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Administration: admin@lituanus.org
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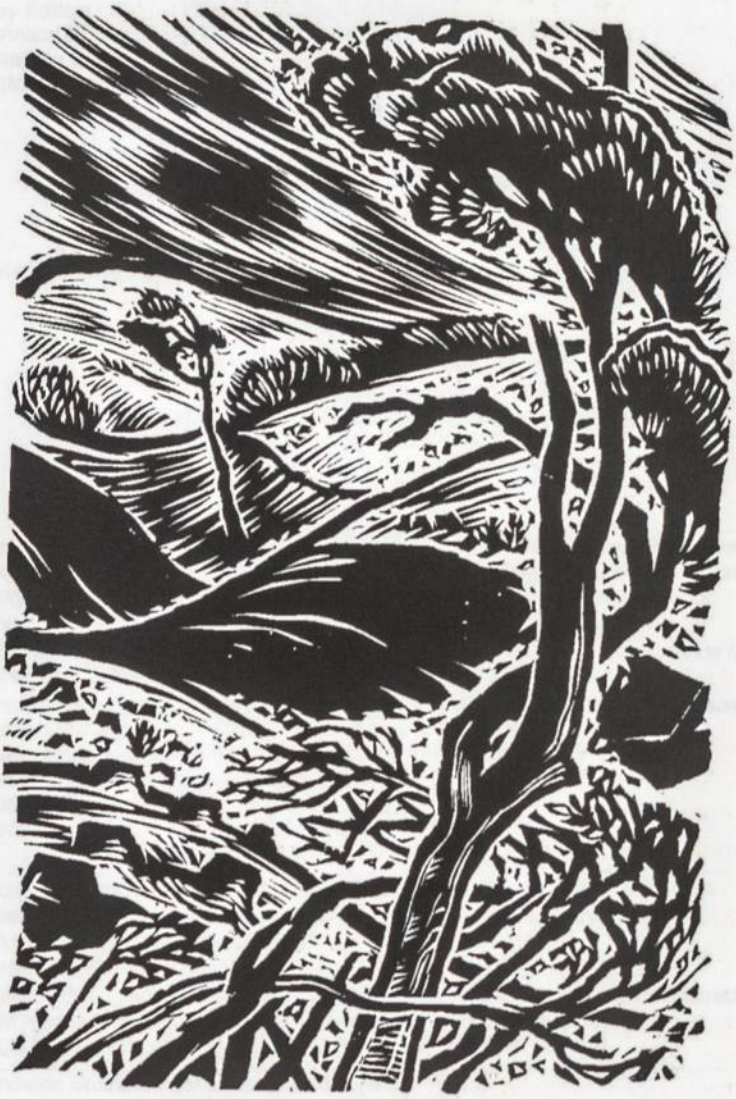

Illustration by Vytautas Valius from *Anykščių šilelis, 100 metų*, Vilnius: Valstybinė grožinės literatūros leidykla, 1959.

Early Conceptions of Romanticism in Lithuania and the poem *Anykščių šilelis*

GINTARAS LAZDYNAS

Most present-day scholars need no proof that the poem *Anykščių šilelis* (1858-1859) by Antanas Baranauskas belongs to the Romantic artistic tradition. The poem has been assigned to the Romantic tradition for so long that one seldom entertains the thought that there might have been a time when there was no need to characterize the individuality of the poem's artistic thought. Yet there was such a time; it was only in the third decade of the twentieth century that Baranauskas was classified as a Romantic. Until then, the artistic method of *Anykščių šilelis* had not been relevant to Lithuanian literary criticism. Neither Baranauskas himself, nor the early twentieth-century interpreters of the poem (Dagilis, Šliūpas, Čiurlionienė, Maironis, or Vaižgantas) applied the term Romanticism (or any other term) to the poem. Generally speaking, Romanticism began to acquire the status and substance of a scholarly concept in Lithuanian literary criticism only after the polemics about Romanticism were initiated by Vaižgantas in 1920. However, it did not become fully entrenched until the Soviet occupation of Lithuania. Until the end of the third decade of the twentieth century, Lithuanian critics had little or no conception of Romanticism as a literary method. The discussion between Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas and Balys Sruoga during their days of study in Munich

GINTARAS LAZDYNAS is an Associate Professor at Šiauliai University and the author of four books. His research focuses on the novel, the theory of the heroic epic, and the aesthetics of Romanticism.

shows that even educated Lithuanian writers had only a very superficial acquaintance with aesthetic systems, but used their terminology freely and irresponsibly: when Sruoga was asked by Putinas whether he had wearied of everyone categorizing them as symbolists, Sruoga confessed that at the moment he considered himself a Neoromantic[1]. After his studies at the university in Freiburg in 1922, Putinas enrolled at the University of Munich for another year to attend lectures on literature. The lectures by Professor Fritz Strich about German classicism and Romanticism left a particular impression on him. In that year, Fritz Strich had published a book titled *Deutsche Klassik und Romantik oder Vollendung und Unendlichkeit: Ein Vergleich* (German Classicism and Romanticism, or Completion and Infinity: A Comparison). It appears, however, that Putinas was not especially enlightened by those lectures:

> Without attempting to remember the quite intricate and difficult-to-comprehend philosophical premises of Strich's theories, I remember only that he considered classicism as a perfect completion (*Vollendung*) and Romanticism as infinity (*Unendlichkeit*). These are two forms of the manifestation of eternity; they are the two fundamental ideas of the arts. Perfection is changeless serenity; immensity is eternal motion and change. What made a greater impression on me were the characteristics of the classical and the Romantic person and the discussion of the substance and subject matter of their creative work. The former purportedly is the incarnation of reason, a lucid consciousness, and equilibrium, and the latter of restless feelings, longing and angst. The object of the classic's works is the world of day, sun, serenity, and joy, while the themes of the Romantic are night, twilight, storm, and pain.
>
> While listening to Strich's, in places very intricate, reasoning and analysis of examples, I was wholeheartedly leaning towards Romanticism.[2]

Vaižgantas, who in 1927 presented the first comprehensive interpretation of Romanticism in Lithuanian literary scholarship, also relied on Strich.

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1 Mykolaitis-Putinas, *Raštai*, 270-271.
2 Ibid., 268.

One can therefore propose that the poem's Romanticism is only the result of twentieth-century Lithuanian literary criticism's interpretative relationship with the poem, while Baranauskas's relationship to Romanticism remains unclear. Baranauskas did not consciously consider himself part of any literary school; it is conceivable that he did not even know of their existence. If one supposes that Baranauskas's self-orientation developed subconsciously and only decades later was determined to be a "conceptual coincidence,"[3] then one would be obliged to speak of an unbelievable marvel, by which the intellectual and spiritual substance of Romanticism reached a remote corner of tsarist Russia and possessed Baranauskas's creative soul without his awareness, while the German Romantics needed several centuries of spiritual and theoretical exercises, i.e., deliberate reflections, to attain the same result.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, in her 1910 book *Lietuvoje* (In Lithuania), Sofija Kymantaitė-Čiurlionienė argued that realism is not at all suited to the Lithuanian soul; the statement elicited a fair amount of discussion, which brought up the concepts of realism, mysticism, symbolism, and modernism, while Romanticism was never even mentioned. Despite her skeptical opinion of the second part of the poem, she had no doubts about Baranauskas's poetic talent, although she suspected that it was "unlikely that he knew either the rules of composition or the requirements of criticism."[4] Nevertheless, she did not emphasize his lack of theoretical knowledge. On the one hand, knowledge of the rules of criticism may not contribute to the value of the creation if the creator has no talent, while on the other hand, knowledge of the rules of poetry does not make a poet – rather the poet makes the rules that later "scholars of literary criticism study long and hard, searching for food for humanity and rules for future creators." For that reason, it was enough for Baranauskas to "have this great talent that guided him along the true way towards the immortality of his name among his fellow-countrymen."[5]

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3 cf. Jurgutienė, *Naujasis romantizmas*, 56-57.
4 Čiurlionienė, *Raštai*, 264.
5 Ibid.

Emphasizing the demand for new forms at the beginning of the twentieth century, Vincas Mykolas-Putinas wrote that "the emergence of new forms is prepared by history and lengthy traditions of artistic creation. At the time, our literature did not have these traditions, and still does not have many."[6] In 1938, a translation into Lithuanian of Hyppolyte Taine's *Philosophie de l'art* (Philosophy of Art, 1865) appeared in Lithuania. This book helped to lay the foundations for a positivistic approach in literary research, and also presented statements like: "to bring a similar art afresh on the world's stage there must be a lapse of centuries, which will first establish here a similar milieu."[7] Much earlier, one of the most renowned thinkers of the era of Goethe and a founder of Berlin University, Wilhelm von Humboldt, asserted that art achieved its current form only because its artists were immersed in the current culture: "it [art] had to achieve its current form if it was created by contemporary educated individuals."[8]

The young Balys Sruoga, Julijonas Lindė-Dobilas, Juozas Keliuotis, and others criticized an epigonic and imitative relationship to Western European literary movements. There were discussions about the search for new forms needed to replace the obsolete classicism. In other words, at the beginning of the twentieth century in Lithuania, it was necessary to perform the same act that, as one stereotypically imagines, was achieved by Romanticism in the beginning of the nineteenth. Considering that Lithuanian literature was not prepared for a renewal of the Romantic form even at the beginning of the twentieth century, how could it have been able to take such a step in the middle of the nineteenth? After all, why did it take until the fourth decade of the twentieth century to establish that Baranauskas's poem belongs to Romanticism, notwithstanding that all of the so-called Lithuanian Romantics, from Baranauskas to Maironis, were creating without mastering their own Romanticism? To state that Baranauskas knowingly chose Romanticism

6 Mykolaitis-Putinas, "Naujosios lietuvių literatūros", 219.
7 Taine, *Lectures on Art*, 156.
8 Humboldt, *Gesammelte Werke*, 214.

would confuse the issue even more. It is clear that he could have referred only to authorities of his own time, such as the Polish poets Adam Mickiewicz and Kazimierz Brodziński, or their opponent, Vilnius University professor Jan Śniadecki, as well as their contemporary, the Russian duke Piotr Viazemski, who had consolidated the Polish and Russian concept of Romanticism that had little in common with that of Vaižgantas or Putinas, or with the Romantic conception that had been evolving after Heinrich Heine's treatise *Die romantische Schule* (The Romantic School, 1835). Furthermore, if Baranauskas had chosen the poem *Pan Tadeusz* by Adam Mickiewicz as a model to be followed, as has often been argued, then he would have been following the path of realism. In Lithuania, this evaluation of *Pan Tadeusz*, by the Romantic Mickiewicz, was not surprising. Professor Vladas Dubas of the University of Lithuania described the alterations of aesthetic principles in the poem:

> Finally, the poet's realism is evident in his descriptions of nature and the plasticity of his landscapes. Generally, the poet does not introduce anything of his own, nor of his feelings toward nature (as the Romantics did). Mickiewicz observes the beauty of Lithuania's nature, the fascination of its fields, its grasslands and its forests [...]. Nature flourishes on its own in the poet's descriptions completely independent of human sentiments or experiences; it lives 'Homerically.'[9]

It would not be difficult to apply these characteristics to Baranauskas's *Anykščių šilelis* as well. In this case, Putinas would have been correct to call *Anykščių šilelis* realistic, as he did in an article written during Stalin's time.

Romanticism versus Classicism

There has been a persistent tendency in literary studies to explain the substance of a concept by lumping together the synchronic and diachronic conceptions of a term and then linking them genetically with the term's lexical meaning. In other words, all of the content that had ever been linked to a term, historically or lexically, is summed up in the word signifying

[9] Dubas, *Literatūros įvadas*, 96-97.

the concept. This tendency is particularly frequent in the concept of Romanticism, which makes an analysis of the historical development of the term especially difficult.

At the end of the eighteenth century, two fundamental paradigms of Romanticism emerged. The earlier of the two could be called the "Romantic" paradigm, initiated with the earliest writings of Friedrich Schlegel; while the other paradigm was named "Romanticism." The first, the Romantic paradigm, developed from attempts by exponents (especially Schlegel and Novalis), of the Romantic School, as defined by Heinrich Heine, to identify the most important aesthetic features of the new art that gushed from its initial source during the epoch of the courtesans. This concept was intended to characterize the art of the most prominent nations of Europe created between the twelfth and nineteenth centuries. It is not difficult to notice that the early Romantics developed their aesthetic rules by relying upon the historiosophical, anthroposophical, and philosophical attitudes of the eighteenth century. These viewpoints were based on oppositions, such as antiquity/present, sensibility/reason, subjectivity/objectivity, etc., and were applied a priori to chosen works. Thus, entire cultural epochs were obliged to conform to one single trait, one characteristic, and one artistic rule. All of them were forced into a single corresponding homogeneous system as an integral organic construct, even though many of the various poets were separated by several or even many centuries. This idea predetermined the character of an entire epoch, ignored its intrinsic diversity, and erased artistic individuality.

The second paradigm of Romanticism started crystallizing about 1835, with the analysis of the worldview and world-conception of the representatives of the Romantic School and their aesthetic principles, as described by its creators or expressed in their creations. This concept, as defined by Jacques Barzun, was applied to the art created from 1790 to 1850. However, the definition is often narrowed to the period of the German Romantic school (the Romantic poets of Jena and Heidelberg, Chamisso and Hoffmann, from 1795 to 1830). Franz Thimm, who was one of the first to apply the concept of the Romantic School in his

1844 textbook, defines the period of early German Romanticism, probably quite rightly, as the period from 1800 to 1813, bounded by the earlier Sturm und Drang (1770-1800) and by the literature that arose between 1813 and 1820. However, Thimm does not mention E.T.A. Hoffmann at all.[10] Paradoxically, even though Friedrich Schlegel, the foremost creator of Romanticism's aesthetic, was the first to use the word "romantic" to describe the new European literature, the concepts Romantic and Romanticism. These concepts are entirely independent interpretations of artistic principles, despite their similar-sounding names did not become identical. It is quite understandable that, in view of this confusion of terms, both of these systems are combined, mixed, and muddled by grafting and transplanting features of Romanticism onto later art, while at the same time attributing characteristics of new art to Romanticism, without recognizing the heterogeneity of the two systems from the point of view of their religious and philosophical perceptions of the world. This confusion is not restricted to the nineteenth century.

Although the new art form was accepted, the principles of Romantic art bursting upon the scene throughout Europe were meeting active resistance from apologists of the old or classical art. The old controversy about old and new art (*Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*) flared up again in Europe. In France, it had been instigated in 1687 by Charles Perrault, who clearly spoke in favor of the new art of the European nations and against emulating ancient authors. A century later, Friedrich Schiller, taking a fresh look at the question, introduced the partition of art into sentimental and naïve, which greatly influenced the young Friedrich Schlegel.

