Dalia Leinarte, *The Lithuanian Family in its European Context, 1800–1914. Marriage, Divorce and Flexible Communities*, Cham (Switzerland): Palgrave Macmillan. 2017. 193 [XXI] p. ISBN 978-3-319-51081-1

In her monograph *The Lithuanian Family in its European Context, 1800–1914. Marriage, Divorce and Flexible Communities*,¹ Dalia Leinartė has set herself an ambitious task: to present the Lithuanian family² in a European context. The author's own comment in the Preface, 'the fundamental question is, how did families in the past respond to social upheavals and economic reforms as well as policies of state and religious institutions' (p. vii) is especially important for understanding the behaviour of families in Eastern Europe, where significant transitions were under way during the period discussed: serfdom was abolished, and national movements emerged in many regions. Taking into consideration the fact that similar research into the Lithuanian family has not been conducted in either Lithuanian or European historiography, this task is clearly not an easy one. Leinartė had to reconstruct the marriage strategies of the Lithuanian peasantry and the typical household structure in the region, analyse the national intelligentsia's critique of the traditional family at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, and the modern national family marriage strategies they recommended, and discuss the behaviour of family members when confronted with 'rough patches' in family life, or when they wanted to end a failed marriage. Selecting the necessary research, finding analogies and revealing the reasons for these patterns from the rich field of research on the European family are no less important tasks for the author. She states that her book analyses questions such as a 'comparative overview of family systems [...] and nationalist family ideologies in Europe' (p. x); 'various social phenomena associated with marriage in nineteenth-century Lithuania'

¹ D. Leinarte, *The Lithuanian Family in its European Context, 1800–1914. Marriage, Divorce and Flexible Communities* (Switzerland, 2017). Further references to citations from this book are indicated as page numbers in brackets.

² Even though this is not highlighted in the monograph's title, the book basically analyses the Lithuanian peasant family. No attention is paid to families from other social or ethnic groups (e.g., city dwellers or Jews). However, in the presentation of the discussion developed by the Lithuanian national intelligentsia at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries about the place of the Lithuanian family in society, and the challenges and goals it had to deal with under the national revival, the author's attention focuses mainly on the national intelligentsia, with numerous examples taken from noble families.

(p. xi); and 'divorce, separation [...] and alternatives to the legal resolution of marriage' (p. xiv). In summary, the author says that 'this book uncovers flexible family strategies in the traditional nineteenth-century Lithuanian rural community' (p. xiv).

In the Preface, Leinartė gives a very brief outline of the geographical boundaries of her research: 'This book covers the case study of the two largest Lithuanian provinces, the Kaunas and Vilnius provinces' (p. viii). She defines the chronological boundaries of her study as the period 1800 to 1914. We should note that the author takes a rather liberal approach towards these restrictions, and when analysing separate themes, she often considerably narrows both the geographical and the chronological framework of her study. I shall go into more detail on this when discussing separate parts of the book. Four maps are also given in the Preface (two of which lack dates, Fig. 1 and Fig. 3). It is a shame that they are not easy to read: the scale on these maps is very small, and there is no explanation of the colours used. The first map (Fig. 1, p. ix) is identified as the 'European part of the Tsarist Empire, second half of the nineteenth century', and was in fact prepared by Benedykt Hertz and published in 1905. The second map (Fig. 2, p. x) was probably ruined during the design stage, and should not have been used at all.

The Introduction consists of two chapters. The first, 'Living in the European Household in the Long Nineteenth Century', discusses the variety of household structures in Europe, and strategies for entering into marriages and making inheritance plans. Quite a lot of attention is also paid to presenting divorce, illicit marriages, and problems regarding nationalism. Based on the very rich historiography on this theme, Leinartė highlights the non-homogeneity of marital behaviour in central parts of Eastern Europe, presenting numerous examples from various European regions that reveal radical differences between household structures, entering into marriages and inheritance strategies, etc. Nonetheless, she focuses most of her attention on the central part of the Russian Empire and Lithuania. She notes that the areas she discusses, the Kaunas and Vilnius provinces, were attributed to the areas of early marriage and extended family according to the J. Hajnal classicification (p. 1). Leinartė reveals that peasant household structures in the part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) that was incorporated into the Russian Empire differed from those in central Russia, and gives a concise overview of these differences. She also presents the rather more sparse earlier research data on Lithuanian peasant households from the 16th to the 18th centuries, saying that the differences were formed historically and were not eliminated by the abolition of serfdom in 1861 or the land reform of 1863 (pp. 2–5).

