LITUANUS

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GINTA T. PALUBINSKAS

1. Introduction

Seventy years ago, George Kennan's famous "X" article, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," appeared in *Foreign Affairs*, warning U.S. policymakers of the threat of Soviet expansionism and proposing a policy of containment as a response. In his article, Kennan pointed to two sources of Soviet conduct – communist ideology and the need to maintain power at home. He recognized that Russia conceived itself to be a state under siege, one which had to defend itself against the outside world at any cost, and that the Soviet state had no common interests with any capitalist states. Because of this, there could "be no appeal to common purposes <…> no appeal to common mental approaches."[1]

A little more than forty years later, the Soviet Union collapsed and as memories of the Cold War faded our view of Russia changed. Rather than seeing it as an ever-present threat, we came to view it as a potential partner. Perhaps, it can be said that since we did not conceive of Russia as a state under siege and considered the ideological battle at the heart of the Cold War to be over, we thought that we could now appeal to common purposes, as well as to appeal to common mental approaches to world problems. After all, communist ideology was dead. International

[1] X, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," 574.

GINTA T. PALUBINSKAS earned her Ph.D. in Public Policy from George Mason University. She is currently an associate professor of Political Science and Chair of the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at West Virginia State University.

norms prohibited territorial expansion through the forceful changing of borders. And, a democratic Russian state could maintain power at home through peaceful means.

But, a democratic Russian state did not emerge, nor did a sense of common purpose between Russia and the West. Instead, Russia became increasingly authoritarian, democratic gains were reversed, and the drumbeat of the national narrative of Russia as a state under siege returned. The rise of authoritarianism can be seen in Figure 1 below.

Russia's turn from democracy in the post-Soviet era coincides with the beginning of Vladimir Putin's presidency. Under Yeltsin, Russia had introduced democratic institutions and begun the difficult process of transforming its political, economic, and social systems to those of a democracy. It acknowledged its neighbors' right to exist as independent states and began forging a new relationship with the West. But, change was difficult and progress was slow. When Yeltsin resigned on December 31, 1999, Russia's democratic institutions were still fragile and a democratic political culture had not yet taken hold. Putin came to power when democracy was still a foreign concept to a nation

that had lived under authoritarian rule for a thousand years and still mourned the collapse of its empire.

Putin capitalized on Russia's hesitation to embrace democracy. He brought back the familiar, and moved Russia back toward the consolidation of an authoritarian regime. He resurrected Soviet-era symbols, increased political centralization, actively suppressed political opposition, supported restrictions on press freedom, and cracked down on civil society organizations. At the beginning of Putin's rule, Russia was sometimes described as a managed democracy, a system in which

> leaders use government resources and manipulation to ensure that they will not be defeated in elections, although they permit democratic institutions and groups to function to a limited extent.[2]

In 2003, Russia's Democracy Score of 4.96 showed that it could barely be categorized as a transitional or hybrid regime. In 2004, it exhibited the traits of a semi-consolidated authoritarian regime. At the end of Putin's second term in office, Russia had consolidated its authoritarian regime and was no longer considered a free country. Under Putin's leadership, Russia's traditional autocratic state was resurrected and the Russian people fell back into their familiar role as subjects of a system that neither wanted, nor valued, citizen participation in the governmental decision making process. The Russian state used violence, disruption, obstruction, and disinformation to suppress democracy both at home and abroad.

2. Suppressing Democratic Development at Home

When Yeltsin chose Putin as his Prime Minister in August, 1999, little was known about the man who had been trained by the KGB, spent his life as a career intelligence officer, and was then the head of the Federal Security Services. In spite of this, it didn't
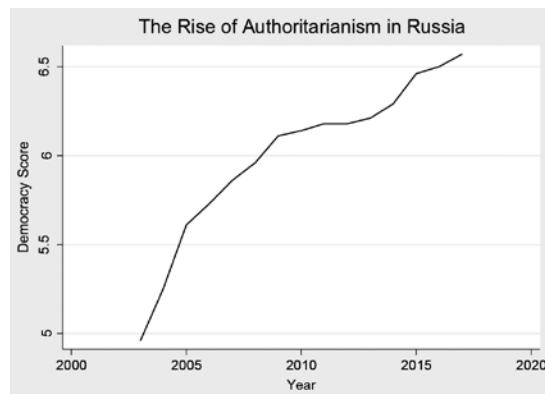

Figure 1: *The Rise of Authoritarianism in Russia*

Note: This graph was constructed using Freedom House Nations in Transit reports from 2003 through 2017. The Democracy Score is based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest.

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[2]   Nichol, *Democracy in Russia: Trends and Implications*, 3.

take long for Putin to gain the Russian public's approval. Less than a month after Putin became Yeltsin's Prime Minister, a series of deadly apartment bombings took place in Moscow in a short, two-week period. Hundreds were killed and scores were injured. The Kremlin immediately attributed the bombings to Chechen militants and began a concerted operation targeting Chechens in Moscow. Ground troops were deployed to Chechnya in an attack marked by the deliberate bombing of civilian targets.[3] The Russian public approved of the campaign and it approved of Putin who was closely associated with the operation. Putin's public approval ratings soared. And, they remained high, even as it became increasingly apparent that the apartment bombings had been conducted by the Russian government itself and not by Chechen militants as the Kremlin had asserted. The information implicating the government was not widely discussed in the media at the time, so it is hard to know what the Russian public's reaction would have been had it been aware of the government's involvement. What is known is that the story was actively suppressed and investigative journalists covering it were harassed, beaten and killed.

The 1999 apartment bombings and subsequent government response marked an important turning point in Russia's democratization process. They set the stage for Russia's return to an authoritarian system in which state interests are paramount. The reversal was smooth and relatively seamless. On December 31, 1999, Yeltsin unexpectedly resigned and Putin replaced him as President. On March 26, 2000, Putin was elected with 53% of the vote by a public that saw him as a disciplined, competent leader, capable of both bringing order back to Russia, as well as regaining Russia's rightful place on the world stage.

Upon taking office, Putin discontinued Russia's democratization process and moved toward consolidating an authoritarian regime. Among other things, he restructured Russia's govern-

mental structure by creating "seven new 'super regions' headed by Kremlin appointees, most of whom had backgrounds in the military or security services."[4] By 2004, Putin had introduced changes that "altered the composition of the ruling elite through the influx of personnel from the security and military services"[5] which came to represent "more than 25 percent of the country's ministers, deputy ministers, legislators, governors, and 'super governors'."[6] This centralized power, decreased opportunities for citizen participation in Russia's political system, and reduced the Russian government's accountability to its citizens. At the same time, Putin's government placed increasing pressure on the media to curb criticism of the Kremlin. In September 2001, the government closed "the country's last remaining national independent television network,"[7] reducing Russia's freedom of the press and citizen access to independent information. Finally, laws governing the media were changed to restrict its ability to report the news, thereby reducing the free flow of information, which is vital to a democratic society. The erosion of Russia's independent media can be seen in Table 1 below.

The Erosion of Media Independence in Russia														
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Independent Media Score	5.50	5.75	6.00	6.00	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.50	6.50	6.50

Table 1: *The Erosion of Media Independence in Russia*

Note: This table was constructed using Freedom House Nations in Transit reports from 2003 through 2017. The Media Independence Score is based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of media independence and 7 the lowest.

[3] Freedom House, "Russia, Freedom in the World 1999."

[4] Freedom House, "Russia, Freedom in the World 2001."
[5] Freedom House, "Russia, Nations in Transit 2005."
[6] Ibid.
[7] Freedom House, "Russia, Freedom in the World 2002."

The suppression of media independence reduced the type of information that was available to Russia's citizens. Russia's media could not perform the essential role of holding government leaders accountable to the people, nor could it provide Russian citizens with uncensored information that would allow them to make informed decisions. Increasing government control of the media allowed the administration to formulate news in a manner that was conducive to the government and reduced transparency in Russian society. Public perception of local, national, and international events was carefully managed to unify the people behind the Russian state and to keep Putin in power.

The political effect of living in a state that suppressed media independence was highly visible during the 2003 Duma and the 2004 Presidential elections. In 2003, extensive bias in media coverage assured the Kremlin-controlled Unity Party 306 of the Duma's 450 seats. A year later, extensive media bias ensured that no challenger could mount a credible challenge to the incumbent President.[8] By 2003, the Putin administration had created a situation in which a state-controlled media could be used to enable a Kremlin-controlled party to gain control of 70% of the seats in Russia's lower house of parliament. In the space of three years, the Kremlin had eroded media independence and, at least for the time being, effectively fused the executive and legislative branches.

But, media censorship alone could not ensure the centralization of power that Putin sought. This required long-term suppression of political opposition. So, laws governing political parties were introduced to restrict the number of parties that could exist within the country. Reducing the number of parties increased the government's ability to suppress the opposition and reduced the level of pluralism in Russia. This resulted in reduced power-sharing and allowed for the consolidation of an authoritarian regime in Russia. The steady erosion of democracy in Russia can be seen in Table 2 below.

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[8]   Freedom House, "Russia, Nations in Transit 2005."

The Erosion of Democracy in Russia														
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Democracy Score	5.50	5.75	6.00	6.00	6.25	5.96	6.11	6.14	6.18	6.18	6.21	6.29	6.46	6.50	6.50

Table 2: *The Erosion of Democracy in Russia*

Note: This table was constructed using Freedom House Nations in Transit reports from 2003 through 2017. The Democracy Score is based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democracy and 7 the lowest.

During Putin's first two terms, Russian citizens were largely stripped of rights enjoyed by citizens of democratic countries. They lost the possibility of participating in free and fair elections, their right to freely assemble, their freedom of speech, and to an extent, even their freedom of movement. Under Putin, Russia moved from being a country in which political rights were moderately protected to one in which political rights were severely restricted. Seventeen years after emerging from the Soviet Union, Russia was no longer a country on the path to democracy. It was instead, a country that had returned to its authoritarian roots. Its leader would increasingly reject democracy and revive the drumbeat of Russia's long-time national narrative of Russia as a state under siege, surrounded by enemies that seek to destroy it.

In 1947, Kennan wrote:

> … the men in the Kremlin have continued to be predominantly absorbed with the struggle to secure and make absolute the power which they seized in November 1917. They have endeavored to secure it primarily against forces at home, within Soviet society itself. But they have also endeavored to secure it against the outside world. For ideology, as we have seen, taught them that the outside world was hostile and that it was their duty eventually to overthrow the political forces beyond their borders. Then powerful hands of Russian history and tradition reached up to sustain them in this feeling.[9]

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[9]   X, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," 569.

Much of this can still be said nearly ten years after the consolidation of Russia's authoritarian regime in 2008. The men in the Kremlin are still absorbed with the struggle to protect and make absolute the power they have, securing it primarily against opposition forces at home and then working to secure it against the outside world. They still cultivate the myth of relentless foreign hostility. And, they actively seek to keep the forces that lie beyond their border at bay and work to overthrow them wherever possible.

3. Suppressing Democratic Development Abroad

As Putin was consolidating domestic power through the suppression of democratic forces within Russia, he also sought to weaken and discredit democratic forces abroad. The quelling of pro-democracy forces within Russia eliminated an immediate and direct threat to Putin's power. Successful destruction or discreditation of democratic forces abroad would eliminate a long-term threat to Putin's power: internal democratic forces would not be able to draw on the success of external democratic forces to validate their position. Initially, the most dangerous democracies were those emerging in the post-Soviet region. The reason for this was two-fold. First, post-Soviet countries that became consolidated democracies would serve as incontrovertible proof that post-Soviet countries can transform and thrive as democracies and this would bolster opposition forces in Russia. Second, there was a danger that these newly consolidated democracies would slip away from Russia's grasp permanently through integration into Western political, economic, and security structures. This would both preclude Russia's ability to expand in the region, as well as bolster opposition forces that could point to the tangible benefits of transforming Russia into a democracy.

The Russian government used a multi-pronged approach to undermine democracy in the post-Soviet region. Much as Kennan had written in 1947, the Kremlin's political activities continued to be

a fluid stream which moves constantly, wherever it is permitted to move toward a given goal. It's main concern is to make sure that it has filled every nook and cranny available to it <…> [applying] pressure, unceasing constant pressure, toward the desired goal.[10]

It sought to slow and undercut its neighbors' democratic development through political, economic, and social pressure. It interfered in its neighbors' national elections, sought to gain control of their energy sectors, and fomented social discord to prevent democratic consolidation in the region. It spread disinformation about countries in the region in an effort to discredit them and to hamper their ability to join Western political, economic, and social structures.

Evidence shows that countries seeking closer ties with the European Union resisted Russia's pressure to reverse course and continued to reinforce their democratic institutions. In 2004, Lithuania impeached its President who had colluded with Russia to win the election, and then the country went on to become a member of the EU and NATO. That same year, Ukrainians rejected Russia's blatant interference in their country's Presidential elections by refusing to accept fraudulent election results and voted pro-democracy candidate Viktor Yushchenko into office. In 2007, Estonia survived demonstrations sparked by Russian disinformation and "endured the first-known cyber attack on an entire country" after it decided to move a soviet war memorial from the heart of its capital to a Soviet military cemetery.[11] In 2009, the European Union adopted the Third Energy Package, derailing Russia's efforts to gain political leverage over its member states through their energy sectors.

Evidence also shows that Russia's "unceasing constant pressure, toward the desired goal," has borne fruit. In 2016, the Center for Strategic and International Studies released a report, "The Kremlin Playbook: Understanding Russian Influence in Central and Eastern Europe," which showed a correlation between Rus-

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[10]   X, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," 575.
[11]   McGuiness, "How a cyber attack transformed Estonia."

sia's economic footprint in a country and that country's propensity to move away from democracy. Generally speaking, countries with greater Russian involvement in their economy are more susceptible to Russian political influence. Russia uses its economic clout to leverage political gains and to erode a country's democratic institutions from within "through the corrosive comingling of public and private interests."[12] It seizes on the individual economic ambitions of both willing and unwitting collaborators whom it engages in corrupt practices that contribute to the erosion of a country's democracy in exchange for economic gain. Corruption inhibits a country's ability to function as a democracy and stunts its ability to develop economically.

Russia has targeted both new and old democracies with an aim to weaken both their internal cohesion, as well as the unity between democracies. Here, too, it has taken a multi-pronged approach by targeting strategic economic sectors to gain economic leverage; spreading disinformation to create discord within and between countries; and, interfering in national elections, among other things. Investigations are underway to illuminate Russia's role in the UK's Brexit vote, the U.S. 2016 Presidential elections, as well as its support for anti-establishment parties in Germany, France, and Italy. Russia has steadily denied meddling in the U.S. and any other elections. Its Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has declared that there is no evidence that Russia interfered in either the U.S. Presidential elections or elections in European states. He has said that the United States is accusing Russia of election interference as a "pretext to muscle Russian business interests out of Europe," specifically out of European energy sectors, to gain a U.S. advantage.[13] He also urged the U.S. to examine the "Ukrainian trace" – wording reminiscent of terminology used to accuse and discredit Chechens following the 1999 apartment bombings in Moscow. Lavrov's assertions ring hollow in light of Russia vehement denial of any connection to

the Little Green Men that invaded Crimea in 2014 and subsequent admission that they had in fact been Russian forces. Lavrov's assertion that there is no proof that Russia meddled in the 2016 U.S. Presidential elections is not a denial of involvement. It is simply a declaration that no proof of its involvement has been found. Lavrov's denial is part of a pattern that has existed in Russia's foreign policy for a long time. Seventy years ago, Kennan identified what it is that "we find disturbing in the Kremlin's conduct of foreign policy: the secretiveness, the lack of frankness, the duplicity, the wary suspiciousness, and the basic unfriendliness of purpose."[14]

4. Conclusion

The Russian state has been suppressing democratic development at home for more than a century in order to preserve its power. The emergence of democracy in Russia would fundamentally change the relationship between citizen and state. The dynamic would shift from one in which the citizen's function is to serve the state to one in which it is the state's function to serve the citizen. The Russian people's traditional obedience to state authority at the expense of their personal freedom would dissipate and Russia's rulers would lose some of their power. To prevent this, the Kremlin maintains what can be seen as a modern-day feudal system in which the current political and economic elite prospers through the maintenance of Russia's authoritarian regime. It is to their benefit to suppress democracy at home.

But, suppressing democracy at home is not enough and its very existence represents a potential threat to those who sit in the Kremlin. Seventeen years after Putin's rise to power and nearly a decade after the consolidation of Russia's current authoritarian regime, nearly a third (31%) of the Russians surveyed believe that "democracy is preferable to any other form of gov-

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[12]   Conley, et al., *The Kremlin Playbook*, xii.
[13]   DW, "Lavrov: No evidence of Russian interference in US presidential elections."

[14]   X, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," 572.

ernment."[15] In order to maintain power, Russia's rulers must find a way to convince them that the Russian state is under siege and that it is their duty to sacrifice their personal freedom to protect it from the enemies that surround it. And so, they sow discord and wreak havoc in democratic countries to weaken democracy abroad as a means to convince Russians that they are better off living in an authoritarian state.

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[15]   Pew Research Center, "No Regional Consensus that Democracy is Preferable to Other Forms of Government."

Democratic Crisis or Return to the Western World? Civic Engagement, Social Capital, and Media in Latvia[1]

SERGEI KRUK AND JANIS CHAKARS

Declining evidence of self-organization in East Central Europe following the democratic revolutions of the late 1980s "puzzled" some scholars who expected a quick revival of civil society after the demise of communism.[2] To be sure, the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are frequently noted as a bright spot in terms of democracy among the 15 countries that once constituted the USSR. They have held regular elections without incident and become stable members of the European Union and Euro zone. However, they have also experienced economic whiplash with dives following booms and for Latvia and Lithuania, in particular, a crushing economic crisis in 2008.[3] The Baltic countries have faced other challenges at home and abroad as well.

