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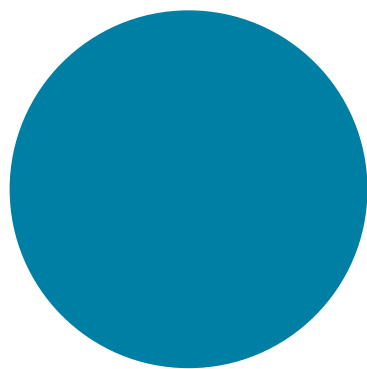


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
LIBRARIES

PETRO JACYK CENTRAL & EAST EUROPEAN RESOURCE CENTRE

Publishers in Exile:

Belarusian and Russian Émigré Publishing, 2022–present



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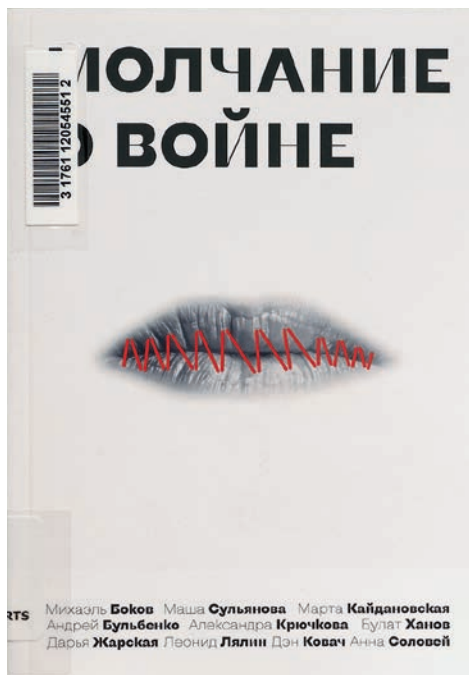
In “Belarus Protest Diary,” part of her 2022 poetry collection *Motherfield*, Belarusian poet, writer, and translator Julia Cimafiejeva (1982–) describes the book launch for her earlier book of poetry, *ROT. Veršy* [ROT. Poems]. *ROT. Veršy* was published a few days before the August 2020 presidential elections in Belarus, which extended Alyaksandr Lukashenka’s presidency for another four-year term. The results were met with unprecedented country-wide anti-government protests and a brutal crackdown on the peaceful protesters. Cimafiejeva writes about the timing of the event: “It was the worst time: no one is interested in a tiny poetry book when the main news is deaths, beatings, and detentions. But there is no other time. There are just a few people at my event, no questions, a couple of books bought. I get upset. Ania, who is the moderator of the discussion, decides to join the demonstration outside, on Partisans Avenue” (*Motherfield*, p. 27). To avoid imprisonment for the opposition to Lukashenka’s regime, Cimafiejeva and her husband, writer and translator Al’herd

Bakharëvich (1975–), left Belarus. Both now publish their works abroad. In Belarus, several works by Bakharëvich are included in the list of works that the state considers to be “extremist” and are prohibited from distribution.

The University of Toronto Libraries recently acquired a selection of books published by Belarusian and Russian writers in exile, including recent works by Cimafiejeva and Bakharëvich, from the vendor MIPP International. Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and Belarus’ role as an ally to Russia changed the conditions of book publishing in Russia and in Belarus. These changes include “rising prices for paper, logistics, new laws against so-called LGBT propaganda and foreign influence, and the refusal of foreign authors and publishers to work with Russia” (*Moscow Times*, 16 May 2023).

Censorship continues to affect the book publishing industry in Belarus and Russia. The newly acquired selection offers a glimpse into the ways independent publishers in both countries are adjusting to the political situ-





ation. Some continue to publish as “foreign agents” or by limiting their offerings (e.g., self-censoring), while some have emigrated to continue their work (*Moscow Times*, 16 May 2023). Uncensored literature published abroad gives a contemporary meaning to the term *tamizdat* which refers to “texts published abroad, either officially reprinted *samizdat*, or texts first appearing in the West” (Kind-Kováč and Labov, p. 3). Although typically associated with the Cold War, the roots of *tamizdat* as a literature phenomenon can be traced back to Russian-revolutionary thinkers from the second half of the nineteenth century: “*Tamizdat* received a huge boost from the energetic publishing activities in England, Switzerland, France, Germany, and elsewhere of political exiles such as Herzen and Ogarev. Perhaps the most committed reader and writer of what would now be called *samizdat* and *tamizdat* was Lenin, who helped to spread his and other Marxists’ teachings in numerous leaflets, newspapers, and booklets, some printed in the West and others produced in Russia” (Dewhurst).