The second sub-section of the Introduction, where archival and published sources are presented, is particularly laconic, consisting of barely a few pages (pp. 30–31). It has a concise discussion of the source groups

author used in her research, and the information they provided. Leinartė states that her study is the first in historiography to use data from 3,000 Lithuanian peasant households from the first half of the 19th century (p. 31). Unfortunately, she does not mention in which archives these sources are held (a list of archives is given only at the very end of the book [p. 181]), or the number of documents she used. Some figures are given further on in the text, (such as the number of requests for divorce or separation); however, this kind of information is scattered, making it difficult to evaluate how well the source base represents the situation. For example, the author mentions that she analysed the marriage registry entries of three parishes, Varniai, Viešniai and Ariogala, but she does not provide arguments as to why she selected these particular parishes, or the number of entries that were actually analysed. We should also note that all three of the parishes mentioned are in the Kaunas province, and the other half of the area mentioned in the Preface, the Vilnius province, remains completely unrepresented.

In the Introduction, Leinartė highlights the variety of marriage and family model structures and strategies in Europe, adding Lithuania as another example of this rich variety. Unfortunately, I should state that the information about Lithuanian peasant households ‘disappears’ amid the broad context of European and central Russian research. The author has failed to highlight in which regions marriage and family models similar to those in Lithuania prevailed, nor does she answer the question about the trends in historical, cultural, social and economic development that determined these models. The Lithuanian situation is not distinguished at all in the summary of the Introduction either (p. 29).

Even though the author often draws attention to the influence of the abolition of serfdom on Lithuanian peasant marital strategies, there is often a lack of arguments to support these claims. Of course, in many cases, this is a result of the absolutely lamentable situation regarding research on the family in the 19th and 20th centuries in Lithuania. As a result, the author is often forced to search for dubious analogies. For example, her claim that ‘in Lithuanian and Russian villages, illegitimate newborns often died at infancy’ (p. 26) is based on D.L. Ransel’s article about how children were cared for in the Russian Empire. However, Ransel does not analyse the situation in Lithuania in the article, and at the beginning stresses clearly that ‘I will limit analysis in this essay to comparisons between Russians and Volga Muslims, principally Tatars and Bashkirs.’³ Leinartė might have gained more from an article by R. Praspaliauskienė about the situation of bastard children in Lithuania in the

³ D.L. Ransel, ‘Infant-care Cultures in the Russian Empire’, in: *Russia’s Women. Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation*, eds. B.E. Clements, B.A. Engel, Christine D. Worobec (Berkeley, 1991), p. 114.

19th century,⁴ which, judging by the bibliography, she did not refer to. But sometimes she does not even mention the papers she obviously did use. For example, she states that 252,594 people left Lithuania for the United States between 1899 and 1914 (p. 16). However, she does not acknowledge the source of this information, the study by the Lithuanian researcher A. Eidintas about Lithuanian emigration to North and South America.⁵

Coming to the second and third parts of the monograph, it should be highlighted that this is an English translation of a monograph written in Lithuanian by Leinartė that was published in 1999⁶ (the differences being several new paragraphs explaining to the English reader certain aspects of Lithuanian history, and some updated tables). However, this fact is not mentioned in the book.

In the second and third parts, the author turns away from the European context, and focuses all her attention on the situation in Lithuania. Part Two, 'Marriage, Family, Love', consists of six chapters (almost all are further divided into smaller sub-sections), in which she discusses the situation of people who did not marry, and society's attitude towards them, the administration of the sacrament of marriage and the provisions of canon law, marriage and inheritance strategies, and the formation of households after marriage. Leinartė discusses in detail not only the motives for marriage, but also relations between spouses, issues of child-rearing, and the role of women in the family. Special attention is given to a critique of the traditional family and new images of the family in the context of the national revival. The author uses a very varied source base: inventories useful for demographic research, epistolary legacies, and other ego-documentary sources from well-known figures in the Lithuanian national revival, publications, sermons and fiction. This engages the reader on a closer level, and gives an extra impact to the work, as many sources, especially those revealing the structure of peasant households, are used for the first time in Lithuanian historiography.

