

About the Lithuanian Baroque in a Baroque Manner

Darius Kuolys, Man, Nation and State in the Historic Literature of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania: Renaissance, Baroque. Vilnius: Science and Encyclopedia publishers, 1992. 286 p.: ill.

We still cannot boast of a history of culture up till this day. It is enough to open any synthetic piece of work on Lithuanian history to prove that: there are a few facts on the history of education, on literature, arts and architecture. During Soviet times the history of culture was understood, in the best case, as the sum of facts from the spheres in the competence of the Ministry of Culture. This was caused by several reasons: it is often repeated that before the war Lithuanian historiography was concerned mainly with political history, while after the war Soviet historiography dealt with social history. Now it becomes clear that this differentiation is not accurate. The subject of pre-war historiography was a history of events while post-war historiography dealt with the history of doctrinally understood processes, and mainly social-economic ones at that. Neither one nor the other methodological trend was favorable to the history of culture. On the one hand, history of culture seems to stand apart from events; on the other hand, "social-economic" historiography which disregards interaction of "its own" processes with other levels of historical process is not in need of history of culture either. Furthermore, Soviet historiography which had removed themes of Church and God as well as ideas of nation from its research could not discuss the most fundamental problem of the history of culture — the search for the meaning of life and action and the reflection of this search in various artifacts. Although culture and its history were being written about, the dimensions of its value were either forgotten or such facts and ideas as the Christening of Lithuania, the Catholic Church, the idea of God and religion were claimed to exist beyond the boundaries of culture.

In the light of this context, the recent book by Darius Kuolys is to be considered as the first step to the post-Soviet historiography of cultural history. It is true that *Epochų signatūros* by Vytautas Kavolis which has subtly marked the development of culture's spiritual secularization and modernization in Lithuania has to be considered as a guiding star. Although Kuolys' book appeared not much later and the path of its ideological maturation was much more difficult (due to the causes mentioned above), it is clear that an attentive analysis of the text was picked up from Kavolis. Therefore, this is most probably the first time in historiography that the biggest and the most outstanding written memorials of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania have been read so attentively: historical works by Maciej Strykowski and *History of Lithuania* by Albertus Wiliuk-Koialowicz. For the first time it was done from the point of view of a culture historian. Let us have a look at how the author succeeded in his task.

Personality, history and the absolute.

The analysis of systems of value is the most persuasive part of Darius Kuolys' book. He uses the concept of "person", though bearing in mind the theoretical context which is used as a basis by the author himself, one would agree that the concept of "individual" defines the direction of considerations more precisely. Although, according to Arvydas Šliogeris, all of European civilization is based on the "individual of substance," the roots of modern individualism are often being sought in the Renaissance. After having analyzed closely Maciej Strykowski's Renaissance paradigm of *virtu* and the hypostatization of the history common for such an outlook, Kuolys should not object to this either (p. 10-31). Careful observations on the manifestations of the Renaissance outlook were started by Vanda Zaborskaitė. Yet after her works, other Strykowski's texts have seen the light; his authorship of Alexander Guagnini's chronicle is much better proven, so the author had better and more opportunities to tackle the problem in a deeper and broader fashion. The concept of the whole book rests on the ideas of historical memory as the only permanent reality, glory throughout the ages, relations of glory and virtue. The Jesuits, the Counter-reformation and the Baroque were once looked upon by Juozas Jurginis as phenomena of the same epoch of "feudal reaction," while Zaborskaitė adjusted the concept by subtly discerning the anthropocentric crisis in Lithuanian culture and by calling it Baroque philosophy, not decadence. Kuolys adopts this

