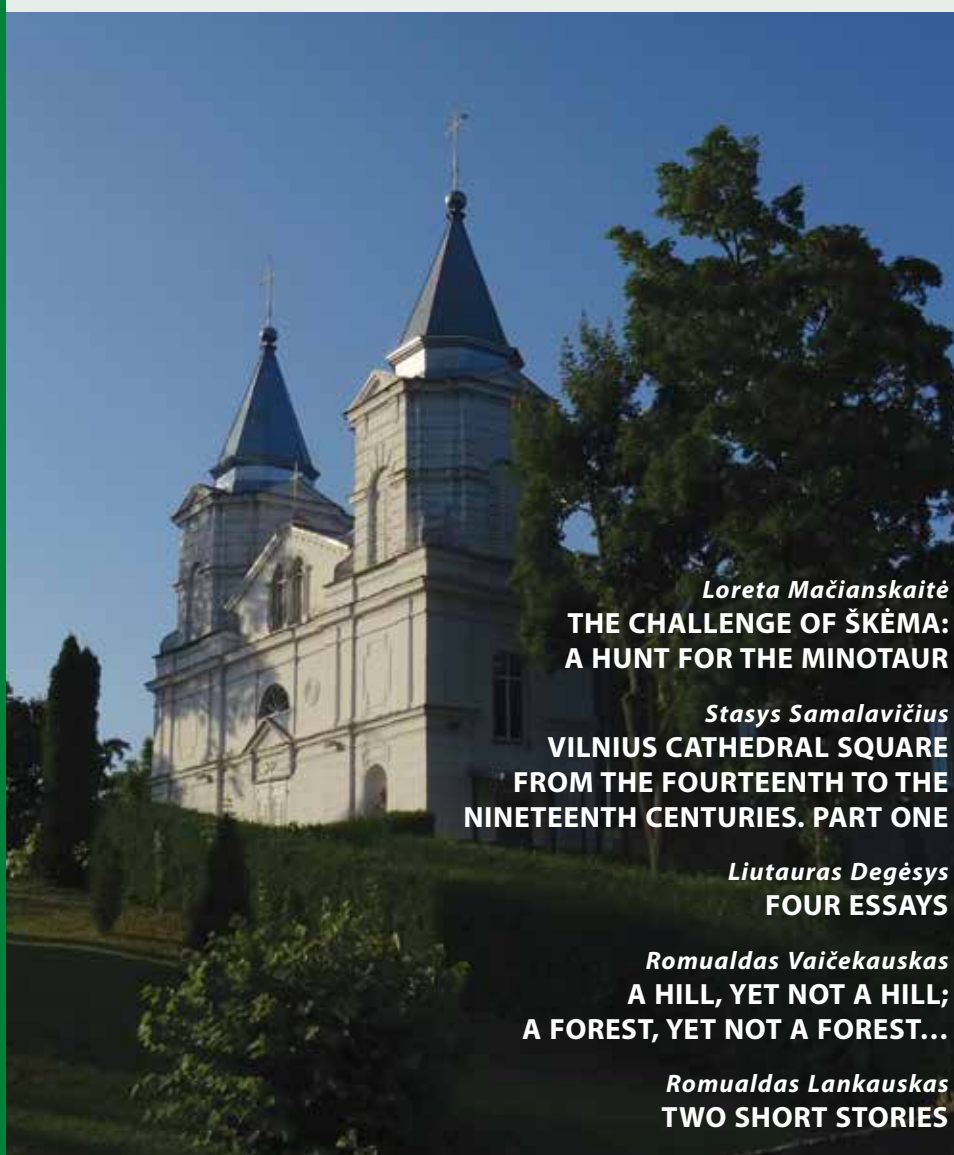


LITUANUS

THE LITHUANIAN QUARTERLY

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Loreta Mačianskaitė
**THE CHALLENGE OF ŠKĖMA:
A HUNT FOR THE MINOTAUR**

Stasys Samalavičius
**VILNIUS CATHEDRAL SQUARE
FROM THE FOURTEENTH TO THE
NINETEENTH CENTURIES. PART ONE**

Liutauras Degėsys
FOUR ESSAYS

Romualdas Vaičekas
**A HILL, YET NOT A HILL;
A FOREST, YET NOT A FOREST...**

Romualdas Lankauskas
TWO SHORT STORIES

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Contents

LORETA MAČIANSKAITĖ	5	<i>The Challenge of Škėma: A Hunt for the Minotaur</i>
STASYS SAMALAVIČIUS	28	<i>Vilnius Cathedral Square from the Fourteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries. Part One</i>
LIUTAURAS DEGĖSYS	56	<i>Four Essays</i>
ROMUALDAS VAIČEKAUSKAS	68	<i>A Hill, Yet Not a Hill; a Forest, Yet Not a Forest...</i>
ROMUALDAS LANKAUSKAS	80	<i>Two Short Stories</i>

ABSTRACTS



Hill of Crosses near Šiauliai city. Photo by Romualdas Vaičekas
See essay on page 68

Hill of Crosses

*Coming down the wooden path
from the Hill of Crosses,
a votive cross just in front
on the other side of the railing,
fell at an angle pointing towards me.*

*I took the gesture as a living sign
though not inclined to interpret it.
I didn't heft the tree on my shoulder
or raise it up to stick it back in earth,
nor did I see, though I looked, Christ*

*grappling in the dirt, panting, bloody.
I kept going on, not toward Heaven
or Purgatory or Hell, but toward Eternity,
to sleep in the nearby Hotel of Angels.*

KERRY SHAWN KEYS, 2021

The Challenge of Škëma: A Hunt for the Minotaur

LORETA MAČIANSKAITË

Mysteries of Origin and Biographical Facts

The journey of Škëma's literary works to Western readers, which started from the publishing of his *Balta drobulė* (White Shroud) in 2017 in Germany, once again draws the reader's attention to the writer's biography, which has retained so many secrets until the present day. First, the author's precise year of birth is not known to date. During an interview taken by the newspaper *Draugas* on the occasion of his fortieth birth anniversary, the author himself claimed:

I was born twice. The official date of birth is November 29, 1911. The actual one – November 29, 1910. Father gave birth to me twice, having decided to make use of the childbirth allowance longer.¹

Škëma recalls that he had no birth certificate as it had been left behind in his place of birth, Poland, in the city of Łódź, where his father, ordered by Russian authorities, worked as a teacher. The Škëma family, fleeing from World War One, found themselves in Russia in 1914, and arrived in Lithuania only in 1921. The

¹ Škëma, *Rinktiniai raštai*, t. 2, 494.

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writer's father, upon arriving to work in Kaišiadorys in early 1926 and being aware that no one would be able to check it, obtained his son's official documents pre-dating them by one year (teenagers were paid 20 litas per month until 16 years of age).

As long as the document of birth is not found in the Łódź archives, both birth dates seem probable. As to Škėma's parents, something more precise can be said. There has been a long-established opinion that the writer's father (b. 1871, a teacher by profession) married a Polish woman, also a teacher, in Łódź. There is no doubt now that the marriage ceremony took place in Kaunas on October 3, 1910 in St. Trinity Church. The religious marriage document attests to the bride Vera Saglina having been born in 1888 and indicates her parents – Alexander Saglin and Yekaterina Saglina (Zwycewicz). We come across the family name Saglin in Škėma's autobiographic novella, *Saulėtos dienos* (Sunny Days), in which Vera's Kirghiz father is said to have converted to the Orthodox belief and, from Sagly, became Saglin.² We certainly cannot consider fiction a trustful historical source, but the writer's granddaughter Corrina Škėma Snyder has attested to a forefather of hers, a rebel of the Uprising of 1864, who was exiled to somewhere in South Siberia. Most probably, that rebel was Škėma's great-grandfather from the Zwycewicz Family (no data about this branch is available except for a mention in *White Shroud* of the mother's coat of arms with an upright fish and her noble motherland somewhere in Telšiai district). What we also know about the writer's mother is that, prior to marrying his father, she had converted from the Orthodox belief to Catholicism, that she was the editor of the first Lithuanian humoristic newspaper *Garnys* (first issued in 1910), and that she taught courses for teachers in Kaunas for a few years (where Škėma's father also worked as a teacher).

No exact data about the family's tragedy is available, yet we are aware that after getting back from Russia in 1921 and living for four years in Radviliškis, the family's paths diverted: the

² Škėma, *Rinktiniai raštai*, t. 1, 132.

father worked as director in Kaišiadorys, the future writer studied in Kaunas, and at approximately the same time, Vera Škėmienė, due to a mental illness (most probably, the result of the bitter experiences in Russia in post-revolutionary years), was put in Kalvarija Psychiatric Hospital. For a long time, it was believed that she died rather soon, but in the book of the Church of Aukštoji Panemunė, next to the record of death of Škėma's father on June 23, 1946, there is a note that the only survivors of the family is Antanas and his wife Veronika. Ascertaining where and when she died, and where her grave is, has so far ended in failure.

After graduating from Kaunas Aušra Gymnasium in 1929, Škėma began studying medicine, which totally conflicted with his artistic nature. (Later, with irony characteristic of him, Škėma said that "All that I had taken from medicine is my love for corpses, which apparently is taking a toll on my creative work even today"³, and in the letter to Marija Gimbutas of May 24, 1959 he defined his method as "a surgeon's knife".⁴) The subsequent studies of law did not suit him either; instead of attending lectures, he played cards, pool, or marched in solemn funerals to earn money. Škėma found his true self in theatre: in 1936, he joined the drama studio led by Vladas Sipavičius-Fedotov, later worked in the State Theatre in Kaunas and Vilnius State Drama theatres, and tried to prove himself as a dramatist (in 1943, his drama *Julijana* was added to the theatre repertoire, but was forbidden by Germans as formalistic). As the Soviet troops approached in 1944, Škėma, with his wife and daughter, left Lithuania for Germany. There, they lived in DP (displaced persons) camps in the American Zone of Germany. In 1947, Škėma issued his first prose book *Nuodėguliai ir kibirkštys* (Firebrands and Sparks) in Tübingen, which received quite favorable reviews from readers with different frames of reference. As Jonas Mekas put it, "As much as we were critical of the writings of the generation

³ Škėma, *Rinktiniai raštai*, t. 2, 495.

⁴ All letters except those of Greimas' will be cited from a private archive.

“before us”, it was admitted that Antanas Škėma was ‘OK’.”⁵ In 1949, Škėma emigrated to the USA; however, he failed to find a job that would match his artistic talents at least a little. He worked as a worker in a factory, a packer, later – as an elevator operator at a luxury hotel Statler (as he himself put it ironically, his profession of actor came in handy). Škėma would use each spare minute for literary creation even at work; moreover, during his spare time, he took part in the émigré community theatre’s activities as actor and director. Publication of Škėma’s literary creations in the Lithuanian diaspora did not go well: the book of different genres *Šventoji Inga* (Saint Inga) written in 1952 aroused considerable indignation due to the crossing of moral, esthetical, and sexual limits; after that, the publishing of any book was to be awaited for years: the most famous novel *White Shroud*, written in 1952–54, was issued only in 1958; the prose book *Čelesta* was written in 1951 and only issued in 1960; the drama *Pabudimas* (Awakening) was written in 1952 and issued in 1958. The novella *Izaokas* (Isaac) remained in a manuscript form; with regard to it, the writer was going to consult an attorney.

Škėma perished on August 11, 1961 in a car accident on a Pennsylvania road on his way back from a Santara-Šviesa congress at Tabor Farm where his 50th birth anniversary and the 25th anniversary of his creative work were marked.

Between Illness and Pose

In the memoirs of contemporaries, Škėma is first and foremost characterized as an everyday life esthete who took care of his looks, carefully picked out his clothes, shoes in particular. It is true that, according to his literary agent Vytautas Meškauskas, when asked for a photo for a cover, he would humbly excuse himself for not being a “cover girl”⁶; however, undoubtedly, he

⁵ Cf. Comment by Jonas Mekas in Škėma, *White Shroud*, 192.

⁶ Meškauskas, “Antanas Škėma – gyvosios lietuviybės reiškėjas,” 4.

did flirt, and Škėma can be called one of the first creators of the Lithuanian self-image. The writer was perfectly aware of the impact of an effective photo on the audience and modelled his portraits in a professional manner; so, not surprisingly, his photo images merged with his name as a writer. The picture with a cigarette taken by the photographer Vytautas Mieželis around 1955 in New York was a particular success. It became, speaking in modern terms, Škėma's brand.

A lit cigarette was one of the most popular attributes of portraits in the 1950s: in the Internet collections of pictures, we will also find philosopher and writer Albert Camus with a cigarette pressed between his lips in a "proletariat" way and Gary Cooper elegantly holding a cigarette with smoke curling gracefully upwards; our guess would be that it was namely Gary Cooper from whom Škėma took over the idea of the famous picture. Note also the ring on the small finger of his right hand – this detail reminds us of the first pages of *White Shroud* where the character's ring is described: "a gift from mother, a memento of his grandmother. Engraved on the ring: 1864, the year of the Uprising".⁷

Outlines of a romantic myth can be perceived in the self-description in publicistic writings: "My bosses in each place of work decide that I am a decent worker but I make no progress. Such a – likable savage", "Due to my fate or perhaps my character, I happened to hover in the position of a loner"; or in the statement "Creative nihilism is my religion", which has become an aphorism.⁸

Škėma's assessment of his literary achievements was quite modest: "I am an average author, minor, as the American critics like to describe some authors" he wrote in a letter to Marija Gimbutienė on June 2, 1959; yet his humbleness can be suspected to be feigned since in other letters he underscores having no "inferiority complex"; hurt by the incomprehension of his fellowmen, he proudly declares being "not needy of a pittance."

⁷ Škėma, *White Shroud*, 5.

⁸ Škėma, t. 2, 499, 514, 439.

In his letters, hints about final withdrawal from literature interchange with outbreaks of anger and determination to fight; moments of low self-esteem are followed by concerns about translations of literary creations and the dream to appear on the American stage.

Over the years, Škėma increasingly felt himself a misfit in terms of both Lithuanian and American lifestyle; he looked on outcast Western artists, with an extremely sensitive mentality, as often as not mentally ill, as his spiritual relatives. He felt particularly close to Čiurlionis, about whom he even wanted to write a drama during the WWII years in Vilnius. In a reply to the editorial board of *Atspindžiai* in 1953, he also voiced a true concern over his “nervousness” and the situation which was unfavorable to his spiritual health:

I had recently been overcome by pride when one of the reviewers calumniated my *Giesmė* (The Chant) as schizophrenic. I thought, I had a gift of the spark of the great geniuses. I visited even two doctors, who surveyed my eyes and, after tapping on my knees and asking me provocative questions, – found nothing but signs of simple nervousness typical of plants who had been replanted by an amateur gardener.⁹

The cited text was written in 1953, as well as the letters to the psychiatrist and writer Julius Kaupas, whom Škėma wrote to, dissatisfied by the Montreal doctors’ verdict and, apparently, quite frightened. In a letter of December 24, 1953, Kaupas writes to Škėma:

The fear of death you mentioned, a lack of breath, stopping of the heart or racing heartbeat are typical symptoms, often accompanied by sweating, dizziness and irrational fear, without being aware what exactly one fears. Due to the number of physical symptoms of these attacks, a person often believes that their illness is of a physical nature; yet actually, some subconscious conflict, necessary or unnecessary, is to blame. Also, the phobias mentioned by you often go hand in hand with those ‘anxiety state’ attacks.

⁹ Ibid., 501–502.

Ignoring Kaupas' advice to take medication, Škëma did not go into a hospital, at least at that time, and did not try recommended psychotherapy; according to his friends, during subsequent years, the situation worsened; he could not do without medical help. In his letters written in 1958–1959, duality and mood swings strengthened: more and more often he called himself a sick person, mentioning fits, nervousness, a "sickly state" which, previously, he would get into from time to time, and now were "chronic". When referring to his illness, he, somewhat surprisingly, adds: "When I write that I am sick, I do not pose – blood gushed from my throat yesterday". We can presume that friends suspected him of posing or exaggerating his feeling unwell.

In the memoirs of daughter Kristina, Škëma's mental state is even worse and, in medical terms, his state would probably be close to bipolar disorder:

There is no question that he suffered from mental illness and anguish and that this often made him a scary father. Every day, as I came home from school, I would try to anticipate his mood and hope for the best. His moods governed our family life. Often, he would be in a deep black mood and I would stay away from him, but when he felt OK, we would talk for hours and hours.¹⁰

In Škëma's creative work, the illness is mostly treated as sacred and doctors demonized (except for doctor Ignas from *White Shroud*, in the traits of whose image we would recognize Julius Kaupas), and the psychiatric hospital, especially in his texts from the last years, is depicted as a place of torture or modern hell. Such an attitude is in part close to that found in Ken Kesey's novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (written in 1959, published in 1962); however, on the other hand, it also takes root in the archaic, later – also the romanticist tradition, which worships feeling and what is natural rather than trust reason and science.

¹⁰ Citation from Kristina Škëmaitė Snyder's letter of November 8, 2001 to daughters Corrina and Abigail, an accompaniment to the memoirist text "Petrushka" which was sent to them.

Škëma's illness interests not only literary specialists but physicians as well. Neurologist Valmantas Budrys, who devoted a special article to *White Shroud's* protagonist, denies his diagnosis established in the novel – neurasthenia, and doubts the endogenic origin of his illness, raising a hypothesis that the character of the novel suffers from focal symptomatic epilepsy.¹¹ Such a diagnosis and the fatal end of the novel depicting mental derangement as well as the use of the term “idiot” make Škëma's protagonist close to Dostoyevsky's Prince Myshkin, and this context increases the value of *White Shroud* even more.

Contradictory Memoirs

Memoirs about Škëma, mainly of an obituary nature, appeared quite soon after the author's death. After that, very few memoirist materials were published, yet recently, memoirs – written down and as audio records or recorded during radio broadcasts, emerge increasingly more often from the distance of time.

