

## BETWEEN SOUP AND SOAP: ICONIC NATIONALITY, MASS MEDIA AND POP CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY LITHUANIA

(Šalpos valgyklos ir muilo operos: ikoninis tautiškumas,  
žiniasklaida, *pop* kultūra nūdienėje Lietuvoje)

### Santrauka

Šiame straipsnyje analizuojamos idealaus tautiškumo sampratų, žiniasklaidos, *pop* kultūros bei kasdienybės sankirtos nūdienėje Lietuvoje. Žvelgiama į tai, kaip žiniasklaidos priemonės, kurdamos anoniminių lygiateisių subjektų lygą, padeda Lietuvos žmonėms galvoti ar negalvoti apie bendruomenę ir tautą. Klausama apie tai, kokiais būdais įveiksinamos tautinės normos, kai susiduriama su kasdienybe, kaip asmenys, kurie trokšta priklausyti bendrijai ir solidarizuotis su ja, patiria visa tai ne tik pasikartojančiais tautinio vaizdymo išgyvenimais, bet ir savo kasdienybe. Apibūdinant trivialių sensacijų, gandų, banalumo leksikoną, vyraujančią Lietuvos žiniasklaidoje, populiarios pasilinksminimų industrijos ir vartojimo prekių scenas, teigiama, kad kasdienybėje cirkuliuojantys televizijos, radijo, spaudos vaizdiniai išbando idealaus "teorinio" tautiškumo normas ironizuodami jas ir nuplėsdami nuo jų šventumo kaukę. Straipsnyje atskleidžiama, kaip žiniasklaidos priemonės keičia nekritiškas fetišistines "teorinio" tautiškumo normas (kraujo ryšių, aukos, nepriekaištingos moralės ir dorovės, išgrynintos ir skaisčios tautos) daugiareikšmėmis, daugialypėmis tautinio ir visuomeninio solidarumo bei tapatybių galimybėmis. Konkrečiais pavyzdžiais pademonstruojama, kad tautos, erotikos, seksualumo, pilietiškumo diskursai dažnai susikerta ir susipina masinių žiniasklaidos priemonių sukeliamuose bendruose išgyvenimuose ir potyriuose, brėždami naujas normas to, kas vadintina "masiniu tautiškumu": nepreskriptyvinėmis viešų tapatybių ir priklausomybių sampratomis. Pomodernistinės komunikacijos priemonių ir vizualinės technologijos formos, koordinuojančios daugialypes asmeninių troškimų, savo paties vaizdinių ir savęs pažinimo sferas, patvirtina, kad tautinių simbolių ir ženklų sistema nėra stabili ir vienareikšmė: kasdienybės chaose improvizuojama ir deramasi dėl to, ką kiekvienas asmuo įkainos kaip visuomenišką, lietuvišką, tautišką, patriotišką vertybę.

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As the global lexicon of images dominates the world scene of consumption and unsettles the established norms of national signs and identifications, the affirmation of monolithic local identity with its peculiar ethnocentric and cultural flavor becomes increasingly difficult. This difficulty derives not only from the global transit of the world, its constant translation and transvaluation, and the movement of cultures outside the spaces of any specific language. It

also stems from the conflict between the sublimity of national identities and the banality of everyday life which makes national promises for justice and well-being seem utopian. In the face of the living world, profane and multiform — government corruption, economic impoverishment and pauperization, Mafia crimes and the formation of new classes, of which most prominent and powerful is the *nouveaux riches*,<sup>1</sup> — Lithuanians' identifications with the national

\* Straipsnis spausdintas sociologų ir humanitarų elektroniniame žurnale "Artium unitio". Redakcija dėkoja paminėto žurnalo redaktoriams už leidimą šį straipsnį išspausdinti mūsų žurnale.

state and freely-elected government have been crumbling. It seems that the chasm between the imagined national community and its reality becomes bigger and bigger every day. As a prominent Lithuanian philosopher put it, the mythology of ideal Lithuania no longer has anything to do with contemporary life.<sup>2</sup>

After the destruction of the Soviet Empire and a short period of national re-fashioning and euphoria during 1988-1991, which resulted in an independent Lithuania, an ontology and ideology of Lithuanian nationness became more problematic. The dissolution of imagined national unity and sister/brotherhood after elated national gatherings and rallies transformed the totality of the Lithuanian nation into a potpourri of historical and everyday modalities, a space in which everyday temporality plays a much more significant role than historical and national mythologies. This is why it is no longer enough to discuss and attest to the mythologies of Lithuanian national identity; a look into the everyday workings of nationness is now needed. The increasing complexity of the social world and diversified sites of national memories and utopias in the 1990s challenge the ideal national imaginings as they were summarized in the words of the Lithuanian national anthem (Lithuania as a land of heroes, the heroic past as a source of spiritual strength, the desire that Lithuanians would be a people of the highest integrity; united work for their homeland and humanity's good; Lithuania as a source of enlightenment, truth and justice<sup>3</sup>). Such imaginings have lost their power to unite Lithuanians into a new patriotic performance.

After the Baroque theatricality of the 1988-91 political meetings, in 1993-1998 Lithuanian society shifted towards an ascetic apathy. It appears, as most Lithuanians have personally experienced, that to live the ordinariness and dailiness of national identity is more difficult than to extol its sublimity. Instead of a sacred national sublimity, one is forced to taste, in everyday life and in Lithuanian newspapers, TV and radio, the picturesque scenarios of crimes, corrupted officials, bankrupt banks and unconcerned entertainment. Mass media flooded with

sexual and sexualized advertisements, everyday banality and international celebrity gossip represent a "loathsome" unlearning of Lithuanian patriotism and citizenship, and the proliferation of social, gender and other divisions. It turns out that to be a Lithuanian is much more difficult than to imagine being a Lithuanian. In other words, imagining one's own community as a system of cultural and political representation is easier than to enact this imagining.<sup>4</sup>

In my essay, I will attempt to theorize the above outlined complex relationship between the sublimity of Lithuanian national identity and its everyday happenings by playing with national significations and resignifications extracted from a wide array of texts written in the nineteenth century and in the 90s of the twentieth century. I will interpret mass media, pop culture and the everyday as spaces of a new nationness in practice demonstrating how the national imaginary is constructed and deconstructed through the circulation of televisual and print media images. Drawing on the ideas of Benedict Anderson about imagined communities created by the press, my essay will touch upon the various kinds of media producing, in Anderson's words, a "league of anonymous equals."<sup>5</sup> How does media help the Lithuanian people think the nation? How do the people negotiate their desire for belongings and solidarities through their everyday acts and experiences of national imaginary?

## 1. "LITHUANIA, OUR FATHERLAND, LAND OF HEROES..."

First I will try to analyze the "imagined community" as created by the Lithuanian anthem and recycled by the recent Lithuanian national reconstruction and its leader *Sajudis* (*Lietuvos Persitvarkymo Sajudis*, the Lithuanian popular front founded in the 1988 summer), and to establish the norms and canons of sublime Lithuanian nationality (Lithuania as a theoretical ideality). I define a sublime or theoretical nation after Homi Bhabha as a "medium of a naturalistic continuity of Community or Tradition"<sup>6</sup> and as a large-scale solidarity policed by a gathering of cultural experiences, myths and

fantasies. The sublimity of a nation excludes national temporality and the uncertainty of nation's boundaries focusing instead on its historicity and the stability of its cultural significations.

