

**TOWARDS UTOPIAN COMMUNISM:
WRITING FOR CHILDREN IN SOVIET LITHUANIA (1964-1989)**

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to look afresh at children's literature in Soviet Lithuania between 1964-1989 and provide an insightful account on the literary field and its peculiarities. By adopting the literary field theory developed by Pierre Bourdieu, I aim to provide a new approach for understanding Soviet children's literature and its status within the Soviet project towards utopian communism. I examine children's literature from two different angles. First, I analyze administrative body of Soviet institutions responsible for the literary and publishing matters. Second, I examine the content of children's books published during the research period. I determine the main Soviet morals and concepts which I aim to indicate in children's books through critical content analysis. In this research I argue that Soviet Lithuanian children's literature existed in the margins of the general Soviet cultural field. Also, I argue that such peripheral position was beneficial for Soviet authors to explore more topics. By merging the two aspects (administrative/structural body) and content of children's books I am to provide an innovative approach to children's literature studies.

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I dedicate this thesis to Vincent for endless support and encouragement.

List of Abbreviations

LCVA – Lietuvos Centrinis Valstybės Archyvas – Lithuanian Central State Archives

LLMA – Lietuvos Literatūros ir Meno archyvas – Lithuanian Archives of Literature and Art

LYA – Lietuvos Ypatingasos archyvas – Lithuanian Special Archives

MGB – Ministry for the State Security

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Introduction

The studies of children's literature are complex and varied. The complexity lies in two concepts: *children* and *literature*. First, the definition of childhood and its perception has been changing over time and it varies from culture to culture.¹ Second, children's literature studies have often been held to the same standards as literature for adults. Peter Hunt points out that children's books are written for different audiences, with different skill sets. The authors of these books often have very little experience with children; therefore, they are judged by the same values by which adult literature is judged.² Furthermore, the origins of children's literature are to be found in both literary and pedagogic systems. This binary reference has far-reaching consequences for the status of youth literature.³ In other words, because of its didactic purposes the artistic value of children's literature has often seen to have been suppressed by its pedagogical merit. Nevertheless, there is a shared consensus across the world that books carry power and influence in the formation of children's attitudes and their perception of the world. According to the theory of children's literature the main function of books is to offer children a model of values and behaviors which contribute to the development of their identity.⁴ Writing for children varies from country to country according to its values and ideology. There

¹ Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962); Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan: Or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction*, Language, Discourse, Society (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1992), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-23208-6>.

² Peter Hunt, *Understanding Children's Literature: Key Essays from the International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10054825>.

³ Emer O'Sullivan, *Comparative Children's Literature* (Routledge, 2005).

⁴ Robyn McCallum and John Stephens, "Ideology and Children's Books," *Handbook of Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature*, 2010, 359–71.

are a number of discourses that need to be considered in order to understand ideological purposes in youth literature. One of the most important issues is the place of children and youth in society.

Since the establishment of the USSR, public discourse fashioned children as a special group, as they were supposed to become productive members of a newly formed socialist society. Catriona Kelly notes that the Soviet state placed children's affairs at the heart of its political legitimacy.⁵ Furthermore, childhood became a central sphere for the modernizing ambitions of the Soviet state, which aimed to develop formal education, institutional care, and intervene in the child-raising practices of parents. Socialism became the main political ideology which had to be implemented in all aspects of social, economic, and cultural life. In order to achieve ideological goals, intensive political indoctrination started from a very early age which shaped the lives of children across the USSR. Happy childhood was not only a goal of Soviet culture, but also a sacred value which became a central tenet of propaganda. Particularly, during the period of the Cold War, the child became an icon of the country's capacity and an emblem of a modern future.⁶

According to Evgeny Dobrenko Russian culture has always been literature-centric; therefore, it was understood that children's literature was one of the most important means of shaping human consciousness in Soviet literary culture. After the Stalinist-era the well-known cultural myth propagated that Soviet people 'are the most

⁵ Catriona Kelly, *Children's World: Growing up in Russia, 1890-1991* (New Haven [Conn.]; London: Yale University Press, 2007).

⁶ Margaret Peacock, *Innocent Weapons: The Soviet and American Politics of Childhood in the Cold War* (University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

active reading nation in the world' (*samyi chitaiushchii narod v mire*). Even though, books as well as toys, are consumer goods and require financial means, they occupied a different location in the system of social values in the Soviet Union. As Catriona Kelly emphasizes books were regarded as essentially different from other purchases and were associated with the conviction that reading was “an activity of peculiar virtue and civilizing power”.⁷ Thus, the analysis of the children’s literature and its production is a fundamental aspect of the Soviet cultural field. It can reveal the main propagated values of the society, its identity, and how it was changing over the years.

After the Second World War, the Baltic republics – Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia were incorporated into the Soviet Union and became a part of multinational socialist project seeking to achieve communism. An important point here is that the Baltic states were included into the Soviet Union under different circumstances than those countries that participated in the Soviet project since its beginning. During the Interwar period Lithuanian, Latvia, and Estonia existed as independent countries. That is, Lithuania had its own established literary tradition and functioned without strict censorship. Children’s literature was also strongly influenced by modernism from the West.⁸ Kristina Vaisvalavičienė notes that about 30 different magazines were published monthly for children.⁹

⁷ Kelly, *Children’s World*, p.449.

⁸ Giedrė Jankevičiūtė and V Geetha, *Another History of the Children’s Picture Book: From Soviet Lithuania to India* (Chennai: Tara Books, 2017), 66.

⁹ Kristina Vaisvalavičienė, “XX a. tarpukario lietuvių vaikų periodikos komunikaciniai modeliai: vaikų literatūros premijos (Communication models in twentieth century Lithuanian children’s periodicals: children’s literary awards),” *Colloquia* No. 37 (2017): 115–36.

After Lithuania's incorporation to the Soviet Union, the newly formed Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic (LSSR) had to follow already established social, economic, and cultural templates mirroring Soviet Russia. The communist party began to interfere actively in literary matters, a process that culminated in the state's aspiring to complete control over literature. Private publishing houses and literary journals closed or were immediately monopolized by the state. The writer's function changed, as well as publishing policy. Most of children's books were published by The State Publisher of Fiction (lit. Valstybinė Grožinės Literatūros Leidykla) founded in 1945. During the first years of the Soviet period, children's books were not published in a very high volume. First, to avoid the fate of deportation, many talented Lithuanian writers and artists moved to other countries before the war ended. Second, the new publishing house was not located in a capital city; therefore, the demand for children's literature was low.¹⁰ The situation started to change when in 1949 the publishing house relocated to the capital city of Vilnius. Furthermore, around the same time the first generation of young artists and writers were graduating from Soviet Lithuanian art schools where they began to master the basic principles of socialist realism. Since Soviet Russia became the primary example for cultural policy in Soviet Lithuania, children's literature had to meet socialist principles and to provide a blueprint on how children were to become productive members of socialist society.

In this thesis children's literature in Soviet Lithuania 1964-1989 will be examined from two angles. First, I will examine the administrative body of Soviet institutions which were responsible for literary matters and publishing (The State

¹⁰ Jankevičiūtė and Geetha, *Another History of the Children's Picture Book*.

Publishing House of Fiction, the censorship institution *Glavlit* (General Directorate for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press under the Council of Ministers of the USSR), The Writers Union, Primary Party organizations) in order to analyze how they contributed to the communist project while producing children's literature. Second, I will examine the contents of children's books written during the Soviet era to determine what and how Soviet values were reflected and propagated in youth literature.

Chronology. The starting point for my research is 1964, the year that marked Brezhnev's accession to power and the start of what would later be called late socialism, which is also referred to as mature socialism in some scholarly work.¹¹ As Polly Jones notes that by this period Soviet literary institutions had matured and had well established functioning body. Also, from 1964 the main children's literature publisher was renamed and sought to implement new directives of children's literature publishing.¹² This research also covers the period of *perestroika*, because the first publishing house dedicated to children's literature in Soviet Lithuania was opened just in 1985. Thus, in this thesis I aim to analyze the changes that occurred after the establishment of the new publishing company. Furthermore, the year of 1989 is marked by a resolution issued by Glavlit, on the basis of which 'Vaga' and

¹¹ See for example Polly Jones, "The Zones of Late Socialist Literature," in *The Cambridge History of Communism: Volume 3: Endgames? Late Communism in Global Perspective, 1968 to the Present*, ed. Juliane Fürst, Mark Selden, and Silvio Pons, vol. 3, The Cambridge History of Communism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 376–98; Neringa Klumbytė and Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, eds., *Soviet Society in the Era of Late Socialism, 1964-1985* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2013).

¹² „Vagos“ leidyklos pirminės partinės organizacijos atviro susirinkimo, įvykusio 1964-01-24, protokolas Nr. 1. {Meeting minutes of the primary party organization of 'Vaga' Publishing House, held on January 24, 1964, No. 1}, in: LYA, f. 11321, ap. 2, b. 8, p. 1-14.

‘Vyturys’ publishing houses were exempted from censorship.¹³ This means that children’s literature publishing was free of ideological commitment.

Thesis statement. As mentioned above, children and youth had a special place in Soviet society; therefore, literature was of a great importance in the educational process. It was claimed that the profession of a children’s author is respected and even desired. Juvenile literature was particularly important in communist project as a propagator of Soviet morals. However, I argue that in Soviet Lithuania children’s literature existed in the periphery of the cultural field, which means that youth literature was not considered as important as books for adults. Furthermore, there existed a constant shortage of talented children’s authors among members of the Soviet Lithuanian Writers’ Union as they were perceived as educators rather than writers. I also argue that the books reflecting Soviet morals were mostly produced by the writers in important administrative positions. Thus, during the period of 1964-1989 there were published books that did not meet Soviet morals and official propaganda by less visible figures.

Primary sources. The main body of sources for this research are the administrative documents of Soviet institutions held in the Lithuanian Special Archives (LYA), the Lithuanian Central State Archives (LCVA), and the Lithuanian Archives of Literature and Art (LLMA). Their information is supplemented by Soviet periodicals such as *Literature and Art* (lit. Literatūra ir Menas), *Victory* (Pergalė), and

¹³ Vyriausios valstybinių paslapčių spaudoje saugojimo valdybos prie LTSR ministrų tarybos (LTSR Glavlito) įsakymas Nr. 18, 1989-03-03. {A decree of the General Directorate for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press under the Council of Ministers of the LSSR (LSSR Glavlit) No. 18, 1989-03-03}, in: LCVA, f. R-522, ap.2, b. 253.

Nemunas (culture magazine named after Lithuanian river) published during the research period. Furthermore, in this thesis I will use memoirs, correspondence and interviews of writers and editors published after the collapse of the USSR.¹⁴ Since historical documents and chosen periodicals were produced during the Soviet period, they require a critical analysis as they were obliged to respond to official Soviet discourse and propaganda.

Written sources, including archival material have significant flaws. First, statistics and other reports were produced selectively. Meeting minutes offer an administrative perspective providing detailed reports on adult literature while accounts on children's literature are highly limited. Second, some archival documents are handwritten which proves difficult to read as they are often erased and crossed out. Furthermore, some archival documents are not yet accessible because they are still to be classified. Also, since the majority of historical documents are written in Lithuanian, I will provide original titles and translations into English of my own.

Literature review. Even though children's literature is important to a child's development, its studies have been marginalized. It has not become a distinct part of any discipline. On the other hand, because of this marginalization, children's literature does not exist in a vacuum, and therefore, is attractive to scholars of literature, psychology, history, anthropology, art, or popular culture. Nonetheless, literature dealing with children's literature in Soviet Lithuania is scarce. It has been touched upon by literary scholars Vincas Auryla and Kęstutis Urba. Auryla devoted his attention to children's literature and published a monograph on the history of

¹⁴ Majority of these interviews are published in contemporary children's literature magazine entitled *Rubinitis*.

Lithuanian children's literature in 1986 which remains the only thorough account of such kind to date.¹⁵ It is a detailed study of children's literature genres and Lithuanian writers focused on the main themes. However, it was published during the last years of the Soviet period, thus it is favorable to official Soviet discourse. Urba focused on Lithuanian national children's literature of the twentieth century. His approach aims to prove that towards the end of Soviet period, children's literature became free from communist ideology and publishers did not aim to produce any of the 'correct' books.¹⁶ Urba, however, relies only on a few well-known authors of that time and did not support his study with archival material. While it is insightful research and it provides an account on the main themes and authors, it could have benefited from inclusion of more different examples.

Art historian Giedrė Jankevičiūtė analyses Soviet children's literature through illustrations.¹⁷ Jankevičiūtė focuses on the developments of artistic styles and especially the influence from the West. She draws special attention to the expressions of modernism and innovations in illustrations of children's books which shows that the field of youth literature benefited from a relatively safe environment in terms of Soviet restrictions. Also, Jankevičiūtė's research aims to show under what conditions children books illustrators got involved in a field which is of great importance to this thesis.

¹⁵ Vincas Auryla, *Lietuvių Vaikų Literatūra {Lithuanian Children's Literature}* (Vilnius: Vaga, 1986).

¹⁶ Kęstutis Urba, *Auginančioji literatūra: XX a. lietuvių vaikų literatūros tyrimai {Literature that Raise: study of Lithuanian Children's literature of the twentieth century}*, (Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla, 2015).

¹⁷ Jankevičiūtė and Geetha, *Another History of the Children's Picture Book*; Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, "Swinging Sixties Sovietų Lietuvos Literatūros Lauke {The Swinging Sixties in the Illustrations of Soviet Lithuanian Children's Books}," n.d., 25.

Some scholars focused explicitly on representations of certain subjects in Soviet children's literature. Literary scholar Loreta Jakonytė examined the representation of World War II in Soviet Lithuanian prose for children.¹⁸ Jakonytė's research reveals that the interpretation of the war between 1940-1990 was strongly ideologized. However, the research is based mostly on the books that were published during the first two decades of the Soviet period in Lithuania. Jakonytė also published a monograph on the family image representation in Soviet children's literature.¹⁹ She approached children's books through critical content analyses which revealed what image of the family was propagated by the Soviet state. Furthermore, the research showed how that image has been changing over the years with changing political power. It is an insightful study focusing on a variety of genres, which provides a detailed overview of particular images in Soviet Lithuanian children's literature.

