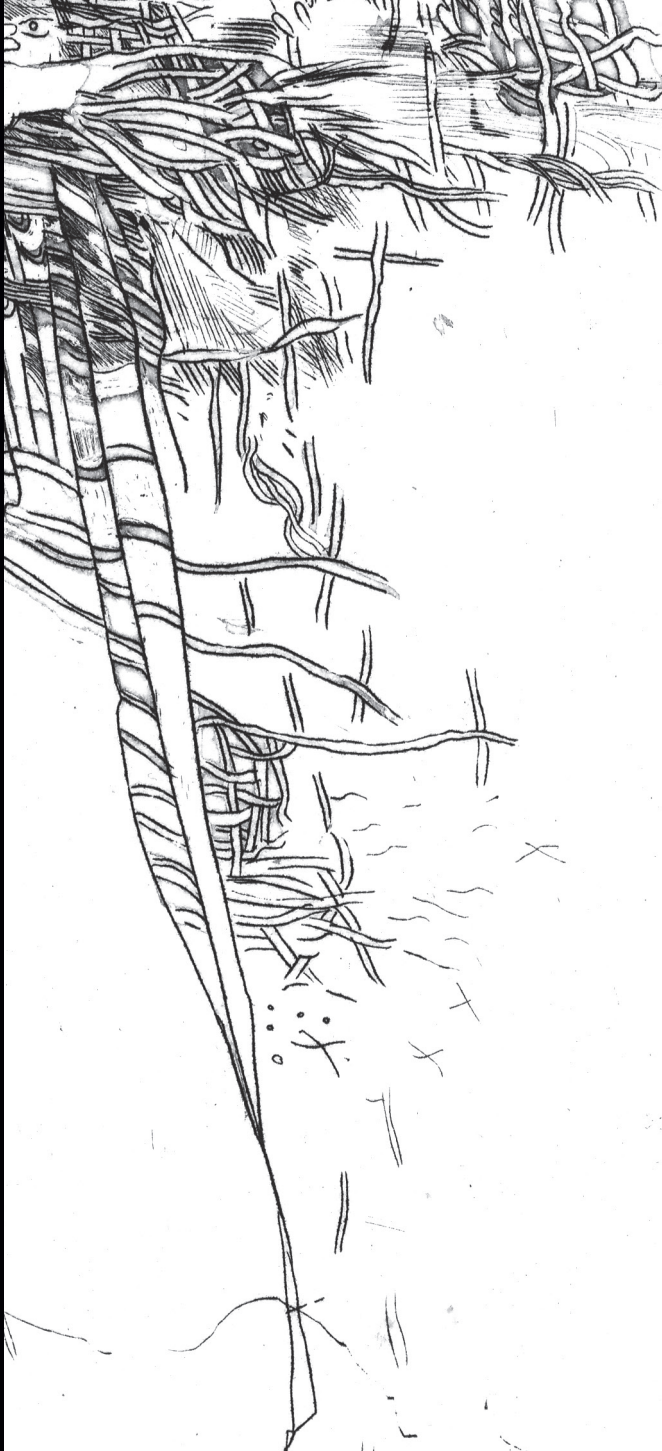



Life
Writing
and
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Contemporary
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Omaeluloolisus ja ajalookirjutus
Baltimaade nüüdiskultuuris



LIFE WRITING AND HISTORY WRITING
IN CONTEMPORARY BALTIC CULTURES

The 12th International Conference
of Baltic Literary Scholars

A conference hosted by the
Under and Tuglas Literature Centre
of the Estonian Academy of Sciences

14–15 November, 2019

Estonian Academy of Sciences, Kohtu Str 6, Tallinn

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Tallinn 2019

KONVERENTSI KUTSUNG

Balti kirjandusteadlaste konverentsid on toimunud alates 1996. aastast iga kahe aasta järel vaheldumisi kas Riias, Vilniuses või Tallinnas. Järjekorras 12. konverents toimub taas Tallinnas Eesti Teaduste Akadeemia Underi ja Tuglase Kirjanduskeskuses.

Seekordne Balti kirjandusteadlaste konverents keskendub omaeluloolisusele kirjanduses ja kultuuris laiemalt. Kuigi mälestuste ja päevikute kirjutamine on maailmakirjanduses levinud juba vähemalt 18. sajandist – näiteks Jean-Jacques Rousseau pihtimused (1765–1770), Johann Wolfgang Goethe epistolaarne romaan „Noore Wertheri kannatused“ (1774), baltisaksa naiskirjaniku Elisa von der Recke autobiograafia (1795) või Kristian Jaak Petersoni päevaraamat (1818) –, on nüüdisaegsed tekstid üldjuhul hoopis teistsuguse ülesehituse ja eesmärgiga. Autobiograafiliste teoste (mälestuste, päevikute, kirjade jms) populaarsus on kestnud juba aastakümneid. Üha enam ilmub ka 21. sajandil teoseid, milles autobiograafilisus on põimunud kirjandusliku fiktsiooniga; samuti kerkib esile uusi vorme, teemasid ja vaatenurki. Seeläbi kajastuvad mitmed ajaloos seni maha vaikitud sündmused, mis on tugevalt mõjutanud paljude inimeste elu ja saatust, näiteks Alvydas Šlepikase raamat „Minu nimi on Marytė“ (2012; eesti keeles 2015) või Knuts Skujenieksi vangilaagris kirjutatud luulekogu „Seeme lume all“ (1990; eesti keeles 2018). Mälestuste kaudu jõuab ajaloo traagika tulevaste põlvkondadeni. Üksikisiku lugu mõjutab ühiskonda laiemaltki ning sageli ei piirdu see mõju ainult kirjandustekstiga, vaid avaldub ka visuaalsetes ja etenduskunstides. Heaks näiteks võiks siin olla Leelo Tungla romaanitrioloogia „Seltsimees laps“ jõudmine kinolinale (2018).

Konverentsil käsitletavad võimalikud teemad:

- omaeluloolisuse avaldamine proosatekstides;
- omaeluloolisus luules;
- fakt ja fiktsioon omaeluloolistes teostes;
- omaelulooline kirjandus ning visuaalsed ja etenduskunstid (kujutav kunst, film, teater);
- omaeluloolisus ja ajalookirjutus.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The first biennial conference of Baltic literary scholars took place in Riga in 1996. It has been followed by meetings in Vilnius and Tallinn, which will also be the venue of the 12th Conference of Baltic Literary Scholars. The Conference is organised by the Under and Tuglas Literature Centre of the Estonian Academy of Sciences.