scheme very effectively. It seems that the chapters on the formation of a new paradigm of "holy obedience" and the condemnation of the ideas of "vain glory" are the most original and effective (p. 130-201). 17th century ideas of the repenting human, inability to know the world and the insufficiency of human wisdom, dimensions of God's mercy and eternity, the turning to death as the only source of the world's wisdom, the drama of a nation's (not a person's) salvation, the transition from the political age ignoring moral scruples to the age based on the morals of the fear of God — all these insights are an indisputable success in the book. These paradigms are called the Renaissance and the Baroque by Kuolys, and he assigns these concepts to whole cultural epochs. Let us not consider here whether he is right or wrong. Let us set aside the problem which is very important from the point of view of the history of mentalities; i.e. to what extent Strykowski's ideas mirror the "average" of a society's ideas. Let us consider how many of such Strykovskis there were in sixteenth century Lithuania. According to Kuolys these should be Augustinus Rotundus, Joannes Radvanus and Andreus Rymza (only they are discussed alongside Strykowski, pp. 19-20). But the latter two are analyzed in the chapters dealing with Baroque world perception (pp. 134-136), while Augustinus Rotundus is correctly remembered as a zealous spokesman of Christianity and could be called a Christian humanist at best. We will discuss the latter statement later. At present one can only state that using the manner of strict rejection provides us with the conclusion that the nucleus of Kuolys' conception of the Renaissance is widely based only on the creative works by Maciej Strijkowski. Later we will conclude that the opposition of the Renaissance to the Baroque is the most persuasive one (though not sufficient either) and is an object of the analysis of value systems, because the Renaissance and the Baroque are much more difficult to find in the concepts of nation and state. If we agree with this, then we could maintain that by his own criteria Kuolys has found only one representative of the Renaissance and tried to prove him so.

Between paganism and Christianity.

The hypostatization of history found in Strijkowski's works is considered by Kuolys as a sign of the epoch. This is true, if Strijkowski alone represents the Renaissance, maybe he is so unique that any other text cannot offer us a picture of the epoch's character and we should admit a total "disregard of God" in Lithuanian culture in the second half of the Sixteenth century. But this is not true. The second half of the sixteenth century is a period of great ideological-religious disputes, the source of which lies in the Reformation movement. Why is Strijkowski analyzed in absolute neglect of religious polemic literature? Why is Andreus Volanus, the pillar of Calvinistic reformation, the author whose volume of works is no less, forgotten? Of twenty works by this author only a few are given more or less space. And where are Piotr Goniaza, Simonus Budny, Petrus Scarga, etc? Would it not turn out that the second half of the sixteenth century was a century of "the search of God" and Strijkowski with his apology of history is an "aberration", an upstart foreigner who was warmly accepted, a writer who gained wide but not deep resonance? This idea can be supported by the pattern of the Christianization process which has already made strong inroads in our history of culture. The middle of the sixteenth century in Lithuania is still the epoch of syncretism; therefore, both the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation served christianization. The Christian God had not yet reached the lower levels of society. By the way, one of the most persuasive facts allowing such an argument was described by Strijkowski himself. The peasant's Christ is one of many gods, the one who gave "poor rye". The search for God had not lost its urgency, it had not even started yet in a more fundamental way. Strijkowski again becomes unique and original in this light. It turns out that Strijkowski, in the manner of the Renaissance, is a vigilant describer of the spontaneity of folk culture. This explains his fascination with Antiquity and "the antique," i.e. the pagan culture of Lithuania. Such a conclusion would correspond to Kuolys' scheme. But in that case, can one keep silent about the chapter in the Chronicle devoted to the description of folk customs and entitled "On old ceremonies, or, more exactly, on the follies of Russian, Polish, Samogitian, Lithuanian, Latvian and Prussian pagan dwellers and the versatility of their false gods". More than once Strijkowski refers to paganism as "terrifying darkness," "temptations of the devil", "darkness", while a sort of humanist Wenceslaus Agrippa describes it by a very sordid term, "the old dung" (*pristinæ sordes*). Would it not mean that Strijkowski is not as much a man of the Renaissance as he seems?

Christian humanism?

It is possible to get out of this dilemma by using the concept of "Christian humanism." This concept is usually applied in discussing the most prominent ideological trend of the "Northern Renaissance" (i.e. non-Italian) and its leader Erasmus (Desiderus Erasmus Roterdamus). Christian humanism tried to combine Renaissance Christianity and anthropocentrism. The combination sprang from biblical philology, which served as a basis for understanding the humanistic Christian ethics called the "philosophy of Christ" by Erasmus. Later Martin Luther was to criticize Erasmus, maintaining that Christ's humanness always meant more to him than his godliness.

