

Local Feminisms In the Baltic Region

the late 19th—
1st half of the
20th century



24th — 25th
October 2025



THE INSTITUTE OF
LITHUANIAN LITERATURE
AND FOLKLORE



UNIVERSITY
OF WARSAW



TLU

LAMI

The Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore
Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art University of Latvia
Tallinn University
University of Warsaw

Local Feminisms in the Baltic Region. The late 19th - first half of the 20th century. Parallels, Differences, and Influences

24-25 October 2025, Vilnius

ABSTRACTS



UNIVERSITY
OF WARSAW

Organizing Committee

Birutė Avižinienė (The Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore)

Ramunė Bleizgienė (The Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore)

Eva Eglāja-Kristone (Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia)

Zita Kārkla (Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia)

Žydronė Kolevinskienė (The Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore)

Johanna Ross (Tallinn University)

Joanna Tabor (University of Warsaw)

ABSTRACTS

Plenary speakers:

Eglė's Web: Material (Inter)Textualities and Women's Agency in Narratives about Spinning and Weaving, from Myth to Modernity

Abstract: Spinning an impossible amount of raw flax, wool, or silk is one of the three tasks Eglė must tackle before returning home for a visit. Eglė's completion of these tasks sets in motion a sequence of events that culminates in the tragic destruction of her Serpent-Man husband, Žilvinas, and the metamorphic transformation of their children and Eglė herself into trees. In his *What is World Literature?*, David Damrosch proposes that world literature, "is not an infinite, ungraspable canon of works but rather a mode of circulation and of reading [...]" and that "just as there never has been a single set canon of world literature, so too no single way of reading can be appropriate to all texts, or even to any one text at all times." My talk undertakes an exercise in some "modes of reading" of the classic, much-beloved and much-studied Baltic mythotale, "Eglė, the Queen of Serpents," with a particular focus on the symbolic meaning of the spinning motif found in many of the tale's variants. Grounded in feminist critique, gender studies, comparative literature, and mythology, as well as studies of material culture, my talk also refers to mythical narratives involving spinning and weaving in the ancient Greco-Roman and Mesoamerican worlds. I argue that, through a unique narrative structure and sequence, as well as an unusual set of antagonisms and complementarities between the symbolic realms of the masculine and the feminine, spinning in "Eglė, the Queen of Serpents" serves as an articulation of female voice, wisdom, and agency. In addition, Damrosch's concept of the "mode of circulation" helps us draw attention to the crucial role that women have played in telling, remembering, and recording this tale.

Bio: Dr. Evelina Gužauskytė is an Associate Professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Wellesley College (MA, USA). She specializes in colonial Latin American literature, visual and material culture, the history of fashion, gender studies, postcolonial studies, and comparative mythology. Dr. Gužauskytė is the author of Christopher Columbus's *Naming in the Diarios of the Four Voyages (1492–1504)* (University of Toronto Press, 2014), in addition to articles on casta paintings and the history of women's fashion in periodicals, as well as several literary translations. She is the recipient of grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Spain, the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture, Columbia University, and the John Carter Brown Library. Her current book-length project, *Gender and Material Culture in Eighteenth-Century New Spain: Spinning the Thread of Myth in Casta Paintings*, is under contract with the University of Amsterdam Press (forthcoming in 2025).

The Personal as Historical: Women's Writing and (Auto)biography

Abstract: This plenary makes a simple, bold claim: women's life-writing – diaries, letters, memoirs, and (auto)biographies – does not just feed history; it does history. I read the personal as historical by treating “experience” as shaped by language and power (Joan W. Scott 1991), and approach life-writing as a way of thinking, autotheory (Lauren Fournier 2021), enacted through concrete autobiographical acts (Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson 2001) and often shared within intimate publics (Lauren Berlant 2000).

I introduce the “life effect” to name a pattern visible across many texts: the pressures of care, work, movement, and insecurity shape how people write about themselves; in turn, small forms such as notes, lists, diary entries, and letters send out signals that help us notice larger historical shifts. In plain terms, the everyday page becomes a seismograph. Throughout the lecture, I draw on examples from various forms of autobiographical writing across the Baltic region, with a particular emphasis on Latvian sources I am currently researching and editing.

The talk follows vernacular self-narration, first-person writing made outside official institutions, at kitchen tables, bedrooms, and on the move. Read together, these materials form a counter-archive. They document political struggles and survival, entry into education and professions, changing family forms, and the negotiation of gender roles in literature and public culture. I also show how local norms and institutions, such as publishers, periodicals, and archives, shape which stories travel, which are silenced, and which become “evidence”.

The aim is both scholarly and public: to broaden what counts as historical knowledge and to make room for voices that have long done the work of history from the margins. This directly meets the conference interest in regional parallels and differences, contributions to national cultures and publics, intersections of class, ethnicity, and religion, and renewed tools for feminist historiography.

Bio: Eva Eglāja-Kristšone is a senior researcher and director at the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia (LU LFMI). Her work centers on women's writing and feminist historiography, autobiographical and life-writing studies, and Baltic literary culture, with a strong profile in Digital Humanities. She leads Womage.lv, a digital resource on Latvian women's cultural history, and serves as editor-in-chief of Literatura.lv, the national literary database. She is editor of the collective volume *Perspectives: Women in Latvian Culture and Society, 1870–1940* (in Latvian; LU LFMI, 2025) and guest editor of the *Letonica* special issue “Women's Agency: Multiplying Stories and Subjects” (vol. 49, 2023). Her monograph *Iron Cutters: Contacts of Latvian and Western Exile Writers* (2013; 2nd ed. 2016) received the Special Prize of the Annual Latvian Literature Award (2015).

A Young Nation on the World Stage: Estonia and the International Council of Women

Abstract: The international and transnational women's organizations of the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century tended to accept membership mainly from organizations, not individuals. These organizations also had to represent states, with a few exceptions. Women of the Baltic states had to wait for independence to fully participate in these organizations.

One of the oldest and most central of the women's organizations was the International Council of Women. Estonia joined it in 1921, Latvia in 1922, and Lithuania in 1930. The council took upon itself several tasks, such as promoting women's rights, advocating for peace, and representing women's interests at the League of Nations in cooperation with several other similar, but slightly more specific women's organizations, such as the International Federation of University Women, the International Alliance of Women, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and others.

The lecture will present the Estonian case. Based on archival documents, the press, and the Bulletin of the International Council of Women, the presentation will analyze how Estonian women benefited from international cooperation and how they presented Estonia, a young country, on the international stage. The presentation will also compare Estonian participation in the International Council of Women with other similar organizations.

Bio: Janet Laidla is a lecturer at the Institute of History and Archaeology and a research fellow at the Skytte Institute of Political Studies (University of Tartu). In her early research (including a PhD thesis in 2017), she focused on the early modern period (chronicle writing, history of knowledge). In contrast, her recent research focuses on the history of science of the modern period and the early educated women in Estonia. She was the principal researcher of the project *Women at the University of Tartu before 1919* (2024–2025, Estonian Ministry of Culture). She has published articles on the history of science and women's education in the 19th-century Baltic provinces of the Russian Empire and in interwar Estonia. She is also editor-in-chief of *The Estonian Historical Journal*.

