

BOOKS
FROM LITHUANIA

2016–2019

FICTION and NON-FICTION

BOOKS FROM LITHUANIA

2016—2019

FICTION and NON-FICTION

It is often said that in the age of globalisation everything is becoming uniform and that national literatures are beginning to lose their significance. You can decide for yourselves if that is really the case. In this publication we present to you a panorama of Lithuanian fiction and nonfiction books published in the last few years, selected from the most exciting, provocative and controversial texts. Yes, this list does reflect global and classical literary trends, such as genre fiction or fashionable autofiction — often chosen as the genre for writing about the 1990s. But equally, alongside these, you will find books that recognisably belong to Lithuanian literature, which evince a melancholic and deep contemplation of inner life, a search for causal links, exceptional style, and a ceaseless aim to perfect the sense of language and to push the boundaries of its use. Most important, this panorama includes unique Lithuanian stories that the world has not yet heard — but should.

FICTION



PETER'S EMPRESS

Vilnius: Baltos lankos,
2019, 334 pp.

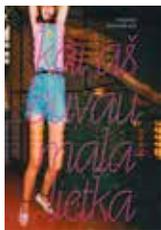
A novel

“Peter’s Empress” explores the story of Lithuanian Marta Skowrońska: an impoverished noblewoman turned laundress, a sex-slave and prisoner of the Great Northern War, who became the second wife of Peter the Great - the first ever Empress of Russia, Catherine I.

Voltaire called her incredible ascent 'the Cinderella of the 18th century' but in this novel Catherine's I and Peter's I story is a cultural clash of the East and the West in one toxic royal marriage, with a good measure of a Greek tragedy. It is a her story to the well known history of Peter the Great. It is also a love triangle, which includes Peter's best friend and favourite Alexander Menshikov. The novel is narrated in the first person, inhabiting the dying empress' body and takes place during the last 24 hours of Catherine's life. The novel comes in 2 parts: the first part of 12 hours on May 5th, 1727, the second part from on May 6th, 1727.

KRISTINA SABALIAUSKAITĖ has a PhD in the history of art and the novel combines scientific research, a profound knowledge of Russian language and culture, the depiction of Western and Eastern mentalities with a high suspense literary narration. As soon as it was published in August 2019 it became a sales-record-breaking No 1 bestseller. Today Kristina Sabaliauskaitė is the most read Lithuanian author, with her previous internationally acclaimed and award winning novels “Silva rerum I–IV” (Silva Rerum I–IV, 2008–2016) having sold over a quarter of a million copies.

KEYWORDS: Peter's Empress; women's history; toxic marriage; cultural history of Eastern and Western mentality.



Vilnius: kitos knygos, 2019, 163 pp.

A novel

WHEN I WAS MALALIETKA

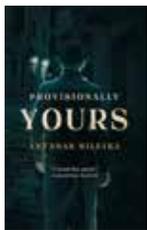
This is the first confessional writing by a woman author depicting the 1990s in Vilnius. These mundane stories of everyday life, which definitely did not all happen to the author herself, transform into fiction where, with the right distance from one's experiences, reflection on them begins to acquire the shape of a plot.

Kiosk culture, first nightclubs and various other firsts: the protagonist Virga appeals to fans of authenticity, masterfully balancing personal intimacy and frank disclosure. The resulting book is a *Bildungsroman* that reveals the underbelly of life in the city. The underside of urban life is later replaced by descriptions of life behind-the-scenes in the academic world, after Virga begins her PhD. Everything in the book is told as if through a veil: *malalietka* (a Russian term appropriated in Lithuanian used to refer to a minor or to emphasize an individual's lack of maturity) shares her experiences in a distant manner, with no sentimentality but often with a great sense of irony.

VIRGINIJA KULVINSKAITĖ (CIBARAUSKĖ) is a poet and literary critic. Her first book was a poetry collection “Antrininkė” (Doppelgänger) in 2017. “Kai aš buvau malalietka” (When I was Malalietka) is her second book and her first novel.

KEYWORDS: women's Bildungsroman; transformed autofiction; authentic experiences of life and survival; generational experience; the underbelly and behind-the-scenes; raging memory.

RIGHTS: sold to Ukraine.



PROVISIONALLY YOURS

Canada: Biblioasis,
2019, 284 pp.

Translated from
English
by Kristina Aurylaitė.
Vilnius: Baltos lankos,
2019, 294 pp.

A novel

The Lithuanian James Bond – this diplomacy noir novel is based on actual events and tells a story about the newly founded Lithuanian intelligence agency in the emerging state of Lithuania in the interwar period of the 1920s.

Canadian-Lithuanian author Antanas Šileika's spy novel "Provisionally Yours" was added to the best international crime fiction list on CrimeReads.com in July 2019. Justas Adamonis returns to Lithuania after long service in the Russian army, hoping finally to stay with his family he hasn't seen for years, and to make a fresh start in life. Unfortunately for him, the head of the Lithuanian army intelligence services Mykolas Landa instead sends Adamonis to complete the very first counter-intelligence mission. Slowly and cinematically developed, the events of the novel draw Adamonis and the reader into the interwar atmosphere, where the Russian intelligence agents' trajectories map the streets of the swiftly modernizing temporary capital Kaunas, only to meet in a charming love triangle.