The Lithuanian anthem, perhaps the most important nineteenth-century national text, evokes an august Lithuanian past as the source for guiding future actions and as a primal shelter from the everyday wrongs and pitfalls: "Lithuania, our fatherland,/ Land of heroes,/ May your sons draw strength/ From your past..." The common denominators of nationness in the anthem are national origins and the heroic deeds of the forebears. The Lithuanian nationness produced by the Lithuanian anthem includes the call for the moral and spiritual chastity of each individual Lithuanian: "May the sun of Lithuania/ Banish all darkness,/ May light and truth/ Guide our steps." The repertoire of a shared experience and popular memory which mobilize the national populace into an imagined community also embraces the summons to unite by a token of love for Lithuania and to work for the nation and humanity's good: "May your children walk/ Only on the paths of righteousness/ May they work for your sake/ And the good of all people.// May love of Lithuania/ Burn in our hearts,/ In the name of that Lithuania/ May unity flourish."<sup>7</sup>

A look at another national text, no less important to the self-creation of modern Lithuania, reveals a similar outline of nationness. The song entitled *We are born Lithuanian* (Lietuvninkai mes esam gime)<sup>8</sup> which became an unofficial anthem of Lithuania Minor in the second half of the nineteenth century enacts a similar image of the origins that have assigned us biological identity and a linguistic, social, political, and historical place (or space). The definition of the Lithuanian nation as a closed ethnic body (you have to be born into it; thus, the assumed identity between the nation and ethnicity) which can be inferred from the song owes much to the notion of *Volksggeist*, "spirit of the people," stemming from such thinkers as Herder and Hegel (in this personalistic conception of nation, a nation and its cul-

ture are conceived of as a collective individual, a nation is imagined as a person). This text presents the fecundity of the Lithuanian land producing Lithuanians as a guarantee of national survival.<sup>9</sup> According to the song, national identity can be authenticated only within the production of a closed ethnic space (a motherland bearing Lithuanians). The identity politics of native space include the majestic rhetoric of origins, boundary-making and ethnic purity.

In the Lithuanian national icon Maironis's (1862-1932) poem *Lithuania* which became the treasure of the Lithuanian national folklore equivalent in its power to the Lithuanian anthem and to the song *We Are Born Lithuanian*, the name of the Almighty is evoked along with the shared national landscape (rivers, forests, plains and hills), historical memories (Princes and their deeds) and the common language. Confident that Lithuania is a divine space and that Lithuanians are God's children, the poet asks God to defend and cherish his country:

May the Lord of grace defend the place  
Where the bones of our ancestors lie.  
May Thy powerful hand protect the land  
Where Thy children suffer and die.  
Shed still upon our home Thy mercy's  
light;  
Still hear us, Lord of everlasting  
might.<sup>10</sup>

In this poem, national subjects are called to embrace the imagined community through their faith and love of Providence. The belief in God is wrought by the Bishop and poet Maironis as a national strategy style of being and living Lithuanian. The poet adumbrates the Catholic religion, making it a part of national identity.

The second Lithuanian national re-fashioning of the late 1980s which resulted in Lithuanian state sovereignty, revitalized, recycled and often hyperbolized the metaphors of the Lithuanian anthem and nineteenth-century national texts in general. The pedagogy of patriotic performance and national competence professed in numerous demonstrations and mass rallies expressed itself through the phrases of eternal memory, ethnic purity and the past glory.<sup>11</sup> "Heroic" self-perceptions continued to

dominate the Lithuanian collective consciousness and to predispose them towards more daring political actions (Lithuania's declaration of independence on March 11, 1990). The heroic style of national imaginings was inseparable from the theatrical or ritualistic character of national behavior in which national images were practiced and deployed (an unbroken human chain holding hands from Estonia to Lithuania, demonstrations with lighted candles, young men dressed as medieval knights ready to defend the Parliament building, mass hunger strikes in the protest of government decrees, etc.).<sup>12</sup> It is arguable that the ritualism and charisma of Lithuanian nationalism not only mobilized people for political action but also stifled the pragmatic elements of national politics.

The second national "revival" or, as I call it, national re-construction, continued to disseminate national knowledge by organizing it around and within the spatial metaphors of the national landscape. Once again in this kind of mobilizing national rhetoric one encounters the enunciation of an inevitable relation between the national and the spatial, the national and the native. As in any postcolonial discourse, the local is fetishized and celebrated as the site of national identity. It was important to de-sovietize the native and to reaffirm the authenticity of the Lithuanian land. The notion of a native land has been regarded as a symbol around which people are mustered. National experiences were inexplicably mobilized inside a shared territory. As one of the most prominent leaders of *Sąjūdis*, Vytautas Landsbergis, put it:

Destiny, history or God — as you may wish — gave us this small bit of land with a beautiful name: Lietuva (Lithuania). // Before our era, this land was suitable for our ancestors to live; now we are responsible for its suitability for future generations.<sup>13</sup>

According to Landsbergis, identifications and attachments to a local space, nationally connoted and inescapably assigned to a national subject, are the basis of a stable national identity. The nation here is simply the natural destiny of Lithuanians rooted in the native soil.

National responsibilities are naturalized through the concepts of historicized, fatalized and divined native space. Through the metaphor of space, erosions and revivals of national identities are expressed: native or inside space articulates a geography of belonging and identification, whereas foreign or outside space speaks of a flow of threatening differentiation and difference. Spatial metaphors dominate Landsbergis's politics of national mapping. In excerpts of two other Landsbergian orations, the politics of national mapping are widened by alluding to the ethnic spirit, national pride and national morals:

There was a cultural war, plague and famine in Lithuania. Complete cultural layers, related to beliefs, Lithuanian statehood and its trials in past battles, even the most peculiar Lithuanian folklore, shortly, everything that could awaken national pride and moral strength has been denied, scorned and replaced with false commodities.<sup>14</sup>

I see three guarantees of the Lithuanian revival and I will name them. They are: a strong work ethic, family and a native land. ... A native land is our fatherland, in which one can live the best life. Life here is best not because our fatherland pays high salaries, but because its sky is pleasant, its nature is beautiful, and everyone lying in its graveyards is one of us.<sup>15</sup>

Landsbergis's nationalism is quintessentially "territorial": images of home, of soil, of place dominate his thought. Symbolically reappropriating the native place, Landsbergis associates national identity and national landscape. His vision of the conceptual, mappable nation resonates the archetypal national imaginings created by nineteenth-century Lithuanian nationalism with its pronouncements of national unity and moral egalitarianism.

The tendency towards the exaggerated moralism marks the whole fabric of the second national reconstruction. In the analyzed Lithuanian national texts of the nineteenth century, a superior national morality was seen as a prominent composite of the canonical national identity. During 1988-1992, a belief in the col-

lective moral superiority both over the Stalinized Russians and the degenerate West was dominant in Lithuania. The theories of Lithuanian (and Baltic in general) genetic goodness are still widespread in Lithuania in spite of the increasing criminalization of the society and the proliferation of social pathologies:

Morality (DORA) is the core of self-consciousness of the Baltic man. It (DORA) is one of those untranslatable and thus essential words. For a Lithuanian, morality (DORA) is more than a moral value. *Dora* is a mark of the divine order and the godly imperative goodness in a man.<sup>16</sup>

Chastity, shyness, and purity are particularly important words of our ethical culture, but somehow we are ashamed of them. Our culture is based on the ethics of shyness, and we do not have to be ashamed of it...<sup>17</sup>

Public enactments of moral “purity” and demands for individual repentance of former Communists in 1988-1992 went hand in hand with the reflection on how to equip Lithuanian souls in order to resist successfully an unexampled wealth of pleasure brought by the “degenerate” West.<sup>18</sup>

Along with high morality, the canon of Lithuanian nationality includes fetishistically repeated and amorously represented (not explicated or proved in any way) spirituality (in Lithuanian *dvasingumas*). Spirituality as a fixed attribute of Lithuanianness to be maintained at all costs makes Lithuania a sanctified stereotype (with the specific genealogy of national heroism, chastity, and shyness, of Christianity,<sup>19</sup> of patriarchal culture and of common spiritual experiences).

