Summary

THE POLITICS OF VISION: LITHANIA IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

In his renowned book *Imagined Communities* (1983), Benedict Anderson defined a nation as an imagined political body united by a common language and a print media. According to Anderson, it was precisely the information disseminated through the media in a common language, understood by all its users, that brought unrelated individuals into a like-minded group of people embracing shared values. Thus, in his view, a nation is a community of speakers and readers consolidated by the philological revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries.

To paraphrase Anderson, the subject of this book is the "seeing communities", i.e., different political, ethnic, and professional groups that create, disseminate, and use shared images. These "visual" groups are not understood as being in opposition to "reading communities" identified by Anderson, but rather as another aspect of that expression.

In the Western humanities, there are numerous efforts to explore the collective forms of looking and seeing. Similar trends are also becoming apparent in Lithuanian academic studies focused on the political, cultural, and artistic phenomena of the 19th century. Generally speaking, we can observe a convergence of the positions of language-oriented specialists in political and social history and visual-oriented art historians over the past two decades: the former increasingly focus their attention on various images, while the latter explore the socio-political context of visual art. However, this resurgent historiography still fails to avoid a certain degree of inertia: with rare exceptions, historians tend to treat images as simple sources and signs, without delving deeper into the specifics of their function, while art researches often use the facts of social life as a mere backdrop for aesthetic phenomena, without searching for more fundamental links between the social milieu and art.

This book precisely seeks to overcome the passive interpretation of the relationship between sociality and visuality. By examining the mass consumption images and the collective ways of seeing them that prevailed in Lithuania in the 19th century, it attempts to answer such questions as: How were "corporate" visual practices developed? How did different social groups express their interests through visual practices, and how did such practices affect the imagination of communities? To what extent were these phenomena similar throughout the Russian Empire and in what respects did they differ? Were the aims and methods of image exploitation in lands controlled by the Romanovs, including the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, analogous to those developed in other European countries? And, finally, was there a certain policy of vision on the western borderland of the tsarist state, similar to the political regulation imposed upon language?

The research in this book spans the entire long 19th century, from the last division of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1795 to World War One. It focuses mainly on the late Russian imperial period, when the visual media, which experienced a qualitative leap in reproduction technology, became an important instrument for the popularization of political ideas, the dissemination of knowledge, and the mobilization and control of the general public. The geographical scope of the analysis covers the so-called Northwest Region, which included the provinces of Vilnius, Kaunas, Grodno, Minsk, Vitebsk, and Mogilev, and the territory of which more or less corresponded to the lands held by the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 18th century. Although this geographical area underwent major processes of cultural and political differentiation during the period in question, until the fall of the Romanov state it functioned as a certain administrative unit, ruled by common decrees and a single network of executive institutions, and it was perceived not only by those in power, but also by the majority of local inhabitants (primarily the local Polish-speaking elite) as a distinct region.

The main approaches used in the research are social history and visual anthropology. Here, visual media are not only seen as factors shaping the collective imagination, but also as instruments for the production and dissemination of knowledge, playing an important role in the establishment of discursive power relations. Thus, the power-knowledge interface, as conceptualized by Michel Foucault, becomes one of the main analytical perspectives to gain insight into the specificities of the production, consumption, and perception of images. It facilitates a discussion of the functioning of images in the most important secular disciplinary systems of society: pedagogy, law, and science.

The monograph consists of seven chapters: *I. Visualizations* (school reform and the introduction of visual educational methods); *II. (Re)Presentations* (public education through illustrated lectures and museum exhibitions); *III. (Il)Legalities* (legal regulation of images, including censorship and copyright); *IV. (Dis)Loyalties* (the dissemination of portraits of representatives of the Romanov dynasty); *V. (Self)Localizations* (geographical images as a means of indoctrinating the population of the Northwest Region); *VI. (Mis)Identities* (the use of visual media in the field of forensics); *VII. Abnormalities* (medical images and their relation to the concept of "disease").

Visualizations

The first chapter, on the school reform, examines the concept of visual education that had come into use in the mid-19th century. In the Russian Empire, as in other countries, this new approach in pedagogy was treated both as a general didactic principle for more effective teaching of language, mathematics, geography, history, and religion, and as a primary school subject in the form of so-called object lessons. The main component of such lessons was the display of natural and artificial objects in an effort to develop the cognitive process from a pupil's simplest visual experiences to abstract conceptual thinking. To this end, schools began assembling visual artifacts. On the eve of World War One, many primary schools in the cities of the Northwest Region had collections of visual aids at their disposal, and pedagogical museums were opened in Vilnius (1903) and Kaunas (1910) to provide professional advice to local teachers.