Joannes Visliciensis, Nicolaus Hussovianus and Augustinus Rotundus are considered to be Christian humanists by Kuolys. He states that "the path cleared out by Erasmus and the free spirit of Christianity guarded by him saved early Renaissance Lithuanian artists from the closed circle of anthropocentric philosophy" (p. 30). Few arguments are

presented. But this is not so important in this case. According to Kuolys, the following conclusion would seem appropriate: Christian humanism, being promising philosophy at first, "wound up" in anthropocentrism later (Strijkowski) and after the crisis of the latter, a Baroque perception of the world developed. The author does not explain what caused the above mentioned "closing off", how Christian humanism was possible before an anthropocentric one and in what way the "Christian humanist," Augustus Rotundus, could become the herald of the Counter-Reformation directly related to Baroque philosophy. The latter fact would force us to ask what is the relationship between Christian humanism and the Christian Baroque perception of the world. This question does not yield a direct theoretical answer. Even in the West Christian humanism can only be the application of the mature Italian "arsenal" to the more medieval, i.e. trans-alpic Renaissance. Even while speaking about Western Europe, the boundary between the humanism adorned by "human" Christianity and modern Counter-Reformation Christianity which adopted humanistic, sometimes only humanistic philology means, becomes indiscernible. The problem becomes even more complicated in terms of Lithuania which did not experience the Middle Ages. The discussion is disassociated from the process of Christianization and therefore cannot be fruitful. And what if it is a Christianization with the arsenal of the Renaissance and Baroque? Will the problem of Augustinus Rotundus not be clarified? Maybe Strijkowski's movements from paganism to Christianity will find their explanation as well? One way or another, at this point we could say once again — Strijkowski was an upstart who diverged most from Christianity and the search for God towards anthropocentrism. So, it turns out that the individual facing history was only Maciej Strijkowski himself.

Homeland as a modern nation?

Darius Kuolys notices that the only concern of Strijkowski's egocentric protagonist linking him to the society is his love for the homeland (p. 31). The latter word is very often formed in all historical writings. It seems that Kuolys consciously substitutes the word "nation" for it. He writes: "...it was the age of the Renaissance which linked the person to the nation by a consciously perceived ontological junction: only in the existence of the nation did the existence of the person become meaningful and existentially proved" (p. 31). The idea is meaningful, but what is meant by the concept of "nation"?

More than once Kuolys speaks of the "idea of political unity of the Baits," "ethnolinguistic cultural unity of the Baits," etc. One could take these as generalizations aimed at describing Strijkowski's and Albertus Viiuk-Koialowicz's views as the attitudes of the whole historiography before the nineteenth century (see p. 109). Nevertheless, the clarity disappears from time to time and it seems that Kuolys agrees to these ideas as he fails to set himself apart from the reasoning that Vytautas had marched to Kiev to unite the Baltic lands. This should not come as a surprise. Romantic Baltophilia is very alive nowadays and Kuolys makes his obeisances to it. Though this is slightly annoying, we are concerned with other things here — Baltophilia looks upon the nation as an ethnos, i.e. an unchangeable phenomenon, which can only "fall asleep" and then needs to be "awakened." Everything would be consistent (though it is not clear how the concepts of the Renaissance and the Baroque fall into line with this understanding of ethos), if only in other places the nation were not be understood as *society*. Other concepts describing socio-cultural change of ethnos are used: "the national Lithuanian state," "concepts of national culture," "national rebirth." Kuolys evidently "coins" these concepts according to the Italian pattern, because for him nationalism, alongside with anthropocentrism, is one of the main features of the Renaissance (p. 37). Indeed, starting with Dante, Italy begins the creation of modern national culture and this correlates with the emergence of a modern nation. Modern Italians do not need dictionaries to read Boccaccio. What other nation could boast such a thing? Maybe only France with its Francois Rabelais. Maybe England with Shakespeare, but for Germany Martin Luther was not enough. It needed the romantics. So, does there exist a concept of the Renaissance nation common for the whole of Europe? The question is complicated but it is not discussed in the book. Bearing in mind the fact that the author discovers the Renaissance as an epoch in Lithuania, one should think that sixteenth-century Lithuanian culture is looked upon as a modern one. It means that the author should speak of the modern nation and of national rebirth. But all nations, before becoming modern, had to survive the feudal or class epoch, which typically contains the political nation whose members are representatives of the privileged estates, disregarding their ethnic origin.