From February 16th to February 17th: The Centenary of Lithuanian Women

Abstract: At the beginning of the 20th century, as in other European countries and North America, Lithuanian women's struggle for their rights took on an organized form. In 1905, the first women's organization was established – the Lithuanian Women's Union for the Defense of Women's Rights, which aimed to advocate for women's suffrage and the right to participate in the restoration of an independent state. In 1907, the First Lithuanian Women's Congress was held. However, the main document establishing the Lithuanian state, signed on February 16th, 1918, was signed only by men. The leaders of the national revival did not abide by the agreements and eliminated women from the most important event of the 20th century in Lithuania – the proclamation of independence.

The next day, on February 17th, 1918, a large women's rally was convened in Kaunas, demanding that the Lithuanian Council co-opt women (some sources indicate that thousands participated). Despite promises and formal equality, women remained second-class citizens of the Republic of Lithuania.

It is not difficult to predict that the memory of the women's protest on February 17th soon disappeared from the public narrative. Although feminist criticism (specifically Violeta Kelertas) that emerged in the diaspora in the 1980s and 1990s used this encyclopedic fact in discussions, it did not seem essential. However, in 2016, at a mini-conference entitled "Discourses of Emancipation in Lithuania" held at the National Art Gallery, I read a paper entitled "Mechanisms of Recognition of Women's Creativity", in which I mentioned this historical fact. The paper was met with enthusiasm by the participants, who called for this day to be celebrated as National Emancipation Day. In 2023, the Seimas amended the Law on Commemorative Days, adding February 17th to it.

This paper aims to reveal the history of women's emancipation in Lithuania, focusing on several episodes, such as the public reaction to Liūnė Janušytė's novel *Korektūros klaida* (Proofreading Error, 1938) and the legalization of women's surnames that do not indicate marital status (2003).

Bio: Solveiga Daugirdaitė is a literary scholar and chief researcher of the Contemporary Literature Department at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore. She is the leader of the long-term research and experimental development program, *Transformations of 20th-21st-Century Lithuanian Literature: Canon, Poetics, and Contexts* (2022–2026). Her monograph *Rūpesčių moterys, moterų rūpesčiai: Moteriškumo reprezentacija naujausioje lietuvių moterų prozoje* (Caring

8 | Women, Women's Cares: The Representation of Femininity in the Most Recent Lithuanian Women's Prose Fiction, 2000) introduced the theory of feminism in Lithuania and creatively linked it to the Lithuanian intellectual tradition. In 2016, Dr. Daugirdaitė was awarded the Vytautas Kubilius Prize for her study *Švystelėjo kaip meteoras: 1965-iejį su Simone de Beauvoir ir Jeanu Pauliu Sartre'u* (They Flashed like a Shooting Star: Glimpses from the 1965 Visit of Simone de Beauvoir and Jean Paul Sartre, 2015) and for her literary and cultural texts on the reception and functioning of literature in society. Together with her colleagues, she has compiled and edited publications on the work of several Lithuanian writers. Among other books she has compiled, an anthology of Lithuanian short stories in Latvian, *Lietuviešu zelta stāsti* (Golden Lithuanian stories), and a collection of Georgian women's short stories, *Sausas Mėnulio veidas* (The Dry Face of the Moon, 2021), stand out.

Papers:

Lost Women's Movement or Simply Overlooked Women's Movement?

Abstract: Baltic German society, especially during the 19th century, is regarded as conservative and is rarely talked about in light of women's emancipation in historical writing. Anders Henriksson, Anja Wilhelmi, and Heide Whelan have dealt with the matter within their research on other main topics regarding Baltic German women.

However, there are some topics that are often overlooked. Were those Baltic German women, who eventually tied their lives to other countries as they had better career opportunities there (for example, Margarete von Wrangell), totally lost to the women's movement and emancipation back at home, or did they contribute in less-known ways? Should we broaden our perspective on what constitutes the women's movement? Should the conservative backlash also be taken into account when helping us define how contemporary people evaluated different aspects of life as part of the movement?

I will first outline the definitions of emancipation and women's movement that I use, and then proceed to introduce my findings based on prosopographical materials from archives, newspapers and journals, and secondary literature.

Bio: Lembi Anepaio-Hytönen is a doctoral student in history at Tallinn University, Estonia. She previously completed both her MA and BA in history at the University of Tartu. She has also worked as an archivist in the National Museum of Estonia. Her field of research is Baltic German women's history in the 19th century and early 20th century. In her PhD thesis, she examines how Baltic German women transitioned from the private sphere of their homes to the public sphere seeking financial independence, and how their society responded to this shift.

Women and Society: Emancipation through Emotions

Abstract: Current research on European nationalism highlights the impact of emotions on the spread of nationalist ideas among ordinary people. Emotions are seen as the key concept that could help answer the question “How do people become national?” (Verdery, 1993: 40) Yet no less important is the influence of emotions on women’s emancipation. Feminist studies have challenged the image of nationalism as a homogeneous phenomenon. It has been shown that both women and men were given different roles in nationalist projects, and thus different models of identity were formed (Stynen, Van Ginderachter, Seixas, 2020: 6). It is important to stress that we can observe a growing attention to emotions in women’s writing at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. It is possible to assume a correlation between the ideology of nationalism and the emancipation of women. These studies of nationalism and emotions share several common assumptions: that emotions are seen as a culturally defined, transmitted, and learned phenomenon, and that identity is realized through relationships. Recent research on emotions emphasizes that they arise in interpersonal relationships and are a crucial aspect of human interaction. This view of identity and emotion is an important contribution to the study of nationalism as well as to the emancipation of women. Thus, the task of my presentation is to reveal the correlation between the modernization of Lithuanian society and women’s emancipation by examining which emotions were emphasized in their public texts and literary works, and how some of the emotions displayed in women’s texts worked as a tool to spread both nationalist and feminist ideas.

References

- Verdery, K. (1993). *Whither “Nation” and “Nationalism”?* *Daedalus*, 122(3), p.40.
- Stynen, A., Van Ginderachter, M. and Núñez Seixas, X.M. (2020). Introduction. In: A. Stynen, M. Van Ginderachter and X.M. Núñez Seixas, eds. *Emotions and everyday nationalism in modern European history*. London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Bio: Ramunė Bleizgienė (PhD) is a senior research fellow at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore (Vilnius, Lithuania). She has published the monograph *Privati tyla, vieši balsai: Moterų tapatybės kaita XIX a. pabaigoje–XX a. pradžioje* (*Private Silence, Public Voices: Women’s Identity Dynamics in the Late 19th and Early 20th Century*) (2012), and chapters of the books: *Maironio balsai: kūryba, veikla, atmintis* (*Voices of Maironis: His Oeuvre, Activities, Memory*) (2019) and *Lietuvių literatūros kanono dirbtuvės (XIX a. pabaiga–XX a. pirma pusė)* (*The Lithuanian’s Literary Canon Workshop (the Late 19th–the Early 20th Century)*) (2022). Her academic interests include the history of women’s writing, the literary history of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the history of emotions.

