

## European Literature Night 2024 Returns to New York on October 24th

*A selection of Europe's brightest literary talents gather at the Ukrainian Institute of America to celebrate the power of international literature for the 6th edition of European Literature Night.*



**NEW YORK, October 24, 2024**— Authors, translators, and performers from seven E.U. countries will convene in New York City on **October 24, 2024**, for the annual European Literature Night. Hosted by the **Ukrainian Institute of America**, the event will feature inspiring multilingual readings, Q&A sessions, panel discussions, and musical performances. This year's program explores a range of contemporary writing, from the intimate stories of Franz Kafka and post-Soviet autofiction to travel journals and anthropological essays.

The 2024 lineup represents a diverse and varied Europe, showcasing writers, translators, and performers from Czechia, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Switzerland. Authors include **Romain Buffat** (CH) presenting *Grande-Fin*, **Paulo Rodrigues Ferreira** (PT) presenting *No One Goes Back to What They Left Behind*, **Rimantas Kmita** (LT) presenting *The Southside Chronicle*, **Ioana Nicolaie** (RO) presenting *The Book of Reghina*, and **Magdaléna Platzová** (CZ) presenting *Life After Kafka*.

Translators include **Ross Benjamin** (DE) presenting *The Diaries of Franz Kafka* and **Grażyna Drabik** (PL) presenting *Wartime Notebooks*. Performers include **Julijus Aleksovas** (LT), **Nuno Marques** (PT), **Maryel Mayz** (PT), and **Rita Sistrunk** (LT).

"We are excited to host European Literature Night for the third consecutive year," said Lydia Zaininger, Executive Director of the Ukrainian Institute of America. "This event goes beyond sharing ideas—it fosters connections across borders, bringing people together through a shared love of literature. It enriches our community by introducing new perspectives and deepening our appreciation of European literary traditions."

"European Literature Night celebrates the rich diversity of European literature, creating a space where languages and perspectives converge," said Jörg Schumacher, President of EUNIC New York. "Through translation, these voices transcend borders, fostering dialogue and cultural

exchange. In today's world, literature is a powerful tool that connects us, showcasing both our differences and shared experiences."

### **About European Literature Night:**

A decade-long tradition in many European countries, where readings and idea exchanges often take place in communal spaces like pubs and coffee shops, ELN brings the essence of European café culture to New York. Launched in 2017, ELN embodies a spirit of unity and the belief that literature serves as a unique medium for strengthening dialogue among diverse voices and cultures while breaking down communication barriers. European Literature Night is organized by EUNIC New York, a cluster of 40 European cultural institutes and embassies.

### **PROGRAM FOR OCTOBER 24, 2024**

**5:30 PM:** Doors open.

**6:00-6:15:** Opening remarks by Ukrainian Institute of America and Czech Center New York.

**6:15-7:00:** Panel Discussions.

Discussion 1: "The Novel as Social Commentary" moderated by Clarisse Rosaz Shariyf, Chief Program Officer, Literary Programming at PEN America. Participants: Romain Buffat, Paulo Rodrigues Ferreira, Ioana Nicolaie, Magdaléna Platzová.

Discussion 2: "Reflections on the Page: Diaries, Autofiction, Memoir" moderated by Sabir Sultan, Director of Literary Programs and World Voices Festival at PEN America. Participants: Ross Benjamin, Grażyna Drabik, Rimantas Kmita.

**7:00-7:15:** Break.

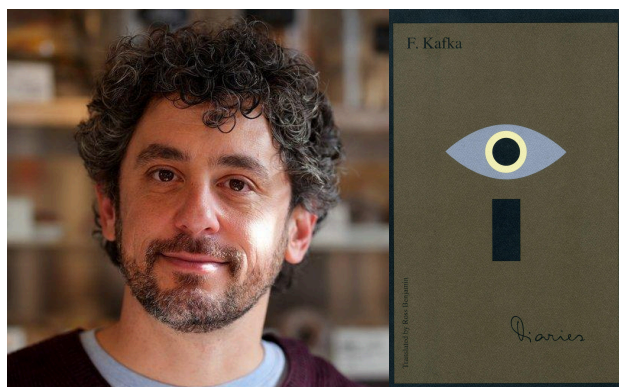
**7:15-8:40:** Readings in Breakout Rooms.

