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GINTAUTAS TIŠKUS

Introduction

It is evident that the city milieu has more value and significance than it is possible to assess using only the traditional urban or architectural research methodology. Therefore, in investigating city squares, it is not sufficient to describe only their visual aspects, but it is essential to determine how and why such squares came into being, what was their significance, their origin and the context of their existence within their environment and within their time span. Such understanding is important to the thought process in evaluating the wider scope of further analysis of the relevant factors. In this instance, it is important to determine the square's purpose or its use, because reconstruction also signifies the renewal or [potential] improvement of those characteristics that may have been lost, and their transformation implies a change in the singularity of the existing space, by creating a model of its "new identity," without denying what had previously been there.

In the opinion of this author, the purpose of the reconstruction and transformation of the city squares is their revitalization—i.e., the returning to them of their former vitality. Although such terminology does not exist in any official legal documents, it can be

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found in the applicable professional literature. In the book by Pranciškus Juškevičius, Marija Burinskienė et al, *Urbanistika: procesai, problemos, planavimas, plėtra* (Urbanism: Processes, Problems, Planning and Expansion) revitalization is defined as the renewal of the organic components of a city where its civil engineering infrastructure, its environmental conditions, its buildings and structures have deteriorated, were neglected or no longer maintained, and where the tangible quality of its habitat, its economic activity and its social development and integration indicators are worse than the average of such markers elsewhere in the city. Revitalization means the emergence of new functions and the reinforcement or elimination of the existing functions by relevant reconstruction and renovation or deconstruction processes, and by less impactful new construction, which would enliven the square's social and economic activities, would add to its functionality and would provide more aesthetic and utilitarian appeal and a better quality of life.[1] This restoration of the square's former vitality must be carried out by seeking for a balance between the preservation of the existing qualities of the square and the insertion of new functional elements.

In discussing the vitality of the city squares, it is important to consider the variations that exist in the overall city context. The trend in reducing the number of buildings for residential use negatively influences the attractiveness of the public spaces. As Nikos Salingaros, in conversation with Almantas Samalavičius, printed in the *Kultūros Barai*, correctly noted,

> City squares work well in a mixed and densely populated setting. Those city centers, where the buildings are intended primarily for commercial use, cannot provide the vitality of the open urban spaces. This is a cardinal rule, which is ignored by projects where their essence stems from the modernistic legacy of the design based on their appearance and not on the human activities and the actual city history.[2]

[1] Juškevičius, *Urbanistika,* 198.
[2] Salingaros, „Pinigai byloja garsiau už demokratiją," 9.

Rimantas Buivydas in his book *Architektūra: pozityvai ir nega-tyvai* (Architecture: Positives and Negatives) writes:

> Professional and centuries-long tested methodology states that searching for an architectural and monumental ensemble, the architectural character developed in such an environment deter-mines the form and the extent of [any] sculptural object and its placement in a given space. Of course, this principle is valid when the objective is not to deny the [existing] architectural en-vironment, or when a monument is not regarded as a significant insertion into such space.[3]

The purpose of this article, using a systemic research meth-odology, is to examine some city square reconstruction aspects and to offer some guidelines for their design.

Reasons for City Square Reconstruction

Every city square is unique and, without changing its nature, various observers may perceive it differently. Its essence may be differently interpreted. Because of political, emotional or other reasons, any given city square may be selected for someone's attention or analysis. Such a choice is especially significant in the event of the square's reconstruction. The reason to alter the square's design, intended use, or its aesthetics may be twofold: such reconstruction may be tied to the city's expansion (a natu-ral process), or it may be an attempt to change the square's for-mer use or "history" (an ideological process). In the first instance, an overall reconstruction seeks to enhance its [urban] quality. The second approach most frequently just replaces an existing monument with another, and may only cosmetically renew the square's pavement.

A city is a complex entity, of which the urban and social structures are connected by visible or invisible ties. Therefore, in reconstructing a city square, it is not sufficient to devise only

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[3] Buivydas, *Achitektūra: pozityvai ir negatyvai,* 150.

[an isolated] square's renewal plan. It is important to make a much broader analysis, taking into consideration not only the immediate surrounding milieu, but, more often than not, also investigating the entirety of the overall city complex. The square's accessibility by public transportation, automobile parking, the flow of pedestrian circulation, the cultural and social infrastructure and many other factors essentially influence the square's purpose and the potential of it becoming an attractive destination for the city's inhabitants. The square must somehow attract people, because hardly anyone will visit it just to get across from its one side to the other. It is important to recall that historically the growth of a city generally started at its central square.

In rebuilding cities, frequently the square served as the starting point for planning the city's renewal. The symbolism of the square as the "center of the world" was significant not only in its physically tangible but also in its subliminal aspects. Therefore, such reconstruction may be likened to the arrival of a "new era", signifying the beginning of a "new period" for those within it. It would become a reordering of their world and lifestyle, but not a start from a void. The nature of the square's existence in time and space is important. A square's renewal must be relevant not only to the alteration of its outward appearance, its function and its architectural expression, but also to the preservation of its presence in the context of changing time and scope.

As Jan Gelh and Lars Gemzøe, in their book *New City Spaces*, observe, nothing of importance in the public space and public architecture realm took place between 1930 and 1970. Rapid growth of the needs for transportation directed attention to the construction of roads and the means of communication. Furthermore, after the Second World War the attention of architects was focused primarily on the rebuilding of cities. Everything changed starting in the 1970s, when the challenge of modernization started to stimulate the debate about the quality of life in the city and the concern with the intrusion of the flow of transportation and pollution into its streets and open areas (many city open spaces had become automobile parking lots – G.T.). The public space and

civic vitality again became important subjects of architectural discourse. Having long remained largely untouched, the architecture of the public areas was being rapidly altered during the last quarter of the twentieth century by reconstruction of the existing and the creation of new spaces. Architectural solutions for public spaces naturally became important as the starting point for such work, although the relationship between the expansion of the city and the nexus of the city and the public space was also emphasized.[4]

Governments of many European cities recognized that reconstruction of the cities' open spaces was a complex process, requiring comprehensive solutions, and sought strategic means for their implementation. Such an example may be the politics concerning the open spaces in Barcelona. In 1979, after the first democratic election in Spain since the Spanish civil war in 1939, that city's government changed its long-term functional city zoning plan, which largely was dependent on the interests of the financial investors, to a participatory policy approach, based on the public sector initiative and geared towards creation of many new spaces, parks and city squares. Architecture became one of the principal instruments of the urban statecraft and many new public spaces were thus created. In every city block there was a unique "living room" and a park in every city district, where citizens could meet and kids could play. Some old buildings in the city center were demolished to provide within its spaces new places to meet. The slogan of the Barcelona mayor Pasqual Maragal i Mira, who was elected in 1982, was "We need to re-create the dignity of the lost cityscape, and encourage and direct the energy to the marketplaces." Architecture and sculpture had to play the main part creating the public face of Barcelona. New parks and city squares were being created with the catchword of "Move the museum to the street." It is important to note that a large number of the new squares were characterized as "houses of stone" and served as the city's living rooms and places for interaction. Another popular type of the city square were places for rest and recreation.[5]

[4] Gehl and Gemsoen, *New City Spaces*, 7.
[5] Ibid., 28–31.

Strategies and political issues pertaining to public places are important not only within individual countries but also in the international context. The so-called *Leipzig Charter of the Sustainable European Cities* (adopted in Leipzig on May 24–25, 2007, at the unofficial meeting of the [European] ministers responsible for the urban development and territorial linkage), in the segment labeled *Creating and ensuring high-quality public spaces*, states:

> The quality of public spaces, urban man-made landscapes and architecture and urban development play an important role in the living conditions of urban populations. As soft locational factors, they are important for attracting knowledge and information businesses, a qualified and creative workforce, and for tourism. Therefore, the interaction of architecture, infrastructure planning, and urban planning must be increased in order to create attractive, user-oriented public spaces and achieve a high standard in terms of the living environment, a *Baukultur*. *Baukultur* is to be understood in the broadest sense of the word, as the sum of all the cultural, economic, technological, social and ecological aspects influencing the quality and process of planning and construction. However, this approach should not be limited to public spaces. Such a *Baukultur* is needed for the city as a whole and its surroundings. Both cities and government must make their influence felt. This is particularly important for the preservation of architectural heritage. Historical buildings, public spaces and their urban and architectural value must be preserved.
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> Creating and safeguarding functional and well-designed urban spaces, infrastructures and services is a task which must be tackled jointly by the state, regional, and the local authorities, as well as by citizens and businesses.

Ideological issues may even cause conflicts between countries. One obvious example was the reaction of China to the unanimous decision by the United States Senate to name a public square in Washington after the "disruptive activity" dissident Liu Xiaobo, who was sentenced in China to an eleven-year prison term in 2009. The Chinese Foreign Ministry warned the United States that there would be "serious consequences," if the square oppo-

site the Chinese embassy in Washington was named after the Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Chinese writer, literally critic, human rights activist and philosopher Liu Xiaobo.[6]

Public Square Reconstruction Experience in Lithuania

After regaining independence, in Lithuania there was a boom in the reconstruction of the Soviet-era public squares. This process, however, did not go smoothly, because in most instances the main reason for the reconstruction of a city square was ideological. According to Rimantas Buivydas,

> even in Europe the dialogue between the rebuilders and the public frequently wasn't easy; however, observing such practice of organizing the post-Communist design competitions, one can conclude that, until now, the public discourse, without intrusion of the political or patriotic motivation, was lacking and the results frequently did not end up in favor of aesthetic considerations. Occasionally, political groups actually dictated to the organizers and participants of such competitions a preconceived vision of the public space reconstruction to the detriment of frequently available more original proposals.[7]

In his book *Įsitikinimai: sąmoningumo metamorfozės* (Convictions: Metamorphosis of Consciousness) Gintautas Mažeikis writes:

> The term "ideology" was defined and expanded by the French revolutionary Antoine Destutt de Tracy, who, after the Great French Revolution (1796), experienced the link between politics and propaganda manifesting both the inspiring and the destroying power of great ideas to create new revolutionary people <…>. The key analytical function of an ideological ritual is

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6 Reuters/Delfi, 2006.
7 Buivydas „Viešųjų erdvių transformacija Lietuvos miestuose," 140.

to reduce the political rhetoric and the diversity and chaos of political philosophy to an easily comprehensible level and to give meaning to the activities of the ideologues.[8]

Claude Lévi-Strauss noted that political ideology is similar to mythological thinking. A myth always is tied to the events of the past: to what happened "before the creation of the world," "in the antiquity"— in a word, to something that took place a "very, very long time ago." Nevertheless, events happening at any given time make up a permanent (not temporary) frame-work, at the same time being connected to the past, the present and the future. As Lévi-Strauss says, in the current society, ide-ology most likely has replaced mythical thinking.[9]

In his article "Viešųjų erdvių transformacija Lietuvos mies-tuose" (The Transformation of public spaces in Lithuanian Cities), Rimantas Buivydas notes the ideological basis for the reconstruc-tion and exaggerated "monumentalization" of the public squares in Lithuania. Buivydas wrote:

> It may be noted that the monuments which previously had been there are replaced by symbols of those who had defeated the previous power. Thus, instead of a canon which stood atop of a pylon in the Soviet Victory Square in Klaipėda, now there is a monument to Martynas Mažvydas, the author of the first book in the Lithuanian language, and the square has been renamed Lietuvninkas Square (after the name that was attached to those who historically promoted the Lithuanian language in the East Prussia region); Vincas Kudirka Square and the sculpture of his likeness replaced the former Nikolai Cherniakovsky Square in Vilnius. (Cherniakovsky's statue was handed over to his relatives in Russia.) In Šiauliai, after removal of the Lenin statue on the Avenue of the Dawn, a square was created with a monument dedicated to the patriotic movement linked to the [first Lithua-nian] newspaper "Aušra" (The Dawn). In Panevėžys, in the city square with the statue of Lenin as its focal point, the ideological

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8 Mažeikis, *Įsikitinimai: sąmoningumo metamorfozės*, 279.
9 Levi-Strauss, 53.

and design accent was replaced with a statue to the legendary Panevėžys theater director Juozas Miltinis.

In analyzing the competitions that were held for the reconstruction of the city squares, it is useful to recall the article by Buivydas, which was printed in the magazine "Literatūra ir menas" (Literature and Art) in 1996, titled "Lukiškės Square—Not Again . . . and So On?" Buivydas writes:

> Many of those who in recent years have participated in the local design competitions refer to the rules and principles of their conduct in angry words. Therefore, the competition to redesign Lukiškės Square [in Vilnius] isn't necessarily just some other unfortunate event. Perhaps, indeed, such is our "way"!? Nevertheless, one does not want to be reconciled to this approach. The only thing left is to agree with the opinion of the majority of the [Lithuanian] architects that it would have been difficult to come up with a worse example for conducting the competition. We can bravely boast that in this realm we have hit "the bottom." Yet this process is progressing in accordance with the familiar precepts, because there does not appear to be any desire to rise "higher," but instead to resort to peacefully crawling and lounging at the bottom. We are not going to second-guess why those who are responsible for what is taking place sincerely continue to believe that all those "optimists," who now are squirming and grumbling, slowly will get used to the current situation.

Buivydas further writes: "The architects and artists who repeatedly were lured into those competition traps are hoping that finally the customer who ordered the Lukiškės Square competition will become a wise guide, instead of being a capricious know-it-all, inviting them "to go not-knowing-where and do not-knowing-what." They expect that the competition sponsor will responsibly and clearly say to the competition participants what is expected of them, will explicitly state the competition purpose, its stipulations and requirements, the judging criteria, and will conscientiously adhere to such prerequisites. They hope

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that every submission will be responsibly evaluated by [peer] reviewers and a jury. These "optimists" want to participate and compete on the basis of the artistic merit of their submissions and not be evaluated by those acting as judges."[10]

Another author, Tomas Grunskis, in an article entitled "About Some Contemporary Tendencies Regarding the Design of City Squares," in 2009, wrote:

> During the past eighteen years of independence there were several attempts to resolve the issues of the previously ideological status of some of the public spaces and city squares by architectural design competitions. This year, that has become especially relevant. Such a phenomenon has acquired significant meaning, when the merit of the shrines and places symbolizing the power of the state of the previous [Soviet] administration are debated only on the ideological level. Generally, the third wave of the urbanization of Lithuania affected the development of the public spaces relatively slowly and not very intensively. It would be difficult to find examples where the public spaces were substantially changed or transformed, altering their basic nature. There is no evidence or markers which would clearly show that any reformation of the cities' public spaces is taking place, or that there are any qualitative indicators of such change. There are many examples where the public space is partially reformed by "redoing" [only] the surfacing of the paving, or by replacing one monument by another. The overall situation, however, has obvious stagnant features. In the last decade, several major and significant traits in the reconfiguration of the city open areas have become apparent. These traits were deconstruction and alteration, when the majority of the country's prominent city squares lost the element which represented their significance—their monuments to an ideology.[11]

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[10] Buivydas, „Viešųjų erdvių transformacija Lietuvos miestuose," 140.
[11] Grunskis, „Apie kai kurias šiuolaikines aikščių formavimo tendencijas Lietuvoje."

