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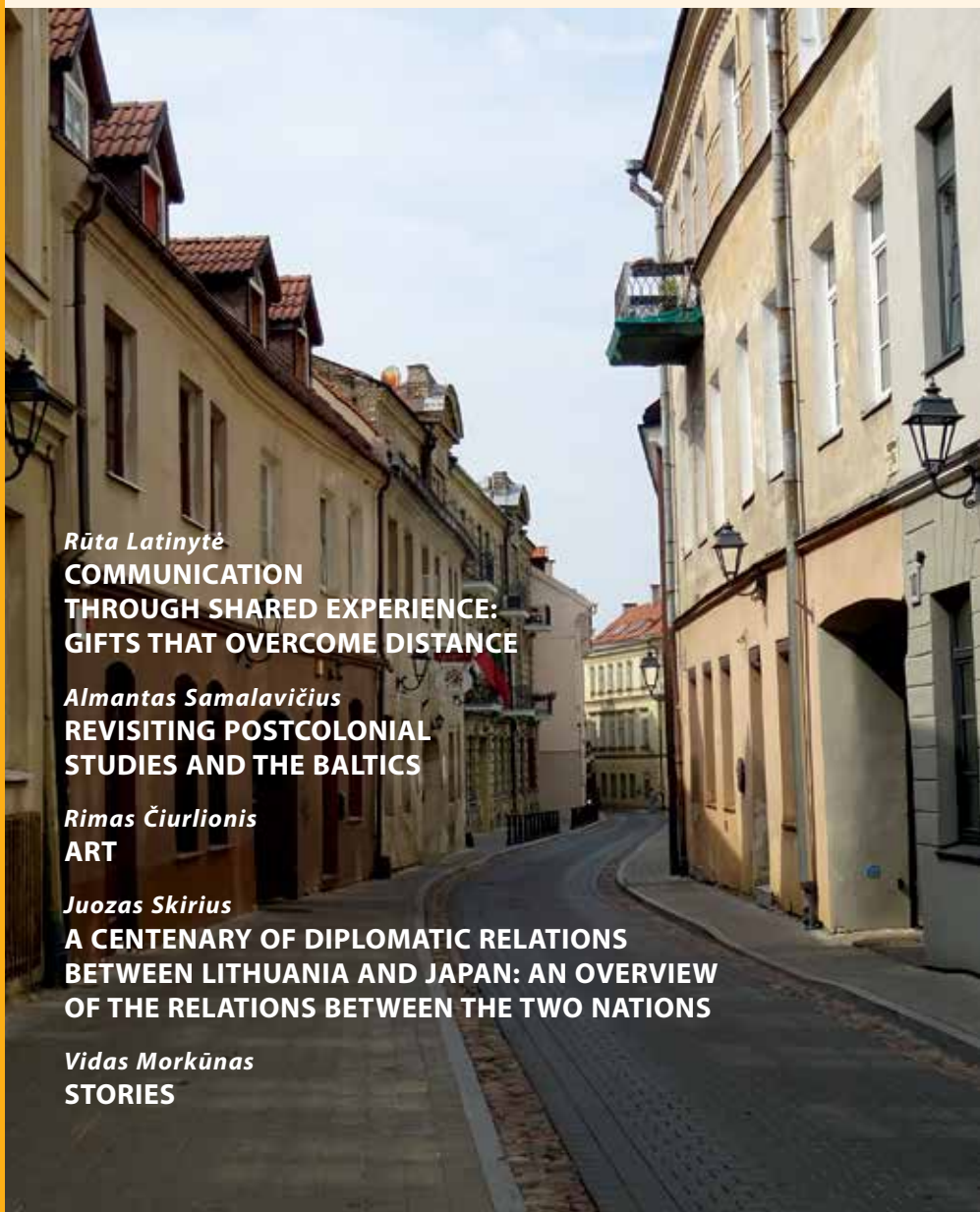

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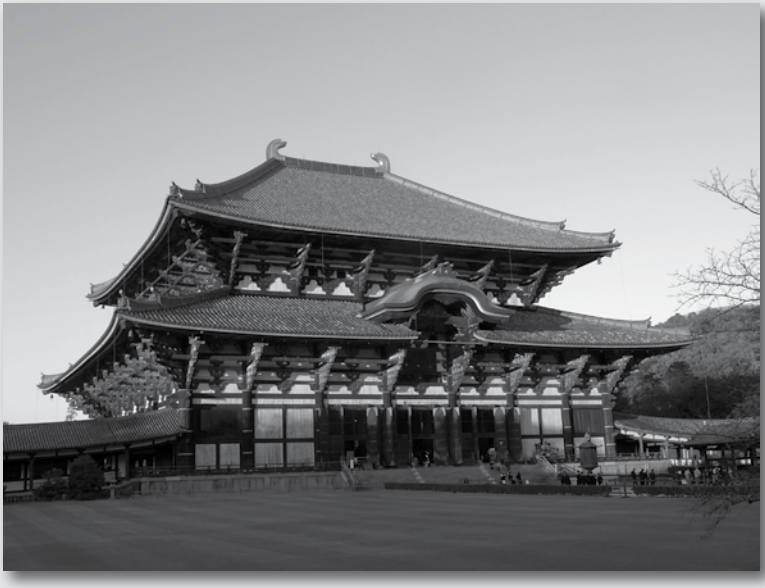

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Communication Through Shared Experience: Gifts that Overcome Distance

RŪTA LATINYTĖ

What makes long distance gifts so satisfying? They are fascinating for their power to break the silence of remoteness. Especially today, when it's so easy to send a message – it only takes touching the phone screen and the whole world is nearby. Still, we don't rush to make the call so often. Sometimes even the phone conversation is shallow, too, and misses the hidden and unspoken. Then how to translate these personal depths into language? Apparently, it is necessary to first grasp, to find a relevant form for it and then language will catch up. This is what happens with the current analysis of the collected life stories interpreted in this article: the meta-language is running after the experience, serving as a translator, speaking about what people do not usually talk about, because they feel before even thinking. People share experiences by sending gifts. And living away from those closest ones, makes these gifts special.

In this paper, I will discuss a special group of gifts found in today's everyday practices that share a common context: gifts or goods sent or otherwise delivered by friends and family living abroad. The separation of relatives after moving to a distant country brings about the need to maintain a special connection.

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It unites the preservation and creation of the identities of the homeland and the new country, feelings of longing and lack, and the assurance of this connection is realized by different forms of coexistence. The most vivid memories of the interviewees will tell us about each of them.

Methodological Background

It is important to put this article in the context of gift-giving studies. This research is integral to the extensive debate in humanities on the topic of gift-giving. Beginning with Bronisław Malinowski (1922), gift exchange was examined structurally (Mauss 1925; Lévi–Strauss 1950, 1963), linguistically (Benveniste 1997; Mauss 1997), socially (Caillé 1994, 2007), economically and politically (Bourdieu 1980, 2017; Sahlins 1997). It had also caught the eye of existential and phenomenological philosophy (Schutz 1962; Merleau–Ponty 1964; Jackson 1998) and its critique (Derrida 1991, 1992). Modern authors looked at the phenomenon of the gift as a tool to a broader understanding of social, religious, and creative life (Godbout, Caillé 2000; Marion 2002, 2011; Hyde 2012; Pyyhtinen 2016).

I took a challenge to expand the discussions on the gift and to plunge deeper into what individual experiences might reveal. To make my research, I first gathered the stories about gift experiences and then analyzed these texts by using the tools of semiotics (Greimas, Fontanille 1993), phenomenological anthropology, and the means of research of everyday practices (Jackson 1998, 2012, Lingis 1989). The whole research was made from 2018 to 2021 in Lithuania and included various gift-giving experiences from more than 40 hours of audio recordings and transcribed notes, as well as non-verbatim narratives, selected correspondence, and gift-giving texts from material collected by other researchers. In this article I would like to introduce just one part from the whole research that brought on an interesting discovery: a group of special cases when gifts are exchanged

between emigrant family members, sending presents to or from foreign countries. One of the questions that sparks the interest of the researcher is how the code of gift giving is enabled – how to transmit not just the message of care and love, but also identity, culture, and even everyday living without saying a word but with the gift itself.

With a deep reading analysis of the texts of the interviews the research seeks to reveal:

- how the experiences of gifts take place;
- how these gifts acquire meaning and place in memory;
- how the gift plays a role of building identity;
- how it affects a person's relationship with themselves and those around them.

Each sub-section of the research narrative starts with an excerpt from the narrative and then follows where the story itself will lead, and what it may reveal.

Dovilė's Story: A Gift as Creation of Common Cultural Identity

> *I sent a lot of books because part of the family lives in America and France, so I was a modern book transporter; I would transport all kinds of books. And in the winter [in the bookshop] I would spend so much time on my feet that I would start feeling hot. I felt like I was about to faint, standing there with a coat. I would arrange the books according to weight (although, I was ready to pay for that weight), but I wanted them to last long enough, to mean or teach something, or be beautiful. [...] I spend a lot of time choosing the most perfect book to send.*
>
> *And I sent these large format [books] and those children were obviously too small but despite that, whatever I found interesting, or if it was educational, or had to do with beauty – something worth sending from Lithuania across half the world. So, I bought a big-format book illustrated by Eidrigevičius. They were really too small back then, but I thought that they will just have the book, it will not go anywhere, it will remain on the shelf, and you are constantly seeing it while*

growing up. At first, you might just flip through the pages, then someone might read it to you and after that you turn the pages and read it by yourself. And I thought that because they lived abroad, [it was so] that they [would have] some memories and could remember. Because [Eidrigevičius] is very recognizable. And if they were to ever see him, they would know that "there, I had this thing." They will connect themselves to what they see; if they ever see him somewhere, they will know that they have a connection with it. These were the signals [I wanted] to send out to them.

[...] Of course, I mostly [sent] the books, so that the children and adults would read in Lithuanian. But it takes time to adapt it to each person's character. And, well, I would also [put] some pretty things. They might not have been obvious but rather what I find beautiful, what could be decorative, something European.

Ms. Dovilė, 48 years

This story richly illustrates the intensity of the connection's intention, "I sent a lot of books," "I would spend so much time on my feet that I would start getting hot," "I felt like I was about to faint," "I spend a lot of time," "large format," "but it takes time to adapt to it." Such focus shows the interlocutors concern and how much of herself she devotes to this mission.

The very need to keep in touch with the loved ones arises from the emerging distance and the time that expands with it. In the interlocutor's story, both figures of time and space are very closely intertwined, simply inseparable, all connected by the same large and unfathomable shape: the "large format" book, worth sending "across half the world," children "were too small," with a hint that they will grow up and the time that is in front of them is as big as the distance between them. And it must be filled.

To overcome the physical distance without going on a trip, one must put a lot of sensually and physically felt efforts. Just like book smugglers, who transported books to Lithuania risking their lives. Unintentionally, the interlocutor identifies with them through physical suffering by staying in the bookstore for so long that "I would start getting hot. I felt like I was about to faint, standing there with a coat."

The dividing distance is repeated by the dimensions of space (volume, weight, size) associated with the gift itself. However, in the woman's story, the gifts are not only measured in terms of their size but also in terms of time, "I would arrange the books according to weight," "I wanted them to last long enough," "I spend a lot of time choosing," "these large format [books]," "children were obviously too small" and so on. Such an inseparable sense of space and time seems to integrate into the description of the facts, but at the same time describes a difficult relationship with her family members: they are far away, and access to them depends on time and other circumstances such as the (parcel) weight and requires the longevity of the gift, which would enable the capture and filling of the rapidly passing childhood of nieces or nephews. The separating time can be left neither empty nor absent.

Of particular note are the different layers of meaning that the sender tries to fit into the gifted object as a medium. There are an infinite number of layers of meaning to this gift and I will try to grasp and list them all. All of these layers of meaning are also of value, indicating importance and necessity:

1) the European cultural context as a counterweight to the US environment ("something European");
2) Lithuanian cultural context (Eidrigevičius books, "book smuggler's" mission);
3) the subject of Lithuanian language is highlighted separately ("I mostly [sent] the books, so that the children and adults would read in Lithuanian");
4) educational value ("something educational");
5) beauty: aesthetic, artistic value ("something beautiful");
6) shaping the identity of the gift's recipients ("they will connect themselves to what they see");
7) describing the recipient ("according to character");
8) creating memory ("that they [would have] some memories");
9) creating the highest possible value/quality ("choosing the most perfect");

10) when gifting a book, the interviewee names another meaning: the longevity of it ("and you are constantly seeing it while growing up");
11) finally, the chosen form of a gift also touches upon the communication between the family of relatives living abroad; the relationship between parents and children ("then someone might read it to you").

Thus, almost a dozen eloquent messages fit into one gift, which is meant to overcome distance and time, connect, and maintain, acquaint with, and create recognizability.

I would like to pay special attention to the value that creates memory. The woman dedicates Stasys Eidrigevičius' book "for the future" or as it is popular to say about children's things "for growing out of," realizing that children may be too young now, but it is important for her that the book – created by a prominent illustrator connected to Lithuania – will be at their house, and they will "sometimes flip through pages, sometimes read," and sometime later, the children will recognize that artistic style, it will be familiar to them. Instilling a cultural experience and identity, which the small children lost after their parents left Lithuania, is an important mission of the gift giver, equal to the memory of the book smugglers. In this way, she also reveals what creates, compiles, and fills the Lithuanian cultural field of meaning for her. Thus, the transfer of cultural identity is created through a common, recognizable experience arising from the knowledge of the work of art and its contexts, through a common past that still needs to be created, in this case, in the future, because "they will just have the book, it will not go anywhere."

At the same time, it is interesting that the connection is ensured through the woman's carefully selected gifts and protected through the cultural content, which the interviewee chooses as a gift. This is how the content/form => form/content sequence of change takes place. While searching for the form a gift should take – how to fulfil the connection with the relatives living abroad – the woman chooses cultural content, which, through

recognition and new memories, becomes a signifier of new meanings, a sign of that connection and all the described layers of meaning – something that is Lithuanian and European – and at the same time a sign of what she and her relatives have (or more precisely, will have) in common.

It is a creation of a secondary signified, characteristic of myth, pointing at something other than the primary meaning. This shift between the primary and the secondary mythological level or meaning was described by Roland Barthes[1], and in the context of Lithuanian customs, Daiva Vaitkevičienė[2] used his insight to research fire metaphors in the Lithuanian mythological worldview. By drawing apart the fire's threads of meaning (such as the rose flower, blood) as the components of mythological discourse, she calls them mythological metaphors. In the interviewee's story, the gift also becomes such a mythological metaphor pointing to the deeper layers of a cultural and personal world. The giving of such a gift also performs a mythological/ritualistic act. It changes the identity of the recipient, like a spell, transcending the divide between space and time through constant repetition and the possibility of recognition.

"Meanings collected from the past create other meanings and connections," Alphonso Lingis wrote in an issue of *Angelaki* journal dedicated to the topic of gifts. In his article, he analyses the need to constantly return to an environment located "far away and a long time ago."[3] Here he draws on Freud's discovery that memory restoration and the recollection of a traumatic event helps a patient get rid of a compulsive symptom because the symptom is an involuntary and distorted attempt to repeat that traumatic experience. The departure of the relatives to a distant land and the loss of direct contact can also be called a traumatic experience, which is sought to be circumvented and resolved through a constant, repeated attempt to bring the loved ones back. And not

1 Barthes, *Teksto malonumas*, 88.
2 Vaitkevičienė, *Ugnies metaforos*, 8–11.
3 Lingis, "The Return," 165–176.

only them, their children as well, who are growing up in a completely different cultural environment. Lingis writes that memory is a different form of getting back to the event: through representation. Dovilė's gifts do the opposite. Through the representation of cultural meanings in the gifted books, she creates a new memory that could later develop into a connection between her and the children of the relatives living overseas.

Vaitkevičienė also draws attention to the motivation of the myth that creates secondary signification. In phenomenology, this corresponds to the concept of intentionality. The multi-layered meaning attributed to a gift has direction and purpose. The presence of such a connection penetrates deeply into the recipient and touches upon the formation of another person's identity.

