Undigested Past: The Holocaust in Lithuania.* New York: Rodopi, 2011. 195 pages. ISBN 978-90-420-3371-9. Paperback, $29.00.

In recent years, the theory of a double genocide has dominated politics, scholarly research, and Lithuanian-Jewish relations. Simply put, it states that Eastern Europeans suffered as much or more from the Soviets than the Jews did from the Nazis. In Lithuania's case, it also justifies the participation and collaboration of native Lithuanians in the Holocaust. It even suggests that the killing of Jews was justified in part because they had worked with the Soviets in deporting Lithuanians to Siberia. It blames the victims for what happened. Robert van Voren's book presents a balanced account of the Holocaust that explains, but also rejects the theory of the double genocide.

Undigested Past is a synthesis based on secondary works. Starting with a historical analysis of the origins of Jews in Lithuania, van Voren proceeds to anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, Lithuanian collaboration with the Nazis, and even an attempt to find an answer to why it happened. The author then contrasts Dutch and Lithuanian behavior during the Holocaust. Van Voren even examines the psychology of the perpetrators, who were "ordinary" men. A graduate of Amsterdam University in Sovietology, he obtained his Ph.D. at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, where he currently teaches Political Science. He also directs and teaches at the Center for Cold War Studies at the Ilia State University in Tbilisi, Georgia.

In the chapter entitled "The Holocaust in Lithuania," van Voren squarely blames Lithuanian perpetrators for the speed and savagery of the murder of Jews in Lithuania. "All over Lithuania, local gangs or units formed by the Lietuvių Aktyvistų Frontas (LAF) took things into their own hands and organized local shootings" (89) and "...two-thirds of the Lithuanian provincial Jews were killed by locals, without any Germans around" (78). Nevertheless van Voren states: "But all documents show that, in fact, it was the Germans who orchestrated most of the killings ..." (70) To be sure, assessing blame

for what happened is thorny. The events of the Holocaust are still being debated today, and the debate is contentious. Some consider the LAF patriots trying to reestablish independence, whereas others see them as collaborators, currying favor with the Nazis by willingly killing Jews. During its very short existence, the LAF could not organize or control all the anti-Jewish vigilante groups that surfaced in Lithuania, but it is fairly clear that they knew of, or tacitly fostered, the murder of Jews. Among its many concerns, the LAF wanted the executions done quietly (82).

Although the chapter on Dutch compliance with Nazi directives presents a contrast to the Holocaust in Lithuania, other than presenting a transnational comparison of different Holocausts, this extraneous add-on does not explain anything about the Holocaust in Lithuania. The Dutch bureaucracy seems to have done its job delivering Jews to the Germans, whereas Lithuanian individuals went on a frenzied killing spree.

In seeking objectivity, van Voren's intentions are in the right place, but this is otherwise a poorly written and unoriginal book, adding very little to the debate about the Holocaust. Out of a bibliography of over eighty books, he repeatedly refers to the same authors, often citing them consecutively over several pages. One would do better to seek out and read the works of historians such as Liudas Truska, Saulius Sužiedelis, Christoph Dieckmann, or Vygantas Vareikis.

Van Voren has written a harmless book. In *Undigested Past*, he stands on the correct side of history, but his stance is neither new nor remarkable. Anti-Semites will no doubt denounce this book. But herein lies the dilemma. When analyzing the moral dimensions of the Holocaust, the psychological makeup of the perpetrators should not be justified. Nor can there be dispassionate neutrality on the subject of the Holocaust. Currently, government officials and many Lithuanians in general say, "Let the historians do their job researching the subject and then assess any blame." Unfortunately, even the best historians have the same foibles and prejudices as everyone else. Seeking neutrality

on a subject like the Holocaust is either a naive goal or an impossible task.

There is a larger issue with the series *On the Boundary of Two Worlds: Identity, Freedom, and Moral Imagination in the Baltic*, of which this is volume thirty-one. The contributors to this series, published by Rodopi, are among some of the best, most important scholars in the Baltic States, but most of the authors are not native speakers of English. In spite of executive editor Leonidas Donskis's endorsement that van Voren "tells an exciting story with a lively narrative" (xi), this volume, along with many others in this series, is rife with misspellings, odd word choices, grammatical mistakes, and substandard English, which in some cases make the narrative so confusing that the reader cannot even understand the intent of the author. There are too many spelling errors to cite. Sentences like, "One tot... wore a pair of oversized coarse woolen stockings whose feet were full of wholes,"(44) are found throughout.