The 12th Conference of Baltic Literary Scholars will focus on recent developments in life writing in the field of literature and culture. Although autobiographical texts, such as diaries and memoirs, have been widespread in world literature since the 18th century – one only needs to mention Jean-Jacques Rousseau's confessions (1765–1770) or Johann Wolfgang Goethe's epistolary novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), the autobiography of the Baltic noblewoman Elisa von der Recke (1795) or the diary of the Estonian poet Kristian Jaak Peterson (1818) –, the structure, and aim, of life writing has undergone changes by present times.

Life writing has proved to be popular again during recent decades, and the format is still viable in the 21st century. At the same time, several new formats, themes and perspectives within life writing have emerged. The most significant recent texts constitute life writing as a realm with a strong tendency towards literature, but also social and cultural history. Autobiographical aspects are intertwined with fiction, better to reveal historical events that have influenced the destinies of many people. Memoirs will also help younger generations not to forget the tragic moments and periods of history.

Life writing functions as a textual practice not only in literature, but also in the visual and performing arts, in film and theatre.

Possible topics to be discussed in this framework include:

- life writing and prose fiction;
- life writing and poetry;
- fact and fiction in works of life writing;
- life writing and visual and performing arts (film, theatre and paintings);
- life writing and history writing.

PROGRAM

14 November

09.00–09.30 Registration and greeting coffee

09.30–10.00 Opening

Jaan Undusk, Director of the Under and Tuglas Literature Centre of the Estonian Academy of Sciences, Member of the Estonian Academy of Sciences

Peeter Sauter, Laureate of the Baltic Assembly Prize, author of autobiographical writings

Session 1 Chair: **Jaan Undusk**

10.00–10.30 **Benedikts Kalnačs**, Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia

Literary History Writing as Life Writing: a Theoretical and Comparative Insight into Histories of Latvian Literature and Literary Culture

10.30–11.00 **Dalia Satkauskytė**, Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore

Games with Autobiography in Contemporary Lithuanian Literature: Between Historical Testimony and Provocative Confession

11.00–11.30 **Luule Epner**, Tallinn University

Autobiographical Performances by Actors in Contemporary Estonian Theatre

11.30–11.45 Coffee

Session 2 Chair: **Manfredas Žvirgždas**

11.45–12.15 **Laura Laurušaitė**, Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore

Contemporary (E)Migration Literature as Faction

12.15–12.45 **Jason Finch**, Åbo Akademi University

Life-Writing and the Frontiers of East London (Including Baltic Ones)

12.45–13.15 **Ojārs Lāms, Mārtiņš Laizāns**, University of Latvia

Life Through Meals in Contemporary Latvian Migrant Texts

13.15–15.00 Lunch break

Session 3 Chair: **Dalia Satkauskytė**

15.00–15.30 **Mirjam Hinrikus**, Under and Tuglas Literature Centre of the Estonian Academy of Sciences

The Autobiographical Dimension in Friedebert Tuglas' *Felix Ormusson*

15.30–16.00 **Eva Eglāja-Kristsone**, Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia

The Journal Intime: Autobiographical Narratives of Women from Documental to Literary Diaries

16.00–16.30 **Radvilė Racėnaitė**, Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore

The Image of Vilnius in the Life Writing of the Post-War Inhabitants of the City

16.30–17.00 **Aija Sakova**, Estonian Literary Museum

The Novel as a Testimony and a Historical Document, but of What Kind?

19.00–21.00 Reception at the Museum of the Under and Tuglas Literature Centre of the Estonian Academy of Sciences, Väikese Illimari Str 12, Tallinn

15 November

Session 4 Chair: Aija Sakova

09.30–10.00 **Aare Pilv**, Under and Tuglas Literature Centre of the Estonian Academy of Sciences

The Self and Time in *The Mutable* by Jaak Jõerüüt

10.00–10.30 **Zita Karkla**, Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia

Embodiment, Identity and Place: Travel Diaries of Latvian Women Writers in the Beginning of the 21st Century

10.30–11.00 **Piret Kruuspere**, Under and Tuglas Literature Centre of the Estonian Academy of Sciences

Life Writing in Estonian Memory Theatre

11.00–11.15 Coffee

Session 5 Chair: Eva Eglāja-Kriststone

11.15–11.45 **Elle-Mari Talivee**, Under and Tuglas Literature Centre of the Estonian Academy of Sciences

The Glass Shards by Inga Gaile and Ideas of Positive and Negative Eugenics in Estonia during the 1930s

11.45–12.15 **Inguna Daukste-Silasproģe**, Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia

Bridges between a Life and a History: Two Narratives Describing Childhood

12.15–12.45 **Manfredas Žvirgždas**, Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore

Epistolary Dialogue as a Form of Vitality in Post-War Lithuanian Exile Culture: the Correspondence of Juozas Girnius and Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas

12.45–13.30 Lunch: pumpkin soup at the venue

Session 6 Chair: Benedikts Kalnačs

13.30–14.00 **Martin Klöker**, Under and Tuglas Literature Centre of the Estonian Academy of Sciences

The Life of a Forbidden Love: Life Writing and Love Letters

14.00–14.30 **Joosep Susi**, University of Tartu

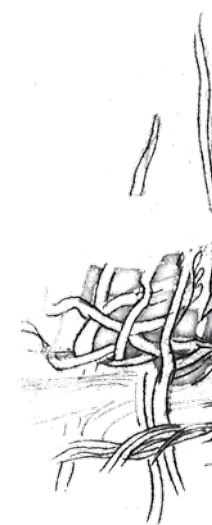
Against Autobiographical Reading!

14.30–15.00 **Tiina Ann Kirss**, Estonian Literary Museum, University of Tartu

Thresholds of Postmemory: Katja Petrowskaja, Nora Ikstena, Ene Mihkelson

15.00–15.30 **Anneli Mihkelev**, Tallinn University

Poetry and Life Writing in Recent Baltic Cultures: Knuts Skujenieks and Mats Traat



THE UNLUCKY MISS B., OR LIFE WRITING AS A PERFORMATIVE

Welcome words

The difference between life writing and fiction seems to rely on their different referential bases: while life writing claims always to be also an act of subjective history writing, fiction does not necessarily imply such presumptions. Still, there are major exceptions, such as the historical prose of Jaan Kross with its considerable passion for historical discoveries.