In phenomenology, consciousness is both a reflection of the world and a creator of it. And the world itself is known only through consciousness; it is shaped by it and at the same time affects it. In this way, the world becomes part of its own way of perceiving. Hence the duality of the Self: the experiencing Self and the Self that reflects from a distance. We can grasp both of these dimensions of the inner Self in the woman's story as well. She is both a subject experiencing longing and lack, seeking connection with her relatives, and a subject reflecting itself, as if looking at itself from further away, which creates a new meaning there and then, shapes a new experience and consciously aims at changing the world that affects her; in a way, to reclaim the loved ones through the establishment of an intellectual and cultural connection.

Why should this strategy, chosen by the interviewee, work? Why is she so certain of it that she is ready to make sacrifices, as she herself says, "I felt like I was about to faint, standing there with a coat." Such a way of accepting, internalizing the intentionally addressed meanings of the Other and simultaneously passing them on to others, one might guess, came about through the life experience of the interviewee. We can notice that in her other story about the fate of a very important gift she received as a child.

These are certain signs, foundations. I found a dress, sent to my sister from the US, very beautiful. There were no such dresses available here and we took pictures of my sister everywhere. And it was precious by its very nature because it travelled here, because it is the only one, very beautiful, made for a child of 3 or 4 years old. And things like that, you keep as essentials. Now, my sister is in the US and that dress was sent to her here and now I sent that dress back to her daughter (to the US). And it is also [important] to those people out there that we kept it. They also chose it, put effort into it, thought about what would fit, what would be liked and would provide that added value. And then when it is still in good shape after several decades and goes back. And for that niece... it is also a thing that has a whole history, that travelled this way and then returned; it is a thing that says something extra, a kind of reunification and the fact that you didn't throw it away. So, these are the zigzags; that that thing travels and then goes back again.

Ms. Dovilė, 48 years old

This story reveals how closely the traditions of gift-giving in the woman's family are related to the relationship between the family members, even moving from childhood to overseas, protected and nurtured further. In this short excerpt, the woman very visually shows what was "precious by its very nature" to her. It is the fact that value lies within the object itself, arising from the fact that "it traveled here, because it is the only one, very beautiful" and even more so because it was selected, preserved, and went back. It is important to those who sent it, so it is also important to those who received it and it is therefore worth returning as a treasure that confirms the original meaning and value assigned to it. For this to happen, a physical, material exchange is needed. It becomes possible through physical preservation and shipment of the object. It is the world's value-making model, which the interviewee transfers from the past to the present, the creation of a connection between her own distant nieces and nephews.

Time here also becomes a measure of distance. Those few decades here refer to the life that has passed but a connection that has remained (and the object: a dress) and became even

stronger since the received object was highly valued and sent back as a thank-you.

What is also interesting, is that the dress that was sent back is in no way a returned gift. It is a different, much more valuable gift that gained added value (preservation), testifying to the exchange of roles (the sister's childhood was replaced by the childhood of the nieces), the two-generation threshold, change, and permanence in one as a paradox.

If the phenomenological description (in this case it was the respondent's story about the experience of gifts) is inevitably governed not only by direct experience, but also by "inherited models of interpreting the world, the most basic rules of logical thinking or even superstitions,"[4] then such a description opens the door of cognition not only to the object itself, but also to the consciousness that creates its image, which is unable to dissociate itself from cultural and intellectual contexts. These contexts (childhood experience and gifts from America) changed, or rather created the narrator's perception of the world. Following this perception, she seeks to replicate the same motion in her relationship with her little nephews or nieces.

Agnė's Story: A Gift as an Expression of Everyday Life

There are more of such stories about the gift exchange with the relatives living abroad. Here is the story of another interviewee. In it we can identify fragments reminiscent of Dovilė's experience, but, in addition to that, another aspect of sending gifts is revealed.

> *Mom used to send things all the time, all sorts of Lithuanian things, which you miss and also want to give something Lithuanian to your friends. Some Lithuanian chocolate. Yet you don't have inexhaustible amounts of these chocolates, so you always wait for those [mom's] gifts*

[4] Jurgutienė, "Fenomenologinis," 23.

to be able to gift something from your country to your local friends; something super unique that they have never seen or tasted here. In a word, to tell them and show them how delicious Lithuanian chocolate is, how nice are the sausages because though you can tell them about it as much as you want, they will never visit Lithuania and taste it anyway. But when mom sends it and you can gift it, the present becomes more expensive than the actual cost of that chocolate because it's the kind of thing you wouldn't get in life. So basically, I started asking my mother for these presents in order to give my friends what I receive and treat them to "Lithuania".

And sending back is similar because there are all kinds of ramen noodles and cosmetics here: everything that can be found here on every corner, even those beauty samples, which in Lithuania... they take money for them on the internet and here they give them to you for free in every shop and you don't know where to put them and don't want to throw them away. So, it would happen that when the shipping costs were not so high, you could pack one more box and send it.

Truth be told, there is nothing special in that box. I must admit that all these beauty products and samples had accumulated at home, and I did not want to throw them away. Of course, there were some special requests, like BB creams, which did not exist in Lithuania, so you would, you know, buy them. And all the other stuff that seemed to me to be the most interesting were completely random. That is, you'd look around the house and think what other curious things you could send.

Mrs. Agnė, 34 years old

If the story of the first interviewee was based on gifts conveying conceptual meaning, then this excerpt reveals a slightly different signified: an everyday experience. The exchange of packages between a woman and her mother allows the exchange of an immediate and seemingly insignificant environment: everyday food (chocolates, sausages, ramen noodles, cookies) and other everyday things: beauty products, notebooks. Part of the content of these parcels does not even have a practical use (stickers, souvenirs) but contain emotional significance and value. They are cute, interesting, never seen before and, most importantly, from "the other side", sent by the mother from Lithuania and by the daughter from the Far East.

Another aspect of these gifts is sharing them "with friends", which extends the chain of the gift's meaning and raises its value, "when mom sends it and you can gift it, the present becomes more expensive." In this way, the small pieces of the "little Lithuania" sent by the interviewee's mother become not only an object of personal experience and the opportunity to repeat the familiar sensations and thus remember one's country but also a part of one's own identity, which is being established around and allows to sensually show – give a taste – to the overseas friends, a part of the culture that shapes the interviewee's inner self. Creating a connection with a new environment in a woman's story, requires not only cognition, but also recognition, so that new friends, acquainted with a distant culture, can identify the narrator with it. Meanwhile, recognition here again becomes possible only through physical, bodily experience, and even if "they will never visit Lithuania anyway", these Lithuanian snacks that they taste become a part of that shared experience.

The shipment of everyday food (ramen noodles and other snacks) to the interviewee's mother plays the same role. The mother should not only learn but also feel how her daughter lives through a common (taste) experience and via it get acquainted with the new identity of the daughter, who is now living abroad, surrounded by a different culture and everyday life. In addition to that, this exchange becomes a ritual – constantly sent, requested, and awaited parcels full of goodies emphasized by the interviewee: "all sorts", "inexhaustible amounts" (replaced by mother's parcels), "one more box" and so on.

It should be noted that the composition of these gifts is all about the senses. In addition to food, beauty products are also mentioned, which directly touch and affect the skin and moreover appeal to daily or at least frequent use, a long-term ritual that becomes a hygiene habit. The effect of body products allows the sender to touch upon the bodies of the recipients and provide them with all the good things she wishes upon them: beauty, health, youth.

There is another important aspect in the interviewee's story, completely different from the previous story about the shipped books. And it is to do with how the woman chooses what to send, and as she herself puts it, "everything that can be found here on every corner," "you don't know where to put them and don't want to throw them away," "completely random," "you'd look around the house and think what other curious things you could send." These hints reveal a completely different way of choosing a gift, neither better nor worse, just different and unique. The interviewee considers the perception of everyday life, items and trinkets at hand as valuable, refers to them as the "stuff that seemed to me to be the most interesting," as if spontaneity, unplanned, and genuine action would gain more realness and everyday life authenticity.

Meanwhile, the interviewee provided a broader explanation about the "I don't want to throw them away" hint.

> *For me, gift-giving was a self-evident thing. It is Christmas, it is necessary to give and give a lot. Perhaps this comes from mom because she would bring many presents. Because when you give a gift, you do it for yourself, so that you will feel nice. Well, there is this strange thing connected to gift-giving. Well, of course, when its Christmas or parcels for the family, then you give it out of love because it is pleasant and so on. But when I had a roommate, a Brazilian girl, she noticed this character trait I have, which is that when there are things, I don't want to throw away, then I start looking for someone to give them away to. And she laughs, says, "Just throw it away if you don't need it," and I say no, no, I have to give it to someone because how could I just throw it away. She didn't share this trait and she noticed it in me, that even uploading it online, as a giveaway, gets me in a better mood than just throwing it away and no one has any use for it. So, I notice this trend in Lithuania as well.*
>
> *So, there is one thing when you love a person and know that they need something, and another when you want to get rid of a thing and look for someone, to whom this will bring more joy than it brings you.*
>
> Mrs. Agnė, 34 years old

The woman explains the meaning of this behavior with "this will bring more happiness." This short story reveals a dual relationship with the object itself. An object may be meaningful and valuable to a woman (in other words, it provides happiness), or unnecessary, which must be disposed of somehow, but not discarded because it contains potential meaning and value (happiness) to another person. And giving that happiness to another person is especially gratifying for the giver. In this way, the search for "whom to give to" is also a search for something that could give new meaning to the object, another person and the giver herself. This experience shows that the emergence of meaning requires there to be a relationship between the perceiver and the perceived (object). Without its meaning and value, the emergence is impossible. At the same time, such new meaning creates a new relationship between two people based on the three-tiered structure of the gift described by Mauss: giving, receiving, and reciprocating. Feeling (it is the same as knowing for the interviewee) that it will "will bring happiness" to someone else is enough for reciprocation here, and it also provides the feeling of happiness to the gift giver.

In the practice of exchanging parcels with her mother, two ways – described by the interviewee – of gift-giving intertwine: "out of love" and "it is a pity to throw it away." She even emphasizes the latter as gifts that are the "most interesting." She equates love with care and the recipient, who "needs something" and demands the content of the gift to be pointing to the recipient and be about him or her. Meanwhile, the interviewee compares the gifting of unwanted things to joy and spontaneity, turning the unnecessary into necessary. In the first case, the object of the gift becomes a way of expressing the nurtured relationship, and in the second case "looking for someone to give them away to" is about looking for a person whose need would correspond with the object and thus would create a relationship that provides happiness. This shows a twofold way of giving meaning to a gift: through the search of the form for the content and through the search for a meaningful content for an already existing object.

Dainius and Renata's Stories: The Gift of Being, or "I am the Best Gift"

The relationship between children living in emigration and their relatives can be fulfilled in a slightly different way, when the usual gifts do not participate in the process of maintaining the relationship, but the structure of exchange remains – physical, sensual, and material.

> *I say that I am the best gift for everyone [laughs]. Well, I used to bring perfume [to my mother] but now, not so much. She just waits for me to visit.*
>
> ***I remember you told me that you bought a homestead for your mother near Kaunas Lagoon, and you said that it was not an investment but rather a gift for her.***
>
> *Oh, yes, there was a plot [next to mother's homestead] and it was a gift to her. Along with the fact that I bought it and no one else did and she gained more space. She always goes and stays there. [...] And in the fall, I came to visit my mommy and helped her with the potato harvest [in that homestead]. So, I don't know how she, being eighty-five years old, dug the potatoes all day and nothing, and I had pain in the small of my back in the evening. And when I come, I gladly eat everything. She grows everything herself, including potatoes. She makes her own pickled cucumbers and tomatoes, and they are so delicious.*
>
> ***And when you send money to your mother and sister from abroad; isn't that a gift?***
>
> *Oh no, not that, that is not a gift, it's to help them! It happens sometimes that I get a larger sum and then I have nothing to do with it, so I send it to my mother and sister. For example, recently, there were five thousand, so what do I need that for? And in terms of gifts, their material form is not for me. I [communicate] differently.*
>
> Mr. Dainius, 54 years old

As a qualitative study of gifting practices has revealed, almost all the respondents make a very clear distinction in their stories about what constitutes a gift and what doesn't. This story is no different. Sending or giving ordinary gifts is not a common act for this man. He maintains the relationship with his mother and

sister, who stayed in the home country, in a different way. In truth, despite distancing himself from the practice of gift-giving, he nevertheless purposefully calls one special event – the buying of a plot for a garden – a "gift to my mother." And this gift, similarly to the one in Dovilė's story, is perceived in the shape of time and space. Of course, in this story, such spacetime is revealed through being in it, "she always goes and stays there."

There are no other material gifts in this relationship between the mother and son, only the perfume that he used to bring before. However, being together is fulfilled on these rare occasions when they meet; being together in that same existence, which even in the absence of the son connects him and the mother, by planting potatoes in the land he gifted her and eating the goodies she produced. The land itself here becomes a figurative expression of the relationship between the two people: its cultivation, its fruits, their preparation, and their consumption. It is a whole cycle, which is necessary while waiting for the son's arrival, and which is ritualistically repeated each time when visiting "mommy", as he refers to her in a loving manner.

Goodie-tasting in this context also joins the chain of exchange. The time allocated by the mother takes on a very material form of food, which, in order to show gratitude, should be taken in, eaten. Interestingly, eating goodies here sounds like an act of gratitude, even though it should be a gift received from the mother. But if it is gratitude, then the mere being becomes a gift; a visit, and finding time for it, allocating part of one's life, as Derrida wrote.

However, the interviewee doesn't refer to the more material parcels – money he sometimes sends his sister and mother from abroad – as gifts because "it's to help them" and help cannot be a gift, it has a completely different intention. The interviewee, who declaratively distances himself from material values, jokingly says that he is "the best gift." He later confirms it with his story. A gift, which is big and given apparently once in a lifetime, is a means of preserving a connection, only it is perceived through

a real being in a place designated for that being (garden), common activities (harvesting potatoes), and enjoying food.

Another interviewee's story about her centenarian grandmother's opinion offers a very similar approach only coming from the recipient's perspective.

> *And she used to say, "I don't need any gifts. The best gift is when you all get together and when I can see you and enjoy you all." [...] I don't know if I've met another person like that in my life, who believes in others and the goodness around her. After surviving the war, poverty, and the life of an orphan, she kept repeating, "I haven't met a single bad person in my life... only good." I never understood how that could be. But when I feel like I want to complain and whine about how bad everything is, how this or that guy is a jerk, I always remember Her words. And then comes the realization that everything depends only on us, on our attitude, the point of view we choose.*
>
> Ms. Renata, 40 years old

This episode is very reminiscent of the gift refusal motif (discussed in the part about the gifts of care) connected to the dilemma of the giver as a caregiver and the receiver of that care. Which is which? And what makes both parties emphasize that there is "no need for anything"? In this woman's story, the grandmother very clearly defines what is "the best gift" for her – the presence and the visit of the people. The connection with the Other is perceived here in the most sensual way, by being near and through sight "when I can see you all." This cannot be replaced by any simulacrum conveying the meaning of the relationship. And at the same time, the same story quite deliberately accommodates the portrait of the grandmother, as a person who only sees the good around her. It shows that the wish to see everyone physically is not a reproach but rather a joy that comes from togetherness and being itself.

Going back to other stories – Dovilė's shipped books and Agnė's parcels full of everyday trifles – it must be pointed out that they have a common denominator with the seemingly very different experiences of Dainius and Renata, in which a person be-

comes the best gift. That common denominator is the meaning of presence, whether it is encoded in a carefully selected copy of cultural content, or caught in a household trifle at hand, or whether it is possible only by working the land together and tasting its produce, or simply in the eyes of a grandmother, so she could see her loved ones and be happy. Being together – as a premise and a result of connection at the same time – is what unites people in their consciousness. The only difference is that gift-giving helps to embody presence through the distance of time and space, and refusing gifts as a form of communication and co-existence requires a journey and a presence of a physical body.

These stories are reminiscent of the term "stock of knowledge" as defined by Alfred Schutz. During life, a person creates a certain "stock of knowledge" about the surrounding world, which they take over and develop based on their experiences.[5] As this knowledge changes, so does the perception of the world.