In 1794, Schlegel became actively involved in a discussion concerning the old and the new art. At first, he leaned towards the old art, until Schiller's article "On Naïve and Sentimental Poets" was published in the journal *Die Horen*,[11] which forced him to change his attitude. Refining Schiller's differentiation, Schlegel gradually introduced a new dichotomy of the Romantic and the classic (before his acquaintance with Schiller's article,

[10] Cf. Thimm, *The Literature of Germany*.
[11] *Die Horen*, 1795, No. 12 and 1796, No. 1.

Schlegel had tried to develop an opposition of objective and subjective art), which helped to adjust the old classification of art. Schlegel's conclusion drew on research done on the greater part of Greek, Roman, and some of the literature of the Middle Ages. None of the English (Wordsworth, Coleridge), French (de Staël, Chateaubriand) or German (Novalis, Wackenroder) works had been written yet, therefore, they could not have been material for Schlegel's study and classification.

During a conversation between Johann Eckermann and Johann Wolfgang Goethe, the latter claimed that it was he and Friedrich Schiller who came up with the binary opposition of Romantic and classical, and later the Schlegel brothers seized upon it and developed:

> The concept of classical and Romantic poetry that has now spread over the whole world and occasions so many quarrels and divisions, – Goethe continued, – came originally from Schiller and myself. I laid down the maxim of objective treatment in poetry and would allow no other; but Schiller, who worked very much in the subjective way, deemed his own approach to be the right one and composed his essay upon *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry* in order to defend himself against me. He proved to me that, against my will, I was Romantic and that my *Iphigenia*, through the predominance of sentiment in it, was by no means as classical or as conceived in the spirit of antiquity as many people supposed. The Schlegels took up this idea and carried it further, so that it has now been disseminated throughout the world, and now everyone talks about classicism and Romanticism, something no one gave any thought to fifty years ago.[12]

Essentially, Goethe was not entirely right. It was not the opposition of old and new art that Friedrich Schlegel rethought in his early writings and labeled as classical and Romantic art, which was certainly given impetus by Schiller's article. The turning point of all of these ideas was conveyed through the secondary consciousness of the influential and aristocratic French writer Anne Louise Germaine baroness de Staël, widely known as Madame de Staël. In 1813, de Staël, the author of such novels as *Korina* and *Delphina*, published a book *About*

[12] Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe*, 203.

Germany, which unexpectedly introduced all of Europe to the German allocation of literature into Romantic and classical. Madame de Staël also introduced the identification of Romantic literature with German literature and classical with French literature. This link implied a new opposition, later emphasized by Heinrich Heine, between Protestantism and Catholicism. Soon enough, all of Europe, as well as Poland and later Russia, started to divide literature into Romantic and classical, as if this division had existed since time immemorial.

Contemporary creators who consciously considered themselves representatives of the new art (Coleridge, Wordsworth, Stendhal) or those who demanded art's renewal (Tieck, Chateaubriand), were all labeled Romantics. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, writers who divided themselves into camps of Romantics and classicists, using Schlegel's principles, eventually had to reclassify themselves under the worldview principle of Romanticism. In consequence, many of them lost their status as Romantics. Stendhal, who called himself "a furious Romantic," as well as Baudelaire, fascinated by Schopenhauer's philosophy, suffered the same fate; however, their elder contemporaries, who did not know about the opposition of Romanticism-classicism at the time they created their most important works, for example, de Staël, or Chateaubriand, who violently defended the basic aesthetic principals of classicism, remained Romantics.

The Spirit of German Poetry

Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) followed Schlegel's position on Romanticism. Later, according to his own words, he organized an "extermination campaign against Romanticism." Nevertheless, he was the first to define Romanticism as an artistic movement. In his polemic, the article "*Die Romantik*," (1820), he developed his fundamental theoretical statements that were later repeated in his essay "The Romantic School": the cyclical vicissitudes of Romanticism and classicism, the sensual intoxication of antiquity (the reason people enjoyed an outer observation and representation of the objective world) and the spirituality introduced by Christianity that awakened a secret thrill of the

heart, perpetual longing, and bliss. Conveyed through the poetic word, these initiated Romantic poetry, which blossomed during the Middle Ages but was soon suppressed by constant military and religious conflicts. In Heine's era, it was reborn in Germany and produced its prettiest flowers, such as Goethe and Schlegel. Heine refused to accept the division of Romantic (obscure, colorful) and plastic poetry because "the images through which those Romantic feelings should be excited can be just as clear and be drawn with just as clear outlines as the images of plastic poetry."[13] That is why he considered Goethe the most plastic poet, but still a Romantic. Christianity, and the institution of knighthood, had a tremendous impact on the development of Romantic poetry. However, both of them were only the means of introducing Romanticism, which had already long since established itself as the spirit of German poetry. A few years later, Heine emphasized that the Romantic School in Germany was "something quite different from that designated by the same name in France" and "its tendencies were totally diverse from those of the French Romanticists."In other words, Heine had already noticed that two phenomena of different origin were designated by the same name in Germany and France. "But what was the Romantic School in Germany?" asks Heine, and answers his question, stating:

> It was nothing else than the reawakening of the poetry of the Middle Ages as it manifested itself in the poems, paintings, and sculptures, in the art and life of those times. This poetry, however, had been developed out of Christianity...[14]

Kazimierz Brodziński

The polemic between Romantics and classicists flared up in Poland in 1818; in Russia, it took place in 1824. An echo of this battle had reached Vilnius as well. One initiator of the polemic was the notable Polish sentimentalist poet and literary critic

[13] Heine, *Sämmtliche Werke*, 18.
[14] Heine, *Heines Werke*, 195.

Kazimierz Brodziński,[15] who became famous on account of his broad study *O Klassyczności i Romantyczności, tudzież uwagi nad duchem poezyi polskiej* (On Classicism and Romanticism, As Well as on the Spirit of Polish Poetry, 1818). Between 1842 and 1844, after the writer's death, ten volumes of Brodziński's collected work were published in Vilnius. The study mentioned earlier is included at the very beginning of the fifth volume.

Barely 27 years old and a professor at Warsaw University, Brodziński had mastered idealistic German philosophy very well. He approached Johann Gottfried Herder's idea of national character, as was typical for the Enlightenment, as a totality of that nation's particular features, which appear in every literature. He was convinced that the most appropriate genre to convey Polish spirituality was the idyll. Soon afterwards, he himself wrote the idyll "*Wiesław*" (1820); however, it pleased neither the new, nor the old art adepts. The reason behind this might be that, as a moderate, Brodziński was searching for the strongest features of Romantic and classical trends, and tried to harmonize them.[16] Brodziński, instead of constructing one, classical, collection of rules, constructed yet another, a Romantic one, based on the same superficial principle of the regulation of artistic images. In this sense, he kept to the principles of classicist aesthetic thinking.

Unlike Romantics such as Novalis, Schlegel, and Schelling, Brodziński returned to the eighteenth century's primary binary opposition of nature and culture, along with its consequent oppositions of reason and sensibility, body and spirit. Reason and body are the features of classicism, while sensibility and spirit belong to Romanticism. New binary oppositions crystallize that will be used by many upcoming critics to define Romanticism:

> Classicality limits imagination, leading it to a single object; while Romanticism lifts one up from material things to infinity; in the

[15] Maironis considers "Kazys Brodzinskis" a father of Polish Romanticism (Maironis, *Raštai*, 414). Similarly, a contemporary *History of Lithuanian Literature* calls him "the most famous representative of Polish pre-Romanticism – John the Baptist of Polish Romanticism" (*Lietuvių literatūros istorija*, 246).

[16] Miłosz, *History*, 207.

> former, imagination is external and physical, in the latter, it is internal and perpetual. The material body was everything to Homer, and spirit is everything to our Romanticists. The first one is bright day, in which this infinity seems limited to us; the second one is night, which reveals the same infinity and offers the entire emotive content of things, and not the things visible to the eye.[17]

Brodziński does not argue with Madame de Staël's statement that Romanticism starts with the epoch of the courtesan and is infused with the spirit of knighthood and Christianity,[18] or that it primarily depends on the nature of the relationship between knighthood and Christianity, and on Roman and Greek literature. Looking at the opposition of Romanticism and classicism from a nationalistic Polish point of view, Brodziński introduces the component de Staël emphasized, that is, the regular patterns of German and French artistic thought correspond to the contradiction between Romanticism and classicism. Brodziński tasked himself with finding Polish literature's place among French and German literary canons. The cultural authority of the great nations powerfully constrained possible aspirations to originality and the freedom to interpret both Polish and Russian literature. There was only one possibility left for the Polish and Russian nations – to intervene in the dialog uninvited, without hope of being heard beyond the homeland's walls; to listen to what French or German authorities discussed, and to plunge into variations of topics suggested by Boileau, Winckelmann, Schlegel, or Madame de Staël. It did not matter how strongly feelings of national pride resisted it, but at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, the great Western cultures served as a model to Russians and Poles, just as the ancient world was the model for the French in the seventeenth century. Nothing remained for Brodziński but to reluctantly acknowledge that in Poland, some follow the French, while others try to follow the Germans, but in both cases there was imitation and replication, not original art.[19]

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[17] Brodziński, *Dziela*, 51.
[18] Ibid., 3.
[19] Ibid., 3-4.

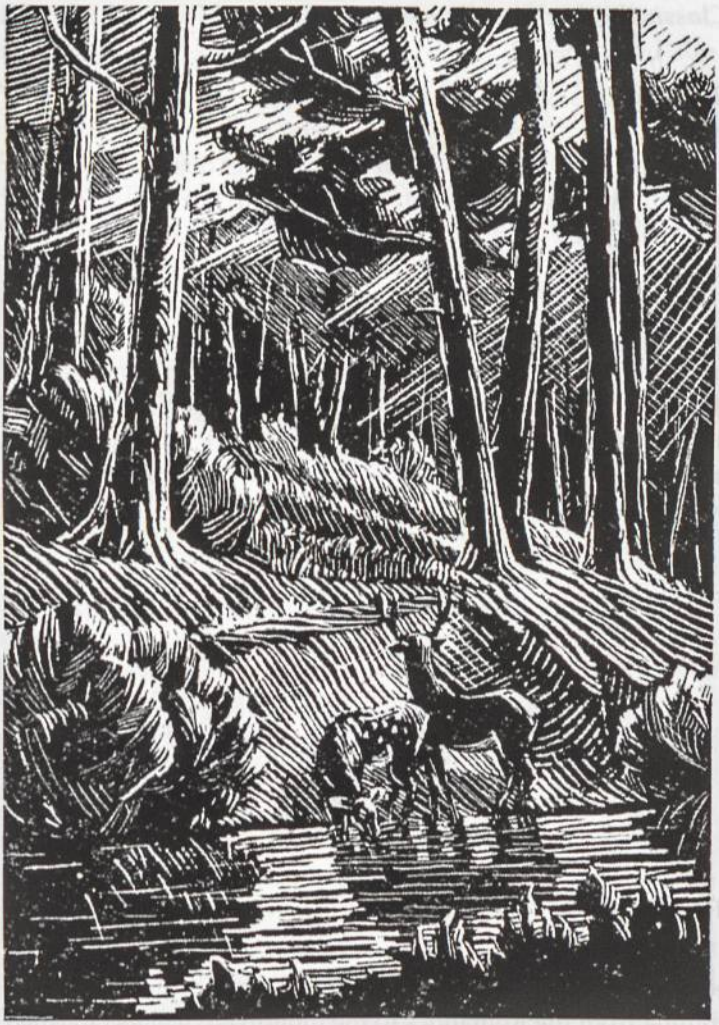

Illustration by B. Klova from *Anykščių šilelis*, Kaunas: Valstybinė pedagoginės literatūros leidykla, 1959.

Classical is Healthy, Romantic is Diseased

In all of the nations, adepts of the classics fought against the principles of the new art in the same way. Art, for the "naïve" poet Goethe, had not yet become a subjective expression of the contents of the human spirit; art is objective, existing beyond the boundaries of the human soul. For this reason, he maintained the value of representation: there is the true (classical) and untrue (Romantic) art, or distortion of true art, which Goethe consistently, and without the least tolerance, fought against until the end of his life. In his famous maxim, he compared both of these tendencies to the opposition of health and illness: "*Classisch ist das Gesunde, romantisch das Kranke* (Classicism is health, and Romanticism is illness)."[20] In 1829, in an interview with Eckermann, Goethe could not hide his disgust with the Romantics:

> We then came to the newest French poets and the meaning of the terms "classic" and "Romantic." "A new expression occurs to me," said Goethe, "which does not ill define the state of the case. I call the classic *healthy*, the Romantic *sickly*. In this sense, the *Nibelungenlied* is as classic as the *Illiad*, for both are vigorous and healthy. Most modern productions are Romantic, not because they are new, but because they are weak, morbid, and sickly; and the antique is classic, not because it is old, but because it is strong, fresh, joyous, and healthy. If we distinguish 'classic' and 'Romantic' by these qualities, it will be easy to see our way clearly."[21]

Trespassing the Perfect Rules

Jan Śniadecki, a professor at Vilnius University, responded to Brodziński's article in a Goethe-like spirit. He felt a threat coming from the Romantics to the long-lived, well-established rules. In his 1819 article "*O piśmach klasycznych i romantycznych*" (On Classical and Romantic Writings), he defends the finished forms the world had acquired and was no longer willing to change. Like Brodziński, he applies a systematic approach to

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[20] Goethe, *Sämmtliche Werke*, 234.
[21] Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe*, 203-204.

literature, that is, he upholds a view criticized by Mickiewicz, who stated that some "writers see only classicism and Romanticism in all poetry, and they sort all writer's works, from Orpheus to Byron, to the left or to the right, labeling them as either classical or Romantic."[22] Actually, Mickiewicz does not use the terms "classicism" and "Romanticism," which signify subjection to a concrete literary method; he uses instead concepts such as "classicality" and "Romanticity," which indicate the particular stylistic features of those groups of works.

Śniadecki maintains the position common to the old apologists, which derives from a creationist worldview – the world was created a long time ago, and so the rules and regulations of perfection were established long ago, and therefore, one may either follow them or not. Classic art conforms to poetic rules set for the French by Boileau, for Poles by Dmóchowski, and for the rest of the civilized world by Aristotle and Horace. Romantic art breaks these rules of perfection and destroys them. In other words, if Boileau or Horace established the rules of perfect art, logically, the art that denies them is simply imperfect. The arguments presented by Śniadecki best illustrate that the collision between Romanticism and classicism was primarily a collision of creationism and evolutionism: if all the laws of human existence are inscribed into human nature, and ancient Greek art and philosophy defined them most accurately, then receding from the Greeks is receding from truth and perfection. This is purportedly what Romantic or new art occupies itself with.