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[1]   This work was supported by the Riga Stradiņš University internal grant 15/2013.
[2]   Dvorakova, "Civil society in Latin America and Eastern Europe," 579.
[3]   Mačys, "The crisis and economic recovery," 202–209.

SERGEI KRUK is associate professor and senior researcher of communication studies at Rīga Stradiņš University. His research interests include the semiotics and history of Latvian media. He has published over 80 journal articles, books, and book chapters in this area.

JANIS CHAKARS is associate professor of communication at Neumann University. His research interests include media, history, and politics in Latvia and the Baltic states. His work in this area has appeared in *Journalism History*, *American Journalism*, the *International Journal of Communication*, and, with Sergei Kruk, the *Central European Journal of Communication*.

Since joining the EU, they have seen drastic population decline in which low birth rates combined with residents moving west chasing higher salaries.[4] Latvia and Estonia with the largest minority populations continue to struggle with integration issues connected to its large Russian-speaking minority, many of whom have not followed the path to citizenship offered them. Relations are continually strained with Russia, its powerful neighbor to which the government sees NATO as a bulwark against. Despite successes, democracy in the Baltic states has plenty of challenges to resolve. Further, rates of civic participation suggest, Baltic social capital may present another challenge for the future. For example, only 17 percent of Latvians are members of civic organizations today. Further, Anders Uhlin argues the "most striking feature" of these groups is their non-political and elitist character.[5]

This article explores this situation and whether Latvia, as a former-Soviet country, is facing a distinctive post-communist crisis of democracy or not. While this study focuses on Latvia, rates of civic participation in Lithuania and Estonia are also low. A study of Lithuania, for instance, concluded that "society is suffering from the syndrome of impotence" and "the most severe civil disability which hinders the development of civic initiatives is the society's prevailing disbelief that citizens' collective action can make a difference."[6] This may suggest that democracy is struggling or imperiled in the Baltics as a set. However, as the data provided for comparison in this article shows, West European countries also exhibit weak signs of civic life. This suggests another interpretation: The Baltics states have simply rejoined the Western World, to borrow the phrase used by Marju Lauristin and Peeter Vihalemm to refer to Estonia.[7] Of course, it is possible to maintain both interpretations at the same time. Democracy could be in trouble in the Western World *including* the

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[4]   Ubarevičienė, "Population decline in Lithuania," 57–79.
[5]   Uhlin, "The Structure and Culture of Post-Communist Civil Society in Latvia," 848.
[6]   Žiliukaitė, et al, *Neatrasta Galia*.
[7]   Lauristin and Vihalemm, *Return to the Western World*.

Baltic states. This leads us to at least two further questions for study and discussion. Is there something in particular about the Baltic states or any one of the Baltic states, such as Latvia, to account for low civic engagement? What does weak civic participation suggest for the future of the Baltic states and the West?

Finally, any attempt to assess the health of democracy must include a discussion of media. In the twentieth century, it became axiomatic in the West that civic participation and responsible journalism make for healthy democracy. If democracy is rule by the people then clearly there must be engaged citizens for the system to be true to itself. Further, they must be well-informed citizens to be effective participants. This extends beyond the baseline practice of voting. It concerns self-organization more broadly which is essential to any liberal conception of democracy. Here media have long been presumed to have a role too. Indeed, Alexis de Tocquville, writing of American democracy in 1835, said "Newspapers make associations and associations make newspapers."[8] More recently, David Nord has argued that it is through media that "communities are built, maintained, and wrecked in communication."[9] In the 1990s, Blumler and Gurevitch warned of a crisis of public communication in the West and saw wreckage on the horizon rather than the building or healthy maintenance of democracy.[10] Some have seen a similar phenomenon in Latvia, where political and media discourse cultivates an image of a fragmented society that can inhibit social solidarity and collective action.[11]

In the United States, a great hue and cry was raised by Robert Putnam, whose best-selling book, *Bowling Alone*, asserted falling rates of participation in civic organizations were precipitously draining the bank account of social capital necessary for democratic community life.[12] The chief culprit, he argued, was

television. People watch too much TV to be good citizens. The medium was the message, in his view. The internet was not really changing that either, it just made for another kind of extra personalized screen time. His calculations of decline have been challenged by others, as has been his reasoning, particularly regarding online civic participation.[13] Baer, Curtis and Grabb noted that if Putnam was correct in that TV is neutering civic life we should see it in other countries too. However, they found inconsistent results across 15 countries.[14] This study follows suit in that it situates Latvia with reference other countries, but in line with Felicia Wu Song, it does not find evidence of digital life translating into robust democratic participation or civic life.[15]

In recent years, communication scholars have turned their attention to the ways civic engagement is changing in the digital age. Some scholars see doom with the death of print, whereas others see hope.[16] However, overall, it is still unclear how online communities translate into consistent social capital.[17] The argument that digital technology signals a change rather than a withering of civic participation is roughly in tune with some scholars in sociology and political science who see a kind of evolution occurring. In the U.S., for instance, Theda Skocpol claims, there is still a nation of "joiners," but they more frequently make a financial donation rather than attend a meeting.[18] Still, Putnam's general assertion is intuitively powerful: "Citizenship by proxy is an oxymoron."[19] Be that as it may, this is but one conception of democracy and perhaps the most idealistic. His cry of warning may also be typical of rhetoric in and out of academia that sees the sky falling in many discussions of democracy. Popular concerns express fears about people not being well informed, sus-

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8   de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 601.
9   Nord, *Communities of Journalism*, 2.
10   Blumler and Gurevitch, *The Crisis of Public Communication*.
11   Ījabs and Kruks. *Saeima, vārdi un demokrātija*.
12   Putnam, *Bowling Alone*.

13   Skoric, et al. "Bowling Alone, not alone," 414–433.
14   Baer, et al. "Has Voluntary Association Activity Declined?" 249–274.
15   Song, *Virtual Communities*.
16   Lee, "Dead Newspapers and Citizens' Civic Engagement," 131–148; Ognyanova, et al. "Online participation in a community context," 2433–2456.
17   Bennett, *Civic Life Online*.
18   Skocpol, "Advocates without members."
19   Putnam, *ibid.*, 160.

ceptible to "fake news," and in the worst case scenario vulnerable to authoritarian populism. However, a citizenry buzzing with beehive-levels of civic engagement may be a fantasy, at least in Euro-Atlantic democratic political systems today.

This study uses data from representative surveys collected in October 2013 and July 2014 by the Riga-based marketing and public opinion research center SKDS. A sample of 1,000 respondents aged 18–74 proportionally stratified by age, region, gender, ethnicity, profession, education and citizenship responded to face-to-face interviews at their homes. In addition, qualitative data was drawn from 25 semi-structured interviews with business people (proportionally stratified by industry, region and company size) conducted in summer 2014. For reference and comparison, the findings were then set against analogous research on Estonia, Sweden, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands drawn from the World Values Survey and Eurobarometer in which the same questions were asked of respondents.

Civic Participation

If civic participation is the backbone of democracy then democracy is not especially popular in Latvia. In 2013, 83 percent of people surveyed reported no active membership in a civic organization. For those who were involved in associations, the most popular were dedicated to arts, culture and education or religion (Table 1), however, the numbers are small accounting for just shy of six and five percent respectively. Activity is higher among students and managers for whom every third is a member of a civic organization, but again cultural organizations are most common: 23 percent of students, seven percent of managers, and nine percent of white collar workers belong. Managers also participate most in political parties (eight percent) and sports organizations (nine percent), while blue collar workers, naturally, prefer trade unions (seven percent). Therefore, rates of activity vary among the population, but in all cases remain low.

Table 1. *Membership in Civil Society Organizations, percent*

Arts, culture, education	5.8	Environment protection	0.7
Religious	4.7	Women's	0.4
Trade Unions	2.9	Health	0.4
Sports	2.8	Human rights	0.1
Social support groups	1.2	Other	1.7
Professional	1.1	No membership	81.2
Political party	0.8	N/A	1.9
Youth	0.8	Total	106.5

SKDS, October 2013, N = 1000

But what should we expect rates of participation to be? At what point should we be worried? According to a 2012, Pew Research Center survey, 13 percent of Americans have been an active member of a group that tries to influence the public or government and seven percent worked or volunteered for a political party of candidate.[20] This is in the land where Putnam saw a crisis. Another approach is to look at other European countries closer to Latvia. The World Values Survey collects information on rates of civic participation in countries around the world. Table 2 shows active membership in Estonia, Sweden, Germany, The Netherlands and Spain from this survey as compared to Latvia.

There are low rates of participation in civic organizations across all six countries. Further, Latvia appears most similar to Sweden rather than its post-Soviet neighbor, Estonia, with which it has close historical experience, even though its neighbor often brands itself today as "Nordic" rather than "Baltic."[21] Sweden is rarely cited as being in a crisis of democracy in the manner that many former-Soviet countries are seen.

Of further concern, however, is Latvians' dismal appraisal of their governance. Seventy percent say their politicians pursue their own interests above that of the people. Only 10 percent

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20 Smith, "Civic Engagement in the Digital Age."
21 Jordan, "Nation Branding," 283–303.

Table 2. *Membership in Civil Society Organizations in selected EU countries, percent*

	Latvia	Estonia	Sweden	Germany	Netherlands	Spain
Art/culture	5.8	9.2	3.5	8.3	8.2	12.8
Religion	4.7	3.8	5.6	14.1	10.9	6.6
Labor Union	2.9	4.3	2.8	1	3.5	3.3
Sports/Recreation	2.8	22.3	7.9	10.6	26.4	36.4
Mutual Aid/Social Support	1.2	1.9	1.2	1.3	2.3	1.3
Professional Association	1.1	2.9	1.1	3.3	3.3	1.9
Political Party	0.8	1.8	0.8	1	2.8	1.2
Environmental Group	0.7	1.3	0.3	0.7	2.4	1

Sources: SKDS Survey 2013; World Values Survey 2010–2014

think politicians make good decisions. Indeed, often Latvians live in a state of anxiety (see Table 3) and feel powerless to do much about government incompetence (Table 4). Pessimism has shrunk since the height of the economic crisis, but the number of optimistic Latvians remains just under half.

While only 34 percent of Latvians believe active protest can make a difference, many are still willing to try: 56 percent would sign a petition, 27 percent would take part in a public manifestation, and six percent said they would take a leadership role in organizing a strike or demonstration. Comparable data is available for two of these measures in the World Values Survey (Table 5). These two measures from different surveys can only hint at the range of activities and will for empowerment in these countries, but even within their variation they suggest certain similarities across these European countries. Nowhere are even half of the people interested in public manifestations. Regarding the low-commitment action of signing a petition, Latvia joins The Netherlands with a little over half willing to dissent on record in that manner. Again, while these indicators of a sense of civic empowerment are not impressive, Latvia does not stand out as odd.

Table 3. *Hope or anxiety about personal future, percent*
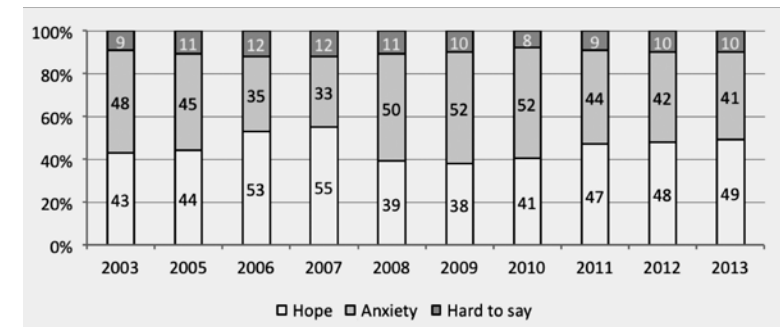
Source: SKDS, October 2013, n = 1000.

Table 4. *Can protest actions influence government decision making?*
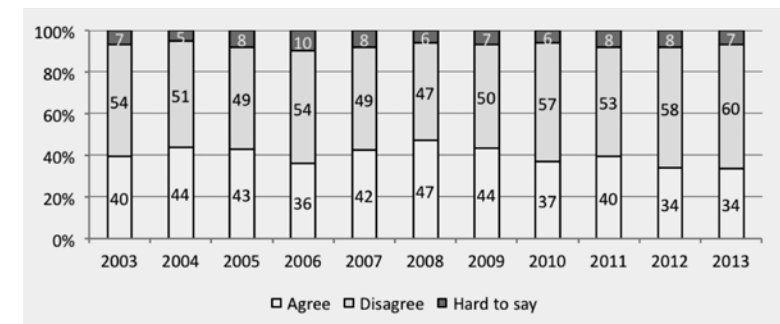
Source: SKDS, October 2013, n = 1000.

Table 5. *Willingness to protest, percent*

	Latvia	Estonia	Sweden	Germany	Netherlands	Spain
Petition	56	25.8	24.9	32.2	52.4	38.4
Demonstration	27	36.5	30.3	24.3	32.8	46.4

Media Consumption in Comparison

While there are certainly differences in the media preferences of the six countries compared in this study (see Table 6), the only category in which Latvians showed drastically lower rates of con-

sumption, along with Spain, is print media. It is primarily in reading the daily press in which these two countries differ strongly from the others. Further, while Latvian trust in media may be below the other countries save Spain (see Table 7), faith in the internet and social media, common tools of social mobilization, is higher.

Table 6. *TV Consumption (on a television set), percent*

	Latvia	Estonia	Sweden	Germany	Netherlands	Spain
Daily	79	83	73	84	80	92
Weekly	11	12	16	12	15	5
Monthly	5	3	6	2	2	1
Never	5	2	5	2	3	2

Radio consumption, percent

	Latvia	Estonia	Sweden	Germany	Netherlands	Spain
Daily	57	63	63	69	62	41
Weekly	19	19	18	16	21	27
Monthly	11	11	15	10	10	14
Never	13	7	4	5	7	18

Written Press consumption, percent

	Latvia	Estonia	Sweden	Germany	Netherlands	Spain
Daily	20	42	70	56	54	21
Weekly	44	33	23	28	25	31
Monthly	41	19	6	12	11	20
Never	15	6	1	4	10	28

Internet use, percent

	Latvia	Estonia	Sweden	Germany	Netherlands	Spain
Daily	64	71	86	57	88	58
Weekly	8	4	5	17	7	10
Monthly	4	4	2	5	2	4
Never	24	21	7	21	3	28

Social Media, percent

	Latvia	Estonia	Sweden	Germany	Netherlands	Spain
Daily	43	40	53	24	48	38
Weekly	15	12	15	15	17	15
Monthly	6	8	7	11	8	6
Never	35	40	25	50	27	41

Source: Eurobarometer, Autumn 2014
http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb82/eb82_media_en.pdf

Table 7. *Tend to Trust, percent*

	Latvia	Estonia	Sweden	Germany	Netherlands	Spain
Radio	61	69	82	67	74	49
Television	62	69	70	60	62	33
Written press	41	54	48	47	66	37
Internet	42	46	29	27	44	33
Social Media	27	23	13	15	20	25

Source: Eurobarometer, Autumn 2014
http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb82/eb82_media_en.pdf

Latvia in Particular

The SKDS survey allows us to delve deeper into the media inclinations of Latvians. As regards radio, music is preferred, with the market share of the two public talk radio channels in the Latvian and Russian languages at 15 percent. Urban Latvians have access to a wide array of television channels via the cable and satellite. The average Latvian watched five hours of television a day in 2013. The market share of the two public television channels was 13 percent. The five commercial channels owned by the MTG Group enjoyed a share of 34 percent. Almost 30 percent of viewing time goes to channels originating in Russia and the remaining 23 percent is divided among numerous other foreign channels and home movies.

The popularity of print media is decreasing. During a week, about every third Latvian reads at least one issue of a regional newspaper (36 percent) and national dailies are approximately twice less consumed (15 percent). The most in demand are the weeklies (57 percent).

Regarding news, for more than a half of respondents (55 percent) the main source of information about national affairs was television. Almost every fourth Latvian gets news through the Internet (23 percent). Social media was mentioned by six percent, the regional press by three percent, and national dailies by two percent. Four percent of Latvians learn about domestic events from personal conversation.

Self-evaluation of digital competence is rather high: for half of the respondents it is sufficient, but another 19 percent reported no need for it. Indeed, 28 percent, mostly elderly people, have not accessed the Internet during last twelve months.

Top-down communication prevails on the Latvian Internet. Users tend not to create and share original information. Among those who access the Internet, 63 percent never tweeted or wrote a blog, or shared audio, video or photos. However, it is a daily activity for five percent and another nine percent do it at some point in a week. The most popular interactive communication is e-mail (27 percent). Writing a comment below the information published by a news site is a daily activity for four percent of Internet users and another 12 percent publish their comments several times a week, while 59 percent have not written a single line. Passive reception of news content is typical. Reading news sites is the most widespread everyday activity (37 percent), followed by listening radio and watching television broadcasts (20 percent), reading home-pages of dailies and magazines (15 percent), and readers' comments (12 percent).

A small amount of people use digital communication in acts of social solidarity, but more use it for shopping. Only 5 percent share useful information and counsel others about the topics they have expertise about. Giving a donation is the most popular act of solidarity (7 percent). More commonly the Internet satisfies private consumer needs: respondents search for sec-ond-hand goods and consumer advice (27 percent), housing, jobs, and babysitters (15 percent).

