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Daina Avotina. *Nenogaliniet Stirny...* Riga: Liesma. 1970, 175 pages, 37 k.

With this book a well-known poet turns prose writer. But the reader's high expectations raised earlier by Avotina's two poetry collections and her volume of Lithuanian travel sketches are not met. Written in a traditional, completely non-experimental technique, *Don't Kill the Doe*... is a thinly veiled portrait of herself during the post-war years — her reflections and frustrations as a young poet and magazine editor, her relations with the three men in her life, and so on. The intrusion of excessive sentimentality keeps this work from producing the impact it could have. Too often it makes one think of a confessional soap opera — largely because of the tastelessly melodramatic handling of almost all characters, whose speech only seldom achieves individuality. Although Avotina's writing appears to be sincere and as such it rises above the level of standard Soviet fiction, the heroine's almost constant escapes in dedicated work from an unhappy love life and other personal difficulties seem very unconvincing. On the other hand, Avotina succeeds in offering an insight into the psychosis of the conforming and not so conforming Soviet creative intelligentsia, and this is why *Don't Kill the Doe*... is of more than routine interest. Especially revealing are the opinions of the heroine's second husband, an artist and sculptor whose creative life, having been monstrously distorted during the "cult of personality," now has ceased to exist altogether. As he puts it: "Spiritually I have nothing to live for... I have become entangled and confused by all sorts of clichés. I have been trapped .by various critics' administrative pronouncements and directives. No matter how hard I try, it is impossible to free myself from them. Inside, I am as if dominated, as if possessed by an invisible, inseparable, exceedingly cautious and vigilant overseer. Do you recall my painting of a plowed field? Well, I wished to depict autumn. Not only in nature, but also in man... But, of course, I knew only too well that the committee would reject such a gloomy theme. So, I inserted a tractor in the middle of the field... All these art shows nauseate me. Everything makes me sick. Above all, our shadowless life. We float around in nothing but sunshine... Even the smallest chunk of dead stone possesses its own form and shape, but all our art and, for that matter, all our lives are made to follow one single pattern... You keep urging me to submit my works to one of those art exhibits. Do they really mean so much to you? To me such participation in public displays has become completely meaningless. It would be different if only I could somehow succeed in becoming myself, in discovering myself. You see, the tractors I planted in the middle of the fields have plowed me over. Likewise, the construction cranes which I arranged like birds along the banks of the Daugava, have hurled me into that river. I have plowed myself under, I have buried myself, I have suffocated myself."

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