

BOOKS
FROM LITHUANIA

2019–2020

FICTION and NON-FICTION

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When one looks at the Lithuanian fiction and nonfiction books for 2019–2020, it feels like the famous phrase *there is no history, only histories* is turned on its head and deconstructed. History with a capital H does indeed exist but it is always written by the smaller, often personal (hi)stories. The books in this catalogue are a testament to this reality, where the only common denominator between them is (hi)stories and historicity. The books selected here offer, more than ever before, important and painful reflections on the historical past — researching and rethinking terrible historical wounds and scars, and personal narratives unfolding within specific historical contexts. These works of fiction and nonfiction tell us about the golden interwar years, World War II, the Holocaust, the Soviet occupation, the restoration of Lithuanian independence in 1991 March 11, and the infinitely rich first decade in a newly free and independent country that followed.

FICTION



Vojaĝo

Vilnius: Aukso žuvis,
2020, 475 pp.

A novel

Rich and dense narrative tells one family's story where people are separated by World War II but united by the Esperanto language, which goes through its own significant changes.

Rugilė Audienienė's debut novel is a very personal tale. Stitched together from family stories and other egodocuments, it reconstructs her grandfather's and grandmother's life and love story – full of conflict and dangers, but also love and dreams. These dreams are squashed when, during World War II, Juozas Gaidukas is taken straight from work to be executed but is instead sent to another wagon delivering him to ten years of exile. Initially he ends up in a forced labour camp in Germany and later goes to Kazakhstan to build the city of Balkhash. All the while his beloved wife and daughter stay in Lithuania, trudging along, trying to continue with their lives. Esperanto is given its own storyline in the book – once a universal language of peace, it becomes a pretext for persecution during the war. However, for the Gaidukas family and especially for the father and daughter, Esperanto remains the language of hope and commonality. Audienienė chose the Esperanto word 'Vojaĝo' (meaning "travel") as the title for her novel spanning 40 years and 500 pages, proving again that 'none of us ever return the same; none of us ever stay at their initial place'.

RUGILĖ AUDENIENĖ is a journalist, a writer, and a leader of various creative and communication projects. Her prose and poetry have been published in various literary magazines. She actively maintains her website kurtekstas.lt and organises a poetry festival for the community in Biržai. She started 'Haiku gimnazija' as a project for students. After publishing 'Vojaĝo', Audienienė said she had always dreamed about being a writer.

KEYWORDS: Vojaĝo; metaphor of a journey; family history; war and post-war; father and daughter secret language; Esperanto.



Vilnius: Lithuanian Writers' Union Publishing House, 2019, 279 pp.

A novel

Further Than the Ocean

A novel about pilgrimage is a diary of walking The Way of St. James (El Camino de Santiago). It considers the experience of The Way and the journey, the act of walking, being, and finally – returning. It prompts us to think about what it is that we try to run away from when travelling; and what we might discover on the way.

Narius Kairys's debut novel "Further Than the Ocean" brings the Camino (after The Camino de Santiago) book to Lithuanian literature. The protagonist and the narrator of the story is a 22-year-old, Paulius Kostka, who embarks on a journey, leaving behind his native town and his dear grandma, as well as his lover, Audra. One day Audra discovers his travel notes in the mail, with all of the traveller's doubts, fears and experiences of journeying through Europe to the Way of St. James laid bare within. These travelogue-like notes capture the type of pilgrims he met along the way and their stories. Paulius contemplates the importance of time and physical endurance, while fighting emotional battles and phantoms from his past, which he re-encounters on the pilgrimage. The notes also depict the monotony of walking, which erases the boundaries between the inner and outer world. This is a story of confronting oneself and the unknown, coinciding with the volcano that erupted in Iceland that same spring of 2010, causing a fright to the whole of Europe. The Ocean calls our protagonist to go further still.

NARIUS KAIRYS is a writer, translator, lecturer, film critic and curator of the human rights film festival 'Inconvenient Films'. His anthropological fiction, reviews, articles and interviews have been published in major Lithuanian cultural publications. "Further than the Ocean" is Kairys's first novel. In the spring of 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic, he completed the famous Japanese '88 Temple Pilgrimage' route, also known as the Shikoku Pilgrimage.

KEYWORDS: 'road' novel; The Way of St. James; pilgrimage; loneliness; confronting oneself; the mythology of the journey.



