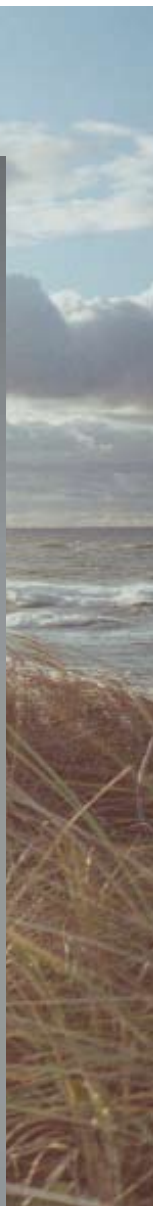


LITERARY LITHUANIA

TOUCHING STORIES ABOUT UNKNOWN EUROPE

Writers
Books
Book Fairs
Literature Festivals
Translations
Illustrations



LITERARY LITHUANIA

TOUCHING STORIES ABOUT UNKNOWN EUROPE

Renata Šerelytė

Stasys Eidrigėvičius

Jonas Mekas

Czesław Miłosz

Sigitas Parulskis

Marius Ivaškevičius

Tomas Venclova

Rūta Šepetys

Jurga Ivanauskaitė

Kęstutis Kasparavičius

Antanas Šileika

Ričardas Gavelis

Laura Sintija Černiauskaitė

Lina Dūdaitė

Vytautas V. Landsbergis

Marius Jonutis

Marcelijus Martinaitis

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TOUCHING STORIES ABOUT UNKNOWN EUROPE

There is much that is unusual and fascinating about Lithuanians and their literature. The very fact of the existence of a small nation of less than four millions cherishing memories of more than a thousand years of life in arguably one of the most politically dynamic parts of Europe is intriguing. It is, indeed, amazing that in spite of ever changing cultural, religious, and ethnical influences, wars and occupations, the vitality of Lithuanian and Lithuanian literature today are attested not only by constantly increasing number of writers and poets, but also by the richness of the language itself. It is much telling fact that the 20 volumes of the Dictionary of the Lithuanian Language contain more than half a million words, expressing the unique character of the Lithuanians' world view, ways of life, their experience, feelings and aspirations. With a ratio of one to eight, one could say that every single Lithuanian family could claim a unique Lithuanian word of its own! Perhaps this would not be so extraordinary after all, if not the fact that Lithuanian is indeed the most ancient living Indo-European language in the world.

The archaic structure of Lithuanian is exceptionally fit for literature, especially poetry. Its highly inflecting character allows for a completely free word order, a range of open vowels and diphthongs together with a complex system of accentuation that allow for endless variations of singing rhymes and alliterations. Perhaps this was one of the reasons why poetry was always an important part of the cultural identity of Lithuanians. Poets were among the leaders of the National Revival at the beginning of 20th century. It was also poets who inspired what is known as the "Singing Revolution" that led to the restoration of Lithuanian independence in 1990. Just a few decades ago, poetry books were published with print runs in the tens of thousands. Even today in the age of Internet, Lithuanians still feel compelled to gather in crowds and show their respect to deceased poets such as Bernardas Brazdžionis or more recently, Justinas Marcinkevičius, who had earned their title of the "conscience of the nation" with their inspiring writing and their outspoken humanism.

There are other signs of vigor and universality in the book culture of Lithuania. Every year Lithuanians discuss, vote, and select the most popular books of the year in several categories. Book designers, publishers, and printing houses have their own competition, which honors the most beautiful books of the year. Every now and then the Lithuanian parliament proclaims a year honoring a particular distinguished writer or poet. Each February, in spite of the snow and usually freezing weather, people again and again break attendance records for the Vilnius International Book Fair, the biggest book fair in the Baltic countries.

WHAT ARE LITHUANIANS WRITING ABOUT?

The range of Lithuanian literature follows the shape and forming of the country's emotional history. The first poems by Kristijonas Donelaitis were included in the library of European literary masterpieces by UNESCO. They are an epic journey into the lives of Lithuanian peasants of the 18th century. The poems show humor and sympathy for his countrymen living in their most intimate, rural world. Lithuanian nature, its magic serenity, its pictorial, almost mythical landscape, were the sources of inspiration for such internationally acclaimed poets as Adam Mickiewicz and Nobel Prize Winner Czesław Miłosz. An echo of this primordial affinity to one's native land and nostalgia after its loss are pertinent in multiple works of Lithuanian

4 writers and poets of the 20th century. Some of them, like Jonas Mekas and Tomas Venclova, were expelled from Lithuania to the West or the East by World War II or the Soviet occupation that followed, while others remained in Lithuania and personally experienced the cynical dehumanizing surrealism of the totalitarian Soviet regime.

A feeling of loss, anger, protest, melancholy, and desperation are the dominant emotions of the works by Lithuanian writers whose lives were dragged into the historical turmoil of war, occupation, loss and the restoration of independence. One can also find a longing for love and intimacy, subtle irony and allegory, sarcasm, black humor, and the grotesque. Such authors as Jurgis Kunčinas, Ričardas Gavelis, Jurga Ivanauskaitė, Gintaras Beresnevičius, Sigitas Parulskis, Herkus Kunčius, Juozas Erlickas, Marcelijus Martinaitis, and Sigitas Geda are just a few writers and poets of those that give us touching personal but also bitter insights into the world of persons and society crushed and tormented by the ideology of homo sovieticus and its legacy. Lithuanian Jewish authors such as Grigorijus Kanovičius, Icchokas Meras and Markas Zingeris add a specific Jewish perspective to this array of subtle and sometimes harsh reflections on the historical development and destiny of Lithuanian society.

It is interesting that the authors of new generation of writers living abroad, for example, Antanas Šileika and Rūta Šepetytė, who both were born in North America and write in English, are presently re-thinking and successfully translating the traumatic experiences of their parents and relatives to a Western audience. They are turning a whole new page of the hitherto unknown and exceptionally dramatic history of 20th century Europe. The story of the more than 20 year long partisan war against Soviet occupation that took place in the forests and countryside of Lithuania after World War II and the massive deportations to Siberia are explored in historical novels by these authors.

The turn of millennia and two decades of independence mark important changes in the perception of literature and reading in Lithuania. Democracy and the freedom of speech opened up a whole new world of possibilities and topics that had been previously censored by Soviet authorities. Social change, mass media and the Internet have drawn attention to this, starting with the poetic expression of the inner experience to the cultural and social awareness and critique expressed in the form of essay and biography. Prose is becoming more prolific than poetry, and the essay even more than prose. Genres merge, causing many authors to experiment and find new forms of expression. Poet and essayist Sigitas Parulskis has been prolific, publishing one novel after another, while novelist Marius Ivaškevičius writes and stages a number of plays and has also directed a short film.

CHILDREN AND THE BOOKS

The rapid development of book design is making the form of books no less important than the literature itself. This is especially true in the case of illustrated books for children. Translations of books by writer and illustrator Kęstutis Kasparavičius made their way to many countries of the world long before he could personally visit his fans abroad. However, Lithuanian children are not the only the readers of books. Book fairs have shown themselves to be the perfect place for improvised laboratories where children are invited to learn and make books themselves. The process of creating a book, right down to its material elements – paper, ink, colors, illustrations, press and binding - becomes an intriguing adventure for children. Book artist Sigutė Chlebinskaitė created and supervised a game called "You Can Create a Book", which proved to be universally appealing to children in countries around Europe. Its success makes us believe that direct contact with a book, along with the very material stuff it is made of, and participation in the birth of a book as a piece of art, can effectively earn the affection of children and their respect for the traditions of book culture, which today is noticeably suffering from the huge pressure of the Internet and video games.

5 LITHUANIA AS THE GUEST OF HONOR AT INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIRS 2002–2011

FRANKFURT: A CONTINUATION OF THE STORY OF EUROPEAN CULTURE

There is no better place to foster contacts among different cultures and literatures than at international book fairs. When Lithuania was the guest of honor at the biggest book fair in the world in **Frankfurt** in 2002, it was an extremely challenging endeavor to introduce to Germany and the whole of the Western Europe a Lithuanian culture, history and literature that had been covered by the Iron Curtain for more than 50 years. The element of surprise was perhaps one of the factors of success. “To be continued”, which was the motto of participation itself, serves as a reminder of the continued popularity and continuity of Lithuania’s cultural presence in Europe.

GÖTEBORG: FOCUSING ON THE REGION

Frankfurt propelled the Lithuanian book exposition to other pivotal book fairs around Europe. 2005 was the year in which Lithuanians were hosted by the Swedes, their Northern neighbors across the Baltic Sea. **The Göteborg Book Fair** is the most important book fair in the Nordic countries. Being the main country in focus in Göteborg was a great responsibility bearing in mind the traditionally high standards of book culture in Scandinavia. Contemporary Lithuanian authors Eugenijus Ališanka, Laura Sintija Černiauskaitė, Gintaras Grajauskas,



The Göteborg Book Fair. 2005. Photo by the organizers

Jurga Ivanauskaitė, Herkus Kunčius, Vytautas V. Landsbergis, Sigitas Parulskis and other 10 poets and writers were presenting and discussing their works at the book fair. Eight Lithuanian books were translated and published by different Swedish publishing companies for the occasion of the book fair or shortly after it. The most interesting aspect of this visit was the hugely popular program of analytical, historical, and cultural seminars, which showed a need for dialogue and a better understanding of the historical and cultural identity of the Baltic Sea region.