Since the studies of Soviet Lithuanian children's literature is relatively limited, the case of Soviet Russia serves as a springboard to this thesis. Marina Balina is a leading scholar of this field, who analyses the emergence and development of Soviet juvenile literature.²⁰ Balina pays special attention to ideological goals assigned to children's authors and their possibilities of experimenting which is close to the questions raised in this thesis. Furthermore, Balina provides an insightful analysis of childhood narratives propagated in youth literature.²¹ This thesis also benefits from

¹⁸ Loreta Jakonytė, "Nuotykių, kančių ir propaganda: Antrasis pasaulinis karas sovietmečio lietuvių prozoje vaikams {Adventures, Suffering, and Propaganda: World War II in Soviet Lithuanian Prose for Children}," *Žmogus ir žodis* 17, no. 2 (2015).

¹⁹ Loreta Jakonytė, *Šeimos vaizdinys sovietmečio lietuvių literatūroje vaikams {The Image of Family in Soviet Lithuanian Literature for Children}* (Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2015).

²⁰ Marina Balina, *Russian Children's Literature and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

²¹ Marina Balina, "Troubled Lives: The Legacy of Childhood in Soviet Literature," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 49, no. 2 (2005): 249–65, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20058262>.

Evgeny Dobrenko's research which provides tools to approach socialist realism as an aesthetic political doctrine in children's literature.²² The case of Soviet Russian children's literature is also examined by Ben Hellman.²³ Hellman uncovers the development of various genres and approaches to various themes by Soviet children's authors. However, since his study aims to cover a wide scope, it does not provide a deep analysis of certain books.

Some scholars explicitly focused on the thematic and aesthetic developments of children's authors. Ainsley Morse analyses the evaluation of children's poets from the October Revolution to the dissolution of the USSR.²⁴ Morse focuses on specific authors in every chapter and provides deep analyses of their work and peculiarities of the time period. Importantly, Morse provides an account on children's literature perception of the authors which is beneficial to this thesis. Furthermore, while Sara Pankenier Weld does not explicitly analyze children's literature, she explores how childlike poetics influenced the development of avant-garde during the early Soviet period and argues that central Russian writers, authors, and theorists self-consciously used an infantile aesthetic, as inspired by children's art, language.²⁵ Weld's interdisciplinary study not only covers a rich period but also offers tools for wider contextualization.

²² Evgeny Dobrenko, "The Entire Real World of Children': The School Tale and 'Our Happy Childhood,'" *The Slavic and East European Journal* 49, no. 2 (2005): 225–48, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20058261>.

²³ Ben Hellman, *Fairy Tales and True Stories: The History of Russian Literature for Children and Young People (1574 - 2010)*, *Fairy Tales and True Stories* (Brill, 2013).

²⁴ Ainsley Morse, *Word Play: Experimental Poetry and Soviet Children's Literature*, 2021.

²⁵ Sara Pankenier Weld, *Voiceless Vanguard: The Infantile Aesthetic of the Russian Avant-Garde* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2014).

During the past three decades, the literary and artistic field of the Soviet Union was regarded with a significant academic interest. However, as Dobrenko notes majority of the studies focus on Soviet Russia leaving other national literatures behind.²⁶ In this thesis I aim to address this gap and provide an account from the field of Soviet Lithuanian children's literature. A combination of empirical data collected during archival research and critical content analyses of children's books will contribute to the understanding of children's literature status, role and propagated values.

Structure. This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter provides theoretical considerations and an outline of the main concepts used throughout the thesis. The second chapter consists of four sections and is based on archival documents. Each section provides an account from a different perspective towards children's literature ('Vaga' publishing house, The Writers' Union, Soviet authors, and children's literature critique). The third chapter is based on the analysis of the content of children's books published during the research period. It explores ideologically charged literature as well as books that did not meet standards propagated by Soviet authorities. The last chapter is dedicated to the establishment of children's literature publisher 'Vyturys'. This chapter briefly outlines the founding circumstances of 'Vyturys' and its primary vision.

²⁶ Evgeny Dobrenko, *Soviet Multinational Literature: Approaches, Problems, and Perspectives of Study, The Literary Field under Communist Rule* (Academic Studies Press, 2019), 4-5,

Chapter 1: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND THE FRAMEWORK

In the first research chapter I will analyze the field of Soviet children's literature and its functionality. Thus, this chapter intends to provide a theoretical framework and outline of the main concepts used in the later chapters. First, I will introduce the literary field theory developed by French scholar Pierre Bourdieu and will position children's literature within the theory. Second, I will introduce the main Soviet morals and qualities that the Communist Party was seeking to encourage in an ideal Soviet man or woman through children's literature. This approach will provide me with the necessary tools to analyze the content of Soviet children's books published within the research period (1964-1989)

1.1 Literary field theory

For this thesis I will borrow the concepts such as *field*, *agent*, *habitus*, *capital* (*social, economic, cultural, and symbolic*) from the literary field theory developed by Pierre Bourdieu. I argue that this theoretical approach proves to be fruitful and provides a rigorous method to analyze the peculiarities of the field of the Soviet children's literature. It highlights the functional relationship between active agents involved in the field. Even though Bourdieu developed the theory by examining the emergence and evaluation of literary and artistic culture in France in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it can be adopted to different national and societal models.

Field is one of Bourdieu's most important and most popular concepts which is also a base of this thesis. Bourdieu describes a *field* as a system of social relations operating according to its own specific logic and rules.²⁷ It is also a space of position takings which "is nothing other than the structure of the distribution of the capital of specific properties which governs success in the field and the winning of the external or specific profits (such as literary prestige) which are at stake in the field."²⁸ Positions within the field are occupied and manipulated by the social *agents* which may be individuals, groups, or institutions.²⁹ Thus, in the field of Soviet children's literature single literary authors (individuals), publishing houses, and the Writers' Union (institutions) will be treated as social agents. To describe agents' activity within a field Bourdieu used a game metaphor. In other words, agents enter a game (field) to win and by doing so they accept the constraints and the possibilities inherent in the game.³⁰

Every agent enters the field with their *habitus*. *Habitus* is Bourdieu's key concept to understand the agent which is the agent's individual system of embodied behaviors, skills, and habits that help to orientate in the field and determine decisions based on previous experiences.³¹ To illustrate, if an author published a piece of work and did not gain any recognition, he or she may try to publish within a different genre that is at a higher position in the literary hierarchy to gain recognition.

²⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson, Reprinted (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011).

²⁸ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 30.

²⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, Medidian Crossing Aesthetics (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

³⁰ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 184.

³¹ Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, 261-264.

According to Bourdieu, the agent's position in the literary or artistic fields is defined by the possession of a specific *capital* (recognition).³² He distinguishes four forms of *capital*: *economic* (financial means, wealth), *cultural* (education, knowledge), *social* (social network, relations), and *symbolic* (socio-cultural prestige, name).³³ Thus, an agent participates in a game (field of struggle) in order to gain capital and to improve its position within the field. This means that agents play according to the rules of a specific field. Since during the Soviet period, the communist party was strongly involved in literary production and agents that wanted to move higher in the hierarchy had to follow the principles dictated by the political party.

I am aware of Bourdieu's literary field criticism and limitations, therefore as mentioned above instead of mechanically applying the theory, I will borrow its concepts that fit to my research and help to answer raised questions. Bourdieu's literary field theory is criticized for the use of mostly economic concepts which 'reduces' the value of aesthetic works and experiences.³⁴ However, as Loreta Jakonytė highlights, Bourdieu adjusts these terms and employs them in a creative way.³⁵ Furthermore, Bourdieu's theory is accused of being 'too French' and, therefore, incomplete to use in different settings.³⁶ However, his theory has been successfully applied to different national traditions (South Africa, China, Germany).³⁷

³² Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 31.

³³ Loreta Jakonytė, "Pierre'o Bourdieu Literatūros Sociologija (Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology of Literature)," *Literatūra* 47, no. 1 (January 1, 2015): 57–72, <https://doi.org/10.15388/Litera.2005.1.8150>.

³⁴ John R. W. Speller, *Bourdieu and Literature* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2014).

³⁵ Jakonytė, "Pierre'o Bourdieu Literatūros Sociologija (Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology of Literature)", 60.

³⁶ Roger Friedland, "The Endless Fields of Pierre Bourdieu," *Organization* 16, no. 6 (November 1, 2009): 887–917, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508409341115>.

³⁷ Speller, *Bourdieu and Literature*, 23.

Taisija Laukonėn applied Bourdieu's literary field theory as a base for her research on strategies of Lithuanian Russian poets in Soviet period.³⁸

Bourdieu particularly emphasized the autonomy of the literary and artistic field which can prove to be difficult in Soviet literary field. According to the scholar, the more autonomous the field is, the more completely it fulfils its own logic.³⁹ Since Soviet literary field production was strongly dependent on censorship, its autonomy was low. However, as Vasiliauskas and Baliutytė note Soviet authors had a choice (autonomy) to either enter the field, remain unpublished, participate in an unofficial publishing, or practice Aesopian language, which makes literary field autonomous.⁴⁰ Furthermore, since one of the Soviet literary field rules was meeting the communist ideology, one could assume that authors higher in the hierarchy were not talented but merely capable producing literary works accepted by the party. However, since Soviet literary field functioned differently than in the capitalist French society, often this assumption is false.

By employing these concepts together with the empirical data collected during archival research, I will determine the status (position) of Soviet Lithuanian children's literature within the general cultural field. This will help to trace the activities and strategies of social agents which will contribute to the understanding of children's literature production and its liminalities. It will help to identify phenomenon that existed in Soviet Lithuania.

³⁸ Taisija Laukonėn, *Dainiai be tautos. Lietuvos rusų rašytojų strategijos (po)sovietmečiu (Poets without a Nation: Strategies of Lithuanian Russian Writers in the (Post) Soviet Era)*, Ars critica (Vilnius: Lietuvių Literatūros ir Tautosakos Inst, 2013).

³⁹ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 39.

⁴⁰ Saulius Vasiliauskas, "Pierre'o Bourdieu teorija ir sovietmečio lietuvių literatūros lauko tyrimai {Pierre Bourdieu's theory and studies of the Soviet Lithuanian literary field}," *Žmogus ir žodis*, 2018, 119–31, <https://doi.org/10.15823/zz.2018.7>.

1.2 An ideal citizen: Soviet morals and values

During the Soviet period children's literature was part of a character education process. This function obliged children's authors to respond to Soviet morals and values in order to raise ideal members of communist society. Soviet leadership had a detailed concept of the type of the citizen they would like to inhabit. Thus, in this section I aim to introduce the main tenets of Soviet moral education and the main qualities that an ideal Soviet citizen was supposed to meet.

In 1961 the Communist party adopted *The Moral Code of the Builder of Communism* – a set of twelve codified rules which were supposed to be followed by every member of the communist party and Komsomol.⁴¹ Felicity Ann O'Dell emphasizes that these overlapping demands can be classified into six main virtues or general features of Soviet morality: *collectivism, discipline, love for work, patriotism, proletarian internationalism and atheism*.⁴²

Collectivism. Soviet thinking about morality is exclusively socially oriented and it can be observed in *The Moral Code* alone. Most of the other virtues highlight the importance of the society. For instance, love for labor is not described as love for labor *per se* but rather as conscious work for the good of the society.⁴³ Also, as

⁴¹ Jan Feldman, "New Thinking about the 'New Man': Developments in Soviet Moral Theory," *Studies in Soviet Thought* 38, no. 2 (1989): 147–63.

⁴² Felicity O'Dell, *Socialization through Children's Literature: The Soviet Example* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010).

⁴³ O'Dell, *Socialization through Children's Literature*, 32.

Marina Balina emphasizes social utopia was rooted in the impossibility to achieve individual happiness without first embracing collective happiness.⁴⁴ Thus, from an early age Soviet pupils were taught to work for the common good *and to love labor*.⁴⁵ These qualities were introduced through so called ‘socially useful labor’ included in a school program.

Discipline is an inseparable quality of an ideal Soviet citizen. *Discipline* first of all helps an individual to subordinate any selfish desires for the sake of the common good. Thus, Soviet authorities regarded it as a fundamental feature of moral upbringing.

Patriotism was one of the socially significant values which was referred as the basis of strengthening of the state.⁴⁶ Importantly, Soviet patriotism demands not only the mere love for the motherland from its citizens but an active and dedicated involvement to the building (strengthening) of the state.⁴⁷

Proletarian internationalism. Another virtue that Soviet Society stood for was proletarian internationalism. This virtue was understood as a unity not only of a nation, but a class common to all modern nations – proletariat.

Atheism was one of the central tenets of the Soviet morality. *Thus*, one of the main goals of Soviet authorities was to achieve a society free of religion.⁴⁸ For this

⁴⁴ Marina Balina and E. A. Dobrenko, eds., *Petrified Utopia: Happiness Soviet Style*, Anthem Series on Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies (London ; New York: Anthem Press, 2009), xvi.

⁴⁵ Ina Schlesinger, “Moral Education in the Soviet Union,” *The Phi Delta Kappan* 46, no. 2 (1964): 73.

⁴⁶ Olga Nikonova, “Soviet Patriotism in a Comparative Perspective: A Passion for Oxymora,” *Studies in East European Thought* 62, no. 3/4 (2010): 353–76.

⁴⁷ O'Dell, *Socialisation through Children's Literature*, 38.

⁴⁸ Victoria Smolkin-Rothrock, *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty: A History of Soviet Atheism* (Princeton Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018).

reason, the main task of atheist apparatus was to position religion as something alien and as a feature of the bourgeois society. Atheist world view was taught and propagated at schools and Pioneer organizations.

