



(IN)SCRIBE YOUR CODE

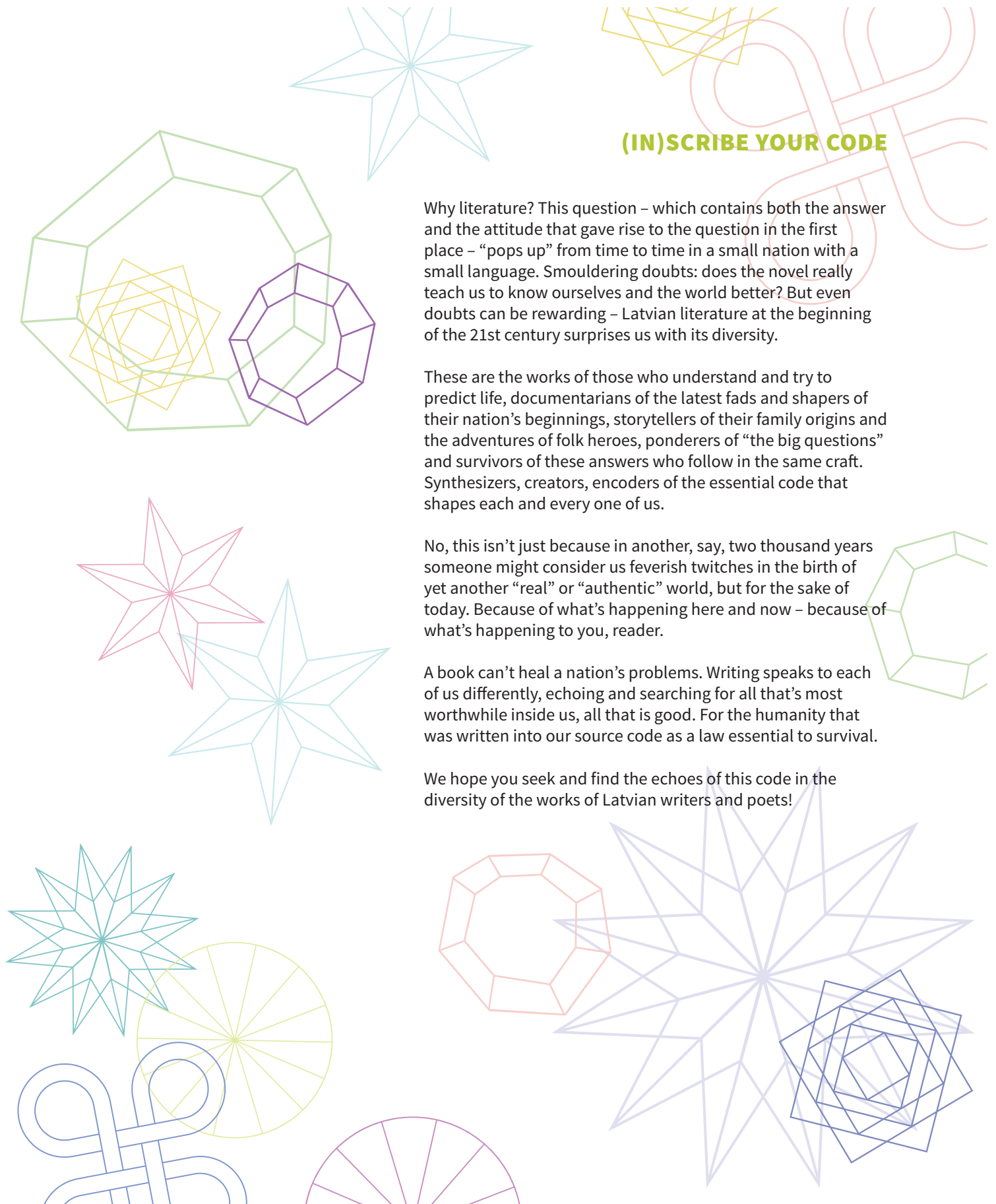
Why literature? This question – which contains both the answer and the attitude that gave rise to the question in the first place – “pops up” from time to time in a small nation with a small language. Smouldering doubts: does the novel really teach us to know ourselves and the world better? But even doubts can be rewarding – Latvian literature at the beginning of the 21st century surprises us with its diversity.

These are the works of those who understand and try to predict life, documentarians of the latest fads and shapers of their nation’s beginnings, storytellers of their family origins and the adventures of folk heroes, ponderers of “the big questions” and survivors of these answers who follow in the same craft. Synthesizers, creators, encoders of the essential code that shapes each and every one of us.

No, this isn’t just because in another, say, two thousand years someone might consider us feverish twitches in the birth of yet another “real” or “authentic” world, but for the sake of today. Because of what’s happening here and now – because of what’s happening to you, reader.

A book can’t heal a nation’s problems. Writing speaks to each of us differently, echoing and searching for all that’s most worthwhile inside us, all that is good. For the humanity that was written into our source code as a law essential to survival.

We hope you seek and find the echoes of this code in the diversity of the works of Latvian writers and poets!



MODERN CLASSICS FICTION

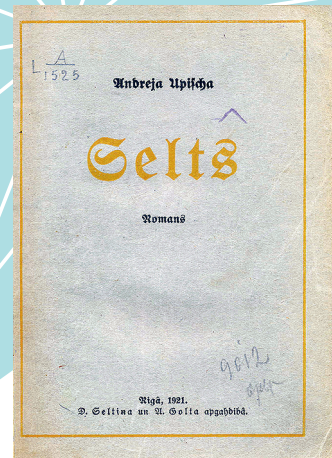


Photo: Mārtiņš Lapiņš, originals. AUMM 25550



ANDREJS UPĪTIS (1877) was an author, literary scholar, and literary critic. He lived through several different eras and their contradictions, which left a clear mark on all his writing. Some of his work is socially precise and artistically important. The rest – socialist realist texts permeated by the ideology of the Soviet regime – is irrelevant to modern-day readers. Upītis wrote in a wide range of genres. His body of work includes 20 novels,

12 collections of short stories, and a succession of plays – dramas, comedies, and historical tragedies. Throughout his career, the author was both a literary scholar and a literary critic. Upītis was also a poet, journalist, and translator. He translated the works of Gustave Flaubert, Heinrich Mann, Anatole France, Heinrich Heine, and other foreign authors into Latvian. Upītis' education came mostly from being self-taught; he mastered Russian, German, French and English in this way. By reading many classics of world literature in their original languages, he learned the foundation of a writer's skills. When it comes to convictions, Upītis is a realist; the author combated the Romantic movement and turned against the course of twentieth-century Modernism, calling it an expression of the decline of literature.

Around 1905, the author turned to the ideas of Marxism. In 1919, when Soviet power briefly ruled Latvia, Upītis led the Art Department in the People's Commissariat for Education. He later went to Russia. Following his return to Latvia, the author was arrested twice. In 1920, after these arrests, Upītis was sentenced to death; other cultural figures rescued him from the sentence.

Upītis was an important organizer of literary and social life. After World War II, he became the head of the Department of Latvian Literature at the University of Latvia (1944–1948), and a professor there (1945–1951). Later he became the founder and director of the Language and Literature Institute at the Latvian SSR Academy of Sciences (1946–1951) and the president of the Latvian Writers' Union (1944–1954). Ruling Soviet power glorified Upītis both due to his realistic worldview and because of his socialist past, in particular his actions in 1919. There are commemorative Andrejs Upītis museums both in Rīga and in his birthplace of Skrīveri. In 1982, a statue of Upītis was erected in Rīga.

Andrejs Upītis' major novels are *The Robežnieks Family* (1909–1934) (a four-book cycle), *The Woman* (1910), *A Page of Smiles* (1937) and its sequel *Nurse Gertrude's Secret* (1939), and the two-book cycle *At the Turn of an Era* (1937–1940). During Latvia's first period of independence,

the short story collections *Sawdust in a Whirlpool* (1921), *Beyond the Gates of Paradise* (1922), *Metamorphoses* (1923) and *Naked Life* (1926) were published. Upītis also wrote many plays: both satires and comedies full of social irony (he coined the term “social comedy”). Alongside these is his trilogy of historical tragedies: *Mirabeau* (1926), *Joan of Arc* (1930) and *Spartacus* (1943). Two other significant works by Upītis are *The History of World Literature*, co-written with Rūdolfs Egle (4 vols., 1930–1934), and the monograph *The History of the Novel* (vol. 1 published 1941, vol. 2 – unpublished).

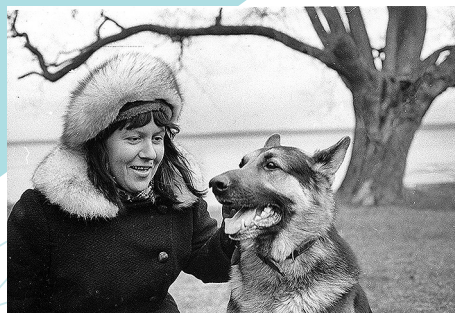
The novel *Gold* was serialized in periodicals in 1914 and published as a novel in 1921. This book, like most of Upītis' writing, contains a marked analysis of social issues. Several artistic techniques, symbols and motifs characteristic of Upītis, also used in his later works, appear in this novel. For example, the title embodies a symbol which becomes a leitmotif of the book. In this case gold (or money) is a convenient literary device, used in a way similar to how it appears in the works of Émile Zola, Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and other nineteenth-century authors, demonstrating that wealth can fundamentally test a person's inherent humanity.

Augusts Sveilis Jr., the oldest son of a poor small-town tailor, is the center of attention in *Gold*. He and his family are tested suddenly and unexpectedly when Augusts, working as a servant, receives an inheritance from his mistress. The inheritance leads him (and his family) into a completely unfamiliar environment, one they had previously only seen from a distance. In this world, commercialism, intrigues, and the excesses of Rīga's Latvian bourgeois inhabitants are everywhere. Here the slogan “Gold is life, gold is freedom, gold is everything” rules. Symbols of the era – shops for many types of goods, a car, and big-city Latvian bourgeois social circles – reveal the magical power of money, against which country/small-town morals turn out to be powerless.

MODERN CLASSICS FICTION



Photo: Gunārs Janāitis



REGĪNA EZERA (née Regīna Kindzule, 1930–2002) was born in Riga. Ezera graduated from the Department of Journalism of the University of Latvia and published her first writings in 1955. From the 1960s onwards her primary occupation was writing. Her most

well-known works are the novels *The Well* (Aka, 1972), which was adapted into the highly popular film *The Lake Sonata* (Ezera sonāte, 1976); *Smouldering Fire* (Zemdegas, 1977), *Violence* (Varmācība, 1982), *Betrayal* (Nodevība, 1984), and the short story collections *The Trap* (Slazds, 1979); *The Princess Phenomenon* (Princeses fenomens, 1985), and *Dragon's Egg* (Pūkaola, 1995). Considered a master of what could be called “silent drama” as well as nuanced psychological portraits, she pays great attention to detail in human relationships, and often uses parallels with the animal world, exploring the interaction between man and animal. She blurred the line between psycho-realist and postmodernist fiction in the novels *Smouldering Fire*, *Violence* and *Betrayal* by deconstructing the plot and incorporating her own persona and reflections about writing. Her works have been translated into German, Swedish, Estonian, and other languages.