Nonetheless, we should note that, due to the already-mentioned lack of research on the Lithuanian family, some of the author's statements appear rushed or somewhat overly general. For example, Leinartė says that Lithuanian rural communities did not tolerate single women or men right up to the middle of the 20th century: this included unmarried women with illegitimate children, brothers/sisters who had never married, and widows and widowers who had not formed another family following the death of their first spouse (p. 41). However, only one paragraph and one example

⁴ R. Praspaliauskienė, 'Crime Born of Shame and Fear', in: *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, Vol. 6 (2001), pp. 89–105.

⁵ A. Эйдинтас, *Литовская эмиграция в страны Северной и Южной Америки в 1868–1940 гг.* (Вильнюс, 1989), p. 70.

⁶ D. Marcinkevičienė, *Santuoka ir skyrybos Lietuvoje XIX amžiuje – XX amžiaus pradžioje* (Vilnius, 1999).

as an illustration are dedicated to each of these categories of people who never married and widow(er)s (p. 46). The author summarises that 'in farming communities, only family life was recognized. Single persons, such as widows, widowers and illegitimate children, were outcasts who were not fully accepted in the social life of a village' (p. 44). We may well ask, are such conclusions not rushed, and can we really equate the situation of widow(er)s and illegitimate children in society?

The author gives a very thorough discussion of the question raised among the nationally aware Lithuanian intelligentsia of the late 19th century regarding the role of women and mothers in raising children in a nationalistic way. Leinartė quite accurately grasps the high, often unfounded and unambiguous requirements expressed by the nationalist intelligentsia towards rural Lithuanian women. However, the monograph completely avoids a discourse about the place of men or fathers in the family, and their role in the formation of a national family. The author appears to have noticed this omission herself, saying that 'an educated woman and properly brought up children were, in the view of the nationalist intelligentsia, the most important factors in an ideal Lithuanian family. The critique made no mention of the husband's role in the family' (p. 90). The author adds that the claims of the nationalist intelligentsia about the new roles of the family, and especially of the woman-wife-mother in society and in the nation's education, did not have a strong impact: 'By the 1920s, nationalistic ideas started losing their significance in the marital choices of Lithuanians' (p. 105). In the earlier Lithuanian publication, the author accentuates this point more clearly: 'Inter-war historiography did not adopt the nationalist intelligentsia's critique of the traditional family woman and formed a romantic view of the 19th-century Lithuanian woman.'⁷ If we are to recall the author's claims about the poor relations between educated people and their relatives who had remained in the villages mentioned in the sub-section 'Memory of the Traditional Family' (pp. 72–74), it would be difficult to understand why the author still reaches the conclusion that 'nationalistic family ideology had a significant impact on the Lithuanian family in general. Above all, it introduced the concept of modern family life to Lithuanian society. As a result, Lithuanians shifted from patriarchal marriages based on economic motives to marriages with a more individualistic orientation. Following nationalistic ideas, Lithuanian society also started enjoying the new attitudes of love and happiness in marriage and in the upbringing of children' (p. 105).

It is also a shame that, when claiming to present the Lithuanian family in a European context, the author does not discuss whether national movements and growing nationalism in other European countries brought up similar questions. For example, in Poland, a significant part of which

⁷ D. Marcinkevičienė, *Santuoka ir skyrybos Lietuvoje XIX amžiuje – XX amžiaus pradžioje*, p. 83.

was also incorporated into the Russian Empire, discussions about the role of women in the national movement and the preservation of nationalism not just in the family but in the public space also remained lively throughout the second half of the 18th and into the whole 19th century. So when we compare the critique of the family in both regions during the period discussed, some common trends would have been quite obvious, or conversely, features characteristic only of Lithuania could have been distinguished. Unfortunately, the author does not refer at all to the rich Polish historiography⁸ on this topic. The Lithuanian researcher O. Mastianica expresses some valuable insights into the public discourse on the role of women in society in her comprehensive study⁹ and in several articles.¹⁰ These works were also left outside the range of Leinartė's attention, just like many of the other more recent studies by Lithuanian researchers analysing 19th and early 20th-century Lithuanian history. Among the papers that were ignored, and unjustifiably so, is the study by the Belarusian scientist V. Nosevich about the traditional Belarusian village in the European context, where the main focus is specifically on traditional household structures, and the factors that changed them during the course of the modernisation process.¹¹