Jochen Dreher interprets this term by distinguishing three ideal types of the relevance of meaning: motivational, thematic, and interpretive, emphasizing that it is not empirically possible to detect their pure form.[6] The motivational connection between experience and the "reserve of knowledge" arises from specific causal connections that are prompted in an objective world by various issues and interests. The thematic connection arises from the circumstances in which not all elements of the situation are known or the environment itself is not recognizable among those already known. The third – interpretive – connection points to solutions arising from thematic connections and the experience of the knowledge at hand. In this way, the unfamiliar situation can be solved by interpreting and applying the available experience, and later this solution seems to be added to the knowledge pool as something already known, so there is no need to interpret it a second time. This concept of the relevance of the

[5] Schütz and Luckmann, *The Structures of the Life-World*, 202.
[6] Dreher, "On Alfred Schütz," 489–510.

connections between meanings, according to Dreher and Schutz, is a key factor in constructing subjective reality. A person acting in this way will be guided by the same types of behavior and motives that they have already experienced in the past and have retained in that reserve of knowledge that they will use in seemingly similar circumstances. This shows that even a simple action presupposes a whole series of steps of man-constructed self-knowledge, including the fact that the same motives are expected from the Other. Schutz calls this the idealization of the reciprocity of motives.

Concluding Remarks

Looking at the aforementioned gift-giving experiences, we could attempt to grasp the empirical form of these principles of behavior. From Dovilė's stories, we can see that she brought this idea of sending culturally meaningful and long-preserved gifts overseas from her childhood. As we see in Agnė's story, she tries to pass on the joy of simple, everyday items to her mother who receives and also sends parcels, at the same time asking the mother to send her simple, everyday snacks that would provide the taste of her homeland. In terms of the real gift – the presence of a person – the cases of Dainius and Renata bring forward the relationship that the women in their stories have with the world. Dainius' "mommy" makes a connection with her son through joint work and food she cooks for him. Such exchange of attention cannot be replaced by any gift, the son must physically come and taste the food. Renata's grandmother accepts the whole world around her as an inherent good, which is good just because it exists. That is why the attention and love of her relatives make her the happiest when she sees them directly.

As life situations change – in all cases of the above-mentioned interviewees, after moving far away from home – an interpretation of a previously unknown situation takes place, based on the knowledge they already have. That is how new solutions come

about, new communication traditions that take root within families that are in compliance with each other's expectations.

It is interesting to observe how in the plane of intersubjective relations, this array of knowledge reserves becomes common knowledge: behavioral expectations are also adopted by the loved ones. At this point, I would single out the subject that takes the initiative to build connection, more precisely, an initiative to build a form of connection and establish an intention, and the Other that responds to it (Other being the loved ones, who adopt the new experience and respond to it). In this way, we get completely different gift-giving traditions in the families of the interviewees discussed, including the shipping of culturally valuable objects to everyday trifles or even a complete elimination of gifts. And no matter what type of connection and a way for communicating it, people choose, a vital, real, and untainted interpersonal relationship and a wish to maintain it, opens in its depths.

In addition, playfulness and creativity accompany all the stages of gift-giving: choosing, giving, receiving, reciprocating. The play found in gifts acts as a way of minimizing the world, replacing the intersubjective relationship with a subject-object relationship that helps to create a simulacrum that can be manipulated to regain the illusion of control over the world. The change in the tradition of gift-giving also becomes an act of creation, where the creator is free to choose a new form and give it a meaning that coincides with value, utility and generosity.

Finally, a gift, as a non-verbal language, allows the transmission and reception of meaning through experience without relying on verbal perception of meaning. The meaning that is embedded in a personal relationship is intentional like a gift – it is always directed towards the Other, and is only fulfilled through the Other (the receiver). And the fact that we have the possibility of repeatedly returning to the relationship (in the form of its expression), through the object and memory, indicates its ritual repetition and ensures its continuity, and the continuity of the communion itself, which creates society. The meaning acquired by the gift cannot therefore be dissociated from the relationship involved in the gift, nor from the effect on it.

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Revisiting Postcolonial Studies and the Baltics

ALMANTAS SAMALAVIČIUS

During recent decades a new field of research, known as Postcolonial Theory or, even more often (and possible more accurately) as Postcolonial Studies has gained currency in the shifting landscape of humanities. Emerging during the 1970's of the last century and undergoing a rapid development and experiencing numerous re-adjustments, postcolonialism finally established its academic and scholarly reputation during the last three decades of this century when it made its way into the teaching programs and research projects of many western and non-western universities. It was during this period, that Postcolonial Studies acquired a global character as well as academic respect, becoming a booming and yet inexhaustible academic industry all over the globe.

One of the features of this newly emerging field of research and academic studies was its persistent and ongoing search for identity that led it to remapping its territory and marking a variety of new targets. The relative fluidity and (inconsistency) of this field of research and approach was often criticized by older and thus more 'legitimate' disciplines; however, in the long run it not only contributed to its growth as an academic enterprise but also brought on a spectacular expansion of postcolonialism in geographical terms.

Postcolonialism and Its Discontents

It is well known that in the early stage of development, the concept of postcolonialism was mostly and exclusively applied to what is known as 'classical' or 'historical' colonies, i.e., African or Asian countries and lands that were colonized by mostly Eu-

ropean powers and/or superpowers in one or another historical period. As soon these studies evolved, however, some scholars interested in colonialism and its cultural, political and social effects, soon got dissatisfied with the reigning understanding and especially the 'geography' of colonialism and postcolonialism. They set out to question the early certainties of this research field and offered views that contained well-grounded criticism concerning ambiguities contained in colonial/postcolonial discourse. Edward W. Said was one of the first scholars in the Western hemisphere who realized that colonialism can not be contained within the then-reigning paradigm which limited this discourse exclusively to African and Asian conquest by the European powers. Being an insightful scholar and subtle critic, Said observed that there were also non-European powers that were as equally colonialist as their Western counterparts. He realized that one of such non-European or semi-European political entities was imperial Russia that was and remained a colonial enterprise to no lesser degree that the Western European powers that set to colonize Africa, Asia and/or Latin America. Its involvement in colonial activities in the Caucasus, Central Asia, as well as large parts of Eastern Europe, made Russia a colonial power *par excellence* despite the fact that it never went as far as to gain lands in other continents or far-away territories. Instead of reaching into other geographical realms, Russia focused on its immediate neighbors. As Said noted in his influential and highly acclaimed book *Culture and Imperialism*, colonialism was not purely and exclusively a European activity and he went on to say that

> There are several empires that I do not discuss: the Austro-Hungarian, the Russian, the Ottoman, and the Spanish and Portuguese. These omissions, however, are not at all meant to suggest that Russia's domination of Central Asia and Eastern Europe, Istanbul's rule over the Arab world, Portugal's over what are today's Angola and Mozambique, and Spain's domination in both the Pacific and Latin America have been either benign (and hence approved of) or way less imperialistic.[1]

[1] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xxii.

Even if he did not explicitly analyse the character and effects of Ottoman or Russian colonization and chose other targets than imperial Russia, Said nevertheless made an acute and timely remark on imperial Russia that has a lasting importance for all students of (post)colonialism, suggesting that Russia under tsars

> […] Acquired its imperial territories almost exclusively by adjacence. Unlike Britain or France, which jumped thousand of miles beyond their own borders to other continents, Russia moved to swallow whatever land or people stood next to its borders, which in the process kept moving farther east and south.[2]

Despite these timely and largely accurate remarks, the voice of Said remained lonely for at least a couple of decades. Few pioneers into the newly emerging field of postcolonial studies were eager to respond to his challenge and get themselves engaged in redrawing the borders of Postcolonial Studies and reconsidering the most widespread notions of (post)colonialism and/or imperialism. Other postcolonial scholars of the period were far more interested in the forms of 'classical' (or 'historical', 'traditional') colonialism than being engaged in risky debates about any other interpretative versions of colonial enterprise, especially those that were hardly seen as legitimate from the viewpoint of postcolonial studies during that early period. Accordingly, colonialist policies of imperial powers such as Russia as well as the Soviet Union (or for that matter other non-European powers) escaped from any further scrutiny. Meanwhile concerns about the applicability of postcolonial studies to the analysis of the post-Soviet and post-Communist realm were growing. Scholars of Baltic descent residing in USA and Canada, as well as some younger researchers living in the post-Communist realm were setting their eyes on postcolonial theory as one of the possible (and promising) intellectual tools for scrutinizing the legacy of the Soviet domination in Eastern Europe. Immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union, some scholars in the Bal-

[2] Ibid., xxiii.

tic and other Eastern European countries started to search for a new methodological framework for analysing their societies as the available intellectual tools were seen as inadequate at the moment. Postcolonialism was one of these new intellectual agendas that offered a fresh perspective for serious scholarly inquiry.

Regarding post-Soviet Lithuania, some attempts to incorporate postcolonial criticism into local discourses were made as early as 1996.[3] At that time, however, there were only a handful of scholars interested in postcolonial theory/postcolonial studies. Moreover, institutionally there was almost no space to pursue research connected to the postcolonial agenda that was generally considered in local academia as something outside the framework of Baltic/Lithuanian studies or more specifically as imports from the West. In an article published as early as 1999, American Lithuanian literary scholar Violeta Kelertas aptly observed that

> Although much has been written about various locations and forms of postcolonialism, the empire that constituted the Soviet Union has been little discussed in these terms, and Baltic scholars, both in and outside the countries themselves, are only now beginning to realize the utility of this approach.[4]

Though there were definitely some scholars on both sides of the Atlantic that had realized the potential of this approach, there was no easy way for postcolonialism to enter the realm of Baltic and/or Lithuanian studies especially during the first post-Soviet decade. There were a number of reasons for that. Some of these reasons were local, some others were related to a larger perhaps even global milieu. On the local level in many Eastern and Central European countries (including the Baltic ones), there was a distrust in theories 'imported from the West', especially immediately after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and eventually the Soviet Union. This kind of suspicion and distrust was rather strong during the first post-Soviet decade, especially in Lithuania.

[3] Samalavičius, "Postkomunizmo studijų klausimu," 11–14.
[4] Kelertas, "Perceptions of the Self," 251.

During this period the local literary scene in Lithuania (and I guess elsewhere) was still institutionally dominated by the 'old timers' who were hardly eager to meet any new theoretical frameworks or adjust to any new interpretation agendas. Some established local scholars firmly believed that any such new interpretative frameworks were questioning or even denying their earlier contributions to literary analysis and even threatening their institutional existence and eventual survival. Such an attitude was shared by both – the hardliners of Soviet literary scholarship as well as by somewhat more liberal scholars who wholeheartedly embraced some Western theories (like for, e.g., semiotics) but remained hostile to those intellectual agendas that lacked long-term scholarly traditions.

On the other hand, there were also practical issues involved: younger scholars lacked proficiency in English and other foreign languages; possibilities to obtain higher education at Western universities were still rather limited, besides local academic journals and publishing houses (dominated by the old-timers) were hardly eager to offer space for 'suspicious' and thus 'illegitimate' criticism and theorising. To make matters worse, public funds supporting any new approaches in humanities were scarce until the Open Society Foundation offered an alternative to state funding. Disinterest in new literary trends and theories can be illustrated by my own personal experience. Sometime around 1994, I received a message from professor Violeta Kelertas about the visit of a young but already established American scholar, David Chioni Moore. While making a field trip to Central Asia he was supposed to stay in Vilnius and give a lecture on Postcolonial Studies and their uses. Urged by Kelertas I showed up for the lecture; however, to my surprise and dismay I found out that I was one of the three persons who turned up for this highly publicized public event. The curse eventually turned into a blessing as instead of a formal lecture we left the premises of the Foundation and went to a nearby coffee house and spent a few hours involved in a highly interesting, thought-provoking and far less formal intellectual discussion. As a matter of fact, this exchange

also triggered my own interest in Postcolonial theory and especially its applicability to the study of Lithuanian literature during the post-Communist era.

In the West, there were different reasons for a cold or sometimes even utterly hostile attitude towards appropriating postcolonialism for the studies of Eastern European literatures and cultures. This attitude can be scrutinized and explained, especially looking from the present-day perspective. For a long time after 1917, the Soviet Russia that eventually became Soviet Union was fashioning and presenting itself as an anti-imperialist state, a vanguard political entity, the epitome of social and political progress speaking for all the 'humiliated and overwhelmed' of the world and occasionally demonstrating its formal aid to African and Asian countries that were fighting against 'capitalism and colonialism'. The West was captured by its own naïve and one-sided visions of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. These visions of course were in one way or another influenced by the reigning political climate.

Discussing the problems of extending postcolonialism to the Eastern Europe and especially, the Baltic states (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia), some scholars have argued that there are several reasons for the reluctance to see the countries of this region as victims of Russian (and eventually) Soviet colonial policies. One of the reasons that often obscures this perspective is closely related to the genealogy of Western critical theory itself. Critical theory that gave rise to postcolonial studies was developed as a discourse of the Left and thus it was not free from certain prejudices, especially viewing imperialism and colonialism as mostly a Western enterprise. For example, American literary scholar Karlis Račevskis, one of the contributors to *Baltic Postcolonialism*, following the insights of David Chioni Moore further elaborated on this issue arguing that such an ambiguous attitude was an inevitable consequence of the Leftist discourse that dominated in the West. According to Račevskis,

> What complicates the matters even further in the case of the Baltic states is that leftist critical theory in general is implicated

> in a long history of interception or miscomprehension of the Soviet system. In this sense, it could indeed be said that the Baltic countries have been doubly disadvantaged: victims of the World War II, they were further victimized by the Cold War that followed, since the latter prevented them from being seen as the victims of the former.[5]

Other contributors to *Baltic Postcolonialism* implicitly or explicitly shared this viewpoint and gave their insights into imperialist and colonialist policies of tsarist Russia and eventually its successor, the Soviet Union, and its relations toward its closest neighbors. This timely collection of scholarly articles extended the arguments and insights previously made by David Chioni Moore and what is perhaps even more important, brought not only fresh interpretative schemes to the field of Postcolonial Studies, but also made interesting and convincing linguistic, literary and cultural material available to the students of this vast and constantly expanding field. The book has attracted a lot of attention among postcolonial scholars, accumulated a number of generally favourable reviews and last but not least, was and continues to be widely quoted. In Lithuania, where the reception of the book was also surprisingly welcomed, more than a dozen reviews that accompanied its publication contained mostly satisfaction and praise rather than scepticism and/or suspicion. It looked like Baltic postcolonialism was finally accepted and approved both on the international scholarly scene as well as in the Baltic countries. It might be added in this context that in contrast to Lithuania, the approach of Postcolonial studies towards Baltic societies and cultures was somewhat more favourable in Estonia and Latvia even before this volume became available. Some reviewers saw the success of this book as the final and indisputable legitimation of postcolonial approach to Baltic societies, cultures and literatures. This bold conclusion, however, turned out to be at least a little bit premature.

[5] Račevskis, "Toward the Postcolonial Perspective on the Baltic States," 171.

Critical Theory Strikes Back

In an article published in the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, Neil Lazarus, a well-known UK postcolonial scholar directed his attack on Eastern European (and Baltic) scholarship claiming a space within the framework of postcolonial studies. He questioned the attempts to interpret "post-Soviet literatures and cultures" as belonging to postcolonial discourse and shared his doubts whether the claims of Baltic scholars to their cultures as subjects of postcolonial inquiry are grounded and legitimate. Lazarus, however, did not dispute claims of Baltic (or any other) countries to have been victims of Russian colonialism and imperialism before 1917, i.e. the October Revolution that marked a new era and course in Russia's history.[6] Lazarus even goes on to quote a certain Russian historian, Vasily Klyuchevsky (not Kluchevsky as he is referred to in the article), who insisted back in 1911 (i.e. before the October Revolution) that colonisation was "the most essential element" in Russia's history. Though using Klyuchevsky's quote provided in a book, *Colonization*: *A Global History* by Marc Ferro, rather than examining the original writings of the renowned Russian historian of the imperial period, Lazarus seems to agree that imperial Russia was an empire that pursued colonial and imperialist policies. In this sense he implicitly sides with Edward Said who made the observation on tsarist Russia's role in colonizing countries that were closest to its borders. Yet he approaches the case of the Soviet Union as far more complex and complicated. While discussing the problematic aspects of the issue, he refers to the article of Moore who has also observed the differences between imperial Russia's and Soviet colonizing policies and practices. Nevertheless his further arguments represent a departure from the position of Moore and his famous call for a 'global postcolonial critique'. Even Said's work is being revoked to insist that postcolonialism was and continues to be related to the West rather than 'specific dynamics of capitalist development'.[7] He argues that

[6] Neil Lazarus, "Spectres haunting," 117–129.
[7] Ibid., 120.