The novel *The Well* begins on the shores of a lake in the heat of summer. Rudolf, a doctor from Riga, is looking forward to enjoying some time off work, intending to spend the time fishing on his own while lodging with an elderly couple on a lake. He comes into contact with the next door neighbours, the Tomariņi family, when he borrows their boat for his fishing trips. He meets Laura and her two children, Zaiga and Māris, her mother-in-law Alvīne and her sister-in-law Vija. For Laura, this encounter is a reminder of her wasted life, one of self-denial and her attempts to honour her responsibilities. For her children, it is a reminder of how much they lack a father figure.

Attraction surges between the quiet, slightly standoffish Laura and the confident, successful Rudolf, yet from the very beginning there is the sense that the relationship is doomed. A crucial part of the story is the presence, or rather absence, of Laura's husband Rihard, who is in prison for the murder of a friend he killed on a hunting trip while drunk. The fact that Rihard is soon to be released throws a shadow over any attraction between Laura and Rudolf. Rihard, from a distance and through his circumstances, has forced Laura to play the roles of perfect mother, perfect wife, and strong woman. Regīna Ezera skillfully blends together the lives of all these people, showing the sins and life events of previous generations and how the echoes of these reverberate in the lives of their children and grandchildren.

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In 1986 *Der Brunnen* (*The Well*) was published in Germany by Ullstein. In 1987 a selection of short stories entitled *Die Schaukel und andere Erzählungen* was published by Verlag Harro v. Hirschheydt.

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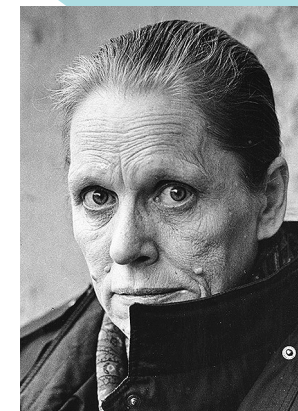


Photo: Gunārs Janāitis



VIZMA BELŠEVICA (1931–2005) was one of Latvia's most acclaimed poets and was nominated for the Nobel Prize. She also wrote prose and was a very successful translator from Russian and English. She was born in Riga and lived there all her life, and thus the city has a prominent role in her writing, especially in the semi-autobiographical trilogy *Bille*. It is an honest retelling of her childhood in the 1930s and 1940s during the authoritarian regime of Kārlis Ulmanis, as well as during the Soviet occupation, all seen from the perspective of a young girl named Bille. Her more notable poetry collections include *Rings of Years* (Gadu gredzeni, 1969), *In My Lady's Bedstraw* (Madarās, 1976), and *Autumn Time* (Dzeltu laiks, 1987). After the publication of *Rings of Years* her publications were banned for several years for what was perceived as an anti-Soviet sentiment in her work. Her short story collection *Misfortune at Home* (Nelaime mājās, 1979) was also immensely popular – simultaneously funny and sad, and rich in black humor, the stories are about various strangers (e.g. a graveyard flower thief, two old sisters with a penchant for dying, and even a ghost) with odd and unexpected occurrences in their lives. *Bille* has been published in Swedish and Russian translation, while selections of her poetry have been published in translation in Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland.

girl. The author avoids any nostalgia about the lost paradise of childhood and, using her actual memories, shows the life in the workers' district of Grīziņkalns and the life of the Gūtmanis family there during the late 1930s and early 1940s. The result is 75 separate stories told in chronological order. Bille goes to school and visits her country relatives; as the regimes change, Bille grows up and, with the adults, she must endure stretches of not eating, she helps people imprisoned in the ghetto, and she goes to the countryside to exchange what things they do have for food. Each episode represents a moment that is stuck in her mind forever.

The first volume of *Bille* was published in 1992, with *Bille Lives On* (Bille dzīvo tālāk) and *Bille's Wonderful Youth* (Billes skaistā jaunība) published in 1996 and 1999 respectively. The entire trilogy came out in one volume in 2004. Bille is the shortened name of the main character, Sibilla Gūtmane, who observes an era that is filled with tragic events and difficult to understand even for adults. Bille, as opposed to most other children portrayed in Latvian literature, is a city

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In 1997 *Bille* was published in Sweden by Natur och Kultur.

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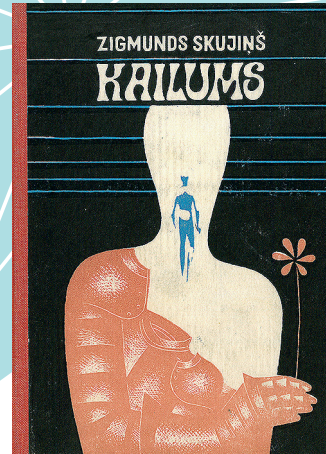


Photo: Inga Skujiņa



ZIGMUNDS SKUJIŅŠ

(1926) is the author of many remarkable novels, film scripts, plays, and essays, and is one of Latvia's most translated writers. More than seven million copies of Skujiņš's works have been published in German, English,

Russian, Bulgarian, Czech, Slovak, and Hungarian. He debuted with a story collection in 1954. His more notable works include the novels *Nakedness* (Kailums, 1970), *The Bed With the Golden Leg* (Gultaarzeltakāju, 1984), *Flesh-Coloured Dominoes* (Miesaskrāsas domino, 1999), *Entry of the Thief of Hearts* (Siržu zagļa uznāciens, 2001), and the story collections *Attack on the Windmill* (Uzbrukums vējdzirnavām, 1976) *Storyteller's Sunday* (Stāstītāja svētdiena, 1995), and *Magic and Ink* (Buršana un tinte, 2003). A storyteller with a penchant for exotic details, his short stories mix a wide array of settings (from Soviet Latvia to Ancient Rome), genres (historical, domestic, romantic, and science fiction), and tones (from ironic to tragic). He employs his broad knowledge of history and culture to play out various speculative "what-if" scenarios about well-known historical persons and events. Although initially his works were somewhat traditional and realist, he quickly shifted towards more ambiguous and entertaining writing styles and topics ranging from morality and identity problems in Soviet society to extravagant family sagas and historical accounts.

The novel *Nakedness* (when it was finally allowed to be published) turned Zigmunds Skujiņš into a literary celebrity across the Soviet Union and "radically changed the Latvian prose scene," according to Latvian literary critic Guntis Berelis. Since then, two popular films based on the book have been made, and it's still the Skujiņš novel that most people first come into contact with.

The protagonist of the novel, Aleksandrs Draiska, comes to a small textile factory town looking for a girl he's been exchanging letters with. Finding somebody else at her address, he sets off on a search across the town, where he discovers that almost everyone is pretending to be somebody else. This mask-wearing becomes the cause of death for the girl Draiska has been looking for, driving him deeper into despair. The final twist is saved for last, however, when we discover that it was not Draiski, but his army friend who came to the factory town after falling in love with the girl from the letters, deciding to masquerade as his friend in order to find her.

Published by Liesma, 1970

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www.apgadsmansards.lv

Foreign rights: sold to United Kingdom

The narrative of the novel *Flesh-Coloured Dominoes* is split into two parallel stories. On the one hand, there is the 18th-century Baltic German gentry in the framework of Tsarist Russia: Baroness Waltraut von Bruegen, with the help of the famous Count Cagliostro, is searching for her husband who has disappeared during the Turkish wars; with great pains she discovers that her husband had been torn in two during a battle, and that his lower half had been stitched to the upper half of the local captain Ulste, a man of humble origins. After finding the lower half of her husband, she conceives a child with it and is contemplating at great length who should be considered the father of her child when her husband returns – in one piece. The other plotline is the life story of the author himself, travelling through the turmoil of 20th-century Latvia. The story is a rich tapestry of detail, with nationalities intertwined in an inseparable mix – Latvians, Germans, Jews, and Japanese, among many others. The connection between the two narratives becomes gradually clear: they click together through details mentioned as if in passing. It is also a moving story of the experience of one person's life during turbulent times.

Published by Preses nams, 1999

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Foreign rights: sold to United Kingdom, Macedonia, Sweden

Selected titles in translation: *Flesh-Coloured Dominoes* (Miesas krāsas domino) in English (Arcadia, UK), Macedonian (Prozart Media) and Swedish (Tranan); *The Bed with the Golden Leg* (Gulta ar zelta kāju) in Estonian, Russian, and Bulgarian; *Memoirs of a Young Man* (Jauna cilvēka memuāri) in Lithuanian, Estonian, Russian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Polish, Czech, Ukrainian, and Hungarian; *Man in His Prime* (Vīretis labākajos gados) in English, Lithuanian, Estonian, Russian, Bulgarian, Polish, Czech, Slovak, and Ukrainian; *Nakedness* (Kailums) in English (Vagabond voices, UK), Estonian and Russian; *The Grandsons of Columbus* (Kolumba mazdēli) in Lithuanian, Estonian, Russian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, and Georgian.



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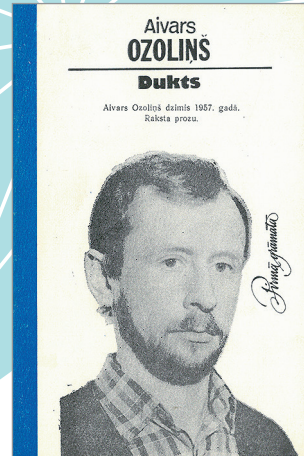


Photo: from the author's personal archive



Writer and journalist **AIVARS OZOLIŅŠ** (1957) studied in the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University of Latvia. Renowned as one of the first Latvian postmodern writers, he made his debut in the late 1980s with a novella entitled *Almost a Hundred* (Gandrīz simts,

1989). His seminal work is the book *Dukts* (1991), a cult classic of Latvian postmodernist fiction, which has clear intentions to cast doubt on the entire purpose of fiction and writing. *Dukts* consists of several unconnected stories, varying in style and length, but all of an experimental nature, full of wordplay, puns, parody and references to other texts in the same vein as the work of Daniil Kharms and Donald Barthelme. The most popular is the titular story – a humorous and absurd parody about what is described as an eponymous mythical “game of gods that everyone can play.” Ozoliņš quit writing soon after the publication of *Dukts* and became a well-known political commentator. His works have been translated in Russian, English and Swedish.

Dukts is his only book-length publication. It is an exemplary work of postmodernism, in which influences as wide ranging as Kharms, Kafka, Barthelme, and Latvian nonsense poet Ļurbulis intermingle to create a unique blend of literature about nothing. Perhaps fittingly, after the publication of *Dukts*, which was quickly followed by the short story *Fairy Tale No. 13* (Pasaka Nr. 13), Ozoliņš has not published any other work since, and has abstained from talking publicly about his writing.

Regardless, *Dukts* is one of the very few books with staying power from that heady era in Latvian literature when authors immersed themselves in all that had been previously forbidden or unwelcome. The book was rereleased in 2014, reigniting lively discussions about *Dukts* at universities and in dorm rooms all over Latvia.