The matter of the reconstruction of city squares and the conduct of the design competitions remains relevant today. Public debate continues about the Lukiškių aikštė (Lukiškės Square) rebuilt in 2017 in Vilnius (the Square was redone without any design competition and workshops were held to discuss some still not realized memorial accentuation) and about the reconstruction work that was started at the Vienybės aikštė (The Unity Square) in Kaunas, the Atgimimo aikštė (The Rebirth Square) in Klaipėda and Prisikėlimo aikštė (The Resurection Square) in Šiauliai. Although those designs were selected by design competitions, the situations which Buivydas described in his article about the transformation of the public spaces continues to repeat itself:

> In post-Communist Lithuania, the public spaces, especially those that have some [tangible] representative elements, today run into a multitude of positive as well as negative challenges, which stem from the difficulty to overcome the physical and mental inheritance of their past, the interruption of tradition, the political and economic power play, and other factors of the protracted transformation period. Therefore, it is not surprising that those spaces frequently become the domain of various stresses and conflicts. The analysis of the trends of the current public spaces and monuments design, confirms that the direction taking place in that area is, in fact, not what we would desire. For the time being, we need to emphasize that often we are constrained to think and act on impulses which were formed in the past, and that the treatment of public spaces reminds us of the competition between immature political forces.[12]

What do we see as the reasons for unsuccessful reconstruction of public areas? Such reasons may be the insufficient amount of research, the lack of a methodical evaluation of the city square's physical attributes (such as the extent of its boundaries, its shape, its function, its architecture and the surrounding environment) and the disregard of the psychological aesthetic impact on the people.

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[12] Buivydas, „Viešųjų erdvių transformacija Lietuvos miestuose," 140–141.

Guidelines for a Methodical Modeling
of the City Squares

One of the most important subjects of city square research is the evaluation of their psychological and aesthetic impact on people. This evaluation is essential in solving the city square's design and reconstruction issues. It may be helpful at this point to recall and examine the article by Martynas Purvinas, titled "Landscaping as the Systemic Shaping of Objects,"[13] and adapt the main precepts of this article to the research of the city squares. A square may be treated as a conditionally self-sufficient object of research, having recognizable systemic characteristics. A square may be analyzed by:

a) examining its indispensable attributes (its boundaries, its purpose, its architectural appearance) – the elemental analysis;
b) determining the relationship of those special attributes to one another – the structural analysi).

Creating such a model reveals the essential characteristics of the square and their place and function in designing the square.

This method of modeling is utilized for the selection of an object and its evaluation, by aggregating the information about it. There are various models. The simplest is the verbal description, which, however, is insufficient. The object may be "described" in various languages or analytical symbol systems (a la, *meta* language). In this process it is important to look into all previously assembled information, improving on some of that data and re-examining some aspects, because such questions may not have come up in earlier research.

The purpose of such a modeling process is to isolate the significant attributes and characteristics of the object and to determine their internecine relationships. At the start, it is necessary to determine or augment [as needed] the essence of the object

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[13] The article was published in *Lietuvos TSR aukštųjų mokyklų darbai, Statyba ir architektūra, t. 15. Architektūra ir miestų statyba (5).* Vilnius: Mokslas, 1977.

under research. It is evident that people are psychologically or aesthetically influenced not by the object itself, but by its parts or attributes. The tangible information about the object is provided by its visual appearance. In the case of the city square, by its attributes.

To begin with, the essence of the public square must be determined. It may be said that it's not the square itself, but its individual parts, its attributes or their segments and features, or its visual elements that provide the direct psychological and aesthetic impact on people.

A city square may be analyzed as a primary concept, keeping in mind just the object itself. The square actually has a twofold meaning: in the broad sense, when its attributes are explicated into the tangible entirety of its visual image (its form, function, aesthetic expression, environment) and in a narrow sense, when we consider only the individual attributes, which make it possible to call the object a city square (its boundaries, appearance, function and architecture).

Systemically, the square may be analyzed and researched as an urban structure and an architectural object. This means that a city square can be an object for the research by several different systems. On the other hand, the attributes of the square reflect different structural objects, therefore attempts to examine all of the square's attributes (its parts) at once may be unsuccessful because of their volume. Consequently, in researching city squares, it is important to the examine square's separate attributes (or its parts), which may be defined by some of the several aspects, such as its shape, purpose, architectural expression, importance of its surroundings, and so on.

A square is an object of systemic examination. The features of the systemic research are the entirety of the attributes of the objects and their internal relationship. Such relationships can be determined by means of modeling, or the design of the model. Because it is difficult to determine a universally acceptable city square's systemic evaluation, the systemic assessment of the square's appearance may only be treated as a hypothesis, i.e., as an initial modeling position.

Summary and Conclusions

Revitalization means the emergence of new functions, the strengthening or discarding of earlier ones, and performing specific reconstruction tasks which improve the square's functionality, provide aesthetic and functional attraction, and enhance the quality of life. Revival of the lost vitality of the city squares, their revitalization, has to be done seeking a balance between preservation of the existing values and the insertion of new functions and elements.

The reason for changing the square's structure, purpose, and aesthetics may be twofold: reconstruction may be tied to the city's expansion, which is a natural process, and to the intent to change the square's "history"—an ideological process. If, in the first instance, integrated reconstruction of the square seeks to enhance its quality, in the second approach, generally the intent is to settle on the replacement of some single monument or the installation of new pavement.

One of the most important aspects of the investigation of city squares is to evaluate their psychological and aesthetic influence on the city inhabitants. Such appraisal is especially important in solving the issues of urban square design and reconstruction.

From the systemic point of view, a city square may be investigated and researched as an urban component and as an architectural object. This means that a square may be the subject of [several] diverse research systems. The square's attributes reflect different structures. Therefore, attempts to examine all of the square's attributes or their parts at once, because of their volume, may prove to be fruitless. When researching city squares, it is important to investigate their individual parts or their segments, which may be described by one or several qualifiers, such as their appearance, purpose, architectural expression, importance and so forth.

(*This article was prepared based on the paper presented at the scholarly event "Symbols, Changes of Artistic Elements and the Public Space", held on March 23, 2018, in Vilnius in memoriam of Professor Rimantas Buivydas.*)

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Translated by ARVYDAS BARZDUKAS

Reflection of the In-Between State in the Novel *Trys Sekundės Dangaus* by Sigitas Parulskis

VIOLETA KATINIENĖ

Sudden changes after Lithuania regained independence and the long, protracted transitional period force us to raise questions on what we were and what we are now. As we look for the answers, our eyes are drawn to fiction as the most complex form of human communication, which makes it possible to get acquainted with the world and all of its diversity, transcends the boundaries of realistic experience, and brings us closer to fundamental moments of the human existence. On one hand, literature is an alternative model of reality which also reflects it; on the other hand, by affecting the reader, literature itself is a participant in the process of history-making.

An important role here is played by the novel, which stands out in the context of fictional texts because of its singular specificity: as a longer narrative,

> it is not so much the art of narration, building intrigue, or characters getting along, but the problematic human's <…> deliberations about himself and the world, about his existence in the world.[1]

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[1] Chartier, *Įvadas*, 212.

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Speaking about the man and his existential problems in more detail than other genres, the novel is, in the words of literary scholar Norbert Mecklenburg,

> <…> a medium which, in its own way, makes it possible to get to know other people, their living conditions and fields, their belonging to a specific place and their openness to the world, their homeland or its loss.[2]

The modern Lithuanian novel is characterised by a diversity of styles and themes. Discussing the "prose modes" of the new Lithuania, literary scholar Jūratė Sprindytė sees trends such as

> <...> carnival spirit, / decline of the village-city opposition, rise of urban mentality, / autobiographism, / establishment of feminist perspective, / deterioration of genres, diffusion, / intertextuality, cultural layers, / priority of flesh, body as the beyond of consciousness, / transformations of the phenomenon of space, the faded distinction of public/intimate, / invasion of mass culture, / lability of identity, / desacralization.[3]

Yet another strong trend is deliberations in the face of the historical turning point at the end of the twentieth century. The changes in Lithuanian society are reflected by the new stage of literary processes, which was launched by Ričardas Gavelis, one of the first ones to break many of the Soviet taboos with his conceptual prose (*Jauno žmogaus memuarai* (1989), trilogy *Vilniaus pokeris* (1989), *Vilniaus džiazas* (1993), *Paskutinioji žemės žmonių karta* (1995), etc.). Almantas Samalavičius described him accurately as "one of the most insightful Lithuanian society analysts".[4] New themes are taken on by Jurgis Kunčinas, Herkus Kunčius, Sigitas Parulskis, Renata Šerelytė, Zita Čepaitė, Valdas Papievis

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2   Mecklenburg, *Das Mädchen,* 537: „<…> ein Medium, das auf einzigartige Weise erlaubt, andere Menschen kennen zu lernen, ihre Lebensverhältnisse und Gebiete, ihre Ortsgebundenheit und ihre Weltoffenheit, ihre Heimat oder ihren Heimatverlust." [Here and thereinafter, translation from German is provided by the author.]

3   Sprindytė, *Prozos būsenos,* 37–38.

4   Samalavičius, *Kaita ir tęstinumas,* 51.

etc., whose novels focus on everyday life, societal relationships within post-communist Lithuania and with Western Europe, limit situations, issues of post-soviet era creators, and emigration. In the works by the aforementioned authors, the historical turning point becomes an incentive for autoanalysis and reconsideration of the past and the present.

According to Sprindytė, the period after the regaining of independence, when one bids farewell to the past but does not yet fully arrive to the new world which operates on the basis of Western European criteria, is easier to describe using "small phenomenological words *between*, *as though*."[5] Interestingly, this motif of an in-between state is also evident in many Lithuanian novels written after the events of the late twentieth century. In this context, it is worth mentioning the emigrant Valdas, who feels like being somewhere between the past and the present, in *Vienos vasaros emigrantai* (2003) by Valdas Papievis; the limit situation of the traumatised Adolfas in *Murmanti siena* (2009) by Sigitas Parulskis; and the brother and sister lingering at the doorstep of the forbidden room in *Mėlynbarzdžio vaikai* (2011) by Renata Šerelytė, etc. The motif of the in-between is also the main narrative axis of the novel *Trys sekundės dangaus* (Three Seconds of Heaven, 2002) by Parulskis, which this article discusses in detail. In order to expose the specificity of how the "in-between" state is depicted in this novel, the phenomenological concept of the topography of *the alien* by one of the most prominent contemporary German philosophers, Bernhard Waldenfels, is used. In his extensive studies, the phenomenologist examines the multidimensional phenomenon of *the alien*, which is inseparable from *the self*, highlighting the relative (i.e. everyday and structural) *alien* and the radical one, which is characterised by such limit-phenomena as intoxication, sleep, Eros, wars, historical turning points, etc. and which can never be fully reached. Waldenfels devotes special attention to the latter, which "appears by not appearing" only in our answers to its inquiry. Responsiveness

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5   Sprindytė, *Prozos būsenos*, 13.

(*Responsivität* in German) is perceived as a responsibility for one's conduct and actions and development of one's attention to the *alien*. According to Waldenfels, the attention to *the alien* is already a type of response, because it sensitizes one for the perception of pathic events. Discussing the paradoxical structure of *the alien* experience, he refers to two experiential poles which influence one another and which he calls *pathos* (encounter, the moment of confrontation with *the alien*) and *response*, i.e. the unavoidable response, which is later followed by the answer. The phenomenologist describes the breaks (diastases) between these poles as a *threshold* – the transitional, in-between phenomenon when we are neither on one nor the other side and seemingly stop for a while, not unlike when we slow down after stumbling on a rock. The ways in which the phenomena observed and described by Bernhard Waldenfels can contribute to a deeper understanding of literary works, will be demonstrated below.

Trys sekundės dangaus, the first novel by the winner of the Lithuanian National Prize for Culture and Arts in 2004, Sigitas Parulskis, could be categorized as a literary work based on autobiographical facts. Like the novel's author, the protagonist Robertas is a former landing-forces soldier who served in the Soviet Army in East Germany. When Robertas travels to a resort "between the sea and the lagoon"[6] after being asked to describe his experience by an American sovietologist named George, a story is born which is lively, ironic and auto-ironic, painful and funny, balancing between dream and reality, and told as a collage: the scenes of the present in independent Lithuania alternate frequently with memories of army service, studies in Vilnius University, life in Soviet Lithuania, and the period of restored independence. The author himself compares his work to walking at the seaside:

> Walking by the sea after the storm always pulls you towards symbolisation of life a bit: you find lots of garbage, you find pieces of amber, you find a woman's footprint, while next to you

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[6] Parulskis, *Trys sekundės dangaus,* 12.

there are waves of a gigantic, foreign and at the same time en-dearing and powerful mass, a force which you will never fully comprehend and will never fully defeat, no matter what it is – fear, God, death, etc.[7]

The protagonist Robertas tells his story, speaks about person-al experience, but at the same time he is also drawing the portrait of his entire generation, who grew up in the Soviet era and ex-perienced a sudden turning point in their youth which was fol-lowed by radical changes:

> When they look at the sea, some generations see God, others hear symphonic music, Bach's fugues, yet others see a woman, Aphrodite, infinity, eternity, nirvana and other poetic rubbish. The generation which was pushed into this world in roughly the 1960s, even though time does not have special meaning, does not see a damn thing. I belong to this generation. The generation which does not have any special traits, the generation which is almost without qualities.[8]

Parulskis' phrase about the generation which is "almost with-out qualities" unavoidably creates associations with the famous novel *The Man Without Qualities* (1930–1943) by Robert Musil. However, as accurately noted by Viktorija Šeina, these two nov-els do not have much in common: while Musil adds a positive undertone to "without qualities", the possibility to break free from the confines of the convention-bound Austro-Hungarian society, Parulskis' novel has little positivity. Musil's protagonist Ulrich intertwines diverse, often contradicting, philosophies and ideologies,[9] while Parulskis' protagonist Robertas and his gener-ation do not have any philosophy, any illusions, any values, or any patriotism. To this generation, philosophy is replaced by alcoholism, though they "haven't learned to drink" and "are simply unable to enjoy".[10] Here we may recall a description of

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[7] Jonušys, *Pokalbiai,* 69.
[8] Parulskis, *Trys sekundės dangaus*, 7.
[9] Cf. Šeina, „Sigitas Parulskis," 50.
[10] Parulskis, *Trys sekundės dangaus*, 8.

the newcomers from Eastern Europe by the clochard Nathalie, who calls them *polonais* (Poles), in *Vienos vasaros emigrantai* by Valdas Papievis: "*Polonais* are unable to enjoy".[11] The legacy of the Soviet regime, the tragedy of *homo sovieticus* is also reflected by other post-colonial authors, who establish identity in this very context (e.g. Ričardas Gavelis, Herkus Kunčius, Renata Šerelytė, Laurynas Katkus, etc.).

An important moment in the establishment of the self and identity is the response to the inquiry by *the alien*, which often simply catches us by surprise and does not depend on our wishes. "Je est un autre" (I is an other), Arthur Rimbaud says, referring to the impossibility of the "I" that speaks being identical to the "I" that is spoken. "I am him, but he is not me,"[12] Parulskis' protagonist Robertas extends the famous French poet's phrase and opens up the topic of *the alien*, feeling alien to oneself, in the novel. "I is an other, because the alien begins in one's own home,"[13] Bernhard Waldenfels writes. He emphasises that *the self* and *the alien* are intertwined, and we are confronted with the alien from the very first days of our lives: we do not choose when we are born, we are given a name, we are talked to before we start talking ourselves, therefore

> [r]adical alien begins inside ourselves. [Because] if the person is not the master of his house, then [in the encounters with the radical alien] thresholds emerge as not just external but also as internal. We enter 'the internal abroad' in the subconscious. We are separated not just from the others, but also from ourselves.[14]

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11 Papievis, *Vienos vasaros emigrantai,* 32.

12 Parulskis, *Trys sekundės dangaus*, 194.

13 Waldenfels, *Grundmotive,* 28: „Das Ich ist ein Anderer, weil die Fremdheit im eigenen Haus beginnt."

14 Waldenfels, *Sozialität und Alterität,* 215: „Radikale Fremdheit beginnt im Inneren unser selbst. Ist der Mensch nicht Herr im eigenen Hause, so treten Schwellen nicht bloß als Außenschwellen auf, sondern auch als Innenschwellen. Im Unbewußten betreten wir, inneres Ausland. Wir sind nicht nur von Anderen geschieden, sondern auch von uns selbst."