A political nation?

Often Kuolys dissociates himself from "the nation of noblemen" considering it characteristic of Poland. And we will see more than once, how Lithuania, in some strange way becomes more mature than Poland. Are we again dealing with Baltophilia? Many times, and very effectively, Kuolys discusses Strijkowski's and Albertus Viiuk-Koialowicz's relations with the nobility of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, especially its Lithuanian representatives. It is repeatedly stressed that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a state of Lithuanians. It seems that the author considers this a counter-argument against the concept of the "political state." Everything is the other way around. The author himself acknowledges that "the sixteenth century nobility of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was united into a national community not so much by a common language and / or faith as by the historical fate which had left deep traces in the nation's memory, especially the descent

from Lithuanian dukes and noblemen" (p. 97). Is this not a direct recognition of the existence of a political nation? The new cultural models of the sixteenth century — the Lithuanian (Abrahamus Culvensis, Mikalojus Daukša) and the Latin (Michalo Litanus, Wenceslaus Agrippa) and the Polish (Maciej Strijkowski) can only be explained by the existence of a political nation. All these were the cultural orientations of the same "nation of noblemen." True, Strijkowski is more original in that he notices ethical differences more subtly and describes more nationalities than Viiuk Kojalowicz. But while the latter is mostly concerned with the nationalities of Lithuania, such as Lithuanians and Guds, Strijkowski describes the whole "Sarmatia," the leader of which is Poland (by the way, Kuolys cannot make up his mind as to how to treat Strijkowski — whether as a spokesman of Lithuanian or of Polish interests). Kuolys himself brought attention to the fact that Lithuania too was familiar with the wording *natione Lithuanus, gente Polonus* (p. 249). But after all, this is a formula of a political nation's self-consciousness! Hypothetically one can assume the formula *gente Ruthenus, natione Lithuanus* (a "three-fold" self-consciousness existed in Poland at that time — *origine Iudeus, gente Ruthenus, natione Polonus*). Of course it is only natural that the process of Polonization had slowly to influence the formation of the Lithuanian political nation. The time has now come to explain the concept of society so important to the problem of the political nation.

Society: post-estate, estate or pre-estate?

The Renaissance concept of society, at least the classical one, should not raise any doubts: it was Dante's exclamation: "When I hear talk of estates, I want to seize my dagger." Maybe such declarations were not formed by the transalpic Renaissance but the emerging absolutism had to change the estate ideology as well. As has been mentioned, the most prominent humanist for Kuolys was Strijkowski. But the latter very often mentions "the unenlightened" (*czern*) and it seems that he distinguishes them according to social criteria and not those of intelligence. In other places, Strijkowski openly declares the ideal of a natural order of three-estates that is again brought out by Kuolys (p. 101). But it should be noted that a three-estate order is the concept of *tripartitio Christiana* (Christian tripling), dividing the society into three parts — *oratores, bellatores, laboratores* — which supported the estate ideology of the Middle Ages. Strijkowski's concept of a three-estate society is opposed to the views of Rotundus and Volanus by Kuolys. In reality, Rotundus mentions the common people but it seems that he is mostly concerned about the decline of "orators", i.e. the clergy's, role. This, according to him, was caused by the Reformation, which even in Poland set the minds of the common people "on fire", and this is dangerous to secular power. Volanus is very advanced in stressing the peasants' equality with regard to the law and their right to lodge a complaint on their masters' decisions. His ideas of seigneurial economy clearly oriented toward the social pattern of Northern Europe may have prompted some of the noblemen to draw philanthropic wills freeing their peasants. But where could the peasants turn under conditions of an increasing serfdom, if not to throw themselves on the mercy of other masters? The conflict between reality and the ideal program had to be very explicit here. Would one not assume that Volanus was a similar upstart as Strijkowski, only with different ideas? There are gaps in Strijkowski's real humanism as there are gaps in the anti-estate ideology of Volanus. Does the following emotional sentence by Volanus answer to the spirit of the Renaissance: "Will we not be the enemies of our own happiness, if we have to rob and oppress them" (the peasants — A.B.)? [5](#) Is this "own" happiness not a class-based happiness?