Without mentioning a single Romantic work, Śniadecki condemns Romanticism for offering figurative meanings instead of explaining things simply and literally. Shortly afterwards, in 1822, Piotr Vyazemsky ironically ridiculed adepts of classical regulations who did not understand figurative meanings, and demanded that Pushkin, in his poem "*Kavkazskii plennik*" (The Prisoner of the Caucasus) of 1822, clearly explain that the Circassian girl jumped into the water and drowned her-

[22] Mickiewicz, *Lyrika*, 326.

self because it was too difficult to understand what the verse meant: "As moonlight waters splash ahead / A rippling circle disappears."[23] Similarly, Śniadecki highlighted only a realistic meaning, a oneness with nature, and refused to accept the magic, spells, and ghosts the Romanticists purportedly portray.

Illustration by Alfonsas Žvilius from *Anykščių šilelis*, Vilnius: Vaga, 1985.

[23] Vyazemsky, *Estetika*, 53.

The purposes of art include entertaining the reader, along with educating him or her and providing knowledge. However, Śniadecki obsessively shook off the memory of humanity's childhood; he could not analyze it, he could not see its image because this image degraded and disgraced him. Śniadecki was a civilized person who had risen from a primeval state; he did not want to remember his past, because a juxtaposition with the past, basically, suggests his evolution. The creationist's consciousness interprets this evolution as an emphasis on human limits: man understands his present state as the peak of perfection, and any reminder of the path that led him to this state, in other words, his previous imperfection, humiliates and frustrates him. Only a human who has reached a present state of perfection and who is guided by reason and sees things as they leave an imprint on the senses (the "eyes and lenses") can represent them. In this case, the most convenient approach is to identify oneself with the ancient authorities and humbly and submissively acknowledge their perfection: "For two thousand years, we respected appointed laws that were confirmed by truth and experience; let us obey them (...)"[24]

Unlike Goethe, Polish Romantics did not actualize the problem of the concepts' origin; they approach them as if they were new, but intrinsically understandable, as if they had existed for centuries. On the other hand, one cannot find any references to the research done by Friedrich Schlegel, which is replaced by a short compilation from Madame de Staël's book *On Germany*. The principles of Romantic and classic art formulated in a chapter of de Staël's book become a starting point for subsequent development and realization. As we have seen, until the middle of the nineteenth century, Romanticism and classicism, or the old and the new art, are understood as the expression of two types of worldview – the spiritual versus the physical, the emotive versus the rational, and from there, as the variation of two topics, two styles, braced against Greek-Roman and Christian religion, the ancient and the Middle Ages,

[24] Sniadeckis, *Raštai*, 116.

and ultimately, as the embodiment of the German and French nations' spirits.

Perception and Belief

Four years after Brodziński's study was published, a young Adam Mickiewicz entered the quarrel. Zavadskis's publishing house in Vilnius published a collection of poems, *Poezje* (Poetry), by Mickiewicz in two volumes in 1822-1823. The book traditionally marks the beginning of Romanticism in Polish literature, and the collection's foreword, "O poezji romantycznej" (On Romantic Poetry) became a manifesto of Polish Romanticism. If the revolution enacted by Mickiewicz, wrote Czesław Miłosz, did not lead towards a quick victory of the Romantic spirit over rationalism, it at least introduced a new understanding of poetic language.[25] In this foreword, as well as in the ballad "Romantyczność" (Romanticism) created in January 1821, Mickiewicz actively involved himself in the still-smoldering polemic on Romantic and classic poetry.

In "Romantyczność," Mickiewicz portrayed an old rationalist, who, with the passion of Jan Śniadecki's anti-Romantic article, attacks the emotive mystical worldview, and to the ordinary people witnessing a miracle, he says: "Trust my sight and my lenses, / I see nothing here." A poet calmly explains the rules of the new art to him:

> "The girl feels" I modestly answer,
> And the crowd believes profoundly;
> Feeling and faith speak more clearly to me
> Than the lenses and eye of the sage.[26]

Classicality's advocate follows dead truths, unfathomable to people, and since he does not know the living truth, he will never see a miracle.[27] One can see a miracle only with one's heart, not with the eyes. In the Lithuanian translation of "Romantyczność" by Eduardas Mieželaitis, the opposition of live/dead truth disappears ("Tu juk negyvą tiesą tegynei. / Ji ir

[25] Miłosz, *History*, 213.
[26] Mickiewicz, "Romanticism."
[27] Mickiewicz, *Pisma*, 165.

neleidžia patirti / Tau šio stebuklo, pažįstamo miniai. / Žvelk širdimi tik į širdį"), and so does the unity of feeling and belief ("Ji, atsakiau aš seniui,– tai jaučia. / Žmonės ja tiki. Man regis – / Jausmas pasako žymiai daugiau čia, / Nei akiniai arba akys"[28]): "Dziewczyna czuje, – odpowiadam skromnie, / A gawiedź wierzy głęboko; / Czucie i wiara silniej mówi do mnie / Niż mędrca skiełko i oko."[29] It is precisely feeling and metaphysical belief, with a distinctive religious shade, which reveal the deep existence of things and allow seeing a miracle – the soul of her deceased beloved that appears to Karusia – a miracle impossible to see with either the eyes or lenses. In the translation, metaphysical belief is reduced to trusting what Karusia says.

Apologists for the old art were not the only ones Mickiewicz disagreed with. In some respects, he disagreed with Brodziński, a promoter of the new art, to whom Mickiewicz dedicated a remark in the foreword of *Poezje* and a Romantic speech in "Forefather's Eve, Part IV." This was a disagreement inside the camp. Brodziński's goal, to define static systems of classicism and Romanticism and to set all previous and present poetry into these systems, is unacceptable to Mickiewicz. Like Madame de Staël, Mickiewicz introduces a diachronistic principle; he considered the relationship of imagination, sensibility, and reason, as well as a nation's language, as the essence of poetry. The other important distinctive constituent of poetry is its audience. There is poetry created for ordinary people, and there is poetry created for the chosen. Mickiewicz completely depreciates the ancient Romans because "a strange culture, borrowed from the Greeks, interrupted the natural development of its national culture."[30] In Greece, art found more fertile ground and blossomed as a balance of imagination, sensibility, and reason, and gave works of art harmony of structure and expression. Besides, the poet said,

> during the heyday of their culture, Greek poets always sang for the people; their songs contained the nation's feelings, attitudes,

[28] Mickevičius, *Lyrika*, 131.
[29] Mickiewicz, *Pisma*, 165.
[30] Mickiewicz, *Lyrika*, 316.

> and memories, adorned with ingenuity and a pleasing structure, and consequently they had a major influence on maintaining, strengthening, and even forming the nation's character.[31]

Precisely this kind of art is called Greek or classical art (*klasyczny*).

Chivalry, love of the fairer sex, observance of the code of honor, religious ecstasy, and a blend of pagan and Christian mythical images "compose the medieval Romantic world, whose poetry is also labeled as Romantic."[32] Both arts are composed of spirit and form, or content and external form. As the new European nations matured, the beauty of antiquity's art discloses itself to them, and "literate poets" could no longer be indifferent to it. Poets imitating the poets of antiquity create various possibilities of a synthesis of form and content, but poetry cannot be the same as it was in ancient times. Initially, nationalistic topics dominated, because the ancients' oeuvre was not popular. Later, "more order, harmony, and refinement"[33] were introduced into the Romantic world. Romantic poetry was shaped by a nation's particular tendencies, and "real Romantic works should be sought for in the oeuvre created by medieval poets,"[34] while the rest of the later "Romantic oeuvre," considering the content and structure, form and style, leans towards other kinds of poetry. To Mickiewicz, Romantic literature is, in a sense, identical to the courtesan literature of the Latin nations.

When Mickiewicz wrote about the genre of the ballad, he made no mention of Coleridge's "Lyrical Ballads," which appeared in 1798. Its "Introduction," written by Wordsworth for the 1800 edition, is considered the manifesto of English Romanticism. Mickiewicz does not mention any of the representatives of German Romanticism either, except for Schlegel (Friedrich, judging from the context), whom he actually reproached for providing an inaccurate definition of Romantic literature.[35]

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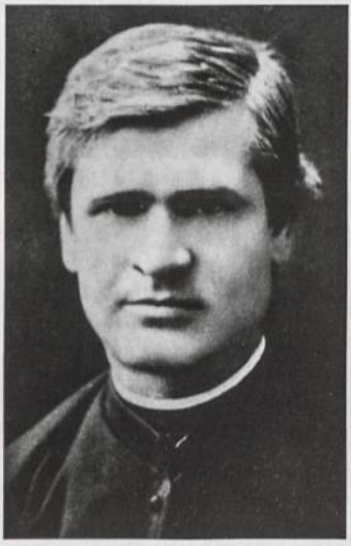
[31] Ibid., 314.
[32] Ibid., 317.
[33] Ibid., 318.
[34] Ibid., 325.
[35] Ibid., 327.

Brodziński as well as Śniadecki, the opponent of Romantics, write of Romanticism in a similar manner, using broad strokes and without referring to specific works.

Anykščių šilelis – *Classical or Romantic?*



To which of those two arts would a literary proficient attribute Antanas Baranauskas's poem *Anykščių šilelis* when it was written in 1858? Accepting Brodziński's definitions, that "classicality restrains imagination and leads it to a single thing," while Romanticism liberates the imagination and, instead of portraying things as seen with the eyes, offers their content as it is felt (in a sense, the very essence of Kant's thing-in-itself), the literary proficient would undoubtedly describe Baranauskas's *artistic* method as classical, as an art of daylight and emphatic materiality. Clearly, Baranauskas does not concern himself with presenting the emotive content of things. Instead, he presents things "seen with the eyes," arranged in the emotively limited external world. Baranauskas's hero enters a forest armed with four senses:

> Kur tik žiūri..., Kur tik uostai..., Kur tik klausai..., Ką tik jauti...[36]
>
> (Wherever you look..., Wherever you smell..., Wherever you listen..., Whatever you feel...)

He does not try to struggle through the surface of the thing-in-itself. Instead, he is satisfied with conveying the static physical content, reminiscent of a scientist-naturalist's compilation of a list plants in the making:

[36] Baranauskas, *Anykščių šilelis*, 28.

Čia paliepių torielkos po mišką išklotos,
Čia kiauliabudės pūpso lyg pievos kemsuotos,
Čia pušyne iš gruodo išauga žaliuokės,
Čia rausvos, melsvos, pilkos ūmėdės sutūpę,
Linksmutės, gražiai auga, niekas jom nerūpi, ...[37]

(There under the lindens, ox-eyed daisies, blanketed through the woods
There the milkcaps poke out, as if the fields were covered in hillocks,
There in the pines, the green elfcups grow from the frozen earth,
There ruddy, bluish, gray toadstools squat,
Cheerful, growing nicely, without a care, ...)

In the forest, the poet does not see anything beyond his "eyes and lenses"; a picture of external nature is a miracle to him, and nature itself, for Baranauskas, is not the thing-in-itself that conceals the great secret. Instead, using Julijonas Lindė-Dobilas's words, it is God's most beautiful creation. Nature as depicted by the poet is prettified and decorated, as if an experienced gardener had cleaned up its primitive wilderness that, purportedly, is so beloved by the Romantics, yet disgusts Śniadecki. Reason and perception dominate in the poem's imagery. However, imprints of imagination are marginal everywhere, there is no "mystical infinite power of seeing," [38] which Śniadecki considers a Romantic fallacy, and Mickiewicz so particularly valued. But Baranauskas also never uses the figurative meanings of words, which so frightens classicists. Even in the second part of the poem, historical memory and rational decisions dominate over imagination. Undoubtedly, the strictly well-formed plan of the poem, especially the first part of it, could be assigned to the features of classicism. Relying on Mickiewicz's rules, the very feature that draws *Anykščių šilelis* even closer to Greek or classic art becomes a very important argument for Lithuanian literary studies to attribute *Anykščių šilelis* to Romanticism: Baranauskas sings for the people, not for the chosen. His song consists of the "nation's feelings, attitudes, and memories, adorned with ingenuity and a pleasing

[37] Ibid.
[38] Sniadeckis, *Raštai*, 114.

structure." Several folklore elements in the poem could also be assigned to this category (for example, the story of the Puntukas Stone and the fairytale about Eglė, Queen of Serpents).

Referring to the early conception of Romantic and classic art, one must acknowledge that the largest part of the artistic features in *Anykščių šilelis* fulfills the conception of classical art and leaves very few arguments to prove the poem's Romanticism. Wendell Mayo also questions the Romantic label of *Anykščių šilelis* by saying: "Still, critics continue to identify a strong bias in the poem rooted in a Romantic tradition. If the poem continues to be identified as Romantic it is only because historical forces have [t]ended to center meaning that way."[39] Therefore, despite the fact that the poem was associated with the aesthetics of Romanticism in the middle of the nineteenth century (referring to the aesthetics of Romanticism, as conceived by Vaižgantas, Putinas, or subsequently, Vytautas Kubilius), it is possible to state that for Baranauskas's contemporaries, *Anykščių šilelis* fits perfectly into the rules of classical art. And if we assume Baranauskas deliberately chose an artistic method, the more conservative pole of this opposition – classicism – would have attracted him as more suitable to the poet's cultural nature: Baranauskas was, according to Vytautas Kavolis, a person of a static, not a dynamic, world; Baranauskas was afraid of change and therefore avoided it. Later evaluation of the poem was not determined by new discoveries, or deeper insights into the poem's artistic essence. Instead, it was determined by the high regard given the paradigm of Romanticism, which substituted for the concept of Romantic and classical in Lithuania, as corresponding better to the nation's spirit, despite the drastic changes in this paradigm in the last hundred years.

Translated by Daiva Litvinskaitė

[39] Mayo, "A Note on Oppositional Discourses," 5.

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M. K. Čiurlionis and the East: Part 2

ANTANAS ANDRIJAUSKAS

Many aspects of Čiurlionis's painting bear evidence of East Asian influences. Following his sojourn in Prague in 1906, during which he wrote of his interest in Japanese art, Čiurlionis enters a new creative phase, distinguished by his use of arabesque shapes, sinuous lines, calligraphy, and other formal elements associated with the art of East Asia. Characteristic features of Chinese and Japanese art traditions become even more prevalent later, in the third or Sonata period of Čiurlionis's painting, as he discovers novel approaches to composition and perspective, as he turns to a more muted palette. The bright colors of earlier periods give way to soft illumination and diffused light, as if seen through mists or fog. Themes are developed within a limited color range. He uses tempera and pastels on paper, alone or in combination, to achieve gently contoured modeling, pure tones and halftones, a subdued decorative quality, sensitive relationships between flowing forms and delicate linear structures. Bare surfaces, laden with great symbolic meaning, appear in his canvases. Scenes are often depicted from an aerial view. His cycles of paintings migrate through the dimensions of space and time in constant transformation.