This means that the I, or *the self*, always slips away from the observing consciousness. The attempt to reach one's self is also the loss of self, i.e. the discovery of the alien within oneself. It is precisely this inaccessibility of oneself which is established as an element of action in the novel *Trys sekundės dangaus*, whose title already captures the key metaphor: "three seconds," the time spent between heaven and earth, the present and the past, this side and the other side.

Trys sekundės dangaus is a novel about the *in-between* generation, the *in-between* state, which reveals the drama of a person's search for identity. The *in-between*, which even appears in the book's title and epigraph (the quote by Conrad Aiken, "The Almighty / is the space between the page and the text, / imagination and knowledge, reality / and non-existence. You invented him. / And he invented you."[15]), is also constantly unfolded in various forms within the novel's content. There are boundaries that are possessed or acquired, they can be shifted, expanded or narrowed, but not overstepped. However, there are also the kind of boundaries that can be overcome, when, "while stepping into a different order, one changes and at the same time jumps over one's shadow,"[16] as though stepping over oneself. This refers to *thresholds*, limit zones, where one stops, and which instil fear or can be overstepped.[17] Waldenfels describes *threshold* metaphorically as an authentic location of an experience of the radical *alien*, as a place of "nobody", of "between".[18] He talks about the *threshold* as a transitional space and time like an experience during which the double motion of entrance and exit occurs. In Waldenfels' terms, "the between" is understood primarily as an event in the chrono-

[15] Parulskis, *Trys sekundės dangaus*.

[16] Waldenfels, *Der Stachel des Fremden,* 31: „<...> sich durch den Eintritt in eine andere Ordnung selbst ändert und gleichsam über seinen eigenen Schatten springt."

[17] Ibid.

[18] Cf. Waldenfels, *Sinnesschwellen,* 9; *Vielstimmigkeit,* 204; *Topographie des Fremden*, 205.

topic sense, not just as a spatial category. It is not a point of reference by itself, but it provides one, or rather a point of support, i.e. it is seen as functional, as a transition from one side to another, from one quality to another, without belonging to either side. This function of the *threshold*, which is exactly what makes it the *threshold*, manifests itself in very different aspects during the transitioning process: as an in-between place, an in-between time, and an in-between state (e.g. the state between sleeping and waking).

The action of Parulskis' novel *Trys sekundės dangaus* takes place in such an in-between zone, on a permanent *threshold*: between heaven and earth, between a man and a human, between a man and a woman:

> <…> all the doors disappeared, only a gap remained between the vision and the reality, between the man and the human, between heaven and the dome of the soul which is dragged on the earth, sweeping up the traces of a horse-hoofed angel wading through the sand.[19]

As mentioned before, Waldenfels describes *the threshold* as a "place of nobody," when "one exists neither here, nor there,"[20] as "the setting of a soaring state."[21] In Parulskis' novel, a paradoxical place emerges between heaven and earth – the sacred and the worldly – which is "neither … nor …" or "both … and …" and which simultaneously separates and connects these poles. In Parulskis' novel, the existence between heaven and earth is compared to being in the place of nobody as described by Waldenfels:

> And when, after receiving the signal, you jump off the ramp at the end of the plane, when you step into the relative void, a moment later the noise disappears and suddenly you feel that you are nowhere. For a moment, you do not feel the Earth's

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[19] Parulskis, *Trys sekundės dangaus*, 188.
[20] Waldenfels, *Vielstimmigkeit*, 204: „Die Schwelle ist <...> ein Niemandsort, man ist weder ganz hier noch dort."
[21] Waldenfels, *Sinnesschwellen*, 9: „Ort der Schwebe".

gravity, the longing for the homeland, or the power of a mother's love. <…> The silence of the existential vacuum.[22]

The depiction of a soaring in-between state can also be read as the phenomenon of falling out of time, a *threshold* metaphor contrasted with the linear structure of time: Robertas seems to freeze in a fall, in his own words, " <…> because I jumped out of the present time and now I am dangling in some in-between space <…>."[23] He is neither departing nor arriving, he keeps walking, or falling, while bypassing time: "I am walking, though all the marches are long over, and this walk is only in my mind, in my head, where the time that bypasses me is ringing, filled with memories that are turned into items <…>."[24] At another point in the novel, time is described as a fall from one order without entering another order:

> The biggest mistake of my life was time. After coming back, I asked what the time was. <…> However, he told me the time, but I clearly understood, or simply sensed physically, that his clock and my clock were showing different times. More precisely, my consciousness was counting a different time. A gap appeared. In the calendar, this gap would be marked by two years, but the gap that appeared was not in the calendar.[25]

Waldenfels also includes dreams among the limit phenomena that pierce the order of space and time, as a different form of existence where a deformed reality appears and subconscious images emerge. In his words, no one feels at home in dreams (even if they are repeating).[26] Waking is separated from falling asleep by a brief in-between state: "one does not go to sleep, one falls into sleep,"[27] the philosopher notes. In Parulskis' novel, dreams are a metaphorical place where the self and *the alien*

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[22] Parulskis, *Trys sekundės dangaus,* 77.
[23] Ibid., 65.
[24] Ibid., 164.
[25] Ibid., 10.
[26] Waldenfels, *Topographie des Fremden,* 37.
[27] Waldenfels, *Der Stachel des Fremden,* 32: „Man geht nicht in den Schlaf, sondern man fällt in Schlaf <…>."

meet: another metaphor for *the threshold*. The protagonist Rober-
tas, tormented by wondering if he is dreaming or is being dreamt
himself, "having some nightmares from the future,"[28] soaring
between dream and reality. The novel mentions awakening more
than once ("Something bumped and I woke up,"[29] "Something
bumps and I wake up"[30]), which only reinforces the impression
that the dream continues while he is half-asleep, at an uncertain
point between sleeping and waking, when the subconscious
reaches the consciousness for a moment,[31] and the threshold be-
tween them becomes pervious.[32]

The novel uses the metaphors of light and, more precisely,
the figure of *twilight*, when the day collides with night and the
usual outlines disappear,[33] to depict the in-between state. "My
generation likes twilight, and any boundaries of existence are
erased in the twilight <...>"[34] Robertas says, emphasising the am-
bivalent situation of his life. Germany greets the arriving con-
scripts with "twilight which is not typical of this time of day,
filled with European time <...>"[35]. A gap opens between light and
dark, a *threshold* of time, in Bernhard Waldenfels' words, as "twi-
light of a certain waiting state."[36]

An ambivalent boundary of the body, e.g., open wounds, can
also be considered to be a metaphor for the in-between state. Skin
becomes the locus of such limit injuries between the internal and
external ones.[37] *The alien*, the infiltration of the body of *oneself*, in
a way becomes a part of the self, yet still remains alien, like a
foreign body. In literary descriptions, skin symbolises *the thresh-*

28 Parulskis, *Trys sekundės dangaus,* 31.
29 Ibid., 117, 132.
30 Ibid., 175.
31 Cf. Freud, „Die Traumdeutung", 484.
32 Cf. Waldenfels, *Sozialität und Alterität*, 222–223.
33 Cf. ibid, 222.
34 Parulskis, *Trys sekundės dangaus*, 9.
35 Ibid., 38.
36 Waldenfels, *Ordnung im Zwielicht,* 29: „Dämmerung eines gewissen Warte-
    zustands".
37 Cf. Waldenfels, *Sinnesschwellen*, 56.

old, and its damaging signifies confrontation with the radical *alien* which approaches from the outside: in this case, a traumatizing *encounter*. The army experience appears in the novel as "hands with festering knuckles."[38] In a foreign country, "an incomprehensible land,"[39] "the weather is damningly humid and completely unsuited for doing push-ups, let alone for wounds: they do not want to heal."[40] Loving a woman is affecting and damaging, while bridging the gap between the man and the woman is hurtful: the episode of meeting with Marija by the sea begins with the words "And then something sinks into my foot."[41] The *encounter* is described as a trauma: "The puncture is so painful that I stop immediately and cannot take a single step <...>."[42] Marija invades the field of his *self* like a foreign body – oversteps the boundary of the body: "leaning over [his] foot, she licks the small wound."[43] Rejected by his beloved, Robertas feels the pain with his body; he falls down the stairs of the bell tower: "My body is completely covered with wounds and bruises of various kinds, and as I was falling down from the bell tower, I became similar to a martyr saint: arrows and spears stuck out of me <...>."[44] In this way, the novel articulates the literal "sting of the alien", which Waldenfels discusses in a study of the same name.[45]

In her paper "Sigitas Parulskis: Chronist einer Generation ohne Eigenschaften,"[46] Viktorija Šeina-Vasiliauskienė compares this novel to the works of a prominent German author, Parulskis' contemporary Thomas Brussig, and primarily the latter's novel *Helden Wie Wir* (Heroes Like Us, 1998), because, as stated in the paper's abstract,

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38 Parulskis, *Trys sekundės dangaus,* 80.
39 Ibid., 78.
40 Ibid., 80.
41 Ibid., 68.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid., 71.
44 Ibid., 177.
45 Waldenfels, *Der Stachel des Fremden.*
46 Šeina, „Sigitas Parulskis," 46–54.

> [t]he heroes of these two authors are people of one generation that emerged during the stagnation era, the youths who grew up in the same system of deceit, people of the turning point, who regard patriotism with distrust, who look at the national rebirth with irony or even cynicism. These two authors share a witty narrative style infused with irony.[47]

Indeed, the portrayals of Klaus Uhltzscht and Robertas depicted in the two novels reveal the experience of the same generation, which was marked by the same Soviet system, and both of them have a similar reaction to the political events in Germany and Lithuania at the end of the twentieth century: while euphoric crowds of people are marching on the streets, both protagonists observe the action from a cynical distance,[48] the experience is described with humour, without patriotic pathos.

Looking at this novel in the wider context of the historical turning point in Central and Eastern Europe at the end of the twentieth century, other comparison possibilities emerge. Many representatives of the so-called *Wendeliteratur* (literature of the turning point, which focuses in one way or another on the events at the end of the last century) who hail from East Germany, including the aforementioned Thomas Brussig, raise similar existential questions and share a common European mentality and the experience of totalitarianism. *Trys sekundės dangaus* by Sigitas Parulskis can be successfully compared to, say, Kurt Drawert's novel *Spiegelland. Ein deutscher Monolog* (Mirror Country: A German Monologue, 1992), which describes the experience of a nameless protagonist who fractures in the face of the reunification of Germany's two sides, or Wolfgang Hilbig's novel *Das Provisorium* (A Temporary State, 2000), which depicts the drama of the loss of the self by C., a writer and a worker plagued by a dual existence. Both Parulskis' as well as Hilbig's and Drawert's works have autobiographical elements, reflect authentic experiences, and focus not so much on historical events but rather on "phe-

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47   Online: https://www.lvb.lt.
48   Cf., Šeina, „Sigitas Parulskis," 51.

nomena of human nature that emerge in extreme conditions."[49] All of these novels are also united by rich metaphors of the in-between state, a reflection on the encounter and standing on a *threshold*. They are characterised by an ironic and self-critical depiction of the devastating soviet era and the period following it, while the protagonists do not identify themselves as unified whole and are torn between the present and the past.

Descriptions of the in-between state in *Trys sekundės dangaus*, such as "a body bag,"[50] "neither alive nor dead," "zombie,"[51] head spinning, getting nauseous and losing one's footing,[52] are often reminiscent of Hilbig's metaphors: the experience of protagonist C., torn "in-between," which manifests itself as "loss of consciousness," "hypnosis,"[53] "clockwork automaton,"[54] "a disease,"[55] "something broken,"[56] comparisons of oneself with a "walking dead," "feral somnambulist," "an unpleasant anachronism," who "has already been dead for a long time"[57] – the figures that are in an in-between state, metaphors of something neither alive nor dead. Likewise, in Kurt Drawert's novel, the protagonist torn between his past and present self is placed on a *threshold*, which is experienced in the body as a loss of speech and a disease. On one hand, this experience is traumatising in all novels; on the other, it opens up new horizons and the op-

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[49] Jonušys, *Pokalbiai*, 22.

[50] Parulskis, *Trys sekundės dangaus*, 164.

[51] Ibid., 41.

[52] Cf. ibid, 58: "Head starts spinning, soon the dizziness accelerates so much that it even nauseates me, I want to open my eyes, but I feel the ground slipping away from me."

[53] Hilbig, *Das Provisorium*, 18: „mit der Bewußtlosigkeit," „wie in einer Hypnose".

[54] Ibid., 22: „wie ein aufgezogener Automat".

[55] Ibid., 24: „wie eine Krankheit".

[56] Ibid., 14: „etwas abgebrochen".

[57] Cf. ibid.: „Er konnte nicht altern, weil das einer lebenden Leiche nicht möglich war! Tatsächlich, er schleppte das Schamgefühl eines unheimlichen nachwandelnden Leichnams mit sich herum: ein peinlicher Anachronismus, dem niemand andehen durfte, daß er längst tot war."

portunity to take a fresh look at the former and current order, to reconsider it.

The theme of losing one's language in a new situation is significant in Drawert's novel, as mentioned; it is also quite prominent in Hilbig's *Das Provisorium*. After emigrating from the GDR to West Germany, the protagonist C. finds himself in a deep crisis of identity: he is stuck between the language of the ideological socialist system, which he hates but cannot rid himself of as a part of his *self*, and the alien language of the GFR as a foreign sign system which he does not want to accept, and this results in the loss of language: he feels unable to not only write but speak as well. In the novel *Trys sekundės dangaus*, during the capture of Spaudos Rūmai on 11 January 1991,[58] Robertas meets with a landing-forces soldier – as though himself from the past – and both does and does not recognize himself:

> You know, *bratan*, I tell him, let me touch you, no, better let me hold the machine gun, you see, I say, noticing his confusion, it's possible that you're not here at all, the past can't just visit a person out of the blue, to come the way you came to me – by simply stepping through the door, it's possible that it's a dream, a nightmare, a clouding of consciousness <...>.[59]

Like the German novels, this one also questions the possibilities of language and communication: "Miscommunication among people is much more common than we sometimes think. Some things cannot be determined with the help of language, profession, or similar interests,"[60] Robertas concludes sceptically. A gap between people emerges once again: miscommunication, alienation, and loneliness, the feeling of being alien to oneself; however, a motif of longing for communication is also expressed: "It is very difficult to talk with oneself…"[61] Similarly to C. in

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[58] Parulskis, *Trys sekundės dangaus,* 180–183.
[59] Ibid., 183.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., 34.

Hilbig's novel *Das Provisorium*, Robertas sees his own voice as alien: "<…> when I speak without any mediators, I find my voice bearable, but whenever I start listening to its recording, I want to turn it off immediately… The tape is probably emanating the true 'self' of a person <...>."[62] According to Waldenfels, after hearing one's own recorded voice or seeing one's face in a video, one encounters "a situation which intertwines closeness with distance and where each reflection is diverted with the help of a kind of deflection."[63] As a result, the body, whose expression is language, acquires features of an alien body, because direct contact with oneself is lost.[64] Robertas cannot find common ground with people of his own generation because, while this generation also "suffers from the gap, the miscommunication is exactly the same. Those damned gaps are different."[65] The gap, if we treat it like a *threshold*, is the experience that fractured during a confrontation with *the alien*. Thus, once again we may return to Waldenfels' idea about the multidimensional nature of *the alien* – there is no single *alien*, there are as many of them as there are different orders, and the experience of *alien* is individual.

