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* Cover: 2004 Christmas card designed by Virgis Volertas, who was an eighth grade student at "Vinco Krėvės" Lithuanian School, Philadelphia, PA.

Lithuanian American Community (LAC) XVII Board of Directors Third Annual Session



Members and Guests.

Photo by Kazys Razgaitis

This third session of the LAC's Board of Directors took place in the Sheraton Detroit Novi Hotel during September 23-25, 2005. It consisted of nine meetings and two evening programs. Eighty registered members and guests were present. Although many Lithuanians belong to the LAC, during Board of Directors meeting only Board members may speak and/or vote. If a non-member wishes to speak he/she must have a voting sponsor. The rules regarding individual speaking time were very strictly enforced by the presiding chairperson.

The first meeting was opened by Board Chairperson Regina Narušis. First were sung the American and Lithuanian national anthems led by Antanas Polikaitis. The invocation was delivered by Rev. Jaunius Kelpšas. The "in memoriam" for the recently deceased was presented by Birutė Vindašius. She spoke extensively of our late pontiff, Pope John Paul II, whose mother was of Lithuanian descent. Also honored was V. Kutkus, former Lithuanian American Community President.

R. Narušis presented two guests of honor from Lithuania: V. Landsbergis, who as chairman of the Lithuanian Parliament fifteen years ago was instrumental in reestablishing Lithuania's Independence and A. Lydeka, a present member of the Lithuanian Parliament.

Liuda Rugienius, LAC Michigan regional chairperson, read greetings received from G. Žemkalnis, President of the Lithuanian Worldwide Community, and various greetings and well-wishes from Lithuania, Canada and the United States. Later, during a discussion regarding the agenda of the meetings, D. Skučas suggested the deletion of round table discussions about the Joint Committee of Lithuania's Parliament and the LAC's representatives. In his opinion, it is not appropriate to discuss foreign countries' business. This suggestion was met with strong opposition and after further discussions A. Dzikas, LAC's executive vice president apologized to V. Landsbergis and A. Lydeka for this apparent rudeness. Later, R. Narušis, presenting her annual report, issued an additional apology. She touched on the dissent between the Lithuanian Community and the Lithuanian Fund. "This hurt all of us... We should look for ways to work together in harmony... We need new guidelines for our future work."

During the second meeting Board members received hand-outs of the work done during the year by the Executive Council. These were not read during the meeting, but the focus of the presentation was on what goals were not reached. Chairperson's (V. Vebraitė) report was read by Dr. E. Vaišnys. On

one hand, the upcoming Song Festival next year is a very positive step, but we do lack funds and we lack journalists. Also, we should look for persons who can eventually replace us.

Dr. E. Vaišnys, during her own report, focused on the necessity of expanding our active membership utilizing modern methods such as e-mail and staying in touch through the telephone. Dr. S. Bačkaitis spoke about education and reported that there will be four conferences in the future where presentations will be by experts in their field.

During the third meeting, various committees gathered separately to discuss future projects.

Friday evening was a 'get acquainted' event at the Divine Providence Parish Culture Center. Here various chairpersons of the LAC chapters presented their reports about activities and accomplishments, working conditions, joys and hardships. After these presentations we feasted on 'cepelinai', wine, coffee and an assortment of cakes.

Fourth meeting Saturday morning dealt with the committee in Lithuania which is composed of eight Parliamentarians and five LAC members. This Committee analyzes LAC current problems and gives its decision-resolution to the Parliament for further deliberation. Future meetings will deal with

restitution of damage done during Soviet occupation, reinstatement of Lithuanian citizenship and other such issues. During the round table discussion which included the honorable guests from Lithuania, several subjects were raised for clarification. In Lithuania at present there is very little patriotism or love for the country. Widespread abuse of alcohol, depression, and suicide have to be dealt with. During a question-answer period a big problem came to light. Russia is spending a large amount of money to spread disinformation regarding the Soviet occupation. Does Lithuania have enough funds and know how to counter this? Also, we have to do something to encourage the youth who go abroad looking for jobs and earn money to return to Lithuania.

