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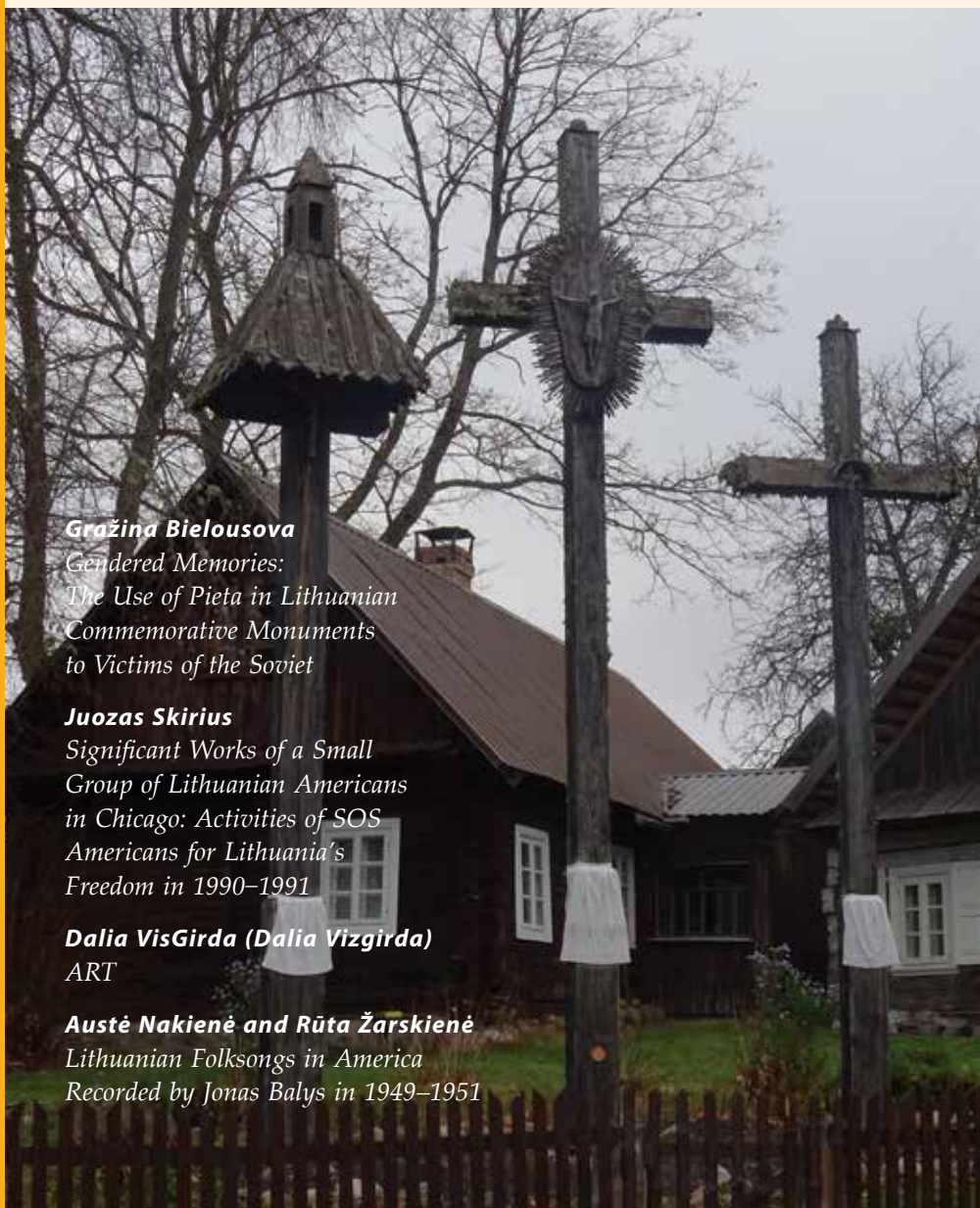

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Panevėžys pieta "To the Reborn Nation," photo credit René & Peter van der Krogt, https://statues.vanderkrogt.net, used with permission. See article on page 5.

Gendered Memories: The Use of Pieta in Lithuanian Commemorative Monuments to Victims of the Soviet Regime

GRAŽINA BIELOUSOVA

Introduction

She sits, a solitary figure absorbed in her voiceless grief, with the wounded body of her son stretched across her lap. His head rests on her shoulder, and her arm cradles his lifeless form. The folds of her robes, ample and flowing, exaggerating the hips and maternal embrace, swamp the figure of the adult man, now as helpless in his mother's arms as he was at his birth. The agony of his dying has been replaced by the stillness of his death, reflected in his almost restful expression and folded limbs. The wounds are visible but subdued, a mere hint at the torture he had endured, his body otherwise perfectly intact. If not for his mother's eyes, almost too large for her face, focused on the puncture on his side, and her right hand held at the heart, signaling her sorrow, the marks of torture might even go unnoticed. The tragedy that is indexed here contrasts with the subdued emotion almost as sharply as glassy bronze contrasts with the sharp edges of black granite out of which the composition is constructed.

This sculpture of pieta, the Virgin Mary holding her son Jesus' body after the crucifixion, has been erected in Vilnius, Lithuania, as a memorial to the last victims of Soviet regime, the fourteen people who lost their lives during the January events

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of 1991.[1] While this monument is perhaps one of the most iconic pietas erected in Lithuanian public places meant to commemorate the victims of Soviet regime, she is by no means singular. Her power resides precisely in the recognizability and popularity of such images that have been perpetuated not only after the restoration of Lithuania's independence in 1990, but also in the centuries that precede Soviet occupation. The pieta is a fixture of Lithuanian collective memory indexing the multilayered national trauma of Soviet oppressions, but also of occupations, wars, and national tragedies preceding the Soviet regime.[2]

The power of pieta symbolism shapes Lithuanian national and religious imaginations, rendering these grieving maternal figures as not just affective and evocative, but also as tools of shaping national memory. When considered from the point of view of gender, such commemorative sculptures raise questions about the ways in which traditional gender roles are reinscribed, the ways in which The Roman Catholic Church's religious hegemony is perpetuated, and the ways that collective memory is gendered.

The purpose of this paper is to consider Lithuanian public monuments that utilize pieta motifs for commemorating victims of Soviet regimes in their manifold complexity. Without negating the ability of public monuments to provide meaningful ways to grieve and remember collectively, I argue that the conflation of sacred and national symbolism in these memorial monuments censors the past and is prescriptive for the present and the future. Through enshrining passive expressions of motherhood and women's grief, pietas become normative expressions of femininity in national discourse. My argument will first review the history of pietas in Lithuania with the goal of understanding how this motif was endowed with the symbolic power it currently holds. Then, I will offer a theoretical framework for understand-

[1] Girininkienė, "Antakalnio kapinės".

[2] For the history of pieta's use in these contexts, see Regina Stankevičienė, "Švč. Marijos Maloningosios siužetas Lietuvos liaudies dailėje;" Skaidrė Urbonienė, "Švč. Mergelė Marija tradicinėje lietuvių liaudies skulptūroje ir papročiuose" and "Šiuolaikinė liaudies skulptūra Lietuvoje: socialinė ir kultūrinė raiška," among others.

Antakalnis cemetery pieta, photo credit: Loraine, Wikimedia Commons, CC-BY-SA-4.0,3.0,2.5,2.0,1.0 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Antokol_pieta_groby_obro%C5%84c%C3%B3w_wie%C5%BCy_telewizyjnej.JPG

ing and analyzing commemorative pieta sculptures as public monuments. Finally, to illustrate and expand my argument, I will analyze three current expressions of the use of the pieta for commemorative purposes: in Panevėžys Holy Trinity Catholic Church's yard, in Domeikava's Via Crucis of National Sufferings and in Birštonas Commemorative Path.

Engendering Memory

For the purposes of this paper, the question of particular importance is the way that the pieta structures social, political, and religious imaginaries in relation to gender through its respective functions as a public monument. If, as Anderson reminds the readers, "monuments are really ways of mediating between par-

ticular types of pasts and futures,"[3] the question of how the past is gendered can be seen as also prescriptive for the future, as well as expressive of a certain vision of the present.[4]

The repeated imagery of Mary, especially when considered as a critical component of the triad of Mary-Mother-Motherland which will be fully analyzed later, becomes a prototype of a submissive, subservient woman, who not only merely embodies this type of femininity but also can become a means "of disciplining [women] to understand pain and self-abnegation as their destinies."[5] This gendered submission to pain and suffering, whether personal or national, is further imbued with religious authority that rises from Roman Catholic Mariology. For example, Pope John Paul II in his encyclical "Redemptoris Mater" explains the significance of Mary's obedience in the following way:

> The Holy Spirit had already come down upon her, and she became his faithful spouse at the Annunciation, welcoming the Word of the true God, offering "the full submission of intellect and will... and freely assenting to the truth revealed by him," indeed abandoning herself totally to God through "the obedience of faith."[6]

Here Mary is modeled as the perfect obedient spouse who avails her body, intellect, will, and her very life to God's procreative purposes, even when this obedience demands suffering. When merged with national functions that Lithuanian pietas perform, Marian representations through the combination of national ideology and Catholic theology also carry the power to prescribe for women the same obedience to a husband's and a nation's authority, the virtue of redemptive childbearing, the availing of a woman's body for national and familial causes, all met with a silent, pious acceptance of such a destiny.

The other way in which pietas in service of national commemorative memory and national identity formation can act as a means of discipline is through censuring and prescribing ways

[3] Anderson, *Language and Power*, 174.
[4] Saul and March, "In Whose Honor," 117.
[5] Orsi, "The Many Names of the Mother of God," 4.
[6] John Paul II, "Redemptoris Mater," Article 26.

for maternal grieving. This consideration becomes critical when put against the outward calm and submission of Mary in pietas. One can easily imagine a shrieking, lamenting mother who is on the edge of insanity at the sight of the disfigured body of her son, who would be compelled to "revise or re-vision [her] own bod[y],"[7] censored in her grief by Mary's admired quiet acquiescence.[8] The socio-cultural and religious cache that these monuments carry also opens up the possibility for these sculptures becoming prescriptive not only in the ways someone grieves, but how one remembers maternal suffering. Those who succumbed to trauma, mental illness, physical disability, or otherwise were incapacitated to perform exemplary motherhood as imaged in pietas. risk being erased or illegitimated, despite the fact that their suffering is equally valid.

Finally, privileging representations of female contributions to the national cause within the confines of the pieta makes it harder for women whose contributions find no correspondence to these monuments to be seen and acknowledged, especially because among religiously coded monuments, pietas outnumber any other feminine representations.[9] When submission in the face of death dominates the visual scene, other types of women's agency, especially of contributors to the resistance movement, national restoration, and community organizing in deportation risk are then perceived as less-than-normative.[10]

[7] Morgan, "The Look of the Sacred," 299.

[8] Here I am drawing on the scholarship of researchers who have studied the effect of sacred art on the viewer in gerneral, as well as of Marian images in particular and observe the power of these images to act in prescriptive ways: see, for example, Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880–1950;* David Morgan, *Images at Work: The Material Culture of Enchantment* and *The Embodied Eye: Religious Visual Culture and the Social Life of Feeling*; Nicholas Perry and Loreto Echeverria, *Under the Heel of Mary,* and to a lesser extent, Brian Porter, "Hetmanka and Mother: Representing the Virgin Mary in Modern Poland," in *Contemporary European History,* 14(2).

[9] Urbonienė, "Tradicinės lietuvių liaudies skulptūros siužetų pasiskirstymas."

[10] Grief and suffering can be seen as a form of agency, too (see, for example, Theodor Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*), and is equally political and historical; my contention here is with privileging this type of agency, confined to traditionally feminine gender roles.

The History of Pieta in Lithuania

Even though Lithuania was a late comer to European Christendom, the presence of both Catholic and Orthodox missionaries and monks before the Lithuanian Grand Duchy's baptism in 1387 is well attested.[11] Since both of these Christian traditions are Mariological, it is reasonable to assume that various images of Virgin Mary would have traveled to the country with them. Thus, when following the official conversion of the Duchy to Catholicism, Marian images created in the Western tradition proliferated; they did not introduce a new visual concept but rather amplified an already existing one.

One of such Mariological artworks that would be introduced to Lithuania was pieta, an image of Virgin Mary holding the body of her crucified son, Jesus. The genre originated in fourteenth century Germany, and was quickly adopted throughout Europe, gaining widespread popularity and devotion among the faithful.[12] The first known records of the pieta genre in Lithuania date to the fifteenth century, but they speak of a more formal sacred sculpture.[13] Such formal sculptures were often informed by Western European sacred art traditions, and while important, they did not become as intimately interwoven with the lives of common people as later versions created by local folk artists.

Folk pietas were traditionally fashioned from softer wood, which allowed for greater intricacy of the figurines; also, they provided an affordable way for people to obtain objects of personal piety. The drawback of wood, looking from the historical perspective, was that it did not preserve well. As such, very few examples of wooden folk sculptures predating nineteenth century have survived.[14] Also, even though the sculptures were

[11] Jovaiša, "Baltai ir krikščionių misionieriai," 139–142.

[12] Urbonienė, "Švč. Mergelė Marija tradicinėje lietuvių liaudies skulptūroje ir papročiuose," 27.

[13] Ibid.

[14] LIMIS, Lithuanian Integrated Museum Information System, which has digitized the majority of holdings in material archives, currently does not contain any earlier examples of Lithuanian wooden pietas.

very much revered, they were also replaced as needed.[15] The deconsecrated ones were usually burned or otherwise appropriately disposed of.[16]

When crafting the actual images of pieta, Lithuanian folk artists for the most part adhered to the conventions of the genre. Such conformity was ensured by the local parish priests who could refuse to consecrate the sculpture if it was theologically or aesthetically too errant.[17] Traditionally, Mary was portrayed seated upright, only with occasional examples of her leaning towards Jesus's body. Her head usually was adorned with the royal crown, which occasionally was replaced by the halo of stars, speaking to her title as the Queen of Heaven. A less common, but not unusual portrayal was just a simple head covering, which rather than emphasizing Mary's queenly status focused on her simplicity and commonality with rural people. Characteristically, her face is somber and expressionless, with the gaze focused on the body of Christ, positioned perpendicularly on her lap. The outward composure is on occasion contrasted by the placement of her heart on her chest, which can be pierced with seven swords, symbolizing the Seven Sorrowful Mysteries. This most dramatic portrayal seems to be the blending of the traditional pieta with the Sorrowful Mother of God motif, where Mary is depicted on her own, but with the pierced heart pointing to her own and her Son's suffering.

The ubiquity of sacred folk sculpture across the countryside of Lithuania and the variety of genres it covered has been well established. Yet, as Skaidrė Urbonienė, a sacral art specialist at the Lithuanian Cultural Heritage Institute, in her survey of Lithuanian folk sculpture has found, at the end of the nineteenth

15 Stankevičienė, "Švč. Marijos Maloningosios siužetas Lietuvos liaudies dailėje," 14–31.

16 Lithuanian National UNESCO Commission, "Kryždirbystė ir kryžių simbolika".

17 Urbonienė, "Švč. Mergelė Marija tradicinėje lietuvių liaudies skulptūroje ir papročiuose," 31.

century the only genre that surpassed pieta in popularity was the crucifix,[18] and only marginally.