“Girls’ Future” in the “Future”: The Distribution of Women’s Publications in Cultural Periodicals at the End of the Third Decade of the 20th Century

Abstract: In this paper, I investigate women’s activity in Lithuanian cultural periodicals at the end of the third decade of the 20th century. The problematics of women’s journals and women’s sections in other periodicals are addressed by drawing on sources of public discourse such as articles published in daily newspapers and the cultural press. An analysis of statistical bibliographic source data reveals the distribution of women’s publications in cultural periodicals. The establishment of the section “Girls’ Future” in the student magazine “Ateitis” (Eng. “Future”) offers a specific case to explore in greater detail women’s solidarity efforts to foster “young” or emerging female authors in the context of prevailing ideologies that were unfavourable to them. I analyze the process using a sociological approach to literature and methodological tools from Pierre Bourdieu’s theory on the field of cultural production, based on which I interpret the group of women as a limited and non-independent group of participants in the literary field. I argue that the strategic grouping of women writing in periodicals into a gender-based group had a dual effect: on the one hand, it encouraged publishing texts and fostered mutual support, and on the other hand, it functioned as an entry into a closed circle, further increasing exclusion and, as it were, voluntarily withdrawing from the competitive field.

Bio: Agnė Cesiulė is a former doctoral student in literature/philology at Vytautas Magnus University (Kaunas, Lithuania). In her PhD thesis, she focused on Lithuanian literature and cultural periodicals at the end of the third decade of the 20th century. Previously, she completed both her MA in literature and BA in psychology at Vytautas Magnus University. Since 2022, she has been working in the Maironis Lithuanian Literature Museum (Kaunas, Lithuania) and also continues her scientific research as an independent researcher. The field of her research interests encompasses the sociology of literature, women’s writing, and feminism in Lithuania at the beginning of the 20th Century. In 2024, she published peer-reviewed scholarly articles on topics such as women’s writing and solidarity, and women’s cultural activities.

Feminist Zones of Interaction: Women's Liberation in Estonia, 1887-1918

Abstract: This paper examines how Estonian-speaking feminist leaders constructed their approach to women's liberation before the February Revolution in 1917 and analyzes their reactions to the rapidly changing political environment after the October Revolution. This paper argues that Estonian-speaking regions of the Tsarist Empire functioned as a zone of feminist interaction. Upon closer examination of these zones of interaction, this paper demonstrates that Estonian-speaking women in the Tsarist borderlands drew on elements from a broad spectrum of feminist thought to address women's oppression. Estonian-speaking feminists articulated the language of women's oppression and equality in relation to the serfdom imposed by Baltic Germans, solidified their commitment to workers' rights during the upheaval of the 1905 revolution, and connected with the Russian-speaking feminists who brought about universal women's suffrage in the post-Tsarist Empire. Moreover, this paper seeks to demonstrate the entanglements of Estonian-speaking feminism with nationalism. This paper shows that the overlap between ethnic and social status in the Estonian population forced Estonian feminists to engage with both constructions of class and nation, concluding that the status of Estonian-speaking regions as a zone of feminist interaction ultimately shaped the movement's emphasis on the enfranchisement of women over other methods of women's liberation.

Bio: Tara Godwin is a PhD student in the History department at The Ohio State University (US). Her research focuses on the historical development of Estonian feminism as a political movement across Estonia's history as an imperial Tsarist holding, an independent nation-state, and an occupied territory of both the Nazi German and Soviet regimes.

Contradictory Gendered Discourses in A. H. Tammsaare's (1878–1940) Short Stories and Novels: The Estonian Case

Abstract: Numerous feminist scholars have argued that works of decadent and modernist literature often revolve around questions of sex and gender, shaped by the rise of women's emancipation on the one hand, and the corresponding backlash on the other. Building on this premise, the present paper explores the contradictory gendered discourses in selected decadent-naturalist short stories and decadent-modernist novels by the renowned Estonian author A. H. Tammsaare (1878–1940). It illustrates how various discourses related to the 'woman question' – a recurring theme throughout Tammsaare's oeuvre – interweave with sexist and, at times, overtly misogynistic representations of sex and gender.

Much like their contemporaries in Western and Central Europe and/or in the Baltic States and Scandinavia, Estonian male and female writers in the first half of the 20th century – grappling with the onset of modernity – were both captivated and unsettled by the figure of the New Woman, as well as her supposed counterpart, the New Man. Hence, it is not merely sexism or misogyny that characterizes modern (and often “peripheral”) literatures, but rather a complex entanglement of patriarchal attitudes and the enduring influence of feminist discourse. The aesthetics and poetics of decadence and modernism further complicate this fusion.

This paper seeks to reframe the reception of Tammsaare's canonized work by situating it within the broader context of radical aesthetics and early feminist thought, thereby offering a new lens through which to interpret his literary legacy.

Bio: Dr. Mirjam Hinrikus is currently leading the project *Emergence of a Civilized Nation: Decadence and Transitionality 1905-1940* at the Under and Tuglas Literature Centre of the Estonian Academy of Sciences. She has published articles in both Estonian and English and edited and co-edited several volumes in Estonian and English.

Women at Home: in Search of *Acknowledgement* of the Feminist Identity

Abstract: In Lithuanian literature of the first half of the 20th century, there is a regular presence of personages in the literary background of women as maidservants, farmhands, peasants' wives, etc. Often, they serve to complement the main characters and to depict the authors' ideas. Thus, the dominant imaginary system of a woman and femininity is on display as something either to conform to and fulfill or to oppose and question. These types of characters are also in contrast to the images of educated women, wives of wealthy farmers, and patriotically committed females of the Lithuanian youth. The paper is dedicated to the literary representation of such feminine characters in certain texts written, for instance, by Žemaitė, Šatrijos Ragana, and other Lithuanian authors. Both the social context and the polemics on the role and position of women in society are addressed. Some respective texts by foreign authors are considered useful for comparison. *The paper aims to answer the following question: are these women somehow relevant to the feminist challenges, or do they remain invisible and insignificant even today?*

Bio: Jūratė Jasaitytė has completed a joint PhD at Vilnius University and the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore. Her research interests include reception theory, comparative studies of Lithuanian and German-speaking literature and culture, comparative literature, and philosophy. She is a member of the Lithuanian Comparative Literature Association as well as an independent researcher.

Realism and Feminist Perspectives in Latvian Women's Writing at the Turn of the Century

Abstract: The rise of realism in 19th-century Latvian literary culture marked a decisive shift toward representing everyday life and individual experience. Realist literature, with its emphasis on family, marriage, and social customs, also directed greater attention to the position of women and the constraints they faced within a patriarchal society. By the turn of the century, realism had become a powerful medium through which women writers articulated women's experiences and aspirations for autonomy while simultaneously critiquing patriarchal norms. These developments coincided with the emergence of local feminism, shaped by Latvia's particular cultural, social, and political conditions.

This paper examines how Latvian women writers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries employed realist narratives to document women's lives and explore new possibilities for female agency. Their works reveal diverse approaches to feminist thought. The discussion focuses on Marija Medinska-Valdemāre (1830–1887), who advocated for women's education; Hermīne Zālīte (1858–1932), whose travel writing and fiction reflected ideas of emancipation that challenged traditional gender roles; and Anna Brigadere (1861–1933), whose fiction vividly portrayed women's struggles, while upholding motherhood as a woman's highest duty.

Bio: Zita Kārkla, Dr. philology, is a lead researcher at the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia. Since 2011, she has published peer-reviewed scholarly articles on topics such as women's writing, feminism, motherhood, literary geography, and gendered censorship. She is also the author of the monograph *Embodied Experiences: Genealogy of Female Subjectivity in the Prose of Latvian Women Writers* (Rīga: LU LFMI, 2022).