ANTANAS ŠILEIKA is a Canadian author of Lithuanian heritage who has published five books of fiction and a memoir in Canada and had four of them translated in Lithuania and one in China. He was the director of The Humber School for Writers in Toronto before retiring to devote himself to writing.

KEYWORDS: espionage novel; diplomacy noir; Lithuanian James Bond; the history of the Lithuanian intelligence agency; interwar Kaunas.



Vilnius: Writers Union
Publishing House,
2019, 192 pp.

Short stories

MERMAIDS

Each story reads like a scene cut out from life for the reader's viewing, with the realism of ordinary domesticity marching alongside magical realism, thereby creating an alternative reality.

Jurga Tumasonytė's second collection of short stories is brimming with unpredictable antihero characters in believable circumstances, and the very opposite – predictable heroes in unbelievable situations. This mix of believable and unbelievable stories reveals the writer as a master of short prose. She is a precise one-phrase-diagnostician and a stinging one-sentence-existentialist. Asked about the title of the book, the author said that the metaphor of the mermaid “best conveyed the mood of the book: the fragility of life and a gentle yearning for love, together with the fear and confusion when coming in contact with otherness.”

JURGA TUMASONYTĖ is a writer with a truly unique aesthetic sense. She has published a great number of interviews with a variety of artists. Her debut short story book “Dirbtinė muselė” (Little Artificial Fly, 2011) was awarded the Kazimieras Barėnas Literature Prize. She works in the “eureka!” bookshop which inspired her book “Knygyno istorijos” (Stories from a Bookshop, 2018).

KEYWORDS: mermaids; short stories; one-phrase diagnostician; one-sentence-existentialist; different reflection of life in a short story.



Vilnius: Tyto alba,
2019, 273 pp.

A collection of
short stories

PYRAMIDS OF THE DAYS

Insignificant everyday situations here get to play out important roles usually reserved for big stories.

Daina Opolskaitė blows the dust off the once prestigious genre of short story, which she describes as “a concentrate which lands a punch” or, in other words, a text with massive power, condensed into a miniature volume. With little plot in her texts, one can instead hear the rustle of language and the gathering of characters’ thoughts. The author chooses to talk about the most vulnerable, abandoned and wronged people in our society. She cares about the essence of human experience and is therefore convinced that her reader is “not a thoughtless person seeking to relax”, and truly hopes “that those who read this book will think of what life can be.”

DAINA OPOLSKAITĖ is a writer and essayist. She made her debut with her short story collection “Drožlės” (Scobs, 2000). She is the author of three novels for young adults and received many prestigious awards for her fiction. “Dienų piramidės” (Pyramids of the Days) is her second book of short stories.

KEYWORDS: extracts from life; small details in big stories; classical form of storytelling; existentialism.

AWARDS: European Union Prize for Literature, 2019.

RIGHTS: sold to Serbia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Macedonia.



Vilnius: Alma littera,
2019, 410 pp.

A novel

THE BLACK SUN OF VILNIUS

One of the wackiest and most interesting Lithuanian adventure novels of the past few years. The action takes place in interwar Vilnius, where the astonishingly multicultural fabric of society (“the melting pot of nations”) becomes the stage where all the noir stories happen.

Marius Marcinkevičius, who first became known for his children’s books, wrote his first novel – a true historical mystery detective story, a genre that was sorely lacking in Lithuanian literature. One early and crisp December morning, an old man, Šenderovičius, scans the panorama of Vilnius from the tower of St John’s Church and notices a strange young man, staring right through the depths of his soul. Only this man, George, can disperse the gathering cloud of disaster over Vilnius and solve the murders terrifying the inhabitants who want to find out who is killing innocent Lithuanian girls in such a macabre way, and why.

Just like in the myth from the Middle Ages, he will face a fight with a dragon – the incarnation of evil spirits – alone and will try to save the good spirit of Vilnius.

MARIUS MARCINKEVIČIUS is a doctor, traveller and writer. He graduated in Medical Studies from Vilnius University, studied acupuncture in China and Uzbekistan, and travelled in India, Israel and many other countries around the world. His stories have been widely translated and have received many literary awards. They also have been adapted for the theatre and have been turned into songs.

KEYWORDS: historical mystery detective; interwar life in Vilnius; the myths and legends of Vilnius; mysticism; stories from the city; unknown heroes of the city.



Vilnius: Odilė,
2018, 149 pp.

A novel

ISAAC

Written at the time of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann's trial, this novella cuts through the topics of guilt and remorse, describing the circles of hell that both nations and individuals entered during and immediately after the Second World War.