6 TURIN: TRANSCENDING CULTURAL AND POLITICAL BORDERS

In 2007, Lithuania was invited to become the main guest country at the most important book fair in Italy. **The Turin International Book Fair** was an intriguing occasion, not only to search for common cultural roots of Lithuania and Italy, but also to present to an Italian audience a broad range of contemporary Lithuanian culture and art. Thus, besides the main exposition on the premises of the book fair, there were also a contemporary art exposition, modern theater performance, avant-garde film screenings, and jazz concerts that were held in different places all over the city. Lithuanians are proud of Vilnius as an heir of Italian Baroque culture, and proudly bears the title of the most northeastern Baroque city. Participation at the Turin International Book Fair was important for realizing that not only is mutual cultural history an exceptionally efficient channel for intercultural communication between countries from the two extreme borders of the European Union, but also new contemporary culture.



The Turin International Book Fair. 2007.
Photo by the organizers



JERUSALEM: THE MEMORIES AND FEELINGS

The 2009 Jerusalem Book Fair was another challenge for Lithuanian writers, book designers and publishers. The memories and feelings tied to the grievous moments of World War II were the most difficult part of this challenge. The Holocaust was a time of great suffering for Lithuanian Jews, whose community was almost entirely destroyed during World War II. Literature and dedicated seminars again proved to be not only a compelling expression of individual talents, but also an apt medium in which common memories can be awakened, shared, and honored.

BOLOGNA: SALVE, BOLOGNA! THE FAMOUS MECCA OF ILLUSTRATORS

In 2011 Italy once again became a place for major attention on Lithuanian writers, book designers, and publishers. The most important international fair of books for children, **The Bologna Children’s Book Fair**, featured Lithuania as the guest of honor. This participation was a long-held dream of Lithuanian book artists and writers for children. Some of them, like Kęstutis Kasparavičius, Stasys Eidrigevičius or Rimvydas Kepežinskas, were already well known by generations of children and their parents in many countries long before any major public exposition of their works had been held at international book fairs. Bologna was a perfect

7 occasion to present these outstanding artists and many others and to show the links between the richness of Lithuanian folklore and the unique tradition of depicting it visually. The entire universe of Lithuanian illustration was presented under the title “Illustrarium”. Those that visited this stand, which featured spectacular design, were invited to open small doors that were on the Illustrarium. Behind these doors were illustrations, which were a call for everyone to pay a visit to this extraordinary world of imagination.



Lithuanian Illustrarium at the Bologna Children's Book Fair 2011.
Photo by Processoffice

THE VILNIUS BOOK FAIR INVITES YOU IN FEBRUARY EACH YEAR

During the last month of winter, the Lithuanian Exhibition and Congress Centre (LITEXPO) becomes one of Vilnius' most visited places each year, as it is host to the now traditional and hugely popular international Vilnius Book Fair. Every three years it is held simultaneously with the Baltic Book Fair, and is the largest book fair in the Baltic, which is visited by more than 60,000 people every year.

It's more than just a place where books are bought and sold. The Vilnius Book Fair sets itself apart from similar events with its broad culture programme. Over four days, there are over 300 events taking place in the seminar and conference halls and other spots well-known to visitors, such as the Forum, Writers' Corner, Creative Studio, Children's Stage, and Book Cinema Hall. They feature famous Lithuanian and foreign writers, poets, literature experts, philosophers, culturologists, and artists.

The fair includes artists' exhibitions, film and play screenings, and programmes for children. Since 2003 there is a unique event that takes place every year at the fair, which is a creative educational studio “You Can Create a Book”. This event features creative workshops, readings, meetings, contests, and creativity hours. It's not just a place where not only children get to know paper art, book binding and illustration.

The fair's cultural programme is financed by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania.

8 **Time**
In February every year

Place
Lithuanian Exhibition and Congress Centre LITEXPO, Laisvės Ave. 5, Vilnius

Vilnius Book Fair's website
www.vilniausknygumuge.lt

Organizers
Lithuanian Exhibition and Congress Centre LITEXPO
www.litexpo.lt

International Cultural Programme Centre
www.koperator.lt
www.booksfromlithuania.lt

Lithuanian Publishers Association (LPA)
www.lla.lt



The Vilnius Book Fair 2012.
Creative educational studio
“You Can Create a Book”.
Photo by ICPC



The Vilnius Book Fair 2012.
Photo by Irmantas Gelūnas

9 LITERATURE FESTIVALS IN LITHUANIA

INTERNATIONAL

Poetry Spring is an international festival that has been taking place each year in spring since 1965. The Poetry Spring Almanac, of which there are already 47, comes out during the festival. Festival events are held not only in Lithuania, but abroad as well where there are Lithuanian communities (such as Ireland, the U.K., Poland, and Russia). The Poetry Spring laureate is announced during the festival, along with prizes for poetry translated into Lithuanian and for poetry translated from Lithuanian into other languages, as well as for the best debut in the almanac. In addition, the best reader/actor of poetry during the year is recognised.

The festival is organised by the Lithuania Writers Union and the Writers' Club: rasytojuklubas@aiva.lt



Poetry Spring readings in Veisiejai County under the Šilainės oak. 2009.
Photo by Vladas Braziūnas

The Druskininkai Poetic Fall is an annual international poetry festival. Since 1990 it has taken place in mid-October in the southern Lithuanian resort town of Druskininkai and also Vilnius. The founder of the festival and one of the main organizers is poet Kornelijus Platelis. The festival features discussions between poets and critics, various poetry contests, creative workshops, and poetry readings. The Jotvingiai Prize is awarded to the best book of poetry, while the Young Jotvingis Prize is awarded to the best debut by a young poet. Since 1999 a multilingual Druskininkai Poetic Fall almanac has been published, which features poems by foreign guests published in the original with a Lithuanian translation, and the poems of Lithuanian poems translated into English.

Festival board chairman Kornelijus Platelis: platelis@takas.lt.
Festival board vice-chairman Antanas A. Jonynas: antajony@yahoo.com.

Magnus Ducatus Poesis (The Grand Duchy of Poetry) is a gathering of poets, musicians and translators from Central Europe nations (including Lithuanians, Latvians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Poles, and Russians) that are joined by a shared heritage of a country that once spanned the region. The first event took place in Minsk in 2006, and subsequent events have

been organized in Vilnius, Kiev, Krakow, Minsk and Kaunas. A multilingual Magnus Ducatus Poesis almanac is published every two years (three have already been published), which includes poets' works in the original and translated into Lithuanian, with Lithuanian authors' texts translated into the languages of other participants contained in the almanac.

The inspiration behind the idea was poet and translator Vladas Braziūnas: vladas@braziunas.net, www.culture.lt/pen.

The contemporary literary forum **Nordic Summer**, which takes place in Jurbarkas and Vilnius, took place for the ninth time in 2011. Along with Lithuanian authors, there are also authors from Nordic countries. There are literary readings and discussions by intellectuals based on a theme decided upon in advance.

Project organiser Giedra Radvilavičiūtė: giedrara@yahoo.com.

European Literary Days in Šiauliai is an annual festival dedicated to prose that is held in the fall. It has been organised since 2004. The festival publishes an almanac called Under the Northern Sky, of which there are already 7 volumes: in Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian (2006), Dutch (2007), English (2008), Catalan (2009), Italian (2010) and French (2011).

Festival organizer Markus Roduner: markus.roduner@gmail.com.

The **Panevėžys Literary Winter** is a literary festival devoted to poetry and short prose and essay that has taken place annually since 1998. The laureate of the Julijonas Lindė-Dobilas Prize is announced during the festival, along with the Elena Mezginaitė Prize for best debut by an author from the Panevėžys region. The festival has been international since 2007.

The organizer is the Panevėžys County Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė Public Library: info@pavb.lt, www.pavb.lt.

NATIONAL

Ginger Nights is a festival of short prose readings that has taken place in Alytus since 2004. It is in commemoration to Jurgis Kunčinas (1947-2002). The laureate of the Ginger Nights is awarded the Jurgis Kunčinas Prize. A total of two Ginger Nights almanacs have been published (2007, 2011).

Festival organiser Giedrė Bulgakovienė: giedre.bulgakoviene@alytus.mvb.lt, www.baltavarna.lt.

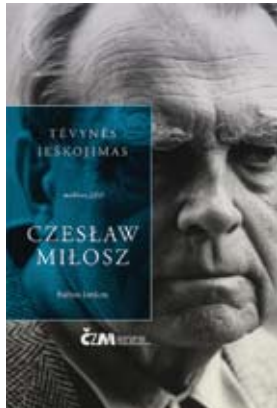
11 LITHUANIAN LITERATURE: NAMES AND WRITINGS

IMPORTANT PERSONALITIES

Czesław Miłosz

Czesław Miłosz (1911 – 2004) was a Polish poet, prose writer and translator. Despite the fact that Miłosz did not write in Lithuanian, his never failing affinity to his native land left a clear mark on his literary work, philosophy, and his awareness of his multicultural Eastern European roots. His ideas and attitude towards the historical and cultural heritage of Great Duchy of Lithuania makes Miłosz a crucial figure in the landscape of Lithuanian literature and culture.

Czesław Miłosz was born on June 30, 1911 in the village of Šeteniai (now in the Kėdainiai District, Kaunas County, Lithuania, which was at that time a part of Russia). Memories of his Lithuanian childhood became the background of his 1955 novel, “The Issa Valley”, and his 1959 memoir “Native Realm”.



Miłosz debuted as a poet in 1933 with a collection of poems called *Poemat o czasie zastygłym* [Poem of the Frozen Time]. During the Second World War Miłosz was involved in the underground resistance movement in Warsaw, and wrote and edited several books, which were published secretly. After the war, Miłosz became a member of the People's Republic of Poland's diplomatic service and took a position as cultural attache in Paris, France. In 1951, he abandoned this post and received political asylum in France. Soon after that, in 1953, his nonfiction book *Zniewolony umysł* [The Captive Mind] earned him a name as a subtle and profound critic of Stalinism. It was also the same year, in which Miłosz received the *Prix Littéraire Européen* [European Literary Prize].