In the memoirs of the dramatist Balys Sruoga's daughter, Dalia, from her war-time youth years in Vilnius, Škëma emerges as a mythical hero, who intrigued by his extravagant looks, charmed with the gracefulness of his gestures, and had very little to do with everyday life.¹² The surviving letters of Škëma and of his wife Janina, as well as his daughter's sensitive autofiction “Petrushka” show that the handsome Škëma took an interest in women throughout his lifetime, causing, of course, a lot of pain to his wife, without whose selfless support he would most likely have just been lost. The memoirs of Birutë Pūkelevičiūtė, with whom he lived in Montreal in 1953 when most of *White Shroud* was written, is dominated by the image of a man-child charged with a mood of disappointment and irony. These emotions are perfectly understandable given the end of the novel when “the

¹¹ Budrys, “87-asis žmogėnukas aštuoniamilijoniniame New Yorke,” 272.

¹² Sruogaitė, *Atminties archeologija*, 59.

subsequent lack of love was more interesting than love”¹³: in 1959, in the press, Škėma accused his ex-mistress of plagiarizing.

Male persons unlike female, at the beginning of acquaintance would feel an aversion to Škėma: he seemed to admit others to his presence with difficulty, “actor-like”, dressed-up, and with the halo of a heartbreaker.¹⁴ The Lithuanians with whom Škėma worked in the Kimball piano factory in Chicago around 1950 did not like his introversion and hurrying home, while everybody else liked spending time together in a pub on Friday evenings. Younger writers recall that Škėma often behaved arrogantly, ridiculed rural manners, out-of-fashion clothes, and laid bare their conservative literary views and ignorance of wider contexts. It also took some time before his fellow author friends managed to evaluate the novelty of his prose. For example, the writer Marius Katiliškis found Škėma’s fiction not esthetic enough, even vulgar; the naturalistic depiction of the body was unacceptable to him; upon listening to the reading of extracts from the draft of Škėma’s future book *Saint Inga*, his writer colleagues referred to it among themselves as “variations upon a clitoris”.¹⁵

Škėma was a constant subject of gossip and discussion, filling society with indignation not only by his fiction itself but also his provocative articles, canceled performances, retrieved manuscripts, drastic reactions to criticism or personal resentments.

In memoirs about Škėma, antinomies prevail, which attests to the writer having been one of the most complicated and dramatic personalities in Lithuanian literature:

We recall his warm smile, the lively talk of an attentive person, but we also recall his oppressive spirits, nervousness, shifting to hysterics, his self-confidence and suspiciousness, his apparently learnt, theatrically performed cynicism, and also the real, unfeigned romantic, almost child-like idealism he was not able to conceal,¹⁶

¹³ Pūkelevičiūtė, “Antano Škėmos puslapiai: Pro domo sua,” 152.

¹⁴ Jonynas, *Rinktiniai raštai*, 602.

¹⁵ Cidzikaitė, “1965-ųjų vasara pas Katiliškį,” 2018.

¹⁶ Blekaitis, “Antano Škėmos atsisveikinimas,” 1961.

his buddy, director Jurgis Blekaitis wrote. An important trait of Škėma's personality was the paradoxical way he saw things and his aspiration to tear off the mask from the manifestations of lies in different forms: while many contemporaries perceived it as cynicism, the writer's daughter Kristina saw him as having "a very great sense of humor and a very strong sense of what was bullshit and what was not".

Patriotism and Masculinity

A very special moment in Škėma's biography is his involvement in partisan war during the June Uprising in 1941 (he defended the bridge of Panemunė from retreating Soviet soldiers in the Kaunas region). Some of Škėma's friends were genuinely surprised by this episode from the author's life:

One could say, he was extremely non-public-spirited, not a public man – an individualist in both creative work and life. But he grabbed a gun and acted as a partisan in driving communists away from Lithuania at the beginning of the war.

Škėma never considered this biographical episode as significant; on the contrary, he even spoke about it with irony ("I was shooting for about a week at the Bolsheviks roving in the surroundings. I executed shots clumsily, but with an enthusiasm sufficient for a civilian"¹⁷); however, this experience has left its marks in his creations. First of all, the short story "Anapus Nemuno" (Across the Nemunas) (1948) should be mentioned, which tells about the death of one of the partisans while trying to rescue a woman with a child, and his brother-in-arms, short of cartridges, unable to help him. Nowadays, we read this literary work as a metaphor of a nation which is unable to defend itself, whereas at the time it was written, it aroused a negative reaction as non-patriotic.

¹⁷ Škėma, t. 2., 496.

As the Soviets approached in 1944, Škëma experienced a necessity to make a painful choice: he was invited to join the fighters for Lithuanian freedom close to the Lithuanian-German border, yet he did not accept the proposal and, later, always felt the shame of retreating, speaking about which publicly was not popular, to say the least:

[...] I am skeptical about the declared heroism of the 'military' living in the diaspora: it is not of the first-sort. Front-line heroes have perished and perish in Lithuania. The Lithuanian civilians in emigration could probably be justified due to their being unfit for service, lack of training, and a necessity to be abroad. But they will always be just minor heroes.¹⁸

Škëma's fiction often deals with the first Bolshevik period in Lithuania, which, in his texts, is transformed into a situation of universal existential choices, without losing historical specificity at the same time. Škëma can safely be called a patriotic author, although such an image of him is unusual – it is obscured by his renown as a fiction innovator: obligation to the homeland was an important topic of many of his texts – both his publicistic writings and fiction, dramas in particular – and also, at some point in time, quite an obstacle to his "literary career". Škëma's works could not be published up until the national revival in Lithuania, yet his hostile attitude towards the Soviet power also prevented his creations from spreading in the free world, indifferent to the destiny of the nations enslaved by the Soviets or captivated by leftist ideals (e.g. Greimas refused to help Škëma for the staging of his *Awakening* in Paris, substantiating his refusal by topical arguments of the modern theatre – yet it is more likely that this was his diplomatic trick in order to avoid any discussions about the unfavorable attitude of the leftist intellectuals of the time to the anti-communist topic¹⁹).

Of course, Škëma's patriotism was controversial, unconventional, based on self-reflection, and corresponded to what Vytau-

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Greimas, *Asmuo ir idėjos* 1, 245–247.

tas Kavolis referred to as living Lithuanianness. Škëma spoke ironically of the diaspora authors overwhelmed with utopic nostalgia, with their eyes turned to the receding shore. Moreover, he was also critical of many Lithuanian cultural heritage phenomena, the “historical childhood”, in which, according to him, the shoots of the degeneration of the past lie. For example, Škëma perceived the signs of such immaturity in the penchant to feel proud of the Lithuanians’ high origin from the Palemonids Dynasty and worshipping the grandeur of the dukes from the past; he would mercilessly destroy the sacred myths by asking rudely,

Why the hell did these mighty men waste their territories and authority in, if you’ll excuse me, the ass of the Russians, Germans and Poles [...]; why haven’t we become a nation of millions, or not made our neighbors slaves.²⁰

Such a relationship with the past often aroused indignation or incomprehension in society. For example, the play *Živilė*, which looks into the reasons behind the weak-spiritedness of the nation and its tendency to collaborate, was accused of a lack of patriotism; the idea of the drama *Awakening* that the mission of the freedom of Lithuania is not more valuable than humaneness, for many seemed too forthright a message considering the emigration conditions. The topic of the responsibility for killing was Škëma’s permanent interest: already his first book contains a short story “Pagautas” (Captured), which tells about the horror of an ex-SS man as he comes across a witness to his crime who has left a KZ (Nazi concentration camp). However, Škëma resolved to also write about what for many years had been a most rigid taboo in Lithuanian literature – participation of Lithuanians in the actions of murder of Jews in 1941. One of his last works, the novella *Isaac* begins with a depiction of a massacre in the garage of Kaunas Lietūkis, and ends in New York with a scene of homosexual love in a bughouse between a Lithuanian DP (displaced person) and a Jew he killed twenty years ago. In Škë-

²⁰ Škëma, t. 2, 516.

ma's conception, murder is justifiable neither by the law of revenge nor a patriotic ideology; the impulse of killing lies in the very human nature, especially masculine.

Škëma himself, more than once, uses notions of "genuine masculinity" in his essays, appealing to stoic attitude, courage, controlled emotions, i.e., he underscores the values underpinning the notion of hegemonial masculinity. However, we could find a far more different variety of images of masculinity in Škëma's texts: he was one of the first to enter into polemics on masculine standards as a power repressing one's personality, spoke about masculinity as a certain social role. Already in the short story "Egoistas" (Egoist) from the first book, there is an attempt at articulating the relationship between masculinity and hegemonial discourse (in this case – the national socialism ideology):

One never gets rid of *play-acting*. One of the few things our celebrated evolution has provided us with. There were so many times that I, escaping from the front and in shelters, watched that sham. I saw how unwillingly, with an unconcealed nervous fear of danger, did the Germans prepare for a battle, while play-acting for us. Poorly, amateurishly, and yet pretending to be brave combatants.²¹

With studies in masculinity growing, there is no doubt that Škëma's literary works will be a not-neglected source for digging deep into the development of the Lithuanian imagination. His texts include both ideal images of a "real man" (*Awakening*) and polemics against them (*Sunny Days*), also criticism and even parody. In this respect, the novella *Isaac* should be singled out again, since it marks the shifts in the conception: traditional masculinity (revenge as a man's duty) – fragmentation of identity (feminization of the body, loss of potency) – giving up of gender duality, reconciling body and spirit. Rimas Žilinskas, who drew attention to the issue of racism in *Isaac*, interprets the final scene of the novella – the killing of the black Mr. White and the kisses of Gluosnis and Isaac (marginalized minorities) as resistance to

²¹ Škëma, t. 1, 52–53.

a state's power structures. According to the researcher, the novel-la is a "conscious play with homosexuality: during the years of the Cold War, in America's public discourse, homosexual relations were still treated as a threat to national security and non-traditional sexual orientation was persecuted".²² However, *Isaac*, of course, is a certain extreme example, whereas many other texts reveal that Škėma essentially continues to belong to the paradigm of traditional masculinity. His creations have broadened the limits for the depiction of man and woman a lot and, as it seemed at that time, they broke down the taboo; however, now, we identify double standards in Škėma's interpretation of women, especially in his assessment of their sexual behavior and in the inherited dichotomy of the femininity images of a saint/slut.

Search for Identities

From the aspect of aspiration for real masculinity, we could look for a link between Škėma and Ernest Hemingway. The kinship of these two artists was noted by more than one, and was commented on regarding the masculinity aspect by Blekaitis:

Did he, like that great modern romanticist who ended his life tragically somewhat earlier than Škėma – Ernest Hemingway, – did he, too, felt a necessity to lead a full and dangerous life, as if to prove to himself again and again of being a one hundred percent, combative man?²³

There are no direct references to Hemingway or his literary creations in Škėma's texts, except for the auto-fiction text "Utopija Kanadoje" (Utopia in Canada), in which the narrator, remembering his stay in Mr. Adams's "camp", identifies himself with one of his dogs – wild Vilkas (Woolf), inclined to metaphysical

²² Žilinskas, "Antano Škėmos *Izaokas* JAV etninių literatūrų kontekste," 80.

²³ Blekaitis, "Antano Škėmos atsisveikinimas," 1961.

reflections: "I don't know which genre Vilkas would chose should he be willing to write. Probably prose. Somehow, for me, it is associated with Hemingway in his Spanish novel."

Obviously, the anthropomorphized Vilkas here embodies the values of a real man, and the "Spanish" novel is *For Whom the Bell Tolls*; however, we can develop the association further: Gary Cooper, Škëma's favorite actor, starred in a movie of the novel in 1943. It is thus likely that the writer's memory had recorded the film's poster, depicting a lone man with a dog against a background of wild nature; now, it was exactly such a hero – a hunter, nomad rather than a soldier, who was closest to the new dominant ideal of masculinity at that time.

We can find quite many allusions to cinema in Škëma's texts: mention of the actor Babochkin who played in the film *Chapayev* in *White Shroud*, Charlie Chaplin, making some town laugh, Walt Disney's personages; in *Awakening*, the character Kazys is compared to Gary Cooper; in the short story *The Chant*, the character is not allowed to watch the film *Quo vadis*, etc. And yet Škëma got the strongest impression from Jean Cocteau and his film *Orpheus* shot in 1950. In *White Shroud*, hotel clients, guys from a curtain factory, awaken cinematographic associations in the protagonist's consciousness ("How beautifully the curtains fluttered in Cocteau's film!"²⁴), and in the short story "Pasivaikščiojimas" (*A Walk*), a specific episode from the film *Orpheus* is indicated:

My wife walked with her eyelids half open. Shall I lift the blue netting? The eyes – the mirrors of the soul? When the mirrors break down, is it possible, with your arms stretched, to plunge beyond, like in Cocteau's film *Orpheus*?²⁵

Crossing the limit between "here on this side" and "beyond" was one of the plots that incited Škëma's imagination the most: the idea of love after death was taken over by Škëma primarily from the poets Bolesław Leśmian and Edgar Allan Poe, yet the

²⁴ Škëma, *White Shroud*, 135.

²⁵ Škëma, t. 1, 254.

major suggestion came from Cocteau's film, which was also close to him in its conception of the dual personality. We could find links between Škėma and Cocteau not only with regard to emotional attitude but poetics as well: according to Škėma, the horror of the modern man "manifests itself the strongest through secure views and objects". An example of such an instantiation of a nightmare for him was "the decorations of the next world in Cocteau's film (ruins of a deserted city, *everyday* walls, in which *real bricks* surface through a *real* wall and plaster which has come off the wall)".²⁶

The major archetype heroes that can be associated with Škėma's characters are Sisyphus and Christ, recognized in more than one of his works, and since they are obvious, discussing them is less interesting; however, we should remember another important personage in Western culture – Don Quixote. The writer himself disliked this comparison, confessing with a grievance in his statement for the weekly *Atspindžiai* in 1953: "I learnt that I am a Don Quixote and that I've been fighting with wind mills since I lack depth."²⁷ The truth is that his fiction contains no direct references to Don Quixote, yet it might be worthwhile searching for some links. Interestingly, in memoirs, the writer is as often as not compared to Don Quixote, and this parallel is quite ambiguous and caused by not a most pleasant feature of his – to react without going deep into the matter and without trying to recognize who is who. His friend director Blekaitis wrote:

[...] was hot-headed and quick-tempered, always ready to fight for what he considered to be true – no matter that due to his impulsiveness, he might as well be wrong. As often as not, personally not interested in a matter at all, he would be quick to engage in fierce controversy, as the picture of something he cared for was being obscured or distorted, or at least that's what he thought. [...] Say rather a Don Quixote, but not a cynic.²⁸

²⁶ Škėma, t. 2, 389.

²⁷ Ibid., 502.

²⁸ Blekaitis, "Antano Škėmos atsisveikinimas," 1961.

From the Myth to Understanding

During the years of Škėma's life, the attitudes toward his personality and creative work were extremely controversial. Of course, Škėma had a circle of fans of his creations, but his friends, too, spared no criticism of him; obviously, no cult of the author existed when he was living. Perhaps Birutė Pūkelevičiūtė alone, still in the DP camps, defended his creations with heat in all their controversies, and declared him to be an "unacknowledged talent who had no equals and has no equals in our literature", – which would bring an ironic smile to the face of her friends.²⁹ The attitude toward Škėma was changing after the writer's death while driving back from a Santara-Šviesa congress, where his 50th birth anniversary and the 25th anniversary of his creative work were marked. Mystical hints appeared in the obituaries, the similarity of his facial features and the circumstances of his death to those of his favorite author, Albert Camus, was underscored. Škėma's position as a modernizer of Lithuanian literature was established through a dispute which arose in reaction to Blekaitis' obituary, in which Škėma's creative work was no longer referred to as "a search but a lucky discovery". Critic Jonas Grinius of the conservative camp was indignant at such an evaluation of Škėma and began declaring that his creations were artistically worthless, blasphemous, and pathological, and the author himself, who has left the poison of nihilism to his nation, does not deserve respect.³⁰

Writers began dedicating their creations to Škėma; the book of poetry *Chapel B* by Algimantas Mackus, named after the chapel in which Škėma's body was laid out, was significant in particular. By a fatal coincidence, Mackus, as well as Škėma and Camus, died in car accidents, thus contributing to the creation of a romantic myth. Kostas Ostrauskas was probably the first to start a critical revision of Škėma's myth. In his drama *Paskutinis kvartetas ir dr. Kripštukas pragare. Post mortem* (The Last Quartet, or Doctor Kripštukas in Hell. Post mortem), Škėma, in eternity,

²⁹ Jonynas, *Rinktiniai raštai*, 604.

³⁰ Grinius, "Dėl A. Škėmos literatūrinio palikimo," 1962.

is offered a deal – to cancel the car accident, which he does not agree with, realizing that if his legend does not live on, the *halo* of his creation would *fade* too.³¹

In Lithuania, the trends of romanticization began to surface as early as the national revival period when the first publications came out and the first theatrical performances were staged. *White Shroud* was first published in Lithuania only in 1988 in the literary journal *Pergalė*, but, according to the world-known poet Tomas Venclova, who took part in the presentation of *White Shroud* in the Leipzig Book Fair in 2017, due to the illegal nature of the bringing of émigré press in, only a small part of the lucky ones had been able to read this novel before. In Lithuania at that time, it was a real discovery, especially for young persons, and has had a great influence on Lithuanian prose to date.

The staging of Škėma's works in the theater and cinema would be a separate and big topic, which we will not get into here in this article. The drama *Awakening* has been the center of attention (e.g., the film *Ataraxia* based on it, directed by Vytautas Balsys, 2015; performance *Awakening* in Panevėžys Drama Theatre, directed by Artūras Areima, 2018), while the staging of *White Shroud* in Kaunas Drama Theatre has been enjoying the greatest popularity (2012, director Jonas Jurašas). The truth is that the interest in the theatrical performance comes primarily from the fact that this novel is a must-read at school. It seems that an over respectful attitude to the author and his creative work poses a certain danger to the theatrical and cinematographic interpretations of Škėma's works; whereas Škėma himself liked experimentation and even conscious provocation. The idea of the film *Isaac* directed by Jurgis Matulevičius (2019) to involve Škėma himself in the world of narration is a certain novelty: the director has appropriated the plot by Škėma who is no longer living, but transferred the action from the USA to Soviet Lithuania; there's a glimpse of a photo of the writer; in the talks among friends, Antanas' death is alluded to. Interestingly, to find a language of their own in giving a meaning to their traumatic experiences,

³¹ Ostrauskas, *Paskutinis kvartetas*, 257.

the next generation of creators rests upon Škėma, whom they confide in as both a truthful witness to history and an artist “of the same emotional attitude”.