Fifth meeting dealt mostly with the world wide Lithuanian Community. Primarily, if this Community is incorporated in Lithuania, we might be facing a problem if our conflicts are to be solved in Lithuania. Further discussions involved how to vote for representatives to this Community's next Congress which will take place next summer. One suggestion was to put the names on the ballot of the Board of Directors elections. There was a debate regarding changing some by-laws. This was postponed due to lack of time.

Sixth meeting. A decision was reached to leave the Board of Directors as is: sixty elected members plus regional chairpersons. This was followed by long discussions regarding changing some by-laws. No definite decisions were reached, but the general consensus was that "if it's not broken, don't fix it."

Seventh meeting. At the beginning, various committees presented their decisions. The focus was on the damage done to Lithuania during Soviet occupation and present Russia's disinformation attempts.

At present there is a discussion with the United States government to permit Lithuanians to come to this country without visas. Also, the Board

urges everyone to support the new immigration laws in the making that would permit new immigrants easier legalization.

Further thanks was expressed to the United States Congress for their resolutions urging Russia to admit the USSR occupation of the Baltic States and its illegal annexation. Finally, a request was made to explore the possibility of going to court to seek restitution for those families who were deported as political prisoners for hard labor to Siberia.

Due to Lithuanian grammar, in multi-word titles only the first word is capitalized. We have been writing our Community name capitalizing the first letter of all words. This is correct according to new grammar rules in Lithuania. Unfortunately, there are people who still adhere to the old rules. It is up to us to inform and insist that the Lithuanian press capitalize Lithuanian Community (Amerikos Lietuvių Bendruomenė).

Saturday evening services were at the Divine Providence Church. The Mass was offered by Pastor R. Repšys, assisted by St. Anthony's Parish Pastor A. Babonas and visiting priest from Chicago, J. Kelpšas.

After Mass all members and guests gathered at the Cultural Center for a banquet. The guest speaker, Prof. V. Landsbergis was greeted with a standing ovation. He spoke almost an hour

about Lithuania's situation in Europe. "Freedom is most important... The country freed itself from communism, but not its consequences... There are few rich people here, but many very poor... Moral political stagnation is huge... But there is a lot of potential here... We need to work hard in planning our future here."

After a short recess Prof. V. Landsbergis was again introduced, but this time as a musician. This year is a hundred and thirty years since the birth of the Lithuanian musician, composer and artist M. K. Čiurlionis. Prof. Landsbergis played his compositions for almost an hour without intermission. This concert was very warmly received.

Eighth meeting (Sunday morning) The beginning of the meeting was for different reports from Finance, Religious and Cultural committees. During the discussion about finances, youth congresses and get-togethers received sharp criticism for the extravagant spending on touristy trips. For example, youth get-together at Kent University cost \$140,000. A cruise on the Baltic Sea was \$40,000. Others stated that next year's Song Festival should be encouraged to bring as many youths as possible to Chicago.

Ninth meeting. After lunch the last meeting took place. First, R. Narušis


Continued on page 19

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

*To all our writers and readers,
we want to thank you for
your support during the past year.*

*We wish you and
your families a very
Merry Christmas and a
New Year
filled with peace, good health and
happiness.*

*Our very best wishes to each and all,
Gema and Jeanne*



Continued from page 5

LAC Third Annual Session

introduced the many press, radio and TV journalists. Also, the photographers were kept busy. Next, by an overwhelming vote, members agreed to meet next year in Philadelphia, PA for the annual session.

Dr. Audrius Polikaitis, Chairman of the upcoming USA and Canada VII Song Festival, very professionally and with the use of slides, presented plans for this festival. There will be several sing-alongs, large screens and other embellishments. So far, forty nine choirs have registered. Future plans include fund-raising and printing a special edition of the festival. Souvenir shirts were available in the lobby. They were provided 'gratis' so that recipients could wear them as an advertisement for the festival. Other announcements followed.

During the three days of intense discussion and differences of opinions, some "toes were stepped on" and/or misunderstandings occurred. At the end of this session followed several public apologies and hugs and thanks to all who helped to organize this session and made it a success. The session ended with all standing and joined hands held high singing '...in the country of Lithuania mighty oaks will grow'.