While Lithuanian preferential treatment of Mary can be traced back to as early as the fifteenth century,[19] many scholars identify the success of the counterreformation, accompanied by Marian apparitions, as the key factor. Marian apparitions in Šiluva, a contested town where Protestants and Catholics vied for influence, became one of the first places in Europe where Mary is said to have revealed herself during the counterreformation,[20] and ensured Catholic victory there. Similarly, other instances of smaller scale and significance, some preserved in the traditions of popular piety, contributed to Marian devotion and lasting Catholic influence.[21]

The success of the counterreformation in Lithuania was compounded and fortified by Jan II Kazimier Vasa's, the king of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, dedication of the kingdom and its vassal lands to Mary in 1656, after the miraculous victory against the Swedish army at Czestakawa.[22] He declared Mary to be the queen of Poland and Lithuania, and since then, Lithuania has self-identified as the land of Mary. As a result of these developments, Marian piety, and with it, the production of Marian sacred folk sculpture, reached its apogee between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.[23] The demise of the Polish Lithuanian commonwealth and Lithuania's annexation to the Russian Empire seemed to have not dimmed this devotion, and if anything, strengthened it. The nineteenth century, which supplies most of the currently accessible material artefacts of popular Marian de-

18 Ibid., 26.

19 Ibid., 27.

20 Gagliarducci, "Lithuania, the 'map of light' against coronavirus from the shrine of Siluva," line 33 ff.

21 For a comprehensive survey of Marian apparitions and holy places in Lithuania, see *Piligrimo vadovas po stebuklingas Marijos vietas* by Robertas Gedvydas Skrinskas (Judex, 1999).

22 Baronas, "Ar Lietuva – vis dar Marijos žemė?"

23 Perry and Echeveria, *Under the Heel of Mary*, 194–198.

votion, was also a critical time for the formation of the Lithuanian national imagination and a violent resistance to Russian imperial attempts at Russification and repressions against the Catholic church.[24] These repressions further fanned the flames of national revival and the ideas of a Lithuanian nation that Lithuanian intellectuals, studying abroad and breathing the spirit of the national revivals which swept Europe in the nineteenth century, had brought home with them, and which fueled the resistance.

Dovilė Pukertaitė in her study of the maternal images in nineteenth century Lithuanian poetry, has persuasively argued that these historical events have shaped the Lithuanian popular imagination of the maternal.[25] She distinguishes three aspects of motherhood that seemed to be particularly important at the time. The mother figure was the locus of traditions, moral values, and national spirit. Mother as the keeper of the national spirit, and by extension, traditions, in the later part of the nineteenth century came to be figured as the Motherland, and the idealized image of the mother as the guardian of morality was both nurtured by the Catholic tradition and found its expression in the Catholic representations of Mary.

These two maternal images converge in the pieta, where Motherland-as-Mother and Mary-as-Mother of crucified Jesus both mourn the death of their sons, while at the same time drawing salvation from their sacrifice. Pukertaitė sees an explicit connection between Lithuanian affinity for the pieta and the historical experience of Russian imperial repressions.[26] As such, the formation of the triad of Mother-Motherland-Mary can be traced to the emergence of a Lithuanian national identity in the nineteenth century, and in large part due to that, it becomes an indelible part of illustrating the struggle for freedom and commemorating past sacrifices. I will show the imaginative implications of this triadic maternal imagery in the three following case studies, featuring commemorative pietas in Panevėžys, Domeikava, and Birštonas.

[24] Pukertaitė, "Motinos įvaizdis XIX a. Lietuvių poezijoje".
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid., 53.

Case Study I:
The Pieta of Panevėžys' Holy Trinity Catholic Church

One of the more interesting examples of appropriating Lithuanian sacred folk sculpture motifs for public monuments is Juozas Lebednykas' pieta in the church yard of Panevėžys Holy Trinity Catholic Church. The stature was erected in 1990, right after the church building, which the Soviet regime had converted into an art gallery, was given back to the diocese to be used as the house of worship.[27] Commissioned at the height of the Lithuanian national revival and the Catholic Church's liberation from Soviet restrictions, the monument seamlessly intertwines these two themes.

The inscription on the column supporting the sculpture reads, "To the Reborn Nation." This inscription makes it clear that the Virgin Mary's grief over the death of her son indexes both individual mothers' grief for their children lost to the Soviet regime, and also the nation's grief and the grief of the church. This multi-layered indexing, while hinted at in the inscription, draws on the national and Catholic imaginaries which supply context for an overlapping interpretation of sacrifice, loss, and identity.

In Catholic theology, the Virgin is often seen as the symbol of the Church, who is inextricably tied to the redemptive suffering of Christ, her son.[28] Pieta encapsulates this bond, with the Virgin Mother in obedience accepting her Son's death and suffering alongside with him. But as the prefiguration and symbol of the Church,[29] she also grieves the death of her children, especially those who died a martyrs' death. By extension, then, when Pieta is used as a commemorative monument for the victims of Soviet regime, the victims' suffering is equated to that of Christ, and thus, holy not just in the imaginaries of the nation state, but also of Lithuanian Catholicism. Just as Jesus' redemptive death is con-

27 Meldytė, "Panevėžio buvęs pijorų (vėliau marijonų) vienuolynas ir Švč. Trejybės bažnyčia," lines 21–22.

28 Pope Paul VI, "Lumen Gentium", paragraph 63.

29 Ibid.

Panevėžys pieta "To the Reborn Nation," photo credit René & Peter van der Krogt, https://statues.vanderkrogt.net, used with permission

stitutive of Mary's prominence in the Catholic Church, so is the death of Lithuanians at the hands of the Soviet regime cast as redemptive and constitutive of Lithuanian nation state.

What makes the link between Mary, the Church, and the nation state as the Motherland explicit in this particular pieta is the use of folk sculpture motifs. During the national revival of 1988–1991, the return to traditional, folk, and material culture signaled the enduring, indestructible nature of Lithuanian national identity. Alė Počiulpaitė, one of the eminent experts on Lithuanian folk sculpture, notes that just as the intentional destruction of Lithuanian sacred sculpture was the marker of assimilationist policies under the Russian empire in the nineteenth century and later in the Soviet Union, so the preservation and rebuilding of these markers of popular piety were the signs of resistance to that assimilation.[30] As such, she continues, the first five years of Lithuanian independence have been marked by increased interest in and rebuilding of traditional sacred monuments, and thus can explain the appeal of utilizing Lithuanian folk imagery of pieta as a multivalent expression of grief and revival.

Lebednykas' pieta brings both grief for lost lives and the proclamation of independence together visually: the black granite out of which the statue is carved further impresses the mother's mourning, and the inscription explicitly proclaims regained independence. What makes Lebednykas' pieta interesting is that it does not merely replicate some common features of Lithuanian folk Mary such as her crown, a reserved facial expression which avoids a direct gaze with the viewer and focuses on her son, and the minuscule proportion of Jesus in comparison to the looming figure of Mary. Lebednykas' pieta, rather than having seven sorrowful swords piercing Mary's heart as would be traditional, only has four.

The first three sorrows of Mary are related to Jesus' infancy (the prophecy of Simeon, the flight to Egypt, and the loss of the child Jesus in Jerusalem), and the last four – to his crucifixion

[30] Počiulpaitė, "Kryždirbystė amžiams bėgant ir dabar".

(meeting Jesus on the way to Golgotha, his crucifixion, Jesus' body taken down from the cross, and his burial). It would seem that the artist, breaking with the tradition, chose to emphasize only the sorrows associated with Christ's death, thus emphasizing the martyrdom of Jesus, and of Soviet victims. As such, the Virgin Mother's grief here is artistically centered on a particular moment of Jesus' and Mary's lives, which in the sculptor's – and also in the nation's imaginary, most closely parallel the suffering of the nation and its children. As such it makes the suffering of Mary and Lithuania, as well as tragic yet holy and redemptive death of Jesus and that of Lithuanian victims of the Soviet regime one indelible whole, etched in stone and memory.

Case Study II: Domeikava's Via Crucis of National Suffering

If the pieta in the outskirts of Holy Trinity Church imbues and connects the sculpture to national imaginaries via the inscription and the number of sorrowful swords, the one in Domeikava, located in the Via Crucis of National Sufferings by the local Roman Catholic Parish of Lithuanian Martyrs, even more deeply links the national with the religious by bringing the two together visually.[31]

Established in 1990 at the request of the local faithful, the parish of Lithuanian Martyrs is in itself emblematic of Lithuanian independence and recovered religious freedom.[32] The name of the newly-founded parish can be seen as symbolic of the national mood of the time period: national and religious martyrdom often were indistinguishable from each other, especially because the Soviet government persecuted adherents of both causes, and the two causes often intersected in the same bodies. The inaugural sculpture of what would become the famed Via Crucis of

[31] Počiulpaitė, "Dabartnės kryždirbystės tendencijos," 137.
[32] Domekikavos Lietuvos kankinių parapija, "Parapijos istorija".

Domeikava's Via Crucis Pieta "To the Partisans," photo credit Gintaras Staučė, Lietuvos nacionalinė UNESCO komisija, www.kryzdirbysteskelias.lt, used with permission

National Sufferings, composed of a wooden cross and sculptures of the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph, was a memorial to the nation's martyrs, consecrated in 1991. Since then, ten other sculptures have been added, each symbolizing a station of the cross, imbued with additional meaning as a memorial for national losses and traumas (KGB victims, Lithuanians who perished in Chernobyl, mothers of resistance fighters, etc.).

The placement of the sculpture as a part of Via Crucis is significant as well. The Way of the Cross in Catholic liturgy is meant to represent Jesus' walk through Jerusalem, while carrying

his cross to his crucifixion in Gethsemane. Often installed in church buildings or in the vicinity of the church, the fourteen stations commemorating various biblical and extrabiblical moments on that last journey, is meant to mirror the Via Dolorosa experience for local parishes. Walking the stations of the cross encourages the believers to meditate on Christ's suffering, in the footsteps of their Savior.

The case of Domeikava is interesting because here, walking and praying before the stations of the cross is also a meditation upon national suffering, ranging from the times of Vytautas Magnus to contemporary realities. If traditional stations of the cross is primarily a movement in space: walking the path of Jesus, the Via Crucis of National Sufferings introduces a movement through time: reliving histories of shared national trauma. Yet the designation of the traditional Way of the Cross as a memorial for national suffering, especially when the traditional stations of the cross have been replaced with commemorative sculptures for specific events, traumas or losses in the nation's history, conflates the two into indivisible imaginations of the nation and the faith, if not altogether supplanting the original Catholic meaning. These common fusions of the national and the religious are further encouraged and endorsed by the priests and the patriarchs of the Catholic Church in Lithuania. In a liturgy written for Via Crucis in commemoration of the Blessed Archbishop Teofilius Matulionis, who is often seen as a Catholic and national hero in resisting Soviet occupation, Rev. Marius Talutis directs the meditation of believers:

> Christ is the Son of God, and so His suffering is perfect and redeeming for humankind, but through this mystery of the Church we can in a mystical way connect to the person of Christ because here [in the stations of the cross] His and our lives intersect. The suffering of the members of the Church as members of the mystical Body of Christ is united to the redeeming suffering of Jesus, and so we collaborate with Him in the mystery of salvation. Thus Jesus' Way of the Cross is not only His way; many ways of suffering are interconnected in it. So let us con-

> template the way of Christ's suffering together as we look to the odysseys of suffering endured by God's servant, Archbishop Teofilius Matulionis.[33]

What the intertwining of the national and the religious here demonstrates liturgically, the Via Crucis of National Sufferings accomplishes visually and materially. Thus, it is little wonder that a stylized wooden composition of three chapel posts – that mirror traditional wooden folk sculpture compositions of pieta surrounded by the angels – appears in this Way of Cross under the title "In Memory of Resistance Fighters." Created by a celebrated Lithuanian wood worker and sacred sculptor Rimantė Butkuvė, the sculpture features three multi-storied chapel posts, each adorned by figures positioned on the top as well as in the middle layer. Carved in the manner reminiscent of some of the oldest surviving sacred wooden sculptures, the figures mimic a rough, primitive style, with features obscured, as if dulled and erased by the passage of time. Such an appeal to historicity ties the composition with the general theme of the park, as well as places it at the time of the emergence of the Lithuanian nation state in the nineteenth century.

The top layer of the sculpture features the traditional composition of pieta and the angels, centering on an intentionally obscured figure of the Virgin Mary. Her stoic face is surrounded by the asymmetrical rays of her crown, and the only sign of emotion, in keeping with the tradition, is a barely discernable heart on her chest. The figure of Jesus is recognizable only because of its traditionally diminutive figure positioned across Mary's lap. The two bodies carved out of the same piece of wood melt into each other, thus emphasizing their interdependence. The two auxiliary chapel posts on the left and the right, each featuring a wooden angel on their top tier, create an allusion to the crucifixion scene, where the centered cross of Christ is positioned in between the crosses of two criminals. The angels, also expressionless but

[33] Talutis, "Kryžiaus kelio apmąstymai pagal arkivyskupo Teofiliaus Matulionio gyvenimą".

with hands folded in prayer, mirror Mary's stance, and the composition is further tied together by the use of red and blue paint, contrasting the darkened wood of lower tiers.

It is the middle tier of the composition that introduces the real drama and ambiguity, along with possibilities of multiple interpretations. The least ambiguous figure of the middle tier is Saint Veronica, recognizable from the cloth with an imprint of Christ's face in it. This image is often associated with the sixth station of the cross in the Catholic tradition. While extrabiblical, hers is the story of a compassionate woman who eases Jesus' walk to the scene of His execution by wiping His face and is rewarded by an imprint of Christ's face on that cloth. Veronica's action, while often lifted up as an example of charity and compassion to all believers is frequently framed as a paradigm for exemplary femininity. For example, the liturgy for praying the stations of the cross by Cardinal Ratzinger offers the following interpretation of her actions:

> On Jesus' Way of the Cross, though, she at first did nothing more than perform an act of *womanly kindness*: she held out a facecloth to Jesus. She did not let herself be deterred by the brutality of the soldiers or the fear which gripped the disciples. She is the image of that *good woman*, who, amid turmoil and dismay, shows the courage born of goodness and does not allow her heart to be bewildered.[34]

This image of "womanly kindness" is contrasted by a more ambiguous image of the male figure on the right side of the composition. While no clear identifying marks can be seen (at least not in the multiple images considered for this project), one thing remains certain: the man is a warrior. Clad in a stylized cloak, pointing either to ancient soldiers or to his royal status, the figure remains as impassive as its counterparts. The only clearly discernable detail is a sword that crosses the figure's body. Whatever his identity may be, he is the polar opposite of the stereotypical femininity embodied by Veronica. When interpreted in conjunction

[34] Ratzinger, "Sixth Station."

to the dedication of the memorial to the resistance fighters, the figure becomes emblematic of freedom fighters, forest brothers, and other male militants who actively fought against Lithuania's Soviet occupation. The final figure of the composition, most likely representing Saint Casimir, the patron saint of Lithuania, is positioned on the central chapel post, higher than the other two figures in the middle tier. Holding a cross and a barely discernable flower (Saint Casimir is often pictured with a lily as a sign of his Marian devotion), he once again brings together the national as Lithuanian-Polish prince, and the religious as a saint who, despite his royal privilege, dedicated his life to the poor and the suffering. The overall effect of the composition is not only of an inextricable convergence of national and Catholic symbolism, but also of the gendered nature of the narratives that produce these symbols: while men are imaged as rulers and fighters, women are memorialized for their passive suffering, motherhood and service.