However, life writing as a sort of historiography is not only characterised by some more or less mild subjectivity due to personal interpretations, memory gaps or creative associations in remembering events and human beings. Life writing aims at making an impact on a much broader field of spiritual realities. Everyone who takes his or her memories into the public sphere as a book, for example, is making an effort to occupy some little territory of collective cultural memory, and remould it according to his or her personal truths of life. They may succeed in this or not, but the attack has started and the others have to take sides in the conflict. These people who write memoirs are actively participating in the battle of establishing their personal vision of life as a generally applicable model. Those who do not write memoirs depend on the visions of others. Recently, for instance, the Estonian writer Ott Raun published the third and last volume of his memoirs, crowded with historical actors, me being one of them. There are a number of people who know me personally and have their personal views on me. There are still more of them – today, not to speak of the future – who have no idea about my human flesh and blood. For them, an actor who bears my name in the memories of Raun, actually is the man in reality. Fortunately, I cannot blame the writer for this role.

Let us return to the fiction of Jaan Kross. Kross refused to write down his memories for a long time on the ground that – as he said – everything important he had to say to the world had been written in his poems and prose works. Yet at the end of his life – too late, in fact –, he nevertheless started working on his personal recollections in a written form. This may have happened at the very

moment when he understood that, as a fiction writer – although with pretensions to the historical truth – he would never be taken seriously as a full-size history writer, a historiographer. In the realm of life writing, in contrast, he was legally fighting for his personal piece of truth on the battlefield of collective memories. So he rolled up his sleeves in the end. His memoirs are a great autobiographical novel that contains many deliberate or unintentional phantasies, and nevertheless depict some fundamental personal truths of his life. To cite his memoirs in detail means an almost fifty-fifty chance of going astray. Yet as the subtitle of the work reads “memoirs”, and not “a novel”, the text has gained formal rights as a source book for history writing. Symptomatically, Kross himself cites in his memoirs quite a lot from his novels and short stories, as if to show that the truth value of his fiction is comparable to a text of life writing. Still he may have felt that only while melting fiction into the context of his memories could he convince the reader in his enthusiasm for this kind of belief.

Johann Wolfgang Goethe titled his memoirs as *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, that is, *Poetry and Truth*, with a deliberate emphasis on poetry as the decisive moment in the process of life writing. Remembering is an imaginative work of the searchers for the truth of life. I myself wrote a long time ago approximately as “Life cannot be remembered. One has remembrances of some life not yet lived”.

And this is the last and paramount aspect I should like to touch on. Life writing and the life not yet lived. Or: life writing and the life postulated first here, with this text. Life writing texts are overflowing with the type of sentences such as “I have always thought Miss B. was an excellent creature” or “I never thought of him badly”. These “always” and “never” seem to hint at the distant past and a long period of time in the course of which these opinions were held. The writer as if remembers some ancient truth. And quite often he or she even does not notice that exactly at that point he is uttering a performative – in other words: at that certain moment the ‘ancient



ABSTRACTS

and everlasting' postulate is being created for the first time, and the deep sympathy for Miss B. is finally established in an explicit manner. Even if this sympathy was occasionally not hidden from the world also earlier, the personal truth of life, the general rule of universal scope (expressed with 'always' or 'never') is established now. Apparently, the remarkable Miss B. herself was not conscious of what she "always" was – and, in all probability, the writer has made the final decision as late as now. Miss B. is perhaps not aware of the latter either. And the burning question which arises in her is the following: why did not he say that before? Life could have acquired other dimensions. She feels herself to be a bit unlucky.

But there was no t h a t life before. The life that is being remembered is created by means of writing. And in this sense, each text with an autobiographical bias means living one's own life in a new and different vein. You can call it a masquerade on a bad-tempered day, but if so, our task is to risk taking a glance behind the masks.

JAAN UNDUSK

*Director of the Under and Tuglas Literature Centre
of the Estonian Academy of Sciences*

BENEDIKTS KALNAČS

Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia

Literary History Writing as Life Writing: a Theoretical and Comparative Insight into Histories of Latvian Literature and Literary Culture

This paper will provide a comparison of two histories of Latvian literature written by a single author. I take as my research focus Andrejs Johansons' *Latviešu literatūra*, published in exile in the 1950s, and Guntis Berelis' *Latviešu literatūras vēsture*, printed in Latvia in the late 1990s. A discussion of the personal motifs behind the two works and an insight into their structural similarities and differences will create the background for a discussion of theoretical and methodological issues in literary history writing, and will deal with the personal dimension in the two examples and with their different socio-cultural contexts. In a sense, these and other examples of Latvian literary history writing might closely resemble the models of national and teleological literary history that were especially common in the 19th century. It is understandable that such an approach might meet considerable reservations. However, an explanation for this can certainly be sought in the constant distortion of literary processes that was imposed on Latvian society. This means one task for recent literary scholarship has been simply to restore a more or less reliable scenery that would at least notice most of the characteristic literary trends and personalities. In my paper I'll also discuss other texts on literary history in Latvia and, in addition, provide a comparison with such well-known contributions as those by Endel Nirk on Estonian literature and Vytautas Kubilius on Lithuanian literature.

DALIA SATKAUSKYTĖ

Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore

Games with Autobiography in Contemporary Lithuanian Literature: Between Historical Testimony and Provocative Confession

Elements of autobiographical writing were significant in the Lithuanian personal essay, which was the most popular literary genre between 2000 and 2010, but life writing or autobiographical narrative did not stand at the structural centre of it. Rimantas Kmita and his novel *Pietinia kronikas* (*The Chronicles of South District*, 2016) initiated a new trend in Lithuanian literature that gained great popularity among readers. Autobiography, or autobiography as fiction, not only functions as the structural dominant of the narrative, but also serves as a means for historical and sociological investigation of post-soviet society. The strategy of the life story fluctuating between confession, fiction and historical or social testimony takes a central position in Lithuanian literature and encompasses not only the novel (Kęsutis Šapoka, Virginija Kulvinskaitė), but also poetry (Giedrė Kazlauskaitė, Marius Burokas, Virginija Kulvinskaitė and others). The paper discusses the new trend of life writing in Lithuanian literature, and analyses the narrative and communicative strategies used in it and the effects of meaning they generate, together with the model of the post-soviet and actual reality it represents.

