LITUANUS

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Vilnius TV Tower Memorial. Photo credit Ellen B. Cutler. See article on page 47

Ultima Europae Prouincia?
On "The National Model"
in Lithuanian Literature

PIETRO U. DINI

1. By Way of Introduction

Describing Russia's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, Milan Kundera wrote (cf. *I. Xenakis*, 1980–2008, 88–89):

> me and my friends went through this event as a hopeless catastrophe. And if we forgot the way we felt at the time, it would be impossible to understand anything… Regimes come and go. But the borders of the civilizations remain. Many other nations within the Russian Empire even began losing their own languages and identities.

This account described something known elsewhere as "the arrest" (or, according to others, "the loss") of Central Europe. As we know now, it would take until early 1990 for this wound in the Old Continent's heart to start to heal and Central Europe to return to it.

Naturally, as mentioned by Kundera, the "many other nations within the Russian Empire" also included the Balts (geopoliti-

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cally: Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians). Lithuania is an old political entity which figured strongly in Europe during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Latvia and Estonia became politically active only in the twentieth century. However, the history of all three countries has always been heavily intertwined with shared connections.

Memorably, it was exactly the protests for the independence of the Baltic states in the late 1980s that resulted in the beginning of the end for the Soviet Union. It was a national issue which was underestimated by the leaders of the Kremlin (including Gorbachev); a national problem which was always strongly connected to language (and not just for the Balts). It is no coincidence that the excerpt from the Czech writer's work cited above communicates a clear link between language and identity: "many other nations <…> even began losing their own languages and identities".

So, from the perspective I am about to provide, we find ourselves completely *in medias res*.

Finally, in order to give a better presentation of the fates of Baltic literary and cultural communities (more specifically, my focus will be on the Lithuanian ones from this point forward), there is no harm in presenting several historical-cultural coordinates about this region of Europe, which, for the most part, is still not very familiar in the West. For this reason, I think it is necessary to start from an *excursus* which would be appropriately discussed in our discourse and would review significant historical and literary events in Lithuania. Consequently, the object of my examination will become clearer: both because the history of the Baltic states is one of the events "that are scarcely mentioned in textbooks and literature, and if they are, then inadequately" (Cz. Miłosz) and because *baltica (scilicet lituanica, lettica, estonica) non leguntur*. Furthermore, I apologize in advance for being obliged to mention so many authors that are unknown to most in my brief attempt.

2. Grand Duchy of Lithuania as "Modern Alexandria"

The situation of Lithuania in the Middle Ages is often described by comparing the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to modern Alexandria. Allow me to cite the renowned Lithuanian author Tomas Venclova:

> Lithuanians like to say that they are not always able to explain to foreigners how complex the amalgam of cultures was in the historical Lithuania and Vilnius region. <…> Not every resident of that region is well-versed on the subtle mixture, the conglomerate of languages, traditions, and lifestyles, even the genetic conglomerate which birthed great poets and was almost unparalleled in the Western Europe. Ireland is an incomplete analogy; perhaps it would be more appropriate to remember Alexandria. There, cultures clashed and reflected one another, sometimes they damaged but also nurtured each other. The oldest, substratum, and at the same time the youngest culture, which completed its hatching only in the twentieth century, was the Lithuanian one.[1]

Indeed, an analogous situation has been observed in the entire Baltic macro-context. It is enough to recall that, during the humanist-Renaissance period, the multilingual *topos* of Livonia recurred in many of the *Descriptiones Livoniae*.[2]

Thus, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a potential medieval melting pot situated in the middle of the continent. During the rule of Gediminas, many refugees and fugitives were welcomed from various European locations (today we would call them migrants). After 1492, Jews who were persecuted for various heresies

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[1]   Venclova, *Tekstai apie tekstus*, 145.

[2]   For instance, in his *Cosmographia uniuersalis* (Basel, 1550) Sebastian Münster distinguished four languages that were used in the region of Livonia (Livonian, Latvian, Estonian, and Curonian). This fact was accepted by many of his contemporaries: some of them (Carion, Krantz and Thurneysser) faithfully repeated Münster's perception of *diuersitas* as a linguistic division into four parts, others included the German language (used in urban areas) as the fifth one, while yet others (Bielski) added Polish (see P.U. Dini, *Aliletoescvr. Linguistica baltica delle origini: Teorie e contesti linguistici nel Cinquecento*, Livorno, 2010).

found sanctuary here, embracing the religious tolerance declared by the Grand Duke.[3] Let us refer to Tomas Venclova once again:

> The Grand Duchy of Lithuania was perhaps one of the most idiosyncratic entities in the history of Europe. It could be compared to the states that emerged in the Migration Period, even though the latter preceded it by almost 1,000 years. The conglomerate of pagan and Christian lands, which was 15 times larger than the ethnic Lithuanian territory, was quite unstable. After the christening, the Polish elements who came into Lithuania generally did not attempt to adapt to the present cultural situation but rather tried to subjugate it for themselves. For instance, the pagan religious system was damaged to such an extent that it is very difficult to reconstruct it scientifically today. The upper classes of society were rapidly polonizing. The model of the society itself was polonized. However, Lithuania's entrance into the European cultural sphere simultaneously encouraged Lithuanians to affirm their uniqueness. This validation was expressed in the form of a myth about the [Roman] genesis of Lithuanians, which is in contrast with the genesis of other nations.[4]

It is worth emphasising an important fact which emerges from this brief description: the relatively strong situation of multiculturalism and multilingualism which applied to the Baltic territory when it was united into a single entity after its first historical manifestation. These circumstances, which had formed over a long period of time, along with a wealth of the introduced linguistic phenomena (from Germans, Poles, Russians, Swedes; finally, once again, for a long period – Russians), determined a "delay" of autochthonous languages (Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian) in written sources (as we know, their first important records appeared in the second half of the fifteenth century, in the context of the Lutheran Reformation).

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[3] Cf. V. Pašuto and I. Štal, *Gedimino laiškai*, Vilnius, 1966: „Christianos facere deum suum colere secundum morem suum, ruthenos secundum ritum suum, polonos secundum morem suum et nos [lietuviai] colimus deum secundum ritum nostrum, et omnes habemus unum deum". Also see P. Rabikauskas, *Lituanus* 15, 1969.

[4] Venclova, op. cit., 26.

3. Ortsgebundenheit *and* Sprachgebundenheit
in Lithuanian literature

At this point, in order to continue our deliberations on the subject, we should make a distinction within the modern and contemporary "Baltosphere" between *ortsgebunden* literature and *sprachgebunden* literature.

3.1. ORTSGEBUNDENHEIT. The result of *Ortsgebundenheit* is the nonfictional or fictional literature which is focused on the Baltic territory and uses the linguistic resources of other cultural-literary traditions highlighted in the same territory so amply that this literature has been and is addressed and recognized in other types of literature.

Taking Lithuania as an example, the situation provides many dissemination directions that have developed over time on the basis of foreign languages (i.e. non-Lithuanian). The briefly described guidelines include the following:

a) The Latin-Lithuanian, e.g. Sarbievius (1595–1640), the Horace of Northern Europe; Hussovianus (1475/85–post 1533), and many other authors from the humanist-Renaissance era;

b) The *Ruski*-Lithuanian, which is extensive literature written in the so-called "Slavic officialese" (office language), or, if one prefers, the Ruthenian language during the four/five centuries of the GDL's existence;

c) The Polish-Lithuanian, which emerged already after the Union of Lublin signed in 1569 and became the leading one during Romanticism, which is the link between authors such as Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), Cyprian Norwid (1821–1883), and others, before eventually leading up to Czesław Miłosz (1911–2004);

d) The Russian-Lithuanian; I will only refer to one example, to the symbolist poet Jurgis Baltrušaitis Sr. (1873–1944);

e) The German-Lithuanian, e.g. Hermann Sudermann (1857–1928) or Johannes Bobrowski (1917–1965), who de-

scribed the Sarmatians, the Prussians, and Lithuania Minor in general in his *Litauische Claviere* [1966];

f) The French-Lithuanian, represented by Oscar de Lubicz Miłosz (1877–1939), Prosper Mérimée (1893–1870), and later by Algirdas Julien Greimas (1917–1992), Jurgis Baltrušaitis Jr. (1903–1988) and others;

g) The Hebrew-Lithuanian, from the cabbalistic teachings of Vilna Gaon to Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995); also includes contemporary writers that are prominent in Lithuania, such as Markas Zingeris (b. 1947), and Israel, such as Icchokas Meras (1934–2014).

All of these creative and other possible guidelines were based or are based on Lithuania as both a historical and a mythical reality; however, one way or another, Lithuania is perceived as a recognized setting and a foundation of identity regardless of the language which was historically chosen to be used.

3.2. SPRACHGEBUNDENHEIT OR A MINIMAL EXCURSUS INTO LITHUANIAN LITERATURE. On the other hand, demonstrably, the result of *Sprachgebundenheit* has been literature expressed in the autochthonous language of the Baltic region. This is exactly where the current discourse would begin: starting from the changes in literature that were expressed in three principal Baltic languages (Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian) and that I will illustrate hereinafter solely with the Lithuanian example.

3.3. FROM DONELAITIS TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. After centuries of oral literature and about 150 years of written religious (Reformation and Catholic) literature, the first secular work in the Lithuanian language was created by Kristijonas Donelaitis (1714–1780). Who was this man? A Protestant theologian, a multifaceted literary and scientific figure who was active in Lithuania Minor (i.e. Lithuanian-speaking territory located in the former Duchy of Prussia); between 1765 and 1775 he wrote his most important work (2,968 hexameters) entitled *Metai* (The Sea-

sons), which was divided into four parts: *Pavasario linksmybės, Vasaros darbai, Rudenio gėrybės,* and *Žiemos rūpesčiai.*

Donelaitis' poem was one of the examples of the widespread model of seasonal poetry (descriptive poetry of the eighteenth century), which was prominent not just in Europe. Speaking exclusively about the eighteenth century, it emerged in Spain with the first part (*Primera parte. En la primavera de la niñez y en el estío de la juventud*) of *El Criticón* (1651) by Baltasar Gracián (1601–1658); in Scotland, with *The Seasons* (1726–1727) by James Thomson (1700–1748), which was translated into German (1745) and went on to become the basis of an oratorio by Haydn; the figures remembered in France include Jean François de Saint-Lambert (1716–1803) and his *Les saisons* (1769) as well as Claude Peyrot (1709–1795), the author of *Los cuatre sosous* (1781), which was written in the Occitan language; in Italy, this model was developed by less known authors such as Parma native Francesco Ghilardelli Delfò (1745–1815), who published his *Le quattro stagioni* (1804) using the modern Bodoni typeface.

However, Donelaitis' poem, which was inseparable from European literary trends of the time, remained isolated in the Lithuanian literary scene. Certain historical events in Lithuania resulted in a period of decline, which continued – it is worth remembering – for about the entire nineteenth century! This also included years when the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth was partitioned and ended up a part of Tsarist Russia; those were the years when, in accordance with the tsar's plans, Lithuania would become only a geographical entity. Those were the press ban years, when Latin characters were prohibited in the Lithuanian press and the orders came to use the Cyrillic script; those were the years of the book smugglers: a unique phenomenon in the European context, thanks to which, for many years, Lithuanian books printed using the Latin alphabet outside the Russian Empire were smuggled into the homeland by approximately 2,000 book smugglers; they were often exiled to Siberia for their attachment to the native language and writings. Nevertheless, those were also the

years when the patriotic movement grew in the underground – within the entire Baltic region – and, after numerous uprisings, eventually culminated with declarations of independence during the same year, 1918: on 16 February in Lithuania, 18 November in Latvia, and 24 February in Estonia. This occurred after a shift in the historical circumstances, which followed multiple devastations of the Baltic region by enemy forces, as described by Marguerite Yourcenar in *Le coup de grâce* (1939).

It is worth emphasizing the close connection which emerges between national consciousness and linguistic awareness. The linguistic requirements of the patriotic Lithuanian (and the entire Baltic) movement have always followed in the wake of the demands for the country's welfare.

A natural question arises: are such cases exclusively typical of the Balts and other Central European nations, or, after all, are they encountered elsewhere as well. The long development of the modern and sovereign Lithuanian state has been, naturally, delayed; however, with the help of analogous measures, it is reminiscent of the rebirth of many other European states. This situation is not too different from other examples, starting from the events in Italy, where the dispute regarding the language (also known as *questione della lingua*, "the language question") became a kind of substitute for the country's much-needed unity. And, indeed no less effectively than other factors or historical conjunctures, the linguistic specificity and its "distinctiveness" are capable of evoking the sense of unity and tradition, especially at a time of political oppression. Of all the arts, literature has the strongest connection to the language it is expressed in; thus, it has been the most affected by this situation, in spite of all the rhetorical implications.

A delayed, or, in other words, epigonic expression of Romanticism can be recognized in these events of Lithuania's history. At any rate, this is what happened in the context of the Baltics and what requires attention.

If the comparison between the Lithuanian *Atgimimas*, the Latvian *Atmoda* or the Estonian *Ärkamisaeg* and the Italian *Risorgi-*

mento appears exaggerated or out of place – even though, to be honest, I do not see any reasons for that to be the case – one may find other, even more apt parallels. There is no shortage of similarities that can be noted between the "smaller" cultures that are located at the margins of the Old Continent, such as the Baltics or the Eastern part of the Iberian Peninsula. For instance, helpful parallels can be drawn with the Catalan *Renaixença*.

Even the aforementioned "delay" (I am unable to find a more adequate word: it should be read without the negative connotation which is usually ascribed to it), that is, actual lagging of Baltic autochthonous literature is more evident when compared to other "lateral areas" (using Matteo G. Bartoli's terminology) in Europe.

If we attempted to continue this comparison, we would find numerous interesting parallels with the situation of the Catalans. At about the same time, both linguistic communities – Lithuanian and Catalan – experienced the abandonment of language by the higher social classes; both of them were affected by recurring attempts to modify their language; both developed careful attentiveness and partiality to eco-linguistic ideas. Taking a closer look, it is not difficult to find intellectual and literary figures who are similar in styles, subjects, and the forms that they used; I am referring to poets such as Jonas Mačiulis (1862–1932) – a priest better known as Maironis, – and *mossèn* Jacint Verdaguer (1845–1902); or Simonas Daukantas (1793–1864), Motiejus Valančius (1801–1875) and, for instance, Josep Yxart (1852–1895), Joaquim Casas-Carbó (1858–1943) and Carles Riba (1893–1959); additionally, I would like to highlight the similarities between Jonas Jablonskis' (1860–1930) work of standardizing the common language and the analogous effort by Pompeu Fabra (1868–1948).

There could be even more comparisons. However, it is also necessary to explain clearly that, aside from well-founded similitudes between Lithuania and Catalonia, great differences also exist: throughout its history, Lithuania never discovered the importance of the large bourgeois class unlike Catalonia (and, par-

tially, unlike Livonia, albeit at the hands of the German population) and, because of this, it always remained attached to its agricultural roots both socially and culturally.

3.4. PARENTHETICAL CONSIDERATIONS. At this point, I would like to present considerations that diverge slightly from the subject at hand.