Case Study III: Birštonas Memorial Path

If the other two case studies analyze sculptures in the vicinity of local churches, which lends them an explicitly Catholic clout, Birštonas Memorial Path for the victims of the Stalinist regime is not connected to any sacred object.[35] Established as an initiative of folk artists in 1988, at the dawn of Lithuanian Reform Movement, the path features eleven sculptures dedicated to the victims and survivors of Soviet repressions[36] and is recognized as the first memorial of its kind in post-Soviet Lithuania.[37] While the purpose of the memorial path is explicitly national, religious themes motifs are ubiquitous. As Počiulpaitė explains, Pieta and The Sorrowful Christ, the dominant genres in the park, are "per-

35 Even though they were consecrated by a priest in 1991.
36 Murauskaitė, "Atminties takui – 30."
37 Počiulpaitė, "Birštonas. Atminties takas," 7–8.

haps the most precise expression of the silent and dignified pain of our country."[38]

Of particular interest is a three-tiered chapel post by folk artist and sacred wooden sculptor Valdas Rakuckas. The dedication of the carving is inscribed at the bottom tier, and reads: "To the pain of mothers and the cries of babies frozen in the Siberian cold." Referencing Soviet deportations of Lithuanians to Siberia carried out in 1941 and in 1943–1952, the chapel post is a material testament to the fates of 130,000 deportees, 70% of whom were women and children. Lithuanian historian Anušauskas estimates that at least 28,000 of the deportees died due to cold, violence, malnutrition, and poor living conditions.[39] The choice of pieta as the central motif for this memorial, when framed within religious sensibilities, is obvious.

A multi-themed and multi-faceted sculpture features a figure of the man of sorrows on the top tier, and a unique pieta, which is complimented by two additional mother figures to either side. All three mothers are enveloped by hands, perhaps symbolizing divine protection, or paternal love.[40] The placement of the sorrowful Christ on the top tier of the chapel post is not usual but does not break with the general convention of multi-tiered chapel posts, where scenes of crucifixion, crosses, or other scenes from the life of Christ can be depicted. In this case, the brooding sorrow of Christ's disposition reinforces, legitimizes and mirrors that of the mothers underneath it.

In the second lower tier of the chapel post, a three-person composition referencing maternal and Mariological images can be seen. At the center, framed by the enveloping hands, is the Virgin Mary, holding Christ across her lap. Keeping with the tradition, once again, the figure of the crucified Christ is diminutive, but in this instance, his emaciated lifeless body is portrayed in greater detail, with a helpless arm swinging down. An additional devia-

38 Ibid., 7–8.

39 Anušauskas, "Lietuvos gyventojų trėmimai."

40 Strampickaitė, "Medinė mažoji architektūra," 66.

Nemunas Loops Regional Park Memorial Path Pieta "To the Pain of Mothers and the Cries of Babies Frozen in the Siberian Cold," photo credit Laima Bielousova, author's personal archive

tion from traditional pietas is seen in Mary's hand that, while her face remains its usual calm sorrowful mask, her hand caresses the body of her son, signaling deep maternal emotion. The symbolism of hands as a sign of care and love are repeated twice, as Mary's gesture in its meaning reinforces the symbolism of protective hands surrounding her. The need for such repetition is emphasized by the signs of suffering, with the crown of thorns placed on the Sorrowful Christ's head in the upper tier, repeated in the figure of the crucified Christ in pieta, and reemphasized in the lower banner encircling the sculptural composition.

As noted earlier, the sculpture deviates from the tradition in placing two addition maternal figures on either side of Mary. The figure on the left, partially covered by the framing hands, seems to be holding an older child, whose back is facing the viewer. The slumped figure of the child, lack of distinguishing features, and his impassivity suggests that perhaps the child is no longer alive, or is otherwise incapacitated. The mother figure's features and head scarf mirror Mary's but she seems to be unable to extend the same signs of care as the central figure in the composition. The third sculpture on the right side of pieta is another maternal figure, who also mirrors Mary: holding a baby in swaddling in her arms, in the style of Madonna and child images. Covered by the same head scarf, she also displays no emotion. Interpreted on its own, this image could be ambiguous, but in this case it draws on the sorrowful theme of the composition to imbue it with the worrisome grief of a mother, who knows her child will suffer, or has suffered.

While all three images are intentionally mariological, they lack explicit elements signaling their sacrality. Here Mary-Mother figures are adorned neither by halos, nor stars, nor angels; they rather resemble an everyday woman covered by a head scarf: an element commonly found in Lithuanian folk depictions of Mary.[41] Mary here becomes emblematic of the suffering of

[41] Stankevičienė, "Švč. Marijos Maloningosios siužetas Lietuvos liaudies dailėje."

Lithuanian mothers deported to Siberia; her suffering is their suffering. While in line with Roman Catholic theology of redemptive suffering, which unites the suffering believer with Christ (or in this case, Mary), and even completes his redemptive suffering,[42] the sculpture rather than expressing these theological tenants, co-opts the religious and eclipses it into the national. The suffering of Lithuanian deportees here assumes their Catholic identity so much so that they become indistinguishable, and the religious remains indexical of the national. Moreover, the sculpture materially represents the triad of Mary-Mother-Motherland, alluded by Pukertaitė, since Marian figurines, can also be read as Lithuania grieving for the loss of her children in Siberian deportations.

Conclusion

The purpose of this analysis is not to devalue the affective possibilities of pieta in commemorative monuments. Maternal and national grief caused by Soviet repressions in Lithuania could scarcely find a more evocative image in the Lithuanian Catholic imagination. Read charitably, pieta can even be seen as opening up collective memory to include women, in ways that some other more traditional masculine images, such as the ever-popular crucifix, the Sorrowful Christ, or figures of male resistance fighters and political prisoners do not. In a Catholic majority country, such as Lithuania, this religious symbol is also easily understood and reverberates across national memory, conjuring multi-layered grief, giving expression to complex historical traumas, and even offering solace and comfort.

Rather than negate these possibilities, I seek to address and expose the hegemonic underbelly of these public monuments where the sacred and the national are inextricably intertwined. It might well be argued that there are also other, secular, com-

[42] John Paul II, "Salvifici Doloris" Article 24.

memorative monuments, which do not make use of religious symbolism and provide a counterbalance to Catholic symbolism. While that is certainly true, the prominence and the high profile of public monuments where the national co-opts the sacred, with the full consent of the latter, does not even out the score. Besides, as Lisa Lowe points out, it is precisely the "irregular series of regularities that produces objects of knowledge."[43]

The knowledge that is produced here can be said to be two-fold: that the Lithuanian nation state and the Roman Catholic Church are mutually intertwined,[44] and that the proper feminine subject of this sacred national cause is a subordinate woman. The second object of knowledge that gets produced and reproduced through pieta as a material expression of national grief, is the role of women in this sacred national cause. Day and Thompson observe that often "ideas of nation and gender blend into one another until they become indistinguishable, and often unnoticed,"[45] and extend their argument to show how national memory is often masculine. Masculinity here does not necessarily imply that only men are visible, but that public remembrance and national narratives center male perspective as normative. Thus, pietas in Lithuanian commemorative monuments can be seen as expressions of precisely this kind of memory, which even while portraying a woman, make her motherhood and her son's sacrifice as the focal point.

While pietas are not singular material expressions of national and religious loss and suffering, they can be seen as convergence

43 Lowe, *Critical Terrains*, 6.

44 For further discussion on the hegemonic role of Lithuanian Catholic Church in public and political life, see Milda Ališauskienė and Jolanta Kuznecovienė, "Katalikų bažnyčios vaidmuo viešajame Lietuvos gyvenime: dalyvavimo formų kaita (1990–2010)," *Filosofija. Sociologija*, 2, 102–110, 2012; Milda Ališauskienė and Ingo W. Schroeder, *Religious Diversity in Post-Soviet Society: Ethnographies of Catholic Hegemony and New Pluralism in Lithuania*, 2012; Ingo W. Schroeder, "Hegemonic narratives and religious identity politics in contemporary Lithuania," *Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis XIX*, Studia Anthropologica (3), 2009.

45 Day and Thompson, *Theorizing Nationalism*, 123.

points where these two strands intersect in a woman's body. As such, especially in light of their popularity, they merit conversation and consideration about how national memory is gendered, and which stories it brings to the forefront, while silencing or under-privileging others. A much greater diversity of women's roles in resistance, nation building, and political participation exists among printed materials, ranging from memoirs of deportees, underground resistance workers, partisans, organizers, and even soldiers, and to some extent the abundance of such material can be seen as balancing out the lack of visual diversity.[46] Yet in the age where many are privileging the visual, questions of how this balancing can occur more effectively remains.

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[46] Of particular importance here are Dalia Grinkevičiūtė's *Lietuviai prie Laptevų jūros*; Irena Saulutė Valaitytė, *Manėme, kad plaukiame į Ameriką*; Sigutė Smetonaitė, *Pabėgimas iš Taljanų*; Dalia Teišerskytė *Ir aš ten buvau*; Nijolė Sadūnaitė, *KGB akiratyje*; Teklė Paliukonytė Kalvinskienė, *Buvau partizanų ryšininkė*, and many others

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Significant Works of a Small Group of Lithuanian Americans in Chicago: Activities of SOS Americans for Lithuania's Freedom in 1990–1991

JUOZAS SKIRIUS

Introduction

Lithuanian historiography and popular literature in general dedicated to the history of the diaspora has to a greater or smaller extent described different, small or large, Lithuanian American information centers, starting from the First World War period. In 1917–1919, such centers operated in Washington and New York. On June 1, 1944, the Lithuanian American Council in New York opened the Lithuanian American Information Center, in the public domain better known as the Lithuanian American Information Center (LAIC). Its major task was to "inform the US public about the situation of the Lithuanian nation and its fight in an effort to re-establish a free, independent and democratic Lithuania."[1] In 1961, one more Lithuanian Information Center (LIC) was established in New York, which belonged to the Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid organization, which, in its turn, took care of the support of the Lithuanian church. Later, in 1979, this center widened the scope of its activities, starting to disseminate information about the events in Lithuania among the US public. The center was active until 1991/1992. It was led by Gin-

[1] Banionis, *Lietuvos laisvinimas vakaruose 1940–1975*, 46.

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tė Damušytė. In addition, this center had a division in Washington for political work with the US Congress. This LIC division was led by Viktoras Nakas.[2] Hence, such centers, supported by large Lithuanian American organizations, were being established at a hard time for Lithuania, especially when the chance came up for the reinstatement of its statehood and recognition by foreign states – in this case, by the US, as soon as possible. There had been smaller groups, even individuals, too, among clusters of Lithuanian Americans who carried out similar functions of information dissemination to those of the Information Centers of the above-named large organizations. The origination of such groups among the Lithuanian American public is more clearly noticeable after the events of 1990 in Lithuania. This article is oriented specifically towards such groups.

The declaration of the Act on the Re-establishment of the Independent State of Lithuania on March 11, 1990 was a long-awaited event by Lithuanians living abroad, which sparked a great national upsurge among our émigrés. One of the manifestations of that upsurge was the spontaneous rise in the more plentiful clusters of Lithuanian Americans (cities), e. g. Chicago, of small groups of Lithuanians who quickly organized themselves on the basis of friends or acquaintances. They were mainly the next generation of Displaced Persons (DP) who had grown up and were educated in the USA, with an excellent command of English and acquaintances in different social layers. The vast majority of them spoke good Lithuanian.

What encouraged the formation of such groups? The first stimulus was the address to Lithuanians living abroad by Vytautas Landsbergis, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Lithuania, with the appeal "Lithuania Needs Your Help... ."[3] The appeal was publicized in the émigré press. Second, the Lithuanian Americans were made indignant by US President George Bush's evasiveness about speaking up more clearly in favor of Lithuania's indepen-

[2] Skirius, *JAV lietuvių darbai Lietuvai 1918–2018 metais*, 232–234, 321–323.
[3] Šlutienė, Krumplis, 37.

dence. Therefore, the Lithuanian American Community leadership urged the émigrés to send telegrams of protest to the White House.[4] It was this background that motivated the Lithuanian Americans and the origination of such groups. Their origination was the result of the initiative that had risen from the "bottom" of the diaspora (which is quite obvious), as well as the love for Lithuania instilled by parents to their children. Those groups had names, but so far, in historical literature, a general name for such groups is not yet settled. I therefore allow myself, though just in relative terms, to include those groups into the broader term Lithuanian American Information Centers in 1990–1991.

Further in this article, I will confine myself to a review of the activities of one group of Lithuanian Americans in Chicago named as SOS Americans for Lithuania's Freedom (*Amerikiečiai už Lietuvos laisvę*); I will try to highlight its trends of activity and works of significance it has done. It is also an opportunity to understand the activities of other similar groups of Lithuanian Americans, although no scientific knowledge of their activities is so far available to us.

[4] "Siųskime telegramas prezidentui," 1.

The activities of the SOS Americans for Lithuania's Freedom group have been highlighted in much detail in the Lithuanian press of Chicago, especially the *Draugas* daily and fragments of memories published in that press. It is true that one more group of Lithuanian Americans was active at that time in Lemont (not far from Chicago), which had named itself as the Lithuanian Hotline (*Lietuvių karštoji linija*). Its main purpose was to disseminate information about Lithuania and threats arising to it. We already do have some information about it, as a chronicle of its activities under the same title as the organization itself has been issued.[5]

Formation of the Group and its First Steps of Activity

It is known that on March 14, 1990, twenty-six Lithuanians of Chicago organized themselves into a group which, under the auspices of the Lithuanian American Community, used the premises of the Lithuanian American restaurant named "Seklyčia" (in the Lithuanian Marquette Park), where meetings took place almost every Friday evening. Interestingly, as was published in *Draugas*, "people of different age, different views, professions, from all kinds of organizations gather here, and there are even those who do not speak Lithuanian."[6] They became united in the understanding that action was necessary to make US politicians and regular people hear about the Lithuanian people's decision to be an independent state, to do everything to make the US recognize Lithuania's independence as quickly as possible. They even chose a name for their organization, Americans for Lithuania's Freedom, that would show that Lithuania's freedom was a matter of concern not only for Lithuanians but Americans as well. The first thing for the group to do immediately after the declaration of independence on March 11th was to begin collecting the signatures of US citizens at Daley Plaza in Chicago to

[5] Šlutienė, Krumplis, *Lithuanian Hotline*, 176.
[6] Indrė, "Amerikiečiai už Lietuvos laisvę," 6.

confirm that Lithuania was in need of the Americans' moral support. Collection of signatures was repeated at that place on May 11th of that same year to remind the Americans that Lithuania had already persevered for two months.[7] Certainly, the group did not confine itself to just that, and its activities were wider.