The book offers a kaleidoscopic mixture of characters, ideas, and wordplay, mostly centred around the concept of “Dukts” – a word with no real meaning in Latvian. As the narrator says in the book: “The essence of Dukts (although as of yet we’re unsure of what it actually is) can be best portrayed by a single infinitely long, over-exposed film, which must be seen instantaneously to be understood.” The book then details all of the futile historical attempts to define or comprehend Dukts before showing the concept in practice with a brilliant series of surreal short stories.

Excerpt in English available.
Published by Jumava, 2014
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www.jumava.lv

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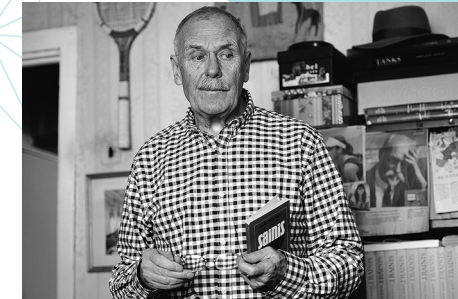
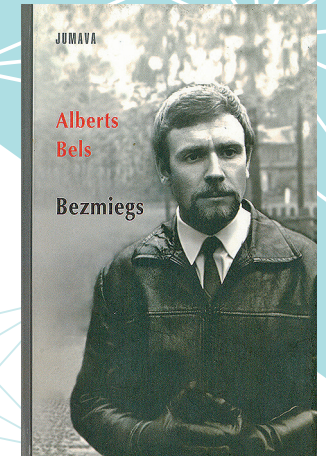


Photo: Kristaps Kalns



ALBERTS BELS (né Jānis Cīrulis, 1938) was born near Riga and later studied at the Electrotechnical Faculty of the Riga Technical Institute, the State Arts School in Moscow, and the Moscow College of Scriptwriting. His first piece of fiction debuted in 1963. His most well-known novels include *The Investigator* (Izmeklētājs, 1967), *Insomnia* (Bezmiegs, 1967, but published only in 1987); *The Cage* (Būris, 1972), *The Voice of a Herald* (Saucēja balss, 1973), *Men in Boats* (Cilvēki laivās, 1987), and *The Black Mark* (Melnā zīme, 1996). He was one of the first Latvian writers to employ modernist and postmodernist literary devices in his work, often juxtaposing parallel stories that take place in different historical periods. The novel *Insomnia* is considered one of Bels’ best and most intriguing works. His criticism of the Soviet establishment in the novel resulted in a lawsuit and a ban on its publication. A censored version of the novel appeared only in 1987, with a full uncensored version finally published in 2003. His works have been translated into English, German, Russian, and several other languages.

his flat, where she promptly falls asleep. She remains asleep for some time. When she wakes up, they begin to talk, and he finds out more about her, leading him on a journey through her often difficult life, and raising more questions for Dārziņš.

The story then switches to the 13th century, during a time when Teutonic Knights are vying for control of the Baltic. Soldiers and ordinary people – understood to be the earliest beginnings of the Latvian nation – are forced to make a decision on their future fate: whether to fight against the knights for their freedom, or assimilate with their aggressors.

The novel then oscillates between these two parallel plots, weaving a tale of humanity in the face of almost impossible odds, and the desire to control one’s destiny amidst the most oppressive of regimes.

The novel *Insomnia* takes place in a block of flats in 1960s Soviet Latvia. The plot centres around the main character Eduards Dārziņš and a woman named Dina, whom he spots running outside near his building one night. She is visibly shaken, so he invites her into

Excerpt in English available.
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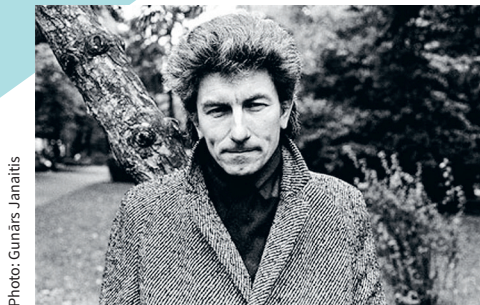
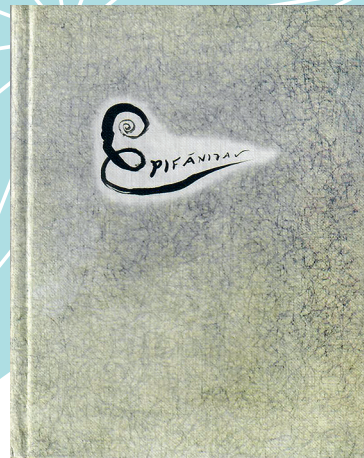


Photo: Gunārs Janaitis

IMANTS ZIEDONIS (1933–2013) is one of the most beloved Latvian authors of poetry, short prose (epiphanies, literary fairy tales), and journalism. He was also a translator, script writer, and politician. He was born in Ragaciems, to a family of fishermen and farmers. Even though he felt that

being a gardener was his calling, he studied philology at the University of Latvia and augmented his knowledge with advanced literature courses in Moscow in 1964. The year 1961 saw the publication of Ziedonis' first book of poetry. During the 1970s and 1980s, he formed the "Group for the Release of Venerable Trees" (a group of volunteers who cleared away brush from around choked old-growth trees across Latvia), which can be viewed as the beginning of the Latvian green movement – and as a symbolic anti-political act which strengthens the nation's historical memory and self-confidence.

The motif of the road, the idea of an individual's and nation's independence, the creation of self-confidence, a tendency to seek intellectual freedom, and endless growth all appear throughout Imants Ziedonis' writing. In his initial works, we can sense discontent with alleged truths; this is why he challenges the world of dogma and limitations. Over time, the author's efforts to break apart and reshape the world develop into a longing to understand it thoroughly and to try to live in accordance with cosmic rhythms. He was influenced by Latvian folklore and the Upanishads.

Most Notable Works:

Books of poetry: *Motorcycle* (1965), *How the Candle Burns* (1971), *In Benevolent Darkness* (1979), *An Onslaught of Butterflies* (1988). Prose: *Epiphanies* (Part 1 – 1971–1974; Part 2 – 1994), *Colourful Fairytales for Children* (1973).

Epiphanies is full of moments of insight, flashes that combine essay-like meditations, journalism, irony, and philosophical conclusions.

The author himself has said of *Epiphanies*:

"They're impulses, little flashes whose light illuminates a few moments in life especially brightly. Sometimes these impulses can seem contradictory;

sometimes, as impulses tend to be, that's exactly what they are. Yet as all the book's impulses come together, they show us what life is, from birth until our journey into the afterlife."

"In *Epiphanies*, Imants Ziedonis persistently preaches logic in the absurd, truth in the false, heaviness in the buoyant, many sides to the one, usefulness in the useless, and so on. Ziedonis always strives to break the stereotypes of perception and the inertia of thought processes, looking at very familiar themes and symbols from an unexpected and often paradoxical point of view." (Latvian literary analyst Guntis Berelis)

Epiphanies forms part of the Latvian cultural canon.

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Selected titles in translation: *Colourful Fairytales for Children* (Krāsainās pasakas) in Italian (Damocle edizioni), *Each Day Catches Fire* (Dzejas izlase) in English (Red Dragonfly Press, USA).

THE PAST AND THE PRESENT CONTEMPORARY LATVIAN PROSE

THE NOVEL SERIES

We. Latvia. The 20th Century

The Novel Series *We. Latvia. The 20th Century*.

The historical novel series *We. Latvia. The 20th Century* is about the experience of one nation during the past century that forged its own independence, lived through the horror of two world wars, the Soviet era, and the regaining of its independence, which are just a few of themes covered in the series.

2011 marked the publication of the short story collection *We. The 20th Century*, the making of which was brought about by Latvian writer Gundega Repše. The book, which contains stories from 12 female Latvian authors, is a literary summary of Latvia in the 20th century. This collection became the impetus behind a much larger project – the historical novel series *We. Latvia. The 20th Century*.

A total of 13 Latvian authors were invited by Repše to take part in the creation of the series, each choosing to take a specific period of 20th-century Latvian history. The primary thread running through the series has been the exhaustive research of documents and other available materials that have served as a basis for the individual literary vision of each writer without having to curb it.

The series is published by Dienas Grāmata Publishers.

There have been a total of 10 novels published in the series so far, each of them having been a seminal event in Latvian literature:

"In the Shadow of Rooster Hill" by Osvalds Zebris (2014)

"18" by Pauls Bankovskis (2014)

"A Taste of Lead" by Māris Bērziņš (2015)

"Words Were of No Use" by Guntis Berelis (2015)

"Mother's Milk" by Nora Ikstena (2015)

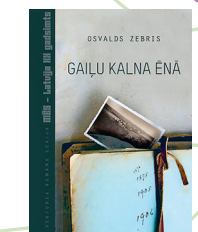
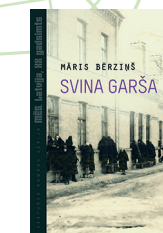
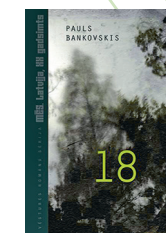
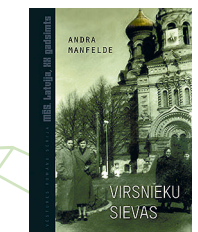
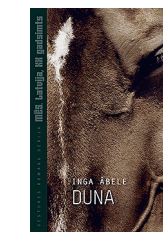
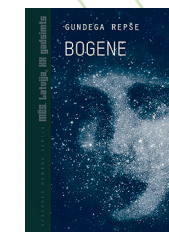
"Bogene" by Gundega Repše (2016)

"The Glass Shards" by Inga Gaile (2016)

"A Room" by Laima Kota (2016)

Duna (Thunder) by Inga Ābele (2017)

Officers' Wives by Andra Manfelde (2017)



THE PAST AND THE PRESENT CONTEMPORARY LATVIAN PROSE

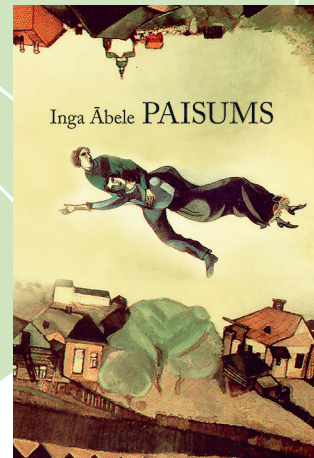


Photo: Zane Ernštreite



Latvian writer **INGA ĀBELE** (1972) was born in Riga. She graduated from the Department of Theatre, Television and Drama at the Latvian Academy of Culture in 2001. She has become successfully involved in several genres of literature, publishing short story collections, including *The Well House* (Akas māja,

High Tide was the winner of the 2008 Baltic Assembly Prize for Literature and 2008 Annual Latvian Literature Award. The novel *High Tide* addresses the question

1999), *Observations in the Time of Snow* (Sniega laika piezīmes, 2004), *Ants and Bumblebees* (Kamenes un skudras, 2010), the novels *Fire Will Not Wake You* (Uguns nemodina, 2001), *High Tide* (Paisums, 2008), and *Wicker Monk* (Klūgu mūks, 2014), a collection of poetry *Night Pragmatist* (Nakts pragmatīke, 2000), as well as a book of plays entitled *Plays* (Lugas, 2003).

of why we are so dependent on the past, even when it has turned us into someone else.