The parallels to Wolfgang Hilbig's novel *Das Provisorium* are noticeable not just in the abundant metaphors of *the alien* and the descriptions of the in-between state, *the threshold*. Sigitas Parulskis' protagonist observes the world from a similar perspective like Hilbig's C.: the ugliness goes hand in hand with the perfect aesthetic form, and it is precisely as a result of the contradiction between these two poles that they shine in a particularly bright light.[66] In Parulskis' novel, "<…> the amalgam of alcohol, whirlwind passion, and nightmarish visions, which

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62 Ibid.
63 Waldenfels, *Grundmotive,* 77: „<…> eine Situation, wo Nähe und Ferne ineinander spielen und jede direkte Reflexion durch eine besondere Art von Deflexion abgelenkt wird."
64 Ibid.
65 Parulskis, *Trys sekundės dangaus*, 11.
66 Cf. Lohse, 34.

emerges from the nooks of memory and is expressed by the shifting of temporal planes and reality / dream layers,"[67] is reminiscent of the decentralized identity of Hilbig's protagonist C.

To summarize, as was demonstrated, it can be concluded that the main theme of Sigitas Parulskis' novel *Trys sekundės dangaus* is the motif of the in-between state, which is expressed in various images. This description of the "between" state is comparable to the concept of *the threshold* by Bernhard Waldenfels: Robertas is neither here nor there, he is soaring in the gap, he is literally suspended in the air. And this feeling remains while reading the entire novel – as a fracture in the experience between *pathos* and *response* – whereas the novel itself can be perceived as a response to the *encounter*. Such an experience is only possible in limit situations, when faced with challenges of the radical *alien*, which is manifested in *Trys sekundės dangaus* in various forms and rich metaphors such as feeling alien to oneself, loss of the sense of time, being in nobody's place, another form of being (dreams), twilight, etc. As demonstrated both in this work and other works discussed in the paper, *thresholds* are not places where one feels as if at home. They emerge between order and what lies beyond it, as uncertainty, indeterminability, etc. Thus, it is difficult to discuss them without discussing the phenomenon of *the alien*. According to Waldenfels, the experience of *the threshold* could be considered to be a prototype of the radical *alien*, which befalls us, a turning point occurs, and one finds himself exactly in this "between".

The novel's unique style and rich language introduce new themes in Lithuanian literature. Parulskis' "existential linguistics"[68] not only does not obscure but rather highlights the novel's poetry, a deep longing for what lies beyond the boundary. What

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[67] „Literatūra", 89.

[68] Cf. Parulskis, *Trys sekundės dangaus,* 11: „Gaps that are filled with curse-words, ugly, dirty, Russian, Turkish curses that have lost their true semantics, that are primarily a certain form of despair. This isn't poverty of vocabulary, this is existential linguistics – a depiction of a gap, a void <...>."

is tempting from beyond *the threshold*, what Robertas misses, and what frightens him ("nightmares from the future"[69]), are not dependent on one's own possibilities but signify a challenge of *the alien*, which has no place in the current order.[70] The entire palette of *pathos* meanings is revealed: it touches us, traumatises and leaves a mark, causes suffering, but also forces us to respond, to make conclusions, move forward, wonder and, like the platonic Eros, gravitate towards beauty, truth, and good.[71] It can be argued that this novel is a way to respond, an expression of the hope that something new is born and created.

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[69] Cf. Parulskis, *Trys sekundės dangaus,* 31.
[70] Cf. Waldenfels, *Der Stachel des Fremden,* 31.
[71] Cf. Waldenfels, „Das Fremde im Eigenen," 3.

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Beyond the Enigma of Power: Notes on the Last Novel by Ričardas Gavelis

ALMANTAS SAMALAVIČIUS

The Master of the Noir

The last novel of Ričardas Gavelis *Sun Tzu's Life in the Holy City of Vilnius* (translated by Elizabeth Novickas and recently published by Pica Pica Press)[1] is not an easy or simply entertaining reading. It is as thrilling and often gloomy piece of literature and at times is even more depressing than his several previous works in this genre. Having written a sequence of several "noir" novels (as he called them himself) that were full of unsolved mystery and violence and quite often contained a large repertoire of threatening and sometimes shocking or even repulsive images, the writer continued until the untimely end of his life his cold-blooded and merciless exploration of the dark side of the human soul as well as a society created and eventually perverted by the humans themselves. To those who are already familiar with at least a few titles of Gavelis preceding *Sun Tzu's Life*, his last novel would hardly come as a surprise and yet at the same time reading it requires some conscious inner strength to enter the dark, cynical and bizarre underworld of what came into being after the collapse of Communism – the process he depicted so vividly, masterfully and no less mercilessly. Any perceptive reader of Gavelis' poignant prose would most possibly agree that he really was, as the afterword to the English translation explicitly states – "a master of the macabre"; however, being

[1] Ričardas Gavelis. *Sun-Tzu's Life in the Holy City of Vilnius*, translated by Elizabeth Novickas, Chicago: Pica Pica Press, 2019.

seemingly a cold and somewhat too rational writer providing a "surgical" view of an irreversibly perverted society, he nevertheless had at least a bit of optimism: the final chapter of his last novel contains this tiny hint of hope as he concludes his narrative with a few passages about a few strangers who without their own knowledge keep the human world going. After providing a thrilling narrative about the fall of the almost totally corrupt and degenerate city of Vilnius that he also chose to destroy in one of his earlier novels (*The Last Generation of People on Earth*, 1995), Gavelis starts the final chapter of his last novel titled "The Righteous Ones" with a hopeful narrative about its possible redemption:

> *Thirty-six righteous souls live and have always lived on the earth, and their purpose is to justify the world in God's eyes. The righteous ones do not know each other, and in life they get by poorly. If someone finds out they are one of the thirty-six righteous souls, they instantly die a painful death, and their place is taken by another somewhere in an entirely different corner of the world. These righteous souls uphold people's existence in the world. If they didn't exist, God would have destroyed the human family a long time ago.* (271)

Though in this brief concluding section of the novel, Gavelis speaks about the world and a human family, in fact it is reduced to the one and only "eternal" city he knew so well – Vilnius, where almost all the plots of his novels were set. His relation to this city had always been ambiguous – he seems to have loved and hated it at the same time, as can be explicitly seen in his depiction of Vilnius in his Opus Magnum, *Vilnius Poker*, that was also the first book of the co-called Vilnius trilogy (that was made up of *Vilnius Poker*, *Vilnius Jazz* and *The Last Generation of People on Earth*). As Gavelis has once famously remarked in his conversation with literary critic and editor Alijušas Grėbliūnas, "I mystify, glorify and imprecate this city, but first and foremost I love it".

Nevertheless, as any sensitive reader can observe, he most often depicted Vilnius as perverted, toxic and, probably, the most

dangerous place on earth where *anything* could happen to any-one or had already happened. The urban milieu as described in *Sun-Tzu's Life in the Holy City of Vilnius* is no exception. What-ever this city happens to be, it is far from being a holy place even if it contains more houses of worship and a variety of other re-ligious structures than any other city in this country. One could argue that the "holy city of Vilnius" as described in his last nov-el is far closer to biblical Sodom and Gomorrah than any possi-ble sacred site as the novel's title deceptively (and consciously) implies, yet the writer was no cynic: it can be concluded that Gavelis finally chose to transgress the macabre scenography of his last novel to bring a tiny beam of light in his world of ultimate darkness.

The Writer and His Critics

As I have already emphasized while reviewing the translation of one of his early novels that co-incidentally contains a number of clues to his future (and larger) prose writings – *Memoirs of a Life Cut Short*,[2] Ričardas Gavelis was one of the leading Lithua-nian prose writers of the late Soviet and early post-Soviet period who without any doubt has contributed most significantly to the change of themes, scope, narratives and even the language of the Lithuanian prose of his time, even when his popularity to a certain degree waned or when he came to be by-passed by some leading and influential academic critics. Beyond any doubt, his novels and short-stories were especially provocative and non-con-formist back in the era of captivity and he was the first to open-ly introduce narratives about Gulag experience and other forms of oppression. His most famous novel, *Vilnius Poker*, shook and changed the whole national literary landscape toward the very end of the Soviet regime and most possible will one day come to be viewed as one of the most exceptional pieces of literature

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[2] Samalavičius, "Autopsy of the System Before its Collapse," 87–91.

written during the long period of censorship and control that lasted from World War II to the fall of the seemingly omnipotent Soviet regime in 1990. But some comments are needed here: he continued to be a bold and fierce critic of post-Soviet realities refusing to take for granted any political or social discourse connected to these changes. Besides, he had a deep distrust in politicians as well as the ideologies that fueled post-Communist politics. This kind of stance brought him a lot of enemies both in the literary milieu and outside it.

As it often happens with truly important epochal writers, he too was hardly adequately interpreted and understood during his lifetime and thus he was often comfortably labelled as scandalous or a popular author with a taste for sexual images, especially during those years when he challenged the murky literary landscape of Soviet Lithuania with his powerful images of the waning of historical Vilnius – the city he provocatively chose to label the Ass of the Universe. Unlike some other writers who reserved their criticism for the era that had ended with the fall of the Soviet empire, after the reestablishment of Lithuania's independence he continued to write perceptive novels focused on ambiguous societal transformations and the new realignment of power. This kind of literary discourse happened to be against the liking of the country's literary establishment, the members of which had built their careers under the previous regime. Quite naturally, most of the Lithuanian literary critics of the time (except a few) failed to grasp his powerful literary images in an adequate way, and chose to either ignore or attack his literary imagination as soon as *Vilnius Poker* was published; moreover so since this novel was aimed at destroying a number of cultural taboos and icons that had been beyond any critical scrutiny during the colonial era. It is not at all surprising that even though it is almost thirty years after the novels *Vilnius Poker* and *Memoirs of a Life Cut Short* were published, these exceptional literary works have been finally acknowledged as important contributions to Lithuanian literature (especially after *Vilnius Poker* made its way to the

international literary market) though his other novels written and published after Lithuania gained its independence in 1990 continue to be considered far less important or even considered as failures. The opinion of literary critic Regimantas Tamošaitis is very typical in this respect. He dismissed *Sun-Tzu's Life* as soon as it was published and continues to dismiss Gavelis' last novels as professionally composed but exhausted. A few years ago while discussing the development of contemporary Lithuanian prose in Lithuania's leading literary journal *Metai* (co-incidentally where once Gavelis worked), literary scholar and critic Tamošaitis insisted:

> *Ričardas Gavelis was angry and real. But afterwards something happened to him as he started to perform jazz while searching for a new language as if trying to find a way out of a literary dead-end with the help of various ways of suicide* (the critic referred to one of his later titles – A.S.). *His prose started to be too personal, too harsh, as if it were a way of dealing with his past. The narrative of Gavelis became lighter and faster, his metaphors – more transparent and more impressive. When everything about our life in the Ass of the Universe was said, his writing became a repetition of continuously grotesque metaphors without adding anything else, except strengthening the effect of sensation and the sensual, increasing its grotesque character.*[3]

This kind of treatment of Gavelis' later novels seems to have met the approval of the official Lithuanian literary criticism that has always tended either to by-pass or underrate this important and truly exceptional Lithuanian writer, remaining hostile to his aesthetics of ugliness and unsettling postcolonial narrative. Though reception of Gavelis' writings has considerably changed during recent decades, a strange hostility prevails among a number of literary critics who either refuse to acknowledge his impact on Lithuanian literature or (more lately) choose to depreciate his later novels as somewhat journalistic and repetitive. Another example of this kind of attitude is provided in a recent overview of Lithuanian prose writing by translator and literary critic and

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[3] Tamošaitis, "Literatūra ant debesies," online.

co-incidentally a recipient of the Vytautas Kubilius prize, Laimantas Jonušys, who while discussing the tendencies of Lithuanian prose writing of the last twenty years chose to by-pass the novels and collections of short-stories by Gavelis, altogether dismissing his later writings as aesthetically non-important.[4] This sort of attitude is perhaps not at all surprising, keeping in mind the tense and complex history of relations between Lithuanian (academic and non-academic) literary critics and literary texts by Gavelis as soon as *Vilnius Poker* was published. It might be added that only due to the efforts of professor Violeta Kelertas and a handful of literary scholars residing in Lithuania, attitudes towards his writings finally shifted, especially after his novels were extensively analyzed in a pioneering collection of literary and cultural criticism analyzing Baltic texts from a postcolonial perspective. This timely and significant volume of scholarship titled *Baltic Postcolonialism* among many other things had some influence on the reception of Gavelis' prose writing in Lithuania, so that they could no longer be labelled as pornographic or belonging to mass culture.[5]

Thus, some literary critics have more recently chosen a different approach while trying to access the impact of Gavelis's later writings. For example, literary critic and scholar Jūratė Čerškutė, who coincidentally wrote her Ph. D. thesis focused on the prose writings of Gavelis, recently offered a different (though not at all novel) perspective of evaluating his literary career. According to Čerškutė:

> *A black hole came into Lithuanian literature after Ričardas Gavelis died in August, 2002, and Jurgis Kunčinas passed away in the beginning of December of the same year. These two unique writers can not be replaced by anyone. Even now, twelve years after the death of Ričardas Gavelis, I can't find any other cultural and social critique.*[6]

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[4] Jonušys, "Prozos proveržiai," online.
[5] See *Baltic Postcolonialism*, edited by Violeta Kelertas, Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi, 2006.
[6] Čerškutė, "Nerandu kito kūrėjo," online.

Though I would be inclined to disagree with Čerškutė about the supposed lack of cultural and social critique after Gavelis passed away, especially as far as non-fictional literary forms are concerned, nevertheless I share her musings about the black hole that came into Lithuanian prose writing after his death. Unlike the majority of Lithuanian prose writers (with only a few exceptions) who were and are most often dealing with their own personal and private experiences, Gavelis always aimed at offering society far broader and significant metaphors – though in a postscript to one of his later novels he wrote that it is not possible to draw any metaphor from life in post-Soviet society and the only remaining possibility is to write a criminal narrative. This overcooked statement seems to be his posture rather than creative credo. On the other hand, as a matter of fact, Gavelis made good use of the criminal material that life after Communism offered, especially in the first post-Soviet decade when Lithuania was plagued by criminal gangs, racketeering, money laundering and collapsing banks. However, he was wise enough to transcend this kind of journalistic narrative and was always concerned with more complex issues: why human beings become the willing victims of their own enthusiasm while submitting themselves to new configurations of power that are no less evil than the previous one? And why they fall prey to political and social manipulations by creating hordes of heroes and idols they choose to follow uncritically, reducing free-will and intellect to sloganeering and other forms of social mimicry. Among many other things, Gavelis was famously concerned about the lack of intellectualism in Lithuanian prose – an issue he brilliantly and thoroughly discussed in one of his first novels titled *Memoirs of a Life Cut Short*. His dissatisfaction with Lithuanian literature as well as Lithuanian intellectual culture in general, quite naturally earned him many enemies who took his provocative musings personally and literally. The issue about the anti-intellectualism of Lithuanian literature remains as significant today as it was during his life-time.

The Last Novel

The last novel of Ričardas Gavelis published in 2002 was titled *Sun Tzu's Life in the Holy City of Vilnius* and once again focused on the city that he made the continuous subject and center of his prose writing throughout his literary career with just a few exceptions like, e. g., his early novel, *Memoirs of a Life Cut Short*. In many aspects this novel is a continuation (but not a mere repetition) of his usual themes, the most important of them being power and various forms of domination and subjugation. Some might even be inclined to call this interest a life-long obsession. While writing this novel that finally turned out to be his last one, Gavelis had already explored many aspects of it in his preceding novels centered on the issue of power. This might be called a life-long obsession. But was it really an obsession?