In their “Statement on the Repression of Belarusian Book Publishers and the Destruction of the Independent Publishing Industry” issued on 30 May 2022, PEN Belarus reported that searches and confiscations of books from independent publishers in Belarus began in full force in January 2021; in spring 2022, the activities of four independent publishers in Belarus were terminated. PEN Belarus itself was one of the cultural and human rights organizations that was forced to stop its activities in Belarus in 2021. It now operates in Poland. Among the repressed independent publishers was Yanushkevich Publishing House, founded by Andrei Yanushkevich. After being evicted from its office in March 2022, the publisher attempted to open a bookstore in Minsk. The bookstore *Knihauka* lasted for just half a day before police raided it, seizing 200 books for “forensic examination.” One such title was a Belarusian translation of Joseph Brodsky’s children’s book, *Balada pra malen’ki buksir* [The Ballad about a Small Tugboat], which was deemed “extremist” by the Central District

Facing page and above left: Three covers of books published by Freedom Letters: *Непоследние слова*, *Правда ли, Спринг филд* and *Молчание о войне*. **Above, centre and right:** Cover of book published by Выдавецтва “Янушкевіч”: *Свінні* / Аляксандр Чарнуха. Cover of book published by Skaryna Press: *Песні тралейбусных рагуляў*.

Court in Minsk in October 2022 (Khalip, *Novaia Gazeta*, 26 Oct. 2022). A visit by two state media journalists had prompted the raid. They subsequently accused Yanushkevich of “open anti-state activity.” Police also detained Yanushkevich and his associate, Nasta Karnatskaya. The licence of the Yanushkevich Publishing House was revoked in January 2023, but it has since resumed activities in Poland. Reporting on the same incident in the state-run newspaper *Belarus’ Segodnia*, well-known media host and politician Vadim Gigin defended the journalists and praised them for posing “uncomfortable questions” about “politicization of book publishing.” He went on to suggest that the actions of pro-state journalists were illustrative of wider social trends in contemporary Belarusian society calling for vigilance “in the fight against the remnants of supporters of b-ch-b [sic] ideology” (*Belarus segodnia*, 27 May 2022). “B-ch-b” refers to the *bel-chyrvona-bely* [white-red-white] flag, associated with Belarusian nationalism. In June 2023, Gigin was appointed as Head of the National Library of Belarus.

Among the independent publishing houses located abroad is Freedom Letters, founded by Georgy Urushadze in April 2023. Based in Washington, D.C., this volunteer-run publishing house issues and disseminates works of literature in Russian, Ukrainian, and English that are prohibited in Russia. These works are further examples of *tamizdat* functioning in the contemporary media environment by relying on a transnational network of media and professionals. In its day-to-day operations, Freedom Letters engages international volunteers to carry out different stages of the publishing process. As Urushadze explained in an interview with *Novaia Gazeta*, every process, from layout and design to editing to proofreading to the actual printing, takes place in different countries

and requires, at minimum, coordinating time zones. As for the content, the publisher prioritizes “books that demand to be published”: Ukrainian authors, anti-war literature, and contemporary poetry. At the time of the interview in October 2023, Freedom Letters had published forty-five electronic and forty print books, with approximately the same amount currently in production (*Novaia gazeta*, 17 Oct. 2023). In another interview with *The Moscow Times*, Urushadze commented on the ironies of independent publishing: “We don’t have money for marketing, but pro-Putin activists help get out the word about us. They accuse me of everything. One person wrote that Russia is losing the war because I publish anti-war literature. It’s comical, but it helps us” (26 May 2023). Freedom Letters’ catalogue includes works by playwrights Sergei Davydov (1992–) and Svetlana Petriichuk (1980–), poet Vera Pavlov (1963–), and journalist and literary critic Dmitri Bykov (1967–), to name a few. These authors cannot be published in Russia either because of anti-LGBT laws or because they face prosecution for criticizing the war or the Russian government. Any innovative or non-conformist act of creative expression could be deemed illegal. The playwright Svetlana Petriichuk, for example, received Russia’s Golden Mask theatre award for the play *Finist-iasnyi sokol* [Finist the Brave Falcon] in 2022; one year later, Petriichuk and the director, Zhenia Berkovich, were charged with “terrorist propaganda” for the very same play.

Russia’s Ministry of Justice and Belarus’ Ministry of Information maintain lists of materials deemed “extremist.” For example, the “List of the Extremist Materials in the Republic of Belarus” was published on 23 August 2023 in the newspaper *Respublika*. It itemizes information resources such as Telegram and YouTube channels, Facebook,

Instagram, and TikTok accounts, as well as books. The prohibited works were mostly published by *Belaruski Knihazbor* [Belarusian Book Library], an independent publisher which was forced to suspend its activity in May 2022. The list includes works by such writers as Lidziia Arabei (1925–2015), Larysa Heniush (1910–1983), Natallia Arsenneva (1903–1997), and Uladzimir Niakliaeu (1946–). The University of Toronto Libraries holds works published by *Belaruski Knihazbor* and by the authors listed above in its collections.

While the recently purchased books continue to build on authors already represented in our holdings, they also include new authors. In addition to works by Cimafiejeva and Bakharévich, selections from Belarusian publishers include works by such authors as Valer Hapeeu (1963–), Maryia Vaitsiashonak (1940–) and Hanna Iankuta (1984–). Pfliaumbaum is the only independent Belarusian publisher that focuses on women writers and continues to operate from Minsk. Skaryna Press, Viasna Books, Janushkevich Press and Knihauka operate out of London, Prague, and Warsaw.