Women behind the Books: Female Translators from English in Lithuania and Latvia during the Interwar Period

Abstract: This paper examines the role of female literary translators in Lithuania and Latvia during the interwar period through the framework of the sociology of translation. As translations from English became more prevalent, female translators began to enter the literary field in increasing numbers. Who were they, and what do we know about them? What social, economic, and intellectual conditions shaped their work? Drawing on biographical research, bibliographic analysis, and sociological approaches to translation studies, this paper examines the professional trajectories of female translators, their social backgrounds, and their possible motivations for engaging in translation. It also considers the literary works they translated, exploring their significance in shaping national literary and cultural landscapes. By comparing the Lithuanian and Latvian contexts and analyzing selected case studies of female translators, the paper sheds light on both shared and distinct translation dynamics and tendencies. Through these examples, it reveals how women navigated the literary marketplace, contributed to cultural production, and participated in shaping the modern literary canons in the Baltic region.

Bio: Alicja Kitlasz, PhD (University of Warsaw, Department of Baltic Studies), graduated from English and Baltic Studies at the University of Warsaw. She specializes in the history of literary translation and the study of translators' biographies. She contributed to the 19th-century module of the state-funded digital repository of Polish Shakespeare translations (<https://polskiszekspir.uw.edu.pl/>). She is currently a member of the research team at the Institute of Literary Research, Polish Academy of Sciences, and is working on the digital lexicon Translators of Literary Masterpieces in the Reborn Polish Republic (1914-1939).

Baltic, German, or Baltic German? Gender, Class, and Cultural Identity in Composer Anna Teichmüller's Travel Narratives

Abstract: This paper examines the travel diaries and letters of the Baltic German composer-poet Anna Teichmüller (1861–1940). Born into a family of intellectuals, Teichmüller spent her childhood and youth in the university town of Tartu, Estonia, where her father Gustav worked as a philosophy professor. Together with her family, she travelled widely in the Baltic Sea region and Central Europe from the 1870s onwards.

Based on Teichmüller's extensive travel correspondence, preserved at Universitätsbibliothek Basel (Kryptonachlass Anna Teichmüller), I examine how gender, creativity, and linguistic identity are constructed in her travelogues. How did she position herself as a young, educated woman traveller in late 19th-century Europe? Did she reflect on her Baltic German identity while on the road, and if so, in which ways? Based on existing research regarding women musicians' travel in the 19th century, I argue that, on the one hand, Teichmüller's travels and international networks enabled her to embark on an independent musical career. On the other hand, her perspective on both women's rights and cultural work remained that of a typical upper-class woman with a stronger German identity, rather than a Baltic or Baltic German one.

Bio: Dr. Nuppu Koivisto-Kaasik is a music historian currently working at the University of Helsinki. Her area of expertise is the transnational and translocal history of the Baltic Sea region in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. She has studied and published on ladies' salon orchestras, historical Finnish women composers (project led by Professor Susanna Välimäki), as well as women piano pedagogues in Helsinki and Tallinn. For the next few years (2026–2029), Koivisto-Kaasik will be focusing on Finnish women musicians active in Nazi Germany in a research project led by Juha Torvinen at the University of Helsinki.

Feminism in the Lithuanian Diaspora: Is it Real?

Abstract: The presentation will consider whether certain manifestations of feminism can be regarded as only local or part of a broader context. The presentation will consider the context of the first wave of Lithuanian (e-)migrants in the United States (late 19th to early 20th century), which also influenced the modernizing consciousness of women of that time. This is not only evidenced by the abundance of early Lithuanian women's societies in America, but also by women's publications, which included political manifestos, job advertisements, and published fiction.

Feminism in the Lithuanian diaspora in the USA developed not only in the context of the immigrant experience and the preservation of Lithuanian culture, but also in the context of the struggle for women's rights in a new land. Already at the beginning of the 20th century, women in a foreign land faced challenges in balancing their roles (mother, wife, daughter, sister, Catholic, worker, and suffragist) not only in the traditional, conservative Lithuanian community but also in broader American society. On the other hand, it is problematic to ask how much of this was due to the influence of the relief and aid societies and how much of it was the conscious acceptance of feminist ideas. Can we even talk about feminism in the Lithuanian diaspora of the late 19th century (in the context of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*)?

Bio: Dr. Žydronė Kolevinskienė is an Associate Professor in Lithuanian Literature and Diaspora Studies at Vytautas Magnus University (Kaunas, Lithuania) and Vice-Director at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore (Vilnius, Lithuania). Her research areas include text analysis, contemporary literature, women's literature, diaspora literature, and comparative literary studies. She is interested in feminist issues and supervises final theses of students in the Lithuanian Philology BA and MA degree programs. She has published her papers in scientific journals and other periodicals in Lithuanian and abroad, and has attended academic conferences both in Lithuania and abroad. Her latest work is the monograph *Savi balsai. Moterų kūryba išeivijoje* (*Their Own Voices. Women's Writing in Exile*) about women's writing and the literary canon in the Lithuanian diaspora in 1950–1990.

“What greater grief can there be for mortals than to see their children dead?” Child Loss in 19th-Century Diaries by Zofia Römer, Paulina Kończyna, and Emilia Wróblewska – a (Feminist) Reading

Abstract: This paper focuses on 19th-century autobiographical writings by three Polish-speaking women from the historical territories of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania: Zofia Römer (1818–1893), Paulina Kończyna (1821–ca 1881), and Emilia Wróblewska (1830–1886). Preserved in manuscript form and previously unpublished, their diaries offer powerful testimonies of maternal experience and grief following the loss of a child.

Read through a feminist and affective lens, these texts are situated within the broader context of women’s emerging literary voices in the Baltic region. They reflect the diarists’ efforts to articulate embodied motherhood and mourning, often in tension with dominant cultural and religious narratives idealizing womanhood and silencing female suffering. These writings challenge prevailing notions of passive femininity, positioning grieving mothers as reflective and intellectually engaged subjects who used writing to process trauma, identity, and care.

By recovering these overlooked diaristic voices, the paper contributes to ongoing discussions about the intersections of feminism, nationalism, and modernity in the region. It highlights how personal grief becomes entangled with broader social expectations and how women’s autobiographical writing served as a form of cultural and emotional resistance. This case study highlights the importance of women’s private archives in rethinking national canons and feminist genealogies in East-Central Europe.

The quote featured in the title of this presentation is from Joan Didion’s *Blue Nights* (New York, 2011).

Bio: Dr. Emilia Kolinko works at The Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences as a historian of literature and a scholarly editor. Her research interests include 19th-century women’s diaries, Francophone diary literature, and scholarly editing of autobiographical writings.

Women Writers of Interwar Lithuania in the Anthology *Aukštyn* (Upwards)

Abstract: The first Lithuanian literary anthology dedicated exclusively to women writers was published in 1930 under the title *Aukštyn* [Upwards]. Some argue that the collection may not have had a significant impact on the reception of its authors' works (Daugirdaitė, 2000: 58), but this paper claims that, nonetheless, *Aukštyn* marks a notable shift in interwar women's writing and reflects a changing perspective on the concept of women's literature, which is ambiguous in the collection. While the works of writers who debuted at the end of the 19th century predominantly address participation in the national movement and social issues related to everyday life, the writers of the younger generation explore women's inner subjectivity, sexuality, and freedom, among other subjects. The biographies and autobiographies of the authors in the collection can also be read as examples of shifting perspectives on women's agency.