Most probably questions like this are futile. The writer himself or herself decides why he or she pursues this or any other object. Gavelis chose to struggle with an enigma of power that he most probably felt extremely important, especially in certain social conditions. It was truly important in the era of Soviet domination but also turned out to be no less important after the collapse of that oppressive regime, as newly emerging politicians and political gangs were no less thirsty for power than their predecessors. Gavelis took politics seriously but he had no taste for politicians. As he remarked in one of our conversations a quarter of a century ago, he could only "detest the caste of politicians" as such.[7]

Gavelis turned out to be both an eye-witness and bold interpreter of post-Communist transformations while describing the strange paradoxical realities of a society that was undergoing a painful and ambiguous social change. He did not buy the idea that a change of regime can automatically bring on a perfect society. Far from it: being a writer who was so critical of the Soviet and generally all totalitarian kinds of regimes in his *Vil-*

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[7]   Samalavičius, "Conversation with Ričardas Gavelis," 52.

nius Poker, Gavelis had no illusions about the post-communist developments. His evaluations were cold and reserved and even occasionally cynical. He never believed that society could soon get rid of a burden of history that large. And thus his literary reflections on post-Soviet society were far from being flattering. In fact, each and every of his novels written after the fall of the Soviet regime, was gloomier and gloomier as if he himself had lost hope in the redemption of post-communist society. In his last novel *Sun-Tzu's* life in the Holy City of Vilnius, Gavelis provides the narrative of the main protagonist who is born into a family of a dissenting scientist who follows his mission of deconstructing the world. Secretly working in his own private laboratory located in his private apartment, the first father of the novel's protagonist hopes to create a better world; however, finally he fails dramatically: one day he is found dead with his head cut off and the author makes no secret that he was murdered by the very system he tried to investigate secretly. The son of the victim is only invited to witness the death and sign the papers.

Eventually the protagonist, who tries desperately to understand what has happened, discloses the official secret:

> *Everything was more or less cleared up for me much later, rummaging through KGB archives and repeatedly questioning old security agents. At the time, all I understood was that my first father's head had been cut off. It was an excessive punishment, one that no human deserves – even those living in Vilnius. I didn't deserve my punishment either: for what fault did the gods allot me precisely that kind of father and precisely that kind of mother? That's a rhetorical question the gods haven't answered to this day, not even in my dreams. On the whole, they don't answer any questions. You must give them and answer them all by yourself.* (64)

Like most of Gavelis' novels, *Sun Tzu's Life in the Holy City of Vilnius* has no heroes. Even those characters who like the protagonist's father might be regarded as dissidents and fighters against the totalitarian regime, turn out to be far more complex people, and are actually non-heroic or even anti-heroic. The pro-

tagonist's father continues to stay with his wife even after discovering she has been constantly unfaithful to him, and this fact hurts his son who cannot understand how such an attitude conforms with his father's ideals. On the other hand, his work in deconstructing the world he hates is equally ambiguous: for he hardly offers any alternative to the system he aims to deconstruct.

Meanwhile his son (the protagonist) who bears witness to the social change and finally decides to take part in it, urged on by his mother Gorgeous Rožė, is also devoid of heroic features. The author follows his moral regression, which becomes more and more obvious with time. As soon as he enters politics, he turns out to be a character who adheres to no moral code. He finally becomes an even more complex and complicated individual who breaks almost all ties with his milieu and gives up his family ties, and soon comes to embody both good and evil, imagining himself as Nietzsche's Superman above both:

> *I'm a man without a single face. All the more, a man without a single real name. You could call me the Archangel Gabriel. But you could call me Abaddon, too, even if I don't destroy the world with my gaze.*

The protagonist of *Sun-Tzu's Life* finally becomes disillusioned with politics and political action. This is how he turns into a cold and cynical ancient warrior who aims to destroy the humans that he considers to embody evil. At the same time, he becomes a perverted killer who not only destroys his enemies but also gathers a collection of their bodies in a secret Vilnius underground. This semi-conscious transformation is described in this way:

> *I am called Sun-Tzu, I am a military leader, and my field of battle is the entire world, artificially compressed into the holy city of Vilnius. In addition, I am collector: I collect and spiritually burn the cockles of the world, all the miscreants and scoundrels – all that is left of them is wailing and gnashing of teeth. My collection of surgical instruments is no worse that Albinas Afrika's collection of drums and drumlets. My only friend and supporter Apples Petriukas agrees with my way, even though he's not prepared to battle with*

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anyone – he only attempts to understand God's eyes. He says this is how he begins the twenty-first century; while I begin the twenty-first century in my own way. (232)

Taking shelter in the guts of the holy city, the Sun-Tzu-turned protagonist dissects the bodies of his victims, occasionally aided by another character familiar from *Vilnius Poker* – medical doctor Kovarskis, whom he invites to share his secret passion while still running the government. Curiously, Kovarskis of the *Sun-Tzu's Life* bears little resemblance to the old, exhausted medical doctor who discovers a special kind of illness called The Vilnius syndrome in *Vilnius Poker*. He is now depicted as a crazy American-based expatriate surgeon sharing some kinship with the infamous "Dr. Death" Kevorkian consumed by the passion of dissecting deceased people – an alter-ego of Vilnius's Sun-Tzu who is likewise desperate, mad, and at the same time a cold blooded destroyer of all forms of evil. The protagonist of the novel seems to believe that a crazy perverted world deserves only equally crazy and perverted actions.

The reading of Gavelis's last novel leaves one in confrontation with a strange sense of guilt or even perhaps the shame of dealing with a deeply disturbing or even perverted society made up of perverted people, but by acknowledging and accepting this feeling, one might possibly find a way out of confusion. As the perceptive literary scholar and aesthetician James S. Hans has thoughtfully remarked,

> *The Human need for victims in the face of the arbitrariness and relative unpleasantness of life is inexhaustible, it would seem, and readily finds an outlet in the expression of violence toward another animal, be the victim a human or some other species. This is precisely why it is so necessary to face shame at the center of human consciousness, for only that confrontation holds any hope of allowing us to escape from the endless symbolic shuffle of victims we search for every time we feel some resentment toward life and wish to get back at it.*[8]

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[8] Hans, *Origins of the Gods*, 105.

However it might be, the last novel of Gavelis provides a lot of food for thought, not only for those living in and experiencing a never-ending social transformation, but also for those readers who encounter other forms of social or political madness in their own immediate surroundings.

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Alfonsas (Alf) Dargis (1909–1996) Lithuanian Marriage Customs

RIMAS VISGIRDA

Alfonsas Dargis was born in 1909 in Reivyčiai, Mažeikiai parish, Lithuania. He studied at the Kaunas School of Art Kaunas, Lithuania, from 1929 to 1935 and received a Lithuanian State Scholarship to further his studies under Professor Grigor at the Vienna Academy of Arts from 1936 to 1940. He apparently took residence in Germany after his Vienna studies and worked as a graphic artist and stage designer at a number of European theaters. After the war, he moved from Communist occupied East Germany to Göttingen where he received acclaim as a graphic designer; the German trade union newspaper art critic wrote about him: "It wasn't by accident that I met Alfonsas Dargis. He is considered one of Göttingen's foremost graphic artists. When I visited him in his one room apartment I found him crouched over a hunk of wood preparing it for printing. His walls were covered with graphics and enchanting paintings. Even though he lived in Germany for many years he still got his inspiration from the fathomless reservoir of Lithuanian Folk Art." He emigrated to the USA in 1951 where he took residence in Rochester, NY. He continued to be recognized as a significant artist and his work can be found in numerous museum collections.

It has been written about his work: alternately spirited and meditative, realistic and elusive, Dargis's distinctive work combines the directness of Lithuanian folk art and the abstraction of mid-century Modernism.

The work presented here is from a limited edition of "Lithuanian Marriage Customs" published in 1946 in Göttingen.
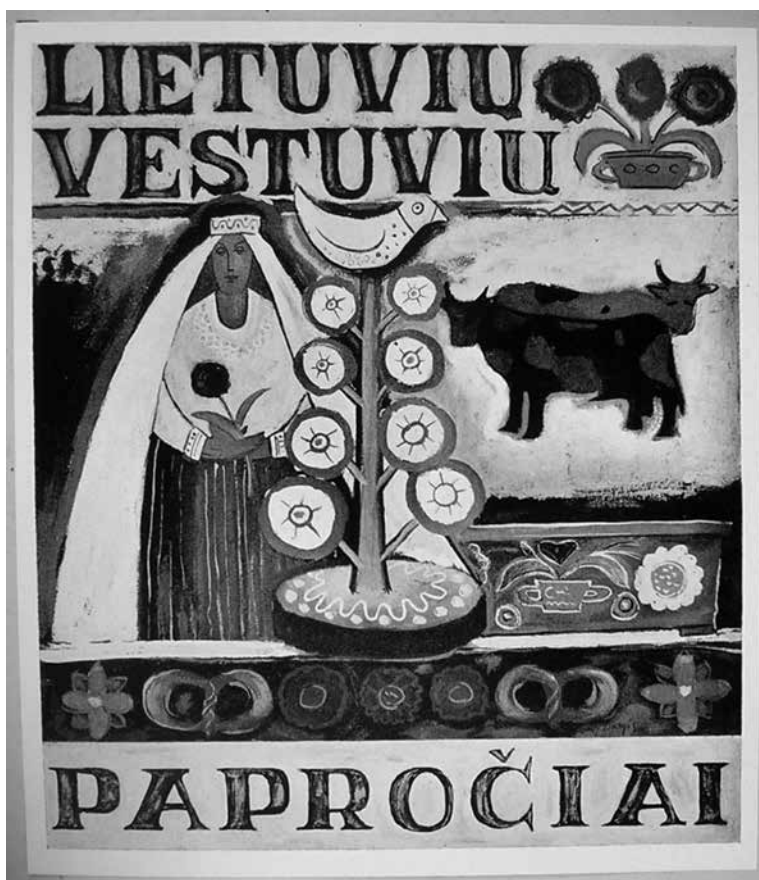
ALF. DARGIS

LIETUVIŲ VESTUVIŲ PAPROČIAI

LITHUANIAN MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

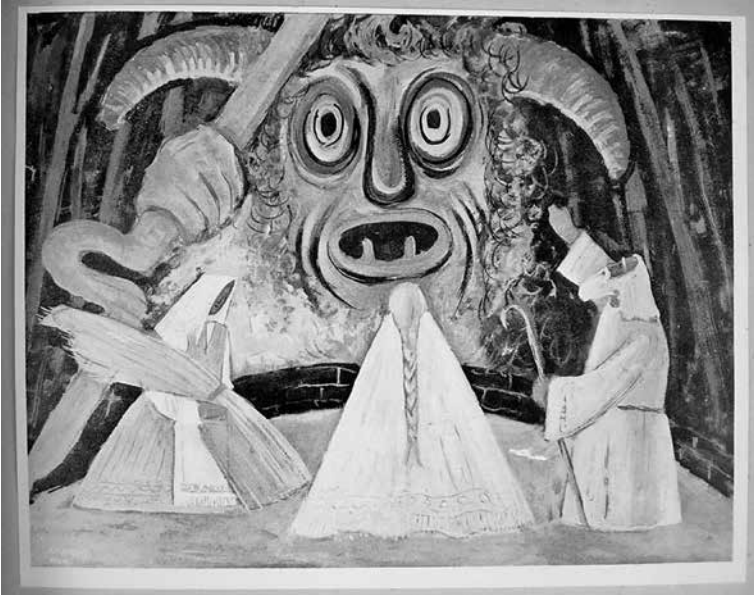LITAUISCHE HOCHZEITSBRÄUCHE

USAGES DE NOCES DE LITUANIE

Monograph cover

Title page. Lietuvių vestuvių papročiai / Lithuanian Wedding Customs

THE ANNOUNCEMENT. *Wooden trumpets sound an invitation to a wedding feast*

TEMPLE RITUAL. *A young woman is presented at the pagan temple and a sheaf of ripe rye is sacrificed at the altar of Eternal Flame to represent fertility*

THE STRANGER. *The setting indicates there is a fair maiden, daughter, living in the house when an unknown horseman arrives and asks directions and some water to slake his thirst. The parents are not tricked by his ruse and understand that he would like the hand of their daughter*

THE ABDUCTION. *One of the young men approaches the fair maiden as she is car-rying water, he entices her and lures her into running off with him to his homestead*
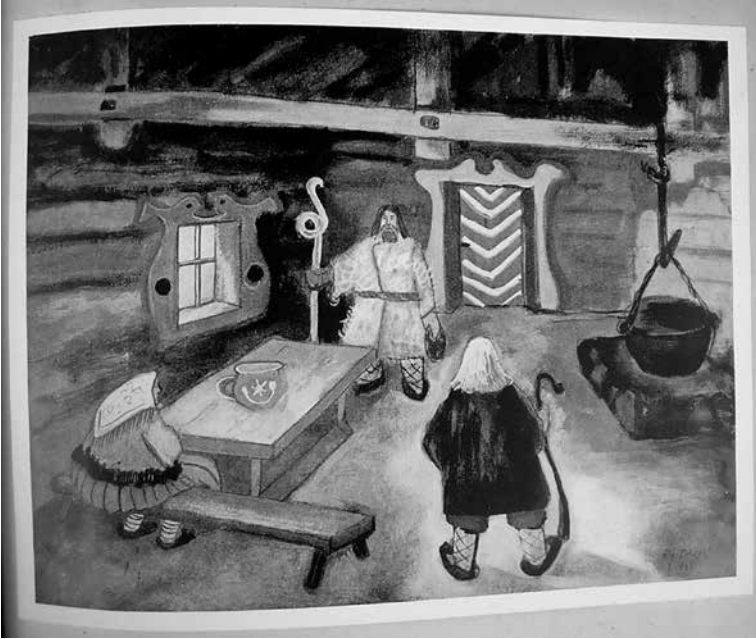
THE MESSENGER. *The parents and young men are upset by the disappearance of the young maiden and seek revenge; the maiden however, allowed herself to be lured away and is happy living in her new surroundings. The bridegroom entrusts a friend to compliment the parents on the excellent upbringing of the daughter and presents them with cattle, furs, and mead*
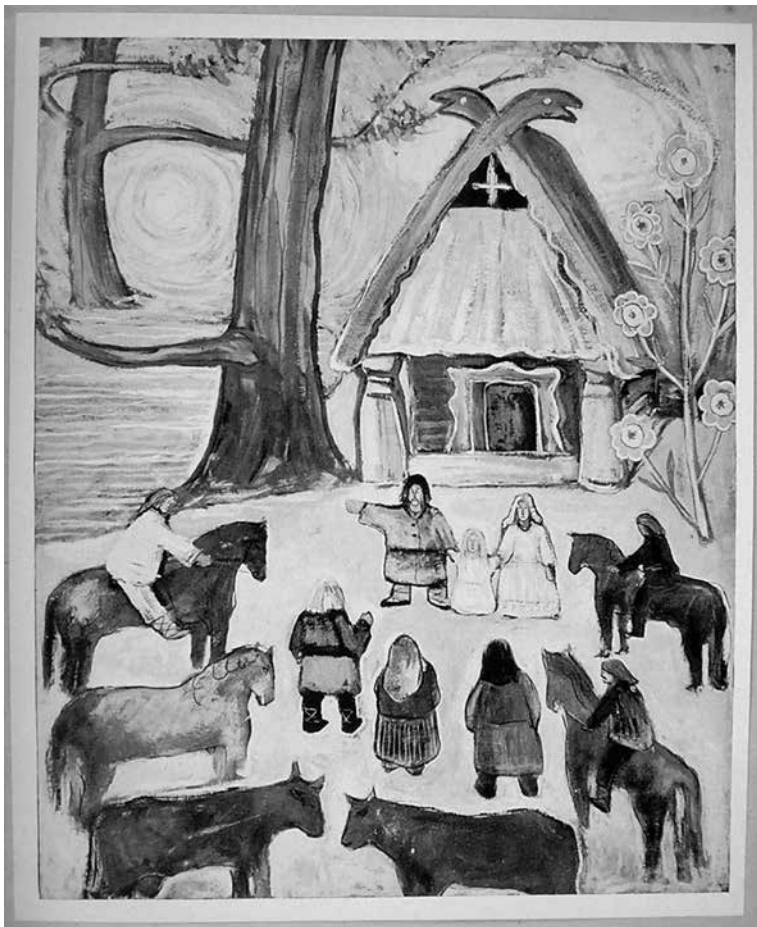
THE RECONCILIATION. *The parents eventually forgive the young married couple and return the gifts that the messengers had given them plus adding weaving materials, cattle, cereals and other presents to help their daughter in her new life*
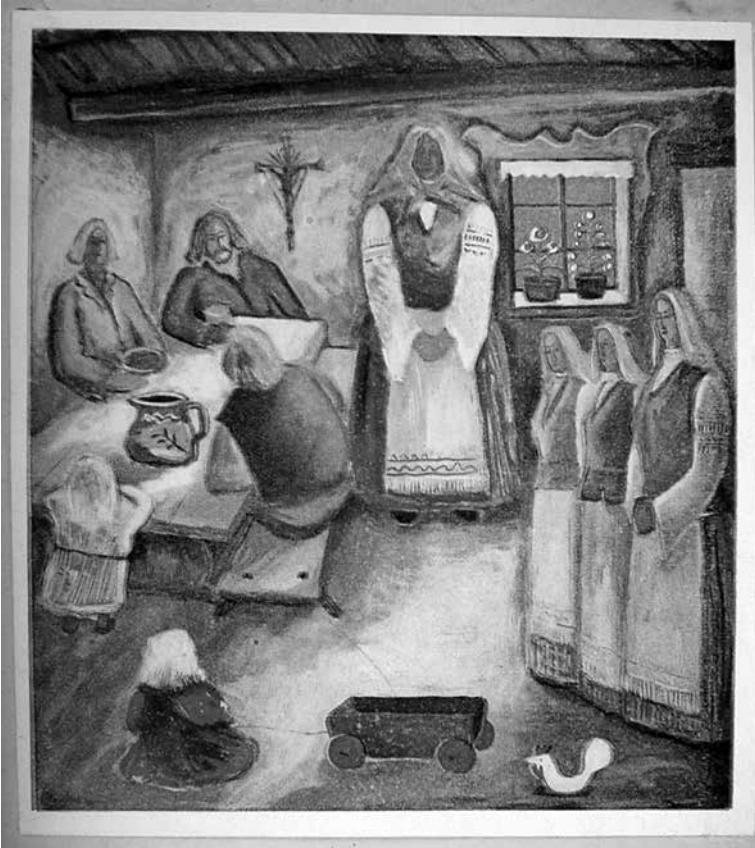
THE MATCHMAKING. *The matchmaker, a glib and entertaining person, along with a suitor travel the land seeking a young maiden. They are welcomed to a village and celebrated with food and drink, the matchmaker presents the suitor as a man of diligence, thriftiness, and especialy of wealth to provide for a bride. The mother then calls out her eldest daughter to present to the suitor; the younger daughters are usually hidden as the oldest needs to marry first. When both parties reach an agreement about a dowry and the parents are satisfied with the condition of the suitor's estate. The wedding takes place three weeks after the engagement is posted at the church*

