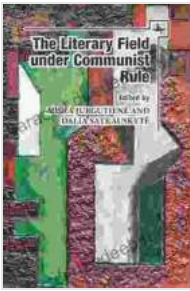


# The Literary Field Under Communist Rule: Lithuanian Studies Without Borders



The rise of communism in Eastern Europe after World War II had a profound impact on the literary field, as it did on all aspects of society. In Lithuania, as in other Soviet republics, the government sought to control all forms of cultural expression, including literature. This led to a period of repression and censorship, as many writers were forced to conform to the dictates of the state or face persecution.



## The Literary Field under Communist Rule (Lithuanian Studies without Borders) by Patricia Falvey

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 3098 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Print length : 346 pages



However, despite the challenges, Lithuanian literature continued to flourish during this period, thanks in part to the efforts of a group of writers known as the "Writers of the Underground." These writers refused to be silenced by the government, and they continued to produce work that was critical of the regime and that celebrated the Lithuanian language and culture.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the literature of the Lithuanian Underground, as well as in other forms of Lithuanian literature produced during the Soviet period. This interest has been fueled by the opening of archives and the publication of new works by Lithuanian writers. As a result, we now have a better understanding of the complex and often contradictory relationship between literature and politics in Lithuania during the communist era.

### **The Early Years of Communist Rule**

The Soviet Union annexed Lithuania in 1940, and the country remained under Soviet control until 1991. During the early years of communist rule, the government sought to suppress all forms of dissent, including literary

expression. Many writers were arrested and imprisoned, and their works were banned.

However, despite the repression, some writers continued to produce work that was critical of the regime. One of the most prominent writers of this period was Antanas Škėma, who wrote the novel "White Shroud" (1954). This novel, which was published in the West, was a scathing indictment of the Soviet regime.

Another prominent writer of this period was Juozas Grušas, who wrote the play "Herkus Mantas" (1957). This play, which was based on a Lithuanian folk tale, was interpreted as an allegory of the Lithuanian resistance to Soviet rule.

## **The Thaw**

The death of Joseph Stalin in 1953 led to a period of liberalization in the Soviet Union, known as the "Thaw." This period was marked by a relaxation of censorship and a greater tolerance of dissent. In Lithuania, this led to a flowering of literary activity, as writers began to explore new themes and styles.

One of the most important literary works of this period was the novel "The Wooden Cross" (1955) by Vaižgantas. This novel, which was set in a Lithuanian village during the Soviet period, was a powerful indictment of the collectivization of agriculture.

Another important work of this period was the play "The Devil's Mill" (1961) by Justinas Marcinkevičius. This play, which was based on a Lithuanian folk

tale, was a critique of the Soviet regime and its destruction of Lithuanian culture.

## **The Brezhnev Era**

The period from 1964 to 1982, known as the Brezhnev era, was a time of relative stability in the Soviet Union. However, it was also a time of increased censorship and repression. In Lithuania, this led to a decline in literary activity, as writers were once again forced to conform to the dictates of the state.

One of the few writers who continued to produce work that was critical of the regime was Sigitas Geda, who wrote the poem "The Song of the Sea" (1972). This poem, which was published in the West, was a celebration of Lithuanian culture and a condemnation of the Soviet occupation.

Another important writer of this period was Vytautas Bubnys, who wrote the novel "The Green Meadow" (1979). This novel, which was set in a Lithuanian village during the Soviet period, was a powerful indictment of the collectivization of agriculture.

## **The Collapse of the Soviet Union**

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to a period of great change in Lithuania, as it did in all of Eastern Europe. In Lithuania, this led to a renewed interest in the literature of the Lithuanian Underground, as well as in other forms of Lithuanian literature produced during the Soviet period.

This interest has been fueled by the opening of archives and the publication of new works by Lithuanian writers. As a result, we now have a

better understanding of the complex and often contradictory relationship between literature and politics in Lithuania during the communist era.

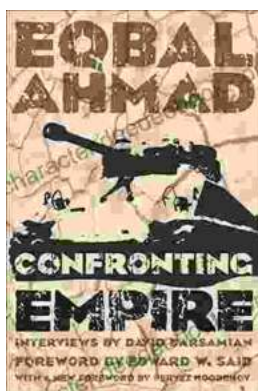
The literature of the Lithuanian Underground is a powerful reminder of the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. Despite the challenges they faced, Lithuanian writers continued to produce work that was critical of the regime and that celebrated the Lithuanian language and culture. This work played an important role in the struggle for Lithuanian independence, and it continues to inspire Lithuanians today.



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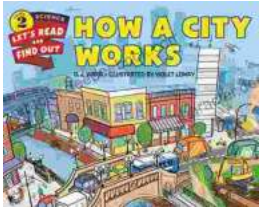
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