In the beginning they were two. They have no values, no horizontals and verticals, and have to create values by themselves. They joke that if something bad happens, they'll help each other die. And then something bad does happen. The boy gets sick, and the girl has to kill him. This "killing" turns out to be completely different from what you might see in movies or on stage. Everything turns out to be false, awkward, and horrible.

Time goes on. One day the middle-aged woman realizes she no longer knows whether what happened a long time ago really happened. Who were those two people who once lived together? Who was that girl who killed her friend? Did he even exist if she only remembers him a couple times a year? She has nobody to talk to about it. So she writes, searching for an answer to the question: How many lives do we live in a single lifetime? By writing, she searches for the path to her former self. There is a high tide and a low tide: when you are in one, then you can understand the other.

The plot of the novel is both real and imagined. The crime is also a symbol of the suicide we commit after each stage of our lives, in search of an answer to the question: What is it that continues to live?

Full translation in English available.

Published by Dienas Grāmata in 2008

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Foreign rights: sold to USA and Sweden

Selected works in translation: the novel *High Tide* in English (Open Letter Press, US), in Swedish (Ariel) and Albanian (Antolog Books), *Ants and Bumblebees* in English in the prose anthology *Best European Fiction 2010* (Dalkey Archive Press, US), the novel *Fire Will Not Wake You* in Swedish (Ariel), in Danish (Husets), and Lithuanian (Versus aureus), short story collection *Still Life with Pomegranate* in French (L'Archange Minotaure), in Czech (Kniha Zlin), and Slovenian (Modrijan), *Whicker monk* in Lithuanian (Elges ledykla). Slovenian (Modrijan).

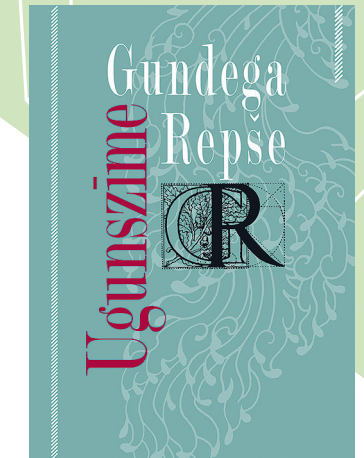
THE PAST AND THE PRESENT CONTEMPORARY LATVIAN PROSE

GUNDEGA REPŠE (1960)

was born in Riga. She studied art history and theory. She was a lecturer for the Artists Union (1985–1992), contributing to the magazine *Liesma*, the newspapers *Labrīt* and *Izglītība un Kultūra*, and literary journal *Karogs*. Her prose has been published since 1979. Gundega Repše has published ten novels, including *Thumbelina* (Īkstīte, 2000), *The Orphanage* (Bāreņu nams, 2008), the trilogy *Heavy Metal* (Smagais metāls, Omnibus edition in 2012), *Nice People* (Jauki ļaudis, 2014), six collections of short stories and many books of non-fiction, including biographies, literary diaries, conversations with writers, and essays. Gundega Repše's early novel *Marked by Fire* (1990)



Photo: from the author's personal archive



is distinctive both among the author's works as well as within modern Latvian prose. The book describes a time before both the author and the novel's narrator, Erika, were born; its historical foundation is rooted in the post-war life of the Latvian intelligentsia, in the tragic fate of the

so-called "French Group" and their search for intellectual nobility. The story is told from the point of view of Erika, born to Kārlis and Magda during the exile of Kārlis's wife Dagmāra. Just as the French Group's members were exiled to Siberia, the novel's heroine Dagmāra too suffers the horrors of deportation, as did Kārlis's mother before her. Their lives are destroyed by the age in which they live – Kārlis stops painting because his work isn't being recognized, and he undergoes treatment for alcoholism. Dagmāra dies early, her translations unpublished. *Marked by Fire's* ringlike composition ends in 1987, when, rereading what she wrote thirteen years prior, Erika marvels at the self-righteous tone of her memories. Taking into account that these notes were written when she was eighteen, the narrator's impatience with the vagueness of historical events is an understandable youthful ardour. At the end of the novel, Erika is working in the library of a seaside village, where she becomes certain that the passage of time is no excuse, and where better than in a world of valuable books, like an eternal flame – a place of remembrance that never burns out.

Published by Zvaigzne ABC, 2014

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Selected titles in translation:

The Tin Scream (Alvas kliedziens) in Swedish (Ariel) *Unsichtbare Schatten* (Ēnu apokrīfs) in German (DuMont) and the short story *How Important Is It to be Ernest?* (Cik svarīgi būt Ernestam?) in English in the prose anthology *Best European Fiction 2013* (Dalkey Archive Press). Writer and journalist

THE PAST AND THE PRESENT CONTEMPORARY LATVIAN PROSE

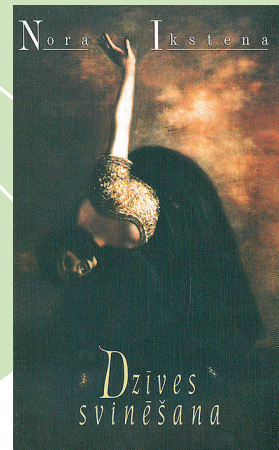


Photo: Andra Ceriņa

Writer **NORA IKSTENA** (1969) was born in Riga. In 1998, she was guest editor of *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* for an issue dedicated to Latvian fiction. She is the author of five novels *Celebrating Life* (Dzīves svinēšana, 1998), *The Virgin's Lesson* (Jaunavas mācība, 2001), *Amour Fou* (2009), *Besa* (2012), and *Mother's Milk* (Mātes piens, 2015), collections of short stories and fairy-tales, as well as many books of biographical fiction, non-fiction, and essays. Her

short story *Elza Kuga's Old Age Dementia* was included in the prose anthology *Best European Fiction 2011* (Dalkey Archive Press). In addition to English, Czech, and German translations, her work has also been translated in Lithuanian, Estonian, Swedish, Danish, and Georgian.

Celebration of Life – A peculiar woman named Eleonora has invited seven colourful people to her own funeral. Eleonora is peacefully laid to rest, but during the night following the funeral, these seven people, seven ghosts from the past, share their memories of Eleonora, with the stories serving as the book's "celebration of life." In sharing their memories about Eleonora, the storytellers wander about in space and time, embarking upon expeditions to distant metaphysical places.

Reading Nora Ikstena's novel is, first and foremost, an aesthetic experience. Its tone is serious, nostalgic, strangely unreal, and beautifully wise. One can sense a slight trace of decadently refined and capricious yearning towards making her works aesthetic, an element that also features strongly in her stories.

Excerpt in English available.

Published by Atēna, 1998

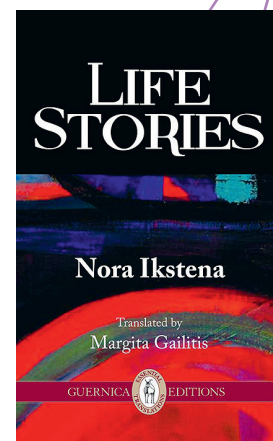
Contact: Mrs. Nora Ikstena
ikstena@apollo.lv

Life Stories – Winner of 2004 Annual Latvian Literature Award – In discussing the inspiration behind her short story collection *Life Stories*, which won the 2004 The Annual Latvian Literature Award, Ikstena said that "I have written *Life Stories* virtually in the space of one breath – these stories have been imagined in such concentration, that I had to free myself from them. They came so naturally, that I am very happy to have returned to the short-story format. It seems to me that in these eight stories each individual and different life is so strikingly intense that it was not possible to place them all into one novel ... Also, in terms of style, I searched and found a different approach to each of the stories. I wanted to express myself more clearly and more simply."

Excerpt in English available.

Published by Atēna, 2004

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ikstena@apollo.lv



Selected titles in translation: *Mothers milk* in English (Peirene press, UK), the short story collection *Life Stories* (Dzīves stāsti) in English (Guernica Editions), Hindi (Vani Prakashan) and Macedonian (SHKUPI), the novel *Celebrating Life* (Dzīves svinēšana) in Swedish (Atlantis), Estonian (Huma), Danish (Rosinante), and Georgian (MVP), the novel *The Virgin's Lesson* (Jaunavas mācība) in Estonian (Loomingu Raamatukogu) and Lithuanian (Mintis), and *Amour Fou* in Russian (Dienas Grāmata, Latvia)

THE PAST AND THE PRESENT CONTEMPORARY LATVIAN PROSE

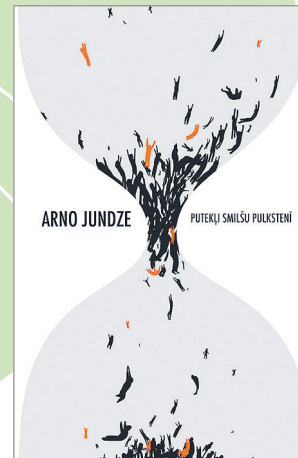


Photo: from the author's personal archive



Writer and journalist **ARNO JUNDZE** (1965) was born in the town of Jaunpiebalga. He graduated from the Faculty of Education and has a Ph.D. in philology. He has worked in Latvian television for more than 10 years directing various programs dedicated to

culture and literature. He is also the editor-in-chief of *LZA Vēstis* magazine and the cultural news editor for the newspaper *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*. He has received numerous prizes for both his literary work and his work in television. He has also published several books for children, including his latest book, entitled *Christopher and the Order of Shadows* (Kristofers un Ēnu ordenis, 2015).

Dust in the Hourglass was shortlisted for the 2014 Annual Latvian Literature Award.

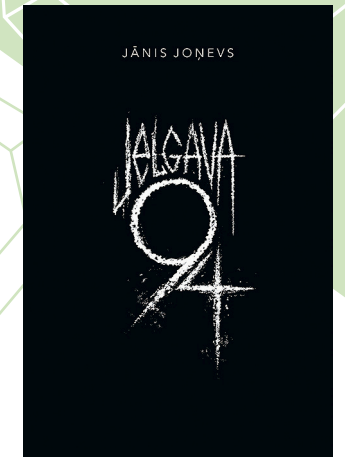
A naive young man dreams of a romantic future with a door open to endless possibilities, but ends up in Afghanistan in the hellscape of war where he is forced to do almost anything to salvage any semblance of a future. In this future, however, it will be easier to kill than to love. A Lutheran minister and Gulag survivor serves only God, because the villagers often avoid even saying hello to him. A talented researcher at the turn of the millennium dreams about a career in science, but in order to support his family, he ends up selling tractors. A once famous journalist, now an addict, is excited about having got the scoop of his career without realizing that he is being played by the secret service. There are echoes from witch trials, death and love in Paris, a walk into the realm of silence and fragments of overheard phone conversations, secretly copied letters and text messages that the reader must put together like pieces of a puzzle.

Excerpts in English available.
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THE PAST AND THE PRESENT CONTEMPORARY LATVIAN PROSE



Photo: from the author's personal archive



Latvian writer **JĀNIS JONEVS** was born in 1980. He graduated from the Latvian Academy of Culture. Since 2002 he has been working as a copywriter, reviewer and translator from French. His first novel *Jelgava '94* was published in 2013.