The ideological situation discussed can be explained by historical truth. Equal rights for all the noblemen estates in Lithuania were reached only in 1564-1566. Having in mind that the reform was carried out from "the top" (as, under the influence of the Livonian war, the noblemen themselves reduced their own privileges), one should acknowledge the fact that to many noblemen estate privileges remained an ideal to be sought.

So, we could maintain that even estate consciousness was a matter of the future in the period under discussion. Life went on in the times of conflict between landlords and noblemen (this conflict and its reflections were analyzed by Marcelinas Ročka). Moreover, the ideology of the nobles is obviously reflected in the works of Augustinus Rotundus (mark how gracefully the noble assessors are called "fathers" */padres conscriptos/* by him) and it is the "noblemen" order that is opposed to the Polish "golden freedoms." It is precisely this "pyramid" of noblemen that is the foundation of the "order" of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and a favorable condition for the implementation of Roman law. Does this not create the outward appearance that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was "more Renaissance-like" than Poland?

Reflections of the landlords' ideology are very scarce in the writings of this period. The beginnings of the criticism of noblemen can be deciphered in Michalo Litanus' utopical mourning for the "golden age" of Vytautas the Great. Thus, the time of estate-consciousness, estate culture, and estate ideology in Lithuania had not passed, it had not even arrived yet.

Between "tolerance" and absolutism.

The problem of tolerance has been raised and exaggerated by Polish historiography. The Sarmatian wish to put on airs cannot be denied here, as Western absolutisms are proffered the example of the "state without fires." Theoretically this is

an anti-historical idea, because, on the one hand, historical progress determined by absolutism is denied, and, on the other, the principle promoted by bourgeois revolutions is sought in feudal society. Sometimes Polish historians look for the sources of this "tolerance" they had invented in pagan Lithuania. This concept finds its reflection in the book by Kuolys as well: "The Baltic spirit of humanness and tolerance which used to surprise the first Prussian' baptizers was still alive in the cultural centers of the sixteenth-century Grand Duchy" (p. 13). But, after all, who murdered Vaitiekus-Adalbertas and Brunonas-Bonifacijus? Where do the later martyr stories of Franciscan and Orthodox monks come from? Is this "tolerance"? It is true that people of different faiths used to share the same table, there used to be various combinations in marriage, and churches of different confessions used to appear very close to each other in the sixteenth century. But if the sixteenth century in Lithuania is the time of the formation of estate society, and the idea of tolerance is discussed, then this "tolerance" should be explained not by the new ideology stressing the value of the individual, but by the right of the *Lehn*, related to the estate of landlords and amended by the vassal's right to stick to his faith. The more such rights the vassals had, the greater the proof that one can speak of a more primitive society. And the fact that some "bones" of "tolerance" sometimes fell from the gentry's "table" on to the peasants' should not create the illusion of respect for peasant beliefs. In other circumstances after a more "orderly" life had settled in, the peasants were confronted with religious oppression.

It should be stressed that Kuolys is not decided as to whether to consider "tolerance," i.e. estate freedoms (the Renaissance ideal of freedom?) and absolutism as features of the Renaissance. If not for the above mentioned obeisances to "tolerance," one would think that the author speaks for absolutism. It seems that the cult of Vytautas and his epoch propagated by Michalo Lituanus and others is considered to be a Renaissance feature by the author. It is better not to discuss the theoretical side of this question because it was not always that Western humanists sided with absolutism. It is enough to remember Thomas More.

We have already mentioned that estate ideology did not yet exist in Lithuania in the middle of the sixteenth century. Michalo Lituanus opposes the order of Vytautas to the order of that period and this means that the "noblemen order" is being criticized. Rotundus, on the contrary, looks for the sources of the noblemen's order, that he favors in Vytautas' times. Both alternatives speak of the pre-estate state apologetics of the Grand Duke and not of the post-estate ideology of absolutism.

Still more complicated is the evolution of the concept of the Lithuanian state. Kuolys has successfully noticed the worshipping of noblemen which emerged at the end of the sixteenth century. It was they who became the ideological sovereigns of Lithuania. But does this allow us to relate this to the transition from the Renaissance to the Baroque state concept, if we are not sure which idea of the state should be considered a Baroque one from the theoretical point of view. It seems that the process could be explained in simpler terms:

this is a transition from the pre-union to the post-union concept of the Lithuanian state. The category of absolutism is on the whole difficult to apply to the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Our state lived by a different rhythm and under different conditions.