LUULE EPNER

Tallinn University

Autobiographical Performances by Actors in Contemporary Estonian Theatre

Biographical theatre is a kind of documentary theatre based on the life stories of real people that is a well-established tradition in Estonia. First created by Merle Karusoo, it has been further developed by young theatre practitioners like Paavo Piik and Mari-Liis Lill. In the early 1980s Karusoo also initiated autobiographical theatre, which used the life stories of the actors, for example in *Our biographies*, 1982. Autobiographical performances have mushroomed over the past decade, as post-dramatic aesthetics have spread and become an increasingly popular method of creation. Recent autobiographical performances have tended to be authored by the actors themselves. They are typically solo performances or collaborative efforts between two or three actors, and are mostly, though not exclusively, performed in small alternative theatres. The authors of such performances are often young actors with little experience of life and work, and this raises the question of how these works function in an actor's creative process.

The subjects of these performances can be divided into productions that speak of specific life experiences, for example studying at agricultural school (*Tiina Tauraitė's Tractor*), military service (*AK-47*), or the experiences of a young school teacher (*The Rehabilitation of Teacher Tammik*), and productions that reflect upon acting and the professional experience of being an actor (*Evald's Blanket*; *By the Way, I Love You*; *Rasmus Kaljujärvi 30 Years on Stage*, and others). From an aesthetic perspective, the key issues are the blurring of boundaries between fictionality and reality, or authentic experience, and the question of the actor's identity in such a performance, seen primarily in the tension between representation and self-presentation. The paper looks more closely into the textual and performative strategies of fictionalisation in the autobiographical performances of actors, and asks about their purpose and their effect on spectators.

LAURA LAURUŠAITĖ

Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore

Contemporary (E)Migration Literature as Faction

The blending of the two different, and even opposite, categories of fiction and fact in literature is a common phenomenon in the current environment of liquid modernity that is ruled by the laws of fragmentation, instability, and transience. Modern (e)migration literature written under the load of authentic collective *experiences* also bears witness to this flexibility and serves as a blender for different genres.

Methodologically the paper is based on imagology, which helps in following the unfolding relationship between an objective, living reality and its literary depiction. Of particular importance in the present discussion is that literature is a bidirectional medium that contextualises and programmes our thinking at the same time. While textual representations actualise reality, the writers themselves can equally be considered architects of reality, because by establishing images they contribute to the construction of reality, and "people are formed by what they read" (Spiering 1992). This raises the issue of how representative a literary work is for imagological research: *fictional* works intentionally create a different alternative existence, and so as an aestheticised margin of error for reality, they do not possess enough imagological potential. The work of the imagologist consists of marginal or faction genres like the historical novel, ego-documentary genres like biography and autobiography, the epistolary genre, diaries, or *pseudofactual* genres like travelogues, migration literature, history textbooks and the like, in which representative material for examining stereotypical structures and a nation's changing self-image can be found. In the imagological context, it was suggested that the term "representation" could be used instead of "mentality" because of the obscurity and vulnerability of the latter (Gorun 2007).

I will argue that the contemporary (e)migration literature of the Baltic countries deserves separate analysis as an abundant corps of information. I will go as far as to suggest that migrant literature

should be consulted alongside sociological data as an important bank of social, anthropological, ideological, and psychological information.

Gorun, Horațiu Tiberiu (2007). *Imagology Reference Marks*. – Annals of the University Constantin Brâncuși of Târgu Jiu: The University-Part of the Strategies for Romania's Postadoption to the European Union.

Spiering, Menno (1992). *Englishness: Foreigners and Images of National Identity in Postwar Literature*. – *Studia Imagologica*. Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi.

JASON FINCH

Åbo Akademi University

Life-Writing and the Frontiers of East London (Including Baltic Ones)

According to Ford Madox Hueffer (1905), cultured Londoners then did 'not want to think about several dark towns of a million or so existing east of "Whitechapel"'. London in 1900 was still the biggest city on earth. Approximately 1.1 million people actually then lived in East London, the industrial and maritime segment of the city. Recent literary urban studies (LUS) explores borders and peripheries as generators of literary plot and social meaning (Talivie and Finch 2015). The concept of borders includes temporal, linguistic and geographical boundaries, crossing which can be productive (Lotman 2005). In *Deep Locational Criticism*, developed by the author of this paper (2016), matters of scale are a key interest, and borders exist at both micro- and macro levels.

But LUS has neglected the relationship between fiction and life writing. This paper explores the relationship via case studies of two 1960s works on the frontier dividing the autobiographical novel and autobiography or memoir proper: Maureen Duffy's *That's How It Was* (1962) and A.S. Jasper's *A Hoxton Childhood* (1969). Each book tells, in a form of artistic prose (one highly wrought and poetic, the other naïve), the tale of an East London childhood and adolescence.

Together with 1960s novelists such as Robert Poole and Alexander Baron, and memoirists of the 'Jewish East End', the autobiographical fictions discussed here survey an East London landscape whose vital boundary of identity separated seemingly indigenous cockney Londoners from recently-arrived migrants, typically refugees from persecution in the Russian Empire. Textual absences matter. The East London migrants included independence fighters from the empire's Baltic provinces such as the perpetrators of the 1909 Tottenham Outrage and the 1911 Sydney Street Siege.

Powerfully present in representations of otherness in pre–World War One East London, such figures largely disappeared from the later literary memorialization of East London.

Lotman, Juri. (2005)[1984]. On the Semiosphere. – Sign Systems Studies, No. 33, pp. 205–229.

Talivee, Elle-Mari; Finch, Jason (2015). Eduard Vilde and Tallinn's Dynamic Peripheries, 1858–1903. – Ameen, Lieven; Finch, Jason; Salmela, Markku (Eds). Literature and the Peripheral City. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 164–183.