The last prescriptive norm of Lithuanian nationness or Lithuania as a theoretical ideal that I wanted to emphasize was visualized by an ordinary woman during the tragic confrontation between the mass population and the Soviet Army in January 13, 1991 (13 people killed and more than 500 injured). A woman from the crowd which was attacked by tanks and heavy artillery near the TV station in Vilnius confessed:

I kneeled by the murdered young man as if he were my son and started to cry ....; I kissed his hands and suddenly I realized that all the killed and wounded have united all the Lithuanian people of a good will with sacred, unseverable blood ties. The innocent blood of the heroes, scattered as the millions of stars, has enlightened our souls wrapped by the gloomy dusk with a new DAWN OF RESURRECTION and it is preparing our hearts to the example of the Pilenai sacrifice<sup>20</sup> if the aggression continues. Our Parliament, its militia and the people guarding the Parliament building are ready for this Sacrifice...<sup>21</sup>

In this catastrophistic vision of national emergency, a woman repeats the familiar image of the nation as a ritual community of people tied by blood, high morality and spirituality. Furthermore, mass national consciousness represented by the confessor assigns to the subject of good will (i. e., exemplary citizen) a sacrifice of one's life for one's nation. Being a national subject and suffering is coupled in an intensely heroic mode. In this vision, death signifies national rebirth; death purifies people's minds and hearts and transforms the nation into a community in which the dead are more real and substantial than the living.

## 2. “HATE ME AND CONTINUE YOUR WILD PARTY, OH MY SCREAMING MOTHERLAND, TURNED INTO A CAFÉ...” (FROM GINTARAS PATAČKAS' POEM HELLO, ALEXANDER BLOK)

The perfidious everyday tests national competence and patriotism. It unsettles the canons and norms of ideal national existence. It demonstrates the uncertainty and instability of cultural significations and symbolic formulations of the nation. An interminable flow of trivia, fluff, gossip, banality — the whole lexicon of images dominating the Lithuanian scene of consumption and popular entertainment — encounters, defies, ironizes, inverts and “desecrates” the sublimity of Lithuanianness. Instead of generating national memory or national knowledge, mass media, mass consumption and

mass entertainment undermine the issues of national specificity. However, media, consumption, entertainment, popular art and literature are fraught with the problems of national representations and patriotism.<sup>22</sup> In this part of my essay, I will attempt to grasp the ways in which media, consumption and entertainment invading the everyday of Lithuanian people can not only generate the amnesia of national memory but also produce new sites for national identifications. I will analyze how the Lithuanian people manage to be Lithuanians and to play Lithuanians in everyday ordinariness making Lithuania a site of the everyday politics and performances.

First let's look at television which has annexed older forms of national self-identification and cultural literacy (in Lithuanian culture, the latter belonged to a "serious" written media — books, journals, newspapers). Because of its free flow into the private world of the home, television occupies a privileged place in the empire of communication which both manifests and sabotages national knowledge. Television defines a new collective experience: instead of reading common national texts, Lithuanian citizens imagine themselves as belonging to a national society through television. TV makes people think differently about both ordinary everyday experiences and national public happenings. It can legitimately be called a producer or at least an enhancer of new polymorphous national identifications. By critically and playfully commenting the national events and happenings, TV programs generate intense debates at people's homes and in the press.

A quick glance at weekly television programs demonstrates that Lithuanian television undermines the postulates of national sublimity by revealing the national sites which so far were not considered public or national. It is quite obvious that Lithuanian TV is saturated with and dominated by international entertainment commodities and locally produced imitations of popular American and European shows. Even Lithuanian pop music in heavy rotation on TV and radio is copied or literally stolen from the West. For instance, the most popular coun-

try singer Virgis Stakenas uses the melodies of American songs but replaces their lyrics with the texts of Lithuanian canonical poets. He sings Elvis Presley's song "Love Me Tender" with the lyrics from the Lithuanian poet's nostalgic poem of love and loss written during the World War II. Even a stranger choice is Stakenas's version of "The House of a Rising Sun" by the group *Animals*. Stakenas replaced its lyrics with the patriotic text of the nineteenth-century Lithuanian national poet Maironis. The lyrics dealing with a bordello were transformed into the lyrics about the glorious castle of Lithuanian princes and knights.

Central to the discussion of the norms signifying nationness are some popular Lithuanian talk shows. Albeit mirroring the American ones, they are more intellectual and subtle than most American shows. They usually deal with the most burning issues of the day such as corruption, criminal subcultures, drug and alcohol addiction, sexual abuse, sexual minorities, woman's place in a patriarchal society, etc. In the talk shows, intimate things flash in Lithuanians' faces: pornography, sexuality, abortion, etc.

TV not only catalogues social problems and ills, but also asks about their origins and consequences. It can be argued that talk shows participate in the work of awareness and consciousness raising. Displaying the media spectacle as an endless narrative of discomfort which upsets theoretical national norms, talk shows as well as other TV programs present vulgar, voyeuristic and sensationalist exchanges of "national" knowledge. The Lithuanian erotic show entitled "Vision," almost impossible to imagine 6 years ago, tastefully presented the art of *Kama Sutra* and discussed the psychological problems of love relationships in Lithuania. "Will Lithuania remain a Catholic country," asks a show entitled "The Last Crossroad" (Paskutine Kryzkele). Should religious sects and minorities such as Krishna's followers be tolerated? The participants of the show discuss whether the Lithuanian government should finance only traditional religious communities such as Catholics or Orthodox or it should also support non-

traditional religious communities.<sup>23</sup>

Television's invasion into the sensitive domains of religious democracy, sex, crime, corruption and drugs which were for a long time national taboos indicates the changing norms of Lithuanian nationness: now Lithuanians are represented not only as an ideal, folklorically shy and unified community but as a diverse society whose social problems can be found in any other society. Discourses of nation, sexuality, citizenship overlap in the divergent readings of the televised experience creating new norms of what we might call "mass nationality"<sup>24</sup>: non-prescriptive yet public identifications and belongings. The making of a self takes place in terms of mass subjectivity. Media affirms Lithuanians' cravings for new objects of desire embodied in sexual ads, soap operas and commodities of pleasurable consumption. Even unconcerned entertainment provokes new meanings and pleasures which citizens insert in their everyday culture: popular culture becomes a space within and by which new subjectivities are constituted. In a popular show "Hollywood News", for instance, the host playfully inserts Lithuanian national events into the happenings of Hollywood glamor. He jokes that on the 16th of February, Hollywood celebrities gathered to celebrate not the Lithuanian Independence Day but Elizabeth Taylor's birthday (the irony and the joke lies in the fact that the Lithuanian Independence day and Taylor's birthday are on the same day). Unexpected juxtaposition makes the nationally important day merely an ordinary event in the chain of media happenings. Another no less significant and symbolic juxtaposition took place when the hero of the most watched in Lithuania American soap opera *Santa Barbara* Mason performed in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius on the 11th of March, the Day of the Restoration of Lithuanian Independence. In a sold-out show in Vilnius, the actor Lane Davies of *Santa Barbara* performed, among other songs, Lithuanian folk songs. People, particularly women, were willing to pay a high price for the tickets to the concert of the soap actor best known only in the countries of the former Communist block.

