

Marija Gimbutas

Transnational Biography, Feminist
Reception, and the Controversy of
Goddess Archaeology

Rasa Navickaitė

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Chapter 6

The Archaeologist of Nation and Gender

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Gimbutas and Post-Socialist Lithuanian Feminism

One of the very few books on Lithuanian women in the post-socialist period, the edited collection *Women in Transition. Voices from Lithuania* (1998), starts with three “interesting facts” that everyone curious about Lithuanian women’s history should learn about.¹ One of these facts is that “the most revered” Lithuanian woman is Marija Gimbutas, whose archaeological research proposes that prehistoric Europe was characterized by a “nonpatriarchal, matristic” culture.² Written by the American cultural anthropologist Suzanne LaFont,³ the introduction to this volume proclaimed Gimbutas to be a national icon and a feminist role model in Lithuania. The book also contained a biographical essay on Gimbutas, entitled “Marija Gimbutas: Tribute to a Lithuanian Legend”⁴ and a number of references to Gimbutas in several other chapters. *Women in Transition* is not exceptional in its treatment of Gimbutas as an “iconic” and “legendary” figure. References to her work and tributes to her persona can be found in many of the feminist publications of 1990s Lithuania, as well as in the political program of the Women’s Party, founded in 1995. As the literary scholar Viktorija Daujotytė told me in an interview, “we mentioned her everywhere, where we could, and probably also where we should not have mentioned her.”⁵

This chapter asks how and why Marija Gimbutas’ ideas about the prehistoric matristic culture and Goddess worship became such an important point of reference for Lithuanian women’s rights activists in the 1990s. It would be impossible, I believe, to fully understand the appeal of Gimbutas’ ideas, especially as she elaborated them in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, without considering the discursive formations that shaped Lithuanian nationalist rhetoric in the period of transformation from state-socialist to a liberal capitalist society. The chapter therefore starts with an outline of two narratives: the narrative of Western-oriented modernization, which I refer to as the *narrative of transition*; and the narrative of nationalist re-traditionalization, or the *narrative of return*, that have both shaped the understanding of post-socialist transformation and its gendered implications. Then I outline the landscape of post-socialist Lithuanian feminism in the 1990s, showing how women’s rights activists “carved space” for rethinking gender equality and women’s rights in the conservative ideological environment

of post-socialism. I go on to then delve deeper into Gimbutas' thinking about the prehistory of the Balts, and how her idealization of the pagan past of Lithuanian ancestors was related to the exaltation of the "feminine element."

The chapter ends with an examination of some examples of how Gimbutas was incorporated into Lithuanian women's activist rhetoric. I argue that it was the very open and ambiguous quality of her understanding of women's role and the feminine, as well as her specific vision of the European belonging of Lithuanian culture, that allowed feminists of different persuasions to adopt her name and mold her ideas towards their political agendas.

Between "Transition" and "Return": Discourses of Post-socialism

The post-socialist transformation in Eastern Europe was a period after the collapse of state socialism, characterized by massive structural changes in economic, political, and social spheres.⁶ In 1990, even before the fall of the Soviet Union, the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia went through a peaceful change of authority and declared their independence from the Soviet Union.⁷ The complex transformation of Eastern Europe in the 1990s has been predominantly understood with the help of two narratives: the narrative of return and the narrative of transition. The narrative of return pictured the post-socialist transformations as a revival of something that existed before (ethnic-national traditions, Catholic morality, interwar socio-political structure, and the like). The narrative of transition represented the transformation as a teleological development of Eastern European societies and economies towards something they were lacking – the Western standard of capitalism and liberal democracy. These two narratives shaped and explained the events of the 1990s and, as I show in what follows, impacted the gendered imaginaries, norms, and ideals in Eastern European societies.

The narrative of return can be understood in at least two guises: nationalist and European-oriented. The nationalist, traditionalist return narrative has been analyzed as a predominant feature of the Eastern European post-socialist transformation across the region, and also as a phenomenon which posed a threat to the development of a democratic and liberal society.⁸ As Violeta Davoliūtė argues, the return narrative in post-socialism accentuated conservative cultural values and expressed nostalgia toward archaic village life, the idealized Golden Age of the nation, combined with the fear of modernity and the destruction of nature and national culture.⁹ The return narrative was, however, not limited to a purely ethnocentric imagination but included also the idea of a "return to Europe," which posited Eastern European countries as a part of European/Western civilization, and inherently deserving to "return" to it. This facet of the return narrative was also criticized on the basis that the "Europe" to which Eastern

European intellectuals and politicians wanted to “return” was the Europe before socialism, the Europe “of the 1920s and 1930s.”¹⁰ The post-socialist “return to Europe” narrative was permeated by nostalgia for interwar Europe, where the interests of the ethnically defined nation were of primary political importance and human rights were yet to be invented.¹¹ Both the nationalist and the European-oriented guises of the return narrative were permeated with nostalgia for the past, strongly anti-Communist, and inherently conservative. The narrative of return helped to interpret the radical changes of post-socialism as if they were merely a rebuilding of pre-socialist institutions and traditions, a return to the allegedly natural and “normal” human and social condition.

Such a narrative of return implied also a return to “traditional” gender roles, which didn’t leave much space for imagining women’s emancipation. As the Lithuanian gender studies scholar Alina Žvinklienė has argued, “in the political rhetoric of the 1990s, the rebirth of the nation was perceived within the rebirth of the traditional family, i.e., the traditional gender contract.”¹² This “traditional” gender contract implied that women’s main task is motherhood, a task they had supposedly forgotten because of Communist propaganda;¹³ and that women’s and lesbian gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) peoples rights were incompatible with authentic national values.¹⁴ The American anthropologist Katherine Verdery demonstrated how post-socialist abortion debates, for example, were largely embedded in the narrative of return.¹⁵ Nationalist traditionalist discourses claimed that the Communist regime was “unnatural,” that it was contrary to the gendered “nature” of people, and that in post-socialism women had to be re-educated to be proper mothers and wives for the sake of the nation.¹⁶ As many theorists have pointed out, this discourse was especially handy in the conditions of the neo-liberalization of the economy and at the time of the collapse of the social security system.¹⁷ Entrenching women as the primary caretakers of the family and the household made them economically vulnerable and dependent on men in the circumstances of economic and social change.

If the narrative of return was more of a local notion, the narrative of transition was seen as a more “scientific” way to think about transition, coming from an English-speaking international context.¹⁸ The narrative of transition worked as an ideological blueprint for political and economic decisions, and represented post-socialist transformation as a one-way road: from the socialist economic system of central planning towards the capitalist system of a free market, and from the Communist Party dictatorship towards liberal democracy.¹⁹ The narrative of transition also had an implication of “success” – an idealized Western standard of prosperity and freedom that had to be achieved with capitalism and liberal democracy. This narrative implied the transformation of socialist society and the individual into a new type of a “Western” modern individual, able to function and flourish in the new circumstances.²⁰ The euro-centrism of this narrative in political and popular discourses was criticized from a postcolonial feminist perspective²¹

and, more recently, from the perspective of sexuality studies.²² Given the limited success in minimizing the economic disparity between Eastern and Western Europe,²³ the narrative of transition can be seen as another variety of the narratives of “backwardness” and “catching up” that have characterized the economic and political thinking about Eastern Europe since at least the eighteenth century.²⁴

The sociologist Daina Stukuls Eglitis has noted that both narratives of return and transition can be seen as two facets of the same permeating post-socialist desire to restore “normality,” to return to the “natural state of things,” understood in opposition to the Soviet period, which was constructed as “a fundamental deviation from what was perceived to be the normal course of national, state, social and economic development.”²⁵ Both these narratives,²⁶ she argued, contained also a discourse about “natural” and “normal” gender roles, understood in contrast to the “abnormal” gender regime of the Soviet period. While the Soviet system allegedly imposed the “artificial” uniformity of gender roles, and “overemancipated” women, the post-Soviet order was supposed to reconstruct the “natural” differences between the sexes.²⁷ Eglitis pointed out how, in the context of post-socialist Latvia, the discourse of a “normal” gender order was embedded in both the return and transition narratives: the examples of ideal gender roles and relations were to be found both in the national tradition (which had to be recovered) and in Western societies (which had to be aspired to).²⁸ She also showed how women’s rights activism in Latvia not only resisted these gender normalization discourses, but also participated in reiterating problematic notions about the gendered “nature” of women and men.²⁹ Latvian women’s rights activists, Eglitis argued, bought into the concept of “natural gender” and often reinforced stereotypical imaginations about femininity and masculinity.

In what follows I outline the landscape of post-socialist Lithuanian feminism in the 1990s, which I reconstructed on the basis of extensive archival and field research. Following the work of Francesca Stella on the creation of lesbian spaces in post-socialist Russia, I use the notion of “carving space”³⁰ to refer to actions and discourses that both accommodated and resisted the post-socialist ideological environment. While Stella’s argument refers to urban spaces, I understand “carving space” both literally and metaphorically, as a construction of material and ideological enclaves for women’s activism and feminist discourses in post-socialism. The post-socialist Lithuanian context was largely defined, I believe, by the rejection of the Soviet legacy and the Soviet gender equality as unnatural, and the competing desires to restore gendered “normality” by returning to national roots, or a successful transition towards Western norms. At the same time, feminists also wished to contest the problematic gendered assumptions implicit in the return and transition narratives of the post-socialist state-building project. This tension can explain the multilayered appeal that Gimbutas’ theory of a matrilineal Old Europe had for the emerging Lithuanian post-socialist feminism.