The interpretation of Škėma’s personality and creative work in literature is more diverse than that in the theatre and cinema: in post-Soviet Lithuania, Škėma shares the closest kinship with Sigitas Parulskis (b. 1965), who has not only voiced a similarity between his way of sensing and that of the protagonist of *White Shroud*, but also used some of the moments from Škėma’s biography (e.g., the latter’s meeting with a representative of the emerging Lithuanian partisans’ movement) in the novel *Tamsa ir partneriai* (Darkness and Company) (in respect to the attitude towards the responsibility for the participation in the Holocaust, this novel is akin to *Isaac*).

The next generation of authors have already been demonstrating a certain distancing from Škėma’s philosophy of life, an emerging, different relationship with nationality and emigration: for example, the character from the novel *Neišsipildymas* (Non-realization) by Gabija Grušaitė (b. 1987), reflecting upon her identity, compares herself with Škėma’s “pillars” and begs his pardon, using the images from *White Shroud*:

I beg your pardon, Antanas, but in the 80s, all bog goblins have died out, and the Lithuanian polyphonic song (sutartinė) only resounded during cheap folklore evenings; there was not even a horror of war – my crime is not non-indemnifiable.³²

The symptom of a young person’s attachment to Škėma is registered in Rimvydas Stankevičius’ (b. 1973) poem “Mėbijaus juosta” (Moebius): in the narrator’s memory, “in the place of windows, there are posters of a smoking Škėma and of Krishna”, and the transition to the unified world of adults, the loss of dreams, and the nearing to death is defined as an exit “from škėmas and krishnas”.³³ Such a relationship with Škėma, as the symbol of liberty and originality, is typical of many young Lith-

³² Grušaitė, *Neišsipildymas*, 66.

³³ Stankevičius, *Ryšys su vadaviete*, 57.

uanians. It is, certainly, very important that Škėma is a school program author and that schoolchildren discover his creations as an alternative to the prevailing Lithuanian literature (part of them, on the contrary, become his passionate haters).

Škėma is the most discussed Lithuanian author on the Internet, and is discussed by people from many different fields of activity (musicians, representatives of sects, super moms, emigrants, etc.), but schoolchildren in particular. Analysis of this large and permanently changing corpus of texts highlights a few of the most general trends: 1) Girls mostly emphasize his looks – „The most handsome of Lithuanian authors. My friend and I would open up the text book with his photo during a lesson of the Lithuanian language and go crazy”; 2) For boys, the moment of identification with him, conformity to masculinity standards is more important – “Škėma, you are the coolest!!”; 3) All without reservation are impressed by his attitude as a nonconformist, the role of a truth teller or even Robin Hood, the courage to be himself. Škėma’s literary works are undoubtedly liked as an alternative to rural literature; they impress in their unexpected language, humor and a certain darkness in the world outlook, which many want to identify themselves with.

Identification with Škėma marks a need for an alternative, a wish to oppose models of a successful biography; we can recognize a compensatory mechanism which helps maintain self-confidence in opposing societal pressure. In an environment of standardization, slight madness is interpreted as a possibility for self-expression or authenticity: „Antanas Škėma is the god of all schizos’ dreams” or “*White Shroud* is the Bible of my thoughts”. Texts imitative of Škėma’s style are published or a simulacrum of a Škėma-like life style is created, and his image is imitated on the Internet: “I’ve noticed that many lose their mind. A friend of mine currently is definitely caught up in a quag of all kinds of reflections; she began thinking existentially, which had not manifested itself before. And she said – this is due to Škėma’s influence.” Websites are full of most different, often melodramatic quotations of Škėma’s meeting the demand from this part of the readers; some feel a need to have a tattoo of some of his aphorisms done.

Such attachment to Škėma gladdens, but more than that, it makes one think why no other symbolic figures with whom young people would like to identify themselves occur, why there is such a strong wish to have an authority or a guru, and what this suggests about the state of our culture. It is certainly not easy to answer these questions, but it is worthwhile remembering Greimas' thought which was inspired by a lecture delivered by Algirdas Landsbergis, to the effect: "What Lithuania's cultural life lacks in comparison with the literature of other Eastern European nations is namely negativity, absurdity of literature, by means of which those nations manage to get rid of old myths as absurd."³⁴

It seems, in Lithuanian culture, there is a danger of replacement of old myths with new ones, which immediately become old, instead of trying to expand the limits of understanding, as Škėma himself did. The times we are living in problematize the existential and esthetic values in Škėma's creation, making us go deep into those texts of his which have probably remained less widely known.

After spending his childhood in multicultural environments in Poland, Russia, and Ukraine, and taking from his father and mother the different historical experiences witnessed by them, Škėma was free from many national stereotypes and was one of the artists most open to Western culture. This openness, however, did not mean melting, yielding to the "digestion by foreign influences"; on the contrary, in Škėma's understanding, the major ambition was a synthesis of Western spirit and Lithuanian-ness, which, in his view, was first realized in Donelaitis' poem *Metai* (The Seasons). He found Sruoga or Binkis, and his contemporaries Nagys, Radauskas, Niliūnas, Mekas, and, of course, Čiurlionis or painters who had wandered around Paris as the examples of such a synthesis. Being an ardent antagonist to prettified folklore and its imitation, Škėma valued archaic folk art in particular: atonal Lithuanian polyphonic songs with the rudiments of modern music, or combinations of folk-art colors and

³⁴ Greimas, *Iš arti ir iš toli*, 359.

shapes in which he saw the abstractionism of Mondrian, the blue epoch of Picasso, and the neorealism of Gromaire.

With an increasingly greater integration of Lithuanians in the Western world and many choosing a life abroad on a volunteer basis, Škėma's reflections from 1960 about the prospects of Lithuanian culture in the global world sound extremely pertinent for us today:

It is at this point that a human problem arises – the problem of a small nation, but the capacious human. We do have an endowment, we need to find exhibits to put on display; we need to slowly, persistently produce exhibits. Forgetting about the prestige of the former large state, to persistently fight for the prestige of the small nation. Not only by highlighting the moment of the small nation when it is done harm, but demonstrating every day and all the time the self-respect of the small nation. [...] Let's call it being a Lithuanian, probably the voice of blood, a necessity that you have brought into this world as your looks, eye color and character. Renouncement of one's national traits can take terrible vengeance in the future, as only nature can take vengeance when its laws are broken.³⁵

It is a most unexpected surprise that Škėma is coming to the Western world. Publication of *White Shroud* (translated by Claudia Sinnig) in 2017 became a sensation in the Leipzig Book Fair, during which Germany's largest and most influential dailies published reviews expressing astonishment that Germany had been unaware of this work to date, and calling this novel Europe's undoubted literary classics. In 2020, the same German publishing company Gugolz issued Škėma's collection of prose *Apokaliptinės variacijos* (Apocalyptic variations). In 2018, *White Shroud* came out in English (Glasgow: Vagabond voices, translated by Karla Gruodis), but the true discovery of this novel by the English-speaking lags somewhat behind.

Remembering Škėma's dream about the connection between the West and Lithuania, we want to believe that his vision is coming true: "In the darkness of the labyrinth – new Theseuses

³⁵ Škėma, *Rinktiniai raštai*, t. 2, 525–526.

rub stones so embers should be ignited, Ariadnes's thread should be found again and tied together [...]."³⁶ His creations remain to us a proof that the great link is possible, and that in Lithuanian literature, the Minotaur has already been hunted.

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Translated by DALIA ŠATIENĖ and KERRY SHAWN KEYS

³⁶ Ibid., 373.

Vilnius Cathedral Square from the Fourteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries. Part One

STASYS SAMALAVIČIUS

The Square from the Oldest Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century

Cathedral Square occupies quite a large portion of the territory of Vilnius Lower Castle. When discussing the early past of the Castle and also of the Square, we cannot fail to mention Šventaragis Valley, which, according to legend, was a site of the cremation and burial of Grand Dukes of Lithuania and also a center of pre-Christian religion. The chronicle of Maciej Strykowski and sixteenth-century Lithuanian annals mention that the Valley was at the confluence of the rivers Neris and Vilnia.¹ A

¹ Strykowski, *Kronika Polska, Litewska, Żmudska i wszystkich Rusi*, 308–311; *Lietuvos metraštis. Bychovco kronika*, 60–61; *Chroniki: litovskaja i žmojtskaja, i Bichovca*, 31.

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special article about this site, as a center of the Lithuanian pagan religion, was published by Vladimir Toporov.² There are opinions that Šventaragis Valley could be situated in the area of modern-day Tilto Street. In the opinion of the archaeologist Vytautas Urbanavičius,

Šventaragis Valley should most probably be looked for in the territory which is now surrounded by the rivers Neris and Vilnia, Janonio and Vrublevskio Streets, i.e., at the confluence of Neris and both branches of Vilnia (one of them used to flow by the front of the Cathedral).³

Following the recent years' discoveries in the vaults of the former (Vilnius) Cathedral, the prevailing opinion is that the first cathedral at this place was built by Mindaugas in the mid-thirteenth century. In 1251, he converted to Christianity and was crowned King of Lithuania. The indications of the Teutonic Order from 1393 and 1409 that Mindaugas lived in Vilnius (*'in quadam civitate qua voosta est ville'*) become more plausible.⁴ That people did live in the territory of the Lower Castle at the time of Mindaugas, is suggested by the remains of wooden buildings from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries discovered at the foot of the northern side of the Castle Hill.⁵

Starting from the early fourteenth century, there is more available data about Vilnius. For example, Gediminas' peace treaty, written down on October 2, 1323, said that it was concluded "in our castle in Vilnius". It was the earliest mention of the Castle ever.⁶ The following year the Pope's envoys were accommodated in the Castle's territory in the sitting-room (*'hospicium'*) and received by Gediminas in the hall which was there (*'in aula'*).⁷ In 1365, Vilnius Castle (*'castrum wille'*) was attacked

² Toporov, *Vilnius, Vilno, Vilna: gorod i mif*, 3–71.

³ Urbanavičius, "Šventaragio slėnis: legendos ir faktai."

⁴ *Codex epistolaria Vitoldi magni ducis Lithuaniae*, 33, 996.

⁵ Tautavičius, "Vilniaus žemutinės pilies mediniai pastatai XIII–XIV amžiais", 171–187.

⁶ Pašuto and Stalis, *Gedimino laiškai*, 74–75.

⁷ Op. cit., 118–183.



Vilnius Lower Castle in the atlas of Braun and Honnenberg. 1576

by the Teutonic troops.⁸ The Vilnius city masonry was first mentioned in 1381.⁹ It is believed that this was a reference to the masonry fortifications of the Vilnius Castle.¹⁰ Vilnius was attacked by the Crusaders in 1383, but the Castle withstood the attack. The Crusaders had to retreat without having seized it.¹¹

Jogaila's privilege of February 17, 1387 indicated that four wooden and one brick house gifted to the Bishop of Vilnius were inside the masonry walls of the Castle.¹² A description of Russian and Lithuanian cities from the late fourteenth century, referring to Vilnius, had it that Vilnius was on the rivers Neris and Vilnia, and was masonry: four walls wooden and two walls masonry.¹³

⁸ *Scriptores Rerum Prusicarum*, 552.

⁹ *Op. cit.*, 613.

¹⁰ Kitkauskas, *Vilniaus pilys: statyba ir architektūra*, 14.

¹¹ *Scriptores Rerum Prusicarum*, 127.

¹² Kurczewski, *Kosciol zamkowy czyli Katedra Wilenska*, 9.

¹³ Tichomirov, *Spisok ruskich gorodov dalnich i bliskich*, 224.

The masonry walls are considered to be the defensive walls of the Upper and Lower castles.¹⁴ The masonry walls of Vilnius Castle were mentioned in the last will and testament of Bishop Andrius of Vilnius of October 27, 1398.¹⁵ The Lower Castle area was surrounded by a masonry wall that a Flemish traveler Ghilbert de Lannoy saw in 1413.¹⁶

Mečislovas Jučas indicates that

in 1390, the Crusaders were unable to get over this city's walls, nor to take the Upper and Lower castles. The then Komtur (later Marshal) of the Order, Konrad von Wallenrode wrote to the Emperor of Germany that in the fall, with changeable weather and the roads deteriorating, he had to discontinue the siege of the Castle. The later assertion of Jan Długosz that canons razed the masonry of the Lower Castle and if it were not for the persistence of the Poles in defending the Castle, it would have been taken, is groundless.¹⁷

The Teutonic Order organized a bilateral attack on Vilnius Castle in 1394. Knights of a number of European countries and Livonian (Order) troops participated in the attack. The siege of the Castle lasted for three weeks and three days.¹⁸ The defensive structures outside of the masonry walls of the Lower Castle greatly hindered the attack on it; they were comprised of wooden barriers, canals and ditches filled with water.¹⁹ The barrages and ditches constituted a particularly serious impediment for the Crusaders; draining them was not a success. The Lower Castle's fortifications suffered during the siege, but the attackers failed to take it. With reference to this attack, the chronicle of Jonas Posilgė indicates that the stonework and towers of Vilnius Cas-

¹⁴ Jučas, *Vilniaus pilys. Rašytinės žinios*, 28; Kitkauskas, *Op cit.*, 10.

¹⁵ Fijalek i Samkowicz, *Kodeks dyplomatyczny katedry i diecezji Wilenskiej*, 5.

¹⁶ Jučas, *Vilniaus pilys. Rašytinės žinios*, 28; Klimas, Ghilbert de Lannoy, 116; *Scriptores Rerum Prusicarum*, 447–448.

¹⁷ Jučas, *Op. cit.*, 28; Długosz, *Dzielo wszystkie*, 460.

¹⁸ Jučas, *Op. cit.*, 29.

¹⁹ *Scriptores Rerum Prusicarum*, 194–195; Jučas, *Op. cit.*, 29; Kitkauskas, *Op. cit.*, 11–12.

tle were heavily fusilladed.²⁰ The harm inflicted on the Castle was described even more extensively in the chronicle of Vygandas.²¹ During the attack, as the Crusaders' cannons fired at the Lower Castle's fortifications, one of the Castle's towers was demolished by cannon balls and fell into water.²² Based on Vygandas' chronicle, Napoleonas Kitkauskas notices that

the wooden tower built by the Castle defenders instead of the demolished one was also turned to dust by cannon balls; later, the defenders burned it down themselves. Vygandas writes that after that, the Crusaders set their cannon artillery in front of the masonry that stone balls also turned to dust.²³

Romas Batūra makes a guess that this tower stood near the bridge and gate to the Castle.²⁴ Napoleonas Kitkauskas agrees with such an opinion.²⁵ Describing the actions of the battle, he writes:

During the attack on the Castle, two more towers were also knocked down. After knocking the smaller tower down, the Crusaders managed to build a bridge over the River Neris; hence, this tower must have been in close proximity to the Neris.

The chronicler refers to the second tower knocked down as the lower. During the siege, the defenders of the Castle would build additional brickwork barriers, although those additional constructions could help but a little against the shells of the artillery.²⁶

Describing this offensive of the Crusaders, he indicates that "to localize the site of the towers knocked down, they should first of all be looked for in the western part of the Lower Castle, closer to the Neris."²⁷

²⁰ *Scriptores Rerum Prusicarum*, 195.

²¹ Op. cit., 658–660; *Kronika Viganda z Marburga*, 361–373.

²² Jučas, Op cit., 29.

²³ Kitkauskas, Op. cit., 14.

²⁴ Batūra, *Žemutinė pilis*, 42.

²⁵ Kitkauskas, Op. cit. 11–12.

²⁶ Op. cit., 13.

²⁷ Kitkauskas, 15.

The buildings of the Lower Castle suffered during the fire of 1419 in Vilnius. The stables, cattle-sheds, other outbuildings, as well as the Duke's treasury and the cathedral burned down. However, under instruction from Vytautas, reconstruction works started immediately after.²⁸ Mečislovas Jučas considers that the Castle was rebuilt by the early 1430s.²⁹ We have no data about the reconstruction of the buildings in the middle and the second half of the fifteenth century.

Mečislovas Jučas points out that in the late fourteenth century,

Brickwork walls had surrounded all modern-day Gediminas Square areas up until the Neris River. The wall extended along the southern hillside where the road down the hill is now, and it led right to the beginning of Pilies Street, where the drive-in gate used to be.

[...] From the Castle Cathedral's bell tower (whose lower floors were the tower of the wall) across the bridge over Kačerga stream, which flew from Vingriai springs into the River Vilnia, there was a driveway out of the Castle towards the modern-day Tilto Street. This road led to Kernavė and Ukmergė. Farther, the Castle's wall was laid until the confluence of the Neris and Vilnia.³⁰

As of the late fourteenth century, brickwork construction increasingly prevailed in the Castle's territory and at the same time in modern-day Cathedral Square. After the adoption of Christianity in 1387, a cathedral was built. From the mid-sixteenth century, it was on both sides surrounded by a cemetery.³¹ As early as before the adoption of Christianity, a masonry house stood in the south-western part of the Square, which was Jogaila's gift to the Bishop of Vilnius in 1387. It is believed that

There stood even more masonry buildings in Jogaila's castle, but the one which stood in the area designated for the Bishop and the Episcopal College was what was given as a gift. After that

²⁸ Op. cit., 17; *Codex epistolaria*, 450.

²⁹ Jučas, Op. cit., 29.

³⁰ Jučas, Op. cit., 29–30.