Finch, Jason (2016). Deep Locational Criticism. Imaginative place in literary research and teaching. Amsterdam – Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

OJĀRS LĀMS, MĀRTIŅŠ LAIZĀNS

University of Latvia

Life Through Meals in Contemporary Latvian Migrant Texts

Migrant literature in Latvian culture is a phenomenon of the 21st century. In this Latvian migrant literature the possibilities of the open world are depicted. The textual corpus dealing with contemporary Latvian migrant experiences is not vast (Bergs, Muktupāvela, Lācītis (Foreignerski), Manfelde), but some of those experiences have attracted great interest in the local reading community, and some have also been translated into foreign languages (Foreignerski, Muktupāvela). This paper deals with the description of gastronomic phenomena, or gastropoetics, in these texts, uncovering the similarities and differences in them. Whatever the different circumstances of the particular migrant cases, all the situations are united by the motif of gastronomical nostalgia, which focuses on simple and traditional Latvian foods. The gastropoetics of each text is marked by specific characteristics though. In the novel *Stroika with a London View* by Lācītis (Foreignerski) gastropoetics functions as the marker of social exclusion and failure, to the extent even of dumpster diving. Muktupāvela introduces the hybrid genre of recipistolary fiction, which is a novel plus a recipe book, where the monotonous daily experience of a mushroom picker is paralleled by rich and phantasmagorical recipes based on champignons. Bergs depicts the migration experiences of Gen Y and Gen Z, who form a more organic part of the open world, while in gastronomic terms they are still tied to their homeland through gastronomy. From another perspective, the gastropoetics in his stories is a sign of the opportunities and challenges offered by the open world. In this paper these texts will be presented as a paradigm connected by gastropoetics, representing the gastronomical as a powerful group of signs in Latvian contemporary migrant literature.

MIRJAM HINRIKUS

Under and Tuglas Literature Centre of the Estonian Academy of Sciences

The Autobiographical Dimension in Friedebert Tuglas' *Felix Ormusson*

Felix Ormusson (1915), a decadent, modernist novel by Friedebert Tuglas (1886–1971), is one of the most influential literary works within Estonian culture and literature of the first half of the 20th century. Even more than this, it has again caused resonance since the 1990s not only through the renewed reception of it but also through echoes in some fictional texts that were published at that time. This huge reception can be at least partly explained by the saturation of this novel with an enormous amount of inter-texts. That the autobiographical dimension is important in *Felix Ormusson* is already alluded to in its metafictional prologue, which quotes Goethe's statement on his novel *Wahlverwandschaften* (1809) in a conversation with Johann Peter Eckermann in 1830. In addition, the novel is written in the form of a diary, consisting of Ormusson's fragmental diary entries about his emotions and experiences related to his stay in the country house of his friend Johannes. This autobiographical dimension does not only appear in the hints about novels and genres that are more or less autobiographical, it seems also that some quotes in the novel refer to Tuglas' critical writings containing his understandings about nationalism, and more exactly his demands for nationalism in Estonian literature at the beginning of the 20th century. The question that interests me the most in my paper is how national discourse on the one hand and decadent discourse on the other entangle with each other. It seems that there are two different concepts of culture at work in *Felix Ormusson*, the pre-mature concept and the over-mature. Overall these both function as signifiers of the transitional situation

EVA EGLĀJA-KRISTSONE

Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia

The Journal Intime: Autobiographical Narratives of Women from Documental to Literary Diaries

Autobiographical writing is defined as a cultural and social practice in a variety of cultures, periods, regions, and contexts. The diary as a document is a great source of information about the women of an era (Delafield 2009). This paper takes as its centre the autobiographical narrative written by women before WWII, and it intends to experiment with different reading practices using interdisciplinary methods, and theories for analysing the female voice and the mentality of that period. Autobiography is useful in historical research as it contributes to the *histoire de mentalités*. In most cases female diaries are more like the *journal intime*, which is one of the most popular kinds of diary. They mostly contain the women's personal views of their intimate or family relations, their strivings to be the perfect woman, and a description of their dreams and intellectual or physical desires. Given the socio-political and cultural changes that affected Baltic society and especially women, these diaries give us today the chance not only to study women and men in a new light that reveals the patriarchal and modern expectations of women, but also to study gender relations through a form of female writing that records daily life in order to authorise self-representation from the perspective of the 21st century.

Delafield, Catherine (2009). *Women's Diaries as Narrative in the Nineteenth-Century Novel*. Farnham: Ashgate.

RADVILĖ RACĖNAITĖ

Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore

The Image of Vilnius in the Life Writing of the Post-War Inhabitants of the City

In the course of the three decades since the restoration of independence in Lithuania, interest in the past has increased significantly as it has in the other post-soviet societies, prompting various new forms of interpretation and commemoration of the past to appear, some of them grasping formerly prohibited, ignored or forgotten historical facts and personal experiences. Understandably, the soviet period stands out as the most important in this respect and requires particular re-consideration. The official soviet period, being heavily weighted down with ideology, was initially regarded in both public discourse and personal memoirs as an empty and lost time that had to be discarded and forgotten. The collective memory of the nation was primarily directed at the period of the first independence (1918–1940), which had recently re-emerged from oblivion. This also included the hitherto publicly suppressed victimological narratives of occupation, deportations, partisan resistance, and the Holocaust. The post-war history of Vilnius was also subject to reconsideration.

The paper presents an analysis of published memoirs and oral interviews with people of different ethnic origins, Lithuanian, Polish and Jewish, that were collected in the course of fieldwork carried out for an ongoing research project dedicated to the life stories of the post-war inhabitants of Vilnius and aimed at researching the dynamics of individual memory.

These life stories reveal the attitudes of people towards Vilnius as their native city and towards its soviet past, and their views on different historical periods, including the soviet experience standing in contrast to the idealised pre-war image of the city. The nostalgic side is frequently especially prominent in both life writing and the oral narratives, manifesting itself simultaneously as a specific feature of personal memory and as a path for impressive recreation of the past.

AIJA SAKOVA

Estonian Literary Museum

The Novel as a Testimony and a Historical Document, but of What Kind?

The German author Ralf Rothmann has claimed that the continuing silence of his father, who was enlisted in the SS as a 17-year-old young man, about the Second World War has created a vacuum inside him that he could only fill by writing a novel about the story of his father. Thus the novel *To Die in Spring* is true and fictional at the same time.

The Estonian diaspora author Elin Toona Gottschalk has said her writing is neither fictional nor factual. She describes her literary memoirs *Into Exile* about the mass flight from Estonia in 1944, when she was only seven years old, as fiction.