Collections of East European underground publications are well represented in the University of Toronto Libraries’ holdings. Prominent collections include Professor Ann Komaromi’s database of Soviet *samizdat* periodicals, and collections of uncensored publications relating to the Prague Spring, the Czech underground, and the Polish Solidarity movement at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library (see *PJRC Update* #1 (2008), #4 (2011) and #13 (2021)). In the current geopolitical situation of Russia’s ongoing war against Ukraine, we will continue to strategically acquire works from outside the mainstream publishers in Russia and Belarus, ensuring access to comprehensive and diverse collections.

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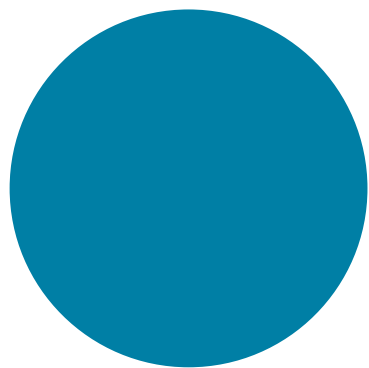
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The Cataloguing Corner: Changes in New Ukrainian Acquisitions and the Library of Congress Classification on Ukraine



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The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 dramatically changed the lives of millions of Ukrainians. Many of them had to leave their destroyed homes within a matter of hours, change their peaceful professions, and join the resistance either in the professional army or as volunteers. Some of their experiences have been transposed onto the pages of memoirs, journalistic investigations, novels, and poetry. Since the beginning of the invasion, staff at the University of Toronto Libraries have prioritized cataloguing Ukrainian books



in response to increased scholarly interest in Ukraine, as well as to demonstrate support for its people. After some interruptions, the flow of books from Ukraine has resumed, allowing the library to present a diverse selection of publications in various forms and genres. Described below are some highlights of the new arrivals.

Folio publishers from Kharkiv, the most eastwards city in Ukraine, which undergoes daily shelling from Russia, introduced the Книжки війни [War Books] series. One of the books in this series is Olha Telypska's *Бігти не можна залишитися* [Run Can't Stay]. The title is a play on words, where the author offers to put a comma to make the meaning either "run, you can't stay" or "you can't run, stay". Published in 2022, this is a collection of first-hand testimonies of Ukraine's internally displaced people. The stories shed light on the experiences of those who faced the difficult decision of whether to escape the war zone, leaving their previous lives behind, or to stay and risk being killed or captured by the Russian invaders. What might appear to be an obvious choice becomes a complex practical and psychological dilemma for many. The book delves into various aspects of the displaced individuals' new lives: some encountered prejudice and a sense of purposelessness, while others discovered a



supportive environment and mobilized for a fresh start. The book features about two dozen unique chronicles.

Another collection of wartime stories comes from children of a village community in the Sumy region in northern Ukraine, one of the first areas attacked in 2022 due to its extended border with Russia. *Щоденник спогадів* [A Diary of Memories] (Kyiv, 2022) provides a glimpse into the children's perspective on encountering war, featuring recollections, poems, and drawings. The book was compiled by Iryna Konstantiuk, a children's writer and Ukrainian instructor from the University of Manitoba who used to organize cultural exchanges between the Canadian province and the Ukrainian community represented in this book.

Маріуполь: голоси війни [Mariupol: Voices of the War] (Kharkiv, 2023) is a more focused publication of first-hand narratives of former residents of Mariupol, a vibrant city destroyed by Russia at the beginning of the war. Through interviews, 24 survivors speak about their lives in the besieged city and their attempts to escape it. The book includes plates with thematic paintings and photos, as well as links to video versions of the interviews.

Those who enjoy poems might find interesting the collection by contemporary and classic Ukrainian poets writing about love in

Opening page, left to right: Covers of *Бігти не можна залишитися* and *Щоденник спогадів*.

This page, first row: Covers of *Маріуполь: голоси війни*, *Книга Love 2.0*, and *Довга комендантська година*.

This page, second row: Covers of *24.02* and *Дванадцятий місяць війни : хроніка подій : промови та звернення Президента Володимира Зеленського*.

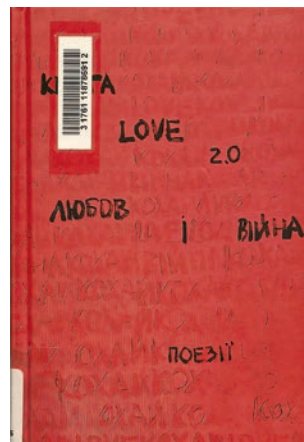
the context of war, *Книга Love 2.0* (Kyiv, 2023), a follow-up to the first volume published in 2022. As the book annotation states, “Love and war, by their nature and essence, these words seem to be incompatible. The poems contain a whole range of feelings: love and hate, passion and rage, the tenderness of touch, as well as memories and the pain of loss. Poetry about the darkness that comes with war and the light that must overcome. A collection about love, which, in addition to weapons, makes us resilient, brave, and unbreakable.”