For the reasons that have already been presented and that will be explained later – thus, not only as a result of my professional habits as a linguist or mania expressed very liberally at this conference, which generally combines ideas by literary scientists and historians – so, like I said, for various reasons, I have found it difficult both subjectively and objectively to assume a position on the issue of national literary identification while leaving the linguistic factor aside.

Today the factor of language is the most easily avoided in literatures (and cultures) that are expressed in "imperial languages" – based on a joyful phrase by Claude Hagège,[5] – but this does not apply to the majority of literary (and cultural) Central and Eastern European contexts: both the Czech one, as recalled for us by Kundera at the start of this presentation, and the Baltic and many others. In the recognition of these literary (and cultural) contexts, language is not an epiphenomenon but rather the main element.

3.5. THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. Returning to the situation of Lithuania, it is important to note that, along with independence, a general reorientation of culture, especially literature, occurred, in accordance with the models brought from Western Europe. Allow me to allude to *Keturvėjininkai* – a local version of futurism whose main representative was poet Kazys Binkis (1893–1942) – or to *Žemininkai*, who explored the themes of existentialism and exodus.

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[5]   Hagège, *Halte à la mort des langues*, 2000.

Furthermore, an independent literary model was being developed (or an incomplete attempt to develop it) whose most prominent representatives were: Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas (1893–1967), Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius (1882–1954), Jonas Biliūnas (1879–1907) and others. Like I said, this was an independent literary model based on: language (not as a separate but rather as a crucial element); environment, *actual*, specific historical references, ties to the pagan mythology, which existed before the birth of Christianity, and a strong oral tradition, especially in poetry (heritage of many centuries of the oral tradition).

In this way, inter-war Lithuania achieved – along with the previously mentioned "delay" – an independent literary model inspired by a unique *Volk* worldview which can be defined and identified as "a national literary model"; the type which had already been established for some time in other linguistic-cultural contexts during the era of Romanticism.

This happened within *l'éspace d'un matin*. In the Baltic region, history repeated itself once again (however, not at all as a farce!) and the three republics were yet again shaken by large countries' plans to divide their territories between themselves; this time in accordance with the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Historical facts are known, so I will not expand upon them too much.[6] The intellectual class was completely crushed and any kind of opposition to the change was simply squashed. To the westerners, Czesław Miłosz's novel *Rodzinna Europa* (1959) became the key to understanding this period.

3.6. THE SECOND HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. A new era of Lithuanian literature began. In 1953, the aforementioned Czesław Miłosz wrote: "To every poet of today, the issue of the Balts is ten times more important than the matters of style, metrics, and metaphors" (see *Zniewolony umysł*, Paris, 1953). Nevertheless, after the circumstances changed, the independent or

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[6] Cf. *Lituanus* 35, 1989.

"national literary model" was abandoned and the writings were divided into three small movements that rarely converged: the official literature, which was influenced by the regime; the dissident or underground literature in the homeland; the diaspora or the lost emigrant literature. Each of these movements deserves a brief commentary.

After the repeated forced annexation into the Russian state, Soviet at the time, the world of Baltic literature underwent new, deep transformations that were common to all socialist republics of the USSR and the typically less highlighted countries from the so-called Eastern bloc.

On one hand, the instructions from the government of "socialist realism" and the established exemplary themes were obeyed, and Mikhail Suslov's method was followed, which fit well with the well-known Stalinist principle of "nationalist in form, socialist in content". On the other hand, the model of "passive resistance" was also developed, which was common to all dissident literatures of the Iron Curtain and which, since Samizdat, used Aesopian language.

No matter how paradoxical it may sound to our ears, throughout these decades, Lithuanians and other Balts embodied the idea of poetry as the "existential plan of the nation". It could be claimed today that this is an absurd interpretation (a misrepresentation of a well-known statement by Paul Celan). One is free to react however one wishes. This does not change the fact that it happened the way it did. Otherwise there is no way to explain the sold out and widely circulated poetry publications by such national bards as Justinas Marcinkevičius (1930–2011) or Bernardas Brazdžionis (1907–2002) or the mass participation in poetry readings within the confines of mysticism (I witnessed it myself) during the long years of passive resistance.

Once again, national consciousness and linguistic awareness, literary *in primis*, went hand in hand. For this reason, to Lithuanian and Baltic writers, the shelter of language factually meant both a shelter and an exile.

It was a shelter to the native dissident writers who wrote between the lines using the so-called Aesopian language. I would just like to remind you that, in the totalitarian world, which was hostile towards literary forms, after the other inconvenient intellectual figures were silenced (in the following order: a journalist, a sociologist, a historian, a writer of novels, a critic), the last one standing was the poet.[7]

It was an exile to those who – based on the euphemistic standard wording presented in soviet dictionaries – "retreated to the West". It was precisely the emigrant literature where the ephemeral "national literary model" attempted to survive, however, unsuccessfully. We could distinguish only a few authors of the first emigrant generation who followed this model.

In these cases, as a result of its strong attachment to language, the Lithuanian emigrant literature found permanent support for itself, but also its limits, in the lost *Heimat*. Starting from the following generations, the erosion process began of the beautiful illusion that one may bask in the glow of the familiarity of one's language. The emigrant poets were also the first ones to experience the finality of their native language during their daily lives abroad (typically in the USA), in the state of *Heimatlosigkeit*. In this context, the first attempts of exterritorialism (in the sense defined by George Steiner) were made by the third generation of writers. Apart from poet and essayist Tomas Venclova, it seems to me that Saulius Kondrotas (b. 1953) was another strong example of a cosmopolitan worldview and the choice of literary models that opposed traditional ones.

3.7. THE STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY. In an interview in 1989 – without anticipating what was to start taking place, little by little, at that time – the aforementioned Czesław Miłosz presented the following questions and answers:

> I ask myself: if these countries become normal, if their poets, writers are free from the constraints of political writing, if they

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[7] Cf. Orwell, "The Prevention of Literature."

write about the century's ideals, about love and death, will their literature be the same as in Europe or America? I answer: no. And it does not have to be. This is because our experience is the historical past. A horrible experience. It must teach us something.[8]

Just two years after these sorrowful words – after the bloody events of 1991 – chronologically, the last period of the changes in the Baltic region's literature began.

Contemporary criticism, especially among U.S. academics, attempts to interpret the experiences of Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians in the second half of the twentieth century (i.e. the Soviet period) using the terminology of "post-colonial literature". This way, the rhetoric of "the last European colonies" is brought back: a successful motto of the struggle for identity that occurred in the late 1980s; in our time, such a perspective is critical.

Even though it raises contradicting positions, this is the perspective through which the Balts themselves attempt to perceive their recent past and are heard by a larger audience at this stage of the restoration of sovereign post-soviet states.

3.8. CURRENT SITUATION. It could be claimed that, after a very long maturation and a very short implementation phase of the so-called "national literary (and cultural) model", the true overview of Lithuanian literature was undoubtedly changed. To question contemporary literature created in the homeland means to approach a vivid, straightforward, multifaceted and diverse place which has been traversed by non-systemic and contrasting, unstable and, in this dimension, also original trends.

Because of this, chronologically, the last European province, which was still partially attached to the Europe of the past, was also *the last one* – perhaps, more appropriately, *the latest one* – to join the literary Europe of today.

The forms, themes, genres and models have been developed that are also encountered in other literatures. To summarize:

8 Miłosz, *Santara*, winter, 1989.

women's literature thrives and stands out, poetry is going strong, the traditional novel less so (it is dominated by a mixed style combining narratives and essayist deliberations). However – this is not banal in this particular history – literature in Lithuanian language continues to be created.

On one hand, the restored political and governmental freedom opened up the perspectives of the writers in these lands towards a different world and also found many of them, especially the older generations of authors, unprepared for it.

On the other hand, new phenomena were observed that raised previously unheard-of questions: could we consider authors like the Canadian prosaist Antanas Šileika, or poets Ray Philippe and Irena Guilford, all of whom used the English language and yet had Lithuanian roots, to be a part of Lithuanian literature? And how should one evaluate the widely popular bestseller *Between Shades of Gray* by American-Lithuanian writer Rūta Šepetys?

Jonas Mekas (b. 1922), the father of underground cinema who has lived in the U.S. for many years but has always written his poetry in Lithuanian, stands out here. And, equally: how does one measure those writers and poets whose numbers are not so small indeed and who live in France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Israel and yet write in Lithuanian?

In the new context, a repeat of the "national literary model" is not possible, not least in recognized, traditional forms. Indeed, in 1993, Ričardas Gavelis (1950–2002), the author of the novel *Vilniaus Pokeris*, which was released as early as in 1990 and translated into foreign languages, answered a question by an American-Lithuanian magazine like this: "It is my hope that only free intellectuals will begin the first stage of Lithuania's synchronisation with the world". Perhaps this is sufficient, i.e. it is enough to use the isochronous rather than lagging forms, themes and models that are also employed elsewhere, so that one could claim that the Lithuanian literature became less national than before?

According to Venclova – yes, it is. He openly stated that the Lithuanian literature of today can no longer be associated with

the same Lithuania. This idea was also supported by sociologist, political scientist Leonidas Donskis, who considered the Lithuanian nation to be diasporic, exteriorial, and deterritorial.

Once again, the sole remaining "national" connection is the language. [9]

4. Stray Considerations

As I reach the end of this brief excursus regarding Lithuanian literature – and, thus, complete the task assigned to me – the time has come to present more of a summarizing consideration, based on which the specific local experience I have tried to review and present in this work could serve as a jumping-off point for our discussions.

At the end, in no particular order, I would like to present several ideas worthy of general reflection.

The first one is the fact that, when the question is asked whether *national literature* still exists, the word on which more emphasis should probably be placed is not *literature* but, rather, *national*. When it is questioned whether *national literature* is an out-dated category, could this be precisely because it is the *national* category which is perceived as out-dated? (It would be more of a concern if the opposite was the case; after all, there is no shortage of those who raise the issue and question the meaning of literature in a post-industrial society and a digital world). Thus, the question which we should ask ourselves is not whether *national literature* (still) exists but rather whether *national nation* (still) exists.

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[9] Similar view is shared by D. Satkauskytė, „Egzilinė (ne)tapatybė naujausioje lietuvių emigrantų literatūroje," *Oikos. Lietuvių migracijos ir diasporos studijos*, 12, 2011. An opposing opinion has been presented by, for example, G. Tamaševičius, „Metaforos, kuriomis gyvi esam. Arba kaip kalbama apie grėsmes kalbai," *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 2011, 5; t. p., „Tauta, gimusi iš filologijos, ir lingvistinio nacionalizmo fenomenas," *Darbai ir dienos*, 56, 2011.

However, an important note: this matter, as well as its motivation, will not be equally perceived everywhere. It is likely that the inability to function in relation to *national literature* will be the most noticeable in places where the category of *national nation* is weakened. Conversely, in places where discussing *national nation* is (still) viable, discussing *national literature* is also likely to (still) be viable as well.

The question becomes even more complicated if one starts deliberating on what the political sciences are saying. According to Immanuel Wallerstein, in the system of the current world, the view entrenched by the late romanticism, based on which the concepts of national nation are established after the creation of the state (and not before), is overturned. However, naturally, according to his general scheme, the American political scientist ignores the cases of "impermanent statehood", which were interrupted and reconstructed repeatedly over the course of history and were common to the Baltic states. It therefore follows that, as a result of the specific and tragic historical events, the countries of the Baltic region were more often considered to be relatively young (or "rejuvenated") and, because of that, they were still very sensitive to the category of the "national nation" right up until the relatively new era.

Returning to the main subject of the discourse, nevertheless, it is still not inconceivable to think that "national literature" will continue to be considered something which loses or has even already lost the elements typical of national literature (as it is perceived traditionally). Finally, there is a well-known phenomenon in languages when words exist longer than the prevalent terminology, and thus there are words that are still utilised and yet define concepts that are already out-dated or unused, and, in any case, have changed. Every language contains numerous examples of the loss of linguistic motivation or its changes.

Because of this, it is likely that the name of "national literature" presents concepts that are already unstable and modified and, in individual linguistic communities, it is undergoing (I

would say, banal) phenomena of semantic deterioration. The manner of one's thought processes does not die out easily and languages are (still) not adapted to the new situation.

In the end, the fact alone that once again the demand has been noticed for the interest in these subjects – as shown by this conference – reveals that for many, "national literature" has now become an ambiguous and unmotivated definition (or at least is in the process of becoming such) which has lost much of its former clarity.

Thus, all of this is still sufficiently likely. However, in either case, it is worth keeping in mind that such a process – as soon as it is determined to be actually taking place – does not happen at an equal rate or in equal manner everywhere, as the internal progress of individual linguistic communities is different. It is probable that even separate "literary communities" – if such an analogy is acceptable – advance using different motors, so to speak, and develop at different rates.

Because of this, one should not ignore the difficulties arising in the horizon each time when one wishes to expand the categories (that are valid in the wide macro-territories of the West) to the smaller European regions (or simply *the provinces*) where history has set up social-cultural situations that are incomparable to those more prevalent elsewhere. Doing this would not only be misguided but would also raise the threat of misunderstanding. And it is well established that today's misunderstandings arise unavoidably as a result of the ignorance of the past.

The trajectory of Lithuanian identity helps us understand the twentieth century history of the entire Central Europe: the amalgam of languages and literatures, the enormous diversity of cultures and ideas accumulated in a relatively small area. At this moment, the challenge for the local intellectuals is to create the identity of the Baltic region, which would be complete and open, and yet simultaneously would be capable of mapping out the past and the present based on completely new criteria.

One strong supporter and seeker of the territorial and cultural identity of the Baltic region is [unfortunately, was] Leonidas

Donskis (1962–2016), a political scientist and sociologist from Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas. Accordingly, in the liberal patriotism (and nationalism) – considered to be an alternative to the conservative and radical imperial nationalism which spurns small nations – Donskis sees the historical creation of the Baltic region, which was untangled thanks to prominent liberal thinkers of this geographical-cultural area such as Kant, Herder, Schiemann, Berlin, as well as Lithuanian theorists of liberalism such as Vytautas Kavolis (1930–1996).

In other words, the Baltic region has been presented again and again as the setting for contemporary challenges and the testing of tensions. In the end, such an understanding was also developed and testified in the lifelong writings of British historian John Hiden (1940–2012). He was certain that contemporary Europe is facing challenges that are very reminiscent of those that the Baltic states had to face during the brief period of independence in the interwar era (particularly, in relation to emigration and the formation of large new ethnic and cultural communities). Hiden confirmed that the Baltic states possess the kind of political experience which the West has either not experienced or does not understand. In the present state of insecurity and necessity to strengthen and protect oneself, Europe could learn from the experience of the Baltic countries.

Moreover, the experience of the Baltics and Lithuania – like that of many other "small homelands" – teaches us one thing which must be repeated and appreciated: the significance of the linguistic factor, i.e. strong connection between national consciousness and linguistic awareness; due to the known historical events in this area, this factor was never considered to be a matter-of-course and thus national consciousness and (socio)linguistic awareness went hand in hand. In spite of this, this connection does not apply only to small nations. In the beginning, every literature establishes a mythical link to the nation's language; that same nation is the underlying, changing element; it is the dynamic promise of identity which follows along the journey.