These distinct features of Soviet morality will be treated as the main principles of communist ideology (*correct* literature) that were supposed to be implemented through children's literature. Moreover, in this thesis the image of a happy childhood will be treated as one of the main tenets of communist aspirations. When analyzing the content of children's books, I will aim to identify these principles and determine how they were reflected within youth literature. Thus, it will help to understand how writing for children was used in order to achieve moral communism.

Chapter 2: THE FIELD OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN SOVIET LITHUANIA: LIMITATIONS

In the following chapter I will focus on the status of children's literature in Soviet Lithuania which I will analyze it through several different perspectives: 'Vaga' publishing house, Writers' Union, children's authors and children's literature critique. Such an approach will reveal if children's literature was regarded with the high respect as it was claimed in Soviet public discourse since it was important to communist goals. It will also show what social status children's authors gained in Soviet Lithuania as they were

The base of this research is archival documents of the publishing house and the Writers' Union which contain meeting minutes, various decrees, speeches, and the tables of thematic publishing plans. Further, their information is supplemented by Soviet periodicals, which uncovers the approach of Soviet literary critics to children's literature. Also, this research benefits from the interviews and memoirs of Soviet writers published after the collapse of the USSR.

As established in the previous chapter, for this research I will borrow concepts from Pierre Bourdieu's literary field theory such as: *field, agent, habitus, capital (economic, cultural, and social)*. This theoretical approach will help to understand how the literary field functioned in Soviet Lithuania which will reveal the status of children's literature in the Soviet project of achieving communism.

2.1 Through the eyes of a publishing house

During the Soviet era there were four publishing houses in Lithuania which were responsible for the different thematic genres. In this thesis, I will focus on the state publisher of fiction entitled 'Vaga'. Unlike other publishing houses 'Vaga' had one editorial office dedicated to youth literature. Thus, most of the children's books were printed by 'Vaga' until the first publishing house dedicated only to children's literature was opened in 1985.

Pierre Bourdieu compares the literary field with a game and emphasizes that all writers in a field seek to 'win'.⁴⁹ In other words, writers aim to gain a higher position and recognition by gaining economic, social, and cultural capital. These power relations depended on the general autonomy of the field. In this sense, the autonomy of the Soviet literature field (or cultural field in general) was highly limited since it was controlled by censorship and the communist party. After the second Soviet occupation in 1944 all Lithuanian publishing houses were closed or monopolized by the state. The communist party began to interfere actively in all publishing matters. There barely existed underground literature hence all authors aimed to get published by official institutions.⁵⁰ Thus, one of the most important elements to analyze children's literature and its development is the perspective of the state publishing

⁴⁹ Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*.

⁵⁰ Vasiliauskas, "Pierre'o Bourdieu teorija ir sovietmečio lietuvių literatūros lauko tyrimai {Pierre Bourdieu's theory and studies of the Soviet Lithuanian literary field}."

house. As mentioned above, during the research period the majority of children's books were published by 'Vaga'.

In 1963 after the fourteenth Congress of Lithuanian Communist party, 'Vaga' received new guidelines for publishing children's literature.⁵¹ The new directives were set according to the quality and quantity of literary production of the previous years. From 1964 'Vaga' sought to increase the printing of children's literature with a particular focus on atheistic books. However, the tables of thematic plans of 1964-1984 reveal that the publishing of juvenile literature was rather unsteady. To illustrate, in 1964 'Vaga' planned to publish 49 new titles of original Lithuanian children's books⁵² while in 1965 the number decreased to 42.⁵³ Even though, this approach was criticized during the closed party meeting, children's literature continued to be marginalized in comparison with books for adults. In 1979, which was announced to be the International Year of Children, the number of adult books was twice as high as the number for children.⁵⁴ Furthermore, during the research period the highest number of new children's book titles per year was 58 (1983) while adult's literature reached 105 (1983).⁵⁵ This planning shows that the official state publisher was in favor of adult literature compared to children's books. According to Bourdieu

⁵¹ „Vagos“ leidyklos pirminės partinės organizacijos atviro susirinkimo, įvykusio 1964-01-24, protokolas Nr. 1. {Meeting minutes of the primary party organization of 'Vaga' Publishing House, held on January 24, 1964, No. 1}, in: LYA, f. 11321, ap. 2, b. 8, p. 1-14.

⁵² 1964 m. „Vagos“ leidyklos tematinio plano lentelė, 1963-12-15 {1964 Thematic Plan Table of 'Vaga'}, in: LLMA, f. 23, ap. 1, b. 135, p. 56-60.

⁵³ 1965 m. „Vagos“ leidyklos tematinio plano lentelė, 1964-11-14 {1965 Thematic Plan Table of 'Vaga'}, in: LLMA, f. 23, ap. 1, b. 142, p. 105.

⁵⁴ Vagos“ leidyklos 1978 m. išleidimo plano ir 1979 m. išleidimo plano palyginamoji lentelė {Comparison table between 1978 and 1979 of 'Vaga' publishing plans}, in: LLMA, f. 23, ap. 1, b. 417, p. 1.

⁵⁵ 1983 m. „Vagos“ leidyklos tematinio plano lentelė, 1983-01-10 {1983 Thematic Plan Table of 'Vaga'}, in: LLMA, f. 23, ap. 1, b. 503, p. 1

institutions participate in the game of the literary field together with individual agents and shape their strategy in order to gain cultural and economic capital. Thus, one could assume that prioritizing adult literature was more beneficial to the publishing house in the case of Soviet Lithuania.

Other, important elements to consider, moreover, are meetings of the editorial board and primary party organization of 'Vaga' publishing house. During the meetings of Vaga's editorial board children's literature was rarely a subject of discussion. According to archival documents, youth literature was mentioned only one time during the period between 1964 and 1975 and consisted of a single sentence.⁵⁶ On the other hand, a turning point can be observed after 1975 when literary critic Vincas Auryla joined the publishing committee. Since then, Auryla not only talked about children's literature in general terms but also discussed recurring problems and offered solutions to fix them. In 1976 Auryla criticized a publishing plan of children's literature as it included a novel by Antanas Venclova entitled 'Friendship' (Lit. Draugystė).⁵⁷ Importantly, Auryla emphasized that the novel was not suitable for children even though it highlighted the values of internationalism and was printed before. However, despite numerous attempts, Auryla's speeches never received attention from other board members. Having said that, one could assume that the development of children's literature was dependent on personal initiatives. A director of 'Vaga' Jonas Čekys highlights similar examples in his memoirs. Čekys writes about

⁵⁶ 'Vagos' leidyklos redakcinės tarybos posėdžio, įvykusio 1968-04-29 protokolas {Meeting minutes of 'Vaga' editorial board, held on April 29, 1968}, in: LLMA, f. 23, ap. 1, b. 256, p. 6- 14.

⁵⁷ „Vagos“ leidyklos redakcinės tarybos posėdžio, įvykusio 1976-11-25 protokolas {Meeting minutes of 'Vaga' editorial board, held on November 25, 1976}, in: LLMA, f. 23, ap. 1, b. 347, p. 26.

Aldona Liobytė, a children's author and editor, who, according to him attracted many talented people to children's literature field in 1949-1961 on her own initiative.⁵⁸

At the meeting of primary party organization of 'Vaga' children's literature also remained in the shadow of adult literature. During the whole research period, only two meetings were dedicated entirely to children's literature. In 1972 the session addressed the questions of the changing needs of young readers, the lack of historical novels, and adventure stories.⁵⁹ Similar notes were discussed in the following assembly held only in 1981. Furthermore, during regular party meetings children's literature was considered from problematic side which did not seem to change. The majority of the party discussions addressed the lack of talented authors or complained about unfulfilled publishing plans while the party members engaged in broad discussion on adult literature. Thus, a close look at children's literature through the perspective of a publishing house highlights that children's literature existed in the margins compared to literature for adults. All discussion about juvenile literature were based on problems without offering solutions. One could assume that children as an audience did not have a voice. According to the literary field theory this situation means that children were not able to produce capital (economic and symbolic); therefore, the field of children's literature was less beneficial to the publishing house.

⁵⁸ Jonas Čekys, *Knygos kūrėjų talkoje: atsiminimai* {With the help of book creators: Memoirs}, Vilnius: Vaga, 1995.

⁵⁹ 'Vagos' leidyklos pirminės partinės organizacijos susirinkimo, įvykusio 1972-05-25 protokolas Nr. 7 {Meeting minutes of 'Vaga' primary part organization, held May 25, 1972}, in: LYA, f. 11321, ap. 2, b. 13, p. 33-41.

2.2 The perspective of the Writers' Union

The Union of Soviet Writers (*Soyuz Sovetskikh Pisatelei*) was established after the first Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934 and since then played a key role in literary control and writers' training.⁶⁰ Writers' Union also provided a social network and support for emerging new authors. In 1959 the union established its own Committee of Children's and Youth Literature.⁶¹ The same structure of the Writers' Union was mirrored in Soviet Lithuania. Thus, in order to understand Soviet Lithuanian Children's literature, its production and development, it is necessary to analyze the work and practice of the Writers' Union towards the youth literature.

Within the Writers' Union operating children's literature committee was responsible for the growth and improvement of the children's critique as well as communication with the publishing house and writer's recruitment. Looking at archival documents of the union, it is noticeable that children's literature was not considered to be an important part of Soviet culture field – it existed in the periphery which contradicts the values of socialism. The writers' Union Audit report of 1965 shows that there was only one author assigned to children's literature.⁶² Further, from 1964 to 1970 children's literature problems were considered just in one meeting of the primary party organization of the union. During the meeting, the committee discussed the lack of talented children authors, the need for a periodical dedicated

⁶⁰ Polly Jones, "The Zones of Late Socialist Literature," in *The Cambridge History of Communism: Volume 3: Endgames? Late Communism in Global Perspective, 1968 to the Present*, ed. Juliane Fürst, Mark Selden, and Silvio Pons, vol. 3, *The Cambridge History of Communism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 376–98.

⁶¹ Felicity O'Dell, *Socialisation through Children's Literature: The Soviet Example* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010), 55.

⁶² Lietuvos TSR Rašytojų sąjungos revizijos komisijos ataskaitinis pranešimas, 1965-12-13. {Writers' Union audit report, December 12, 1965}, in: LLMA, f. 34, ap. 1, b. 471, p. 34.

to a younger children age group as well as the general indifference towards children's literature in Soviet periodicals.⁶³ Noteworthy, the Writers' Union submitted a request to the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party to consider an idea of an additional periodical after two years. Even though, the idea was supported with solid arguments, it was not realized.⁶⁴

The International Children's Year of 1970 encouraged the Writers' Union to improve their commitment towards youth literature. Thus, in 1971 the committee of children's literature added a special task to their agenda which culminated in the preparation and distribution of the questionnaire entitled "Young Readers and Contemporary Literature". The questionnaire was distributed in schools and libraries in order to examine children's interests and expectations.⁶⁵ While it shows an attempt to know children as a reading audience and improve committee's efficiency, I argue that even after these attempts children's literature remained in the margins of the Soviet cultural field. First, during the general union meetings, the committee continued to pay very little attention to reoccurring issues regarding youth literature and discussed only yearly awards. Second, the above-mentioned questionnaire was only briefly discussed emphasizing the need for books about adventures, technology and space which was common or rather necessary to mention in Soviet literature

⁶³ Rašytojų sąjungos pirminės partinės organizacijos atviro susirinkimo, įvykusio 1964-03-17, protokolai. {The report of an open meeting of the primary party organization of Writers Union, July 17, 1964}, in: LYA, f. 4628, ap. 5, b. 8, 1-26.

⁶⁴ Lietuvos TSR Rašytojų sąjungos pranešimas skirtas Lietuvos komunistų partijos centro komitetui, 1966-02-08. {Writers' Union Request to the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party, February 8, 1968}, in: LLMA, f. 34, ap. 1, b. 515, 38-39.

⁶⁵ Unfortunately, the questionnaire is not available in the archives nor are the collected results. 1971 m. Rašytojų sąjungos vaikų ir jaunimo literatūros komisijos darbo planas. {Work plan of the Writers' Union Children and Youth Literature Commission, 1971}, in: LLMA, f. 34, ap. 1, b. 569, 48.

discourse which I will discuss later in the thesis. Further, the outcome of the questionnaire was not shared with the publishing house, or children authors.

During the period between 1964 and 1989 only one conference/plenary session dedicated to children's literature entitled "Children's literature and the present" was organized.⁶⁶ During the session fifteen papers that were delivered revolved again around issues regarding inadequacy of children's literature and the lack of promising authors. Literary critic Vincas Auryla pointed out that very often children's literature it is thought, in the eyes of most, that it is completely devoid of artistic aesthetic.⁶⁷ Vytautas Petkevičius stressed that children's literature is "provincial" compared to literature for adults.⁶⁸ These reoccurring problematic issues highlight that field agents were well aware of the problems but there was little attempts to improve existing situation.

Other important elements to consider are general assemblies and conventions of Writers' Union dedicated to the literary field as a whole. Yearly reports show the same problematic discourse and no further engagement. In 1965 the Chairman of Writers' Union Eduardas Mieželaitis reading his twenty pages long introductory speech dedicated only one paragraph to children's literature stating, "and I will limit myself to the very common problems of the development of children's and youth literature".⁶⁹ Furthermore, during the General Writers' Congress of 1971, Emilija

⁶⁶ 1973 m. Rašytojų sąjungos valdybos plenumo "Literatūra vaikams ir dabartis" protokolai. {The report of the Writers' Union Plenary Session "Children's Literature and the Present", 1973}, in: LLMA, f. 34, ap. 1, b. 620, 15-135.

⁶⁷ 1973 m. Rašytojų sąjungos valdybos plenumo "Literatūra vaikams ir dabartis" protokolai. {The report of the Writers' Union Plenary Session "Children's Literature and the Present", 1973}, 58-59.