³¹ Tautavičius, "Žemutinės pilies teritorija ir jos pastatai," 64.

time, the entire western and south-western edge of the Castle's territory fell into the hands of the Bishop and the Episcopal College. From 1397, there was mention of the school of the Cathedral, which, in the sixteenth century, stood not far from the Cathedral's northern wall. Over time, the territory of the Episcopal College was built with wooden and masonry buildings. In September 1530, the members of the Episcopal College were instructed to repair their houses which had suffered from the fire.³²

A few houses that belonged to the missionary monks of the Chapel of St. Trinity of the Cathedral, burned down during the fire of 1530. They stood south of the Palace of the Grand Dukes of the Lower Castle – old houses standing there from the fifteenth century. Rebuilding them was not allowed. To offset the losses, the missionaries were allotted a plot south of the defensive wall, thereby enlarging the ruler's orchard at the missionary monks' expense.³³ In the mid-sixteenth century, the citizens who had hitherto lived in the Lower Castle were moved out of it.³⁴

Having established the Supreme Tribunal of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in 1581, the Tribunal Palace was shortly after founded on the southern side of the Lower Castle, by the defensive wall.³⁵ In the late sixteenth century, 1596, to the north of the Cathedral, there stood a two-floor masonry vicar house, and in 1684–1685, Bishop *Eustachy Stanisław Kotowicz* (Lith. Eustachijus Kotovičius) had built for himself a beautiful, luxuriously furnished two-floor masonry palace between the vicar house and the southern edge of the servants' quarters of the Ducal Palace. In the first half of the seventeenth century, a small road and a bridge over the fossa connected this palace with “a homestead which belonged to the palace” behind the western defensive wall and the fossa.³⁶

³² Op. cit., p. 62.

³³ Kurczewski, Op. cit., 32.

³⁴ Homolicki, “O planach Wilna,” 34.

³⁵ Baliulis, “Lietuvos vyriausiojo tribunolo rūmai,” 1, 10.

³⁶ MAB, Rankraščių skyrius (The Library of the Academy of Sciences, Department of Manuscripts), P. 43-22455, l. 3–4., P. 43-22455, l. 3–4.

Among the buildings of the Lower Palace, the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania took a very important place. We should bear in mind that although Vytautas resided in the representation Trakai Castle, he organized a celebration for his troops in 1430 in Vilnius. Sovereign Casimir (1440–1492) frequented Vilnius and, of course, resided in the Castle. Alexander (1492–1506) lived in Vilnius for just two years.³⁷ The reign of Sigismund the Old (1506–1548) and of his son Sigismund Augustus (1544–1572) is considered the heyday of the Castle. A majestic Renaissance ducal palace was formed. The buildings to the north of the palace were designated for service premises and the courtiers. Still farther, there stood the buildings of the Horodniczy (Castellan). Until 1666, by the Castle's northern gate, there stood the Church of St. Anne and St. Barbara. A large courtyard and an orchard surrounded the palace from the south. There used to be outbuildings there.

During the reign of Sigismund Augustus, the cannon production undertaking was expanded and many outbuildings (stables, warehouses, baths, laundries) were built in the modern-day Tiltlo Street area.³⁸

At the end of the sixteenth century, Kraków ultimately became the sovereign's place of residence. Vilnius Castle also began losing its former defensive importance. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, prisoners were held not only in the Upper but also Lower Castle. For holding serious criminals, there was a deep cellar with wooden buildings at the southern foot of the Castle Hill. Prisons were built in the castle gate cellars, some of the guard towers, and also near the Bell Tower.³⁹

The Lower Castle, as well as Vilnius city, was devastated by the fire of 1610. The various buildings of the Castle that burned down included the Ducal Palace, the Cathedral school, the gate into the Castle, the Supreme Tribunal, the Cathedral, the Bell Tower, and bridges across the left branch of the River Vilnia as

³⁷ Jučas, *Op. cit.*, p. 29.

³⁸ Kitkauskas, *Op. cit.*, 26.

³⁹ Morelowski, *Odkrycia Wilenskie*, 280–282.

well as many other buildings. Putting up of buildings of the Ducal Palace and of other structures of the Palace was the responsibility of the then Horodniczy Peter Nonhart; architect Wilhelm Pohl also worked. Władysław Vasa awarded the latter with a plot near the cannon foundry for his long-time work.

Vilnius castles were damaged during the wars with Russia (1655–1661). The Lower Castle was probably wrecked the most in 1660–1661 when Lithuanian and Polish military units held it under siege for about one and a half years, attempting to take it five times by storm. Mečislovas Jučas indicates that “during this war, the Castle was severely damaged and only ruins have since remained.”⁴⁰

The defensive walls and towers of the Castle suffered extensive damage.

The Renaissance Ducal Palace, the Arsenal, the Church of St. Anne and St. Barbara and also the Upper Castle were wrecked. The Cathedral stood without a roof, with the vaults broken through and demolished at some points.⁴¹

The former House of the Bishops and the Cathedral school were dilapidated, the House of the Vicars, other buildings that stood in the territory of the Cathedral’s Episcopal College, suffered, as well as the building of the Supreme Tribunal and, certainly, the defensive constructions and the royal mills.

In 1666 it was permitted to pull down the Church of St. Anne and St. Barbara, and to use its bricks in the reconstruction of the Cathedral. In 1667, the Horodniczy of Vilnius Castle was permitted to reconstruct the royal mills. By the letter of May 1, 1668, Sovereign John Casimir ordered the barrage and castle canal to be dealt with, since, with the cellars of the Cathedral and the Ducal Palace flooded, the walls of these buildings were in danger. In the same letter, the Voivode and Horodniczy of Vilnius were praised for their efforts to preserve the Castle.⁴²

⁴⁰ Jučas, *Op. cit.*, 32.

⁴¹ Kitkauskas, *Op. cit.*, 33; Kurczewski, *Op. cit.*, 247–249.

⁴² Homolicki, *Op. cit.*, 9.



Cathedral Square from the South. Drawing by M. Januszkiewicz. 1840

“To the south-east of the territory of Vilnius castles, in the modern-day area of Tiesos [currently Maironio] Street, as early as the first half of the fifteenth century, there was a site put up with residential buildings.”⁴³

The letter of Vilnius Castle Horodniczy Peter Nonhart dated August 21, 1622 regarding the transfer of the plot at this place to Jonas Pilipinas⁴⁴ reveals how the territory beyond the south-eastern defensive wall (currently the area of the Alexander Pushkin [his bust is currently removed] plaza), which used to surround the duke’s orchard, looked like. The description of the plot by the defensive wall owned by him had it that the plot began from a round tower erected on the left-hand side of the Castle, and extended for 17.5 *rykštės* (*rykštė* – 4.32 m) towards another round tower on the wall. There is no doubt that reference here is made to the two towers on the Castle’s wall, which are

⁴³ Kitkauskas, Op. cit., 26.

⁴⁴ CVIA, f. 1281, apr. 1, b. 10489, l. 1–2.

shown in this part of the wall in the Furstenhoff plan. The Castle's wall is mentioned a few more times in this document. Unfortunately, it is not defined in greater detail. The above letter only indicated that the owners of the plot had to make sure that "the water did not do any harm to the Castle's masonry." This is most likely an allusion to the canal which used to be by the Castle's wall.⁴⁵

The plot, one edge of which adjoined the Castle's wall between its two towers, the opposite one – the southern canal surrounding the Castle (Jonas Pilipinas' plot was also between the two branches of the canal which used to be at this place; both merged further downward), according to the letter of August 21, 1622, was boggy and swampy. It was to be drained (by raising the ground level) and the shores of both canals were to be fortified with poles.⁴⁶ The document shows that only after fortifying the shores of the canals and filling the boggy and swampy places with soil and raising the ground level, was it possible to put up buildings.

When describing the plot of Jonas Pilipinas in the above-named Peter Nonhart's letter, the house of carpenter Jonas Lisinskas and the deserted workshop of a metal-worker (*'szloszarnia'*) are indicated as the guides to the situation in Pilipinas' plot. It seems that the workshop stood by the canal. The house of Lisinskas was not far from a wooden mill which was within the jurisdiction of the Horodniczy.⁴⁷ However, neither the house nor the metal-worker's workshop can be precisely localized based on this source. The source also mentions a road to a wooden mill which ran parallel to the River Vilnia (canal).

Jonas Pilipinas, referred to in the sources, was a royal sculptor-stonecutter (*'kamenik'*).⁴⁸ Apparently, he worked in Vilnius Castle.

⁴⁵ CVIA, f. 1282, apr. 1, b.10485, l. 1v.

⁴⁶ CVIA, f. 1282, apr. 1, b. 10489, l. 1v.

⁴⁷ CVIA, f. 1282, apr. 1, b. 10489, l. 1.

⁴⁸ CVIA, f. 1282, apr. 1, b. 10489, l. 2.

On October 19, 1719 the royal commissioners inventoried the houses and plots owned by Vilnius Cathedral, indicating their sites, neighbors, roads and streets, as well as buildings and other matters related to location. Their letter gives an approximate idea of the buildings on the south-western part of the Lower Castle and so on modern-day Cathedral Square, and also on individual plots that were situated near the Castle (on the other side of the wall).

The description begins with the buildings that stood near the Cathedral and nearby plots.

The letter read that, heading from the Cathedral to the Church of St. Mary Magdalene, "by the masonry" (apparently the walls or other buildings of the Castle), there was the house and plot of Jurevičius, a former sacristan of the Cathedral. In the letter which was written in Polish it was referred to as "*dom*" (English: house), so we could presume it was a wooden building. Further on in the letter, it is indicated that "one side of it is bordered with the Castle's fossa, the other – reaches the old Palace of the Bishops which belongs to the Vilnius Episcopal College." However, it seems that this reference is made to the plot of the house rather than the house itself. Further, the plot "by the masonry construction" is mentioned again, which extended along the fossa, from the small bridge across it, down which one walked to the Church of St. Mary Magdalene to the former residence of the vice-deans ('*padekanai*') and the fence of the small manor of canon Giecevičius.⁴⁹

On the other side of the Castle's fossa, there was a plot where manure was spread with buildings on it. On one side, this plot edged the Old Bridge road (this road ran by the Church of St. Mary Magdalene towards the River Neris), on the other – the fossa; meanwhile one of its edges was bordered with Kačerga stream and the other with the small manor of Benedykt Januszewski.

⁴⁹ The description presented here is based on a manuscript from the Department of Manuscripts of the Library of the Academy of Sciences (MAB RS, P.43–22430). The document has also been published in: *Prace i materiały sprostowujące sekcji Historii sztuki*, t. III, Wilno, 1938/1939, p. 94–98.

The small manor of Benedykt Januszewski, as well as the above-named plot with buildings, lay between the fossa and the Old Bridge road. The southern edge of Januševskis' plot adjoined this plot, while the other edge – the road which ran from the Cathedral door, went by the gate in the Castle's wall and led to the Church of St. George.

On the other side of the road running from the Cathedral to the Church of St. George, there stood Mrs. Kirkorowey's "small manor with a masonry construction". This small manor had an orchard which was in the Vilnius Castle territory. As shown by another letter of the royal commissioners from that same year (1719), the buildings were within the jurisdiction of the Episcopal College.

Interestingly, when describing the small manor, it was indicated that, according to old residents, there used to stand royal stables at this place.

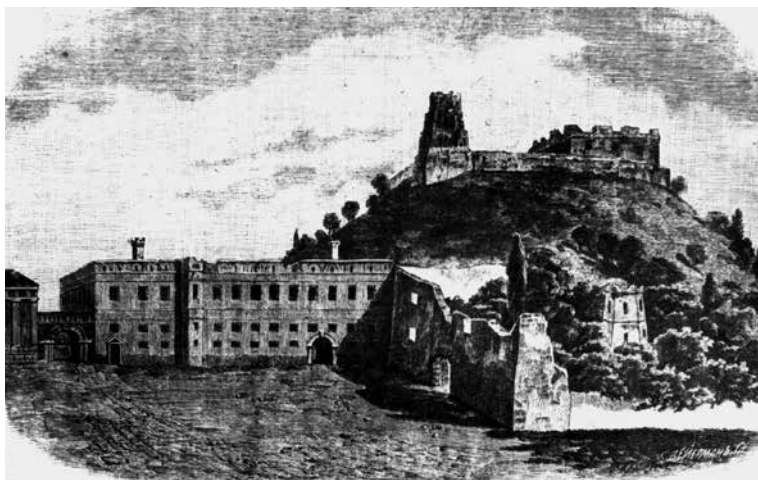
Beyond Mrs. Kirkorowey's small manor with ponds, there was an empty plot, one edge of which faced the Old Bridge of Vilnius.⁵⁰ Beyond this plot, as indicated, there was Sperski's "small manor with a plot".

The letter reads that "from the other side of the fossa", there was a garden and a plot with buildings which had once belonged to Bishop Kotowicz of Smolensk. One side of this holding edged the fossa, the other – the road leading to the bridge (*"bokiem ichnym do fossy, drugim do drogi Mostowey"*).

Further on, this document reads that, on the way back, there were a small manor, garden and orchard of standard-bearer Korsak of Smolensk. His plot was on one side bordered with the fossa, on the opposite – the road to the Neris. The face of the plot adjoined the road which connected the Cathedral with the Church of St. George.

Across the small bridge to the other side of the fossa, to the right of the bridge, there stood a small manor of Vilnius canon

⁵⁰ Apparently, this is the reference to the bridge that used to be by the turn of modern-day T. Vrublevskio Street.



Ruins of Lower castle at the end of the eighteenth c.

Giecewicz. Regarding this manor, it was described as facing the road leading from the Cathedral, one side by the fossa, the opposite side – by the house of Vicar Ryclicki of the Cathedral, the then owner of which was Mrs. Zotowicz, a laundress of the Cathedral.

The borders of her plot were as follows: its face looked towards the above-named road, its back was bordered with the quarters of the Vice Deans of the Cathedral, and its side – the Bell Tower.

In front of the small house of Mrs. Zotowicz, on the other side of the road, there was another small manor. Its previous owner was Vice Custodian of the Cathedral, priest Wilefer. In 1719, the manor belonged to standard-bearer Pszezdziecki of Mozyr. This holding looked towards the vicarage buildings on one side and the Castle's fossa, extending towards the Neris, on the other.

In the description that followed, the Bell Tower of the Cathedral becomes the landmark. It seems that north of it, on the left side of the gate which used to be there, there stood an empty masonry building. It had once been the residence of the priests of the Cathedral's Virgin Mary Church. Further in the letter we

read about a standing empty gate with the housings of the afore-said priests (*‘Broma pusta z temis stancyami stoi’*). The reference here is made to the Lower Castle’s gate.

Further on the way, in front of the central portal of the Cathedral, there stood its office, in which fuel for heating it was held. Beyond the office towards the Neris River, there stood a wooden boat of a Cathedral’s cantor.

When listing other buildings, a “brickwork vicarage” is indicated, behind it – the palace of Eustachy Kotowicz, which at the time of the writing of the letter belonged to the royal prelate Szanowski. Behind the palace, “the small house of the prelate dean of Vilnius” leaned against the sovereign palace’s servants’ quarters.

A large plot on both sides of the fossa is further described. It seems it had once belonged to the Radziwiłłs and later went to the Vilnius Episcopal College. It began from the “Round, or Twardowski’s tower”. The end of this plot was bordered with Sparski’s house, while in the north – the Radziwiłłs’ ponds. The plot extended along the Lower Castle wall to the Vilnia River, where there was a bridge. The letter read that the clergy of the Church of St. Ann and St. Barbara and of the Chapel of St. Casimir had previously resided in this territory. At the time of the writing of the letter, the plot was inhabited by laypeople. By the Round Tower there were the buildings and gardens of Józef Zagórski. In the territory, on one side between “the road, which runs towards the Castle’s masonry to Antakalnis, on the other – between the River Neris and with one edge reaching the River Vilnelė and the bridge or underground fossa”, there stood the house of Steponas Taraškevičius, a notary of the Vilnius Castle Court (*‘raganta grodzkiego Wilenskiego’*).

At this point, the part of the territory of the Episcopal College ends. Another territory within the jurisdiction of the Episcopal College was within the south-eastern part of the Lower Castle, and also extended beyond the Castle’s territory in Sereikiškės (the modern-day Bernardine Garden). In continuation of the description of the territory which was within the jurisdiction of the

Episcopal College, it is said that, not far from the Castle's gate and bridge, there was a piece of ground which belonged to the royal St. Trinity Chapel of the Cathedral. It had a brickwork fence which, at some points, had already fallen down. A newly built house of Captain Michał Kozłowski of the Vilnius Castle garrison stood on this plot. Between the masonry wall of the courtyard and a little tower which used to be there, there was a garden. Next door, there was a plot which belonged to the same Chapel, with the small house of Mrs. Aniškevičienė, who was derisively called Kumelienė (the wife of a horse, a mare), standing on it. This plot was characterized as one side

towards the fossa, the other side immediately adjacent to the masonry, the face towards the Castle's gate and bridge, and the back – towards a small tower and the Vilia River, which flows below the mill.

Then the property holdings of the Episcopal College in Sereikškės are described. We can see that its holdings began while heading from the city (Pilies Street) down Malūnų Street, having walked up to the Royal Mill behind the former Kirdajewskis' plot. The first plot was at the disposal of canon De Pasenti, with a small empty masonry on it and the gardens of locksmith Refecas. The plot belonged to Vytautas *altarija* (a hilly area of Antakalnis in Vilnius). Behind this plot there was another plot. It had earlier belonged to Stephan Tamaszewski, while at the time of taking the record, it was the property of podkomorzy (Latin: *succamerarius*; land official) Danilewicz of Ashmiany. The owner of the third plot was Wawszecki. Its previous owner was Lisowska. In addition to these, there was mention of one more land plot, which had belonged to widow Zurowiczowy before, and at the time of recording – to doctor of medical sciences, Zakrojstej. The description of this plot read that "with one edge it looks towards the mill sluice, the other – to the Vilnelė River; with one side towards that same Vilnelė, flowing along, the other side towards the road, which runs from the mills to the Bald and Békės hills."