Lithuanian Feminists Negotiating Dominant Post-socialist Discourses

The development of women's rights activism in Lithuania since 1990 has not yet received a systematic scholarly treatment – there is only a handful of essays on this topic in cultural magazines and scholarly journals, and only in recent years have feminists started reflecting on this process in public debates.³¹ The existing reflexive essays, written by people more or less directly involved in women's activism, give an impression of feminism having had limited influence in post-socialist Lithuanian society, restricted mainly to educated city women.³² Academia, according to some, was the field where feminism was taken up fastest and with the biggest success: feminist theory was employed as a tool of analysis, and women's studies were institutionalized at universities starting with the Women's Studies Center at Vilnius University in 1992.³³

The sphere of party politics was also a space where feminist ideas found fertile soil. The 1990s saw the creation of women's groups affiliated with the major political parties: Homeland Union – the Conservative Party, Social Democratic Party, Christian Democratic Party,³⁴ as well as the multi-party women's parliamentary group.³⁵ Most significantly, in 1995 also a separate Lithuanian Women's Party (LMP) was created, aiming to counter the continuous underrepresentation of women in electoral lists and Parliament.³⁶ Besides academia and politics, women's activism became an important part of the growing non-governmental sector. By 1995, Lithuania had already 30 organizations that had as one of their primary goals the “promotion of women's rights and the advancement of women.”³⁷ Initially, the Lithuanian feminist scene was ideologically united by the vaguely defined goal of advancing women's rights and did not have substantial disagreements. Only a decade later women's organizations started being differentiated as to their progressive or conservative-leaning beliefs, with some turning “pro-life” and “anti-gender,” while others were “pro-choice” and pro-LGBTQ rights.³⁸

Rejecting the Soviet Legacy

One of the predominant uniting features of post-socialist women's activism in Lithuania was that it was constructed by its participants as something new, a phenomenon quite different from Soviet-style gender equality policies. The new non-governmental women's organizations were supposed to focus on specific *women's* problems, find new activities that would facilitate *women's* empowerment, and not simply repeat the pattern of social, educational, and care work, carried out by Soviet-style women's organizations. Why was Soviet-style women's activism not acceptable for post-socialist women? Lithuanian feminists tended to perceive the Soviet ideology of gender equality as “artificial,” “perverted,” and “dangerous.”³⁹ Soviet gender equality did not pay attention, they argued, to the feminine essence, to

differences between the sexes – it enforced uniformity of the sexes, rather than equality.

Reflecting these attitudes, the introduction to the edited volume *Feminizmo ekskursai: moters samprata nuo antikos iki postmodernizmo* (The currents of feminism: the concept of woman from Antiquity to postmodernity),⁴⁰ the first collection of Western feminist texts translated to Lithuanian, argued that “the pseudo-equality enforced by the Soviet system, which artificially erased the differences between the sexes, was very harmful for the relationships between women and men, as well as for the women’s position in Lithuania.”⁴¹ The editor of this collection, a Lithuanian-Canadian feminist Karla Gruodis, argued that feminism propagated by women in post-socialism was different from the “pseudo-equality” of the Soviet period, and, in fact, a necessary step towards becoming a truly democratic and “civilized” (quotation marks in original – R.N.) country. The main difference between Soviet and post-socialist women’s movements was their approach to the “differences between sexes” – while socialism allegedly “eradicated” them, feminism in independent Lithuania was attentive to the supposedly natural differences between men and women.

There were voices among Lithuanian women, however, that argued against the dismissal of Soviet gender equality policies and socialist women’s activism.⁴² Nevertheless, the majority of post-socialist Lithuanian feminists saw the Soviet period as mainly detrimental to gender equality and the position of women.⁴³ The anti-Soviet position was entrenched by such symbolic acts as the removal of March 8, International Women’s Day,⁴⁴ from state holidays – a decision supported by female politicians.⁴⁵ The political environment of early post-socialism dictated distancing from the Soviet gender equality policies and socialist rhetoric as a strategy for the women’s movement aspiring to become mainstream. This meant also that activists had to largely reinvent the ideological background for their fight for women’s rights and find new ways to relate to gender equality issues. This led to the adoption of a diversity of strategies, which can be roughly systematized with reference to the narratives of “transition” and “return.”

Transition to the “West”

In an overview essay on Lithuanian and Latvian feminisms in the 1990s, the author Nijole White notes that the post-socialist women’s movement across the region shared “the Soviet experience which they are trying to leave behind, and the Western models of feminism which they strive to emulate to a greater or lesser extent.”⁴⁶ She noted that the establishment of women’s studies in Lithuania and Latvia had a clearly pro-Western orientation, learning from the experience mainly of Nordic, Western European, and Northern American countries, “due to their desire to re-join Western culture.”⁴⁷ Indeed the aspiration towards “Western models” of feminism

characterized the women's movement as a whole, not only in academia, and had both ideological and material implications. Ideologically, it allowed women's rights activists to claim to participate in the Lithuanian "transition" to the West, which served as one of the major state-building narratives in post-socialism. This argument became especially strong with the Lithuanian decision to apply for European Union membership in 1995.⁴⁸

Lithuanian women's rights activists were aware of the symbolic power that "the West" held, and employed it not only when arguing for political and legal change, but also when advocating for the introduction of women's studies in universities. In 1993 Gruodis wrote that although the patriarchal and Soviet ideologies both formed a negative attitude towards feminism in society at large, the respectability accorded by the "Western science and learning" allowed for a relative social tolerance towards the implementation of women's studies and general gender equality debates.⁴⁹ The persona of Gruodis herself – a Lithuanian-Canadian scholar, educated in the West and closely related to the OSF,⁵⁰ added the much-needed "respectability" to women's studies. It is not a coincidence that the very first courses in women's studies were given by émigré scholars: Gruodis in 1991,⁵¹ and the prominent culture historian Vytautas Kavolis in 1992.⁵² Lithuanians were also exposed to foreign activists – Western feminist scholars who came to the post-socialist region for volunteer work, research, or teaching, or who participated in joined conferences.⁵³ These interactions led to a somewhat idealized image of "Western feminism" and Western societies in general, as is obvious from articles such as one entitled "Danish Women on their Way to Paradise," which praised Danish feminists as "feminine" and beyond "aggressive feminism."⁵⁴ Although *Women's World* republished an article by Slavena Drakulič, a Croatian writer, who ironically reflected on the mismatch between Western feminism and the realities of post-socialist post-Yugoslav women,⁵⁵ there was basically no equivalent critique produced by Lithuanian feminists of this often hierarchical relationship in the 1990s.

The material aspects of the pro-Western orientation of the post-socialist Lithuanian women's movement also should not be underestimated. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academics alike relied for financial support on Western donors. During early post-socialism, Lithuania saw an influx of Western donor money for a variety of projects, from the establishment of a crisis center for women suffering from domestic abuse, financed by the Norwegian Foreign Affairs Ministry and women's organizations,⁵⁶ to the publication of the translation of Simone de Beauvoir's *Le Deuxième Sexe* financed by the OSF.⁵⁷ The publication of *Women's World* was financed by the United Nations Development Programme, just like other publications relating to information about women's issues, both in the preparation for the Beijing conference and as

a follow-up.⁵⁸ Some of the activities of the conservative Women's League, for example, were financed by Oxfam,⁵⁹ and the Nordic Information Center.⁶⁰ The social programs of the Lithuanian Women's Society were supported by the German Heinrich Böll Foundation and other foreign funds, just to give a few examples.⁶¹

The relationship of financial dependency and ideological orientations towards the West limited the possibilities for developing a critical approach towards Western feminism, reflecting the pattern of hierarchical relationship, noted and criticized by scholars informed by postcolonial approaches.⁶² In the context of anti-Communism, "the West," also referred to as "the free world" or "the civilized countries," was seen as radically different from the Soviet reality, a source of a new ideological background for the growing post-socialist women's movement.⁶³ Moreover, the integration with European political structures, such as the Council of Europe and the European Union, and the close collaboration with Western women's organizations and financial donors provided tangible opportunities for activities in the non-governmental and academic spheres, creating a group of "professional" feminists, who took up women's rights activism as their main activity and a source of income. It is not surprising therefore that in the late 1990s, with the decreased influx of foreign funding, women's activism experienced a sharp decline and increasing competition over scarce financial resources.⁶⁴

Return to the National Past

The wish to construct women's rights activism in post-socialism as fundamentally different from the state-socialist gender equality paradigm required from activists to turn to "the West," understood as the radical opposite of the Soviet reality. However, in the environment of post-socialist nationalism, feminists also aimed to find the local "Lithuanian" history of feminism, to show that women's activism was not simply an imported ideology, but something intrinsically Lithuanian. A part of this was the tendency to "recreate" women's organizations in post-socialism, and stress the roots that they had in the interwar Republic of Lithuania.⁶⁵ The interwar period attracted the attention of women's historians, and was presented, rather uncritically, as a period of economic and cultural flourishing and intensive women's (especially Catholic women's) activism.⁶⁶ In academic texts, the Lithuanian roots of feminist criticism were shown by turning back to even earlier times – the nineteenth-century and the early twentieth-century Lithuanian nationalist revival, and uncovering the early women's activism in political and cultural fields.⁶⁷

In search of the signs of women's emancipation, post-socialist feminists even turned to the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL), where in the sixteenth century the first legal code of Lithuania granted certain property and inheritance rights to women. This regulation was

“phenomenal”⁶⁸ and “unique to ‘civilized’ Europe,”⁶⁹ stressed feminists, aiming to demonstrate the allegedly exceptional Lithuanian tradition of women’s equality. Professional historians, however, had a more modest evaluation of the historical status of Lithuanian women, claiming that the legal regulation was at best ambivalent in the GDL, with some legislation “compensating” for the otherwise inferior status that women held.⁷⁰ Still, the general tendency was that of the idealization of women’s role in Lithuanian history. It was in this context that Marija Gimbutas’ work was also often employed in order to demonstrate the prehistoric roots of the tradition of supposed Lithuanian (or Baltic) gender equality, as I will elaborate on later.⁷¹

While the wish to find the “local” roots of the women’s movement was not inherently problematic, it was easily susceptible to nationalism and conservatism. Wishing to emphasize the “Lithuanian” character of their work, some authors writing about women’s rights and women’s activism in Lithuanian history established a new concept of *feminologija*.⁷² The history of the Lithuanian women’s movement, written from the perspective of *feminologija*, emphasized the long tradition of women’s high standing and respectability in Lithuanian society, especially by contrasting it with the much worse patriarchal oppression that women allegedly experienced in Russia. In this, *feminologija* echoed a similar discourse in post-socialist Ukraine, where, as Tatiana Zhurzhenko has pointed out, the nationalist narrative included a popular image of “strong” Ukrainian women (embodied in the image of the Goddess-protectress Berehinia) and the matriarchal character of the ancient peasant Ukrainian society.⁷³ Zhurzhenko interpreted this narrative as a part of the formation of national identity in post-Soviet Ukraine, created by means of distancing from Russia as a more patriarchal civilization.

The Lithuanian discourse of *feminologija*, similarly to the Ukrainian example, aimed to show that Lithuania was inherently “better” for women than its aggressive and oppressive neighbor – Russia. This narrative also allowed for the dismissal of the Soviet socialist gender equality doctrine as detrimental to women, unlike “the national tradition”:

Equalizing the rights of women and men in a primitive manner, the Soviet system took the Lithuanian woman off the pedestal of the birth-giver to the world, Madonna, creatrix, which was given to her by the Lithuanian national tradition; limited her personal freedom and burdened her with responsibility.⁷⁴

The discourse of *feminologija*, as quoted above, implied that the inspiration for the post-socialist feminist activism had to be drawn from the Lithuanian national tradition of women’s elevation and not from the “primitive” Soviet equality paradigm. This meant also that authentic Lithuanian feminism was not supposed to seek gender equality, but

instead, a kind of special treatment of women in relation to their perceived “natural” differences from men.