⁶⁸ 1973 m. Rašytojų sąjungos valdybos plenumo "Literatūra vaikams ir dabartis" protokolai. {The report of the Writers' Union Plenary Session "Children's Literature and the Present", 1973}, 82-94.

⁶⁹ LTSR visuotinio rašytojų suvažiavimo įžanginis pranešimas, 1965-12-13. {Introductory speech of the LSSR General Writers' Congress, December 13, 1965}, in: LLMA, f. 34, ap. 1, b. 470, 80.

Balionienė opened her speech with sharp, but summarizing remark of children's literature status: "I want to talk about children's literature. About that bastard child who is forgotten by everyone".⁷⁰ In her speech Balionienė was very critical towards the work of 'Vaga' publishing house emphasizing that they did not encourage the submission of innovative works for children. She also highlighted that there is no adviser in the Writers' Union who could help or encourage emerging children authors. This Balionienė's remark indicates that the social network of the field of children's literature was weak. It is obvious, that this situation influenced the marginal status of juvenile literature as no guidance were provided for new authors.

A close look at children's literature through the Writers' Union's perspective shows that children's literature existed in the periphery of Soviet cultural field. The reoccurring problems contradict Soviet values emphasized in the official discourse. While Soviet Lithuania had to follow an established example of Soviet Russia in every area, the field of children's literature was not of a great interest. Children's books were not considered to be important as books for adults, because they were perceived as educational process rather than aesthetic expression.

2.3 Through the eyes of an author

The most important agents in children's literature productions are the writers. It is already mentioned that one of the main problems of the field was a lack of gifted

⁷⁰ Emilijos Liegutės – Balionienės pranešimas V visuotiniame LTSR rašytojų suvažiavime, 1971. {Emilija Liegutė - Balionienė's speech at the 5th General Congress of LSSR Writers', 1971}, in: LLMA, f. 34, ap. 1, b. 585, 118.

children's writers. The audit report of the Lithuanian Writers' Union shows that according to the genre just one author was assigned to juvenile literature,⁷¹ while in Soviet Russia were nearly 200.⁷² The editor-in-chief of 'Vaga', Algimantas Baltakis highlighted the absence of talented writers by saying that it is possible to count children's authors on the fingers of one hand.⁷³ Since an official Soviet discourse highlighted importance of children's literature, it is necessary to examine why there were so few authors involved in youth literature.

Bourdieu's literary field theory highlights that authors (agents) entering the field aim to be recognized.⁷⁴ In other words, they seek to gain prestige (symbolic capital) which later improves possibilities to gain financial means (economic capital). According to O'Dell and Marina Balina children's authors were highly respected in Soviet Russia and often had better opportunities to support themselves financially.⁷⁵ However, this seems to be the opposite in the case of Soviet Lithuania. A close look to archival documents and memoirs of Soviet writers reveals that often children's authors were regarded as less talented compared to authors of adult literature. Emer O'Sullivan notes that the origins of children's literature are to be found in both literary and pedagogic systems, therefore, it is associated with the educational process rather than with the artistic field, which has significant consequences to the status of

⁷¹ Lietuvos TSR Rašytojų sąjungos revizijos komisijos ataskaitinis pranešimas {Report of the Audit Commission of the Writers' Union of the Lithuanian SSR}, 1965-12-13, in: LLMA, f. 34, ap. 1, b. 471, p. 34.

⁷² O'Dell, *Socialisation through Children's Literature*, 55.

⁷³ Rašytojų sąjungos ir „Vagos“ leidyklos pirminių partinių organizacijų atviro susirinkimo, įvykusio 1979-04-18, protokolą Nr. 6 {The report of an open meeting of the Writers' Union on 'Vaga' primary party organizations}, in: LYA, f. 4628, ap. 5, b. 18, p. 27-37.

⁷⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed," *Poetics* 12, no. 4 (November 1, 1983): 311–56, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-422X\(83\)90012-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-422X(83)90012-8).

⁷⁵ Felicity O'Dell, *Socialization through Children's Literature: The Soviet Example* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010).

children's literature in the general cultural field.⁷⁶ As one of the most prominent Lithuanian children's authors Violeta Palčinskaitė remembers:

"Back then existed an opinion that only old teachers write to children. It can be illustrated perfectly by one accident. I wrote a play *I am chasing the Summe*' and it traveled throughout the whole Soviet Union and was awarded at the theater festival in Kiev. This was of course strange because the festival was not dedicated to children's literature. Anyways, I went to the award ceremony, but no one met me at the train station. As I later learned the director was looking for an elderly woman similar to a retired educator. I was very young at that time. So that was an opinion of a children's writer."⁷⁷

Extending O'Sullivan's approach, Marija Nikolajevna explains that at times children's literature had been considered a female profession and, therefore, enjoyed a lower prestige than 'real' writing.⁷⁸ Thus, one could assume that in order to be able to improve the position within the literary field of Soviet Lithuania authors preferred writing to adults as they were regarded as artists rather than teachers.

In 1979 Lithuanian poet Vacys Reimeris wrote: "Writers and poets who write only for children are sometimes seen as something worthless. It is often assumed that their talent did not bloom and, therefore, their muse remained in the limited world of children."⁷⁹ Such expression highlights the poor status of children's writers. Particularly, it lowers their possibilities to gain symbolic capital which would have meant a higher recognition and better-established network which later converts to economic capital.

⁷⁶ O'Sullivan, *Comparative Children's Literature*.

⁷⁷ Juodos avytės baltoji išsipildymų pievoj, Su poete, dramaturge Violeta Palčinskaite kalbasi Elona Varnauskienė { Black sheep on the white meadow of fulfillment. Elona Varnauskienė interview screenwriter Violeta Palčinskaitė}, in: Rubinaitis, Nr.2 (22), 2002.

⁷⁸ Maria Nikolajeva, *Aesthetic Approaches to Children's Literature: An Introduction* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2005).

⁷⁹ Šiuolaikinės vaikų literatūros problemos {Problems of Contemporary Children's literature, Vilnius: Vaga, 1979.

Every author enters the literary field with an embedded *habitus* – an individual behavior and skills system. This helps them not only to orientate in the field, but also to create strategies how to gain capital. One of the most common techniques to gain socio-cultural capital was writing for both audiences. It is noticeable that the majority of Soviet children's authors published books for adults, and often left children's literature after gaining success. To illustrate, one of the most prominent Soviet periodicals published an article by literary critic Ričardas Pakalniškis who highlighted that 'big' authors write for children only during their resting hours.⁸⁰ Pakalniškis distinguished the recipient of the Lenin's prize for literature Eduardas Mieželaitis (1919-1997) who entered the literary field with poems for pre-school children. However, once he mastered the style of socialist realism, Mieželaitis immediately moved to adult literature. Elena Baliutytė also points out that Mieželaitis published a few poems for children only after he had a daughter.⁸¹ Ainsley Morse observes different phenomenon in Soviet Russia. She points out that prominent Russian poets such as Igor Kholin, Oleg Grigoriev, Leonid Aronzon were regularly writing for children.⁸²

It has become symptomatic that Soviet Lithuanian writers would start writing for children only after the birth of their own children. One of the most famous children's author and literary editor Aldona Liobytė (1915-1985) in 1964 wrote to her close friend that children's literature and its production had always been close to her

⁸⁰ Ričardas Pakalniškis, *Tarp dviejų pasaulių {Between two worlds}*, in: Pergalė, Nr. 2, 1970, p. 126-127.

⁸¹ Elena Baliutytė, "Momentinė sovietinio literatūros lauko nuotrauka pagal laiškus Eduardui Mieželaičiui: XX a. 7-asis dešimtmetis {A Snapshot of the Soviet Literary Field in the Letters to Eduardas Mieželaitis of the 1960s}," *Žmogus ir žodis* 17, no. 2 (2015), <http://www.zmogusirzodis.leu.lt/index.php/zmogusirzodis/article/view/131>.

⁸² Morse, *Word Play*.

heart because she herself raised many kids and continued to have strong bond with them.⁸³ Similar views were observed in the creative path of Sigitas Geda (1943-2008), Algimantas Baltakis (b. 1930), and Vytautė Žilinskaitė (b. 1930). As Geda remembers that once his son was born, he wanted to do something “clean and bright” with mythological origins and that is how his first children’s book *Sleeping Horses* came to life.⁸⁴ Žilinskaitė, also, entered the field of children’s literature for the same reasons even though she was an already established humorist.⁸⁵ On the one hand, it seems to be a positive phenomenon since children got to read high standard literature. On the other hand, this trend caused frustration to publishers. As the editor of the main children’s magazine Vytautas Račickas remembers: “Working in the editorial office I had to call authors on the phone and literary beg to write something. Strangely enough, most often I was told that their children are grown up now, and they might write something once they have grandchildren.”⁸⁶ This phenomenon indicates that publishing of some children’s books were incidental, and which often caused gaps in children’s literature publishing.

To be successful in the literary field, and in particular in Soviet society, social network was of a great importance. Anzelmas Matutis, the only children’s author that remained in the field his entire career, could not get his new books published for a long time. First, he did not live in the capital, thus had only a few social contacts with

⁸³ Aldona Liobytė, Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, and Gintarė Paškevičiūtė-Breivienė, *Aldona Liobytė (1915-1985): Korespondencijos Fragmentai {Aldona Liobytė (1915-1985): Fragments of Correspondence}* (Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla, 2015).

⁸⁴ Vaikas yra mažas suaugėlis, poetą Sigitą Gedą kalbina Elona Varanauskienė {A child is a small adult: Elona Varanauskienė interviews poet Sigitas Geda}, in: Rubinaitis, No. 2 (5), 1996.

⁸⁵ Nuostabus yra vaikas, kai juokiasi, o akyse – ašaros, Rašytoją Vytautę Žilinskaitę kalbina Elona Varanauskienė, {It is wonderful when child laughs with tears: Elona Varanauskienė interviews writer Vytautė Žilinskaitė} in: Rubinaitis, Nr. 4 (16), 2000.

⁸⁶ Vaikystė buvo didelė, Vytautą Račicką kalbina Elona Varanauskienė {Childhood is very big: Elona Varanauskienė interviews Vytautas Račickas}, in: Rubinaitis, No. 3 (19), 2001.

other writers. Second, his previous books did not get any attention from literary critics. According to Bourdieu it is important to receive public critique in order to gain cultural capital since it increases the recognition not only by the audience but also by the publishing institution.⁸⁷ For this reason, Matutis himself asked one of the leading literary critics to write a review of his book. However, a critic remembers that at first, he was hesitant to write it as Matutis was only a children's author.⁸⁸ This shows that children's writers faced various problems in order to gain capital and prestige. It also proves that social relations helped to play in the game of literary production.

Unlike in the Soviet Russia, Lithuanian children's authors were less financially secure. For example, Kelly points out that such an original Russian talent as Genrikh Sapgir published more than twenty books for children because of financial gains.⁸⁹ According to archival documents, for publishing children's books writers were paid less than for adult literature. Furthermore, the bonus prizes were also lower. Importantly, the first literature award for a children's book was introduced only in 1970s.⁹⁰ Bourdieu argues that prizes and literary awards are essential institutions for promoting and concentrating of the artists.⁹¹ It is obvious that the literary award for juvenile literature introduced so late discourage authors from writing for children. These practices show that children's writers were not able to gain high economic and cultural capital, which often resulted in their moving to different fields. Also, to gain

⁸⁷ Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*; Vasiliauskas, "Pierre'o Bourdieu teorija ir sovietmečio lietuvių literatūros lauko tyrimai {Pierre Bourdieu's theory and studies of the Soviet Lithuanian literary field}."

⁸⁸ Jonas Linkevičius, *Po girią vaikščiojo poetas {A poet that walked through the forest}*, Vilnius: Agora, 2000.

⁸⁹ Kelly, *Children's World*, 139.

⁹⁰ Lietuvos TSR Rašytojų sąjungos revizijos komisijos ataskaitinis pranešimas {Report of the Audit Commission of the Writers' Union of the Lithuanian SSR}, 1965-12-13, in: LLMA, f. 34, ap. 1, b. 471, p. 34.

⁹¹ Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, 225.

social capital, one of the most important elements was the audience. Since children did not have power and could not provide financial means the field was less attractive. Thus, during the research period very few literature reading evenings dedicated to children's audience were organized. Archival material reveals that very often such requests by various schools or education centers were left unanswered.

A close look at children's literature through the eyes of an author shows that juvenile literature existed in relegated periphery of Soviet cultural production. Authors could hardly compete (play in the game) in the literary field for the higher position since they were regarded as educators rather than artists. Opportunities to gain economic and social capital were also lower. This uncovers a paradoxical situation since children were regarded as the most important group in Soviet society. Soviet Lithuania did not meet general requirements of communist ideology and did not strongly influence children's education in a spirit of communism.

2.4 Children's literature critique: did it exist?

Looking at the field of literary production, critique becomes undisputed element. Baliutytė emphasizes that in Soviet society literary critique served as a special ideological tool.⁹² First, literary critics paid most of the attention to central authors since they were important in propagating communist ideology. Second,

⁹² Elena Baliutytė, "Sovietmečio lietuvių literatūros kritika kaip socialinis reiškiny (Criticism of Soviet Lithuanian Literature as a Social Phenomenon)," article, *Lituanistica*, 2003, 108-120.

criticism was able to form the perception of certain literary works. However, the criticism of Soviet Lithuanian children's literature was scarce.

In Soviet Lithuania literary magazine such as Soviet Russia's *Detskaya Literatura* (Children's Literature) did not exist. All reviews were printed in periodicals such as *Literatura ir Menas* (Literature and Art), *Pergalė* (Victory), and *Nemunas* (Culture magazine named after the river). Importantly, during the entire research period (1964-1989) there were only three critics regularly reviewing books for children. This created a problematic situation because children's authors had limited chances to gain social and cultural capital without public critique. In addition, such marginalization partly caused the decline in children's literature production.