12 From 1961 to 1998 Czesław Miłosz was a professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of California, Berkeley. In 1980 Miłosz was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. He was noted as the one “who with uncompromising clear-sightedness voices man's exposed condition in a world of severe conflicts”. In his speech delivered during the award ceremony, Miłosz again made a significant reference to Lithuania as his native country: “It is good to be born in a small country where Nature was on a human scale, where various languages and religions cohabited for centuries. I have in mind Lithuania, a country of myths and of poetry. My family already in the Sixteenth Century spoke Polish, just as many families in Finland spoke Swedish and in Ireland – English; so I am a Polish, not a Lithuanian, poet. But the landscapes and perhaps the spirits of Lithuania have never abandoned me.”

Tomas Venclova

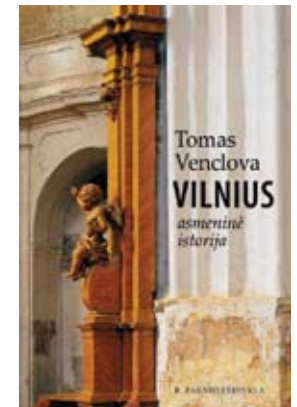
Tomas Venclova (1937) is a scholar, poet, essayist, and translator. He is a Lithuanian poet whose works have received the widest international recognition. In 2000, Venclova was awarded the National Prize of Culture and Art, which was established by the Government of Lithuania.

Tomas Venclova graduated from Vilnius University in 1960 and remained there to teach. In 1972 he published his first collection of poems *Kalbos ženklas* [A Language Sign]. The Soviet regime severely limited the freedom of expression, therefore Venclova devoted a lot of his time translating works by Thomas Stearns Eliot, Ezra Pound, Dylan Thomas, and other famous authors into Lithuanian.

In 1975 Venclova wrote an open letter to the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party in which he declared that he could no longer engage in public cultural activities in Lithuania and therefore asked for a permission to emigrate to the West. On 15 January 1991 together with his friends Nobel Prize winners Czesław Miłosz and Josif Brodsky, also émigrés from Eastern Europe, he declared a statement in protest at “the inhuman attack of the Soviets against Lithuanian people”.



Photo by Algimantas Žižiūnas



Tomas Venclova studied at Tartu University and was influenced by ideas of Juri Lotman and the structuralism prevalent there in the 1970s and 1980s. In his poetry, Venclova is

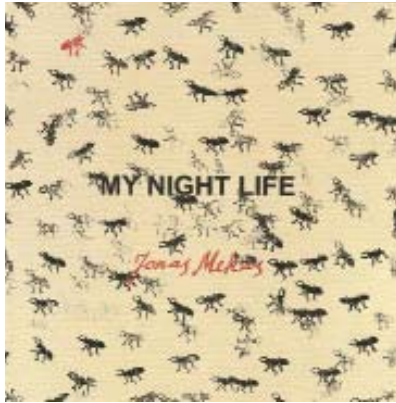
13 concerned with the topics of passing time, history and its impact on people. Venclova was also one of the first Lithuanian poets of urban culture. In his essays and publications the principles of the openness to the world and ethic responsibility are important. The writer remains open both to Lithuanian and global culture: he does not drift either towards inhibited provincialism or towards superficial snobbery. He also does not avoid criticizing cultural stereotypes and

Jonas Mekas

Jonas Mekas is first of all famous for being “the godfather of American avant-garde cinema”, although he is also a Lithuanian exile poet and prose writer. Mekas has been awarded the prizes of the New York Association of Cinema Critics (in 1997), the Pier Paolo Pasolini Award (in 1997), etc. and has received a number of awards at international film festivals. Currently he lives and works in New York.



Photo by Arūnas Baltėnas



Jonas Mekas was born in 1922 in the village of Semeniškiai, Lithuania. In 1944, he and his brother Adolfas were taken by the Nazis to a forced labor camp in Elmshorn, Germany, where they remained for 8 months. The brothers escaped from the camp and spend the last days of the war hiding on a Danish farm. Mekas made his debut as a writer in 1946 when he together with his brother Adolfas published a books of fairy-tales entitled “Three Brothers and Other Stories” [Trys broliai ir kitos pasakos]. Mekas studied philosophy at the University of Mainz from 1946 till 1948. At the end of 1949 both brothers settled down in New York City.

Two weeks after his arrival in New York, Mekas borrowed some money and bought his first Bolex 16-mm camera. Soon he became one of the most influential figures in American avant-garde cinema. He took part in the experimental artistic movement Fluxus, worked as the editor-in-chief of Film Culture magazine, contributed to the Journal of Cinema and in 1962 together with others filmmakers established the Film-Makers’ Cooperative, FMC, and in 1964 founded the Filmmakers’ Cinematheque which later on developed into the Anthology Film Archives. He has established creative and friendly relationships with world-famous artists such as Andy Warhol, Bruce Nauman, Yoko Ono, John Lennon, Nico, Allen Ginsberg, Salvador Dalí, and fellow Lithuanian and the leader of the Fluxus movement Jurgis (George) Mačiūnas.

14 In 1962 Mekas founded the Film-Makers’ Cooperative, and in 1964 the Film-Makers’ Cinematheque, which eventually grew into Anthology Film Archives, one of the world’s largest and most important repositories of avante-garde cinema, and a screening venue.

In spite of his abundant activities, Mekas never ceased making films and writing poetry. In all he has published more than 20 books of prose and poetry, which have been translated into over 12 languages. Mekas was one of the main developers of diary-type forms of cinema. Mekas has also taught at the New School for Social Research, the International Center for Photography, Cooper Union, New York University, and MIT.

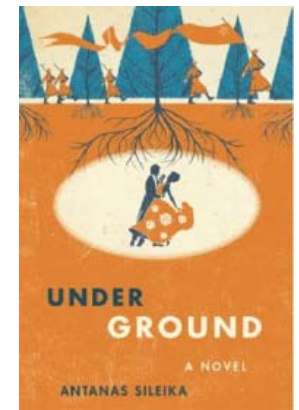
Mekas’ film “The Brig” received the Grand Prize at the Venice Film Festival in 1963.

Mekas has published many of his journals and diaries including “I Had Nowhere to Go: Diaries, 1944-1954”, “Letters from Nowhere”, and “Just like a Shadow”, as well as his articles on film criticism, theory, and technique.

Antanas Šileika

Antanas Šileika is a Canadian novelist and critic, and artistic director for the Humber School for Writers in Toronto, Canada. Šileika was born in Weston, Ontario, in a family of Lithuanian-born parents. After completing his studies at the University of Toronto, Antanas spend two years in Paris where he married Snaigė Valiūnas, an art student at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.

Antanas returned to Canada in 1979 and began teaching at Humber College. He was also working as a co-editor of the Canadian literary journal, Descant, where he remained until 1988. Antans Šileika was involved in the cultural movement of Lithuanians émigrés called “Santara- Šviesa” and spend several years trying to assure support of Canadian authorities for



the restoration of independence of Lithuania. In 1994, four years after the independence was proclaimed, Antanas Šileika published his first novel “Dinner at the End of the World”. The novel was a speculative story set in the aftermath of global warming.

Two other books followed shortly afterwards: a collection of linked short stories, “Buying On Time” (1997) and the novel “Woman in Bronze” (2004). In these works Šileika started to develop the themes of emigration, the deprivation of cultural roots, memory, and the destiny of people drawn turmoil of history of 20th century. According to Šileika, he was able to open

15 a window to the lost world of mythical Lithuania, the same Lithuania which Miłosz wrote about in his book “The Issa Valley”. At the same time, Antanas Šileika is aware of the fact that his own loss is much less direct and personal than that of his parents and other members of the older generation of Lithuanian emigrants. Šileika is already capable of maintaining a certain distance from Lithuania, which becomes an important condition for using historical material in creative and artistic ways.

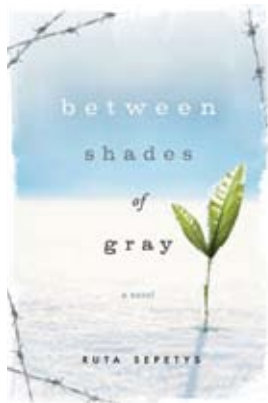
The most recent novel by Antanas Šileika, “Underground” (2011) is based on the history of the more than 20 year-long Lithuanian partisan movement that fought against the Soviet occupation after World War II. Šileika is interested in the personal destiny and love story of Juozas Lukša-Daumantas (Luke Zolynas in the novel), who is one of the leaders of the movement. Šileika shows the complexity of relationships and the situation of post war Lithuania. It all appears to be much more complicated than it is widely accepted in the West. As Šileika comments himself “In America in particular, people are encouraged to think of their destinies as if they were masters of them, but Europe, and Eastern Europe in particular, teaches that your personal destiny exists at the whim of history, which might just as easily crush you as elevate you”.

Rūta Šepetys

The remarkable story of success of the best selling debut novel “Between Shades of Gray” by American writer Rūta Šepetys has been drawing attention of readers already in 29 countries. Born in 1967 in Detroit, a descendent of a Lithuanian refugee, Rūta Šepetys received her B.S. in International Finance from Hillsdale College, Michigan. After graduation Šepetys moved to Los Angeles and established “Sepetys Entertainment Group”. Her entertainment company represented such known musicians as Grammy-award winning guitarist Steve Vai, the Orange County modern rock band Lit, and Emmy nominated film composer



Photo by J. Michael Smith



Niels Bye Nielsen. While being occupied by her managerial duties, Rūta Šepetys was using voice recording to dictate her first novel while driving.