**8:40-9:00:** Break.

**9:00-10:00:** Musical Performance and Wine Reception.

## **AUTHORS AND TRANSLATORS**

### **Ross Benjamin**



**Book:** The Diaries of Franz Kafka

**Country:** Germany / Goethe-Institut New York

**Country of residence:** USA

### **Bio:**

Ross Benjamin, translator of Franz Kafka's *Diaries*, has been awarded the Guggenheim Fellowship, Helen and Kurt Wolff Translator's Prize, and National Endowment for the Arts Literature Fellowship. In addition to numerous translations of German literature, his writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The Nation*, and other publications. He was a 2003–2004 Fulbright Scholar in Berlin.

### **Book description:**

*Franz Kafka's Diaries* encompass daily accounts, literary sketches, letters, dreams, and story drafts. This volume presents a comprehensive English reconstruction of Kafka's handwritten entries, revealing previously omitted material. Translator Ross Benjamin faithfully reproduces the distinctive writing from Kafka's notebooks, highlighting the diaries' role in his literary process and their intrinsic value as a work of genius.

### **Link:**

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/612561/the-diaries-of-franz-kafka-by-franz-kafka/>

## **Romain Buffat**



**Book:** Grande-Fin

**Country:** Switzerland / Consulate General of Switzerland in New York

**Country of residence:** Switzerland

### **Bio:**

Romain Buffat (1989) is a writer based in Lausanne, Switzerland. After earning a bachelor's degree in creative writing at the Swiss Literature Institute he studied French literature at the University of Lausanne. After his first novel, *Schumacher*, was published in 2018, his second novel, *Grande-Fin*, was released in 2023. He also writes for literary magazines and exhibits his work in museums.

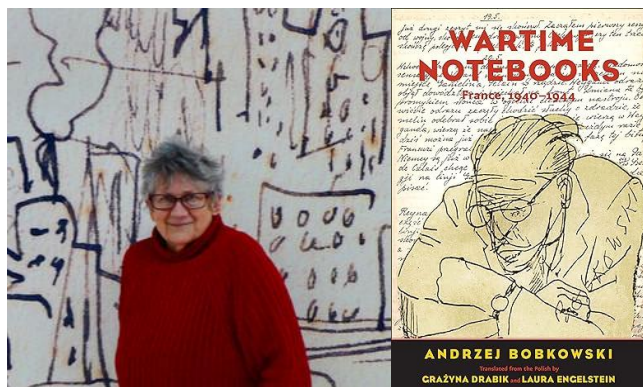
### **Book description:**

To celebrate his thirtieth birthday and the end of his studies, Jérôme embarks on a month-long journey across America by train, searching for the dreams of his father, who vanished fifteen years ago. From Chicago to San Francisco, he reflects on his childhood in Switzerland, recalling family vacations, the long road by the lake, and his parents' hard work. This novel weaves a journey into the past, where memories are sparked by familiar smells, sounds, and places.

### **Link:**

<https://www.doubleligne.com/catalogue/grande-fin>

## **Grażyna Drabik**



**Book:** Wartime Notebooks by Andrzej Bobkowski

**Country:** Poland / Polish Cultural Institute New York

**Country of residence:** USA

### **Bio:**

Grażyna Drabik is a translator and scholar dedicated to bringing Polish literature to English-speaking audiences. She teaches World Humanities and Immigration Literature at City College, as well as a seminar on Arts in New York at Macaulay Honors College, CUNY. Her scholarly interests focus on cross-cultural exchanges and the challenges of literary translation. Drabik's notable work includes the translation of Andrzej Bobkowski's *Wartime Notebooks: France, 1940-1944*, co-translated with Laura Engelstein and published by Yale University Press in 2018. Currently, she is preparing a selection of poems by Brazilian poet Adélia Prado for publication in Polish, further showcasing her commitment to bridging cultures through literature.