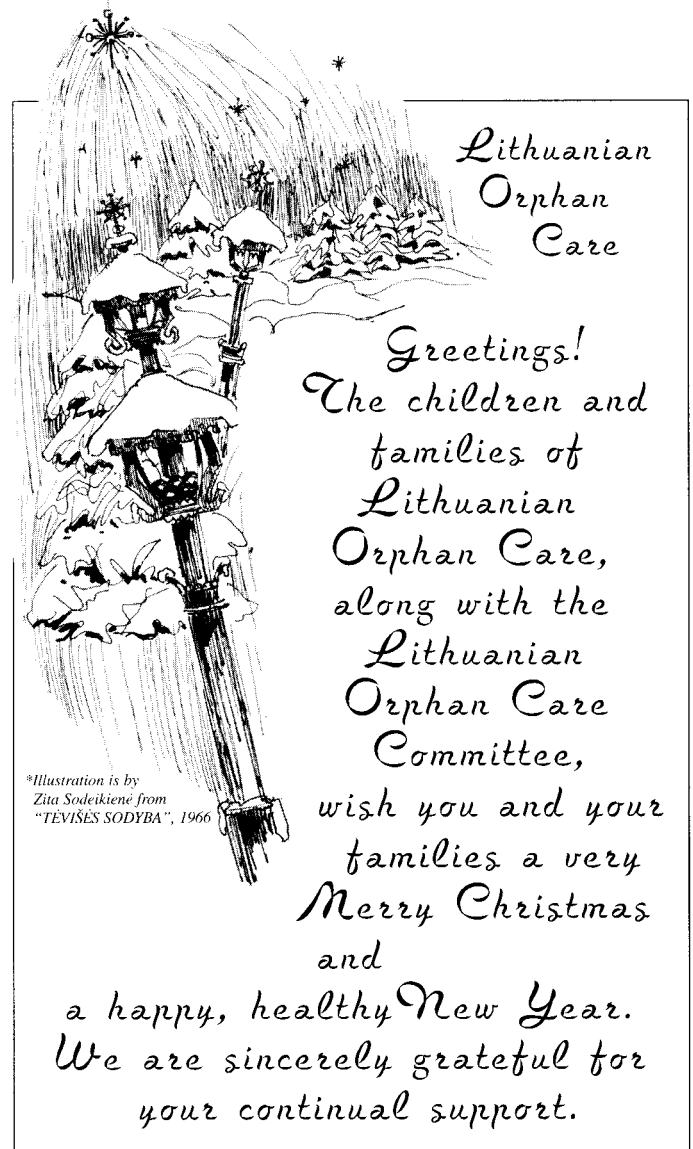
Gražina Kriauciūnienė

Gražina Kriauciūnienė has been active in the LAC since its organization in Lansing MI twenty years ago. She and her husband were 'the founding fathers', so to speak, and since held many positions including president, secretary etc. At present she is the Chairman of Financial Review Committee for the LAC Michigan region. Her interests include tent camping with her family in Alaska and other far away places. Since then she started writing for 'Draugas' about their travels titled "With tent to..." Also, for the past five years she and her husband have been the editors of the Lithuanian organization 'Ateitis' website. They also served in this organization as members of the Executive Board, organizers and writers/editors of Youth Councillors Manuals.

Please don't deport Tasha.

I asked Juratė why she took a stand on this issue. I taught for more than thirty – five years and I know that many principals would not do this. She told me that being part of the Lithuanian Diaspora provided her, and people like her, with the opportunity for leadership and human rights work that so many people devoted much of their life to. If she had not been involved in fighting for Lithuanian human rights she would not have known how to help Tasha. Although she worked for human rights in Lithuania, she believes the struggle begins at home.

Juratė quoted Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, who chaired the Human Rights Commission in its first years. "Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home -- so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends;



the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerned citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."

Juratė learned as a young girl that you have to make the impossible happen. She saw what many thought of as the impossible; a free and independent Lithuania. She believes there is still hope for Tasha and her family to achieve what seems to be the impossible dream.