Further on in the written document, we read that, walking down the aforesaid road and across the sluice, by the Bald and Békés hills, there is the domain of the Jasinskis' Chapel of the Cathedral. Here, a small manor with a wax workshop owned by the Jesuit College is situated, with an adjacent plot with an orchard. The latter is by the Békés Hill.

The record shows that the above-named hills and the large territory on the right-hand side of the Vilnelė River were also within the jurisdiction of the Episcopal College, yet in this source, this territory is not dealt with.

In the eighteenth century, the ducal residence and the other buildings of the Castle stood in a particularly poor state. On June 29, 1738, the Treasury Commission announced that the rebuilding of Vilnius Castle was impossible. In 1758, Horodniczy of Vilnius M. Naruzhny followed suit. The deserted, dilapidated Ducal Palace and other buildings were mentioned as early as 1762 and 1784.⁵¹ As of the mid-eighteenth century, poor citizens started taking up residence in the empty premises of the Palace.⁵² Others built themselves a housing in the courtyards. The list of citizens published by Witold Kieszkowski in 1797 reveals that twenty-five residents lived in the deserted Palace or had built themselves a small house in its courtyards at that time.⁵³

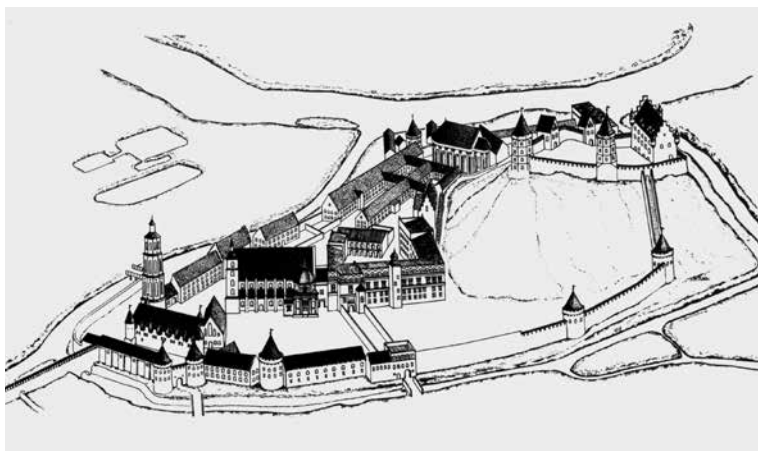
The Square from the Late Eighteenth Century to the Erection of a Tsarist Fortress

On January 24, 1798, the civil governor of Lithuania, Jakov Bulgakov [representative of the tsarist Russian authority] issued a circular regarding the dealing with deserted houses and putting up of buildings on empty plots in cities. The owners were obligated, by May 1, 1798, to provide the Magistrate with information

⁵¹ Jučas, *Op. cit.*, 33.

⁵² Homolicki, *Op. cit.*, 9.

⁵³ Kieszkowski, *Dzieje planu katedralnego...*, 105–106.



Reconstruction of Upper and Lower castle in the seventeenth c.

on the measures they were undertaking to deal with the deserted buildings and to put up buildings on their empty plots. Deserted houses and areas with no buildings on them were to be sold by auction for the avoidance of complying with this edict.⁵⁴

The tsarist authorities in Vilnius, by means of such circulars, took measures to pull down the Lower Castle Palace. Feliksas Sliesoriūnas, based on the ample documentary materials from that time, indicates that

...on September 1, 1799, the civil governor of Lithuania, Jonas Fryzelis imparted to the Magistrate of Vilnius that merchant Moisey Slucki of Kremenchug undertook pulling the Ducal Palace within the Lower Castle down. Fryzelis ordered the Magistrate that it should enter into a contract with Slucki on the pulling down of the Ducal Palace as the latter agreed to pull down the Castle's masonry, level the site, and give 15 percent of the material (bricks) to the treasury... Demanded by its officials, the Magistrate signed the contract with Slucki on the pulling down of the Ducal Palace within the Lower Castle on October 19, 1799. Prosecutor A. Tomasov of the Governorate acted as a surety for

⁵⁴ Sliesoriūnas, Gedimino aikštė, 10; CVIA, f. 397, apr. 1, b. 665, l. 16.

Moisey Slucki. The contract stipulated that Moisey Slucki would knock the Palace down in two years after signing the agreement, level the site, and give 15 percent of the bricks over to the treasury. At that time, the Ducal Palace along with the other buildings' masonry were already being knocked down by the persons who had been authorized by Jonas Fryzelis. Moisey Slucki, under the contract, was obligated not to hinder those persons in pulling down the Palace. Only in case the aforesaid persons, after demolishing the Palace, did not take the construction and demolition waste (bricks and refuse) away and did not level the site, was Slucki allowed to lodge a complaint against them to the Magistrate. That the Palace and the other buildings within the Lower Castle were already being demolished prior to the signing of the contract between the Magistrate and Moisey Slucki, is suggested by Fryzelis' edict for the Magistrate of November 5, 1799 to check the authorizations of all the persons who had been allowed to demolish the Palace and the other buildings of the Lower Castle. The Magistrate was to specify the places at which they were allowed to demolish the Palace and the other buildings' masonry, and also to survey the demolished Palace. The surviving remains of the Lower Castle Palace were to be pulled down by Moisey Slucki alone, as the last contractor. Jonas Fryzelis forbade the Magistrate to meddle in the Lower Castle Palace affairs. The Magistrate was only ordered to follow all instructions from Fryzelis.⁵⁵

Michał Homolicki claimed that the demolition of the Lower Castle Palace was only completed in the early nineteenth century, but he did not indicate the exact date.⁵⁶ Feliksas Sliesoriūnas defines the time of its demolition more precisely. He holds the opinion that the Lower Castle Palace was pulled down in 1799–1801.⁵⁷ The same time is indicated by Napoleonas Kitkauskas.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Sliesoriūnas, *Op. cit.*, 10–12; *Obst, Zburzenie Zamku Dolnego*, 56–57; CVIA, f. 458, apr. 1, b. 467, l. 206–208 and 253–254.

⁵⁶ Homolicki, *Op. cit.*, 30.

⁵⁷ Sliesoriūnas, *Op. cit.*, 12.

⁵⁸ Kitkauskas, *Op. cit.*, 62.

Michał Homolicki points out that the civil governor of Lithuania, Jonas Fryzelis, apparently sold part of the bricks given over to the treasury. Forty thousand bricks were given over to Vilnius University which at that time was building itself a conservatory.⁵⁹

Once the Ducal Palace within the Lower Castle was pulled down, the site became a square.

It is true that the demolition of the Grand Ducal Palace met with a reaction of the then society. In 1802, Vilnius Magistrate lodged a written protest to the governor general of Lithuania, Levin August Gotlieb Bennigsen, regarding the destruction of the Lower Castle's Ducal Palace.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, this just demonstrated the discontent of the city authorities, yet the belated protest had no real significance as the Palace had already been pulled down.⁶¹

On May 26, 1802, the Magistrate of the city decided to remove the marketplace which had previously been situated near the Town Hall. It was decided to build a few marketplaces instead.⁶² One of them was to be built in the place of the pulled down Ducal Palace of the Lower Castle. The works started that same year. Feliksas Sliesoriūnas, based on Kieszkowski, indicates that

in the place of the Lower Castle Palace demolished in the early nineteenth century, a marketplace was established. Part of its territory was stone paved. It was put up with wooden buildings – trader shops and residential houses. One square to the south-west of the marketplace remained with no buildings put up on it – the former courtyard of the Lower Castle.⁶³

In 1802, the Magistrate applied to governor general Levin Bennigsen for permission to pull down the masonry wall belonging to the monks of the Brotherhood of Saint Roch which separat-

⁵⁹ Homolicki, *Op. cit.*, 30.

⁶⁰ Obst J. *Op. cit.*, 58; Sliesoriūnas, *Op. cit.*, 12.

⁶¹ *Op. cit.*

⁶² Homolicki, *Op. cit.*, 30; CVIA, f. 458, apr. 1, b. 577, l. 26, 188.

⁶³ Kieszkowski, *Op. cit.*, p. 91; Sliesoriūnas, *Op. cit.*, 13.

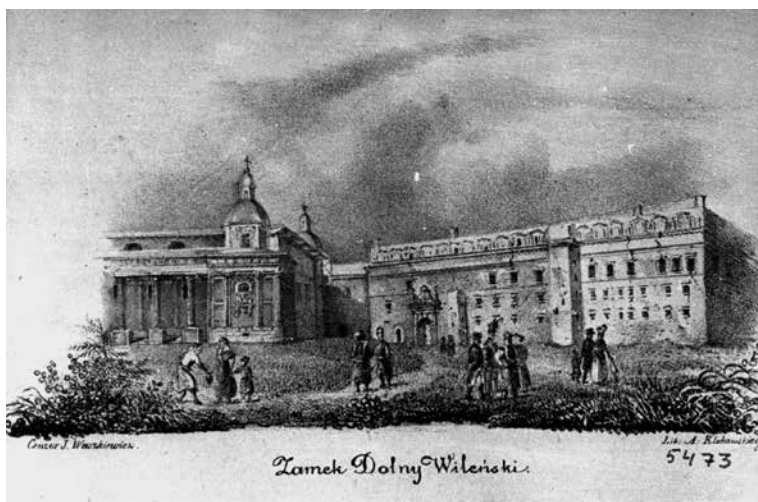
ed their orchard from the Lower Castle territory. Since the governor of the Brotherhood's home, Grisnaila, refused to allow that, the Magistrate lodged a complaint against him to the governor.⁶⁴

After the War of 1812 a need arose to draw up a long-term plan of the city. The plan was drawn up by architect V. Gost from St. Petersburg together with architect Joseph Poussier of Vilnius Governorate, who was aided by local surveyors. The drawn up long-term plan of the city was approved by the Tsar on April 11, 1817. Regarding this plan, Feliksas Sliesoriūnas writes:

It reflected the principles of Classicism. The suggestion was to lay straight, light and spacious streets and passages, and to equip rectangular squares and plazas. It was also planned to build a Cathedral Square. The authors of the project, perfectly realizing the historical and architectural significance for the city of the surviving ensemble of Vilnius castles, suggested that a quadrangle open-type square, larger than four hectares, be built, with the Cathedral building well visible from all sides. The plan was to connect the Square with the paths detectible on the entire territory of the Castle Hill. With a view to the further perspectives of the development of the city, the authors also provided for a new public road [currently Gedimino prospektas] running westwards from the Cathedral towards Žvėrynas. In the project, the directions of the new streets and routes running from the Square were chosen so as their axes be oriented towards the symmetry axes of the Cathedral building. V. Gost and J. Poussier did not provide for a bridge across the Neris River, yet their planned road to the north from the Cathedral towards the river seemed to require a bridge. The urbanistic idea of Gost and other authors of the long-term plan for the development of Vilnius to include Vilnius Cathedral, reconstructed in Classicist style, and the Castle Hill with the surviving remains of the Upper Castle into the Square ensemble, began to be realized. Dealing with the entire territory with the buildings standing on it started.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Sliesoriūnas, Op. cit., p. 13; CVIA, f. 458, apr. 1, b. 577, l. 188.

⁶⁵ Sliesoriūnas, Op. cit., 13–14; *Narebski, Zarys urbanistycznego rozwoju Wilna...*, 342.



Cathedral and Lower castle in the eighteenth c.

By order of Governor General Alexander Rimsky-Korsakov of March 29, 1817, small wooden shops, residential houses and other buildings by the Castle's gate were pulled down. Instead, thirty-eight small masonry shops were built between the Cathedral and the Castle's gate according to Poussier's project.⁶⁶ At that time, the construction of a Classicist-style house was completed, which came to house the Second Department of the Supreme Court of Vilnius Governorate.⁶⁷ The western part of the former Lower Castle courtyard remained without any buildings in it. It was used by tsarist military units for exercise and muster.⁶⁸ In 1817, the left side of the River Neris was heightened and a road was built here in 1821, and was planted with trees. The streets of the 'ceikhauzas' and of the arsenal (from the eighteenth century "ceikhauzas" was referred to as arsenal) were established; they, too, were planted with trees. Since Civinskis' orchard

⁶⁶ Sliesoriūnas, *Op. cit.*, 14; Kieszkowski, *Dzieje placu Katedralnego*, 91; CVIA, f. 937, apr. 1, b. 1640, l. 38–40.

⁶⁷ Homolicki, *Op. cit.*, 18; Sliesoriūnas, *Op. cit.*, 14.

⁶⁸ *Op. cit.*, 15; Kieszkowski, *Op. cit.*, 91.

between these two streets hindered their reconstruction, part of the orchard was liquidated. A wooden pavilion was built in this orchard in 1822. Other buildings that stood in the Lower Castle territory were repaired and dealt with. As early as 1817, “an old and very thick” masonry of the dilapidated Castle that used to stand at the end of the western edge of the Palace of the Lithuanian Tribunal was knocked down. We believe this was the remains of the former Round masonry tower.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, the yard designated for the exercise and muster of military units was planted with trees.

The House of the Bishops

The information that we can associate with this building was found in the privilege granted by Jogaila to Bishop Andrius on February 17, 1387. Under this privilege, the Sovereign gifted to the Bishop and the Cathedral four wooden houses and one brickwork house which were within the territory enclosed by the castle walls. Apparently, this building was the residence of the first bishops of Vilnius. It seems, mention of this building is also made by the Polish historian Jan Długosz when he described the Crusaders’ attempts to demolish Vilnius castles. When writing about the siege of Vilnius Castle in 1390, the author indicated that, during the siege, the Crusaders had climbed on the walls of the Castle by the House of the Bishops, from which they were soon flung down. This reference allows for the supposition that in the last decade of the fourteenth century, the bishop’s residence had already been housed in the building under description. Apparently, this building had been the bishops’ quarters ever since the adoption of Christianity in Lithuania, as the available sources do not show the Bishop of Vilnius having had another residence. This building had been the residence of Vilnius bishops up until 1534.

⁶⁹ Homolicki M. *Op. cit.*, 13; Sliesoriūnas, *Op. cit.*, 16.

Napoleonas Kitkauskas indicates that “after the fire of 1530, Bishop Jonas of Lithuanian Dukes restored the House of the Bishops that stood south of the Bell Tower; however, his successor Povilas Alšėniškis (1537–1555) founded a residence for himself in the former palace of Stanislovas Goštautas, while in the former house of Bishop Jonas, Sigismund the Old accommodated the guards of the Castle. In *Civitates orbis terrarum* (also known as the Braun and Hogenberg atlas) it is already depicted as ‘the Drabants’ house’.”⁷⁰

The author, analyzing the engraving of Danielius Pelceldt printed on the cover of C. Drucki-Horski’s panegyric on Bishop Tyszkiewicz in 1649, points out that “The large building in the front plan whose western facade with three large windows abuts the defensive wall of the Lower Castle seems to be the building gifted by Jogaila to the Bishop of Vilnius in 1387.”⁷¹

The House of the Bishops, as well as the other buildings that stood in the Lower Castle territory, suffered during the war of 1655–1661. In 1707, the Episcopal College of the Cathedral undertook a repair of this house, adapting it to its own needs. Until 1765, the building was two-story. That year, the Episcopal College began constructing the third story, but the works took longer than expected due to a lack of funds. In 1790 the house passed into the hands of Vilnius bishops.

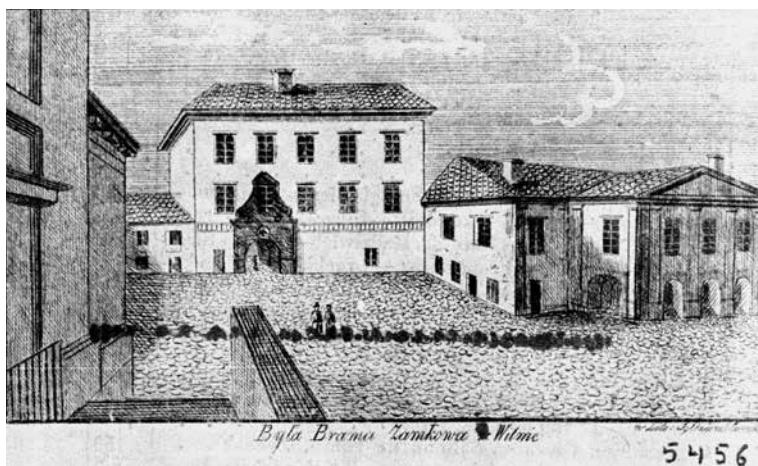
In the nineteenth century, some of the third-floor rooms were rented. Student Chodzka, whose room was a gathering place for Vilnius University student Philomaths, lived there for some time. Poet Adam Mickiewicz, too, used to visit this place.

The descriptions of this building in the acts of visitation reveal the way it looked in the nineteenth century.

In the Act of Visitation from 1820, the building is referred to as a house for retired priests and disabled persons. It is specified that it is located between the domain of the Church of St. Mary Magdalene and Krukowska’s house. It is a three-story monas-

⁷⁰ Kitkauskas, Op. cit., 26.

⁷¹ Kitkauskas, Op cit.



Gates of the castle. From lithography by J. Oziemblowski. (Illustrations from the archive of Stasys Samalavičius)

tery-type covered building divided by a corridor along the middle on all of the three stories.

At its northern end away from the Bell Tower, two-story residential premises were built. At the time when the Act of Visitation was drawn up, the premises were occupied by the vice-custodian of the Cathedral, priest Zigmantavičius. This annex was 18 cubits long and 12 cubits wide. The house itself was 96 cubits long and 18 cubits wide, and its western wall adjoined Krukowska's house. On this side of the house, a two-story masonry wall with eleven windows is mentioned. In this wall there was a driveway into the courtyard. It was closed by a two-leaved planked gate.

In 1814, the courtyard was divided into two by a wooden fence, one part of it planted with fruit-trees.

A four-compartment wooden outhouse was built in the unplanted part of the courtyard in 1816. All wooden buildings were covered with plank boards.

