

Vilnius, KGB Museum

A pigeon cooed. The wind blew. Rain
swelled the clouds that cooled the sun.

The guide spoke of doors extending into ceilings and floors. Of security
in multiplicity. Of oak and steel and iron. Oak for the entry. Steel
for the foyer. Iron for the window. Spoke of locks on the bedroom.
Locks on the water closet. Locks on the kitchen. Locks to determine
the price of real estate after the Gaon, after Hitler and the German
“solution,” after the KGB, after the Partisan Rebellion, after
the Revolution.

I toured the prison: Holding, Interrogation, Lavatory, Padded/Straight-Jacket, Isolation
(two by five feet square), With-Held Library and Medical, Ice, Execution.

She spoke of numbers. Three hundred thousand. She said.

I fingered names scratched into cement walls, bullet-pocks. Three hundred thousand.
They said.

I knelt on glass-encased floors and sifted sand and teeth
and buttons with the two-pronged fork of my eyes,
felt the cold corners reach the center of the room.

Three hundred thousand. It said.

Outside, a pigeon and wind.
The sun and the rain.

Before leaving, I took a picture that I knew
could not come out: the beauty of green
cell doors standing open.

Emily Bobo