There are several new books for fans of prose fiction. An example is *Довга комендантська година* [Long Curfew] (Kharkiv, 2023) by Andrii Kokotiukha, a renowned Ukrainian writer of thriller and detective prose. This novel about a Ukrainian military intelligence officer on a mission in the strategic Kyiv city district is the first in a new series by Kokotiukha called *Таймер Війни* [War Timer]. Another book, entitled *24.02*, consists of a novel *Вкрадена весна* [Stolen Spring] and short stories by Mariia Minaiilo. The texts describe the lives of people who attempted to survive the brutal Russian occupation, and follow characters united by the common woe: the war.

Lastly, for those interested in political documentary texts, the library continues to receive monthly collections of speeches and appeals by Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky. A recent acquisition includes a volume comprising the President’s speeches from the twelfth month of the war.

The war has an impact not only on the books the library receives, but also on the way we catalogue them.

Recognizing heightened scholarly interest in Ukraine, the Library of Congress has undertaken groundbreaking changes to the classification of subject headings related to Ukraine’s history. This involves moving away from the outdated practice of placing these books under the history of Russia. As a result, Ukrainian topics now have their own class numbers—an advancement that has been advocated for decades. Some other important and timely changes were also made. For instance, the subject heading with a debatable name “Ukraine Conflict, 2014 -” that was used to catalogue all books on Russia’s war in Ukraine was supplemented with the

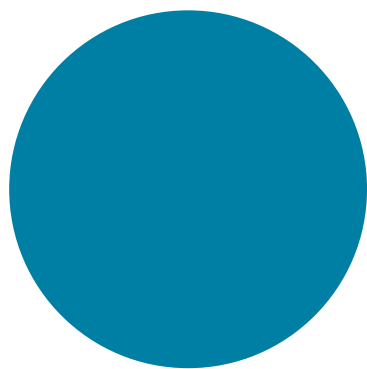


more accurate “Russo-Ukrainian War, 2014 -”. Additionally, names historically associated with various empires have been replaced with Ukrainian names. Furthermore, the periodization of Ukrainian history in the Library of Congress classification system has been revised to align with the Ukrainian perspective on history rather than being influenced by the Russian imperial or Soviet worldview. For example, the new class numbers DK5327-5329 on Ukraine’s history now include the time span of 1945-1991, which

covers Ukrainian resistance movements, including dissidents.

In conclusion, our library remains dedicated to staying abreast of global developments, and ensuring the availability of pertinent publications on urgent matters. The broader profession, including the Library of Congress, actively responds to societal changes and adapts its policies and practices to align with current knowledge and the evolving vision of the world.

On Remembering: Elvi Aer, Estonia, and Estonian Literary Art of the 1920s



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We do not often get an opportunity to honour the memory of fellow librarians and to do so by describing significant new purchases to the University of Toronto Libraries' collections made in their names. In 2022, Naima Aer donated to the University of Toronto Libraries \$10,000 as a memorial gift to pay tribute to her sister, Elvi Aer (1938–2018), a long-time former library employee and volunteer to Robarts Library's Book Room. Naima stipulated that the funds be used to purchase books written in Estonian or about Estonia out of respect for her sister's heritage, place of birth, and love of literature.

Soon after receiving the gift monies, one of our antiquarian vendors, Michael Fagan of Boston, Massachusetts, compiled a list of offers of Estonian poetry and prose published in Tartu and Tallinn between 1919 and 1929. His descriptions of the literary works, together with attached photographs of selected book covers and illustrations, suggested volumes that were expressive and experimental, and beautifully illustrated and typographically designed. It seemed fitting to purchase a selection of these books to recognize Elvi Aer's poetic nature. Furthermore, some of the Estonian writers came from similar family backgrounds, either in farming, fishing, or forestry, and shared comparable

experiences during the Soviet occupation of Estonia as the Aer family.

Elvi was born on 4 October 1938 in Pöide, Saaremaa, Estonia, to Mihkel Aer (1898–1987) and Hilda Louise (née Ots, 1907–1996). Her father descended from the Schmuul-Smuul family of free peasants in the coastal village of Koguva on the Northwestern coast of Muhu Island, near the Väike (Small) Strait. He worked in the fishing industry, settling in Saaremaa in 1926, where he and his wife started their family. Having escaped Soviet reprisals during the first occupation of Estonia between August 1939 and July 1941,

Mihkel and Hilda Aer and their two daughters, Elvi and Naima, fled to Germany during the Red Army's 1944 offensive to reoccupy the Baltic States. They were among seven million refugees seeking safety in Europe, many of whom were housed in temporary camps. The Aer family took refuge in Gieslingen an der Steige, the largest camp of Estonians in the American zone, located in the Württemberg region. Elvi and Naima attended school there. The family eventually moved to Canada



where they made their home in St. Catharines. They joined the 16,000 Estonians who came to Canada from before the Second World War through to 1952.