Undeniably, today this European periphery – the Baltic cultural sphere – is a part of the phenomenon of general convergence (one may call it globalization), which tends to "entropize" the literary expressions of the world. Still, the language in which the works are expressed is not just a secondary supplement; on the contrary, just like in the context presented here, linguistic diversity remains a vitally significant factor of syntropy and identity.

The objections have been known for a long time. For many times in history, depending on the circumstances, the minority cultures were "encouraged" to employ the codes of larger cultures' linguistic expression: it is the consequence of cultural hegemony.

I remember a joke about Miguel de Unamuno, who asked his friend Joan Maragall, at once earnestly and jokingly, why, instead of using a Castillian Mauser, he would rather choose a Catalan Spingarde. Eugeni d'Ors answered him with insight which was ahead of its time:

> Unamuno is correct: as a weapon of their imperialism, in the Castillian language, it is the Mauser. However, other Mausers, which are "more Mauser" than the Castillian language, are required in other wars of the world, *n'est ce pas, my dear*?

Unaware of it himself, Eugeni d'Ors forecast Europanto, which has spread among the public servants in Brussels (and was described in theory by Diego Marani).

5. The End

Our considerations should not underestimate "the identity horizon" (and, even less so, in favour of "the national horizon"). A more general question is connected to the ties between identity, language, literature, and the culture of belonging. Speaking of the Old Continent, one may rephrase the question presented in the beginning and ask whether it is possible to identify individual distinguishing features of a comparative study of literatures

which would differ from an examination of "national literature" and would satisfy both old and newly arising demands of linguistic identity and belonging.

How many and what competences should be possessed by a specialist of such an unheard-of discipline (how should one call it?)? Which literatures and which languages should be reviewed? Do we have any criteria to be able to imagine something like this? Something which would be new enough to differ from the methods employed in *Geistes-* and/or *Sozialgeschichte* and yet would preserve the effective and functional horizon of language-identity?

It is well known that, as long as we are accustomed and inclined to explore visual arts or music in an over-national context, we face greater obstacles – oh, the impregnability of the linguistic code! – while reading literary works. Nevertheless, we can examine them from the perspective of a micro-context (within national culture) or macro-context (within over-national culture).

This is an encouragement which comes from a faraway time. There have been documented attempts in this sense at least since Goethe's considerations of *Weltliteratur*. From the German *Philologie der Weltliteratur* (Curtius, Auerbach, Spitzer), which reacted in an universalist manner to the supernationalism of the time, to the more modern attempts such as Pascale Casanova's *La République mondiale des lettres*, which focused on the time and space model, or the analysis of the European novel's mapping and the form of Franco Moretti's (b. 1950) novel.[10] All of them are great examples. But what is the place of minority literatures within this perspective? And what will be their contribution to the formation of the ideal super-canon?

[10] Cf. *Il romanzo* (Torino, 2001–2003, 5 t.) and *Conjectures on World Literature*, „New Left Review", 1, 2000. Moretti discusses metaphors of wood and wave and admits that he is indebted to the linguistic ideas of the nineteenth century that are described in August Schleicher's (1821–1868) *Stammbaumtheorie* and Johannes Schmidt's (1843–1901) *Wellentheorie*.

From the perspective of the minorities, one solution could perhaps be the definition of European literature. It is a utopian, ideological, realist challenge: undoubtedly, an important project aimed at creating the identity of Europe which would not ignore the diversity of national literatures but, rather, would actually arise from it.

Work would be required on conjunctures and connections, on migration and on the selection of models, genres, directions of the writings; but, also, on the history of translations and auto-translations (Nabokov, Kundera et al.), on the "reception" of works and the authors from different countries, on inter-influences; aspects of publication histories could also have their place. In this way, perhaps, a map of the smallest denominators that are common to the over-national literary tradition could be realized.

Personally, I see no reason why the most traditional grouping into linguistic communities could not also contribute effectively to the composition of such a small network. They are seen as a transitional, yet unbreakable, *quid*.

Alright. I began this brief tour of Baltic, especially Lithuanian, literatures with a quote by Milan Kundera. I will end it with another phrase by the same author which seems highly significant to me because it combines different perspectives:

> Every work's *originality* is partially inspired by the historical environment in which it is rooted, but its *value* is seen, understood, distinguished, and measured only in the context which oversteps the boundaries of its nation.[11]

It is equivalent to the expectancy of equilibrium between the history which has already been created and the history which is still being written today.

> [translated into Lithuanian by K. Žygaitė and reviewed by the author]

[11] Cf. *Weltliteratur*, 2002.

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Translated by MARTYNAS GEDVILA

Family Change and Inequality in Lithuania

AUŠRA MASLAUSKAITĖ

Introduction

In the last three decades, the Lithuanian family has experienced dramatic shifts. Marriage rates have decreased, cohabitation has become almost an inevitable stage in the family formation process, non-marital fertility has increased, divorce rates have remained high, and fertility has declined. Generally, these trends correspond to the ones subsumed under the notion of the "second demographic transition", and many developed countries experience them with some variation in scope, pace and timing. In addition, there is growing evidence from various countries that family changes are socially stratified, thus distinct patterns of demographic family behavior are pronounced in particular social classes; moreover, social classes increasingly diverge in their family trajectories. As the family structure is associated with the accumulation and transmission of various resources, the divergence of family behavior by class raises the question on the role of the family in rising inequalities.

The current debate on family and inequalities evolves around McLanahan's well-known thesis of "diverging destinies"[1]. It sug-

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[1] McLanahan, "Diverging destinies," 607–627.

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gests that family changes, such as unstable partnerships, single motherhood, separation and divorce, and non-marital fertility have become more pronounced among the lower educated, while the better educated opt to marry, have children in marriage and enjoy more stable partnerships. Family life choices are increasingly determined by accumulated resources; however, they also lead to losses or gains of resources. As an outcome, children born to unmarried parents, single mothers or those experiencing parental divorce might be confronted with inequality of opportunities in contrast to children born and raised in two-parent families. The increasing social class gap in family behavior conditions not only the divergence of the life chances of children but also the rising inequalities in the parents' generation.

Family change and inequalities are widely addressed in North American, Northern, and Western European countries. However, the issue is less covered in the Baltic countries, and Central and Eastern Europe despite the fact that the transition to capitalist economy has generated inequalities in many life domains. Lithuania within this context represents a special case of aggressive neoliberal capitalism[2], a marginal welfare state, and a radical austerity strategy implemented in 2008/2009 during the financial crisis[3]. This has resulted in a very high income inequality (the second highest in the EU, almost equal to that in the USA[4]), the lowest social expenditures in the EU, and marginal social spending on family policy. Consequently, the economic growth has been achieved at very high social costs.

Against this backdrop, the aim of this article is to examine to what extent, if at all, family changes in Lithuania over the past three decades follow the pattern of "diverging destinies". I analyze whether the family change is uneven across the social

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[2] Bohle and Greskovits, "Neoliberalism, Embedded Neoliberalism and Neocorporalism," 443–466.

[3] Sommers et al. "Austerity as a Global Prescription," 397–416.

[4] Gini coefficient for Lithuania is 0.38 (2017), for the USA – 0.39 (2016), UK – 0.35 (2016), while for Estonia – 0.31 (2017) (Eurostat, 2019; OECD Family database, 2019).

classes, and focus on trends in cohabitation and marriage, non-marital fertility, divorce, and single motherhood. In addition, I place the Lithuanian trends in a wider comparative perspective in order to reveal the scope and magnitude of the changes. I bring into perspective the USA not only because of the primary audience of the journal but also because "diverging destinies" are most deeply presented in this society. My analysis relies on a systematic review of existing research evidence reported in national and international literature. It is worth noting that, similar to other countries of the region, detailed, complex datasets based on a longitudinal design are far from abundant in Lithuania. Even if descriptive, my analysis could contribute to a wider discussion on family change and inequalities by bringing in the case of a specific transitional societal context.

Changes in Family Formation: Cohabitation and Marriage

The "golden age of marriage", which was prevalent in Lithuania from the 1960s, became the historical past by the end of the twentieth century. Decades when marriage was almost universal, i.e. with the absolute majority of a generation marrying, and doing this at a young age ended in the beginning of the 1990s. The crude marriage rate, i.e. the number of marriages per 1,000 inhabitants, dropped from 9,8 in 1990 to 4,5 in 2001 though in subsequent years has experienced some recovery with the rate leveling at around 7,5 in 2017[5]. To portray the process in a bit different way, in 1970 almost 80 per cent of women 30–34 years old were married, while in 2011 only around 65 per cent were; for men the rates correspondingly were 85 per cent and 60 per cent[6] (Stankūnienė et al., 2016). In addition to marrying less often, people started to marry later. The mean age at first marriage has

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[5]   Statistics Lithuania, https://osp.stat.gov.lt/statistiniu-rodikliu-analize#/
[6]   Stankūnienė et al. "*Lietuvos demografinė kaita*," 2016.

increased from 24,6 to 30,3 years for men, and from 22,7 to 27,9 for women in the period from 1990 to 2017[7].

Despite these trends, Lithuania still has the highest crude marriage rate in the EU (along with Cyprus), while among the OECD countries it is close to the USA, where the crude marriage rate is 6,9[8]. Lithuanians also enter their first marriage at a younger age if compared to other EU countries, and the trend is very similar to the trends in the USA. Thus, disregarding the significant shifts, marriage in Lithuania sustains its central role in the family life and individual biography. Unlike many other Northern and Western European countries, marriage remains the socially and individually aspired form of family arrangement, the normative event of the life course. However, the current young generation experiences transition through this life event less frequently than the previous ones.

Changes in marital behavior are primarily linked to the adoption of a new family formation pattern, which includes cohabitation. Almost 70 per cent of all first partnerships in Lithuania are currently cohabitations[9]. Although the country was a rather latecomer to this new path of family formation, the shift was very rapid compared to other countries and took place at the turn of the twenty-first century[10]. Noteworthy, cohabitation in Lithuania existed already prior to the 1990s, but it was marginal and socially undesired, and, even if entered, played the role of a short prelude to marriage.

In the beginning of the 2000s, cohabitation also changed its character. It has become an arrangement of romantic involvement, temporarily more undefined than previously and, on many occasions, lacking the decisive intention to marry. The transition from cohabitation to marriage grew longer, and fewer cohabita-

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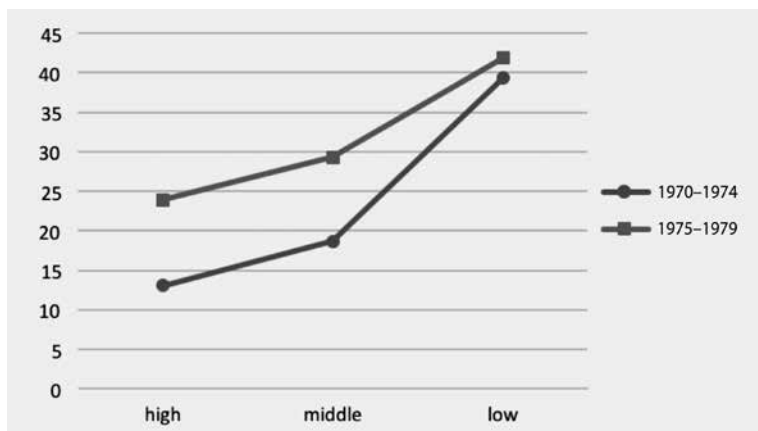[7] Statistics Lithuania, ibid.
[8] OECD Family database, http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm
[9] Stankūnienė and Maslauskaitė, "*Lietuvos šeima,*" 2009.
[10] Puur et al, "Transformation of Partnership Formation in Eastern Europe," 389–417.

Fig. 1. *Never married men by birth cohort and education, per cent, 2011*

Source: prepared on data provided in Stankūnienė et al., 2016.

tions continue on into marriage; consequently, the dissolution of cohabitations also is more frequent[11]. Thus, even if live-in cohabitation has become almost universal, the transition out of cohabitation to marriage – did not. As a consequence, some population groups are left of out of marriage.

Against this backdrop, one might ask if the retreat from marriage is a lifestyle choice or an outcome of limited resources and opportunities. Generally, non-conformity to social norms is a choice of the better educated, because they are the first to adopt and internalize innovative behavior. However, a closer look at the socio-economic profile of the population not marrying reveals an opposite trend. There is strong evidence that the retreat from marriage is recently more pronounced among the socio-economically disadvantaged groups, while those with higher education marry, even if they do so later. A study based on census-linked register data, which provides a very precise picture, shows that the university educated have much higher chances to marry compared to lower educated[12]. The trend is observed for women and

[11]   Maslauskaitė and Baublytė, "Education and Transition," 563–578.
[12]   Maslauskaitė and Jasilionis, "Vyrų išsilavinimas ir pirmoji santuoka," 11–26.

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men but is stronger for men, while the risk of not marrying is almost twice as high for the lower-educated[13]. Figure 1 adds some nuance to the picture and shows non-married men by birth cohort and education. One can observe that among 37–41-year-old men (birth cohort 1970–1974), who are already beyond the peak of their marriageable age, the number of never married with a university education is less than 15 per cent, while among the lower-educated it is around 40 per cent. Thus, a bit less than a half of lower-educated[14] men in their late thirties are not married. The sharp educational gradient in men's marital behavior shows the extremely disadvantageous position of lower-educated men in the so-called marriage market, where the opportunities to marry are weighed against stable employment and sufficient earnings.

The educational divergence in marital behavior is extensively evidenced in the USA (Carlson 2018); however, the results are less consistent for EU countries. Kalmijn reports for European countries that the educational gradient depends on contextual factors linked to gender roles[15]. In gender egalitarian contexts, better educated women and men are more likely to be married, while in traditional contexts, men's prospects to marry do not diverge by education, and better educated women will be less likely to be married. One recent study, which included 14 European countries and the USA, has found that Lithuania is among the few European countries following the US pattern in the educational differences in marital behavior if marriage and divorce are considered jointly[16].

There are several arguments explaining why the lower-educated have lower prospects of marrying. To put it simply, it is the lack of resources. Commonly, marriage is perceived as a long-term commitment, among other matters associated with child-

13 Ibid.
14 Low education includes basic, vocational training without secondary education or lower level of education.
15 Kalmijn, "The Educational Gradient in Marriage," 1499–1520.
16 Perelli-Harris and Lyons-Amos, "Partnership Patterns in the United States," 251–282.

birth and childrearing. There are conventional, culturally pre-scribed prerequisites for entering marital relationships such as more or less secure employment, sufficient income, and the ability to acquire property in which to live. Scientific literature describes this as the marriage bar, which is usually a bit higher than "the minimum necessary to establish an independent house-hold"[17]. The marriage bar for men is higher in many countries, despite relevant changes in gender attitudes, roles, and high or increasing levels of women employment. Overall, individual opportunities to jump over the marriage bar are conditioned by broader economic and social factors. Radical marketization of economy, accompanied by de-industrialization, liberalization of labor and realty markets in most disadvantageous ways, affects the lower-educated: their employment opportunities, earning level, and affordability of homeownership. Moreover, Lithuania inherited a concentration of men of lower education, thus the structural mismatch between supply and demand of human cap-ital detrimentally affected men's chances in the labor market, but also in the marriage market in the emerging capitalist economy.