For the first time, Lithuanians became concerned with the notion of lifestyle, self-image and self-representation. The Lithuanian dailies run articles about Lithuania's image in various countries, TV and radio shows discuss how to improve or change Lithuania's image in the world.<sup>25</sup> There emerged a variety of TV shows on lifestyle and fashion, and the entire sections of Lithuanian dailies are devoted to lifestyle issues. In most cases, "Lifestyles" focus not only on the lives of rich and famous but also on some brutal and sensational Lithuanian news (as in a headline of the "Lifestyle" section, "A Pregnant Woman is Beaten by her Husband's Lover," *Lietuvos rytas* [Lithuanian Morning], No. 78, April 5, 1997). An ordinary "Lifestyle" section covers fashion, personals, celebrity watch, sexual etiquette, medical news, advice how to find Mr. or Ms. Right, horoscopes and travel.

Now Lithuanians can buy their own air time, tell their own life stories and advertize their own products. It can be argued that advertising in Lithuania became not only a means to invent a new kind of desires for commodities but also a way to reveal the truth about the individual and collective fantasies and utopias (one of them is to become rich in a short period of time). In some cases, advertising serves fraudulent and deceitful businessmen. Some of them managed to extort millions of dollars from Lithuanians by using powerful advertising campaigns. The best example is Vasili Mitrokhin, president of a Vilnius realty firm, who collected solid 2 million dollars promising Lithuanian people the 200 percent interest for their investments. Mitrokhin masterminded the idea of a mystical "city of the sun", a playground for children, which made his firm look decent and appealing.<sup>26</sup>

Both "Lifestyle" sections and TV shows include the sexually and socially underrepresented (for instance, women, homosexuals, the homeless or prisoners<sup>27</sup>) and the culturally and socially marginal (for instance, the whole criminal subculture, subcultures of prostitutes, market-traders and soldiers). For the first time, these "invisible" communities come to be unveiled and un-demonized. By including the in-

visible as well as marginal, television addresses the inner life of the citizens by minimizing the heroic while maximizing the private and personal aspects of their existence. Instead of common culture and common interest, media presents us with multiple communities and multiple interests and with a promise of an inclusive and agentive nationality. Instead of uncritical representations of fetishistically conceived nationness (blood, sacrifice, morality and spirituality, purified and virtuous nation), TV disseminates, if we tend to generalize, critically multi-dimensional national identifications by presenting public and national spheres in which the filthiness of people's behavior partakes in the business of making nationality as much as their utopian and patriotic intentions. Mass media interpellates national subjects in multiple ways bringing forth the multiplicity of interpretations and experiences. This is to say, that Lithuanian people are able to construct their allegiances and their identifications at the interface between the norms of sublime nationality and the consumption of the products of globalized cultural industries. As the spectacles of popular entertainment and mass media demonstrate, mass nationality is not afraid of foreign products, models of behavior and cultural practices (note the prevalence of "global" and "universal" modes of narrating (post)modern human experience: talk shows, serials, soap operas, gossip and sensational news, etc.).

Notably, quite a few television programs do not contrast simplistically tradition and modernity, Lithuanian versus Western, virtuousness versus degradation, but opens sites for more complex questions about the nature of patriotism, dishonesty, greed and "wild capitalism." No opposition is set between "authentic" and "inauthentic" Lithuanianness.

New parallels between being Lithuanian and being European have been drawn. For instance, the DJ of a popular radio station M1 advertizes the European chart of pop music by claiming that both "Every genuine European listens to Eurochart" and "Every Lithuanian listens to Eurochart." The logical conclusion of the above parallel should be that Lithuanians are genu-

ine Europeans or that they may become such by listening to Eurochart. Another way to become European is to buy a "Kreontas" biotoilet equipment. "Kreontas' toilets open the gates to Europe!" claims a newspaper headline.<sup>28</sup>

Playful, performative and at times critical response of mass nationality to the ideal modes of national existence created by the national imaginary attempts to deconstruct the paradigm of childish and claustrophobic nationhood based on the image of preindustrial folkloric community. That is why the formation of mass nationality mediated by TV, radio, the trashy press and cheap fiction is seen as the destruction of an ideal imagined nation by most of the literary elite who still live the stereotypes of the closed, purified, and sanctified Lithuanian nation and grieve the loss of their privileged cultural place in the society. In this sanctified stereotype, the Lithuanian national culture is represented as frozen in time and tradition. It is obvious that this resistance to the formation of mass nationality has to do with the threat that, according to Raymond Williams, "new forms of communication pose to preexisting forms of cultural authority."<sup>29</sup>

The interpretation of mass media spectacles by the literary elite proves that popular culture is a contested space in which different subjectivities are constructed and affirmed and in which cultural struggle over the material and symbolic conditions of Lithuanian nationness takes place. "Dirty and foolish television shows," in the writer's words, however, reinforce the literary elite's attachment to a tearful national rhetoric that promotes a monosyllabic archaic nationality. Being a national citizen means pledging an unconditional allegiance to the unified national rituals and adhering faithfully to the homogenized theoretical nationality. This "patriotic" view of national identity seeks to use identification with the ideal nation to devalue all other identifications. A national identity professed by both the literary elite and conservatives which confronts the performative and ironic modes of national identifications disseminated by TV can be defined as an essentially unbreakable closure which has nothing to do



with what's happening in the streets and even within citizens' homes. In this archaic discursive strategy, individuals are not differentiated from the whole and an analytical perspective towards the nation's present are replaced by a nostalgic view of the national past, the overidentification with theoretical nationality and defensive "fortress mentality"<sup>30</sup>. Such essentialist rhetoric preaches the return to the simpler and better times of "unproblematic" community with its monolithic and exclusionary identity.<sup>31</sup> Strong patriotic identifications is valued more than national criticism. To be national here means to be unmarked by the national contradictions. Lithuanian intellectuals still use the discursive conventions of virtuous unity of the national public sphere which has already become archaic and obsolete.