The concept of visual education placed particular emphasis on the importance of drawing lessons. In the latter half of the 19th century, drawing was seen as a fundamental

factor in personal development. It was argued that such an activity perfectly combined a child's intellectual and physical efforts and was therefore a special form of cognition that every individual should master. With the introduction of *realschulen* (technical secondary schools) in the Russian Empire in 1872, the teaching of drawing was confirmed as a compulsory subject. Moreover, drawing skills were seen as a necessary part of the vocational qualification of craftsmen and factory workers. This field began to be taught at the Vilnius Drawing School, opened in 1866, and in technical drawing courses that became popular at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The Russian promoters of the concept of visual teaching carefully analysed the analogous experience of Western European countries and the United States. However, in the Romanov state, innovative ideas were more effective in theory than in practice. The task of the new school, as formulated in the West, to educate a creative, free, democratic society developing industrial modes of production could only function as an abstract vision under the political and economic conditions prevailing in the Russian Empire. The situation in the Northwest Region, where the political regime was extremely harsh, was exceptionally unfavourable for achieving this goal. The new didactic emphasis on a teacher's duty to understand children, to encourage them to fully realize themselves and nurture their individual creativity was too dissonant with the reality of the western borderlands. The political tensions that prevailed there reinforced the insurmountable divide between official and private life, and pushed teachers representing the state and schoolchildren representing a repressed society to opposite sides of the ideological barricade.

At the same time, however, it should not be underestimated that, during the period in question, there was an awareness of the necessity to promote visual literacy in society: just as children learn to speak and write, so they must learn to understand images. This notion, which had taken hold prior to World War One, was developed and given more concrete form in the Lithuanian educational system throughout the 20th century.

(Re)Presentations

As the study presented in the second chapter of the book shows, not only attempts to modernize school programs but also efforts to expand non-formal adult education proved insufficiently effective. In the late 19th century, in order to educate the masses, the state began using lectures with slide projections and museum displays. At the time, slide shows were considered to be a very promising educative method. As in other countries, in the Russian Empire it was associated with the hope of developing a rationally minded, disciplined, and loyal society. In 1885, the Vilnius Educational District Commission was established to organize lectures with magic lantern projections. Its programmes focused mainly on geography and Russian history and literature. Some thirty lectures a year were held in Vilnius, attracting around 3,000 listeners of both sexes and all ages, mostly schoolchildren, soldiers, and servants (in this respect, Vilnius differed from some other cities in the empire, where popular readings attracted many small artisans and tradespeople).

At the beginning of the 20th century, the initiative of the Commission was taken over by the Brotherhood of the Holy Ghost, which had been active in Vilnius since 1865 and united the promoters of the ideas of Orthodoxy and monarchism. The Brotherhood gave priority to religious themes and didactic stories, and tried to expand the social sphere

of its activities. It organized free readings in Vilnius schools, military barracks, prisons, orphanages, and hospitals. Over seventeen years, it convened 3,258 readings attended by over 615,700 people. These events were organized not only in Vilnius, but also in more remote areas. In the early 1910s, readings were held in seventy locations under the jurisdiction of the Lithuanian Diocese of the Orthodox Church. Reading rooms were established wherever there were more sizeable Orthodox communities, which is why they were more pervasive and better attended in Belarusian territory. In Lithuanian lands, meanwhile, lecturing activity developed slowly. We can conclude that neither the Vilnius Educational District Commission nor the Brotherhood of the Holy Ghost achieved their goal. Both organisations failed to attract the interest of the largest population group in the Northwest Region – Catholic peasants. In addition, the local community began to use imported or homemade slides for educational and catechising purposes. At the beginning of the 20th century, this type of production constituted a significant layer of visual culture, alternative to officially approved images.

A similar situation developed in the museum sector. In the Russian Empire, as in many other European countries, museums began to emerge as elite and cosmopolitan cultural institutions, which in the course of the 19th century gravitated towards democratic forms and national content. As imperial culture policymakers increasingly came to understand the importance of the museum as a tool for educating the masses, the development of public museum collections gained momentum not only in central regions of the country but also in peripheral areas. In the historical lands of Lithuania, the tense political situation delayed these processes. The accelerated development of museums only began there in the final decade of the 19th century, under the strict control of the authorities.