> Because of their third-worldist presuppositions, postcolonial scholars seldom give sufficient emphasis to the fact that, whatever else it might have and, indeed, did involve – all the way from the cultivation of aesthetic tastes and preferences to the systematic annihilation of whole communities – colonialism as an historical process involved the forced integration of hitherto uncapitalized societies, or societies in which the capitalist mode of production was not hegemonic, in to a capitalist world-system. Over the course of a couple of centuries in some territories, mere decades in others, generalized commodity production was imposed, monetization; the development of specifically capitalist markets (involving "free" wage labour and the buying and selling of labour power), or the appropriation, de- and re-centralizing of existing markets, and of ancillary systems and institutions designed to enable and facilitate the consolidation, extension and reproduction of capitalist production and capitalist class relations. Along the way, existing social relations and modes of existence were undermined, destroyed, reconfigured; new social relations and modes of existence were brought into being.[8]

Lazarus seems to be concerned with both 'third-worldism' and especially the reductionist character of some mainstream postcolonial narratives and the post-communist critique that embraces postcolonialism for its own purposes. Yet he repeatedly questions the validity and legitimacy of post-Soviet studies to appropriate methods and interpretative schemes that are being used by postcolonial scholars. In one of his notes accompanying his article, he shares his fear that the demise of Soviet dominance and the Communist system might discredit the very idea of communism as wrong, as 'historical lessons' might be drawn from the experiences of former dominance and its end.[9]

Suggesting that there is 'a world of difference' between post-Marxist postcolonial theory and the 'post-communism' of those scholars that are reflecting upon the changes in the post-Soviet realm, Lazarus goes on to explain his explicit distrust in

[8] Ibid., 120.
[9] Ibid., 127.

applying postcolonial theory to the study of countries that were subjugated by the Soviet Union. According to Lazarus

> It is perfectly possible, however, both to celebrate the "independence" gained or regained with the collapse of the Soviet system and to recognize that the "freedom" won in 1989 and the years immediately following has not been unqualified. The various decolonizations achieved in the Bandung era, enabled formerly colonial societies to represent themselves as nation states in a world of nation states. But what was not adequately registered until later was that this world of nation states was a radically unequal one, structured in dominance, so that what continues to be celebrated in the various Independence Days is rarely "independence" as that term is commonly understood. Similarly, in the post-Soviet contexts, the full implication of the fact that liberation from "actually existing" socialism had been liberation into the world-system of "really existing" capitalism are now having to be confronted. For this latter, is a world-system, already and in principle deeply uneven, and now undergoing profound contraction and structural crisis besides.[10]

Such an attitude reflects the caution typical of western scholars who are studying postcolonialism in assessing the applicability of postcolonial discourse to societies that were dominated by the Soviet Union. As I have already mentioned earlier, reluctant attitude towards expanding the notion of postcolonialism so as to accommodate Eastern European cultures societies that were labelled as "post" Soviet after 1990, can be explained by the very origin of postcolonial theory that was developed by mostly Leftist scholars as Kelertas and other contributors to *Baltic Postcolonialism* have discussed. It should be, however, added that a reserved if not an overtly sceptical attitude towards "globalisation" of postcolonialism is shared by some Eastern European scholars who have their own reasons for rejecting its geographical expansion and especially its use as an intellectual tool to study Central and Eastern European societies. For example, Andrei Terian insists that "in order to become a truly efficient

[10] Ibid., 121.

analytical instrument, postcolonialism requires integration in a unified theory of (inter)literary dependence and, at the same time, it must be dissociated from certain concepts that concern interrelated phenomena, such as imperialism, domination or oppression".[11] Speaking in intonations similar to those of Lazarus, Terian rejects the very possibility of applying postcolonial theory to explain processes that Eastern European cultures and societies underwent during the period of the Cold War and Soviet domination in the region as well as in conditions that came into being when this region escaped from the "guardianship" of the Soviet internationalism. Taking a reserved attitude toward the conceptualisation of postcolonialism as a global intellectual toolbox, Terian fears that there is "the risk to simply equate postcolonialism with any form of dependency/domination. However, such a possibility, far from emphasizing the crucial importance of postcolonial studies in the current humanities (in the form of the so-called 'global postcolonial critique' envisioned by David Chioni Moore), would in fact cancel the utility of the concept."[12] Curiously, though refusing to embrace postcolonial studies as an intellectual tool suitable for the analysis of Europe's East, he unlike Lazarus, nevertheless acknowledges the legitimacy of Baltic postcolonialism. Some other scholars, like, e.g., Russian literary historian and critic Evgeny Dobrenko, who teaches at Sheffield University, UK, deny the legitimacy of applying postcolonial theory to the study of the post-Soviet realm (and Baltic countries in particular). According to Dobrenko, who took part in a conference organized in Vilnius and eventually took part in discussion on methods in literary scholarship:

> But it [postcolonialsim – A. S.] does not always work, this theory is too big – it tries to cover everything from Mumbai to Kinshasa, from Moscow to Vilnius, so there is a problem. The same can be said not only about postcolonialism, but about all grandeur, megalomania theories. Structuralism is a different thing, it is instru-

[11] Terian, "Is There an East-Central European Postcolonialism?" 21.
[12] Ibid., 26.

> mental. Theories like postcolonialism, gender studies, postmodernism are ideologically situated grand theories. And because structuralism is instrumental, it is much more practical in our real work and can be accepted by a wider audience. These grand theories very often don't have the methodological apparatus and instruments that can be used specifically for our purposes when it comes to specific material. They are too much politically biased.[13]

Such an opinion is hardly new to any student of Baltic postcolonialism. As I have already mentioned, the attempts to redirect Postcolonial studies toward post-Soviet space, and analyse historical consequences of Russian and eventually Soviet colonialism and imperialism, have been met with mistrust, doubts, sometimes even open scepticism and, occasionally, distrust and utmost dissatisfaction. Some of the reservations are understandable, some are, perhaps, even grounded. Nevertheless, attempts to eliminate any kind of research on Baltic postcolonialism raises various sorts of questions and last but not least – why redirecting Postcolonial studies towards post-Soviet space causes so much inconvenience? Instead of providing an answer to this quite complex and complicated question, I will conclude this consideration with a glimpse at the current state of the art in what might be viewed as a developing sub-field of Postcolonial studies.

Baltic Postcolonialism: Beyond Exaltation and Negation

There are different ways of viewing and reconsidering the ongoing project of Baltic postcolonialism that continues to have supporters and critics. One of the possible attitudes is to continue to doubt not only its accomplishments, but also its legitimacy and premises, as some of the authors previously mentioned have

[13] See, Evgeny Dobrenko's contribution to the discussion during the conference *The Literary Field under Communist Regime: Structure, Functions, Illusions*, Vilnius, October 7–9, 2015, published in "A Discussion on Methodology for Researching Soviet Literary Space," *Colloquia* 35, 2015, 149–162.

done, without providing any convincing and unquestionable arguments. On the other hand, unlike in the case of the so-called 'hard sciences', humanities are full of different, sometimes inconsistent and even incompatible arguments. This kingdom of rivalry while debating which particular discourse is more adequate to the analysis of Baltic culture and society during and after the (colonial) dependence is nothing new. In fact, it has gone on since the Baltic countries re-established their independence and made attempts to find their way towards what we might call the regime of western liberal democracy. After a lengthy period of ignoring postcolonial studies/postcolonial theory as one of the many possible intellectual tools of analysing these societies, postcolonialism finally found its way to Eastern Europe and the Baltics in particular. First being denied, being ignored and/or marginalized later, during the two recent decades postcolonialism has finally entered local academic discourses in the Baltic societies despite the many challenges it has faced and most probably will have to meet in the future. Having originated within the circles of literary scholars (and still mostly ignored within the discipline of history), it is winning more and more territories in various disciplinary and sub-disciplinary fields, like folkloristics. As Latvian scholar Tomas Kencis recently argued:

> A postcolonial approach to Soviet-era Baltic folkloristics looks beneficial in many ways. It provides a toolkit for deep analysis of the disciplinary field, a solid theoretical foundation via adaptation and update of colonial folkloristics, and a vocabulary that allows capturing ambivalent, multivocal echoes of the past in today's scholarship. It is a model that simultaneously hosts different meanings of the research object and thus represents it closer to the actual historical complexity. It also promises to liberate the scholarship from outdated distinctions and oppositions native to the Cold war and its tripartite world division.[14]

Despite what the staunchest critics of Baltic postcolonialism say, there is no doubt that the application of this theoretical agen-

[14] Kencis, "Baltic Postcolonialism," 23.

da has already proved to have been meaningful and quite effective in analysing Baltic cultures and literatures during both Russian imperial and Soviet colonisations and beyond. Perhaps the main issue today, is not the legitimacy of this analytical/interpretative discourse, but the uneven development of postcolonial critique in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Scholars of Latvia and especially Estonia seem to have embraced postcolonial studies with the least prejudice and consequently they have produced somewhat more research available for international readers.[15] Though traces of postcolonial theory might be found in a number of dissertations as well as book chapters[16], postcolonialism is still marginalized as a theoretical framework in Lithuanian literary and cultural scholarship and remains almost absolutely ignored in the communities of historians. Possibly, some more efforts are needed to change its current position on the map of Lithuanian scholarship, moreover so because this intellectual agenda is capable of opening some prospects for a number of scholarly disciplines not only exclusively for literature studies. It is most likely that despite its potential, postcolonialism will continue to remain on the margins of cultural and especially historical research in Lithuania for a number of reasons the discussion of which is beyond the scope of the present article.

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[15] See, Annus, *Soviet Postcolonial Studies*, and Annus, *Coloniality, nationality, Modernity: A Postcolonial View of Baltic Culture under Soviet Rule*; Kalnačs, "Latvian Multiculturalism, Postcolonialism and World Literature" or Hanovs, "Can Postcolonial Theory Help Explain Latvian Politics of Integration? Reflections on Contemporary Latvia as a Postcolonial Society."

[16] Samalavičius, "Beyond Nostalgia," 14–24.

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Rimas Čiurlionis

Čiurlionis speculates that a circle, a square, and a triangle, distinct and geometric forms that are familiar, can reference mysterious things. He asserts that by using these forms, an abstract expression of inner experience can result. Rather than conveying an allusion or illusion of experienced emotions or memories that would make the work "understood," each work becomes an active instrument of contemplation attuned with a particular resonance. Further, the works carry an aura that heightens awareness of the space within and around the work. The forms are like musical notes creating an experience.

A similar aesthetic forms the basis for this current sculpture series, "Society". These modules are open-ended as to function and scale... They could function simply as individual table top sculpture, elements in a still-life, human scale in garden sculptures, or as maquettes for monumental public works.

In his visual vocabulary, Rimas Čiurlionis employs minimalist elements to convey ethereal relationships. He avoids direct references to his physical surroundings, political symbols, social memes, and ethnic iconography, preferring the impact of subtle relationships between form, color, and line.

Čiurlionis was born in Kaunas, Lithuania in 1959. He studied painting and graphic design at the Stepas Žukas Art Technical School in Kaunas.

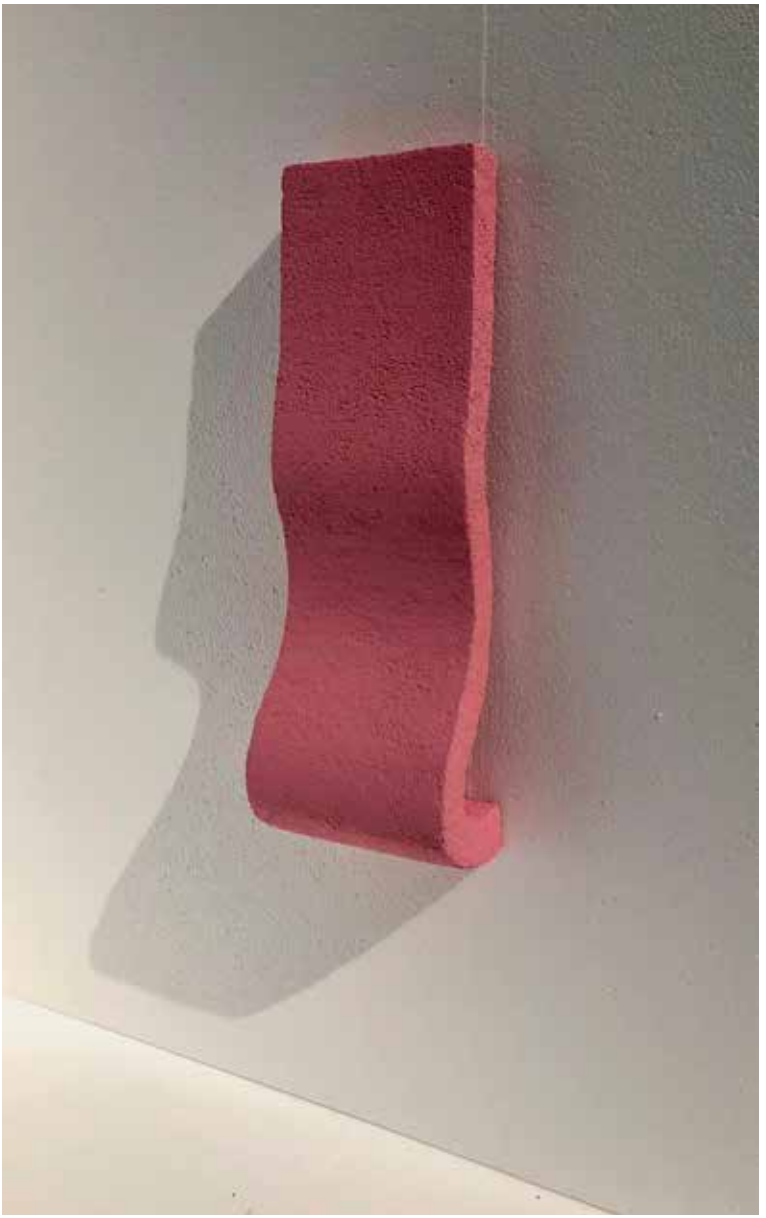
In 1992, Čiurlionis came to the United States and settled in Chicago. His work is often shown at SOFA – Sculpture Objects Functional Art and Design and Art Expo at Navy Pier in Chicago, IL; and has been showcased at Holly Hunt Showroom Collection in Los Angeles, CA, SPACE Gallery in Denver, CO, Art Palm Beach, in West Palm Beach, FL, and Art Silicon Valley/San Francisco in San Mateo, CA. He has participated in solo and group exhibitions throughout Europe and the United States and his work is included in public and private collections.

