

# Egzodika

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# Exodica

AN ANTHOLOGY OF WORLD LITHUANIAN WRITERS



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To be a Lithuanian is not merely fate, but also a conscious decision. Creative people living in various corners of the world consider themselves Lithuanians, even though that link might only be marked by an odd ending to an author's or character's surname, or the location of a certain happening, otherwise unfamiliar to most foreign readers. Nowadays, the fact of being Lithuanian might appear as an exotic "otherness", whereas over half a century ago war refugees likened their own "Lithuanian-ness" to a wound, never healing until their own death. Since the times of the displaced persons camps in Germany, attempts have been made to compile collections of Lithuanian writers' works (*Tremties metai*, Tübingen: Patria, 1947). Later on, emigre Lithuanians' anthologies were published in the United States and even in Soviet Lithuania with the due censorship limitations, of course. However, even a few decades ago, the concept of the Lithuanian diaspora or émigrés was completely different, as was the writers' own relationship with the land, place of residence or community of their ancestors. The identity itself – World Lithuanian writers – it seems, has never really existed until now; even today, that identity is not so common, or, as we would say, exodic.

EXODICA is a neologism derived from two Greek words: *exōtikos* – exotic, foreign, a foreigner) and *exodus* (*exodus* – a mass departure). In the course of compiling this anthology, we had in mind writers in very different situations whose experiences were also quite different: some of them were born and live outside of Lithuania, write in other languages and have consciously chosen their Lithuanian identity; others have, at different periods, decided for various reasons to live abroad yet they have not stopped (or have perhaps just started) to write in Lithuanian. We would not want to see them as exotic others, nor would we want to consider them as "deportees" or exiles.

In order to cover various genres and styles, thirty-five writers living outside of Lithuania, who in one way or another bear an association with the country, have been included in the anthology. It is not limited to an ethno-centric concept of Lithuania, which is why we've included both those whose grandparents or great-grandparents were Lithuanians and those who are the descendants of Litvaks and Lithuania's Old Believers. Our selection criterion was not one's native language and/or the language in which an author writes, but their relationship with the Lithuanian literature tradition, and the uniqueness of their themes and/or styles.

The authors appear in alphabetical order. Each entry is made up of two elements: a short biography and comment about their identity, and an extract of their work. Most of the writers composed their musings (autobiographical comments) specifically for this publication. References for all the published texts and photograph credits are listed at the end of the anthology.

When we think about exodus and the exotic, we also hear the echo of "erotica", another Greek word, in the title of this anthology, which we hope will develop into a series of publications in the future. After all, erotica, according to philosopher Algis Mickūnas, is the desire and depth of a source, "one that you want to return to and lose yourself in, to be reborn, to die, to vanish and then reappear, having drawn inspiration and strength for passionate creativity".

It is from such desire that this polyphonic book is born.