In Canada, Elvi Aer completed studies at University College at the University of Toronto (BA 1961). She joined the staff of University

Opening page: Frontispiece from Henrik Visnapuu's *Valit värssid*.

This page, left to right: Cover and poem from Johannes Barbarus's *Geomeetiline inimene*.

Facing page, left to right: Covers from Marie Under's *Sinine puri*, Julius Oengo's *Meie kevad*, and Hugo Raudsepp's *Kohtumõistja Simson*.



of Toronto Libraries in 1964, where she was promoted to the role of Assistant Head of the Order Department in 1969, and Head of the same department in the 1970s. In this role she managed book acquisitions until her retirement in 2000.

While employed at the university, Elvi Aer, together with librarians Vida Mockus and Betty McKinstry, and with assistance from Emilija Ziplans, compiled the bibliography *Baltic Material in the University of Toronto Library*. This reference work covered material relating to Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian fine arts, architecture, geography, history, law, linguistics, ethnology, archaeology, social sciences, religion, and music in at least fifteen languages and multiple formats. The information proved to be so useful that the authors published a second expanded edition in 1978.

At the time of the first edition, in 1972, the University of Toronto Libraries held 1569 items of Baltica, material relating to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The collection grew to 3288 items by 1978. Presently, the Estonian-language holdings alone (not including publications about Estonia in other languages) number over 6500 books, music scores, journals, and other publications. Our holdings of Estonian books are on par with Yale's collection, and both UTL and Yale rank behind only the Library of Congress in number of volumes when compared to all thirteen member libraries of the East Coast Consortium of Slavic and East European Library Collections. This expansion of our Estonian collection coincided with the establishment of the Elmar Tampõld Chair

of Estonian Studies in 1986 at the University of Toronto. Generously funded by Canada's federal government and members of the Estonian Canadian community, the endowed chair has assured permanence in the teaching and research in Estonian history, politics, and society at the university. Jüri Kivimäe was the first appointed chair (1999–2017); Andres Kasekamp (2017–) is the current holder.

The books in honour of Elvi Aer's memory are the first Estonian volumes to be added to the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library's collection of fine book design from eastern Europe. The previous emphasis had been on the Czech and Russian avant-garde. New books include works by the writers Hugo Raudsepp (1883–1952), Marie Under (1883–1980), Arthur Adson (1889–1977), August Alle (1890–1952), Henrik Visnapuu (1889–1970), Johannes Vares (who wrote under the pen name Johannes Barbarus, 1890–1946), Mihkel Jürna (1901–1983), and Julius Oengo (1901–1941). Their works were all published during and after Estonia's War of Independence (1918–1920) and the adoption of the country's first constitution on 15 June 1920.

Early twentieth-century Estonian literature was characterized by Romanticism, stemming from a people's national awakening. This changed with the founding of the movement called Noor-Eesti [Young Estonians] in 1905, which called for Estonians to maintain their cultural identity while also becoming Europeans. Writers and artists embraced the sense that Europe was open to the new Estonian state. They began to innovate aesthetically by incorporating European trends into their literature: expressionism,

constructivism, and cubism. The destabilizing socio-cultural aftermath of the First World War and the Russian Revolution ushered in the avant-garde era. Many of the young creative class in Estonia turned from neo-Romanticism to futurism.

The leading figure of the Estonian Futurist circles was Barbarus, the son of a farmer who became a physician and one of the foremost poets of the era. His book *Geomeetiline inimene* [Geometrical Man] (Tallinn, 1924) was hailed as one of the most important constructivist manifestos to arise in Estonia. The work centres on city life, with Barbarus incorporating an urban vocabulary relating to industry, transportation, entertainment, and consumerism, and invoking an avant-garde aesthetic. The form-centred nature of the poems is reflected in some of the titles, such as "Perpendicular," "Horizontal," "Parallel," "Linear," "Constructive," and "Vertical." Jaan Vahtra (1882–1947), a founding member of the Estonian Artists' Group and the book's cover artist and illustrator, supplemented the inventive metropolitan-inspired verse throughout with fine geometric abstractions evocative of fragmented human and urban forms.

Henrik Visnapuu was part of the futurist movement. He was the son of a forest ranger, and worked as a teacher and journalist. Visnapuu, Barbarus, Under, Adson, Alle, Raudsepp, and the artist Peet Aren were members of the Siuru literary group (later regrouped as Tarapita). They were early modernists who articulated the freedom of the human spirit and enjoyment of life. They lived



a Bohemian lifestyle and often incorporated eroticism into their verse, particularly the group's leader, Marie Under. Visnapuu's *Valit värsid* [Selected Verse] (Tallinn, 1924) and *Puuslikud* [Idols] (Tartu, 1929) are marked by neologisms, onomatopoeia and glossolalia, musicality, complex rhythms, and new rhyme forms inspired by the nervousness of the time: "I am filled with utter misgiving, / O Idol of all animate things; It was you who gave me to the living / And endued my fancy with wings" ("Kõige hingava ebajumal" [False God of all animate things], translated by W. K. Matthews, 1953). The two collections by Visnapuu carry colourful covers and frontispieces by the artist Peet Aren (1889–1970).