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ANTANAS ANDRIJAUSKAS is a professor at the Vilnius Academy of Art and head of the Comparative Culture Department at the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute. In 2003, he was awarded the National Prize for Lithuanian Scholarship for his series of works, *Comparative Research into Culture, Philosophy, Aesthetics, and Art.*

In Čiurlionis's oeuvre, the most prominent genre is the landscape, but it is not the sort of naturalistic and neo-Romantic landscape of the Western tradition that mimics reality. Čiurlionis steadily moves toward depicting a landscape as it is perceived in the artist's mind, interpreting it metaphorically, as in the East Asian aesthetic. He summons up the metaphysical meanings of the natural world, which is no longer a physical, but rather an ideal reality, rooted in his subjective consciousness. He espouses the poetry of the primeval beauty and harmony of nature devoid of human presence. Čiurlionis sees the landscape as a natural all-encompassing system, closely connected with the orderly structure of the cosmos, as do the masters of East Asian painting.

In his canvases, precipitous towering jagged mountains, gracefully soaring wooden spans, mirror-like waters, tiny skiffs, nets, oversized storm-tossed trees, a proliferation of plants, flowers, fluttering butterflies, and other motifs typically found on Japanese sliding doors and folding screens appear with greater frequency. The growing influence of East Asian painting is evidenced by his detailed studies of Hiroshige's landscapes and of Hokusai's *The Great Wave of Kanagawa*. The latter work is reinterpreted in Čiurlionis's *Sonata of the Sea. Finale*, but here it is the restrained and refined form, muted tones, and internal artistry of the great Chinese and Japanese landscape tradition, as it was preserved in the work of Hokusai and Hiroshige, that takes precedence over the bold lines and intense color that typify the style of *ukiyo-e* etchings.

Further undeniable proof of the East Asian connection is provided by the *Summer Sonata. Allegro* (1908), a work grounded in the aesthetics of the East, but to date not yet afforded a closer look by art scholars. Clearly distinguishable in the distant background is a typical Far Eastern landscape of steep mountain silhouettes, expansive waters, islands, and sailing junks. The painting stands out with its subtle color scheme, so characteristic of East Asian landscapes, and its sensitive graphic lines. This, as well as the aforementioned painting inspired by Hokusai's well-known work, is signed with the artist's initials MKC. Even the signature is stylized like an ideogram, and its

placement is precisely in the accustomed spot chosen by Chinese and Japanese painters. Is this mere coincidence?

These two mature paintings, the only ones that bear the signature of the painter, and in which one recognizes obvious references to East Asian art, speak eloquently of the new aesthetic coordinates of his Sonata period. Aside from the instances mentioned above, direct allusions to East Asian art can be found in other paintings of this period as well. For example, in *Sonata of the Sun. Scherzo,* there are depictions of mountains and of connecting bridges, together with areas of water and ornamental repetitive motifs of flowers and butterflies. In *Spring Sonata. Scherzo,* we see the motif of powerful torrents of rain, so prevalent in Japanese landscapes and etchings. In *Sonata of the Serpent. Scherzo,* images of smooth waters and of decorative butterflies are rendered in a transparent painting style and a subtle muted color palette. In *Sonata of the Serpent. Allegro,* bridges and aqueducts stretch across far-reaching waters.

Lacking reliable sources, it is difficult to say who, out of the entire range of Chinese and Japanese painters, exerted the greatest influence on Čiurlionis. Similar motifs can be found in the work of the Chinese painters Mu Qi (Mu Ch'i), Xia Gui (Hsia Kuei), Li Cheng, Ni Zan (Ni Tsan), Ma Yuan, and Ma Lin, as well as the Japanese painters Shūbun, Shukō, Sesshū, Hokusai, and Hiroshige. Added to this list, we have the many followers of the various influential schools of painting, including the Chinese *wenrenhua,* and the Japanese *haiga, bunjinga (nanga),* and *ukiyo-e* schools.

The fundamental principles of Čiurlionis's worldview and his creative thought constitute another link with East Asian traditions. Foremost is his universality, which manifested itself both in the broad range of his creative activity and in his pursuits to achieve a synthesis of the arts. His multifaceted and innovative being discovered the path to self-expression in painting, literature, as well as music, which he never abandoned, contrary to popular view. Typically, he also devoted his time to philosophical reflection.

Indeed, the great masters of East Asian painting, among them Wang Wei, Mi Fu, Su Shih, Ikkyū Sōjun, Shūbun, Sesshū,

Shukō, Taiga, Buson, and Gyokudō, were, like Čiurlionis, protean individuals, who concurrently worked in more than one branch of the arts. Moreover, Čiurlionis's universality enabled him to overstep the boundaries of narrowly construed aesthetic principles, concepts, and artistic styles, as he successfully incorporated their positive elements into a universal system of aesthetics. He transitioned naturally from one art form to the expressive means of another.

Interests and traits seen as exemplifying artists of East Asia also describe Čiurlionis's personality and views. He was a man of conscience, had a passion for new ideas, sought perfection, and was never satisfied with the results he achieved. He was sensitive and easily wounded. He extolled spiritual values. He was filled with dignity, understood the worth of his creative work, and stood firm in his ethical and humanistic principles. His conviction that a creative individual, in essence, can never attain a state of completeness was the basis for his self-criticism. He shared the belief of East Asian painters that the human creative process is an iteration of the creative model of the universe, to which only a good and pure individual can aspire. Also, similarly, he subscribed to a poetic view of solitude. "Solitude," he asserts, "is a great teacher and a friend."[1]

According to Čiurlionis's sister, their father spoke to them about his frequent walks in the woods, along streams and lakes, listening to bird calls, observing the habits of animals and fish. His love of nature in all its manifestations, as well as his penchant for wandering through the forests of Dzūkija, delighting in their rare beauty, was passed down to all of his children, especially to Konstantinas, the eldest. Nature to Čiurlionis was a real being, just as it was to painters of the East. To him, the color green is a symbol of living nature, and in his writings the concept of *greenness* arises from the depths of his subconscious. He feels a constant yearning for the embrace and harmony of greenness.

"An uncultivated person, as he observes the beauties of nature that surround him," writes Čiurlionis in his article *"Lietuvių dailės paroda"* (Exhibit of Lithuanian Art):

[1] Čiurlionis, *Laiškai Sofijai*, V, 50.

> does not express his pleasure audibly, as do the so-called intelligentsia at every opportunity, but that does not mean that this person does not feel the beauty of the rising and setting sun, that he does not distinguish the bright rainbow from the heavy cloud, the roar of the stream from the chirping of the birds, the rumbling of distant thunder from the mysterious and profound tales of the forest that is dark with age. The rustic man listens and looks quietly and does not need to be told how beautiful it is. He understands that on his own. And he does take pleasure in nature, but he does it in his own way: he crafts songs, which contain all within, all the riches of nature's beauty – observed, described, and named in intimate terms...[2]

Characteristic of Čiurlionis, and of many East Asian masters of painting, is a painful awareness of the relentless passage of time, a particular emotional neediness, a clear differentiation between what is true existence and what is not, a continuing pursuit of the meaning of life that was already evident in the early years of his artistic development. In 1902, in Leipzig, he writes:

> Everything perishes and passes. The future has turned into the past, and what do we find there—rot, foolishness. So much is said and contemplated about life. Life... Oh! Life... Where is it? Show me. Is this then life? What is it worth? The most beautiful ideas will resonate for a while in the air, people will listen and listen, praise them, even put them to memory, while swinish life drags along according to its own rules. We are constantly saying something, doing something. So many words! They are representations of various noble and beautiful things... Where are those things? Do we, in fact, live a double existence: one hideous—reality, and the other, the beautiful and noble one—only in words, in the air? Why is it that one cannot live only in that other life? Why is it so elusive? What is it that I want? I want to be different, I want things to be different. I want a different life. I don't know the road to get there.[3]

Later, after he finds his artistic calling, Čiurlionis apparently turns into the classic introvert, for whom true existence is inseparable from complete dedication to one's art. In this respect, he is similar to the neo-Daoists, the disciples of the

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2 Čiurlionis, *Apie muziką*, 279.

3 Ibid., 151–152.

Chan and Zen aesthetic, who formed the Chinese *fengliu* (wind and stream), *wenrenhua* (literati), and the Japanese *haiga, zenga,* and *bunjinga* schools. These artists, who advocated the ideology of the Way of art, i.e., the dedication of life to art, rejected titles and all material trappings of everyday existence in order to give their lives over to art, to the contemplation of nature's beauty and to the apprehension of its meaning.

In East Asian cultures, art is often elevated above other areas of spiritual pursuit and assumes a religious and philosophical function. As an expression of the deepest impulses, ideas, and emotions of the human spirit, art leads toward knowledge of the mysteries of nature and the universe. It is noteworthy that the Chinese and Japanese masters of landscape painting conceived the cosmos as "living reality." The primary purpose of painting is to genuinely convey the flight of the artist's spirit and the life pulse of every depicted object. Furthermore, the artist must enter into the rhythms of the universe and allow them to spread through his body as he creates. If the painter is able to enter into the spirit of the represented object and convey the creator's spiritual energy, then he is worthy of being called an artist.

Thus the painter should reveal not the external but, rather, the internal essence of the painted object or phenomenon. Čiurlionis rejects the premise prevalent in the West that an extreme and irreconcilable dichotomy exists between spirit and matter, the divine and the human, the ideal and the real, beauty and ugliness, and so on. Through his art, he seeks to emphasize the unity and harmony of opposites. He develops his own concept of the antithesis of the spirit and the material transitory world. By involving himself in the object of his artistic creation and by removing himself from the external world, he not only conveys the idea of a harmonious and ineffable universe, but he also captures inner reality – the consistent flow of actual pure states of consciousness.

The works of Čiurlionis are, similarly to those of the followers of the Daoist, Chan, and Zen art aesthetic, "paintings of the mind" that reveal the artist's intimate communion with nature and his receptiveness to its rhythms and constant

transformations. Of foremost importance is an intuitive understanding of reality and the pursuit of poetically expressed simplicity. Alien to the art of Čiurlionis and of the East is the ancient world's idea of *mimesis*, i.e., the mimicking of the external world, the imitation and slavish copying of reality. The essential concept of his creative work involves the principles of Eastern contemplation and meditation, that is, inner sight, which explains the archetypal character of many of Čiurlionis's visions, the depth and metaphoric quality of his pictures.

"Paintings of the mind" demand from the viewer an active intellectual effort, emotional involvement, even a peculiar sort of meditation that encourages further reflection. It is as if the artist, through his paintings, urges the viewer to enter into a world of symbols and to actively experience a personal relationship with the depicted object, to approach the creator's spiritual state. The viewer must be worthy of the creative efforts that the painter has undertaken to transform primordial chaos into harmony. To the masters of East Asian landscape painting, the highest criterion for judging a genuine work of art is the work's ability to make the viewer think. Čiurlionis apparently shares this view, because his "mind paintings" typically tend toward conditionality, symbolic thought, and stylization of the depicted phenomena.

Even though Čiurlionis develops his visual structures consistently, in many of his paintings we find incomplete statements, aesthetic allusions, and an unfinished quality typical of East Asian painting. For Čiurlionis, it was more important to suggest an idea and to grasp its essence than to achieve its realization. This explains why many of his art, music, and literary works seem to have been left unfinished. However, on the other hand, one might regard this trait as a deliberate conceptual principle – in the incomplete statement and in the aesthetic allusion Čiurlionis sees the source of all things and the powerful potential of existence. Bare picture surfaces for Čiurlionis, and for East Asian painters, become a meaningful spiritualized meditational reality, an inner gravity, the incomplete state of the spirit, a pause, silence. Čiurlionis also actively used the emotional power of emptiness and of blank space to

achieve harmony with other visual structures in the painting and thus ensure the integrity of his compositional solutions. This is thoughtful painting that requires emotional involvement, deeper reflection, the gradual apprehension of the assembled parts of a work, and later – the interpretation of the entire compositional unit.

Čiurlionis's worldview and oeuvre are steeped in pantheism and the idea that man is one with the world around him. The stimulus for many of his works was close attention to the mysterious ciphers of nature and close observation of nature's physical phenomena. It is here that the artist's affinity with the aesthetic of East Asian painting comes more clearly into view, especially where the relationship of man and nature is described in terms of unity and harmony. In traditional Western art, the primary focus is on man and his dominance over nature. In contrast, the human form in Čiurlionis's paintings, as in traditional East Asian art, is, for the most part, insignificant. Man is regarded as an organic part of nature, enmeshed in the elemental indivisible processes of the universe within the endless stream of life's transformations.

This cosmic universality, in which the self melds into nature's boundlessness, encompasses Eastern ideas of man's temporary existence and the principle of ineffability. Objects depicted in paintings obey the regular rhythms of nature; the illusory and transitory nature of human life is juxtaposed with the sublime eternity of the cosmos and nature. We find this viewpoint in *The Zodiac* cycle (1907), which followed a prolonged period of immersion in Eastern mythology. The marked ornamentation, sophisticated color palette, and terse forms that predominate here are later further developed in *Sonata of the Stars* (1908) and the majestic *Rex* (1909).

The Poetry of Space and Eternity

To Čiurlionis, as to the masters of landscape painting, a heightened sense of space and immeasurable distance are among the most important elements of a landscape. The diptych *Sorrow* (1906-1907), quite reminiscent of the minimalist landscapes of the Chan painters, was the first noteworthy work

from this standpoint and served as a sort of transition to his later Sonata period in terms of its treatment of space, as well as its color palette and gentle lines.