Rūta Šepetys' novel is rather unusual story for young adults. It is very much different from the currently popular dystopian phantasies and romantic stories about vampires. Rūta's novel tells the story of Lina, a 15 years old Lithuanian girl, as she along with her mother and

16 younger brother is separated from her father and deported to a forced labor camp in Siberia in 1941. The novel depicts Lina's attempts to survive extremely difficult conditions in a labor camp beyond the Arctic Circle. Lina tries to meticulously document her everyday life by making drawings that she hopes could somehow give a clue to her father that they are still alive. Rūta Šepetys, just like Antanas Šileika, is capable of translating the historical experiences of people living in Eastern Europe into a literary language, which is accessible and interesting to the Western readers. Even though these two authors write in English, their growing popularity makes a direct impact on Lithuanian literature too, because it encourages Lithuanian writers to draw on their own culture and experiences while trying to tell their stories not only to a Lithuanian audience, but also to a much wider one.

Rūta Šepetys was a guest of the thirteenth Vilnius Book Fair in February, 2012. Lithuanian is one of 26 languages which her novel has been translated into up till the present.

Laura Sintija Černiauskaitė

Laura Sintija Černiauskaitė (1976) is a prose writer and a playwright. She has published four collections of short stories, novellas and plays (*Trys paras prie mylimosios slenkščio* [Three Days Before My Beloved's Threshold], 1994; *Liučė čiuožia* [Liučė Skates], 2003;



Vladas Braziūnas

Artumo jausmas [The Feeling of Closeness], 2005; *Kambarys jazmino krūme* [A Room in the Jasmine Bush], 2009), three novels: *Kvėpavimas į marmurą* [Breathing Into Marble], 2006; *Benedikto slenkščiai* (Benedict's Milestones), 2008 and *Medaus mėnuo* [Honeymoon], 2011. Her prose is marked by a language of metaphor which creates a compelling world of the characters' states of mind, dreams and visions. It is a prose of great subtlety, a nuanced psychological prose, which focuses primarily on the contemporary young woman's world, cares, and daily life. The writer seeks to reveal the deeper, subconscious drives operating behind her characters' actions.

Interesting facts

In 2004 the play *Liučė čiuožia* [Liučė Skates] won First Prize at the Theaterntreffen Theatre Festival in Berlin.

The novel *Benedikto slenkščiai* [Benedict's Milestones] was awarded the literary prize of Kazimieras Barėnas (2008).

The novel *Kvėpavimas į marmurą* [Breathing Into Marble] was awarded the European Union Prize for Literature (2009).

18 The novel *Medaus mėnuo* [Honeymoon] was awarded the literature prize of Jurga Ivanauskaitė (2012).

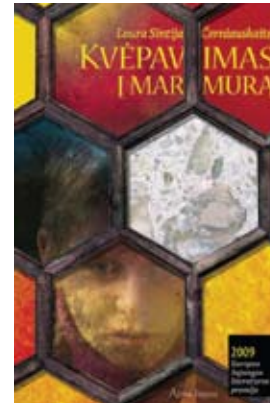
The novel *Kvėpavimas į marmurą* [Breathing Into Marble] was translated into Bulgarian (2008) and Italian (2011).

Excerpts of her novels, plays and several short stories have been translated into English, German, Italian, Croatian, French, Russian, Slovenian and Swedish.

The plays *Liučė čiuožia* [Liučė Skates], *Artumo jausmas* [The Feeling of Closeness], *Blyksnis po vasaros vandeniui* [Flash of Light Under Summer Water] have been produced in Lithuania and abroad.

Novel. Kvėpavimas į marmurą [Breathing into Marble]

The main protagonist of the novel both typifies the contemporary woman and appears as a picture of a rather enigmatic persona driven by irrational forces. Izabelė and her husband,



Author: Laura Sintija Černiauskaitė
Year of publication: 2006
Publisher: Alma littera, Vilnius,
www.almalittera.lt
Number of pages: 208
ISBN 9955-08-996-2

a young family with artistic aspirations, live in a country house close to large city. They work and take care of their ailing son. One day the family's harmony begins to break down due to the protagonist's decision to adopt a boy from an orphanage. Acting on the spur of the moment, she chooses a strange boy whose behaviour is unpredictable, disregarding the advice of specialists. The family is determined to have the boy "warm" to them through love and attention and puts up with his different forms of aggression until he seriously hurts their biological son. The woman then sends the adopted boy back to the orphanage. At the same time, the protagonist and her spouse begin losing interest in each other, which results in her spouse leaving. One night the child they had adopted escapes from the children's home and with a small knife murders Izabelė's son. Psychiatrists would in their own words explain that the tragedy occurred due to a "serious reactive attachment disorder" developed in the boy's early childhood as the result of the lack of parental care and tenderness. Yet in the book the author is not so much interested in the behaviour of the adopted child, as in the woman's response, which appears irrational and inexplicable. Upon discovering her adopted son with a bloody

19 knife in his hand next to the body of her son she lets him escape and later pretends not to know who the perpetrator is. Her weird behaviour is prompted by her strange and inexplicable kinship she develops with the child from the very start. Yet her son's loss leaves her grief-stricken, the woman falls ill with depression and finds herself on the brink of suicide. It is only her awakening artistic talent and painter's instinct that help her to come to terms with herself after the tragedy.

Jurga Ivanauskaitė

Jurga Ivanauskaitė (1961 - 2007) is one of the most popular and prominent writers of independent Lithuania. Her work includes prose, poetry, essays and plays. She graduated from the Vilnius Academy of Arts in 1985, majoring in graphic art. She organised painting and



photography exhibitions and illustrated books. During the Soviet period, she embodied the most provocative and rebellious literary voice of the young generation: her collections of short stories (*Pakalnučių metai* [The Year of the Lilies-of-the-Valley], 1985; *Kaip užsiauginti baimę* [How to Grow One's Fear], 1989) depicted her contemporaries who wanted to be hippies, were crazy about Western culture and felt caged in Soviet daily life. Her later work (novels: *Pragaro sodai* [The Gardens of Hell], 1992; *Ragana ir lietus* [The Witch and the Rain], 1993; *Agnijos magija* [The Magic of Agnija], 1995) are dominated by the theme of unfulfilled love which also embraces the female protagonist's spiritual and religious quest. Her writing is characterized by a merger of realism and mysticism, of horror and fantastic elements. Her interest in the East prompted her travels and her self-guided studies of Eastern art, philosophy and religion. She put her experience of the East into three books of non-fiction: *Ištremtas Tibetas* [Tibet in Exile], 1996; *Kelionė į Šambalą* [A Journey to Shambhala], 1997; *Prarasta pažadėtoji žemė* [The Lost Promised Land], 1999; in 2004 she published *Tibeto Mandala* [A Mandala of Tibet]. Gradually irony and intellectual wit emerged into stronger prominence in her books, together with the criticism of consumer society and the situation of women in the modern world (*Sapnų nublokšti* [Gone with the Dreams], 2000; *Placebas* [Placebo], 2003; *Miegančių drugelių tvirtovė* [The Fortress of Sleeping Butterflies], 2005). Her last books *Viršvalandžiai* [Overtime], 2007, and *Odė džiaugsmui* [Ode to Joy], 2007, record her experience and insights from her struggle with cancer).

20 Interesting facts

Ivanauskaitė was an active Tibet freedom fighter. She created a Tibet support group in Lithuania and knew the Dalai Lama personally.

There is a biographic documentary *Šokis dykumoje* [A Dance in the Desert] created about the writer and a book of memoirs, *Jurga* (2008).

Two film scripts were created based on the novels *Ragana ir lietus* [The Witch and the Rain], *Placebas* [Placebo] and *Miegančių drugelių tvirtovė* [The Fortress of Sleeping Butterflies]. Both feature films, *Nuodėmės užkalbėjimas* [Whisper of Sin], 2007, and *Miegančių drugelių tvirtovė* [The Fortress of Sleeping Butterflies], 2011, were directed by Algimantas Puipa.

The writer was awarded the Lithuanian National Prize for Culture and Art (2005).

In 2007 the public agency Cultural Legacy of Jurga Ivanauskaitė was founded.

There is a square of Jurga Ivanauskaitė in Vilnius Old Town featuring a sculpture of a cat (created by the artist Ksenija Jaroševaitė), the writer's most fancied character.

In 2008 the literary prize of Jurga Ivanauskaitė was founded.

The novel *Ragana ir lietus* [The Witch and the Rain] (1993, 4th edition 2007) was banned for a while on grounds of alleged pornography, subsequently only adding to the popularity of the book and the author.

Ragana ir lietus is the most frequently translated novel of the writer, it has been translated into Czech (2006), Croatian (2003), Estonian (1997), Latvian (1994), Swedish (2005), and German (2002, 2nd edition, 2004).

Five books by the writer have been translated into Latvian (*Kelionė į Šambalą* [A Journey to Shambhala], 1998; *Agnijos magija* [The Magic of Agnija], 1999; *Prarasta pažadėtoji žemė* [The Lost Promised Land], 2000; *Ištremtas Tibetas* [Tibet in Exile], 2001; and *Sapnų nublokšti* [Gone With the Dreams], 2006).

The novel *Placebas* [Placebo] was translated into German (2005).

A collection of poetry entitled "108 Moons" was published in English (2010).

There are also translations of Jurga Ivanauskaitė's prose into English, Georgian, Polish, French, Russian, Slovak and Slovenian.

Novel. *Ragana ir lietus* [The Witch and the Rain]

Three women from different epochs tell their identical stories of how they fell for the "forbidden" men: Vika, who is a modern woman, falls in love with Paulius, a Roman Catholic priest, but is rejected by him; a pilgrim named M.V. is consumed by the passion to a recluse monk, and is sentenced as a witch by the Inquisition; and Mary Magdalene confesses her love to her Saviour who absolves her sins, Jesus Christ. Their love breaks a set order, is sinful and fatal, and totally transforms the life of the protagonists. A psychoanalyst's attempts to help Vika to let go of his unrequited love is for naught – the young woman chooses death for herself and her love by causing a car accident.