To sum up, reading news, searching consumer information, and e-mailing are the primary uses for almost 90 percent of Internet users. Whereas sharing one's own information publicly is much less important – almost 60 percent have never done it. Social media are not enabling social action. More than 70 percent of Internet users have not attempted to conduct business, distribute information about their products and services, create a support group, or to find partners for their projects.

Respondents do not admire the quality of news media in Latvia. More than half (59 percent) agree that, in general, journalists represent the government rather than grassroots opinion and 57 percent say they do not understand many events because they miss the broader context. Less than a half agreed that domestic politics is reported clearly (46 percent) and only every third comprehends the coverage of economy (32 percent). About one third of the respondents (29 percent) recognised their everyday experience in the news coverage. Overall, a majority of Latvians evaluate journalism as too sensational (59 percent). A range of under-represented socio-demographic groups—self-employed, unemployed, workers, housewives, students, non-citizens, residents of the economically weak region of Latgale, and those with basic education and lower income— more often say that the media information does not reflect their daily experience. Residents of the capital city Riga tend to evaluate media quality higher than the average and those who live in smaller towns and Latgale as well as the self-employed are less satisfied with journalism.

Of those polled, 23 percent said they got the news from only one media outlet and 54 percent consulted diverse opinions found in various media outlets. Every third Latvian discusses the mediated information with peers. Thirteen percent responded that the mediated information was not relevant for their life at all. Managers, white collar workers and people with higher income tend to seek more opinions in different media. Pensioners and Russian-speakers more often than the average turn to only one trusted source of information. In general, higher education correlates with diversity of sources and discussions with peers.

Discussion

In the first decade of post-communist life in the former-USSR and East Europe it was popular for commentators and analysts to speak of "transition." These societies were expected to steadily change into something resembling the Euro-Atlantic capitalist democracies. Eventually, such anticipation was dashed and "transitology" lost its luster as mechanism for explaining these countries.[22] The Baltic states, however, are often held up as exceptional among ex-republics of the Soviet Union. In 2015, in a study for Freedom House, Kārlis Bukovskis and Andris Sprūds gave Latvia a "democracy score" of 2.07 with one being the best and seven the worst. For "independent media," Latvia received a 2.0, its worst score since 2006, but still quite respectable, particularly in comparison to the world at large and other post-communist states.[23] Indeed, the indicators of civic participation and media use cited in this paper suggest Latvia is a rather unremarkable country in terms of democratic life, although in some respects more advanced than some other European Union countries in terms of the paucity of evident civic engagement. This suggests that Latvia, as the cliché now goes has become "another boring Western country."

If Western Cold War triumph was undermined by ill-liberal and undemocratic developments in many parts of the old Soviet space, so too perhaps was the idealism of some even in those places where the so-called "transition" appears most complete. However, even in boring Western countries democracy can face challenges. Further, notions of what democracy should look like have also been contested. Here it is useful to turn to Walter Lippmann, a canonical figure of American communication studies. Skewered by some, notably his philosophical nemesis John Dewey, for his somewhat anti-democratic tendencies, he instead was proposing a new theory of democracy in the 1920s. In what some would call elitist fashion, he argued that democracy was already largely reduced to occasional participation at the ballot box. Limited rule by the people, however, was not such a bad thing, in his view, because democracy had previously been predicated upon the "myth of the omnicompetent citizen."[24] Roughly speaking, elite management was preferable to the citizenry trying to give input on every issue. The power of the people therefore would essentially be relegated to a last resort defense against misdeed and occasional stamp of approval to decisions taken by others. Indeed, one can argue that this is largely what democracy in the U.S. looks like today with citizen participation reduced to financial contributions or clicking a share button on social media for most people. The parliamentary systems of Europe are meant to provide greater pluralism and by extension wider rule by the people than the two-party system of the United States, but it is no guard against Lippmann's vision of democracy without robust civic participation. Indeed, elite-directed democratic environmental policy making is currently the norm in Lithuania, where public participation has been "non-existent."[25]

Latvians, like Estonians and Lithuanians, are capable of mobilizing for a cause. That is how they re-established their independence and broke free of the Soviet Union. More recently, social action quickly dissipates. A tragic event in November 2013 illustrates how. Due to a fatal construction error, the roof of the supermarket Maxima crashed killing 54 people in a densely populated neighbourhood in Riga. The death toll was especially high because the supermarket management neglected to maintain an alarm signal. The tragedy opened up horizontal and bottom-up communication channels. On the spot private persons – neighbours, psychologists, journalists – helped the victims and their families. Latvians raised a large amount of donations for the victims. Social media users shared first-hand information about violations of safety regulations experienced at their work place. The stories were picked up by the traditional media and in turn shaped the political agenda.

Journalists had already investigated labour conditions in supermarkets earlier in May, but there was no governmental reaction. An expert told journalists to no avail that he was warning

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22 Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*; Paletz, et al., *Business as Usual*.
23 Bukovskis and Sprūds, "Latvia," 2015.

24 Lippmann, *The Phantom Public*, 35.
25 Mžavanadze, "Sustainable development in Lithuania," 402.

the state authorities that the safety regulations needed to be improved. After the disaster, under the pressure of public opinion, an impartial non-governmental investigative commission was formed, however, the initiative was quickly overtaken by elite NGO activists who committed several blunders. Members of the commission were selected ignoring democratic procedures and their first proceeding was to request an inflated budget from the government. The commission had to resign thereafter discrediting the idea of civic participation in public governance.

Journalists also inhibited civic activity by discrediting grassroots activists. A social media campaign invited Riga residents to commemorate the victims in the front of the office of the company that constructed the unsafe roof. Media reports of the event invoked the threat of possible disorder. Journalists did not attend the event and relied on the police sources for their coverage. The news agencies BNS and LETA, the national news outlets Diena.lv and Delfi.lv quoted a police spokesperson implying that the civic initiative presented a threat to social order: "police are ready to [suppress] the non-authorized manifestation," "police vehicles drove to secure order," "police were on high alert," "police arrived to prevent the crowd from disorder."[26] Diena.lv implied that its journalist witnessed the event on the spot, but no participants were quoted. Only a journalist from public radio provided first-hand information airing interviews with people who explained their motives to commemorate the victims of the builders' negligence. Such moments cannot breed faith in the power of self-organization and do not suggest a facilitative role for news media in civic participation.

A much bigger challenge for the Latvian public came in 2008 with the economic crash, an event the country is still emerging from, yet the experience seems to have increased a sense of social isolation rather than solidarity among Latvians. Respondents in the SKDS survey affirmed that individuals feel alone in the face of socio-economic problems. They claimed that solutions can be

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26 BNS, "Pie būvkompānijas Re&Re"; Delfi.lv. "Pie Re&Re biroja."; Diena.lv. "Pie Re&Re ēkas."

found in thrift (70 percent); self-reliance (60 percent); personal change (46 percent); and saving money (37 percent). Tactics requiring social interaction were ranked as less important: cooperation with others for mutual aid (30 percent); improving public governance (17 percent); improving the quality of education (14 percent); exerting influence political decisions (10 percent). Urban residents, however, mention cooperation more often (46 percent) than the rural population (25 percent). Those less involved in everyday interaction with others rely less on sociability: 10 percent of farmers and 14 percent of self-employed respondents deemed cooperation important. Overall 30 percent of respondents believed organized cooperation was the key to overcoming a socio-economic crisis.

Semi-structured interviews with Latvian business people, a group that is usually highly invested in public policy and professional self-organization, indicated little faith in either media as a mechanism of democratic public communication or associations as a means of engagement in policy formation.

> "All these media are not free. They were bought or relatively bought, or they work for the government. For example [the public television newscast] Panorama or [commercial] TV3 News reflect only the opinion of [the governing party] *Vienotība*. Whereas newspapers reflect opinions of their respective parties only."

> "I would prefer to say that the debate in media is an effective [feedback], but in reality one should sponsor a political party or a newspaper seeking to change something."

> "Very many media outlets propagate one-sided opinions only, but they do not analyse the issues. Much more information I get from my Facebook account when I read opinions of those who are able to analyse [different sources of information]."

> "Sometimes the association's opinion cannot be communicated to the government because the members have not expressed their vision."

> "[Our professional association] has an experience. We had initiated a discussion but it resulted in nothing and will not result. With the state there is no dialogue."

"In general they [the government officials] get acquainted with your opinion but immediately they ignore it."

"People are convinced that nothing will change if they would have engaged in discussion. If a decision has been adopted it will be enforced."

"You can go and object, but you'll get it in the neck. More you'll object more inspections will come to control your enterprise."

Among the public at large, attitudes towards pluralism suggest there is little faith in a robust public sphere. Large percentages say that a group whose members hold many different opinions cannot exist for long. (Table 8) Strikingly, young people aged 18–24 exhibit little faith in pluralist democracy and civic participation at high rates: 45 percent say that citizens are incapable of self-organization and the state must take care of them; 53 percent say a strong leader is needed to take decisions; and 45 percent believe the state and media should be the guiding force in public opinion formation.

Table 8. *A group whose members hold many different opinions cannot exist for a long time.*
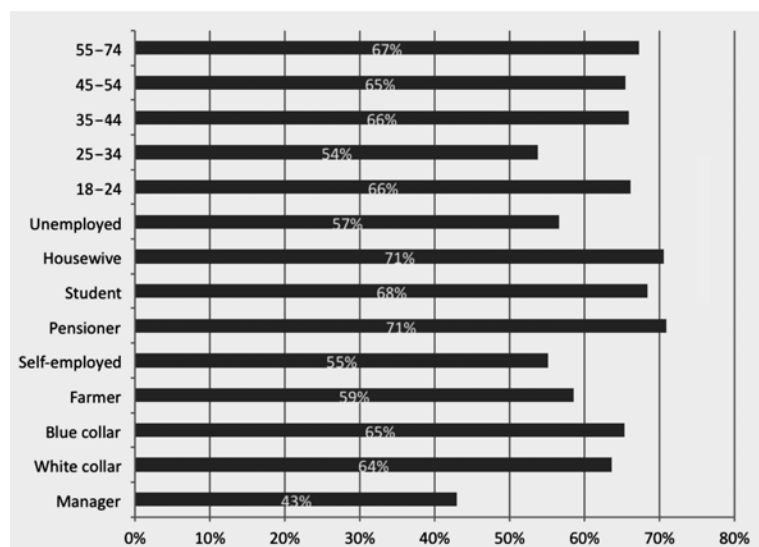
Source: SKDS, July 2014, n = 1002.

Conclusion

Is there something particular to the Latvian, Baltic or Soviet experience that helps explain this seeming malaise of democracy? While the transitologists' failed expectations for civil society in the former Soviet Union are often blamed on the legacy of communism, today's attitudes toward civic participation and public communication in the wake of the Great Recession, in some respects, actually resemble Latvia in the 1930s in the wake of the Great Depression, another traumatic experience in the whole Western World.[27] Historians argue that period in Latvia was characterized by political fragmentation, petty quarrels and failed compromise in parliament that developed a sense of public frustration and disgust with politics and democracy.[28] At the time, critics argued that social, economic and political paralysis caused selfish individualism. The remedy proposed was self-development and internal perfection mediated by culture.[29] A coup d'état by the nationalist Kārlis Ulmanis was then largely accepted by a public that sought salvation in state-directed group cohesion. "Nationalist intellectuals became infatuated with a utopian state of national culture, which led them to articulate and propagate pro-authoritarian political rhetoric even before the coup," maintains Ieva Zaķe.[30] Official propaganda represented the coup of 1934 as a solution to the failed social contract and a democracy that undervalued the traditional culture of organic community as the foundation of social harmony. The fall of communism rehabilitated this ethnocultural heritage and it is treated as the foundation of civic society enshrined in the constitution. Neglect of this pre-communist history is a general trend among scholars

27 Howard, *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-communist Europe*; King and McNabb, *Nation-building in the Baltic States*; Rose, *Understanding Post-communist Transformation*; Ruutsoo, *Civil Society and Nation Building in Estonia and the Baltic States*; Smolar, "Civil Society after Communism."

28 Bleiere, et al. *Latvijas vēsture. 20. Gadsimts*, 162; Dreifelds, *Latvia in Transition*, 34; Zaķe, *Nineteenth-Century Nationalism and Twentieth-Century Anti-democratic Ideals*.

29 Jurevičs, *Nacionālās dzīves problēmas*; Students, *Visparīgā pedagoģija*.

30 Zaķe, *ibid*, 85.

studying transition in Central Eastern European region, but there are political and economic parallels between then and now.[31] Another coup appears highly unlikely today, but a democracy without robust and independent civic participation is evident.

However, in the data there is also some evidence that independent civic participation can strengthen a sense of social responsibility and solidarity among individuals. When asked about the economic crisis, members of civic organizations felt more in league with their fellow citizens than those who did not belong. (Table 9) They saw their fate as equivalent to others. This suggests that even if Latvia now looks like a boring western country with disengaged citizens, democracy can be enlivened with participation. Such empowerment can only be made organized and effective through communication. Latvians, like others, have the communication equipment. They need, like others, a social foundation or conception of society that fosters self-organization for the fullest measure of citizen-driven democracy. Different modes of social organization and ideology may have consequences for civic life.

Laima Nevinskaitė argues that the shape of the public sphere in Lithuania has been characterized by socio-political conditions which in historical perspective have only rarely favored civic participation. The public sphere in the Soviet era was restricted by the state and its ideology of communism. She characterizes the current situation as constrained by commercialism which erodes the health of civil society in its own way.[32]

Further research may help determine the historical, political and philosophical legacies that contribute to the general patterns observed in this study, but in the case of Latvia, elite-directed communication and social action patterns pre-date the period of communism and Soviet occupation. It is clear that people still care about society, but they most often keep their social capital on the Internet or in the home where they can click "like" or hit a share button, rather than channeling it into direct action (and even this group is a minority). This experience is not unique to Latvia. Thus the popular British rock group Chumbawamba sing:

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[31] Petsinis, "Twenty Years After 1989," 301–319.
[32] Nevinckaitė, "On the public sphere."

Table 9. *Crisis has affected me and my family…*
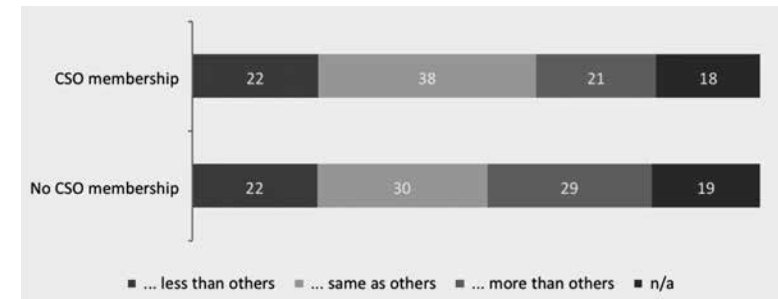
Source: SKDS, October 2013, n = 1000.

"Pass it along by word of mouse, save the world, don't leave the house." Then the question remains for Latvia, the Baltics states, and the Western World: What does weak civic participation portend? Predicting the future is hazardous, but illiberal tendencies evident in Europe and the U.S. have many people concerned.[33] It also stands to reason that if people do not use democracy they may possibly lose it. In order to maintain democracy in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia as with anywhere else, people must feel that their civic initiatives are welcome, that such involvement can help achieve benefits, and that there are public fora in which they can see and voice their concerns.

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[33] Basora, et al, *Does Democracy Matter?*

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Jurgis Baltrušaitis: Search for the Rules of Imagination

ODETA ŽUKAUSKIENĖ

Jurgis Baltrušaitis (1903–1988) – one of the most original of twentieth century art historians. Through his works he had publicized Lithuania's name in France during the years of Soviet occupation, and he is currently well known in various countries as the author of marvelously illustrated books. However, the works of this erudite scholar, whose importance does not seem to diminish with time, are still being discovered in Lithuania. I recall that when I started writing my dissertation in 2001 concerning his research on medieval art, his most important books still were not available in Lithuania's library catalogs. More than a decade after Lithuania had regained its independence, those books were still lying in foundations inaccessible to the general reader. Some of them could be read in the French Cultural Institute Library in Vilnius, but I needed to search for others in Paris. In spite of the articles by such authors as Algirdas Greimas, Algirdas Gaižutis, and Antanas Andrijauskas on Baltrušaitis' creative activities, which appeared during the early years of independence, the process of regaining the cultural memory and its realization took a long time. And even until recently, in spite of Baltrušaitis' great contributions to art and culture, it still is difficult to reclaim his legacy, to introduce it into the cultural history going beyond Lithuania's borders, recognizing his uniquely Lithuanian contributions into the fund of general knowledge, opening up common cultural universality.

ODETA ŽUKAUSKIENĖ is senior researcher at the Institute of Lithuanian Culture Research and associate professor of Vilnius Academy of Arts (Kaunas faculty).

While commemorating the hundred year anniversary of the reestablishment of Lithuania's independence, it is worth remembering that Baltrušaitis took part in the freedom fight's legal battles as the representative of Lithuania's diplomatic mission in Paris.[1] His diplomatic activities and professional achievements were little known at the time in occupied Lithuania, even though they were periodically highlighted in the Lithuanian newspaper of national thought "Dirva" which was published in the United States. Nevertheless, the bulk of his achievements was in the area of history of art forms and imagination which raised a challenge to Rationalism's dogmas and, of course, was a radical antithesis to the ideas of social realism which were dominant at the time behind the Iron Curtain.

It would be impossible to cover his entire biographical and creative journey in one article. Therefore I will attempt to present an overview of the works of Baltrušaitis from the current point of view stressing that which appears unique in his investigations and findings and that which meaningfully enriches cultural research. While commemorating the one hundred fifteenth anniversary of the birth of this famous art historian, it is worth to recall his unique philosophical thought, his sense of moral responsibility to world culture and to the world of imagination, where the mysterious worldview of mankind and indications of its metaphysical meanings unfold.