The novel garnered acclaim from critics and readers alike, and received numerous awards: it received the 2013 Annual Latvian Literature Award for Best Debut; in 2014 it received the 1 Kg of Culture Prize awarded by the LTV 1 television show "100 Grams of Culture"; it was named among the 100 favourite Latvian books of all time on the television show "Great Reading"; and the Children's Jury (a project involving young readers from all over Latvia) chose the book as their favourite book in the over 15 age group.

Jelgava '94 – Winner of the 2014 European Union Prize for Literature and the 2013 Annual Latvian Literature Award for Best Debut

Jonevs's debut novel proved to be a real hit and bestseller in Latvia. The story takes place in a town called Jelgava and centres around the rather short-lived craze for heavy metal music in the 1990s. The reader is given a look at this world from the inside – the text is both an intimate diary of a youngster trying to find himself by joining a subculture as well as a skillful, detailed, and almost documentary depiction of recent history, i.e. the beginnings of a Latvia that had just regained its independence.

The story seems even more captivating for the generation that shares the same perception of the world – Jonevs is the first among this generation who has managed to stir their memories by transforming the images and period into a full-fledged work of literature.

Full translation in English available.
Published by Mansards in 2013
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Rights sold to United Kingdom (Wrecking Ball) France (Gaïa), Norway (Bokbyen), Bulgaria (Izida), Turkey (Bencekitap), Poland (Kolegium Europy Wschodniej), and Slovenia (Miš).

THE BEST OF GENRE FICTION SCIENCE FICTION



Photo: Spīgana Spektore



IEVA MELGALVE (1981) is a science fiction and fantasy writer, with influences of literary and experimental genres. She has also written books for children and young adults. Her first book was a collection that included her first short story and a play entitled

The Point of No Losses (Bezzaudējumu punkts 1999). In 2013, she self-published her play *Inhumanity* (Necilvēki). In the same year, her fantasy novel *The Dead Don't Forgive* (Mirusie nepiedod) was published and subsequently shortlisted for the 2013 The Annual Latvian Literary Award for Best Prose Work. Her book *Arrow, Star and Laee* (Bulta, Zvaigzne un Laī) was published in 2014. Her novel *Moon Theatre* (Mēness teātris) combines dystopian fantasy with the typical storytelling techniques of literary fiction, creating a book that is both accessible and attractive to genre readers as well as to a wider audience that values intellectual challenges.

Moon Theatre – In an enormous theatre on many stages there are theatre performances all happening at the same time. The actors don't have their own identity outside of their stage lives, and no other objective than just to get the chance for a better part and try not to get into the playwrights' bad books. Who are these playwrights, who is the audience, and do they really exist? No one knows (although a few of them – the inquisitive young Lapsa, for example – try to find out). One of the book's central roles – an Actor who doesn't have his own name – tries desperately to take part in the scenarios presented to him, but each time he tries to play his role honestly, it becomes more and more bizarre, tearing down the border between performance and truth. Similarly, the Mime – one of the androids equipped with artificial intelligence who maintains order in the theatre world – tries to play the role of a guardian for the actors. However, as he gradually awakens to a consciousness that becomes his own, the mime can no longer react to what is happening in the theatre without emotion. Perhaps they could continue to play their parts if the planned performances weren't shaken by a resistance movement trying to realise the Actor's identity behind the scenes and possibly even do away with the theatre's power altogether. Yet their road isn't easy – the idealistic Malda, who's expecting a child, can no longer separate true love from performed love, and the tricky Gurdy, sensing imminent danger to the movement, tries to make a scapegoat out of the egotistical Vladi, who in turn has landed himself a good part, no longer wanting to resist the existing order...

Excerpt in English available
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The Dead Don't Forgive is set in an imaginary world where emotions are magic and magicians are both powerful and vulnerable. On the one hand, they can exert nearly total control over commoners, who do not possess comparable abilities; on the other hand, they can be emotionally unstable and, thus, easily manipulated by other magicians.

The story is told from the perspective of Vega, a gifted young woman who began training as a magician but quit before completing the full course, defying her master. Haunted by memories of that experience and carrying a deep resentment for all magicians, she hides her special skills and lives as a commoner even though that is a crime carrying a severe punishment.

Excerpt in English available
Published by Zvaigzne in 2013
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Houses Without Doors is Ieva Melgalve's sequel to her fantasy novel *The Dead Don't Forgive*, but it can be read without having read the first. It is enough to know that the story is set in the same world, where emotions are magic, and this magic can either save you or kill you.

In the Bruoni city of Graa, many young commonfolk women and even a young magician have been mysteriously killed. Who is to blame? Rem, the wizard from the capital city, or the stranger Vega who has arrived in Graa in an attempt to keep to herself? The head wizards do not care for justice – it is enough if their suspect survives. Thus, Vega and Rem will have to fight a silent and cruel mental battle while secluded in prison, at every moment risking the worst fate the mages can be forced to confront – loneliness. Will Vega be able to maintain common sense as the events of her recent past – a friendship that ended in murder, a spell that ended in humiliation, and a love that ended in separation – come rushing back to her?

Published by Zvaigzne in 2016
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THE BEST OF GENRE FICTION CRIME

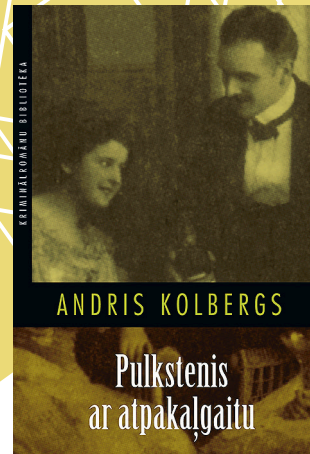
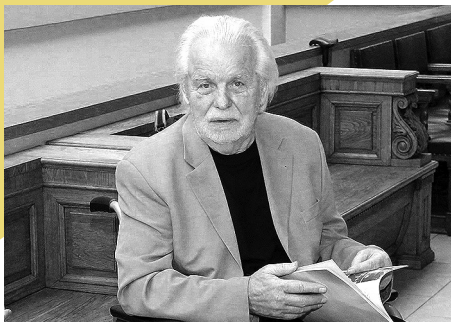


Photo: from the author's personal archive



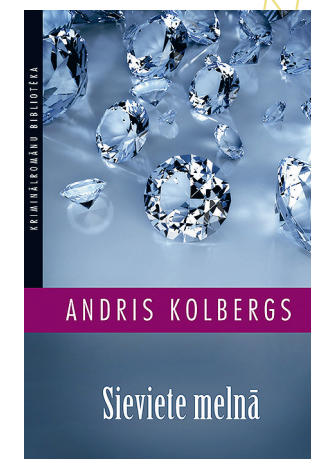
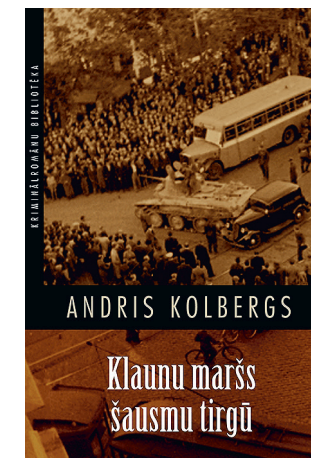
a detective's active service) – but the committing of that crime. In other words, the focus is on the analysis of the crime's societal causes and the psychological description of the criminal's personality. These two tools make skillful use of the only option left to a Soviet author: not tangling up a recklessly thrilling plot or indulging in solving intellectual criminal riddles, but searching for and considering the causes at the root of the criminal act – the ultimate disturbance of the Soviet order. Kolbergs' novels have a particular style and textual structure that appear in nearly all of his later books. First, in his novels the criminal isn't an "expendable" or the exception to an otherwise entirely positive society, where crime is unavoidable. The social system itself creates crime – the criminal merely uses the opportunities presented to him. Second, Kolbergs' works are increasingly interested in economic problems: what are the economic and legislative factors that permit and encourage these crimes? Third, there's a dialogue with the canon of detective fiction. In *The Person Who Crossed the Street* this is achieved with a covertly ironic flourish by using a corpse that isn't actually necessary to the novel.

The structure of Kolbergs' novels is quite complex. There are usually two plotlines that remain separate until the very end. In one, the militia is looking for a criminal; in the other, the omniscient author carefully delves into the life stories of the people described in the book, sometimes wandering into the decades-old past. Each novel is composed of threads that are very distant from one another in time and space, and the biographies of several individuals that at first glance don't and, in fact, can't have anything in common. The author doesn't ignore the investigators' mistaken assumptions either, and explores them just as thoroughly. Thus he involves additional characters in the text to create secondary plotlines. As a result, the space of these novels broadens and becomes panoramic. Over the course of the novel, the threads grow closer and closer, until they twist into a tight knot. This journey through the labyrinth of time and life stories is the driving force behind Kolbergs' plots. Always at the root of things lies the question: what are the enigmatic reasons behind the plotlines knotting together? Chance? Order? Maybe "orderly chance"? Order which, at first glance, seems like chance? The plots of Kolbergs' works take shape in searching for the answers to these questions. The author's plots tend to be quite complicated and sometimes seemingly chaotic: his books are made up of fragments a few pages long, the events they describe are decades and hundreds of kilometres apart, and, what's more, social barriers that seem insurmountable often appear between characters. Only in the final pages do all these fragments, plotlines and secondary plotlines, trips into the past, multiple characters that appear only for a moment, and descriptive passages arrange themselves neatly into an wonderfully precise overview: as it turns out, everything that seemed surplus was necessary to the novel, and chaos transforms into an architecturally elaborate design.

In the 1980s, **ANDRIS KOLBERGS** became the only classic writer of Latvian detective novels, and remains so today. The center of attention in his books is not so much the process of uncovering the crime (deduction or

The novel *Don't call me, don't look for me!* (1996) is one of his most successful works. The story begins with the murder of a Saeima member's assistant (Saeima is the Latvian parliament). Later on, however, as is typical of Kolbergs' novels, the plot branches out to include a vast circle of problems, every social class and many decades. There's corruption in the Saeima; ties exist that bind international business both to the Saeima's lawmakers and to the mob. There's the long arm of the Russian secret service, which controls the Saeima's activity, and much more, including Kolbergs' usual descriptive asides. In the end, it turns out that the member himself has killed his assistant, but it's impossible to prove the man's guilt, and his name is offered among candidates for the Latvian presidency. Overall, an ironically tragic yet very believable model of contemporary society takes shape here.