In the Northwest Region, the tsar's officials promoted museums that glorified the administrative and military power of the Russian Empire, represented the Orthodox Church, helped to collect statistics, and contributed to the general and vocational education of the population. However, after the 1905 Revolution and the liberal reforms that followed, new actors – local ethnic communities – joined the process of museumification. This realignment of cultural forces posed a challenge to pro-state institutions. The representatives of official culture began to look for ways to create cultural focal points that were relevant to the indigenous population and acceptable to authorities. To achieve this goal, they turned to the principles of appropriating the heritage of non-dominant ethnic groups. One such notable project was the idea, put forward in 1912–1913, of transforming a memorial institution dedicated to Vilnius Governor-General Mikhail Murav'ev into an ethnographic museum featuring the culture of local peoples. However, attempts to maintain a state monopoly in this field were unsuccessful. The museum collections formed by the Polish and Lithuanian communities became the focus of public attention in the Northwest Region and enjoyed broad popular support. Meanwhile, museums promoted by the government failed to attract a larger number of visitors.

(Il)Legalities

The increasing pluralism of visual culture was a growing concern for officials in the Russian Empire. The third chapter of this book discusses how the tsarist censors attempted to regulate the spontaneous dissemination of images.

In the 19th century, the institution of censorship existed in all European countries. The Russian Empire was no exception: information disseminated in the public sphere was systematically controlled there beginning in 1804, when the first Censorship Regulations were adopted. But what distinguished the Russian model from the larger international context was its highly complex institutional and legal framework. This unwieldy bureaucratic "organism" reflected the complicated structure of a huge semi-feudal state and, as the case of the Northwest Region shows, instead of facilitating the work of officials, it made it more difficult to control the public intellectual sphere. In addition, this system was conservative compared to other countries. Preventive methods had been used in the Russian Empire for much longer than elsewhere. In France, for example, the pre-printing review of publications was abolished in 1822, and for cartoons in 1881 and the theatre in 1906; by the mid-19th century, many European countries had abandoned preliminary censorship, not to mention Great Britain, where the laws enabling pre-publication review of the press were repealed as early as 1695. The tsarist government, however, did not take its first compromise step in this direction until 1865, and the final abolition of preliminary measures came with the onset of the 1905 Revolution. Nevertheless, even after the adoption of new provisional rules, the requirements for exhibitions, lectures, theatre performances, and cartoons published in various publications remained unchanged: in these areas, the old system of obtaining prior authorization remained in force until the collapse of the Romanov state.

Although historiography analyses Russian censorship mainly in terms of restricting the press, issues pertaining to imagery also played an important role in the imperial control system. Images were carefully controlled in the historical lands of Lithuania that had fallen under Romanovs rule. In the Northwest Region, the monitoring of visual artifacts was exceptionally strict and conducted on a microscopic scale, with not only engravings, lithographs, photographs, and postcards but also the smallest household objects adorned with patriotic symbols coming under an inspector's scrutiny. Moreover, the censorship of visual items in the Lithuanian and Belarusian provinces was directly impacted by the ban on printing in Latin characters imposed on the Lithuanian press after the 1863–1864 Uprising. Thus, even images with permissible content were banned if they were accompanied by text printed in an unauthorized language and alphabet.

Despite the government's repressive policies, the growing capacity of the printing industry and the emergence of new means of mass communication challenged the censors' usual working methods. One such innovative medium was photography. This type of image production prompted the authorities not only to revise the repressive principles of the press law, but also to rethink the concept of copyright.

Indeed, the first to become concerned about copyright protection in the Northwest Region were photographers. In the Russian Empire, the copyright rules were formulated as an integral part of the Censorship Regulations of 1828, and their content thus had both restrictive and punitive elements. However, in the second half of the century, a significant shift took place, testifying to the modernisation of the legal system of the Russian Empire. At that time, the police version of copyright, subordinated to censorship purposes, was replaced by a legal model in which the problems of protecting the interests of writers and artists prevailed. The very concept of the subject matter of copyright had also fundamentally changed. In the editions of 1846 and 1857, the artwork was interpreted as a unique

material product created by hand and opposed to mass products reproduced by mechanical means, which, according to the conviction of the time, had no signs of individual authorship. However, the evolution of image production technology compelled an adjustment of legal criteria. A particularly important role in this process was played by a debate over the nature of photography and its relationship to other visual arts, upsetting the traditional classification of art and old confrontations over values. The new version of the law adopted in 1911 was thus already much more focused on works of art as intellectual assets.