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In general, one could say that similarly to the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges, Baltrušaitis, while living as an exile in Paris, walked along the mysterious border between reality and fantasy, sanity and madness, logic and absurdity. While creating an index of his unique imagination, he studied imaginary beings, apparitions and mirages which cross a fateful threshold. He

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[1] He was advisor to the Lithuanian Embassy in Paris since 1951, deputy representative of Lithuanian diplomacy in Paris during 1960–1965, and eventually representative despite his conflict with Stasys Lozoraitis.

Jurgis BALTRUŠAITIS
Self-portrait

sought to explain the principles of creativity which register in the mental space, carry out various deformations, create illusions and paradoxically and ambiguously force themselves onto reality.

Fantasy's pretensions, the world of monsters, and distorted perspectives – all of which appeared to him natural and in a way logical, human, and existentially necessary. And Borges agrees with him:

> The notion of a dragon contains in itself something which is familiar to the human imagination, therefore dragons are found in different localities and in different time periods. It is, to tell the truth, a real and not a temporary or accidental monster.[2]

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[2] "There is something in the image of the dragon that is congenial to man's imagination, and thus the dragon arises at many latitudes and ages. It is, one might say, a necessary monster, and not some ephemeral and casual creature." Borges, *The Book of Imaginary Beings,* p. xii.

Inspired by the philosophical ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche, Baltrušaitis believed in the Dionysian spirit hidden in the imagination, which becomes expressed in the most universal forms which have their own particular geometry. Obsessed by the idea of the eternal return, he studied the constant formation of scenes and mental images, repetitiveness, anachronisms. He demonstrated that even an imagination of the insane follows laws which turn in an enchanted circle.

Gilles Deleuze, who appreciated Baltrušaitis' ideas, recommended the reading, viewing and listening to Nietzsche's work *Thus Spoke Zaratrusta* (Baltrušaitis' favorite) as an example of modern day operatic creation.[3] One can also look at the sum of Baltrušaitis' works as at a theatrical spectacle, where the impressive scenes are performed by unbelievable characters which had been left in the wings of rational art history.

While developing his own unique style, the interaction between words and scenes, Baltrušaitis developed a keen ear for the imaginary. He filled notebooks with manuscripts while constantly sketching, creating unusual sketchbooks. His sketches preserved in a private archive[4] attest to many years of devoted and passionate work, full of moments of creative flight.

However, let us glance more attentively at his scholarly works, and uncover several more important facts and contexts related to the objects of his research and to his stylistic features.

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The direction of his interest in the art forms and his original views were determined by several circumstances. He was raised in an intellectual atmosphere in Moscow, surrounded by his father, the famous poet and diplomat Jurgis Baltrušaitis (1873–1944) and by friends who were famous artists, writers, theater directors. In addition, he was tutored at home by the future Nobel laureate Boris Pasternak, while his music teacher was the family friend

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[3] Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. xiii.
[4] The archive is being kept in his son's Jena Baltrušaitis' home in Paris.

and composer Aleksander Skriabin. Having obtained a superior education in Moscow, Baltrušaitis became fascinated by the new ideas in the theater, modern scenography, the works of the directors Vsevolod Mejerhold and Gordon Craig, who were family friends, and also in the ideas found in Constructivism.

He went to Paris with this baggage of knowledge and abilities intending to study the art of scenography. However, a chance meeting with the art historian Henri Foccillon in 1924 induced him to study medieval art, because at that time scenography was not offered as an area of study at the Sorbonne. Focillon became not only his teacher, but also his father-in-law with whom he collaborated in the Art History Institute founded in 1927 at the Sorbonne. Eventually Baltrušaitis reworked the more formal and academic perspectives obtained from his teacher into his own structuralistic method which unveiled not only the artistic forms, but also the logic of unaccustomed visions and images.

Having chosen art history as his area of interest, Baltrušaitis started his research which is surprising not only by its direction and opinions, but also by his findings and conclusions. His first research areas not surprisingly were connected with the cultures of South Caucasus. In order to understand their meaning, it is necessary to make a small excursion into the intellectual context of that period.

Henri Focillon (1881–1943) as a representative of Aesthetic Formalism and being an art history professor at the Sorbonne attracted students to Paris from various countries and encouraged them to study the art of the Middle Ages of the West, while directing their attention to a concrete area. In this way he was attempting to take a fresh look at Western Christian civilization and the sources of Western art. At the time, the subject of European identity was debated as well as the origins of medieval art and its cultural influences. Thus this collective research was intended to contribute to the discussions, which were widespread. In 1922 the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation was founded, a UNESCO predecessor. Being aware of Baltrušaitis' father's connections, Focillon encouraged him to explore the

Christian Caucasus, since Western scholars were not permitted at the time to travel to Armenia and Georgia after they became Soviet Republics in 1922. The role and contributions of South Caucasus to Western culture had intrigued medievalists since the time that the Austrian art historian of Polish heritage, Josef Strzygowski (1861–1941) had published works which pointed to the influences played by the Middle East and ancient Iran. Having travelled throughout Turkey, Armenia, and Egypt, Strzygowski was the first to point out that the Christian art which arose on the plateaus of Armenia and Georgia was significant to the history of medieval art.[5]

Baltrušaitis attempted to check the hypotheses raised by Strzygowski, which the latter had not had the time to substantiate. Thus the originality of the young art critic's understanding became apparent in his first scholarly work on the art of Armenia and Georgia,[6] and, without reservation, lifted the silence surrounding the art of the Caucasus. Because of opportunities which arose because of his father's diplomatic connections, Baltrušaitis went on two expeditions (1927 and 1928), during which he accumulated many photographs and sketches depicting local architectural and sculptural monuments with distinctive themes and ornamentations. In this way he introduced the West to the Christian countries of Asia, drawing attention to the unusually rich culture of Armenia which had suffered a horrific genocide in 1915 at the hands of the Turks.

In his earliest books, he shed light on the influences of Persian art of the Sasanian epoch in the Caucasus area, and the road of several motifs to the West. In his opinion,

> Persia of the Sasanian period was one of the schools in which rules for deformation and decomposition that were established formed the ornamental dialectic between the real and the abstract, between whim and rigor.[7]

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[5] See, Strzygowski, *Die Baunkunst der Armenier und Europa*, 1918.
[6] Baltrušaitis, *Études sur l'art médiéval en Géorgie et en Arménie*, 1929.
[7] Donabedian, "Jurgio Baltrušaičio įnašas į krikščioniškojo Kaukazo tyrinėjimus", 158.
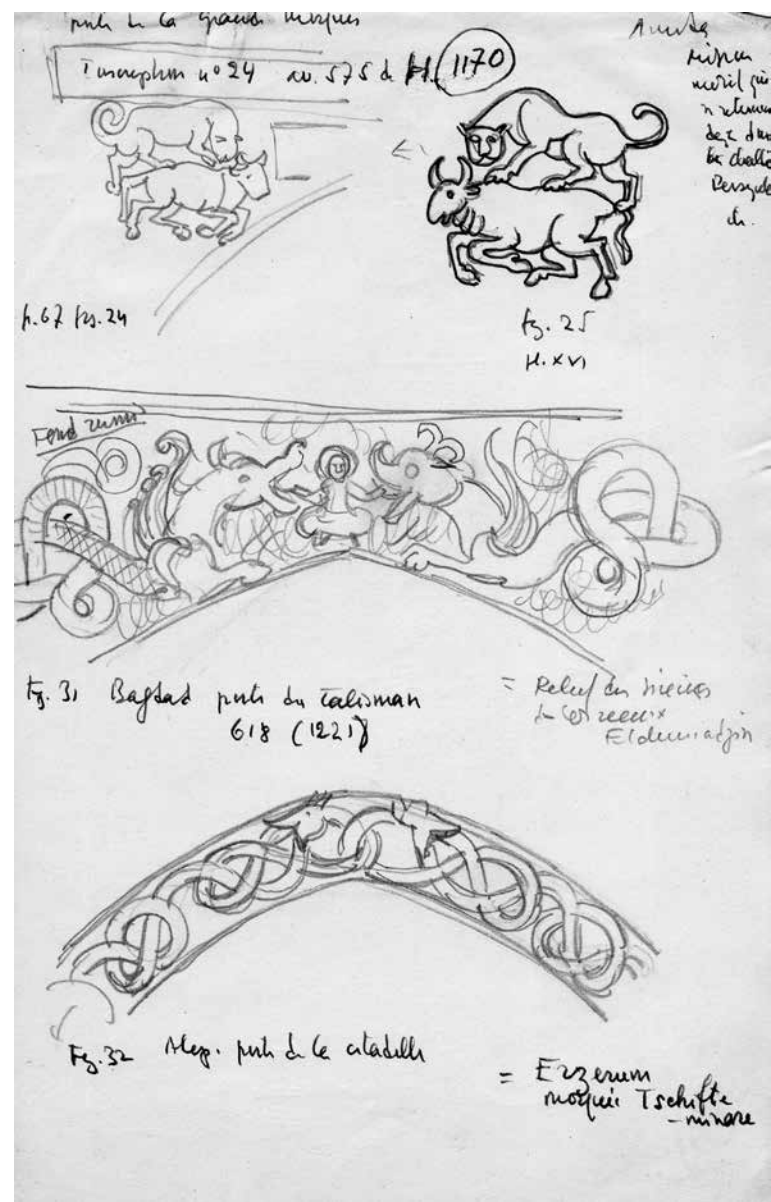
Manuscript of Jurgis BALTRUŠAITIS. *Armenian and Sumerian Motifs*

According to him, that sort of dialectic is also applicable to Romanesque sculpture[8]: figures are transposed into abstract architectural and ornamental forms, which create imaginary story lines, a world of oddities and monsters.

In the study *Art sumérien, art roman* (Sumerian Art, Romanesque Art, 1934), Baltrušaitis was searching for the deep sources which also nourished the Christian art of the Caucasus and the Romanesque art. He wrote:

> The Romanesque sculptor is fascinated by whatever is unusual and unbelievable. He observes and collects the strangest exoticisms. His world is filled with nightmares and visions in which various monsters come to life and become engaged without let up in fierce battles. Overcome by his strange musings, the creator of Romanesque art passes everything through the prism of legends and the imaginary world. Chimera and a human are to him the same sort of reality. They are paradoxically united. He attributes a monster's characteristics to a human and vice versa. The figures of man and beast are linked in the poetics of monsters and supernaturals.[9]

The poetical relationship with Sumerian art he explained as:

> The Romanesque and Sumerian monsters follow the same rules, their relationship is determined not by the themes, but by the similarities in the creative techniques. < …> In other words, the comparison reveals that the ornamental dialectics which had created the Romanesque bestiary is as characteristic to Sumerian art as it is to creations which emerged from it. It is the essential organizing principle.[10]

Baltrušaitis was interested in the essence of the ornamentation, the geometric abstraction, which lends deformation to the depicted figures, distorts them, creates legends and stories full of strange beings. This can be observed even in drawings of the

Drawings of Jurgis BALTRUŠAITIS. *Details of Romanesque architecture, France*

romanesque cities as characters are incorporated as ornamental forms and as the abstract architectural plane becomes an unbelievable creation. It is more complicated to observe this ornamental dialectical tension in photographs, therefore Baltrušaitis not only photographed but also sketched his subjects. On different sheets and in his notes he clarified the structure of the composition and the transformation of the characters. The pictures were the basis not only for his historical interpretations, but also for deeper philosophical consideration.

As George Dumezil, the researcher of Indo-European mythology, so also Baltrušaitis worked on developing comparative research not only in the areas of the heritage of spoken or written language, but also in the domain of forms. By about the same time,

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[8] Baltrušaitis, *La stylistique ornementale dans la sculpture romane*, 1931.
[9] Baltrušaitis, "Art sumérien – art roman", 179.
[10] Ibid., 184.

Dumezil was exploring the folklore and the mythical worldview of North Caucasus which had inherited the rich epic tradition from the Scythians and Sarmatians of northern Iran. This shared interest which many times had brought the two researchers together in life, encouraged Baltrušaitis to further explore the formation of the most abstract of forms, which not only embody the concrete mythical tales, but also express the most universal relationships.

Moreover, without discontinuing his expanding research in Paris, Baltrušaitis also was teaching art history at the Vytautas Magnus University during the 1932–1939 years. Moral imperative and a sense of duty to the Lithuanian culture was likewise reflected in his preparations for the Lithuanian folk art exposition in 1935 in Paris where an exhibit of folk art of the Baltic States took place at the Trocadero Ethnographic Museum. His interest in folk culture did not fade and later in 1948 his book *Lithuanian Folk Art* was published in Munich. This book published by T.J. Vizgirda was the third volume of a series *Lithuania Country and Nation* and funded by VLIK (The Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania) information services. It is interesting that Lithuanian folk art here is being examined through the prism of French art criticism (Focillon's "life of forms" theory). In addition, it is important because the evolution of Lithuanian folk art is shown as bound up with the history of Christian Europe. Baltrušaitis shows that Europe's cultural genealogy is very varied. Although the art forms were developing far from history's mainstream, in the vitality of Lithuanian folk sculpture and ornamentation, the sharp eye of the art historian finds not only images characteristic of Western European medieval art, of Baroque and Classical forms, but also Asian decorations and geometric form motifs from the East. These comparisons were important in seeking to inscribe Lithuanian folk art onto Europe's as well as the world's artistic cultural map.

It would also be worth noting that Focillon, during French and American institutional exchanges, taught at Yale University as a visiting professor starting in 1933, and finally immigrated to the U.S. before the war and died in New Haven in 1943. While
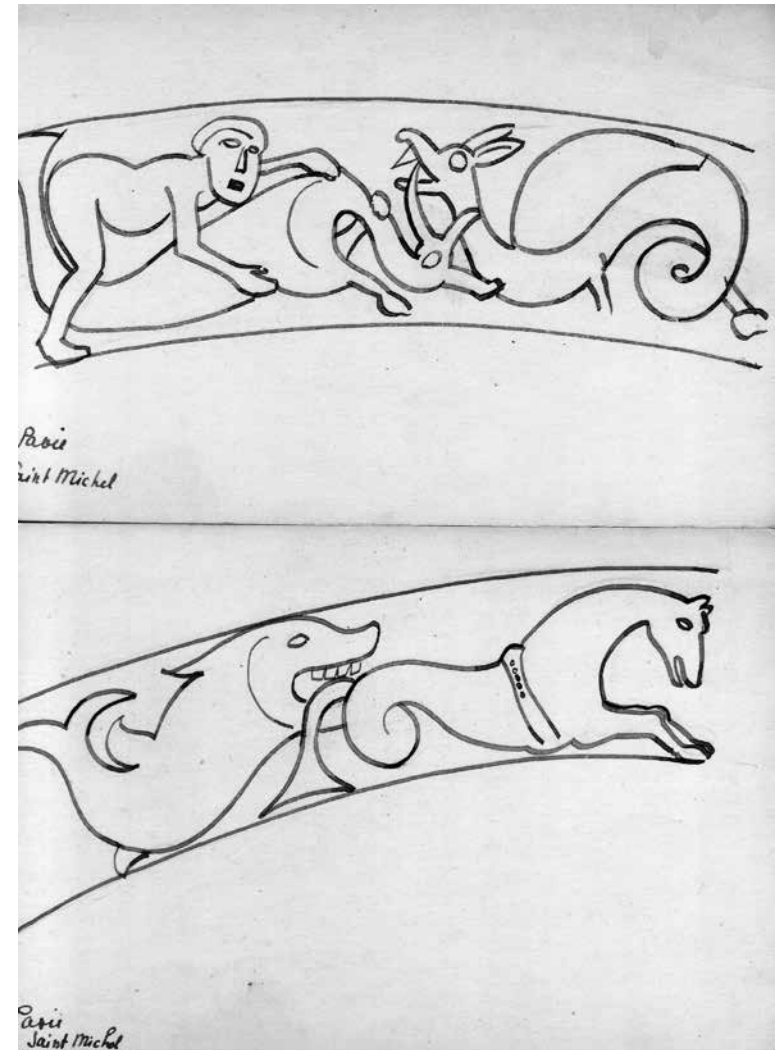
Drawings of Jurgis BALTRUŠAITIS. *Motifs of Romanesque sculpture, Italy*

in America, Focillon conducted studies on Medieval art; Baltrušaitis was also invited to deliver lectures at Yale, Washington, Harvard, and Columbia Universities and at the Dombarton Oaks Center. However, while representing the University at Kaunas,

he never became firmly established in any of Western European or American institutions and remained an independent researcher, spreading his very original findings regarding the world of imagination.

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What inspired Baltrušaitis' passionate interest in these fantastic motifs? Perhaps an unconscious influence to his creativity came from his father who had a tendency toward mysticism, or the symbolistic ideas acquired in youth, the ideas of theater reformers regarding the concepts of mask and marionette in the theater, or the power of conditional theatrical scenery. Of course, his inclinations were strengthened by the fantastic creatures and ornamental fads which were uncovered during the Romanesque epoch that connected with his tendencies to abstract thought. Still, according to Jean-François Chevrier,[11] who knew Baltrušaitis intimately, the characteristic surreal worldview mainly flowed from his very unique emotional attitude which in essence was quite different from the dominant Surrealism in Western culture.

In the manuscripts of the author of *Le Moyen Âge fantastique*[12] (The Fantastic Middle Ages), an unbelievable imaginary world opens up encompassing the lengthy time span from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century. Carefully selected and copied images in Baltrušaitis' notes and in his book reel off as if frames in a movie. The monsters from antiquity, and visions from the Far East come to life. Surrealistic and grotesque forms or refined macabre forms create wonder. Are there any predictable rules inherent to this wondrous world? Yes, maintains Baltrušaitis.