Vilnius: Lithuanian Writers' Union Publishing House, 2019, 408 pp.

A novel

Stalin's Iron Glove

With his characteristic sense of irony, Herkus Kunčius tells the story of the infamous Soviet secret police official Nikolai Yezhov (1895–1940), aptly nicknamed Stalin's butcher. While Kunčius reveals the intricacies of what leads one specific person to become a ferocious executioner, he also tells the bigger story of how communism was actually built – the many directions the Red Terror took and the various guises it wore, ruthlessly destroying even its own most loyal henchmen.

Herkus Kunčius is a playful author, once considered the first postmodern writer in Lithuania. Today he is dedicated to researching and wittingly retelling history. Kunčius's most recent historical novel "Stalin's Iron Glove" was influenced by his desire to explore the Lithuanian origin of Nikolai Yezhov, who was born not in St Petersburg, as was thought for a while, but in Veiveriai, Lithuania. Yezhov was the head of the NKVD – one of the most brutal repressive agencies in Soviet Union. Kunčius wanted to 'portray the history of the Soviet Union in the first half of the last century through telling Yezhov's personal history'. Without ever losing his sense of irony, Kunčius purposefully exaggerates some historical details to tell the story of the most cruel and merciless of Stalin's executioners, often referred to as "Stalin's iron glove". Kunčius's comicality allows him to 'convey the monstrous, inhumane nature and the absurdity of the communist system'.

HERKUS KUNČIUS is an author, playwright, essayist and the head of the Lithuanian PEN. He studied art history and theory and is the author of more than ten novels. Kunčius's work ironically and consistently questions established writing conventions. At the beginning of his creative journey, he was considered a scandalous provocateur, and one of the first true postmodern writers in Lithuania. In his recent work he delves into the past to reflect on historical events and historical figures.

KEYWORDS: Stalin's iron glove; history of the Soviet Union; repression; biography; irony and comicality.



Vilnius: Alma littera,
2019, 429 pp.

Nordic noir

The Needle

This is probably the first Lithuanian Nordic noir novel. The Criminal Police Detective Butkus – swamped in the misery of his personal life but surrounded by a loyal investigative team – begins solving carefully planned, almost ritualistic murders whose victims are all exclusively one type of woman, found dead in the very centre of Vilnius. The perpetrator becomes determined to intimidate Butkus with increasingly aggressive tactics.

On the foggy morning of 22 October 2016, a young woman's body is found on the Hill of Three Crosses in Vilnius city centre. A dead pigeon is placed on her forehead, a red parrot tattooed on her left shoulder, and her left breast is half the size of the right one. The young photographer who found the body claims that at the time of discovery an eagle was flying over the trees above. 'An eagle in Vilnius city centre?' the Criminal Police Detective, Algimantas Butkus, repeatedly asks in astonishment, having taken on probably the most complex case of his career. With the government breathing down his neck, and plagued by a persistent cough, with the truly wet and dark Lithuanian autumn affecting his health, the investigation proves a considerable challenge. Traces of the crime lead the investigation all over Lithuania, and as far away as London and Stockholm. 'This novel is my tribute to Lithuania,' says Jaroslavas Melnikas in the foreword. In "The Needle" Melnikas not only explores the depths of a criminal's soul but also finally discovers the right way to employ bird symbolism – something that the writer has been grappling with in his last few books.

JAROSLAVAS MELNIKAS is a philosopher and writer who explores the depths of existentialism in his work. He was born in Western Ukraine but currently lives between Lithuania and Paris. His work of the last few years is dystopian, fusing absurdity with existentialism. Melnikas's books have been translated into Ukrainian, English and French. His dystopian novel "The Distant Space" (also known as "The Remote Space") became BBC Book of the Year in Ukraine in 2013. The French translation of this novel "Espace Lointain", published by Agullo Éditions in 2018 received a prestigious Libr'a Nous prize as the Best Book of the Year (Livre de l'Année en France, in the category 'Imaginaire').

KEYWORDS: detective; Nordic noir; ritual murder; birds; revenge story; Vilnius; Lithuania in autumn.



Vilnius: Tyto alba,
2020, 230 pp.

A novel

The Girls from Freedom Boulevard

Tales told with a light touch, these easily readable stories of two women's lives are set in the legendary interwar Kaunas, the temporary capital of Lithuania at the time, also known as little Paris.