Stressing the notion of the female voice (Smith and Watson, 2001: 60, 174), this paper aims to contextualize the circumstances surrounding the publication of *Aukštyn* and to conduct a thorough analysis of the (auto)biographies and literary works collected in the anthology in order to reassess its significance in Lithuanian literary historiography.

References

- Daugirdaitė, S. (2000). *Rūpesčių moterys, moterų rūpesčiai*, Vilnius: LLTI.
- Smith, S. and Watson, J. (2001). *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press.

Bio: Aistė Kučinskienė is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Philology (Vilnius University). Her research focuses on the history of Lithuanian literature in the first half of the 20th century. She is also interested in autobiographical writing and the study of literary canons. She is one of the editors of the volume *Literary Canon Formation as Nation-Building in Central Europe and the Baltics* (Brill, 2021). Her most recent book is a monograph co-authored with Viktorija Šeina, *Mokyklinis lietuvių literatūros kanonas. Šimtmečio raidos rekonstrukcija* (*The School Canon of Lithuanian Literature: a Reconstruction of a Century of Evolution*)(2024).

The Writer's Mother: A Lost Biography

Abstract: The paper focuses on one of the most educated women in early 20th-century Lithuania, whose name has largely been forgotten in Lithuanian cultural history: Vera (Veronika) Saglinaitė (1888–?). Saglinaitė began her career as a lecturer at the “Saulė” courses in Kaunas in 1907, where she trained teachers for Lithuanian schools. Additionally, she served as the editor of the first Lithuanian humour magazine “Garnys” and collaborated with Catholic intellectuals. In 1910, she married her colleague at the “Saulė” course and moved to Łódź, where she gave birth to a son, the future famous Lithuanian writer, Antanas Škėma (1911–1961). At the onset of World War I, she and her family fled to the interior of Russia, and returned to Lithuania only in 1921, after which she was confined to a mental hospital.

There are no further records of her cultural activities, but official documents indicate that in 1939, her husband took her from the hospital. However, the date of her death and the location of her grave remain unknown, and her husband is buried with another woman.

Veronika's name and a few fragments of her life story are preserved in the works of her son Antanas Škėma, who created a poetic and tragic portrayal of a woman with an artistic soul, ultimately shattered by the circumstances of her life. The fate of Veronika Saglinaitė-Škėmienė serves as a paradigmatic example of a 20th-century intelligent woman who, despite her considerable intellectual and creative potential, was unable to fulfill it.

Bio: Loreta Mačianskaitė, PhD in Humanities, is a Senior Researcher at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore and an Associate Professor at Vilnius University. Her research areas include the Semiotics of Culture, Soviet studies, and the interaction between literature and other arts. She is especially interested in issues related to the structures of consciousness, focusing on the relationship between the individual self and broader societal and cultural frameworks. Her article “The Woman Defeated: The Theme of Sexual Violence in Wartime Lithuanian Literature” received the Independence Day Prize from the Lithuanian Centre for Human Rights in 2019.

E. A. Ivanova and the Communities of “Sisters of Mercy” in the Baltic Region

Abstract: In this presentation, I discuss the experience of Elizaveta Ivanova (1862-1937?), an otherwise unknown woman from Saratov, in lay female communities in St Petersburg and Burigi, a village in Pskov province.

For many years, Ivanova attempted to escape her unhappy domestic situation. After several attempts—which included music, literature, and historical study—she found her calling at the age of 38, when she began working as a “Sister of Mercy” in 1900. Although her life remained peripatetic and emotionally difficult, the communities of St Magdalene in Burigi and of St Evgeniia in Petersburg were places where she experienced both a certain psychological tranquility and professional success. Both institutions had been founded by aristocratic women, and while they remained outside of official church structures, their members attempted to combine a life of Christian self-sacrifice with the secular provision of modern medicine. It was at these institutions that Ivanova trained and worked as a nurse, assisted during operations, and eventually taught herself.

Yet, Ivanova’s writing suggests that the explicit attempt by the communities’ founders (and we can assume also their members) to forge a modern model of professional womanhood, which nonetheless remained faithful to traditional values of female self-sacrifice and submission to religious and medical authority, did not succeed. Too great was the clash between individual professional aspiration and rigid hierarchies that undermined the cooperative ideal of these sororities.

Bio: Julia Mannherz is an Associate Professor of Modern History at the University of Oxford and Oriel College. She is currently completing a book project on three otherwise unknown women and their artistic and cultural activities in the provinces of the Russian Empire in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Polish Women's Organizations and the Situation of Women in Poland in the Latvian Press in the First Half of the 20th Century

Abstract: The First World War fundamentally altered the social roles of women, compelling their active participation in spheres previously dominated by men. Women engaged in professional work, served as nurses in military operations, and contributed to the war effort through volunteer activities. Some even participated directly in combat. These developments significantly contributed to the postwar strengthening of emancipation movements. In the interwar period, women in both countries increasingly entered higher education, professional fields, and public life. Numerous women's organizations emerged or resumed activities, representing a range of ideological orientations.

The parallel historical trajectories of Poland and Latvia – particularly their processes of nation-building and democratic consolidation – encouraged cross-border observation and the exchange of ideas. Latvian periodicals regularly reported on social and political developments in Poland, including issues related to women's status and the activities of Polish women's organizations. Despite these shared experiences and geographic proximity, preliminary analysis of Latvian press sources suggests that cooperation between Polish and Latvian women's organizations remained limited. This raises questions about the factors that hindered more substantive collaboration between these movements.

This paper will examine representations of Polish emancipation movements and the broader situation of women in Poland as reflected in the Latvian press during the first half of the 20th century. The analysis aims to shed light on the regional dynamics of gender discourse and transnational engagement.

Bio: Monika Michaliszyn, Dr. Philology, is an assistant professor at the University of Warsaw and a specialist in Baltic studies and Polish-Latvian cultural relations. She is the author of numerous articles concerning cultural ties between Poland and Latvia, particularly during the interwar period. Her research also focuses on the history of Latvia and the Polish minority in Latvia. She has also coordinated academic cooperation between Poland and the Baltic Sea Region, and served as Head of the Unit for Polish-Baltic Cultural Relations at the University of Warsaw. Beyond her academic work, she has actively contributed to strengthening Polish-Latvian relations through diplomatic work.

The Interaction between Catholic Feminism and Females' Artistic Careers in Interwar Lithuania: Issues of Compatibility and Possible Solutions

Abstract: The paper explores the complex intersection of Catholic feminism and women's professional artistic development in interwar Lithuania, focusing on the ideological and practical tensions that shaped women's access to and participation in art education and careers. While Catholic feminism sought to promote women's intellectual and creative agency within the framework of religious morality, it often clashed with elements of modern art training – particularly life drawing classes involving nude models, which were central to academic art education. The emerging figure of the “New Woman” in the 1920s – independent, educated, and professionally ambitious – further complicated traditional Catholic ideals of femininity, which were centred around motherhood and domesticity.

The presented topic examines how Catholic female artists and educators navigated these tensions, negotiated their identities, or sought alternatives that allowed them to reconcile faith, feminist aspirations, and professional ambition. Drawing on archival sources, educational discourse, and selected case studies, the presentation aims to illuminate how local expressions of feminism in the Baltic region (focusing on interwar Lithuania) uniquely evolved under the influence of religious, cultural, and modernist forces.