The carefully selected illustrations indicate that during the anxiety-filled period toward the end of the Middle Ages, a two-directional movement becomes intensified. First, there appears a revival and reestablishment in the cultural subconscious,

of creatures found in stories and drawings from antiquity, (such as "walking heads," monsters living in sea shells, half-human, half-animal) which later reveal themselves in the paintings of Bosch. Phantasmagoric and folkloric fantasies born in the margins of Gothic manuscripts reappear in Flemish paintings. This reawakening of strange forms encourages another movement – the influx of Eastern images and ideas and their experiences into the West.

Europe discovered the East during the Middle Ages: during the times of the Crusades, royal emissaries and missionaries, having returned from Mongolia, China and other countries, circulated stories about their travels. Reality became entwined with imagination, which was furthered by the Turkish invasions of Europe bringing with them depictions of devils and other demons. Stories of monsters and imaginary scenes encompass the collective imaginary world, and naturally connect symbolic spaces marked by historical tendencies, threat, fear, dreams, faith.

In Baltrušaitis' books we observe how the West, frightened by the Mongol Empire, discovers Asia. The exoticisms of the Far East flow into the Gothic age. However, China is seen as the Kingdom of the Night: full of monsters, dragons, demons and devils with bat wings which make their way into depictions of Western Hell. Upon closer acquaintance with China, even anthropomorphic mountain views appear in pictures. The sainthood of St. Anthony in Bosch's creations is put on trial by visions of Buddhist temptations. Macabre dance depictions appear as well, brought by Franciscans who had observed thirteenth century Lama ceremonies in Peking or Tibet.

Following Humanism's path, the Gothic period did not give up the fantastic, frightening visions from the East. The fantastic cycles were reworked and renewed constantly and the monsters flood into the historians' so called "no monsters' land."

These metamorphoses which were in conflict with the predominant Gothic path bent on humanism, according to Baltrušaitis, were not letting up. The scenes of the Apocalypse and Hell which were depicted in the Psalters were being recreated in the

[11]   Chevrier, *Portrait de Jurgis Baltrušaitis*, 1989.
[12]   Two books were published: *Le Moyen Age fantastique*: *antiquités et exotismes dans l'art gothique*, 1955; *Réveils et Prodiges. Le gothique fantastique*, 1960.

works of Dürer and Van Eyck. The characters found in the margins of Gothic texts were being revived in the imaginations of Bosch and his acolytes. Occult thought inspired new life into the unusual characters. Odd mixtures, half-man, half-animal travel the path of the cultural imagination.

Gothic visions rise up from imagination's structures, which complement reality with aberrations. Thus one can find a woman depicted with horse's hoofs, a man with a crane's neck, St. John's eagle with three heads, and eyes on a stomach. Such images become battle implements in Reformation's cause, making fun of Maximillian I's policies. Visions become actualized. Monsters whose roots lie deep in the past return to provoke the new surroundings. They stand in the new battle against coercion and ideology.

And those monster battles recall in a strange way the experiences of the investigator in his time period. Algirdas Julius Greimas summarizes nicely the creative search efforts of the art historian:

> As an art historian, Jurgis Baltrušaitis speaks about epochs left behind in the deep past, about man's mental ravings during the Medieval or Classical periods, about European art which feeds on the monsters from the Far East, the boundless flora and fauna of the ancient times. Nonetheless, his concerns are relevant: it is our epoch's unease, it is our generation's desire to understand ourselves.[13]

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Having uncovered the colorful face of the Middle Ages, Baltrušaitis also revealed the "opposite" side of the depiction of culture and perspective during the Renaissance. He unmasked the two-sidedness of perspective, writing: "the history of perspective – not only the history of artistic realism, but also a history of visual impressions".[14] So during his sixth decade, he started his

intended four book series on deviated perspectives (*les perspectives dépravées*). As a matter of fact, he was the first to unravel the history of anamorphic forms. Examining the texts on science, philosophy, and magic, he enjoyed the old books and carefully collected visual material: copying illustrations from primary sources, reproducing the engravings and picture compositions.

Baltrušaitis' interest in anamorphic forms was encouraged by the works of the surrealists and their interest in the anamorphic scenes. While in the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1936, he visited Alfred Barr's exhibit entitled *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, where in addition to surrealistic work there was also Erhard Schön's anamorphic engravings and works of an unknown artist from the collection of Jacques Lipchitz. From that point onward, the art historian became fascinated with optical treatises and immersed himself in research on geometric illusions.

Master of anamorphosis – that is how the French press called the art historian who revealed how strangeness and the miraculous force their way into the study of perspective which is based on strict and rational methods. Here one finds not only the spirit of realism, but also optical magic, depicted variously as seen in the creations of Leonardo da Vinci, Erhard Schön, Albrecht Dürer, Hans Holbein, and others. The redundant metamorphoses of the sixteenth century find their way into the Renaissance cabinets, evolve in Baroque surroundings, are revived in the works of surrealists and sneak into current culture depicting alternative attitudes and swerves from the norm.

Anamorphosis, the idea which arose in the seventeenth century, refers to distorted perspective, which when viewed from a certain angle assumes the correct form. It is a well-planned and mathematically correct distortion of perspective which envelops the view with illusion. The images which are stretched or expanded play with the visual sense, underscoring the dependence on the viewpoint. "Stereo-vision" deformity, viewed from a different angle, becomes the correct view. At first, the view appears abstract, deformed, and later, looking differently or looking at

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[13] Greimas, "Sutiktuvės, kurių nereikėtų minėti", 234.
[14] Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphoses ou Thaumaturgus opticus*, 13.

the reflection in a mirror it becomes more concrete, revived. Or in another depiction there are other hidden ones, multilayered encoding story lines depending on how you are viewing the picture (such principles are characteristically found in the works of Giuseppe Arcimboldo and his followers).

Baltrušaitis reveals that some of the principles of image distortion were created in the West and were taken with pride to the Far East. Others hold that they were found in Peking and later spread to the West. Some of the anamorphoses create fantasy images, carry out transcendental movement, others underscore the fictitious nature of the scene and of the viewed reality, the power of sight and illusion. Or simply that they may be a playful diversion meant for curious observers or simply for the joy of discovery.

Seventeenth century – the golden age of catoptrics noted for its research on illusion and treatises on perspective. In his book *Thaumaturgus Opticus*, the French mathematician and master of anamorphoses, Jean-François Niceron (1613–1646), calls perspective the "magic illusion" which is able to produce the strangest effects: animate objects and visually create unbelievable worlds. Niceron leans on the theory of magic that the German scientist Cornelius Agrippa (1486–1535) laid out in the treatise *Occulta Philosophia* (1531): perspective is described as the automatic and mechanical wellspring of deception and illusion which produces change and movement of the figures. The sixteenth and seventeenth century experiments in geometry and optics raise questions about the nature and power of illusion. Theoretical musings were reflected in book illustrations and in the experimentations of artists. Geometric anamorphoses as a visionary mechanism became widespread. It expressed the principle of doubt, the *vanitas vanitatum* motive: it arose in this manner in Hans Holbein's "The Ambassadors" (1533). And finally in the nineteenth century, the so-called "pictures with riddles" (German *Vexierbild)* became the lively entertainment. The anamorphoses which were reborn in the works of surrealists continued as an attractive and intriguing creative principle.

Therefore

> through the ages, the visionaries were intrigued by one view fantastically turning into another. When a view becomes clear in the mirror, that is, a correct figure emerges from the chaos, it may appear that something supernatural is taking place. Figures emerge not from a flat plane, but an endless depth (which is found), in the reflection. The picture becomes alive. It moves, depending on the eye movements. It moves into the realm of magic, in which anything is both nonexistent and existing.[15]

The play of optical illusion encourages reflection on the nature of reality and art connected to visions and creative magic, which strives notably to fool the viewer, but also to force him to see that which is invisible, to observe more attentively, see from a different point, to match up several perspectives. That is why it is not surprising that anamorphosis has become the prop of postmodern philosophers, writers, and artists who are considering the illusionary nature of the visible world.

In truth, Baltrušaitis created a large wave of popularity for anamorphosis. Several exhibitions based on his book *The Anamorfosen, spel met perspectief* were held in the Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum in 1975, and in 1976 in the *Musée de Arts Décoratifs* in Paris. The catalogue was prepared by Fred Leeman with the introduction written by Baltrušaitis who also had contributed a lot of material to the organizers. Later the exhibit traveled throughout the United States (1976–1978) attracting large crowds of visitors. However, in the Boston, Brooklyn, Cleveland, Chicago, Washington, and Atlanta museums, there were no references to Baltrušaitis' research in the exhibit notes, the catalogue, or in Fred Leeman's book, *Hidden Images: Games of Perception, Anamorphic Art, Illusion from the Renaissance to the Present* (1976) and later Leeman was accused of plagiarism. It was an unfortunate incident because Baltrušaitis' book *Anamorphic Art (1977)* came out in English the year after the pirated work. Nonetheless Balt-

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15   Ibid., 199.

rušaitis' book was translated into many languages and remains one of the most important sources on anamorphic research.

Aberrations (1957)[16] continued the history of visions. Looking at the world through the eyes of imagination, which distorts reality, it becomes possible to see things where they should not be occurring. Such visions present deceptive illusions distinctively broadening reality. Throughout the history of mankind, waves of aberrations bind together mythical knowledge with reality scenes, revealing the truth of legends. The power of paradoxes is stressed. It forces one to see more. That is why "metaphysical truths are aberration truths" — Baltrušaitis had often repeated.

It is a book about imagination and appearances which science has already unraveled, but which are reborn awakening an entire world of cultural imaginations. According to Baltrušaitis, aberrations are the positive wanderings of the glance and thought which lead down poetical paths, paradoxically entwined with the study of natural sciences. One of the impressive aberrations – identifying man with other living creatures, having arisen from myths and legends and developed into actual physiognomy and unbelievable theories found a response in the works of artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Rubens, Titian, Charles Le Bruno, Ingres J.J. Grandville, as well as the writers J. G. Lavater, Goethe and Balzac. The joining of man and beast, the history of its hybridization is very attractively reflected in the Baltrušaitis' collected illustrations as well as in his own sketches: the scroll of the images indicates how systematic was the search in man's appearance and spirit for signs of the mysterious bestiality.

He was likewise interested in the poetic aberrations found in parks. Fantastic gardens[17] became an object of study for Baltrušaitis. He enjoyed illusionary landscapes, the depictions of the Gar-den of Eden, strangely represented in the culture of park landscapes. It seems that in the eighteenth century enchanting visual perspectives opened up in the parks: Chinese pagodas, Egyptian pyramids and obelisks, Spanish Alhambra palaces, arcades from antiquity and gothic temples appeared. "Gardens linking different countries, as if from a cabinet containing a collection of oddities, became a *Kuns-und Wunderkammern* in an open field."[18] And not only structures, but also the vegetation, grottos and ponds created illusionary landscapes, "a microcosm, the Earthly Paradise, in which nature surrounds with fairy-tale atmosphere and with the spirit of the Orient."[19]

Baltrušaitis revealed that there is something both general and unusual in aberrations. Man is searching for truth in deceit, in illusions, in lost places. Flights of imagination make man creative, deep. Man's nature in itself is not logical, therefore illogical aberrations become a positive part of recognizing the whole of human nature.

Bringing attention to the consistency in his research, Baltrušaitis had this to say about his book *La quête d'Isis*[20] (Searching for Isis,1967):

> Somehow naturally spontaneously I become interested in deformations, distortions, because the topic of illusions always leads beyond our reality horizon. In the book *Searching for Isis*, I studied the legend which distorted, changed, then renewed the primary myth. This legend started to form when the historic Egypt disappeared and successfully survived until Jean Francois Champollion's discovery. Scientific research and decoding of the hieroglyphics encouraged its rebirth. It seems that then the entire world became "Egyptized". Even Paris became associated with Isis: with these findings as background, the Church of San Germain de Pres became known as the Isis Shrine; the Blessed Virgin became identified with Isis, while the name of the city of Paris was explained as derived from *Para-Isis*. Total insanity.

16 Baltrušaitis, *Aberrations. Quatre essais sur la légende des formes*, 1957.
17 Baltrušaitis, Jardins en France, 1760–1820. Pays d'illusion, terre d'expériences, Paris, Hotel de Sully, 1977.

18 Baltrušaitis, *Aberrations. Essai sur la légende des formes*, 122.
19 Ibid., 153.
20 Baltrušaitis, *La Quête d'Isis. Introduction à l'Égyptomanie*, 1967.

During the revolutionary period, Egyptomania was bantered about as an anti-religious movement that explained the common basis of all religious cults. In this manner, the religion of the Egyptians became a symbol of a peculiar renewal and of philosophical freedom.[21]

The final book *Le Miroir*[22] (The Mirror, 1978) concentrates on the false paths of mythical and scientific thought. It is a work of unusual erudition, leading down confusing labyrinths of scientific, philosophical and creative visions. Starting with the words of Rainer Maria Rilke: "Mirrors, no one has yet deciphered you, wherein lies your essence…",[23] the book explores the distorted and distorting, demonic and visionary history of mirrors which includes both the areas of rational science and of creative visions. Cosmographical symbols appear in the illustrations of ancient cultures, optical experiments with the cabinets of curiosities, dramatic metaphors of the beyond and the in-between, phantoms and simulacrum. *Reflexio* (Latin for reflexion) turns the attention to the depths of consciousness. As much as artistic creativity captures the magical power of distorted mirrors, so scientific creativity damages the fragile border between reality and fantasy which becomes completely wiped out in the current age of satellite communications.

From Archimedes to Buffon, from *catoptric treatises* to the collectors of present day solar power, mirrors help to bring unbelievable ideas into reality. In Baltrušaitis' view, two of the Seven Wonders of the World (the Lighthouse of Alexandria and the Colossus at Rhodes) are the predecessors of current day telescopes. Newton's apparatus which predicted the future was also connected to fantastic reflections. The magical mirror of Pythogorus which sent strange rays to the moon – that was like an anticipation of satellite communications.

In literature and in art, man's strangest metamorphoses begin with mirrors, reviving the sources of stories and legends. It is a window into the beyond, a spring of fantasies. Distorted, two-faced worlds being revealed through the metaphors of reflection, which find themselves under the gaze of philosophers and other erudites.

* * *

The research of Jurgis Baltrušaitis is unique in that it not only concentrates on deformations, fantastical forms, visual wanderings, but also because of his visual observation method. The archives of this art historian reveal that while writing, he was also continually drawing. And those sketches and drawings demonstrate the amazing surgery of the perspective and view, where with a few strokes the art historian cuts out forms and figures. He carefully picks out and reveals strange and, until then, quite unnoticed and unstudied motifs, stunning images, whose sequences provide alternative narratives.

The exhibit *Jurgio Baltrušaičio rankraščiai: visiems ir niekam* (Jurgis Baltrušaitis' Manuscripts: For All and None, 2016–2017)[24] attempted to demonstrate this alternative side of scientific creativity not observed by the reader. The title is in reference to his favorite philosopher's work, Nietzsche, as well as to the fact that there is a great shortage of his books which had been translated into Lithuanian, which would have helped to get to know him better.

Baltrušaitis filled many notebooks and blank sheets of paper with his sketches and drawings. He was extremely technical while studying the life of forms and of imaginary worlds. Through his drawings, he attempted to explain the distortion and invention of forms which were very important for the imagination, and also to highlight characters, players, expressions, the

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[21] Baltrušaitis, "Apie deformacijų galią ir tyrinėjimų aistrą", 25.
[22] Baltrušaitis, *Le Miroir: révélations, science-fiction et fallacies*, 1978.
[23] "Spiegel: noch nie hat man wissend beschrieben was ihr in euren wessen seid." Rainer Maria Rilke, Duino Elegies and the Sonnets to Orpheus, 143.

[24] The exhibition was held in National Art Gallery and curated by Odeta Žukauskienė and assisted by Gintaras Didžpetris.

processes of influences and exchanges, which had been unjustly left by the wayside in art history. It is as though his amazing manuscripts and his visual method give rise to deeper scientific creativity. Creativity? Yes. Because individuality emerges and it becomes clear that everything was done from inner urgings and with inspiration while pondering in an unfettered and playful manner.

While summarizing the panoramic picture which was presented, it should be noted that the theoretical thoughts of Baltrušaitis have remained in the cultural subtext. It should not be surprising that in the world of "pure" art history, he is often criticized, but also paradoxically admired by philosophers, philologists, psychoanalysts, psychologists, and artists. Perhaps because he had drifted further afield from the objectives which the art historians had set for themselves. He confounded the truths in art history, revealing an unexpected side of objects. Maybe that is why Baltrušaitis appears to be so current. His creative works are sort of like an invisible labyrinth or a Tsui Pen garden with branching paths (as in the story by Borges)[25] leading through confusing paths of fiction and legends which open up previously unseen realities.

He was a Lithuanian with the character of a žemaitis (Samogitian), who was born in Moscow and died in Paris. He had dedicated himself to science, the joy of discovery and solitude. He was interested in the culture of Europe and of the entire world. While publishing his French books, he stressed his Lithuanian origins. He refused to accept French citizenship. His playful, deep philosophical thoughts in the era of a technological and rational worldview seem more relevant now as never before, revealing the depth of complicated structures of the imagination which determines the constant rebirth and transformations of monsters and other imaginary beings.

[25]   Jorge Luis Borges, "The Garden of Forking Paths", translated by Antholny Boucher, *Ellery Queen's Mystery magazine*, 12(57), August 1948, 102–110.