Ina Pukelytė's second novel, "The Girls from Freedom Boulevard", tells two parallel stories: that of Zofia, a Polish woman from the Šančiai borough of Kaunas and an employee at 'Stella' bookshop; and the story of Rachel Berger – an actor who later became the director of Kaunas Jewish theatre. They both lived in the thriving temporary capital, Kaunas, during the last decade of an independent Lithuania – their stories spanning from 1932 to the beginning of World War II and the dark 1941 when the Holocaust began. The novel is divided into four parts according to the seasons, which follow the developments in each women's story, as well as the historical events of interwar Kaunas – placing the characters in spaces and venues popular in the city at the time. Zofia's character challenges the common understanding of Lithuanian identity of that time - her family consider themselves to be Lithuanian, but all speak Polish. Rachel's character resurrects and immortalises Jewish actress Rachel Berger's life: she falls in love and starts a family in Kaunas, becomes the director of the Jewish theatre, and eventually perishes in the Holocaust.

INA PUKELYTĖ is a theatre producer, playwright, director, culture manager, and an Associate Professor at Vytautas Magnus University. Her first novel "French Romance" was published in 2000. She is also the author of the monograph "Jewish Theatre in Interwar Lithuania", published in 2017. "The Girls from Freedom Boulevard" is her second novel.

KEYWORDS: interwar life; Freedom Boulevard; history of Kaunas; Kaunas Jewish theatre; the beginning of World War II.



Vilnius: Lithuanian Writers' Union Publishing House, 2020, 198 pp.

A novel

The Library of Beauty and Evil

A decadent, eccentric and aristocratic story of beauty and the sacrifices made for it, as well as the death of God, and consequently, the death of The Decalogue. How much evil is one capable of committing to satisfy a passion for collecting? And how does one live in a world whose beauty is not understood?

'Our epoch no longer remembers the subject of beauty, since contemporary literature prioritises political and social subjects and struggles for human rights of one type or another', says Undinė Radzevičiūtė. Her new novel is set in Weimar-era Berlin and tells the story of a young eccentric heir, Walter Schultz, who inherits the wealth of his grandfather Egon. He is also bequeathed a library with a unique and mysterious book collection, which awakens within Walter an urge to add to the collection. For Walter, who was ready to die at the age of 25, this unexpected activity ushers in a new era of danger and crime, with dilemmas over freedom and morality, as well as beauty – with a drop or two of evil. Telling Walter's story in her distinctively concise style, Radzevičiūtė eloquently contemplates the links between beauty and ugliness, and good and evil. She creates a persuasive image of the decadent 1920s Berlin, not at all dissimilar to the present making 'The Library of Beauty and Evil' a powerful metaphor for creative work in general.

UNDINĖ RADZEVIČIŪTĖ is an internationally acclaimed author of six novels and a collection of short stories. Her books have been shortlisted for The Most Creative Book of the Year on four occasions and have been nominated four 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 widely translated Lithuanian authors.

KEYWORDS: beauty and evil; the aesthetic of ugliness; library; collection and collector; 'Gott ist tot'; Weimar-era Berlin.



Lisa's Apartment

Vilnius: Tyto alba,
2020, 262 pp.

A novel

This is the story of one apartment in Kaunas Old Town and a mother and daughter who live in it. It is also a historically significant in story of the Lithuanian liberation from Soviet occupation, and the initial influx of goods and ideas from the Western world.

Vaiva Rykštaitė's novel tells the story of those who were born in the mid-1980s. At first glance this is Gintarė's and her mother Saulita's story, put together from fragments of memories, but it is also a shared story of so many others from that time. A whole generation of people who grew and came of age, experiencing all their firsts while the nation was taking its first independent steps. It is about the childhoods spent outdoors in the backyards of tall apartment blocks, where the Roma women used to sit on benches eating sunflower seeds, fortune-telling, and occasionally putting a curse on you. Lithuania was an interesting and volatile place in the 1990s, with the infamous Kaunas mafia raging - they appear in the novel episodically. Rykštaitė said that 'the idea of writing "Lisa's Apartment" came about because I wanted to capture my mother's fiery energy', and to think about what contributed to our childhood and youthful memories.