A much better, more original, albeit polemical, collection coming from the same series is *The Vanished World of Lithuanian Jews*. Edited by Alvydas Nikžentaitis, Stefan Schreiner, and Darius Staliunas, and prepared as a follow-up to two conferences, this is a "balanced" book, with essays and articles from the best Israeli, American, British, German, Belarusian, and Lithuanian scholars. Van Voren's synthesis pales in comparison. The English-speaking world needs a comprehensive historical synthesis of the Holocaust in Lithuania, but this book is a weak introduction to the subject.

Virgil Kraupauskas

ABSTRACTS

Exploring New Territories, Creating New Languages: Theater in Lithuania and Latvia after the Turn of the Millennium

Valda Čakare

My investigation focuses on the ways Lithuanian and Latvian directors create stage reality and negotiate history, present experiences, and future possibilities. Drawing on two productions, one by Rimas Tuminas (2001) and the other by Alvis Hermanis (2002), I proceed from the observation that, even though both theater cultures have developed similar staging strategies, Lithuanian and Latvian theaters differ because of historical conditions. I clarify how these differences, which manifest themselves in the choice of themes, the treatment of identity issues, and attempts to answer essential questions about human existence, have contributed to the artistic purpose and the dynamics of Lithuanian and Latvian theater.

The 2012 International Vilnius Book Fair: A Subjective Map of Lithuanian Literature

Ramunas Čičelis

The article looks at what, in the author's view, are some of the most significant Lithuanian books published in 2011 and 2012 and presented at the 2012 International Vilnius Book Fair. In discussing each book, he pays attention to its social context, to some of its literary features, and to its probable meaning for, and impact on, potential readers. The article argues that the international book fair, in enabling real, close, and quiet encounters with writers and their writings, is a significant phenomenon of Lithuanian literature and publishing.

Mimic Realities: The Construction of Popular Identity in Contemporary Lithuanian Film

Edgaras Klivis

This article aims to analyze and evaluate the contemporary Lithuanian film industry, employing the concept of "national cinema." From the possible definitions of this concept, the author chooses the "protectionist," claiming (as per Ian Jarvie) that mastery of new technology is vital for societies if they are to develop and modernize. For example, new media technologies offer the possibility of constructing a polemical and critical picture of social reality through cinematic devices and communicating with a wider national audience. Referring to three examples – the Lithuanian art house film, Šarūnas Bartas's production *Eastern Drift*, and a popular reinterpretation of the myth about a noble

Lithuanian bandit, *Tadas Blinda. The Legend Is Born* – the author points to problems post-Soviet Lithuanian society faces in dealing with its own critical reflection. The major problem, the lack of skills in the new media languages and technologies, results in "mimic realities" that make it difficult to negotiate major social issues on a popular level and places film outside public matters.

Kaunas Architecture in Wood
Nijolė Lukšionytė

This article reveals the diversity of wooden architecture in Kaunas and describes its cultural value. Historic wooden buildings, such as small manor and garden estate houses, villas, cottages, summer homes, rental houses, and military and railway complexes, have survived in all parts of Kaunas. Such buildings are exceptional at conveying a local identity. A large number of the houses are neglected and deteriorated, while others have been renovated in a manner that compromises their original style and substance. Consequently, it is very important to distribute documentation on old timber houses in order to motivate their owners to restore them correctly. In 2011, a database of Kaunas's wooden architecture (www.archimede.lt) was begun and continues to be updated at the Vytautas Magnus University Faculty of Arts. It is hoped that the information on this website will reach the homeowners as well as district and municipal administrators, and an appreciation of the historic and cultural value of wooden architecture will gradually develop among them all.

Lithuanian Cultural Politics: On the Move
Ina Pukelytė

This article presents the development of a new Lithuanian cultural politics paradigm in response to the changing ideological, economical, and social environment of recent years. Major actions or political documents bearing influence upon the appearance of a new paradigm are reviewed. In addition, the confrontation between two different systems, the socio-humanistic and consumer-oriented, is presented. Lithuanian cultural politics is analyzed with regard to new national and European strategies. Three policy levels are taken into account in this overview, namely the international, national, and municipal domains. The coordination of these three levels is treated as one of the most important tools for a fruitful realization of Lithuanian cultural politics.

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LITUANUS THE LITHUANIAN QUARTERLY Vol. 59-1(2013)