Bemoaning the loss of community and scolding an aversion to patriotism in the Lithuanian society, the literary elite fill the pages of literary and cultural weeklies with conspiracy theories and the search for an enemy. The search for enemies is definitive of their ideal imagined community. According to one of the most prominent conspiracy theories, both American liberals and Hollywood (i. e. expansionary domination of the Western mass culture) are responsible for the destruction of the chaste and virtuous Lithuanian nation. As one writer puts it:

And all this "literature", the splashing of excrement, the plastering of slop, fucking, sex, served as a desert after a nutritious dinner or offered by force as a obscene toilet graffiti, all this "art" disfigured and laid on the floor, walls and windows; the rock music which resembles a heavy bombardment and which moves legs, lacerates throats and parasitically evacuates from a person all human thoughts about obligation, responsibility, decency and sacrifice — all this comes from the West, from Dulles, from Hollywood, from the citadel of world democracy.<sup>32</sup>

It is not so far from the descriptions of national chaos and destruction carried out by the international entertainment industry and Western liberals to the political reflections on the

perils of Lithuania's integration into the European community. Because of the "fragility" of Lithuanian nationality and culture such integration is seen as dangerously self-destructive. Two resonating examples on this topic state:

We repeat the monotonous slogan: "To the West, to the West!" As if it was all clear.... I cannot help but wonder whence our strong craving for the merging comes. It seems that after having just left one union we rush to another one. Isn't it too soon? We must formulate our autonomous thinking, to strengthen our culture in order not to evaporate as a drop of water on a frying pan.<sup>33</sup>

We are rushing to join the European Union. I don't know why we must do it so soon. At first we must take care of business in our own country, because even the European Union does not look for the poor. As a member of the European Union, Lithuania will lose its sovereignty. It will become a state within a state. In the European Union, the largest countries will rule, while smallest states will have to obey.<sup>34</sup>

Such a claustrophobic perception of Lithuanian national identity dwells on the "vulnerable" Lithuanian national character which is to be destroyed by contact with the Other (which might be West, East or other imaginary enemy). In order to assert the security of the Lithuanian national identity, threats to that identity are necessarily projected as external. It is quite clear that the projection of the feared Other is always about repressed aspects of the self; the Other is seen and represented as both an object of desire and abjection, of envy and contempt. Hoping to suppress the conflicts and contradictions within oneself, one assigns them to others, the strangers. The price of the self's coherence is the consistent humiliation of the Other. Abjection is, in Judith Butler's words, "the mode by which others become shit."<sup>35</sup> The feared Other has become a convenient scapegoat upon which the Lithuanian intellectuals displace the responsibility of their own class position.

The clichés on the world mission of pure and

honorable Lithuania (Lithuania as the Athens of the North, according to the cultural weekly entitled *The Northern Athens*) in this type of discourse defeat the critical sense. One can argue that the exclusionist and archaic character of Lithuanian identity professed mostly by literary figures and right-wing politicians destroys itself by its hyperbolized significations (purity of language and origins, chastity and spirituality of a Lithuanian, an individual's sacrifice for the mythologized "we"; national identity as a compulsory performance or an inescapable destiny). Nationality made into a ritual and burlesque ostentation of exaggerated gestures and permanent appearances satirizes itself. Confronting the reality of "wild" postcommunist capitalism, terrorism, bombs exploding in the editorial offices, an alleged preparation of conservative parties for the *coup d'état* and the strangest prophecies of Lithuanian psychics concerning economics and banking the sublimity of Lithuanian nationness becomes merely a self-parody: national norms are continually haunted by their own inefficacy (thus, the search for enemies and complaints about waning patriotism). In this situation, the prolific societies entitled "the Lithuanian Union for Honesty and Culture," "the Center for Spiritual Perfection,"<sup>36</sup> etc. with their claims to create "a new, pure and honorable Lithuania" cannot but become a target of ridicule and mockery by critically thinking intellectuals and politicians.

It is truly paradoxical that TV and non-governmental radio and print media (most frequently *Respublika* [Republic], a daily representing what's best and worst of the trashy press, and *Europa* [Europe], the trashiest weekly) often accused of irresponsibility and demoralization aim to invent new modes of national and mass cultural memory by constantly playing with the power of national signs and resistance to them, civic discipline and non-discipline, national order and disorder. It provides an insight into the disjunctive forms of representation that signify the nation; it demonstrates that the distance between individuals and collective identities both as a place to be filled up by mass and individual fantasies and as a space where the

various logics of identity that circulate through the culture enter into relations of contradiction and not simply analogy. In the descriptions and broadcasting of serial killers, Mafia dealings, intricate prison stories and the dinners for the poor, mass media masquerades the romantic illusions of sublime nationness and folkloric community united by collective dignity, strong customs in a ritual and sacred time. Is there any trace of collective dignity left when one is hungry? Can the inquiries into the character of a genuine Lithuanian still be relevant when one might lose, at the blink of an eye, one's entire life savings?

TV and print media ridicule such questions. Media shifts from the lexicon of patriotic monumentality to a lexicon of postmodern national dynamism and change redefining nationness and dislocating people's experiences of being national. The fictions of a genuine Lithuanian, collective dignity, eternal national memory parodied by media almost inevitably signify the personal inability to grasp the evolving realities. By transforming nationally respected figures, myths and memories into a media spectacle, mass media offers a new figuration of nationality in which to be a competent subject, one has to be flexible in reading between the lines of utopian national identity and cynical practical reason. Mass media recognizes Lithuanian people as a constantly changing dynamic entity. Here are a few examples which may explain my point.

Newspaper articles and talk shows mock the allegedly "important" questions which trouble post-soviet national rhetoric. One of such questions is the inquiry into "genuine" Lithuanianness. How is one to conform the statement that "for a Lithuanian, matters of morality are very special. ... It is impossible to be an immoral Lithuanian, because an immoral Lithuanian ceases to be Lithuanian, whereas an immoral German remains merely an immoral German..."<sup>37</sup> with the following passage:

They say that a Soviet Lithuanian speaks with an accent, but a true Lithuanian has no accent. They also say that Soviet Lithuanians are very vicious and rude, they

cram into overcrowded buses or trolley buses, but true Lithuanians do not. These are, however, only trifles. More importantly, a Soviet Lithuanian does not have a soul, but a real Lithuanian does. And not just an ordinary soul, but a very big soul. I am sure of it.<sup>38</sup>

By humorously comparing the clichés of a “genuine” Lithuanian with a “false” Soviet Lithuanian, the author of the opus entitled “The Dreams of Barnabas Aurelijus” parodies the national normativity which lacks ironic self-consciousness. After all, it is not easy for the author born in Soviet Lithuania to transform himself from “non-Lithuanian” into a truly “national” subject with the aura of virtuousness.

Another satire written by a writer turned media figure Juozas Erlickas uses references to the repertoire of sacred Lithuanian historical and literary figures and works. The main character of the satire Vytautas (the name of the medieval Grand Prince whose rule made the Grand Duchy of Lithuania one of the biggest and strongest countries in Europe) is depicted as an invalid who spends all his time watching TV. Overwhelmed by the flow of TV commercials, Vytautas, together with his wife, constantly cries out the names of foreign commodities, mostly the brands of chewing gum. He proclaims that for him “TV is the only window to Europe.” But Vytautas also scolds TV. “Television!”- he shouts. “Is it possible to preserve one’s sanity while watching such broadcasts? And what about Lithuanianness?”

Vytautas’ wife gets angry at him, because they live so miserably and poorly. Annoyed by his wife’s swearing, Vytautas goes for a walk. He buys a pack of chewing gum, the same brand he has just seen on TV, and decides to knock at the door of total strangers. After coming inside, he bewilders a couple who does not recognize him. Vytautas asks the strangers absurd and incoherent questions about the fate of some very national literary characters: “I wonder how Biliunas’s cat is doing? And what has happened to Brisius? Is he still alive?” (a reference to Biliunas, the Lithuanian prose master of the end of the nineteenth — the beginning of the twen-

tieth century; helpless victimized animals and individuals dominate his short stories). It is absurdly comic that the strangers confused by Vytautas’s questions also bear the names of the medieval Lithuanian royalty, Kestutis and Biruta (the father and the mother of the Grand Prince Vytautas).