Retreat from marriage does not imply retreat from partner-ship. Young Lithuanians start living together younger than their parents' generation[18]. However, a portion of them do not form marriages due to the inability to overcome the marriage bar and live in cohabitation, dissolve cohabitation or form new cohabit-ing relationships.

The outcomes of cohabitation for the individual and society depend on many factors; however, there is strong empirical ev-idence on some universal differences between cohabitation and marriage. First, cohabitation is less stable compared to marriage. After ten years from the beginning of the partnership, 38 per cent of cohabitations dissolve in Lithuania, while the rate for marriages is 14 per cent, in Sweden the rates are 47 per cent and

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[17] McLanahan and Percheski, "Family Structure and the Reproduction of In-equalities," 257–276.

[18] Stankūnienė ir Maslauskaitė, "Lietuvos šeima," 2009.

20 per cent, while in the USA – 62 per cent and 32 per cent correspondingly[19]. In addition, cohabitations are associated with lower subjective well-being and relationship quality[20]. Partnership instability is linked to psychosocial stress, lower well-being, and disruption in the accumulation of economic resources. It is important to stress that the disadvantage linked to cohabitation is primarily conditioned by the selectivity of cohabitants. They are often lower-educated, come from a lower socio-economically background, and from divorced families. Thus, in their life course, cohabitation is an outcome of accumulated disadvantages but this family form also generates additional disadvantages.

Divorce

Divorce in Lithuania has been very frequent for more than half a century. Liberalization of divorce legislation in 1965 has led to the secular rise of divorce rates, which peaked in the late 1970s and has remained almost at the same level until recently with a few short-term fluctuations[21]. In 2016, the crude divorce rates (i.e. number of divorce per 1000 inhabitants) in Lithuania was among the highest in the OEDC countries 3.1 (in the USA – 3.2)[22]. The total divorce rate – the indicator measuring the probability of marital dissolution – in Lithuania is around 0.4 and shows that app. 40 per cent of all marriages will be dissolved[23].

Divorces are distributed unevenly across the social ladder, and the relationship between class and divorce is dynamic over time. Previously, in most developed countries, divorce was more common among those with a higher education. However, this is not the case anymore. The USA was among the first where people with

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[19] Andersson et al. "Life-table Representations of Family Dynamics," 1081–1230.
[20] See for review Perelli-Harris, "Universal or Unique?" 2018.
[21] Maslauskaitė et al. "Socio-economic Determinants of Divorce in Lithuania," 871–908.
[22] OECD Family database, ibid.
[23] Statistics Lithuania, ibid.

a lower education started to divorce more than other educational groups, and the change took place in the 1970s[24]. Studies regarding Europe show a variety in the educational divorce gradient: meaning that in some countries, a higher chance of divorce is characteristic for the lower-educated, in the others – for university educated, and in some countries education does not play a role[25].

In Lithuania, the educational gradient of divorce reversed from positive to the negative at around the year 2000. While studies covering earlier periods, found that the higher educated were more prone to divorce, one recent population level study reports that the risk of ending marriage in divorce is around 60 per cent higher for lower-educated men and women compared to those with a university education[26]. Perelli-Haris and Lyons-Amos (2016) conducted a methodologically complex study with the focus on individual partnership trajectory in totality in 14 European countries and the USA[27]. They found that partnership trajectories diverge by education only in three countries – Lithuania, the USA and France: the higher educated marry and stay married, even if they do it later in their life course, while the lower-educated, if they marry, have a higher risk of separation.

Several sociological arguments explain the change in the social composition of divorce. First, when financial and social costs of divorce decrease, divorce becomes affordable also for people with fewer resources. Second, people in disadvantageous socio-economic positions have a family life which involves more psychosocial stress caused by their vulnerability and insecurity. On the other hand, the lower-educated have more limited personal and emotional resources to deal with stress, because of the lack of communication and conflict-solving skills. They often

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24 Martin, "Trends in Marital Dissolution," 537–560.
25 Härkönen and Dronkers. "Stability and Change in the Educational Gradient of Divorce," 501–517.
26 Maslauskaitė et al. Socio-economic Determinants of Divorce in Lithuania," 871–908.
27 Perelli-Haris and Lyons-Amos, "Partnership Patterns in the United States," 251–282.

adopt abusive, self-destructive behavior and other non-constructive strategies to deal with the stressful situations, and this also increases the propensity of divorce.

Divorce is associated with many negative outcomes for adults, but also for children. There are economic loses, which are especially severe for women raising children alone. Women experience larger economic losses, if they were economically dependent in marriage. In contrast, divorce does not trigger a decrease of economic well-being if women divorce unemployed or poorly employed men[28]. These women were already poor and economically vulnerable before the divorce, and in most cases remain poor afterwards.

Research on divorce and health outcomes report inconsistent results, and highlight the relevance of many mediating factors linked with gender, nature of marriage, and the divorce process[29]. However, there is strong evidence of a higher mortality rate for divorced women and especially men, and this holds true also for Lithuania[30].

Generally, children of divorce fare worse in terms of academic achievements, and they have more behavioral and emotional problems, and problems with social relationships[31]. The discussion on divorce outcomes for children is still ongoing, and current research reveals many intervening factors that determine the child's adjustment to parental divorce[32]. However, research evidence for divorce outcomes for children remains scarce in Lithuania primarily due to the lack of detailed and reliable data. Existing research unambiguously supports only the intergenerational transmission of divorce, which means that children of divorce most likely will also experience a break-up of their marriages[33].

28   Maslauskaitė, "Single Mothers Always Lose?" 614–630.
29   See for review Härkönen, "Divorce," 1–14.
30   Shkolnikov et al. "Linked Versus Unlinked Estimates of Mortality," 1392–1406.
31   Amato, "The Consequences of Divorce," 5–24.
32   Härkönen, ibid.
33   Härkönen and Dronkers, "Stability and Change in the Educational Gradient of Divorce," 501–517.

Summing up, Lithuania has a long tradition of frequent divorce and this tradition has remained stable in the last three decades. Yet, recently, the social composition of divorce has significantly changed. The higher educated have higher chances of remaining married, while the lower-educated – of getting divorced, and thus accumulating even more vulnerability in their life course. Most important, divorce has a long-term negative effect, and in this sense deepens the inequality of opportunities between the children of a divorced couple and children raised in a two-parent family.

Non-marital Childbearing

Through almost all of the twentieth century (except the last decade), non-marital fertility in Lithuania was low and with small short-term fluctuations leveled at around 6-7 per cent[34]. Growth in non-marital childbirth was recorded between 1992 and 2002, when, in a decade, it increased almost four times from 7.9 to 28 per cent and plateaued afterwards[35]. Lithuania is among the OECD countries with rather low non-marital fertility rates. To compare: it was 39.8 per cent in the USA, 59,7 per cent in France, and 40 per cent in neighboring Latvia in 2016.

The growth of non-marital fertility in Lithuania in the 1990s coincided with the proliferation of cohabitation. As a result, the majority of all non-marital children are born to cohabiting parents (approximately 80 per cent). Interestingly, the share of single mothers, who at the birth of the child do not have a partner, is more or less the same as it was before 1990[36].

Non-marital childbirth is also socially stratified; thus, the change in fertility behavior is distributed unevenly among the social classes. Several comparative studies, which also include Lithuania, prove that non-marital fertility is more concentrated

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[34] Maslauskaitė, "Nesantuokinis gimstamumas Lietuvoje," 54–65.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.

among the lower socio-economic groups[37]. This finding is also supported by the study of the spatial distribution of non-marital fertility in Lithuanian municipalities. Non-marital fertility is significantly higher in rural municipalities and in some of them almost half of the children are born in non-marital relationships (for instance, in Pakruojis, Kupiškis, Šilutė district municipalities)[38]. Substantially fewer children are born to unmarried parents in the largest cities; for example in Vilnius city municipality around 20 per cent, with a similar percentage in Kaunas city municipality[39].

Children born to unmarried parents most likely will experience dissolution of the parental union and end up living in a single parent household or in an unstable subsequent partnership of their parents. Both outcomes have an unfavorable effect on a child's development, and on their overall well-being and life chances. As non-marital fertility is concentrated on the lower end of the social ladder, the majority of children born to unmarried parents will be confronted by financial constraints, low parenting quality, lower psychological well-being of the mother, and less involvement of the non-resident father.

Single Parent Families and Children in Single Parent Families

Around one in four families with children are single parent families (26.9 per cent) in Lithuania and the absolute majority of them are single mother families[40]. A quarter (25 per cent) of all children 0-17 years old grow up in a single parent family. This is one of the highest rates among the OECD countries, and Lithuania very closely follows Latvia and the USA (Fig.2). A study, covering 19 countries and the period of the early 2000s,
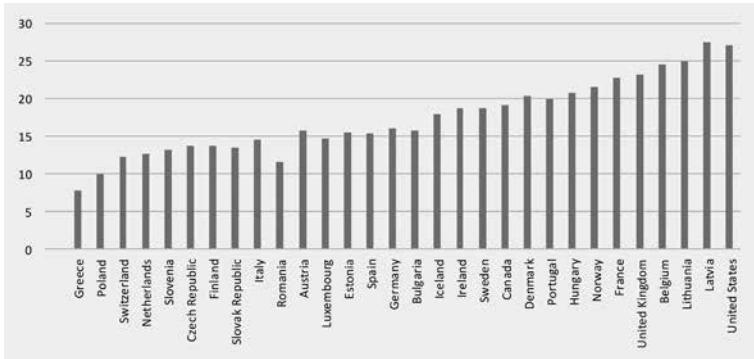
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[37] Lappegård et al. "Why are Marriage and Family Formation Increasingly Disconnected," 2018.

[38] Maslauskaitė, "Nesantuokinis gimstamumas Lietuvoje," 54–65.

[39] Ibid.

[40] OECD, Family database, 2019.

Figure 2. *Children (0–17) in single parent families in OECD countries, per cent, 2016*

Source: OECD Family database 2019

proves that 40 per cent of children in Lithuania experience short-er or longer periods of life in a single mother family until they turn 15 years old[41]. A similar share exists in France, Estonia, the Czech Republic, and even higher in the USA (52 per cent) and Russia (49 per cent)[42]. In the early 1990s, Lithuania had 29 per cent of children with the childhood experience of a single moth-er family[43]. Children born to unmarried parents have a higher likelihood to end up living with only one parent (60 per cent) compared to children born in marital unions (32 per cent)[44].

Single motherhood is stratified by education and in the last decade, the educational gap is widening in Lithuania. In the period 1994 to 2017, there is a gradual increase of single moth-erhood among lower-educated women. The percentage has al-most doubled; it has progressed from 22 per cent to almost 40 per cent (Fig. 3). In contrast, among middle or higher educated women, single motherhood was already less prevalent in the early 1990s. The increase was moderate in the subsequent decade and it stabilized afterwards at around 22 per cent for higher
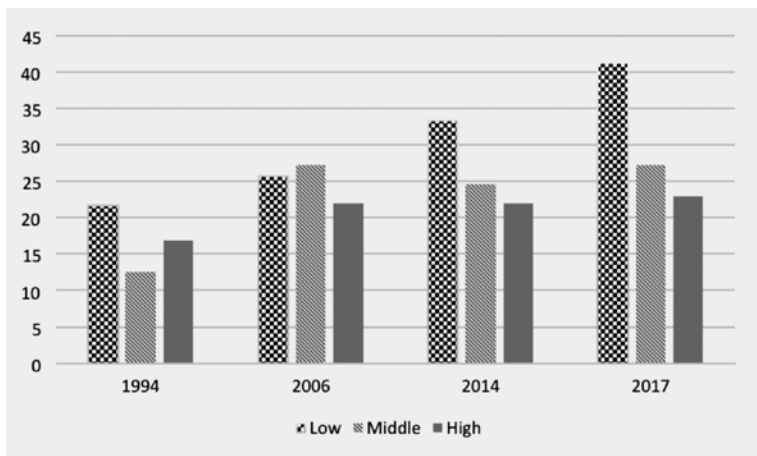
41   Andersson et al. "Life-table Representations of Family Dynamics," 1081–1230.
42   Ibid.
43   Andersson, "Children's Experience of Family Disruption," 343–364.
44   Andersson et al. "Life-table Representations of Family Dynamics," 1081–1230.

Figure 3. *Single motherhood prevalence (% of all mothers) by education, Lithuania 1994–2017*

educated and approximately 25 per cent for middle educated. Thus, currently, the educational gap in single motherhood in Lithuania is large: among lower-educated women, single motherhood is approximately twice as prevalent as among university educated mothers.

The large presence of single motherhood among the lower-educated in also characteristic for the USA (32 per cent), the UK (33.7 per cent), and Denmark (32.3 per cent)[45]. However, in contrast to other countries, in Lithuania, single motherhood is more frequent among better educated women. For example, for higher educated, the rate is 15.9 per cent in the USA, 11.7 in the UK – 11. 7, and 9.3 in the Czech Republic[46]. Consequently, even if there is an overall increase in single motherhood among lower-educated women and the educational gap is growing in Lithuania, it is still moderate in international terms.

[45] Härkönen, *Diverging Destinies in International Perspective*, 2017.
[46] Ibid.

The increase in single motherhood among lower-educated women reflects the social stratification of already discussed family processes, i.e. non-marital fertility, cohabitation and divorce.

Single parent families are exposed to economic hardship in many countries; however, the level and outcomes of economic deprivation are conditioned by the social composition of divorce / union instability, and structural gender inequalities in the labor market and the type of family policies, which might alleviate the economic burden. In Lithuania, the level of poverty of single parent families is very high; almost every second family lives at risk of poverty. Lithuania scores among the countries with very high single parent family poverty and the highest in the EU. In 2017, 48.4 per cent of single parent families lived at risk of poverty and this was the highest share in the EU, while the rates are substantially lower even for other Baltic and CEE countries[47]. To compare, the risk of poverty rate for the USA was 46 per cent[48].

Poverty and economic hardship of single mothers lead to social exclusion from a socially acceptable way of life, which is generally understood as the "good and desired". In addition, single motherhood is associated with lower psychological well-being, and higher parental-related stress, particularly among lower-educated women. As in other countries, higher education has a protective effect for single mothers. To our knowledge, there are no national or international studies which would include Lithuania and would directly consider the effects of family structure on a child's educational outcomes. Existing recent comparative studies covering other countries, suggest that even if single motherhood is linked with educational disadvantages for children, the link between the mother's education, family structure and child's educational outcomes is very complex and depends on the societal context[49] (Garriga, Berta 2018; Bernardi, Boertien, 2016).

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[47] Eurostat database, 2019.
[48] OECD, Family database, 2019.
[49] Garriga and Berta. "Single-Mother Families," 2018; Bernardi and Boertien, "Understanding Heterogeneity," 807–819.

Conclusions

This article summarizes the evidence of the trends and social stratification of family changes in Lithuania, which took place in the last three decades. We focus on several aspects of family behavior such as cohabitation and marriage, divorce, non-marital fertility and single motherhood; show the progression of this behavior over time and the socio-economically uneven pattern. Overall, findings show that lower likelihood to marry higher chances of divorce, childbirth outside marriage, and single motherhood are more pronounced among the population with a lower education, while the better educated adopt "traditional" family behavior. They marry and live in more stable unions, less frequently have children in cohabitation, and consequently among them single motherhood is less pronounced. Thus, extensive shifts in family life, which the Lithuanian society has experienced since the 1990s, did not occur in parallel across the social spectrum. Social classes developed distinct patterns of family behavior.