Ado Vabbe, the most important Estonian avant-garde artist, created many covers of the Siuru members' books. Overall, he contributed illustrations to 90 books between 1917 and 1940. Vabbe studied and worked in Germany and Russia where he was influenced by the pioneering artists associated with Der Blaue Reiter [The Blue Rider], especially Franz Marc and Wassily Kandinsky. He returned to Estonia in the late 1910s and founded the Pallas Artists Union to train the next generation of Estonian artists, such as Aleksander Bergmann, known by his pseudonym Aleksander Vardi (1901–1983). Vabbe incorporated curved lines and abstract shapes in his book designs, reflecting a mixture of influences from cubo-futurism and expressionism. He produced the frontispiece abstraction of a male figure for Arthur Adson's *Wana laterna* [Old Lantern] (Tallinn, 1919), the cover and illustrations for August

Alle's *Üksinduse saartele* [To the Islands of Solitude] (Tartu, 1921), and the striking white graphic ocean-wave-like cover design on a blue background for Marie Under's *Sinine puri* [Blue Sail] (2nd ed., Tallinn, 1919).

Vabbe's student Aleksander Bergman designed the colourful cover and the seven full-page cubo-figurative illustrations for Mihkel Jürna's collection of stories, *Tavalised* [Ordinary] (Tartu, 1927). The artist Roman Haavamägi-Espenberg created the expressionist cover and four full-page linocut illustrations for Julius Oengo's and Ada-Oengo-Johanson's (1896–1963) collection of children's poems, *Meie kevad* [Our Spring] (Tallinn, 1922). In the 1920s, he specialized in book arts, incorporating modernist international trends into his designs.

Hugo Raudsepp, a leading dramatist and another major participant of the modernist Siuru literary movement, dealt with Estonia's ethical and spiritual problems in the context of the Old Testament story about Samson the Judge in his *Kohtumõistja Simson* [Samson the Judge] (Tartu, 1927). The play's remarkable constructivist cover design is by Märt Laarman (1896–1979), one of the most important avant-garde artists in Estonia who created minimalist-constructivist covers and enriched bibliographic printed matter with book-blocks, unique in Estonia at the time. This cover became an icon for his choice of colours (red, black) and the large-scale arrangement of geometric elements in conjunction with a striking typography. All the elements — colour, surface, and lines — are conceived in relation to one another.

This flourishing of Estonian literature and art was short-lived and limited to the inter-war period. Following the Soviet occupation of Estonia in 1939–1941 and reoccupation in 1944, with Nazi rule in between, the writers and the illustrators of the above-mentioned works either went into exile (Adson, Under, Visnapuu, Aren), were subjected to persecution (Raudsepp, Vabbe), cooperated with the ruling regime (Alle), or were liquidated (Barbarus, Oengo). Writers were free to create in exile or tried to subvert political censorship through the dissemination of underground chapbooks or manuscripts. Only when Estonia regained independence in 1991 did Estonian literature re-emerge in the public sphere. Writers rid themselves incrementally of Russification in hopes of preserving Estonian culture and language well into the future. Lines from Kristjan Jaak Peterson's poem "Kuu" [The Moon] (1818) recall the sentiment:

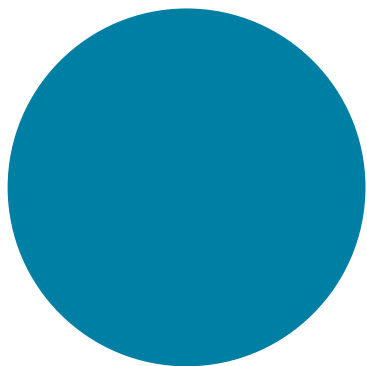
“
Cannot, then, the native tongue
Of this country rise in the wind
Of the song to the heavens
And seek for it eternally?
”

(Translated by Jüri Talvet
and H. L. Hix, 2010)

We are grateful to Naima Aer for remembering Elvi and for helping the University of Toronto Libraries offer researchers an opportunity to study the early innovators of Estonian language, literature, and art.