“Isaac” is one of the last books by Antanas Škėma, written in 1960–1961. The story begins with the Lietūkis Garage Massacre on 27th June 1941 in Kaunas, where more than fifty Lithuanian Jews were brutally and publicly humiliated, tortured and killed. Andrius Gluosnis, the main character in the story, participates in the pogrom, killing a Jewish man Isaac with a blow from a spade. The rest of the story develops through Andrius' inner monologues, haunted by demons and ghosts from the past. The most powerful of them is Isaac, who had told Andrius, just before being killed, that they would meet in hell, and so they do. “Isaac” deals with complex themes of guilt and remorse, revenge and self-sacrifice, all in the context of the Holocaust. Škėma shows how oblivion is always in reality conscious and knowing.

ANTANAS ŠKĖMA (1910–1961) is the author of the famous novel “White Shroud” (English edition in 2018). He is one of the most widely read Lithuanian writers of the twentieth century and a remarkable example of modernist fiction, often referred to as the Lithuanian Albert Camus. Upon the outbreak of the Second World War he emigrated to the West and settled in the USA, where he died in a car crash on 11th September 1961.

KEYWORDS: Holocaust; World War 2; collective responsibility; overcoming guilt; conscious oblivion.



THE WELL

Vilnius: Writers Union
Publishing House,
2018, 189 pp.

A short novel

Full of deep suffering, this touching story of forbidden love and single motherhood unravels the secret of the well while dealing with the reality of the death of a child.

This short novel transports the reader to the 1950s – the second decade of the Soviet era in Lithuania. In a small provincial village people’s fates are strangely interlinked, as Judith, a teacher who ends up murdering her ex-husband’s young daughter from a new marriage, finds herself at the forefront of a hopeless love triangle. The book begins with an absorbing and complex emotional account of the tragedy of a child’s death and moves on to show the entanglement between the characters in the story of the well, where new details emerge to complete the picture of tragedy and expose the twists of fate.

LAURA SINTIJA ČERNIAUSKAITĖ is a novelist and playwright. She wrote her first book of short stories “Trys paros prie mylimosios slenksčio” (Three Days and Nights on the Threshold of the Beloved, 1994) while still in secondary school. She made her debut as a playwright in 2000 and published her first novel “Breathing into Marble” in 2009 (English edition in 2016). This novel was awarded the EU Prize for Literature in 2009.

KEYWORDS: death of a child; unrequited love; Soviet era; broken lives; unexpected twists of fate.



Vilnius: Odilė,
2018, 336 pp.

A novel

A TRACE THROUGH THE CROPS

A book with a dual narrative about resistance and the fight for freedom: the Lithuanian partisans are fighting the Soviet occupation in the period 1944-1956, while in the late 1980s people are waking up to freedom during the last years of the disintegrating Soviet Union.

Valdas Papievis' historical novel "A trace through the crops" was written at the height of the Sąjūdis (the political organisation that led the struggle for Lithuanian independence in the late 1980s and early 1990s) but was then forgotten after the author left to live in Paris. The dual narrative, based on authentic eyewitness accounts, begins in a small postwar town where people are living through deportations to Siberia, attacks by *stribai* (members of armed Soviet civilian squads who assisted the Red Army in the fight against local Lithuanians), the loss of loved ones and clashes in the partisan conflict. The second narrative develops in Vilnius during the years of the Sąjūdis. The historical subject matter of the book is thrilling, while the language Papievis uses bursts with multiplicity of meanings and is genuinely moving. Cinematographic and poetic, the novel attempts to disentangle the difference between armed justice and injustice, and reveals the heroes' conflicted inner hell, right down to the painful core of history itself where *no one is guilty, yet everyone is guilty*.

VALDAS PAPIEVIS lives in Paris and is the author of five novels. He was awarded The Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore Prize and the Liudas Dovydenas Prize for his novel "Eiti" (To Go, 2010). In 2016 he was honoured with the Lithuanian National Prize for Culture and Arts for "the expression of existential experience" and "the revitalization of aesthetics in his novels".

KEYWORDS: partisan war; banality of war; when friends become enemies; no one is guilty, yet everyone is guilty.



Vilnius: Alma littera,
2018, 235 pp.

Essays

I AM NOT BOTHERED BY ETERNITY

One of the most widely read writers and the founder of Lithuanian essay writing, Sigitas Parulskis structures this essay collection as a meeting point for the slowing down of time, memory and the coordinates of experience and contemplation, intersecting “hic et nunc”.

The book is a compilation of short essays beginning with “The mines of time slowing down” where Sigitas Parulskis’ creativity is revealed in layers, taking on a variety of roles in the search for answers to eternal questions in literature. Parulskis’ use of a whole range of literary techniques make his opinion pieces and cultural essays a delight to read, mapping the experiences of living in the Soviet Union, as well as in contemporary Europe with its artistic and cultural heritage, past and present.

SIGITAS PARULSKIS is a poet, playwright, publicist and one of the most popular and most read Lithuanian authors. He made his debut as a poet in 1990 but soon after wrote and published his first plays. In 2002 both his first novel and his first collection of essays came out. In the twenty years since he started writing, Parulskis has written nineteen books. He is a recipient of the Lithuanian National Prize for Culture and Arts. Over the last decade he has been writing prose and regularly publishes opinion pieces in the press.