1. Rimas ČIURLIONIS. *Society*. White elements in grouping, plaster, approx. 12″ × 12″ × 12″

2. Rimas ČIURLIONIS. *Society*. Grouping, white elements, plaster, approx. 20″ × 12″ × 12″

3. Rimas ČIURLIONIS. *Society*. Grouping, white elements, plaster, approx. 20″ × 12″ × 12″ and 10″ × 6″ × 5″

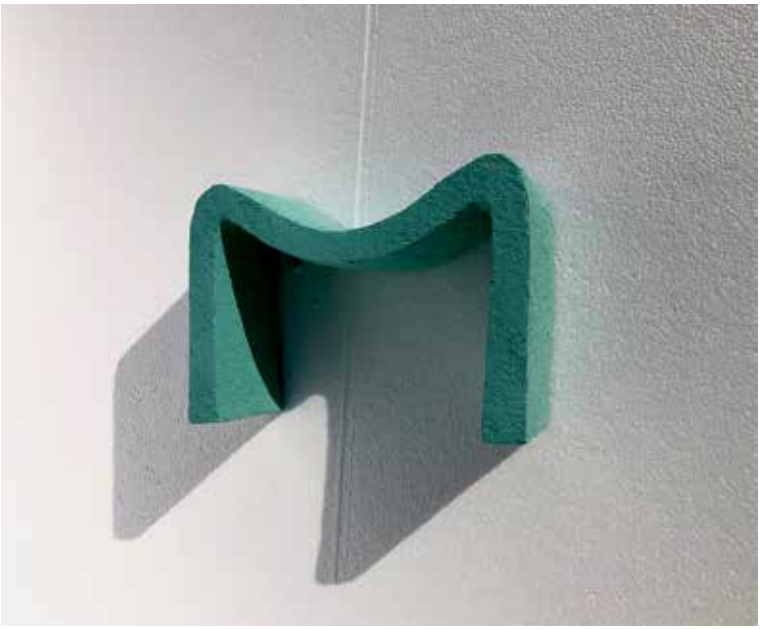
4. Rimas ČIURLIONIS. *Society*. Still-life, white & pink elements, plaster, paper pulp, acrylic, acid-free glue, 19″ × 10″ × 10″ and 12″ × 7″ × 7″, oil painting



5. Rimas ČIURLIONIS. *Society*. Pink element,
plaster, paper pulp, acrylic, acid-free glue, 21″ × 7″ × 5″

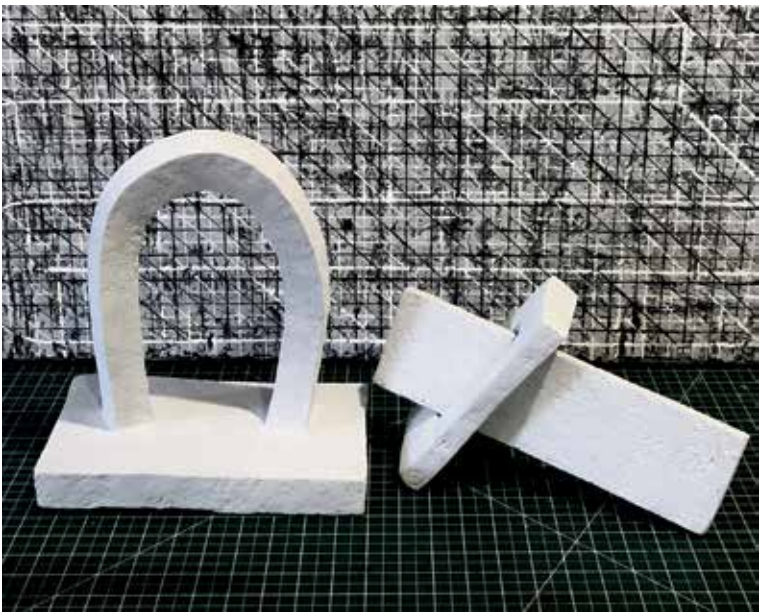
6. Rimas ČIURLIONIS. *Society*. Pink element,
plaster, paper pulp, acrylic, acid-free glue, 14″ × 7″ × 4″

7. Rimas ČIURLIONIS. *Society*. Green element,
plaster, paper pulp, acrylic, acid-free glue, 36″ × 33″ × 3″



8. Rimas ČIURLIONIS. *Society*. Green element,
plaster, paper pulp, acrylic, acid-free glue, 12″ × 9″ × 5″

9. Rimas ČIURLIONIS. *Society*
Grouping, white elements, 12″ × 12″ × 12″



10. Rimas ČIURLIONIS. *Society*
Still-life, white elements, plaster, 12″ × 12″ × 12″

11. Rimas ČIURLIONIS. *Society*
Still-life, white elements, plaster, 16″ × 7″ × 7″

* Approximate sizes in inches (″)
** All photos by artist
White pieces – plaster
Colored pieces – plaster, paper pulp, acrylic, acid-free glue
Paintings – oil on canvas

A Centenary of Diplomatic Relations Between Lithuania and Japan: An Overview of the Relations Between the Two Nations

JUOZAS SKIRIUS

The year 2022 is important for the history of modern Lithuanian diplomacy and at the same time for Lithuanian culture, because a hundred years ago, on February 16th, the new Lithuanian State was recognized *de jure* by major western powers – the USA, Great Britain, France, Italy, and Germany. At that time, independent Lithuania was also recognized by the Vatican, the head of the Catholic world. The list of countries to have recognized Lithuanian independence included the Far East country of Japan. Recognition came not only in the aftermath of Lithuania's diplomatic efforts, but also of favorite circumstances internationally. Thus, after long four years of Lithuania's diplomatic "fights," in the second half of 1922, Lithuania, a small Eastern European country, finally became a full-fledged, internationally recognized political unit enjoying equal rights in the League of Nations. Our country, until the tragic year 1940, achieved impressive results in the fields of economy, culture, and education in an incredibly short time. The fact of the integration of the Lithuanian nation into the world nations undoubtedly had an impact on achieving so impressive results as well.

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Relations Between the Two Nations in the Pre-war Period

Remembering the origins of the interstate relations between Lithuania and Japan, it is widely noted that on December 20, 1922, the Japanese government, together with the governments of Great Britain, France, and Italy, officially recognized the Lithuanian State *de jure*, laying the foundations for Japan and Lithuania to enter into diplomatic relations. The Japanese government was the first among Asian countries to recognize Lithuania as an independent country. It should also be noted that, according to the documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan recognized the Lithuanian State *de facto*[1] as early as January 3, 1919. It was the second country after Sweden to grant such, very important, recognition for the nascent Lithuanian State. However, historians have not yet researched more into this fact, especially to specify if it was the recognition of the Lithuanian government or of the Lithuanian State *de facto*. And at the same time try to explain why the far-off Japanese government favored the Lithuanian State so strongly.

Based on Japan's foreign policy of the time and its attitude towards Russia, which was ravaged by a brutal civil war, Japanese politicians were more concerned about the Russian State being weak and fragmented, as it claimed territories in the Far East. Such an approach was contrary to the USA policy, which advocated for a democratic "indivisible Russia," which, according to the Americans, would include all non-Russian peoples, including the Lithuanians, who were part of Tsarist Russia. Individual documents from the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania show that the Japanese government, through its representatives in various European countries and the USA, on meeting Lithuania's envoys, inquired about the Lithuanian issue, which entered the sphere of Japan's interests in Eastern

[1] Information of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania from 1922. Office of the Chief Archivist of Lithuania (Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas; henceforth – LCVA). F. 383, ap. 7, b. 295, l. 40; Čepėnas, *Naujųjų laikų Lietuvos istorija*, 717; *Lietuvos užsienio reikalų*, 414.

European countries, especially Russia's western border. It was important for Japan that the states in this region were strong, as possible allies in the future.[2] Although the Lithuanian-Japanese relations were not characterized by intensity and closeness at that time, a certain favor of Japan towards the Lithuanians and the State of Lithuania can be felt. Understandably, this was due to Japan having no territorial claims in Europe and avoiding any obligations against the European states that were settling their disputable border issues after the First World War.

The Lithuanian government, considering Japan's favorable attitude, tried to establish closer political-economic relations with Japan and, through Japan, put some pressure on the major Western powers, accelerating their decision to recognize the Lithuanian State *de jure*. At the end of 1921, the Lithuanian government even appointed its *chargé d'affaires*, Tomas Norus-Naruševičius, who resided in London, as the representative of Lithuanian affairs in Japan,[3] because he knew the peculiarities of that country and had visited it in 1917. In his letter of December 6, 1921, with reference to Lithuania's recognition *de jure*, Naruševičius appealed to the Japanese authorities through ambassador Gonsuke Hayashi, but his letter did not bring the desired result.[4] Despite this, the representative of Lithuania (and later other representatives as well) tried to maintain contacts with the Embassy of Japan in London and made efforts to get the consent of the Japanese to present their credentials to the Emperor of Japan. Unfortunately, we have no information about the results of such efforts. Maybe, the Japanese archives will reveal it in the future. Despite a lack of such information, we do not notice any greater interest of Japanese politicians in Lithuania at that time.

[2] Report of Vytautas Gylys, representative of Lithuania in Finland, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania of 19 06 1919. LCVA. F. 383, ap. 7, b. 100, l. 37 (and other documents).

[3] Transcript of the 03 12 1921 letter of T. Naruševičius, Envoy of Lithuania in London, to the Japanese Ambassador in London (in English). LCVA, f. 648, ap. 1, b. 332, l. 13.

[4] "Nuo diplomatinio pripažinimo." Online.

Japan's political role in international relations was prominent. The Japanese ambassador to France, together with the representatives of Great Britain, France and Italy, had joined an important political organization – The Conference of Ambassadors, which was set up by a resolution of the Supreme Council of the Antante and was active from 1919 to 1931 in Paris. The Conference of Ambassadors was an informal alternative for the League of Nations. The aim of the Conference of Ambassadors was to oversee the implementation of the Treaty of Versailles (signed on June 28, 1919), to resolve disputable issues, such as, e.g., the Klaipėda issue.

It should also be remembered that Japan supported Lithuania in its dispute over the Klaipėda Region in 1922–1923 and advocated for the transfer of this Region to Lithuania. This can clearly be seen in the speech of S. Sasaki, Japan's representative in Estonia, delivered on October 18, 1922, in which he advocated that the Klaipėda Region be transferred to Lithuania (after recognizing it *de jure*) as soon as possible, because, as he put it, Lithuania without Klaipėda is "a small child without hands and legs."[5] On February 16, 1923, the Conference of Ambassadors recognized the Klaipėda Region sovereignty rights for Lithuania. Japan was one the signatories to the Klaipėda Convention, signed on May 8, 1924 in Paris.[6] It is also interesting to note that when the representatives of Great Britain, France and Italy in Kaunas presented the Lithuanian government with an ultimatum note on February 2, 1926, in which it was accused of organizing the uprising in Klaipėda, Japan did not join them.[7] Consequently, this can be seen as Japan's aim to support Lithuania as though by placing a wedge between Germany and Russia. Japanese politicians rightly anticipated that Bolshevik Russia could only strengthen with the help of Germany, the most disadvantaged country after the war. And so it happened. Regardless of that, with the current circumstances after the First World War and

[5] Žiugžda, *Po diplomatijos skraiste*, 118.
[6] Žostautaitė, *Klaipėdos kraštas*, 31–36.
[7] Ibid., 31.

fortunately for Lithuania, Japan's political interests in a way coincided with its support for the Lithuanian State and its independence. It was a considerable gift for the small new state.

Shortly afterwards, Japan's Representative Office was established in Riga to maintain diplomatic relations with Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, which operated there in 1919–1923. It changed its locations though: in 1923–1935 it operated in Berlin, and in 1935–1940 again in Riga. Whereas the Lithuanian diplomats residing in London, Paris, Washington, Riga, Berlin, even in Stockholm and Copenhagen were assigned to represent Lithuania's interests in Japan, or rather to maintain contacts.

After Lithuania signed several agreements with Japan, a possibility arose for it to appoint its own representatives. Lithuania took advantage of that, and the establishment of the Honorary Consulate of Lithuania was approved in Tokyo on May 15, 1935, which was later approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan on August 13th of that same year. The position of the Honorary Consul of Lithuania in Japan was held until 1940 by a businessman, Masadzhi Yasaka, who headed the trade company Yasaka Shiodzhi Kaysha.[8] This created more favorable conditions for the development of economic and cultural relations between Lithuania and Japan. One more Consulate of Lithuania operated in Harbin (China), through which Lithuania's relations with Japan were also maintained.

Chiune Sugihara, Vice Consul of Japan, was the first Japanese diplomat. He resided in Kaunas in 1939–1940, and is best known to the general public. Based on his humanistic beliefs, with the help of the Lithuanian authorities, he saved the lives of Polish Jews who escaped from the persecution of the German Nazis by issuing them visas to Japan.[9] Visas were also stamped on international-level documents provided to Jews by the Lithuanian authorities.[10]

[8] "Nuo diplomatinio pripažinimo." Online.

[9] Jazavita, "Apie Kauną." Online; Strelcovas, *Geri, blogi*, 245–253.

[10] Procuta, "Antano Gurevičiaus sąrašų įvadas," 23–25.

Another more interesting fact – at the invitation of Augustinas Voldemaras, the Prime Minister of Lithuania, Yasaka Sugimura, Deputy Secretary of the League of Nations visited Lithuania on June 22–26, 1929. He became more widely familiar with our country, met with President Antanas Smetona and the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prof. Augustinas Voldemaras. His visit to Lithuania when fervent discussions were taking place in the League of Nations to settle the Lithuanian-Polish conflict,[11] also illustrated a certain favorable attitude of Japan towards our country. The Lithuanian press covered this extraordinary fact quite extensively and even emphasized the human openness of this Japanese diplomat: "His statement is characterized by undiplomatic clarity." While giving his interview, Yasaka Sugimura said that for the Lithuanian nation and its young state, in order to achieve the appropriate level of culture, i.e., to be among the highly cultured states of the world, it would take a lot of work to overcome a lot of obstacles, to take care of internal order and external peace. At the same time, he emphasized the role of the League of Nations in regulating conflicts and establishing peace in the world.[12] He made it clear that Lithuania had rightly chosen to become a member of the League of Nations. It seems that this gave the Lithuanians confidence in this organization.

Lithuania and Japan established direct economic relations only after signing an agreement on the abrogation of entry visas in 1929 and an agreement on trade and shipping in 1930. The latter agreement was signed at the initiative of Japan, but Japanese goods, due to the geographical conditions (a large distance) and competition from Western European countries, did not find a large market in Lithuania. According to the volume of Lithuania's trade with foreign countries, Japan's position was at the end of the first twenty or within the first thirty countries among Lithuania's trading partners throughout the 1930s.[13] In general, it was symbolic trade, focused rather on the more distant future.

11 Vilkelis, *Lietuvos ir Lenkijos santykiai*, 162–171.

12 "Prie Sugimuros apsilankymo," 1.

13 *Lietuvos statistikos metraštis 1938*, 252; *Lietuvos užsienio prekyba 1938*, XII-XIII.

Japan began to export its goods to Lithuania as early as 1920, although in negligible amounts. The amounts of its annual volumes of goods ranged between a few hundred and a few thousand litas. Japan's imports were the largest in 1929 – amounting to 377.6 thousand litas, which only made up 0.12 % of Lithuania's total imports.[14] Whereas Lithuanian goods, as shown by official statistics, found their way to Japan as late as 1933, and only for a tiny amount of 200 litas. From 1935 Lithuanian exports to Japan reached the following amounts: 18.6 thousand litas in 1935 (the largest amount), 10.1 thousand litas in 1936, 15.5 thousand litas in 1937, 4.2 thousand litas in 1938, etc.[15] These were very small amounts indeed. Lithuanian exports to Japan included butter, scrap metal, honey, flax, and small quantities of other products (cheese, sugar, etc.). Japanese imports in Lithuania included cellulose, haberdashery, electrical goods, carpets. Japanese fountain-pens were popular in Lithuania as well. Lithuania's trade balance with Japan was always negative. It should be noted that Lithuania had more profitable and closer markets for its goods in Europe; therefore, it was not interested in increasing Japanese imports or shipping its goods to Japan in larger quantities.

The tragic events for Lithuania and the Lithuanian nation in 1940 – the loss of statehood – led to the liquidation of legations and consulates of foreign states in Lithuania. One of the last representative offices to leave Kaunas was the Consulate of Japan, which operated until September 5, 1940.[16] The political relations between Lithuania and Japan were broken for a long time.

Knowledge of Japan in Lithuania Until the Mid-twentieth Century

Information about Japan reached Lithuanian society as early as a few centuries ago. Romualdas Neimantas, a researcher of the history of cultural relations between Lithuania and Japan, wrote

14 *Lietuvos užsienio prekyba 1933*, XV.
15 *Lietuvos užsienio prekyba 1938*, XII-XIII.
16 Skirius, "Lietuvos Užsienio reikalų," 410.

that the first to report about Japan was the Jesuit Andrius Rudamina in the 1620s–1630s. The first to visit Japan was the Lithuanian nobleman Juozapas Goškevičius of Vilnius Governorate. He was appointed the first consul of Russia in Japan and worked in this country in 1858–1865.[17] He was also the first specialist in the Japanese language in Lithuania. He also knew Chinese, Manchurian, Korean and Mongolian, and published a Russian-Japanese dictionary. He is considered the pioneer of Japanese studies in Lithuania.[18]

The first articles about Japan in the Lithuanian press are found in 1891 in the newspaper *Žemaičių ir Lietuvos apžvalga*, which was issued in Tilsit. The serialized article *Japonijos muczelninkai*, published in fifteen issues, deals with issues of Catholics in Japan in the seventeenth century. It also provides some information about earthquakes and the First Sino-Japanese War.[19]

The war between Russia and Japan in 1904–1905 and Russia's defeat significantly increased the interest of the Lithuanian intelligentsia in Japan. The war showed that even small nations could defeat large empires. The future chairman of the Social Democratic Party, a signatory to the Act of February 16 and the first chairman of the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania (Lith. VLIK), and also the first Lithuanian, Steponas Kairys, disguised as Dėdė, in 1906 wrote and published three books in Lithuanian about Japan, its nature, people and major historical events, such as the abolition of serfdom and the promulgation of Japan's Constitution.[20] It was a peculiar tribute of the Lithuanians to the Japanese. These books about Japan, written in Lithuanian, are considered the first sowing of Japanese studies in Lithuania.