In the Act of Visitation, the description of the house begins with its eastern end. It is indicated that "after climbing a three-step staircase from the "Castle market" through a new join-

er-made door, one gets into a small corridor", which, in the source, is referred to as "passage". In the opposite wall of this corridor, which ran across the house, there was a door ('fortka') into the courtyard. There was a dining hall ('stołowania') in it; whereas the lengthwise first-floor corridor was vaulted. The floor in both corridors was brick.

When walking down the corridor, a one-piece planked door on its right-hand side led into a room that a masonry partition, with a door, divided into two. The premises had a plank board ceiling, a board floor, and both of them were heated by one common Swedish simple-tile furnace. There is a mention of two windows in the premises.

From the common corridor, an identical door on the same side of it led into two rooms ('stancyj') with a window in each. The floor in these rooms was also wooden. Both rooms shared a Swedish simple-tile furnace which heated them. There is a mention of a small fireplace in the second room and it is also indicated that the door from it into the common corridor was bricked up.

Two more rooms on the same side are also mentioned, to which led one door from the common corridor. Through it, one accessed the first room which had a window the same size as in the rooms mentioned before, though there were iron bars on this window. A plain door ('drzwi gładkie') led from this room into the other premises. The second premises had a window of the same size as the other one, though it had no bars. The windows and the floor in both rooms were also wooden, and they were heated by a Swedish simple-tile furnace.

There was a kitchen, sectioned off by a masonry partition, at the end of the corridor. The Act of Visitation says that the kitchen door had been stolen and burnt down by soldiers. The Act also specifies that all the rooms described therein were occupied by soldiery. The description of the first floor of the house is further continued from its western end to its other end. The entry into the house is through a masonry porch (Lithuanian: *gonkelės*) covered with boards, on both sides of which "there were

four steps of a staircase." From the porch, through a door, one gets into the anteroom, at the end of which there is a wooden staircase to the second floor. The ceiling of the anteroom was of plank boards.

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Four Essays

LIUTAUROS DEGÈSYS

To Appear and to Be

When I was still a blond-haired youth, I inadvertently put my allergic reactions to the test in fields of Sosnowsky's hogweed. At another time I was bitten all over by mosquitoes in the Kola Peninsula. I have handled plants known as *poison ivy* on the other side of the Atlantic for no reason. After each of these adventures I appeared to be someone who should have received a medal for "bravery during a fire". Someone who rescued an old lady or maybe also a grandchild from a burning building. I was a real failure, but I could appear to be a hero.

At the beginning of the Independence period, I knew a clever man who wrote programs for emerging political parties. People wanted to create political parties, but they did not know what that meant. They wanted to appear, but they did not want to be. After they read the programs (no matter how noble the names by which they were called – conservatives, social democrats, members of the labor party, the party of order, the party of justice), they would say: we want to be called by that impressive name, but to be that – God forbid.

Clearly, if you put your mind to it, you are able not to see and not to understand problems or phenomena. And you don't have to hide, to deliberately push your head into the sand or through the portal. It is enough to close your eyes. Not to want

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and not to see. The human head is the oldest photoshop. Of course, it is possible to see what does not exist. I don't know which is better and safer: not to see what there is, or to see non-existent ghosts. To create artificial horrors for oneself, or to fail to understand daily problems. To delude oneself that it's nothing. Not to want and not to understand.

What is more important: to appear or to be. If the problem of the town square is more important than the health care system or the educational system. If you did not see the virus, then it must not exist. If before your wedding you undergo plastic surgery on your nose and that is why no one understands why all your children don't look much like you. If you are an energy giant and you complain to everyone that you have suffered a loss of 180 million, but it turns out that you had planned to have a profit of 400 million, but only got 220 million. So the decrease in profit appears to be a loss. How everyone enjoyed screaming at pensioners, that they will be getting the 200 euros unjustly promised to them. But all those screamers have long since picked up their payments and compensations, while those poor wretches are still waiting for theirs. People were appalled at quarantine restrictions, but it turns out that it just meant they could not go out to drink a cup of coffee that cost two euros. After buying their own coffee, they were able to drink twenty cups at home with those two euros.

Artists are not always consistent – that is why they are artists. The majority of them asserted that the quarantine either did not hinder their artistic work, or that it even helped it. But that same majority was keen to ask for support, stipends, compensation – for uncompleted works, for performances which might occur, but have not occurred. The ones who were secretly working, who were not unemployed at all, took unemployment compensation. The people felt that the government borrows the money for these compensations, but it is the inhabitants who provide it. You have to take, because the government's debts will have to be paid both by those who took and by those who did not take. It is just that some took and also grumbled about the gov-

ernment, while others took quietly, calmly, elegantly and wisely. Paraphrasing the poet, only “priests and beggars” did not take, well, also those aforementioned thieving pensioners, who still have not received, who are still standing last in line.

How deceptive our language can be sometimes. They tell you – you have to show, to show, to show (*rodyti*) – and in the process of showing, you can prove (*i-rodyti*) anything. Or the reverse – to say that here it just appears (*rodosi*) to be so, because it so appeared (*pa-si-rodė*) to someone. It just appeared, but it is not really so. And that is why there are those who show off themselves. There are those who are “against” and those who are “for”. And then there are those who are always “against”, and most often they are against the ones who are “against”. And then there are those who are always “for”. Especially if there are many like them who are “for”. The inhabitants of the righteous majority. And then there are those who seem to be “for”, but are secretly “against”. They struggle for freedom, they march with flags, they sing the national anthem. Elections and tax returns show who they are. And then there are those who drive Lexus-es, but live in apartments. And then there are those whose automobiles cost as much as the total monthly wages of a thousand teachers. If a teacher walked around naked, survived by eating berries he picked himself, did not use toilet paper and did not pay for electricity – then he could save enough money for such a car in 84 years. But then he probably would not have the time to drive such a car, nor any place to drive to.

In conclusion, the moral: a five-year old girl says: “When I grow up, I want to be as pretty as daddy.” People ask: “Why don’t you want to be as pretty as mommy.” The girl answers: “It takes mommy a few hours in the morning to become pretty. Daddy jumps into his pants straight out of bed, without even stopping in the bathroom, and he is pretty right away, and he dashes right out the door.”

To appear, it means – to be.

About Litmus Paper

How good it is that there are means to clarify problems, to paint them over, to make them meaningful. Like some litmus paper, which reacts, changes color and shows, what was here before and what is here now. It never reveals what will happen. Only astrologers and meteorologists can do that. What a shame that all our knowledge is from the past and about the past. Unless there is someone who has special, extrasensory abilities, or special acquaintances on the other side. On the other side to tell us about this side.

Liquor does not change people. It just magnifies their obnoxiousness, stupidity, brutality or dishonesty tenfold.

Give a person something to drink and you will see him in all his splendor. Maybe you will even feel his fake kindness, generosity or heroism. Driving clarifies to the hundredth degree the boorishness of pedestrians who are otherwise kind-hearted and well-meaning. While he is not driving a car, while he still is in charge of his own one-half-horsepower self, he is just someone who elbows and pushes his way through on sidewalks, who breathes down your neck in the check-out lane of a store, who tries to sneak by out of line. Just a small bird, a yard sparrow, almost a peace dove. But when he gets behind the wheel and engages a 250 horsepower engine, he turns into a mountain goat and a highway eagle, a threat to his own health and to the lives of other people.

The virus, it turns out, is an excellent detector and indicator. In a few months it has shown what everyone has been trying not to see for entire decades: that the health system is itself unhealthy, that polyclinics are clinically ill, that infirmaries are infirm, that physicians at best treat illnesses, but not people, that patients are not at all patient, but are hysterically nervous and that they are in the habit of plugging up holes rather than trusting to private medical help.

Suddenly it has become clear that teachers never worked with thirty students at a time, but at best – with the five or six who were being called on, that classes were too big, that classroom

learning was just a pretense, that remote learning made teachers and students more remote from each other, that internet technologies are best suited for computer games. If we were to speak not about hyenas but about hygienes, then we might suspect that many people must not have washed their hands for weeks at a time, since now for some reason they are upset and surprised that they have to wash their hands four times a day. Many have finally come to the realization that in their apartments, which have “all the amenities”, the shower works in the morning and in the evening, that washing yourself is an excellent way to disinfect, and that you do not have to wait for Friday to take a bath, as in the good old days of village bath houses.

And even words, it appears, even words can mean completely different things than what they appear to mean. The rural Lithuanian etymology of the word “pasveikti” (to get well) clearly indicates that one who has gotten well (*pasveikęs*) is healthier (*sveikesnis*) than he was before. To say that someone “pasiligojo” (went through an illness) is understood to mean that he was ill for a long time, and by going through his illness, he immunized himself, hardened himself, and now he is going to be healthy, he will not become ill again. Folk wisdom always knew that it is not so bad to break one’s leg, since once the leg heals, it will be stronger in that place. It will never break again. If you broke all your bones, then you would be as fit as a fiddle, none of your bones would break anywhere in your body, you would be all like steel. It is hard to understand why the proponents of this theory don’t all jump into some threshing machine or don’t jump off the roof of a threshing barn – just to become stronger by breaking some bones.

In the crowd of people who have bought into this theory, there are a good number who want to get mildly sick as soon as possible and then to get well easily. To become healthy (*susveikėti*), not to become infantile (*suvaikėti*) as well. According to them, the asymptomatic virus, the virus in its “lightest form”, is a good thing, which will confer immunity and will make a person stronger. That the illness eats you up, chews up and weakens some

bodily organ – no one cares about that. That while you are ill, you become weak, the illness eats up a piece of your lungs, that you can no longer walk up to the fifth floor without stopping to rest, without losing your breath, while before you could run up to the ninth floor. That the kidneys and liver of the one who was ill suffered while they struggled, that is admitted, but that they became weaker as they struggled – no one admits that. For it is a known fact that one who strives, who works, only gets stronger. Work adorns and strengthens not only human beings, but also their internal bodily organs. The more disgusting the work, the more it adorns. For the joints of long-distance runners and ballet dancers only grow as the years go by, they just develop, improve. The idea that those joints are carved up, that thirty-year olds are sent into retirement – well, that is just an old wives' tale.

There are those who are convinced that any loss of taste and smell is a joke, a temporary disorder, basically a symptom which indicates that nothing has happened, that it is just a trick. Things can be much worse after some serious drinking – you don't feel anything, you lose all your senses. It's not just that you don't smell anything, but you don't even hear anything. You get up in the morning, and slowly everything goes away, and you are healthier than you were. The same applies here – you think. That now your nose or your tongue is malfunctioning temporarily. That actually your nose and tongue are sending signals, but your brain is not accepting those signals, that this is the clearest case of a disorder in the central nervous system, that this is a blow to the brain, a bang to the head, like a knockout punch, from which you cannot recover without consequences – well, that is absurd.

That is why it is important to send your children to kindergartens and schools as soon as possible, so that they can get sick there and develop immunities. Just like in the army, where bullying, manly pranks, the pretenses of the older generation, terror and oppression – they just harden you, they turn children into real men, who will be able to apply the lessons they learned there to their lives, their families – on those who are weaker: on old women and children.

Carnival masks were always signs of fun, games, festivities. Cosmetic, therapeutic facial masks were very popular, especially with women. Mardi Gras masks were popular only with some – mostly with children. But now for some reason everyone has become disillusioned with masks. They make people angry. People are disgusted with them.

But there is some good news. They say that hospitals are now preparing oxygen masks for those who do not like masks.

Dreamers Don't Want Sleep

You constantly find unwearable clothes in your closet. According to the pundits, you should throw away every jacket you have not worn for several years. A bad mood, a mania for cleanliness, or sudden attacks of the desire to do house cleaning help you to get rid of old clothes. In a flash of enlightenment you come to understand that you will never need those hopeless pants and you will never wear those funny shirts again. But there is one piece of clothing which you have not worn for a long time, but which is very important and which you do not dare throw away: your almost ten-year old jeans. You can always try them on whenever you get the urge to have some chips, some chocolate or some extra beer. The jeans will tell you – you can still do that, or – not anymore.

Unfortunately, there are no clothes, which let you check on the extent of your spiritual obesity. It would be even worse if you could still fit into the book-clothes of Remarque, Hemingway or Jack London, that you wore as an adolescent. Even the novels of Marquez, Miguel de Unamuno, Cortázar, which you read in your youth, sometimes seem to fit a bit too tightly. Clearly, you are stuck in a wardrobe of relatively old-fashioned clothes: you still like Faulkner, Heimito von Doderer, Musil, Louis-Ferdinand Céline. You remind yourself, you must not become lazy, you have to try on new book-clothes constantly. They do not always fit, and you understand perfectly well that the fault may be not

just with the clothes, but with your inflexible, withered, obdurate, hardened and wrinkled spiritual body. In the world of the mind, you tell yourself, one also needs to exercise. You may not be a reading champion, but you have to work out.

You have to look around constantly, not just through the window, but also into your own head. You have to shake up the contents of your consciousness, you have to think not only about the life which boils and bubbles throughout the city, but also about the process which flows imperceptibly through your head, your thoughts, your soul. You have to notice not only all kinds of accumulated trash – foreign ideas, which have forced their way into your head and have settled down there as if they were at home. Drummed-in beliefs, phobias that have taken shape, superstitions of thought which have adhered themselves to you, have become hooked on to you, scorched cultural habits and moldy standards. It is useful and beneficial to clean out and purify your head. It is even more important to check periodically on whether you have not fallen asleep. Whether you are not dreaming as you live. Whether everything is not in fact different from what it “appears” (*atrodo*) to you. Because when they demonstrate it to you (*parodo*), when they repeatedly show it to you (*rodo ir rodo*) – then quite often they prove it (*irodo*). Showing (*rodymas*) is not proof (*irodymas*).

“Wake me up when it’s over.” A phrase often heard in the background of contemporary life. And that idea of life – as a dream, as an anticipation, life as fate, does not lead to anything good. For you know that you have to change, that you have to alter yourself. When you say that the news is old news – you mean that things have not changed. It is a paradox that the news gets old when it does not change – when it keeps talking about a reality which has disappeared. The news has remained what it was in the past – perfect, true – but it is reality that has changed. You still are sure that things were and must be – so (*Taip*), but in life everything is already different (*ki-Taip*).

Whatever does not change – remains and takes up residence in a world which no longer exists. In which those games of dai-

ly life are the most dangerous ones. Where you can pretend every day that everything is flowing forward on its own: that as you wait and dream – life, time, the world are all still going forward. You start to think that you are going forward too – even if you are doing nothing, even if you just close your eyes, stay put or take a nap – you are flowing forward on the river of the life-dream. It may appear to you that it is enough not to worry about anything. To persevere. To conquer, to overcome yourself. To wait. Not to pay attention. That it is important to be resilient. To know how to take care of things yourself. Not to notice. Maybe not even to notice yourself – that you are going down already. That you are becoming ordinary. That you are becoming comfortable. That you are becoming light, but empty and unfeeling.

That you have already hardened yourself against all the exigencies of life in advance.

Maybe you know now “how things really are” and for you much is already “obviously clear”. You now understand who is guilty and who has fooled you. That this is not science (*mokslas*), but a conspiracy (*sąmokslas*). That the enemies of your enemies are your friends. Maybe everything is completely “evident” (*akivaizdu*) for you, until you start thinking that this is just an admission that you have visions (*vaizdu*) in your eye (*akyje*). And what kind of visions have you not had in your eye. Unseen, unfamiliar, unimaginable visions, and visions which have not existed. One wants to write it that way – not *akivaizdu* (evident), but *akyyvaizdu* (visible to the eye). Even though the computer insists on correcting this word.

But if you think about it some more, you can understand that your *akivaizdu* (evident) may be completely different from another person’s vision of the eye (*akies vaizdu*). And for someone it can be completely not evident (*neakivaizdu*). And not everything is obviously clear.

Dreamers don’t decide to sleep.

Don't Open your Mouth – and You Won't Give Yourself Away

People talk too much, and by talking they give themselves away, of course. Not surprisingly folk wisdom advises: if you want to look good, attractive, intelligent and mysterious – keep quiet. Because as soon as you open your mouth – word snakes and incomprehensible compilations of letters start falling out of your mouth. Impossible things will become clear; for example, that it is possible to be a racist in Lithuania. Apparently, even if you have never left Jonava and have never met a representative of a different race or a different orientation in your life – you are perfectly capable of expressing homophobic ideas and telling discriminatory jokes. It would seem that if you just had not opened your mouth, you would not have given yourself away. But no, some people simply have to give themselves away.

It is easy to understand who a person is by what he says about others. One can learn everything about a person by learning whom he condemns, about whom he rejoices, whom he worships, whom he detests and about whom he lies. How fortunate that voting is secret. If we found out who voted for whom, we would be outraged, but then we would be able to understand how it happened that what no one wanted to take place did take place again. An autopsy of the vote will show what disease the political corpse was suffering from.

For politicians it is simpler – based on what they promise, it is easy to understand when and how they will fool all of us. Such is their profession – to pretend to be magicians, fortune-tellers and gods. And what is most important – there are many people who want to be seduced, fooled and deceived.

Even the owners of frolicking, supposedly domestic cats give themselves away. By how they brag on *Facebook* that their pets have dug up all the soil from the flower pots again. That the cat toppled the Christmas tree so nicely. That it howled all night and then ran away and has been wandering around for two days no one knows where. You can conclude from all of this that these owners would like to climb all over the drapes themselves, to

tear up the furniture and to piss on the shoes of visitors. They would like to do so, but they do not dare. That is why they keep cats, who embody all of their unfulfilled dreams.

The owners of dogs, especially service dogs, they themselves dream about serving. About wagging their tails, about fetching a stick, about dutifully complying with all commands, and about faithfully looking into their Master's eyes. They want to dog around. Sometimes, of course, to play some dirty doggy trick.

Those who keep birds would prefer not plow, sow, or reap. Just to warble, to jump joyfully from branch to branch, to fly and be happy, and not to have to go to work at all. But they are forced to stay in some office cranny from the dark of morning to the dark of night.

Those who raise fish, they themselves would like to be slippery, lazy, slow and cold, and somewhat open-mouthed. But unfortunately, they have to be energetic, they have to busy themselves with all sorts of management activities, and they have to speak a complicated body language. Not to mention the owners of turtles, who scurry around in their BMWs or choppers, but dream about living quietly, without being noticed, without being engaged and even being sad, a little.