The new edition of copyright established the supremacy of individual artistic invention over reproductive activity. But these rules were ineffective in the historical lands of Lithuania. The fact that copyright existed here only on paper was the result of a constrained, underdeveloped, archaic local market and a retrospective cultural milieu oriented towards authorities of the past. These circumstances hindered the formation of a modern artistic mentality. Until the final decade of the 19th century, the idea of personal freedoms and creative rights was mainly expressed as a timid leitmotif of abstract reflections, while in reality there prevailed a devotion to communal ideals that led to a rejection of individual invention and a dedication to copying of canonical works of art.

Be that as it may, the 1911 edition of copyright should be regarded as progressive in the overall legislative framework of the Russian Empire. In what was a police state, the new version of the legal document provided opportunities for public creativity. Its progressive nature is evidenced by the fact that this document was adapted in the first Republic of Lithuania without any major changes: it was merely translated into Lithuanian and remained in force until 1940.

(Dis)Loyalties

Some of the most closely controlled types of images were portraits of the tsar and members of his family, and it is to these images that the fourth chapter of the monograph is devoted. The second half of the 19th century can be described as a period of intense visualization of power. It was hoped that images of the Russian emperor, printed in large quantities, would increase the visibility of the sovereign and reinforce loyalist sentiments among his subjects. Research has revealed that in the Northwest Region, such visual artifacts were widely distributed across the various social and ethno-confessional strata of the population. The tsar's "icons" functioned not only in public sphere, but also in private space, as attributes of the home environment. The pro-imperial Vilnius press of the day viewed this phenomenon as a sign of civil society formation. However, most researched cases of vandalism suggest the opposite – namely a lack of civic spirit and loyalty to the government.

The mass distribution of cheap portraits of ruling figures often served as pretexts for conflict. Police documents attest to a wide range of violent acts: the monarch's pictures were sliced, scratched, pierced, trampled, punched, whipped, chopped with axes, and torn up. Data collected during pre-trial interrogations show that aggression against the ruler's "effigies" was mostly motivated by economic, religious, and psychological reasons. Defacing these portraits was an expression of dissatisfaction with economic deprivation, a protest against the persecution of the Catholic Church, and an attempt to satisfy personal social inferiority.

Under Russian imperial law, the vandalism of images of royal persons was classified as a state offence and an insult against the emperor personally. Crimes in the *lèse-majesté* category were punishable by severe penalties. Archival documents show that the population of the Northwest Region was well informed about this aspect of the law. Those who acquired cheap lithographic images of the emperor usually did so out of selfish motives and used these pictures as "legal" arguments when seeking to resolve personal conflicts. An owner's relationship with the visual artifact was often situational, pragmatic, even highly cynical – with the help of the symbol of the highest authority, a person tried to defend his or her household, property or work interests. The popularity of the tsar's portraits in the northwestern provinces could thus be interpreted not as a manifestation of naive monarchism, but as a reaction by the lower social strata to the complex legal system of the Russian Empire and the lack of qualified lawyers able to meet the needs of the people. In short, it can be argued that the use of the ruler's "icons" was a form of alternative popular legal practice, in which lawful action intertwined with illegal behaviour.

(Self)Localizations

The tsarist government sought to secure the loyalty of its subjects not only by disseminating visual symbols of the empire, but also by shaping communal territorial imagery. The latter is discussed in the fifth chapter of this book, devoted to the geographical imagination of the people of the Northwest Region.

At the time, many countries were attempting to sketch out their own national maps, identify socially important geographical features, and create visual catalogues of the national landscape. This was supported by a widely disseminated ideology of "homeland studies" and various modes of travel. Tours became an important instrument of political indoctrination, and adult and youth organizations were set up towards this end, such as the Hungarian Teachers' Tourist Society, founded in 1896, and the School Tourism Group (*Schülerwandergruppe*), which was established in Berlin that same year. Similar cultural techniques were employed in the Russian Empire and its Northwest Region. A government-promoted "homeland studies" (*rodinovedenie*) and educational tourism campaign had a strong political component, intended to instil in the minds of young people a common dimension of imperial space and to strengthen official patriotism.