In August of 1916, two Lithuanian public figures – Martynas Yčas, a member of the Russian Duma, and Jonas Žilius-Žilinskas, a Lithuanian-American priest, visited Japan on their way to the

17 Neimantas, *Nuo Nemuno iki Fudzijamos*, 5–6, 9.
18 "Japonijos ir Lietuvos santykiai." Online.
19 Kumpis, "Istoriniai, kultūriniai," 4.
20 Railienė, "Pirmosios žinios," 93–102.

USA. They visited Shimonoseki, Kyoto, Tokyo, and Nikko, and bordered a ship bound to America in the port of Yokohama. Yčas described his impressions in his book of memoirs which was published in 1935. He noted that the Japanese had long enjoyed the fruits of European civilization, "taking for themselves the best and the most perfect of all things." Imitating the Europeans and trying to Europeanize their country, they maintain their traditions, practice ceremonies such as tea drinking, and preserve the relics of their past.[21]

Japan was described in great detail by our famous traveler Matas Šalčius. In 1936, he published a series of his impressions *Svečiuose pas keturiasdešimt tautų* (book 6) of which is dedicated to the Far East and Japan. Šalčius drew attention to the industriousness of the Japanese, saying that "they are hardworking, diligent and persevering." According to him, after the Meiji Revolution in 1868, "Japan took off like a charm", because it was able to take many things over from other countries.[22] Šalčius, it seems, was urging the Lithuanian reader to learn from the Japanese. The then media of the Republic of Lithuania introduced the public to the cultural life of Japan, its history, poetry and music, especially Japanese art and architecture. At that time, as many as 24 translations of Japanese literature came out, mostly in periodicals. In the field of cultural contacts, a few Japanese exhibitions were hosted in the M.K. Čiurlionis Gallery in Kaunas. Several books by foreign travelers about Japan, describing local life as seen through the eyes of Europeans, were also translated.[23]

Several articles published in Japanese newspapers broadened Japan's knowledge of Lithuania. Priest Albinas Margevičius, one of the first Lithuanians to live in Japan at that time, not only wrote about Japan for the Lithuanian press, but also promoted Lithuania in the Land of the Rising Sun. He even organized an exhibition of Lithuanian books and periodicals there.[24] Japan was introduced

21 Yčas, *Atsiminimai*, 216–220.
22 Šalčius, *Svečiuose pas 40 tautų*, 234, 238.
23 Vaščėga, "Lietuvos ir Japonijos ekonominiai," 189.
24 Ibid.

to Lithuanian residents at that time not only in the Catholic press, but also in at least 25 other secular publications: *Aidas, Darbininkas, Diena, Karys, Lietuvos žinios, Moteris, Sekmadienis,* etc. Each of them wrote about this country one or more times.[25]

Bilateral Relations in the Soviet Period

After the Second World War, the Lithuanian SSR and the defeated Japan built bilateral relations slowly. The contacts between these countries were highly restricted. Lithuanian cultural figures – authors and poets – did not forget Japan and were not indifferent to the Japanese tradition. S. Geda, K. Korsakas, J. Degutytė, J. Vaičiūnaitė, J. Mikelinskas, T.A. Rudokas and others touched on Japanese images and interpreted Japanese themes in their own way. Interest was growing not only in Lithuania in Japan, but also in Japan in Lithuania. The M.K. Čiurlionis Club based in Japan contributed a lot in introducing the Japanese to Lithuania. The first Japanese researcher of Lithuanian studies, Prof. Ikuo Murata, who translated into English *The Seasons* of K. Donelaitis, *The Forest of Anykščiai* of A. Baranauskas, *Egle the Queen of Serpents* and other Lithuanian fairy tales, is inextricably linked to this club as well.[26] Thanks to his efforts, a group of Japanese became interested in Lithuania, its language and culture.

After the war, much was written about Japanese industry, which in the 1950s–60s experienced something of a boom, and was called "a Japanese miracle." The researcher Romualdas Neimontas counted the articles on Japanese industry and science that were contributed to the Lithuanian press by Lithuanian scientists: A. Ališauskas (28), G. Bajoras (44), J. Grigas (176), R. Makuška (389), etc.[27]

The Olympic Games of 1964 in Tokyo should also be noted, in which 16 athletes from Lithuania participated, representing

[25] Kumpis, "Istoriniai, kultūriniai," 5.
[26] Neimantas, *Nuo Nemuno iki Fudzijamos*, 77–78.
[27] Ibid., 16.

the USSR national team. Sports journalists Aleksandras Icikavičius (who signed under the pseudonym Imantas Aleksaitis) and Mindaugas Barysas who worked there, contributed detailed series of articles to newspapers.[28] Thus, in the Soviet period, Japan was no way an unheard country for the Lithuanians.

Lithuania of March 11th and Japan

Lithuanian-Japanese relations strengthened both quantitatively and qualitatively after Lithuania reinstated its independence and Japan again recognized Lithuania as an independent state on September 6, 1991. Japan was one of the countries to officially recognize Lithuania's independence the earliest. The mutual interest that followed after that increasingly strengthened: visits of both Lithuanians to Japan and of Japanese to Lithuania became more frequent, various agreements were signed and different events were held. Many of these visits were top-level, including official visits of the Prime Ministers and Presidents of both countries and return visits. The culmination to all such visits was the visit of the Japanese Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko in Lithuania on May 26–27, 2007.[29]

On February 11, 1997, the Embassy of Japan was opened in Lithuania, where *chargés d'affaires* worked. (It is true that before the opening of the Embassy, the Japanese Information Center had operated in Vilnius from 1995.) The first Japanese ambassador to reside in Vilnius was Miyoko Akashi, who was appointed in 2008 (until then Japanese ambassadors resided in Copenhagen).[30] In 1999, the Lithuanian Embassy was established in Tokyo as well. The first permanent Lithuanian ambassador in Japan, Algirdas Kudzys worked in that country in 2002–2006. Currently, six Lithuanian honorary consulates operate in different cities of Japan.

28 "Lietuvos ir Japonijos santykiai sovietmečiu." Online.
29 "Diplomatiniai santykiai nuo 1991 m." Online.
30 Ibid.

After Lithuania declared independence and sought democracy and a free market economy, Japan helped our country develop by providing material help and through technical cooperation. A total of 13 projects, aimed at promoting and improving cultural and educational activities, were implemented in Lithuania in the 2000s. For example, support to the Lithuanian Academy of Music to supplement the variety of its musical instruments, to Vilnius University and Vytautas Magnus University – to renew the Japanese language teaching equipment, etc.[31]

The relations between Japan and Lithuania are currently most noticeable in cultural events and exhibitions, which particularly attract the attention of Lithuanians. Japan's exoticism and its old, rich, and unique traditional culture excite Lithuanian people. Sushi that they have come to like so much is also proof of the spread of Japanese culture in Lithuania. Many Lithuanians have been fond of traditional Japanese martial arts such as judo, karate, aikido, and kendo. Many Japanese martial arts schools have been established in Lithuania, in which people develop their mastery and constantly strengthen their mind.

It is good to note the strengthening of bilateral partnership in the field of economy. Exports of laser devices manufactured in Lithuania to Japan increase rapidly. Lithuanian technologies are used in Japan both in the academic and industrial sectors.[32] Domestic appliances, plastic and rubber products, chemicals and other goods are imported from Japan. Although the trade volumes are not large – Japan's place is within Lithuania's first forty trade partners by size – Japan is important from a political and cultural point of view.

The number of tourists from Japan in Lithuania in the period 2008–2018 increased almost fourfold, to exceed 28 thousand. The number of Lithuanian tourists in Japan is lower – according to calculations, 4,303 tourists visited Japan in 2016. From 2020, incoming tourism was significantly affected by the COVID-19 pan-

[31] "Diplomatinių ryšių tarp Japonijos ir Lietuvos 20-metis." Online.

[32] Ibid.

demic, decreasing by dozens of times.[33] Tourism is a great way to disseminate information about another country and its inhabitants, and to get closer. Furthermore, there is a guaranteed income from the money left by tourists.

Japanese studies researchers in the Center of Oriental Studies at Vilnius University, Klaipėda University and Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas also significantly contribute to the promotion of Japan in Lithuania. In the past three decades, Japanese studies in Lithuania have been developed in various directions, starting with classical studies of Japanese culture, history, art, and philosophy, and ending with studies of its contemporary politics and economy. The works of Romualdas Neimontas, Dalia Švambarytė and others are exceptional in this respect.[34] It should also be noted that the most productive writer in the 1990s about Japan, its life and culture was the expert in the Japanese language, translator, associate professor at Vytautas Magnus University, Aurelijus Zykas, who in 2022 was appointed the Lithuanian ambassador to Japan. He became Lithuania's fifth ambassador to Japan. It is to be hoped that interstate and other relations between Lithuania and Japan will keep strengthening.

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[34] Didvalis, "Japonistika ir lituanistika," 7.

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Translated by DALIA ŠATIENĖ
and KERRY SHAWN KEYS

It was VIDAS MORKŪNAS'S (b. 1963) fortune, good or ill, to grow up in Naujoji Akmenė ("the New Rock"), a city built by the Soviets to service a giant cement works. Set in a northern area of Lithuania where, as it happens, two major dialects of Lithuanian meet the Latvian border, these circumstances undoubtedly had their influence on both Morkūnas's laconic prose with its consistently surprising vocabulary, and on its frequent deep dives into the Soviet milieu. His laconism extends beyond style and ventures into form as well; in an era before short fiction became a literary darling, Morkūnas struggled with publishers who simply did not know what to think of the brevity of his texts. His prose has since gone on to win numerous awards and honors.

The pieces presented here are from his 2019 book, *Pakeleivingų stotys* (The Stations of Fellow Passengers). Utterly fascinating but uniquely disquieting, these stories frequently present situations that could be interpreted in multiple ways, and sometimes there's a whiff of the otherworldly as well. Their subjects are often marginal people not usually subject to literary treatment: criminals, outcasts, and children. Mortality lurks behind every corner, from a corpse who momentarily escapes her coffin, to a pair of wet shoes in a garbage dump that are "immortalized" in a photograph. Drawn with a minimum of telling detail in language as precise as a surgeon's knife, the significance of Morkūnas's texts give the reader pause.

Morkūnas studied language, literature, theater, and scenography in Klaipėda and Vilnius. Besides publishing both poetry and prose, he is a prolific translator, translating from German, English, Polish, and Russian. He currently lives with his wife, another writer and translator, and three daughters, in Vilnius, Lithuania.

***/the nameless

They had a horse. It was of some use anyway—apparently at harvest time the neighbors used to have need of the animal in their orchards or gardens. The renters would feed the flaxen chestnut, too. Otherwise it'd be unlikely it could have pulled for long. They also had a couple of currant bushes and half a pig. Nothing more. There were perhaps fourteen children in the family. They lived nearby, so we'd run into each other. One time I happened to be at their house at dinnertime. There weren't enough chairs, so we squatted, sat, and kneeled everywhere. The children's mother brought in a half-bucket of melted grease and a loaf of bread. This she sliced, and began distributing "dinner." Giving out the bread slices smeared with grease, she would swipe each child's forehead with a greasy wooden spoon—so the marked child couldn't pretend to a second portion. I wasn't snubbed; she gave a slice to me too, but for some reason, she didn't swipe my forehead. Perhaps she perceived that my fate differed from that of her children. If someone had photographed us then, I'd be uncomfortable looking at that photograph now. I kneeled, surrounded by future thieves, rapists, and murderers, unaware that most of their biographies would end early, and roughly alike: condemned to death, overdosed, murdered, poisoned by a fluid of unknown origin... Although if you didn't know, it's unlikely you'd see anything special in that photo: well, a heap of kids in sagging jogging suits with shiny foreheads. And among them, me—unmarked.

***/the bottomless ones

The two of them ran into each other at the station by chance. Although they hadn't seen each other in decades, somehow they recognized each other at once. Alfukas was experienced at asking in a way a person couldn't refuse, and so Remigijus took on driving him to his former home.

The drive was barely two and a half kilometers. At first it even seemed they'd have things to talk about. But Remigijus soon went quiet.

"I'dguzzleabafoonforanachasanyhowI'dhaditontherealpokiedam..." It was difficult to understand the fast-talking Alfukas's chatter.

Remigijus's chest heated from an never-before experienced agitation. He had never socialized before with a hardened recidivist. "Who knows how many people he's killed?" he wondered, ashamed of such unbecoming curiosity.

When they drove out of the city, Alfukas went quiet, too. He stared out the window indifferently, at the fall orchards flying by, at the thin, wind-tossed bushes at the side of the road. Remigijus furtively glanced at the scared, smoke-aged face of the traveler.

"How strange," he thought. "If I was heading for home after so many years, I surely wouldn't ask for a ride. I'd go on foot, looking around, greedily breathing in the air of my childhood..."

They turned from the highway to an overgrown, nearly invisible road, and shortly came up to the returnee's house on the edge of the woods—a collapsed hovel. Alfukas got out, but Remigijus politely stayed sitting in the car.

"Maybe he needs to be by himself," he thought. "Better I don't bother him."

The barely noticeable smell the traveler left behind lingered inside the car: not gas, not cheap liquor, oh no—something considerably darker and heavier.

Alfukas, growing more and more irritable, waded through the yellowed high grass in the yard; going inside the building, he stepped on glass shards and charred logs, and kicked at moldy trash. Driving here, he hoped he'd find people here, he hadn't doubted they would have acquired at least something more valuable. But the house had been long since abandoned, and what hadn't been carried out was burnt, broken, rotten, and rusted.

"Corner that lop maybe," he thought. "But how far would I get with that hearse of his. I'd pile into the first pole. When he drives there, okay, then..."

Alfukas returned to the car carrying rubber boots. They were thickly covered in something, most likely dung from the ruins of a cowshed looming not far away. The sides were stuck together inside; you couldn't even push your feet into them anymore.

"Take them for a fiver?" asked Alfukas when they were out on the highway again. For some reason he held the boots in his arms.

"Why would I need them?" uttered Remigijus, smiling shyly.

"No way I need them, either," muttered the other, and, rolling down the window, flung the rubbers out.

One boot flew off into the water standing in the ditch at the side of the road; the other plopped into the middle of the road. There it remained lolling about.

***/the hapless

The conversation struggled; the decanter emptied slowly. Red spotlight beams carved the twilight; at intervals reflections slid across the ceilings, walls, and pleated curtains. The restaurant designer's conception, to portray the friendship of man with colored glass details on dark brown varnished wood, was dispiriting. The little tables were fully surrounded, the din of voices mixed with the clink of glasses and loud music. On a low stage, the group, which ought to be called a vocal-instrumental ensemble, unmercifully tortured "Hiperbolė". The Sleds and The Credenzas were supposed to climb upon the platform later, at the end of the program.

The musicians began another set, and the dancers behind my back went to wearing out the already-worn parquet. Suddenly someone touched my shoulder and hoarsely inquired:

"May I ask?..."

"For what?" I replied, turning around.

Our table giggled. Fooled by my long hair, the questioner, a known hothead and a frequent client of the police, recoiled with a start.

"I'm sorry... sorry... sorry..." he barely stuttered out.