As family structure plays an important role for individual well-being, health, and accumulation of socio-economic recourses, divergence of family behavior by social class also signals the accumulation of advantages or disadvantages across the individual life course. This raises an important question on the interdependencies between family and inequality on the societal level, because family is shaped by inequality, but it also contributes to inequality. Marriage and divorce, and non-marital fertility are outcomes of inequalities in incomes, in access to housing, and in life chances. Single motherhood and an unstable family context reproduce inequalities, because, in such family circumstances, children are exposed to lower parenting quality, and lower social and economic resources, which in turn have a negative affect on their life chances.

There is an intense discussion in current international scholarship on family as a mechanism in reproducing inequalities. The phenomenon of "diverging destinies"[50] is well evidenced for the

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[50]   McLanahan, "Diverging Destinies," 607–627.

United States. However, evidence for Europe is more diverse and points to a mediating role of various contextual country level factors. Nonetheless, it appears that, within the European context, Lithuania represents a case which approximates the scenario of "diverging destinies" as it was illustrated in this paper. On a more general level, we might argue that this condition is an outcome of the interplay of various dependencies and cultural and gender factors, but also neoliberal economic and welfare state policies, which resulted in very high income inequalities, social exclusion, high barriers to homeownership, commodification, and very marginal social support for individuals and families.

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Rūpintojėlis: Evocation of Indigenous Lithuanian Soulfulness

EGLUTĖ TRINKAUSKAITĖ

> Landscapes are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock. <…> But it should also be acknowledged that once a certain idea of landscape, a myth, a vision, establishes itself in an actual place, it has a peculiar way of muddling categories, of making metaphors more real than their referents; of becoming, in fact, part of the scenery.[1]

The Waking Screen

About 1000 years ago, Lithuania was covered in primeval forest, swamps, bogs, marshy lakes, and rivers.[2] This rich physical environment formed what Indian-born psychoanalyst Salman Akhtar defines as 'the waking screen':[3]

> By "waking screen" we mean the baby is taking perceptual input inside and forming a substrate of perceptual expectations. From which background the baby will then scan the environment – if this thing is familiar or unfamiliar. This is about everything: the

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[1] Schama. *Landscape and Memory*.
[2] Daugirdaitė-Sruogienė. *Lietuvos Istorija,* 21.
[3] Akhtar, *Immigration and Acculturation*, 16.

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level of noise, the skin color of people around, the height of the people around, the density of population, the landscape, the big and the small animals around, thunder, the mountains and rivers and oceans and rain – all this forms a waking screen from which we access things.[4]

Akhtar argues that migration causes a rupture – a disturbance in the waking screen. This results in compensation for that disturbance in the form of creative practice. He writes, "One's mind becomes the fertile motherland of ideas in a reparative identification with the idealized artistic productivity of the lost country".[5] The waking screen of pre-Christian Lithuania, and the cultural identity it shaped, exists today only in fragments. This essay will explore ways in which the "soulfulness" of Lithuanian culture, rooted in pagan beliefs and practices, survives most particularly in folk art carvings called *rūpentojėlis*, the 'worried man' associated with the Christian image of the 'Pensive Christ' or 'Man of Sorrows'.[6]

Lithuanians conceived their landscape to be animated by a myriad of spirits and deities that mediated between the human and the natural worlds. Among these members of the indigenous pantheon are the *barstukai* (creatures that sow or throw), *puškaičiai* (creatures that puff up), *barzdukai* (little bearded men), *bezdukai* (things associated with unpleasant smells like flatulence), the thunder god Perkūnas, the bee gods Austėja and Bubilas, god of the dead Vėlinas and *laumės* (witches). While references to them appear in primary and secondary texts dealing with ancient Bal-

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[4] Salman Akhtar lecture "The Trauma of Dislocation", 2008.

[5] Akhtar writes about the rupture in the waking screen and how one strives to compensate for that disturbance: "The laceration of the waking screen (Pacella, 1980) is, after all, self-caused and a source not only of anguish but of unconscious guilt. Creativity helps manage both those emotions. <...> One's mind becomes the fertile *motherland of ideas* in a reparative identification with the idealized artistic productivity of the lost country. The orphaned inner child can thus reclaim, inch by inch, the psychic territory lost." (Akhtar, 2011, 16–17).

[6] JCJ Metford. *Dictionary of Christian Lore and Legend*, 166.

tic religion and mythology, [7] their visual expressions are scarce, non-existent or marginalized in the modern era. Descriptions of these deities, however, continue to inspire the Lithuanian artistic and religious imagination. Recent examples in children's literature include *The Book of Great Beings* (2016) by Kotryna Zylė, *Kaukas Gugis and Magic War* (2017) by Justinas Žilinskas and *Ancient Lithuanian Gods and Goddessess* (2009) by Liubertas Klimka and Irena Daukšaitė.

From the late eighteenth century, Lithuania's waking screen has been repeatedly ruptured by foreign occupations: Russia (1795–1918); Germany (1941–1944) and the Soviet Union (1944–1990). The country's forests, the ancestral home to most of the ancient spirits, have been exploited by invaders; they have also fallen to the changing social outlooks associated with industrialization and modernization.

The Architecture of Soulfulness

Lithuania is peppered with sculptured *rūpintojėliai* (pl.), *koplytėlės* (shrines or miniature chapels) and indigenized crosses. All three structures evoke trees and, I argue, are taking on the role of a new waking screen. The most concentrated example of these structures in Lithuania is the Hill of Crosses near Šiauliai. The dense cluster of wooden statues and stylized crosses on the Hill of Crosses gives the impression of a forest. Crosses, shrines, and wooden sculptures of saints also seem to be alive, as if growing out of the landscape.

Lithuanians lived in world animated by nature spirits and the souls of ancestors.[8] This 'soulfulness', perceived as inherent

[7] Balsys, 'Dėl Puškaičio," 51–60. Primary texts compiled by Norbertas Vėlius have an endless horde of spirits and deities for every aspect of everyday life; it would require a long index of names to list them all. See Norbetas Vėlius, *Lietuvių Mitologija*.

[8] Trinkauskaitė, *Seeing the Swarming Dead*, 2008.

The Hill of Crosses near Šiauliai. Photo by Peteris Alunans

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Rūpintojėlis
in Balbieriškis cemetery (*Prienai*).
Photo by Ellen B. Cutler

in the land, is expressed traditionally through an architecture of natural objects such as trees and rocks, and in folk carving, especially figures carved in wood. Lithuanian folk art is oriented towards the landscape; the connection of the Lithuanian people to the landscape is fundamentally spiritual and links the souls of the dead with the natural world.[9] Lithuanians continued much later than neighboring nations to draw from a pre-Christian worldview, believing that humans reincarnated into trees, plants, birds or other small animals after death. Aspects of those beliefs paralleled the new Christian dogma: the soul of the deceased (*vėlė*), for instance, rested in the natural world before it got to heaven (*dausos*), which was imagined as an Eden-like garden. Many of these beliefs have survived into the twenty-first century and inform traditional and contemporary artistic practice.

In Lithuanian imagery, the souls of the dead, *vėlės*, were often associated with small winged creatures, like birds and bees; like

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[9]   Ibid.

them, *vėlės* rested on tree branches or flowers.[10] People, therefore, built dwellings – shrines or miniature chapels called *koplytėlės* – in trees and on poles by roadsides where traveling *vėlės* could rest.[11] Nesting boxes (*inkilai*) were placed in trees in or near cemeteries so that *vėlės*-birds would have a place to stay. The practice of placing wooden ancestor statues in trees or on poles was wide-spread. People believed that the *vėlė* of a dead ancestor inhabited such a statue and protected the entire homestead.[12] Even when those statues were removed, people still made sacrifices to trees, regarding them as homes of the souls of the dead.

Sacred Space and Sacred Material

Long ago Lithuanians placed the bodies of the dead in trees, and they associated the dead with trees materially and spiritually. Ancestral spirits that inhabited trees held keys to such vital pow-ers as fertility, harvest, health, and the futures of children who had not yet been conceived. A Doctor, a folklorist, and a leader of Lithuania's National Movement Jonas Basanavičius writes that the ancient, most primitive caskets were simple troughs carved from thick tree trunks.[13] There were times when ancient Lithu-anians 'buried' the bodies of the dead high up in trees. Such open tree burial is known to have been gendered: men were entombed in oak trees, women in linden trees, and bodies of dead babies were placed in tree hollows.[14]

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[10] Similar reincarnation of human soul into the natural world is observed in Mexico. See Jill Leslie McKeever Furst, *The Natural History of the Soul in Ancient Mexico*.

[11] Dundulienė, *Medžiai senovės lietuvių tikėjimuose*, 85.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Basanavičius. *Iš gyvenimo vėlių bei velnių*, 63.

[14] According to the myth of Sovijus, such open tree burials did not allow for the soul of the dead to rest: "It was bitten by bees and a swarm of mosquitoes <…>". Philippe Walter, *The Ditty of Sovijus (1261). The Nine Spleens of the Marvelous Boars: An Indo-European Approach To A Lithuanian Myth*, 72.

'A soul of the dead inhabits a tree': this adage that makes explicit the transformation of the soul of the dead into a tree was recorded in the beginning of the twentieth century.[15] Basanavičius describes four ways of existence for the souls of the dead in another world. One of them is transformation into rocks, trees, animals, etc. (metamorphosis) and subsequent rebirth in new bodies (metempsychosis).[16] In a like manner, scholar of religion Gintaras Beresnevičius points out four layers of reincarnation (metempsychosis) to describe the eternal quality of a soul and its manifestation into other bodies of nature – plants and animals.[17] Mythologist Norbertas Vėlius also writes that a great "number of trees are related to people; people are either compared to trees <…> or identified with them <…>; it is believed that the souls of the dead live in trees".[18]

Indigenous oral tradition uses metaphor and homology to relate trees to people: "Oh, my linden, linden, you are my mother, your roots are her feet, your branches are her arms and these green leaves are her kind words".[19] This motif of the dead transforming into plant life is especially common in funerary laments:

> What grass will you sprout into
> What branches will you spread,
> What leaves will you grow into,
> What flowers will you bloom in?
> As what flower will you blossom?
> As which leaves will you grow?

[15] History Institute of Lithuania, LTA 1565/151.

[16] Basanavičius. *Iš gyvenimo vėlių bei velnių*, 62.

[17] Beresnevičius, *Dausos: pomirtinio gyvenimo samprata*, 182. Also, see Gintaras Beresnevičius, *Baltų Religinės Reformos – Baltic Religious Reforms*, 25–34. Beresnevičius associates these views with the Mother Goddess era, the late Paleolithic age. For an in-depth study of souls of the dead *Vėlės* and their connection to the natural world, see Eglutė Trinkauskaitė, *Seeing the Swarming Dead: of Mushrooms, Trees, and Bees* (Doctoral Dissertation, Syracuse University, 2008).

[18] Vėlius, "The World of the Ancient Balts," 127.

[19] Ibid.

Rūpintojėlis *in Birštonas cemetery.* Photo by Ellen B. Cutler

How should I walk past and see
What flowers will you grow.
What shall I recognize you by?
By the leaves?
Or by the flowers?[20]

This lament expresses a hopeful belief that the loved one will continue to live in the natural environment; this sentiment seems to offer consolation.[21] According to Beresnevičius, pre-modern Lithuanians perceived death not as a terminal event but as a transformative process that did not completely transcend matter.[22]

Rūpintojėlis: The Worried Man

Lithuanian folk sculpture often expresses sorrow and nostalgia but frequently with a hint of humor and mischief. The explicitly Christian image of *rūpintojėlis* is the 'Man of Sorrows'. Sculptures with indigenous or pagan motifs of *velniai* (devils) and *raganos* (witches) express something mischievous.

Today *rūpintojėliai* populate the Lithuanian landscape. The abundance of these wooden figures implies the omnipresence of spiritual beings, an atavistic expression of what I call the 'swarming dead'. Their presence is a kind of chthonic sacralization of the landscape, as if the *rūpintojėliai*, emerging from the underground, are also one with the earth. The form is a hybrid image that embodies not only explicit anthropocentric Christian imagery of a pensive Christ but also evokes deeper indigenous meanings and symbolism, that of elders sitting on the stoop, observing the world.

Rūpintojėliai have evolved over centuries. The image is an offshoot of Christian iconography and belongs to the group of

[20] Trinkauskaitė Johnson, "*Seeing the Swarming Dead.*"
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid. Beresnevičius writes that the souls of the dead themselves have some weight, form, and substance. Gintaras Beresnevičius, *Lietuvių religija ir mitologija: sisteminė studija – Lithuanian Religion and Mythology: Systemic Study*, 289–290.

Rūpintojėlis *on the Hill of Crosses near Šiauliai.*
Photo by Peteris Alunans

devotional images that were formed during the late Middle Ages.[23] In Christian iconography, the Pensive Christ, sometimes called the Man of Sorrows, is often depicted seated. He wears the crown of thorns and shows on his body the marks of his crucifixion.[24] The image was widespread throughout the Christianized world. In Germany, Poland, and Lithuania it became a popular motif in the folk-art tradition of woodcarving. In Lithuania, in fact, folk wood-carvers are called *dievdirbiai* or 'god-makers'.

The earliest surviving models that inspired *dievdirbiai* date to the seventeenth century and an excellent example is the figure of Christ in the church St. Stanislaus in Balninkai (Molėtai region, 2nd quarter, seventeenth century), Lithuania.[25] The naturalistic

[23] Surdokaitė, "The Cult of Christ in Distress in Lithuania."

[24] "'Man of Sorrows' The depiction of Christ wearing his *crown of thorns, his arms either crossed on his breast in an attitude of submission, or extended with palms open to show the holes made by the nails at his *Crucifixion. Blood is sometimes shown flowing from the wound on his side. The artistic intention is to create a devotional image which will remind the faithful of the sufferings of Christ on their behalf (*see *Ecce Homo*). It recalls the prophecy of Isaiah (Is 53:3)." The above is taken in its entirety from J.C.J. Metford, *Dictionary of Christian Lore and Legend*.

[25] Surdokaitė, "Balninkų rūpintojėlio skulptūra."

figure is made of polychromed wood. The drapery that is his only covering alludes to the shroud of the grave. He rests on a tree stump, half-naked and vulnerable. Gabija Surdokaitė points out that such iconography of Christ seated on a tree stump is extremely rare; only a few examples are known: "In literature and art, Christ <...> is most often represented as sitting on a stone".[26] It is as though the narrative has been transported from the desert environment of Israel to the northern forests of Central Europe. When one considers the Lithuania idea of wood animated by a divinity or spirit, the Trinitarian implications of the sculpture align with ancient systems of belief long familiar to Lithuanians.