VAIVA RYKŠTAITĖ is a writer, blogger and yoga teacher with an MA in Philosophy. She currently lives in Hawaii where she is bringing up her two daughters. She made her debut in 2009 with the novel "Butterfly Syndrome". She is the author of four novels and two children's books. Rykštaitė wrote "First Time Mum" – one of the most widely read contemporary nonfiction books in Lithuania.

KEYWORDS: 1990s; childhood and youth episodes; collective memory, mother and daughter; coming-of-age novel.



Vilnius: Lithuanian Writers' Union Publishing House, 2020, 240 pp.

A novel

Repairs

This is a story of two families at the end of the 20th century, when everyone in Post Soviet Lithuania lived in identical flats, owned the same items and formed friendships within the network of their apartment block. "Repairs" also tells a story rooted in the present, where the fraying net of commonality and crumbling family relationships might be saved by...repairs? And not only of the walls.

Jurga Tumasonytė's first novel unfolds at the boundaries of the detective genre. It tells a story of life in a standard apartment block, in an ordinary area of Kaunas, over different periods of time. In 1991 when Lithuania finally frees itself from Soviet occupation, it plunges headlong into wild capitalism, while the characters in "Repairs" live with the consequences of these events. Then, in the present, as things finally stabilise, a childhood friend reappears unexpectedly and disappears again, only this time in mysterious criminal circumstances. In the ensuing search for the friend, the narrator traces the history of the two women's friendship, shaped by living in the same apartment block, playing the same games and having the same experiences, but with an underlying competition growing between them as each year goes by. Life in an apartment block begins to feel like a game of Sims. It is possible to draw parallels with Elena Ferrante's work here; reading "Repairs" makes you contemplate the ways in which one's parents' traumas, as well as the economic and social crises they live through, affect their children's lives and the relationships they form.

JURGA TUMASONYTĖ is a writer with a truly unique aesthetic sensibility. Her debut short story book "Dirbtinė muselė" (The Little Artificial Fly, 2011) was awarded the Kazimieras Barėnas Literature Prize. Her second collection of short stories "Mermaids" was listed among the best books of the year. She received the Jurga Ivanauskaitė award for the book. In 2020 Tumasonytė was awarded the Lithuanian literature equivalent of a Nobel prize – the Antanas Vaičiulaitis award. Tumasonytė works in the "Eureka!" bookshop which inspired her book "Knygyno istorijos" (Stories from a Bookshop, 2018). She has published a great number of interviews with a variety of artists. "Repairs" is her first novel.

KEYWORDS: apartment block; repairs; collective memory; the 90s; story of two women's friendship and competition; the relationship between parents and children.



Killing Zeus

Vilnius: Lithuanian Writers' Union Publishing House, 2020, 334 pp.

A novel

A sombre critique of patriarchy, "Killing Zeus" tells one of the fundamental cultural stories – that of the relationship between father and son. With the title immediately evoking the motif of patricide, this book invites the reader to follow the tangled threads of life.

Mindaugas Jonas Urbonas dedicates his second novel to 'the boys who, despite seeking it, never gained their father's approval'. Attempts to overcome one's own, and one's father's, expectations form the very core of this novel. The lead character, Martin, is a lecturer who lives at the edge of the world near the Arctic – now a general battlefield due to the effects of global warming. However, there is another pressing inner fight that Martin is battling with: his attempt to conquer his relationship with his father – an ambitious and egocentric painter, whose scarce attention and affection Martin has craved throughout his life. Blending patriarchal legends, Classical myths and a gloomy apocalyptic present, Urbonas offers a stark and introspective version of human relationships, reminiscent of Scandinavian gloom.

MINDAUGAS JONAS URBONAS is a contemporary writer who made his debut with the short story collection "The Urn of Spirits" in 2016. His novel "Melancholy of a Thousand Years" came out a year later. "Killing Zeus" is his third book. Urbonas works as a Lithuanian language and literature teacher in Klaipėda.

KEYWORDS: father's influence; father-son relationship; dealing with the past; distance; bleak life.



Vilnius: Apostrofa,
2019, 136 pp.

A play

Russian Romance

An expertly written play which cleverly interlaces the biography of the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy with his legendary novel “Anna Karenina”. The play raises a core question pertinent to any creative work: what exactly is an author’s imprint made up of – an imprint that will not only be preserved in the literary canon but possibly in all eternity?