The three women perceive love as existence itself, and it is through this feeling that they try to establish their relationship with their self and God. The sinful men in the novel, except

21 for Jesus Christ, whose love is universal and spiritual, strike one as careless seducers, who reconsider coming back, thus becoming more passive objects than subjects of the action.



Author: Jurga Ivanauskaitė
Year of publication: 2002
Publisher: Tyto alba, Vilnius,
www.tytoalba.lt
Number of pages: 352
ISBN: 9986-16-273-4

Marius Ivaškevičius

Marius Ivaškevičius (b.1973), a prose writer and playwright, made his literary debut with a collection of novellas *Kam vaiku* [Who Needs Children] (1996), published two novels (*Istorija nuo debesies* [A Story From the Cloud], 1998; *Žali* [The Green], 2002), and a historical novella for children *Vikingų žygis į Apuolę* [The Vikings March to Apuolė], 1998. His plays have won international acclaim (including *Artimas* [A Neighbour], 2002; *Madagaskaras* [Madagascar], 2004; *Artimas miestas* [A Close City], 2005). He writes essays and film scripts (*Purpuriniai dūmai* [Purple Smoke], 2003), makes documentaries, directs his own plays and takes part in international theatre festivals. His prose revises the concept of the history of the nation by stripping off its rhetoric, romanticism, heroism and giving up the exaltation of suffering. Language is given an exceptional role in the poetics of both his prose and drama.



Photo by BFL

22 Interesting facts

The treatment of the Lithuanian partisan war during the post-war period in the novel *Žali* [The Green] stirred a heated discussion in Lithuania.

The novel *Žali* [The Green] was dubbed by the critics the first “Euronovel” in Lithuania.

The novel *Istorija nuo debesies* [A Story from the Cloud] has been translated into Polish (2001).

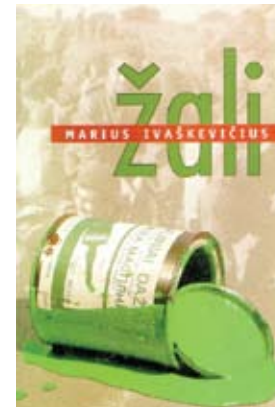
The novel *Žali* [The Green] was translated into German (2012).

The plays *Kaimynas* [A Neighbour], *8-230, tai aš* [8-230, it is Me] and *Malyš* [Malysh] have been translated into English, Polish, French, Russian, Finnish and German.

His writing has been translated into English, Belarus, Czech, Italian, Croatian, Polish, French, Russian, Slovenian, Finnish, Swedish, Hungarian and German.

Novel. *Žali* [The Green]

The literary critics find this novel not only as shattering all historical stereotypes, but also a fine piece of prose, perfectly meeting the canon of the genre. The novel is about the Lithuanian partisan war against the Russian occupational army, which lasted for an entire decade after World War II (1944-1954). But it is far from being a historical work based on documentary



Author: Marius Ivaškevičius
Year of publication: 2002
Publisher: Tyto alba, Vilnius,
www.tytoalba.lt
Number of pages: 327
ISBN 9986-16-259-9

facts, despite the fact that the protagonist is given the name of Jonas Žemaitis, who was a real leader of the Lithuanian partisans. The author is not interested in the heroic, patriotic or ideological character of this battle and its meaning. He doesn't provide a rhetorical assessment of the unfolding military action, instead, as a young and free individual, he offers his literary vision: both of the warring sides appear simply as victims to Bolshevism or to the absurdity of history. The actions of both parties strike one as taking an unwilling part in a play of the absurd staged by some unknown director. These two antagonistic and already exhausted forces seem to passively enact a scenario given from above and appear in the novel as a mirror

23 image of each other. The action of the novel takes place on Sunday, August 21, 1950. The partisans (three men and two women) travel by a horse drawn cart to bathe in the river. On the way they are supposed to execute the death penalty of the traitor. A truck with a group of troops from the occupying side is roaming the same area looking for the house of the same partisan traitor. It was a day when nobody died. But the novel is dominated not by fighting, but by simple mundane actions; the now-surreal-looking details of the life underground in a bunker, and the memories of their simple civilian days with love stories. The author stated the following on the book's cover: "Love to one's Motherland did not kill the love to the woman. Maybe, only at the time, death outweighed life. I found a frightened soldier more live than a fearless one, and an unsettled fighter – more real than one "always ready"".

Ričardas Gavelis

Ričardas Gavelis (1950 - 2002) is a prose writer, playwright and publicist. He has published four collections of short stories (*Neprasidėjusi šventė* [The Celebration That Never Started], 1976; *Įsibrovėliai* [The Intruders], 1982; *Nubaustieji* [The Punished], 1987; *Taikos balandis* [The Dove of Peace], 1995), seven novels (*Vilniaus Pokeris* [Vilnius Poker], 1989; *Jauno žmogaus memuarai* [Memoirs of a Young Man], 1991; *Vilniaus džiazas* [Vilnius Jazz], 1993; *Paskutiniai žemės žmonių karta* [The Last Human Generation on Earth], 1995; *Prarastų metų kvartetas* [The Quartet of Lost Hopes], 1997; *Septyni savižudybės būdai* [Seven Ways to Commit a Suicide], 1999; *Sun – Tzu gyvenimas šventame Vilniaus mieste* [The Life of Sun – Tzu in the Holy City of Vilnius], 2002), and a book about the journalist Vitas Lingys who was assassinated by the mafia (*Nemirtingumas* [Immortality], 1994).

By the end of the Soviet era, Gavelis was one of the pioneers who discarded "censored Realism" and relied on shocking poetics to deconstruct the mechanisms of the totalitarian system of violence and revealed naked the essence of homo sovieticus. His work is characterized by constructivism, rationality and an analytical approach.

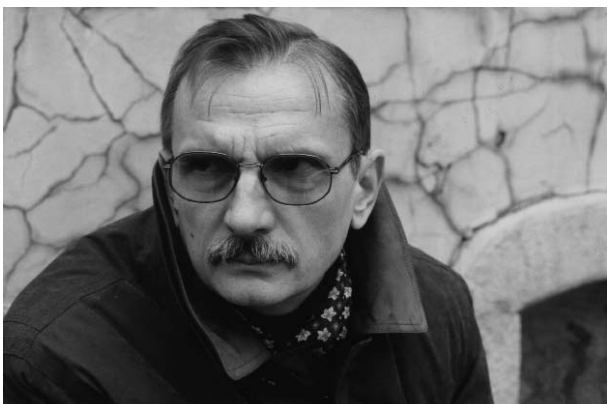


Photo by Algimantas Žiziūnas

Interesting facts

The novel *Vilniaus Pokeris* [Vilnius Poker] (1989) came as a challenge to the reader because of its violent and explicit sex scenes and the demythologized image of Vilnius and its inhabitants. Lithuania has already seen four reprints of *Vilniaus Pokeris* (1989, 1990, 2000, and 2011).

24 The novel *Vilniaus Pokeris* [Vilnius Poker] (1989) came as a challenge to the reader because of its violent and explicit sex scenes and the demythologized image of Vilnius and its inhabitants. Lithuania has already seen four reprints of *Vilniaus Pokeris* (1989, 1990, 2000, and 2011). The novel *Vilniaus Pokeris* has been translated into Latvian (1995), English (2009) and French (2013).

The novel *Jauno žmogaus memuarai* [Memoirs of A Young Man] has been translated into Finnish (1995) and Polish (2002).

The collection of short stories *Taikos balandis: septyni Vilniaus apsakymai* [A Dove of Peace: Seven Short Stories of Vilnius] has been translated into German (2001).

His prose has been translated into the Croatian, Russian and Slovak, Slovenian, French, Portuguese, Swedish, Ukrainian and Hungarian languages.

Novel. *Vilniaus pokeris* [Vilnius Poker]

The author presents a grotesque picture of a nation demoralized by totalitarian rule, leaving no illusions for the future as the universe is engulfed by the totality of the absurd. In the novel four protagonists present differing narratives of their shared life story, the essence of which is the conflict with Them – abstract powers of evil, which embody both Soviet totalitarianism and metaphysical evil. In the novel, Vilnius emerges as an unreal space of phantasmagorical events, a city-dream, an empty and senseless labyrinth or a whale digesting the human mob, overpowered by the system. The graphic and brutal sex scenes abounding the book are interpreted by the critics as a political allegory.

Gediminas Castle, a traditional landmark of Vilnius, is transformed in the novel into a symbolical phallus, a sign for "the castrated city, a grand sign for castrated Lithuania". The main narrator Vytautas Vargalys finds himself under surveillance and persecution by Them. He is not even sure of his thoughts, yet he is one of those few who try to penetrate into the system. Yet he and his companions, the narrators of other chapters in the novel (Martynas Poška, Gediminas Riauba, Stefa), emerge rather as anti-heroes than heroes. They are merely wanderers of the empty, senseless, absolute maze, the miserable poker players. All of them, except Stefa, who leaves Vilnius after being raped and goes back to her village, end their wanderings in the maze in a violent death set up by the system.