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Translated by
BIRUTĖ PENKIŪNAS-TAUTVYDAS

The Legacy of Lithuanian Baroque Architecture*

ALMANTAS SAMALAVIČIUS

Introduction

In contrast to architectural styles that dominated in Lithuania earlier in its history (for example, Gothic that came from France through Germany), art and architecture of Baroque that originated in the artistic circles of Rome in between the pontificates of Sixtus V and Paul V, reached the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania directly from Italy without any mediating cultures in between. The impact of Baroque on Lithuanian architecture was profound. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a number of profound edifices – Catholic churches, palaces and manor houses were erected throughout the country. Lithuanian baroque architecture acquired its own peculiar features, especially in Vilnius – the capital city of the Grand Duchy where Baroque buildings contributed to shaping its visual character and are still traceable nowadays despite numerous destructions and other historical cataclysms. Despite numerous destructions – wars, fires, etc., and transformations of Baroque architectural structures – most of these occurred during the period of Russian imperial colonization when some Catholic churches were redesigned into the Orthodox ones and eventually during the Soviet occupation when such buildings were destined to become warehouses or parts of army barracks – the footprints of Baroque are still visible in contemporary Lithuanian cities and are visual testimonies of the European urban culture of the region.

The Ascent of Lithuanian Baroque and Its Historical Context

Certain peculiarities of Lithuanian Baroque architecture were due to specific historical events that had an influence on the whole eastern European region. Some parallels with Italy – the place of origin of Baroque art style are also evident. In the same way Italy felt a need for grand-scale reconstructions after the disasters of 1527 and 1530, Lithuanian culture needed new artistic impulses and a flow of energy during the seventeenth century and especially its second half, when the turbulent wars with Muscovy and Sweden left the country devastated. During the reign of John Casimir (1648–1668), the wars with two powerful neighbors – Russia and Sweden broke out. The first one – and the most devastating one, was provoked by the policy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in Ukraine where hetman of Cossacks Bohdan Chmielnitski rose up against the Commonwealth, and the mutiny of Ukrainian Cossacks finally developed into a war with Muscovy that broke out in 1654 and lasted some thirteen years. This particular war hit the Grand Duchy especially hard: its army suffered several defeats, and the Russian army moved as far as to threaten Vilnius. Small Lithuanian forces (some 5 thousand men) led by the grand hetman Janusz Radziwil were unable to offer effective resistance to a far larger number of Russian troops and so retreated to Kėdainiai leaving Vilnius to the enemy. This was the first time in the history of Lithuania when its capital city fell to an alien army, and the consequences of this loss were devastating. Vilnius remained in the hands of Russian troops for several years and during this period it suffered enormously: the buildings were sacked and a large number of city dwellers perished. After a peace treaty with Sweden was signed in 1660, The Grand Duchy of Lithuania could breathe more easily and concentrate on its eastern neighbor. As soon as Lithuanian forces gained the upper hand, the Russian army was forced to retreat. Lithuania finally had the chance of taking back its capital Vilnius. The historian Dr. Stasys Samala-

vičius has vividly described this important episode amidst military turbulences of the seventeenth century in his *Outline of Lithuanian History*:

> In Vilnius, the Russia garrison was severed from the retreating troops and at the end of 1660 the city was finally besieged. However, it took the Lithuanian army pretty long to liberate the city and to crush the strong defense of the Russian garrison, led by the commanding officer Danila Mishetsky. In the summer of the next year fresh military forces were sent into action to recapture the city. The commander of the Lithuanian troops was Michael Casimir Pac who directed a new attack on the besieged Russian garrison. At first the Russians built up their defense along the city wall which had been erected in the early sixteenth century and was a formidable defensive wall all around the city. The remaining Russian troops were forced to retreat, and they barricaded themselves in the strong Vilnius castle. The Russian garrison rejected an offer to surrender as the terms of surrender had not been agreed upon. Then an order was given to take the castle by storm. Although the Russian had no hope of withstanding the mighty attacks by the *besiegers*, the commander of the Russian garrison Danila Michetsky was also afraid to be taken prisoner by the Lithuanians. The reason was that he had been extremely cruel to the inhabitants of Vilnius and had severely plundered the city. Therefore Mishetsky planned to blow up the castle together with its defenders. Yet some of the Russian garrison resisted the plan; on the 2nd of December, 1661, they arrested their commander and surrendered themselves to the Lithuanians.[1]

After recapturing Vilnius, the forces of then grand hetman Michael Casimir Pac found the city in a dismal state: churches, palaces and burgers' houses were heavily plundered or destroyed, an extremely large number of buildings had been burned down and it is believed that only less than fifty edifices remained in their regular shape; meanwhile, the inhabitants had vanished after the plague struck the city during the Russian invasion. Be-

Vilnius, The Church of All Saints

fore discussing how Baroque architecture came to flourish immediately after the wars with Muscovy and Sweden were over, a short overview of Vilnius development might be helpful in understanding the utmost cultural importance of this old city.

As present archeological evidence suggests, Vilnius (alias known as Wilno or Wilna) is known to have been a settlement since the fifth century and was situated on the hills and valleys near the junction of the Neris and Vilnia (Vilnelė) rivers. The castle of Vilnius in historical records was mentioned as early as 1129. The documents of the Lithuanian Karaite community mentions the existence of Vilnius castle as early as the years 1189–1190 as well.[2] During the medieval period and especially in the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries, Vilnius had grown into a large city, and especially via the letters of the Grand Duke Gediminas was well-known among other European cities. Fragments of some 300 architectural structures including some 11 Christian churches

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[1]   Samalavičius, *An Outline of Lithuanian History*, 77.

[2]   *Vilniaus architektūra*, 6.

witness the reign and the glory of Gothic architecture that was eventually succeeded by Baroque.

Vilnius became the capital of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy as early as 1323. Since the fourteenth century it was largely divided by communities of several nationalities: a number of city dwellers, Lithuanians as well as German craftsmen and merchants, occupied the territory between the Trakai–Rūdninkai roads; the Russians lived on the Medininkai axis, meanwhile the Tartars moved to Vilnius as early as 1341 to add to the colorful character of the city. The Jews were another large community that, as some historians believe, came to settle in Vilnius as early as the twelfth century and were representative as a community in the fourteenth century when privileges were granted to them by the Grand Duke in 1388 and 1389, and where they were under the direct jurisdiction of the ruler himself. The Russian population was mainly situated in the area of present day Užupis – a city area that burned down in 1471. In the sixteenth century, Vilnius was known as an important regional center of the Renaissance, and as some sources estimate the city had as many as 75 thousand inhabitants.

The curse that befell Vilnius turned out to be its blessing. The most important Baroque edifices were erected shortly after the city was recaptured, despite the fact that as an architectural style, the Baroque had reached Vilnius far earlier in the seventeenth century. Baroque art and architecture were introduced with the arrival of Jesuits who were invited to Lithuania in 1569 by the bishop of Vilnius Valerijus Protasevičius. The province of Jesuit order in Lithuania was established as early as 1608. Even before that, the Jesuits became actively engaged in reconstructing the city's sacred topography. The first edifice that was given to the Jesuits was Vilnius' St. John's Church (a part of the present architectural ensemble of Vilnius University); however, they seem to have been dissatisfied with remodeling the original Gothic structure and concentrated on building the first true Baroque edifice – St. Casimir's Church that was established in 1596 and the construction works started in

1604.[3] The construction work was supported by the Polish-Lithuanian king and the Grand Duke of Lithuania Sigismund Vasa. It is believed that it was designed by an Italian architect Giovanni Maria Bernadoni coming from the internationally renowned community of artists from the Como area. Lithuanian statesman Leon Sapieha provided support for this important construction work. A number of other churches were soon under construction in the vicinity of St. Casimir's Church as well as other localities of the capital city. As art historian Victor L. Trapie has insightfully remarked while commenting on the ascent of Baroque architecture in the eastern realm of Europe:

> In Central and Eastern Europe, and in the south of Germany, the peasant population, incredibly poor and injured to misery as they were, never thought of resenting baroque for its ostentation or flamboyance. They welcomed it sometimes with enthusiasm for those very qualities, for they brought some rays of light into their darkness. The works of art were of such quality that they might appeal to the most exacting connoisseur or the merely naive illuminator.[4]

Though he is certainly right about the low status and poor conditions of the peasants of Eastern Europe, including those living in the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, most Baroque churches were built in cities rather than small towns where peasants flocked on Sundays. Vilnius was the city that could truly boast of remarkable edifices of an adequately Baroque character. Trapie has further accurately observed that

> The city of Wilno reflected the nobility's self-assurance when it began to evolve a style based on the works of Borromini and Guarini and their pupils. Wilno too was to have a chequered and strange history, but in the seventeenth century it was a residential town where the nobles built their palaces and were very generous in their gifts to local churches. The religious orders had

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[3]   Drėma, *Dingęs Vilnius*, 171.
[4]   Trapie, *The Age of Grandeur*, 74.

gained a strong foothold: the Dominicans, the Carmelite friars and nuns, the Benedictines, Augustines, Jesuits and also those Trinitarians that sought to keep a Uniate Church loyal to Rome by granting the use of Greek ritual... It was also from Wilno that civilization spread eastwards and exerted an influence on people like Ordine-Naschokine who was under the Czar's patronage.[5]

As John Bourke has noted while describing the peculiarities of Baroque in Central Europe, Baroque churches had some common features that characterize the sacred architecture of the period as it developed eastwards in the peripheral part of Europe;

> Ground-plans and elevations, even where seemingly simple, will be found on closer attention to conceal planning of a subtle, indeed mathematical characters aimed at producing definite effects of a partly aesthetic, partly symbolic character. We shall find for example, frequent structural use of certain numbers that have come to have sacred and thus symbolic associations, especially 3 (the Trinity), 5 (the wounds of Christ), 7 (the words from the Cross, the sorrows of Mary), and 12 (the Apostles); steps will be found grouped in flights of three or seven, pillars or windows in groups of three... Even the often remarked asymmetrical element in Baroque church decoration is here of importance and will be found to be in some way balanced and compensated.[6]

What building materials were used while constructing Baroque edifices in Lithuania? Mostly these were local materials such as bricks, stone, dolomite or granite. Colored marble was also used, albeit not very often and was applied to decorate specific parts of the interior or church portal. Red bricks were for construction works and varied in size and form. Some researchers have emphasized that this variety occurred because there were no fixed size for bricks in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the selection was most often based on local traditions but bricks were put together using the techniques that were peculiar to Renaissance.[7]

As was already mentioned, St. Casimir's Church built by the Jesuits was the first truly Baroque edifice in Vilnius city. The structure of the cross first applied by Vignola to Il Gesu Church in Rome was used as the model for the structure of St. Casimir's in Vilnius; however the facade of the church with two towers according to Drėma, was built according to the Lithuanian traditions of erecting Catholic churches.[8] The church was reconstructed in 1750–1755 by renowned Lithuanian architect Johan Christoph Glaubitz, who had a special feeling for Baroque; however, both the exterior and interior of St. Casimir's Church was essentially transformed after the edifice was given to the Russian Orthodox Church. It might be added that other Catholic churches in Vilnius suffered the same fate as a consequence of the repressions Tsarist authorities turned to after crushing the rebellion of 1831. During this reconstruction, ten altars of the church as well as the tombstone of field hetman Vincent Gonsievski executed in white marble were demolished, together with an extremely valuable pulpit designed by Glaubitz himself.[9] St. Theresa's Church is another notable example of perfect Vilnius Baroque architecture. The present structure instead of a wooden one erected in 1627 was built in 1633–1650 under the patronage of Stephan Pac , vice-Chancellor of the Grand Lithuanian Duchy who is known to have accompanied King Wladyslaw IV Vasa during his European sojourn and visited the workshop of Peter Paul Rubens in Antverp.[10] Some researchers believe that he built this particular structure having been deeply affected by his visit to Italy; moreover, the exterior of the church resembles some Baroque churches in Rome, e.g. Il Jesu and the church of St. Susan designed by Carlo Maderna.[11] The interior of the church was partially destroyed by the French army during the Napoleonic wars but was restored in the nineteenth and twentieth cen-

5   Ibid., 143.
6   Bourke, *Baroque Churches of Central Europe*, 48.
7   Poželaitė and Čerbulėnas, "Baroko architektūra Lietuvoje (1600–1790)," 140.

8   Drėma, *Dingęs Vilnius*, 171.
9   Ibid., 173.
10   Grinius, *Vilniaus menas*, 58.
11   Ibid., 59.

Church of St. Theresa

turies. The Carmelite monastery established as early as 1621–1627 is situated next to the church building, forming a cozy neighborhood; however, its buildings once owned by the technical college are now converted into a lovely historical hotel.

Next to St. Theresa's Church another important sacred building is located on the site where a wooden structure is known to have existed since 1597. The Orthodox Church of the Holy Spirit with the adjoining monastery was built in 1638; its lay-out design is of Crucifix shape, and a remarkable iconostasis executed in rococo style, that was installed after a fire in 1749. Curiously enough, the founders of an important Orthodox monastery chose Baroque aesthetics rarely found in the churches of eastern Christianity. A bell tower of early Baroque style was built next to the Orthodox Church of the Holy Spirit; however, it was partially reconstructed in the nineteenth century.

Another important example of Lithuanian Baroque can be found in the periphery of present-day Rūdninkų Square. The Church of All Saints and the Carmelite monastery attached to it were built in 1620–1631. The church was designed in the shape of a basilique and contains three naves; however, it has only one tower, which adds to its exceptional character. Though the exterior of All Saints so much admired by renowned Vilnius photographer Jan Bulhah can be equally enjoyed these days, its interior is also admirable; however, after experiencing damage in the fire of 1748, it was redesigned in the style of late Baroque. According to Drėma, the present sculptural figures in the interior of the church might have been designed by Glaubitz,[12] and yet this hypothesis still needs to be proved.

While discussing the Baroque character of Vilnius, St. John's Church cannot be left without mention even despite the fact that it is an example of early Baroque containing some Gothic elements that are still traceable in the edifice's interior. As was already mentioned, it was the Jesuits that reconstructed the Gothic building of St. John's into a Baroque structure and it is perhaps this mixture of two architectural styles and aesthetic principles that makes the shape of St. John's so admirable. Jan Bulhak has recorded remarkable impressions of this architectural structure in his small, yet extremely focused book, *The Landscape of Vilnius*, where he has thus described the beauty of St. John's Baroque:

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[12] Drėma, *Dingęs Vilnius*, 206.

While recording impressions of landscapes, I don't describe the architecture of Vilnius, yet one must make an exception in regard to this exceptional sacred structure the exterior of which is as good as its interior and which unites a restrained Gothic that reaches to the sky, with a luxurious sumptuous Baroque. While one looks at it from Pilies street, it is a high flat wall that reminds one of fraction of rock and where a Cross with the figure of Christ is beautifully attached with two narrow and long windows. Further, there are facade lines gravitating up that are difficult to spot in a narrow street. The light and tasteful top of the facade, the curved cornice, angels fluttering as if they were swallows and the openwork cross with it radiating inscriptions can only be seen from a distance... The church when seen from another side, from the gallery of the university courtyard, is in total contrast to the Gothic style. This is a joyful eruption of mature Baroque tamed by the elegance of rococo, the fast rhythm of columns, a perfect feretory that glorifies the skies. The facade of St. John in the light of slanting afternoon sun rays is a true symphony of light. The sun paints in gold the pilasters, niches and ornaments one by one, emphasizes their plasticity and as if touching the strings it plays a melody that lifts both the eyes and the soul. The organs of pure gold reach the sky in their wonderful rhythmic grandeur.[13]

Who can resist such a poetic description of a wonderful example of Vilnius Baroque? One can only add while observing the remaining sights of Vilnius Baroque architecture, that most of them can, without much exaggeration, be called visual poetry in itself.

St. Casimir's Chapel in Vilnius Cathedral is another example of remarkable Vilnius Baroque. Being a part of the present Neo-Classicist structure designed by Lithuania's greatest architect Laurynas Gucevičius who incorporated this exceptional piece of Baroque into his Classicist vision, St. Casimir's Chapel exhibits the striking peculiarity of Lithuanian Baroque interior aesthetics. Jonas Grinius has rightly described this chapel as one of the best examples of Baroque found in Vilnius, though he was mistaken

to suggest that the chapel in question was designed by Italian architect Constantino Tencalla.[14] The walls of the chapel are covered in black marble and are decorated by white stucco molding executed by Italian Comasque sculptor Pietro Perti, who also worked in Vilnius SS. Peter and Paul's Church and a number of other structures in Vilnius.

The Italian Connection

As was already mentioned, unlike the preceeding Gothic architecture, Baroque entered Lithuania directly from Italy without any mediating Western country in between. Though a number of important architectural structures were designed by local or Polish architects, the ideas for models were often borrowed from Italy and what is even more important – Baroque churches in Lithuania were often decorated by Italian artists who brought their visions and skills together with them to the Grand Duchy while being commissioned by the nobles to perform various artistic assignments. Italian sculptor Pietro Perti is one of many other sculptors and painters that worked in Lithuania; his contribution to the development of Baroque decoration in Lithuania is enormous. Born in the Como area, in the territory of the Milan Duchy that was ruled by Switzerland during that period, Perti moved to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, most likely being invited by Christoph Sigismund Pac, the Chancellor of the state who was busy building an important Baroque – the Pažaislis Kamaldolite monastery and church in the vicinity of Kaunas city that is considered one of the most impressive Baroque monuments in Lithuania.[15] Polish art historian Martin Karpowicz believes that Pietro Perti moved to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth together with his three brothers and two cousins. His brother Antonio is known to have created stucco decorations for

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[13]   Bulhak, *Vilniaus peizažas*, 49–50.