A luminary in the Lithuanian playwriting scene, Marius Ivaškevičius first wrote “Russian Romance” in Russian after carefully studying the biography of Leo Tolstoy, known as the Russian “nation’s conscience”. It was staged at the Vladimir Mayakovsky Theatre in Russia in 2016, directed by Mindaugas Karbauskis, and Ivaškevičius was awarded the “Golden Mask”, the most important award in Russian theatre, in 2017. Ivaškevičius translated the two-act play into Lithuanian a couple of years later, masterfully playing with varied linguistic registers and dialects. The story is about Leo Tolstoy and his family, especially his wife, Sophia Tolstaya. She was a woman who carried on her shoulders not only Tolstoy’s genius and his work – copying and editing his manuscripts - but also all the anguish that flooded the family. This play probes people’s fate, where imagination interlaces with real life - Tolstoy’s work is rooted not only in his own life story but also in that of his characters. With time all these life stories increasingly intersect and merge, turning into fictional figures and symbols of the universal family life.

MARIUS IVAŠKEVIČIUS is an author, playwright, film screenwriter and director. Undoubtedly, he is one of the best contemporary Lithuanian playwrights, and shot to fame with his plays “Madagascar” and “Expulsion”. At the beginning of his writing career he was famous as a remaker of myths and a deconstructor of history. Both qualities are present in “Russian Romance”. Ivaškevičius was awarded the The Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore prize in 2004; he was awarded the The Order for Merits to Lithuania in 2014; and in 2018 he received the Lithuanian National Prize for Culture and Arts. Ivaškevičius has been the curator of the Estonian Vaba Lava theatre in 2019/2020 and in 2020/2021.

KEYWORDS: Leo Tolstoy; Sophia Tolstaya; Anna Karenina; wife and muses; merging fiction and biography, bilingual book.

AWARDS: Golden Mask Award, 2017.



Bodies

Vilnius: Balto,
2020, 157 pp.

Short stories

These twelve short stories which are set in different corners of Europe tell, from distinct perspectives, of bodies and their inhabitants. The body is a physical form that often determines a person's actual and imaginary life.

Akvilė Kavaliauskaitė's memorable second book of short stories departs in form but follows the success of her very readable debut novel "Two Lifetimes in One Summer". In twelve stories, told from distinct perspectives, people's lives unfold as if under a magnifying glass. One moment we see an excerpt from an insurance agent's boring life; then a scene in a film director's studio, immediately sparking associations with Pedro Almodóvar. Kavaliauskaitė captivates the reader with her effective use of the short story genre, managing to reveal a whole *lifeworld* in a brief fragment of a character's experience. Asked about the title of the book, Kavaliauskaitė said that 'we speak less and less about the fact that how we feel in our body is what defines it', adding that she has tried to illustrate how the physical body participates in the life of emotions and feelings.

AKVILĖ KAVALIAUSKAITĖ is a journalist, screenwriter, producer and TV host. She published her debut novel "Two Lifetimes in One Summer" in 2015. According to Kavaliauskaitė, her second book – the short story collection "Bodies", was inspired by true stories she encountered while travelling and exploring the world.

KEYWORDS: body; feelings and emotions; a mosaic of life fragments; the paradox of reality; surrealism.



Vilnius: Tyto alba,
2020, 363 pp.

Selected prose

The Collector

For the first time all the short fiction of one of the best Lithuanian writers from the second half of the 20th century, is published in a single collection. This new publication brings all his legendary characters, memorable plot lines, literary silence, fog, and eloquent metaphors together in one book.

With his 1977 debut short story collection “World Without Boundaries”, Saulius Tomas Kondrotas inadvertently wrote a manifesto for the writers of his generation. Kondrotas was one of the first Lithuanian writers to employ elements of magic realism, testing out a life in an unbounded world. He shared how to be, live and read *without boundaries* – both with his contemporaries and with later generations of readers. At the time, with Lithuania suffocating under Soviet occupation and Brezhnevian stagnation, this was in itself almost a magical act. His stories have always defied reality and now, having passed the test of time, they are part of the Lithuanian literature canon. ‘A magician’, Danutė Kalinauskaitė, the master of short prose herself, once said about Kondrotas. A character in one of his stories utters, ‘My story may help you understand a great deal of things’ – words also fitting for Kondrotas’s corpus of short prose, finally all presented in one book.