The women involved in the construction of the discourse of *feminologija* initially claimed the word “feminism,”⁷⁵ but with time established a critical relationship towards it, and, assuming feminism to be a Western phenomenon, turned from criticism of the Soviet period and its gender equality, towards criticism of “the West” and its “gender ideology.”⁷⁶ The women writing in the tradition of *feminologija* wished to reconstruct women’s role in the national narrative, to show the great deeds and selfless sacrifices that women did for the sake of the nation and the survival of Lithuanian culture.⁷⁷ Probably the biggest project of the conservative and nationalist excavation of the Lithuanian women’s history was taken up by the Lithuanian Women’s League in the conferences organized between 1995 and 1998. The conference proceedings⁷⁸ focused on resistance to the Soviet occupation and presented women as either victims or heroines, always selflessly working in the service of the nation.⁷⁹ The “Western style” feminism was presented in these texts as not suitable for Lithuanian women, since it was about “various freedoms, sexual freedom and other incomprehensible, abstract freedoms.”⁸⁰ The discourse propagated in *Lietuvaitė* and by other writers in the tradition of *feminologija* made women’s activism legitimate only in the name of the nation, and propagated the image of Lithuanian women as not suitable for “revolutionary feminism.”⁸¹ This discourse was strongly connected with the conservative post-socialist return narrative, including, and especially emphasizing the necessity to return to “natural” gender roles for the sake of the nation.

It is often emphasized how the combination of nationalist re-traditionalization and neoliberal economic forces almost obliterated the possibility for women’s organizing and feminist discourses in post-socialist Baltic societies.⁸² Contrary to this argument, I claim that women’s rights activism in fact managed to “carve space” for action *within* the hostile post-socialist ideological terrain by partially adapting to the predominant narratives of transition and return. Similarly to Stella, whose work has focused on lesbian practices in post-socialist Russia,⁸³ I want to show here that practices of resistance to mainstream ideologies in post-socialism sometimes take forms which can be counterintuitive to a Western-centric point of view. Women’s rights activists in Lithuania conformed to the strong anti-Soviet sentiment in society and presented post-socialist feminism as fundamentally different from Soviet gender equality policies. The association with left-wing activism and socialist gender equality was seen as undesirable. In search of a new feminist ideological background, Lithuanian women’s rights activists adopted, to some extent, both the narrative of transition to the West and the narrative of return to the idealized nation past, framing their actions and discourses as either progressive and Western-oriented, or conservative and “Lithuanian.” While the tension between these two contradictory narratives (pro-Western and nationalist) eventually divided feminists, in the early nineties the two narratives were often intermingled,

allowing for a relatively harmonious collaboration between ideologically different women's rights groups.

Gimbutas in (Post-)Soviet Lithuania

As a prehistorian and archaeologist, Gimbutas was known in Lithuania mainly for her work on the origins and history of Lithuanian ancestors, the Balts.⁸⁴ Her interpretation of this nationalist (pre)historic narrative united elements of both return and transition narratives, positioning Lithuania as both an integral part of Europe, and by criticizing Western modernity from a perspective of historically marginalized European peripheries. This made her a very attractive thinker for the post-socialist Lithuanian audience. Moreover, Gimbutas' persona united elements of both the charm of the interwar Lithuanian intelligentsia, and the appeal of the "Western lifestyle," allowing her not only to theorize but also to embody a certain nationalist narrative. As I show here, Gimbutas' work not only framed the Soviet experience as inauthentic, not corresponding to the true "Lithuanian spirit," but also answered the new fears and insecurities of the period of post-socialist transformation, and the seemingly inescapable "lagging behind" the West. Gimbutas' theory of Old Europe proposed a critique of modernity, which was skeptical of both capitalist and state-socialist rule, and proposed an antimodernist feminist spiritual vision for Lithuania.

"Lithuanian Spirit"

At the core of Gimbutas' conceptualization of the Lithuanian national historical narrative was paganism – the most authentic expression of the "Lithuanian spirit" and the source of national pride in contemporary times. The history of the Christianization of Lithuania and other Baltic lands (current Latvia, Lithuania, and former Prussia) for her was a part of the history of oppression – an internal European colonization. In the book *Baltai priešistoriniais laikais: etnogenezė, materialinė kultūra ir mitologija* (The Balts in Prehistoric Times: Ethnogenesis, Material Culture and Mythology),⁸⁵ published in Soviet Lithuania, Gimbutas presented Christianity as an ideology of conquerors, enforced by the sword, starting with the fourteenth century.⁸⁶ Lithuanians, similarly to other Baltic peoples, resisted the imposition of the culture and religion foreign to them, and continued practicing their pagan beliefs until just a few centuries ago, with some remnants of the old beliefs remaining alive up until the twentieth century, she argued.

In an article from 1988, published in the Lithuanian-American monthly *Akiračiai*⁸⁷ Gimbutas wrote that "to understand the concept of the transcendental God was probably the most difficult thing for our ancestors, who breath in sync with the rhythm of nature, who were inseparably connected with the soil, the trees, with sacred sources and waters."⁸⁸ She argued that the ancient Balts had a holistic worldview and found it difficult to accept

the androcratic Christian organization, its androcentric spirit, and the exaltation of suffering. Up until modern times Lithuanians, Gimbutas wrote, believed in life energy, impersonal spirit, and reincarnation – they created a hybrid religion with elements of both Christianity and paganism.⁸⁹ For Gimbutas, the cult of the Virgin Mary was an example of such hybridization – one proof of the survival of the true “Lithuanian spirit” through the centuries of Christianization.⁹⁰ She claimed that Christianity was a relatively recent cultural layer, and that therefore it was still possible to decipher the archaic Old European mythological layer through the study of Baltic folklore. Through this narrative Gimbutas propagated a primordialist nationalist account of the origin of Baltic nations and portrayed Lithuanians as victims of centuries-long military and spiritual oppression by foreign powers from the East *and* the West, starting with the spread of Christianity and culminating with modern occupations by the Soviet Union.⁹¹

By emphasizing their resistance to Christianization, Gimbutas did not aim to portray Lithuanians and other Balts as antithetical to the European civilization. On the contrary, she stressed the inherently “European” character of Lithuania and Latvia, and the special connection that Baltic culture had with the most archaic European cultural layer – the layer of Old Europe, more *profoundly* European than Christianity. Gimbutas here followed to



Figure 6.1 Marija Gimbutas with the folk artist Eduardas Jonušas at the Nida Ethnographic Cemetery. Neringa, Lithuania. 1981.

a large extent the ideas of Jonas Basanavičius – a central figure of early twentieth-century Lithuanian nationalism and a close friend of her father Danielius Alseika. As the historian Nerija Putinaitė argues, Basanavičius proposed a vision of Lithuanian history, in which Christianity was at the root of the civilizational downfall of Lithuanian culture, while paganism represented a higher culture – the Golden Age of Lithuania. This narrative placed the Baltic culture at the root of the European civilization, paradoxically, argues Putinaitė, presenting Christianity as only a barbarian rendition of the former superior old pagan beliefs.⁹² One can notice an almost identical logic in Gimbutas' work, as she argued that due to the preservation of pagan beliefs, Lithuania can be seen as a descendant of the most authentic and archaic European civilizational layer, as a culture which preserved the treasures found at the very roots of European culture. Such understanding, propagated by Basanavičius and Gimbutas, rhetorically reversed the usual power dynamic between the center and periphery of Europe inherent in the “transition” narrative, which portrays the marginal Baltic Eastern European nations as “trapped in backwardness.”⁹³ Lithuania, Gimbutas argued, was not behind Western Europe, it was “preserving” the true treasures of the past, from which the center, or “the West,” drifted away to its own misfortune.

Critique of Modernity

It would be tempting, as Putinaitė does with Basanavičius, to see Gimbutas as merely a critic of “the West” and Europe, due to the way she negatively interpreted the imposition of Christianity in the Baltics. However, for Gimbutas, the criticism of Christianity was just a prelude for the criticism of the direction of the progress of patriarchal civilization in general. Gimbutas presented a strong critique of modernity, or as she called it, “the last 300 years” of social and economic development in the Western world, and directed her criticism towards both capitalist and Communist forms of modernity.⁹⁴ One of the best illustrations of Gimbutas' antimodernist critique can be found in the speech that she delivered during the ceremony for her Honorary Doctorate at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, her Alma Mater, in 1993.⁹⁵ In her speech Gimbutas criticized modernity for creating a “mechanical world,” by which she meant that human approach to nature has changed from mystical and spiritual to rationalist and utilitarian.⁹⁶ Modern society has left no space for spirituality in human life, she claimed, and this led to an unprecedented period of wars and destruction in the twentieth century.⁹⁷ Talking in a country that was just recently liberated from the Soviet Union, she spoke about “standing today at the closing doors of the passing era” and the need for a change in consciousness.⁹⁸

In early post-socialism Gimbutas' words about “the end of an era” could have not been read differently than in the light of hegemonic anti-Communism – contributing to the already pervasive understanding of the Soviet

period as unnatural and artificial. Gimbutas, however, framed the Lithuanian trauma of the Soviet occupation within the broader historical narrative of the downfall of European civilization – which started with the Indo-European imposition of patriarchy 5,000 years ago and reached its peak with modernity – instead of seeing it as an exceptional event. Hence also Lithuanian resistance during “the last 50 years of Soviet terror”⁹⁹ for Gimbutas was just another manifestation of resistance to imposed ideologies, all foreign to the authentic Lithuanian (and, by extension, Old European) spirit. Gimbutas saw both Soviet and Western modernity as problematic, as the two sides of patriarchal modernization, the androcratic model of progress and civilization. In an interview for the LRT with Kazys Saja, recorded in 1992, Gimbutas described the twentieth century as the peak of the patriarchal rule of the world, which resulted in “the most terrible dictatorships and authoritarian regimes, biggest lies and injustices.”¹⁰⁰ Gimbutas emphasized that the current times might be the times of a “change in consciousness,” of turning away from a militaristic and destructive understanding of progress, and back to an Earth-bound spirituality and feminine values. This imbued the recent Lithuanian independence from the Soviet Union with an additional layer of meaning, portraying it not only as a nationalist or political achievement, but also as a “spiritual” liberation.