KEYWORDS: stories about the present; slowing down of time; rifts in memory; espresso of social realities; the map of writing.



THE PINE THAT LAUGHED

Vilnius: kitos knygos, 2018, 179 pp.

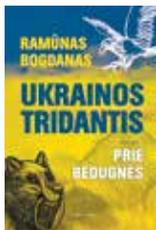
A novel of linked stories

These are stories which play out in different districts of the capital Vilnius in the mid-1990s when life in Lithuania was wildly interesting. Slang and swear words of the time enrich the storytelling, while other attributes of the Noughties mix with references to classic Soviet texts to build a special world.

Art historian Kęstutis Šapoka decided to document the stories of savage capitalism in Vilnius during the first years of independent Lithuania in the 1990s. Šapoka follows several young people's lives during these unusually interesting years, full of clashes and fights, even in the spiritual realm when a wave of esoteric doctrines floods the country. All these stories, which paint the portrait of a young Lithuanian state, are based on the author's personal experience, which he makes even more interesting by weaving some of the most important Soviet writing into his text.

KĘSTUTIS ŠAPOKA is an art historian and curator, and an artist. During the 1990s he was a metalhead and dreamed of working in construction or in a vehicle repair garage. As an art historian, he consistently critiques institutional art and the strategies of authentic creative practice. "Pušis, kuri juokėsi" (The Pine that Laughed) is his first novel.

KEYWORDS: 1990s; savage capitalism; life full of change; a torrent of esoteric doctrines; Soviet literature paraphrased.



Vilnius: Baltos lankos,
2018, 447 pp.

A novel

UKRAINIAN TRIDENT. ON THE EDGE OF THE ABYSS

The events of the last decade in Ukraine with its painful changes set the stage for this novel, where a former Canadian special forces member Nikas Fosa returns to the turmoil and unrest of Ukraine to start... growing wheat (yes, you read that correctly).

The well-known political correspondent Ramūnas Bogdanas starts the first book of his “Ukrainian trident” trilogy by diving straight into a highly corrupt Ukraine tormented by its post-Soviet traumas. When Canadian Ukrainian Nikas Fosa arrives in the country to begin an agricultural business, he is immediately faced with Ukrainian reality: widespread corruption, criminal gangs, oligarchy and deeply rooted unwritten rules. His fight against the network of corruption and oligarchy debilitating the country is at the centre of this page-turner fraught with danger.

RAMŪNAS BOGDANAS is a political correspondent at Delfi.lt, the most widely read online news website in Lithuania. He met many participants of the revolutionary events in Ukraine and lectured in Kiev, Odessa, Mykolaiv and Dniepr. “Ukrainos tridantis. Prie bedugnės” (Ukrainian Trident. On the Edge of the Abyss) is Bogdanas’ debut novel and the first one from the “Ukrainian Trident” trilogy, dedicated to events in Ukraine of the last decade.

KEYWORDS: adventure novel; page-turner; Ukrainian present; corruption; oligarchy; Euromaidan; West vs. East.



BLUE BLOOD

Vilnius: Writers Union
Publishing House,
2017, 356 pp.

A novel

The Lithuanian “Game of Thrones” – full of the relentless sound of clashing armour – “Blue Blood” looks at the history of the Livonian order between 1472 and 1483 when it was led by the Grand Master Berhard von der Borch. The crows from his coat of arms mystically connect the glorious historical past with the narrator’s present.

Undinė Radzevičiūtė is a master of sharp irony and short sentences – the latter very uncharacteristic of Lithuanian literature. Asked about “Blue Blood”, her fifth novel, she said that the story was “90 percent true”, adding that “there was a strange poison in our family’s blood, except that it came not from an outsider but from ourselves.”

Poison is the central motif running through this masculine novel, where both the knights of the Livonian order and the free knights of Westphalia scurry back and forth across the Livonian Confederation. “Blue Blood” is about the battle for survival in a place full of political and tactical games, perfidy, neverending wars and constant tension with the Catholic church.

UNDINĖ RADZEVIČIŪTĖ is an internationally acclaimed writer, the author of five novels and a collection of short stories. Her books have on four occasions been shortlisted for the most creative book of the year, and three times for best Lithuanian book of the year. In 2015 the novel “Žuvys ir drakonai” (Fishes and Dragons, 2018) was awarded the European Union Prize for Literature and is cited as one of the best books of the decade. Undinė Radzevičiūtė is also one of the most translated Lithuanian authors.

KEYWORDS: Livonian order; neverending wars; perpetual perfidy; constant battle for power; the curse of the family and its fate.

AWARDS: The Lithuanian Writers’ Union Award, 2018.

RIGHTS: sold to Austria and Latvia.



Vilnius: Lapas,
2017, 271 pp.

A novel

COLD EAST

Stasys' journey is an x-ray of the millennial generation, vividly portraying their loss of meaning in life and their painful realisation that Instagram hashtags and filters don't actually make life more beautiful or add meaning to it.