THE DOWRY MOVERS. *The matchmaker along with helpers arrives to take the dowry, which is packed in gaily colored chests and contain linen cloths, towels, carpets and sashes that the bride has made as well as domestic animals, grain and other things for the start of the bride's new life. The items are not moved until the matchmaker has paid for them in gold*
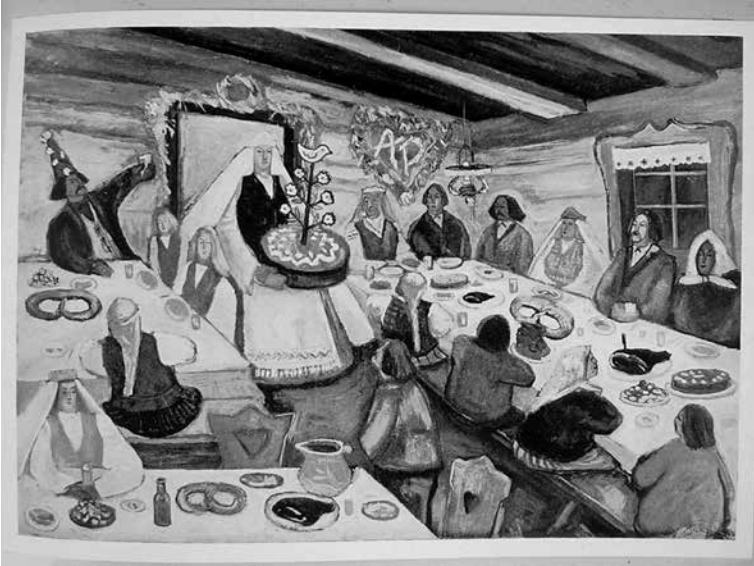
THE WEDDING CAKE. *An important part of the wedding ceremony is the cake.
The Chosen Bridesmaid cuts a piece of the cake and offers it to each of the guests*

WELCOMING OF THE BETHROTHED AFTER THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY.
The married couple is met by the parents at the threshhold of their new residence with gifts of bread and salt

THE WAKING OF THE BETHROTHED IN THE MORNING. *The newly married couple spend their first night in the storehouse. At daybreak, the wedding guests gather to wake the newly weds with loud song and music. They pepper the couple with witty and clever sayings. When the couple arise, the guests honor them with spirits and sweet cakes*

THE TRIAL OF THE MATCHMAKER. *As the celebration escalates, the guests accuse the matchmaker of decieving the bride by overstating the assets of the groom. They decide the matchmaker must be tried and select a judge and jury. After a brief deliberation the jury decrees a verdict and the secretary declares that the matchmaker must be put to death by hanging*

THE HANGING OF THE MATCHMAKER. *An effigy of the matchmaker is hung from a dead branch of a tree while the actual matchmaker hides. The guests continue the revelry with song, dance and spirits and are overjoyed that the matchmaker has found the fair conclusion to his lies and machinations*

DEATH, THE ANGEL AND THE DEVIL. *As the wedding lasts for a number of days, the participants plan and act out various scenarios. To represent the Destiny of Man, three participants are chosen, one is dressed as an Angel, another as the Devil and the third as Death. Death decides the fate of Man on the Earth; the angel takes those that were virtuous to Heaven and showers them with sweets and other delicacies, while the devil takes his chosen to hell – a dark room and rubs their faces with soot*

The Equipment of the Military of the Republic of Lithuania in 1918–1940

VIDAS GRIGORAITIS

Until now, there has been no separate publication dedicated to the history of the equipment of the Lithuanian military in the historiography of Lithuania. In the twentieth century, during the period of the country's occupation, this subject could not have been studied by historians because everything related to the life of a free state was sought to be silenced, while the symbols of statehood, including the army, were sought to be erased from memory. During the period of restored independence, there was an increase in separate articles related to the Lithuanian military, but there aren't many works dedicated to the topic of military equipment.

Unfortunately, not all sources used in the overview of the history of Lithuanian military are easily accessible, thus the main goal of this work was to start the discussion of the subject and hope that it will not be forgotten, and perhaps other researchers will continue exploring it. Stimulated by these thoughts and relying on a variety of less known and less referenced sources, the book's author attempted to take a look at the genesis of the military equipment of Lithuania, because the authors of previously released books did not have such opportunities.

The period of the existence of the Lithuanian military from 1918 until 1940 was chosen for the work. The aforementioned years correspond to the period of the emergence, development, and destruction of military equipment units: tanks and tankettes,

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Light military automobile Opel 34/80 PS, K.A.M. No. 28 with soldiers. Circa 1925. Lithuanian State central archives

cars, motorcycles, armoured vehicles, and special equipment. Other types of motorized and mechanized equipment – such as of the air force and the navy – and their purchase and usage in the Lithuanian military will not be discussed here, because they could serve as subjects of separate works. All of this is reserved for other researchers. It is my hope that my work, which does not claim to be a comprehensive history but is dedicated to the commemoration of the twentieth century history of the Lithuanian military vehicle transport, will be at least a small part of the efforts in the research of the entire history of the Lithuanian military.[1]

As for the history of Lithuanian military equipment, it can be observed that it has not been discussed at length both in the twentieth and the twenty-first century. The surviving historical sources only partially allow one to determine the principal stages of the acquisitions of Lithuanian military equipment; it is possible to more accurately determine the dates of the emergence, operation, and destruction of technical military divisions; one can partially uncover the procedures of debates and decision-making,

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[1]   LCVA, f. 1364, ap. 3, b. 206, l. 14.

note the attempts at equipment unification, find out about the failures and successes in the motorization and mechanization of certain military divisions, e.g., the Anti-Aircraft Brigade.

Before discussing the transport vehicles of the Lithuanian military, the stages of the emergence and formation of the Lithuanian road system should be briefly reviewed. Many of the principal roads/highways were established in the period between the late fourteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century, after trade with Poland, Riga, Königsberg and the cities of Russia was expanded. Since the mid-sixteenth century, international post connections were established between Vilnius and Kaunas along with Krakow, Vienna, and Venice. The historically established highways of Daugavpils–Kaunas–Suwałki, Riga–Šiauliai–Tauragė–Königsberg, and Klaipėda–Tilsit, which went across the country, met the needs of postal transportation. Along these roads, every 15–20 kilometres, postal stations were built which performed several functions: these were post services, horse-replacement buildings, often with hotels and eateries for the officers and waiting rooms for the passengers. However, the roads of those times were bad, difficult to travel in the autumn and spring, and there was a shortage of bridges across water.

Lithuania inherited a weak transport system and a scarce number of means of transport from the Russian Empire and the occupying German government. Before the declaration of independence in 1918, the entire road system in Lithuania was developed for the satisfaction of economic and strategic interests of other countries. The roads at the time were difficult to wade through and there were hardly any hard-cover roads. Because of the difficult paths, even using horse transport, it was only possible to use them for 3–4 months of the year.

The first cars appeared in the current territory of Lithuania at the end of the nineteenth century; they appeared in Vilnius in 1908. Organized vehicle trade was already taking place in 1913, it was reported in informational publications.

Along with the declaration of the Act of Independence on 16 February, 1918, the state also started deliberating the creation of

its own military. Lithuanians returned to the homeland from the *Lithuanian* (the name is relative, based on the nationality of the soldiers) units that were part of the Tsarist Russian army in an unorganized manner, usually in small groups or along with the deserters that were coming back to Lithuania.[2]

The date of the establishment of the Lithuanian army is considered to be 23 November, 1918: this was the day when Professor Augustinas Voldemaras signed the Order No. 1.[3] On 30 January, 1919, by the ruling of the Ministry of National Defence, the Engineering Company was created, whose composition also included the Vehicle Team. The established team included soldiers who had learned to drive while serving in the army of another country – typically Tsarist Russia. Unfortunately, the team did not have any vehicles. Moreover, not all of the drivers were Lithuanian, which resulted in various misunderstandings when they interacted with one another. Not to mention the fact that there was no unified terminology related to the equipment.

On 3 April, 1919, the Vehicle Team stationed in Kaunas, at the intersection of Donelaičio and Maironio streets, was separated from the Engineering Battalion and placed under the direct authority of the head of the engineering department.[4] It was allocated a garage on Donelaičio Street, in a former Russian Church. By the ruling No. 12 (20 June, 1919) of the Supreme Commander of the Lithuanian Armed Forces, General Silvestras Žukauskas, the Vehicle Team of the Vehicle Company was placed under the authority of the Transport Division of the General Staff, and Officer Vladas Nivinskis was assigned as its head. Furthermore, the same ruling prohibited women and "individuals who are not associated in any way with the military" from using state-owned horses and vehicles and warned that "the heads of the divisions with whose knowledge horses and vehicles are given to unauthorised persons will be punished and removed from office". In

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[2] Statkus, *Lietuvos ginkluotos pajėgos*, 22–25.
[3] LCVA, f. 384, ap. 3, b. 4, l. 8.
[4] Order No. 63 to the Ministry of National Defence, 7 April, 1919, Kaunas.

Light tank Renault FT 17. Circa 1924. Lithuanian State central archives

the first half of 1919, the Vehicle Company consisted of 8 officers, 105 soldiers, 14 freelance drivers, and 4 office workers.

On 14 March, 1919, the Military Attaché of the Lithuanian Embassy in Berlin reported to the Chief of Staff of the Ministry of National Defence about the vehicles purchased in Germany that were to be dispatched: "Starting from the Monday of the coming week, freight trains will start running to Kaunas via Königsberg. From that day forward, Zachario promises to send items prepared for the army in 5–6 train cars daily. Clothes <…> will be sent out

On patrol with 6 light tanks Renault FT 17. Circa 1924. Lithuanian State central archives

first, then motorcycles – 50, bicycles – 25, cars – ten, field kitchens – about forty <...>".[5] Before these vehicles reached Lithuania, officers acquired some of them in Lithuania too. On 29 March, 1919, the Vehicle Company purchased a Wanderer motorcycle (1.5 hp) for 1,000 Deutsche Marks in Kaunas. The deed of conveyance was signed by the members of a commission assembled in the Vehicle Company specifically for that purpose. On 18 April, another Wanderer motorcycle (4.5 hp) with belt drive and a gearbox separated from the engine was purchased. Thus, in the summer of 1919, the army of Lithuania had 15 passenger and 13 freight vehicles, including 4 Audi and Opel ambulances.[6]

The research determined that the first new motorcycles were purchased for the army without following specific purchasing procedures – they simply did not exist at the time. However, later on, not only were the equipment purchasing procedures approved but also tests of the proposed equipment were conducted and, after the proposals were discussed by the competent commissions, the equipment purchase contracts were signed.

[5]   LCVA, f. 930, ap. 2, b. 11, l. 13.
[6]   *Karo technikos dalių dvidešimtmetis 1919–1939*, 129.

Antanas Merkys, the Minister of National Defence, also discussed the shortage of military equipment in the military of Lithuania during the meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers on 19 April, 1919: "We do not have any communication, because we do not have our own telegraph and phone. From this, one can understand the situation in which we can end up one day". Without any means of communication and transport, the army was completely incapable of performing the tasks that were assigned to it. Thus, the need for the purchasing of all army vehicles was dictated by the military everyday life and necessity: the trucks were for the transportation of soldiers and freight, the passenger cars were used by military officers, and the motorcycles were typically dedicated to the purposes of communication and reconnaissance.

The limited possibilities of the budget allocated to the military prevented members of the military from purchasing new equipment, it was also not among high-priority purchases, and as a result new equipment was not acquired. Even though it is difficult to find a direct connection between the stages of the army's development and the purchasing of equipment, such a trend was already noticeable in the 1930s.

In 1936, the military had 206 cars and motorcycles. The Vehicle Team alone included 36 passenger cars, 47 trucks, 9 ambulances, and 21 motorcycles. Motorcycles were used not only in the Vehicle Team but also the Armoured Vehicle Team, the 1st, 3rd, 4th, 7th, 8th, and 9th infantry regiments, the 2nd lancer unit, the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th artillery regiments, air force, and the military housing division. Some of the motorcycles were kept in the emergency store within the engineering storage. During the warm season, motorcycles were actively used in the topography division and in the military training grounds. The majority of them were Indian (USA) cargo and passenger models (with and without sidecars), quite a few were Triumph 5/5 (UK) and Harley Davidson (USA) models, there was also one BSA (UK) and one NSU (Germany) motorcycle. Some of the motorcycle sidecars were adapted for carrying not just passengers or cargo but also machine-guns.

Just like civilians, the military also had to pay sizeable customs duties for the purchasing of new vehicles. For instance, during the acquisition of a new Indian motorcycle, 550 Litas were paid to the Treasury. Tariff duties of motorcycles and their sidecars were the same amount as those of passenger car chassis – 0.50 Litas per kilogram. Such a customs policy of Lithuania certainly did not encourage the purchasing of either four-wheeled or two-wheeled new vehicles. After the duties were reduced in 1937, the situation changed immediately: the number of the cars, motorcycles, and spare parts that were brought in started rising rapidly.