Author: Ričardas Gavelis
 Year of publication: 2011 (4th ed.)
 Publisher: Tyto alba, Vilnius,
www.tytoalba.lt
 Number of pages: 523
 ISBN 978-9986-16-177-6

25 Marcelijus Teodoras Martinaitis

Marcelijus Teodoras Martinaitis (1936) is a poet, essayist and translator. He has published 13 books of poetry, several collections of selected poetry and seven books of essays. He is a poet with an agrarian world outlook who writes poetry anchored in an epic and narrative base, and which is often centred around mythical, folklore characters. The Samogitian Kukutis from the book *Kukučio baladės* [The Ballads of Kukutis] (1977; 2nd supplemented edition 1986) is the most prominent example of this kind of folklore-like character. In his later work the author also avoids straightforward sentimentality and writes in a deceptively simple poetic language as in *Atrakinta* [Unlocked] (1996), even the “intimate” motif of love is presented as a stylized version of the poetry album genre (*Atmintys* [Memories], 1986, 1995, 2008). His most recent poems feature a new character called K. B. who becomes a metaphor for a man facing the challenges of the contemporary world (*K.B. įtariamas* [K.B. Under Suspicion], 2004).

In his essays (*Laiškai Sabos karalienei* [Letters to the Queen of Sheba], 2002; *Lietuviškos utopijos* [Lithuanian Utopias], 2003; *Tylintys tekstai* [Silent Texts], 2006; *Mes gyvenom* [We Have Lived], 2009) the writer reflects on the Lithuanian agrarian ethnos and the experiences of the nation during the course of history. He also analyses the structures of the archaic, mythological mentality in folk art, literature and the everyday life of modern man.



Photo by Vldas Brazūnas

Interesting facts

The Vilnius University Courtyard Theatre has staged *Kukutyne* (1989) based on *Kukučio baladės* [The Ballads of Kukutis].

Quite a few composers have written music to Martinaitis' poetry; he is a favourite of bard poets.

Marcelijus Martinaitis has received the following awards:

The 4th Class Order of the Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas (1995),
The Lithuanian National Prize for Culture and Arts (1998),
The Baltic Assembly Prize in Literature (2007).

26 *Kukučio baladės* [The Ballads of Kukutis] were published in English (2011), Norwegian (1987), Russian (1983, 1990, 2003) and Swedish (1985).

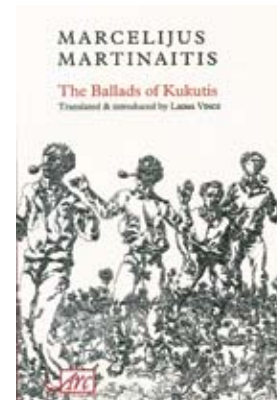
His poetry books have been published in English, Estonian, Latvian, Polish, French, Russian, Ukrainian and German.

Individual poems by Martinaitis have been translated into Azerbaijani, Belarusian, Georgian, Hungarian, Italian, Spanish, Serbian, Tajik and Turkmen.

A poem of ballads. The Ballads of Kukutis

This book was a major influence on the modernisation of Lithuanian poetry during the Soviet period. Kukutis belongs to a grotesque world and links different parameters of time and space – he can be dead and alive at the same moment, he can come back to his senses while being hanged, he can also fear death and admire his own decorous funeral at the same time.

A character of mythical origin, Kukutis said things that were dangerous to the Soviet system, remaining almost irresponsible. He used a grotesque carnival mask, the essence of which is paradoxical thinking, a make-believe innocence and simple-mindedness with which he approaches essential moments of existence. During the Soviet period, one used a mythical code in order to interpret *Kukučio baladės* and to avoid any overt hints to Soviet reality.



Author: Marcelijus Martinaitis
Year of publication: 2011
Publisher: Arc publications, Todmorden,
www.arcpublications.co.uk
Translation: Laima Vincė
Number of pages: 155
ISBN: 978 1906570 26 2

Currently the aspect of the ideological and political grotesque in the poetics of the *Ballads* is emphasised, and the book is considered a brilliant example of what is called Aesop language that was employed to criticize the totalitarian state. The poet's attitude is characterized as rebellious and modern; he emerges as an avant-garde author with an agenda.

Jaroslavas Melnikas (1959, Ukraine) graduated from Lviv University and did his postgraduate studies at Moscow's Gorky Institute. He has published poetry and literary criticism books in Ukrainian language. He is a member of both the Lithuanian Writers Union and Ukrainian Writers' Union. His books in Lithuanian include short stories, novellas, and books of philosophical miniatures: *Rojalio kambarys* [A Room of Grand Piano], 2004; *Pasaulio pabaiga* [The End of the World], 2006; *Labai keistas namas* [A Very Strange House], 2008; a book of philosophical essays *Laisvė, arba Nuodėmė* [Freedom, or Sin], 1996; and novels: *Tolima erdvė* [Distant Space], 2008; *Kelias į rojų* [The Road to Paradise], 2010. His work is characterized by its constructivist and philosophical approach, by existential problems and intriguing combinations of science fiction and realism.



Photo by Arūnas Baltėnas

Interesting facts

The French publisher Robert Laffont published Jaroslav Melnik's novel *Les Parias d' Eden* [Išguitieji iš rojaus [Expelled from Paradise]] (1997).

The novel *Kelias į rojų* [The Road to Paradise] was nominated for the European Book prize (2011).

The writer was awarded the literary prize of Jurgis Kunčinas at the Ginger Evenings Festival (2008).

Melnikas' books have been among the best Lithuanian books of the year a number of times.

His work has been translated into English, French, German, Russian, Ukrainian, and Croatian, as well as other languages.

Novel. *Tolima erdvė* [Distant Space]

This novel of philosophical science fiction deals with the existential problems of the contemporary global world: the stunning technological processes are stripping man of any individual qualities transforming him into anonymous creature, manipulated and controlled.

28 In the novel, the theme is developed through a dynamic, thriller-like plot. In Megapolis, inhabited only by blind people, only “close space” exists. It is filled with electronics enabling the dwellers of this space to survive, yet making them completely dependable on it. One day, Gabras, one of the inhabitants of Megapolis, regains his eyesight. He discovers how repulsive the “close space” is and this causes him problems – he starts thinking of the “distant space” and loses his peace of mind. He consults the health care center of the Control Ministry and they



Author: Jaroslavas Melnikas
 Year of publication: 2008
 Publisher: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla, Vilnius,
www.rsleidykla.lt
 Number of pages: 262
 ISBN 978-9986-39-571-3

offer him treatment that involves taking his vision away in order to free him from the hallucinations. Yet the new experience awakens anxiety in him, and he starts doubting the suggested treatment. With the protagonist unable to make a decision, he is taken by force to a psychiatric hospital, but underground terrorists rescue him and give him the task of getting into the system's Central Control Station and destroy Megapolis. The protagonist is compelled, against his will, to undertake an action that would kill thousands of the innocent blind people, going about their business in their cozy, daily life, his mother, his fiancé and his friends among them. Gabras decides one again to disobey, but after several attempts to resist, he is forced to implement their plan. The protagonist experiences another shock (like being able to see for a second time) when he discovers that the system is controlled by those that have sight. After a while he becomes one of them and marries the daughter of the senior manipulator, and is about to settle in his comfortable and pleasant life. Yet he starts suffering again from the syndrome of “close space”, becomes repulsed with his foreseeable future and starts longing for “distant space” where one can still find emotions, freedom, infinity and God.

Renata Šerelytė (1970) is a prominent prose writer, poet, playwright and literary critic of the young generation. She has published four collections of short stories (*Žuvies darinėjimas* [Cleaning a Fish], 1995; *Balandų ratas* [A Pigweed Circle], 1997; *O ji tepasakė miau* [She Only Said Meow], 2001; *Balzamuotojas* [The Embalmer], 2006), four novels



Photo by Arūnas Baltėnas

(*Ledynmedžio žvaigždės* [The Ice-Age Stars], 1999; *Vardas tamsoje* [A Name in the Dark], 2004; *Mėlynbarzdžio vaikai* [Children of Bluebeard], 2008; *Vėjo raitelis* [Rider of the Wind], 2010) along with seven poetry and prose children's books that have been hailed by critics as an exceptional success.

The main themes of her work are the depressing mundane life of a provincial town in both the Soviet and post-Soviet era, the trajectories of fate of young women and children. Šerelytė's narrative is steeped in metaphor and association: she has a command of a wide emotional spectrum, from lyricism to irony and grotesque.

The work of Šerelytė has already been analyzed in an academic study (Loreta Jakonytė, *Karvės kuolas Pilies gatvėje* [Cow's Pole on Pilies Street], 2011).

Interesting facts

Her work has been recognized with five Lithuanian literary prizes (Žemaitė Literary Award, 2000; Antanas Vaičiulaitis Award, 2001; literary award of Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė, 2007; Juozas Paukštelis Award, 2009; the literary prize of Jurga Ivanauskaitė, 2010).

The novel *Mėlynbarzdžio vaikai* [Children of Bluebeard], besides two Lithuanian literary prizes (2009 and 2010) have won the Bank Austria Literaris Prize (2010), recognizing literature in Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

The novel *Ledynmečio žvaigždės* [The Ice-Age Stars] has been translated into German (2002) and Polish (2004).

The novel *Vardas tamsoje* [A Name in the Dark] has been translated into Polish (2005).

30 The novel *Mėlynbarzdžio vaikai* [Children of Bluebeard] has been translated into German (2010).

Šerelytė's work has been also translated into English, Czech, Georgian, Spanish, Italian, Croatian, French, Russian, Slovenian and Swedish.