The clothed *rūpintojėlis*, a variant of the Pensive Christ increasingly common since the eighteenth century is, humble, pensive and completely Lithuanian. *Rūpintojėlis* has adapted himself to Lithuania. The wooden faces of today's *rūpintojėliai* look familiar; they resemble the faces of their makers, villagers, of grandparents, of next-door neighbors. They are also the faces of those ancestors whose souls were believed to inhabit trees and ensure good life and harvest. My mother once told me:

> God is far away, above, *rūpintojėlis* is near. This is God that is brought to be in the proximity of a human being. This God is of simple village folk. He is like Jesus Christ, but he is made familiar. When you look at their faces, they do not look like saints, they look worried, they emulate goodness and caring. Folk artists took the features of 'good' people that lived next door. They make people feel comfortable and good. *Rūpintojėliai* usually sit or stand in a beautiful natural place, usually near a lake or a stream, so that people could stop and rest. The place is very important, it provided people with an atmosphere of relaxation.[27]

[26] "However, in the scenes of Flagellation and Awaiting for Crucifixion, the stone may be replaced by a stump. The meditative literature says that after flagellation Christ was seated on a dirty stump. In the scene of Awaiting Crucifixion, the stump symbolizes a tree from which the cross was constructed." Surdokaitė, "The Cult of Christ in Distress in Lithuania."

[27] Conversation with Stasė Trinkauskienė 01/04/2006.

Rūpintojėliai and the Soulfulness of Wood

Wood belongs to the spiritual fabric of Lithuania.[28] People lived in wooden homes, slept in wooden beds, raised babies in wooden cradles and named the babies with tree names, ate from wooden bowls with wooden spoons, sent their daughters off with wooden dower chests, bathed in wooden bathhouses, and were buried in wooden tree trunk caskets or boxes. Wood sustained the Lithuanian people in every way because they had an abundance of wood and not other materials, such as metal or stone. Thus Lithuanian "soulfulness" is based in the pragmatic nature of indigenous values and sensibilities.

Trees, living often for hundreds of years, are witness to historical events. They are beyond suffering and yet they both symbolize and embody the material past and transcendent soul of a place. Wood is, moreover, a malleable material that allows for a more flexible idea of god and god-making. *Rūpintojėlis* is thus the eternal soul of the place where it stands. As the Lithuanian relationship to trees suggests, wood is the medium that most authentically expresses the layered spirituality of Lithuanian culture. As Rūta Saliklis points out,

> Most contemporary sculptures are monochromatic, made of untreated wood, so that an outdoor sculpture will weather and crack. This emphasis on natural raw material can be seen as an expression of national consciousness as well. Leaving the wood bare makes it a more authentic cultural expression because nothing is hidden under the paint. Solemnity and restraint are traditional Lithuanian values.[29]

In weathering and decaying, *rūpintojėlis* draws its aesthetics from ancient organic life forms and expresses the cycle of reincarnation characteristic of many indigenous religious sensibilities.

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[28] Lithuanian word 'tree' – 'medis' – etymologically related with 'material' – 'medžiaga'. Thanks to Dainius Razauskas' comment at Indigenous Culture Seminar in Rumšiškės, Lithuania, 2017.

[29] Saliklis, 17–18.

Rūpintojėlis *in Antakalnis cemetery.*
Photo by Ellen B. Cutler

Lithuanian poet Marcelijus Martinaitis (1936–2013) has observed that if one visits the storerooms of ethnographic or art museums in Lithuania, one encounters the sublime:

> Tens, hundreds, and thousands of questioning, penetrating, surprised wooden eyes stare at the visitor from the surrounding shelves. These wooden saints stand in swarms arranged by their places of origin and by the names of their masters. It seems as though a nation is gathered, dressed in the clothes of prophets, saints, and martyrs, and that they are only waiting for a sign – then they will speak, then they will move. There is a sense of something frozen in their wooden forms – human lives, thoughts, sufferings.[30]

From the perspective of this indigenous Lithuanian worldview, metaphysical wisdom overrides both religious doctrine and rational logic: humans are fully one with the natural world. Folk sculpture joins the bodies of trees and people together.

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[30]   Bumblauskas, *Senosios Lietuvos istorija 1009–1795*, 383.

Trees, like the Lithuanian people and their indigenous culture, have experienced eradication. The arrival of monotheistic Orthodox and Latin Christianity displaced the polytheistic and animistic indigenous traditions: the clear-cutting of Lithuanian forests to sate the demands of Western imperial powers and Soviet occupiers, as well as the utilitarian philosophy of industrialism and capitalism from the late eighteenth century forward. All these forces razed the ecology that was home to *vėlės* and other spirits and deities. Folk art in Lithuania offers a fundamental humility; it reminds humans that they are not at the center of the world, not the mirror of a singular god distanced from life, but one with a larger reality of trees, rocks and moss, animals, birds and all living things. Wooden bodies, like human bodies, change with time and the elements.

Rūpintojėlis blurs boundaries between a tree and a human, between Nature and humanity. As a humble wooden avatar of the Pensive Christ, *rūpintojėlis* unites humanity with the spirit of place and landscape. This folk-art Jesus, one might say, prefers to sit outside the Church. *Rūpintojėlis* is a folk-intellectual, down-to-earth and practical.

Rūpintojėliai in the Twentieth Century

The post-World War II Lithuanian landscape did not have many *rūpintojėliai*. Many figures were destroyed and their makers persecuted by the Soviet regime. As had been the case with early Christianity in the Roman Empire, religious imagery including the *rūpintojėlis* had to be ambiguous and sometimes purposefully misleading. As Saliklis points out, unlike with other censored art forms and scholarly work, "Soviet authorities had difficulty regulating folk culture imbued with double meaning that eventually became a powerful nationalistic force".[31] *Rūpintojėliai* also

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[31] Saliklis, *Sacred Wood*, 17.

disappeared from public into museums and private collections. In fact, the term *rūpintojėlis*, 'worried man,' emerged only in the later twentieth century in part because it suited the Soviet culture of atheism. In the region of Aukštaitija in eastern Lithuania, people called these same statues *smutkelis* (pole-shrines), *kryžius* (cross), or *dievulis* (little god).

As *rūpintojėlis*' wooden figure was stripped of one meaning and cloaked in another, it encodes the understanding that ideologies are always temporary. Though Christian in its origins, *rūpintojėlis* is both complex and iconic, transformed by place and the passage of time. It reconciled indigenous Baltic religion with its reverence for trees with the anthropocentric focus of Christianity. It indigenized the image of the Pensive Christ, investing it with *vėlės*, the souls of ancestors. The Pensive Christ, a little god, a thinker and sage, served as the symbol of Lithuania under the Soviet occupation; and he became the emblem of national renewal during the reestablishment of independence in 1990.[32]

Diaspora, Change and the Waking Screen: an Epilogue

In his book *Immigration and Acculturation*, Salman Akhtar discusses loneliness in the diaspora, the absence of family, the strangeness of a new culture. *Rūpintojėlis* grounds, nurtures, and empathizes with one's most inner emotional life. For many Lithuanians, it shares nostalgia for things lost and fills in the void that results from the loss. There is a contrast between an animate world where *barstukai*, *puškaičiai*, *rūpintojėliai*, *samaniniai* and a plethora of spirits inhabit the landscape and what can seem a rather hollow, materialistic world of consumerism. In such a place, in Mircea Eliade's words, there is no possibility of hierophany, a manifestation of the sacred.[33] The 'loneliness in the diaspora' is also present in the contemporary materialist world, a

[32] The monuments to the fallen at the Vilnius TV station center on a *rūpintojėlis*.
[33] Allen, *Myth and Religion in Mircea Eliade*, 74.

sense that the new world lacks the soulfulness inherent in the old, more animate world.

A migrant to the United States, I find resonance in these ideas. I have been unconsciously recreating my own waking screen and adjusting to a new landscape, transforming myself, all the while with the silent wooden figure of the *rūpintojėlis* by my side. Far from my place of origin, my waking screen, I am deeply nostalgic for the more animate, soulful world that I associate with Lithuania and its indigenous culture. I argue that many Lithuanian migrants bring *rūpintojėliai* to their newly adopted countries to compensate for the loss of the waking screen—and to preserve some part of it. *Rūpintojėliai*, in the diaspora, are comforting company to emigrants.

On March 4, 2017, the Lithuanian community in the Washington-Baltimore area commemorated the restoration of Lithuania's Independence.[34] The event had a serious official and political tone. In front of the room, on a small table next to the speaker's podium, there were about twelve *rūpintojėliai* figures on a linen tablecloth. Their presence seemed so organic, as if they grew out of the ground. Ritually, for migrants, their grounding presence gave an illusion that the gathering takes place in Lithuania. *Rūpintojėliai* in Baltimore's Lithuanian Hall serve generally as a spiritual bridge to Lithuania[35] despite the 7,105 kilometers that separate Baltimore and Lithuania, wooden bodies of *rūpintojėliai* transport the spirit, providing familiar symbolism and effecting ritual purpose.[36] *Rūpintojėlis* iconography is charged with melancholy affects that empathically parallel immigrant experience: sadness, isolation, a sense of loss, uprootedness, and nostalgia for their lost country.[37]

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[34] Lithuania has two Independence Days – February 16th (1918, from Tsarist Russia) and March 11th (1990, when Lithuania declared its Independence from the Soviet Union's occupation in 1940).

[35] McCarthy Brown, "Staying Grounded in a High-rise Building." In *Gods in the city*.

[36] Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*.

[37] Akhtar, *Immigration and Acculturation*.

Rūpintojėlis by Irena Deltuvienė.
Photo by Evaldas Bujanauskas

The statues of *rūpintojėlis* and other wooden figures are ubiquitous in Lithuania because they are part of Lithuania's waking screen. They are manifestations of the soulful connections between the natural and the human worlds. In the context of Lithuania's Christian monotheism and its agnostic secularism, indigenous polytheistic imagination still thrives. As the Lithuanian proverb goes, "If you close the door to the Devil, he will climb through the attic".[38]

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[38] Lipskienė, *Po savo stogu visaip patogu*.

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Four Essays

LIUTAURAS DEGĖSYS

Life is Like a Movie

I don't know why, but for a long time the idea of life as a movie has been persecuting me. That sense that you are an actor in some screenplay, that you have been fixed in a film tape roll, that you have no control over the story line and can't change anything because nothing depends on you. That you are living in a screenplay written by someone else. You can't behave differently, you can't ruin the part or improve upon it, it is what it is, and that's how it is every day. Or even if you succeed in doing something special, after a while it unfortunately becomes clear that everything was already planned to turn out that way. Your absurdities have been anticipated from the beginning, and so your behavior has changed nothing. Everything has been left like it was. It is the nightmare of a revealed fate. When even your personal nightmare has been ordained in some heaven. When you learn that you are not a creator, but just a creation.

The actors in this film appear to meet each other, but what is most astounding, they don't see each other, they don't talk to each other, and even if they do talk, they do not communicate with each other, they do not understand each other, they talk past each other. It's as if they were actors from different stories, where authors live in their own textbooks of literature, composers compose music in the pages of music history, artists recline

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in art albums, travelers trudge through geographical atlases, and where war heroes – completely apart – rest in battles described by history. They all lie independent of each other in some sort of thought-drawers and never meet each other. Because if they were to meet, it would again become clear that they don't know how to talk to each other and do not understand each other. Just like politicians, artists, doctors, teachers, firemen and gravediggers who don't meet each other in their separate lives – unless it is by a gravesite where they bury one of their own and then go off in different directions again. You are simply surprised to learn that the prime minister is not a robot, but a human being, who has his own personal doctor, a doctor who almost wanted to lead a rebellion of all doctors against the government. Not much more is needed for these actors not to meet even each other. Like those two Columbuses from childhood lessons, where we had to learn about one of them in history class and about the other in geography class, and that was why we got the impression that there were two Columbuses, who were utter strangers to each other because they never came together in your – the student's – head.

Other actors in that reality also seem to be governed by some unknown forces, and that is why they act the roles assigned to them – like marionettes pulled by invisible strings: they don't live, but instead seek ratings, they take part in top-five, top-ten, or top-twelve contests, they make speeches on national holidays and have no human characteristics. Only what is necessary for the homeland, the country or the party. If on the way they come upon a human being by chance, they are startled and stop in wonder: how can this be happening? It's not in the screenplay. Where did this unforeseen person with his own problems come from? We, people of action, are concerned about nations and countries, not about such insignificant people.

Time passes, costumes, decorations, and portals change. New bloggers appear, and even newer goodies. But they still don't see or hear each other. New governments appear, they alternate like barbers – and they keep cutting the hair of their constitu-

ents – with scissors of taxation or legislation – and all the time they criticize the barbers that came before: dear citizens, who was it that did such a bad job of cutting your hair last time?

And everyone is always astounded by everything: why doesn't anyone see us, understand us, listen to us? Economists are surprised by politicians, politicians are surprised by citizens, but citizens are surprised by themselves – how much longer will all sorts of governments be able to ignore them completely.

And that is why it seems that they all are in different movies which by chance are being shown on the same screen at the same time. And the heroes of those movies can't meet each other or talk to each other. Screenplays and dialogues of interaction and understanding have not been written for them. They pass by each other on the screen without seeing, hearing, understanding or communicating with each other. It's as if they are hamlets or raskolnikovs who have met without knowing why, like little-red-riding-hoods and pinocchios, like three little pigs, who are really only three phases of development of one little pig. Like a destiny that looks at everyone but does not see anyone but itself.

And at the same time everything in that movie is entangled, crumpled up, and mixed up. You can't separate and understand in which scene, on which screen or in which genre something is happening: sometimes you hear politicians singing operatic arias, dramatic blogger monologues are heard in the background, passages from comic novels, the sounds of feminine poems that are lyrical in a masculine way, or the catastrophic duets of political analysts are heard. And again: they all sing, dance, complain, recite – with their eyes closed. They act their parts as if they were the only prophets, the last representatives of life on Earth. They don't even fight, because they do not see each other and are incapable of hearing each other.

They are players, they are heroes, they live in a movie, and that is why they have many spare copies and extra lives.

The director smokes and is surprised and envious: he too would like to live in a movie.

I can't Live Without You

Knowledge ennobles, gives deeper understanding, inspires, consoles and calms people. The more you know, the bigger, more important, more interesting, the stronger you feel. One who knows can accomplish more of everything: to know what others don't know, to surpass others with your golden mind and in the battle of the minds. Of course, it is unpleasant to realize that you will never know everything. There will always be something new. There will always appear someone who knows more, who learns faster and in greater depth. You will lose news-tidbit contests, result-guessing competitions and wagers, you will delude yourself about tendencies and you will make prediction mistakes.

The only consolation is that knowledge frees you from information overload. Sooner or later you will be disappointed that you learned what wasn't worth learning at all. That "British scholars" – are not British at all, and aren't even scholars. That it is more important not just to know, but to understand. And then you will see how important it is to become interested in yourself and to care about yourself. To seek a deeper knowledge of yourself. To learn to be with yourself – not to be always rushing towards new information, not to be jumping around in portals, not to be bored and not to be asking repeatedly: what's going to happen next, what are we going to do now, or what's the use of that and where is all that leading. Your legs will take you home by themselves – back to yourself, next to yourself, with yourself. Maybe now you will learn not only to study, but – to stop, to avoid the silly daily rush, maybe you will decide to look around, to understand and appreciate not others, but yourself.