### **Book description:**

When the ambitious young writer Andrzej Bobkowski, a self-proclaimed cosmopolitan Pole, found himself stranded in occupied France in 1940, he chronicled his thoughts on culture, politics, history, and daily life. His notebooks, published after the war, provide an outsider's view of the struggles and ironies of life under the Occupation. These writings reveal the emergence of an original literary voice. Bobkowski was only recognized as a master of modern Polish prose after the fall of Communism, and he remains to be discovered in the English-speaking world.

### **Link:**

<https://yalebooks.yale.edu/book/9780300176711/wartime-notebooks/>

## **Paulo Rodrigues Ferreira**



**Book:** No One Goes Back to What They Left Behind (“Ninguém Volta ao que Deixou”)

**Country:** Portugal / Consulate General of Portugal in New York / Camões, I.P.

**Country of residence:** USA

### **Bio:**

Paulo Rodrigues Ferreira teaches Portuguese language and literature at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Previously, he taught in New Jersey and at Queens College and Bronx Community College in New York. He holds a PhD in Contemporary History, focusing on Iberian cultural relations. His published fiction includes the novel *Uso Errado da Vida* (Companhia das Ilhas, 2019), which was a finalist for the Eça de Queiroz Literary Prize.

### **Book description:**

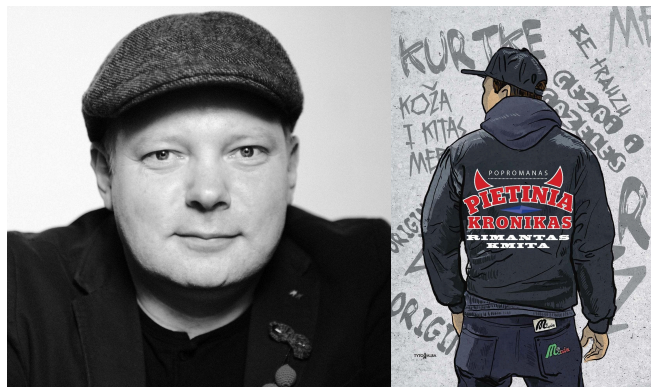
*Ninguém Volta ao que Deixou* is the winner of the 4th edition of a prize for Portuguese people living abroad and those of Portuguese descent. The jury praised it as a gripping narrative that maintains tension throughout and offers a fresh perspective on contemporary issues. This novel is part of the *Colecção Comunidades Portuguesas*, which highlights testimonies, essays, and literary works by Portuguese individuals outside of Portugal, aiming to give visibility and voice to these communities through a collaboration between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda.

### **Link:**

<https://loja.incm.pt/products/livros-ninguem-volta-ao-que-deixou-1026258#:~:text=Ningu%C3%A9m%20Volta%20ao%20Que%20Deixou.%20Paulo%20Rodrigues%20Ferreira%20ensina%20l%C3%ADngua>



## **Rimantas Kmita**



**Book:** The Southern Chronicle (“Pietinia kronikas”)

**Country:** Lithuania / Lithuanian Culture Institute

**Country of residence:** Lithuania

### **Bio:**

Rimantas Kmita (1977) is a Lithuanian writer, playwright, and literary scholar with a Ph.D. in Humanities. He is known for his poetry, novels, and academic works on Lithuanian literature. His debut novel, *The Southern Chronicle* (2016), became a bestseller and was adapted into a film in 2024. His latest novel, *Remyga* (2020), won the Lithuanian Writers' Union Prize. Kmita has also adapted Orwell's *Animal Farm* for the stage. His works have been translated into Ukrainian and German, with poetry published in several languages, including English and Polish. In 2024, he received the Lithuanian Government's Culture and Art Prize for his literary contributions.

### **Book description:**

*The Southern Chronicle* offers a poignant view of post-Soviet Lithuania through the eyes of a young man in Šiauliai. This semi-autobiographical novel explores self-discovery amid shifting identities and social change as the protagonist navigates friendships, family, and love in the wake of Lithuania's independence. Kmita's sharp, humorous prose and regional dialects capture the essence of 1990s small-town life. Beyond a linguistic experiment, it's a coming-of-age story that reflects on career, status, love, and rebellion, resonating with readers for its nostalgic portrayal of the post-Soviet era and the challenges of youth, earning critical acclaim in contemporary literature.