Jeanne Dorr

Jeanne Dorr is the Editor of Bridges and is a member of the Board of Directors of Lithuanian Orphan Care, a branch of the Human Services Council of the Lithuanian American Community, Inc.

The Crucifix in the Crib

Reprinted from Bridges-December 1987.

Stasys Yia

Translated by Rev. Anthony Jurgelaitis, O.P.

*Our Christmas and Easter
Mysteries are, in essence, one and the same.*



The crib at St. Casimir Church in Vilnius, Lithuania. It depicts the newly born Christ Child lying on a wooden cross signifying His crucifixion for our sins.

Photo by Banga Grigaliunaite, Vilnius

The light greater than the sun, God Himself who stepped over the threshold of time that first Christmas sends forth a new ray of light: His Son, born as man Who brings into the world a spiritual renewal and, with it, peace and love.

Our family gathers around a common table, but this is not an ordinary, everyday table; because the family table on Christmas Eve has little to do with the everyday, commonplace chore of taking a meal. We do not get together this evening merely to feed bodies nor to enjoy a feast. The bread-wafers of unleavened dough, the boiled wheat grains, the fish-these are elements of a sacred meal, as are, too, the hymns sung around the family table and the prayers with which the meal is begun and ended. There is an air of seriousness and devotion. All this envelopes the Christmas family gathering with a special aura of mystery and holiness.

The Christmas Eve supper table reminds us of that other supper, the Last Supper of the Master, on the evening before He died; a supper which is unique in all human history. At that Last Supper ordinary wheat bread became the mysterious Bread which nourishes the soul more than the body. And for three hundred years after the Last Supper small groups of Christian people have gathered in their own homes, or in the Catacombs, where they sat around a common table and broke bread in a spirit of unity and communion with each other and with their Divine Master.

From the depths of the centuries, from the cradle of Christianity, this sacred family meal was transferred to Lithuania and has persisted up to the present. Many observers in the Christian Western world regret that their own Christmas celebrations, in comparison with the celebrations in Lithuania, do not have such definite ties with primitive Christian observances.

Our Kūčios, our Christmas Eve supper, is the only celebration that joins the table of the Last Supper with the Crib of Bethlehem. The bread-wafer and the hay are the two symbols which recall the one and the other.

The bread-wafer bespeaks the bread become Body, the hay speaks of the Word becoming flesh. These two mementos of God's transubstantiation lie on the Lithuanian Christmas Eve table, just as in ancient Christianity, side by side on the same altar there rested the Sacred Host and the Book of the Gospel, the living Bread and the living Word.

These two mysteries - the Christmas and Easter mysteries - are in essence one and the same. What happened at the

Lithuanians, risen belatedly from paganism in 1387, developed a uniquely profound understanding of Christianity. On Christmas Eve, they do not prepare a crib for the Christ Child. Instead, they make a bed of hay on which they lay a crucifix, not an Infant. They conjoin the crib of Bethlehem

with the table of the Last Supper. In this long-suffering "land of Crosses", the family gathers at the table, makes room for those who are unable to be present and those who have died, and celebrates both the birth of the Christ Child and the Resurrection of Christ.

Following the customs of our Lithuanian ancestors, we gather on Christmas Eve around a common table which symbolizes the family altar. Here, we renew those deep-down, inner ties which bind us to each other and to God. This holy Christmas Eve, there is a deep silence of peace; our hearts speak out to one another in that silence. We forgive one another and express our fondest wishes for the Christmas season. Whether this be done in a poor, small dwelling or a well-to-do home, those who gather together on Christmas Eve feel something sacred and holy. Christmas Eve is a night of mystery in which the light of two worlds intermingles, the light of this world and that of the world beyond.

It is winter and the sun has crossed over its threshold and seems to be renewing the world again, shedding down more and more light, awakening within our hearts a greater joy, a stronger life, a more brilliant beauty.

Christmas crib and what took place in the upper chamber of the Last Supper may be likened to the same ray of light which appears as two different colors of the spectrum when shining through a prism. Looking at the one ray of white light we cannot distinguish the two colors, but through the prism many colors become visible.