What was typical for Gimbutas’ ideas, as she promoted them in post-socialism, is that she rhetorically connected the Lithuanian post-socialist transformation with a global antimodernist vision. By criticizing the notions of progress and civilization she also challenged the idea that Western modernity is the logical end-point of the post-socialist transformation.¹⁰¹ The Lithuanian “backwardness” in industrial and economic terms became an advantage in Gimbutas’ vision: the relatively late Christianization and, later on, “belated” modernization and industrialization, allowed Lithuania to preserve the values and traditions of the “old world.” Lithuanians were closer to nature, to Earth, and thus morally superior to the representatives of highly urbanized and industrialized cultures. Gimbutas’ antimodernist narrative allowed the tackling of tacit fears about the massive economic, social, and cultural transformations in post-socialism. However, she also managed to add a strong feminist element to the nationalist trope of the return to the Golden Age of the nation. For Gimbutas, the return to Lithuanian national origins was, as I discuss next, a return to the values of pagan Old Europe, where the “traditional” gender contract was reversed, with women taking leadership positions and the “feminine principle” being the guiding spiritual principle.

“Feminine Principle”

The antimodernist narrative that Gimbutas proposed had a strong gender element in it, adding the “women’s question” to the nationalist post-socialist narratives. Gimbutas believed that the social issues caused by modernity could be healed by turning to the gynocentric spiritual origins of the

European culture, returning to “feminine values.”¹⁰² Her theory of Old Europe, as she promoted it in post-socialist Lithuania, responded to the desire for gendered “normality,” implicated in both return and transition narratives. It also, however, challenged the traditional and Catholic definition of gendered “normality.” While she put femininity at the center of the nationalist Golden Age picture, Gimbutas also left the content of it rather empty, thus creating space for feminist reimaginations.

In her speech in Kaunas in 1990, Gimbutas quoted the eco-spiritualist thinker Thomas Berry,¹⁰³ saying that “we need to revise history and bring back to life the forgotten vital elements: Earth, body (health), femininity and unconscious.”¹⁰⁴ While Gimbutas did not explicitly refer to any movement or theory, her references and the use of the expressions such as “new world” and “the end of an era,” intellectually connected her to eco-spiritualism and eco-feminism, growing to popularity in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, but also rooted in earlier countercultural movements of the 1960s U.S., including radical feminism. These movements tended to see the end of the twentieth century as the turning point in the history of humanity, a start of a new era, which would be more spiritual and “feminine.”¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Gimbutas argued, the answer to the tragedy of the twentieth century’s disasters was to be found in humanity’s ability to turn away from the anthropocentric, patriarchal, “mechanistic,” militaristic worldview and find an alternative way of living, drawing inspiration from the prehistoric, Goddess-worshipping civilization and its “feminine” culture.

Gimbutas argued that women-oriented spirituality, the “feminine principle” was a part of the Baltic culture, directly inherited from the Old Europe. Already in *The Balts* she outlined the main elements of Lithuanian pagan spirituality, distinguishing between the Indo-European and Old European layers. The Old European layer was represented in Lithuanian culture by the powerful Lithuanian female Goddesses, such as *Laima*, *Ragana*, *Žemyna*, and *Austėja*. These Goddesses, she wrote, were not the wives of Gods but independent powers with an established hierarchy among themselves – thus, she theorized, they proved the existence of a matristic order in the pagan period, at least in the spiritual sphere.¹⁰⁶ Gimbutas emphasized the beauty and persistence of pagan beliefs: the ancient Balts lived in a world imbued with spirituality and meaning (*sudievintame pasaulyje*) and they did not easily surrender to the androcentric Christian beliefs imposed from the outside. The female Goddesses, argued Gimbutas, “became so deeply rooted in the Baltic psyche, that neither Indo-European, nor Christian religion could uproot them.”¹⁰⁷ Gimbutas believed that the Old European gynocentric culture had not disappeared altogether but was preserved as an archetype of “the feminine principle” in the individual psyche. It was especially deeply rooted in the Baltic psyche, argued Gimbutas, making Lithuanians and Latvians some of the most authentic heirs of Old Europe.

Gimbutas placed the “feminine” and women’s culture at the center of the national historical narrative – she argued that a “balance of sexes” and

the centrality of femininity was intrinsic to authentic Lithuanian national culture. She presented a narrative of Lithuanian history that positioned her country in a “unique” position within this reimagined European history: while it was indeed a part of the Western civilization, it also had its peculiarity, the “national treasure” (to quote her article from 1949), that is the cultural heritage from the pre-Christian, Goddess-centered time. In a documentary video, filmed by the director Algirdas Tarvydas for LRT, Gimbutas spoke in the following way:

If we would look on the surface only, it would seem that we [Lithuanians – R.N.] are very big admirers of knights, dukes and heroes, riding horses and concurring the world ... But our fundament is the woman’s culture that, in fact, preserved our culture to this day. Our songs (*dainos*) are from Old Europe, most of them. The love for nature, the feeling of life energy in a leaf, a tree, a bird, a stone – all of this is from Old Europe.¹⁰⁸

Gimbutas presented the connection to the Old European culture as key to national survival – it was women and “women’s culture” that preserved the national identity of Lithuanians. Gimbutas formulated a similar message in the introduction to the book *Senoji Europa* (The Old Europe) available in virtually every library in Lithuania.¹⁰⁹ In the introduction written for the Lithuanian edition Gimbutas condemned technological progress, which “annihilates the conditions for life on Earth”¹¹⁰ and argued for the necessity to return to the values of the past, to reconnect to the “feminine principle” (*moteriškasis pradai*).¹¹¹

The road for Lithuania to return to Europe after the experience of Soviet modernity, Gimbutas argued, was not in “catching up” with the West, but in regaining the pride in its national heritage, national uniqueness, a sort of moral superiority, which was also gendered – more feminine than the patriarchal Western civilization. Gimbutas’ theory of Old Europe made the question of gender and women’s role central to the Lithuanian historical narrative and the post-socialist state-building project. However, she did not provide much content to the very concept of the “feminine principle,” as well as little explanation of the particular ways in which the heritage of Old Europe could be employed in a post-socialist context. In what follows I look at how this ambiguity allowed Gimbutas’ ideas to be used by post-socialist Lithuanian feminists in a variety of ways, both as a tool of criticism of both the Soviet legacy and its detrimental effects, and as a discursive apparatus to channel the insecurity created by the post-socialist transformation.

Gimbutas and Post-socialist Lithuanian Feminism

In Lithuanian-speaking contexts Gimbutas was known mainly for her ideas about the origins and the (pre-)historic development of the Balts, the

ancestors of Lithuanians and Latvians. She provided a nationalist narrative that argued for the centrality of pagan, Old European values in Lithuanian culture, among those values being spirituality (as opposed to rationality), closeness to nature (as opposed to environmentally destructive progress), peacefulness (as opposed to war and conflict), and femininity (as opposed to masculinity). She saw Western civilization, and various forms of modernity (capitalist and state-socialist) as drifting away from these core values, and constructed Lithuanian culture as the most authentic resource for the reconstruction of the Old European heritage. In what follows I discuss how Gimbutas' ideas on gender, nation, and modernity were taken up by the post-socialist women's movement. I analyze two areas: the developing academic field of women's studies and the creation of the Lithuanian Women's Party. Through the examples presented here I argue that the appeal of Gimbutas' ideas about femininity, nationhood, and modernity in its state-socialist and capitalist guises, demonstrate the complex and sometimes ambivalent relationship of the growing women's movement with the questions of Western-oriented economic and social reform, Soviet legacy, and the nationalist re-traditionalization.

Gimbutas in Academia: from Women's Past to Women's Voice

Given Gimbutas' authority as an archaeologist and prehistorian, it is not surprising that she was taken up by post-socialist feminists as an unquestionable authority in understanding the history of women's role in society. Gimbutas was particularly useful for providing a positive picture of Lithuanian and European prehistory, where women once allegedly occupied the position of power. The majority of Lithuanian feminist texts in the 1990s referred to Gimbutas as a source of authority without questioning her ideas about gender and women's place in prehistory. The introduction to *Feminizmo ekskursai* by Karla Gruodis, for example, referred to Gimbutas' work on Old Europe to argue that the question of sexual difference is as old as humanity – already the ancient religions and mythologies were structured with a help of gender binary. Following Gimbutas' work, Gruodis stated that the ancient, prehistoric societies of Europe were matrilineal, structured by the belief in the Mother Goddess, while the later Indo-European civilization replaced the female-centered symbolism with male gods and introduced the ideology of war and aggression.¹¹²

In the edited volume *Women in Transition*¹¹³ mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the sociologist and later, a prominent leftist politician Giedrė Purvanekienė also turned to Gimbutas to discuss gender roles in prehistory, narrowing down from the scale of Western civilization to the history of Lithuania. Talking about the prehistoric Baltic tribes, Purvanekienė claimed, relying on Gimbutas' work, that the ancestors of Lithuanians were “basically egalitarian ... the region was matrilineal in the prehistoric era.”¹¹⁴ It can be said that Gimbutas' ideas were used by these Lithuanian

post-socialist feminists such as Purvaneckienė in a similar way as they were employed by the Goddess spirituality movement in the U.S.,¹¹⁵ where they provided a positive image of prehistory to serve as a background for women's activism and feminist political reimagining in the present.

The appeal of Gimbutas' vision of women's past as a background for contemporary feminist thinking can be seen most clearly in the work of Daujotyte-Pakerienė, a Lithuanian literary critic and philologist. In her book *Moters dalis ir dalia. Moteriškoji literatūros epistema* (Woman's Share and Destiny: The Feminine Episteme in Literature) Daujotyte presented probably the first feminist analysis of Lithuanian literary works, using Gimbutas' ideas as her theoretical background.¹¹⁶ Daujotyte reflected in her book on the epistemological break, a "new paradigm" that her work was inaugurating – while in the Soviet period, she argued, any analysis of literature had to apply the class perspective at the expense of other approaches, her work was the first in Lithuania to give primacy to the question of gender.¹¹⁷ This perspective was necessary, she argued, to understand the flourishing of women's literature in Lithuania since the beginning of the 1980s, and to understand the development of a specific "women's voice" in literature.¹¹⁸ Daujotyte did not rely in her work on any Western feminist explicitly, besides a passing comment on the works of Simone de Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf.¹¹⁹ In an interview with me Daujotyte, however, retrospectively acknowledged being familiar with Julia Kristeva's work and the possible influence of the *écriture féminine* (women's writing) literary theory on her thinking. She, however, preferred to consider her ideas as developing independently and "parallel" to similar ideas abroad.¹²⁰ In *Moters dalis ir dalia* Daujotyte developed what could be called a Lithuanian variant of the "women's writing" approach, without relying explicitly on any Western feminist theoretical work, and with reference only to the work of Marija Gimbutas.