Efforts to consolidate imperial society were intensive, but essentially unidirectional. While tsarist authorities were trying to integrate the inhabitants of the Northwest Region into the imperial space by organizing school trips to St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kyiv, Crimea, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, the integration of the former lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania into the Russian mental map proceeded at a sluggish pace. Although the western borderlands were treated as ancient Russian lands, this depiction only functioned smoothly in official discourse. Up to World War One, the position of the region in the Russian geographical imagination remained undefined and highly controversial, as evidenced by the lack of descriptions of Russian trips to the northwestern provinces and the low number of visitors from the central areas of the empire.

At the end of the 19th century, Lithuanian and Polish communities began to actively develop their own geographical vision. On the eve of World War One, the western borderland

of the Romanov state was already home to a number of competing spatial discourses and practices. All of them appealed to nature, culture, and history, but with different conceptual elements and political goals. For example, the Polish Sightseeing Society (*Polskie Towarzystwo Krajoznawcze*), founded in Warsaw in 1906 and active not only in the Kingdom of Poland but also in the Northwest Region, attempted to resist the entropy of traditional spatial images of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth by exploiting the metaphorical imagery of physical geography. Images of nature disseminated through group travel, scientific writings, periodicals, artworks, photography, and postcards, were meant to bring together the fracturing map of a lost state into a coherent, vibrant whole. Lithuanians sought to distance themselves from this trend and define their own – modern – ethnic territory. Compared to the potential embodied in the legal and cultural autonomy enjoyed by the Kingdom of Poland, Lithuanian capacity was limited, mainly based on the periodical press and the private initiatives of nationally committed enthusiasts.

Of course, the question inevitably arises as to whether these methods of space creation were effective. Unfortunately, the lack of reliable historical sources makes it difficult to formulate an unequivocal answer. One thing is certain: the processes discussed above were not smooth. This can be said not only about the strategies used by authorities, but also about the efforts of non-dominant ethnic groups. For example, despite the fact that rising national movements breathed new relevance into the significance of depictions of a homeland, the dissemination of such iconography proved to be far from easy. Both the costly *Album de Vilna* (Vilnius Album) by Jan Kazimierz Wilczyński and lithographs based on drawings by Napoleon Orda were commercially unsuccessful. Moreover, the much less expensive collections of images of Vilnius and its environs, which began to be assembled in the 1870s by the city's photographers, were also not in great demand. At the start of the 20th century, the Polish Sightseeing Society, which had set out to publish postcards depicting Polish and Lithuanian sites, encountered similar problems: at the outbreak of World War One, a large number of its products distributed in the Polish lands and the Northwest Region remained unsold.

(Mis)Identities

The second half of the 19th century was a period of transformation for society in the Russian Empire. The changing economic and legal foundations of social coexistence and increasing migration by the population exacerbated the question of personal identity. In this context, human identity ceased to be an obvious constant. As social class relations fragmented and individuals became more mobile, the old mechanisms for disciplining imperial subjects became less effective. They were replaced by police methods that penetrated deep into the social fabric. Alongside with the new ways of monitoring individuals, visual identification techniques came into use. It is these modern methods of surveillance that are the focus of the sixth chapter of the book.

It should be noted that, in an era of tectonic social ruptures, it was not one's origin, beliefs, or profession, but the human physical characteristics that came to be identified as the most objective and easily recognizable aspect of the individual self. At the same time, it was precisely in the physical human features that the possibilities for monitoring social

phenomena were perceived. The human body acquired an exceptional identification function in the public law enforcement system. Individuals began to be measured, described, and photographed, and this type of information began to be filed in police archives.

In the historical lands of Lithuania, photography was first used for repressive state purposes during the suppression of the 1863–1864 Uprising. Thus, in this region, it was primarily used for the political control of society. A similar link between political upheaval and the efforts to use technical images for law enforcement purposes was also seen in other European countries. For example, in Great Britain, the Irish liberation movement had a similar effect on the development of law enforcement photography, as did the Paris Commune in France. The struggle against opponents of the state system led to the modernization of the search not only for political but also for criminal offenders, using visual tools for this purpose.

The forensic visualization process that gained momentum in Western Europe as early as in the 1870s, did not take off in the historical lands of Lithuania until the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. At the same time, photographic identification began to be introduced in the administrative practices. Personal identification through imagery was first applied in the public sector – in communications, military service, and higher education. Photography thus became a kind of indicator that signalled the most important spheres of strategic state interests, on which the security of the empire depended. The proliferation of visual means of identification suggests that, on the eve of World War One, an individual's police-approved photographic image was already functioning as the equivalent of a passport, and that it took only a small bureaucratic push to merge the two forms of identification into a single, modern form of identity document, which soon followed with Germany's invasion of the western regions of the Romanov state: it was the German occupying power that introduced passports bearing photographs.