The coming of the God-Man into the world would have been like the flash of a meteor, if He had not become incarnate under different species. That which began with His Birth had to be perfected in the Eucharistic substantial change.

Kūčios is a night of mystery, and communion, Kūčios joins the two greatest mysteries of our religion: the Birth of Christ and the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

The Lithuanian Christmas Eve supper unites the hearts of men and thus forms the oneness of mankind, which is in itself a great mystery. Our inexplicable sacred force binds the hearts of men together.

The table is a visible sign of family unity. It brings together all the family members and points out to them the meaning of family hierarchy: father, mother, children. The table serves not only to set out the food to feed the body, but also serves to nourish, uplift and renew the very soul of the family.

This second aspect becomes more prominent in the family circle and thus the family table becomes a sacred altar. It is somewhat similar to the "family altar" mentioned in the marriage prayer. All the more so, the family table becomes the family altar at the Christmas Eve supper, when upon it are placed religious symbols, when around it special family prayers are recited, when the father of the family sits at the head of the table to lead in the family customs, thus becoming the family priest.

The Christmas Eve table is first spread with hay to recall the crib in which Christ was born. The hay is covered with a clean white tablecloth on which a crucifix is placed, not upright, but flat upon the table. Why the crucifix and not a crib with Christ-Child?

The Christmas crib is not a symbol, but a real representation of the Christmas event. The realistic-minded Westerners used a crib in their homes and churches; they would place a crib with the Christ-Child on the altars, and even on the tabernacles in place of the crucifix on Christmas Eve.

Was there some historical reason that kept the Lithuanians from making Christmas cribs and using them, or was there some inner sensitivity in the hearts of Lithuanians themselves that refused to make the cribs and to use the crucifix instead?

A crucifix on the hay is clearly a contradiction, a paradox, because it represents Christ's death at Christmas. However, this shows a unique understanding of the Christmas mystery among the Lithuanians. After all, Christmas was the first step in the preparation for the first good Friday and Easter. The Birth of Christ leads to spiritual renewal and

redemption which was gained by the death of Christ upon the Cross. Liturgically, these two things are inseparable, because in the Midnight Mass on Christmas Night the same Sacrifice of Good Friday is represented and renewed. So why should these two events in the life of Christ be separated in the Christmas Eve celebration?

Hay on the Table

Hay has been drenched with the sweat of man at harvest time. It is food for animals who are man's helpers. It reminds us of the flowers of the fields. It is not brought into the house at other times and placed on the table except on Christmas Eve.

Once on the table, the hay reminds us of the Birth of Christ in the Christmas crib. It is covered by the white table cloth, the color of mystery. After the Christmas meal, strands of hay are pulled out and examined. Its dried blades suggest what the future will hold for the members of the family. Different forecasts are made, depending upon whether the blades of grass are short or long, whether they are straight or broken, whether they are branched or single. Once the hay on the Christmas Eve table is blessed by the prayers, it is not discarded.

After the meal, it is carefully gathered and returned to the stable and given to the animals to eat. The animals were witnesses to the birth of the Christ Child. Their breath kept the Christ Child warm. Maybe, in their way, they understood what was taking place that night and what a great change was taking place in the world. It is said that on Christmas Eve animals talk to each other about mankind.

The hay on the Christmas Eve table reminds us of simple humility when the sincerity of the heart opens up. No one places crystalware, silver or porcelain on the Christmas Eve table. No one comes to the table dressed up in silks and finery. All the glitter and glamour with which other countries surround Christmas Eve are absent on Lithuanian Christmas Eve. Our people do not make much of decorating the Christmas tree... At least, the Christmas tree is not lit up during the Kucios supper. The festivities around tree itself are left for the following morning.

Host from Wafers

Some place in Lithuania the bread-wafer used to be called the "Christ-Child cake". The wafer, thus, is a symbol of the living Bread which became flesh. The Christmas Eve wafer used to be a single wafer which was divided among the whole family. It was always set at the place of the father, who, after he had said the prayer, took it into his hands and turned to the mother and asked her to break the bread-wafer. Then he would say: "May you live till the next Christmas. God grant you happiness and health all through the coming year, until the next Christmas holidays." In a similar way, the father would give the wafer to the children, to each according to age, asking each to break off a portion while he expressed the same prayerful wishes.