Daujotyte analyzed in her book, among other things, the criticism towards Soviet modernity as it was formulated in the works of Lithuanian women writers (especially of Vanda Juknaitė) of the late socialist period.¹²¹ Soviet modernity, as it was portrayed in the writings of these authors, broke the connection between human and nature, the environment, and authentic Lithuanian culture.¹²² Moreover, the Soviet period disrupted the gendered nature of individuals, which resulted in the loss of "natural" gendered instincts, the loss of "normal" manifestations of femininity and masculinity.¹²³ Analyzing these literary criticisms of Soviet modernity and its effects, Daujotyte embraced Gimbutas' work to conceptualize the masculine and feminine "elements" as essential and unchanging.¹²⁴ The "women's writing" approach, as formulated by Daujotyte, aimed at unearthing the archaic pagan cultural layer, which held the possibility to reconnect with authentic femininity, oppressed under socialism. Trying to find the authentic "feminine voice" in literature Daujotyte embraced Gimbutas' view that the traditional Lithuanian pagan religion (due to the elements preserved from the Old European culture) was beneficial for women and for the flourishing of

the “feminine element.”¹²⁵ To some extent Daujotytė embraced the dominant *return* narrative of post-socialism, which portrayed the Soviet period as distorting the “natural” gender roles, and perpetuated the alleged need for reconnecting with “normal” femininity and masculinity in post-socialism. However, using Gimbutas’ work also allowed Daujotytė to avoid succumbing to the pervasive conservative Catholic definitions of gender roles,¹²⁶ and instead to propose a perspective of women’s empowerment based on a utopian pagan matristic imaginary.

Daujotytė used Gimbutas’ work on Old Europe to criticize both the “artificial” Soviet gender equality and the gendered re-traditionalization, characteristic to the post-socialist period. Moreover, embracing the vision of the “feminine element” as formulated in Gimbutas’ work, enabled Daujotytė to formulate anxieties around the new forms of gendered expression, arising in the context of Westernization. Characteristic to Daujotytė’s work was a strict distinction between the masculine and feminine “elements” (masculinity being associated with aggression, confrontation, goal-oriented activity, and culture; while femininity, with empathy, feelings, introspection, and nature) and the claim that due to the overarching dominance of the masculine perspective in all fields of life, the authentic feminine perspective had no possibility to develop in the creative terrain.¹²⁷ This led her to distinguish between “authentic” and “inauthentic” women’s writing, criticizing some prominent contemporary female writers (like Jurga Ivanauskaitė) for writing in what she considered a *masculine* style, propagating an “artificial emancipation.”¹²⁸ It can be said therefore that in *Moters dalis ir dalia* Daujotytė provided a pioneering analysis of women’s writing, while at the same time often employing the stereotypical representations of femininity. Daujotytė established a Lithuanian “women’s writing” approach, referring to the work of Gimbutas, which both enabled a formulation of the specific contribution of “women’s voice” in the field of literature, but also demarcated the boundaries of the possible “authentic” expression of female writers.

The appeal of Gimbutas’ ideas about the Old European matristic society was not universal in the developing field of Lithuanian women’s studies. Differently from the majority of Lithuanian feminists writing in the 1990s, the literary scholar and, later, a prominent politician and women’s rights advocate, Marija Aušrinė Pavilionienė,¹²⁹ did not find Gimbutas’ theories appealing or trustworthy. In her 1998 book *Lyčių drama* (Gender drama), Pavilionienė analyzed selected works of Western literature from a feminist perspective. In the introduction she provided an overview both of the historical development of women’s oppression and feminist consciousness, as well as the theoretical development of feminist thinking in the West. *Lyčių drama* was one of the first works in the Lithuanian academic sphere to introduce a social constructivist approach to gender, and to criticize the biologist justification of gender stereotypes. Her work aimed to demystify homosexuality and transsexuality and argued for androgyny as a way to liberate people from the limiting gender roles.¹³⁰

Pavilionienė ventured into an overview of the historical development of patriarchy in order to support her claim that gender inequality was based not on different biologies of women and men, but on historical processes and social environments. Following Simone de Beauvoir, she held that women had always been subordinated by men and that there was never a society where women truly held the position of power analogous to that of men in patriarchy. The “myths and legends about the Amazons and the era of matriarchy,” Pavilionienė argued, had been created as a psychological “compensation for the subordinated female sex.”¹³¹ She employed the work of the historian Gerda Lerner,¹³² to argue against the existence of prehistoric matriarchy, and criticize the work of “our compatriot Marija Gimbutienė.”¹³³ Similarly to Lerner, Pavilionienė was more interested in following and explaining contemporary women’s subordination and its historical roots, rather than seeking sources of empowerment in the ancient past.

Despite the prominent position that Pavilionienė had in the Lithuanian academic feminist sphere in the 1990s, being the head of the Center for Women’s Studies at Vilnius University, her opinion regarding Gimbutas’ ideas was in the minority in the overall post-socialist feminist context. Gimbutas’ ideas about the matristic Old European past and the Lithuanian national tradition of women’s power were largely embraced by academics in the newly developing women’s studies field. Employing Gimbutas’ theories allowed for conceptualizing a feminist theory based on the sexual difference paradigm – emphasizing the difference between femininity and masculinity as an innate human characteristic. Nevertheless, given the vagueness of Gimbutas’ definition of “feminine element,” her criticisms of both Soviet and Western forms of modernity, and her critique of patriarchy, it allowed feminists to reimagine a gender order outside the limiting framework of the conservative post-socialist context of gendered re-traditionalization.

Gimbutas in Politics: the Lithuanian Women’s Party

One of the best illustrations of Gimbutas’ popularity among Lithuanian feminists in the 1990s is the inclusion of her ideas on the matristic Old Europe in the political program of the Lithuanian Women’s Party (*Lietuvos moterų partija*, LMP). As I have shown in this chapter, in the majority of cases in post-socialist Lithuania, the need for women’s involvement in politics and progressive legislation of gender equality was justified by feminists as a part of Westernization and integration to European political and economic structures.¹³⁴ Contrary to this tendency, LMP chose to argue, with the help of Gimbutas, for the intrinsic Lithuanian character of women’s participation in the decision-making process and issues of social justice. The use of Gimbutas’ work and her persona in the LMP program and other discourses of the party leaders show how the theory of Old Europe bent the usual center-periphery power dynamics of the narrative of *transition*, portraying Lithuanian national culture as an exemplary case of women’s

power, rather than lagging behind “the West.” The reliance on Gimbutas’ work distanced LMP’s feminism from the Soviet doctrine of gender equality, while at the same time making it appear as intrinsically “Lithuanian.”

LMP was created in 1995 as a response to the relative exclusion of women from party politics. Women’s participation in the central organization of *Sjūdis*¹³⁵ was marginal, and women were underrepresented in the first democratically elected *Seimas*¹³⁶ of independent Lithuania – they made up only 10% of the deputies.¹³⁷ An exceptional personality in this context of the general exclusion of women from politics was Kazimira Prunskienė, the first Prime Minister of post-Soviet Lithuania, who led an all-male cabinet during the first year of the country’s independence (1990–1991). Prunskienė, an economist and university professor, a former Communist Party member, was one of the initiators of *Sjūdis*. Her popularity and professional abilities led her to the top of the new political elite, but the political and economic turbulence of the period, such as the high inflation rates and the economic blockade by Russia, resulted in the fall of the cabinet after a year. After her “expulsion” from politics, as she described it in her memoirs (she saw the fall of her cabinet as a result of political machinations), Prunskienė became more aware of women’s discrimination in politics and became involved with women’s activism.¹³⁸ She created the Lithuanian Women’s Association in 1992 and was an active participant in the non-governmental sphere in Vilnius.¹³⁹ This eventually led her to participate in the creation of the LMP, which won her a seat in the Parliament in the 1996 elections.

The appearance of a women’s party was not unique to Lithuania in the post-socialist context. The political scientist John Ishiyama has shown that between 1993 and 1998, political parties (or other political organizations eligible to participate in elections) run by women were created in a number of former republics of the Soviet Union: Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, and Lithuania. *The Women of Russia* movement, the Armenian *Shamiram* Women’s Party, and the Democratic Women’s Party of Kyrgyzstan, as well as the LMP in Lithuania managed to win seats in their respective national parliaments.¹⁴⁰ *The Women of Russia* demonstrated the potential appeal of such parties already in 1993, when it won 8.03% of the vote in the parliamentary election,¹⁴¹ thus it could have served as an example for Prunskienė. Ishiyama noticed that post-Soviet women’s parties ideologically preoccupied themselves mainly with “women’s concerns,” such as family policy and child welfare and held a center political position. As described by one of the leaders of *The Women of Russia*: “we are not with the right and not with the left ... we are by ourselves!”¹⁴² The Lithuanian Women’s Party espoused a similar ideology of “no ideology.” One of the leaders of the party, Dalia Teišerskytė wrote, echoing her Russian counterpart, that the political orientation of LMP is “neither right or left, but straight forward.”¹⁴³ The party, according to her, was created to solve the problems affecting Lithuanian families and children, and tackle the rising poverty. The program of LMP stated a wish to

avoid antagonism and seek the middle ground, a “rational and human” compromise between a free-market economy and social security, national values, and openness to the world.¹⁴⁴

The party program of LMP invoked Gimbutas’ work from the very first page, outlining the general ideals of the party:

Globally acknowledged Lithuanian scientist Marija Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė has revealed in her works the layer of the old matristic culture of Lithuania and Europe, which was suppressed by the patriarchal layer of the last few millennia. She has proven how important it is for this culture to return to our life, so that the humanity would finally stop fighting and destroying, so that after reaching the harmony in the relationship between women and men, the equality of the expression of both genders, it could develop and progress freely. Lithuanian women’s party is based on matristic culture.¹⁴⁵

The program stressed the scientific authority of Gimbutas, as well as the scholarly character of her hypothesis of the matristic Old Europe. Employing Gimbutas’ work, LMP proposed a political vision, where the “return” of matristic culture would facilitate the restoration of social harmony, establish a balance of sexes. Claiming that “matristic culture” is at the basis of both Lithuanian and European culture, it implied that the change towards more “harmonious” gender order was to be achieved without struggle and conflict, but somehow organically, by retrieving the forgotten intrinsic Lithuanian cultural elements. The program implied also, similarly as in Gimbutas’ work, that the key to avoiding ideological conflicts was to be found in women’s nature – the party was not a vehicle for individual political and career ambitions, but a way for women, as a group, to become more involved in national politics, in order to facilitate the state affairs “with wisdom and care,”¹⁴⁶ just like in the imagined utopian matristic past.