Photographers also give themselves away. Their passion for photography shows that they themselves would like to see everything and to be seen by everyone. But they don't dare – and so they photograph others. Especially the ones who are portrait masters. Surely you are not going to lower yourself by taking some banal selfie. *Selfis vulgaris*, as you know, is not made for yourself, but for another. That is why it should not be called a selfie, but an anotherie. Photographers – portrait masters – take pictures of others – for themselves. That is the real selfie: to see yourself in others.

To see myself in such a way that my character, the shadow of my sorrow, the joy of my solitude, the aroma of my emptiness, my hopes and my longing for love should be reflected in the face of another person. The ability to see yourself in the eyes of another person. The ability to see and show yourself to others, in others – is not this true happiness.

Writers and poets make up their own worlds and populate them with constructed copies of themselves – with lyric heroes.

In these worlds they verify their ideas about love, happiness, life and solitude. Like some kind of psychotherapists – they check out their hypotheses by persuading their patients that they have problems, and they rejoice when those problems start to take on a life of their own. Then, of course, they solemnly kill them. That is what freedom is – to kill yourself and others – without dirtying your hands too much.

Barbers constantly try to force hairdos on their clients – the hairdos for which they themselves don't have enough hair. And afterwards people even act surprised that those hairdos don't look good on them. Presidents want to shove their countrymen into their countries, but unfortunately, it is the citizens who have to live in those countries. The presidents are angry: "What is it that you don't like about this?"

If you are flying across the Atlantic, from Frankfurt to Los Angeles, let's say, the flight takes about 13 hours. You get bored and so you walk around on the two-story plane, looking around and flexing your legs. You notice how during the flight Muslims or Jews pray periodically. Catholics, unfortunately, reveal themselves as Catholics only when the plane experiences heavy turbulence. Then they remember that they are Christians, and they begin to bless themselves vigorously. Then you see how many true believers there are in the world and on planes. God becomes necessary when He is most needed.

In conclusion – an anecdote. An old one, it has whiskers.

Little Julius did not start talking until he was five years old. His parents were very frightened that he would never talk. But one Friday little Julius was slurping up his soup when he scowled and said: "The soup is too salty." His mother, with tears in her eyes, asked him, "Why, o why, dear Julius, have you not said anything for so long?" The boy answered, "Because everything was good till now."

Of course, you should keep quiet, you should not babble empty words. But one day, if there is too much salt, maybe you really should say something.

Translated by RIMAS ČERNIUS

A Hill, Yet Not a Hill; a Forest, Yet Not a Forest...

ROMUALDAS VAIČEKAUSKAS

Prae scriptum

This year marks the twentieth anniversary since Lithuania's cross-crafting has been included by UNESCO in its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2001. Devout believers say that a Mass should be offered, or a cross of gratitude should be added. After all, it feels good to know that there is a place like the Hill of Crosses in the world, where those who have lost hope can try to regain it; however, perhaps it would be sufficient to add a modest reference, to dust off the old texts, so to speak, and diligently rewrite some paragraphs here and there, not in pursuit of some profit, but for the salvation of the soul and, of course, to add a few notes of one's own. Building a house from borrowed bricks is not a very good idea; you should at least make sure the mortar is your own...

* * *

The phenomenon of cross-crafting in Lithuania is so complex that only someone who does not grasp this could attempt to explain it in a simple manner. How did some of the last heathens of Europe become the nation of crosses in the nineteenth century? Ironically, at least at first, the zealous crafting of distinctive crosses could have been an expression of a silent protest against an imposed faith.

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In 1587, over one and a half century after the baptism, Samogitian bishop Merkelis Giedraitis complained to Jesuit general Claudio Acquaviva that, upon arrival in Samogitia, he did not find anyone in the larger area of the diocese who would go to confession, take the Holy Communion, know the words of prayer, or at least how to make the sign of the cross... "They settle for just one thing: we are not Lutherans, we do not eat meat on Fridays".

While I realize that the zealous pastor exaggerated a bit for his benefit, I still see the people behind these words who may be honest believers, but – either solely due to ignorance or due to

some additional factors as well – pick and choose from the practices of their new faith only that which is the closest to their hearts.

“We follow your God, but we will build crosses only when we need to, only where we want to, and only the kind that we find beautiful.” Even though such words were never uttered, knowing the Samogitians’ character, the idea is quite likely... An incident involving the King Žygimantas Augustas’ surveyor Jakub Laszkowskij could serve to illustrate this. As he philosophized passionately about the advantages of a sole god, an ordinary Samogitian remarked bitinglly that a multitude of deities probably possess more power than a single deity.

I guess that our progenitors were not too fond of the proper Latin cross, like the one on the crusaders’ cloak: after all, you would not put one in an old place of worship; conversely, a pole-shrine (*koplytstulpis* in Lithuanian), especially one with the local patron saint, or a cross adorned with carvings of ancient ornaments, were much more familiar.

It must be assumed that at first the folk-crosses were built further away from people: in forest crossings, where the paths of the living and the dead intersect, in the frequently haunted hills, and in other sacred places. For a long time, I could not understand why there were stories of churches that disappeared into the ground in one place or another; only a complete dupe would believe this. However, it occurred to me once that the oral tradition specifies the degree of the place’s sanctity: a buried church should provide more sanctity than some poor buried serf... Let the scientists argue themselves hoarse about whether the crosses are pagan or Christian, the Lithuanian crosses come from the forest...

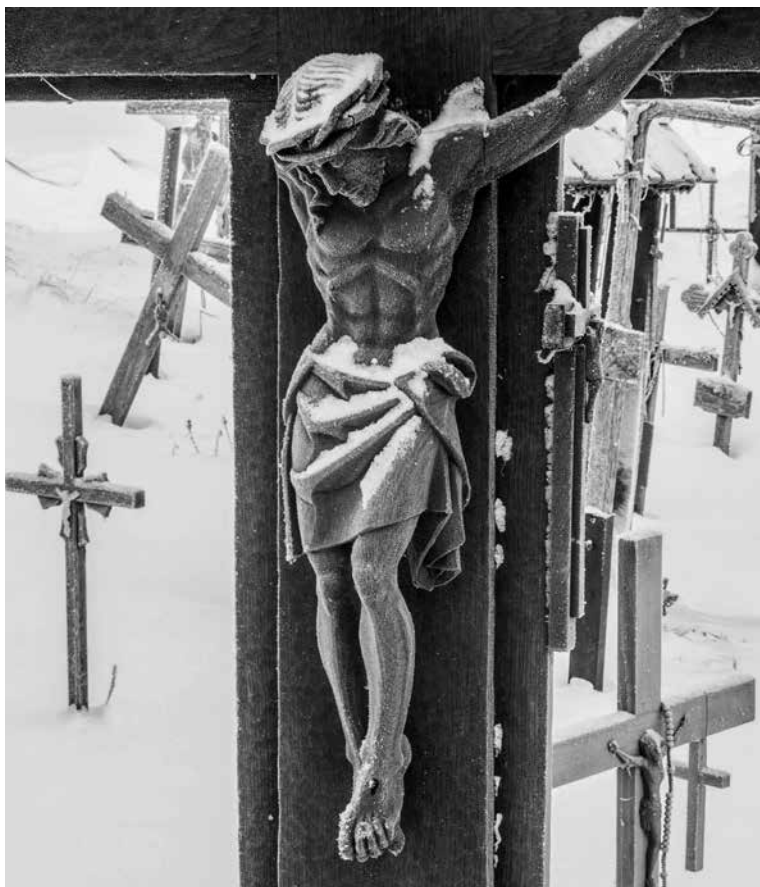
Some clergymen always raised certain doubts about the sacral and artistic value of the folk sculptures; even in 1891, the priest Adomas Dambrauskas-Jakštas presented the following assessment of folk monuments: “Looking from afar, it seems that these are some kind of pagan statues or purposefully invented scarecrows...” It seems that the priest had seen statues that were already built and perhaps even sanctified by another, less scrupulous priest.



In 1939, Balys Buračas mentioned the troubles of the most famous Lithuanian cross-maker Vincas Svirskis – related to, as we would say today, official recognition:

The priest Kušleika sometimes did not sanctify his most beautiful crosses, claiming that they were pagan and marred by the disposable idols [...] the villagers enjoyed his work very much and they all adorned their homesteads with it, ignoring any reprehension ...

The crosses also displeased both the reformists, as signs of heathendom, and the tsarist officials, as markings of a Catholic



territory, because Lithuania was sought to be seen as “a land [which has been] Russian Orthodox for centuries”. In 1845, Russia’s government prohibited crosses from being erected outside of cemeteries, but their numbers nevertheless increased. They emerged alongside homesteads, in cemeteries, near old graves, in roadsides and crossings – all places related to joyful or tragic occurrences. In the late nineteenth century, the abundance of crosses in Lithuania reached an astounding degree.

Professor Ignas Končius, who researched crosses and chapels in 1912–1938, made some calculations:

Many of the larger roads of Samogitia have been visited already. [...] Overall, there are about 1.3 saints per one kilometre of these roads.

Vincas Žilėnas, a scholar of Lithuania's twentieth century culture and history, wrote the following in his diary:

A cross, a little chapel, a small monument at every step. Even now, in 1957, they can be found, in spite of the storm that devastated the land in wars and calamities. Who hasn't pinched them, these little sculptures? There is no museum that hasn't added Samogitian idols to its collections. During wartime, there was no soldiers who did not shoot at these sculptures, and they still can be found, Samogitians are still making them, though not as abundantly as in the past...

I am glad to attest that even today, in 2021, there are still three old crosses (one made in 1889) in my native land, alongside the road, in a stretch of about one kilometre. If needed, in the same stretch, I could specify three locations of old pole-shrines that I witnessed withering away.

* * *

According to current information, the first more detailed description of the Hill of Crosses in written sources was provided in 1850, by the Šiauliai economy treasurer Maurycy Hryszkiewicz:

Even today, people ascribe sanctity to the Jurgaičiai Mound. That hill, while there were never Christian graves in there until 1847, and there were no crosses on it, currently has about 20 crosses. [...] In 1847, one resident of Jurgaičiai who was gravely ill promised God that, if he is still alive after the illness, he would put a cross on that hill. It turned out that he got better while putting the cross there.

That year a large part of the Russian empire was overwhelmed by a cholera epidemic, and it defended from it mostly by prayer. The first operation was performed using ether narcosis, though anaesthesia was still seen as the devil's invention. Therefore, the news of a miraculous recovery after putting a cross in an appro-

priate place must have spread widely among the surrounding residents.

There are other versions of how the Hill of Crosses was created, but they are less likely. A miraculous place tends to become filled with legends, and each era affirms its sanctity in its own way. During the Soviet era, it was said that the destroyed crosses grow back overnight, or that the Hill takes vengeance on its destroyers...

* * *

In 1885, Russian archaeologist Fedor Pokrovskij included the Hill of Crosses in "The Map of Archaeological Monuments of Kaunas Governorate".

In 1888, the Hill of Crosses was described in the article "Apie kalniukus Lietuvoje" (On little hills in Lithuania) published in *Lietuviškas balsas*, a Lithuanian-American newspaper:

Upon arrival, they build crosses, [...] nobody is burying cadavers in the hill, but those crosses are constantly put as a vow, and, in 14 Stations [of the Cross], there are pictures put up next to those crosses. Many people from the surrounding areas and from further away walk on their knees, from one cross to another.

In the early twentieth century, Polish scientist Liudvikas Kšivickis visited the Hill of Crosses multiple times. According to him, in the August of 1900 the mound had 130 crosses, while in July of 1902 it had 155 of them.

Soon after World War I, the hill had just 50 crosses. Archaeologist Petras Tarasienka specifies the following reason: "During the German times, the crosses were destroyed, burned mostly by the local residents, especially the night-herders, who still herd horses on the hill".

Balys Buračas provides an interesting description of a still-effective method for maintaining the Hill of Crosses during the interwar period:

At the Hill of Crosses, beyond Kulpė River, there lives a farmer who is also the guard of that hill. That farmer has lived here for a long time; he never purchases any firewood. Only the old wooden crosses that fall down on the hill are enough for him as fuel; and



if none fall down, then he topples the weaker ones himself and burns them. He puts up new crosses in place of the toppled ones.

According to the bishop Eugenijus Bartulis, the fire burns down only the wood, while the intent put into the cross remains.

* * *

During the Soviet occupation, as directed by the authorities at the time, the Hill of Crosses was ravaged multiple times: the crosses were toppled using bulldozers, they were burned and melted. Officially, these acts of vandalism were called, hypocritically, “the historical-archaeological monument maintenance work”.

The first time, on 5 April 1961, all of the several thousand crosses were destroyed, and the hill was planted with grass and shrubs so that there would remain no trace of the sacred place. However, people were not scared away and did not stop putting up the crosses. There were risks of interrogations, arrests, imprisonment, dismissal from university...

Judging from what I have read, the most expressive image of the time was offered by *The Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church*:

On 14 September 1970, priest Algirdas Mocius from Lauksodis Parish carried a wooden cross, while barefoot, walking with bloody feet for 65 km to Meškuičiai, and put it at the location ravaged by atheists on the day of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

In April of 1973, there were already about 400 crosses on the Hill of Crosses, but they were toppled again. *The Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church* wrote:

On the night of 19 May 1973, at 12 a.m., an unusual procession appeared on the outskirts of Šiauliai City. A crowd of people, consisting of young men and women, carried a cross in a solemn and focused manner [...] On 20 May 1973, at 2.30 a.m., the Hill of Crosses was adorned by a beautiful new cross [...] At 6.45 a.m. [...] angry hands tore out the cross and took it away. However, at noon, another cross was already standing. Atheists kept destroying [them], but the crosses grew from the ground. [...]

The ravaged Hill of Crosses has raised a new idea: If it is impossible to put crosses on the Hill of Crosses, let's start putting them next to our homesteads, in our homes, in our hearts and in the hearts of others.

The crosses continued to be toppled in 1974, while in 1976, in addition to all crosses being destroyed, a portion of the hill itself was dug out. In 1977, *The Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church* wrote:

By divine providence, the famed Lithuanian hill of crosses, which has seen many storms, remained unravaged this year. [...] On

2 May 1977, there were already 360 larger and smaller crosses on the hill.

On 21 December 1977, Juozas Šileikis left Šiauliai City with a cross on his shoulders [and headed] towards the Hill of Crosses [...] he mostly had to wade through the snow on the roadside.

On the night of 15 March 1985, the Hill of Crosses was ravaged: the statues of Jesus' heart and of Mary were damaged, about 50 crosses and pole-shrines were broken, the glass of altars and pictures was broken.

* * *

The Hill of Crosses gained worldwide prominence in 1993, after the visit of Pope John Paul II.

"There is a unique place in Lithuania, the only one of its kind in the world – it is the Hill of Crosses. A forest of crosses. Nobody has managed to eradicate the large and small crosses growing on this hill. They keep growing back again. They are especially abundant today." – Holy Father John Paul II spoke in Rome in 1993.

... There aren't many Lithuanians today who would correctly solve the old riddle: where can you find the most crosses? The most frequent answer is "At the Hill of Crosses"; however, the correct one is "On a ball of thread".

* * *

... I first visited the Hill of Crosses during the times when you still had to look around to make sure no one was watching. Sometimes it rained, and the crosses, like trees in a real forest, provided a shelter; however, the gusts of wind joggled the thousands upon thousands of small crosses, rosaries and holy figurines hanging anywhere on the larger crosses. But, instead of the subconsciously expected sound of leaves rustling, you would hear a strange sound here and there, which was a bit reminiscent of bells ringing; it gave you goosebumps, as if you had already stepped beyond the boundary between here and the hereafter...

If, according to Freud, a dream is fulfilment of desires, then could it not be that, in the place where those wishes come true,



you imperceptibly start dreaming in the middle of the day, without sleeping:

... It seems that I approach a Christmas tree whose branches are drooping to the ground and which is all adorned with little crosses: I try not to look because there's probably entrails of a freshly-sacrificed animal on the trunk...

... There's a gust of wind – suddenly bells ring out erratically on the other side of the slope, as though a crowd of penitent pilgrims had been ambushed by a flock of fierce Saracens; or perhaps it's just a commotion which resulted when someone without a bell joined the fools who had to wear bells during the Middle Ages...

... I close my eyes and the silent crosses turn into a wild crowd of skeletons intent on dancing the Samogitian "Meškutė" dance. You could hoof it with them until morning, or until you turn into a skeleton yourself... A thought occurs to me: wouldn't it be better if, once the immortal soul abandons the body, without any sorrow, the latter would gradually go dry like a tree, while the relatives, asked by a stranger about that strange cross outside, could answer with pride: it's one of our elders, he is still protecting the crop... A person's shadow falls on every cross... A cross is at its most beautiful from afar...

... I became curious about what people desire the most: most captions thanked the Lord for the returned health. Perhaps some people wanted to win an unjust litigation, perhaps some were repenting for hurting their near and dear one, or they wished ill on a neighbour, but, it goes without saying, those desires were not expressed.

... After several visits to the Hill of Crosses, you start noticing that you don't walk wherever you want; you keep circling around the same crosses, as though someone had integrated a scheme for walking around this unique heterotopia inside your head, or as if you were participating in a strange performance which was constantly observed and controlled by its Maker. And, as though these feelings were not enough, unexpectedly, your mind recalls a biting observation from someone's text about *Fool's Cap Map of the World* (1590): "the world is a silly place to live in"...