Shortcomings of the Schema.

Thus, we have a Renaissance in Lithuania which not only had not yet outgrown but also was still behind estate ideology. We have a Renaissance which is related not to the petty bourgeoisie but, compared to Western Europe, to archaic social layers; we have a Renaissance which is intertwined with fierce religious struggles but still exists in conditions of incomplete Christianization. Is this not a paradox? Furthermore, the idea of the Renaissance in Kuolys' book is built exclusively on Strijkowski's views. But this is not enough. The best pages in the book are those showing Strykovskis' relations with the society of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. But the conclusion drawn is that the historian remained a stranger to Lithuanian society.

So, by way of logical rejection we arrive at the conclusion that there was no Renaissance in Lithuania — it had some manifestations of the Renaissance but not the Renaissance epoch. If this is true, then the whole scheme of Kuolys' book is suspended in the air. Furthermore, the concept of the dawn of a new age in Lithuania is sometimes grounded by the presence of the Renaissance, and it is already reflected in school curricula. Consequently, if the New Ages exist, the Middle Ages have to be found as well. According to this scheme we are subsequently led to the Renaissance. And the Middle Ages are found to start as early as the sixth century: the Middle Ages without a state and civilization? These are the paradoxes to which one can be led by the concepts of synchronic history of culture. How do they originate?

The understanding of the Renaissance by Kuolys is the same as that of Georg Burckhardt — it is the "discovery of man and the world". How fruitful this concept is in historiography is under question. The author does not consider this. Perhaps it is too complicated to require this, but, on the other hand, it is annoying that the concept of the Renaissance is taken over wholly from the works of Soviet historians (though not from the worst ones — M. Barg, L. Batkin). One way or another, looking at the Renaissance from the perspective of centuries, it nevertheless becomes clear that it was then that the roots of anthropocentrism, secularization and historicism appeared.

The situation with the Baroque is even more complicated. Darius Kuolys primarily makes use of Russian and Polish authors. It should be immediately stressed that in historiography the concept of the Baroque does not bear the same content as the Renaissance does. The Renaissance is a concept marking a stylistic as well as a fundamental historical epoch. While for Burckhardt the Baroque was only the decline of the Renaissance, for Wölfflin it was an aesthetic category marking every epoch of decline. And, having in mind, that sometimes the Baroque is taken for a part of Classicism, and sometimes just for a trend in art, we are free to say that the book lacks a strict definition of the Baroque as an epoch.

On the application of a more captious approach, would it not turn out that the new insights are practically being "stuffed" into Juozas Jurginis' pattern of the Renaissance and the Baroque (making use of the above mentioned corrections by Vanda Zaborskaitė). The book *Renaissance and Humanism in Lithuania* by Jurginis which appeared in 1965 may be considered a symbol of the Khrushchev "thaw" in historiography. It then became clear that not only bastshoes or ploughshares or serfdom could be objects of investigation. On the whole. Soviet historiography of that time saw the rise of an important phenomenon — Nikolaj Konrad's concept of "world Renaissance." Strictly speaking, this concept was only an adornment to the concept of synchronic world history propagandized by Marxist-Leninist historiography. Until then, Stalinists, holding hands, marched in five formations to a brighter tomorrow, i.e. communism, while Konrad kept silent about their destination. He only maintained that all nations marched through the Renaissance holding hands in exactly the same manner. It was much easier for Jurginis to ground his concept. After all, we had Renaissance attics, a lot of Baroque, and maybe less but still enough classical architecture in Pilies street in Vilnius. The concept of synchronic history of culture had been created. It remained only to balance it with the problems of social process. Since the Renaissance in Soviet historiography was considered the beginning of capitalism and the New Ages, Jurginis discovered capitalism in Lithuania, too. For him the Renaissance attics appeared to be of the same origin as hired workers (read: the early proletariat). Of course, Jurginis did not bother to fine-tune this early overstrained capitalism to his own wonderful description of the serfdom-establishment process. The important point was different — a "Soviet"-grounded Renaissance.