Novel. *Mėlynbarzdžio vaikai* [Children of Bluebeard]

The novel *Mėlynbarzdžio vaikai* [Children of Bluebeard], recognized as the best Šerelytė's novel by both readers and critics, spans the last decade of the Soviet era and the early period after re-independence of the country. The title of the book refers to the scary fairy-tale of Charles Perrault. In Perrault's Bluebeard, the action develops around a forbidden bloody chamber. The fairy-tale motif in the novel is employed in a symbolic way: Bluebeard is both a sadistic stepfather and the entire Soviet system, producing indecisive, disturbed, pathologically sensitive young people who are unable to act. They did not become free even, after the change of the regime, in the newly independent country. There are three narrators in the book: the story of the family is being told by the mother (who is deceased), as well as her daughter and son. All three stories reveal equally depressive reality of the mundane character



Author: Renata Šerelytė
Year of publication: 2008
Publisher: Alma littera, Vilnius,
www.almalittera.lt
Number of pages: 216
ISBN 978-9955-38-142-6

of Soviet life: drinking, poverty and squalor, and the all-permeating atmosphere of hatred and emotional anesthesia. The mother's miserable life (at first married to a drunkard, she remarries a violent sadist) ends up in suicide; her son's fate is equally tragic: he fails to find any meaning in his life, and increasingly retreating into himself and his sensations, also committing a suicide. The daughter is the only one who manages to sever ties with the past: she leaves her provincial town and goes to study to the capital city, pursuing a dream to become a writer. And when it seems the right time for her to live a long and happy life, the black experience of her Soviet past hunts her down: the book ends with the protagonist landing in a psychiatric hospital. Though the book tells of heavy and depressing issues, the style is energetic and the story is told in broad sweeps, embracing a wide range of emotional registers, from lyrical to (self) irony, sarcasm and the grotesque.

31 Sigitas Parulskis

Sigitas Parulskis (1965) is one of the most prominent Lithuanian writers, alternately a poet, essayist, prose writer, playwright and translator, who has published five poetry books (*Iš ilgesio visa tai* [All That out of Longing], 1990; *Mirusiujų knyga* [The Book of the Dead], 1994; *Mortui sepulti sint*, 1998; collections of poetry *Marmurinis šuo* [Marble Dog], 2004; *Pagyvenusio vyro pagundos*, [Temptations of An Elderly Man], 2009); two collections of essays (*Nuogi drabužiai* [Naked Clothes], 2002; *Miegas ir kitos moterys* [Sleep and Other Women], 2005); four novels (*Trys sekundės dangaus* [Three Seconds of Heaven], 2002; *Doriforė*, 2004; *Murmanti siena* [The Murmuring Wall], 2008; *Vėjas mano akys* [Wind My Eyes], 2010); a collection of plays *Trys pjesės* [Three Plays], 2006; two books of short internet texts (*Sraigė su beisbolo lazda* [The Snail with a Baseball Bat], 2006; *Prieš mirtį norisi švelnaus*, [Longing for Tenderness Before Death], 2011).

His poetry is characterized by an unornamented language and demythologization of traditional values. The author has branded himself by choosing low and often shocking style to tackle lofty themes (of God, death, and the meaning of human existence), because it could be said that those are the only themes of interest to him. The more lofty the theme, the lower his stylistic register plot of his story. The marriage of the sacred and profane, from which a new metaphysics of the mundane is born, applies also to other genres in Parulskis' work.



Photo by Vladas Braziūnas

Interesting facts

His achievements have been recognized by prestigious Lithuanian prizes for literature: the Jotvingiai Prize (1995), and the Lithuanian Writers' Union Prize (2004), and the National Prize for Culture Art (2004).

Parulskis is one of the most frequently translated contemporary Lithuanian writers. His most popular novel *Trys sekundės dangaus* [Three Seconds of Heaven] (it has seen three editions in Lithuania) has been translated into eight languages (Albanian, Italian, Latvian, Polish, Macedonian, Slovenian, Swedish and German).

His novel *Murmanti siena* [The Murmuring Wall] was translated into Hungarian (2012).

32 His poetry and essay books have been translated into English, Greek, Swedish and Norwegian.

Translations of Parulskis' work are included into anthologies in Belarusian, Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Greek, Croatian, French, Russian, Finnish, Slovak and Hungarian.

A novel. *Trys sekundės dangaus* [Three Seconds of Heaven]

The framework of the novel's plot is constructed from the narrator's memories of Soviet life.

In post-1991 Lithuania the protagonist receives a Western sovietologist's offer to recount his experience as a paratrooper in a unit in the Soviet military that was stationed in the former German Democratic Republic. When the idea fails (it is impossible to mechanically reproduce



Author: Sigitas Parulskis
Year of publication: 2002
Publisher: Baltos lankos, Vilnius,
www.baltoslankos.lt
Number of pages: 215
ISBN 9955-429-89-5

one's experience), he takes another attempt at recording his story with a tape recorder, but this time alone in a small health-resort town near the sea. There the protagonist consumes a large amount of alcohol and ends up at a centre to become sober. There, in his bed and hung over, episodes from his past life appear – as a Soviet army paratrooper, his study years, his love for Maria, and episodes from the stories of his unplanned encounters with other women.

In addition to the authentic, brutally obscene experience, which takes on an existential dimension, the novel is compelling in its language and style. The book contains slang and swear words, physiological, bodily sensations, but in the text all these elements fuse into what could be called a kind of "existential linguistics".

Critics have pointed out the writer's rare ability to employ several language codes, to weave together the layers of the sacred and off-colour everyday talk.

33 CHILDRENS' LITERATURE AND ILLUSTRATION

Lina Dūdaitė

Lina Dūdaitė (1974) is one of the brightest young book illustrators in Lithuania. She creates her own unique world of illustrations for books through the use of a classical method of drawing and techniques, such as gouache, watercolour painting and pencil, inspired by the



work of Stasys Eidrigevičius and Kęstutis Kasparavičius. This world is characterized by a strongly expanded plot-led storytelling, dynamism, an abundance of unexpected and meticulously drawn details in her pictures, and mesmerizing characters. She has illustrated the children's magazine *Penki* [Five] for almost a decade, however she broke into the world of book illustration like a whirlwind: during the last five years she has illustrated six children's books and participated at prestigious exhibitions (Book Illustration Triennial in Tallin, Biennial of Illustration Bratislava, Bologna Illustrators Exhibition), and garnered recognition.

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More info: www.dudaite.com

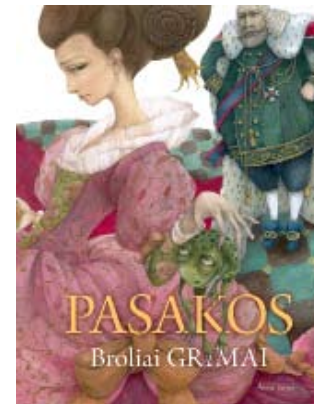
Interesting facts

Luis Sepúlveda's book *Apie žuvėdrą ir katina, kuris išmokė ją skraidyti* [The Story of a Seagull and a Cat Who Taught Her to Fly], 2008, included on the IBBY Honour List 2010.

Upon seeing the book *Sikstenas* [Sixten], 2007, which she illustrated, Swedish author Ulf Stark said that the work had to be illustrated "just like that".

Pasakos. Broliai Grimai [The Grimm Brothers' Fairy Tales], 2011, which was shown for the first time at the 2012 Bologna Children's Book Fair, is the first interactive e-book she has illustrated.

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Broliai Grimai [The Grimm Brothers' Fairy Tales]
Original title: *Kinder-und Hausmärchen*
Authors: The Brothers' Grimm
Target reader: 5–10 years old
Year of publication: 2011
Publisher: Alma littera, Vilnius,
www.almalittera.lt
Number of pages: 236
ISBN 978-609-01-0173-5

Stasys Eidrigevičius

Stasys Eidrigevičius (1949) is the most famous Lithuanian artist today. He has lived in Warsaw since 1980 and actively participates on the elite stage of the world of visual art. His work is characterized by a universality and versatility: he paints, does graphic art, exlibris, posters, miniatures, book illustrations, installations, performances, sculpture and photography.



He also participates in film and theatre projects. He debuted as a book illustrator in 1978. The 1980s and 1990s were his most creative period in illustrations for children's books. He has illustrated approximately 40 contemporary authors, including books of fairy tales by both Lithuanian and foreign authors. His illustrations stand out with their unique vision of a world, where unexpected, surrealistic moods dominate.

35 Interesting facts

He has put on more than 100 personal exhibitions in countries around the world.

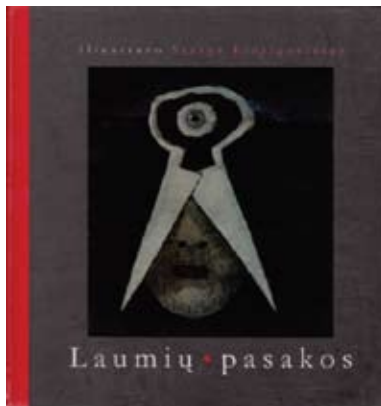
He has created his own genre of the mask and the *smutki* [sorrows].

In 1984 he was included in an encyclopedia of the one hundred most famous children's book illustrators which was published in Japan.

He has received more than 40 significant awards, with most of them coming for posters and illustrations for children's books (including the Gold Medal at Biennial of Book Art '79,'81, and '91, Grand Prix for book illustration in Barcelona 1986, Grand Prix at International Biennial of Posters in Finland 1989, and awards in the US and Serbia, among others).

Laumių pasakos [Pixies' Tales]

Pixies are among the most mysterious mythological creatures of Lithuanian folklore. Readers of these fairy tales can form an idea about the pixies' origin, their appearance, and



Folk Tales
Target reader: 7–12 years old
Year of publication: 2008
Publisher: Šviesa, Kaunas,
www.sviesa.lt
Number of pages: 132 p.
ISBN 5430-04-298-1

their special powers, which cannot but provoke wonder. The deeds of the pixies are described in detail, but readers are also advised how to guard against them and how to deal with them. Such lines as “In our times, pixies don't exist, but old people say...”, and “I have never seen a pixie, but my grandmother has seen them for sure” to pique the curiosity of readers and engage their attention.