So even if Toona Gottschalk is an eyewitness to important historical processes and Rothmann is a secondary witness, the value of their literary testimonies and literary historical documents lies not in the factual story that they have to tell, but rather in the way they show how humanity is preserved during traumatic and difficult historical processes and what happens to a human being within those historical processes. In this sense some literary stories or literary memoirs can be read and understood as moral witness stories.

The current paper aims to explore the boundaries of literary moral witness stories and ask what a moral witness testimony is within literature, and how it differs from life writing.

AARE PILV

Under and Tuglas Literature Centre of the Estonian Academy of Sciences

The Self and Time in *The Mutable* by Jaak Jõerüüt

The Mutable (*Muutlik*, 2010) is the most autobiographical text among Jaak Jõerüüt's works. It is a diary written in belletristic style, which covers approximately one year of his service as the Estonian ambassador in Riga. Jõerüüt writes about his work and everyday life, but the most important parts of the diary are its existential and autopsychographical contemplations. One of the main issues in the book is time, temporality and the timelessness of the inner self, and this is also expressed in the peculiar form of the diary; it is not strictly chronological as the entries sometimes follow each other in reverse order too. In some sense the diary is also a delicate study of personal history and asks how much and in what ways the self is defined by its temporality. It is interesting that Jõerüüt gives his answers not as explicit claims, but through the poetics of the text itself and he leaves a certain amount of silence in his text. The paper tries to examine the concept of the self that *The Mutable* creates, to get at what is meant by the title of the book.

ZITA KARKLA

Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia

Embodiment, Identity and Place: Travel Diaries of Latvian Women Writers in the Beginning of the 21st Century

Travelling away from home for a woman writer may also mean time away from work, domesticity and childrearing, giving her free time for writing, reflecting, going deeper and paying more attention to the inner 'I'. The travel diaries of two Latvian women writers, *To the East of the Sun and to the North of the Earth* (2005) by Inga Ābele and *Travel for a Month* (2011) by Andra Manfelde, were written while the authors were residing in writers' houses in Sweden at the Baltic Centre for Writers and Translators in Visby on Gotland, and Estonia at the Writers' and Translators' House in Käsmu, and were published shortly afterwards, covering short but intense periods in the lives of the authors. Their loose, fragmented, personal and unstrained writing takes the form of a diary where everyday impressions and observations are noted, and it becomes a work of art, reflecting the specific experiences of a woman and a writer. The writer's identity is in the foreground in both diaries as Ābele and Manfelde reflect on being and on the creative process, following the line dividing the conscious and unconscious, where the boundaries between the internal and the external overlap. Personal identity also comes in through their awareness of place in the harsh northern landscapes of Käsmu and Visby, as the body of the woman writer links the self to the lived space in its sensible and perceptible features. Looking closely at the texts, the paper aims to explore the relationship between the body, the landscape and the creative process in women's life writing in the beginning of the 21st century.

PIRET KRUUSPERE

Under and Tuglas Literature Centre of the Estonian Academy of Sciences

Life Writing in Estonian Memory Theatre

In the framework of Estonian memory theatre of the 1970s–1990s and the beginning of the 21st century, which aims to treat and work through individual and collective traumatic experiences of the national and historical past, I will focus on how life writing and history writing have become entangled or intertwined in both dramatic texts and stage productions. At first I will analyse the autobiographical aspects of particular texts, while also paying attention to meaningful metaphors in them like the image of *the lost father*, and then examine the phenomenon of travelling memory forms.

The corresponding examples are primarily dramatic works by two Estonian playwrights, Rein Saluri (*Minek / A Depature; Poiste sõidud / The Boys' Journeys*) and Madis Kõiv (*Tagasitulek isa juurde / Return to the Father*), and the stagings of the female stage director Merle Karusoo. The interpretations of the dramatic texts on the Estonian stage and in stage productions abroad as Saluri's *Paskutines doi valandos / Two Last Hours* at Šiauliai Theatre in Lithuania or *Lähtö* at the Finnish National Theatre, or Kõiv's *Takaisin kotiin* at Joensuu City Theatre in Finland, and on the stage of the local Russian drama theatre, will be examined and compared. Parallels will be drawn for Saluri and Kõiv with their prose and their memoirs or autobiographies, like the series of *Studia memoriae* by Kõiv. For Karusoo, I will pose the question of the possible transfer of some of the characteristic features of her sociological and documentary 'theatre of biographies' to the Austrian and Russian stages as transnational memory patterns in *Von Wien nach Moskau – Das Kinderheim No 6 / From Vienna to Moscow. Orphanage No 6* at Wiener Festwoche in 2004, and *Сегодня не играем / Today We Don't Play* in the local Russian Drama Theatre in 2006.

ELLE-MARI TALIVEE

Under and Tuglas Literature Centre of the Estonian Academy of Sciences

The Glass Shards by Inga Gaile and Ideas of Positive and Negative Eugenics in Estonia during the 1930s

The novel *Stikli* (*The Glass Shards*, 2016; translated into Estonian in 2018 by Aive Mandel) by Inga Gaile, was initially published in the novel series *Us. Latvia, 20th Century*, reflecting the recent past of Latvian history. Covering the era from the 1905 Russian Revolution to the end of the 1930s in a fragmentary form, *The Glass Shards* explores the attitudes of President Karlis Ulmanis towards national purity. The book review by Pille-Riin Larm compares his idea of developing strong agriculture to his desire to create a pure, healthy, and strong nation. The novel questions the right to decide upon positive and negative approaches to eugenics. Gaile raises the question of the right to different kinds of love and discusses the individual courage needed to confront a society that proclaims another person worthless for some reason. In the novel, it is love that gives the courage to confront the world and glows above all with the hope that everyone has the right to be happy. The paper intends to compare this with the ideas of eugenics in Estonia in the 1930s: what was the background that first enabled such a way of thinking?

Bridges between a Life and a History: Two Narratives Describing Childhood

To turn to narratives of recollections, attempting an illusory and nostalgic return to a lost and vanished world, is nothing out of the ordinary in literary texts. The time of childhood and youth occupies a special place in such works. The presentation focuses on two such narratives, *Rīgas svārki mugurā: atceres un apceres* (*Wearing the coat of Riga: memories and essays*; 1966) by Andrejs Johansons (1922–1983), and *Starp Mežaparku un Murjāņiem: atmiņas, piedzīvojumi un pārdzīvojumi, 1951–1980* (*Between Mežaparks and Murjāņi: memories, adventures and experiences*; 2018) by Valdis Rūmnieks (1951).