Usually Kolbergs focuses on current events in his novels, but he showed a completely different side to himself with a trilogy about Mendel Davidsohn's diamonds: *Time in Reverse* (2002), *March of the Clowns in the Market of Horrors* (2002) and *The Woman in Black* (2004). These are historical detective novels, but Kolbergs reshapes this genre according to his own taste and views. The action of the books takes place in various time periods, each one has different main characters, yet the works are connected – they're brought together by jeweler Mendel Davidsohn's diamonds, which are stolen in 1919, when the first novel's action takes place. (This story, *Time in Reverse*, is based on an actual criminal case from 1919 about a Jewish merchant who was robbed). Kolbergs once again plays his trump card, offering us a look at events not even through the back door, but through a narrow crack; the view we get is extremely limited, while the drabness and frugality of everyday existence immediately become bitterly sharp and contrasting. On one hand, the heist itself could be worthy of a solid thriller given other circumstances, and on the other, the background to the action is epic (the red division of the world after World War I and the founding of the Latvian nation in the first book; World War II, ghettos, the shooting of Jews, and members of the Latvian Legion in *March of the Clowns in the Market of Horrors*); yet in the trilogy all these events are shown "from below," deliberately narrowing the characters' horizons. In *Time in Reverse*, for example, the robbery of the Jewish jeweler is just one of many criminal cases being investigated by a rank-and-file agent of the newly founded Latvian police; in *The Woman in Black* we have his mirror image in the 1950's, a junior lieutenant in the militia. Besides, the stolen diamonds plotline emerges only episodically – mostly, the characters don't even suspect what they've come into contact with. (In the end, the largest diamond disappears into the mists of history again, only to reappear in the 21st century.) Where the history of "the little people" meets this "great" history – in which the events, as mentioned above, are somewhere in the background – the plot sparks and the entire trilogy takes on panoramic contours.



THE BEST OF GENRE FICTION CRIME



Photo: from the author's personal archive



Writer **ALDIS BUKŠS** (1985) has worked in different financial institutions in Latvia for nearly ten years. He debuted in 2015 with his first novel, a psychological thriller called *The Debt Collectors*.

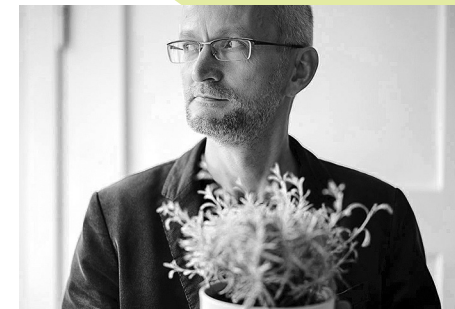
Worried about the increasingly tense relationship of their parents, Krista calls her older brother Ritvars in Birmingham, where he has been working for several years, and asks him to come home. When Ritvars arrives home in his native Riga, he discovers the painful truth: their father has been unable to cover their bank loan, and the Leidums family is on the brink of losing their mortgaged flat. Ritvars understands that he needs to do something to help ... This novel abounds in everything that might capture a reader's attention – an engaging plot, thrilling chases, the criminal underworld, bankers and entrepreneurs, friendship and love, lies and betrayal, greed and honour. The action takes the reader to Spain, the UK, and Latvia in a fast-paced thriller that is sure to keep the reader in suspense until the very end.

Excerpt in English available
Published by Dienas Grāmata in 2015
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THE BEST SHORT STORY AUTHORS



Photo: Girts Raģelis



Writer and journalist **PAULS BANKOVSKIS** (1973) was born in Līgatne, Latvia. He studied glasswork at the Riga School for Applied Arts and philosophy at the University of Latvia (1992–1996). His first work of prose was published in 1993. A prolific author, Bankovskis has published ten novels, two collections of short stories, a children's book, and a non-fiction title all within the span of a decade. His focus tends to shift from Latvian history, myths, and legends to the realities of the recent Soviet past and the possibilities of its future. In late 2007, Bankovskis published his first children's book, *The Tiny-Noggins' Play House* (Mazgalvīši spēlē mājās), which was awarded the International Baltic Sea Region Jānis Baltvilks Prize in Children's Literature and Book Art in 2008. His latest novel *18* (2014) centers around the year 1918, when the Republic of Latvia was founded; it was published as part of a series of historical novels entitled *We. Latvia. The 20th Century*.

Crazy Old Men
Eighteen men with eighteen hobbies – or mad fixations, what most would call “obsessions.” What could an unrecognized Soviet-era genius who dedicated his entire life to a single invention have in common with an eternally diligent writer of anonymous libels, a salesman of conspiracy theories and a hostage of his own Borgesian fantasies? This

is a story collection in which all of these husbands, fathers, and sons are finally brought together in 18 tragicomic and grotesque tales, prompting us to reflect on the borders we tend to draw between normal and abnormal, productive and futile, female and male, Soviet and post-Soviet, between us and “them” – all for the sake of our daily comfort and welfare – including how we perceive our own past and the way we want to be or feel in the here and now.

Published by Dienas Grāmata in 2016
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Selected titles in translation: *18* in English (Vagabond voices, UK), *Reds, Rats and Rock'n'Roll* in Finnish (Like) and Czech (Argo) and the short story collection *School* in German (Akademie Schloss Solitude)

THE BEST SHORT STORY AUTHORS

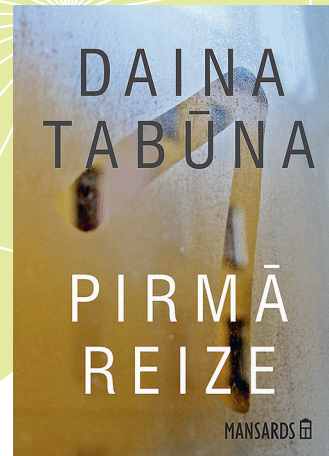


Photo: from the author's personal archive



DAINA TABŪNA (1985) is a Latvian writer. In 2010 she graduated from the Latvian Academy of Culture. Her short stories have been published in numerous Latvian publications, including *Luna*, *Karogs*, *Sans*, *Kulturas diena*, *Latvju teksti* and the online journal *Satori*. Her first short story collection entitled *The First Time* (Pirmā reize) was published in 2014, and was shortlisted for the 2015 Annual Latvian Literature Award for Best Debut. She lives and works in Riga.

The First Time was shortlisted for the 2014 Annual Latvian Literature Award for Best Debut.

How can you prepare for life as an adult if you're always having to experience new and undiscovered things? The protagonists of Tabūna's short stories deserve praise for their struggles, however life always has some sort of surprise in store, and suddenly nothing is ever the same as it was before.

Excerpts in English available
Published by Mansards in 2014
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Foreign rights: sold to United Kingdom

THE BEST SHORT STORY AUTHORS

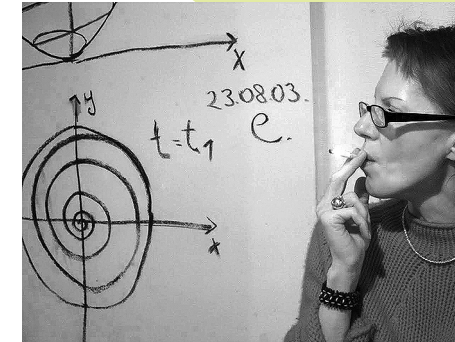
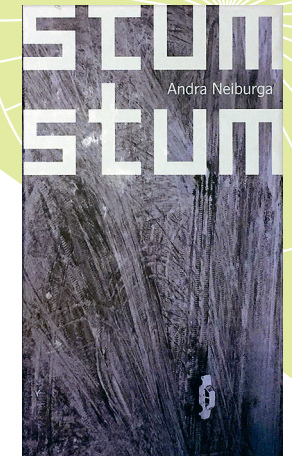


Photo: from the author's personal archive



Although **ANDRA NEIBURGA** (1957) has only published two short story collections and a book for children, they have all become modern classics and an indelible part of contemporary Latvian literature.

Her literary debut *Stuffed Birds, and Birds in Cages* (Izbāzti putni un putni būros, 1988) was warmly received at the time due to its sharp, uncompromising prose and the depth of her characters. After Latvia declared independence, her acclaim was aided by a wildly popular movie based on her children's book *The Story of Tille and the Dog-Man* (Stāsts par Tilli un suņu vīru, 1992). The publication of her second and most recent collection of short stories *Push, Push* (Stum, \stum, 2004) was called the cultural event of the year by the influential daily newspaper *Diena*.

Andra Neiburga's work has been published in anthologies and magazines in France, Germany, the UK, the US, Russia, and elsewhere. A Swedish translation of *Push, Push* was published in 2007.

Push, push (Stum,stum) was received with great curiosity as Andra Neiburga to returned to adult fiction after a 16-year absence since her much-praised debut short story collection *Stuffed Birds, and Birds in Cages* (Izbāzti putni un putni būros, 1988). Not only was *Push, Push* one of the most talked-about books of the year, but it's since

become a popular staple in secondary school curriculums, and hasn't lost its ability to surprise and even shock a new generation of readers.

"All of her stories are constructed from the inside out, building from the characters' individual experiences, memories, thoughts and reflections (...). The great variety of her characters also considerably widen their appeal – even if there's a reader who hasn't spent a lot of time worrying about existential problems, they will have had to waste a considerable effort dealing with their lives and relationships in a manner similar to at least one the possibilities offered by Neiburga." (Literary critic Ieva Kolmane)

"The stories are full of drama and subtleties, which encapsulate the narratives that would normally require a generational novel. Neiburga's "family" is her generation – the wounded souls, the unhappily happy people, those pushed and shoved by their lives and history, those left standing in the doorway between the 20th and 21st centuries. Her prose is colloquially grotesque yet at the same time harshly ironic, poetic, and emotionally precise. (...) *Push, Push* is, without a shadow of doubt, the most notable book in the Latvian literature of the 21st century." (Writer Pauls Bankovskis)

Full translation in English available
Published by Jānis Roze in 2017
Contact: Mrs. Renāte Punka
renate.punka@jr.lv

THE BEST SHORT STORY AUTHORS



Photo: Ģirts Rāgelis



INGA ŽOLUDE (1984) is a prose writer, essayist, and literary critic. She is the author of three novels and two collections of stories. She teaches creative writing at the University of Latvia and in workshops. Her

story “*Dirty Laundry*” (translated by Margita Gailītis un Vija Kostoff) is included in the anthology *Best European Fiction 2014* published by Dalkey Archive Press. Her prose has been translated into English, German, French, Swedish, Czech, Hungarian, Slovenian, Croatian, Lithuanian, and Armenian. She is a member of Latvian Writers Union, ambassador of the CISAC community of artists.

Warm Earth is a courageous story about the nature of incest. Instead of admiring the detail, it digs deep. The author has attempted to pierce the seemingly flirtatious veil of taboo and present a story cleverly resisting bringing the naive ‘for and against’ of physical love to the front (while marginalised, descriptions of these are as colourful and lively as the text of the whole novel); instead she uncovers the deeper and much more painful reason of loneliness and the monsters it creates – the lack of soulful warmth and a yearning towards warmth of the earth.

Excerpt in English available
Published in *Dienas Grāmata* in 2008
Contact: Mrs. Dace Sparāne-Freimane
dace.sparane-freimane@dgramata.lv
www.dgramata.lv

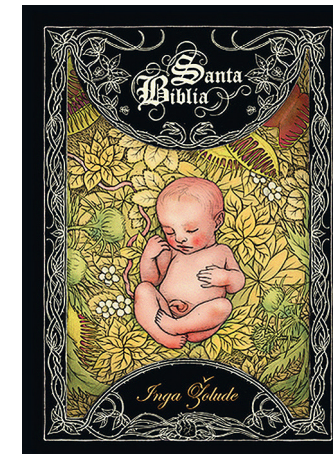
Stories – Shortlisted for the Annual Latvian Literature Award 2015 – This collection of seven short stories is writer Inga Žolude’s fifth book. The stories in this collection have developed from observation, most often observations of herself, nature, and other people, as well as from listening closely, most often to silence, to herself, and to words. In talking about her book, Žolude stated that “I wanted to write stories that we carry inside us and which quite possibly none of us actually knows are there.”