When, in 1908, the painter began to show obvious interest in East Asian landscape painting, he was drawn to its evocative use of space and to its attempt to convey the effect of the limitless reaches of the cosmos. Space is the cornerstone of his mature painting aesthetic. It is the basic element that fundamentally separates Čiurlionis from contemporary Western painters and closely associates him with the tradition of Far Eastern landscape painting. His early enchantment with nature's metamorphoses, which he rendered poetically, gradually progresses toward an intense study of nature. In these later works, we see how he emphasized details that convey space and depth and how he made masterful use of foreground and background to achieve the clarity of atmosphere typical of East Asian painting (*Summer II*, 1907-1908). *The Zodiac* cycle may be considered a peculiar hymn to space. The significance of space in Čiurlionis's works was first noted by V. Chudovsky. "Space," he wrote, "is the primordial element in Čiurlionis's art; it is the possibility of being. Space is the potential for life. For Čiurlionis, empty space, just like broad expanses, represented a real depicted phenomenon, similar to mass or materiality for other artists. He was the brilliant herald of untapped possibilities."[4]

The first painters to address the problems of space and distance were the great masters of Chinese landscape painting Tsung Ping (375–443) and Wang Wei (415–443) of the Yin dynasty. The leading figure of the Tang dynasty, also named Wang Wei (699–756), established new principles of spatial perspective and made further strides toward achieving the illusion of spatial depth.

The concept of landscape painting they created was further developed by the great masters of the Chinese Song and Yuan dynasties and the Japanese Muromachi and Momovama periods of painting. Central to the concept that they introduced was the idea of the shifting perspective, characteristic of later East Asian landscape painting and especially the neo-Daoist,

[4] Чюдовский, "Н.К.Чурлянис," 53.

Chan, and Zen traditions. This idea of movement within the pictorial space, both within the physical boundaries of the picture plane, as well as the space beyond, is typical of Čiurlionis's painting cycles, where the viewer is allowed to wander freely within the expanse of the visible landscapes, to move across hills, woods, roads, and paths.

Furthermore, connected with the East Asian aesthetic of space that extends in all directions, is the rule that a painting, being an organic part of natural and universal harmony, may not have a delimiting physical frame, which would be counter to the concept of its integral existence within the uninterrupted stream of life's transformations. Westerners, on the other hand, observed the world as if looking through an open door or window. With its emphasis on optics and scientific knowledge since the days of Leonardo da Vinci, Western painting sought to have nature serve science and man, while East Asian painting, suffused with infinite respect for nature untouched by man, sought to preserve the primordial sacred beauty and nobility of nature. The Western concept of a single perspective seemingly circumscribed space and the physical fragment of the visible world within a rigid frame.

East Asian painters, even though they possessed an understanding of the Western concept of perspective as early as the eighteenth century, adhered to the predominant view of the East, which emphasized the preeminence of a perspective that allowed for panoramic space and multiple vanishing points. There is no doubt that Čiurlionis's mature work is rooted in the East Asian concept. This is easily confirmed by a close analysis of the paintings *Summer. II* (1907-1908), *Summer Sonata. Allegro* and *Andante* (1908), *Sonata of the Pyramids. Allegro* and *Scherzo* (1909), and many others. Here, Čiurlionis has employed the panoramic perspective of a bird's-eye view that is so characteristic of East Asian landscape painting. Even though the flat and even Lithuanian countryside mitigates the effect of the shifting perspective and the depiction of the world from an aerial view, nonetheless Čiurlionis succeeds in eliminating the boundaries to space that are created by the picture frame, because the viewer's imagination is able to roam beyond the visible world

or landscape. This is clearly seen in *Hymn* (1906-1907), *City. Prelude* (1908-1909), *Angel. Prelude* (1908-1909), *Sonata of the Pyramids. Allegro* (1908), *Altar* (1909), and many other works.

In classical Western art, compositional unity is achieved by emphasizing the balance of the various components of the painting in reference to its compositional axis. The entrenchment of balance and symmetry determined the static character of classic Western art. East Asian painters and the mature Čiurlionis (with the exception of his *Rex*, 1909) are attracted to an asymmetrical composition, the natural disturbance of balance that liberates the artist's creativity and nourishes the imagination. This approach achieves greater dynamism, powerful emotional responses, and is effective as structures are developed within the dimension of artistic time.

Like the great masters of Chinese and Japanese landscape painting (Ma Yuan, Ma Lin, Xia Gui, Ni Zan, Wu Chien, Shūbun, and Sesshū), Čiurlionis applied the universality of his creative talents, which included music composition, to the pursuit of musicality in painting, focusing his attention on the natural rhythms of the world rather than on the represented object. As a result, the visual structures of Čiurlionis's Sonata paintings offer the experience of moving, not only through space, but also through time, as in music and literature. In East Asian scrolls and cyclical paintings, which often depict the change of seasons, the images that are conceived within the dimension of time move from right to left. In Čiurlionis's cycles, the direction is from left to right, but in both instances, the process of comprehension is the same: the part or segment of the cycle that is comprehended by the mind is limited only in terms of what is capable of being grasped by the viewer's field of vision and by the mental process of contemplation.

This temporal principle of musical composition enables the painter to draw the viewer unawares into the process of comprehending the creative work and to pull him along. He reveals to the viewer the most mysterious flights of the spirit and urges him into dialogue with the ideas, moods, and emotional experiences being revealed. He speeds up and slows down the progression, as required by the visual suggestiveness of the

painting in the cycle as well as by the significance of the main themes and leitmotifs being developed, concentrating or diluting their effect. This involvement in the world of the images and symbols found in many of the Sonata period cycles reminds one of the systematic exposition of themes and the development of motifs within the realm of music, all of which are experienced by the listener within the dimension of time. Indeed, many of Čiurlionis's Sonata period works, as well as many East Asian landscape painting cycles (e.g., Sesshū's *Landscape of the Four Seasons*), seem to follow the musical model of thematic exposition, development, and recapitulation, while some others, as if works of drama, have a clearly expressed climax.

A consistent exposition of the main themes and leitmotifs in the various paintings of a cycle is necessary in order to prepare the viewer psychologically. Through his involvement in this manner, the viewer is able to "read" the work as an integrated whole and evaluate it in terms of its aesthetic characteristics, symbolic meanings, unexpected twists in ideas, the introduction of new motifs, and masterful formal solutions. This "reading" occurs independently, regardless of the importance of the depicted images, of their meaningful content, of a work's complexity or simplicity. If the viewer wishes to experience a cycle's subtleties, he must do so sequentially, going from painting to painting, according to the painter's programmed span of time, which operates according to its own rules of subjective comprehension, without regard to the objective passage of time.

Čiurlionis cleverly uses the horizontal line to link individual paintings in a cycle, a common device in East Asian painting. In *Raigardas*, it is a rivulet snaking its way through the three sections of the triptych. In *Sonata of the Stars*, it is the decorative ribbon of the starry path. Furthermore, the integrity of the component parts of the cycles is achieved, not through an obvious coordination of depicted motifs or color relationships, but rather through the use of a uniform color scheme, asymmetrical composition, ornamental details that repeat rhythmically, and the powerful emotional effect of blank space. Pauses and bare surfaces of the painting here acquire a special

significance, because they emphasize the meditational character of the painting. The lithe musical line and the repetition of ornamental dynamic flowing shapes not only have a rhythmic purpose, but also help to develop the main themes and motifs within the sections that constitute the thematic exposition, climax, or resolution. At the same time, each section of the cycle has its own unique color range and spiritual mood that characterizes it alone. As in East Asian art, the cycle frequently ends with an ostentatious motif full of energy and vitality, much like a rousing musical chord that introduces the finale.

Conclusion

The connection of Čiurlionis's painting with East Asian traditions is undeniable. The refined aesthetic of East Asian art that replaced the Orientalism of his early literary, psychological symbolism led him to essentially new approaches in formal artistic technique and style. Indeed, Čiurlionis's familiarity with East Asian landscape painting had a huge, perhaps determinative, influence on the development of the musical painting style of his mature Sonata period.

East Asian philosophical thought informed his worldview and creative ideas. Painting to him, as to Chan and Zen painters, was prayer, contemplation, evocation, spontaneity, and the liberation of the spirit. The scale of objects and the point of reference for his art came from nature rather than from man. The constantly changing beauty of everyday nature is a theme in many of Čiurlionis's works. In his pantheism, nature is the primary object of the painter's contemplation and the source of his inspiration. Man's role is to engage in an intimate passive relationship with nature through observation and meditation.

Furthermore, East Asian concepts galvanized Čiurlionis's universality and his views on the synthesis of the arts, his exaltation of immeasurable space and aerial perspective, the *non finito* principle and bare picture surfaces, symbolic painting, and the poetry of simplicity. Chinese and Japanese art traditions are reflected in his solutions to problems of artistic composition, in his refined sense of color, his use of decorative

arabesque shapes, graphic elements, calligraphy, and other formal stylistic features that characterize his oeuvre.

Most significantly, in many of Čiurlionis's works, as in East Asian landscape painting, the structures often unfold not only within the dimension of space but also in time. His Sonata paintings bear a close resemblance to musical counterpoint in terms of their compositional and plastic elements. They are based on a musical temporal principle that involves the development of main themes, leitmotifs, linear structures, and fluid shapes. Of great significance is the ornamental quality of sinuous lines and calligraphy, the dynamic repetition of stylized shapes, the rhythmic acceleration and diminution, all of which convey "musicality."

Having experienced the powerful effect of the East Asian landscape, Čiurlionis, as a painter, was not concerned with the interplay of form, space, and rhythmic structures in and of themselves. Rather, he consistently focused his creative will on resolving the complex problems of the synthesis of the arts. Čiurlionis was especially successful in realizing the goal of musical painting when he was able to integrate a suitable graphic-plastic approach with the specific requirements of representational art. Many of the late paintings of the Sonata period are distinguished by their masterful plastic language, their subtle gradation of tones and halftones. It is due to its grounding in the East Asian aesthetic that Čiurlionis's Sonata style of painting achieved its highly refined means of expression and remarkably sensitive relationships of color and form. Čiurlionis's *Sonata of the Sea* is, undoubtedly, one of the finest examples of the interaction of music and painting in the entire history of art.

Translated and edited by Birutė Vaičjurgis Šležas

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Poems by Jake Levine

Lithuania for Lithuanians

for the Nationalist Youth

near the three gold cupolas
greased with light
just above the sink, Jesus Christ
and men tinkering with a satellite
wave from outer space

when the tv tower
on the horizon explodes
assuaged from life
by a strange and curable disease
the clumps of chestnuts lining the river walk
are dying you say
lazily fingering gooseberries
on the gold-rimmed plate

a global warning is happening
and this is completely avoidable
as their disease is preventable

but if we address every story
how they deserve happy endings
made by love, a wilderness of hair
glued to sweating windows

JAKE LEVINE'S work in translation, criticism, and poetry has appeared widely online and in print. He was a Fulbright Scholar in Lithuania in 2010-2011, when these poems were written. He continues to edit Spork Press and lives in Seoul, Korea.

then explain the green front door
of our bedroom suburb
how it rusted unexpectedly
after the wall stain
made by the portrait of Stalin
was replaced with a Chihuahuan sombrero

how unexpectedly the acquisition of things
we only knew as ideas became real
and the ideas we once knew
we no longer could afford to dream

I have paid witness to the ghosts
of your ancestry dancing nakedly
around a fire of a statue of a serpent

in the center of an island of reeds
whose shadows look like teeth
you look like a snapdragon
avoiding the licking flame

while the silver hands of a few dead Jews
cram through the ghetto wall
plead quietly for spare bread
in Šnipiškės a few babushka
houses fly up from some flames

we wonder, perhaps because of poverty
or is it capitalism
that your Volga was deported
like the culture of my ancestry
is unnecessarily bleached from pain

we don't live as well as we imagined
under the free Lithuanian sky

but I remember that ride to the castle at Trakai
where we ran over a snake and almost died
because the minibus driver had been drinking

I remember the dead flint
of the SS Einsatzgruppen lighter
I kept both in fear and from disgust
from buying. how we arrived
at the lake with a bottle of triple 9's
and rented an old pedal boat
and bought a plastic ale jug
and parked the steadfast jalopy
on that island of reeds

in the middle of your skin
greased with sunlight
like a roman candle
you hurled your body into the lake

I understood that where you felt free
I planned an escape

and so for your blind flag
sacredly raised over a ground made hollow
by the liquidation of the dead

a single poem
my one and only condolence

Ponar

at the moment the ash heap stopped its smoke
our world began

we treated it by returning to the source
again and again, ripping the hair out the old dog
until there wasn't one left, not even on his balls
but that wasn't enough—we wanted skin—

bloodwet hound hide stretched round our face
fully wrapped and warm like the first evacuated
birth hole ripped open to a hood—
Eden, this is where we have come
an unutterable and deafening stillness
in this our pit of silence
let silence be mightier than prayer

elsewhere children are stuffed
with smoked ribs, a banjo strums to the banshee cry
of a violin

inside a log built tavern a town is being stomped out
to a waltz

but here we are the fugue
an individual in each plucked note like a bucket
of water poured over a campfire

playing out loud our lives
from a soggy ash, the deafening shrill

Ponar

holy pit, my forever echo, I cast
fate
into your womb

Vigilant,
here is where I stab my name

despite time spent elsewhere, distant crowns
of spruce appear as a single pixel

chestnut trees rowed to mask the blood trail
on earth

on earth
I have most lived

inside a light box, shattered images
of my childhood world

a flat screen, bending inward
toward the death shroud—rip a small hole
in the fabric of earth

I take the oath

that once upon time birds circled
the thought char, disappearing inside a plume
of lost smoke and saw language dying

never forget
but from the fire pit we were educated
only on how to build fire — only how to forget

the heart's counter-pulse shot blood
out the brain and around the animal body
aborting language out the fire pit

where the profane became most sacred
and still is

Ponar

the forevered teardrop crystallizes on the bonecrust
and it is fresh
rain again, dappling the ground
to a sour shade

the seasons deregulate
as we, our bodies, become deregulated

knotting our tongue, plucking the mouth
the Jew sounds gulp in separate discord
easy as a void's harp

our congregation assembled into being
which now no more a nothing mob
industrious in non-labor
progresses toward unclear objectives
on the railway system lost stars navigate

home, we bury
our white pickets in evenly spaced rows
vertical, like makeshift gravesites
planted at the side of a road

and just as we believed
the pit couldn't sink lower
they give us heavier shovels

we know where they go
we without tongues
as it continues to rain

Ponar

kneeling down in the pit, a bald girl
raising a picture with both her hands
above her head in the shape of a prayer

into thin rays squeezed out the half light
surrounded by the glint of rusty tin cans and oil trays
spread out to collect rainwater, the world disappears

she doesn't recognize it
the fact that her prayer was answered

she who said father
sticks her head out the window
to listen to the vixen's howl
celebrating the night's first kill