LMP did not call itself “feminist” and received mixed responses from Lithuanian feminists. On the one hand, the program of the LMP proposed a conservative definition of womanhood, arguing that, for example, “healthy children is the biggest joy of every normal woman” and invoking Catholic morality as the basis for national culture and education.¹⁴⁷ Some prominent feminist voices in Lithuania criticized the LMP, and especially its leader Kazimira Prunskienė, for avoiding being associated with feminism, the most prominent critic being the aforementioned Pavilionienė.¹⁴⁸ On the other hand, while LMP leader Prunskienė would often start her arguments with the phrase “I am not a feminist, but ...,” the content of her talks was relatively progressive for the particular historical moment.¹⁴⁹ Not surprisingly, thus Prunskienė and her party were seen positively by many prominent Lithuanian women.¹⁵⁰ However, after the not very successful election of 1996, when only the party leader Prunskienė was elected to *Seimas*, the party eventually changed its name (becoming *The New Democracy*

– *Women’s Party* in 1998, then simply *New Democracy* in 2001) and character, eventually rejecting its background as a party of women.

Using Gimbutas’ name and her work in the party program did a multilayered ideological work for the LMP. Just like in many other spheres of women’s activism in early post-socialism, the LMP was concerned with establishing itself as ideologically different from the Soviet gender equality policies. It was especially important for Prunskienė, who was accused of pro-Russian attitudes and even collaboration with the KGB.¹⁵¹ While the LMP was a part of a broader trend of the appearance of women’s parties in the post-Soviet sphere, it wished to dissociate itself from the post-socialist region and align instead with Europe. The LMP program therefore stated that the concept of women’s parties had been especially characteristic of Scandinavian countries,¹⁵² but did not mention the development of women’s political movements in Russia or other post-Soviet countries. Since Gimbutas’ theory claimed the existence of a prehistoric matrilineal layer in the culture of “Lithuania and Europe,” it demonstrated that Lithuania was an intrinsic part of the European culture, thus twisting the usual transition narrative. Furthermore, while she clearly stressed the importance of “the balance of sexes” in society, and criticized patriarchy, she did not claim the label of feminism and thus was less threatening than an explicitly “feminist” theorist. All in all, evoking Gimbutas allowed the party to embrace the European/Western horizons of culture and science, and at the same time, to claim the inherent “Lithuanianess” of its intentions to “restore” the harmony between men and women.

Concluding Remarks

Given the anti-Communist ideological context, in the post-1990 period Lithuanian women activists, politicians, and academics could not rely on socialist arguments for gender equality. Even more so, due to the pervasive negative association of women’s emancipation with the Soviet legacy, Lithuanian feminists, like in other Eastern European countries, mostly denied any connection with left-wing ideas.¹⁵³ In search for a new paradigm on which to build their claims for gender equality, Lithuanian feminists found Marija Gimbutas’ antimodernist vision of Old Europe very appealing. Gimbutas provided an ideological background that was critical of both Soviet and Western modernity, embraced nationalist ideals, but also positioned women at the center of a spiritual and moral renewal of society. Gimbutas’ theory of matrilineal Old Europe as a part of the national Lithuanian heritage created a discursive space for the women’s participation in post-socialist state-building and also a way to channel the anxieties of Western-oriented economic and cultural development. Gimbutas’ gendered nationalist vision made her a perfect icon for the post-socialist women’s movement, which aimed to carve a space for itself within the nationalist, pro-Western, and anti-Communist ideological environment.

Notes

- 1 Suzanne LaFont, *Women in Transition: Voices from Lithuania* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1998).
- 2 Suzanne LaFont, "Introduction," in *Women in Transition: Voices from Lithuania*, ed. Suzanne LaFont (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1998), 1.
- 3 LaFont taught at the Women's Studies Center, Kaunas University of Technology, in Lithuania, between 1994 and 1995. LaFont, "Introduction."
- 4 Joan Marler, "Marija Gimbutas: Tribute to a Lithuanian Legend," in *Women in Transition: Voices from Lithuania*, ed. Suzanne LaFont (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1998), 113–132.
- 5 Viktorija Daujotyte, interview with the author, Vilnius, April 7, 2016.
- 6 Alfred Erich Senn, *Lithuania Awakening* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990); Alfred Erich Senn, *Gorbachev's Failure in Lithuania*, 1st ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995).
- 7 Anatol Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution: Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and the Path to Independence*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).
- 8 Jan Jozef Lipski, "Two Fatherlands, Two Patriotisms," in *Between East and West: Writings from Kultura*, ed. Robert Kostrzewa (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990); Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998); Adam Michnik, "Three Kinds of Fundamentalism," in *Letters from Freedom: Post-Cold War Realities and Perspectives*, ed. Irena Grudzińska-Gross (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998); Tomas Venclova, *Forms of Hope: Essays* (Riverdale-On-Hudson, NY: Sheep Meadow Press, 1999).
- 9 Violeta Davoliūtė, "The Sovietization of Lithuania after WWII: Modernization, Transculturation, and the Lettered City," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 47, no. 1 (2016): 49–63; Davoliūtė, *The Making and Breaking of Soviet Lithuania*.
- 10 Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution*, 374.
- 11 Tomas Venclova, "A Fifth Year of Independence: Lithuania, 1922 and 1994," *East European Politics & Societies* 9, no. 2 (March 1995): 344–367.
- 12 Alina Žvinklienė, "Gender Equality in the Baltic States: Democratization of Patriarchy," in *Gender Matters in the Baltics*, ed. Irina Novikova (Riga: LU Akadēmiskais apgāds, 2008), 81.
- 13 Irina Novikova, "History, National Belongings and Women's Movements in the Baltic Countries," in *Women's Movements: Networks and Debates in Post-Communist Countries in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. Edith Saurer, Margareth Lanzinger, and Elisabeth Frysak (Köln: Böhlau, 2006), 149.
- 14 Igor Semenovich Kon, "Sexual Culture and Politics in Contemporary Russia," in *Sexuality and Gender in Postcommunist Eastern Europe and Russia*, ed. Aleksandar Štulhofer and Theo Sandfort (New York: Haworth Press, 2005), 111–124.
- 15 Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).
- 16 Mirjana Ule and Tanja Rener, "Nationalism and Gender in Postsocialist Societies," in *Ana's Land: Sisterhood in Eastern Europe*, ed. Tanya Renne (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 220–233; Daina Stukuls, "Body of the Nation: Mothering, Prostitution, and Women's Place in Postcommunist Latvia," *Slavic Review* 58, no. 3 (October 1, 1999): 537–558.
- 17 Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?*; Barbara Einhorn, *Cinderella Goes to Market: Citizenship, Gender, and Women's Movements in East Central Europe* (London: Verso, 1993).

- 18 Susan Gal and Gail Kligman, "After Socialism," in *The Politics of Gender after Socialism: A Comparative-Historical Essay*, ed. Susan Gal and Gail Kligman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 10.
- 19 Dorothee Bohle and Béla Greskovits, *Capitalist Diversity on Europe's Periphery* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012).
- 20 See, for example, the work of the prominent Polish sociologist Piotr Sztompka, who argued that Eastern Europeans needed to undo their "homo sovieticus" mentality in order to be able to embrace the lost European values and re-enter the "European home" (Sztompka 1993, 86). For a postcolonial critique of such narrative see Michał Buchowski, "The Specter of Orientalism in Europe: From Exotic Other to Stigmatized Brother," *Anthropological Quarterly*, no. 3 (2006): 463. For anthropological research into the effects of transition on a gendered level, see Elizabeth C. Dunn, *Privatizing Poland: Baby Food, Big Business, and the Remaking of the Polish Working Class*, Culture and Society after Socialism (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).
- 21 Joanna Regulska, "The New 'Other' European Woman," in *Shifting Bonds, Shifting Bounds: Women, Mobility and Citizenship in Europe*, ed. V. Ferreira, S. Portugal, and T. Tavares (Oeiras: Celta Editora, 1997), 41–58.
- 22 Anikó Imre, "Lesbian Nationalism," *Signs* 33, no. 2 (2008): 255–282; Robert Kulpa and Joanna Mizielinska, *De-Centring Western Sexualities: Central and Eastern European Perspectives* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2011); Rasa Navickaitė, "Under the Western Gaze: Sexuality and Postsocialist 'Transition' in East Europe," in *Postcolonial Transitions in Europe: Contexts, Practices and Politics*, ed. Sandra Ponzanesi and Gianmaria Colpani (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015), 119–132.
- 23 Bohle and Greskovits, *Capitalist Diversity on Europe's Periphery*.
- 24 Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*; Todorova, "The Trap of Backwardness."
- 25 Daina Stukuls Eglitis, *Imagining the Nation: History, Modernity, and Revolution in Latvia* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2002), 12.
- 26 Stukuls differentiates between the spatial and temporal narratives of normality, which roughly correspond with what I call, respectively, the transition and return narratives.
- 27 Eglitis, *Imagining the Nation*, 224.
- 28 Eglitis, 240.
- 29 Eglitis, 203.
- 30 Francesca Stella, *Lesbian Lives in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia: Post/Socialism and Gendered Sexualities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 131.
- 31 For example, during the "National Emancipation Day." This annual event was first organized in 2017, on the 17th of February, in this way marking the anniversary of a women's protest against the exclusion of women from the signing of the Lithuanian Independence Act in 1918.
- 32 Solveiga Daugirdaitė, "Ko moteris nori? Spėlionės po dvidešimties metų" [What does a woman want? Speculations after twenty years.] *Colloquia* 25 (2010): 17–28.
- 33 Karla Gruodis, "Studying Lithuanian Women," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 21, no. 3/4 (1993): 172–183; Daugirdaitė, "Ko moteris nori?" [What does a woman want?].
- 34 Zita Čepaitė, Dalia Gudavičiūtė, and Solveiga Daugirdaitė, eds., *Moterys kintančioje visuomenėje: Lietuvos nevyriausybinų moterų organizacijų ataskaita Jungtinių Tautų organizacijos IV Pasaulinei moterų konferencijai Pekine 1995 rugsėjo 4-15 d.* [Women in a changing world: the report by the Lithuanian women's NGOs for the United Nations 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995 September 4–15] (Vilnius: Pradai, 1995).