At last Vytautas leaves the stunned Kestutis and Biruta and returns to the street. He asks himself whether he should go to the forest or to Europe (the forest may signify the place of national resistance and may refer to post-war Lithuanian guerillas). To get the answer, Vytautas knocks at the door of the conference room of Ministers. It turns out that they (i. e. Lithuania) are going to leave for Europe in only five years and that all train seats have already been reserved. Saddened, Vytautas squeezes himself into the corner of the room to listen to the discussion of ministers on the “burning” issue: who disseminates and circulates the rumors that Lithuanians can choose nothing but chewing gum.<sup>39</sup> Ministers decide to bomb all institutions that might contribute to this rumor: the University, the Union of Journalists, schools, reading rooms, publishing houses, etc. Having made this decision, the happy Ministers depart from the room singing a Lithuanian military song. Such is the plot of this burlesque story.<sup>40</sup>

The above satires, particularly the second one, skillfully exploit nationally reproduced seriousness and authority based on the devout respect of historical and literary canonicity. By means of laughter, they deconstruct the rituals of power and control which can enforce reverential solemnity and designate what is to be taken seriously. Neither base and cynical political realities, nor the once romanticized but now debased and trivialized historical and literary figures must be taken too seriously, say the satires. Utopically misrepresented history does no good for a citizen’s well-being; neither does one’s own corrupt government. The satires reverse the relationship between the past and the present: it is not the past that explains the present, but it is the present that humiliates the heroic past. Everyday politics make cultural and literary mythologies lame and invalid (as the ir-

diculous character of Vytautas).

In the citizen's everyday, not only the historical past but also prominent political figures become a source of criticism and ridicule. By narrating political happenings and its actors, street gossip interprets everyday events and reinforces the impact of these interpretations on the collective mass conscience. Spicy rumors disseminated by word of mouth and the trashy press about the alleged homosexual affair of the former prime minister Slezevicius with the minister of foreign affairs Gylys clashed with the information on the prime minister's idyllic family life issued by the governmental sources. While dailies extolled, in the interview with Slezevicius's wife, the prime minister's industriality and his family values, street gossip quite credibly depicted the attempt by the prime minister's wife to commit suicide (she had supposedly witnessed her husband's affair). The above rumor might have been merely a concoction of the prime minister's political adversaries; but it was surely fraught and loaded with the Lithuanian people's anxieties, expectations and disappointments with their government.

It appears that a new generation of Lithuanians, especially urban (the largest cities Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipeda) builds their sense of identity through the heterogeneity of symbols and behavioral modes: not only satires of historical icons, literary traditions, and government figures, but also rap music and the Internet figure in their attempt to compose new territories and languages of identification.<sup>41</sup> The older people can relive their sense of being citizens both in participating in folkloric festivals and watching ill-reputed American soap-opera *Santa Barbara* (very popular in Lithuania among various age groups but especially among elders). Signs of identification codes are changing and with them claims for belongings and exclusions. The new global economy of culture presents the Lithuanian public with the mobility of texts and contexts and allows them, although often only in the realm of imagination, to emulate certain aspects of the life-styles of the bold and the beautiful (allusion to the widely watched soap *The Bold and the Beautiful* first translated into

Lithuanian as *Chameleons*)<sup>42</sup>. Hence global traffic in images, fashions, and ideas interacts with and contests the nationally produced styles and products; it threatens the world where ancestry and locality sanctioned a national identity. Nowadays Lithuanian consumers of electronic media can experience a common heritage with people they have never seen.

Together with mass media, we can ask: Do the above discussed satires and shows dealing with prostitutes or single mothers on national television undermine a repertoire of nationally sanctioned themes? Does a critical deconstruction of national icons (for instance, nationally acclaimed poets who collaborated with the KGB) and a freshly anti-romantic attitude towards the "heroic past" destroy the pure and virtuous Lithuania? Do the American shows and movies of dubious quality subvert the Lithuanian nation, as the "sophisticated" Lithuanian writer would like to believe?

The answer is "yes" if our guide is the sublimity of national identity. Yes, if we refuse to acknowledge the encounter of Lithuania as a theoretical ideality and Lithuania as a site of practical politics and everyday practices. The positive answer predicts the paradigm of "infantile" nationalism which operates in the sphere of nostalgic "unknowing" and believes in the capacity of the nation to be indeterminably utopian.

I would argue that a negative response to the above questions, which provoke a lively debate and allow Lithuanians to envision their own diversity, may help to defy the problem of how national identification can survive the practical habitation of everyday life as irrelevant. Instead of learning to live nationally without losing faith in nationality we should attempt to reconsider the utopian possibilities of national identity which frequently if not always humiliate Lithuanian citizens, revealing them as incapable of negotiating the semiotic, economic and political locations of their existence. Blind and nostalgic attachment to the norms of sublime nationality that we might also call "infantile" indeed explains indeed the incompetence of a large part of Lithuanian society to deal with the

cynicism of postcommunist politics and with the terrifying liability of a growing market economy. The practical impossibility of utopian nationalism produces grotesque effects in the minds of persons challenged by true, not idealized, national knowledge. The constant humiliation of the Lithuanian citizen by the texts of everyday life translates itself into the collective fantasies of *fin du monde* "... time and the world are ruthlessly devouring our world and our times, in other words, our very selves. It's self-deceptive to believe that literature or culture can save us from this *danse macabre*,"<sup>43</sup> writes a young journalist and writer. Ironically, "infantile" nationalism which refuses to become an adult (to disidentify with the taken-for-granted national sublimity) confuses its own inability to face reality with the metaphors and images of national and cultural crises.

**3. "I AM LOOKING FOR 500 INDIVIDUALS TO WHOM I WILL REVEAL MY BIGGEST SECRET. AFTER EXPERIENCING IT, YOU WILL FEEL POWERFUL, FORTUNATE AND HAPPY..." (ADVERTISEMENT IN A LITHUANIAN NEWSPAPER)**

I have started the last part of my essay with a rather absurd and cynical advertisement in the Lithuanian newspaper *Lietuvos aidas* (Echo of Lithuania, government daily). A woman who calls herself the Great Benefactress promises to share with 500 people a secret which will make them rich and happy. There is only one condition: one must fill out a questionnaire and send 39 litai (about 10 dollars) to the Great Benefactress. If one's life isn't to change after the revelation, a refund is guaranteed.

Unfortunately, there are no refunds, guarantees or easy ways of being and living Lithuanian. And there is no quick magic way to coordinate a new nationality. The recognition of separate ways of both living and imagining nationness is the first premise of such a project. Resistance to oppressive national iconicity reveals that Lithuanians' relation to their own nationality can be multiple and ambiguous. To

challenge the national sublimity based on the image of stable, hierarchical and authoritative community which justifies itself through the voice of traditions, mythological collectivity and passively accepted local culture, one needs to recognize difference and diversity of national identifications. There exists a plurality of public and private spheres, each having its own separate logic. In the apparent chaos of the everyday, a Lithuanian must learn to continuously bargain and improvise with the meanings and functions of these spheres. Not only a shared consciousness, but also a dialogic negotiation of one's place in civic society with its polymorphous pleasures and dangers supplies us with a guide for living nationally. Fluid and multiple identities must be constantly revised in order to achieve maximum instrumentality and efficacy. The phenomenon of "mass nationality" created by mass media, entertainment, and consumption engenders the multiplicity of social and national spaces in which the structures of national identification are both constructed and deconstructed, embodied and disembodied. Culture here figures not only as a site of belonging, but also and first of all as a process of transition and becoming. New collective rituals of watching and interpreting talk shows and soap operas provide us with the resources of new communalities and identifications (as does the monument to Frank Zappa in Vilnius). Through the commodities of mass media, individuals experience the collectivity of public desire. This is to say, that offensive pleasures of mass media and entertainment reclaim the Lithuanian nation for pleasure, in spite of its occasional poverty and tastelessness. Popular or, as some call it, mass culture offers to Lithuanians carnivalesque, evasive and liberating practices in which the hegemony of national sublimity is weakest and least repressive. Postmodern forms of media and visual technology which coordinate the multiple fields of private desires, self-imaginings, sensations, exchange, knowledge and power are involved in criticism of patriotic monumentality and represent, in most cases, a counterbalance to the powers whose goal is to clean and euphemize