Ponar

the first black lab seen for years gnaws off the rotten
end of a wooden bench. the ghosts are monitoring

a fresh wound we dug, inserting long veins
of fiber optic cable inside the ditch

as we ail dirty for a connection to a different and
outside world
we can feel the hunger inside the pit

with torn bits of sun bleached rag
wrapped round our beaten heads
like the first Eskimos traversing the ice bridge
to an unknown land in the age of unreason

our palms crackle against the shovel handles
like cracked eggshells

at night the guards give us a laptop, a mixer, turntables
and we play our degenerate music

we do not know what is promised
here, in this place, where the ghosts speak

we grow desperate for connection

Ancient Songs at Millennial Moments

EMILY DAINA ŠARAS

Throughout the last two decades following Lithuania's recent establishment of independence, the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture has featured the performance of *dainos*, or folk songs, in much of the country's state-sponsored arts and culture programming. This celebration and state sponsorship of the "authentic" Lithuanian folk song tradition is not a recent phenomenon. Mapping the relationship between the shifts in governmental power and the changing nature of the Lithuanian folk song canon as a "national" commodity over the past hundred and fifty years reveals the variety of functions this art form has served. The celebration and exploitation of this tradition has served entirely different, and sometimes opposing, political goals and functions over time, despite very little change in the collection or performance of the music itself. Intrinsically connected with the Lithuanian national identity, the folk song canon has been used during periods of occupation to mediate the relationship between nationalist Lithuanian sentiments and the unification aims of the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union. During periods of revolution and resistance against occupying forces, the performance of these folk songs has been a preservation methodology through which nationalist Lithuanians have maintained their national identity, particularly within the protests of the nonviolent Singing Revolution

EMILY DAINA ŠARAS is an MA candidate in Sociology and Social Anthropology at Central European University in Budapest, Hungary. Her work in Lithuania, in the field of national and cultural identity, has been supported by Fulbright and US Embassy grants.

of the late 1980s. During periods of independence, folk songs have catapulted beyond identity preservation into the realm of identity construction, supporting the introduction of new systems and initiatives (such as capitalism) in defining the Lithuanian nation. Since Lithuania declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the traditions surrounding the genre of Lithuanian folk music have come to serve a new, "enchanted" function within Lithuanian nation-building as a result of the flourishing of the festival as a new major cultural form. This fluctuation mirrors the change witnessed by contemporary society in the conceptualization and function of the nation-state under "millennial capitalism" as defined by Jean and John Comaroff.[1] The Lithuanian Ministry of Culture funds the promotion, practice, and public performance of Lithuania folk music, not only to preserve a contestable notion of the country's "ancient" national past, but also to help launch Lithuania into the future as a financially strong and nationally stable European Union member state.

To contextualize the role that the Lithuanian traditions of folk singing have played in Lithuania's more recent history, it is important to first explore the origins of the Lithuanian national obsession with ethnic folk music. However, it is difficult to determine precisely when the concept of Lithuania itself was established and tracking the changes in this particular cultural identity, which birthed the Lithuanian singing tradition, is a challenging task. Following many territorial conflicts between tribes in the Baltic area prior to the formation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, several key political occupations and border shifts have redefined Lithuanian territory: the augmentation of the territory of the Grand Duchy that preceded the Crusades, the treaty that established the political connections between Lithuania and Poland in 1413, the Union at Lublin in 1569 that established the Polish-Lithuanian Confederation, and the division of the territory of Lithuania between the rulers Maria-Theresa of Austria, Frederick of Prussia, and Catherine

[1] Comaroff and Comaroff, "Millennial Capitalism."

of the Russian Empire between 1772 and 1795.[2] These borders continued to shift as additional partitions were established throughout these two decades. As John S. Loppato writes, the border changes that took place during this time were reflected within the society and culture of this region: "the Prussianization of German Lithuania and the Russification of Russian Lithuania marched hand in hand."[3] The region continued to change as Lithuania sided with Napoleon in his campaign against Russia in 1812 and as Lithuania was unsuccessful in the 1831 insurrection against Russia, both done in an effort to resist this pattern of cultural erasure and political control.[4] When he appointed General Mikhail Nikolaev Muraviev as the Governor General of the Northwestern Empire of the Russian Empire in 1855, Tsar Alexander II ordered the general "to crush the Polish-Lithuanian insurrection," so as to erase the Polish and Latin influences in religion and culture, and decreed that Russian (and Lithuanian written in Cyrillic script) were the official languages within the educational system.[5] Overall, these several centuries of Lithuania's contested history brought many cultures, languages, and political systems into this geographical territory, indubitably fusing (or confusing) the various cultural traditions in this region. Neither a particular Lithuanian national history nor a specific Lithuanian cultural tradition were clear throughout this period, and the national tradition of folk song was not yet a particular scholarly or political focus.

As this brief summary of Lithuania's early history demonstrates, the concepts of Lithuanian ethnicity and nation have been dynamic in nature even prior to the drastic political changes that took place in the twentieth century, yet fin de siècle Lithuania experienced a shift in understanding this national history. Driven in part by the abolition of serfdom between 1861 and 1865, the Aušra era (meaning "dawn," or "reawakening") of Lithuanian nationalism blossomed, drawing from roots in the

2 Lopatto, "Lithuania," 190; Jusaitis, *History*, 17.
3 Lopatto, "Lithuania," 191.
4 Our Lady of Sorrows Convent, *Handbook*.
5 Page, *Formation*, 2-3; Suny, *Revenge*, 36.

movement of German Romanticism, and throughout this period the fascination with "pure" Lithuanian ethnicity developed among historians, artists, and musicians.[6] Politically, Lithuanians fought for their independence from the Russian Empire at the Lithuanian Diet in December 1905 and finally achieved independence after World War I.[7] This newly independent state capitalized on a new wave of Lithuanian Romanticism for primordialist political gains; it turned to ancient historical roots to rediscover the nation's "ancient" cultural past, prominent Lithuanian historians and scholars began to document traditions, art, and music, manipulating them to form what would become a historically recurring sentiment of the "regilding of Lithuania's faded glory" throughout the following century.[8] Folk music served as an effective tool for helping to construct the identity of a "Lithuanian nation" since the performative, living aspects, like all musical traditions, were "a particularly potent representational resource... a means by which communities are able to identify themselves and present this identity to others."[9] Historians and musicologists described "immortal dainos" and distinctly Lithuanian instruments as the preserved survivals of a pure ancient Lithuanian culture – one that, as previously demonstrated, had never fully existed in the region that became the Lithuanian state, due to a complex cultural and historical past.[10] Musicologists found the work of Lithuanians "to be unusually rich in number and in signs of creative talent," and have claimed that the Western classical composers Schubert, Chopin, and Schumann incorporated folk song motifs from Lithuanian dainos into their compositions.[11] This political independence was ultimately short-lived, as the Baltic States (including Lithuania) became part of the Soviet Union under the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939, remaining so until the

6 Our Lady of Sorrows Convent, *Handbook*.
7 Ibid.; Page, *Formation*, 21; Hazard, *Managing Civilization*, 100.
8 Page, *Formation*, 4-5.
9 Dawe and Bennet, "Introduction," 224.
10 Harrison, *Lithuania*, 126.
11 Page, *Formation*, 4; Harrison, *Lithuania*, 132; Bender, *Slavonic*, 328.

early 1990s. The obsession with Lithuanian folk music as one of its independent, unique cultural traditions when compared to those of nearby ethnic groups had already been established.

Folk music was a genre used by Lithuanians within the Soviet Union to construct an ancient past for the purposes of preserving their former independent national identity. Whether a nation is or is not officially recognized as independent, cultural customs and traditions are often imagined as "the cultural property of the nation, products of the collective genius of its nationals... important to their identity and self-esteem. They are of the nation and cannot be alienated from it."[12] Surely, music was a strong part of Lithuanian life under the Soviet empire, but the government attempted to forcefully control the direction of the folk song tradition through strategic documentation techniques and support of musical performances. Soviet song festivals had been held since 1948, but they necessarily included the performance of Russian folk songs alongside Lithuanian ones, providing "a popular outlet for national feeling" in front of the overarching Soviet backdrop.[13] This particular folk festival environment afforded an opportunity for state-sponsored ethnologists to investigate the "evolutionary" development of culture as a linear progression from simplicity and primitiveness towards high culture over time.[14] Stalin's concept of internationalism was that the multiethnic Soviet state would allow diverse cultures to develop together, from pagan and folk roots through increasingly complex forms of culture, and ultimately amalgamate into one merged, uniform state, so that the original traditions of the separate cultures of the Soviet Union could be "ethnically engineered."[15] Contrary to sociologist Jean-Louis Fabiani's description of "the most important cultural festivals... [which] allow a fair space for critical discussions, not only about cultural tastes but also about political issues," these festivals

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[12] Cuno, "Introduction," 1.

[13] Iwaskiw, *Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania*, 38; Misunas and Taagepera, *The Baltic States*, 111.

[14] Hirsch, *Empire*, 213; Kozlov, *Peoples*, 153.

[15] Tishkov, *Ethnicity*, 24.

provided the Soviet state with a mechanism for slowly stifling the nationalist spirit expressed through performance of Lithuanian folk music, promoting conformity, and quelling notions of independence instead of encouraging debate.[16] The Soviet system continued to flourish for several decades, encouraging ethnic groups to define themselves in terms other than class or religion, and music was one cultural category through which the Lithuanian people could continue to understand their culture and ethnicity while part of the USSR.

However, this practice took on an new aim as the movement for independent Lithuania, which became know as the Singing Revolution, and the political organization called *Sąjūdis* grew stronger with Gorbachev's glasnost policy in 1987.[17] The public demonstration of nationalist sentiments, including events such as the Baltic Way and the Vilnius Television Tower actions that were accompanied by the peaceful performance of folk songs by demonstrators, were part of the actions that broke down the communist system.[18] Lithuania became the first nation to declare independence from the Soviet Union in January of 1991. In his book Nations and Nationalism, Eric Hobsbawm asserts that "Nations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way around," and following from this, folk music became one of the key tools through which developing Lithuanian nationalist sentiments have helped to construct the modern Lithuanian state and a new corresponding independent and free national identity.[19] The performance of folk songs alongside *Sąjūdis* actions and protests has been increasingly glorified as a grand ritual, taking on new significance that ritualizes the demonstration of independence today. Today in post-Soviet capitalist countries this involves not simply ideological, but also financial support, since "state support of artists suggests direct financial support, through fellowships,

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16 Fabiani, *Festivals*, 2.
17 Hazard, *Managing Nationalism*, 100.
18 Gleason, "Sovietology," 6.
19 Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 10.

purchase of art works, or funding of arts organizations."[20] Now more than ever, there is a strong trend in Lithuania towards manipulating its national history through public, performative presentations of national culture.

Two decades after the fall of the Soviet Union, and nearly a decade after Lithuania became a member of the European Union in 2004, Lithuanians use their musical tradition to display their ancient ethnic roots, imagining that their folk songs are living relics of their ancient past. Lithuanians demonstrate and celebrate these primordialist sentiments at folk song festivals that reflect national and pan-Baltic regional pride. This new use of folk culture, not just to determine a past, but to project a mystical, mythical form of nationalism into the future, is much in keeping with the themes of John and Jean Comaroffs' 2001 essay "Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming," which served as the introduction to their volume. The authors discuss the fervent nature of what they term "millennial capitalism," signifying both the new nature of capitalism during the decades surrounding the year 2000 and the way that capitalism has manifested itself and become mystified.[21] Explaining millennial capitalism's connection to mystical trends, occult movements, and other particular features of contemporary society, such as the changes in the relationship between production and consumption, these authors demonstrate that this shift is ultimately changing how labor and capital interact, which in turn has a profound effect on the nature of social classes and political and economic environments.[22] Imagined communities based on nationality and ethnicity are often envisioned through a primordialist lens.[23] Cultivation of the Lithuanian folk music community today by the state is "a means of accounting for the way in which locally produced musics become a means through which individuals are able to

[20] Alexander, "State Support," 185-186.
[21] Comaroff and Comaroff, "Millennial Capitalism," 2.
[22] Ibid., 3.
[23] Suny, *Revenge*, 3; Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

situate themselves within a particular city, town or region."[24] Combined with the new uses of "primordialist thought," and in connection with the Lithuanian folk song canon, is the revived phenomenon that mythologizes the past to establish definitions of national identity that reinvent the future – and certainly we can understand this as a "millennial," mystical turn in capitalist cultural practices.[25] Sometimes, these details of the past are not based on fact, but are part of invented occult, pagan Lithuanian legends. It is precisely this complex, community-grown, primordialist process that has led folk music and twenty-first century politics in Lithuania to become grossly conflated.

By turning to ancient historical roots to find an "ancient" cultural past, sentiments of nationalism have increased, and folk song traditions have become a cultural commodity that is now marketed by the Lithuanian state to draw attention and financial benefits from sources in the international capitalist market. Keeping in mind Lithuania's history of oscillating between an occupied and an independent status over the last several centuries, it proves useful to examine how authentic Lithuanian folk culture has been imagined and performed over time. In order to serve the Lithuanian state agenda of nation building, the performance of folk songs has been used to strengthen Lithuania's image as a capitalist independent country. As the governmental structure has changed from one of communism to capitalism in Lithuania, the arts as a whole have struggled to become a viable privatized business sector, and this struggle between the artists and the state to find a compromise have led to an understanding that "art should be state-supported but not state-controlled."[26] Although not all events are controlled per se by the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture, performances of folk songs have been used through the Lithuanian state's exploitation of the festival as a major cultural form to expose the

[24] Bennet, "Consolidating," 224.

[25] Suny, *Revenge*, 3.

[26] Iwaskiw, *Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania*, 224. Editor's note: See also Ina Pukelytė, "Lithuanian Cultural Politics: On the Move" in Vol. 59, No. 1.

nation to fellow European Union member states and the greater international market. By developing a strong national folk music culture through sponsorship of festivals that feature this music, the state employs folk music as a political tool to bridge Lithuania's contested past and its national future, despite the series of occupations and border shifts that have taken place in this nation. Annual pan-Baltic folk song festivals and international student folk song festivals, both held during the warm and sunny summer months that draw tourists, also receive state funding, which encourages cooperative participation in both local folk song groups and larger-scale international festivals, and also trains the millennial generation in the folk song tradition.