[14]   Grinius, *Vilniaus menas*, 61.
[15]   Samalavičius and Samalavičius, *Vilniaus šv. Petro ir Povilo bažnyčia*, 177.

Vilanovo palace in Warsaw.[16] Pietro Perti was commissioned by Michael Casimir Pac to decorate Vilnius SS. Peter and Pauls' Church together with another Italian sculptor Maria Giovanni Galli; however, this latter personality has been far less researched and is believed to have come to Vilnius either from Como, like Perti, or from Rome.[17]

Pietro Perti was also commissioned to decorate St. Casimir's Chapel in Vilnius Cathedral during 1686–1688 after which he left his assignment to decorate Vilnius SS. Peter and Paul's Church after the death of its benefactor Michael Casimir Pac, and is also known to have performed the stucco decoration for Sapieha's residence in Antakalnis and most possibly in Sluška's palace as well. He finally settled in Lithuania and became a respected burger of Vilnius, administrator (seniūnas) of Antakalnis and Šnipiškės, a member of the Vilnius magistrate and a sworn architect. Perti was not only an extremely gifted artist who brought his skills and knowledge to remote Lithuania but turned out to be a successful city dweller and businessman: among many other things he owned a shop of fabrics in Grodno city, supervised by his agent.[18]

Though in mainstream academic sources sculptor Pietro Perti as well as Giovanni Maria Galli were hardly associated with the school of stucco decoration that originated in the Como area,[19] more recent research has indicated that they should be associated not with Milano artistic circles, but with the Comasque school famous for its artistic traditions and its impact on Baroque decoration of Central and East central Europe. As art historian Sigita Samuolienė has emphasized, that there is enough evidence to maintain that both belong to the school of the Como area; his two relatives had worked in Bavaria, Germany and his brother Antonio Perti made an important contribution to Warsaw's Wila-

Chapel of St. Casimir, Vilnius Cathedral

now palace's stucco decoration.[20] Giovanni Maria Galli also belonged to the wave of Italian Comasque artists who moved to other European regions offering their services to local benefac-

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[16]   Karpowicz, *Artisti Ticinesi in Polonia*, 150.
[17]   Samalavičius and Samalavičius, "The Realm of Lithuanian Baroque," 18.
[18]   Samalavičius, "Vilniaus šv. Petro ir Povilo bažnyčios dekoravimas ir statyba,"
[19]   Beard, *Stucco and Decorative Plasterwork in Europe*, 68.

[20]   Samuolienė, "Komaskai ir trinitorių bažnyčia."

The cupola of Vilnius SS. Peter and Paul's Church

Courtyard of Alumnatas. Author's photos

tors. It has been suggested that Galli was a member of the Galli di Rovie family of artists; however, so far there is no reliable evidence to back the hypothesis that he was really related to this artistic dynasty.

Little is still known about the further activities of Giovanni Maria Galli, especially after he left the decoration of Vilnius SS. Peter and Paul's Church uncompleted because of the benefactor's death and the temporary decline of funds for decoration works. Pietro Perti's artistic work in Lithuania is far more researched and is truly impressive. Perti worked on the stucco decoration of a number of Lithuanian churches, villas and manor houses. Besides its important impact on the development of the Baroque sculptural decoration of Christian churches, Perti's legacy represents the artistic traditions of the Como area as well as the impact of well-known masters of Italian Baroque on the artistic culture of other European regions. Art historian Aušra Vasili-auskienė, who recently researched the context of the Ticino ar-

tistic school's sculptural decorative traditions and drew comparisons with the work of Pietro Perti, maintains that he was influenced by such well-known Comasque masters as Antonio Silva and Giovanni Battista Barberini as well as the great Baroque sculptors like Lorenzo Bernini and Pietro da Cortona.[21] She argues that despite the school's influence, no objects in Lithuanian churches can be compared to those of Lombardian churches, but have far more similarities with Baroque edifices that are found in Germany and Austria.[22]

Last but not least it should be added that one of the most powerful Lithuanian families that played an important part in the making of Lithuanian Baroque architecture, the Pac family, claimed to have their own Italian connection. Michael Casimir

[21] Vasiliauskienė, "Komaskų mokyklos atspindžiai XVII a. antros pusės stiuko lipdyboje: nauji tyrinėjimų aspektai," 158.
[22] Ibid.

Pac is known to have traced his family roots to Italy. The legend claiming that one of the members of the Florentine Pazzi family escaped the Italian city and moved to the far away country of Lithuania was sustained by several members of Pac family, even by Michael Casimir Pac, the benefactor of Vilnius' SS. Peter and Paul's Church, who took care that certain motifs related to the life of Italian Carmelite nun St. Maria Magdalena de Pazzi were represented in the iconographical program of the interior decoration of Vilnius SS. Peter and Paul's Church. Though there is no historical evidence proving this family connection, as art historian Aušra Baniulytė has recently suggested,

> The legend about the "kinship" between the Pacas family and the Florentine Pazzi, which was formed by the different political, religious, social and cultural aspects of the seventeenth century, was thus able to forge a link between two geographically distant noble families under the symbolic union of the Pazzi surname. It played a significant role in the activity of those Italian merchants, generally from Tuscany, who arrived in the Baltic.[23]

Whatever one might think of the genealogical claims of Lithuanian nobles of the seventeenth century, one thing is at least certain: despite all the ambiguities of alleged family connections, cultural relations between Lithuania and Italy were not only abundant but also epoch-making. The legacy of Italian artists who happened to carry out their artistic activities in Lithuanian lands in the seventeenth century indicates a remarkable contribution of Comasque sculptors as well as other artists to the making of Lithuanian Baroque as well as its largely unique local character.

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[23] Baniulytė, "Italian Intrigue in the Baltic: Myth, Faith, and Politics in the Age of Baroque."

Symbols of Nationality and Statehood in the Art of Sculptor Regimantas Midvikis

LINAS KRŪGELIS

Introduction

The identity of Lithuania as a nation and a state is tied inextricably to its lengthy history, which spans more than a thousand years. It is natural that some historical events and individuals have taken on a symbolic importance, which we perceive only after a sufficient amount of time has passed. These symbols of past epochs are important components of cultural and ethnic identity for us, and that is why their expression in works of art is a valuable extension of such a tradition. Traditionally Lithuanian art has had an abundance of symbolic images. This is especially evident in the period from the end of the twentieth century to the beginning of the twenty first century. Sculpture, as one of the plastic arts, became a favorable medium for the embodiment of symbols of nationality and statehood. The art of sculptor Regimantas Midvikis (1946–2015), a National Prize laureate, is precisely of this nature – it is dedicated to the actualization of Lithuanian identity, national symbols and legends. Midvikis was born and grew up in Western Lithuania, and so it is not surprising that the bulk of his creative legacy is concentrated in this region of Lithuania. This article analyzes some of the

DR. LINAS KRŪGELIS is a practicing architect and an instructor and associate professor of the Department of Design at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University. His areas of research include contemporary Lithuanian sacral architecture, sculpture, and the design of real estate environments.

more vivid examples of the art of Midvikis, which best reflect his artistic world view and his use of symbols as forms of non-verbal communication. Four principal avenues for the expression of symbols are delineated, by which the artist used different tools to convey the particular nature of Lithuanian nationality and statehood.

Mythological Symbolism

The Lithuanian state, examined from the perspective of the distant past, developed under complex historical circumstances, as shown not only by historical sources, but also by legends, myths and episodes transformed into sacral archetypes, all of which have survived to the present day. It is not surprising that the theme of historical myth has attracted artists of various time periods, beginning with writers and extending all the way to representatives of the applied and representational arts. The art of Midvikis is no exception. This sculptor probed with particular passion historical and folk themes which were permeated with symbols and depictions of collective social life.

Sculptor Midvikis made no effort to hide the affection he felt in his personal outlook on life for the subject of ancient Baltic religions. The chance to immortalize pagan symbols in stone had a sacral meaning for this artist. On the other hand, Midvikis did not ignore Christian symbols, as witnessed by the sculptures he composed for the chapel of the village of Rainiai (in the Telšiai region).

When speaking of Baltic mythological symbols in the art of Midvikis, one must first mention the sculptural composition of the altar on Rambynas Hill. Here the visitor is met with a composition of natural rocks on which mysterious symbols have been carved. Sculptor Midvikis immortalized archaic symbols of the beliefs and customs of our forefathers on these mysterious rocks.

The theme of mythological symbols and national identity was always especially meaningful for Midvikis. By the time he began work on the Rambynas Hill sacrificial altar, he had already acquired considerable experience in the embodiment of historical

themes. When a contest for the design of the Rambynas sacrificial altar was announced in 2010, sculptor Midvikis became passionately involved in the task of finding a proper creative response. I had the honor of participating in this process. At that time a temporary altar of hewn rocks constructed during the Soviet period stood on this hill, and a leaning rock had been dug into the ground alongside the altar. The tower symbol of the Gediminas dynasty was chiseled on this rock, and a collection of other commemorative rocks protruding from the ground completed the composition. From the very beginning, sculptor Midvikis was of the opinion that such a collection of commemorative rocks failed to represent that particular location properly and even more so failed to reflect the national traditions of our country. The shapes which made up the temporary altar were foreign to our traditions. Therefore, a decision was made to look for a more meaningful conception, which could be achieved with available materials.

Soon there arose two principal visions, which the sculptor chose as possible solutions for the design of the future sacrificial altar. The first variation was a composition of rocks which symbolized the Baltic gods, while the second variation experimented with volumetric geometrical forms and national symbols presented in the form of reliefs. The artistic team engaged in preparing an entry for the contest had a hard time deciding which of these variations was better. Therefore the decision was made to submit both of them individually with the expectation that the judges of the contest would be able to decide which one was better. As it turned out, the first project won the contest – the composition of rocks depicting Baltic symbols and gods. It was found to be superior to other projects because of the content of its ideas and the rationality of its execution. Midvikis, in the written description of his project, emphasized the importance of Rambynas Hill as a natural preserve and mythological site. That is why his artistic concept of the symbolic altar was oriented towards making the mythological site a meaningful part of the preserve. This work of art strives to strengthen the impression this location leaves as an historical site by enhancing artistically a location which was holy for our ancestors.

The project's sculptural composition consisted of a group of three large rocks surrounded by a pavement of smaller rocks. According to Midvikis, "it is very important for these rocks to appear natural in the space of the natural preserve."[1] The rocks were arranged in the same location where two large protruding rocks with informational plates had once stood. It was not difficult to envision a new artistic accent of equal height in their place. The sculptor maintained that only by approaching closer would the viewer be able to realize that this is a contemporary work of art and that the rocks form a unified composition – the rocks are placed close to one another in an artistic way and are individually decorated. The natural surface of the rocks contrasts with polished elements. This creates artistic intrigue, an impression of mystery, which becomes like a tuning-fork for the experience of Rambynas Hill in its entirety.[2]

Viewers familiar with ancient Baltic religion and mythology will quickly realize that these three rocks are a contemporary artistic interpretation of three gods – Perkūnas, Patulas and Patrimpas, while the smaller rocks are symbols of other gods. The symbolic sacrificial altar rises in a characteristically striking silhouette. It is the principal accent of this sculptural composition. It emerges as a contrast to the heavy leaning rocks. This metal stand, which is at the comfortable height of 90 centimeters, has on it an area where a small symbolic fire can be lit, both in the conventional way or with gas. The sacrificial altar for Rambynas Hill, designed according to this plan, was unveiled in 2011. It consisted of the three rocks decorated with symbols as mentioned above and alongside them – an altar of steel, whose top, in the form of a plant leaf, is to be used for starting a sacrificial fire. A band of irregularly shaped rocks on the ground marks the perimeter of the composition.[3] Today these rock formations, which speak to us about the ancient past, have become a part of the

[1]   The written description of the project by Midvikis and Krūgelis, 2010.
[2]   Ibid.
[3]   Krūgelis, "Tautiniai simboliai skulptoriaus Regimanto Midvikio kūryboje," 31–37.

identity of the Rambynas area. They attract a large number of visitors, and they are especially liked by those enthusiasts who seek to keep alive ancient customs.

Symbolic language in the art of Regimantas Midvikis is manifested not only through historical narrative, but also through a narrative of nature, life, and the cosmos. The sculptor places particular importance on the symbolism of nature/earth and the symbolism of woman/mother. These concepts often coalesce into a unified vision in the works of the artist. An example of this is the sculpture "Žeme, nepalik mūsų" (Earth, Do Not Leave Us).[4] The work contains an image of maternity, which is a motif that occurs from time to time in the sculptor's works and one which he often imbues with a mythological tone. In this work Midvikis sought to view the relationship of mother and child through a sacral prism. The artist created this work for an art exhibition, and only later was the proposal made to have the work displayed in the Klaipėda Maternity Hospital.[5] Doctor A. Vinkus was one of the individuals who advocated the idea of displaying it at that location. A space for it was prepared in the lobby of the building, and appropriate lighting was installed. This was an unusual work of art for the artist. The untraditional materials chosen by the artist and the expressive artistry of the sculpture are what first strike the viewer. At the time, the artist was awarded the "Union Communist Youth Prize" for this work.[6] The sculpture was made out of epoxy resin. It was dedicated to Arvydas Ambrasas, a friend of Midvikis and a fellow art student, who had died after a protracted illness while a student at the institute of art. Ambrasas studied painting and wrote poetry. He and future sculptor Midvikis wrote plays for the underground theater, and both of them acted in them. The title of the sculpture, "Žeme, nepalik mūsų", was taken from the title of a poem by Ambrasas. Over the years this work took on a symbolic meaning and became closely associated with Klaipėda Maternity Hospital. In 1993 it was included in the registry of culturally significant works.[7]

This work may be considered one of Regimantas Midvikis's most successful creative experiments. Architect Z. Rutkauskas designed the space in the lobby into which the sculpture is incorporated, and he also designed the lighting and the entire interior of the lobby as well. Midvikis collaborated with Rutkauskas in many other works in the port city of Klaipėda. The techniques Midvikis used for this work of art, its style and the manner of representation are all atypical compared to his other works. The work's interaction with its architectural surroundings was also distinctive and in some respects innovative. Art critic E. Lubytė, writing about the art of Midvikis, stated that it was especially important for this contemporary artist to convey his world view. She noted that Midvikis has a rational, logical and emotionally calm relationship with the world. He not only has an intuitive feeling about what to do and how to do it, but he also has a precise knowledge of these things. His works are typically staged in advance. According to Lubytė, Midvikis tries to force the viewer to stop and think about ordinary things in a new way. He tries to shock, to operate on the border of sentimentality and kitsch, to reproduce a sensation. Seriousness of form is not a handicap, but is a way of conveying the passage of time.[8] It is not the form which is being interpreted, but rather the impression it makes. This is a risky way of creating art because it is based on rational logic rather than artistic intuition, and therefore every detail is important: the materials, the variety of colors, anatomic precision or deformity, the scale, the lighting, the place where the sculpture stands. The viewer who fails to consider everything fails to understand the artist's conception.[9]

A decade later Midvikis continued to develop the theme of the Mother symbol in his works. In 1987 he created a sculpture entitled "Visata, motina, tai aš" (The Universe, Mother, That's

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[4]   This work, completed in 1979 by sculptor R. Midvikis and architect Z. Rutkauskas, is in the maternity hospital in Klaipėda

[5]   Mačiulis, *Dailė Architektūroje*, 322.

[6]   Martinkus, "Laiko nenustojantis bėgimas".

[7]   Kuklys, "Penki klausimai Regimantui Midvikiui".

[8]   Lubytė, "Portretas jūros fone".

[9]   Ibid.

Me). The work was displayed in the exhibition hall of Klaipėda, where the triennial exhibition "Visata ir žmogus" (Man and the Universe) was held. Artists from Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai, Telšiai and Palanga participated in the exhibition. Midvikis's sculpture "Visata, motina, tai aš" was named the best work of the exhibition. The sculpture depicts an enlarged figure of a man, who is shown wearing only underclothes. His body is emphatically imperfect, as if it were exhausted and emaciated. The figure's gaze is directed to the sky, but his arms are extended to the sides as if to express a kind of meditation and a mental connection with the universe. The sculpture stands on a small round pedestal, whose roundness deliberately connects the sculpture with the theme of universality and conveys the idea that every individual is meaningful even in a limitless world. The sculpture is made of gypsum, and encaustic is used to color the surface. That is why this work of art, which is covered with transient blue and yellow colors, reminded viewers of the colors of planet earth and in that way exemplified the theme of the exhibition. The title of the work sounds like an address to the universe, which is even called a mother, while the male figure, according to the allusion, is to be understood as the son of the universe, who has grown up, but still seeks a connection with his primordial sources.

A lesser-known work is the tombstone on the sculptor's family grave in the town of Gaurė in the Tauragė region (1984). It is a white marble figure depicting a woman with a child. The sculpture is placed on a small granite column. The figure is smaller than life-size, as if the sculptor were seeking to impart aspects of asceticism and moderation to the sculpture. Analysis of the sculpture's details reveals a shroud motif. The woman and child are depicted as if wrapped in a shroud. A dual interpretation of this motif is possible. It is reminiscent of traditional Lithuanian folk attire, but at the same time there may be some allegorical allusions to the Biblical shroud symbolism of the burial of Christ. The white marble used for this sculpture strengthens this impression even more. When viewed from the side, the sculptural figure is seen to lean forward somewhat, thereby providing an allusion to the hard fate of motherhood, its burden of worries and its years of hardship.