Lately, however, wafers are obtained in sufficient numbers for all the members of the family. The father breaks his wafer first, then each member of the family breaks off a portion from his own plotkele and they all share their wafer with each other.

Wheat and šližikai and Priekucial

Two other foods have a symbolism close to the symbolism of the bread-wafer: the boiled grains of wheat, sweetened with honey, and the little pieces of unleavened bread called “šližikai” and “priekūčiai”, which are prepared from unleavened dough. There is no doubt that the šližikai and the priekuciai remind us of Eucharistic bread, which in former times was used for Holy Communion, in France. Even today, there are places where, at the end of the Mass, similar pieces of unleavened bread are cut up and distributed to the people as a reminder of the ancient agape banquets practiced long ago.

It is possible that the šližikai were the original symbol of our Eucharistic bread and the bread-wafer was a later version, which came into the Church with the custom of parish priests visiting the families before the Christmas holidays.

When the wafers became the primary form of bread used, the šližikai became one of the other twelve foods prepared, and lost some of its original significance. However, the šližikai are used again on New Year’s Eve, when the

Octave of Christmas, the Christmas meal is repeated. It is more difficult to explain the boiled wheat grains in connection with the Eucharistic symbolism. This is an exception. It is used only in Lithuania. One thing is clear: the wheat grains are the element from which Eucharistic bread is made. It is very unusual among the Lithuanians to eat this at any other time of the year. That is why some members of the family will not want to eat this, but it is the custom that everyone at least taste the boiled wheat grains. It seems that whoever refuses even to taste these grains will not be considered as one fully sharing in the joys of the newborn Christ.

“The Eden Fruit”

Among, the twelve Christmas Eve dishes which remind us of the twelve Apostles of the Last Supper is the “Eden fruit”, the apple. This Eden element in the Lithuanian customs is also found in some marriage customs where in the “tree of Eden” reminds us of the beginning of life, while here “Eden fruit” recalls the first sin and the promise that a Redeemer will come to redeem mankind and that he would be born of a Virgin, the second Eve. Christmas Eve is the liturgical feast day of Adam, so the symbolic apple relates him with the new Adam-Christ, and with the symbol which refers to Christ as the New Adam. It is that the father of the first family has a relationship to the Child of the new family of God in this Lithuanian family feast.

The element of Eden in our Christmas Eve supper, as we see, has not become too common among other Western nations which do not have a Christmas Eve supper. The Christmas tree which symbolizes the Eden tree became the sign of the entire Christmas season and hence the focal point of family reunion.

Our neighboring Slavs have, as we do, the family table as the center of Christmas Eve celebrations and it, too, is considered an altar. The meal is considered a sacred meal. But we differ from the Slavs in our Kūčia supper. We have twelve different foods, but the Slavs have one special food called “Kūčia,” which is prepared from twelve different grains. This symbolic Slavic food was adopted by some Lithuanians in certain parts of the country. However, in recent years, this “Kūčia” was little used. All the food of the Christmas Eve meal is meatless, or abstinence food.

Stasys Via
Translated by

Rev. Anthony Jurgelaitis, O.P.



The motif of this beautiful life size manger is a Lithuanian cottage in Vilnius’ Cathedral Square. With its life size figurines and live animals, it is guarded twenty-four hours a day. Each year the manger is blessed by Cardinal Juozas Backis and it is displayed until the Feast of the Three Kings. Visitors and children vie to have their photographs taken near the manger.

Photo by Banga Grigaliunaite, Vilnius



**Janina
Degutyte**

Poezija/Poems

Adapted from the Introduction to the book by Prof. Rimvydas Silbajoris.