Mark Gayn Papers:

A Window into Eastern Europe



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Mark Gayn was among the first Western reporters to be admitted to the Eastern Bloc, China, and North Korea during the 1950s to 1960s. He was a prolific journalist who for five decades covered foreign affairs in Eastern Europe and the Far East for newspapers published in Canada, the United States, France, Japan, and elsewhere. His extensive journeys and frequent visits to China, Asia, the Soviet Union, and socialist satellite states garnered him recognition as a foremost and highly informed analyst of these regions.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Gayn was born Mark Julius Ginsbourg in Barim, on the Manchurian-Mongolian border, in the Qing empire, in 1909, to Russian-Jewish parents who emigrated from the Russian Empire. He went to school in the eastern port town of Vladivostok, Russia and resided in the newly created communist state of the Soviet Union in the early post-revolutionary period. There, Gayn worked for the library of the Red Army, and in 1926 pursued studies at the Soviet Institute for Teachers, Librarians,

and Propagandists. Elizabeth Ridolfo, Special Collections Projects Librarian at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, noted that Gayn found his calling for journalism “while reading a Russian style wall newspaper.” Indeed, much of Gayn’s poster collecting can be found among his papers housed at the Fisher Library. He returned to China to study in Shanghai before beginning his journalistic career in 1928.

In 1929, Gayn moved to Claremont, California where he attended Pomona College, majoring in political science. He graduated from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in 1934, after which he landed a job at *The Washington Post* and freelanced for Japanese and Chinese news agencies. He moved to Toronto in 1952, where he remained until his death in 1981, with several intervening trips to and stays in the Soviet Union, China, Hong Kong, North Korea, Mexico, and Cuba.

Shaped by his Chinese upbringing, Gayn produced numerous reports assessing China’s achievements and criticizing the government’s political and intellectual control over Chinese society. During his four-year stay in Paris from 1948 to 1952, he travelled



extensively across Europe, especially the Eastern Bloc. There, he met his wife, Suzanne Lengary, a Hungarian actress who later contributed to the Fisher Library's Mark Gayn collection. Gayn's articles, diaries, notebooks, and other documents offer fresh perspectives on numerous geopolitical and sociohistorical developments during the Cold War. His reputation as a reliable commentator on Chinese and Soviet affairs is evident in the wealth of materials in his collection, which highlight his natural ability to engage in conversations, often impromptu.

MARK GAYN PAPERS: AN OVERVIEW

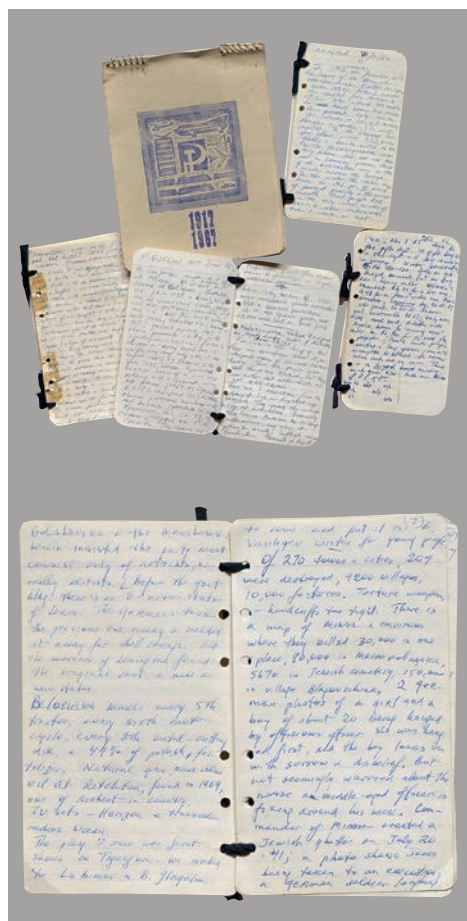
Mark Gayn's extensive collection of photographs, journals, documents, and ephemera was donated to the Fisher Library in 1981 following his death.

Throughout his career, Gayn documented personal accounts of the places he visited, either in longhand in his notebooks or as typed entries in his diaries. He also collected the work of others. His collection contains 10,000 monographs, 350 periodical titles, 35 linear feet of manuscripts, eight filing cabinets and twenty cartons of ephemera, 1,000 posters, and a great number of photographs, films, maps, and realia.

The primary challenges Fisher Library staff faced upon receiving the collection included determining the value of all the donated materials for preservation and identifying their research potential. Following a thorough assessment of Mark Gayn's journalistic career, the library recognized its significance for scholars and researchers. In addition to conducting exclusive interviews with Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Liu Shaoqi, Gayn witnessed firsthand the Cultural Revolution in China, reported on the Vietnam War, and lived in Czechoslovakia during the turmoil in 1968.

MARK GAYN PAPERS: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

For anyone interested in the politics of the socialist countries during the Cold War, the Mark Gayn Papers span a spectrum of narratives and experiences. The notebooks and diaries are supplemented by photographs,



film recordings, and ephemera. These documents provide an overarching view of how a journalist would have navigated the restrictive Soviet and socialist systems and interacted with local peoples. The notebooks and diaries include detailed descriptions of Gayn's encounters in the Soviet Union and the satellite states of Central and Eastern Europe and in Asia. William G. Saywell, the former president of Simon Fraser University and a friend of Gayn, helped arrange the transfer of the papers to Toronto. He described Gayn as

an outstanding observer and analyst of "the great human dramas that unfolded in the century."