For Gabija Grušaitė the present is a litmus test for measuring and critically assessing her generation. Consequently, *Stasys'* story is a contemporary person's tale, with all the characteristics of the modern era: exhaustion and ennui, anxieties and mental states, virtue signalling and political games. The location of the novel spans New York, Thailand, Malaysia and Hong Kong, with the geography often determining the characters' life changes. All of this creates an exceptional, richly textured and cosmopolitan novel that is painfully existential.

GABIJA GRUŠAITĖ was born in Vilnius, and studied media and anthropology in London. She published her debut novel "Neišsipildymas" (Unfulfilled) in 2010. Gabija lived in Malaysia for six years and founded Hin Bus Depot – an independent art centre in Penang. For the last two years she has been living and working in Vilnius.

KEYWORDS: millennials; IG generation; white post-Soviet hipster; uninspired; exhaustion and ennui.

AWARDS: Jurga Ivanauskaitė Literary Award, 2018. The English translation of the novel "Cold East" was awarded the "Penang Monthly Book Prize, 2018".

RIGHTS: sold to Malaysia.



Vilnius: Vaga,
2017, 108 pp.
Short stories

90S

Toying with Marcel Proust's famous questionnaire, the author asks: "Which global event has affected you the most? This is an interesting question, I need to think about it. Possibly it's the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Though it's slightly strange, even to myself, that this is still the case."

Žakaitis' microfiction stories, always different and refreshingly unpredictable, share one common theme, which is that they are all set in the last decade of the 20th century. More precisely, the act of publication was itself symbolic since the whole book just appeared online one day at 90s.lt. Each story is written like a flash of a fading present moment so ordinary it becomes almost invisible. On the other hand, thinking of such present moments in the era of Snapchat and Instagram, they can seem even hypervisible.

JONAS ŽAKAITIS is a Lithuanian writer, philosopher, contemporary art critic and curator currently based in Vilnius. His writings have appeared in world class publications such as "Spike Art", "e-flux" and "MAP".

KEYWORDS: 1990s; describing a world of things; transformations of the present; striking texts; surrealist text.



Vilnius: Writers Union
Publishing House,
2017, 421 pp.

A novel

I SAT ON STALIN'S LAP

The central metaphor of the novel – sitting on Stalin's lap – opens a multilayered epic tale about life in the second half of the Soviet era in the mid-twentieth century, and one family's attempts to adapt the manners and traditions of the bygone era to the new life under Soviet occupation.

In writing his fifth novel Markas Zingeris has sought to explore how history plays with a person's fate without them realising it, and to reveal the existential rifts that open up when one comes face to face with death. A translator of American musicals for Lithuanian theatres, Jaša Bliuminas is lying down on the operating table for heart surgery and in that moment he suddenly remembers his whole life: the complicated Soviet era, his old fashioned Kaunas family and fiery love. These very different events are masterfully blended into a catchy, passionately written and easy to read story.

MARKAS ZINGERIS is a poet, writer, playwright and translator. From 2005 to 2019 he was the director of Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum. He made his debut with a poetry collection "Namas iš kedro" (House of Cedar) in 1984. His first novel "Aplink fontaną, arba Mažasis Paryžius" (Around the Fountain, or Little Paris) came out in 1998. Since then he has written another five novels.

KEYWORDS: Soviet era; interwar family; theatre of life; life running before one's eyes like a film; to sit on Stalin's lap.

AWARDS: The Liudas Dovydėnas Prize, 2018



Vilnius: Vaga,
2016, 169 pp.

A novel

GLESUM

The main character's extraordinary amber-like features – brown eyes and brown hair – inspire the man who falls in love with her, to give her the name Glesum. This novel gives us a glimpse into the second and third centuries AD and the everyday lives of the Aesti tribes who were inseparably linked to the Roman Empire through the Baltic Amber Road.

The plot tension is created by two women – Selija, the wife of Gondas, the leader of the tribe, and Glesum, whom Gondas falls in love with and kidnaps from Akvilėja. The story of secret relationship, competition and motherhood develops against the fascinating backdrop of their everyday life in the tribe, their social and cultural reality, and their ritualistic relationship with the natural world and its deities.

RASA AŠKINYTĖ is a writer, who made her debut in 2009 with the novel “Rūko nesugadinti” (Unharmed by the Fog). In 2013 the novel “Žmogus, kuriam nieko nereikėjo” (The Person who Needed Nothing) was selected as Book of the Year in Lithuania. “Glesum” is considered Aškinytė’s best novel so far.

KEYWORDS: historical reconstruction; poetic interpretation; revering and living harmoniously with nature; the Baltic Amber Road.

RIGHTS: sold to Germany.



Vilnius: Writers Union
Publishing House,
2016, 229 pp.

A novel

ORPHEUS: A JOURNEY THERE AND BACK

This is a story of a young couple's relationship and how it is affected and changed by their move into a new apartment, where a charming next door neighbour intrigues the main protagonist, a young student working on his dissertation.