During the research period two assemblies were organized (in 1971 and 1981) by the Writers' Union dedicated to discussing the state of children's literature critique. The speakers of both conferences formed a problematic discourse emphasizing that the critique of children's literature did not exist. The assembly of 1981 was opened by an editor Jonas Linkevičius who started his speech by saying:

"After reading the agenda of the meeting I felt somehow ambiguously. It feels like sitting in an empty field where you try to call but your words do not evoke echo."⁹³

Linkevičius's approach was supported by other member of the meeting. Kęstutis Urba also, noted that such a situation existed because children's books were often regarded as material purchases rather than artistic production. Kelly points out that in Russian society books were perceived as essentially different from other

⁹³ Rašytojų sąjungos pirminės partinės organizacijos atviro susirinkimo, įvykusio 1982-03-10, protokolas Nr. 3, {Open meeting of the Writers' Union Primary Party Organization}, in: LYA, f. 4628, ap. 5, b. 21, p. 19.

purchases and were associated with the conviction that reading is “an activity of peculiar virtue and civilizing power.”⁹⁴ Even though, Soviet Lithuania was supposed to mirror an established template of Soviet Russia, it was never fully realized.

As I noted above, Bourdieu emphasizes that all agents in the literary field aim to win the *game* and move up the hierarchy ladder of literary production. Critics as well as authors seek to gain *economic capital*, thus reviewing adult books proves to be more attractive. For this reason, Soviet children’s literature received relatively little attention.

⁹⁴ Kelly, *Children’s World*, 449.

Chapter 3: (NOT)TOWARDS UTOPIAN COMMUNISM

*Artistic creation requires a variety of styles, devices, and genres.
We decry any attempt to reduce artists' individual characteristics to uniformity.
The Party and the people want only one thing:
for works of art to reflect the truth of life,
manifest the greatness of the Soviet people's heroic feats, educate all people
in the spirit of Communism's high ideals and help them realize those ideals.
(Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, 1968)⁹⁵*

The research carried out in the previous chapter has shown that children's literature existed in the periphery of Soviet Lithuanian cultural field. In this chapter I aim to demonstrate how such a position influenced the content of children's books and the thematic choices of the authors. Further, following the set of Soviet morals and ideology established in the first chapter, I aim to show how they were reflected in Soviet Lithuanian children's literature. To achieve these aims, I will analyze the content of children's books, publishing plans, and directives that formed the path of children's literature publishing. I do not aim to analyze all books published during the research period. Instead, I will focus on literary works that were a subject of discussion during the meetings of the main publishing house and the Writers' Union. I will also include the books that received attention by the Soviet press and were awarded with state prizes.

It has been widely discussed that the relatively open period of Khrushchev's Thaw was followed by the years of stagnation which was not an exception in children's literature.⁹⁶ Ben Hellman points out that the major change in juvenile

⁹⁵ Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, *Lenininkim kursom: Rechi i stat'i*, Vol.2 (M., 1970), 234, Quoted in Hellman, *Fairy Tales and True Stories*. 535.

⁹⁶ See for example, Herman Ermolaev, *Censorship in Soviet Literature: 1917 - 1991* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997); Giedrė Jankevičiūtė and V Geetha, *Another History of the Children's*

literature is the return to the principles of socialist realism.⁹⁷ He emphasizes that even if there was no turning back to strong ideological commitment of Stalin's years, children's literature began to be filled with depictions of Soviet achievements, idealistic heroes inspired by the communist state, and atheism. Soviet Lithuania was obliged to follow the example of Soviet Russia in the process of children's literature creation. However, in this chapter I argue that *correct* literature was produced by the central authors who were highly visible in Soviet public discourse. Hence, they were obliged to support ideological work and participate in Soviet project of achieving communism. there was a relatively small number of Lithuanian children's authors ideological literature was supplemented by translation from Russian. I also argue that Lithuanian children's literature benefited from its peripheral position. In other words, authors not only were able to explore topics that did not respond to propagated Soviet morals but also directly criticized the socialist state.

3.1 Central figures and correct literature

In 1964 after the plenary resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party the major Lithuanian publishing house 'Vaga' issued new directives regarding children's literature.⁹⁸ Taking into the account the demands of the Communist Party, the editorial team announced a need for literature promoting

Picture Book: From Soviet Lithuania to India (Chennai: Tara Books, 2017); Olga Voronina, ed., *A Companion to Soviet Children's Literature and Film*, Brill's Companions to the Slavic World 2 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2020); Ainsley Morse, *Word Play: Experimental Poetry and Soviet Children's Literature*, (Northwestern University Press, 2021).

⁹⁷ Hellman, *Fairy Tales and True Stories*, 535.

⁹⁸ "Vagos" leidyklos pirminės partinės organizacijos atviro susirinkimo, įvykusio 1964-01-24, protokolas Nr. 1 {Meeting minutes of "Vaga" primary party organization}, in: LYA, f. 11321, ap. 2, b. 8, p. 1-2.

atheistic and revolutionary ideas. 'Vaga' particularly stressed the necessity for memoir literature for young readers depicting the struggles of the Lithuanian working class before the Great Patriotic War and for autobiographical novels of converted atheist.⁹⁹ The volume of authors' responses to this demand was not high. In the next few years, the majority of the ideologically correct books promoting socialist values were re-prints of previously published works which I will discuss later in the chapter. Furthermore, during the research period the peaks of the *right* literature were noticeable only during important anniversaries. To illustrate, the 25th anniversary of Soviet Lithuania in 1965 and the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution in 1967 were marked by separate columns in the publishing plans which were also composed of previously known books.¹⁰⁰

The most prominent Soviet authors committed to communist ideals were Salomėja Nėris (1904-1945) and Kostas Kubilinskas (1923-1962). Even though, both poets died before the research period, their works were often discussed during editorial meetings of a publishing house as exemplary literature. Furthermore, various collections of their poems were published almost every year in a high volume of print runs; thus, it is important to briefly introduce the legacy of their literary work.¹⁰¹ Today both Nėris and Kubilinskas are considered to be controversial figures because of their involvement with the communist party during the Soviet era.

⁹⁹ Such accounts of memoir literature were best known by Soviet Russian children authors Maxim Gorky, Samuil Marshak, and Kornei Chukovsky. Their recollections of childhood were filled with pain and social injustice as this had to emphasize the improvement in Soviet state, in Balina, "Troubled Lives."

¹⁰⁰ 1965 m. "Vagos" leidyklos tematinio išleidimo plano lentelė {The table of thematic release plan of "Vaga"}, 1964-11-14 {, in: LLMA, f. 23, ap. 1, b. 142, p. 109-110.

¹⁰¹ Collections of poems by Salomėja Nėris and Kostas Kubilinskas always reached print runs of 15000 copies at least. Books by Kubilinskas most often reached prints runs of 50000 – 100000 copies.

Nėris emerged as a poet during the interwar period and reached the peak of her career around the 1940s. She was an appointed member of the Lithuanian delegation that travelled to Moscow to request Lithuania to be accepted to the Soviet Union in the late summer of 1940. For this occasion, Nėris wrote a poem in honor of Stalin and was later awarded the Stalin's Prize for literature.¹⁰² While this poem ceased to be printed after Khrushchev's "secret speech" in 1956, other works promoting heroic communist feasts became central to ideological work. In 1967 *Vaga* re-published the collection of poems by Nėris entitled *Four* (lit. *Keturi*) propagating Soviet morals such patriotism, love, and fight for the motherland.¹⁰³ The main subject of the collection was the heroic death of four communists that were accused of organizing a socialist revolution in 1926. While it seems that the poems were not suitable for children, they served ideological purposes to educate the young reader in the spirit of communism:

¹⁰² Vincas Auryla, *Lietuvių Vaikų Literatūra {Lithuanian Children's Literature}*, (Vilnius: Vaga, 1986).

¹⁰³ Nėris Salomėja, *Keturi {Four}*, (Vilnius: Vaga, 1967).

Kovoti ir numirt už liaudį –
Tų teisių nieks negal atimt,
Kai liūtys lijo, vėtros gaudė...
Šuo neitų šitokiom naktim.

– Maldauti budelių malonės?
Te nieks iš mūs nedrįsta!
Tiesa, ne akmenys mes – žmonės,
– Bet esam komunistai.

Pasigailėjimo neprašo
Joks komunistas – iš tiesų.
Istorija vardus terašo
Švarius – akivaizdoj visų.

To fight and die for the people –
No one can take away those rights,
When it was raining, the storm was
growling...
The dog would not go to this night.

- To beg for the mercy of the
executioners?
Let no one of us dare!
True, we are the people, not the
stones.
- But we are the communists.

He does not ask for mercy
No communist of course.
History may write the names
Clean and obvious to everyone.

The poems continue glorifying the sacrifice of the four communists for their heroic attempts to work for the people and the future of the socialist state. One could see that the poems met most of the demand of the communist party and therefore, became exemplary propagandistic work. For this reason, it remained in print through the entire Soviet period and was also read in schools. The personality of the author was also glorified as an example of communist citizen.

In Soviet Lithuanian press Kubilinskas was referred as the Lithuanian Marshak for his playful childlike poetics. Although, at first, he struggled to get published in Soviet Lithuania. In 1944 Kubilinskas published a couple of satirical poems mocking the Soviets. Hence, he was expelled from the university and banned from publishing. In order to be able to publish again Kubilinskas joined the MGB and participated in state security operations. In 1949 he gained back the trust of the Lithuanian Communist Party by shooting the lead commander of Lithuanian partisans. Thus, Kubilinskas appeared in the center of the literary field as an ideal communist and a

children's poet. As Jankečiūtė notes at the first glance his rhymes seem to be free of ideology and propaganda. On the other hand, I argue that even though he did not openly propagate the fight for the motherland and patriotism, his poems emphasize other Soviet morals such as internationalism and labor. His most prominent collection of poems entitled *The New Year's Tree of Friendship* (lit. Draugystės Eglutė) promoted the unity of all socialist states.¹⁰⁴ The poems included in the volume celebrated other states emphasizing their uniqueness:

Moldavija – tai grožio
Ir vynuogių tėvynė!
Gražiausią puokštę rožių
Vaikučiai jums priskynė!

Moldova is a motherland of grapes
and beauty!
The most beautiful bouquet of roses
The children have gathered for you.

¹⁰⁴ Kostas Kubilinskas, *Draugystės Eglutė (The New Year's Tree of Friendship)* (Vilnius: Vaga, 1965).

As established in the first chapter, the fundamental tenet of communist morality was love for work. From a very early age children were thought to appreciate labor and despise laziness. Another collection of poems by Kubilinskas entitled *The Workers* (lit. *Darbininkai*) was also published a couple of times (1964, 1982). Playful poems and colorful illustrations (Fig. 1) not only caught children's attention but also served ideological goals.

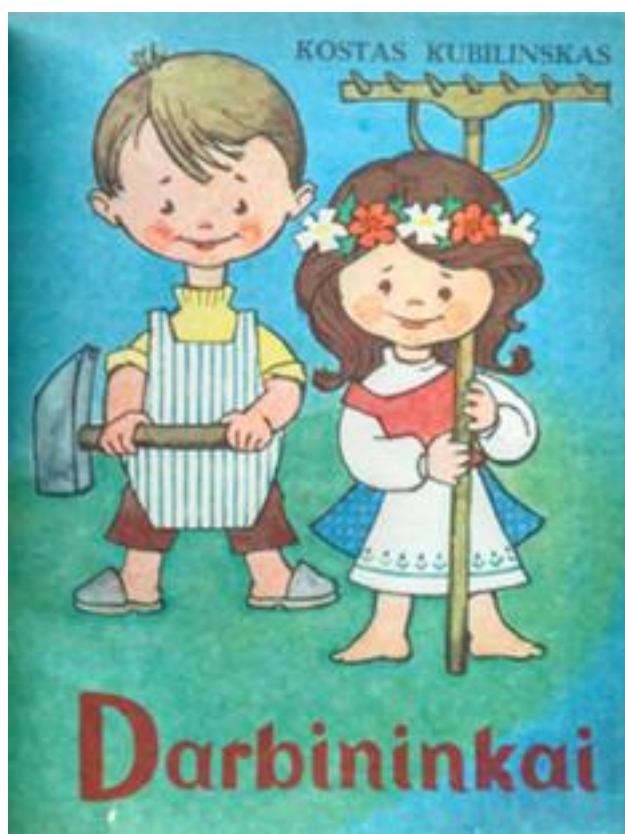


Fig. 1 Kostas Kubilinskas *The Workers* (1964), cover Taida Balčiūnienė

Such simple yet communicative works by Kubilinskas and book illustrators were often discussed in the Writers' Union meetings. Even after his death, he was often

remembered as an ideal exemplar of communist upbringing and a master of childlike poetics.¹⁰⁵

Even though, the works by Nėris and Kubilinkas were often re-published, the party was seeking to recruit new authors who would reflect on improving socialist life. Thus, an ideological pressure by the party continued to exist. In 1969 the Communist Party and the Council of Ministers adopted a resolution called “Measures for further Development of Soviet Children’s Literature”.¹⁰⁶ Apart from the usual demand for high-quality literature, the party expressed dissatisfaction of low print runs and dull children’s books. However, the most important demands were related to ideologically correct works. The party again expressed the need for literature about the heroic past of Soviet people, Lenin, and Komsomol organizations. Further, the authors were urged to expand their range of thematic subjects and raise ideological standards. Nevertheless, the content of children’s books and the thematic plans I analyzed for this research show that ideological commitment was often evaded by the authors. Soviet morals were propagated mostly by the central figures who also did not commit to writing entirely for children. The most prominent figures in ideological work were Eduardas Mieželaitis (1919-1997) , Mykolas Sluckis (1928-2013), and Vytautas Petkevičius (1930-2008). Since all three authors had similar positions within the literary field, below I will discuss Petkevičius’ case as an example since during the research period he published for children more regularly than the other two.