The sense of belonging to a particular place is important for both authors, as is symbolically demonstrated by the book titles. Both authors were connected to a specific part of Riga at different times, the Mežaparks district, which became a significant neighbourhood for the Latvian intelligentsia in the 1930s and early 1940s. The recollections of Andrejs Johansons are directly related to this period, though they were written in exile in Stockholm. The end of WWII left a wide stream of refugees flowing to Germany and Sweden, after which came several decades of soviet rule. Mežaparks in the memories of Valdis Rūmnieks is a different world, one showing the new layers of a different age. So though the cultural space is geographically the same, it is viewed from the perspectives of two different historical ages, independent Latvia in the first half of the 1940s, and the soviet period of the end of 1950s and the 1960s. Belonging to a particular place becomes something more as it also encompasses events, recollections and a particular time of a person's life. The specific locality or life space in both cases has seemingly imperceptibly formed the personalities of the authors.

Aleida Assmann a researcher of culture memory remarked in 1947 that "Individual memory [...] is included in the framework of larger collective memory culture, creating the conditions for a collective identity that bridges the past, the present and the future". The two books discussed have a layer of personal and biographical

memories, but at the same time they can be viewed in a wider context, as the narratives become bridges between two different realities, even though from the spatial perspective they are devoted to the same locality of Mežaparks. Valdis Rūmnieks still lives there, while Andrejs Johansons, having left Latvia in May 1945, never returned there – except only in his memories.

MANFREDAS ŽVIRGŽDAS

Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore

Epistolary Dialogue as a Form of Vitality in Post-War Lithuanian Exile Culture: The Correspondence of Juozas Girnius and Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas

Collections of letters by famous cultural figures may be regarded as important ego-documents in the context of cultural communication, especially when private interests can be discerned from their social engagements. These texts acquire decisive meaning in the émigré diaspora, when poets and philosophers express their attitudes as members of a definite “literary tribe”, a typological class that is broader than a generation or an ideological trend (Maingueneau). When we publish the personal letters of famous authors, these ego-documents turn into an “academy of reincarnation” for the reader, stimulating the change of viewpoint and a playful attitude to different types of social memory (Lotman). Writers who belong to such tribes practice emotional interchange, as their imaginary communities function as strictly organised movements with hierarchical tendencies, and individual authors act as collaborators on anthologies or literary journals and are forced to take a particular position in aesthetic discussions.

Lithuanian émigré cultural communities were active in the United States after the great transfer from the DP camps of Germany in 1949–50, and they organised a Lithuanian Writers’ Union in exile, arranged literary contests, and delivered annual prizes for the best novels, collections of poems or dramas. However some authors had a reputation as distinctive individuals who communicated among themselves while intensely opposing the conservative and isolationist trends of diaspora organisations. They were known as post-catastrophists, and they paid loyalty to Western modernism and existentialism, published the declarative anthology of the poetical generation *Žemė* (*Earth*, 1951), and established the influential literary magazine *Literatūros lankai* (*Literary Sheets*, 1952–1959). Juozas Girnius (1915–1994), a thinker, and an expert on Catholic theology, culture and ethics, and Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas (1919–2015), a poet, translator and famous diarist, were close friends who engaged in a long-standing epistolary dialogue. Their correspondence covered the period 1948–1991 and was extremely

intensive in the 1950s and 1960s, when they together determined the strategy of the major Lithuanian literary journals *Literatūros lankai* and *Aidai* (*Echoes*, 1944–1991), and they discussed classical literary subjects when Girnius edited cultural sections of *Lietuvių enciklopedija* (*Lithuanian Encyclopaedia*, Boston, MA, 1953–1968, 37 volumes) and Nyka-Niliūnas was one of its main authors. The struggle to re-vitalise émigré culture and orient it to world-class aesthetic standards is evident in their letters. The main problems discussed by the two correspondents were stagnation and the levelling effect of diaspora cultural institutions, the depressing routine of encyclopaedic articles, and the lack of leisure time that could be dedicated to popularising classical and contemporary Western theories of poetry, literature and art. Patriotism for both of them meant knowing more about world culture, and despite their individualism, Girnius and Nyka-Niliūnas acknowledged equally their obligations to the Lithuanian-speaking diaspora.

MARTIN KLÖKER

Under and Tuglas Literature Centre of the Estonian Academy of Sciences

The Life of a Forbidden Love: Life Writing and Love Letters

Using a collection of love letters from 17th-century Tallinn that I am currently preparing for publication, I will try to show how the life of a forbidden love can be written from historical love letters. The story of this love is equally the story of two people and so it contains two biographies that have to be written within the biography of their love. A special problem that arises is the question of the chronology, because these letters extend over 15 years and are disordered, mostly undated, and not completely preserved. In this particular case, the archives preserve a relatively large amount of material about the historically proven couple, who were a citizen's daughter and the secretary of the knighthood, and their social environment. In this respect, the story visible in the letters confronts a different story from the archives. The two versions are of course connected, but there are also some events and information that exist only on one side. However, this parallelism creates a very vivid picture of the time.

Central for me as a researcher is the form of presentation. It was immediately clear to me that the letters had to come out as true to the original as possible, so that this outstanding source material could be available for focused research of all kinds. Because these are confidential love letters and very special texts with linguistic and aesthetic peculiarities that are typical of the time, readers should be able to read the original text in edited form. The manuscripts had to be deciphered of course, and they need explanation, and sometimes also an interpretation or the formulation of open questions. All of this, however, I understand as support for the readers in their enjoyment of reading and in their understanding of the letters. The letters stand for themselves, while my accession aids and interpretations, which are contained in every kind of addition and conjecture, form a framework as a kind of narrative commentary in the sense of 'telling reality'. In this way, perhaps a challenging but hopefully interesting form of the biography of a love emerges.

JOOSEP SUSI

University of Tartu

Against Autobiographical Reading!

Traditionally lyric poetry has been considered to be an axiomatically reliable genre. Several prototypical features like the lack of a narrator, subjectivity, and weak narrativity create favourable grounds for reading lyrical poems as *a priori* factual and autobiographical. This is especially so when the text contains easily recognisable references to events, objects, or people. It is, after all, obvious that such allusions often make it tempting to read poems as documentary texts. Furthermore, there are no indications in most cases that there is any difference between the categories of the empirical author and the lyrical speaker, for example.