Bio: Lina Mumgaudyte is a doctoral student in history at Vilnius University, Lithuania. She holds an MA in history from Vilnius University and a BA in visual arts from École Supérieure des Arts in Brussels. Her research focuses on women in art education in interwar Lithuania, particularly female artists and the cultural debates around nude classes. She has received a Fulbright scholarship for research at Pennsylvania State University and contributed to various academic publications. Her professional experience includes illustration, education, and managing cultural projects.

Janina Dłuska 1896-1932: (Un)Veiling the Life & Works of One of the First Female Pilots in Vilnius

Abstract: The topic of the presentation is the life and works of Janina Dłuska – one of the first female pilots in Vilnius, who was also a painter, fashion designer, and illustrator – a representative of the ephemeral Art Deco movement in the history of Polish art. Almost completely unknown in Poland, overshadowed by the scientific fame of her younger sister (Maria Dłuska, a linguist and verse theorist), Janina Dłuska remains a part of pre-war Vilnius history, with the traces of her presence still residing in the city's landscape to this day. The main thesis is that the case of Janina Dłuska is in many respects ambiguous. The author presents the painter as an independent and modern woman who pursued a slightly different model of emancipation than the more famous representatives of her generation. To support this thesis, the author employs the methodology of feminist literary criticism and the archival turn and reconstructs the artist's biography using uncovered archival materials. Such an approach not only allows for a closer look at the figure of a lesser-known artist of the interwar period but also presents her activity and work as historically entangled and emblematic of various social and ideological contexts.

Bio: Maksymilian Odrzywołek (University of Warsaw) – MA, PhD student at the Doctoral School of Humanities, University of Warsaw, in the discipline of literary studies. Editorial secretary of the journal *Age of Enlightenment*. In July 2024, he defended his master's thesis, *The Knowns and the Unknowns of Maria Dłuska. What Will the Archives (Un)Veil?* He recently published an article *On the Verses of Theory. About Maria Dłuska's Unpublished and Previously Undescribed Literary Works* (2024). His scientific interests include the cultural history of Polish literary studies, the archival turn, poetics, and textual criticism.

Little Mothers of the Empire: Searching for Agency of the Orthodox Clergy Wives in the 1880s-1920s

Abstract: Until recently, feminist historiography has paid little attention to seemingly conservative groups such as the clergy and their wives. However, debates around women's ordination, and more broadly around marriage and sexuality in the major Christian confessions, have encouraged historians to draw on literary, biographical, and ecclesiastical sources to reconstruct the lives of clergy wives and daughters. Orthodox clergy women in particular have remained neglected - dismissed for their supposed backwardness, obscured by the scarcity of ego-documents, and overshadowed by a church history focused on ecclesiastical politics, monasticism, and popular religion. This paper addresses the question of agency among Orthodox clergy wives in the late Imperial Baltic provinces. By employing methods that reconstruct women's lives from fragmentary historical sources, I aim to illuminate this overlooked group and recover their voices. I will argue that by writing clergy wives into the history of the Baltic provinces of the Russian Empire, we gain a deeper understanding of the role of the Orthodox Church in the region, of shifting power relations, and of the development of women's education and feminism.

Bio: Irina Paert is an Associate Professor at the School of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Tartu. She is a PI of the research project "Orthodoxy as solidarity: conciliar and popular Orthodoxy in the Baltic provinces and Estonia". She has published two monographs on the history of Old Believers and Orthodox spiritual elders, and edited several volumes and journal special issues on various aspects of the history of the Baltic and Russian Empire. She is working on a book focused on biographies of Orthodox Clergy wives in the late Imperial period.

The Historical Novel in 19th-Century Lithuania: The Female Perspective

Abstract: The 19th century witnessed the rise of historical novels, which combined fictional stories with real historical events and settings. This trend was prevalent across Europe and was strongly influenced by the works of Sir Walter Scott. Lithuanian literature was no exception; interestingly, this genre became particularly popular among female writers. This presentation aims to explore the historical novel as a genre predominantly dominated by women writers in 19th-century Lithuania. Was it considered a ‘safe’ and ‘legitimate’ genre (to quote historian Reda Griškaitė) for women to choose? What were the specifics of Lithuanian female historical novels at the beginning of the 19th century? The lens of female historical novel theory and the works of early Lithuanian women writers may provide some answers. The presentation will highlight lesser-known 19th-century Lithuanian female authors, including Anna Barbara Olimpia z Radziwiłłów Mostowska and Sophie Tyzenhauz de Choiseul-Gouffier, with a focus on their historical novels.

Bio: Jūratė Petronienė is a third-year PhD student at The Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore. She is writing her PhD thesis on women’s historical prose in Lithuania at the beginning of the 19th century. Her scientific interests include 19th-century Lithuanian women’s literature, 19th-century Lithuanian literary history, and Romantic and Victorian literatures. Jūratė Petronienė has presented her research in various local and international conferences and has contributed to the Lithuanian edition of Sophie Tyzenhauz de Choiseul-Gouffier historical novels.

**Female Pioneers in Latvian Ballet:
Aleksandra Feodorova-Fokina (1925-1937)**

Abstract: Women have played a major role in Riga's ballet history. During the second half of the 19th century, the Stadt-Theater (currently known as the Latvian National Opera and Ballet) included Polish, French, Italian, German, and Austrian female ballet masters. This multicultural manifestation prevailed after Latvia's independence. This paper examines the unexplored figure of the Russian dancer and pedagogue Aleksandra Feodorova-Fokina through visual and documentary sources held in Latvian and American archives. In 1925, she became the first female director of the Latvian National Ballet. Among her 22 productions, she staged Mikhail Fokin's avant-garde choreographies, Marius Petipa's classical ballets, and numerous Spanish-themed choreographies. Simultaneously, she taught in Riga and Kaunas until she migrated to New York in 1938. Feodorova-Fokina's pivotal career not only established the basis of Latvian ballet but also enhanced the relevance of women in interwar Latvian culture.

Bio: Gonzalo Preciado-Azanza is a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Art History at the University of Zaragoza. His research focuses on Spanishness in late 19th and early 20th-century ballet productions (especially in the Baltic region). He is a former dancer of the Latvian National Ballet.

Working Women and their Relief Organizations: The Case of German Female Teachers in Interwar Estonia

Abstract: In the 1920s, women constituted almost half of the economically active Germans in Tartu, the university city of Estonia. Siegmund Klau (1890–1941), a prominent member of the German community, described this phenomenon as “obvious signs of an existing economic distress” (*deutliche Symptome einer vorhandenen wirtschaftlichen Notlage*) within the German minority. As German women primarily worked as teachers, several relief organizations emerged to support those among them who faced financial hardship.

This paper is a case study of Baltic German female teachers and their support networks. Within the German minority, women often worked not out of a desire to pursue a career but out of necessity – the only way to earn a living. Baltic German female teachers established private associations to support their colleagues who were affected by age, illness, or financial distress.

Methodologically, this study employs an intersectional approach, considering how gender, nationality, and social class shaped the experiences of these women. The research is based on archival materials from the German Cultural Government and relief organizations established by German female teachers.

This paper argues that the relief networks created by Baltic German female teachers reflect not only their resilience and solidarity but also the broader socio-economic challenges faced by women in the early 20th century.

Bio: Heidi Rifk is a doctoral student at Tallinn University. Her research explores the adaptation of the Baltic Germans in interwar Estonia. She has published on Baltic Germans’ responses to the 1919 land reform, Estonia’s international recognition, and the position of the German minority under different regimes in Estonia in the 1920s and 1930s. In her doctoral thesis, she examines the socioeconomic situation of the Baltic Germans in interwar Estonia, also considering gender aspects. Her broader research interests include women’s work and emancipation in the early 20th century.