So what were this group's other activity trends? Based on available materials, the following can be singled out: 1. Maintaining contact with US senators and congressmen personally and by writing letters. 2. Organizing "coffees", i.e. communication at the table with American politicians, their wives, and just their American neighbors, telling them about the Lithuanians' ambitions, asking them to sign letters to be sent to the US government representatives. 3. Arranging lectures to the Americans on Lithuanian issues. 4. Participating in TV and radio broadcasts. 5. Writing letters to the US English press. 6. Organizing marches, e.g. to mark August 23rd, inviting Latvians and Estonians to join.[8] We could also single out the paraphernalia created by this group. It should be noted that all of this paraphernalia was not just distributed for free, but attempts were made to sell such things, thus raising funds for the group's activities. This was not enough, though. The group was obliged to appeal for donations, but part of the activity expenses had to be covered by the group members themselves.[9]

Publications in the press about the activities of this organization reveal clear distribution of work within the group and the presence of people in charge of specific fields of activity. For example, *Draugas* writes:

> In order to raise the Lithuanian issue among the American public, Jolita Narutienė plans a cycle of lectures. Indrė Tijūnėlienė works as a spokesperson, thus making an impact on the politicians' and correspondents' focus on Lithuania. On the initiative of Danguolė Kviklytė, pressure is exerted over young Lithuanians that were forcefully conscripted to the Soviet army. Lina Žlio-

[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Žliobienė, "Americans for Lithuania's Freedom veikla," 6.

> bienė is leading a campaign against the awarding of Gorbachev with the Nobel Prize. The list of US citizens who are in Lithuania compiled by Dr. Vidas Nemickas is constantly supplemented and presented to the Department of State […]. Encouraged by Birutė Vindašienė, we are contributing to the Baltic March for Freedom to be organized on May 5, 1991 in Grant Park with the aim of raising funds for humanitarian aid in the Baltics.

Further in the publication it is noted that "it is impossible to mention all the contributors who dedicatedly sacrifice their time and strength."[10] From what we read here, the traditional focus in the Lithuanian Americans' activities on the politicians is clear. Members of the group took part in different events, boldly trying to approach influential American participants: these would be handed letters inviting approval of humanitarian aid to Lithuania and were pinned with badges with the group's emblem.

The Group's Poster that Brought Lithuania Fame

The Americans for Lithuania's Freedom group in the USA became famous for its poster depicting a tricolor swallow (of the colors of the Lithuanian flag) flying out from an open cage of barbed wire hung on a hammer and a sickle. At the bottom, there was a short text written in large letters: Don't Close the Door on Democracy in Lithuania! Let President Bush know! The author of the poster was Vincas Lukas. This poster was seen by millions of people. It hung in the most visible places in Chicago and Washington, such as main roads, subways, and streets. Thousands of stickers and badges were made following the example of the poster; its image was printed on T-shirts, sportswear, postal envelopes and coffee mugs that were handed to US politicians (senators, congressmen, governors, etc.) and media representatives.[11] By giving coffee mugs with the image of the tricolor swal-

[10] Ibid.

[11] Skirius, *JAV lietuvių darbai Lietuvai 1918–2018 metais*, 320–321.

low and the words Freedom for Lithuania, the expectation was that "our request stands for a long time before their eyes."[12]

While the main activities of the group were concentrated in Chicago and its surroundings, attempts were made to maintain relations with Lithuanian activists in other cities as well. For example, we find information that "Rūta (I guess, Rūta Šmulkštienė) had gone (at her own expense) to Philadelphia to find out about the activities of other 'grass roots' groups." Whereas Jurgis Augius (also at his own expense) had gone to a Lithuanian American Community's seminar in Washington, D.C. to get training on how to more effectively act and share knowledge, as well as to hand to each congressman a letter urging to help Lithuania, to raise its issue.[13] At meetings with politicians, the group members would straightforwardly say that "Lithuanian US citizens will vote for the party that will not only nicely mention Lithuania, but will also take specific actions for the sake of Lithuania prior to elections." At the same time, it was emphasized that "this is our message to all candidates", i.e. all those laying claim to different US government positions. Moreover, the press noted:

12 Žliobienė, "Americans for Lithuania's Freedom veikla," 6.
13 Indrė, "Energijos netrūksta," 4.

"If there are about 100,000 Lithuanians in Chicago, this can be decisive for local elections." At the same time, the group urged their fellow-countrymen: "Let's write letters to our Governor."[14] There is also a mention of the results of such meetings with politicians. One issue of the *Draugas* newspaper reads that

> the feedback from congressmen and senators, during their visitation, was generally positive, but the majority said they were waiting for President Bush's instructions about the stand on the matters of the Baltic people.[15]

Well, even if that was so, certain results would still be achieved – at least in getting politicians familiar with Lithuania and its issues.

The events of January 13th, 1991 in Lithuania prompted the group to take a more active action. In a separate column that appeared in the *Draugas* daily, entitled "Lithuania Needs Your Help!", we find insistence by the group to the residents of Chicago to call their congressmen in Chicago and Washington. The column indicated their phone numbers and the working hours they might be available on the phone. The daily called on sending telegrams to President Bush asking him to convey to Gorbachev not to use military power in the Baltics.[16]

During an ordinary meeting of the group at "Seklyčia" on March 24, 1991, Jurgis Augius, who had just returned from a Political Weekend of the Activists in Washington that was coordinated by the Lithuanian American Community, was glad to announce that the Americans for Lithuania's Freedom group in Chicago was recognized as one of the most active. According to him, the event had confirmed

> the importance of personal initiative that each of us have to continue, combining it with the activities of major Lithuanian organizations and supporting them, and we have to seek help for Lithuania in different ways.[17]

[14] Ibid.
[15] K.R.V. "Rytinio pakraščio legislatūrinis seminaras," 4.
[16] "Lithuania Needs Your Help!" 6.
[17] Žliobienė, "Kuo rūpinasi Americans for Lithuania's Freedom," 6.

Hence, such groups indeed were serious helpers of the Lithuanian American organizations.

Furthermore, the activities of such groups highlighted the most active persons who had encountered an opportunity to also act in large American Lithuanian organizations. For example, the Americans for Lithuania's Freedom group recommended three of its members to stand as candidates for the Lithuanian American Council: Jurgis Augius, Vytas Narutis, and Vacys Šaulys. The group called on the Lithuanian public to vote for them.[18]

To conclude, the following can be said. While such groups as Americans for Lithuania's Freedom were not abundant, their initiative fascinates with its patriotism. Although the majority of those activists had not even seen Lithuania with their own eyes, they took it to their heart. At this point, the merit of the fathers – the first generation of Displaced Persons (DP) – in bringing up their children as Lithuanians is quite obvious. Their activity comes as a pleasant surprise: when reading the Lithuanian American press from 1990–1991, we can't stop being surprised at the multiple activities of those groups. We are also impressed by their disinterested aid – as they spared not only their time but also donated their own money for the group's activities. This undoubtedly signifies the deep-rooted tradition of the émigrés – to donate and volunteer.

These groups have contributed with their works to the activities of the large and influential Lithuanian American organizations such as the Lithuanian American Community, Lithuanian American Council, Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania, and the Lithuanian Diplomatic Service. It is therefore not incidental to say that sometimes, even small works contribute to significant deeds – by creating history.

The occurrence of such groups in the diaspora at certain periods illustrates that at times when Lithuania, the Lithuanian nation is in danger, there is definitely a hope for both political and material support from abroad to come to its aid. The century-long history of the Lithuanian diaspora is a proof to that. And we must be aware of that!

[18] Žliobienė, "Americans for Lithuania's Freedom veikla," 6.

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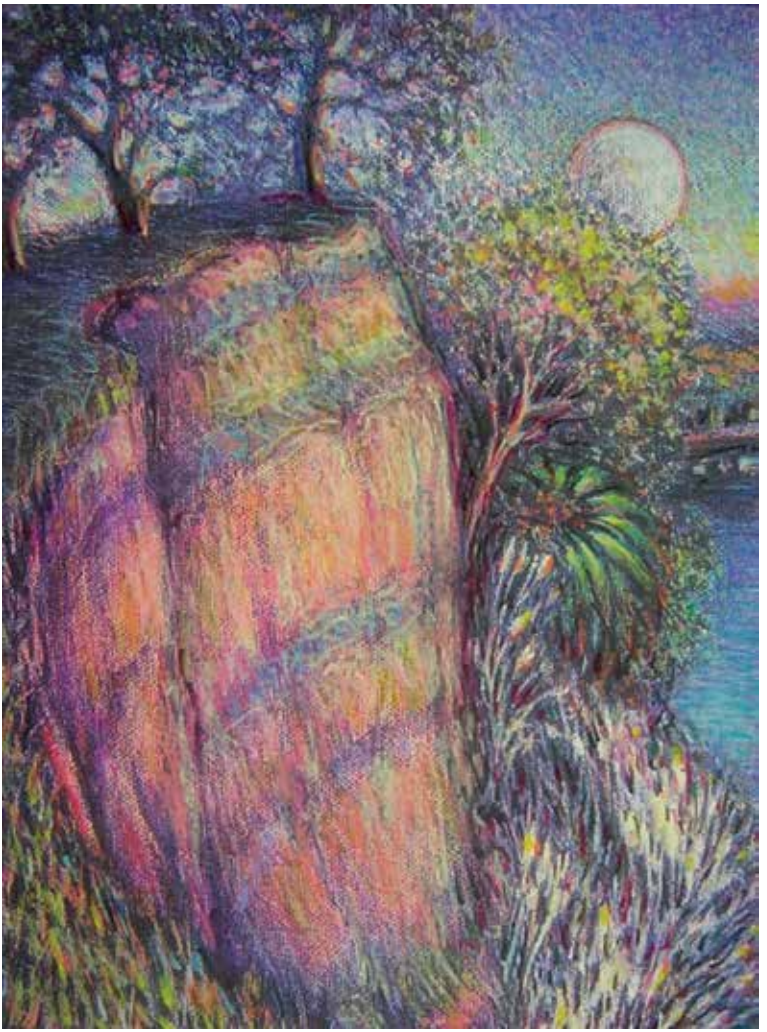
Translated by DALIA ŠATIENĖ
and KERRY SHAWN KEYS

Dalia VisGirda (Dalia Vizgirda)

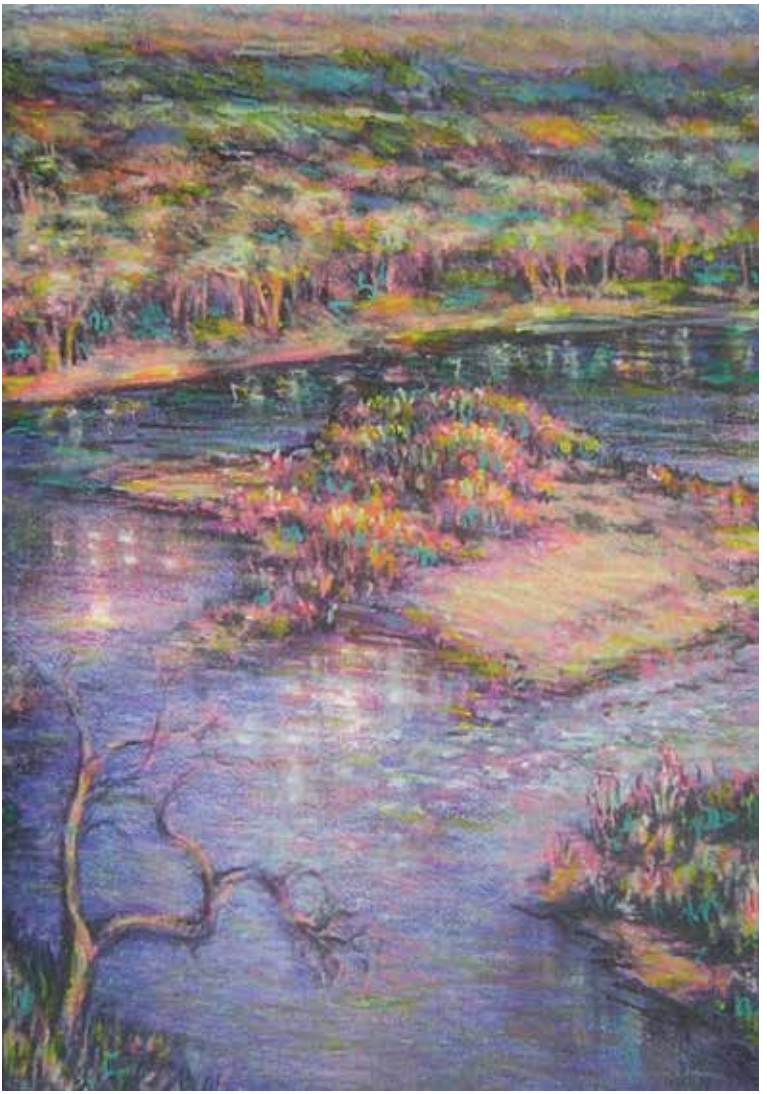
Dalia VisGirda (Dalia Vizgirda) was born in Munich, Germany. At the end of World War II, her parents, Tadas and Maria, escaped the Russian occupation of Lithuania and relocated to Germany as Displaced Persons. They found their way to the United States in 1949. They initially lived in Boston, relocated to Los Angeles, and finally settled in Sacramento, California where Dalia currently resides. She began her formal education as a pre-med student at American River College where she graduated with honors. Her path segued into alternative health practices and she earned a certification in massage therapy. She continued to make art. She later enrolled at California State University where she received a Bachelor of Art in Drawing and Painting. Dalia is a landscape and figurative drawer and painter. From a young age, Dalia enjoyed art classes where she learned to draw. Her attraction to landscape reflects her love of nature and her Lithuanian heritage. She resided for many years in Fair Oaks, CA, a quaint village situated near the American River with a bluff that provides a beautiful panorama of the surrounding area. Dalia was an advocate for the endangered Fair Oaks Bluff and produced prints to aid in their preservation. Of her figurative work, Dalia says, "I'm familiar with the figure." Dalia attributes her familiarity to anatomy studies in the pre-med years that led to work as a massage therapist.

Dalia is from a family of well-known artists. Her uncle, Juozas, was a theater, opera, and philharmonic administrator. Her uncle, Viktoras, was a painter and Director of the Vilnius Academy of Art. Her cousin, Rimantas, was a gilding specialist in the Lithuanian Artist Union. Her father, Tadas, was an architect and publisher of Lithuanian art and culture. Her cousin, Algirdas, is a flautist and Professor at the Vilnius Academy of Music.

