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Self-Fashioning in Lithuanian Women's Letters (First Half of the 20th Century)

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Letters were one of the earliest forms of written communication available to women, serving as a means to assert their agency through the expression of their voices and engage in cultural life (as discussed by Dena Goodman, Linda S. Kauffman, and others). In Lithuania, an increase of women's correspondence became evident in the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, a period characterized by intense nation-building processes and the development of national culture. This paper examines the practices of self-fashioning (defined as the construction of one's identity within societal codes) in the epistolary communication of Lithuanian women who were cultural figures, including Julija Žymantienė-Žemaitė, Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė, Marija Pečkauskaitė-Šatrijos Ragana, and Sofija Kymantaitė-Čiurlionienė, among others. The primary aim of this paper is to explore the creation of a public persona in private letters by analyzing the roles constructed within the correspondence and the relationship between the formation of one's public identity and letters as a specific type of egodocuments, with particular emphasis on the addressees.