Janina Degutyte (1928-1990) not only wrote about, but in a sense was, her native land. She sustains a powerful urge for a kind of osmosis with her native landscapes around her, to open oneself to the last thread of her being. The romantics in their day yearned to overcome the barrier between nature and the human being by pretending nature was like them - it could sigh, weep, dream, and have empathy with human fate. There is an element of that in Degutyte's poetry as well, but rather than imagine nature's response, she seeks an identity with it, "to live like a tree, or grass, or a butterfly," to taste the sun in a yellow apple, feel the pulse of a willow. The Soviet regime was an enemy of free imagination. Yet she writes as early as 1964 in

"INTERMEZZO":

*Through me ripple sod and sky,
Birches and the midsummer sun.
What am I in this eternal flow?*

Communication with nature for Degutyte is not a system of symbols, as in Baudelaire's Correspondances, because however much she can absorb into herself or penetrate within them - nature remains what it is: actual birds and trees lovingly observed by an actual poet. Degutyte achieves her poetic texture by means of interpenetration of inherent qualities among different things.

Her oneness with nature, however, offers solace but cannot save her from her solitude. She stands alone like a dark tree in the night, a silent witness. It is not the imaginary solitude of the

romantics. Rather, it comes from real events in our terrible century. In a country devastated by war and then subjected to strict censorship demanding ideological conformity, belles lettres must inevitably acquire a political aspect. Degutyte, as did many other Lithuanian writers, knew how to establish a political subtext in some of her seemingly unobjectionable poems. This surface compliance with state policy underlines the opposition implicit in the subtext.

At times, Degutyte does not veil her sorrow. In one poem, (*Thorn Bush Etude*) she makes a direct reference to the deportations she witnessed as a child and the double life that she and others were made to lead:

*Sealed echelons were passing by.
I hid in a fairy tale.*

.....

*As streams of fire and blood spewed
from the earth,*

*As torrential rains drowned out the last
shred of hope,*

*I planted a thorn bush in my window.
Begrudging a rock I write fairy tales.*

It is amazing how this poem, written in 1971, escaped the censor's pen and official punishment.

Veiling her moral courage, grief, and loyalty to all oppressed, her poems often resonated with folk tales and songs. Degutyte employed myth in the context of the bloody guerilla warfare against the Soviet regime which persisted in Lithuanian forests until about 1952. Guerillas who perished in battle are remembered in the simple form of a folksong:

*High on the Hill
Nine bullets passed him by.
The tenth cut my brother down.
Where his head fell—a rose bush grows.
Where his blood was spilled—a fountain flows.*

Retreating into Greek mythology, the poet speaks through Antigone's lips. In antiquity, Antigone buried her brother in secret on the pain of death, defying King Creon's orders. "Their temporary laws are not my law", writes Degutyte in Antigone's name:

"I shall return a thousand times..."

To bury my brothers in the night".

This is a direct reference to history. Bodies of killed guerillas were often left to decay exposed in city squares as punishment and a deterrent to others, as King Creon had done to Antigone's brother. Degutyte and Antigone are two eternal sisters, sharing the same courage of conviction regardless of sacrifice. Degutyte plays many roles to express what she cannot do otherwise. She empathizes with the Don Quixotes of the world. She is Till Eulenspiegel, bemoaning his land of ashes after the Holocaust, or Judas, who sells himself. Or Cassandra, whose visions nobody believes. In the final analysis, she is also Scheherazade, the survivor:

*Talk, Scheherazade, the shah is ravenous.
Your words flow slowly,
Like blood from an open wound.
Do not stop!*

*The thousand and first night is still far.
And the last handful of earth is still unpaid.*

As a poetic device, the playing of roles, that is, the assumption of another identity, is similar to Degutyte's deep passion for becoming those things in nature and in her native land which she loves unequivocally and which are her reason for living ("Hamlet"). One might call this Degutyte's basic signature as a poet. She is a poet of resonances and transformations. Above all, she brings herself to her nation as a loving gift.

Degutyte's poetry is very difficult to translate into the semantic environment of another language because it contains many subtle nuances drawn from deep archaic layers of the Lithuanian language. Dr. M. G. Slavenas has been responsive to the semantic and emotional sensibilities of the original and reproduced them in the English idiom by translating not so much from lexical item to lexical item as from underlying meaning to underlying meaning, perceived primarily as an emotional event in the mind.