Tomas Vaiseta's first novel stands out with its special relationship between the narrator and reality: the protagonist experiences his environment in a detached and indifferent manner, as if through glass. The book is a contemporary and surprising interpretation of the myth of Orpheus, but instead of the journey to the underworld, it takes us on a journey to the world of sin, where all kinds of deceptions and evasions plague intimate relationships, all against the background of ever louder reports of war in neighbouring Ukraine. The melancholic tone of the storytelling and atmosphere carry echoes of John Williams' novel "Stoner".

TOMAS VAISETA is a historian, writer and an associate professor of History at Vilnius University. He is the author of fiction books "Paukščių miegas" (The Sleep of Birds, 2014), "Orfėjas, kelionė pirmyn ir atgal" (Orpheus: A Journey There and Back), as well as monographs covering the Soviet era: "Nuobodulio visuomenė" (The Society of Boredom: Ideology and the Mundane in the Late Soviet period, 1964–1984, 2014) and "Vasarnamis" (Summerhouse: The Social History of Vilnius Psychiatric Hospital, 1944–1990, 2018).

KEYWORDS: journey to sin; journey to yourself; relationship in the face of betrayal; living through the foreboding of war; overcoming (self-)deception.



Vilnius: Tyto alba,
2016, 367 pp.

A novel

SOUTHERNER'S CHRONICLES

This popular fiction book is set in 1993–1994 during the first four years of independence from the Soviet Union. A young man's story unfolds at a time of savage capitalism in Šiauliai, the fourth largest town in Lithuania, when everyone was rushing to make money from business.

Fun and catchy, written in Šiauliai dialect and full of slang from the 1990s, this novel is about life in the “Southern” district in Šiauliai during the first spectacular years of Lithuanian independence. Savage capitalism is thriving, everyone is hustling – including school children – and fakes of just about anything are more abundant than originals. Rimantas Kmita intricately reconstructs the reality of the time – objects, fashions, relationships and typical travel routes. A young man's coming-of-age story is sensitively and wittily told. Because of the author's love of rugby, which he actually plays, the sport also features heavily in the story. The whole novel follows one rule of autofiction: “Any resemblance to actual persons or actual events in the novel is purely coincidental, unless you are a character in the book.”

RIMANTAS KMITA is a literary critic, poet and writer. He has published three books of poetry but it was his first novel – “Pietinia kronikas” (The Southerner's Chronicles) – that made him a bestselling author. With this novel Kmita built a monument for his hometown and inspired a spike in interest in the location of the book: in the Southern district now, there are organised festivals and tours based on the novel.

KEYWORDS: 1990s; savage capitalism; time machine; rugby; Bildungsroman; a monument to Šiauliai and Šiauliai dialect.

AWARDS: Book of the Year for Adults, 2017; Jurga Ivanauskaitė Literary Award, 2017.

RIGHTS: sold to Germany and Ukraine.

NON-FICTION



Vilnius: Aukso žuvis,
2019, 455 pp.

LITUANICA. THE UNHEARD SIDE OF THE STORY

Eighty years after the event, this is the first comprehensive analysis of the legendary Darius' and Girėnas' flight across the Atlantic ocean – probably the most famous episode in the history of Lithuanian aviation.

It was meant to be one of the most glorious events in Lithuanian history. However, the Lithuanian American pilots Darius and Girėnas took off from New York on 15th June 1933, never to reach the temporary Lithuanian capital Kaunas. Their death near Soldin in Germany has always been surrounded by legends and conspiracy theories, the story always manipulated by different regimes throughout the epochs. Gražina Sviderskytė researches the circumstances, context and the reception of this legendary flight, in an attempt to bust the myths and shine a light on Darius' and Girėnas' triple destiny of death, glory and consignment to oblivion. We are able finally to find out what really happened in the Soldin forest in July of 1933. Did the plane Lituanica crash because it was shot down?

GRAŽINA SVIDERSKYTĖ is a journalist, author of several books and multiple documentary films, who has been awarded some of the highest professional prizes in Lithuania and abroad. “Lituanica. Nematoma pusė” (Lituanica. The Unheard Side of the Story) is her first monograph.

KEYWORDS: Darius and Girėnas; flight across the Atlantic; the history of Lithuanian aviation; the trap of conspiracy theories.



Vilnius: Lapas,
2018, 272 pp.

SUMMERHOUSE: THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF VILNIUS PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL, 1944–1990

Even though Soviet psychiatry is still held ransom by the myths about it, Tomas Vaiseta dares to seek the truth, researching the social history of a particular psychiatric hospital through the lens of the Soviet model of psychiatry.

For the inhabitants of Vilnius and most Lithuanians for that matter, the house number 5 on Summer Street is synonymous with a “madhouse”. For almost one hundred years it has been home to the Vilnius Psychiatric Hospital, the most important psychiatric institution in Lithuania during the years of the Soviet occupation between 1944 and 1990. Starting off with the address that became a sociocultural stigma and a metaphor, the historian Tomas Vaiseta invites us to step inside and learn not only about the local history of the hospital, but also about the entire model of Soviet psychiatry. Vaiseta’s research is unique because never before in the books about Lithuanian Soviet psychiatry have we heard the accounts of former inpatients and medical personnel.