Excerpt in English available
Published in *Dienas Grāmata* in 2015
Contact: Mrs. Dace Sparāne-Freimane
dace.sparane-freimane@dgramata.lv
www.dgramata.lv



Santa Biblia – “The protagonists of this novel are Tūrs, Levs and Nīma – who is also the narrator. The prototype for Nīma is clearly Mary, and the prototype for Levs is Joseph. They are on a mission to save the world: to find and destroy a microchip factory that produces microcircuits for controlling people and installing in them a certain kind of personality programme. Over the course of the novel, the protagonists visit twelve stations, which may represent the Catholic Stations of the Cross (although there are fourteen of those, each dedicated to a meditation on the passion of Jesus Christ). With the help of a talking, inexhaustible rucksack, the young people fulfill their mission encountering various illustrations of the decadence, animal nature, and sins of mankind at a certain time and place. The location where the novel unfolds is abstract and unspecified, it resembles time tunnels and encompasses various regions. Biblical and Christian references dominate the novel and are intertwined with history: there is a Casper Hauser prototype from the 19th century, the hedonism of the ancient Romans, skyscrapers, and neutralization of the brain among other things.” – Kristīne Kārklīņa, Ubi Sunt

Excerpt in English available
Published by *Dienas Grāmata* in 2013
Contact: Mrs. Dace Sparāne-Freimane
dace.sparane-freimane@dgramata.lv
www.dgramata.lv



THE BEST SHORT STORY AUTHORS



Photo: from the author's personal archive



Writer, poet, playwright, and translator **DACE RUKŠĀNE** (1969) studied at the University of Latvia's Department of Biology and at the Latvian Academy of Medicine. In 2003, she attended the Sources 2 scriptwriting workshop in Vienna. Rukšāne is the author of three plays: *Florinda Will Arrive Tomorrow* (Rīt atbrauks Florinda), produced at the Daile Theater in 2001; *An Angel. Not Yet Fallen* (Kāds eņģelis. Vēl nekritis, 2001); and *I Didn't Tell You Everything* (Es tev nepateicu visu), performed at the Limbaži Theater in 2005. She translated Eve Ensler's play *The Vagina Monologues*,

which was performed at the Daile Theater in 2003, and Henry Miller's play *Just Wild About Harry*, which was staged at the Daile Theater in 2008. In 2007, her novel *Why Were You Crying?* (Kāpēc tu raudāji?) was published in German, as well as a Danish translation of her novel *A Little Affair* (Romāniņš). She has written several film scripts, magazine articles, and is the author of a weekly column in the magazine *Sestdiena*, a Saturday supplement to the newspaper *Diena*. She has been editor-in-chief of the magazine *Lilit* since 2004.

The Love Stories – “Love Stories,” as the title suggests, are stories of love. But readers will search in vain for classic, sentimental pieces and the literary provocations that were so characteristic of Rukšāne's work years ago. These “Love Stories” might be defined as a consciously toned down, profound book, rich in its quest for hidden issues of the human essence, delicately revealing them yet avoiding their brutal elimination. That is love – love imagined, unanswered, denied, accepted with and without conditions (often very peculiar ones). Here, love is incarnated through the use of different images – animals, objects, imagined landscapes. Love which, often without awareness, is transformed into its opposite. The author's protagonists are young and not-so-young women who act out the only lives given to them in their own unique ways – the author leaves them to it, at times sliding into surrealism, fantasy and a true genre of horror. Every story is another polished episode, but the book as a whole forms one entity – a sensitive, sharp insight into a woman's world (including her everyday life and chores) within the reality of the modern world.

Excerpts in English available
Published by Zvaigzne in 2015
Contact: Mrs. Bārbala Simsone
barbala.simsone@zvaigzne.lv
www.zvaigzne.lv

In *A Little Affair*, the first novel from author Dace Rukšāne, we meet Taņa, a young Latvian woman on an intense quest for her own identity. As the novel unfolds, Taņa's search becomes intertwined with the responsibility she feels for her children, falling in love and being in love, her countless losses and rebirths.

After she is abandoned by her husband, Taņa suddenly finds herself alone with three children. She plunges into adventures – losing herself, then finding herself again. She gets involved in various messes, but never hangs her head; she is the character who might cry briefly, but then always gets up, dusts herself off with a smile, and carries on. *A Little Affair* offers us a cross-section of an untamed young woman's world, where all moral judgment is left up to the reader.

Published by Atēna, 2002
Contact: info@akka-laa.lv



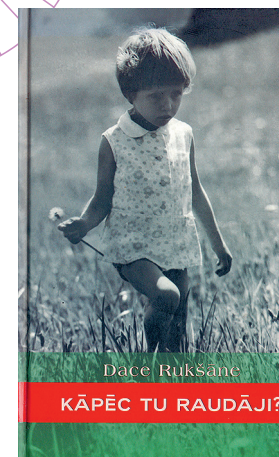
Why Did You Cry?

In the final chaotic years of the Soviet Union, Katrīna is 15 and living on the outskirts of Rīga. Just before her sixteenth birthday, she embarks alone on a long journey across half of Russia to an mountain-climbers' camp in the Caucasus. There, not only does she encounter the mountains and their challenges, but also meets her first love, who happens to be Russian. In Latvian society, where Russians are the occupiers, this is practically criminal. When she returns home, Katrīna must confront not only the uncomprehending shock of those around her over her relationship, but also a family tragedy. As these events unfold, so too does Latvia's liberation from occupation with the Soviet Union collapses.

Of *Why Did You Cry?*, Rukšāne's third novel, poet and editor Inese Zandere writes: “This is the story of a schoolgirl gradually becoming a woman and trying to give herself a hand, to fight her way out of a hole dug by others. Only adolescents live both desperately to the point of bad taste, as though there were no other way, and lightly to the point of narrow-mindedness, as though at any moment they might fly away.

Published by Atēna, 2002
Contact: info@akka-laa.lv

In 2007 *Why Did You Cry?* was published in Switzerland by Ammann Verlag.



THE BEST SHORT STORY AUTHORS

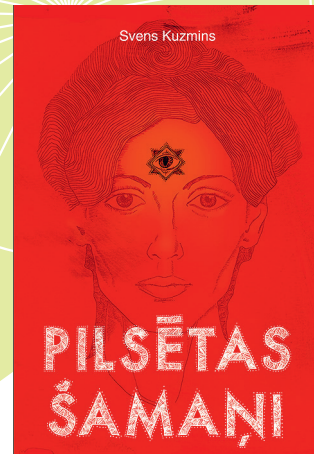


Photo: Artūrs Kondrāts

SVEN KUZMINS (1985) is a Latvian writer, artist and actor. He mainly writes prose fiction, critical articles, and journalism, but also experiments with various forms of visual arts and literature. He is actively involved in other media projects, and is known to the wider public as one of the initiators and authors behind the NERTEN sketch theatre project. *Pilsētas šamaņi/Urban Shamans* (Dienas Grāmata, 2016) is Kuzmins' first collection of stories, complimented by his own graphic drawings. His works have been translated into English, Russian and

Lithuanian, and published in various printed and online platforms. *Urban Shamans* is the first book by Sven Kuzmins, a writer and artist currently based in Riga. It's a collection of interconnected stories where subtle mystical experiences find their way into everyday urban life. Separate plots seamlessly intertwine, creating a twisted and magical picture of the modern world. In spite of their surreal settings, the stories remain grounded in our reality, with a great deal of tongue-in-cheek humour. The book is designed and illustrated with a suitably bizarre visual aesthetic by the author himself.

In 2016 *Urban Shamans* won the Ventspils Silver Quill Award and was nominated for both Liepājas Egona Līva Literary Prize and the 2017 Latvian Literary Award.

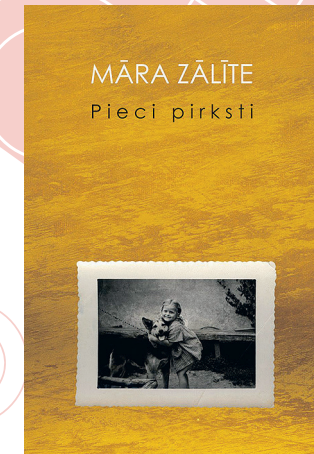
Excerpt in English is available.

Published by Dienas grāmata, 2016
Contact: Mrs. Dace Sparāne-Freimane
dace.sparane-freimane@dgramata.lv
www.dgramata.lv

BIOGRAPHICAL FICTION



Photo: from the author's personal archive



Poet and playwright **MĀRA ZĀLĪTE** was born in 1952 in Krasnoyarsk, Siberia, where her family was deported in 1941 by the Soviet regime. When Zālīte was four years old, her family returned to Latvia. In parallel to her writing career, Zālīte has worked at the Writers' Union of Latvia, served as editor-in-chief of the literary magazine *Karogs*, and headed the copyright agency of Latvia. Māra Zālīte is the author of five poetry collections and 21 staged plays and musicals, several children's books and collections of essays, as well as the novel *Five Fingers* (Pieci pirksti, 2013). She has won numerous literary awards, including the prestigious J. G. Herder Prize in 1993. She is an emeritus member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences. Her works have been translated into German, Russian, English, Estonian, Lithuanian, Swedish, and many other languages.

Five Fingers is the winner of the 2013 Annual Latvian Literature Award. *Five Fingers* is a fictionalised childhood memoir in which the author describes her family's return from Siberia in the 1950s and life in Latvia in the late

1950s and early 1960s. In terms of quality, the book matches the best of Latvian autobiographical literature, including the trilogy *Bille* by Vizma Belševica.

"Up to now, Zālīte has been best known as a poet and playwright. [...] Poetry and drama are present in *Five Fingers* as well; the best of the writing in the book involves a combination of precise poetic details and dramatic purposefulness up to the very end where the protagonist Laura promises to fulfil the wish expressed by her grandfather before his death – to give his wedding ring to his son Reinis who has disappeared without a trace after being deported to Siberia "once he returns." That means that she takes on the task of remembering. The five fingers are a metaphor for the apple tree, in the branches of which Laura sets up a perch, and a metaphor for God's hand; they are also the fingers of Jewish opera singer Asia broken during an interrogation by the Cheka [...]. The repressive instrument, the ubiquitous Cheka, has been generalised as an absolute evil in the character of the Ogre, at the same time not paying much heed to political correctness, which is that other enemy of freedom." (Egīls Zirnis, Kdiena)

Full translation in English available

Published by Mansards in 2013

Contact: Mr. Jānis Oga, janis@apgadsmansards.lv, www.apgadsmansards.lv

Foreign rights: sold to Estonia, Lithuania, Georgia

Selected titles in translation: The play *Das Gericht* (Tiesa) in German (Berlin & Riga) *Margaret* (Margarēta) in Lithuanian (Vaga); the novel *Five fingers* in Georgian (Bakur Salakauri), Estonian (Randvelt Kirjastus) and Lithuanian (Lithuanian Writers Union Publishers), and an excerpt from *Five Fingers* included in the anthology *Best European Fiction 2015* (Dalkey Archive Press).