We can conclude that American motorcycles were among the most popular and the most appreciated types of military equipment in the army. For instance, on 24 September, 1927, the Republic of Lithuania adopted a resolution which allowed military officers (primarily in the air force) to receive an interest-free loan for the acquisition of personal motorcycles and which was not to be dictated solely by financial necessity. Most likely, this was one of the comprehensive measures meant to ensure that, if needed, air force officers could gather in the airport as quickly as possible, or also a publicity stunt which was supposed to stimulate the growth of the Officers' Corps.

This was a highly useful means of transport both within the army (it effectively solved the matter of air force officers quickly arriving to work and outside of it (the desire to have a personal vehicle).

After the struggles for independence, there was a long period when new military trucks were not purchased, while the old trucks acquired previously from the Bermontians, Germans, and the Entente were a constant headache to the officers maintaining them. It has not been determined exactly why the discussions on the purchase of new heavy vehicles were initiated so late: whether it was because of the lack of funds or because there was no established approach towards the respective type of equipment yet. The situation changed just before the Republic of Lithuania lost its sovereignty, when new trucks were being purchased in relatively large quantities. For instance, in late 1937, an expected

Armored vehicle Landsverk 181-29/34 is met by the inhabitants of Vilnius. October 27–28, 1939. Lithuanian State central archives

shipment from Sweden reached the military of Lithuania. After long considerations and pursuits (many manufacturers of analogous products were approached) the army of Lithuania purchased ten Swedish Volvo LV 94 vehicle chassis with Örebro gas generators.[7] The vehicles were delivered by boat, they had small defects and were not completely assembled: there was a lack of pallets and diagrams, all of them had no maintenance manuals or lists of spare parts. The commissioned chassis were painted over in black instead of camouflage; as a result, the provider, John Hülstrom, was asked to remove the defects in a month.[8]

Later on, as part of an update of its equipment in 1936, the army acquired fifteen ZIS and fifteen Ford trucks. The trucks were given to the 1st and 3rd cavalry regiment, the Vehicle Team, the 4th artillery regiment, the 7th infantry regiment, and the 2nd engineering battalion.[9] In 1936, the Vehicle Team alone

[7]   LCVA, f. 1364, ap. 3, b. 371, l. 94.
[8]   LCVA, f. 1364, ap. 3, b. 371, l. 95.
[9]   LCVA, f. 1364, ap. 1, b. 456, l. 134.

Tanket Vickers-Carden Loyd. K.A.M. No 61. Circa 1935. Jeronimas Kerševičius personal archives

had 36 passenger cars, 47 trucks, 9 ambulances, and 21 motor-cycles.[10] In a document on 18 December, 1937, the acting head of military equipment Juozas Barzda-Bradauskas expressed delight that the following were purchased during the year: 30 new dual-axle Ford trucks capable of carrying the payload of 2–3 tonnes as well as 30 new tri-axle Ford trucks with the capacity of 3–4 tonnes. One can also include the following among them: 10 units of new dual-axle Volvo trucks with gas generators and the capacity of 2–3 tonnes as well as 60 new tri-axle ZIS-6 trucks with 4-tonne capacity. He noted that, in order to complete the annual military transport provision pro-gramme, he requested the transport companies that had won the bidding to purchase another 14 truck-chassis and 5 trailers. The minister of national defence approved this requisition.[11]

It must be noted that all vehicles purchased by the military were bought only as chassis with engine bonnet, the front wings,

[10] LCVA, f. 1364, ap. 1, b. 456, l. 98–99.
[11] LCVA, f. 1364, ap. 3, b. 398, l. 246.

and the engine, while the other required parts of the bodywork were manufactured in Kaunas, in the central army's workshop, as well as the workshops of the American-Lithuanian Trade Joint-stock Company (hereinafter Amlitas) and the Jonh Hulström Workshop.

Thus, at the end of the 1930s, an almost equal number of Ford trucks assembled in the Soviet Union and Europe were purchased, replacing the old trucks that were reminiscent of museum exhibits. With the hopes of long-term operation, passenger cars were purchased that had already been used in military service.

On 13 December, 1930, the army's Provision Department commissioned a Cadillac Imperial Limousine Sedan for the representation purposes of the Ministry of National Defence via the Kaunas-based company Erhart Sommer. The requirements imposed on this vehicle were special: it was required to include a phone, a clock, a motor pump for air, and, most importantly, glass separating the driver from the passengers. On 9 January, 1931, the order was fulfilled: the military received a navy-blue 7-seat limousine (serial No. 355, 110 hp V-shaped 8-cylinder engine). The army's vehicle lists in 1936 included the commander's new Buick vehicle manufactured in 1935. In the last military transport lists made in July of 1940, the commander's Buick was still present. No other technical data is provided, except for the note that the passenger car weighed 2570 kg (3.3 tonnes with load).[12] Further traces of the vehicle that had been transporting Lithuanian military commanders could not be found: just like the minister of national defence's limousine, it is likely to have fallen into the hands of the occupying army.

It has been determined that the official vehicles of the army's top management, i.e. the minister of national defence and the commander of the military, were run-down after the struggles for independence; however, in the second decade of the first independent Republic of Lithuania, very high-class vehicles were

[12] LCVA, f. 532, ap. 1, b. 154, l. 22.

purchased that were not available in any other state institutions except for the president. For the everyday purposes of the army, cheaper passenger cars by various manufacturers, typically American, were purchased.

In 1920, the conflicts against the Bolsheviks, Bermontians, and Poles had subsided, but it was still too early to talk of a lasting peace, which is why Lithuania, just like its neighbours, had to keep supporting an army that was difficult to support from the budget. Knowing the appetite of the neighbouring Poland, it was necessary to strengthen and update the military weaponry and to purchase armoured fighting vehicles. Advance preparations were made for this task: in 1920, after reaching agreement with the government of Latvia, the Lithuanian army's officers and soldiers were sent to attend courses in Riga, where they had the opportunity to get acquainted with the construction of the Latvian army's tanks and to learn to drive and maintain them. Unfortunately, due to the difficult economic situation of the country, the soldiers' hopes of buying the tanks during the first years of the 1920s were not met. After learning to maintain tanks, the soldiers were demobilized following compulsory service and the officers were assigned to other military divisions after a separate tank division was not created.

Since new tanks, tankettes and armoured vehicles were too expensive, for a long time, the military was not able to acquire them. However, it must be observed that, even though they were not new, the French light tanks had combat abilities that were on a level with the analogous equipment of other armies in Europe and the world. Still, this situation did not persist for a long time as other countries, which were more economically and financially able, built new equipment and provided their own armies with it; as a result, in the 1930s, the light tanks of the Lithuanian military were already outdated both morally and technically.

On 22 March, 1939, after losing Klaipėda and the Klaipėda Region as a result of the agreement between the Republic of Lithuania and the State of Germany, upon the ruling of the Ministry of Finance, the army's provision board made the following deci-

Drivers of motorcycle Harley Davidson dressed for cold season. Circa 1937. Jeronimas Kerševičius personal archives

sion on 15 May, 1939: to purchase the required military goods primarily in Germany by entering into contracts with German companies for clearing services (or payments via Sonderkonto account), while choosing the transportation routes and ports based "purely on trade considerations, i.e. using what is cheaper".[13] According to Col. Kazimieras Škirpa, as compensation for the lost Lithuanian capital in the Klaipėda Region, the Germans had presented a proposal for Lithuanians to take various types of weaponry that the Czechoslovakian army had been armed with (following the Anschluss, the weaponry went to the Germans). Among other items, the list of proposed weaponry included 600 tanks and 750 military planes. According to Škirpa, the weapons "were both modern and completely appropriate for the better arming of our military". However, it was opposed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which argued that it was incompatible with Lithuania's declaration of neutrality and, on the other hand, "would seem like an exploitation of the misfortune of Czecho-

[13] LCVA, f. 1364, ap. 3, b. 319, l. 29.

slovakia, with whom Lithuania had previously fostered the warmest relationship". In an official telegram signed by Kazimieras Bizauskas, it was declared that such a "proposal by the Germans does not interest the government of Lithuania".[14] After Lithuania lost the Klaipėda region, it also lost about 20.9 % of vehicles that, in accordance with mobilization plans, could have been used for military purposes, if necessary.[15] The military partially solved the shortage of mobile armoured vehicles by purchasing English tankettes, but they were not sufficient and, due to unfavourable circumstances in the international sphere, the attempt to purchase new light tanks from Czechoslovakia was not successful.

After the military officers returned from secondment and their reports were received, a decision was made following short discussions to purchase Swedish armoured vehicles Landsverk 181-29/34. The contract signed with AB Landsverk Landskrona in 1933 specifies that over 600,000 Swedish kronor were to be paid for 6 armoured vehicles. The new armoured vehicles were painted in camouflage, they were given Ministry of National Defence's numbers 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, which were drawn in white paint on the bottom part of the radiator guard.[16] The Lithuanian coat of arms (Vytis on a shield) is depicted on the sides of the vehicle's turret.

The first armoured vehicle appeared in the military of Lithuania in the summer of 1919, when, following a clash with Bolsheviks on the road Ukmergė–Utena, an armoured Fiat vehicle was taken as a war trophy. At that point the Lithuanian army had not purchased any tanks or tankettes, which is why the smoke-spitting giant was frightening not just to the horses of the cavalry – its dual-machinegun fire was also no less intimidating to the infantry of the opposing army. Understandably at the time, this equipment was a powerful force which was difficult to overcome. However, it was adapted for the solid paving of European streets and thus powerless in the military operations in Lithuanian villages: the

[14]   Škirpa, *Lietuvos nepriklausomybės sutemos*, 161.
[15]   Vaskela, *Lietuva 1939–1940 metais*, 21.
[16]   LCVA. F. 828, ap. 1, b. 101, l. 8.

narrow wheels of the armoured vehicle got stuck hopelessly in the slushy country roads, fields, and muddy pathways.

In the winter of 1919, four Daimler armoured vehicles were received from a commission headed by an Entente representative, General Henri Albert Niessel; each of them was armed with four Maksim machineguns. As a result, in the early spring of the following year, a new division of the Lithuanian army was created: the Armoured Team placed under the authority of the General Staff. Capt. Kazimieras Musteikis was appointed as its head.[17]

As was typical at the time, military equipment was given names: the Fiat armoured vehicle was named Žaibas, while the German Daimler models were named Šarūnas, Pragaras, Aras, and Perkūnas.

Other armoured equipment, the old World War I vehicles that had served the military's needs for many years, were replaced by new Swedish armoured vehicles only in the mid-1930s. Admittedly, the design of the new armoured vehicles was not too perfect and, while they did surpass the old ones in terms of combatant abilities, they were not the most modern, at least in Europe, or, in any case, did not meet the pre-purchase expectations.

In the 1930s, the requirements imposed on military equipment in the Lithuanian army could be met only by 36 Vickers Carden Loyd tankettes: Renault FT17 was more suited as a showpiece of military equipment. Global development trends of armoured vehicles demonstrated that the military needed not just the tankettes and the light tanks but also other tank types as well, which is why a commission established in the army was tasked with getting acquainted with tanks made by globally prominent manufacturers and proposing one that was the most suitable to the military of Lithuania. The commission determined that the army's needs would be covered the most satisfyingly by the vehicles made by the Czech military equipment company ČKD; thus, in May 1937, the Lithuanian army signed a contract with it. Taking into account the technical task presented by the Li-

17   LCVA. F. 828, ap. 1, b. 1, l. 1.

Jonas Abeltinis, driver of Automobile batallion (eventually driver of Lihuanian presidents) driving Benz 25/55PS – the car of the head of Lithuanian military. Circa 1923. Jeronimas Krševičius personal archives

thuanian army's Military Equipment Provision Department, ČKD agreed to design and manufacture a single tank prototype, update it if needed (in accordance with the Lithuanian military's requirements), manufacture twenty LTL tanks and provide the spare parts. For this order, the Lithuanian military agreed to pay over 13.5 million Czech korun (the possibility to use Lithuanian goods as payment for the tanks was even considered) and paid 3 million Czech korun in advance as irrevocable bank credit. The draft contract determined that the tanks would be presented to the client before 1938.[18] On 1 July, 1939, by mutual agreement of ČKD and the Lithuanian army, the contract signed in 1937 was extended and amended: it was agreed that the payment for twenty one tanks and their spare parts would be in British pound sterling rather than in Czech koruna; furthermore, it was determined that they were to be transported via Germany: by rail or by boat (by that point, Lithuania had

[18] LCVA, f. 1364, ap. 3, b. 203, l. 224.

already lost the Klaipėda region and the port city). The entire order was supposed to be fulfilled in 9 months starting from April 1939.[19] Assembly of the first ordered tank was completed in May 1940, and, by July, 16 tanks had already been tested. Later on, when the Republic of Lithuania was already occupied and annexed, the occupant army of the USSR demanded Germany to give the equipment ordered by Lithuanians to the rightful clients. While Germany's Ministry of War was generally a willing co-operator with the USSR, it prohibited the transfer of this military equipment to Lithuania and even offered to reimburse Lithuania's advance payment. It is difficult to say whether this offer was accepted because no other documents have been found on this subject.[20]

In December 1940, the provision chief of the 29th Territorial Rifle Corps reported that the armoured vehicle team had twelve Renault FT 17 light tanks, nineteen Vickers-Carden Loyd tankettes, two Daimler armoured vehicles, and seven burnt Vickers-Carden Loyd tankettes.[21]

The entire equipment of the military was registered, the army had an equipment repair shop with the necessary facilities and fire brigades with all the fire-fighting tools. Moreover, most of the equipment was painted in camouflage.

Aside from vehicles, the Lithuanian army also used special equipment: the fire engine, engineering and aviation divisions' equipment, lorries and tractors. The latter were some of the most modern in Lithuania at the time.

After Germany attacked Poland in 1939, the Polish army moved towards Lithuania, along with its military vehicles. It is not completely clear as to what was done with the Polish army's vehicles that were interned in 1939, whether or not they were provided the Lithuanian army's license plates; still, they were used for the purposes of the Lithuanian military.

[19]   LCVA, f. 1364, ap. 3, b. 396, l. 444.
[20]   LCVA, f. 1364, ap. 1, b. 739, l. 291.
[21]   LCVA, f. 828, ap. 1, b. 227, l. 34.

To summarise the equipment purchasing procedures of the Lithuanian military, it could be claimed that the army had created and used an effective equipment purchasing system which made it possible to choose appropriately, purchase items, and subsequently evaluate them.

After signing a trade agreement with Soviet Russia on 16 October, 1939, Lithuania sought to focus on the purchasing of the needed materials, fuel, and equipment, but it avoided buying military equipment. Reporting on the perspective of the Lithuanian government and military leadership, Soviet Russia's envoy Nikolaj Pozdniakov wrote: "They probably dislike that their army would be dependent on Soviet military equipment".[22] He was likely correct because Lithuania avoided and successfully evaded such technical responsibility. It is another question entirely as to whether a purchase of a large number of vehicles from the USSR would have served as a beginning of technical dependence. It is difficult to answer this question now, as it is unknown to what it could have led. Regardless, because of these or other reasons, the officers did not manage to purchase the entire required number of trucks. The subsequent trade blockades declared by the warring European states impeded the Lithuanian military's efforts to acquire military-purpose equipment and heavily affected the country's trade, as did the loss of the Klaipėda region and the port city.[23] Nevertheless, Poland's military attaché Leon Mitkiewicz was probably right when he stated the following: "After surveying the Lithuanian army for the first time, I formed a positive opinion. It is partially modernized and no stranger to the strides in military equipment". The Polish military attaché was certainly correct in saying that the military of Lithuania was only *partially* modernized.

Unfortunately, due to the constant shortage of funds, Lithuania often had to purchase not the most modern and the most suitable equipment but rather ones that were affordable. The

[22] N. Pozdniakovas to V. Molotovas. *Pasaulis*, 20.
[23] Vaskela, *Lietuva 1939–1940 metais*, 45.