TOMAS VAISETA is a historian, writer and associate professor of History at Vilnius University. He is the author of fiction books “Paukščių miegas” (The Sleep of Birds, 2014), “Orfėjas, kelionė pirmyn ir atgal” (Orpheus: A Journey There and Back, 2016), as well as monographs covering the Soviet era: “Nuobodulio visuomenė” (The Society of Boredom: Ideology and the Mundane in the Late Soviet period, 1964–1984, 2014) and “Vasarnamis” (Summerhouse: The Social History of Vilnius Psychiatric Hospital, 1944–1990, 2018).

KEYWORDS: “madhouse”; Soviet psychiatry; research into a particular hospital; the social history of a case study; stigmatization of mental illness.



ARCHITECTURE OF OPTIMISM: THE KAUNAS PHENOMENON, 1918–1940

Edited by
Marija Drėmaite.

Vilnius: Lapas,
in collaboration with
the Lithuanian UNESCO
Commission,
2018. 292 pp.

The interwar period was full of miracles, and the optimistic history of modernization and architecture of Kaunas – the city that suddenly became the capital of Lithuania – was one of them.

In 1919, due to the political circumstances at the time, Kaunas became the temporary capital of the Republic of Lithuania and had to rise quickly to the challenge of transforming from the provincial stronghold of the former tsarist empire into a modern, elegant and European capital. Kaunas succeeded with this radical and swift transformation, making its history of modern architecture a story of success and optimism. Art and history researchers come together to explore this story from multiple angles, delving into the political, social, economic and cultural aspects of fast urbanization and modernization to show how architecture has created the city.

MARIJA DRĖMAITĖ is a historian of architecture, Professor of History at Vilnius University, and author of “Baltic Modernism: Architecture and Housing in Soviet Lithuania” (English edition in 2017) and “Progreso meteoras. Modernizacija ir pramonės architektūra Lietuvoje 1920–1940 m.” (The Meteor of Progress: Modernization and Industrial Architecture in Lithuania 1920–1940, 2016).

KEYWORDS: optimism; temporary capital
Kaunas; modernist architecture; the his-
tory of architecture; urbanization.

ELLEN HINSEY, TOMAS VENCLOVA | *Nelyginant šiaurė magnetą:
pašnekesiai su Ellen Hinsey.*



MAGNETIC NORTH: CONVERSATIONS WITH TOMAS VENCLOVA

University of Rochester
Press, 2017.

Vilnius: Apostrofa,
2017, 531 pp.,
48 illustrated pages.

A conversation between Ellen Hinsey and Tomas Venclova which covers all eight decades of Venclova's life and constantly interweaves personal, political and literary history, as well as facts and memory.

One of the most famous Lithuanian intellectuals, poet Tomas Venclova is interviewed by American author Ellen Hinsey. He shares with her his whole life: the four decades leading up to his emigration from the Soviet Union in 1977 and the four decades that followed. In these conversations we get a glimpse of Venclova's personal life behind-the-scenes: the atmosphere of the times he is telling us about; the historical and political context; (un)official cultural life; people's attitudes and value systems. Venclova's calm tone, precise knowledge, authentic, unsentimental and detached objectivity are all impressive. The book is full of personal stories featuring famous artists of the twentieth century, including Boris Pasternak, Anna Achmatova, Josif Brodski and Czesław Miłosz.

TOMAS VENCLOVA is a Lithuanian poet, writer, scholar and translator. He is Professor Emeritus of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Yale University. Ellen Hinsey is a poet and essayist. Her most recent book is "The Illegal Age" (2018).

KEYWORDS: The intellectual history of the 20th century; Soviet era; "nomenklatura"; underground; opposition; intellectuals.

AWARDS: The news portal 15min selected it as the best translated book of 2017.

RIGHTS: sold to Germany, Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania.

Manėm, kad greit grįšim.

18 pokalbių apie pasitraukimą į Vakarus 1940–1944



WE THOUGHT WE'D BE BACK SOON. 18 STORIES OF REFUGEES, 1940–1944

Selected and edited by
Dalia Stakė Ansysas,
Dalia Cidzikaitė,
Laima Petrauskas
Vanderstoep.

Vilnius: Aukso žuvis,
2017, 381 pp.

What have you lost by leaving Lithuania?

*I'll tell you this: that country and that land still calls out
to me. I regret losing those beautiful days with my family...*

(Joana Krutulienė)

Eighteen conversations with US Lithuanians, who were forced to leave Lithuania during the Second World War and escape to the West from an advancing Soviet front and the threat of deportation. These exceptionally open and often painful conversations reveal the reasons why they fled to the West, their lives in Displaced Persons (DP) camps in Germany, the circumstances under which they reached the US, and how they settled there and created new lives. None of them expected to stay in the US for more than a few months and were certain they would soon return to Lithuania – hence the title of the book.

DALIA STAKĖ ANYSIENĖ and LAIMA PETRAUSKAS VANDERSTOEP are the second-generation offspring of so-called DP (*dipukai*), Lithuanian emigrants.