Given the aforementioned context, it can be argued that the principles of visual surveillance of imperial subjects in the historical Lithuanian lands were both typical but also exceptional. The region's geopolitical and ethno-confessional situation had a decisive impact on their distinct nature. The fact that the northwestern provinces bordered on the rebellious Kingdom of Poland and the German Empire then actively developing its economic and military power, as well as the fact that they constituted a border zone populated by people of "other ethnicities" (*inorodtsy*) and "other confessions" (*inovertsy*), resulted in a reinforced regime of police and administrative surveillance and a specific attention by authorities to Catholic priests and Jewish conscripts. Thus, in this region, visual control was more intense and encompassed more population groups than in the interior of the empire, where Orthodoxy was the predominant religion and Russians the dominant ethnic group.

Efforts by imperial policy enforcers to control their subjects in the northwestern lands had another – paradoxical – side effect: Due to administrative requirements demanding the presentation of photo identification, photographic products did not only circulate amongst the local elite and the wealthy, but also spread within the lower strata of society. Portrait-taking became obligatory for the sons of Lithuanian peasants as well as poor Jews – tailors, hatters, sock knitters, bakers, accountants, small tradesmen, and day labourers. Thus, from a social point of view, the modern technical medium spread faster and wider

in the Northwest Region than in most of the central and eastern provinces of the Russian Empire. But here we encounter another paradox. Instead of symbolizing the autonomous value of the individual, and his or her private and social welfare, as was more often the case, these photographic portraits obtained for the sake of identification testified to the instrumental subjugation of the individual to the power of the state.

Abnormalities

A different fate befell visual aids in the medical sciences. At that time, the human health sciences were undergoing tumultuous change. This positivist period saw the rise of the biological model of medicine based on the belief that all human disorders have organic causes and are manifested by external symptoms that are visible to the eye. Such an approach led to an awareness of the importance of visual data. The 19th century witnessed an extraordinary influx of medical imagery. Photography played a special role in this regard, as it was seen as a medium for "pure" images – free from subjective interpretation and therefore infallible.

The development of medical photography intensified in many countries after 1851 with the widespread use of the wet collodion process. Photographs were collected for research and didactic purposes by the Vilnius Medical Society, established in 1805. The oldest known photograph in the society's collection dates back to 1866. For this purpose, the Society's members used the services of local commercial photographers, and at the beginning of the 20th century, some of them started taking amateur photographs themselves.

Although it was hoped that visual media would become an objective diagnostic tool to facilitate the work of physicians, their role proved controversial. Visual methods had been particularly questioned in psychiatry. In 1903, the opening of a 1,000-bed specialized hospital on the outskirts of the city made Vilnius one of the largest and most modern psychiatric centres in the entire Russian Empire. Among other tools, visual methods were also employed there.

The doctors of the Vilnius District Hospital accentuated the organic origins of mental illness. They had a strong opinion that somatic disturbances causing anomalies of the psyche were associated with a person's physiological and anatomical characteristics, and would be expressed externally, so various deviations of the mind and emotions could be diagnosed by analysing a patient's bodily function indicators, their physical motility, and anatomical forms. Patient medical files meticulously recorded physical characteristics such as height, weight, physique, craniofacial measurements, physiognomy, facial expressions, and posture. Each new arrival was photographed at a local photographic laboratory and his or her image was pasted into a patient chart. And indeed, when checking patients, physical indications of mental disorder were often "discovered": atypical height or weight, an excessively low forehead, joined eyebrows, an elongated head at the crown, an irregular bite, or general physical exhaustion. But there were also cases where no physiological or anatomical defects could be detected. The discrepancy between theoretical expectations and the reality, which so disturbed medics, unhinged their notions about the causes of illness and the boundary between a disease and a healthy state. Physicians in Vilnius became interested in mental disorders of non-organic origin. Their views began to show a gravitation from a somatic to a psychosocial model of aetiological interpretation. With the collapse

of the idea that man is a causally bound organic whole in which the invisible inevitably manifests itself in certain visible forms, the cognitive power of visual means began to be called into question. A suspicion arose that visual perception "grasped" only the exterior of a real object, which did not necessarily correlate with any fundamental, profound content, and that the meaning of the results of such cognition was therefore indeterminate, variable, and directly dependent on the interpretative context. Thus, the image might only be a surface reflection, not a symptom. The status of an image as symptom and evidence faltered not only in the study of mental illness but also in the study of physical disability. Photographic documentation of physical abnormalities, which was supposed to ensure the maximum objectivity of visual data, gave the opposite result: it highlighted the semantic pliability of the image related to the intentions of the doctor / photographer / viewer and the chosen angle of view.