The Emancipees and “False Emancipees” in Early Realist Estonian Literature

Abstract: Eduard Vilde (1865–1933) and Ernst Säreava (1868–1958) have been recognized as the founders of Estonian realism at the end of the 19th century. Additionally, both writers have been lauded for their early depictions of emancipated women. Several of their stories from the turn of the century feature young women protagonists protesting against their circumstances – most often life in narrow-minded bourgeois circles – by aspiring for education and critical thinking.

This paper aims to draw attention to certain negative secondary characters in the same literary works. These characters are often sketched out, using some of the token attributes of New Women both in their appearances and activities. They can be either student girls or middle-aged socialites, but their common feature could be described as “false emancipation”: their reprehensible behaviour is associated with the discourse of the so-called woman question. Sometimes, the driving force of the plot is the conflict between these “false emancipees” and the protagonist, the true emancipee. As a paradoxical result, the writers celebrated as the authors of early emancipatory literature in Estonia actually denounced their contemporary real-life women’s movement.

Bio: Johanna Ross is a literary scholar specializing in the history of Estonian literature, especially women’s writing and Soviet literature. Last year, she completed a postdoctoral project on the stories of Soviet Estonian and Latvian girls. She is the editor of the philological journal *Keel ja Kirjandus* and writes literary reviews.

Stanisława Przybyszewska: An Unlikely and Unlikeable Feminist Icon?

Abstract: Polish playwright Stanisława Przybyszewska (1901–1935) was not particularly well-known in her lifetime, certainly not in Gdańsk, where she spent the last decade of her life. A century later, there is a veritable renaissance of interest in her among feminist artists, both locally and nationwide. Our paper critically examines the ongoing reclaiming of Przybyszewska and asks how much of the author herself is left in the process.

We begin by tracing Przybyszewska's ideas about gender, which reflect her idiosyncratic reception of interwar European feminist thought. Those ideas, however, are nearly absent from the present-day creative re-appropriations of her figure. Drawing on a broad selection of examples, we demonstrate how the feminist artists' quest for "foremothers" clashes with what Przybyszewska expressed in writing, which results in them resorting to a set of biographical clichés and plain fictions. Just like the initiatives to celebrate Przybyszewska's connection to Gdańsk require forgetting her explicit dislike of the city, the project of turning Przybyszewska into a proto-feminist icon verges on ignoring her ideas.

Ultimately, while recognizing the importance of commemoration and celebration for women's history, we aim to initiate a discussion about the ethical challenges and our responsibilities towards those commemorated.

Bio: Dr. Ksenia Shmydkaya is a Lecturer in Slavic and Russian studies at Tallinn University's School of Humanities. She is currently working on her first monograph, which explores the philosophical foundations and political resonance of women-authored historical fiction in interwar Europe. Among her scholarly interests are the history of gender and knowledge in Eastern Europe, epistolarity, historical representation, and the French Revolution.

Bio: Antonina Lorek is a PhD candidate at Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków, where she is developing a thesis focused on intersemiotic translations between literature and sculpture, particularly within the realm of Stanisława Przybyszewska's creative works. Her research explores possibilities of developing a universally understood 'language of sculpture' and draws from the field of comparative literature study.

Family Idyll in the First Half of the 19th Century in Lithuanian Textbooks

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to analyze how textbooks and literary works, used in early 19th-century schools, wrote about family and how family life was portrayed. Analysis of this literature suggests that the textbook authors and literary work writers were concerned not only with educating children in philology and literature, but also with providing numerous examples of ethical communication from everyday life. Because farmers comprised the majority of Lithuanian families during that period, the image of farmers and their traits was commonly idealized. The most important characteristics of a traditional Lithuanian family were good relationships among family members, empathy, a willingness to help one another, and consideration for one's close ones and surroundings, all of which were emphasized in Lithuanian literary textbooks for children. This ideal was influenced by didacticism, religion, and folkloric traditions.

The image of family created in school readings for children contrasts sharply with the image of the family presented to adults in the works of women of that time. In conveying this, women writers did not shy away from more difficult themes, deeper psychological insights, and the painful realities of the time. In elementary books and textbooks, there is a more pronounced effort to form a vision of ideal family relationships, to preserve parental authority, and to respect traditions.

This presentation highlights the most common aspects of the popular family portrait of the time.

Bio: Dr. Jurga Sivickaitė-Sadauskienė is a senior research fellow at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore (Vilnius, Lithuania). She is the author of the monograph *Didaktinės lietuvių dainos: poetinių tradicijų sandūra XIX-XX a. pradžioje* (*Didactic Lithuanian Songs: The Intersection of Poetic Traditions at the Beginning of the 19th and the Beginning of the 20th Century*) (2006). The research interests include Lithuanian folklore, links between folklore and literature, children's folklore, and folklore therapy.

"This is a man's world" – On Humor and Women Artists in Interwar Estonia

Abstract: During the 1920s and 1930s, humor was generally considered antithetical to a woman's "nature" (Kunzle, 1986). While Estonia had a bustling caricature scene at the time, it was a boys-club.

Erna Brinckmann (1899-1967) was one of the few women caricaturists in interwar Estonia. Her humorous works have not been researched before, nor are most of them known. Being of Baltic German background and having lived in various areas of the Russian Empire before settling in Estonia with her family in 1914, Brinckmann was preoccupied with her social and cultural identity. This is also evident in her caricatures, where she frequently depicts herself among other figures. Thus, most of her caricatures can be considered autobiographical, forging relationships, identity, and belonging. By extending the contemporary understanding of literary autobiographical narrative (Löschnigg, 2010) to the visual autobiographical presentation, I would argue that Brinckmann's caricatures were not so much a mimetic representational practice but a process fluctuating between "fact" and "fiction", creating and dreaming of belonging as an ethnic minority and as a woman.

References:

- Kunzle, D., Duval M. (1986) *A Caricaturist Rediscovered*, *Woman's Art Journal*, 7.1, p 28.
- M. Löschnigg, M. (2010). Postclassical Narratology and the Theory of Autobiography. In: J. Alber, M. Fludernik, eds. *Postclassical Narratology. Approaches and Analyses*. Ohio State University Press, pp. 255-274.

Bio: Ragne Soosalu is a doctoral fellow, junior researcher, and lecturer at the Institute of Art History and Visual Culture at the Estonian Academy of Arts. Before starting her doctoral studies, she worked at the Kumu Art Museum in Tallinn as a curator and project manager. Ragne's doctoral thesis focuses on ethnic minority women artists from approximately 1890 to 1940 in the area of Estonia and later the Estonian Republic.

On the Path to Self-determination – Female Characters in the Modernist Prose of Jurgis Savickis

Abstract: Jurgis Savickis is considered one of the most important modernizers of Lithuanian prose in the first half of the 20th century. First of all, he broke the dominance of rural themes in Lithuanian literature, introducing urban settings such as theatres, cabarets, or cafes, along with the professions associated with these environments. Another significant aspect of his work is his portrayal of children in an unconventional, anti-sentimental way, depicting them as multidimensional protagonists who experience complex, sometimes negative emotions.