Maybe now you will see that what is called socialization is often just a delusion, just a hook, a bait – to make you fool yourself and to make you believe that in life everything is more important than you yourself. Maybe you will realize that all sorts of wise folk sayings – "measure nine times", "bend a tree while it is young", "how you make your bed, that's how you will sleep" – are just standard attempts to put you out, to seduce you, to lull you and

to force you to run in place like in a squirrel-wheel. You will understand that you cannot step into the same river twice, but you can fall into the same pit three or four times. You will come to realize more than once or twice that when searching for the apple of knowledge, all you got was the core. That when you desire attention, love, friendship, when you search for pleasures, you are really just waiting for the experience of the same external stimulants. You will understand that sometimes you are allowed to be alone, with yourself, that you don't have to run away from yourself, that you are not required to cling to others all the time, as if you were sinking, as if you were drowning. That you don't have to live in a state of constantly being stimulated by external images, sexual poses, TV serials, shows or books in which someone is engaged in action, where suspense, plot, adventures, life histories and geographies of thought are mandatory. That you are not required to run away from your own time and place. That it is not essential that you end up in a place where you cannot meet yourself.

Ah, how sweet it is to fall into the same pit. Because if nothing happens – there, outside in the external "world", "reality" , "actuality" – if weddings, funerals, illnesses, holidays, catastrophes, rapes do not occur – how can this really be life. If you cannot regulate and enhance sensations, ecstasies, passions with weed, alcohol, successes, pills, web sites, losses – how can these really be feelings. If you cannot enrich relationships with new loves, friendships, trips, disappointments, adventures, infidelities, betrayals – how can these really be relationships. If nothing special happens, then how can this be a celebration. For life to become interesting – an instance, an event, a stimulus, a symbol, a stimulant, a signal, an occurrence, an elixir, a narcotic, a catalyst is needed. What is needed for life is not even a context, just a pretext – for the text of life.

It is only then that the famous, sentimental, beautiful, touching sigh – "I love you. I cannot be without you." – can mean: "I can't be with myself anymore." You did not learn how to be alone, because you did not know how and didn't try to learn. Even in childhood you weren't able to. You were always dragged

around to little groups, circles, friends. To schools of art, music, sports and life experiences. Just so you wouldn't ever be left alone. So that you wouldn't get the idea of talking to yourself, of being with yourself. Just so that you would not find yourself. Now you will attach yourself to someone, cuddle and snuggle up to someone, you will follow after someone, you will hang on someone's neck, you will devote your whole life to him – even though no one asked you to, you will be faithful to her – even though she doesn't know it and doesn't want it. Because you do not know how to be alone. Because it's uninteresting to be by yourself, with yourself.

You will be active and social to the point of being obnoxious, empathetic to the point of being loathsome, friendly to the point of renouncing yourself – only because you don't have anything to do with yourself. Because you have become tiresome to yourself, because you are too lazy to do something with yourself. That's why when you catch up with someone – on the street, in a café, at work, on the internet – you will try to devote yourself to him or to give yourself away to her, you will plead with someone to take you – let them go ahead and take you, let them go ahead and bring you home to their house, let them go ahead and do whatever they want with you. You want to belong to another. Because you are tired of belonging to yourself. Because you want to belong – not to yourself, but to someone else /to him/her/everyone. To give him/them the whole world – yourself. Let them go ahead and take it, maybe they will think of a way to perfect you, to improve and change you, maybe they will see what they might be able to do with you and what they could make out of you.

In conclusion – an almost true life story: a mother of three children – boys aged four, six and eight – is playing a game of war with her sons in the yard. To the shock of the neighbors, the children sometimes "shoot" their mother. The embarrassed woman says to justify herself: "The moments when a son "shoots" me are the happiest moments of my life because I can lie down and do nothing for ten minutes." There you have it. La guerre, c'est la guerre…

That's None of Your Business, My Dear

In an old anecdote a husband and wife are getting a divorce. The judge asks, "What are the reasons for the divorce?" The husband answers, "My life has become impossible. My wife is too orderly." "How so, how so?" asks the judge with interest. The husband explains, "Every night, when I get up and go to the kitchen to drink some water, I come back and find my bed has already been made."

Oh that human talent and desire to impose one's own order always and everywhere. To arrange the world according to oneself. Even when we are simply looking at something – we are already looking through glasses of our own knowledge, experience and rules. We wrap things and phenomena in the paper of our knowledge and wisdom, we tie them up with colored ribbons of feelings and memories, and we put them into shelves of our experience, tastes and priorities. That is why every one of our worlds is arranged according to our own personal procedures. Even when we are speaking in the same language, we can assign different meanings to words, we can assign our own sense to those meanings, and that is why it is very easy to misunderstand one another and not to be able to communicate with one another. We can fail to see what we do not know, we can fail to notice what we do not want to see, we can stare at our own inner worlds – which are unapproachable for others. Thanks to consciousness, we can reside in our own realities, hide in are own private actualities and personal orders.

If people still would want to understand each other and not separate themselves from one another. If they still expect to live together – in the same kitchen, in one city, in a shared country or a similar world – they should want to understand each other and try to agree with each other. First it would be necessary to agree about agreeing: if you have decided to live together – acknowledge that you will have to coordinate your actions – "let's agree to agree." Because the alternative is just another agreement – "let's agree not to agree about anything." If it is acknowl-

edged that the first agreement is the more effective one, then we can have further discussions about what things are so obligatory or such life-or-death matters that we will have to agree about them. For example, which side of the road are we going to drive on – it's not important which one; it's just important that it be the same one: if everyone drives on the right, then we drive on the right, or everyone drives on the left side. We can commit ourselves to holding forks in the left hand and knives in the right when we are at the dinner table, even though this agreement is not so critically obligatory, since a fork is less dangerous to human life than driving a car. We can agree that there are many things about which we do not need to agree. If some girl were to start asking you on the street what you like to eat, you can freely shoot back at her: "It's none of your business, my dear", because you and she are not going to have dinner together, and she doesn't have to worry about preparing dinner for you.

What happens when the decision is made that there has to be agreement about many areas of community life. There is less and less room left for personal decision and private life. More and more laws, decisions, rules, regulations and norms appear. Life apparently becomes simpler because there is no more room left for personal choice, because you have to "live as you have to live", but then it also happens that human beings have less and less responsibility: everything about each human being is thought out in advance – how much, when, what, how and with whom – to eat, to drink, to pay, to talk. The only question for which there is no room left is the question "why". Because every "why" is answered with "because it's necessary".

Less and less often are you able to choose how to live better and more justly: theoretically you can either see everyone as an enemy and so not have any friends (because, as you know, true enemies tend to pretend to be true friends), or you can see everyone as a friend and thereby stupidly let a few enemies slip in. It turns out that enemies are more important than friends. You can even examine friends as if they were potential enemies. Treating them as different from you – positioning them as "abnor-

mal" – as not living up to your ideas of order or your norms, and therefore – dangerous. You can look for offenders and guilty parties. There seems to be a choice – to rely on the presumption of innocence or the presumption of guilt: one can think that everyone is innocent until proven guilty, but somehow it's easier to think of everyone as guilty from the start, and then – let them sweat it out and establish their innocence.

To be different or not to be different. To acknowledge that everybody is different and that this is why everyone can live together but in their own worlds. Or to try to ensure that there be as many required things and as few non-required things in people's lives as possible. So that more and more people would appear who know in advance what must be put in order, what to eat, what to drink, who read all of their speeches from scraps of paper, who impose their own systems of order everywhere by force, who do what is good for everyone and who ignore the fact that peoples' concepts of the good and the beautiful can differ radically.

And then they can respond to every timid "why" – question very simply: "That's none of your business, citizen."

To Believe, but Not to Expect

Or not to believe, but to expect. There you have two different ways of living. And there is always the option of choosing. To believe in oneself, to dare, to speak, to think, to act. Or – to wait for gifts and favors – no matter what kind, just because you do not believe in your own options, because you are weak, ignorant, unable to think of what to do. And thus – to buy lottery tickets, to bargain, to betray yourself. To listen to what others are saying. After licking your finger, or maybe after licking your whole hand – to look for which direction the wind is blowing, to look at where others are running, to rush in that direction, where it's better, where you can win something – no matter what: a discount, a prize, a share, a privilege. To end up at the table of bounty along with everyone else, but first. To want everything,

but not to dare. To wait until it falls into your hands. Until someone brings it to you, until someone defends you, pleases you.

To try to be liked. To please. To study, to think, to strive, to speak – not for yourself, but only to be liked by others. Like back in your early childhood – to be praised for being a good boy. Good to everyone. So good that you are almost invisible. Convenient, not causing problems. Raising your hand when you want to say something. Not ruining, not littering, not wetting the toilet floor. Knowing that "you can't change anything" or that "everybody does it that way."

And then courage may become the principal criterion of virtue. To resolve, not being afraid to lose. Remembering that you won't have everything anyway. Because as soon as you choose something, you lose what you gave up. To have an opinion, but to dare to doubt your own truth. To check whether your truth has not become obsolete, has not fallen out of time. Perhaps your real, steadfast, unchanging truth – as solid as a rock, as dogma, the same today as yesterday – has become meaningless just because it is now speaking of a reality that no longer exists. Because reality has changed, but your truth hasn't. And you have been left living with your truths – in the past. While the train of life has pulled away.

Maybe life should be looked at as a constant experiment that cannot be repeated. As when in becoming familiar with a human being – like in a scientific experiment – you raise hypotheses, you choose methods, you make assumptions, and you check them. Just like in a simple dialogue, when in starting a conversation with someone, you rely on the assumption that he understands you. You speak and wait for your conversation partner to send you a signal that he understood you, since his answer will be responsive to the theme, the tone, the meaning. Then you will send him a signal that you have understood that he has understood you. And so you will continue to live – because you will try, you will start the experiment again from the beginning, while asking: do you understand, do you know, do you feel, are you waiting, do you love, are you able. You're not going to fool me, betray me, condemn me, are you?

Always you will be taking a chance: in choosing friends, lovers, studies, a profession, work, leisure, pleasures. Books, theories, religions, beliefs, opinions, rules. Pieces of information, experiences. Changes will occur within you never to return – because those choices, those pieces of information, habits, rules will change you irrevocably. You will not be able to repeat anything, because you will not be able to do anything a second time the way you did it the first. When you decide to change yourself, you already will be a different person, not the one who was once satisfied with himself. You will no longer be able to see yourself with the eyes you used to have. You will not be able to evaluate how much you have changed. Maybe you will be able to long for your former self. A strange and incomprehensible self. An idealized, embellished one. The kind of self that looks as it appears to you now – through new eyes.

The most frightening moment in a horror film is the time when nothing is happening. The music swells, something ungraspable is forming, is getting closer, the suspense grows, but there is nothing there. Exactly like in life. When there is nothing, you understand that there will be something right away. The longer there is nothing, the greater the guarantee that something will happen right away. How horrible it is that it hasn't rained for a long time, there hasn't been an earthquake, there haven't been wars, epidemics or prophets. Even though it should be even more horrible that you look the same to yourself as you always have, the same and unchanged.

Microscopic changes occur all the time. You are changing every day – a little at a time, slowly, unavoidably, unnoticeably even to yourself. It may happen that one day – as you are waiting for the future, but not having found the courage to choose – you will see a stranger looking at you in the mirror.

And you will be scared, and you will regret that you did not have the courage to be resolved and to change yourself earlier.

Translated by RIMAS ČERNIUS

Krėvė's Oriental Tales for Grown-Ups
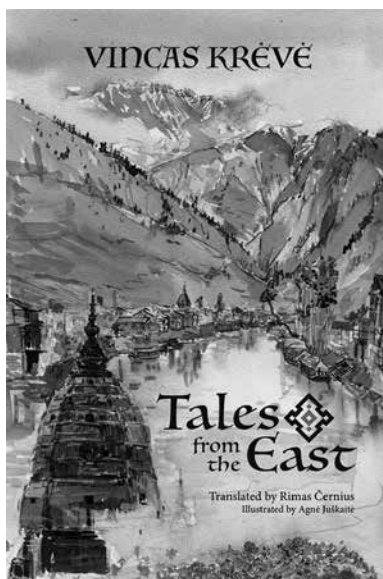
Vincas Krėvė
Tales from the East
Translated by Rimas Černius.
IBJ Book Publishing, 2018.

Only a handful of people know that Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius (1882–1954), the famous Lithuanian writer, wrote his most significant literary works as an émigré. Critics believe that the writer's sojourn in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, rendered him one of the most prominent orientalists of the twentieth century in Lithuanian literature. According to writer Mykolas Vaitkus, Krėvė's oriental story "Pratjekabuda" could have been published in any celebrated European literary almanac of that time.[1] Un-

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[1] Vladas Turčinavičius, "Kūrėjas, kurio pėdos gimtinės žemėje, o akys aprėpia platųjį pasaulį." In http://alkas.lt/2012/12/05/v-turcinavicius-kurejas-kurio-pedos-gimtines-zemeje-o-akys-aprepia-platuji-pasauli/#more-98159

fortunately, during a period in which the West was fascinated with the Orient, no such translation into German or English language appeared, leaving this Lithuanian author and his oriental texts unknown to the world.

Krėvė's oriental stories were first translated into English almost one hundred years later. In 2012, Rimas Černius translated "Pratjekabuda" and a few other short stories on the Orient. Five years later, *Tales from the East*, collecting five of Krėvė's works on oriental themes, was translated by Černius and published in the United States.

Krėvė's oriental stories have never been very popular among critics or readers. Upon its first publication in 1913, "Pratjekabuda" received very mixed and conflicting reviews. Mykolas Vaitkus was fascinated by the story, declaring that it would fit well in the best literary almanac in Europe. Writer and translator Kazys Puida was more reserved. According to him, the story is "a philosophical riddle that no reader will be able to crack."[2]

Although the author calls his oriental texts "tales," his stories are far from traditional tales. They convey some of the oldest metaphysical ideas of ancient India and Persia, which Krėvė grounded in the *Upanishads*, the ancient Sanskrit texts that contain some of the central philosophical concepts and ideas of Hinduism and in Persian mythology.

"Pratjekabuda" was originally published in the literary and art journal *Vaivorykštė* (The Rainbow). Krėvė considered the story one of his most significant works on the Orient, and, as Černius notes in his introduction, it reveals the writer's "philosophy placed on the foundation of ancient India."[3] The story is a highly stylized philosophical parable that recounts a man's life, death, and awakening. Regimantas Tamošaitis describes "Pratjekabuda" as embodying what the author considered the essential ideas of Romanticism, i.e., the power of human spirit, personal freedom,

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[2]   Albertas Zalatorius, "Gaivi Oriento versmė." In Vincas Krėvė, *Pratjekabuda. Rytų pasakos*. Vilnius: Petro ofsetas, 2008, p. 15.

[3]   Rimas Černius, "Introduction." In Vincas Krėvė, *Tales from the East*, p. iii.

and an individual person's rebellion against the stagnant world order, which, the critic notes, have been too bold and even alien to the earthbound and agrarian Lithuanian culture.[4]

In an interesting aside, Černius points to another prominent Western writer who wrote on oriental themes: Hermann Hesse. For Černius, Hesse's *Siddhartha*, which came out in 1922, nine years later than Krėvė's work, is very similar to "Pratjekabuda." The translator suggests that the two tales would make for an interesting comparative study.