### **Link:**

<https://www.pegasas.lt/pietinia-kronikas-2169403/>

## **Ioana Nicolaie**



**Book:** The Book of Reghina ("Cartea Reghinei")

**Country:** Romania / Romanian Cultural Institute

**Country of residence:** Romania

### **Bio:**

Ioana Nicolaie is a poet and prose writer with numerous literary awards. She has published six novels, five poetry collections, and ten children's books. Her novel *Cartea Reghinei* won multiple awards in 2020, including the Radio Romania Cultural and National Prose Prize. Translated into several languages, she has been invited to read and lecture at numerous national and international literature festivals worldwide.

### **Book description:**

*Cartea Reghinei*, published in 2019, won major Romanian literary awards and is being translated by the prestigious Italian publisher La nave di Teseo. The story follows Reghina, a woman from northern Transylvania, where the miraculous intertwines with the weight of recent communist history. As the mother of twelve children, she creates "a body weighing a thousand pounds." The narrative is dense and deeply moving, unfolding through key episodes: a match, a wedding, the first night of love, domestic violence, and the births of her children.

### **Link:**

<https://humanitas.ro/humanitas/carte/cartea-reghinei>



## **Magdaléna Platzová**



**Book:** Life After Kafka

**Country:** Czechia / Czech Center New York

**Country of residence:** France

### **Bio:**

Magdaléna Platzová is the author of nine books, including three novels published in English: *Aaron's Leap*, a Lidové Noviny Book of the Year Award finalist, *The Attempt*, longlisted for the Dublin Literary Award and a Czech Book Award finalist, and *Life After Kafka*, a Magnesia Litera award finalist. Platzová grew up in the Czech Republic; studied in Washington, DC, and England; received her MA in Philosophy at Charles University in Prague; and has taught at New York University's Gallatin School.

### **Book description:**

Franz Kafka scholars know Felice Bauer, his onetime fiancée, primarily through his Letters to Felice, viewing her as little more than a woman with a raucous laugh and a taste for bourgeois comforts. *Life After Kafka* tells her story. The novel begins in 1935, as Felice flees with her children from Hitler's Berlin, following her family and members of Kafka's entourage—including Grete Bloch, Max Brod, and Salman Schocken—as they try to escape the horrors of the Holocaust. Years later, a man claiming to be Kafka's son approaches Felice's son in Manhattan, igniting the drama surrounding Kafka's letters to Felice. While exploring the long shadow of literary fame, *Life After Kafka* depicts the magic and poison of memories and what we cling to when all else is lost. Most importantly, it illuminates the bravery required to move forward through the shattered remains of one world to rebuild life in a new one.

### **Link:**

<https://blpress.org/books/life-after-kafka/>

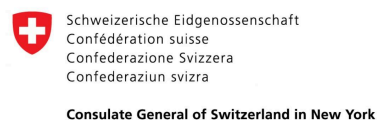
## **VENUE AND REGISTRATION**

**The Ukrainian Institute of America** | 2 East 79th Street New York, NY 10075

Free and open to the public. Space is limited. **Free registration [via Eventbrite](#) is required.**

More information: [Czech Center New York](#).

This special evening is organized by the [Czech Center New York](#), [Ukrainian Institute of America](#), [PEN America](#), and [EUNIC New York](#) with the help of partnering cultural institutions and consulates: [Camões Institute](#), [German Consulate General New York](#), [Goethe Institut New York](#), [Lithuanian Cultural Institute](#), [Polish Cultural Institute in New York](#), [Romanian Cultural Institute](#), [Consulate General of Portugal in New York](#), and [Consulate General of Switzerland in New York](#).



## **ABOUT EUNIC NEW YORK**

EUNIC (European Union National Institutes for Culture) is a network of organizations in 90 countries, with 125 clusters promoting European values, sharing knowledge, and fostering cultural collaboration. Established in 2007, the New York cluster comprises around 40 EU cultural missions, working together to enhance transatlantic dialogue, cultural cooperation, and showcase European creativity.

## **MEDIA CONTACT**

Bruce CT Bybee

T: 347-974 7028 / E: [bybee@czechcenter.com](mailto:bybee@czechcenter.com)