My paper aims to examine Savickis' approach to female characters – specifically, whether his portrayal of women also reflects a modern perspective. Are there any signs of emancipation or self-determination in the behaviour of these protagonists? To explore this question, I will analyze short stories from two of Savickis' collections: “Šventadienio sonetai” (Sonnets of Feast Days, 1922) and “Ties aukštu sostu” (By the High Throne, 1928). These works feature several distinctive female characters, such as Jadvyga from “Kaukės” (Masks) or the title character of “Ponia Janina Suchodolskienė” (Madam Janina Suchodolskienė).

Bio: Joanna Tabor (PhD) is a lecturer, assistant professor, and the head of the Subdepartment of Baltic Studies at the Department of General Linguistics, Sign Linguistics and Baltic Studies of the University of Warsaw. Her main field of research interests includes Lithuanian literature of the modern period and contemporary literature (late 20th century).

In Defiance of their Time: Young Estonian Women Revolutionaries in the Context of the Events of 1905

Abstract: The Estonian journalist, educator, and writer Lilli Suburg published an essay entitled ‘Emancipirt!’ in her journal *Linda* in 1888, while a debate on women’s rights had already begun in local newspapers in the 1880s. Her other articles provide a methodological background to early Estonian feminism (Annuk 2012; 2021). Another important supporter of women’s rights was the writer Eduard Vilde, who published novels dealing with women’s issues before the end of the century. This may (or may not) provide some background for the young women who actively participated in the 1905 revolution in Estonia: Minni Kurs, Alma Anni, Lilli Ibrus, and Marta Lepp. Based on their memoirs and other written sources, the presentation will ask how these young women related to ideas of feminism and (gendered) nationalism. It will also ask how their views, choices, and behaviours affected their present and future.

References

- Annuk, E. (2021). Soolisustatud rahvuslus Lilli Suburgi (1841–1923) jutustuses „Liina” (1877). *Mäetagused*, No 81, pp. 45–64. <https://doi.org/10.7592/MT2021.81.annuk>
- Annuk, E. (2012). Sooküsimus eesti ajakirjanduses 19. sajandi lõpul ja Lilli Suburgi „uus naine“. *Ariadne Lõng*, Vol 12, No 1–2, pp. 65–81.

Bio: Elle-Mari Talivee (PhD) is a senior researcher at the Under and Tuglas Literature Centre of the Estonian Academy of Sciences. She also works as a literary adviser for the Estonian Literature Centre and was a research fellow at Tallinn University from 2020 to 2024. Her primary research areas are literary urban studies, environmental humanities, and the biography of the Estonian author Friedebert Tuglas. She is also interested in events relating to the 1905 Revolution and the fate of the young Social Democrats who were involved in it.

Connected by Nationality, Divided by Class: The Case of Jewish Women's Organizations in Interwar Vilnius

Abstract: The lack of opportunities for women in Poland for organized activity within public life offered by the state contributed to women of various ethnicities creating their separate structures as various female organizations. Three organizations dedicated to helping Jewish women were established in Vilnius during the interwar period: *Vilner yidisher froyen fareyn* (Vilnius' Jewish Women's Union); *Froyen shuts* (Society for the Protection of Women); and *Yidisher arbeter froy* (Jewish Worker Woman), known as YAF, was founded by one of the biggest Jewish political parties, the Bund. Two of these organizations, Women's Union and YAF did not limit their activities to relief for women and entered politics. Both of them supported Yiddishism, a form of Jewish linguistic nationalism, and became rivals in the 1927 municipal elections in Vilna. Drawing on an analysis of primary sources related to these elections allows us to argue that shared class appeared to be a much more important bonding trait than shared nationality. The presentation will focus on the participation of Jewish women in political representation and present an example of conflict between class and ethnicity.

Bio: Saulė Valiūnaitė is a research fellow at the Lithuanian Institute of History. She recently defended her PhD thesis „Yiddishist women and their contribution to the formation and preservation of secular Jewishness in interwar Vilna,” and received a doctorate from Vilnius University. She has been working in the field of Lithuanian Jewish history and culture for the past two decades, including work at the Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History and curating a core exhibition for the Museum of Culture and Identity of Lithuanian Jews. She has coedited the book *Hope Is Stronger Than Life: Vilna Ghetto Diary* by Zelig Kalmanovich. Her latest project is the translation of Vilna Ghetto memoirs and Nuremberg diary notes by Avrom Sutzkever (eds. Justin D. Cammy, Saulė Valiūnaitė), published by Hubris in 2024. She has also been actively presenting her research at international conferences and in scholarly publications.

Latvian Painter Milda Grīnfelde and her Time Studying Art in Paris

Abstract: “What could be more wonderful than art? You, non-artists, either cannot or do not want to understand this. This is a divine flame. You would say that love is equally divine. Yes, but I am disturbed because I know it can fade away. But nothing and nobody can take away art”, so the young Latvian artist Milda Grīnfelde (1881–1966) writes to her husband from Paris in January 1909. Having said goodbye to him and left their young son with her parents, she spent each winter in the French metropolis from the autumn of 1908 to the spring of 1912. In letters to her husband, Grīnfelde depicted the everyday aspects of life in Paris, the people she met, the lessons she attended, and the wonders of art she saw. She also expressed her musings on painting and reflections on her future as an artist. This is the only known case in the history of Latvian art when, although incomplete, the epistolary heritage of a woman artist from the early 20th century has been preserved, yet this correspondence has not been studied in depth, and Grīnfelde’s artworks are not included in the latest academic edition of general Latvian art history.

In my paper, I will analyze Milda Grīnfelde’s correspondence from both biographical and social art history and try to uncover her views on the role of women in society and art.

Baiba Vanaga (*Dr. art*) is an art historian and works as an exhibition curator at the Latvian National Museum of Art in Riga. She defended a doctoral thesis “Women Artists in Latvia from the mid-19th Century until 1915” (Art Academy of Latvia, 2015), and participated in a research project “Women Agency in Latvian Culture and Society (1870–1940)” at the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia (2021–2023).

Public and Private in the Early 20th-Century Lithuanian Women Writers' Autobiographies

Abstract: At the end of the 19th century, women writers began to emerge one after another in Lithuanian literature: Žemaitė, Lazdynų Pelėda, Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė, and others. It can almost be said that Lithuanian fiction began with female writers. Almost all women writers who debuted in the late 19th and early 20th centuries wrote autobiographies or memoirs. Their autobiographies are significantly different from those of men written at a similar time or slightly earlier. The men's life stories were exclusively related to public life, without a single mention of family. Women's autobiographies of their own lives as writers or cultural figures are told through the lens of family experiences. The presentation will explore how the intertwining of the private and public spheres influenced the cultural consciousness of the time and changed the way autobiographies were written. While men's autobiographical stories follow a linear and chronological narrative, women's autobiographical discourses are more fragmented, often more muted than direct. The presentation will also examine the differences in the socio-cultural context of male and female autobiographies from that time.

Bio: Gitana Vanagaitė is a senior research fellow at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore (Vilnius, Lithuania) and the head of the Department of Modern Literature. She is the author of the monographs *Vaižganto asmuo ir kūryba: krikščionybės ir modernybės sąveika* (*Vaižgantas and his works: the interface of Christianity and modernity*) (2023) and *Prasmių raiška Vandos Juknaitės kūryboje* (*The Problematics of Expressing Meaning in the Works by Vanda Juknaitė*) (2015). Her research interests include autobiography and autobiographical studies, modern Lithuanian and Italian literature, narratology, and hermeneutical studies.