The other stories in Krėvė's *Tales from the East* are rooted in Zoroastrianism and Islam. Černius remarks that the story "The Vessel in which the Kings Keeps His Best Wine" has the flavor of an Arabic morality tale and is perhaps the most accessible of the five tales in the collection. For critic Albertas Zalatorius, the style of "The Vessel" closely approximates the genre of legend.[5] In "The Land of Azerstan," Krėvė expresses his affection for the people of Azerbaijan and for the country where he spent ten years of his life. The story "Opposing Powers" is a Zoroastrian account of the creation of the world, with a traditional plot posing two camps, good and evil. Zalatorius opined that Christian readers will find it a counterpart to the Biblical motif of the Tree of the Knowledge. The story "Woman," which is grounded in Islam, is yet another counterpart to the Biblical account in Genesis of the creation of the world.

In addition to its oriental themes, Krėvė's *Tales from the East* stands out for what critic Vincas Maciūnas termed a decorative oriental style.[6] Krėvė uses words that fit that genre and makes comparisons and repetitions characteristic of tales and legends. The translator does his best to transmit the author's rich and elevated style.

[4]   Regimantas Tamošaitis, "Krėvės apysaka apie gyvenimo miegą ir pabudimą." In Vincas Krėvė, *Pratjekabuda. Rytų pasakos*. Vilnius: Petro ofsetas, 2008.

[5]   Albertas Zalatorius, ibid.

[6]   Vincas Maciūnas, "Krėvės kūrybinis žodis." In Vincas Krėvė, *Raštai*, t. VI. Bostonas: Lietuvių enciklopedijos leidykla, 1961.

Here is an excerpt from "The Vessel in which the Kings Keeps His Best Wine" in which, after deliberating for twenty-one days, his ministers and advisors advise the king:

> – Noble king and God-given ruler of us all! All of us here as-sembled have deliberated for a long time, and we have agreed that the most famous and respected man is Arkazar, who rules the neighboring country in the name of his king. He is the most virtuous and wisest of all virtuous and wise men, and there is no other man like him in that respect. His soul is as deep as those bottomless seas which the people call dead seas. His heart is pure and full of love for others, and it is serene like the expanse of the morning sky on a bright day. But, noble king, he cannot become your daughter's husband, and you will not be able to call him your son and let him rule the country which you rule, because as much as his soul is noble and pure, so is his physical appearance ugly and repulsive to the eyes; everyone who looks upon him is disgusted.[7]

* * *

Krėvė, an émigré himself, was highly appreciated by Lithuanian-Americans. On February 27, 1953, Professor Alfred Senn, speaking at the University of Pittsburgh, appraised Krėvė as the most prominent Lithuanian writer of all time, with his rivals for the title being the celebrated Kristijonas Donelaitis and Maironis. Senn dismissed Donelaitis for lacking of originality. According to Senn, Donelaitis's hexameter merely imitated the style prevailing in Western European literature at that time. Though Senn did not offer any criticism of Maironis, he nevertheless judges that Krėvė surpassed him. "Even if Krėvė had written only realistic dramas and short stories, he would be worthy of the highest honor and recognition, perhaps even the Nobel Prize," intoned Senn.[8]

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[7]   Vincas Krėvė, "The Vessel in which the King Keeps His Best Wine." In Vincas Krėvė, *Tales from the East*, p. 87.
[8]   Vladas Turčinavičius, "Kūrėjas, kurio pėdos gimtinės žemėje, o akys aprėpia platųjį pasaulį." In http://alkas.lt/2012/12/05/v-turcinavicius-kurejas-kurio-pedos-gimtines-zemeje-o-akys-aprepia-platuji-pasauli/

Senn's remark about the Nobel Prize was not just rhetorical. In 1952, at the commemoration of Krėvė's 70th anniversary, Senn announced to the writer and assembled guests that he had organized a commission to work toward the Nobel Prize for Krėvė. Unfortunately, the professor's plans did not bear fruit.

Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas, a Lithuanian émigré poet, also attests to Krėvė's significant role in Lithuanian literature and among Lithuanian emigrants in the US. Two days after the news about Krėvė's death reached the poet, he wrote in his diary: "Krėvė died in Philadelphia [the day before]. It is as though the Nemunas, the Vilnius Cathedral, or Šatrija Hill had perished; he was so deeply rooted in my consciousness."[9]

Krėvė's importance in the consciousness of the Lithuanian diaspora and his greatness did not die with the writer. His works have continued to be taught in Lithuanian Saturday schools. New generations of Lithuanian emigrants zealously read his works, especially the historic ones. Therefore it should not come as a surprise that the translator of Krėvė's *Tales from the East* arose from the second Lithuanian emigration wave, also known as the DP generation. Having started translating Krėvė's oriental tales as a special project under guidance of Paul Friedrich, Černius completed his work in the Master of Liberal Arts Program at the University of Chicago. It is commendable that the student Černius's work bloomed into the book.

Černius frequently contributes to the monthly *Draugas News* and to the newspaper *Draugas*, both published in Chicago. He is also one of the translators of the book, *We Thought We'd Be Back Soon* (Aukso žuvys, 2017). I hope that Černius will continue introducing readers of English to Lithuanian literary gems.

DALIA CIDZIKAITĖ

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[9] Ibid.

Revising the Architectural History
of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth
in Seventeenth-Eighteenth Centuries

Ursula Szulakowska
*Art, Architecture and
Humanism in the Polish
Lithuanian Commonwealth:
Renaissance and Baroque
Artistic and Literary Culture
in Poland, Lithuanian
and western Rus.*
Saarbrucken: Scholar's Press,
2016, 425 pages
ISBN 978-3-76031-6.

The books focused on the architectural as well as cultural legacy of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and published in English so as to be available for international readership are still, unfortunately, rather scarce, and thus any new title naturally attracts attention of those academic and non-academic readers interested in the historical and cultural developments of Eastern Europe and the Baltics in particular. This particular volume was published a few years ago and is authored by an Australian Polish researcher who taught at Sydney University and the University of Queensland eventually moving to Europe to serve as visiting Research Fellow (currently emerita) at the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom. As the author of the book – Dr. Ursula Szulakowska has published extensively on the art, religious re-

forms and esoteric culture of the European sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; this lengthy, academic book, focused mostly on the legacy of the Renaissance and Baroque in Poland and Lithuania during the period of the Commonwealth, naturally calls for some adequate attention. Moreover so, since the author of the book aims to provide some insights into the multicultural aspect of its culture, examining the legacy of Jewish, Tartar and Karaite contribution towards its artistic and cultural variety.

The book is obviously ambitious in its attempt to cover both the architectural and literary cultures of the region. However, a close-up reading reveals that there is hardly a balanced view of both spheres. Mostly, an analysis of development in architecture and visual art predominates in this study, and generally the author attempts to provide quite a panoramic view of the cultural phenomenon researched, but is not always able to do so. In her book on the art and culture of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the era of the Renaissance and Baroque, Szulakowska deals with various issues of historiography and discusses the complex and complicated themes of national identity, and the religious roots as well as class profiles that existed in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Further on in the book, the focus is on the so-called "Classical revival" and humanism in Hungary and Poland despite the fact that the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had an impressive and insightful ruler who happened to come from Hungary (notably Stephan Batory who among other things was a founder of Vilnius University, established in 1579), the discussion about both countries in a separate chapter seems somewhat odd, since Hungry was never (legally and intellectually) a part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Some parts of the book are quite interesting and might be regarded as a contribution to a wider and more complex understanding of the cultural and artistic legacy of the Commonwealth; however, some of chapters are less elaborate and more often than not are based on outdated information, ignorance of available sources and, last but not least – some bias toward scholarly research originating in other areas than Poland. Chapter Six of

Szulakowska's book is focused on the Lithuanian architectural and cultural legacy of Renaissance and Baroque periods, though discussion of Baroque, quite naturally dominates, as this historical period has left a somewhat more lasting imprint upon architecture and the visual arts than the preceding epoch. Her rendering of the development of Lithuanian architecture during the period she discusses raises a number of questions – first and foremost about the scope of published resources used in this volume. Interestingly enough, the author of the book mostly relies on Polish sources, no matter how old or dated these are. Accordingly, there are some factual mistakes that a more serious reader encounters in this volume to his or her surprise. For example, the image on p. 306 is titled "Wilno, Lower Castle, 1930s but in fact it is a picture of a courtyard of a dwelling house on Pilies street. Mistakenly she refers to sculptor Pietro Perti as Peretti basing herself on an outdated source (p. 324.). Despite these occasional lapses, there is, however, no doubt about the value of research done by Polish architectural historians when discussing the legacy of Renaissance or Baroque in the territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The names of such distinguished scholars as Jan Bialostocki and Mariusz Karpowicz (or to a lesser degree Stanislaw Lorentz, as his work is less known outside Poland) are well known to the international audience interested in the art and architecture of the sixteenth–eighteenth centuries. Lithuanian authors who have contributed to the research on this historical period are very familiar with the findings of these distinguished figures and often make references to their works as well. Nevertheless, unlike in the Soviet period when scholarly interest in historical studies was strongly controlled and supervised by the authorities, the scope of research on Lithuania's architectural and artistic legacy of the sixteenth–eighteenth century has grown considerably. The author of the book, however, chooses to by-pass a number of writings easily available in English and instead refers to a very limited amount of research published by Lithuanian scholars. For example, Eugenija Ulčinaitė or Jūratė Kiaupienė are mentioned in passing, and only a few

articles of Lithuanian art historians published in Polish art history journals (as for example, the one authored by Mindaugas Paknys, but not his book-length publication), or the author refers to a review of Darius Kuolys' book by Alfredas Bumblauskas (interestingly enough, this is the one and only reference to *Lituanus* quarterly) and ignores more important and more exhaustive studies by the Lithuanian students of Renaissance and Baroque. It is quite strange that research on the Renaissance in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania done by such authors as Ingė Lukšaitė is not even mentioned despite some of her articles are available in English. In providing an account of Vilnius Lower castle, the author relies heavily on a single article by Josef Maroszek, published in 1998. Meanwhile, several volumes of studies by Lithuanian and Polish art historians on the castle's legacy compiled during recent decades are not even mentioned at all.

Szulakowska curiously insists in her rendering of Lithuanian history that "The most important 17th century Baroque foundation in Wilno is Kazimierz Chapel (a1623-36) attributed to the Italian architects Matteo Castello and Constantino Tencalla and located within the Roman Catholic Cathedral" (p. 315). Though Castello in fact designed the *Sancti Casimiri* (St. Casimir's Chapel) and his nephew Constantino Tencalla was given the commission to create its interior, the author fails to mention that the stucco decorations of this chapel (incorporated into a Classicist cathedral eventually designed and rebuilt by Laurynas Gucevičius during 1783–1808) were created by Italian Comasque sculptors Pietro Perti and Giovanni Maria Galli who came to the Grand Duchy from the region of Lombardy, famous all over Europe for its school of stucco decoration. No mention, however, is made to a recent book by Napoleonas Kitkauskas, who lately re-examined the history of Vilnius Cathedral, or to publications of other Lithuanian researchers.

Though St. Casimir's Chapel is one of the most important examples of Lithuanian Baroque, stucco decorations executed by Pietro Perti and Giovanni Maria Galli at Vilnius SS. Peter and Paul's Church are the prime and most valuable example of

this kind of artistic legacy as Szulakowska admits in passing (p. 324). A couple of pages devoted to this Baroque edifice and its remarkable interior do little justice to this remarkable example of Lithuanian Baroque architectural legacy. The same applies to her superficial discussion of Pažaislis (Požajjšč) Camaldolese monastery and church in the outskirts of Kaunas city founded in the second half of the seventeenth century by Christoph Sigismund Pac.

Some quite interesting chapters of the book focusing on the Jewish synagogues and Karaite Kenesas in the territory of the Grand Lithuanian Duchy, add to the ambitious panoramic character of the author's research and her interest in the multi-cultural character of the Commonwealth's culture, as well as does a brief final section on "Islam in the Eastern Commonwealth". However, despite the author's ambitions, this panoramic book sometimes lacks a certain depth and concentration and largely suffers from the scarcity of updated references to recent research. Because of this, some of her observations fail to present an adequate picture of the current state of the art in Renaissance and Baroque studies of the Commonwealth.

And yet, despite a number of shortcomings and inconsistences mentioned above and a lack of balance in assessing the architectural legacy that belongs to several nations and cultures, Szulakowska's monograph deserves to be read by both academic and non-academic readers who have an interest in Lithuania's rich, multilayered, and somewhat complicated cultural history.

ALMANTAS SAMALAVIČIUS

ABSTRACTS

PIETRO U. DINI

Ultima Europae Prouincia?
On "The National Model" in Lithuanian Literature

In order to give a better presentation of the fates of Baltic literary and cultural communities (more specifically, my focus is on the Lithuanian ones from this point forward), there is no harm in presenting several historical-cultural coordinates about this region of Europe, which, for the most part, is still not very familiar in the West. For this reason, it is necessary to start from an *excursus* which would be appropriately discussed in our discourse and would review significant historical and literary events in Lithuania. Consequently, the object of my examination will become clearer: both because the history of the Baltic states is one of the events "that are scarcely mentioned in textbooks and literature, and if they are, then inadequately" (Cz. Miłosz) and because *baltica (scilicet lituanica, lettica, estonica) non leguntur*. Furthermore, I apologize in advance for being obliged to mention so many authors that are unknown to most in my brief attempt.

It is worth emphasising an important fact which emerges from this brief description: the relatively strong situation of multiculturalism and multilingualism which applied to the Baltic territory when it was united into a single entity after its first historical manifestation. These circumstances, which had formed over a long period of time, along with a wealth of the introduced linguistic phenomena (from Germans, Poles, Russians, Swedes; finally, once again, for a long period – Russians), determined a "delay" of autochthonous languages (Lithuanian, Latvian, Esto-

nian) in written sources (as we know, their first records appeared in the second half of the fifteenth century, in the context of the Lutheran Reformation).

AUŠRA MASLAUSKAITĖ

Family Change and Inequality in Lithuania

This article summarizes the evidence on the trends and social stratification of family changes in Lithuania, which took place in the last three decades. We focus on cohabitation and marriage, divorce, non-marital fertility and single motherhood. Overall, there is divergence by social class in family behavior. Non-traditional family behavior is more pronounced among the lower-educated, while better educated opt to marry, live in more stable unions, and less frequently have children in cohabitation. Thus, extensive shifts in family life, which Lithuanian society has experienced since the 1990s, did not occur in parallel across the social spectrum. Moreover, this signals that the family became a relevant mechanism in producing and reproducing inequalities.

EGLUTĖ TRINKAUSKAITĖ

Rūpintojėlis: Evocation of Indigenous Lithuanian Soulfulness

This article explores ways in which the soulfulness of Lithuanian culture, rooted in pagan beliefs and practices, survives most particularly in folk art carvings called *rūpintojėlis*, the 'worried man' associated with the Christian image of the 'Pensive Christ' or 'Man of Sorrows.' This soulfulness, perceived as inherent in the land, is expressed traditionally through an architecture of natural objects such as trees and in folk carving, especially figures carved in wood. Lithuanian folk art is oriented towards the landscape; the connection of the Lithuanian people to the landscape is fundamentally spiritual and links the souls of the dead with the natural world.

M.K. Čiurlionis monument in Plungė. 2018. Sculptor: Dalia Matulaitė, architect: Jūras Balkevičius