- 35 Moterų informacijos centras, *Moterys ir rinkimai* [Women and elections] (Vilnius: Petro ofsetas, 1998), 15.
- 36 Prunskienė, “Lietuvos Moterų Partijos programa” [The program of the Lithuanian Women’s Party].”
- 37 Nijole White, “Women in Changing Societies: Latvia and Lithuania,” in *Post-Soviet Women: From the Baltic to Central Asia*, ed. Mary Buckley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 210.
- 38 Giedrė Purvaneckienė, interview with the author. The reasons behind the relative “harmony” among women’s organizations in the early 1990s and the later ideological differentiation are beyond the scope of this book, but definitely deserves further research.
- 39 For examples of this discourse, see Violeta Kelertienė, “Prakalbinti tylinčias kultūros prasmes” [To voice the silent meanings of culture], *Metai* 5 (1992): 74–78.
- 40 Gruodis, *Feminizmo ekskursai* [The currents of feminism].
- 41 Karla Gruodis, ed., “Įvadas” [Introduction], in *Feminizmo ekskursai* [The currents of feminism] (Vilnius: Pradai, 1995), 40.
- 42 Nijolė Steponkutė, “Kas gera prisiminkime, kas bloga - lai išblės [Let’s remember what was good and let the bad things fade away],” *Moters Pasaulis / Women’s World*, November 1996; Irena Litvinaitė, “‘Man patinka būti laisvai ir kūrybingai.’ Interviu su Dalia Teišerskyte [‘I like being free and creative.’ An interview with Dalia Teišerskytė],” *Moters Pasaulis / Women’s World*, December 1994; Marija Aušrinė Pavilionienė, “Feminizmas Lietuvoje: istorija ir dabartis [Feminism in Lithuania: history and now],” *Moters Pasaulis / Women’s World*, February 1997.
- 43 Daujotytė, *Moters dalis ir dalia* [Woman’s share and destiny]; Pavilionienė, *Lyčių drama* [Gender drama]; Solveiga Daugirdaitė, *Rūpesčių moterys, moterų rūpesčiai* [The women of worry, the worries of women] (Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2000); Dalia Leinarte, *Adopting and Remembering Soviet Reality: Life Stories of Lithuanian Women, 1945–1970* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010); Laima Kreivyte, “Moterys ir vyrai Lietuvos kultūroje po 20 metų” [Women and men in Lithuanian culture after 20 years], *Literatūra ir menas*, January 8, 2016.
- 44 While the history of the International Women’s Day has its origins in the socialist women’s movement, in the Soviet Union the celebration of this day became largely detached from its radical roots and was marked by men individually congratulating their wives and colleagues with flower bouquets, further entrenching gender stereotypes.
- 45 Giedrė Purvaneckienė, interview with the author, Vilnius, June 1, 2016.
- 46 White, “Women in Changing Societies: Latvia and Lithuania,” 215.
- 47 White, 212.
- 48 See Pavilionienė, “Feminizmas Lietuvoje: istorija ir dabartis” [Feminism in Lithuania: history and now], 4.
- 49 Gruodis, “Studying Lithuanian Women,” 174.
- 50 The father of Karla Gruodis, Vytas E. Gruodis was the head of the OSF at the time. Her husband Darius Čiplinskas was responsible for the publishing program at the OSF. According to Solveiga Daugirdaitė, the personal connections of Gruodis helped to find the funding for the publishing of feminist literature. Solveiga Daugirdaitė, interview with the author, Vilnius, November 5, 2015.
- 51 Gruodis, “Studying Lithuanian Women.”
- 52 The lectures of Kavolis were also published as Kavolis, *Moterys ir vyrai lietuvių kultūroje* [Women and men in Lithuanian culture]; Solveiga Daugirdaitė, “Vytautas Kavolis ir feminizmas” [Vytautas Kavolis and feminism], in *Vytautas Kavolis: Humanistica vs. Liberalia*, ed. Ramutis Karmalavičius (Vilnius: LLTI, 2005), 111–124.

- 53 Virginija Apanavičienė, “Forumo dienos ir menų naktys” [The days of the forum and the nights of art], *Moters Pasaulis*, September 1994; Leonarda Jekentaitė, “Danijos moterys pakeliui į rojų” [Danish women on their way to paradise], *Moters Pasaulis*, July 1997.
- 54 Jekentaitė, “Danijos moterys pakeliui į rojų” [Danish women on their way to paradise].
- 55 Slavenka Drakulić, “Ko mes išmokome iš Vakarų feminisčių” [What we learned from Western feminists], *Moters Pasaulis*, March 1998.
- 56 Lilija Vasiliauskienė, “Norvegės padeda skriaudžiamoms lietuvėms” [Norwegian women are helping the abused Lithuanian women], *Moters Pasaulis*, August 1996.
- 57 Simone de Beauvoir, *Antroji lytis* [The second sex], trans. Violeta Tauragnienė and Diana Bučiūtė (Vilnius: Margi raštai, 1996).
- 58 Moterų informacijos centras, *Moterys ir rinkimai* [Women and elections]; Moterų informacijos centras. *Lietuvos Respublikos moterų ir vyrų lygių galimybių įstatymas* [The Lithuanian Republic law of the equal opportunities for men and women] (Vilnius: Via Recta, 1999).
- 59 Ona Voverienė, ed., *Lietuvaitė. Lietuvos moterų judėjimai nuo seniausių laikų iki šiol* [Women’s movements in Lithuania from the oldest times until now] (Vilnius: Mokslo aidai, 1995).
- 60 Ona Voverienė, ed., *Lietuvaitė. Moters vieta ir vaidmuo visuomenėje* [Woman’s place and role in society] (Vilnius: Mokslo aidai, 1997).
- 61 Nijolė Steponkutė, *Kaip mes mokėmės išgyventi* [How we learned how to survive] (Vilnius: Spauda, 2001).
- 62 Todorova, “The Trap of Backwardness”; Kulpa and Mizielinska, *De-Centring Western Sexualities*.
- 63 See for example Jurga Iavanauskaitė, in Kelertienė, “Prakalbinti tylinčias kultūros prasmes” [To voice the silent meanings of culture], 80.
- 64 Giedrė Purvaneckienė, interview with the author.
- 65 Elena Adomavičienė, “Lietuviškų tradicijų puoselėtojos” [The ones fostering Lithuanian traditions]. *Moters Pasaulis*. August 1996. One of the first women’s organization to be (re-)created in post-socialism was LUMA – the Lithuanian University Women’s Association, in 1991.
- 66 Danutė Valionytė, “Baltiškojo moteriškumo stiprybė” [The strength of Baltic femininity], *Moters Pasaulis*, September 1994; Nijolė Blaževičiūtė, “Moterys Lietuvos Respublikoje 1918–1940 m” [Women in the Lithuanian Republic 1918–1940], in *Moterys Kintančioje Visuomenėje* [Women in Changing World]. Compare with recent research by Ugnė Marija Andrijauskaitė on the leftist women’s activism during the interwar period and the political repressions. See Ugnė Marija Andrijauskaitė, “Emancipacija per revoliuciją: radikaliai kitokios Lietuvos moterų istorijos [Emancipation through revolution: radically different stories of Lithuanian women], Mano teisės, accessed March 8, 2017, <http://manoteises.lt/straipsnis/emancipacija-per-revoliucija-radikaliai-kitokios-lietuvos-moteru-istorijos/>.
- 67 Daujotytė, *Moters dalis ir dalia* [Woman’s share and destiny]; Gruodis, “Įvadas” [Introduction]; Pavilionienė, “Feminizmas Lietuvoje: istorija ir dabartis” [Feminism in Lithuania: history and now]. Viktorija Daujotytė-Pakerienė, *Šatrijos Ragana pasaulyje: gyvenimo ir kūrinių skaitymai* [In the world of Šatrijos Ragana: reading life and works] (Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla, 1997); Viktorija Daujotytė-Pakerienė, *Salomėja Nėris: gyvenimo ir kūrybos skaitymai* [Salomėja Nėris: reading life and works] (Kaunas: Šviesa, 1999).
- 68 Daujotytė, *Moters dalis ir dalia* [Woman’s share and destiny], 20.
- 69 LaFont, “Introduction,” 1.

- 70 Irena Valikonytė, “Moters statusas Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės visuomenėje XVI a.” [The status of woman in the society of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, XVI c.], in *Moterys kintančioje visuomenėje* [Women in a changing world], 8–9.
- 71 Daujotytė, *Moters dalis ir dalia* [Woman’s share and destiny]; Giedrė Purvaneckienė, “Women in the Domestic Domain,” in *Women in Transition: Voices from Lithuania*, ed. Suzanne LaFont (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1998), 48–59.
- 72 Valionytė, “Baltiškojo moteriškumo stiprybė [The strength of Baltic femininity]”; Irena Leliūgienė, “Humanitarinės studijos moterims [Humanities for women],” *Moters Pasaulis*, June 1995.
- 73 Tatiana Zhurzhenko, “Strong Women, Weak State: Family Politics and Nation Building in Post-Soviet Ukraine,” in *Post-Soviet Women Encountering Transition: Nation Building, Economic Survival, and Civic Activism*, ed. Kathleen R. Kuehnast and Carol Nechemias (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2004), 30.
- 74 Valionytė, “Baltiškojo moteriškumo stiprybė 2” [The strength of Baltic femininity 2], 10.
- 75 Ona Voverienė, “Moterų judėjimai šių dienų Lietuvoje (1989–1995)” [Women’s movements in contemporary Lithuania (1989–1995)], in *Lietuvaitė. Lietuvos moterų judėjimai nuo seniausių laikų iki šiol* [Women’s movements in Lithuania from the oldest times until now], ed. Ona Voverienė (Vilnius: Mokslo aidai, 1995), 31–35.
- 76 While it was not explicit initially, in a more recent article Ona Voverienė contrasted *feminologija* with gender studies, referred to the latter as an ideology propagated by the European Union and detrimental to the Lithuanian nation. See Ona Voverienė, “Sugrįžimas iš užmaršties...” [Return from the forgotten...], *alkas.lt*, accessed July 6, 2016, <http://alkas.lt/2015/07/26/o-voveriene-sugrizimas-is-uzmarsties/>.
- 77 Voverienė, *Lietuvaitė. Lietuvos moterų judėjimai nuo seniausių laikų iki šiol* [Women’s movements in Lithuania from the oldest times until now], 6.
- 78 The series were published under the name *Lietuvaitė*, roughly meaning “Lithuanian girl,” with an implicit meaning of female virginity.
- 79 Ona Voverienė, ed., *Lietuvaitė. Moterys ir rezistencija Lietuvoje* [Women and resistance in Lithuania] (Vilnius: Mokslo aidai, 1998); Ona Voverienė, ed., *Lietuvaitė. Žymiosios XX a. Lietuvos moterys* [Famous Lithuanian women of the XX century] (Vilnius: Mokslo aidai, 1998).
- 80 Vilija Aleknaitė-Abramkienė, “Žvilgsnis į dabartį [A glance at the present],” in *Lietuvaitė. Moterys ir rezistencija in Lithuania* [Women and resistance in Lithuania], ed. Ona Voverienė (Vilnius: Mokslo aidai, 1998), 20.
- 81 Valionytė, “Baltiškojo moteriškumo stiprybė [The strength of Baltic femininity],” 8.
- 82 Daugirdaitė, “Vytautas Kavolis ir feminizmas”; Irina Novikova, “Post-Socialist Politics of Memory and Women’s Narratives of Their Past: Baltic Contexts,” in *Feminisms in a Transnational Perspective. Women Narrating Their Lives and Actions*, eds. R. Jambrešić Kirin, S. Prlenda (Zagreb: Centre for Women’s Studies, 2013).
- 83 Francesca Stella, “The Politics of In/Visibility: Carving Out Queer Space in Ul’yanovsk,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 64, no. 10 (2012): 1822.
- 84 In this section I only analyze books, articles, and speeches written or given by Gimbutas in Lithuanian language and for the audience living in Soviet or post-Soviet Lithuania. The translations to English here are all mine.
- 85 Marija Gimbutienė, *Baltai priešistoriniais laikais: etnogenezė, materialinė kultūra ir mitologija* [The Balts in prehistory: ethnogenesis, material culture and mythology] (Vilnius: Mokslo aidai, 1985).