Lithuanian language (no foreign words!)<sup>44</sup>, to clean the nation (nation equals ethnicity plus virtuousness and honesty!) and to mythologize national memory (Lithuanians as heroic and chaste Saviors of Europe). Media happenings demonstrate that a nation is essentially artificial, a cultural product of the collective imagination, not a body which grows out of natural facts, such as native language, blood and soil. By parodizing the myth of national homogeneity, making national belongings inclusive rather than exclusive and transcending linguistic and cultural differences, mass media (and electronic media particularly) has been restructuring Lithuanians' sense of community and collective identity. As a peculiar incarnation of the global in the most immediate local, mass media opposes the dichotomies of the local and global and demonstrates that the global operates within and is shaped by the local and vice versa. Without discounting the shallowness and vulgarity of mass media, one must note that it reflects the changing net of Lithuanian social and cultural identities. More inquiry and thought are needed to grasp the ways by which media technologies create national subjects and to assess mass media's role in the formation and deformation of the civil and pluralistic Lithuanian society and in the framing of what can be considered national.<sup>45</sup>

Lithuania as a specific locality is no longer tightly territorialized and closed. Similarly, national identity is being constantly reterritorialized: the landscape of national identity is fluid, permeable and conflictual; it is penetrated by and penetrates what lies outside of its location. Lithuanian émigrés, people of no clear ethnic origins preoccupied with the concerns of Lithuania and cosmopolitan citizens who work and speak on behalf of Lithuania — all are a part of the polyphonic and multivociferous imagined community. The bor-

derline of the nation is always shifting. National identity is constructed and lived in the realm of a context-dependent creativity based on the transfiguration of a Lithuanian citizen by practical, not idealized, national knowledges. As members of discursive not territorialized communities whose locations are multiple and contradictory, both domesticated and internalized, we negotiate our identities in a “discontinuous intertextual temporality of cultural difference.”<sup>46</sup>

My essay was an attempt to offer a new style of semiotic resistance to nationally established and sanctified Lithuanian nationality, to the meanings which consciously or unconsciously control our behaviors and words. It is a project that not only refuses dominant official and taken-for-granted meanings but constructs oppositional ones in order to narrate the “uncanny polyvalence of nationness”<sup>47</sup> and in order to liberate oneself from the powerful monumentality of national archetypes. My objective was to outline and make us fathom not only the idealized but also the pathological and repellent sites and sides of the Lithuanian society. Although the invisible bottom of Lithuania, as of any other, nation cannot be fathomed completely (national mythologists say that nations are bottomless and the national spirit is deep and unpenetrable), one may see, if one dares, oneself reflected in the concealed depths of both national imaginary and national reality. The double interplay of the hard bottom of reality and the mysteriously infinite and soft bottom of national imagination make me believe that there are no universal or unchanging attributes of national identification; by deconstructing and reconstructing national subjectivity produced by both the domains of utopian national identity and cynical practical national identification, we resist dominant mythologies that serve to sustain particular systems of power relations.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> On the latest events in Lithuania see *Central Eurasia, Daily Report* (Foreign Broadcast Information Service) for 1997-1999 and the netscape under the rubric "Lithuania."

<sup>2</sup> Leonidas Donskis, "Kalbos ikalinta kultura" (Culture Imprisoned by Language), *Metmenys* 67 (1994): 51-75.

<sup>3</sup> Both words and music of the anthem were written by the physician and writer Vincas Kudirka (1858-1899) and they were first published in the newspaper *Varpas* [The Bell] in 1898.

<sup>4</sup> My construction of national community derives from a number of sources, of which most important are Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), Homi Bhabha, ed. *Nation and Narration* (New York: Routledge, 1990) and Lauren Berlant, *The Anatomy of National Fantasy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

<sup>5</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 67-82.

<sup>6</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of Modern Nation," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1990), 302.

<sup>7</sup> The translation of the anthem is taken from *Encyclopedia Lituanica*, vol. IV, ed. Simas Suziedelis and Juozas Jakstas (Boston, Mass.: Kapocius, 1975), 24.

<sup>8</sup> First stance of this text reads as follows: "Lithuanians we are born, Lithuanians we shall be; we desire to be such/ And we must not allow/ the innate honor to be Lithuanian perish..." The text was written by the writer and pro-Lithuanian activist in East Prussia (Lithuania Minor) Georg Julius Justus Sauerwein (1831-1904).

<sup>9</sup> "Notwithstanding that someone attempted to destroy us, the fecund Lithuanian land will be bearing Lithuanians..." Lithuanian version cited from *Lietuviu Poezijos Antologija*, eds. J. Aistis & A. Vaiciulaitis (Chicago: Draugas, 1951), 196-197. As to the bearing of Lithuanians, even nowadays a Lithuanian émigré can seriously claim that those who "do not have children, cannot be accountable for the future of Lithuania." Linas Sidrys, *Draugas*, December 29, 3.

<sup>10</sup> The translation of Maironis's poem by Rafael Sealey was pulled from the modern information network using the Netscape system. Through modern information technologies, one can experience the production of an overinformed "reading community". The poem Lithuania was first published in Maironis's collection of poems *Pavasario Balsai* (The Voices of Spring) in 1902.

<sup>11</sup> The best political account of the 1988-1990 national "revival" is Alfred Erich Senn's *Lithuania Awakening* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

<sup>12</sup> On Lithuanian national ritualism and theatricality, see Vytautas Kavolis, "The Second Lithuanian Revival: Culture as Performance," *Lituanus*, vol. 37, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 59-60.

<sup>13</sup> Note the geographic and ethnic inevitability expressed in the words of destiny, history and God which preordained us to be Lithuanians. Quoted from Vytautas Landsbergis, *Atgave Vilti* (Hope Regained) (Vilnius: Sajudis, 1990), 9.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 13. Note the emphasized contrast between moral values and false although unnamed commodities.

<sup>15</sup> Vytautas Landsbergis, "Doras Darbas, Seima, Gimtoji Zeme" (Virtuous Work, Family and Native Land), *Lietuvos aidas*, no. 251, (December 17, 1991): 1-3.

<sup>16</sup> A. Patackas, *Redos ratas* (The Circle of Arrangement), (Kaunas, 1988), 2.

<sup>17</sup> A. Patackas, "Tauta, Kultura, Amzinybe" (Nation, Culture and Eternity), *Zemaiciu saulute*, no. 7 (February 18, 1995): 1.

<sup>18</sup> From the thoughts of the Lithuanian philosopher Arvydas Juozaitis as cited in Algis Valiunas, "Homage to Lithuania," *The American Spectator*, (July 1990), 24.