BIOGRAPHICAL
FICTION

ROALDS DOBROVENSĶIS (1936) was born in Yelets, Russia, and graduated from the State Choir School of Moscow in 1954. He studied at the Moscow Conservatory and at the Maxim Gorky Literature Institute (1975). He worked as a journalist and writer in Habarovsk and Sakhalin from 1958 until 1973. During this time he wrote several books for children. In 1975 he married Latvian poet Velta Kalčiņa and moved to Riga, where he continued to work as a journalist. Dobrovenskis was deeply interested in Russian classical music and studied composers' biographies. His first novel *The Alchemist, or the Life of Composer Alexander Borodin* was published in Russian in 1984. It was followed by the recounting of another prominent composer's life in the novel *The Poor Knight. A Book About Mussorgsky*, which was published in 1986 in Russian.

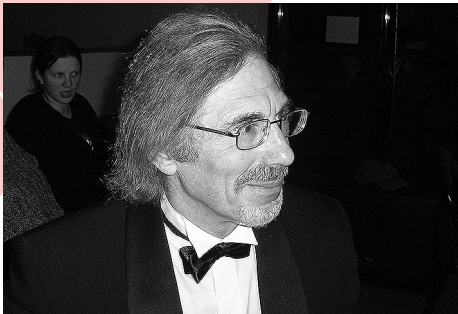


Photo: from the author's personal archive



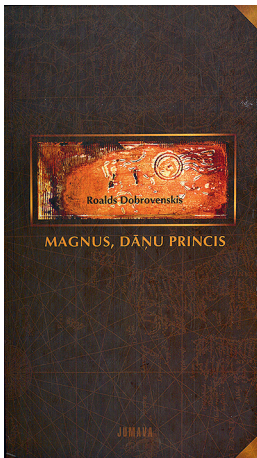
He came to prominence with his epic novel *Rainis and His Brothers. The Seven Lives of A Poet* (Rainis un viņa brāļi. Viena dzejnieka septiņas dzīves, 1999) about Latvian poet Rainis, arguably

the country's most famous literary figure. The novel is constructed like a collage which includes many historical details, quotations from documents, diaries, literary works, and the author's imagination, reflections and speculations about the true motivation behind real historical events. He used a similar style for the historical novel *Magnus the Danish Prince* (Magnus, Dāņu princis, 2004) by deconstructing historical events in the territory of Latvia during the 16th century and drawing parallels to events in the 20th century. The title of the biographical novel *Rainis and His Brothers. The Seven Lives of A Poet* is more than just a melodramatic literary device. The life of Rainis, Latvia's preeminent poet, dramatist, statesman, and thinker evolved in such a way that on numerous occasions his literary and political work brought him to the brink of almost total collapse, after which he was forced time and time again to start his life over. There was no need for him to wait for or invent complexities in his life – it was as if the plot for a story of epic proportions was laid out right before him. It was a case where fact was indeed stranger than fiction. The focus of the novel rests on the lives of people who had a profound influence on the 20th century, as the reader is taken up in a whirlwind of dramatic events that changed the course of history.

Published by Jumava, 1999
Contact: izdevnieciba@jumava.lv
www.jumava.lv

The novel *Magnus, the Danish Prince* is an account of the Livonian War that took place in the second half of the XVI century. It was a complicated and tragic period in history and one that defined the fate of the Baltic region, North West Europe and Russia for the centuries to follow. The author has chosen an untraditionally free and innovative form of writing allowing him to combine the historical facts, taken from old chronicles – testimonials of German, Latvian and Russian historians, with the lives and destinies of his fictional characters. He succeeds in blending both light-hearted, amusing episodes and real drama with undisputed historical records. This untraditional revisiting of the first and last King of Livonia – Magnus – resonates directly with the most current issues of modern life, thus through his exploration of a remote past, R. Dobrovenskij has written a book of relevance today.

Published by Jumava, 2004
Contact: izdevnieciba@jumava.lv
www.jumava.lv



BIOGRAPHICAL FICTION



Photo: from the author's personal archive



Theatre and film scholar **VALENTĪNA FREIMANE** was born in Riga in 1922. She grew up in Paris and Berlin, where her father worked as a legal consultant for the German film studio UFA, and later studied at the University of Latvia Department of

Economics (1940). Valentīna Freimane lost her parents in the Holocaust but was able to stay alive by hiding with acquaintances. She graduated from the Department of History of the University of Latvia (1949), and did her residency at the Theatre Institute of Moscow (1971) in 1992 being awarded her Ph.D. in Art. Freimane's articles were published in the magazines *Art* (Māksla) and *Theatre and Life* (Teātris un dzīve), and she is the author of the books *50 Years of the Liepāja Theatre* (1958) and *Personalities and Phenomena* (1986). She was awarded the Riga Film Museum's prize for lifelong contribution to film education in Latvia in 1994.

Farewell to Atlantis
– Winner of the 2010 Annual Latvian Literature Award – In her memoir *Farewell to Atlantis*, film

scholar Valentīna Freimane (together with Gunta Strautmane) writes of pre-war Paris and Berlin, of legendary film stars she has seen close up, and of the regular trips she took as a teenager from Riga to Berlin and back. Going back to her childhood and the memories of her early youth, the author describes the various environments in which she grew up: the high-finance bourgeoisie and artist milieu of Paris and Berlin, and particularly their film worlds with personalities well known from the history of cinema; the Riga Jewish, Baltic German and Belarusian circles and their lifestyles, as well as schools in Berlin and Riga. She then depicts the collapse, destruction, and annihilation of all of this during the years 1940–1945, along with the particular culture characteristic of people in this part of the world. She has endeavored to provide her outlook as a child and a teenager without projecting an analysis of events that comes in the latter stages of one's life, and to memorialize those people who, endangering their own lives, helped her and gave her shelter during the Holocaust in German-occupied Latvia. Her memoir encompasses an unusual variety of national, social, geographical, and cultural milieus in the 1920s and 1930s up to 1945, which marks the end of the war and the beginning of the long-term Soviet occupation of Latvia.

Published by Atēna in 2010
Contact: Stefan Diezmann
s.diezmänn@wallstein-verlag.de
www.wallstein-verlag.de

Published in Germany (Wallstein Verlag) and Lithuania (Versme). Translation in Russian was published by Atēna in Latvia.

BIOGRAPHICAL FICTION

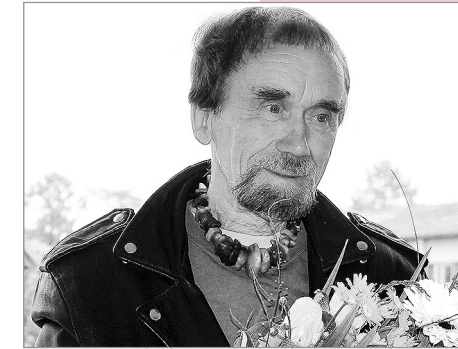
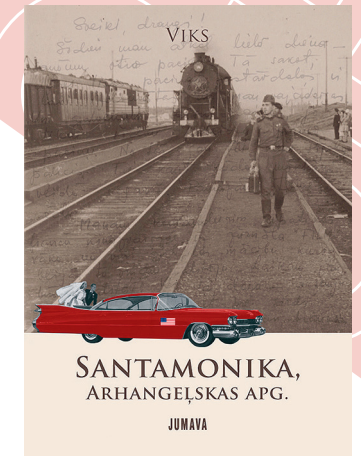


Photo: Eva Eglite



Latvian poet and writer **VIKS** (né Viktors Kalniņš, 1939) studied English at the Faculty of Foreign Languages of the University of Latvia. From 1974 his main occupation has been writing. He has written lyrics for many musical works composed by his brother, famous Latvian composer Imants Kalniņš, as well as for other notable Latvian composers. He is the author of several poetry collections, short story collections, autobiographical novels, and many popular children's books. He also has translated both poetry and prose fiction from English. His most notable works include the poetry collections *Communications* (Komunikācijas, 1978), *An Electronic Rascal* (Elektroniskais pagāns, 1986), the short story collection *A Dangerous Place* (Bīstamvieta, 2009), and the children's books *A Complicated Sparrow* (Sarežģītais zvirbulēns, 1982) and *Klaidis in the World Fairy Tales* (Klaidis pasakuzemē, 1983). His poetry has been influenced by American poetry, especially the work of E. E. Cummings. His lyrical poetry is full of experiments with the text's layout and syntax. His prose is mostly autobiographical, full of memories of real-life events, places, and people. His children's books have been adapted and made into two highly popular Latvian animated films: *A Complicated Sparrow* (Sarežģītais zvirbulēns, 1983) and *Ness and Nesija* (Ness un Nesija, 1991).

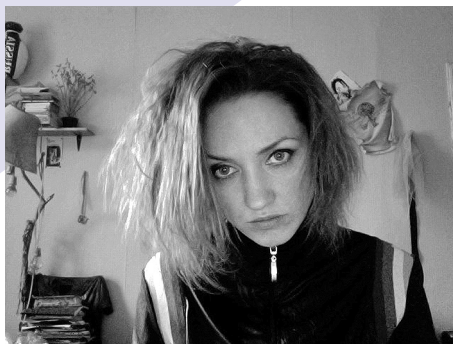
inspiration from the fact that the experience was akin to suddenly finding himself in a parallel world, his previous knowledge of which had merely been gleaned from science fiction books. Unlike fiction, however, it was all for real.

Published by Jumava, 2015
Contact: izdevnieciba@jumava.lv
www.jumava.lv

Santa Monica. The Arkhangelsk Oblast (Santamonika, Arhangel'skas apg.) is Viks's most recent book, which encapsulates his life between the beginning of 1962 and July 1964, a period when he served in the Soviet army. Despite the story having taken place more than fifty years ago, he paints a vivid picture of the people, events and situations he saw there. He was helped in this not only thanks to the letters he exchanged with his family, but also his memories of those times which made such a lasting, visceral impression on him. Viks has said that he drew



Photo: from the author's personal archive



From Riga to Beijing is the story of a more than seven-month long journey by Latvian actress **ILONA BALODE** and musician Rolands Ūdris that took them from Latvia's capital of Riga all the way to Beijing.

The trip was rather unconventional for them – Balode and Ūdris went without any sort of savings, relying on luck, other people's goodwill, and their own perseverance. During that time they lived like both vagabonds and kings – they saw the life of musicians playing on the street and in clubs, and slept in hotels, parks, train stations, and on beaches. They met people from all walks of life, saw the contradictions of the Caucasus, the wonders of the Muslim world, the peculiarities of the Hindus, the hospitality of Pakistan, as well as the pluses and minuses of China's socialism. The book contains the tender, funny and at times unbelievable experiences they had in the 16 countries they visited during their journey: Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Georgia, Armenia, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Tibet, and China.

Full translation in English available
Published by Zvaigzne in 2012
Contact: Mrs. Bārbala Simsone
barbala.simsone@zvaigzne.lv
www.zvaigzne.lv