- 86 “The Teutonic Order brought Christianity to the Baltic lands on the tip of a sword. The order killed people, but could not eradicate the old religion until the XVII century, until the Prussians completely disappeared (were assimilated by Germans). Latvian peasants retained their marvelous mythological songs and old traditions almost until the twentieth century, even thought they were officially Christianized at the beginning of the 13th century...Until the end of the 16th-beginning of the 17th century Lithuania did not get completely Christianized.” In Gimbutienė, *Baltai priešistoriniais laikais*, 149.
- 87 The diaspora magazine Akiračiai organized a questionnaire on the occasion of the 600 years anniversary of the Christianization of Lithuania. In the essay answering to the questionnaire, Gimbutas argued that Christianity, at least initially, went against the natural inclination of the Lithuanian spirit.
- 88 Akiračiai, “Krikščionybė Lietuvoje - 600. Į Akiračių anketos klausimus atsako Marija Gimbutienė” [600 years of Christianity in Lithuania. Marija Gimbutas answers to Akiračiai questionnaire]. *Akiračiai*, 1988, 108.
- 89 Akiračiai, 109.
- 90 Marija Gimbutas, *The Civilization of the Goddess: The World of Old Europe*, ed. Joan Marler (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1991); Marija Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1989).
- 91 Such a primordialist understanding of nationhood and nationalism is contradictory to the approach embraced by many contemporary historians, who see the Eastern European nations largely as a creation of the nationalist movement of the nineteenth century. See for example Balkelis, *The Making of Modern Lithuania*; Davoliūtė, *The Making and Breaking of Soviet Lithuania*.
- 92 Putinaitė, *Šiaurės Atėnų tremtiniai* [The deportees of Northern Athens], 23–27.
- 93 Todorova, “The Trap of Backwardness.”
- 94 Gimbutienė, “The speech at Vytautas Magnus University,” 14.
- 95 The speech was first printed in the cultural magazine *Literatūra ir menas* about a month after it was given and then reprinted in *Laimos palytėta* (2002). Fragments of this speech were also included in the short documentary film about Gimbutas, by Algirdas Tarvydas, “Marija Alseikaitė - Gimbutienė. Lietuvos kronika.”
- 96 Gimbutienė, “The speech at Vytautas Magnus University,” 15.
- 97 Gimbutienė, 14–15.
- 98 Gimbutienė, 14.
- 99 Gimbutienė, “The speech at Vytautas Magnus University.”
- 100 Saja, “Geresnio gyvenimo ilgesys. M. Gimbutienė. [Longing for better life. Marija Gimbutas].”
- 101 Marija Gimbutienė, *Senoji Europa* [Old Europe] (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidykla, 1996), 10.
- 102 Gimbutienė, *Senoji Europa* [Old Europe]; Gimbutienė, “The speech at Vytautas Magnus University.”
- 103 Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books, 1988). The printed version of her speech in Lithuanian (in Ikamaitė 2002) contains a mistake – it quotes Tim M. Berry, the evolutionary scientist and biologist. My reason to believe that Gimbutas quoted Thomas Berry in her 1993 speech is that she made the same reference in an analogous speech during the presentation of her book “The Civilization of the Goddess” in Santa Monica. See Lollie Ragana, *Voice of the Goddess: Marija Gimbutas* (Santa Monica, CA: Santa Monica City TV, 1991), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-k34hXty4iw&t=33s>.
- 104 Gimbutienė, “The speech at Vytautas Magnus University,” 15.
- 105 See, for example, Greta Gaard and Lori Gruen, “Ecofeminism: Toward Global Justice and Planetary Health,” *Society and Nature* 2 (1993): 1–35; Al Gore,

- Earth in the Balance. Forging a New Common Purpose* (London: Earthscan Publications, 1992). It would be a mistake to understand Gimbutas as merely being influenced by these “Western” cultural trends. Instead, Gimbutas should be understood as a part of the development of “ecofeminism/ eco-spiritualism,” and in fact, a reference point for other thinkers. Two influential ecofeminist thinkers, Greta Gaard and Lori Gruen, for example, referenced Gimbutas’ work on Old Europe in their article “Ecofeminism: Toward global justice and planetary health” (1993), published in the same year as Gimbutas gave this speech. Already in 1992, the American politician and environmentalist Al Gore, in his book *Earth in Balance. Ecology and Human Spirit* (1992) drew on the work of Gimbutas to argue that prehistoric Europe was characterized by the worship of the Earth Goddess and harmonious cohabitation with nature.
- 106 Gimbutienė, *Baltai priešistoriniiais laikais*, 161.
- 107 Gimbutienė, 150.
- 108 Gimbutas, in Tarvydas, “Marija Alseikaitė - Gimbutienė. Lietuvos kronika.”
- 109 *Senoji Europa* is an (abridged) Lithuanian language version of the *Civilization of the Goddess*.
- 110 Gimbutienė, *Senoji Europa* [Old Europe], 10.
- 111 Gimbutienė, 11.
- 112 Gruodis, “Įvadas” [Introduction], 11.
- 113 LaFont, *Women in Transition*.
- 114 Purvaneckienė, “Women in the Domestic Domain,” 48.
- 115 See Chapter 5.
- 116 Daujotytė, *Moters dalis ir dalia* [Woman’s share and destiny].
- 117 Daujotytė, 101.
- 118 Daujotytė, 190.
- 119 Daujotytė, 15.
- 120 Viktorija Daujotytė, interview with the author, Vilnius, April 7, 2016.
- 121 Daujotytė, *Moters dalis ir dalia* [Woman’s share and destiny], 275.
- 122 Daujotytė, 281.
- 123 Daujotytė, 280.
- 124 Daujotytė, 13.
- 125 Daujotytė, 17–19.
- 126 Daujotytė, 17.
- 127 Daujotytė, 12.
- 128 Daujotytė, 14.
- 129 Aušrinė Marija Pavilionienė was one of the initiators of the revival of LUMA (Lithuanian University Women’s Organization) and the head of the LSC (Women’s Studies’ Center since 1992, later – Gender Studies Center at Vilnius University). Later she became a parliamentarian, promoter of progressive policies.
- 130 Pavilionienė, *Lyčių drama* [Gender drama], 11–24.
- 131 Pavilionienė, 24.
- 132 Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). In *The Creation of Patriarchy* (1987). Lerner, in fact, takes for granted many of the archaeological findings by Gimbutas, and comes to similar conclusions about the overthrow of a more matrilineal society by the patriarchal, hierarchical ancient states. At the same time she criticized the utopian feminist imaginary of prehistoric “matriarchy.”
- 133 Pavilionienė, *Lyčių drama* [Gender drama], 24.
- 134 Pavilionienė, “Feminizmas Lietuvoje: istorija ir dabartis” [Feminism in Lithuania: history and now].
- 135 Sąjūdis (Lietuvos persitvarkymo sąjūdis), or the Organization for the Transformation of Lithuania, was the key organization in the transitional

- period during the collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of an independent country.
- 136 *Seimas* is the name of the Lithuanian parliament.
- 137 White, “Women in Changing Societies: Latvia and Lithuania,” 208.
- 138 Kazimiera Prunskienė, *Laisvėjimo ir permainų metai* [The years of liberation and change] (Vilnius: Viltis, 1995).
- 139 Giedrė Purvaneckienė, interview with the author.
- 140 John T. Ishiyama, “Women’s Parties in Post-Communist Politics,” *East European Politics & Societies* 17, no. 2 (2003): 279–282.
- 141 Ishiyama, 287.
- 142 Ishiyama, 288.
- 143 Dalia Teišerskytė, “Why and How the Party of Women was Formed in Lithuania,” in *Women in Transition: Voices from Lithuania*, ed. Suzanne LaFont (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1998), 98.
- 144 Prunskienė, “Lietuvos Moterų Partijos programa” [The program of the Lithuanian Women’s Party], 5. The desire of the LMP to seek the middle ground, to stay beyond competing ideologies is visible in many of its stances. For example, while in principle the party was against the death penalty (“as it is against the Christian and humanist morality”), it did not wish to abolish the penalty immediately (“due to the aggression of the criminal world and the insecurity of people”).
- 145 Prunskienė, 4–5.
- 146 Prunskienė, 5.
- 147 Prunskienė, 7. The contradiction of relying both on Gimbutas’ hypothesis of Old Europe, with its privileging of Old Lithuanian pagan religion, and on Catholic morality at the same time, is another manifestation of the amorphous “middle-way” ideological character of LMP.
- 148 Marija Aušrinė Pavilionienė, *Viltys ir nusivylimai* [Hopes and disappointments] (Vilnius: Petro ofsetas, 2011).
- 149 Giedrė Purvaneckienė, interview with the author.
- 150 Viktorija Daujotytė, interview with the author, Vilnius, April 7, 2016; Jurga Ivanauskaitė, “Moters individualizmas Lietuvoje” [Woman’s individualism in Lithuania], *Metmenys* 58 (1990): 166–173; Kelertas, “Kokio feminizmo Lietuvai reikėtų?” [What kind of feminism Lithuania needs?]. The positive attitude towards Prunskienė was later compromised by the later rumors of her alleged collaboration with the KGB. Violeta Kelertienė, interview with the author, Vilnius, September 10, 2015.
- 151 Prunskienė, *Laisvėjimo ir permainų metai* [The years of liberation and change].
- 152 Prunskienė, “Lietuvos moterų partijos programa 1996 m. Seimo rinkimams” [The program of the Lithuanian Women’s Party for the 1996 elections], 5.
- 153 Gal and Kligman, “After Socialism.”

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