Anti-Aircraft Brigade can be singled out as a particularly motorized and mechanized division of the Lithuanian army.

While comparing the equipment of the Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian armies, I would not prioritise any of them over the others. In many cases, there were slight differences in the quantity and quality of individual types of equipment. Notably, the Latvian army was possibly the first one to start using tanks and it even taught the Lithuanian soldiers how to operate them. In contrast to the Lithuanian and Estonian armies, the Latvian one also had and used trucks assembled in the Republic of Latvia as well as the passenger cars that were partially assembled there too; it also had light tanks manufactured in Italy. However, what all three Baltic states had in common was that none of them had acquired enough equipment or the modern-construction equipment that was typical of the time, and they purchased tanks, tankettes and armoured vehicles instead of manufacturing them themselves.

Regrettably, the equipment of all the Baltic countries' armies was taken over by the army of the Soviet Union, after the national armies were liquidated.

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Translated by MARTYNAS GEDVILA

Australian Lithuanians:
Constructing and Living Diasporic Identities

Grazina Pranauskas
Lietuvybė Down Under.
Melbourne: Australian
Scholarly 2018. (165p + vi).
Softbound.

The concept of *Lietuvybė* does not present any obstacle to being literally translated: "Lithuanianess" can be readily understood, as representing the defining characteristic of what it might mean to be Lithuanian. But to Anglophone ears – and Anglophone culture – it is jarring. Awkward. Too essentialist and, despite its brevity, almost too "thick" a description, to use Geertz's term. Grazina Pranauskas' study, however, meets this term full-on, seeing it as providing the key to understanding the world view and community practices of Lithuanians in Australia.

Pranauskas came into this community in Australia, as it were, from the outside, arriving in 1989 and needing to understand

the community of which she had no knowledge from her up-bringing in Soviet-occupied Lithuania. And this notion of coming from 'outside' immediately shows the bizarre and enduringly paradoxical nature of the relation between the exiled communi-ty and an individual from the homeland. This is a personal, felt, almost visceral study of this relationship, and we are the richer for Pranauskas' attempt to name and describe it.

Pranauskas is not the first to write a compelling account of Lithuanian life in Australia. Luda Popenhagen has previously contributed a highly detailed, almost encyclopedic account of the formation and organization of the Lithuanian community in her *Australian Lithuanians* (2012). Popenhagen's is a classic com-munity study, exhaustive in its scope, and serves as a remarkable archive of Lithuanian life and endeavor in their new continent.

Fortuitously, Popenhagen's book was in time to include an account of Pranauskas' arrival in Geelong, the second city in the State of Victoria in Australia, describing her as a "welcomed newcomer" who was "energetic and eager to apply the conduct-ing skills and techniques she had recently acquired in Lithuania." Yet this arrival was not all smooth sailing:

> At the outset some Geelong Lithuanians voiced skepticism about [her] motives for migrating to Australia and her suitability to lead the migrant community choir. Many new arrivals of the 1990s were originally regarded with suspicion, irrespective of profession or trade. The new Geelong conductor also had initial concerns and doubted the choir's musical potential and singing abilities. Nonetheless, mutual reservations dissolved over time, particularly once performances of the Geelong Lithuanian choir received positive feedback. (Popenhagen 2012:235-6)

This is as far as Popenhagen goes in mentioning diverging views of the older exiles and the newer arrivals, but is precisely the starting point of Pranauskas' own work. For Pranauskas, her personal voyage and the reactions she received tell the wider story of members of two historically divergent contingents – from the one nation – confronting each other with the realities of So-

viet occupation still in the forefront of consciousness, changing unevenly in a context of a quite unexpected national revival and independence.

The first surprise for Pranauskas when arriving in Australia was her discovery of – Lithuania. A Lithuania she had scarcely known existed. For in her Soviet period upbringing the vast drama of Lithuanian history was either downplayed or distorted. Empire, unity, aristocracy, unions, division, religions, repression and struggle were whitewashed or ideologically manipulated in Soviet history, and Pranauskas is astonished to discover that the small community in Australia knew and lived this history. While stories of the World War II occupation and Soviet brutality and deceit were foremost, and formed the political underpinning of exile identity, equally important was the striving to maintain the language and culture, based upon the centuries-old store of Lithuanian folklore and legend. Pranauskas was no stranger to parts of this cultural heritage, having become a choir conductor in Lithuanian, a state-supported profession, and finding this was also her entry card to the Australian Lithuanian community. But in Australia, aspects of this culture were maintained in a totally foreign environment.

The Australian Lithuanian community presents a probably unrepeatable time capsule – before the arrival of around 10,000 Lithuanians in 1947–52, there were few Lithuanians in Australia and no organized community, in contrast to the USA/Canada where previously there had been a massive immigration for much of a century, though little organized infrastructure to greet post World War II arrivals. The postwar Displaced Persons [DPs] used their years in German camps to organize themselves – schools, newspapers, theatres, song festivals, representative bodies – and this quasi state and cultural apparatus was recreated almost instantly in the host countries to which they moved.

Pranauskas' task is to trace these attempts to maintain *lietuvybė* under threat from a diminishing population, the force of assimilation, generational change and, eventually, the political change in Lithuania itself to a renewed independence – thus

knocking out one pillar of the Lithuanian community's *raison d'être* – the fight to regain independence. But Pranauskas is after the social and personal aspects of these maintenance efforts and new orientation (or disorientation) since the coming of independence, and the face to face interaction between the exile diaspora and those newcomers who come now out of an independent Lithuania, but one with a Soviet past. This is avowedly Pranauskas' own personal journey – a journey in turns physical, emotional, intellectual and personal. It is not, as such, a political tract.

Pranauskas has done the hard yards, surveying respondents from both postwar arrivals and newer arrivals through her Bachelor of Arts Honors degree and Master's degree. The book seeks the voices of participants to tell the story of their experiences in Australia, their working and community lives, and their experiences of interaction between the two groups. As well as questionnaire material, some 35 interviews of postwar subjects (including 7 Australian born younger respondents) and 21 interviews with more recent arrivals provide rich material.

Pranauskas puts considerable emphasis on the initial difficulties the postwar arrivals had in fitting into Australia. It is worth recalling the situation as it was in the late 1940s. Faced with a small population and having been attacked in World War II, Australia was desperate to raise its then population of 7.5 million people in a very large continent. Although it expected immigration to continue to come from its hitherto major source countries of Britain and Ireland, the lack of shipping and Britain's own need for post-war reconstruction meant few migrants came in the immediate post-war years, and Australia's first Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell was finally persuaded, and in turn persuaded his government, to take non-English speaking refugees from the camps in Europe. Australia at the time had a White Australia Policy, so Calwell was very particular about which migrants would be taken, and considered the Balts' racial profile the one most likely to be accepted by Australians. In 1947 it was the Balts who formed the vanguard of post-war immigration. Though enthusiastically accepted by employers as Australia's

post-war reconstruction economy took off, it was a very conditional welcome the migrants received: overseas qualifications were disregarded (all refugees were brought out explicitly as 'laborers'), two-year work contracts had to be signed where these refugees could be sent anywhere in the country to work, and social attitudes towards non-English speakers were variable but could be mocking or worse. While grateful to find safety in a host country, many respondents remembered negative policies and attitudes.

In this context, one permanent pillar of *lietuvybė* was their political identity, which was also a distinct political mission:

> To the postwar Lithuanian generation, remaining visible in their host country meant being an ambassador for Lithuania, responsible for its image and for the maintenance of the Lithuanian language. (7)

Yet at times negative responses and personal settlement issues led to a more defensive posture: The response, as Pranauskas describes it, often was to retreat into Lithuanian community life:

> In the circumstances, it is not surprising that something approaching a siege mentality took hold in sections of the Lithuanian community. (45)

Pranauskas sees that this posture "had positive, as well as negative, outcomes": it strengthened the community feel of this group, as: "an important element in their understanding of what it was to be Lithuanian, was to make a contribution to the community". (75) Yet negatively, it ensured a position of being largely outside the Australian mainstream. Highly educated people would thus in many instances work in menial jobs and devote themselves to the Lithuanian community: "Australia's loss was the Lithuanian community's gain" (40), Pranauskas summarizes. Self-esteem could still survive as

> A cleaner or a factory worker by day could be a community leader by night. Perhaps this compensated for the exclusion at the heart of assimilation. (46)

Such a situation demands careful social analysis, and Pranauskas adopts the perspective of Bhabha (1993) with his notion of the "Third Space" which a diaspora occupies, and which gives an understanding of "<…> what it means to live in the 'in-between' cultural space we call Australian Lithuanian". (2)

However, one can take issue with this theoretical view. First, the view of 'in-between' in Bhabha's famous "Third Space" gives us a static view of cultural interaction and of identity. It presupposes that one cannot fit in, or is not accepted, or is destined to occupy 'a hybridized space, neither *there* nor *here*'. (55)

First, Lithuanianess was never an act of compensation for Lithuanians for not being accepted by, or not fitting into, Australian society. Despite any initial misunderstandings or discomfort, in fact Lithuanians like other Baltic or Eastern European migrants easily fitted in (Calwell was not wrong in believing they would be accepted). Moreover, with the Balts in particular their relatively high educational and cultural level led to any number of Baltic immigrants who have succeeded as business people, artists, academics, Lieutenant-Governors and any number of able professionals. This also speaks to Hall's otherwise useful analysis of such communities where "existence is experienced as living 'on the periphery of power, or excluded from sharing power'" (2, quoting Hall 1993); in fact, the Baltic communities exhibited great agency in keeping issues of the Baltic States alive during the exile year.

Second, and closer to issues of identity, the question of whether the post-war respondents, after half a century in Australia, feel more Lithuanian or Australian, is a question that has rarely bothered these Lithuanians; it is only ever asked by those perhaps puzzled by the retention of another identity, whether from local natives, or – significantly – from Pranauskas herself. For Lithuanians who are both successful in Australian society and engaged in the Lithuanian community (and now very much engaged in what goes on in Lithuania itself), the question is only of how many hours there are in the day. 'Hybridity', while useful as a concept in moving us away from a static notion of identity, still

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barely captures this absolute normality of daily, yearly and life-long practices of devoting yourself to pursuing interests in relation to both Australia and Lithuania. Theoretical work here still falls short of capturing this reality.

The kernel of Pranauskas' book is the interaction of the post-war generation with that of the more recent arrivals. It is no surprise to often find in the interviews almost comically opposed understandings of this interactions.

Thus, while 45% of Pranauskas' postwar respondents viewed relations between the two groups as good or excellent, only 20% of new arrivals thought so. And while some postwar individuals asserted that "Every Lithuanian who comes here we meet with love", 90% of new migrants did not agree! (65) Some postwar respondents saw that the new arrivals were in fact coping with many of the same issues *they* had faced upon arrival: settlement, establishing themselves, finding appropriate employment. The more educated of the postwar brigade were more tolerant of the newer arrivals, Pranauskas found. (70) Meanwhile, new arrivals reported many instances of lack of interest, or even abuse, suspicion over motivation for migrating, and prejudices against their Soviet past.

Pranauskas' great achievement is to deal with this both sociologically and creatively. She traces the tangled threads of interaction, astutely pointing to the factors that ensured good relations as relating to "age, followed by education and attitude to tradition." (66) But in chapter 6 of the book Pranauskas turns from sociology to fiction. In the fragments of her longer novel she presents her protagonist Daina, coming to Australia, bumping up against often intolerant attitudes towards her from members of the Lithuanian community, including relatives, struggling to be accepted for her independence and other world view; then returning to Lithuania and finding she has been well conditioned by Australian life to be upset by the attitudes and behavior of a new post-independence generation in Lithuania, whose low regard for the quality of life and lack of respect for others shocks her.

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ABSTRACTS

GINTAUTAS TIŠKUS

Some Aspects of Revitalization of City Squares

The impetus to alter the configuration, the purpose, or to change the appearance—the aesthetics—of a given city square may be twofold: it may be a natural process brought about by the city's growth, or it may be an ideological measure intended to change the square's history. While in the first case the reconstruction of the square aims to improve its appearance, the second approach most frequently is motivated only by the replacement of some single existing monument, or by making some cosmetic renovation to its pavement surfacing.

A city is a complex entity, with its urban and social elements both internally and visually intertwined, therefore, any proposal to alter a given city square must take into account a more in-depth analysis not only of its immediate surroundings, but, more often than not, it requires a careful study of the context of the entire city.

After the restoration of Lithuania's independence, the country experienced a boom in the rush to reconstruct the Soviet-period city squares. This was not a smooth process, because, most often, the impetus for such reconstruction was motivated by "ideology."

In investigating city squares, it is most important to evaluate their impact on the public. Such evaluation is significant in determining their configuration and the means of their reconstruction. A given city square may be studied and evaluated as an

urban element as well as an architectural object, and may be subjected to several different analytical approaches.

On the other hand, the attributes of a city square may reflect their varied components or their parts which can be described by a single or by several indicators (such as its configuration, purpose, architectural expression, context, its importance and so on). Using a systemic research methodology, this article discusses some of the aspects of the public square reconstruction work.

VIOLETA KATINIENĖ

Reflection of the In-Between State in the Novel *Trys Sekundės Dangaus* by Sigitas Parulskis

The period after the re-establishment of independence in Lithuania can be characterised as an in-between, transitional state, when the old world has already been abandoned, but the new one has not yet been entered. Metaphorical depiction of this state is not only typical of a number of Lithuanian novels created over the recent time but is also a trend noticeable in the works of many authors hailing from the territory of the former East Germany. Based on the concept of the in-between state as a *threshold*, a fracture between two poles of experience (*pathos* and *response*), as described in the phenomenological concept of the topography of *the alien* outlined by German philosopher Bernhard Waldenfels, the article discloses how this phenomenon is manifested in the novel *Trys sekundės dangaus* (Three Seconds of Heaven) by Sigitas Parulskis. It is demonstrated that the phenomena observed by Waldenfels can contribute productively to a deeper understanding of literary works and provide the possibility to regard many things from another perspective.

ALMANTAS SAMALAVIČIUS

Beyond the Enigma of Power:
Notes on the Last Novel by Ričardas Gavelis

The novel *Sun Tzu's Life in the Holy City of Vilnius* is the last novel penned by Ričardas Gavelis (1950–2002), a first and foremost truly postcolonial Lithuanian prose writer. The novel was written shortly before his untimely death. Largely an underrated prose writer during his lifetime because of his non-conformist attitudes toward culture, society and politics both in the Soviet and post-Soviet era, he is now widely translated into foreign languages and republished for new generations of readers in Lithuania. The author of the article argues that in his last novel Ričardas Gavelis remains true to his life-long interest in reflecting on the origins and forms of power, and in particular how people willingly submit themselves to those holding political power in both totalitarian and post-totalitarian regimes. It is suggested that Lithuanian literary critics ignored and neglected this important novel that contains subtle and at the same time a provocative interpretation of the post-Communist society that continues to undergo controversial social change while its internal structures continue to capture human minds even after a seemingly epochal and spectacular shift of the political regime. The author concludes that the last novel by Gavelis is a mature and original literary work that deserves much more attention than Lithuanian literary critics have given it so far.

VIDAS GRIGORAITIS

The Equipment of the Military
of the Republic of Lithuania in 1918–1940

The aim of this article is to provide a brief introduction on how the Lithuanian military gained vehicle units, heavy and light military transport, military armoured vehicles, tanks and tan-

kettes, tractors, motorcycles, and special equipment, what was the military driver preparation system, how the military equipment was chosen and registered, what were the methods and procedures for purchasing military equipment, how it was decided to use camouflage paint, what vehicles and models were used in the military, how the attempts of equipment unification ended, and what was the fate of parts of military equipment and transport after the country was occupied by the Soviet Union.

Public sculpture Grasshopper in Vilnius, Konstitucijos Avenue
Author: artist Algis Griškevičius