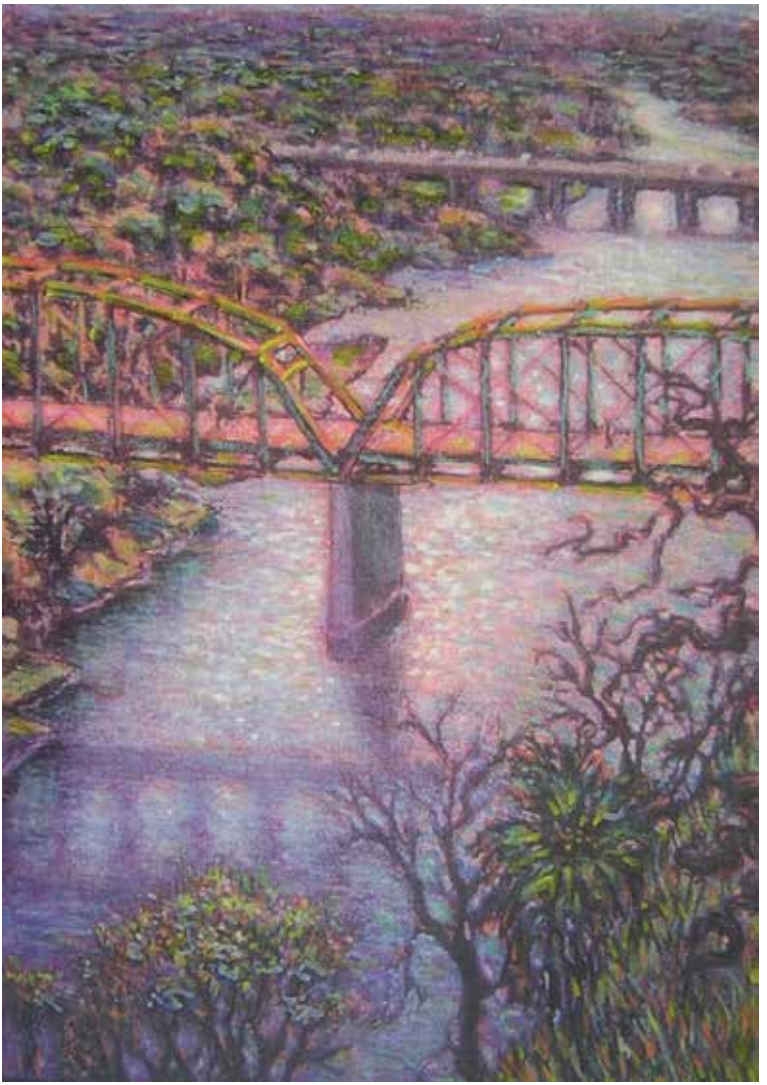


Dalia VISGIRDA. *The Bluff* – Bluff Series
Oil pastel and ink

Dalia VISGIRDA. *North from the Bluff* – Bluff series
Oil pastel and ink



Dalia VISGIRDA. *East from the Bluff* – Bluff Series
Oil pastel and ink

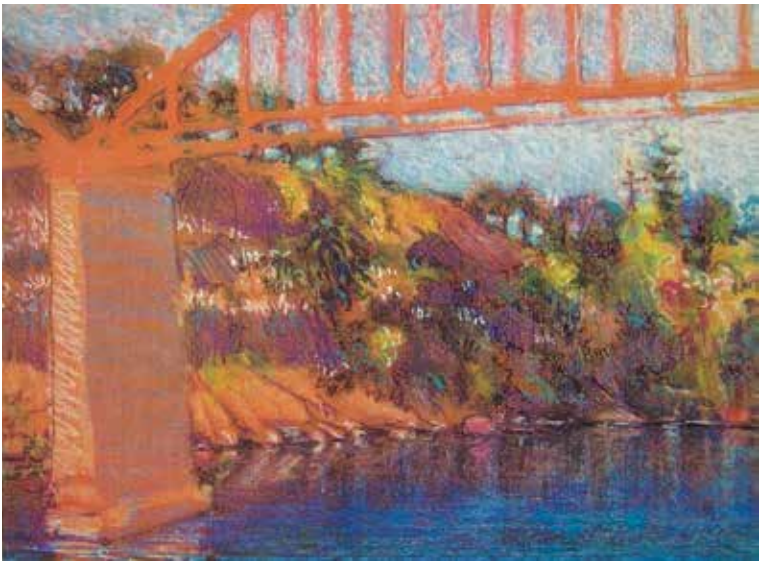


Dalia VISGIRDA. *West from the Bluff* – Bluff Series
Oil pastel and ink

Dalia VISGIRDA. *South from the Bluff* – Bluff Series
Oil pastel and ink

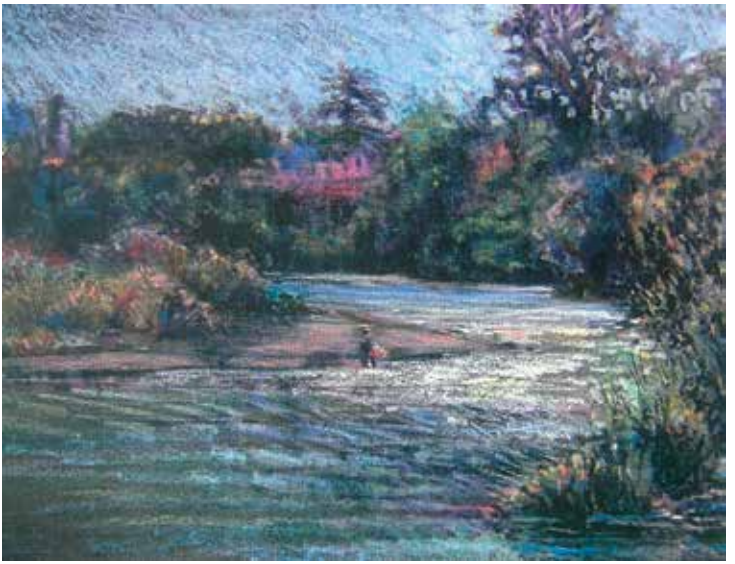
Dalia VISGIRDA. *What's a King without a Queen*
Oil pastel and ink

Dalia VISGIRDA. *Nude*
Oil pastel and ink



Dalia VISGIRDA. *Flaming Bridge.*
Oil pastel and ink

Dalia VISGIRDA. *Folsom Lake*
Oil pastel and ink



Dalia VISGIRDA. *Sailor Bar*
Oil pastel and ink

Dalia VISGIRDA. *Sailor Bar at River Bend*
Oil pastel and ink

Dalia VISGIRDA. *Mt. Shasta*
Oil pastel and ink

Lithuanian Folksongs in America Recorded by Jonas Balys in 1949–1951

AUSTĖ NAKIENĖ and RŪTA ŽARSKIENĖ

In 2019, the Lithuanian Literature and Folklore Institute published a book *Lietuvių dainos Amerikoje, įrašytos Jono Balio / Lithuanian Folksongs in America Recorded by Jonas Balys (1949–1951)*.[1] This publication and the accompanying CD present the folklore of Lithuanian immigrants as recorded by Dr. Jonas Balys in 1949–1951. It includes 40 recordings from the collection made by this noted Lithuanian folklorist and ethnologist. The collection is deposited at the Indiana University Bloomington and in the American Folklife Centre at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

Jonas Balys (1909–2011) spent his childhood in the village of Krasnava, not far from Kupiškis. He started collecting folklore while studying at the Teachers' College in Panevėžys. From 1928 to 1933 Balys studied at the universities of Kaunas, Graz, and Vienna (from the latter he received his PhD degree) and completed an internship in Helsinki. In 1933, he returned to Kaunas,

[1] *Lietuvių dainos Amerikoje, įrašytos Jono Balio / Lithuanian Folksongs in America Recorded by Jonas Balys (1949–1951)*. Sudarė ir parengė / Edited by Austė Nakienė and Rūta Žarskienė. Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2019, 152 p.: illustr., CD. Records restored by Yiorgis Sakellariou. Introduction and content are published both in Lithuanian and English. It contains fourty sound recordings, transcriptions of texts and melodies, comments.

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became a lecturer at Vytautas Magnus University, and in 1935 he started to direct the newly established Lithuanian Folklore Archives. The young, energetic scholar initiated the extensive gathering of folklore manuscripts and sound recordings and started publishing the periodical *Tautosakos darbai* (Folklore Studies). In 1939 the Archives became a part of the Institute of Lithuanian Studies and was moved to Vilnius. During the years of World War II, Balys resided and continued his scholarly work in Vilnius. In 1944, as the Soviet army was approaching Lithuania, Balys and his family left for Germany. He remembers that being a war refugee, he was careful to safeguard a suitcase with copies of archival materials that he planned to use for his studies.

> With bombs dropping from airplanes, I would drag my sleepy children and that suitcase with folklore manuscripts into the bomb shelter. During the awful Nov. 27 bombing, British airplanes destroyed the entire city center of beautiful, old Freiburg. A flammable phosphorus bomb came through the roof and fell into the attic we were renting from a German lady, in exchange for a big slab of smoked bacon we brought from Lithuania. […] And so we were lucky to survive in the basement of that little house and those constantly toted manuscripts were not destroyed by bombs and fire. I consider that to be my biggest success. All those theoretical musings in articles and books, written later, are only secondary in importance. There would not have been any of them had I not brought those selected materials with me. Theories come and go, but authentic materials remain.[2]

During 1944–1945 Balys worked as an assistant at the German Folksongs Archive in Freiburg. In 1946–1947 he taught at the Baltic University in Hamburg. In 1948, together with his family he came to the USA, having been invited by Professor Stith Thompson to work at Indiana University in Bloomington. Lacking original sources and collections left behind in Vilnius, he decided to visit Lithuanian immigrants in America and record folklore they still remembered. These expeditions proved successful:

[2] From a recorded speech given by J. Balys at the award ceremony of the National Jonas Basanavičius Prize on February 15, 1995.

on magnetic tape he recorded about 1200 items, mostly songs, also folktales, instrumental music and other folklore genres.

> Having borrowed from the university a magnetic tape recorder (one of the early ones, made by Brush Developing Company, and quite heavy) and with some financial support, I purchased the necessary tapes and set out during the summer months of 1949 and 1950. I traveled by train and bus because I did not have my own car.[3]
>
> My biggest discovery was the older generation of the earlier wave of Lithuanian immigrants. […] All those older men and women, whom I discovered as representatives of those earlier times, are now gone. They were the last Lithuanian Mohicans who crossed the ocean but never forgot the spirit of their native culture.[4]

He interviewed 118 people, the majority of whom were born in the nineteenth century (the oldest women – in 1866), and who had emigrated at the end of nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. The collection was smaller than the one left in Vilnius, but equally varied, reflecting all regions of Lithuania and different styles of singing. It is important to note that this was the first Lithuanian collection of sound recordings made on the newly invented magnetic tape recorder.[5]

In 1955, a good representation of Lithuanian folklore – recordings of 20 songs – appeared on a vinyl record *Lithuanian Folk Songs in the United States* prepared by Jonas Balys. In the booklet the author wrote that the music of Lithuanian folksongs shows a considerable difference in melodic structure from neighboring peoples, the Slavs and Germans. The oldest and most primitive kind of singing, then almost extinct, was performed in choral rounds (*sutartinės*); however, revival of *sutartinės* was received by the audience without enthusiasm; the taste of people

[3] Balys, *Lietuvių dainos Amerikoj: lyrinės meilės, papročių, darbo, švenčių ir pramogų dainos*, VI.

[4] From a recorded speech given by Jonas Balys at the award ceremony of the National Jonas Basanavičius Prize on February 15, 1995.

[5] This innovation reached Lithuania later. Magnetic tape recorders were first produced around 1955 by the electronic company "Elfa" in Vilnius.

had changed. Lithuanian immigrants preserved the traditional songs of their Old Country surprisingly well. Among the Dzūkai, the people from the southern part of the country, the old songs were sung in one voice. Among the representatives of other regions, the singing in thirds for two voices (in a manner of more recent origin) was also popular. The old-fashioned singing was still practiced at banquets and picnics.[6]

In 1956, Balys started working at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. and at the same time concerned himself with the publication of Lithuanian folksongs.

> From his collections J. Balys prepared a two-volume publication *Lietuvių dainos Amerikoje / Lithuanian Folksongs in America* […]. The first volume with the subtitle – *Pasakojamosios dainos ir baladės / Narrative Songs and Ballads* appeared in 1958 and opened a window into a still living tradition in America. That volume contained 472 song texts, the majority of which he transcribed in 1952–1954. At the end of the book were 222 melodies, transcribed by composer Vladas Jakubėnas. […]. The second volume of *Lietuvių dainos Amerikoje / Lithuanian Folksongs in America* – subtitled *Lyrinės meilės, papročių, darbo, švenčių ir pramogų dainos / Lyric Songs of Love, Customs, Work, Feasts and Entertainments* appeared in 1977. It included 702 texts, most of them recorded by J. Balys, but 257 songs were recorded by another collector, J. Būga. […] These two volumes are considered a great scholarly accomplishment.[7]

These publications as well as the multivolume series *Lietuvių tautosakos lobynas / A Treasury of Lithuanian Folklore* helped Lithuanians living in America not to forget their folklore and provided necessary data for researchers. In Lithuania, however, Balys' name was never mentioned, and his works never cited. The reason was because Balys, with his patriotic sentiments, was an active member of VLIK (*Vyriausiasis Lietuvos išlaisvinimo komitetas / The Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania*) and

[6] *Lithuanian Folk Songs in the United States*, 2.
[7] Sauka, *Lietuvių tautosakos mokslas XX amžiuje*, 234.

tried to make sure that the US government would not recognize the supposedly "voluntary" incorporation of Lithuania into the USSR. His efforts were recognized after 1990, once Lithuania regained its independence. In 1994 he was awarded the National Jonas Basanavičius Prize for his scholarly work in Lithuania and in the USA, and for encouraging the maintenance of Lithuanian ethnic traditions. The laureate designated the prize money to be used for the publication of his works. In 1998–2004, the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore published five volumes of Balys' works, edited by Rita Repšienė. In 1999 Balys was honored with the Presidential award of the 4th Order of the Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas.

In 2009, the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore commemorated Balys' 100th birthday. Interest in his published works as well as archival materials increased. In 2010, in cooperation with the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, the Institute received digitized copies of Balys' sound recordings made in 1949–1951. And in 2013, with the help of Mirga and Ramūnas Girnius who live in Boston, a truckload arrived in Vilnius loaded with Balys' personal items and archival materials. The materials had been deposited in ALKA (*Amerikos lietuvių kultūros archyvas / Archive of Lithuanian Culture in America*) located in Putnam, Connecticut, and included cassette copies of the recordings made in 1949–1951 as well as much information about this folklorist, ethnologist, and politically and culturally active member of the Lithuanian refugee community. In the same year, the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore organized a presentation of "Dr. Jonas Balys' Folklore Room" (as the exposition was called in Putnam's ALKA). At that event, the coordinator of the Archives transfer, Rūta Žarskienė, stated: "even though Jonas Balys never returned to Lithuania after it regained its independence, his works returned, and they always were, are, and will be of great importance to the development of Lithuanian folklore and ethnology studies".[8]

[8] Žarskienė, "Jono Balio archyvas jau Lietuvoje," 315–320.