The research by the author on the formation of new households after marriage, and on household sizes, based on the 1847 census, is very valuable. Leinartė states that peasant households in the Vilnius and Kaunas provinces were smaller than those in central Russia: almost 55 per cent of households consisted of four to eight people, comprising parents, children and/or hired hands (p. 69), while families which also consisted of the unmarried brothers or sisters of one of the heads of the household made

⁸ As examples, I can mention: A. Böldyrew, *Matka i dziecko w rodzinie polskiej. Ewolucja modelu życia rodzinnego w latach 1795–1918* (Warszawa, 2008); R. Bednarz-Grzybek, *Emancypantka i patriotka – wizerunek kobiety przełomu XIX i XX wieku w czasopiśmie Królestwa Polskiego* (Lublin, 2010); M. Satwiak, 'Rola kobiet w wychowaniu patriotycznym młodego pokolenia w Królestwie Polskim w okresie międzypowstaniowym', in: *Edukacja – państwo – naród w Europie Środkowej i Wschodniej XIX i XX w.*, eds. A. Bilewicz, R. Gładkiewicz, S. Walasek (Wrocław, 2002), pp. 237–247; M. Mazan-Jakubowska, 'Kobiety i katolicka kultura religijna w środowisku polskich ziemian i drobnej szlachty na Ziemiach Zabrzanych w XIX wieku', in: *Studia Białorusinistyczne*, Vol. 8 (2014), pp. 47–57.

⁹ O. Mastianica, *Pravėrus namų duris. Moterų švietimas Lietuvoje XVIII a. pabaigoje – XX a. pradžioje* (Vilnius, 2012).

¹⁰ O. Mastianica, 'Женщина между сословной и этнической идентичностью (на примере женского образования в Северо-западном крае в 1830–1860-е годы)', in: *Ab Imperio*, No. 3 (2012), pp. 49–77; O. Mastianica, 'Moterims, kurios gimdo tėvynės sūnus': moters vaidmuo formuojant tautinę tapatybę Edukacinės komisijos laikais', in: *XVIII amžiaus studijos*, t. 2: *Lietuvos Didžioji Kunigaikštystė. Valstybė. Kultūra. Edukacija*, ed. R. Šmigelskytė-Stukienė (Vilnius, 2015), pp. 172–182.

¹¹ В. Носевич, *Традиционная белорусская деревня в европейской перспективе* (Минск, 2004).

up only around 10 per cent of all households (p. 71, Table 2.2). Leinartė ends this sub-section with a conclusion: 'It is important to clarify that the emergence of nuclear families was prompted not only or primarily by the freedom to finally handle one's own personal life, but mainly because the simple, noncomplex family was indeed traditional and an accepted way of life in Lithuanian society even prior to the abolition of serfdom' (p. 72). However, there is insufficient data provided in the study to be able to make any substantiated conclusions about changes to the peasant family structure during the period discussed.

Some tables in this part of the book are also not entirely clear, such as the data given in Table 2.4 ('Marriages between spouses from different social estates according to gender in the Viekšniai, Varniai and Ariogala parishes, 1835–1915'), about the dynamics of the number of marriages between nobles and peasants in the period 1835 to 1865, and 1875 to 1915 (p. 112). The table is not accurate: the total number of marriages in the stated periods is not shown (although Table 2.3 does indicate that in 1835 there were 116 marriages, and in 1845 there were 108 (p. 108)), and the period 1865 to 1875 is overlooked completely. The table under discussion shows that from 1835 to 1865 (i.e., over 30 years), there were 56 marriages between individuals from different social estates, while between 1875 and 1915 (i.e., over 40 years), there were 49 such marriages. This means that in the years after the abolition of serfdom, the numbers of this kind of marriage did not increase, but rather decreased. Although Leinartė states that 'until the abolition of serfdom in 1861, *mėsalliances* did not constitute any marked trend in Lithuania', source records show 5.2 to 5.5 per cent of marriages were between individuals from different social estates (p. 108). Further on, she notes that 'after the abolition, the situation changed. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Catholics entered into marriages more often despite being from different social estates. In 1915 in the Viekšniai, Varniai and Ariogala parishes, marriages between spouses from different social estates made up 18% of all marriages, that is, almost four times as many as in 1835' (p. 109). It is a shame that the author does not present a complete table with annual figures for marriages between individuals from different social estates for the whole period from 1835 to 1915. From the data given in the book, the reader cannot follow the transitions the author describes: the data given in only two tables which each span a rather long period of time makes it impossible to keep track of whether the sudden spike in the number of marriages between individuals from different social estates was limited to a particular moment and was associated with the abolition of serfdom, or whether it took place gradually.