Darius Kuolys represents post-Soviet historiography. The idea of distancing phenomena from social processes as well as from historical reality in general comes into fashion. In trying to escape Soviet historiography, its synchronic schemes are still used, hindering historical understanding of culture. Progress is not as speedy as could be expected. We are not trying to prove that the distinction between the middle of the sixteenth century and the seventeenth century is impossible, but it should be connected to a concrete historical process which obviously does not have enough room even in the synchronic schemes of social history. Is that to say that the concepts framing Western history of culture cannot be applied to Lithuania? By no means. It is clear that the issue of periodization of social and cultural history has become a very important one. At this point we would like to stress that the concepts of European history are to be applied only when Lithuania becomes a part of Europe. This should be accepted even by Baltophiles seeking to stress pagan culture as a separate monad of civilization. Today, we can state that the process of Lithuania's Europeanization was proceeding, at least, to the middle of the sixteenth century, and it seems to have gone in spasms. How else can the Gothic masterpieces of the beginning of the sixteenth century — St. Ann's church and the House of Thunder in Kaunas — be explained when the Zapyškis church, half a century older, is much more primitive? How can we find an explanation for Gothic existing alongside the Renaissance and the Baroque? Are these not the "twitches" of cultural reception? Cannot this explain Strijkowski's and Volanus' originality and Daukša's "voice in the wilderness"? Are they not better explained through the concept of Europeanization? The prominent figures of our culture had to balance constantly between illusory Western oriented projects and the heroic corrections of reality. Very often the only possible resistance, according to Kuolys, could be through "the written word" (p. 63). This, most probably, is the tragedy of all peripheries.

The middle of the sixteenth century saw a change — the Jesuits came to an agrarian and an incompletely Christian country. They founded the University of Vilnius and decided the character of the epoch for two hundred years. This epoch, the knowledge of which was considerably deepened by Kuolys, could definitely be called Baroque. Are we not contradicting what has been said? Are we not proposing a new variant of synchronism? Lithuania indeed became a part of Europe during that epoch. It became Christian; a European system of education reached the very bottom of the society. For the first time the formation of independent civilizational values was started in the cultural history of Lithuania. One of the outspoken examples is the absolutely unique school of Vilnius Baroque architecture which developed through the periods of wars, famines and plagues. Does this mean that we caught up with time? It is difficult to say. But the concept of the Baroque helps here so far. Somebody has said that during the 17th-18th centuries Lithuania had stepped into the "second Middle Ages." Perhaps not the "second" ones, but the "first," and the most important thing was that Lithuania was ready to accept a Western culture of the periphery. It may sound too far-fetched but more advanced countries — England and Holland — were creating Classicism and preparing themselves for the epoch of the Enlightenment. The concept of Classicism is more becoming even to the culture of seventeenth-century Catholic France. So for now let us keep to the understanding of the Baroque as the culture of a Catholic periphery. Such a periphery could be joined by Lithuania. The agrarian, freshly Christian country was not yet ripe for another epoch.

It may seem that we are too critical towards the book by Darius Kuolys. But it does not appear to us that our criticism is for the sake of criticism. We have somebody to argue with and good reason to argue. In many places Kuolys demonstrates that he is at home with the epoch. Not only Baroque language, but even its way of thinking — versatile, "stereo-point," emotional — is resurrected. Are not the following sentences beautiful and even breathtaking: "In the hour of despair we

find Strijkowski's hero not in the house of God, looking for peace and composure in prayer, but alone, standing at the edge of the woods, his hands outstretched to the empty darkening sky. Words of accusation and of cursing and not of repentance are on his lips. The man of Humanism answers with a complaint, not with prayer, to the breath of cold non-existence — reconciliation with God and the world is not possible" (p. 29). This is nice, but does it not look as if very soon God himself will be drawn from nature? Thus, one would wish Darius Kuolys new works, a stricter historical concept, a firmer and more independent way of thinking as well as getting rid of aestheticism and Baltophilic adornments. Sometimes one feels like getting angry: Kuolys' views are to be reconstructed as well. As of any real Baroque author.

The first step has been good. The literary historian has boldly stepped into the sphere of history of culture wiping everybody's noses. Those of historians included.

ALFREDAS BUMBLAUSKAS, Vilnius University

Translated by Raimonda Markevičienė

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