He did not return to his table. He immediately turned to the door. Although he wore a suit (who knows where that'd been dug out from) and a tie (probably not borrowed), he scurried as if naked. No one noticed, no one cared, but in the moment he did not understand that: his catastrophic mistake—to ask a man to dance!—instantly altered his consciousness, his place in society, his future. Awash in despair, scorched by shame, a faint little sprout of imagination even managed to break through the thick, uncomplicated crust of his everyday life. The young man was dying to roll into a ball, to turn into a mouse, and to disappear into some corner as fast as possible.

In the doorway a lummox he knew by sight smacked him roughly on the shoulder. He did not dare straighten up—he wasn't a big shot anymore.

***/the wealthy

He came into our yard, stopped by the stack of slate, and whimpering and gesturing with his hands, indicated he wanted to buy a single tile. For ten litas. He didn't have any more, or so we understood.

Lifting and inspecting the tiles for quite some time, judging them via some unknown criteria, he finally selected one lying compressed at nearly the bottom of the pile—with a broken corner and a cross brushed on it in blue paint. Scribbled on the curve's billow, it somewhat resembled a swastika.

The man carried his purchase stuck out in front of himself like a shield. "What does a deaf man need slate for?" I wondered silently.

Later I saw that expensively purchased tile a number of times in town. Marching at a lively pace along the dusty sidewalks, our purchaser carried it hugged to his chest or lifted on his back; caught in the street in the rain, he'd cover himself with the slate like a little roof; he didn't let it out of his hands even when waiting in the bus station.

Once I went down a beat-up, overgrown little path through a little park where those seeking adventure collected in the evenings to relax on crumpled, rusty children's slides and wrecked benches. I wouldn't even have noticed the shard of slate—there were quite a few broken things there, particularly futures—but the broken bit with a little blue cross like a swastika caught my eye.

I never saw the deaf man again.

***/the unarmed

We hung around for a good three hours at the trading center, on a crumbling loading dock sown with hardened little spots. Not far away, beyond the dusty bushes, a sleepy town slumped in the afternoon heat. At long last, when our threesome's resolve to unload whatever was required had just about faded away, when just about all the jokes had been told and just about all the cigarettes smoked, a truck came rumbling up. It was hauling tomato sauce.

We set to work briskly. We'd stop to catch our breaths only briefly—the director kindly let us take a box of mineral water from the warehouse—so in a couple of hours we had emptied the trailer. When we got to the last stack next to the end wall, Rulis had a bit of bad luck. The crate, used for many years and never cleaned or washed, was dirty and sticky, so while taking a box of sauce in glass jars from the top row, he accidentally lifted two stuck together. The bottom one immediately broke free and crashed to the trailer floor. Sauce splattered in all directions. The very prime of summer sighed about us; we had already almost earned the decent sum of ten rubles a head, no worries oppressed us and no pains nagged at us. Rulis stood there with his legs apart; with the back of his hand he wiped the red glop from his forehead, and, cursing half-heartedly, giggled together with us. No one on that tiring June afternoon imagined that many years later—on a gloomy fall day without a break in the cloud cover, Rulis would need to return home for a bit, to the wood shed,

where a discarded rickety bed was standing; that they'll be lying in it together, and that stuck in a block of wood—quite handily, as if on purpose, just take it—there'll be an axe; that Rulis will swing it a total of six times (that will be enough); that he'll stand afterwards with his legs spread the same way, and in the same way wipe his forehead with the back of his hand. Just that he won't giggle.

***/early confessions

Anetė didn't come into our yard anymore. I knew why she had soured. She was half a year older than me, but still didn't know how to pronounce a perfectly normal word—candy. She would say "dandy." Dandy and dandy. Correct her or not. I couldn't stand it anymore, and teased her mercilessly. I had two candies. I showed them to her on purpose. And didn't give them to her. I said, "Oh no, what a shame I have no dandies. If I had them, I'll give them to you." She stood there biting her lip and didn't say anything. I saw she was barely holding herself back, she wanted the candy so. I didn't give them to her on purpose. I was cultivating patience. I would have loved to give her all the candy in the world, but I couldn't give in. What kind of man would I be, admitting love first! Anetė sniffed the prettiest nose in the neighborhood, brushed it with the back of her hand, and then rubbed the front of her spotted jacket—supposedly animal fur! A shining streak remained on her chest. Her head hanging, dragging her feet just slightly, she slowly walked home along our neighbors' storage sheds. I barely kept myself from following behind her like some puppy. I couldn't get enough of that walk. But I purposely turned away and ran off. After all, I was cultivating patience.

In the end, I couldn't hold out. From out of their hiding places I collected all the candies—okay, okay, dandies—I'd patiently saved for a long time (some of them were suspiciously hard by then), and with my coat pockets full I trudged over to make

peace. Anetė lived in the next street, beyond the gardens, in a wooden two-story house with two entrances. With every step I got slower and slower. I missed her like some kind of insane madman (that there are such things I knew from my brother), but I was mighty sorry about the candy, too. And besides, I was ashamed to give in first. In their filthy yard—there wasn't the slightest little patch of clean snow—stood a truck with four pieces of wood in the bed's corners. A couple of men I'd never seen before were standing about the entrance and smoking. Suddenly Anetė came out the door. She was wearing this really strange gray nightgown, clearly too big. In March! She didn't pay any attention to those men, or to me. As if she hadn't seen me. The men didn't even glance at the girl; they went on smoking and quietly discussing something. Angry, I stuck my tongue out at her. Where she went with that nightgown, I have no idea. She disappeared. Completely. Now I'll leave those damn candies on purpose, I thought. I'll take them up and leave them by the door. And say goodbye for all time. I'll find someone else. We'll see, what you'll say then!

Full of doubt, I climbed to the second floor up some stairs that creaked hideously and traitorously loud and for some reason were covered with pine branches. If I'm cultivating patience, which is better—to go on to the end, or to right now, as fast as my legs can go, head for home? I decided to keep at least one candy for myself, and, picking out a Karakum, I put it on the curve of the banister. I'll take it when I leave, I thought. Right then I passed a woman I didn't know climbing down. She glared at me like I was some kind of criminal.

Finally I reached the second floor. The door to Anetė's place was open. Inside I heard quiet bustling, crying, whispering. A pine branch rustled under my feet. Shyly stepping inside, I went through the entranceway and stopped in the doorway of the parlor. The room's window was covered in a black cloth with dark green patterns. Burning candles spluttered. There were all kinds of smells. Sad people sat on the benches along both walls. There were neighbors I knew. On a platform in the middle of the room,

piled with flowers, stood a small, brown coffin with two tin letters glued to the end. Who was lying there I did not know. From the doorway I saw just the soles of some little feet, bluish fists of knitted fingers, and the end of a not at all pretty nose. A woman dressed in black with a red face and swollen eyes came over when she saw me. Anetė's mother. She picked me up—I immediately smelled brandy—and carried me over to the coffin.

"How can she be lying here, and so nicely dressed in white, too, with a crocheted hat?" I wondered. "I just saw her outside, in that ridiculous old lady nightgown."

Translated by ELIZABETH NOVICKAS

Dalia Leinarte
Family and the State in Soviet Lithuania: Gender, Law and Society.
New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021. ISBN: 978-1-350-13609-0.

Dalia Leinarte's title tells us what this work is about. Considering women were a part of the Soviet system, she deals with virtually all aspects of life in Soviet Lithuania. Leinarte includes everything from the modernizing aspects of Marxism to the dreariness of daily realities. From Soviet occupation in 1940 to independence in 1990, from marriage policies to the building of housing projects, to such difficult concepts as the *blat,* Leinarte leaves no stone unturned. Methodologically, she uses Soviet law and its realities, which usually could be subverted, anthropological statistics, anecdotal evidence for examples, and everything from archival material to her own experiences. Although she has limited this work's chronologically, she cannot help but compare Lithuania's interwar era and the present, as she obliquely searches for the *mentalité* of the post-Soviet woman.

One of the first steps in the Soviet modernization attempt was to make housewives into workers. The Soviets wanted to transform a rural society forcibly into an urban industrial one. Grad-

ually they achieved this through the collectivization of farming and public housing. In the early housing projects people had to share space. For instance, three or four families had to share two rooms with one bathroom and one kitchen. Interwar Lithuania had been a rural agricultural society where people lived in their own cabins. Writers have romanticized the cabin with its thatched moss-covered roof; however, the cabins usually had no electricity or indoor plumbing. Landless peasants often slept in barns, had no shoes, and maintained very poor hygiene. Ideologically, public housing projects sought to engineer family behavior by having workers stay on the job and use the workplace for cultural activities, enrichment, and entertainment thereby strengthening the collective. Love also became ideological. Erotic love may be a part of nature, but the Soviets only wanted to increase births. Erotic love was selfish whereas love for societal betterment was on a higher plane. These are only several example where Soviet law, ideology, and realties intersected.

The Soviets broke the patriarchy of the Catholic Church by allowing for divorce and abortion, but they replaced one patriarchy with a more pernicious legalistic one. Domestic violence caused by alcoholism was the leading reason for divorce. Yet here again judges turned a blind eye in many of these cases. Having been under Tsarist rule, a Russian habit of outdrinking your friends was part of both cultures. Officially the party line was anti-alcohol, but women often had to prove the man was a danger to society. Divorce laws favored men. The word 'Soviet' included Russification and Marxism which became justifications to distort the natural evolution of all aspects of Lithuanian society.

The *blat* is another type of reality. Although indefinable, everyone knew it's meaning. It was not necessarily a bribe but more like the trade of influence. If a family wanted to buy a car, they might have to wait a decade. Cash might not be enough to jump ahead in line of those waiting for a car or any number of other items. A good *blat* could sway the way judges decided divorce cases. It was another way of circumventing the system.

The other reality was instead of making everyone equal, men dominated everything. Women had four jobs: marriage, homemaking, raising children, and earning a wage. The patriarchy

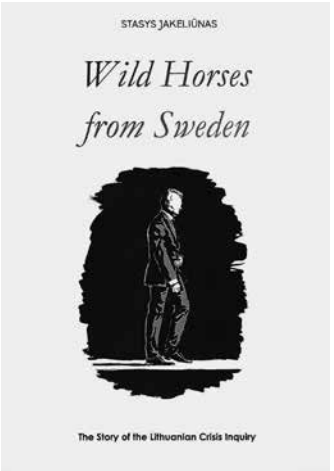
that existed in the interwar period solidified. Quotas for woman representation existed in all institutions, but rarely in decision making roles. The patriarchy permeated all aspects of society. The law codified the patriarchy in cases of property rights, child custody, and domestic abuse.

As a contemporary of independent Lithuania, Leinarte also advocates for women's right today. Having lived approximately half her life under the Soviets, she knows experientially the subject of which she writes. Leinart was a professor of history at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, a fellow at the University of Cambridge, and the chairperson of the UN CEDAW Committee. Aside from her activities eliminating all forms of discrimination against women throughout the world, Leinart remains the foremost Lithuanian scholar of women and gender-related issues. She has published three books in English and authored and edited one other book in English. The preparatory book for this work came from Leinarte's *Adopting and Remembering Soviet Reality: Life Stories of Lithuanian Women, 1945–1970*, (2010) in which she interviewed ten women living under Stalinism. But even in a closed authoritarian system living and working conditions gradually changed. Women who endured Stalin's rapid sovietization under the cloud of a war-ravaged country lived under two patriarchies. The Catholic village priest still retained his authority, whereas in the 80's and 90's a cynical form of secularization made gains for atheism. Despite a shortage of products consumerism spread, even though it seemed like there was nothing to buy. With the *blat*, the *nomenklatūra* became aware of the shortage of products that could be bought freely in the West.

Because Lithuanian is a language inaccessible to most non-Lithuanians, scholars like Leinart want to share their research with a wider audience, hence many Lithuanian scholars are victims of poor English translations. An awkward translation should not dissuade the reader. The reader will understand this book's content and substance. The substance of this work is both original and important. It will no doubt remain the definitive work on Lithuanian women living under the Soviet regime for a long time.

VIRGIL KRAPAUSKAS, Chowan University

Wild Horses from Sweden



Stasys Jakeliūnas
Wild Horses from Sweden – The Story of Lithuanian Crisis Inquiry.
Brussels–Vilnius, THE GREENS/EFA in the European Parliament, 2020.
Paperback, 123 pages.

I have a habit of looking at a new book to see what is says on the back cover. Usually it gives a clue as what to expect and who the author is. The introductory paragraph is written by G. Nausėda, President of Lithuania and former chief economist of SEB bank, testifying at the Lithuanian Crisis Inquiry Commission: "There was a wild horse race. Everyone was racing […] The Bank of Lithuania probably should have done what it did a few years later, that is set the so-called responsible lending rules that would have stopped those simply inevitable […] races that market participants themselves could hardly resist". M. Anderson, former director of Sweden's Financial Inspection, reflecting on bank supervision at the Swedish Parliamentary Hearings on the Baltic Crisis had this to say: "The instruments were there. We choose, for a variety of reasons, not to use them. Seen in retrospect, we underestimated the problems there and perhaps should have acted differently". And the book's author Stasys Jakeliūnas (SJ) gave his assessment: "2009 ushered in a new era for the country. A large portion of the world was suffering along with us, and we had to figure out where we fit into the bigger picture. During

this time, eight EU countries applied to the European Commission and IMF for help. We could see that they weren't being made to do the things President Grybauskaitė has warned about. What seemed particularly odd was that the neighbor Poland was not suffering at all. I became curious as to why Poland wasn't experiencing the same severe problems as us".

The table of contents includes the following entries which shows the diversity of topics covered in the 123 pages of the book: "Euphoria and then a Crash," "The Crisis Hits," "The Steel Magnolia," "Swedish Bank Run in the Era of Austerity," "The Inquiry Begins," "A Banker President," "The Testimonies," "The Corpses of Vilibor," "The Inquiry Winds Down," "Brussels Beckons," "Parliament Approval, Epilogue," "Appendix: Summary of 2009–2010 Lithuanian Crisis Inquiry Findings." The book contains hundreds of episodes and names of key players. As expected, SJ played an important role in most of these developments. It included political, economic and financial forces and, sometimes, their conflicting interactions, affecting the dynamics of planning and change.

In the "Preface," we read that in the Winter of 2009 Lithuania was plummeting headlong into a major crisis. For months they had been told that the global financial upheaval triggered by the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008 wouldn't affect Lithuania. They were told that the Swedish banks which dominated Lithuania's financial system were very conservative. They would not have engaged in the kind of risky behavior seen in Britain and America. However, by January 2009 it was clear that was not the case. The "Wild West" era of real estate lending spurred by Lithuania's entry into the European Union was having consequences. The Scandinavian banks pulled their money out of the Baltics, lending dried up, and the construction and real estate sectors collapsed. Soon there was unemployment and mass migration.

It took many years for Lithuania to recover from the financial collapse. Few people understood what had happened. There were many unanswered questions. "Why had the country become so dependent on Scandinavian banks? Why did the government refuse to go to the European Commission and International Mon-

etary Fund for help? Why had the inter-bank lending rate been so erratic? And why was the central bank so unwilling to account for what happened?" (p. 7).

So in 2016 when SJ was elected to the Lithuanian Parliament, he was determined to get some answers. His efforts to get to the bottom of what happened in the crisis led to the revelation about Swedish banks lending to the Baltics without any restraint – running around like "wild horses", and then casting the countries aside as the crisis hit. Investigations also uncovered government interference that went all the way to a VIP in Brussels. In the course of their work, they were viciously attacked. SJ was called a "looter" by senior officials at the central bank. His committee members were called "useful idiots" and "little green men", accused of being put up to this for political reasons.

As SJ finished up the inquiry in 2019, he was surprised at being elected to the European Parliament. "It was an opportunity I couldn't pass up, but it meant I had to leave the investigation in the hands of others. For a while, it looked like our work was at risk of being confined to the dustbin of history. But on June 4, 2020… our inquiry's conclusions (see Appendix) were adopted by the full Lithuanian Parliament with a vote of 63 to 41. It was one of the proudest moments of my life. The truth was finally out" (p. 8). This was the first time the story of this inquiry was told to an international audience.