SAULIUS TOMAS KONDROTAS, a writer and photographer, made his debut in 1977, and has published four books of short prose and two novels. In 1986, while on holiday in Germany, he asked for political asylum and escaped from the Soviet Union. He later lived in California and worked at Radio Free Europe in Munich and Prague between 1989 and 2004. In 2004 he moved back to the US where he currently resides. After escaping to the West, Kondrotas has not written any new literary works but has been writing essays about life in the States.

KEYWORDS: world without boundaries;
short stories; magical realism; story as
metaphor; collector.



The Wayfarers' Stations

Vilnius: Odilė,
2019, 120 pp.

Flash fiction

These pure gems of flash fiction portray an unpolished, painful and authentic life. Each word pierces your heart with a sense of failure and hopelessness. These are truly anti-success stories.

Bleak micro-narratives from the ugly and dreary margins of society masterfully transform into macro-narratives in Vidas Morkūnas's fourth book. A collection of stories of unlucky people, those pushed out onto the wayside, 'The Wayfarers' Stations' is a gallery of failure. According to the writer, these stories and their protagonists are his life companions, in need of the most delicate of touches. The grouping of the characters forms the axis of the book: the nameless ones, people of abyss, the rich, the early ones, those made of fired and unfired clay, etc. Some of their lives are cracked or broken irreparably while others are often ruled by impatience and readiness to hurt another. Morkūnas's texts are strikingly dense and, once you are submerged in them, his mastery really comes into focus. Weaving together the ordinary and the dangerous, the bleakest reality with gloomy fantasy, Morkūnas tries to solve the mystery of death. Although not comfortable to read, these stories depict the fate of disadvantaged and overlooked fellow human beings, leaving the reader deeply affected. You may find that you have a lump in your throat and feel breathless when reading the stories, which are often no longer than a page or two. At the same time, this is also a sobering call to a society drunk with the excesses of boasting and success.

VIDAS MORKŪNAS is a writer, poet and a translator. He is the author of three books of short stories, and one book of poetry. In his interviews, he often stresses that he finds writing rather arduous due to his slow and meticulous method, and the demands he places on himself. Morkūnas has translated many books from German, Russian, English and Polish. He once admitted that, for him as a writer, 'a text is only good enough if it creates a convincing illusion of revelation of and enlightenment over something previously unknown, while mystifying something that previously seemed self-evident'.

KEYWORDS: flash fiction; micro-narrative; failure; broken people; people on the margins; fate; dialogue with death.

AWARDS: The Most Creative Book of 2019 in Lithuania.

NON-FICTION



Vilnius: Lapas,
2019, 255 pp.

The Cold War Capsule: Lithuanian Design in London, 1968: The Story of One Pavilion

This widely researched and catchy (hi)story of a single pavilion reads almost like a detective novel. It closely surveys the unique history of Lithuanian design in the context of the Cold War, and the political realities and tensions of the time.

Design historian Karolina Jakaitė's research for this book began in 2008 after she overheard someone mention 'some exhibition in London' in passing; then there was also Vaidilutė Grušeckaitė's op art design of a branch of rue – an important Lithuanian national symbol. The author reconstructs the history of the Soviet Union industrial exhibition which showcased the communist way of life at the Earl's Court exhibition centre in London in August 1968. Jakaitė focuses her attention on the Lithuanian pavilion – its concept and design created by Tadas Baginskis. This architect and designer emerges as one of the key figures of the book. Rich in archival footage and pictures capturing the London of 1968, Jakaitė's book walks us through the exhibited objects and specimens of modern manufacturing chosen to represent Soviet Lithuania at the time. Moreover, it gives its readers a glimpse into the impressions of the 'free world' that the creators of the pavilion took away with them.

Dr KAROLINA JAKAITĖ is a design history researcher, and a lecturer at the Vilnius Academy of Arts. Her research focuses on Soviet Lithuanian design. She is interested in artefacts and the stories of their makers; the processes of contemporary design; everyday culture; and the activities of design institutions. As a curator, she has organised exhibitions and conferences, carried out design history projects, and given public lectures in Lithuania and abroad. She is a co-founder and the head of 'The Design Foundation' – a research initiative dedicated to Lithuanian design history.

KEYWORDS: design history; Lithuanian pavilion; London; 1968; Cold War Capsule.



A Lifetime of Letters

Vilnius: Post scriptum.
Littera,
2020, 320 pp.