The suspicious and critical attitude towards visual diagnostics that developed among Vilnius physicians was associated with a somewhat more global anti-ocularcentric cultural shift. According to Martin Jay, at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, Western thought experienced several major epistemological changes, including the detranscendentalization of perspective, the recorporealization of the cognitive subject, and the revalorization of time over space. All of these challenged the privileged status of sight as the most important human sense. The cognitive importance of language increased with the privileging of the temporal perception of movement and change over space identified by the visual organs. It is no coincidence that in many countries in this period a decline in the popularity of images was observed in various disciplines.

Similar attitudes were demonstrated by some Vilnius psychiatrists, who increasingly focused on the psychological and social factors of mental disability defined by linguistic means. The analysis of these factors was of particular interest to the state, which considered mental abnormalities, unlike other illnesses, to be "social diseases", and began collecting detailed statistical data on these disorders in the final decade of the 19th century. On the basis of this research, it can be argued that in Vilnius, as well as in other cities on the multi-ethnic margins of the Russian Empire, psychiatric treatment facilities served not only as medical institutions but also as statistical centres. It should be noted that the indicators collected annually by clinics and submitted without comment to the Medical Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, especially those relating to the ethnic origin of patients, were ambivalent and in principle could have been useful in attempting to provide a "scientific" justification for the tsarist government's discrimination against non-dominant peoples.

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There is agreement in the historiography that the government policy implemented in the northwestern provinces of the Russian Empire was not successful. Indeed, with the perspective of time, this assessment is quite convincing. The only possible issue open for discussion would the reasons for the failure of the tsarist officials' attempts to make these territories an integral part of the Romanov dominion. The ineffectiveness of imperial strategies is commonly attributed to conservative modes of governance. In asserting such a claim, historians usually rely on an analysis of confessional and linguistic politics. However,

if we were to direct our gaze away from the "classical" areas of research that dominate historiography to less explored topics and related archival sources, a slightly different nuance of the authorities' methods begins to become apparent.

An exploration of the role of visual media in schooling, informal education, official propaganda, legal control, and medical care of the population suggests a conclusion that the state applied an entire range of techniques based on visual perception to influence society. Given the international context of the time, we can assert that these approaches were quite sophisticated. In the 19th century in the Russian Empire, as in other European countries and the United States, the belief became widespread that imagery was a powerful source of knowledge which had a direct and immediate effect on human consciousness. This attitude, which flourished during a positivist period, significantly changed the traditionally language-oriented cultural panorama of the Russian Empire. From the mid-19th century onward, the state resorted to a variety of visual strategies that were directed not at rational human thought but at the associative perception of the individual – the subconscious reactions, emotional responses, and imagination. To an extent, these processes were global. However, while recognizing the international nature of the phenomena under discussion here, the distinct nature of the Russian case cannot be overlooked. In their search for innovative social instruments, the tsarist culture policymakers tried to draw on the latest achievements of national and international science. Visual means for influencing the masses belonged precisely to these types of methods. These modern methods developed in the West in the context of the formation of liberal civil societies. Many of the new approaches were both a consequence of democratization processes, as well as their condition and tool. This unfolded differently in the Russian Empire, where the relationship between government and society remained extremely conflictual until the fall of the Romanov dynasty. Thus, efforts undertaken in the Tsarist Empire to employ modern means of social construction faced obstacles rooted in the very makeup of the state. In short, the tsarist government's problem was not that it relied on outdated or primitive strategies (although there were certainly some of those), but that it tried to introduce modern and essentially democratic cultural tools in a non-modern political and legal environment. In the late imperial period, these tasks, which the state was unable to fulfil, were undertaken by the Polish and Lithuanian communities. Using modern image production technologies, the local communities began to actively compile their own pictorial catalogues of the national landscape, to disseminate their own religious images, and to create their pantheons of national heroes.