Narratologist Stefan Kjerkegaard has aptly noted "that typically autobiographical lyric poetry has some roots in the events in the poet's life, but the rendering of those events in poetic lyric transforms them in a few ways" (Kjerkegaard 2014). Concentrating on Estonian contemporary lyric poetry, I observe in my presentation how the quality of autobiographical material is influenced by five prototypical features of lyric poetry, which are its performativity, rituality, lyrical temporality, hyperbole, and apostrophe. Autobiographical reading is possible and often productive, but with lyric poetry, the genre's specifics cannot be overlooked. The starting point has been summed up by Dieter Burdorf: "To be sure, this is legitimate and may be a practicable approach. But one has to take into account that this approach also means reading the poem as a document rather than as a literary work of art". (Burdorf 2017) In other words, a strictly autobiographical reading casts aside the essence of the poetical dimension of lyric poetry.

I argue that referentiality changes decisively in a highly autoreferential space, as the autobiographical elements intertwine with the characteristics of lyric poetry. To give but a few examples: autobiographical elements are subordinated to lyrical temporality; the deictic indeterminacy, figurative potential and metonymy of particular elements increase; referential specificity decreases; and the autobiographical dimension blends at the receptional level with

the reader's strong idiosyncratic input, resulting in changes in the fictionality-factuality axis.

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ANNELI MIHKELEV

Tallinn University

Poetry and Life Writing in Recent Baltic Cultures: Knuts Skujenieks and Mats Traat

Life writing is still a popular genre in contemporary literature and culture, appearing in verbal and visual cultural texts. Autobiographical elements also appear in poetry and represent the life and destiny of the poet together with the historical and social context where the poet lives and the dominant emotions and feelings in his or her time. Poetry represents the memories and emotions of the author and so it also conveys cultural memory.

The aim of the paper is to analyse different poems that have been published in recent years, but were written several years ago. One poet who wrote autobiographical poetry in the Soviet concentration camp in the 1960s was the Latvian author Knuts Skujenieks (b. 1936), and his collection of poems written in that time *Sēkla sniegā* (*Seed in the Snow*) was published in 1990 in Latvia and in 2018 in Estonian, translated by Mats Traat (b.1936).

Mats Traat is an Estonian poet and translator who has written about Estonian history and who represents the destiny of the Estonian people in his poetry, intertwining autobiographical aspects with fiction. One of the best examples of Mats Traat's works is the poetry book *Harala elulood* (*Biographies from Harala*, 1976).

The paper compares the poetry of Latvian poet Knuts Skujenieks and Estonian poet Mats Traat, which uses autobiographical elements mixed with fiction. The paper analyses how life writing in poetry, which is sometimes full of old memories, functions in contemporary time in a new context.



- The 11th International Conference of Baltic Literary Scholars
Global Contexts, National Literatures
26–27 October 2017, Vilnius
- The 10th International Conference of Baltic Literary Scholars
The Changing Baltics: Cultures Within a Culture
29–30 September 2014, Riga
- The 9th International Conference of Baltic Literary Scholars
From Past to Present: Transformations of Memory in Contemporary Culture
28–29 October 2011, Tallinn
- The 8th International Conference of the Baltic Countries
The Baltic Memory: the Beginning of the End (Literary Processes from 1968 to 1988)
18–20 November 2009, Vilnius
- The 7th Conference of the Institutes/Centres of Literature in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania
Back to Baltic Memory: Lost and Found in Literature 1940–1968
29–30 November 2007, Riga
- The 6th International Conference of Baltic Literary Scholars
We Have Something in Common: the Baltic Memory
7–9 December 2005, Tallinn
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Literary History: Paradox or Paradigm
22–24 October 2003, Vilnius
- The 4th International Conference
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12–13 December 2001, Riga
- The 3rd Conference of Baltic Literary Critics
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Latvieši, igauņi un lietuvieši: literārie un kultūras kontakti (1)

Latvieši, igauņi un lietuvieši: literārie un kultūras kontakti.

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We Have Something In Common: The Baltic Memory

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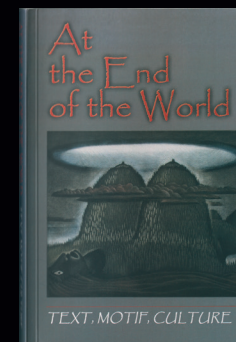
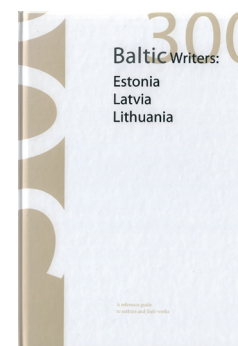
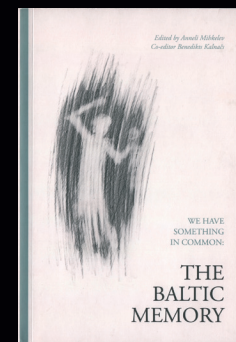
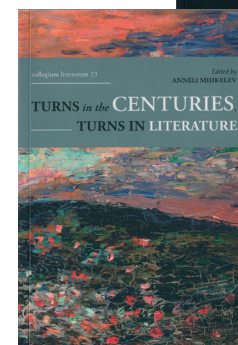
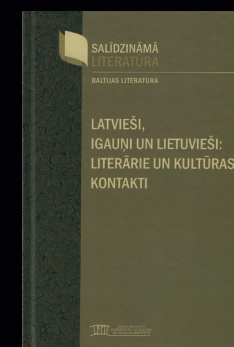
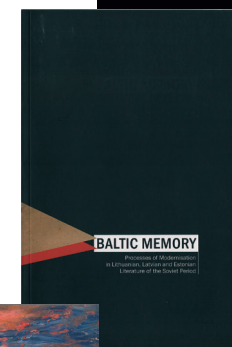
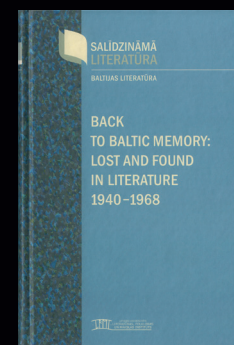
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