SJ was born in Kazakhstan to Lithuanian parents. They had been imprisoned in Kazakhstan during Stalin's rule. His mother was a guerilla messenger and got caught. His father criticized Stalin's regime while serving in the army and faced the inevitable consequences. Eventually, they were released, but neither could go back to Lithuania. They stayed in Kazakhstan where their paths crossed and SJ was born. In 2020, SJ decided to visit his birthplace. On the way there, the train got caught in a snow storm. "As we sat there stuck in the snow, I thought of all the thousands of people who had died and been thrown into ditches at Stalin's labor camps. I thought about how much my parents had sacrificed for speaking their minds. And I thought, 'I can't

let all that we uncovered during this investigation sit mothballed in a drawer somewhere. People need to know the truth'" (p. 9).

What emerged from the inquiry was that major mistakes were made in the lead-up to the crisis and the government's response to it. It also became clear that people knew more about what went wrong than they're now willing to admit. In the pages that followed, SJ outlined what was learned and how the same mistakes could be repeated again. Some things have improved since the 2008 crisis as far as regulation and supervision of the financial system, at the global and Lithuanian level. Some unhealthy conduct has returned. The financial institutions in Lithuania are still haunted by the experience, and exercise more caution. Banks are much less dependent on short-term funding from their parent banks than they were before the crisis.

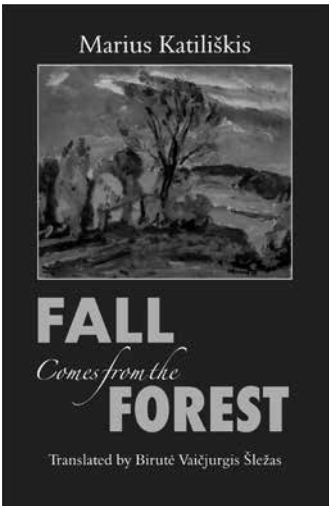
In the "Lessons Learned" portion of the "Epilogue," a question is raised: What are the key problems in the banking and financial systems that need fixing? For SJ, it is the fractional reserve banking model at the European and global level. The other problem, at least at the EU level, is the fragmentation of the financial supervision system. Four different models of supervision are now used in member states which causes major issues for the development of an efficient European single market in financial services. It prevents the banking union from being completed and does not allow faster movement towards the capital market union.

"So my next inquiry this time at the European Parliament, may take me in that direction in addition to my work on the ECON committee. If we want to prevent and mitigate risks of future crises, we need to go deep into the core of the problem and try to fix it. And we need to do this despite the resistance and opposition such work sometimes gives rise to, as certainly was the case with the Lithuanian crisis inquiry. Sometimes getting to the root cause of crises like this one may be uncomfortable. It may shake our confidence in the system that we rely on. Yet looking the other way, solves nothing. It's a lesson I learned from our inquiry work, and it will continue to inform my political work going forward" (p. 103).

Just for the record, I need to mention the summary of the 2009–2010 Lithuanian Crisis Inquiry Findings. It contains 43 findings pertaining to the following: Role of major banks in causing the economic boom and bust in Lithuania; Fiscal policy decisions that amplified the economic and financial cycle; Detrimental government borrowing policies and untapped opportunities for international financial assistance; Economically untenable state-sponsored mortgage load insurance; Bank-induced interest rate shock and indications of interbank rate manipulation; Insufficient supervision of the banking sector.

The reviewed book was translated from English into Lithuanian by Vadimas Vileita and was also published in 2020: Stasys Jakeliūnas. *Laukiniai arkliai iš Švedijos – Parlamentinio krizės tyrimo užkulisiai.* Illustrations in both books are by Thomas Riminy.

ROMUALDAS KRIAUČIŪNAS



Marius Katiliškis
Fall Comes from the Forest.
Translated by Birutė Vaičjurgis-Šležas. Pica Pica Press, 2022.

***M**iškais ateina ruduo*, Marius Katiliškis's magnum opus, is regarded by many critics as the greatest novel by a Lithuanian writer in exile; it certainly belongs in the pantheon of the most important Lithuanian literary works of any time. It caused a stir upon its publication in 1957, in part because of its realistic depictions of sexual relations. In all fairness, the book is not pornographic or even particularly "sexy" in the popular sense of the word; passionate longing, erotic frustration, and sexual fulfillment are depicted as part and parcel of the natural world, not as emotions or elements apart from it. Desire is as inevitable as the setting of the sun, the changing of the seasons.

In *Miškais ateina ruduo*, Katiliškis presents the reader with a bleak vision of rural life in northern Lithuania between the two world wars. We see the brutal way that class differences determine job security and upward mobility. Nature in the form of seasonal shifts in weather affects the lives of the characters as well. Alcohol, rampant in the Lithuanian countryside at the time, exacerbates existing hardships, often leading to violence; Katiliškis does not shy away from presenting an accurate picture of this cultural affliction. If one were to compare him to an Amer-

ican novelist of the time period, it would be John Steinbeck, whose emphasis on class, use of vernacular language, and raw depictions of human behavior mark him as a master of literary realism and naturalism.

Katiliškis's novel is challenging, both in its original Lithuanian and in its masterful translation by Birutė Vaičjurgis Šležas, where it appears as *Fall Comes from the Forest*. In addition to its dark subject matter, the book is a long and sometimes uncomfortable read, especially for someone used to contemporary novels with strong, independent women. Agnė, the object of Tilius's, the main character's, desire, is only seventeen years old, and is described in ways that suggest a girl much younger. In many instances, the women in the novel are not as fully realized as the men, who are more interesting in part because we see them at work, engaging in physical labor, joking and competing with each other. The women live in a *smaller* world, constrained by their roles as daughters and wives. One exception is Zuzana, the first wife of the landowner Doveika. She is described as pigeon-toed, pock-marked, and "broad like the bottom of a dough bucket." Doveika marries her because she is resourceful, sturdy, and a hard worker. She is largely responsible for his financial success, a fact he more or less ignores in his longing for a younger, more attractive wife.

Despite these limitations, Katiliškis' epic remains a classic because of its author's lyrical prose style, his deep appreciation of the nature of the Lithuanian countryside, and his profound understanding of the lives of the people who populate it. Katiliškis plumbs the depth of human emotion—greed, lust, envy, fear, joy—to present a vision of a world both glorious and terrifying.

A translation of *Miškais* into English has been long overdue, although anyone who's read the novel in Lithuanian will understand the myriad reasons for the delay in bringing the book to an English-reading audience. The fact that it's linguistically complex and takes place at a time removed from the present by almost a century makes it an arduous undertaking for any translator. Birutė Vaičjurgis Šležas has risen to the occasion. Šležas, who was born and raised in the United States to Lithuanian

parents who spent time in German DP camps, had to have (or acquire) not only a comprehensive understanding of the history and geography of the region, but also a thorough knowledge of the difficult Lithuanian language, its nuances, peculiarities, idiomatic expressions, and dialects.

Šležas writes the following about the process of translation: "While capturing the lyricism and poetry of Katiliškis's depictions of nature was certainly a challenge, it was the language of the common folk that, at times, had me tearing my hair out." While literal (word for word) translations sometimes worked for Šležas, she also had to find equivalent expressions in English for words or phrases distinctly Lithuanian, sometimes reaching out to the editors of the project, Violeta Kelertas and Elizabeth Novickas, as well as to language experts in Lithuania. What helped Šležas find the rhythm of how ordinary people talk was growing up in a working class neighborhood in Boston where she heard different dialects of English every day.

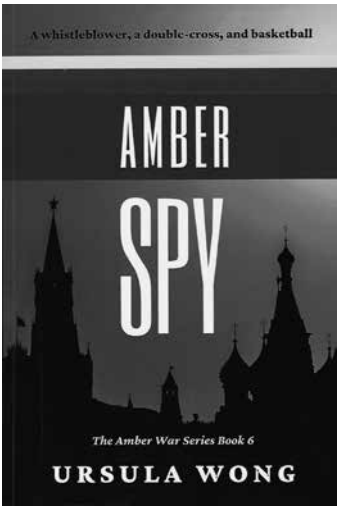
Translating the novel has been a labor of love for Šležas, who discovered Marius Katiliškis in her early twenties, when she and two friends produced a weekly radio show in English on Lithuanian themes. She had translated a short story by Katiliškis for the program; one of her colleagues, Romas Šležas, suggested she read *Miškais ateina ruduo*, and lent her his copy. Birutė Šležas writes that after reading just a few paragraphs, she fell in love with the book.

She also fell in love with the man who lent her the book and married him.

This is an important translation of a classic of Lithuanian literature. *Fall Comes from the Forest* is published by Pica Pica Press, which continues to bring excellent translations of great Lithuanian works to an English-speaking audience. More information about the press can be found at https://www.picapica.press/home.

DAIVA MARKELIS

“A whistleblower, a double-cross, and basketball”



Ursula Wong
Amber Spy.
The Amber War Series Book 6
Genretarium Publishing –
Chelmsford, MA. 2022.
Paperback. 270 pages.

The front cover of the book also includes the phrase given above, in the title of this review. The back cover of the book makes the promise of what to expect. “Investigative reporter Vit Partenkas receives a tip that could mean the end of the current president of Russia, a woman who rules with an iron fist. Destroying her would save his home in Eastern Europe from possible invasion and give Vit the acclaim as he always wanted. But at what cost? Soon Vit is running for his life. He is desperate to do something, but how can he survive when his opponent commands an army of secret agents? He turns to the only organization that can help: the CIA, and a man he doesn’t quite trust… *Amber Spy* is an intoxicating espionage thriller served with a chaser of history”.

In the *Preface* we learn that Ursula Wong has written six books about Lithuania. *Amber Spy* is the latest book in the Amber Wars series. It combines basketball, with Russian espionage, elections, and Putin’s initiative to create a new internet. Then the author asks: What could be a better backdrop for a modern-day thriller?

The book series began with *Amber Wolf* – the story of partisans who fought the Red Army occupying Lithuania during WWII. *Amber War*, the second book in the series, shows the violent steps the Soviet Union took to quell the partisan fighting that continued after the war ended. It includes sending spies into the partisan camps. Next, the series turns to political issues and Russia's relationships with her neighbors. *Amber Widow* considers the potential terrorist consequences of the nuclear waste stolen from the power plant in Southern Lithuania. The novel positions Ukraine as a political pawn. The author notes that the recent political events involving Russian troops on Ukraine tragically confirm that Ukraine is still a political pawn.

The fourth book, *Black Amber*, showcases world reaction to the Russian pipelines under the Baltic Sea bringing vast quantities of natural gas directly to Germany and explores the consequences of an act of pipeline terrorism. In *Gypsy Amber*, the fifth book, Russia unleashes a devious plot to thwart China's alarming territorial expansion into Central Asia.

Amber Spy dips into WWII history, as do all books in the series. The author noted that the story line is fictional, although most of the supporting information is based on facts. She combines the worlds of Russian espionage and Lithuanian basketball. She chose espionage because she was interested in how it evolved in Russia since the 20th century. *Amber Spy* is a novel and it addresses part of the tragic story of Jews in Lithuania. Many Lithuanians were forced into service when the Nazis occupied the country in 1941. They had to obey orders or risk death. Ninth Fort in Kaunas, Lithuania, was the site of two mass shootings in 1941. Over four thousand Jews were killed. Today it's a place for contemplation, learning, and remembering. The massive granite statues marking the site reminds the author of souls rising from the earth in semi-human form.

The author also wanted to celebrate basketball which is very popular in Lithuania. The Lithuanian basketball team represented a free nation for the first time at the Barcelona Olympics in 1992. It played the "Dream Team" from the US in the quarterfi-

nals and lost. Then the Lithuanians played the Unified Team made up with athletes from the states of the former Soviet Union. "The nail-biter represented the tiny country's resolve to be free. She had just demanded independence. She had to beat the Russians, and she did. Lithuania's bronze medal and their team's heartwarming story has gone a long way to promoting sports in the country. Basketball has become more than a game in Lithuania. It's a passion, an obsession, and to some, a persevering symbol of hope and freedom" (p. IV).

As I was reading *Amber Spy*, a feeling of déjà resurfaced. When Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* was published in English, I received a copy of it as a present on the occasion of being drafted into the US Army. I started reading it and soon realized that there were too many names and characters to remember. So I started writing them down for future reference. Soon I had to give this up, because there were way too many names for me not only to remember, but to absorb. I gave up this record-keeping, but forced myself to read the book as a courtesy to my brother-in-law who gave me the book. Reading *Amber Spy* recreated a similar reaction. Only at the end of the book, after finishing it, I found a *List of Characters* containing about 35 names. Way too many for me to absorb and enjoy reading and place everyone in some order. This list was a great, but belated idea, having been placed at the end of the book.

Ursula Wong is currently researching a seventh book, *Amber Exile*. It was inspired by her uncle's time in Europe during the war. She plans to incorporate information about the DP camps and the experience of getting to the USA. "Somehow, I need to weave the story of a modern Russian leader who is out of control. The publication target data is late 2023" (*Draugas News*, August 2022). The publication I just cited is where I learned about the existence of Ursula Wong. I learned that all of her grandparents came to US from Lithuania. The author also noted that she is always looking for stories. If anyone is willing to share their or a family member's experience in Europe during WWII, she asks them to contact her at her website at http://ursulawong.wordpress.com.

Ursula Wong (nee Sinkewicz) is a prolific writer who, since 2006, had authored six novels about Lithuania. Wong is also a professional speaker, appearing regularly on TV and radio. She offers seminars on publishing and writing. All of her books are available from amazon.com and other sources. Her books were presented by Honorary General Consul Ingrida Bublys to Gitanas Nausėda, the President of Lithuania, during the 2022 summer Lithuanian Dance Festival in Philadelphia.

ROMUALDAS KRIAUČIŪNAS

ABSTRACTS

RŪTA LATINYTĖ

Communication Through Shared Experience: Gifts that Overcome Distance

Using the research tools of phenomenological anthropology, semiotics, and everyday practices, this article presents an analytical look at a special group of gifts found in today's everyday practices that share a common context: gifts or goods sent or otherwise delivered by friends and family living abroad. Different meanings, and identifiable and changing relationships are explored in the analysis of various non-structured interviews about personal gift-giving experiences among residents of the United States, South Korea, France and their relatives in Lithuania. The study reveals how gifts both reflect and affect people's interpersonal relationships, how these experiences are enacted, remembered, and take on meaning. These individual traditions of gift-giving testify to deeper layers of a worldview that determines old and new identities, shared sensations, tastes, and feelings, even mark relationship as generosity (or the lack of it). Moreover, through the gift, as a non-verbal form of communication, people can express and understand multiple layers of meaning – without words or reflections, but through experiential knowledge, known in phenomenology as *lived experience*.

ALMANTAS SAMALAVIČIUS

Revisiting Postcolonial Studies and the Baltics

After a lengthy period of ignoring postcolonial studies/postcolonial theory as one of the many possible intellectual tools of analysing these societies, postcolonialism finally found its way to

Eastern Europe and the Baltics. First being denied, being ignored and/or marginalized later, during the two recent decades postcolonialism has finally entered local academic discourses in the Baltic societies despite the many challenges it has faced and most probably will have to meet in the future. Having originated within the circles of literary scholars (and still mostly ignored within the discipline of history), it is winning more and more territories in various disciplinary and sub-disciplinary fields, like folkloristics. The article examines how postcolonialism entered Baltic studies and why its development was somewhat complicated.

JUOZAS SKIRIUS

A Centenary of Diplomatic Relations Between Lithuania and Japan: An Overview of the Relations Between the Two Nations

Lithuania and Japan entered official interstate relations when Japan recognized the State of Lithuania *de jure* on December 20, 1922. It is, however, known that Japan, considering its interests and attitude towards Russia, recognized the State of Lithuania *de facto* as early as January 3, 1919. It was the second country after Sweden to recognize the new Lithuanian government – recognition which inspired confidence and courage for the Lithuanians in strengthening their statehood. The Lithuanians had access to some information about Japan before entering into diplomatic relations, just as the Japanese had some information about Lithuania. On September 6, 1991, Japan fully recognized the independence of the reinstated Lithuanian State, and both nations have since been gradually strengthening their cultural, political-economic, and scientific relations. Japan has favored Lithuania throughout the century.

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Linas LIANDZBERGIS. *I have more to say, my dear.* 2013. Acrilic, canvas. 70 × 110

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

FRONT COVER: Bokšto street in Vilnius
Photo by Almantas Samalavičius