<sup>19</sup> "Lithuania is a village with a church; it remembers what other nations have forgotten or have never known: the rustle of the gardens of the primordial Eden and the direct relationship between God and man..."—writes A. Patackas, "Tauta, Kultura, Amzinybe" (Nation, Culture and Eternity), *Zemaiciu saulute*, no. 7 (February 18, 1995): 1.

<sup>20</sup> The allusion to the mythologized event of Pilenai castle in the fourteenth century. Realizing that the warriors of the Teutonic Order would capture his castle, Duke Margiris had himself and his people burned alive. The Pilenai sacrifice can be conceived of as a symbol of the heroic, non-opportunistic, yet self-destructive, "nation".

<sup>21</sup> Jadvyga Beliauskiene's testimony, in *Lietuva 1991. 01. 13: dokumentai, liudijimai, atgarsiai* (Lithuania in 01.13.91: Documents, Testimonies, Echoes) (Vilnius: Spaudos Departamentas, 1991), 145.

<sup>22</sup> My understanding of the relation between collective national memory and popular culture owes to George

Lipsitz's *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).

<sup>23</sup> The mentioned show took place on March 28, 1997.

<sup>24</sup> I have borrowed this term from Lauren Berlant's article, "The Theory of Infantile Citizenship," *Public Culture* 5 (1993): 395-410. Some other observations in my essay are much indebted to this playfully insightful article.

<sup>25</sup> The headline in Lithuanian daily *Lietuvos Rytas* (Lithuanian Morning) claims that "Only a few months left to improve [Lithuania's] image." *Lietuvos Rytas*, no. 75 (April 2, 1997): 2. The most comprehensive series of articles about Lithuania's image was published in the Lithuanian daily *Lietuvos Rytas*. The articles focused not only on the European countries but also on the countries of the former Soviet Union and Asia. One of the headlines in *Lietuvos Rytas* says "Lithuania's Image in Belgium: A Fairy-Tale Country of Self-Hypnotizing Catholics," *Lietuvos Rytas*, no. 61 (March 15, 1997): 21.

<sup>26</sup> See the article "Nuteistas 'Saules miesto' Statytojas" (The Builder of a City of the Sun is Sentenced), *Respublika* (Republic), no. 73 (March 29, 1997): 4. Also about Mitrokhin, "Apie Saules miesta svajojusiam aferistui — seseri metai nelaisves" (The sentence of 6 years in prison for the impostor who dreamt about a city of the sun), *Lietuvos Rytas*, no. 73 (March 29, 1997): 3.

<sup>27</sup> Reports about the life of prisoners in the newspapers or on TV are especially popular. See, for instance, Lilija Valatkiene, "The Mood of the Easter Morning [Felt] Even Behind the Lukiskes Prison Walls" (Velyku ryto nuojauta — ir uz Lukiskiu kalejimo sienu), *Lietuvos rytas*, no. 73 (March 29, 1997): 1-3.

<sup>28</sup> See *Lietuvos Rytas*, no. 73 (March 29, 1997): 8.

<sup>29</sup> See Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Forms* (Hanover: Wesleyan UP, 1992).

<sup>30</sup> See Vytautas Kavolis, op. cit., 62-63.

<sup>31</sup> Note the literary elite's patronizing tone in guiding and educating Lithuanian masses which stands in a stark contrast with television's models of informed yet non-didactic citizenship.

<sup>32</sup> Jonas Mikeliniskas, "Naujas senos doktrinos triumfas" (A New Triumph of the Old Doctrine), *Literatura ir menas*, 9 (March 2, 1996): 3. On the same topic, see also One Baliukonyte, "Kol demonai ilsisi," (While Demons Rest), *Literatura ir menas* 3 (January 20, 1996): 3-8.

<sup>33</sup> Krescencijus Stoskus, "Koks kulturos demuo Lietuvos uzsienio politikoje" (What Place does Culture

Occupy in Lithuanian Foreign Policy) *Kulturos barai* 10 (1993): 4.

<sup>34</sup> Juozas Placas, "Lietuvos zeme," (*Lithuanian Land*) *Draugas* 104 (May 29, 1996): 4.

<sup>35</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 134.

<sup>36</sup> According to the remarkable theory of the head of this Center, the Lithuanian town Panevezys which befits all characteristic described by the *Apocalypse* will become a New Jerusalem. From *Lietuvos Rytas*, no. 283 (December 2, 1995): 3.

<sup>37</sup> A. Patackas, "Tauta, Kultura, Amzinybe" (Nation, Culture and Eternity), *Zemaiciu Saulute*, no. 7 (February 18, 1995): 1.

<sup>38</sup> Danielius Musinskas, "Barnabo Aurelijaus Sapnai" (The Dreams of Barnabas Aurelijus), *Veidas*, no. 13 (April 1993): 13.

<sup>39</sup> It is not surprising that chewing gum provoked a scandal in Lithuania. In the winter of 1996, Czech chewing gum with erotic pictures inside were quite popular among children and adolescents. The names of Czech gum were also enticingly attractive: "Bikini Girl," "Night Club Girl," etc. The sale of this gum was finally prohibited by local municipalities. On this see Gintaras Sarafinas, "Pirkti kramtomaja guma vaikus vilioja erotiniai paveiksleliai" (Erotic pictures seduce children into buying chewing gum), *Lietuvos aidas* (Echo of Lithuania), no. 88 (May 7, 1996): 5.

<sup>40</sup> Juozas Erlickas, "Jei nieko negali, tai ir nereikia, arba Vytautas pas kryziuocius" (If You Can Do Nothing, Do Not Do It, or Vytautas in the Hands of the Teutonic Knights), *Lietuvos rytas*, no. 283, (December 2, 1995): 8.

<sup>41</sup> Home pages of twenty-years-old Lithuanians wandering through world-wide web are becoming a common phenomenon. Nonetheless, Lithuanian cultural moralists christened the Internet "Satan's abode" or "God's abode without God." See, for instance, Arvydas Juozaitis, "Vilniaus langas," *Lietuvos rytas*, no. 61 (March 15, 1997).

<sup>42</sup> The translation of this soap opera's title may be a good example of how Lithuanian TV reinterpreted it.

<sup>43</sup> Liudvikas Jakimavicius, "Literatura ir visuomene" (Literature and Society), *Metai* 5 (1995): 84-85.

<sup>44</sup> On the purification of language and morals, see insightful article of Leonidas Donskis, "Kalbos ikalinta kultura" (Culture Imprisoned by the Language), *Metmenys*, 67 (1994): 51-75.

<sup>45</sup> In the summer of 1996, Lithuanian President



Algirdas Brazauskas has signed the country's new mass media law, despite a last minute, personal appeal by the archbishop of Vilnius for a reexamination of some of the law's key provisions. The law provides for a system of self-regulation of mass media by an ethics commission composed exclusively of media representatives. The Catholic Church and right-wing politicians have criticized the bill arguing that an ethics commission overseeing mass media should include people from the religious communities, representatives from education and of cultural non-media groups in order to control "the moral content of media-disseminated material." On a controversy over the bill, see Brice Minnigh, "Mass Media Law Raises Ethical Questions," *The Baltic Times*, no. 20 (August 1-7, 1996): 6.

<sup>46</sup> Homi K. Bhabha. "The Commitment to Theory," *New Formations*, 5 (Summer 1988): 5-24.

<sup>47</sup> I use here Bhabha's phrase from his article "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of Modern Nation", in *Nation and Narration*, 299.