This publication presents Balys' sound recordings (1949–1951) that are of special interest to folklorists. They are immigrant songs relating the pain of parting from loved ones, the journey's hardships, the first impressions of the strange new land, and reminiscences of the homeland. There are also songs representing other genres: songs of youth, ballads, love songs, family songs, wedding songs, work songs, calendar songs and others that tell of the traditional rural way of life. According to Rima Visackienė who worked with the recordings,

> while listening, one cannot cease to be amazed that, after so many years of living far away from the homeland and being surrounded by the American world, a person could retain in his memory such treasures without much change or damage to them. After all, these recordings were made almost a half a century after the immigrants had left Lithuania. Most likely the songs were a great source of support, comfort and constant renewal of ties with brothers, sisters, and relatives left behind in Lithuania, a breath of fresh air from the homeland.[9]

Individual Lithuanians had travelled to America since the seventeenth century, but massive emigration started in the 1860s and lasted up to World War I. The primary reasons were: the abolishment of serfdom, the reprisals for the failed uprising against the Tsar's government in 1863–1864, the famine of 1867–1868, as well as a desire to avoid the forced recruitment into the Tsar's army. It is estimated that in the nineteenth century 50,000 to 100,000 Lithuanians came to the New World.[10] At that time in America there was a great demand for labor in coal mines, stockyards, factories, sewing mills, and on the railroads. A more exact count of Lithuanian immigrants was made after 1899 when they were registered as Lithuanians, and not as Russians or Poles. From 1899 until 1915, more than 252,000 Lithuanians came to

[9] Visackienė, "Jono Balio Amerikoje įrašytos lietuvių dainos ir instrumentinė muzika," 230–238.

[10] Kučas, *Lithuanians in America*, 22–27; Kondratas, "Lithuanians in America: A Historical Overview," 29, 31.

the USA.[11] Most of the Lithuanian immigrants were peasants without education who left "in search of a better life" in Pennsylvania's coal mines or Chicago's stockyards. (Some Lithuanians emigrated after Lithuania gained its independence in 1918, but they were few in numbers compared to the earlier emigration.) At first, Lithuanian immigrants tried to stay close to Polish immigrants, establishing joint Catholic parishes and fraternities. When more Lithuanian priests and other educated people arrived, they brought with them patriotic ideas that were published in Lithuania's underground newspapers *Aušra* (Dawn) and *Varpas* (The Bell). These ideas fostered ethnic pride among the immigrants and they soon established their own Lithuanian parishes, schools, societies, etc.

One of the first and the largest colony was the town of Shenandoah in Pennsylvania where the first Lithuanian coal miners settled in 1869. According to Antanas Kučas, Shenandoah was the only American town where Lithuanian immigrants played an important role in the town's history, forming about a third of the population and even taking part in its government. "Therefore, it is not surprising that Shenandoah was called the capital of Lithuanians in America."[12] Here Lithuanians built two churches, published newspapers and books, established Lithuanian schools, had a brass band, a choir, clubs and even four cemeteries. A large number of Lithuanians also settled in other mining towns in Pennsylvania. Not speaking English, they socialized and married mostly among their own, grew flowers in their gardens, and tried to create an environment that was dear to the heart. Even the names of the towns were given Lithuanian forms in their pronunciation. In this way Shenandoah became *Šenedorius*, Shamokin – *Šimukai,* Mahanoy City – *Makanojus*.[13] Work in the mines was difficult and dangerous. Many young men and even teenagers died from accidents or disease. Gravestones stand witness to the early deaths where the inscription states that death

11 Kučas. Ibid., 56.

12 Butėnas and Kezys, *Pennsylvanijos angliakasių Lietuva*, 8.

13 Bradūnaitė-Aglinskienė' information.

was a result of an accident in the mines together with the usual request that the passer-by would say a "Hail Mary" and the traditional prayer for the dead – "Eternal Rest".[14] Often the names of the village, parish and district where the deceased was born were engraved on the tombstone – "so that the soul would know where to return!" This explanation was given by an elderly informant to Elena Bradūnaitė-Aglinskienė during her 1972–1973 fieldwork when she visited a number of mining towns, talked to the remaining elderly immigrants and recorded their folklore.[15]

Those first immigrants were sons and daughters of farmers and, having grown up in rural villages, they had a hard time adjusting to their new surroundings. They returned to their homeland in their thoughts, and, of course, through their songs. "Even today I see everything in my imagination and I don't forget anything, because […] I never let go of those images of my dear Lithuania. Lithuania stands like a mirror, like an altar before my eyes".[16] Those words belong to Uršulė Žemaitienė, Balys' most prolific singer, who came from Suvalkija, the southwest region of Lithuania. She knew a few immigrant songs as well. According to Balys,

> there aren't that many immigrant songs; most of them are created by persons who read books and knew how to write. For that reason, those songs are not that interesting for their poetic form, but they provide information on how the immigrants lived and what they felt a hundred years ago. Usually, they deride their new country and complain about many things. It seems everything was better in the homeland. They admit that they left their land of birth for money and in hope for a better life.[17]

For example, song No. 4, sung by Žemaitienė, "Užaugau kaimely, pas savo tėvelį" ("I grew up in the village with my father"), was written by a folk poet, Jonas Mykolas Burkus. This song

[14] Butėnas and Kezys. Ibid., 58, 87.

[15] From a paper read by Elena Bradūnaitė-Aglinskienė "Etnografinis žvilgsnis į pirmąją lietuvių emigrantų bangą JAV."

[16] Balys, *Suvalkiečių liaudies kūryba Amerikoje*, 19.

[17] Ibid., 139.

became very popular in America and in Lithuania, and composer Antanas Vanagaitis used both the words and the melody in his arrangement of the song.[18] The song "Aš, Lietuvos bernužėlis, laiškelį rašysiu" ("I, a Lithuanian lad, will write a letter," No. 8, additional lyrics), was created in America, printed on postcards and widely distributed among the immigrants. Even an illiterate person could sign the postcard and send it back home.[19] Some immigrant songs describe the pain of parting (No. 3), others – nostalgic longing for the homeland (No. 6); but some songs are ironic and self-critical (No. 9) and even give didactic teachings (No. 11). Unfortunately, the poor quality of sound recordings did not allow for the inclusion of some songs with more poetic texts. But those songs were performed and recorded by the folk group *Dijūta* from Vilnius and are included in their CD album, *Dai lakštava lakštuote / So Sang the Nightingale* in the section entitled "Letters from America".[20]

The results of Balys' expeditions, with its numerous recordings of songs and spoken folklore, proved that many of those first immigrants always remained Lithuanians in their hearts, retaining their traditional culture and its regional characteristics.[21] The song texts were enhanced by the native dialects which the singers had retained in varying degrees. Immigrants from Dzūkija (southern part of Lithuania) – the region considered to have the strongest singing traditions – knew many beautiful and rare songs. They are characterized by long texts, often with nine, twelve stanzas. An Advent song "Łėkė łėkė sakałėlis" ("The falcon flew", No. 34) even had 25 stanzas (singer Elena Pigagienė

[18] Petrauskaitė, *Lietuvių muzikinė kultūra Jungtinėse Amerikos Valstijose*, 55.

[19] From a recorded lecture by Jonas Balys on immigrant songs.

[20] Folk Group "Dijūta". *Dai lakštava lakštuote / So Sang the Nightingale*: Double CD album, ed. Rūta Žarskienė, sound engineer Rimantas Motiejūnas, Vilnius: Dijūta, 2017.

[21] Four songs recorded from the immigrants from Klaipėda region were published in the collection *Klaipėdos krašto dainos ir muzika: 1935–2000 metų įrašai / Songs and Music from Klaipėda Region: Recordings Made in 1935–2000*. Ed. Austė Nakienė, Lina Petrošienė, Gaila Kirdienė. Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2017.

remembered the song with two long parallel descriptions as it was sung during the long winter nights). Especially archaic were the rye-cutting song (No. 32) and family song (No. 33) which she performed with her neighbor Levusia Andriušienė. Men from the Dzūkija region also performed their songs very well: Dominykas Petručionis (No. 14, 15) and Jonas Karauskas (No. 27). Singers from the Žemaitija (northwestern region) – Rožė Maziliauskienė (No. 1) and Ona Gurskienė (No. 18) creatively embellished traditional melodies so that when transcribing them it was difficult to place them within the usual rhythm patterns. Women from Suvalkija – the earlier mentioned "Queen of Songs" Žemaitienė (No. 21, 22, 37) and Magdalena Takažauskienė (No. 17, 19) – sang the songs with a quicker tempo, efficiently, not wasting much time. Perhaps because the majority of the older singers were barely literate, their performance was especially appealing because it was as if directly from Lithuania's countryside, not touched by urban culture. Singers from Aukštaitija (northeastern part of Lithuania), Veronika Kasparaitienė and Felicija Kapočienė sang a refrain song with an interesting form "Valungėlė sakė: čiūta" ("The nightingale said: *čiūta*", No.16) which at one time may have been a *sutartinė* (multi-part song). The style of these two younger women differed significantly from the older generation, their performance was affected by the sounds of urban choral singing, orchestral music and commercial records.

Jonas Balys was most interested in singers who sang songs the way they would usually sing them for family members or for casual entertainment of gathered friends. Perhaps those older singers knew something about archaic traditions (e.g., the children's song sung by Stasys Šepikas "Aš turiejau žilą uožį" ("I had a little grey goat", No. 29) is interesting because the singer mimics animal noises and taps the beat). However, in the Lithuanian community there were those who preferred harmonized folksongs, thus continuing the choral tradition from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. This choral tradition is represented on this CD by the song "Kur tas šaltinėlis, kur aš jaunas gėriau?" ("Where is that spring from

which I drank?", No. 7) performed by three professional singers Aleksandras Kutkus, Bronius Budriūnas, and Jonas Valiukas.

In this publication, among the many singers are two musicians representing the tradition of instrumental music. One piece is a polka played on a concertina by Povilas Daškevičius (No. 10) and the other "Tėtės polka" ("Father's polka", No. 24) is played on a violin in a traditional style by Petras Vytautas Sarpalius, a professional musician who directed choirs and orchestras. Sarpalius titled the composition in honor of his father who was a folk fiddler from Vilkaviškis. It's a pity that Balys recorded only a few pieces by musicians; instrumental music was not the focus of his expedition, so the few recordings do not necessarily reflect the actual situation. According to musicologist Danutė Petrauskaitė, Lithuanians venturing on the long journey took instruments with them – a fiddle, a diatonic accordion, *kanklės* (zither-type instrument), a wind or brass instrument – and played them for their own enjoyment after hard work,[22] also at weddings.[23] Especially popular were brass bands (American-Lithuanians called them *benai*) affiliated with various fraternities and found in almost all mining towns (the first was organized in 1885 in Shenandoah) and in larger cities. Lithuanians took great pride in their bands that played a different repertoire from the American ones, and they performed in almost all community social gatherings.[24] The bands were formed

> not just to elevate the Lithuanian nation to a higher level, not just to kindle ethnic pride and to reach for higher goals, but also to show other people that the Lithuanian nation is musical, that her sons love music, and that they are able to stand on an equal footing with other civilized nations.[25]

[22] Petrauskaitė. Ibid., 47, 90, 100–104.

[23] A wedding feast among Lithuanian immigrants was described in Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle* written in 1904.

[24] Žarskienė, "Lietuvių emigrantų JAV pučiamųjų instrument orkestrai ir tautinis judėjimas," 41–59.

[25] An excerpt from the Statute of Cleveland's Lithuanian Band. See: Žilevičius. "Amerikos lietuvių įnašas į lietuvių muziką," 352–362; Petrauskaitė. Ibid., 202–207.

Lithuanians in America, did indeed demonstrate their musical abilities – the twentieth century saw many professional singers, violinists, pianists, composers and directors.

This CD presents only a small part of Balys' recordings and primarily those that were of better quality. It is possible to listen to all of the recordings by visiting the Lithuanian Folklore Archives at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore in Vilnius. The music library of Folklore Archives also safeguards the folklore collected by Juozas Būga from Lithuanian immigrants in America in 1950. In the Archives we also have recordings made by Bradūnaitė-Aglinskienė during her fieldwork in Pennsylvania[26] in 1972–1973. We are going to continue publishing recordings that document the traditional culture of Lithuanian immigrants in 2022 and to publish selected songs from the collection of Bradūnaitė-Aglinskienė.

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[26] Sixteen songs recorded by Elena Bradūnaitė-Aglinskienė 1972–1973 and three songs recorded by J. Balys 1949–1951 performed by the Boston's Ethnographic Ensemble "Sodauto" (led by Gita Merkevičiūtė Kupčinskienė), were published on a CD "Ten, kur anglių kalnai stėri" [Where the Coal Hills Stand] in 2004. Texts and melody transcriptions of 40 songs from the Bradūnaitė-Aglinskienė' collection were prepared by Kostas Aleksynas and Živilė Ramoškaitė and published in *Tautosakos darbai /Folklore Studies*, vol. III(X), 1994, 105–154.

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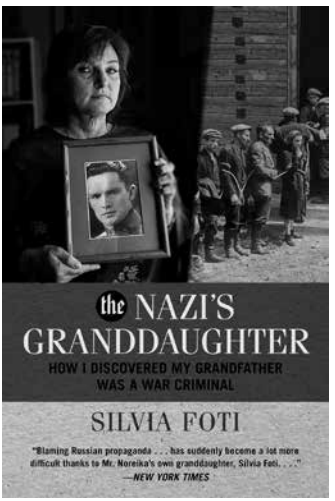


Silvia Foti
The Nazi's Granddaughter – How I Discovered my Grandfather was a War Criminal,
Washington, D.C., 2021, 376 p.

In an interview published in the Lithuanian publication *15min.lt* on November 28, 2021, the author admits that her grandfather was not a Nazi, even though in the title of her book, *The Nazi's Granddaughter*, and prominently on its cover, he is accused and presented as being a Nazi. Thus the book starts off with an admitted falsehood even before one gets to the first page of text.

The author explains that this was a marketing tool to promote the sales of the book. Though she states that the Nazi label will be removed from the second edition of the book, she seems unapologetic for having falsely defamed her own grandfather and misled every purchaser of the book.

The author calls her grandfather a war criminal. By contrast, many Lithuanians consider the grandfather, Jonas Noreika, a war hero who fought to protect his country's freedom.

Some of the news media have cited this book as support for the proposition that Lithuanians have not owned up to Lithua-

nia's role in the Holocaust. The media commentators, however, instead of critically examining the book's contents, mostly appear to be distracted by the fact that it is a granddaughter accusing her own grandfather and don't get far beyond that.

This is an unusual book on which to rely for facts about disputed historical events which occurred 80 years ago during the worst upheavals of World War II. This book, by the author's own declaration, is not an objective review of historical facts, but is instead a subjective emotional catharsis of the author's own beliefs and resentments related to her grandfather and to her own upbringing.

Jonas Noreika, also known as "General Storm", fought as a partisan and otherwise opposed both aggressors and occupiers of Lithuania – the Germans and the Soviets. He was twice imprisoned by the Germans, the second time he spent two years in the Stutthof concentration camp. Only the war's ending freed him. But he was then again imprisoned, and this time executed, by the Soviet KGB. These facts are not disputed.