Edited by
Kęstutis Pikūnas

This beautiful and somewhat mysterious book whose unedited pages contain a collection of letters that the famous brothers Jonas and Adolfas Mekas sent from America to Semeniškiai village, Buginiai post office, Biržai district, Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic. They were all addressed to the most important addressee of their lives – their mother, Elžbieta Mekienė.

What does a family separated by war – two brothers on one side of the ocean, and their mother on the other – write to each other about? The Mekas brothers' letters, written between 1957 and 1995, and collected in this book, answer this question. Accompanied by a huge archive of photographs from the Mekas brothers' various life-stages, this book illustrates and contextualises their lives in the US as well as their visits to Lithuania in the 1970s. The brothers escaped to the West in 1944 and ended up in New York in 1949, where they walked the creative path together. With the world starting to transition from World War II into the Cold War, the Mekas brothers began writing letters to their mother, re-establishing a long-lost connection and dialogue with their family on the other side of the ocean. "A Lifetime of Letters" opens up two distinct dimensions of living in the free world, on the one hand, and in an occupied country, on the other. The letters are full of sincere and ever-present gratitude to their mother, the everyday observations of life in the States, and references to the Mekas brothers' creative process.

The MEKAS brothers are probably the most famous Lithuanians of the second half of the 20th century. They both laid the ground for American avant-garde cinema, founded the magazine 'Film Culture', and participated in the Fluxus movement. Jonas Mekas was a film critic, maker of autobiographical documentary cinema, and a poet. Following his passion, he founded and developed Anthology Film Archives – 'one of the world's largest and most important repositories of avant-garde cinema, and a screening venue'. Adolfas Mekas was a writer, filmmaker and film director. His 1963 film 'Hallelujah the Hills' was shown at the Cannes film festival. Adolfas started teaching at the Bard College and later founded the Film Department there.

KEYWORDS: Jonas Mekas; Adolfas Mekas;
life letters; time letters; USA; Lithuania; art.

Matilda

Unlocked Diary: a Collection

Vilnius: The Institute
of Lithuanian Literature
and Folklore,
2019, 341 pp.

Edited by
Mindaugas Kvietkauskas

What does it mean to open a murdered young poet's diary 80 years after her death? This book is what would have been Matilda Olkinaitė's early work, if it hadn't been for the Holocaust. It collects intimate diary entries – a testament not only of her talent but also of the moral imperative captured in one of her poems: 'and still I have another wish: to be a human'.

Matilda Olkinaitė's life ended in one of the first unmarked Holocaust pits in the Rokiškis district of Lithuania, in July 1941. Barely 19 at the time, she was a talented poet of great promise. 'Quietly, without a sound, like fog in the twilight / a beautiful butterfly was extinguished forever...' – were the words from a poem Olkinaitė wrote in 1937. Growing up in a Jewish pharmacist's family, she spoke five languages but despite that chose to write only in Lithuanian. Olkinaitė was well known in her district, with her work published in the press on many occasions. "The Unlocked Diary" is the first attempt to bring her work out of oblivion by publishing it all in one volume. The book mainly consists of Olkinaitė's notebook and a diary written between August 1940 and February 1941. Both the notebook and the diary were hidden away during the war and are the sole records of Matilda's final years. Her works which were published between 1932 and 1940 are also included here. Irena Veisaitė, the professor who survived the Holocaust and preserved Olkinaitė's writings, says that 'the entire Lithuanian tragedy emerges in front of my eyes through Olkinaitė's work'.

MATILDA OLKINAITĖ (1922–1941) was a young Lithuanian Jewish poet, who wrote in Lithuanian and perished in the Holocaust. She was born in Panemunėliai town, Rokiškis district, in the family of a pharmacist, and graduated from Rokiškis Juozas Tumas-Vaižgantas high school. Olkinaitė studied French at Vytautas Magnus University and Vilnius University. She started publishing her poems and prose in 1932 and was preparing a debut poetry collection. On 10 July 1941 she was brutally murdered by Lithuanian Nazi collaborators in Kavoliškis forest together with the Olkinas and Jofė families. Priest Juozapas Matelionis saved her notebook and hid it at the Panemunėlis church, in a secret spot under the altar. Organist and dissident Alfredas Andrijauskas discovered the notebook in the 1990s and handed it over to Professor Irena Veisaitė. Later Veisaitė also managed to find Olkinaitė's diary which she wrote between 1940 and 1941 – documenting the personal and historical tragedy.