The most intensive state exploitation of folk festivals for political gain took place during the UNESCO European Cultural Capital of 2009 festivities centered in Vilnius, Lithuania's capital. Dalia Bankauskaitė, the Executive Director of the Vilnius European Capital of Culture 2009 Bureau responsible for organizing the cultural programming for the event, spoke of the honor as "one of the most important for [the] country. It's like the Olympic Games."[27] Folk art events, as scholar Howard S. Becker states, "involve elaborate networks of cooperation,"[28] and in the Capital of Culture programming, this included financial cooperation intended to ultimately benefit the Lithuanian economy while playing "a significant part in the process of nation building."[29] Without a doubt, this trend reflects a larger international pattern of cultural policies: "the development of a discourse about culture as a real economic sector."[30] The total budget for the Capital of Culture projects had been estimated at thirty million euros, 60 percent of which came from the Ministry of Culture and 40 percent from the Vilnius Municipality.[31] Bankauskaitė reported that, of the total, the European Commission was expected to grant approximately 1.5 million

[27] Kweder, "Vilnius," 22-23.
[28] Becker, "Art," 768.
[29] Fabiani, *Festivals*, 4.
[30] Menger, "Artistic Labor," 542-543.
[31] Gudzinevičiutė, "Vilnius."

euros.[32] Such an influx of money into the economy of this Eastern European country was an opportunity for growth and the promotion of this perfectly timed, state-sponsored, UNESCO-approved, and mystified musical look into Lithuania's cultural past. In his essay in the Lithuanian magazine *Liaudies Kultūros* (Folk Culture), published by Vilnius University, titled "It's 1,000 years old now," scholar Saulius Liausa captures this obsession with Lithuania's mystical connection between its past and its future.[33] This millennial celebration in 2009 conveniently reached around the centuries of territorial conflicts in the region that had taken place since the Golden Age of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Instead, the main June 2009 festival – itself called Millennium – simply connected present-day Lithuania directly to the unknown group of people vaguely documented in the annals of St. Bruno as the *Lituanea* in 1009, to which notions of authentic culture have been mythically ascribed.

Scholars such as E. J. Harrison wrote of the *Aušra* period of Lithuanian history that "the Lithuanians are a musical people," and this ethnic stereotype pervades Lithuania's national culture today as a result of this strategic marketing of Lithuanian culture through large-scale festivals that boast hundreds of singers performing together on a single stadium stage.[34] In fact, this grand folk festival tradition was perhaps the primary selling point for Lithuania's award of the title Cultural Capital of Europe 2009, indicating that "the spirit of the Lithuanian independence movement in the year 1989 was still alive, and Lithuania had a higher purpose than mere economic reforms."[35] Analysis of the folk music at these events usually focuses on the uniqueness and national importance of the canon:

> When describing this rich collection of Lithuanian folk songs we are primarily speaking of songs which were recorded in the past and songs which were sung in a natural context of everyday life up to about the middle of this century. The repertoire has survived quite well in the memory of older people throughout

[32] Kweder, "Vilnius," 23.
[33] Liausa, "Čia tūkstantis metų dabar," 2.
[34] Harrison, *Lithuania*, 134.
[35] Kavaliauskas, *Transformations*.

> rural Lithuania. The songs continue to be sung on special occasions, and are recorded and documented during ethnographic expeditions. Rural folklore ensembles avidly incorporate them into their repertoire, and folk song enthusiasts in urban centers learn them just as eagerly. In this way the songs are revived and given a new life at festivals and celebrations.[36]

Such an account represents a twist on the imagined idea that these melodies are unadulterated connections to the mythical folk spirit of "everyday" ancient Lithuania. The Lithuanian Ministry of Culture also boasts about the breadth of the Lithuanian canon, critical to the myth-making tendencies of this millennial obsession; the largest archive of Lithuanian folklore contains over 400,000 folk songs.[37] The Ministry of Culture provides "continuous national support for non-commercial music culture area, which has been cherished for many years."[38] These traditions are supported through a bolstered music education system; the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture has founded many learning centers and updated existing schools that focus on teaching music theory as well as both folk and classical performance, and supports a plethora of folk music ensembles that engage in festival singing.[39] Overall, the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture operates as a critical cultural player that provides support, from space to financing, which in turn manipulates and eventually controls the tradition.

Festivals have been flourishing as a major cultural form over the last two decades, which conveniently was the period in which Lithuania developed as a newly independent nation.[40] In theory, these festival-centered efforts within the Culture of Capital programming were designed to build a strong international image that would effectively bring additional revenue from tourism and cultural investment into the country. These performance festivals, for both participants and participant-observers (the audience rarely refrains from clapping and

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36 Ambrazevičius, *Lithuanian Folk Songs*, 15.
37 Ibid.
38 Profesionalus meno skyrius, "Muzika."
39 Iwaskiw, *Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania*, 204.
40 Fabiani, *Festivals*, 11.

singing along with those on stage), also transmit a passion for this explicitly nationalist tradition to the millennial generation, too young to remember the nation's Soviet past personally or to have witnessed the performance of this tradition under the USSR. Because the folk song Millennium festival of 2009 was linked with the Singing Revolution, the "spirit of 1989 [that] had evaporated... the nation of the Millennium recalled. For a moment a sense of unity and solidarity embraced Lithuanians once again."[41] The examination of "...how musicians, residents, boosters and out-of-towners creatively employ images of 'authenticity' to represent the city" has been an important topic in contemporary sociology, and these events were thought to effectively market the rich culture of a nation to an international audience.[42] During the Capital of Culture's summer folk song event, the performances gave rise to a "short-lived... euphoria [that] provided a sense of national rebirth by clearing the shadowy prose of the crude reality of political scandals related to unethical business practices. The rebirth was felt in the consciousness of the masses recollecting the mood of the Singing Revolution."[43] Festivals like this offer an opportunity for discourse, because they "are a privileged space for developing critical interventions about global issues, but the social limits of the audience reduces their social impact."[44] Lithuanian folk song festivals, particularly those hosted at the Capital of Culture 2009, were not meant to generate political discussions and debates. Their purpose was the arousal of patriotic feelings: the "massive participation of youth, the middle aged, and senior citizens in the stadiums for folk song festivals devoted to the Millennium celebration created an inspiring atmosphere, national pride, hope, and ambitions."[45] The development of a spiritual experience for participants and observers, which could effectively transmit a euphoric sense of new nationalism, was successfully generated by this Capital of Culture song festival.

41 Kaviliauskas, *Transformations*.
42 Grazian, "Opportunities," 206.
43 Kaviliauskas, *Transformations*.
44 Fabiani, *Festivals*, 11.
45 Kaviliauskas, *Transformations*.

In practice, however, festivals like Millennium were not as successful on other fronts. Because "art is social in character" and depends on cooperation, it also comes with the baggage of the system in which it is performed, in particular, the relatively young capitalist economy of a post-Soviet state.[46] Funding was pocketed by administrators, and their personal and political aims "did not bind them together with their national responsibilities, long-term commitment, perspectives, and cultural development."[47] This sentiment is echoed in P. Timms's recollection of the Adelaide Festival in 2002, explaining the problematic structure of the state-sponsored festival:

> State arts festivals are always top-down events, conceived by politicians and business interests, assembled by high-profile entrepreneurs and pulled into operation by committees. They are big, complex and expensive, so huge amounts of sponsorships are needed to pay for them, along with huge amounts of advertising to goad us into taking an interest. Meanwhile, we are reduced to being little more than spectators: passive consumers of arts product.[48]

In Lithuania, this went to another extreme during the 2009 events. As the Ministry of Culture focused on "professional music culture dissemination" through state-sponsored programming, much of the financial support for these programs was invested, not in the performers, but in the advertising of events and national marketing materials. Employees at the Ministry of Culture and the Vilnius Capital of Culture administration were rotated, fired, and went unpaid throughout the duration of the event itself, amid the "ambivalent and fluctuating circumstances" of employment and payment for services. Furthermore, the reputation of the festival was clouded by court cases surrounding the disbursement of funds and questionable administrative practices that attracted a great deal of attention from the mass media.[49] The feeling of euphoria may have been sustained socially after the close of the final concert of the Millennium folk

[46] Becker, *Art*, 767.
[47] Kaviliauskas, *Transformations*.
[48] Timms, "Woodchips."
[49] Kaviliauskas, *Transformations*.

song festival in Vingis Park in early July, 2009. However, more sustainable outcomes, such as gross financial profit on the national level, and the development of a strong international reputation among administrative bodies, such as the Capital of Culture Program and the European Union political structure, were not effectively produced, as had been hoped by the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture and overarching government.

The cultural institutions that were highlighted throughout this Millennium celebration were not stable, and, without a doubt, the events of the Cultural Capital of 2009 have permanently changed the image of Vilnius internationally. Yet these scandals were relatively invisible to the tourists and foreigners observing and participating in the folk song festivals, as "they enjoyed the façade of the celebrated city."[50] Yes, festivals such as post-Soviet folk song festivals in Lithuania "imply a particular way of 'consuming culture', i.e., not as mere spectators but as participants."[51] The consumption and participation of both Lithuanians and foreigners with the music itself and the millennial euphoric spirit à la Comaroff and Comaroff were important in terms of Lithuanian nation building. Yet there are more tangible, measurable implications that continue to haunt the social discourse surrounding Lithuanian cultural policies. As an art form, folk song performances are:

> ...considered not as objects of use (for example providing pleasure for individuals... or for provoking thought) but as commodities that can be judged by the same economic criteria [as] cars, clothes or any other consumer good. Essentially, issues of aesthetic... worth... are being replaced by those of the material and impersonal marketplace.[52]

The 2009 folk song festivals, and the folk music concerts and festivals that have occurred since, have suggested the need for a wider discussion of the faulty implementation of capitalist economic practices in the country.

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[50] Ibid.
[51] Fabiani, *Festivals*, 3.
[52] Gray, "Politics," 6.

Conclusion

The folk song festival of the Cultural Capital of 2009, Millennium, serves as an exaggerated case study of the general trend of state sponsorship of euphoric, millennial-centered folk music festivals that attempt to foster nationalist spirit through a mystified ancient culture. In reality, these state-sponsored festivals struggle because of the structural and financial realities of post-Soviet states. However, by reviewing Lithuania's history, in connection with the invention and development of a particular Lithuanian culture, and documenting the changes in the performance of folk songs over time, one can see that the celebration and exploitation of this music for nationalist goals has not necessarily affected the performance of the melodies. Rather, folk music has oscillated between serving as a mechanistic anchor of identity preservation and manipulation as a tool for active identity (re)construction. Two decades after Lithuania's declaration of independence from the Soviet Union, these songs have been highlighted in the crossroads of millennial moments: Lithuania's celebration of its thousand-year anniversary of being documented in the annals of St. Bruno with the spirit of millennial capitalism that took hold within post-Soviet countries bridging a communist past to democracy and new memberships in the capitalist global market and the European Union. Perhaps on an individual scale, one cannot measure the impact of the folk song festival on the transmission of cultural traditions and social memories to the millennial generation of Lithuanians who cannot remember their nation under occupation. After all, as noted by scholar David Grazian, "even the most rigorous quantitative studies of consumption can fail to account for how individuals actually experience music in their moments of consumption."[53] As the spirit of millennial capitalism quells over the coming years, and Lithuania's stability and position as a member of the European Union shifts, it will be interesting to continue monitoring the state sponsorship of folk song festivals in Lithuania and study how they are further utilized and manipulated to achieve particular nationalist, political, and cultural goals.

[53] Grazian, "Opportunities," 207.

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Author Never Died

Transitions of Lithuanian Postmodernism. Lithuanian Literature in the Post-Soviet Period. Ed. Mindaugas Kvietkauskas, Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi, 2011. ISBN: 978-90-420-3441-9.

Since mid-2000, Lithuanian and Baltic literary studies have seen almost a steady, although proportionally slim, output of published English research in book format (approximately a book a year). The year 2011 stood out in that it witnessed two English language collections of articles on the literatures of the three Baltic States. The first, entitled *Baltic Memory. Processes of Modernisation in Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian Literature of the Soviet Period* (eds. Elena Baliutytė and Donata Mitaitė. Vilnius: Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, 2011), deals with the writings of the Soviet period and attempts to identify a common ground in the literatures of three different languages (Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian) in the face of the Soviet regime. In that respect it is similar to its predecessor, *Baltic Postcolonialism* (ed. Violeta Kelertas, Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi, 2006). The second, *Transitions of Lithuanian Postmodernism. Lithuanian Literature in the Post-Soviet Period,* focuses exclusively on contemporary Lithuanian literature and, as such, is the first English book-length treatment of the subject. This is a compilation of recent research on the latest Lithuanian fiction by Lithuanian scholars. It covers almost all genres of fiction and nonfiction (with the exception of drama) – literary prose, fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, essays, autobiography, memoirs, and literary histories – and touches upon critical discourse. Some of the texts featured in the book are theoretical (Jurgutienė, Satkauskytė); many are introductory or generalized reviews of current literary trends (Jakonytė, Sprindytė, Kalėda, Daugirdaitė, Matulevičienė, Baliutytė, Čiočytė, Tūtlytė, Speičytė); and some are close readings of specific authors' texts

or problems (Tamošaitis, Mačianskaitė, Mitaitė, Pelurytė-Tikuišienė).

The collection carefully situates the literary output it explores within its historical, cultural, and ideological background. Some articles take the reader, even if very briefly, through the series of occupations and regimes Lithuania endured in the last century, illuminating some of the resulting artistic and ideological practices and positions that shaped Lithuanian fiction and other kinds of discourse. As the subtitle of the book, *Lithuanian Literature in the Post-Soviet Period*, suggests, the main point of reference is, of course, the Soviet occupation, which creates a temporal split and provides a clear sense of "before" and "after." Although the "before" is multiple and complicated, it seems to have produced powerful mental structures that have found literary expression. The overriding notion that dominated Lithuanian literature of the "before" period, whose effects have spilled out into the "after," is the idea of a homogeneous and stable nation and a nationalist, or borderline nationalistic, ideology, which had a strong hold on Lithuanian literature and its aesthetics for about a hundred years. The authors of *Transitions* draw attention to the fact that, until the 1980s, Lithuanian fiction was mostly preoccupied with verbalizing Lithuanians' close and emotional relation to their land, Baltic archetypes, melancholy, and a longing for a better and greater past, which in turn was largely mythologized. For example: "A discussion of Lithuanian literature most often refers to 'traditional' literature as literature with moral implications, the 'rural' mode that portrays the peasantry and its transformations in the twentieth century" (Satkauskytė, 63), or "the older generation of writers fostered nostalgic images of independent Lithuania and bright depictions of village life that supplied moral and ideological pillars for their creative work as well as allowed them to withstand the cultural nihilism that came with the reality of Soviet life" (Tamošaitis, 138). Jurgutienė argues that the same mentality is responsible for producing two recent Lithuanian literary histories that, to paraphrase her, exhibit and canonize national literary values (23).