The Mark Gayn papers are historically and topically related to other library collections at the University of Toronto, such as the Igor Belousovitch Collection which focuses on Soviet independent press from the 1960s to the early 1990s, and the Project for the Study of Dissidence and Samizdat which contains more than 300 Soviet *samizdat* materials and activist interviews. Gayn's personal experience and collected ephemera provide insights into Soviet life and Cold War journalistic experiences. The diverse formats of his papers, such as handwritten notes, typed diaries, address books, and meeting notes contribute to the social history of objects.

The collection helps us understand daily life in socialist nations, while also offering us a glimpse into Mark Gayn's personality. His detailed narratives explore his culinary experiences and interactions with local residents and reflect on different aspects of Soviet infrastructure. On his initial trip to Moscow in 1960, Gayn noted lengthy queues for goods and encountered youths bartering for chewing gum. He recounted a conversation with a taxi driver who humorously described the Moscow metro as "above is squalor and below are palaces"—a remark laden with irony, exposing the unacknowledged hierarchies within the Soviet Union.

In February 1972, Gayn described his entry into the Soviet Union from Poland via train at Brest: "Frontier guards lift mattresses, inspect compartment niches, and scrutinize my luggage along with others. The tape recorder is sealed, while books and magazines undergo thorough inspection, and other items are examined perfunctorily." Upon reaching Minsk, he emphasized Belarus' significance as the producer of "every 5th tractor, every sixth motorcycle, every 8th metal-cutting die, & 49% of potash fertilizer." He also reflected on the devastation of the Second World War, noting that "Of 270 towns & cities, 209 were destroyed, 9200 villages, 10,000 factories." He provided specific details in a map of Minsk and the environs that illustrated the loss of 30,000 lives in one place, 80,000 in Masiukovshchina, 5670 in the Jewish cemetery, and 150,000 in the village of Blagovshchina.

Gayn witnessed the USSR's evolving hard and tech industries. In Tolyatti, "Russia's Motown," he observed women workers assemble a Soviet Lada car; in Novosibirsk, a computer centre; and in Baku, the Caspian Sea oil field credited with making the

Facing page: Mark Gayn in Moscow, 1961.

This page, top to bottom: Russian children outside Lenin-Stalin tomb — after pledging loyalty they are presented with a scarf, 1960. • Travel notebooks, 1965. • 16 February 1972, arrival to the Soviet Union via Poland, notebook entry.



Left to right, top to bottom: Skyscraper, Kyiv, 1960. • Zagorsk. The Lane, The Halt and the Devout, 1960. • Caspian Sea oil field, 1961. • Women workers assemble a Lada car in Novosibirsk, 1961. • Babyn Yar, 1960. • Kvass vendor, Soviet Union, 1961.



the Eternal Glory (слава [slava]), above the Dnieper.”

Engaging with young people, Gayn’s conversations on Soviet hardships complicate the notion that tourists could not freely explore the country. His papers reveal daily aspects of socialist life in the 1960s and 1970s, offering a unique window into a reality inaccessible to most Westerners at the time. Gayn’s proficiency in Russian and Chinese facilitated meaningful exchanges, while his contributions to newspapers covered geopolitical aspects. This experience contrasts with his personal notebooks, photographs, and films which record his day-to-day interactions. These included attending official ceremonies, visiting local kiosks and markets, watching people while walking city streets, and witnessing urban and industrial growth. The collection offers valuable perspectives on the complex journalistic experiences of the Cold War, while also contributing to a nuanced understanding of the socio-cultural landscape amid geopolitical tension.

The journalist’s enduring legacy is further manifested through the Mark Gayn Scholarships for Chinese Studies and the Mark Gayn Graduate Scholarship, recognizing academic excellence in individuals pursuing study/research on China, Russia, or Soviet studies at the University of Toronto, as well as the Mark Gayn Award dedicated to Master of Journalism students at Toronto Metropolitan University.

Soviets “immune to the energy crisis.” His travels throughout the Soviet Union were extensive as he made his way to Alta-Ata, Baku, Yerevan, Tbilisi, Chişinău, and Tashkent, among other places. Mingling with local populations, he paid visits to the “grey” market where “farmers sell produce from their own gardens at high prices.” He saw the restorations of old churches for tourists, noting “a modest religious revival among the Russians.” In Tashkent in 1960, he concluded from the Moscow-Tashkent-

Kabul, Tashkent-Stalingrad, and Tashkent-Samarkand-Bukhara flight itineraries that the city is “clearly the heart of the Soviet Asian policy, or rather its forward outpost.”

Researchers can get a sense of silenced narratives in the Soviet space. For example, when Gayn visited Babyn Yar on his first trip to Kyiv in 1960, he remarked: “Known as *Бабу́й-Яр* [Babi Yar/ Babyn Yar], old, old name. Now not even a memorial there, but city has grown over it, ‘only the Jews know it; we don’t.’ There is a common memorial in the Part of

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