Seen next to each other, the poems read well in both Lithuanian and English, which is no mean achievement in the translator's trade. In adequate translation, Degutyte can stand her own among the best internationally

Renata Kucas



Last month, when I first began this column, many of you responded by asking “Renata, what is that bowl with the snake wrapped around it doing as your logo?” Well, let me explain it to you. A handful of professions are privileged to have their own symbols that are easily recognized. Physicians have the Caduceus. Lawyers have the Scales of Justice. Pharmacists have several, including the Rx sign (the Greek “rho chi” an abbreviation of the Latin *recipere*, “to take”), the mortar and pestle, and the Bowl of Hygeia. The very symbol you see at the beginning of this column.

Who was Hygeia and how did she come to represent pharmacists? In ancient Greece, Hygeia was the goddess of health and her name is the source of the word “hygiene.” She and her sister Panaces, were daughters of the god of healing, Asclepios.

From the 5th century BC to the 4th century AD, devotees of Asclepios built large temple complexes around Greece which could have been the first neighborhood clinics. Throughout the period, into the era of the Roman Empire, people would visit these temples, called Asclepions, to be healed, using specially prepared ointments and herbal concoctions, or, in other words, the first compounded medications.

However, Asclepios was the son of Apollo, who was the son of Zeus, the supreme deity. Asclepios gradually surpassed Apollo as the greatest healing god. Sanctuaries and temples devoted to healing the sick were erected all over Greece. His two daughters Hygeia and Panacea aided Asclepios, and when he

was struck dead by Zeus, who feared his own grandson’s healing powers would make humans immortal, the care and healing work was handed down to Hygeia. She thus became the goddess of health. This symbolism is depicted by the serpent of Asclepios twining around a staff to touch the bowl of Hygeia.

Why is a snake used to represent Asclepios? At the time, harmless snakes were found inside the temples built for Asclepios. They appeared dead but were actually dormant. When picked up and dropped, however, they would slither away. The ancient Greeks thought the serpents were brought back to life by the true healing powers of Asclepios, which caused them to become the ultimate symbol of the power of healing. Hygeia is usually depicted with a serpeant around her arm and a bowl in her hand because she watched over the temple containing snakes.

Now the bowl represents a medicinal potion, and the snake represents healing. The American Pharmacists Association adopted the Bowl of Hygeia as its symbol to represent the pharmacy profession in 1964.

Hope this clears up all your questions about my logo. With that I wish all of you a Blessed, Healthy, Happy Holiday season!

Renata Kucas

Pharmacist Renata Kucas BA, BS, Rph.. has 24 years experience. She currently works at the nation’s first hospital, Pennsylvania Hospital, located in center city Philadelphia. She will address current topics and at times make suggestions for improving your own approach to managing medications or addressing your personal health-care concerns.

acclaimed lyric poets of her genre. In addition to reflecting her own rich poetic self, her poetry also represents the collective experience of a period in the history of Lithuania as well as all of Europe marked by catastrophic events and an intense battle for the highest human values being crushed under the weight of warfare and political oppression.

Rimvydas Silbajoris

Editor’s note: *Dr. R. Silbajoris, Professor of Slavic Literature, is the foremost authority on Lithuanian literature in emigration, especially poetry, and the author of numerous books and articles on this subject. He followed closely the trends in Soviet Lithuania, and introduced important young authors and poets to the English-speaking audiences through his reviews in World Literature Today (originally Books Abroad, founded by the late Estonian professor and poet Ivar Ivask). Degutyte’s poetry caught his attention*

soon after she started publishing.

Janina Degutyte: POEZIJA/POEMS

Selected and translated by

M. G. Slavenas

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You can order it for \$15.00 by emailing the translator at:

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Marija Grazina Slavenas is an educator, translator and researcher

and has published in English, German and Lithuanian. Her translations of Degutyte and other Lithuanian women poets have appeared in poetry journals and in several anthologies.

On the longest Night of the Year

*On the longest night of the year
she took a white scarf from her trunk,
tied it around her head
and went to the barn
where she talked to the animals
and fed each one a handful of hay.
Then she returned to the house,
placed four full plates on the table,
and four spoons,
adjusted the lamp for better light,
walked to the black window,
crossed her thin arms,
and waited.*