KEYWORDS: cultural heritage; life cut short; Holocaust; remembrance.



Vilnius: Baltos lankos,
2020, 205 pp.

A Guerilla: Monika Alūzaitė – A Woman Fighting for Freedom: an academic study

The most authentic herstory, this is the portrait of Monika Alūzaitė – a brave woman, who was active in guerilla warfare. The book reveals the reality of World War II and the post-war years, specifically shedding light on women's role in the Lithuanian resistance movement.

This academic study by the historian Marius Ėmužis is primarily guerilla fighter Monika Alūzaitė's biography, but also the story of 'some guerillas from Žemaičiai district, who were active in Šatrija,' and of their associates and those who tried to capture them. So this is a portrait of the whole Lithuanian post-war generation. When telling these stories, Ėmužis strikes a balance between captivating language and a researcher's precision, while avoiding inaccessible academic jargon. Monika Alūzaitė's biography is probably the first book to depict women's vital role in the Lithuanian guerilla war against the Soviet government from 1944 to 1953 in such detail. For a long time, it was believed that women were merely messengers and helpers in the war, but Ėmužis' research shows that their role was just as important as men's. 'Writing this book, I realised that the boundary between home and a bunker is very fluid,' Ėmužis has said. His reconstruction of Alūzaitė's life allows us to better imagine and experience the life of a woman guerilla fighter. Alūzaitė's diary was used to help recreate the humane and authentic emotional side of this life story.

DR MARIUS ĖMUŽIS is a historian and a lecturer at the History Faculty of Vilnius University. In 2016 he submitted his dissertation "Soviet Lithuania Ruling Elite 1944–1974: interpersonal relations and their expression". His research areas include the history and activity of Comintern (The Communist International), the nomenclature of Soviet Lithuania, and the guerrilla war in Lithuania.

KEYWORDS: women in guerilla war; freedom fighters; postwar life; humanity despite war; biography.

TRANSLATION GRANT PROGRAMME

The aim of the Translation Grant Programme is to promote Lithuanian literature abroad. Grants are available for the translation of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama, children's and young adult books, as well as the translation of other important books and publications.

There are 3 grants available: The Books Translation Grant, The Illustrated Books (Children's Picture Books and Graphic Novels) Grant and The Sample Translation Grant.

WHO CAN APPLY?

The Translation Grant Programme is open to foreign publishers for the translation of Lithuanian literature or literary works related to Lithuania.

Sample Translation Grant is open for authors, translators and publishers living in Lithuania or abroad.

WHEN TO APPLY?

Deadlines for the submission of applications are **1 April and 1 October**.

WHAT DOES THE GRANT COVER?

- ¶ **The Books Translation Grant** covers up to 100% of translation costs,
- ¶ **The Illustrated Books (Children's Picture Books & Graphic Novels) Grant** covers up to 100% of translation costs and additional publishing costs to a maximum of 1000 EUR (copyright license, illustrations, editing, design, printing, etc.),
- ¶ **The Sample Translation Grant** covers up to 100% of translation costs.

WHAT MUST THE ILLUSTRATED BOOKS GRANT APPLICATION INCLUDE?

- ☞ a completed application form,
- ☞ a copy of the contract with the owner of the rights,
- ☞ a copy of the contract with the translator (if translation costs are applied for),
- ☞ the translator's qualifications (e.g. CV, previous translations) (if translation costs are applied for),
- ☞ a brief presentation of the publishing house,
- ☞ a short cover letter justifying the proposed application.

WHAT MUST THE BOOKS TRANSLATION GRANT APPLICATION INCLUDE?

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

WHAT MUST THE SAMPLE TRANSLATION GRANT APPLICATION INCLUDE?

- ☞ a completed application form,
- ☞ a motivation letter justifying the choice of the proposed application,
- ☞ translator's (or translators') CV and list of previous translations,
- ☞ a letter of agreement from the text's author or the rights' owner (or owners) for the text to be translated.

Applications can be submitted only by e-mail.

For further information, please contact Kotryna Pranckūnaitė:

kotryna.pranckunaite@lithuanianculture.lt
www.lithuanianculture.lt

TEXTS BY
Jūratė Čerškutė

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Sasha Wilde and Jeremy Hill

DESIGN AND LAYOUT BY
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