¹⁰⁵ LTSR visuotinio rašytojų suvažiavimo įžanginis pranešimas, 1965-12-13 { Introductory report of the LSSR General Writers’ Congress}, in: LLMA, f. 34, ap. 1, b. 470, p. 80-85.

¹⁰⁶ Lietuvos centro komiteto ir Lietuvos TSR Ministrų tarybos nutarimas „Dėl priemonių vaikų literatūrai toliau ugdyti“ {Resolution of Lithuanian Communist Party and Council of Ministers “Measures for further Development of Soviet Children’s Literature”}, 1969-07-17, Nr. 306, in: LLMA, f. 34, ap. 1, b. 556, p. 10-14.

Petkevičius entered the literary field with a novel for adults in 1951. He was an editor-in-chief of the daily political newspaper *Truth* (lit. Tiesa) and a prose consultant in the Writers' Union. One could assume that these occupations entitled Petkevičius to support ideological education. The first work for young readers that Petkevičius published in 1963 was entitled *Why cranes wail* (lit. Ko klykia gervės). This book received three editions (1963, 1973, 1982) and the first state prize for children's literature in 1970. *Why cranes wail* is an adventure story that draws a picture of a Great Patriotic War from children's perspective. The young pioneers go on holidays to the countryside where they learn about upcoming war. While kids observe the slowly unfolding image of war, they start playing it by themselves. Everything seems amusing until the main protagonist sees his mother among the German's prisoners.¹⁰⁷ In the book Petkevičius continues to draw an ideologized image of war where Germans become the biggest enemy and Soviets are portrayed as heroes and rescuers.

In 1978 Petkevičius published another *correct* book entitled *Clay Mathew – the King of the People* (lit. Molio Motiejus – Žmonių Karalius). While this novel was not set around war scenes, it praised other Soviet morals and ideals. The main protagonist Clay Mathew¹⁰⁸ is a son of a village woman whose husband was imprisoned by an unfair king. The king constantly exploits the working village people and collect all their harvest without pay. One could understand that Petkevičius makes references to the life before the beginning of the socialist state. Throughout the book Clay Mathew goes to look for the truth as he cannot understand why people are being used so unfairly. He also highlights that: "Village people are accustomed

¹⁰⁷ Vytautas Petkevičius, *Ko Klykia Gervės (Why Cranes Wail)* (Vilnius: Valstybinė Grožinės Literatūros Leidykla, 1963), 95.

¹⁰⁸ Mathew was made of clay, thus he was called Clay Mathew.

to respect labor and truth, they also learnt to bow only to wisdom and justice.”¹⁰⁹ It is obvious that such a description hints to the image of an ideal Soviet citizen.

The examples illustrate that ideologically correct literature was mostly produced by the central authors who often did not write explicitly for children. It is evident that they promoted Soviet morals such as love for labor, patriotism or internationalism. Even though, they were committed to ideological work, they were not less talented than the other authors. One could consider Kubilinkas' case alone, his childlike poetics continue to be published and taught in contemporary Lithuanian schools.

3.2 Against the grain of Soviet ideology

The previous section has shown that ideologically *correct* children's literature was produced by the central figures of the literary field. Also, since there was a relatively low interest to responding so socialist values, the majority of the books were constantly re-printed. In this part of the chapter, I aim to show that during my research period thematic explorations of children's literature authors exceeded the boundaries of accepted Soviet ideology. I will discuss the issues related to the myth of happy childhood. Then, I will focus on the Holocaust literature, religion and criticism of Soviet society.

¹⁰⁹ Vytautas Petkevičius, *Molio Motiejus - Žmonių Karalius (Clay Mathew - the King of the People)* (Vilnius: Vaga, 1978, 166.

3.2.1 The myth of happy childhood

*May there always be sunshine,
May there always be blue skies,
May there always be mummy,
May there always be me!*

(Lev Oshanin, 1962)

During the Soviet period the image of a happy child became a main tenet of Soviet propaganda. Inevitably, the socialist state was praised for its attitude towards youth and its effort putting children's affairs to the top of the priority list. In this process literature played a major part. Through childlike poetics and colorful illustrations children were told about poor living conditions in capitalist countries, about starving kids, and injustice. While Soviet Lithuania was not an exception (Fig. 2), in this section I will introduce different accounts of Soviet childhood that emerged in the late 60s.



Fig. 2 Illustration by Adasa Skliutauskaitė for *The little bootback Boy* by Albertas Laurinčiukas (1971)

The most prominent Lithuanian author that focused on children's psychological issues and painful experiences was Bitė Vilimaitė (1943 – 2014). Vincas Auryla notes that Vilimaitė completely changed short stories for children: instead of joyful adventures, she introduces the reader to the sorrows of a child or a young teenager through their daily routine.¹¹⁰ She did not avoid talking about serious societal problems and abused children by their alcoholic parents.

In 1966 Vilimaite published her first collection of short stories for children entitled *The town of Grains* (lit. Grūdų Miestelis).¹¹¹ The first story under the same title starts with a portrayal of a tired teenager named Andrius looking for a job. He is forced to start working early as he has to support his mother and sisters because their father has left them: "A father left them. Everything collapsed at home. Mother always cries. Sisters too." After a few unsuccessful attempts Andrius manages to find a job. However, he is treated very poorly by his elder colleagues. Also, physical work proves to be very difficult. The story ends without any remarks to the future.

Vilimaitė opens another short story entitled *White Stains* (lit. Baltos Dėmės) as follows: "Mather wrote to me that father drinks again and already talks crazy. It was signed 'your sad mother'. No words about the money."¹¹² This story is focused on a young girl named Ina that goes to a music school away from home in a big city. She is troubled and heartbroken by her mother's sufferings because of an alcoholic father. Since she was not given money to get back home, she decides to go home by stopping cars and traveling with complete strangers. The first driver that stops seems to be drunk, but Ina has no other choice as it is a cold winter. The girl feels lonely and decides to tell all her troubles to the stranger behind the wheel. She does

¹¹⁰ Auryla, *Lietuvių Vaikų Literatūra {Lithuanian Children's Literature}*, 230.

¹¹¹ Bitė Vilimaitė, *Grūdų Miestelis (The Town of Grains)* (Vilnius: Vaga, 1966).

¹¹² Bitė Vilimaitė, *Baltos Dėmės (White Stains)* (Vilnius: Vaga, 1969).

not receive any support or comforting word. The story culminates when Ina is back home and finds her desperate mother. She tells Ina that her father started to drink like never before, and therefore is in the hospital. Ina feels devastated but she keeps it to herself as her mother is already upset. Such accounts completely contradicts Soviet morals and propagandistic claims about happy childhood and constant care for children. Instead, it provides the reader with a painful reality that did not meet the principles of socialist realism either and an image of a bright communist future. Nevertheless, books by Vilimaitė continued to be printed throughout the Soviet period. Vilimaitė was concerned with emotional state of a child. She was seeking to show that children deserves to be seen and treated well.¹¹³

Vladas Dautartas (1927 – 2000) entered the literary field with short stories for adults. But after a few years he dedicated a few works to young readers. His adventure story *He is Captain Tomboy* (lit. Jis – Kapitonas Pramušgalvis) seems to be an innocent and playful account of a happy childhood and games.¹¹⁴ Even though, the main protagonist Tadas lives only with his mother and is often left home alone, there are no indications of him not being happy. He is able to visit his grandparents in a small town and play in nature. However, while visiting he makes a new friend named Andrius who does not talk much about his life in a village of family. After some time Tadas realizes the reason for this: “Andrius brought me near one window. I looked inside. There were a couple of men and women behind the table. Tangled up and drunk. The room was very messy, there were empty alcohol bottles and food cans everywhere. The table was very dirty. Everyone was shouting, it was even scary

¹¹³ Jakonytė, *Šeimos vaizdinys sovietmečio lietuvių literatūroje vaikams {The Image of Family in Soviet Lithuanian Literature for Children}*.

¹¹⁴ Vladas Dautartas, *Jis - Kapitonas Pramušgalvis {He Is Captain Tomboy}* (Vilnius: Vaga, 1970).

to listen.”¹¹⁵ Later Tadas learns that his friend spends most of his time in the street because of the situation at home. Similarly to Vilimaitė Dautartas provides an unacceptable image of childhood in the Soviet society. Young children who are supposed to be taken care of and enjoy the years of their childhood encounter drinking parents and psychological abuse. Margaret Peacock notes that during the Khrushchev’s Thaw depictions of unhappy and abused child appeared in animated movies.¹¹⁶ However, she emphasizes that together with Brezhnev’s accession to power such artistic freedom was no longer tolerated. Also, the movies contradicting an image of a happy childhood disappeared from screens and were locked in archives.

3.2.2 Holocaust literature for Soviet children

During the first post-war decades, the Great Patriotic War became not only a major research subject of historians but was of a great interest for Soviet writers. There appeared a great volume of children’s books praising the sacrifice and heroism of the Soviet people regardless their nationality. Olga Baranova notes that Soviet historiography emphasized the atrocities committed by Nazis against the Soviet people, but it rarely focused on the massive atrocities against the Jewish population.¹¹⁷ Baranova also highlights that while in the United States the issue of Holocaust was emphasized in school curricula, there were no references to such events in the Soviet elementary or secondary school textbooks. Tarik Cyril Amar also

¹¹⁵ Dautartas, *Jis - Kapitonas Pramušgalvis {He Is Captain Tomboy}*, 71.

¹¹⁶ Peacock, *Innocent Weapons*, 123-150.

¹¹⁷ Olga Baranova, “Conceptualizations of the Holocaust in Soviet and Post-Soviet Ukraine and Belarus: Public Debates and Historiography,” *East European Politics and Societies* 34, no. 1 (February 1, 2020): 241–60, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325419831349>.

points out that the major Soviet story was to excise the Jews from the Holocaust.¹¹⁸ He also emphasizes that Soviet discourse suppressed the Nazi's targeting of the Jews and aimed to show atrocities committed against Soviet people. Catriona Kelly notes that Holocaust literature for children was not an accepted topic in Soviet Russia. Kelly points out that the first attempts to use artistic methods to talk about the Holocaust in Soviet Russia emerged only around 1985¹¹⁹, while in Soviet Lithuania the first attempt to introduce the tragic account of the Holocaust to young readers appeared as early as 1960.

Lithuanian writer Icchokas Meras (1934 – 2014) entered the literary field with an autobiographical novel for children *The Yellow Patch* (lit. Geltonas Lopas) in 1960.¹²⁰ The book focuses on the tragic story of a young Jewish boy named Benas.¹²¹ The story unfolds while Benas loses his family members one by one. He is about eleven years old, thus not always understands what is happening around. During the war all his family and other Jewish people were forced to leave home and walk a long way towards the barn away from town. All people get hungry and tired. Benas witnesses how a German soldier kicks a young woman in the head and leaves to die beside the road. When they reach the barn, Benas believes that people are brought here to work and then get food in exchange. Later the boy's mother is taken away. She cries and asks God for mercy for her two children. After a few minutes Benas

¹¹⁸ Tarik Cyril Amar, "A Disturbed Silence: Discourse on the Holocaust in the Soviet West as an Anti-Site of Memory," in Michael David-Fox, Peter Holquist, Alexander M. Martin (Eds), *The Holocaust in the East: Local Perpetrators and Soviet Responses* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014): 158-183," accessed May 31, 2021, https://www.academia.edu/5951635/_A_Disturbed_Silence_Discourse_on_the_Holocaust_in_the_Soviet_West_as_an_Anti_Site_of_Memory_in_Michael_David_Fox_Peter_Holquist_Alexander_M_Martin_ed_The_Holocaust_in_the_East_Local_Perpetrators_and_Soviet_Responses_Pittsburgh_University_of_Pittsburgh_Press_2014_158_183.

¹¹⁹ Kelly, *Children's World*.

¹²⁰ Meras Icchokas, *Geltonas Lopas (The Yellow Patch)* (Vilnius: Valstybinė Grožinės Literatūros Leidykla, 1960).

¹²¹ At the time, the term Holocaust was not used. Meras describes it as atrocity and tragic Jewish fate.

and his sister hear massive shooting. Benas sees his mother's clothes in a pile of bodies in the cart going close by. Throughout the story the boy is portrayed as a lonely and weak victim: "I am always alone. Always unnecessary. Why am I to be blamed for being a Jew?"¹²² Benas has such thoughts after he escapes from the death camp and tries to hide in the town, but people refuses to risk their lives and take him for more than a day. The story culminates when Benas sees the Russian's troops which according to his temporary uncle comes to save them. Would seem that generally the story fit the Soviet official discourse as it showed the negative image of Germans. However, the book ends with boy's concerns about the Russians. He asks his uncle if the Russians are not going to deport them to Siberia like other people in the past years.¹²³ Such approach provides a completely different picture of the war than what was usual in Soviet children's literature. It not only contradicts the image of heroic Soviet children but also hints to massive deportations.

Another novel entitled *A Stalemate Lasts But a Moment* (lit. *Lygiosios Trunka Akimirą*) Meras published in 1963 and was considered for a state prize in 1965.¹²⁴ The book was also included in a school curriculum and was re-published in 1968.¹²⁵ Meras published other works exploring the Holocaust theme, but they were not recommended for children due to sensitive endings.¹²⁶

The plot of the novel is set in Vilna (Vilnius) Ghetto during the Second World War. and last only for a day. The story starts when a Nazi Commandant named

¹²² Icchokas, *Geltonas Lopas* (The Yellow Patch), 73.

¹²³ Icchokas.

¹²⁴ Meras Icchokas, *Lygiosios Trunka Akimirą* (*A Stalemate Lasts But a Moment*) (Vilnius: Valstybinė Grožinės Literatūros Leidykla, 1963).

¹²⁵ Loreta Mačianskaitė, "Lygiosios Trunka Pusę Amžiaus: Icchoko Mero Kūrybos Recepcija Rusijoje (Stalemate for the Half of Century: Reception of Icchokas Meras in Russia)," *Acta Litteraria Comparativa*, 2013, 26–50.