Symbols of the State

During the last years of his life and the last decades of his artistic career, sculptor Midvikis took an active part in the creation of important state monuments. He actively participated in art contests and won many of them. The theme of state symbols is what inspired him the most. At the same time it reflected his patriotism, which for him was a moral conviction. His motto was "to create for Lithuania about Lithuania." In Vilnius Midvikis created one of the most famous works of his life – the King Mindaugas monument. (The architects were Algimantas Nasvytis, Ričardas Krištapavičius and Inesa Alistratovaitė; it was completed in Vilnius in 2003. In designing this monument, the artist used the creative experience he had gained earlier when he had successfully competed in a contest for the design of a monument for Grand Duke Gediminas. He used the best features of the prior project to create a new monument, which conveyed in a striking way the symbol of King Mindaugas and historical ethnographic symbols of our nation. The monument depicts King Mindaugas sitting on his throne and holding a scepter and an orb with a cross, the symbol of authority.[10] On the back side of the monument the sculptor inscribed many archaic Lithuanian symbols and ornaments. In this way he reminded viewers of King Mindaugas's pagan past. In this volumetric composition, the seated figure of Mindaugas merges with the throne and becomes a single silhouette. His crown is decorated with the repeating motif of a flower blossom of three leaves – the well-known "Atgaja" symbol. The king holds in his hands the two royal regalia: the orb and scepter. The sculptor included pagan symbols on the scepter of Mindaugas, while he placed a Christian cross on the orb. In this way the sculptor tried to depict the historical dilemma that King Mindaugas faced – the need to choose between paganism and Christianity. Symbolic language was employed also in the composition of the pedestal: pagan symbols of the calendar are chiseled on the sides of the round

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[10] Valonytė, "Karalius Mindaugas – ir ant žirgo, ir soste".

Fig. 1. *Vytis monument, 2015*

pedestal. This helps to convey the life style and customs of Lithuanians of that time period more vividly.

Another sculpture by this artist – The Monument to the Millennium of the Name of Lithuania – also has many state symbols and heraldic elements (Architect – V. Mazurkevičius, Klaipėda, 2009). The monument depicts the equestrian figure of Duke Netimeras on a column which is in the form of a scepter. This scene was chosen for historical reasons. Duke Netimeras was one of the first rulers to accept Christianity, but his brother Zabedenas, if historical sources are to be believed, slew St. Bruno the missionary. It was due to this fact that the name of Lithuania was first mentioned in written sources. It is interesting to note that this monument has an unusual combination of materials: the artist made the column and the equestrian statue on top of it from granite, but the bust of the rider (above the elbows) was made out of bronze. Perhaps in this way the artist sought to give additional symbolic meaning to the transformation of Netimeras from an archaic pagan personality to a western Christian one.

As time has shown, the final attempt by Midvikis to create a sculpture rich in state and national symbols was the "Vytis"

sculpture intended for Lukiškiai Square (Fig. 1). As it turned out, this work was not submitted to the competition for a monument in the square due to the death of the artist and later due to the changed terms of the competition. The model for the monument shows the equestrian figure of Vytautas the Great. The figure is recognizable from facial features widely known in iconography as well as from heraldic attributes – the crown, the attire, the shield. The steed, as in the national coat of arms, is depicted leaping. Midvikis prepared this concept of the monument at a time when an official decision had been made that the competition for a monument in Lukiškiai Square would be for a "Vytis" monument. According to the artist, up to that time no one in Lithuania had created a spatial "Vytis" monument composition intended for a public space. This motivated the artist to create a distinctive interpretation of this national symbol.

Symbols of Tragedy

The art of sculptor Midvikis covers not only epochs of Lithuania's deep past, but it also addresses modern times, including the Second World War. The exterior and interior sculptures of the Rainiai Chapel of Suffering are examples of the latter (sculptor R. Midvikis, architects J. Virakas, A. Žebrauskas; stained glass – A. Dovydėnas; frescoes – A. Kmieliauskas).[11] In 1994 Midvikis and his colleagues won the National Art and Culture Prize for this project. Architect Algirdas Žebrauskas constructed the chapel building based on sketches made by architect J. Virakas from Telšiai. At the time, the designer of the chapel envisioned it to have spaces where decorative items of the plastic arts could be placed. He designed the necessary lighting as well.[12] Sculptor Midvikis designed sculptures for the exterior of the chapel, a crucifix in counter-relief above the chapel altar (Fig. 2, 3), and a

[11] Radvila, "Įamžintas partizanų atminimas".
[12] Krūgelis, "Tautiniai simboliai skulptoriaus Regimanto Midvikio kūryboje," 31–37.

Fig. 2. *Exterior of Rainiai Chapel, 2007*

Fig. 3. *Crucific of Rainiai Chapel, 2007*

sculptural composition of three crosses near the chapel. Stained glass artist Algirdas Dovydėnas also participated in the project, as did Antanas Kmieliauskas, who painted the frescoes on the vaults of the chapel.

The town of Rainiai near the city of Telšiai is the site of a horrific tragedy which took place on June 24–25, 1941, during the first days of the war between the Soviet Union and Germany. Fleeing Soviet activists and soldiers brutally tortured to death 74 political prisoners from the Telšiai Jail in the forest of Rainiai. The Rainiai Chapel was built in their memory in 1991.[13] The

original idea of a chapel was proposed in 1942 by a young architect named Jonas Virakas. In 1991 architect Žebrauskas took on the task of turning the construction of this edifice of national architecture into a reality. He designed and constructed the whole complex. The steeple of the chapel is 25 meters high. Inside the chapel there is a museum dedicated to the martyrs of Rainiai. The chancel contains a crucifix of white marble, which is chiseled in counter-relief.[14] When it is illuminated, the body of Christ becomes positive (visually elevated), and it moves depending on the viewer's perspective. For example, as the viewer moves to

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[13] *Kultūros paveldo vertybių registras*. Accessed through the internet at: <http://195.182.68.156/DB/pilnas.jsp?mc=21854>

[14] *Kultūros paveldo vertybių registras*. Accessed through the internet at: <http://195.182.68.156/DB/pilnas.jsp?mc=21881>

the right, the body of Christ visually transforms itself by turning to the right. Frescoes by Kmieliauskas adorn the ceiling of the chapel. They depict the passion of Christ and the suffering of the Lithuanian nation (deportations, resistance). The stained glass windows designed by Dovydėnas likewise depict suffering.

About 250–300 meters northwest of the chapel, in the Rainiai forest, is a commemorative sculptural composition named "Trys kryžiai" (Three Crosses) which sculptor Midvikis designed (Fig. 4). It depicts three crosses merged into a single figure. This memorial is a reminder of the brutal repressions the Soviets carried out at this location on June 24–25, 1941, during which 74 political prisoners from the Telšiai Jail were tortured to death.[15] The composition, which is round in form, is in a calm open square of the forest and is paved with natural stones. The style and details of the monument, its pedestal and ornamentation, have some connection with the art of folk artists, known for their carvings of wayside crosses. The materials used and the compositional elements employed are marked by solidity, clarity and simplicity of idea. In the past, stone has often been associated symbolically with soldiers who did not return from war. Similar allusions can be seen in this memorial to the martyrs of Rainiai. Incisions pointing in different directions are chiseled on the sides of the monument. They give the impression of whiplashes. This reinforces the theme of pain and torture in this work of art.

The Rainiai Chapel of Suffering is a relatively recent edifice. That is why the passage of time has not left marks of deterioration on it. This is also due to the fact that the edifice and the surrounding area are well-supervised and well-maintained. The other elements of the complex, the forest square and the "Trys kryžiai" memorial which stands on it, are also well-maintained.

The Rainiai Chapel of Suffering complex is one of the best examples of a harmonious interaction between architecture and

Fig. 4. Monument of Three Crosses, 2007

art. The architecture of the building, the sculptural elements which decorate the building's facade and its interior, the frescoes, the stained glass windows as well as the sculptural composition near the chapel all unite to form a coherent whole.[16] All of this helps us to appreciate the efforts the architects took to join different areas of art harmoniously, even though results did not always meet expectations. In this instance, artist Kmieliauskas did not listen to the requests of the architect and his colleagues to paint frescoes that are light in tone and do not jump out at the viewer. The frescoes contain dramatic and straightforward

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[15] *Kultūros paveldo vertybių registras*. Accessed through the internet at: <http://195.182.68.156/DB/pilnas.jsp?mc=21867>

[16] Krūgelis, "Tautiniai simboliai skulptoriaus Regimanto Midvikio kūryboje," 31–37.

scenes of torture which pull the viewer's attention away from other details of the interior and overwhelm them visually. The chapel space thereby loses its initial gracefulness and brightness. (Scenes of soldiers with weapons and of dogs attacking people typically are not depicted on frescoes found in sacred buildings.)

Despite such tensions in the interaction of various forms of art, this chapel is one of the most significant examples of national and artistic revival in Lithuania. The pooling of several forms of art within a single architectural form encourages the development and realization of original ideas by artists taking part in such a process. At the same time it is a significant precedent for the possibility of research into the interaction of various forms of art.

R. Midvikis used a somewhat different language of the plastic arts in designing memorial monuments for Lithuania's freedom fighters. He employed compositions of massive, monumental forms in designing the monument in Tauragė in memory of the partisans of the Kęstutis District (architect V. Mazurkevičius) and the monument in Telšiai for the partisans of the Žemaičiai District (architects A. Žebrauskas, R. Banys, 2005). When viewing the project for the Tauragė partisan monument, what first strikes the eye is that it is in the form of a cube, something quite rare for monuments of that type in Lithuania. This form understandably provoked heated discussions among Lithuania's resistance fighters. As we know, from antiquity the cube has been a figure symbolizing materiality, earthliness. In the twentieth century, modernist artists especially extolled the cube. However, when the world-wide struggle against oppression is viewed globally, the motif of the cube can be an effective device to suggest the feeling of the unbearable burden our country suffered when enslaved by occupying forces. The monolithic form of the monument also reflects the unity and unwavering strength of our freedom fighters.[17] The surface of the sculpture is ornamented with elements reminiscent of defensive fortifications, barriers and barricades within which the sculptor has weaved motifs of

[17] Rožka, "Kuriamas paminklas Kęstučio apygardos partizanams".

Fig. 5. Monument to Kęstutis' district guerilla fighters, 2007. All photos by Linas Krūgelis

the Knight's Cross, thereby making a reference to the historical strength of the Lithuanian spirit and the enduring quality of Lithuanian traditions.

Meanwhile, it is easy to notice sculptor R. Midvikis's creative fingerprint in the details of the monument for the partisans of Telšiai (Fig. 5). He had used similar symbolic motifs in the previously mentioned monument in Tauragė for the Kęstutis District partisans. Undoubtedly, the fact that the themes are identical would seem to require similar symbolic motifs. However, in this case the role of the architectural surroundings necessitated a different scale. As mentioned above, in Tauragė the prototype of the cube was chosen, while in Telšiai a stylized column was built.

In both cases the monuments are characterized by compositional restraint, solidity and moderation in the use of artistic means. Decorative elements, such as carvings, ornaments and symbols, provide connections to sources of Lithuanian culture, to traditions, to folk art and to some motifs of national heraldry.

In Place of a Conclusion

This article has discussed only the most famous works of art of sculptor R. Midvikis. The artist used similar devices of symbolic language in his lesser known works of the sculptural plastic arts. In analyzing a broader spectrum of composition, one can easily notice clear regularities within works of different genres. The expression of symbols in the art of Midvikis manifests itself in three principal areas: mythology, country, and tragedy. Certain attributes of artistic expression are typically present in each one of these areas.

When seeking to transmit mythological symbolism in volumetric form, the artist first of all chose archetypical subjects – primordial existence, the cosmos, the symbolism of mother nature. The artist's own world view, an awareness of transcendence, of a connection with nature and of the sacredness of nature, are all reflected here in large part. Myths, legends and literature play an important role. They provide the inspiration for the artist's forms. That is why his composition of monuments is characteristically dynamic and mixed. The viewer must interpret the artist's conception individually in order to understand such works of art. It is likewise important to be able to appreciate their national and ethnic signs in context.

The artist gave meaning to symbols of statehood by giving preference to the monumentality of the composition, to its axial composition. This accords with the general practice throughout the world in which the depiction of state symbols is linked first of all to an emphasis on higher status, strength, and stability. This provides the monuments with characteristics of nobility and heroism. Both ancient pagan symbols and Christian symbols are used. National symbols, such as the Knight's Cross, the towers of the Gediminas dynasty and the Atgaja symbol, have an important role. With their help the works of art were given a clearer historical purpose. When depicting the rulers of Lithuania, Midvikis often used the image of a figure sitting on a throne, as Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis did in his painting entitled "Rex". In this way Midvikis sought to emphasize the foundational attributes of the state – the stability and strength of the government, its laws and its sovereignty. At the same time the image is one of peace and wisdom.

Midvikis expanded his use of symbolism associated with the state and the nation expressively in those works of art which can be classified as belonging to the theme of tragedy. Many works of this type are dedicated to the memory of those who died in the struggle for freedom, to the memory of political prisoners and martyrs. The composition here is mostly monumental. It uses abstract, geometric forms. The mixture of reliefs and carvings gives the composition its contextual meaning. The artist used these elements of artistic language to convey to the viewer the emotional impact of an historical event – pain, suffering, destruction. However, he also emphasized strength and the refusal to submit. Often, the artist used Christian symbols such as the Christian cross alongside national symbols such as the Knight's Cross. Such a juxtaposition creates significant parallels between human suffering associated with the struggle for one's country and the suffering of Christ. Each symbol speaks to the meaning of suffering.

The art of Regimantas Midvikis is characterized by an abundance of national and religious symbols, but this symbolic language is not excessive. The artist strove to maintain a feeling of nobility and aesthetic moderation in his works. In view of the period during which many of his monuments were created, the works of Regimantas Midvikis will undoubtedly become a significant part of Lithuania's art tradition.

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Translated by RIMAS ČERNIUS

ADOMAS SUBAČIUS
(1928–2018)

Father of prof. Giedrius Subačius,
the President of *Lituanus* Journal.

For many years he was senior associate at Šviesa Publishing house; member of Lithuanian Journalists Association, a translator and author.

ABSTRACTS

GINTA T. PALUBINSKAS

Russia: Containing Democracy at Home and Abroad

Over the course of the past two decades, Putin's Russia has become increasingly more authoritarian and seeks to contain and to discredit democracy both at home and abroad. It is targeting young democracies, as well as old democracies, and systematically chipping away at the international rules-based system. Violence, disruption, obstruction, and disinformation are the hallmarks of Russia's multifaceted anti-democracy campaign. Russia fears the emergence of democracy within its borders as well as its existence in other countries, so much so, that it spends blood and treasure to contain it. Studies show that, generally speaking, democracies do not go to war with other democracies. This raises the question – why is Russia so opposed to a system of government that represents the rule of the people and is so determined to suppress not only the voice of its own people, but of those in other countries? This paper examines Russia's attempts to suppress democratic development in the post-soviet region specifically and to discredit democratic government in general. Findings show that Russia is driven by the fear of democratic contagion, which could lead to domestic demand for a transformation of its own system, which may wrest power and wealth from the current autocratic regime.

SERGEI KRUK AND JANIS CHAKARS

Democratic Crisis or Return to the Western World? Civic Engagement, Social Capital and Media in Latvia

The Baltic states have seen the peaceful transfer of power through democratic elections for a generation since the reestablishment of independence. However, surveys indicate dim faith in government and little sense that people feel the power to change and influence society. Rates of civic engagement are low, thus diminishing the social capital necessary for a vibrant democracy. This study explores this situation in Latvia with reference to Estonia, Lithuania and four other European countries. Two interpretations emerge: first, that democracy in Latvia is not being realized to its fullest potential; and, second, that the pattern in Latvia is broadly similar to other European countries. Therefore, in order to explain the phenomenon, scholars must look beyond the legacy of communism. Latvia, in particular, has a longer history of elite-directed communication and social action patterns that may contribute to the inhibition of social and political action.

ODETA ŽUKAUSKIENĖ

Jurgis Baltrušaitis: Search for the Rules of Imagination

The article is focused on the life and activities of Jurgis Baltrušaitis (1903–1988) – one of the most original twentieth century art historians who spend a large part of his life in France. The works of this erudite scholar, whose importance does not seem to diminish with time, are still being discovered in Lithuania. The author of the article emphasizes his unique contribution to the studies of medieval art forms.

ALMANTAS SAMALAVIČIUS

The Legacy of Lithuanian Baroque Architecture

The article is focused on the peculiarities of Lithuanian Baroque architecture and historical and cultural conditions in which this architectural style emerged in the country. The author discusses the most notable examples of Lithuanian Baroque, especially those located in Vilnius and its environs. The impact of Italian artists in the making of Lithuanian Baroque architecture and decoration is brought into focus.

LINAS KRŪGELIS

**Symbols of Nationality and Statehood
in the Art of Sculptor Regimantas Midvikis**

The article deals with that part of the art of well-known Lithuanian sculptor Regimantas Midvikis which is dedicated to the theme of Lithuanian national symbols. The sculptor's works of art contain references to Lithuanian historical narratives, ancient Baltic mythology, symbols of statehood, historical tragedies, and the sacred themes of human existence. During his successful and prolific artistic career, Midvikis created more than fifty works of sculpture, many of which still adorn the public spaces of Lithuanian cities, and some of which are still under construction.

Soviet and Post-Soviet architecture in Vilnius. Photo by Almantas Samalavičius

MOVING?
We need your old as well as your new address, to correct our records.

FRONT COVER: The Gates of Dawn in Vilnius
Photo by Almantas Samalavičius