During the German occupation, like other locals who were left to handle the day to day administration of the country, Noreika was initially allowed to remain in his post as Chief of the Šiauliai District. His duties required him to accept and transmit – generally "rubber stamp" – German orders. Among his other tasks, he signed orders to send Jews to ghettos. That is not disputed either.

And that is where the controversy lies – what did Noreika do in his position under the Germans, and why did he do it? Was he a willing accomplice in support of the German policy to eliminate Jews? Or was he, as others, passing on German orders so that he could survive and continue to use his position to help some of the local population?

To answer those questions is beyond the scope of this review. The purpose of this review is only to examine what the book itself does or does not accomplish.

The author wrote this book to fulfill a promise to her mother made at her mother's death bed. Her mother honored and worshiped her father Noreika, and wanted his legacy as a freedom fighter to not be forgotten. She had been collecting materials

about his life with the intent to write his biography. But she fell ill and asked her daughter to write that biography. The daughter has instead written a different book.

In preparing to write this book, the author, acknowledging her modest abilities, enrolled in creative writing courses. Even then, she felt she was not capable of producing a coherent book about her grandfather. She ultimately abandoned her plan to produce "*an objective biography*", and instead decided to write a book about her own "*emotional journey*" as she grappled with her grandfather's history amid her own problems. Efraim Zuroff, who endorses this book and to whom the author gives "*special thanks*", refers to this book simply as "*a tale of personal redemption*".

Thus, the book is an autobiographical presentation of the author's personal emotions, resentments and beliefs, as she searches for her grandfather's life story. As far as grandfather Noreika himself, the book mostly repeats previously published information intermixed with many of the author's own *subjective* – that's her own word – opinions and speculations.

The author was born in 1961, in an area of Chicago known as "Little Lithuania". Her mother was the daughter of Jonas Noreika. Both of the author's parents were active in Chicago's Lithuanian community. She grew up speaking Lithuanian at home, was a member of several Lithuanian groups, attended Lithuanian Saturday school and summer camp. But she did not do that of her own free will. She did it because her parents demanded it – "*I agreed to all their demands*".

The author writes that she grew up in an isolated *"nationalistic bubble*". She now refers to Lithuania as "*the comatose country*". She emphasizes that her mother and grandmother both expressed strong disappointment and disapproval when she decided to marry a non-Lithuanian. She does not hide her resentment of her upbringing, of her family and of Lithuania.

She also reveals some family losses which affected her. As she was preparing the book, both her mother and grandmother, to whom she appears to have been close notwithstanding their disapproval of her marriage, died within a few months of each other. In 2015 her daughter died from a heroin overdose at age 21.

But, as she encounters the story of her grandfather's life, whom she has never met, she expresses deeper emotions: *"my hands trembled", "I had the sensation of falling through a trapdoor", "my head started throbbing", "I stumbled out of my office and poured a glass of wine to steady myself", "I felt a bewildering torrent of emotions", "I began to vibrate with anger",* etc.

Throughout the book are scattered references to everyday events which bring out strong emotional reactions in the author – her despair after a lost ATM card, her lingering pain after a drunken musician's insult at her wedding, her disapproval that a former concentration camp inmate calls his captors Germans instead of calling them Nazis, and other such incidents.

The author's research seems to mostly consist of reviewing materials that her mother had gathered and discussions in Lithuania with the few who were still alive of her grandfather's fellow partisans and relatives. She dismisses some of them, embraces others, and forms opinions which she expresses in her book. In many cases it is not clear what objective criteria, if any, she uses to accept one interpretation and discard another.

Among her opinions and suppositions – "*could have*", "*it certainly seemed", "more than likely", "almost certainly*" – her accusation against Lithuanian prisoners in the Stutthof concentration camp especially stands out.

During the German occupation, Lithuania refused to form a Lithuanian SS unit and Lithuanians refused to join the German army. In reprisal, the Germans rounded up 46 prominent Lithuanians, Noreika among them, and incarcerated them in the Stutthof concentration camp. This group of Lithuanians were allowed to write letters to their families and to receive packages. Other prisoners were not.

From this the author concludes that her grandfather was a "*Nazi collaborator who enjoyed privileged status in a concentration camp*" and by such privilege he was being "*rewarded for killing Jews.*" Without citing any supporting facts, she goes so far as to state that it was the head of the SS, Heinrich Himmler himself, who bestowed these privileges on her grandfather.

But, all 46 prisoners, not just Noreika, received the same privileges. Thus, if one accepts the author's conclusion, then Heinrich Himmler rewarded all 46 "for killing Jews", the reward being imprisonment in a concentration camp for two years in which at least 10 of them were killed or died of starvation. There are no facts to support a claim that any of these 46 prisoners were being rewarded for killing Jews, or that Heinrich Himmler was personally involved.

The author also makes other unexpected statements: *"The men who shot Jews . . . were not the only perpetrators with blood on their hands. Even bystanders who did nothing to prevent or to stop the atrocities were complicit in these crimes."* As if a civilian bystander had any chance of opposing the German killing machine. To interfere meant being killed yourself. The author shows surprising ignorance of the nature of Nazi Germany.

Eventually, her narrative changes from her grandfather and other individuals to "*Lithuania's role*" and Lithuania's "*actions during the Holocaust*", imputing the acts of specific individuals to all of Lithuania, including to all those Lithuanians who, according to the author, simply by being bystanders had "*blood on their hands*" and thus were somehow complicit and guilty.

The Israeli historian, Dina Porat, of course, came to a different conclusion which the author ignores. Historian Porat concluded that 99.5% of Lithuania's population was innocent of any direct or indirect involvement in the German organized killing of Jews. According to Porat, the number of Lithuanians who participated directly or indirectly in the killing of Jews was at most 15,000, or one half of one percent – 0.5% – of the population. The number of Lithuanians who, at the risk of their own lives, sheltered and protected Jews from the Germans is of the same general order of magnitude, if not larger.

Foti's book is the latest in a list of publications – mostly internet posts and newspaper articles, but some books as well – which assert that Lithuania is somehow more culpable than other countries for the Jews that were killed during the Holocaust. These publications are generally authored or sponsored by the same activists, some of whose names are listed in Foti's book with her gratitude for their assistance and support in producing her book.

This book brings to mind Irena Veisaitė, a prominent member of the Lithuanian Jewish community, a Holocaust survivor, scholar and human rights activist, when she said that there are some people *"who never want to acknowledge positive changes in the perception of the Holocaust in Lithuania . . . and keep repeating the same criticism over and over*."

To properly evaluate Jonas Noreika one should reflect on some difficult questions. The railroad worker who kept the trains running, is he guilty because some of the trains were carrying human cargo to Auschwitz? Is a person to be defined solely by a selected event in his life to the exclusion of others?

Disagreements regarding Noreika's role, and that of other Lithuanians in the Holocaust, have been debated for 30 years or so. For many Lithuanians Noreika will remain a hero who not only fought for his small country's freedom, but gave his life doing so. For many Jews he will remain a war criminal.

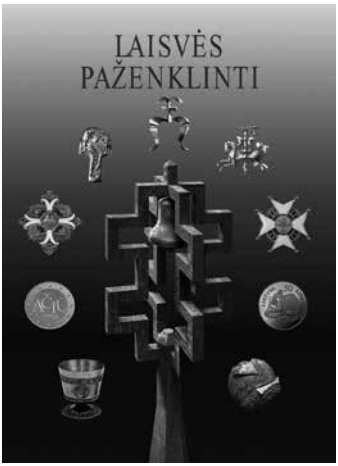
Because Lithuanians and Jews each view the issue from their own separate experiences, these conflicting views may never be reconciled. Perhaps only time can eliminate some of the sharp edges from these debates.

Judged as a literary or biographical work, Foti's book is highly flawed.

From a historical research perspective, the book presents no significant new facts, with the possible exception of perhaps shedding some additional light on whether Noreika could have been present in Plungė when that city's Jews were rounded up. What facts the author does present are often so intertwined with speculations about Noreika's life and with narratives of the author's personal problems and resentments, that it is easier to find those facts in other and more credible sources.

A book about Noreika might have contributed to our knowledge of that terrible and tragic time. This is not such a book. But then, it was never intended to be. The author has instead written a personal chronicle of her own "emotional journey".

DONATAS JANUTA



Rimantas Dichavičius
Laisvės paženklinti. Dailininkai atkurtai Lietuvos valstybei. [Marked by Freedom. Artists for the Restored State of Lithuania]. Vilnius, Lithuania: Versmė. Three volumes:
Vol. I 2012,
ISBN 978-609-408-243-6, 400 p.;
Vol. II 2013,
ISBN 978-609-408-385-3, 399 p.;
Vol. III 2016,
ISBN 078-609-408-839-1, 440 p.
In Lithuanian.

Renowned photographer and artist Rimantas Dichavičius (born in 1937) dedicated over a decade of his life to documenting the visual culture of Lithuania following the reinstatement of sovereignty in 1990. In his own words, "Freedom is not just a cheer 'I am free!' Freedom is something that not only should be heard but also must be visualized." The three monumental volumes by Dichavičius are unique in that they represent a comprehensive visual archive of the exploding artistic production after restoration of independence.

Utilizing his new found freedom, Dichavičius traveled extensively throughout Lithuania in order to personally interview the 214 artists and photograph their works for this magisterial collection. He designed the three large-format volumes (10 by 13 ½ inches), which contain more than 5,000 high-quality color illustrations. Each volume weighs in at almost ten pounds and contains fulsome examples of all the visual arts – painting, graphic design, fresco, stained glass, mosaic, interior design, sculpture, scenography… The creative output of the artists is staggering in its breadth. In addition, archival photographs and historical details are scattered throughout the folios.

Dichavičius opens Volume I with signs and symbols of a sovereign state; for example, images of the flag, state emblem of

Vytis, and historical artifacts such as the cover of the first Lithuanian dictionary, representing the tenacity of the language. A full page follows containing the 2009 monument dedicated to Vincas Kudirka (1858–1899) by Arūnas Sakalauskas and displays the lyrics of the national anthem (authored by Kudirka) etched into glass with laser technology. (Vol. I, p. 3) Photographs of non-violent demonstrations are followed by Dichavičius's philosophical essay on the value of visual signs which he insists are more powerful than military weapons. A newly sovereign society requires everyday objects of symbolic significance: currency, uniforms, medals, insignias, flags, postage stamps, heraldry, sports equipment… This follows a long-standing tradition of well-educated intellectuals like Tadas Daugirdas, Jonas Basanavičius, Antanas Žmuidzinavičius and Kazys Šimonis designing the Lithuanian flag in 1917 as well as postage stamps in 1919.

The jeweler Rūta Panavaitė-Ničajienė created an amber and silver sculpture, dominated by a howling wolf, visualizing the dream of Grand Duke Gediminas (1275–1341) during which he envisioned the founding of Vilnius. (Vol. I, p. 215) Complementing the small-scale objects, the viewer encounters images of large-scale sculptures in public spaces to honor freedom fighters, historical figures, and major events such as the Baltic Way, which took place on August 23, 1989.

Ten pages are dedicated to the large scale oil paintings by Giedrius Kazimierėnas depicting decisive moments of Lithuanian medieval history; for example, the crowning of Mindaugas, 1253; Žalgiris Battle (Battle of Grunwald), July 15, 1410; or the funeral of Barbora Radvilaitė (1520–1551). Kazimierėnas describes one such decisive moment – the turning point in the liberation movement – in a detailed essay interwoven among the photographs of his paintings.

The thrust of Volume II is the venerability of Lithuanian history. Emilija Gaspariūnaitė-Taločkienė writes, "When Lithuanian independence was restored it was as if creativity gained wings… My artistic motifs… come from the deep past and are rejuvenated, reborn in our era, together with me." (Vol. II, p. 160) The

themes of large scale sculpture on land and water range from medieval history to modern heroes such as the book smugglers and partisans. Referring to his paintings of Siberian exiles and prisoners, Paulius Juška writes about his empathy for the experiences of those from the past and their relationship to contemporary times. He questions the very purpose of life on earth. (Vol. II, p. 184) Volume II opens the viewer's eyes to mind-stretching cycles in different mediums chronicling the historical culture of ancestors and artistic perceptions of the spiritual world.

Volume III displays the brilliantly designed stained glass by Ignas Meidus for the Cathedral Basilica of St. Stanislaus and St. Ladislaus of Vilnius and other institutions. (Vol. III, p. 8–15) This volume highlights a plenitude of architectural glass commissions by stained glass masters throughout the country.

This third volume introduces the custom of erecting wooden crosses in cemeteries and memorial sites during the annual "Misija Sibiras" excursions to remote exile sites in Siberia and former Asian republics of the Soviet Union. The volume also contains a display of an underground journal *Taiga*, five volumes of which were published in Veselovka (Irkutsk region) by Vytenis Rimkus (1930–2020) and Juozas Balčiūnas while they were serving 25-year sentences in Siberia. (Vol. III, p. 214–215.) The volume closes with the voluminous publications of Vytautas Landsbergis (born in 1932), the head of the state of Lithuania from 1990–1992.

Dichavičius demonstrates his experience in graphic design by every detail of the volumes achieving pages that are works of art in themselves. The underlying concept for the layout of the folio pages is orthogonal. The entries begin on the left, on the verso side of the open book. Each professionally trained artist is introduced with a portrait and a short biography. This information appears in a column 3½" wide at the left occupying a third of the vertical space. The remaining space of the pages is dynamically divided so that the power of the art triumphs over the geometry of the layouts. The production of the trilogy is flawless.

Photographs are meticulously aligned at right angles, often spaced apart by one quarter of an inch or interwoven with short

texts by literary figures as well as the artists themselves. The margins of the short texts are justified to either the left or right depending on the relationship between text and image. Some essays are deeply patriotic while others interpret historical events. All the texts are full with scholastic acuity and erudition. They ultimately reveal the perception of the world through art and universal signs of identity, that is, through culture. Antanas Olbutas describes the design of his medallions as artifacts which contain memory and spiritual light, thereby revealing the depths of history. Olbutas continues the tradition of an art form known as "miniature monumentality" which began with the first medallion forged in Vilnius in 1525. (Vol. III, p. 186)

The balance of elements on each page is carefully worked out, and the white or blank spaces treated as an integral part of the design. Some works are set without framing and float on a white background. Stained glass or bronze sculptures are set against a black background which enhances the vibrancy of the colors. The two pages featuring mosaics by Saulius Čižikas (1999–2003) for the rebuilt Cathedral of the Visitation in Vilkaviškis are an example of impeccable balance. (Vol. I, p. 316–317) The late nineteenth century Romanesque cathedral was damaged during World War II, dismantled under Soviet rule, and rebuilt 1991–1998 following the original drawings. The mosaic above the central portal of the cathedral contains the red-robed figure of Blessing Christ set against the deep blue of smalt, a classical technique used by the artist. The photograph of the semi-circular portal sculpture is a double spread with two thirds of the image on the recto page and the remaining third curving over to the verso side. The double spread is balanced with three smaller vertical photographs of the chapel mosaics, two on the verso, and one chapel mosaic on the recto. The chapel mosaics depict the Eucharist, and the one with the Sacrificial Lamb falls below the Blessing Christ. Half of the remaining open space under the portal mosaic contains text. These two pages are an excellent example of a geometric spatial division and lyrical organic forms – the counterpoint of right angles against arcs.