Sprindytė quotes the 2001 diary entry of the eminent Lithuanian literary scholar Vytautas Kubilius: "The era of national idealism, with all its emotions and rhetoric, that lasted for the entire century is over" (104-105). Lithuanian nationalism is rapidly losing its currency in the contemporary literary climate, but the book suggests it remains a powerful and agonizing point of contention. Post-Soviet Lithuanian language literature seems to be desperately trying to deconstruct all possible myths, be they to do with Soviet degeneration and brainwashing or with Lithuanian nationalism. In all cases, this is a difficult and painful, albeit necessary and therapeutic process. The cover of the book features the controversial poetic and, at the same time, earthy sculpture by Vladas Urbanavičius, *Arch of the Quay*, which echoes the undulating curves of the river Neris, but also inspires associations with the sewage that pollutes it. The background of the Gediminas Tower within a winter setting is evocative of its double-edged plight. It also suggests the layer of modernity, energy, and contemporary aesthetics superimposed onto a national symbol that looks deflated and devoid of vitality, "just a powerless phallus," to quote Sprindytė discussing the prose of one the greatest Lithuanian writers of the end of the twentieth century, Ričardas Gavelis.

Transitions provides an adequate and exhaustive account of the latest developments in the contemporary Lithuanian-language literary scene. The editor of the book, Mindaugas Kvietkauskas, situates Lithuanian literature at a historical and ideological intersection of the post-Soviet (I'd say postcolonial) and the postmodern (I'd say the age of globalization). He identifies several periods in the post-Soviet history of Lithuanian literature. He sees the run-up towards the restoration of independence, 1988-1990, as a period of consolidation of unequivocal national myths and the 1990s as a breakdown of those myths in Lithuanian literature. Jurgutienė focuses on recent histories of Lithuanian literature, pointing out a number of problems with their method that involves "the intense and full-scale revival of historic memory" (19) and goes on to suggest several more appropriate methodological approaches,

including both an existentialist and a regional mode. In her theoretical article, Satkauskytė debates the viability of the term and phenomenon of postmodernism, especially in the context of Lithuanian literature, and argues that, although sometimes espousing some of the surface characteristics of postmodern aesthetics, Lithuanian fiction largely resists postmodern poetics. Jakonytė's piece of literary sociology is an interesting analysis of Lithuanian writers as a social group that, after the fall of the Soviet state, in which they either enjoyed a privileged status or were completely marginalized, struggled to adapt to the dramatic change in social order, but seem to have successfully defended their rights and put an adequate system of state grants and other structures in place. Sprindytė offers an exciting and insightful overview of the main trends in post-Soviet Lithuanian literature. She suggests that the Lithuanian language and imagination in twenty years of independence have advanced more than in the last hundred years. A previously emotionally and stylistically monotonous literature has developed different voices, styles, types of characters, and set out to explore new territories physically and aesthetically. Kalėda focuses on recent Lithuanian historical fiction and argues that its scope is still rather limited: "the key paradigms of Lithuanian historicism are about the creation of national myths ("dreams of past grandeur"), their individual paraphrasing, offering new interpretation, questioning and ultimately deconstructing" (121). Tamošaitis's article introduces the work of Ričardas Gavelis, whose acclaimed novel *Vilniaus pokeris* (Vilnius Poker) shook up the Lithuanian literary scene at the time of its release in 1989. Tamošaitis argues that although Gavelis was a critic of the totalitarian regime and the perverse society that it creates, he was also a secret idealist. Mačianskaitė's sophisticated piece deals with a persistently difficult topic in Lithuania, the Jewish issue. She looks at three literary interpretations of the biblical character Isaac and offers some interesting insights into the complicated discourse around those subjects, including the Holocaust, in Lithuanian fiction. In her clever and vibrant article, Daugirdaitė celebrates Lithuanian women's writing,

discussing its diversity on the one hand, and the deeply misogynist climate it must contend with on the other. Daugirdaitė quotes one Lithuanian female poet, Onė Baliukonė, complaining about: "a certain hostility expressed, not exactly conscious, but unconscious and unperceived, stemming from ancient ideas about the old lady who writes or creates in some other way, the lady whose real place is in the kitchen and bed" (191). In her article on postwar memoirs, Matulevičienė writes: "Even though memoirs of the history of postwar Lithuania did not become a 'grand' narrative, in essence, the paradigm of a heroic assessment of the past is prevalent" (201), which is indicative of the type of national discourse that persists twenty years into the restoration of independence. Baliutytė's article delicately deals with a rich and interesting part of Lithuanian literary output: autobiography and nonfiction. She singles out three main types of writing: formerly banned memoirs of deportees (the most startling example of which, Dalia Grinkevičiūtė's memoirs of the first wave of deportations, she analyses closely); political activists, such as resistance fighters, etc.; and recent autobiographies of people who "reconciled with violence and made compromises for which they paid the price of personal integrity and dignity" (226). Čiočytė focuses on one of the most exciting genres of contemporary Lithuanian literature, which she calls the "critical essay." Mitaitė's article is devoted to an exceptional Lithuanian cultural figure, the poet Tomas Venclova, whose life and work have been fully determined by totalitarianism and who, she argues, did not "accept the contemporary popular view that all values are relative" (257) and who declared language and poetry to be sources of freedom under totalitarian regimes. Peluritytė-Tikuišienė identifies similarities between classical trends in Lithuanian and Polish poetry and discusses their origins. Tūtlytė focuses on contemporary lyrical poetry and concludes that it has gone through exciting changes and has retained a specific Eastern European feel to it. Finally, Speičytė gives an interesting overview of the latest trends in Lithuanian poetry, which include deconstruction of

the Lithuanian poetic tradition, narrative poetry, and opening up to the Other.

The overwhelming message throughout the book seems to be that Lithuanian literature over the last two decades has been busy reshaping itself, finding linguistic and artistic ways to deal with a complicated history, a fragmented and confused contemporary reality, enormous social changes, and a crushing identity crisis. Techniques such as the grotesque, pastiche, collage, fragmentation, and others often associated with postmodern aesthetics have been used. However, Lithuanian postmodernism has no time for self-referential games, citations, and even less so for the death of the author. Postmodernist assumptions of the decentredness of the subject, its constructedness, and grotesque reality reflect the recent Lithuanian experience. It seems the return of the subject will not be necessary there, because the author of Lithuanian fiction has not had time to die, and continues to agonize over ethical and other issues firmly based in reality while reinventing itself stylistically and aesthetically. Although the book could have enjoyed a better translation (the names of the translator(s) are not indicated) and closer proofreading, it is definitely a good introduction to the recent Lithuanian literary scene and contemporary Lithuanian literary research.

Eglė Kačkutė

A Tale of Biblical Times

Journey into the Backwaters of the Heart. Laima Vincė, self-published by Amazon Create Space, 2012. ISBN: 978-14-751-2897-0.

Laima Vincė's latest book, *Journey into the Backwaters of the Heart*, is a documentary, and yet personal, excursion into the overwhelming trauma of postwar Lithuania and the ways in which its ravages are still sorely evident. It is largely a collection of the stories of mostly, but not exclusively, "women who were former partisan fighters, liaisons, or supporters of Lithuania's armed resistance against the Soviet Union" (7), Jewish

Holocaust survivors, and survivors of exile to Siberia and Tajikistan. Those stories are interspersed with Vincė's personal stories of, and reflections on, life in post-Soviet Lithuania.

In the book, Vincė tells us that she has had a long-lasting and emotionally charged relationship with Lithuania: "For fifty years my grandfather represented a nation that did not exist. He kept his film noir Consulate on the Upper West Side of Manhattan open and operating as Lithuania disappeared from maps of the world [...] Tonight we were racing through the land that was in my blood. I took after my grandfather and the people of his region" (216). Vincė's family had been victims of the Soviet regime and part of the motivation behind this project is her preoccupation with historical justice and perpetuating the memory of people who suffered injustice and whose suffering, she feels, has not yet been appropriately acknowledged: "These deportations, kept secret for half a century, are hardly mentioned in history books outside of the countries affected by them" (205). Although U.S.-born, Vincė has considerable firsthand experience of living in the country of her grandparents' origin. She is fluent in Lithuanian and made lengthy visits at the end of the 1980s as a young woman, studying Lithuanian literature, creative writing, and translation, participating in the Singing Revolution, and witnessing some of the most significant political and social changes in modern European history (those experiences are documented in her book *Lenin's Head on a Platter*). She has returned at least twice as a Fulbright scholar, a mother of a family and a professional teacher and translator. Her own relationship with Lithuania is far from uncomplicated and settled: "I wonder whether I was really so brave in 1988–1989 and in 1983 and 1984 when I visited Soviet-occupied Lithuania as a student? As an American citizen, for me the Soviet Union was just one big reality show, and I could always get out if I had to" (351). Therefore, I feel that her desire to understand the reality and mentality of postwar, as well as post-Soviet, Lithuania is tightly entwined with her own identity quest. Vincė's previous book *The Snake in the Vodka Bottle* also testifies to this quest.

The point of view, from which Vincė carries out her research and contextualizes it, is that of a stranger who has a native right to the knowledge and experience that is shared with her. She treats her subjects as newly discovered family members, sympathetically, with the weight of emotional responsibility. For example, "All his life Jonas Kadžionis had worked as a manual laborer. Yet, listening to his poems and his thoughts on poetry, I felt that under different circumstances, he could have been a professor of literature" (286).

The first two chapters of *Journey into the Backwaters of the Heart* provide the historical background, painted accurately, although in broad brush strokes, for the interviews that follow. In her introduction and indeed the entire book, Vincė does justice to the historical, ideological, moral, and emotional tumult that raged during the years of World War II and postwar Lithuania. She records a moving conversation between Kazys and Karolis Kadžionis, as told by their younger brother, Jonas:

I remember my two elder brothers discussing what to do. 'I will sacrifice for my family,' said my brother Karolis, 'and I will join the Red Army.' Some men joined the Red Army voluntarily to save their families. They went to the front. You can't hold that against them.

'No', said Kazys, 'I am going into the forest to join the partisans and then we will be shooting at each other.'

So they both went into the forest. (291).

Needless to say, they both died.

Vincė is also careful to explore different types of repressions against Lithuanian residents of different ethnic groups and social strata – Soviet aggression against resistance fighters and other participants of the resistance movement, the first Soviet occupation and deportations to Siberia, as well as "one of the least known of the Soviet deportations – that of Lithuania's German population to Tajikistan" (184). She also deals with the Holocaust in Lithuania, a controversial subject given that many Lithuanians participated in it. The overall tone of the book is nonjudgemental, nondefensive, and nonideological. It is sympathetic towards all the survivors of the postwar horrors.

After a visit to a *stribas*, "a man who had actively worked for the NKVD hunting down people in the resistance" (141), Vincė writes: "Listening to Pranas, I began to feel sorry for him. It was a strange sort of compassion. All these people were victims of their times, whichever side they chose" (146).

When it comes to comments on contemporary Lithuania, Vincė maintains a much more negative perspective. After a guided visit to the Museum of the Center for Genocide and Resistance (which is often criticized for not paying sufficient tribute to the Holocaust in Lithuania) and the guide's failure to establish clear historical facts to a group of foreign visitors with little to no knowledge of Lithuanian history, and to explain to them the historical significance of the tortures that took place in the KGB basement, she reels off a string of questions that serve to channel her disapproval: "Gulag tourism is a growing industry in the post-Soviet world. [...] What is the point of this type of tourism? To gawk at the misery of others? Or to reflect and remember? What is the responsibility of the tour guides who lead the groups into a tour of hell? To educate? To indoctrinate? Honor? [...] And are these guides properly prepared to lead us into Dante's inferno? Have they had the appropriate training? Do they know their history? And how dare the tour guides wear bright floral prints?" (151). This is an eloquent commentary. Many of Vincė's observations on contemporary Lithuania question the way in which the complicated and painful past is being dealt with now, people's ability to look at it directly, analyze it, understand it, take in the conflicting points of view towards it, face the ugliness of it in order to one day be free of it.

The title of *Journey into the Backwaters of the Heart* arises from the fact that all the protagonists of the book were young when the war struck and naturally their love affairs feature strongly in their stories. Furthermore, they often share how they came to make the life-or-death decisions they were forced to confront. As Leonora Grigalevičiūtė-Rubine told Vincė, "Ours was a generation that lived through times that were biblical in nature. There was good and there was evil. And there

was nothing in between. It was impossible not to choose sides. Each one of us was forced to choose." Those decisions were always hard, often damaging, and always heartbreaking.

One of the drawbacks of the book is that it lacks a strong editorial touch, both in terms of proofreading as well as content selection. Nevertheless, it is a thought-provoking testimony of the complexities of a not-too-distant past and homage to the suffering of thousands of Lithuanian residents whose lives were crushed by the forces of war and the regimes that followed. In spite of all this, the overwhelming message that Vincė is keen to retain and pass on as a result of those conversations with victims of trauma, physical, and psychological violence is this: "In order to survive, you must throw away all your bad energy. Anger takes up too much. [...] You throw away all the negative emotions, all the anger, the hurt, the jealousy. And that makes you spiritually free" (Rytė Merkytė, 43-44).

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ABSTRACTS

Early Conceptions of Romanticism in Lithuania and the poem *Anykščių šilelis*

Gintaras Lazdynas

Antanas Baranauskas is known as the author of the poem *Anykščių šilelis*. The second most important work in the chronology of Lithuanian literature, it is traditionally considered the first Romantic poem in that literature. This characterization dates from the fourth decade of the twentieth century, but was not completely accepted until the Soviet era. This article reconstructs the understanding of the concept of Romanticism during Baranauskas's lifetime and evaluates the poem from the point of view of the polemics between Romanticism and classicism. Both Kazimierz Brodziński, an advocate of Romanticism, and Jan Śniadecki, an advocate of classicism, would have seen *Anykščių šilelis* as an example of classical poetry.

Ancient Songs at Millennial Moments

Emily Daina Šaras

The Lithuanian folk song festival of the Vilnius Cultural Capital of 2009, Millennium, serves as an exaggerated case study of the general trend of state-sponsored folk music festivals attempting to foster nationalist spirit through the mystification of ancient culture. Celebration and state sponsorship of the "authentic" Lithuanian folk song tradition is not a recent phenomenon. However, since Lithuania declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the traditions surrounding the genre of Lithuanian folk music have come to serve a new, "enchanted" function within Lithuanian nation building, as a result of the flourishing of the festival as a new major cultural form. This transformation mirrors the change witnessed by contemporary society in the conceptualization and function of the nation-state under "millennial capitalism" as defined by Jean and John Comaroff. The Lithuanian Ministry of Culture funds the promotion, practice, and public performance of Lithuania folk music, not only to preserve a contestable notion of the country's "ancient" national past, but also to help launch Lithuania into the future as a financially strong and nationally stable European Union member state.

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