DALIA CIDZIKAITĖ taught literature at the University of Illinois in Chicago and was the chief editor of the Lithuanian community daily paper “Draugas” (“Friend”) between 2007 and 2013.

KEYWORDS: Second World War; Soviet occupation; escape to the West; refugees 1940–1944; eternal yearning for one's homeland.



Vilnius: Alma littera,
2017, 255 pp.

THE LAND OF CYBORGS: THE STORY OF RUSSIA'S WAR AGAINST UKRAINE

Pancerovas' journalistic first-hand account from Ukraine, a country fighting for its freedom and territory in 2014, painfully illustrates what American historian Timothy Snyder described as its historical pivot from East to West.

On 23rd January 2014 journalist Dovydas Pancerovas receives a phone call from the photographer Vidmantas Balkūnas: they buy tickets to Ukraine and the next day they are already witnessing the Ukrainian revolution close up. While this is the subject of the first part of the book, the second part takes us to the real war: the time after the annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbass. Reporting here is even more authentic, refined by experience at the front. The book is first and foremost a war diary, as Pancerovas is writing about what he sees, where he is and what he can hear. It is unique material, unaccompanied by grandiose and vain speeches by politicians.

When Russia occupied Crimea, it seemed as if only the countries who had recently experienced Soviet occupation unequivocally knew that this was war, and a serious one at that.

DOVYDAS PANCEROVAS is a journalist at the news portal 15min and one of the best investigative journalists in Lithuania. He has been awarded multiple prizes for his work, including the Peter Greste Freedom Of Speech Award in 2017. “Kiborgų žemė” (The Land of Cyborgs) is his first book.

KEYWORDS: Euromaidan; Ukraine; Russia's war with Ukraine; war photography; war diary; reporting from the front.



Vilnius: Aukso žuvis,
2016, 382 pp.

IRENA VEISAITĖ. LIFE SHOULD BE TRANSPARENT

The intellectual Irena Veisaitė's story is a love letter to life, portraying its darkest abysses and its brightest heights in equal measure.

Historian Aurimas Švedas interviews an exceptional woman: Irena Veisaitė, a scholar of German and theatre. Her life spans almost a hundred years through the interwar period, the Second World War, the Soviet era and Lithuanian independence, rich with Lithuanian culture and history that has been filled with anguish. Born in interwar Kaunas, and later saved from the Kaunas ghetto, she survived the Holocaust, and showed, in her later life, that forgiveness, life without anger, revenge and hatred is the duty of the living. Veisaitė's non-judgmental gaze and tone are a testament to her erudition and her fundamental respect for others, while the focus on the present and a desire "to judge an epoch in its own context" transform her story into a multifaceted text bursting with life.

AURIMAS ŠVEDAS is a historian of culture, and lecturer at the Department of History at Vilnius University. It is now ten years since he first started using the oral history method to create personal portraits of eminent Lithuanian scientists and artists. He has written and edited nine books.

KEYWORDS: oral history; 20th century story; personal history; Holocaust; Soviet era.

AWARDS: Political Writing and Documentary Book of the Year, 2018

RIGHTS: sold to Germany, Hungary, Russia, Poland.

Lithuanian Literature

TRANSLATION GRANT PROGRAMME

Lithuanian Culture Institute invites publishers to submit applications for the Translation Grant Programme. The purpose of the Translation Grant Programme is to promote Lithuanian literature through making grants to foreign publishers for the translation of works from Lithuanian or which are related to Lithuania. Publishers may apply for either partial or total coverage of the cost of the translation. Grants are allocated for the translation of original works of literature, fiction, children's literature, non-fiction, publications which cover cultural heritage or the humanities (philosophy, literary criticism, history and other fields) as well as for the translation of other important books and publications.

The deadlines for applying are 1st April and 1st October

THE APPLICATION FOR A BOOK TRANSLATION GRANT MUST INCLUDE:

- ☞ filled application form (document can be accessed online),
- ☞ a copy of the contract with the owner of the rights,
- ☞ a copy of the contract with the translator,
- ☞ translator's qualifications (e.g. CV, previous translations),
- ☞ a brief presentation of the publishing house,
- ☞ a short cover letter justifying the proposed work.

THE APPLICATION FOR A SAMPLE TRANSLATION GRANT MUST INCLUDE:

- ☞ filled application form (document can be accessed online),
- ☞ a short cover letter justifying the proposed work,
- ☞ translator's qualifications (e.g. CV, previous translations),
- ☞ the agreement of the owner of the rights for translating the proposed work.

Applications can be submitted only by e-mail.

For further information, please contact:

vakare.leonaviciene@lithuanianculture.lt

www.lithuanianculture.lt

TEXTS BY
Jūratė Čerškutė

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY
Sasha Wilde and Jeremy Hill

DESIGN AND LAYOUT BY
Gytis Skudžinskas

PRINTED IN LITHUANIA BY
Baltijos kopija | www.kopija.lt

EDITION 300

PUBLISHED BY
Lithuanian Culture Institute



MINISTRY OF CULTURE
OF THE REPUBLIC
OF LITHUANIA