¹²⁶

Schoger announces that he is going to take all ghetto children to the death camp. Reacting to such news a respected elderly person named Abraham Lipman tries to change his decision. A guard reconsiders and offers an agreement. He (a guard) is going to play chess against Lipman's only surviving son named Isaac. If Isaac wins, the children will live, but Isaac will be shot by the guard himself. If Isaac loses, the children will die, but Isaac will live. Lipman agreed to the offer and let Isaac play. Every move on the chess board starts with different story about Lipman's family. He tells about his wife, and his daughters that he lost because of current atrocities, but he does talk about their death. He lets a reader to understand by drawing a picture of a daily life in the ghetto. The story culminates when everything get to Isaac's hand. He can choose between his life and life of other children. Isaac chooses to win-die. Isaac has a moment of triumph; he defeats a guard in a chess game. But destines himself to die.

One could assume that the main reason for Meras' book to be published was Isaac's heroic choice to sacrifice his life for the sake of other children which fits into the frames of Soviet morals. Nevertheless, Meras not only spoke of sensitive issues, but also raised the idea of humanism and responsibility of the people regardless of their nationality. Furthermore, the novel emphasized the suffering of the Jews in the ghetto, mentioned death camps and their tragic fate which does not fit in official Soviet policy and attempts to focus on atrocities committed against Soviet people marginalizing the Jewish population.

Meras was considered for a state prize for this book but did not receive it. In 1972 he moved to Israel after his scandalous novel *Striptease, or Paris-Rome-Paris* which was published in one of the literary magazines. After Meras left for Israel, he appeared in the margins of the literary field. He was not mentioned in Auryla's

academic study on Lithuanian children's literature published in 1986.¹²⁷ Meras can be compared to Yevgeny Yevtushenko's *Baby Yar* (Babi Yar) which also focused on the tragedy of Holocaust and in particular on specific massacre. Although, Yevtushenko first published in unofficial literature in the West which was later distributed among Russian Jewish in Soviet Russia. However, Vilius Ivanauskas notes that Soviet authorities started particularly control the Holocaust literature in the seventies when Jewish authors started to emigrate to Israel.

3.2.3 Soviet children and religion

The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of men, is a demand for their real happiness.
(Karl Marx)¹²⁸

The antireligious or an atheist worldview was one of the central features of Soviet morality. Since the October Revolution, the atheist apparatus approached religion as something alien and as an illusionary myth of bourgeois ideology. Thus, it was seen as a problem that needed to be solved. Victoria Smolkin points out that since during Khrushchev's period the material base of Communism was claimed to have been built, it was possible to tackle the spiritual transformation of Soviet society.¹²⁹ The plan started with drafting the new party program which focused on material-atheistic world view. Smolkin also notes that even though Brezhnev's period was relatively stagnant, the area of Soviet ideology was changing in critical ways.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Auryla, *Lietuvių Vaikų Literatūra {Lithuanian Children's Literature}*.

¹²⁸ Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction [1844]," in *The Marx- Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Robert Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), 54.

¹²⁹ Victoria Smolkin-Rothrock, *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty: A History of Soviet Atheism* (Princeton Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), 109.

¹³⁰ Smolkin-Rothrock, *A Sacred Space* 143.

Thus, the fundamental goal of Soviet atheism remained to reach the society free of religion.

Children's literature played a major part in the formation of antireligious society. The communist party actively interfered in literature publishing and often expressed the demand for books propagating an atheistic world view. In this process the apparatus of Soviet censorship played an important role. Such a practice in children's literature theory is referred as *purification* which means that the text is purged of everything that does not suit the common taste, ideology or accepted morals.¹³¹ A well-known and discussed case of this practice is Russian translation of Selma Lagerlof's *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*, in which the parents go to the market on Sunday afternoon, while in the original Swedish version they go to the church. Interestingly, this case was overlooked in Soviet Lithuania. Jankevičiūtė notes that Lithuanian censors were not well trained in ideological purposes and rarely had higher education.¹³² Furthermore, during the interwar period the first award for children's literature was established by the Red Cross organization which culminated in propagating religion in Lithuanian children's books.¹³³ One could assume that such practice formed a tradition in support of religion which later proved difficult to eliminate. It is evident that during the Soviet era Lithuanians continued to go to church, baptize children, and have religious marriages. Although, these practices

¹³¹ Maria Nikolajeva, *Children's Literature Comes of Age: Toward a New Aesthetic*, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities ; Children's Literature and Culture, v. 1816. v. 1 (New York: Garland Pub, 1996), 47.

¹³² Giedrė Jankevičiūtė and V Geetha, *Another History of the Children's Picture Book: From Soviet Lithuania to India* (Chennai: Tara Books, 2017), 83.

¹³³ Kristina Vaisvalavičienė, "XX a. tarpukario lietuvių vaikų periodikos komunikaciniai modeliai: vaikų literatūros premijos (Communication models in twentieth century Lithuanian children's periodicals: children's literary awards)," in *Colloquia* No. 37 (2017): 115–36.

were mostly done in secret.¹³⁴ Thus, there appeared children's books propagating religion throughout the entire Soviet period.

A favorable attitude towards religion and the worship of God can be found in Antanas Jonynas' *The Wheel of Happiness*.¹³⁵ The first edition was published in 1965 and was intended for middle school children. The first story is centered around the daily life of an old village woman named Šapalienė. She goes to the church twice a week. Throughout the short story a narrator focuses on her daily prayers and *conversations* with God. At the altar Šapalienė always thinks about her past, her wedding, her late husband, and other daily things. She often asks for the grace of God to her distant relative who is struggling with nine children. She is concerned that a girl is not married. The story is supplemented with an illustration of Šapalienė kneeling by the altar and holding a Holy Rosary (Fig. 3).¹³⁶



Fig. 3 Antanas Jonynas *The Wheel of Happiness*, illustration Nijolė Kryževičiūtė-Jurgelionienė

Another story in the book provides an account from a classroom of pupils of the Catholic school which is taught by a priest. The priest is described as a very serious

¹³⁴ Rasa Baločkaitė, "Pleasures of Late Socialism in Soviet Lithuania: Strategies of Resistance and Dissent," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 42, no. 3 (September 1, 2011): 409–25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01629778.2011.597132>.

¹³⁵ Antanas Jonynas, *Laimės Ratas (Wheel of Happiness)*, (Vilnius: Vaga, 1973).

¹³⁶ It is also mentioned in a text that Šapalienė holds a Holy Rosary.

and intelligent person. He also wrote a book entitled *Light and Life* about the most important dogmas of faith. He always talks about the importance of religious education and required children's devotion to it: "There is no place for an atheist in a Lithuanian school."¹³⁷ Later the teacher conducts a religious exam which determines which children can continue to study in a gymnasium. The story culminates with a sad young pupil who does not pass an exam because he was not interested in classes of religion. Smolkin notes, in the Soviet Union religious practices were generally known and even devoted party members baptized their children in the church.¹³⁸ For instance, Sergei Zhuk point out that in Soviet Ukraine religious practices were popular among young generation.¹³⁹ They often bought Bibles and other religious items from tourists, listened to Christian music. Soviet authorities were aware of these practices and attempted to stop it by arrests, organizing atheistic seminars, and other activities. However, Jonynas' publication was not addressed by any of the institutions. In 1973 the book received the second edition. Arūnas Streikus points out that after the events of 1972 in Kaunas¹⁴⁰, Lithuanian censorship implemented various changes and strengthened ideological work.¹⁴¹ Thus, such a publication shows the lack of attention to children's literature in the general Soviet cultural field. Joseph Zajda points out that even though after 1980 there were clear signs of Westernization in the Soviet Union, the detailed study of Soviet education

¹³⁷ Jonynas, *Laimės Ratas (Wheel of Happiness, 37)*.

¹³⁸ Smolkin-Rothrock, *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty*.

¹³⁹ Sergei I. Zhuk, "Popular Religiosity in the 'Closed City' of Soviet Ukraine: Cultural Consumption and Religion during Late Socialism, 1959-1984," *Russian History* 40, no. 2 (2013): 183–200.

¹⁴⁰ In 1972 a nineteen years old Romas Kalanta had immolated himself in the city center of Kaunas. On a bench Kalanta left a notebook where he wrote: "The system alone is responsible for my death (Dėl mano mirties kalta tik sistema)." see for example Amanda Jeanne Swain, "From the Big Screen to the Streets of Kaunas: Youth Cultural Practices and Communist Party Discourse in Soviet Lithuania," *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 54, no. 54/3-4 (July 1, 2013): 467–90, <https://doi.org/10.4000/monderusse.7960>.

¹⁴¹ Arūnas Streikus, "Ideologinė Cenzūra Lietuvoje 1956–1989 m. (Ideological Censorship in Lithuania, 1956–1989)," *Genocidas Ir Rezistencija*, no. No. 1(15) (2004): 43–67.

periodicals and journals between 1972 and 1982 indicates that internationalism and militant atheism were given the most prominent treatment.¹⁴²

Clogs by Kazys Saja (b. 1932) originally released in 1958, was republished in 1980.¹⁴³ The book is composed of several short stories which mostly introduces the reader to life in Lithuanian village, difficult living conditions, and children's experiences. One of the stories entitled *My Bunny Rabbits* is about a young kid who prays to the Saint Anthony of Padua (lit. Šventasis Antanas) in order to have more little rabbits. The boy helps out at the neighbors' during the summer where he saves up some money and finally buys two little rabbits of his own. He is proud of his smart purchase and looks after them well. Once both rabbits got too big to stay in a cage the whole day, the boy decides to let them play in the garden while he is working. Unfortunately, when he gets back, he finds that one of the rabbits was eaten by a dog. It deeply upsets the boy, and he decides to not let the other one outside again. But a rabbit manages to runaway somehow. The boy starts to pray to the Saint Anthony and asks him to bring his rabbit home. He promised to go to church on Sunday and to donate all the little money he has to God. He did as he promised and even more. Once he leaves the church after the mass, he hears one of the beggars repeating the name of Saint Anthony and decides to give the last of his saving to him and asks him to pray for his little rabbit. Once the boy is back home, he cannot believe what he sees: his rabbit was playing in a garden. Similarly to the previously stories, Saja shows the miracle of faith and devotion to religion. The story also contradicts the Soviet ideology and its effort to achieve a society free of religion.

¹⁴² Joseph Zajda, "The Moral Curriculum in the Soviet School," *Comparative Education* 24, no. 3 (1988): 389–404.

¹⁴³ Kazys Saja, *Klumpės (Clogs)* (Vilnius: Vaga, 1980).

Especially, when during the late socialist period ideological team was charged with the task of creating spiritual atheism.¹⁴⁴

Children's books propagating religion were often appearing in Soviet Lithuania. Some of them just mentioned an existence of God or other Saints but others like mentioned above devoted an entire plot to express faith and devotion. It shows that during the Soviet period religion was alive in Lithuanian and children continued to be taught by their families, These practices stood against achieving the ultimate socialist goal to reach society free of religion which also stopped the progress towards communism.

3.2.4 Soviet reality through the eyes of a teenager

With the birth of socialist realism, there emerged a so-called school novel which meant to show the happy life of Soviet children at school. In 1936 at Central Committee of the VLKSM (All-Union Lenin Communist Youth Union) a Samuil Marshak called for "*children's stories for children*".¹⁴⁵ In other words, Marshak expressed a demand not only for stories exposing difficult pre-revolutionary times but also happy stories about a school children, their achievements, and general developments of Soviet school. These stories were supposed to depict moral and healthy school life, along with children's exciting routine such as going to excursions, having pioneer meetings, building airplane models, or singing around a campfire).

¹⁴⁴ Victoria Smolkin, "The Ticket to the Soviet Soul: Science, Religion, and the Spiritual Crisis of Late Soviet Atheism," *The Russian Review* 73, no. 2 (2014): 171–97.

¹⁴⁵ Dobrenko, "The Entire Real World of Children."

The school tale as a genre was not popular in Soviet Lithuania. One of the closest versions of this genre can be a novel entitled *Arberonas* by Vytautas Bubnys (1932-2021).¹⁴⁶ Since most of the plot unfolds in a school environment. It was first published in 1969 and was repeated in 1972 and 1978. *Arberonas* is filled with critical testimonies of a stagnant Soviet reality through the eyes of a school teenager named Arūnas. The novel is presented as a diary and is composed of seven days. The story starts with Arūnas' favorite day, Sunday, when he is not in a boring school and can do whatever he is pleased to do. Most of all he likes to listen to American rock music. Hellman stresses that until the collapse of the USSR, Soviet publishers were hesitant to allow the use of English words in children's books.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the first page of *Arberonas* starts with Arūnas singing: "I love you, I love you..." On Monday Arūnas participates in a Komsomol meeting where he listens to his classmate and a new ideological leader. Arūnas critically looks at the classmate and is even sorry for her future: "She used to be a normal girl. Now she got all serious. Jūra is condemned to remain forever an unmarried socialist. She will become a fake flower: no real smell, no real beauty – for the parade."¹⁴⁸ This passage shows that a young teenager refers to the socialist state as a parade with fake flowers like his classmate. Later in the book a class is given a questionnaire to fill in about their atheistic views. Arūnas thinks that boring questions are a waste of time and fills the survey with complete nonsense as do his classmates.

The critical evaluation of a stagnant system continues throughout the *Arberonas*. One day, Arūnas and his classmates attack a history teacher and start

¹⁴⁶ *Arberonas* is an abbreviation of four school friends' names: Arūnas, Benas, Romas, Naglis.

¹⁴⁷ Ben Hellman, *Fairy Tales and True Stories: The History of Russian Literature for Children and Young People (1574 - 2010)*, *Fairy Tales and True Stories* (Brill, 2013).