... Many years after, on a frosty winter morning, the Hill of Crosses looked completely different. I saw a powerful fractal structure, where everything was criss-crossing and crossing over: the details of the crosses, the sculptures, the captions, the flashes of light, and the shadows – scattered experiences of many lives... Perhaps it is the Territory from which humanity has just departed somewhere; however, it seems, that the forest of antennas protruding from the snowed-in fields, the island of hope, is still sending the Good News into space. It appears that a cross is the best conductor of prayer... *Ave crux, spes unica!*

Translated by MARTYNAS GEDVILA

Two Short Stories

ROMUALDAS LANKAUSKAS

Introduction

ROMUALDAS LANKAUSKAS (1932–2020) was a well-known Lithuanian prose writer, playwright and painter who developed the genre of abstract painting during the period when this kind of artistic activity was strongly discouraged by the regime. An author of more than 40 books – notable collections of short-stories (that often featured urban topics and profound ethical issues) and novels, a handful of books for children in his earlier period and later – occasional collections of literary and critical essays, as well as a regular contributor to the public space with timely polemical essays and criticism of official institutions and their policies, Lankauskas was often considered a non-conformist writer who fell out of favor both during Soviet and post-Soviet times albeit for different reasons.

A regular challenger to Lithuania's intellectual life and an outspoken critic of mass culture and fighter for freedom of expression, he left a lasting imprint on Lithuania's culture. Throughout his life he remained a passionate spokesman for a Europeanization of Lithuanian culture and intellectual life, a critic of intellectual provincialism and a spokesman for freedom of expression. It was Romualdas Lankauskas who founded the Lithuanian PEN in 1989 – the first international association ever established in Lithuania that was independent of Moscow's supervision back when the country was still in the firm grip of the Soviet regime.

He wrote short-stories until the very last days of his life. A couple of those that are being published in this issue reflect his literary interests during the latest period of his creative activities.

A. S.

The Calm Twilight

The man walked to the seashore slowly because he was unable to walk faster even when leaning on his old cane, and besides, truthfully speaking, there was nowhere to hurry to, there were no important matters urging him forward as in days gone by, when he was young and healthy and needed no cane for assistance.

But all of that was in the past, a past which remained behind somewhere along with years lived through, along with the many hard years that belonged only to a time that was and, of course, to no other, since each day had inevitably turned into the past, a distant or recent past, at times marked by some important events, but most often just an ordinary day on the way to old age, which approached inevitably.

Strangely, many years ago it seemed that somehow old age would not come, until one day it became an undeniable reality. And that happened seemingly without notice, as if when waking from a dream, another reality opens up with all its problems, with legs racked with pain, with annoying illnesses, whose number constantly increases in a body that is tired and has lost its strength.

Apparently, that was how it had to be. What could he change, and what could he be happy about? Unless it was that of all the days given to him, this day was better and easier than the one before, but how many days could he expect – that was a secret that could not be predicted and which it was futile for him to try to guess. One way or another, his time, like that of any other person, had not yet ended as he walked to the seashore on that quiet September evening.

Simply put, he had to be happy that he was still alive and that every day, after a hard sleepless night, he was still able to experience the dawn, the pale autumn sun, which sheds its light on the awakening world.

When he approached the quiet and empty seashore, which always attracted and delighted him, a familiar scene revealed itself first: the boardwalk extending into the sea from the sandy shore, straight into the sea, and then turning a sharp corner to

the right, where it ends as it leans out against the foaming waves of the sea that splash upon it on a stormy day, and there were many such days in autumn. The smell of the sea was stronger here, and occasionally the boardwalk would shake from the fierce blows of the sea.

However, there never was a time when two or more fishermen would not be standing on the boardwalk with their fishing rods, having placed on the planks of the boardwalk their basket with the few fish they had caught, some small recompense for the extraordinary patience they had displayed as they kept waiting for greater successes.

That evening, when the man came to the seashore, the boardwalk was no different than the day before. Maybe only the sea was stormier than it had been yesterday, and there were fewer people walking about than usual. Perhaps the strong wind had driven away the ones who liked to take a walk, to stare at the sea and at the fishermen's catch.

The man stood a while on the boardwalk, glanced at the restless sea a few times as if hoping to see something special there, then turned around and went back, not having anything else to do, climbed down the wooden stairs that were fastened to the side, and slowly walked down the somewhat empty seashore in order to extend his stroll, since he did not plan to go swimming (undoubtedly, it was already too cold to do so, not like many years ago, when he used to run along the seashore, work up a sweat and then go swimming merrily in sight of surprised on-lookers), since he liked these cold swimming spots, which revitalized your body and soul so well.

Unfortunately, that also was in the past, a distant past, but an unforgettable one. Well, take, for example, that risky time when he bet his friend that he could swim a half kilometer along the shore up to the boardwalk, and he swam tenaciously and without fear, full of bold determination, until at one point he felt his strength sapping as a strong current threatened to overcome him and carry him out to sea, and fear kept flooding his heart more and more, but somehow or other he was still able to get

to shore and stand up and feel the whipped-up sand under his feet. Then there was no longer any danger threatening him, even though fear was still flooding his exhausted body.

It would be clear madness to try something like that now, the equivalent of suicide. But he was not disposed that way, and he did not think about that. That was not why he came here. Definitely not.

As he walked by the water and looked at the spray of the waves on the wet shore, he would constantly walk past people he did not know, adults and children, who had also decided to take a walk by the sea as sunset approached. A thought came to him: how many people must have walked here before – not hundreds, but thousands since the years when he was still young and used to come to the sea often. Yes, taken together they would have made a large crowd, although many of them are no longer alive. They have disappeared and vanished for all time, like spray from waves carried off somewhere by gusts of wind.

Only the seashore has remained the same, changing ever so slightly, as autumn storms and waves slowly altered the appearance of the beach, sometimes reaching dunes overgrown with shrubs and meager windblown coastal grasses and a pallid flower here and there, which had blossomed miraculously on a hot spring day in sand drifts created by the wind.

Some time ago, no doubt, he had basked in the sun on those dunes as well and had glanced at the figures of pretty young girls, sometimes trying to engage them in conversation and flirt with them, seeking new acquaintances that way, but that was a long time ago, several decades ago, and today those girls, if they were even still alive, had to be hardly recognizable old ladies, who were probably sickly and moved slowly just like him. So now he would have passed by them without recognizing a single one.

It was impossible for things not to change as long as the constant metamorphosis of life continued, unavoidable and merciless like someone's stern judgment. Thus he was one of those who had to participate in the process of these fateful changes, a process which was not always clearly noticeable, but was fierce

and merciless. Everything was changing ceaselessly. Even the relief of the seashore as it was pounded by storms, as the band of sand on the beach shrunk relentlessly and pulled itself closer to the dunes.

Suddenly he felt tired, and so he sat down on an empty wooden bench so that he could look at the people as they walked by and at the evening sea adorned with the crests of white waves. His old sickly legs hurt. He needed to rest them for at least a short while.

It was good not to do anything and not to hurry anywhere, as if he did not have any concerns at all – as if those paltry remnants of a daily routine did not exist at all, the ones which maintained your diminishing strengths when life was practically already over, never to return, when it no longer promised any bigger joys or merry adventures and forced you to content yourself only with what was left. But even that kept getting smaller every year.

It was pleasant to sit with legs stretched out on that green-colored bench without having anything important to do and to have memories of bygone days, some clear, some faint, flash before your eyes like old fading photographs, which become more precious each year, but which cannot be repeated and belong to another time, to years that will never return, like sand blown far away by the wind, when only some empty bottles or a broken wooden plank, which the waves have thrown out of the sea, remain in its place. The sea bestows nothing else.

He sat here for a long time facing the waves of the Baltic. A mangled plastic doll with only one good eye lay next to the bench and glanced out at the darkening evening sea, but now the waves were smaller and did not reach the empty shore as quickly.

The man thought that maybe he should throw this useless doll into the open garbage can standing next to the bench, but for some reason he did not do that, as if someone had warned him not to touch it, but to let it watch the sea with its one unblinking eye as twilight slowly crept over the surface illuminated by the rays of the sun, a surface whose colors constantly changed from reddish to grey as twilight rolled in.

Of course there was nothing special there, nor could there be, other than the changing hue of the water, and a thought crossed his mind: isn't it time to walk home slowly along the same sea-shore he had walked when he came here not too long ago, since many footprints, pressed into the sand, were still visible there.

He leaned on his cane and slowly got up, glad that he had succeeded in standing up without any great effort and that now he could slowly go back step by step, not hurrying, to the place from which he had come not too long ago. And the sea, calm and darkening, quietly drove to shore the calm waves which disappeared upon it.

It was already late, and you could only hear the regular murmur of the sea, as the shadows of the night began to envelop it.

2017

Granny Rozaliya Takes a Plane Trip to Visit Her Grandson

Everything needed for the trip had been prepared more or less: a present for her son Jurgis and one for her daughter-in-law Elena, but most importantly a present for the grandson whom she had not yet seen, who was known only from photographs. She ran to the marketplace and bought her grandson something from a man who sold clay pots and pitchers, something which in her mind would bring her grandson the greatest joy.

Oh those colored clay roosters or other clay birds that whistled in an interesting way when you blew into them. The child had to like them a lot, and in all likelihood there was nothing like them in Ireland. For an adult, they may be just trifles, but a child might consider them a very special and interesting treasure. Why not?

And so she had prepared well for that trip to faraway Ireland, even though she did not make it known publicly so as to avoid having her house burglarized by thieves. That is why she asked

her neighbor to check regularly to make sure that some robber had not tried to break in and steal possessions that do not belong to him, because, heaven knows, nowadays there are plenty of instances of such depravities.

Her neighbor promised not to tell anyone that Rozalija was gone and made a solemn promise to keep an eye on her house. Then Rozalija was able to calm down.

Then one day Rozalija took a bus to the big city where the airport was. She waited there a few hours until the loudspeakers announced that her flight was boarding, and in a short while she was on board together with a motley group of travelers. Most of them apparently were planning to look for work and to make their fortunes abroad, just as her son had done when he moved to Ireland.

This was the first time she had ever flown in an airplane, and it was scary for her, as she admitted to the young man sitting next to her, but he calmed her down somewhat, telling her not to worry too much because planes do not crash every day. Plane crashes after all are relatively rare occurrences.

Rozalija was surprised by the passengers who were speaking Lithuanian, but they made up a majority. She was flying to Ireland to visit her son, her daughter-in-law and her dear grandson, but the others were emigrants, seeking a better life in a foreign land. By now the total number of emigrants had reached almost a million. Regional cities, towns and villages had emptied out significantly. Rozalija's village Medinkiemis was so depleted that it seemed as if the people there had fled the horrors of war. Of course, some incurable drunks still remained, who from early morning guzzled strong beer as they hugged their beer bottles and waited impatiently for their pension checks. Others had died off, while the younger and employable ones had already dashed abroad: some to Norway, some to England or Germany, just so they would not have to knock around the village doing odd jobs for meager pay whenever shrewd so-called businessmen would occasionally offer them work. Now all you ever heard about anywhere was business, business, business, as if that were some holy and mandatory pursuit.

People wanted to make a lot of money, so who could blame them for racing off to foreign countries to try to make a good living quickly. Only fools and shameful slackers would not want to do that. And young women, who were clever and sufficiently attractive, kept trying to turn the heads of some admiring foreigners, even Muslims, quickly so that they could spend the rest of their days in style making babies for their husbands. Lithuanians are fleeing their country like rats fleeing a sinking ship, Rozalija would often think, and she, a former teacher, remembered how in her town there started to be a shortage of contented children going to school, and so the school, which at one time had been full of students, had to be closed.

In Dublin Rozalija's son Jurgis was waiting for her. He joyfully hugged his mother, who had just flown in, and took her to his car, and after a good hour's drive through small hills and green meadows, he, like a gracious host, opened the door to his own house for her. Then daughter-in-law Elena greeted the long-awaited guest with joy, as did the grandson, who finally got to see his grandmother and jumped around her cheerfully and full of boundless curiosity.

The guest distributed her presents.

For Jurgis – a small jar of marinated mushrooms (he was wild about them), for Elena – a dish of strawberry jam granny Rozalija had prepared herself, and for the grandson – a few clay roosters and other clay birds, who whistled in an interesting way when you blew into them, and the grandson was amazed and thanked his grandmother for the wonderful gift.

He thanked her in Lithuanian, but Rozalija thought it strange that the boy always spoke English when addressing her. Unfortunately, she did not understand anything.

"What's this, now?", Rozalija asked surprised. "Why doesn't he speak Lithuanian?"

"It's that he no longer knows how," Jurgis explained somewhat embarrassed.

"When he is outside playing with his friends, they speak English, since no one speaks Irish any more," Elena added. "And

newspapers are published in English, books are written in English, even though some people have not forgotten the Irish language. But there aren't many who need it. And on the street and in school everyone calls our little Johnny Jim. They don't even try to call him Johnny. After all, no one speaks Lithuanian here."

"How about that," Rozalija again expressed surprise. "Well, of course, maybe it could not be any other way. The English, it seems, must have put in a lot of effort in this country in the past if their language has spread so much here. But do you feel alright here, are you satisfied with everything?"

"Yes we are, really," said Jurgis. "My service station manager pays me well for my work. I am good at repairing automobiles, and no one complains about my work. It doesn't pay for Elena to work any more, and she even gets unemployment compensation. We have rented this house for several years, and we are living comfortably, you could say. Like nobility. But how are things in Lithuania? And in that town of ours, Medinkiemis?"

"Sad. It's as if Lithuania is gone. We dreamed about independence, about our own country, but what happened? Neither a devil, nor a cuckoo bird, as the saying goes."

"What are you talking about? Lithuania has not gone anywhere."

"But my dear child, it is about to disappear. It's still there in name only. At least that's how it looks to me, but maybe I'm old and I don't understand what is going on in the country."

"We have to visit our neighbor and wish him a happy birthday. We'll be gone about a half hour," Jurgis said after a moment of silence, perhaps wanting to turn the conversation in another direction. "You can stay with your grandson until we return. We won't be there long. Not long at all. I have to visit my neighbor, he's a good client."

"We will be gone about a half hour, not longer," the daughter-in-law reassured Rozalija. "We will leave our dear first-born here, so that you don't get bored. You can get to know each other better."

The daughter-in-law offered Rozalija some Irish cake and tea and left with Jurgis to congratulate the neighbor. She was carrying a pretty bouquet of flowers. Rozalija and her grandson were left alone. However, it wasn't the cake that mattered to the guest as she kept trying to talk to her grandson. Unfortunately, it soon became clear that they would not be able to understand each other. The grandson was already used to speaking English. Most of the time that is how he spoke with his parents, even though he understood some things in Lithuanian.

And there was no one here who could help them. In vain Rozalija asked the boy this and that (what grades do you get in school? do you have many friends?), but little Johnny preferred to blow on the whistle, which he did and laughed with glee because he liked the brightly colored clay rooster he had received as a present, and his enjoyment seemed to have no end. His eyes shined like someone who had found a big treasure.

He kept repeating:

"Granny, I like it."

He really was happy with this interesting present, but the two of them had trouble communicating with each other, and Rozalija regretted that some time ago the only language she had learned quite well was German. Why not English? How much more useful that would have been now!

Rozalija was both very disappointed and sad. She had not imagined that something like this would happen. But now it had. And there was nothing else to be expected, now that the moment of meeting her grandson had been darkened by bitter disappointment and a stifling sadness had suddenly pierced her heart. Was it worth coming here? Should she have spent such a long time preparing for the trip to this beautiful but foreign country to visit her family members when they were no longer the same? These questions beset her and weighed her down more and more, and she felt she had made a big mistake. But she had so wanted to see her grandson for such a long time.

As they were unsuccessfully trying to communicate with each other, the boy's parents finally returned. Jurgis was a little red-

faced from Irish whiskey, and maybe from beer as well. Right away you could tell that the daughter-in-law was in a good mood.

"Well, the two of you probably weren't bored while we were away congratulating our neighbor, were you?" he asked Rozalija, who was sitting by the empty cup of fragrant tea and the untouched cake on the table, but he heard no answer.

Then the jovial son looked into his mother's eyes and was almost rendered speechless: her eyes were wet with tears and fading from old age, from the lonely, grey days that had passed monotonously in the homeland, as she had patiently waited for the trip to a distant green country to visit her own family members established there and to press longingly to her chest the happy grandson, whom she had not seen even once, whom she had seen only in photographs sent to her, but who was so dear to her, and about whom she would often think on sleepless nights, when she pondered the trip she was going to make.

"Do planes fly to Lithuania often?" Rozalija asked suddenly.

"They do, probably," answered her son. "But why are you asking about that, mother? Don't you like being with us?"

"No, don't worry about that. You know that I have always dreamed about visiting you."

And Rozalija tried to smile, but her lips were trembling a little. Or maybe it just seemed like that to Jurgis when he looked at her intently and reflected that she had aged a lot in the time they had not seen each other. That surely is what must have happened.

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Translated by RIMAS ČERNIUS

ABSTRACTS

LORETA MAČIANSKAITĖ

The Challenge of Škëma: A Hunt for the Minotaur

The article deals with the updating of issues in relation to the reception of the biography and creative work of the writer Antanas Škëma, which became particularly important in the recent decade when his works began to be published in the West. The main guidelines for the future research of the writer's genealogy and biography are set, the conflicting traits of his personality coming to light in different memoirist sources are discussed, the correlation between the writer's identifiability choices and the cultural tradition of the time is presented. The significance of the Škëma myth which had established itself in Lithuania in the years of Independence is an important subject of this research. An issue about the demand for alternatives, a lack of independent personalities is raised; it is suggested that Škëma's publicistic texts on the relationship between Lithuanian culture and a global world are read carefully.

STASYS SAMALAVIČIUS

Vilnius Cathedral Square from the Fourteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries. Part One

Vilnius Cathedral Square occupies a large portion of the territory of Vilnius Lower Castle. The author of the article who supervised the historical research of the palace of the Grand Dukes before and after Lithuania's independence, discusses the histor-

ical development of this area from the earliest times until the nineteenth century. The location of buildings in this area and the erection of the Lower Castle are brought into focus. The origins of the Ducal Palace as well as its flourishing and eventual decline are discussed. Historical sources about the buildings that existed in this territory are discussed. The destruction of the Lower Castle by Russian tsarist authorities is scrutinized in the first part of the author's study on Cathedral Square. The architectural character and properties of the Bishops house is also analyzed.

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A view of Ančia lake, Veisiejai

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FRONT COVER: A view of a church in Meteliai

Photo by Almantas Samalavičius