Marius Jonutis

Marius Jonutis (1965) is an artist with his own original mannerism and unique style. The range of his work is very broad: he does sculpture, paints wood reliefs, paintings, decorates interiors, writes and illustrates books. He has put on more than 50 personal and group exhibitions in Lithuania, Germany, Denmark, and France. He began illustrating books in 2004, and debuted as a writer in 2008.

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The world he creates through his work is ornate and vivid, optimistic and inspirational, full of positive emotions and hope. He stands out from other artists with his paintings, where woodcuts are joined with painting on canvas.



Interesting facts

He doesn't like the splitting up of literature, and art in general, into one for adults and one for children, however recently he has become recognized as a unique creator of literature and art for both children and adults.

Kirminas paukštis: tavo pirmoji knyga apie skraidymo meną [The Worm Bird: Your First Book about the Art of Flying], 2009, has been said to be “the most original and unexpected” books of the year for young people; it was included on the IBBY Honour List 2012.

He participated in the children's and young people's literature events at the 10th Internationales Literatur festival Berlin.

He made his debut in puppet theatre in 2011, creating the puppets and decorations for the play *Aukso obelėlė, vyno šulinėlis* [Golden Apple, Little Wine Well].

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Kirminas paukštis: tavo pirmoji knyga apie skraidymo meną [The Worm Bird: Your First Book about the Art of Flying]

This is a very unusual book by this artist and writer. It consists of two layers. Every second double page is coloured and tells an allegorical story about a worm who asks a bird to teach him how to fly. The first double page contains questions about the worm story, as well as practical assignments for readers and an explanation of some of the words used in the story. However, it's not the primary meanings of the words that are explained, but rather some of the unexpected and possible meanings of the words. This exploratory or even philosophical dimension of the book encourages young readers to think actively, and to observe the world around them as well as themselves.

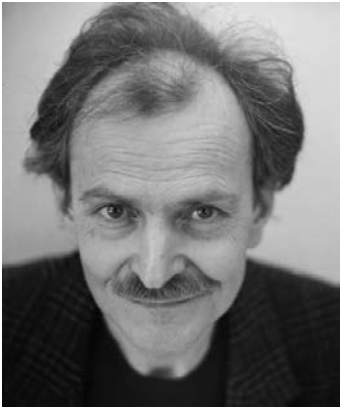


Author: Marius Jonutis
Target reader: 14–16 years old
Year of publication: 2009
Publisher: Tyto alba, Vilnius,
www.tytoalba.lt
Number of pages: 96 p.
ISBN 978-9986-16-686-3

Kęstutis Kasparavičius

Kęstutis Kasparavičius (1954) is the most famous illustrator and writer of children's books in Lithuania. The world of his illustrations is known to readers of children's books in Europe, Asia, North and South America. He began illustrating children's books in 1984. Starting in 1989 he began cooperation with publishers in countries like Germany, Denmark, Greece, France, Mexico, the U.S., Taiwan, and South Korea. He has gained widespread recognition for illustrating classic works such as Hans Christian Andersen, Carlo Collodi, E. T. A. Hoffmann, G. A. Bürger and Fyodor Dostoyevsky.

The subtle colours of his watercolour painting, his precise drawings, masterfully rendering detail, innovative composition, humour and elegance set Kasparavičius apart from other artists. He debuted as a writer in 2003.



The list of this talented artist includes over 60 books, spanning from world classics and contemporary authors to his own books that he has illustrated. He is also the author of 10 books that can be found in more than 20 languages. As an illustrator he has organised over 20 solo exhibitions and participated in numerous international group exhibitions.

Silly Stories (Grimm Press, 2003), the first book he authored, was first published in Chinese.

He has been nominated twice as an artist for Hans Christian Andersen Awards in 2008 and 2010. For his book *Mažoji žiema* [The Little Winter], 2010, he was included on the IBBY Honour List 2012.

Since 1998 he has regularly participated at the Illustrators Exhibition of the Bologna Children's Book Fair.

Kasparavičius participates in creative workshops with children, where they draw a life-size giraffe and achieve records: at the 2009 Vilnius Book Fair, the giraffe was 6 meters long; at the Guadalajara International Book Fair they made a 7 meter long giraffe; and at a book fair in Croatia it was 7.8 meters long!

There was a book presentation of the interactive e-version of his book *Braškių diena* [Strawberry Day], 2007, at the 2011 Frankfurt Book Fair and the 2012 Bologna Children's Book Fair.

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 More info: www.kestutiskasparavicius.com

Mažoji žiema [The Little Winter]

This book contains ten wise and elegant stories full of insight about winter, and also about the colour white. Kasparavičius creates unexpected characters and equally surprising adventures: a small white house escapes from its naughty street and causes great chaos in the



Author: Kęstutis Kasparavičius
Target reader: 8–10 years old
Year of publication: 2010
Publisher: Nieko rimto, Vilnius,
www.niekorimto.lt
Number of pages: 80
ISBN: 978-609-441-001-7

town; a tiny steamboat gets swallowed up by a huge fish and travels the oceans in its belly; pandas from White Bamboo country are decorated in black and white patches like cows; starlings go skiing along a path of jasmine petals... The author never lacks the imagination to invent unique images. His stories ring a poetic, and sometimes funny or paradoxical note.

Vytautas V. Landsbergis (1962) has been an innovator in children's literature for the past 20 years. He is a master of literary fairy tales in the nonsense tradition. This talented artist works in a number of fields, writing fairy tales, poems, plays, essays, directing films and plays, and also writing songs and performing them. He debuted as a writer and director in 1989. He has written more than 30 books, with a large majority of those for children. He has made over 20 documentaries and feature films. He has immortalised famous artists (such as Stasys Eidrigevičius, Petras Repšys, Šarūnas Sauka, and Jonas Mekas) as well as important events in Lithuanian history in his documentaries.



Interesting facts

Arklis Dominyko meilė [Dominic the Horse in Love], 2004, which was the 2004 Children's Book of the Year in Lithuania, and which was included on the IBBY Honour List 2006, was written with ease and joy – he wrote the book in five days.

He has released his best texts on CD, where he most often tells fairy tales and sings.

His books are illustrated by the best artists in the country, including Marius Jonutis, Vaidas Žvirblis, Sigute Ach, Ieva Babilaitė, Rimvydas Kepežinskas, and Agnes Inge.

He together with his wife founded Dominicus Lituanius Publishing House:
www.dominicus.lt.

Email: v.v.landsbergis@gmail.com

A horse named Dominic falls in love with a nice, albeit somewhat whimsical cornflower. Then winter comes, and Dominic hides the cornflower under a stone and takes off to Africa



Illustrated by Sigutė Ach
Target reader: 8–10 year-olds
Year of publication: 2004
Publisher: Nieko rimto, Vilnius,
www.niekorimto.lt
Number of pages: 143 p.
Translated into: Swedish,
Dominic – den förälskade hästen,
Stockholm: Trasten, 2006
Ukrainian: *Любов коня Домінікаса*,
Київ: Грані-Т, 2011
ISBN 9955-9543-1-0

determined to find the cornflower's homeland. While travelling, Dominic encounters a white bear, a crocodile, and a camel as well as other characters. In developing the features of those characters, as he depicts a journey full of surprises, conveying to his young readers a message about friendship, loyalty and love. Paradox, nonsense, poetry, and a rather open expression of moral values co-exist harmoniously in this tale.

Translation grants are available twice a year for those who have an interest in translating and publishing books by Lithuanian authors.

The International Cultural Programme Centre invites applicants to submit applications to participate in the Translation Grant Programme. The purpose of the Translation Grant Programme is to promote the translation of works (books or other publications) in Lithuanian or which are related to Lithuania into foreign languages. The aim of the programme is to encourage translators and publishers to translate and publish works that are in Lithuanian or related to Lithuania by promoting the translation of longer works as well as sample extracts.

Publishers may apply for either partial or total coverage of the cost of the translation. Grants will be allocated for the translation of original works of literature, fiction, children's literature, publications on cultural heritage, or the humanities (philosophy, literary criticism, non-fiction, history and other fields) as well as for the translation of other important books and publications.

All applications will be considered by an independent selection committee consisting of five experts.

Applications may only be submitted by e-mail to books@koperator.lt.

For further information, please contact the Literature Projects Unit of the International Cultural Programme Centre by e-mail: books@koperator.lt.

The following are examples of books by Lithuanian authors who were translated into foreign languages with the help of the Translation Grant Programme:

Asia Publishers (Israel, 2011) published "Uttered in Darkness" by Vanda Juknaitė (translator Sivan Beskin)

Vodnikova Založba (Slovenia, 2011) published "Whitehorn's Windmill" by Kazys Boruta (translator Klemen Pisk)

Ivan Limbakh (Russia, 2011) published "Vilnius: A City in Europe" by Tomas Venclova (translator Marija Čepaitytė)

Open Letter at the University of Rochester (USA, 2009) published "Vilnius Poker" by Ričardas Gavelis (translator Elizabeth Novickas)

Ullstein Buchverlage GmbH (Germany, 2009) published "Three Second of Heaven" by Sigita Parulskis (translator Claudia Sinnig)

More information: www.booksfromlithuania.lt

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Lithuanian Publishers Association

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www.lla.lt

Lithuanian Printers Association

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www.lispa.net

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www.archyvai.lt/lt/llma.html

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National Library of Lithuania**

Gedimino Ave. 51, LT-01504 Vilnius
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www.lnb.lt

**Science and Encyclopedia
Publishing Centre**

L. Asanavičiūtės St. 23, LT-04315 Vilnius
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www.melc.lt

**Maironis Lithuanian
Literature Museum**

Rotušės Sq. 13, LT-44279 Kaunas
www.maironiomuziejus.lt

**Alexander Pushkin
Literary Museum**

Subačiaus St. 124, LT-11345 Vilnius
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http://www.vilniausmuziejai.lt/a_puskinas/indexhtm

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