The Third part, 'Divorce and Separation', touches on the details of failed married life: official ways of exiting a marriage (divorce or separation), and the frequently occurring alternatives that eventuated in reality (running away from one's spouse, conversion to another religion, murder,

or entering into an illicit relationship). In this part, the author halves the chronological and geographical boundaries of her research: she basically relies on data from the Diocese of Samogitia for the period 1863 to 1904 (p. 133). The author refers to a large source base: 'The material contains 278 requests from Catholics for both annulment of marriage and requests for separation, of which 132 were granted by the court' (p. 133). They include 89 requests for divorce (only 12 of which were granted), and 161 requests for separation (120 were granted) (p. 140).

The attribution of entering into an illicit relationship as an 'alternative' way of breaking off a marriage does raise some doubts. Running away and conversion can indeed be considered as consciously selected strategies for exiting a marriage to a spouse where there was no longer love. However, long-term illicit relationships would more likely have been the outcome of an unhappy marriage, that is, the wilful choice to live with someone close to your heart when relations in the marriage had turned sour (and hoping to avoid being discovered), or it could have been a 'secondary' step, one that followed running away or abandoning a no longer loved spouse (or in the event that one of the spouses simply vanished without a trace).

There are several more minor inaccuracies in the book. The author's explanation of 'mankurtism' is surprising: 'russification of the elite of non-Russian nationalities, including Lithuanian' (p. 120). Not to mention the fact that the term is not meant to be applied to the 19th century, and that it is usually used not with reference to Russification, but to the loss of national self-awareness.¹² The translation left out a rather large piece of the Lithuanian version (pp. 89–90). The principles for compiling the lists of published sources and the bibliography are unclear as well: over ten historiographical entries found their way into both lists (that is, they double up), while there are over 20 entries in the bibliography which are actually published sources. A list of the archive collections she used is also missing.

The monograph does not contain any conclusions or summary offering a concentrated overview of the results of the research into the marriage and divorce strategies that Lithuanian families resorted to under the conditions of a changing society, highlighting characteristics particular to Lithuania, or pin-pointing any relationship with specific regions in Europe.

¹² The term 'mankurt' (the word originates from the ancient Turkic language) was first used in 1980 in the novel by the Kyrgyz writer Chinghiz Aitmatov, *The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years* (Indiana University Press, 1988). One episode depicts a person taken captive whose memory is erased using certain measures, making him into a total slave and blindly obeying his master. After the novel's publication, the term became popular during the years of Perestroika in publications describing people who, because of the violence and coercion they had experienced, had lost all links with their historical and national roots, and forgotten their blood and family ties, their family and friends.

To summarise Leinartė's monograph *The Lithuanian Family in its European Context, 1800–1914. Marriage, Divorce and Flexible Communities*, I have to admit that the author took on a major task in selecting and analysing very different kinds of sources, and in summarising the data. In her monograph, the author intertwines complex issues on the themes of historical demography, the national revival and the public discourse on the family, which affected very different groups in society: the peasantry, the nobility, and the national intelligentsia. In most cases, the author's insights are professional and accurate: however, they obviously require greater precision, as the dynamics of these processes is revealed in a very episodic way. The research often appears superficial, and leaves many questions unanswered, due to the not-quite-thorough historiographical input, the wide chronological range she chose for her research, the sheer variety of sources used that ultimately required her to apply different approaches, and the wide range of topics her monograph touches on. Despite this, the monograph admittedly does present truly unique and valuable material to foreign readers about the Lithuanian family in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The data the author provides fills a 'blank spot' in studies of European family history, as research of this kind has never been conducted before on such a scale.

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