Dichavičius chose images which interact with each other; for example the sculpture by the performance artist Robertas Antinis. (Vol. III, p. 154–155) The verso page contains two photographs of the 2002 memorial to Romas Kalanta (1953–1972) which is installed on the lawn of the Kaunas Music Theater. A vertical photograph is stacked above a smaller horizontal one, both utilizing one-point perspective with a strong vanishing point albeit in two different directions. In the lower image, the red cast iron sculpture resembles an urban landscape on fire. The red jagged forms begin above the name ROMAS KALANTA etched in stone and rise in height from right to left. Embers of red are then scattered on the grass between the planted trees, and the image recedes beyond the shady trees. The photograph above is taken from a different vantage point, from an angle parallel to Laisvės alėja, the main avenue in Kaunas. Here the inscription ROMAS KALANTA 1972, read backwards, recedes to a vanishing point barely beyond the beginning of the flaming city. This is how a viewer walking down Laisvės alėja would encounter the site where the student immolated himself in protest to the regime.

The recto page contains photographs of two tall bronze sculptures in Kaunas, "Kryžius-Medis" [Cross-Tree], 1991, and "Vaikų Tora" [Torah for the Children] 1994. The surface of "Kryžius-Medis," 5 meters in height, resembles the gnarled bark of a tree trunk. This detail may relate to the ancient worship of oak trees and the belief that the souls of the departed reside in trees. The lower surface of "Vaikų Tora", 7.5 meters in height, is incised with images of a house and stick figures of humans. As the figures rise they disappear into straight lines. Both sculptures are perforated with abstract shapes to be read against the sky. At the very top of "Vaikų Tora" two upside down hands with elongated fingers reach towards the figures and the earth. Pages 154 and 155 offer the viewer multiple ways to experience space: patterns of fire on the ground vs. sharply defined patterns against the sky evoking infinity. These sculptures stand as witnesses honoring martyrs, in the Greek sense, as someone who has suffered and witnessed suffering.

The layout of two pages of work by Vaidotas Žukas offers both lyrical originality and symbolic complexity. (Vol. I, p. 238–239) The verso page contains four photographs of the fired clay relief sculptures exhibited in 2004 on the nave walls of the Gothic Bernardine Church in Old Town Vilnius. The current medieval brick building replaced the original wooden church in the fifteenth century. The church was closed during the Soviet occupation and turned over to the Art Institute. The church and its gardens have been under renovation since 1994.

A vertical photograph of two of the 79 sculptures exhibited is cropped so that the sculptures are seen against a segment of a wall between two columns on plinths. The vibrant deep red and blue glaze of the sculptures stands in stark contrast to the vanishing, presumably originally frescoed, wall. The author states that the variously shaped ceramics seem to flow into the deteriorating architectural fragments. The cultural leader Irena Veisaitė (1928–2020) writes,

> I was moved by the ceramics of V. Žukas. It is not clear why it was so sad, because those beautiful, meaningful, sincere fragments by the artist represent the condition of today's world – it sometimes seems as if our planet itself is shattered into such fragments. It seems, if one were to collect the fragments from the rubbish one could recreate the beauty and values of the world, and belief in the possibility of harmony. (Vol. I, p. 238)

The recto page contains a 1988 painting by Žukas created in a village by the Baltic Sea. The sand dunes and a strip of sea under the sky are visible through the horizontal strip of windows. The interior with a bed is decorated with two Easter palms representing those placed at the grave of Christ during Holy Week in Žemaitija (Lowlands of Lithuania). These traditional palms, cut from metal in the Plungė region, are among the oldest examples of the Tree of Life image in world culture. The red bedspread symbolizes the suffering of humanity and resembles the cloth used to cover the altar during times when Catholic Mass is not celebrated. The white lacy liturgical vestment

stretched out on top refers to faith and devotion. The painter himself describes this scene as evoking a mood of fragility and mysterious radiance. Thus, the work of Žukas as presented here reaches into the very depths of the earth's clay and extends to the heights of spiritual experience.

Although the artists are listed alphabetically in the table of contents, their works are presented in a carefully orchestrated sequence which makes viewing the pages exciting. A reader grows in anticipation. Dichavičius states that the creative people who contributed to these volumes do not consider themselves as what we usually think of as heroes. Their gestures are generated by inner calling, since they recognize that visual culture expresses fundamental human values.

Dichavičius's sensitivity and deep humanity derive from his own experience as a witness and bearer of tragedy. It should be known that Dichavičius at the age of seven was deported into Siberian exile together with his parents and grandfather. His mother died en route, and his father and grandfather shortly afterward. He lived in an orphanage until the age of twelve when rescued by relatives and brought to Lithuania. In fact, Dichavičius sold some of his family land in order to fund these volumes. He received major funding and encouragement from the Gražutė Sirutis Foundation. This project was further supported by the City of Vilnius, Versmė, Omnitel, Lietpak, Spaudos Radijo ir Televizijos Rėmimo Fondas, and jeroenboschhuis.nl.

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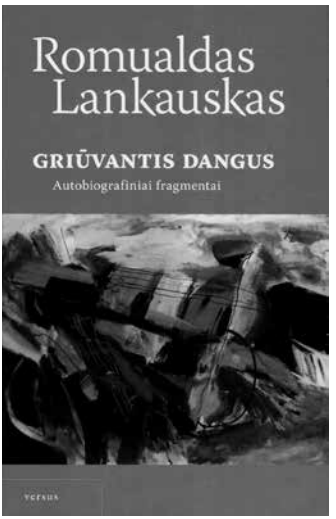
Memories of a Turbulent Century



Romualdas Lankauskas
Griūvantis dangus: autobiografiniai fragmentai.
Vilnius: Versus, 2021. p. 240.
ISBN 978-9955-829-42-3

Romualdas Lankauskas (1932–2020) was an extremely prolific prose writer, playwright and abstract painter of the Soviet and post-Soviet era with more than forty books to his credit. The writer shaped his own peculiar narrative and elaborated a restrained, even somewhat ascetic literary style with a strong emphasis on moral values. In his novels and short stories, Lankauskas questioned the ambivalence and double standards that were becoming wide-spread in Lithuanian society during that period. A keen, thoughtful and perceptive observer, he kept an eye on the shifting ways of life, dissolution of traditional values, and the birth of a new Soviet Lithuanian man and a new society that inevitably came into being with the help of ideological social engineering. Regular brain-washing contributed to a gradual decline of national and civic dignity, and the moral immunity of the occupied which eventually colonized the Lithuanian population.

Balancing between the limits set to free speech and expression, Lankauskas nevertheless found his own ways to deal with

Aesopic language and maintain a detached and often subtly ironic attitude to the social and cultural life of the Soviet period. Starting as a writer for children in the sixties, he published his first collection of short stories *Klajojantis smėlis* (Wandering Sand) in 1960 followed by new books of this genre as well novels, novellas and plays. In addition, he wrote occasional collection of essays and a travelogue (after coming back from Japan). Last but not least, Lankauskas became an equally prolific painter – one of the few early abstractionists in the Soviet Lithuanian visual arts. Having in mind the ideological climate of the day, it is not at all surprising that his early art exhibitions were banned by the authorities. Becoming more and more critical of the Communist system and disillusioned with the activities of the official organization of the Soviet Lithuanian writers (the Writers' Union), he founded the Lithuanian PEN – a chapter of PEN International before the fall of the Soviet power and became its first president in 1989.

The first volume of his memoirs *Griūvantis Dangus* (The Falling Sky), modestly sub-titled "autobiographical fragments" – most likely to be succeeded by another one – documents his early days and the making of a would-be writer during the period when independent Lithuania was dismantled by its more powerful neighbor, and a new social and political entity – the Soviet society – was cast. He sheds some light on his family – his father was a highly qualified expert in the dairy industry who came from the line of landlords who had lost their possessions for unknown reasons. Lankauskas' father was offered a job in Klaipėda after the uprising of 1923 during which Lithuania regained its historical seaport. Because of his father's professional duties, the family moved to Klaipėda where they lived until the city was taken over by Nazi Germany in 1939. After the German troops moved into Klaipėda and the transferring of power was completed, the official attitude of the Germans towards Lithuanians who worked there (and co-existed peacefully with the local Germans) according to Lankauskas was no other than "*raus*" (Get out). The author of "autobiographical fragments", however,

notes that his father was most probably conscious of these events somewhat ahead of time, as he managed to make what was seen then as the wise decision to buy a large (yet uncared for) farm in Liepgiriai village on the picturesque bank of River Minija in the vicinity of Šateikiai (the area belonged in Lithuania's territory after the country lost Klaipėda to Nazi Germany). And it was there that the author of memoirs acknowledges he spent probably the most happy years of his life.

Throughout the book, Lankauskas turns back to various moments of his early life, providing detailed observations of his environment and reacts to what he as a child happened to remember. These accounts of the changing context seen through the eyes of a child are regularly accompanied by the comments and insights of a much more mature person who is trying to make sense of the changing landscape and historical events as well as contemplate what course of life would he have followed under different historical circumstances. The author uses his memory as well as later knowledge to compare differences of urban life in Klaipėda and those Lithuanian cities that were ruled by tzarist Russia after the partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Because of the long-term cultural influences of Germany, the city of Klaipėda

> was absolutely different from Kaunas, Šiauliai or Panevėžys. Here one's eyes captured the signs of higher civilization and culture. While the dusty streets of Kaunas – a former city of the Russian empire's province in 1918 when independence was reestablished – had wooden pavements on which *konkės* full of people drawn by horses moved noisily (these were the means of urban transportation of that period), in Klaipėda the inhabitants had gas, electricity, the telegraph, swimming pools, and even taxi services long before World War I, and comfortable trams drove in city streets with stone pavements that were attended carefully. (p. 15).

Yet after his family left Klaipėda to embrace rural life in Liepgiriai, the writer acknowledges he found paradise in the beautiful nature surrounding his father's farm. While recording his vivid memories of his Leipgiriai period, Lankauskas provides

glimpses into the daily life of the era, discussing what food was consumed in his family farm, the environment of the primary school he attended, what families lived in the neighborhood, etc.

While looking back to the years when he was a schoolboy dreaming of becoming a writer, and eventually a student of Vilnius University – he chose to leave before completing his studies – and as junior editor at *Jaunimo gretos* monthly, Lankauskas provides valuable accounts of Lithuanian life under Soviet colonization.

A large part of the memoirs deals with the large scale social transformations that happened after Lithuania was occupied and colonized by the Soviet Union. The writer believes that despite the numerous problems Lithuania faced during its short period of independence, it can not be compared to the moral decline that started before WW II and progressed with each Soviet decade. Lankauskas notes that this disastrous metamorphosis continues up to this very day in the epoch of globalization "where the new capitalist empire that was created in Brussels replaced numskull Russian socialism." (p. 95). An outspoken critic of the Soviet system, Lankauskas remained equally critical of the capitalist globalization by refusing to accept its myths, and instead arguing for the continuity of national values that are often scarified for vague and ambiguous promises of globalization. His memoirs demonstrate that the writer maintained a life-long distrust in ideologies, remaining faithful to critical reasoning and refusing to buy any new ideologies that were shaped after the fall of Communism.

Throughout the book Lankauskas muses on the effects of Soviet colonization. He compares his memories of pre-war Klaipėda – an old and well developed city with a far more advanced transportation system than Lithuania's temporary capital Kaunas, and the badly ruined and devastated phantom of its previous image after hordes of Soviet colonizers moved into Klaipėda and East Prussia following the Red Army. After the war was over, the Soviets constructed their policy that was applied to the captive society:

> Moscow acted according to the principle: set at variance Lithuanian against Lithuanian. And it succeeded, and thus Moscow continued to strangle Lithuania using the hands of Lithuanians themselves; it continued to chase and destroy them according to the orders of the oppressor. It was not at all difficult to set people against each other. *The class enemy* had to be repressed or destroyed <...>. Jealousy, hatred and the consciousness of uneducated people affected by the Soviet ideology were perfect accomplices to this horrible work aimed at the destruction of the nation. (p. 160).

While looking closely at various moments of his own life, Lankauskas simultaneously attempts to understand what happened to Lithuanian society during the Soviet colonization and why the habits of thinking and acting acquired during this period persisted after the country regained its lost independence.

I have no doubts that Lankauskas' memoirs will be of interest to different readers and their generations. Literary scholars and students of literature will perhaps approach them trying to understand the context of his own writings as well as one more source shedding light on the literary climate of the Soviet era; meanwhile, others will simply look for an honest testimony, and reflections of Lithuania's fate in the last century.

ALMANTAS SAMALAVIČIUS

ABSTRACTS

GRAŽINA BIELOUSOVA

Gendered Memories: The Use of Pieta in Lithuanian Commemorative Monuments to Victims of the Soviet Regime

Lithuanian monuments that utilize pieta motifs for commemorating victims of Soviet regimes are quite prominent in public spaces. These Catholic images of Virgin Mary grieving her son's death in Lithuanian national and religious imaginaries perform a tri-fold function, since they reference not only Mary's grief, but also repressed mothers' and nation state's, too. Without negating the ability of public monuments to provide meaningful ways to grieve and remember collectively, I argue that the conflation of sacred and national symbolism in these monuments has the power to enshrine the role of women as passively suffering mothers, thus reinscribing stereotypical gender roles and downplaying the importance of women's political and social input.

JUOZAS SKIRIUS

Significant Works of a Small Group of Lithuanian Americans in Chicago: Activities of SOS Americans for Lithuania's Freedom in 1990–1991

After Lithuania declared its independence in March 11, 1990, American Lithuanians started establishing groups that aimed to inform US politicians and society about this fact. SOS Americans for Lithuania's Freedom in Chicago was one of these groups. Its

member Vincas Lukas created a poster that represented a bird flying to freedom from a cage. The bird was painted in tricolor. This poster was placed in the most visible places in Chicago and Washington. The members of the group urged fellow Lithuanians to send telegrams and letters to American politicians, to have meetings with them, and to collect signatures of Americans supporting the cause, and to appeal to radio and TV stations. The highest peak of the group's activities were the years 1990–1991.

AUSTĖ NAKIENĖ and RŪTA ŽARSKIENĖ

Lithuanian Folksongs in America Recorded by Jonas Balys in 1949–1951

During 1944–1945 J. Balys worked as an assistant at the German Folksongs Archive in Freiburg. In 1946–1947 he taught at the Baltic University in Hamburg. In 1948, together with his family he came to the USA, having been invited by Professor Stith Thompson to work at Indiana University in Bloomington. Lacking original sources and collections left behind in Vilnius, he decided to visit Lithuanian immigrants in America and record folklore they still remembered. These expeditions proved successful: on magnetic tape he recorded about 1200 items, mostly songs, also folktales, instrumental music and other folklore genres.

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Linas LIANDZBERGIS. *Ugly duckling.* 2013. Acrilic, canvas, 70 × 120

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FRONT COVER: Zervynos village, Southern Lithuania
Photo by Almantas Samalavičius