¹⁴⁸ Vytautas Bubnys, *Arberonas* (Vilnius: Vaga, 1969, 36).

asking why they are not taught about Lithuanian history, or the glorious Grand Duchy of Lithuania. At that moment, the teacher gets lost as she says that she is obliged to teach according to the program provided by the Ministry of Education. The culmination happens when one of Arūnas' friends tragically dies after a chemical explosion at school. A boy's mother decides to invite a priest to the funeral to hold a mass. For this reason, school children are not given permission to go, because there is no place for a Komsomol member where there is a priest. Arūnas despises such a decision and not only goes to the funeral but also runs away from home. He wanders around unknown city, feels lost and not understood.

In the Soviet Lithuanian press *Arberonas* was compared to J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* which came out three years earlier. Both novels are focused around lonely, rebellious teenagers, their flaws and mindset. Nevertheless, both books were reviewed from different angles. Talking about Holden Caulfield, Soviet literary critic questioned why such a young boy is left in the concrete jungle all by himself when other kids are in beds having sweet dreams. But most importantly, a critic asked why the state is not there for him.¹⁴⁹ Even though, Arūnas' situation was pretty similar it was not questioned from the same perspective. Bubnys was even praised for choosing such an unpopular topic as a school tale and teenage life.¹⁵⁰ Since *Arberonas* openly criticized a stagnant Soviet system, and exposed the flaws of Soviet education, I would argue that press review played a part of diverting people to focus on different aspects of the book. After Lithuania regained its independence, Bubnys admitted that the publication of *Arberonas* was a surprise even to himself as

¹⁴⁹ Raimondas Kušauskas, "Šauksmas Neono Džiunglėse (The Cry in the Neon Jungle)," *Pergalė*, No. 11 (1966): 170–75.

¹⁵⁰ Vytautas Girčys, "Ant Slenksčio (On the Threshold)," *Pergalė*, no. 9 (1969): 165–69.

behind closed doors it was described as “a parody of a communist youth”.¹⁵¹ Loreta Mačianskaitė also refers to *Arberonas* as a bomb of that period for its open criticism towards Soviet ideals.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Arvydas Sabonis, *Rašytojas Ir Cenzūra (A Writer and Censorship)* (Vilnius: Vaga, 1992).

¹⁵² Loreta Mačianskaitė, “Žmogus Su Kino Kamera Prieš Cenzoriaus Žirkles. Laisvės Diskursai Filmuose Pagal Icchoko Mero Scenarijus (A Man With a Camera Facing the Censor’s Scissors: Discourses of Freedom in Films Based on Scripts By Ichokas Meras),” in *Tarp Estetikos Ir Politikos: Lietuvių Literatūra Sovietmečiu* (Lietuvos Literatūros ir Tautosakos institutas, 2015),

Chapter 4: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF 'VYTURYS' : THE VISION

The first research chapter has shown that children's literature existed in the margins of the Soviet cultural field. It is evident that this situation was influenced by the fact that children's literature publishing house did not exist in Soviet Lithuania until 1985. There was only one editorial section dedicated to juvenile literature within *Vaga*. In this chapter I will focus on the establishment of the children's literature publishing house 'Vyturys'. First, I will briefly outline its founding circumstances. Then, I will discuss the vision and the tasks assigned to the newly formed publisher.

In 1981 the State Press Committee discussed children's literature publishing and raised an idea for a separate publishing house. The committee emphasized that an establishment of children's literature publisher is necessary in order to increase the low performance, to meet public needs, and to create more opportunities for the Soviet authors.¹⁵³ However, the idea was dismissed due to the lack of resources. Even though, some economic reforms were introduced during the Brezhnev's era it did not prove to be fruitful and affected the capacity of literature publishing.¹⁵⁴ Since the publishing of juvenile literature was not improving the same idea was raised again in 1984 during the party meeting.¹⁵⁵ Therefore, the new publishing house entitled

¹⁵³ Pažyma apie grožinės literatūros išleidimą Lietuvos TSR, Nr. 12/332 (Report of the publishing of fiction in Lithuanian SSR, No. 12/332), 1981-02-16, in: LCVA, f. R-577, ap. 1, b. 613, p. 36-37.

¹⁵⁴ Juliane Fürst and Stephen V. Bittner, "The Aging Pioneer: Late Soviet Socialist Society, Its Challenges and Challengers," in *The Cambridge History of Communism: Volume 3: Endgames? Late Communism in Global Perspective, 1968 to the Present*, ed. Juliane Fürst, Mark Selden, and Silvio Pons, vol. 3, The Cambridge History of Communism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 286-289.

¹⁵⁵ 'Vagos' leidyklos pirminės partinės organizacijos ataskaitinio rinkiminio susirinkimo, įvykusio 1984-10-18, protokolas Nr. 12 ((Meeting minutes of the primary party organization of 'Vaga' publishing house), in: LYA, f. 11321, ap. 2, b. 24, p. 72-81.

'Vyturys' was established in 1985.¹⁵⁶ As an only children's literature publisher 'Vyturys' was supposed to absorb juvenile literature publishing of all genres from fiction to political and popular science literature.

An establishment of a separate publisher marks a turn in the history of Lithuanian children's literature. On the one hand, one could assume that a decision to open a separate children's literature publisher in such an economic environment was rather optimistic. Due to the economic circumstances 'Vyturys' was based in the premises of 'Vaga' and suffered from constant shortages. However, the main reason for an establishment of 'Vyturys' was not to increase quantitative plans but to fulfill ideological requirements. Juozas Nekrošius, the director of the State Press Committee, emphasized that the main vision of 'Vyturys' was to become the massive publisher of atheistic literature.¹⁵⁷ After the first year of operating 'Vyturys' director Juozas Vaitkus also stressed that the main task of the newly formed publisher was to create a concentrated machine of ideological literature. Vaitkus emphasized that now since all thematic genres of children's books are in one hands, it is easier to increase publishing of patriotic, internationalist, and anti-religious literature.¹⁵⁸ This approach to the publishing policy can be understood as an attempt to meet previously raised ideological requirements. Although, it is evident that such a policy was no longer relevant. After the dissolution of the USSR Riitta H. Pittman pointed out that Mikhail Gorbachev recognized the power of an artistic expression and called for

¹⁵⁶ Lietuvos TSR Ministrų Tarybos nutarimas Nr.273, „Dėl vaikų ir jaunimo literatūros leidyklos „Vyturys“ įsteigimo“, 1984-09-03 ((Resolution No. 273 of the Council of Ministers of the Lithuanian SSR, “On the Establishment of the Children's and Youth Literature Publishing House ‘Vyturys’”), in: LLMA, f. 631, ap. 1, b. 1, p. 1.

¹⁵⁷ Lietuvos TSR valstybinio leidyklų, poligrafijos ir knygų prekybos komiteto pažyma ((Report of the State Press and the Book Trade Committees of Lithuanian SSR), 1985-12-19, in: LCVA, f. R577, ap. 1, b. 756, p. 1-5.

¹⁵⁸ 'Vyturio' leidyklos 1985 m. darbo rezultatai ir uždaviniai ((Work results and tasks of 'Vyturys') 1986 m., 1986-01-30, in: LLMA, f. 631, ap. 1, b. 8, p. 1- 21.

literature to support and promote the goals of the party.¹⁵⁹ However, she emphasized that during Gorbachev's era literature and visual arts broke free from "stagnation" and opened discussions on previously forbidden topics such as history, religion, drugs, child abuse. Valentyna Kharkhun illustrates that Soviet Ukrainian authors began to experiment as early as 1980 since ideological work got weaker and allowed more freedom. Thus, the vision assigned to 'Vyturys' seems irrelevant or too late to the time period.

As established in the plans during the first years 'Vyturys' focused on ideologically *correct* literature. Within the series entitled *Little Curious* (lit. Smalsutis) editorial team started a new branch called *In Our Kolkhoz* (Mūsų Kolūkyje). These books portrayed happy children participating in collective farming and doing daily work without hesitation (Fig. 4).

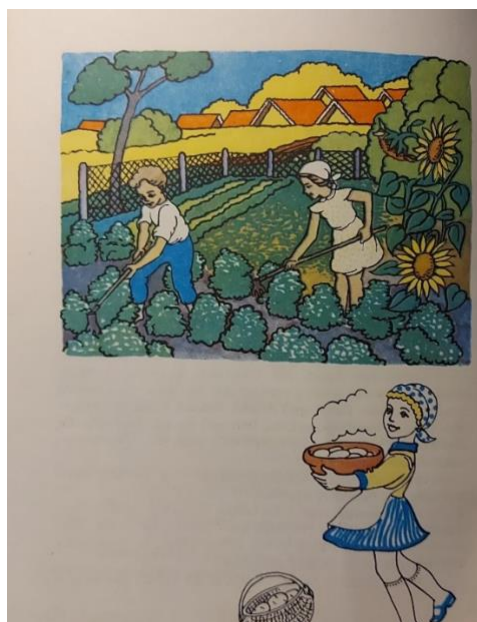


Fig. 4 Anicetas Onaitis *In Our Kolkhoz*, illustrator unknown (1985)

¹⁵⁹ Riitta H. Pittman, "Writers and Politics in the Gorbachev Era," *Soviet Studies* 44, no. 4 (1992): 666–661.

Importantly, this series not only promoted collectivism and love for work but also other Soviet morals such as love for the motherland. To illustrate, in 1985 Anicetas Onaitis introduced the Soviet hero Ivan Chernyakhovsky and his merits to the Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War. Furthermore, 'Vyturys' continued to publish books propagating Soviet achievements such as building of the new cities, opening new factories for the workers, or other technological accomplishments. For example, in 1986 Jeronimas Laucius published a book for younger school children entitled *The Birth of the Giant* (lit. Milžino Gimimas). The book is focused on the construction of the new nuclear power plant in Lithuania. On the one hand, the book seems to be filled with innocent childlike illustrations introducing chemistry and physics to the young generation (Fig. 5). On the other hand, it talks about Lenin's life and his dedication to the Soviet society. It also contains an illustration of a giant ship named *Leninas* which according to the author was the strongest and the biggest icebreaker in the world. (Fig. 6). It is obvious that this choice was supposed to show the Lenin's strength and promote Soviet ideology.



Fig. 5 Jeronimas Laucius *The birth of the Giant*, illustrator unknown (1986)

After the collapse of the USSR Kęstutis Urba was highly critical of the massive production of ideological books.¹⁶⁰ He emphasized that these thematic choices are difficult to explain in given historical time. While it is evident that authors were freer to experiment in other Soviet Republics, Urba was not aware of the primary vision assigned 'Vyturys'. This phenomenon can be explained using Alexei Yurchak's theory that the final dissolution of the USSR was not anticipated.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Kęstutis Urba is an only Lithuanian scholar that dedicated his entire career to children's literature. However, I find some of his arguments insufficient as he focuses only on a few well-known authors. In Lithuanian archives, together with requested document every researcher is given a list of names that previously read the document. I encountered Urba's name only on two documents unrelated to 'Vyturys' publishing house.

¹⁶¹ Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*, Information Series (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2005).



Fig. 6 Jeronimas Laucius *The birth of the Giant*, illustrator unknown (1986)

'Vyturys' publishing policy that focused on ideologically *correct* literature continued until around 1988. It is evident that later editorial team changed its directions. They emphasized a need for fairy tales and translation from the West. During the last years of research period 'Vyturys' editorial board started a new series entitled *Andersen Award Winners* in Honor of Hans Christian Andersen.¹⁶² which was filled with playful and childlike fairy-tales. Finally, in 1989 Chief Board of State secrets (*Glavlit*) adopted the resolution on the basis of which 'Vyturys' publishing house was exempt from censorship. This decision marked a path to a free publishing of children's literature which was no longer based on ideological work.

¹⁶² 'Vyturio' leidyklos 1987 m. darbo rezultatai ir uždaviniai ((Work results and objectives of 'Vyturys' publishing house) 1988 m., in: LLMA, f. 631, ap. 1, b. 41, p. 1-28.

Conclusion

Children's literature played a key role in Soviet project marching towards utopian communism. Children's books were assigned a special role in propagating Soviet morals and depicting socialist life in its revolutionary development. Since Lithuania was incorporated in the Soviet Union after the Second World War it was supposed to mirror all aspects of cultural life from Soviet Russia.

It is evident that official Soviet discourse praised children's literature as central part of the literary field and regarded children's authors with high social status. However, this research has shown that Soviet Lithuanian children's literature existed in the margins of the general cultural field. Authors did not gain high social statues and were not financially secured; therefore, they often were fully employed writing for adults and rarely published for children. Research also revealed a phenomenon that most of the children's authors started to write for children, because they had children of their own. This peripheral position was influenced by the fact that children as an audience were not able to produce any form of capital (economic or symbolic) which would attract authors. Further, there was little attention paid by the Soviet institutions literary and publishing institution towards the development of children's literature. Thus, children authors had significantly low social network.

The most important part of children's literature towards achieving communism was their content. The communist party propagated such qualities as love for work, internationalism, collectivism, patriotism (love for the motherland), discipline and atheism. It is obvious, that well known central authors (often in high administrative) positions were obliged to respond to ideologically *correct* topics and promote propagate Soviet values in order to educate an ideal citizen of Socialist society.

The case of Soviet Lithuania, particularly the late period, reveals that children's authors experimented with thematic choices and exceeded the boundaries of accepted themes. There appeared books expressing tolerance for religion and criticizing Soviet society and the communist party. Furthermore, Lithuanian authors focused on child's psychological issues and instead of a happy childhood introduced readers to alcoholic parents and lonely abused children. Also, Icchokas Meras introduced child reader to the tragic fate of Jewish population during the Second World War and questioned the history of the Soviet Union.

A turning point in Soviet Lithuanian children's literature was observed in 1985 when was established a separate publisher of juvenile literature entitled 'Vyturys'. While historical circumstances suggest that 'Vyturys' was supposed to break free of ideologically charged books and start afresh with thematic exploration, it was merely established in order to create ideological apparatus where all genres were held in one hand. Thus, until 'Vyturys' was exempt from censorship in 1989, ideologically charged books continued to be published.

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