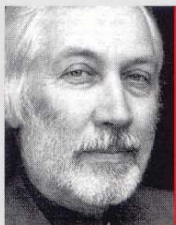


Estonian Novelists



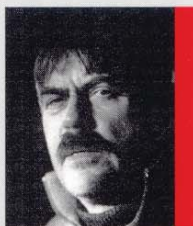
Jaan Kross



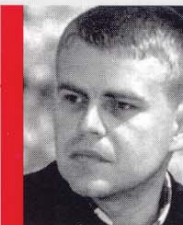
Jaan Kaplinski



Peeter Sauter



Nikolai Baturin



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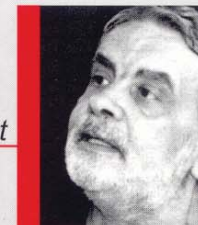
Viivi Luik



Maimu Berg



Toomas Vint



Mati Unt

Estonian Literature Information Centre

Ten Estonian Novelists



Estonian Literature Information Centre (ELIC)

General information

The Estonian Literature Information Centre provides information on Estonian literature and the literary scene in Estonia. The centre has its own database on Estonian literature in translation and in the near future is going to set up a website offering profiles of Estonian writers both in Estonian and in English. The Centre publishes information on Estonian literature in several languages. A small library of more significant Estonian books has been established for the use of foreign translators.

The Estonian Literature Information Centre aims

- To promote awareness of Estonian writing abroad, with particular emphasis on fiction, poetry, drama and children books.
- To provide the international literary world with up-to-date information on Estonian literature and the literary scene in Estonia.

Activities

The Estonian Literature Information Centre stimulates interest in Estonian literary fiction abroad by providing information. The Centre takes part in international book fairs, in co-operation with the Estonian Publishers' Association, participates in seminars and important literary events abroad. It also organises seminars and other activities in co-operation with the Estonian Writers' Union. The ELIC works in close collaboration with the *Estonian Literary Magazine*, (published by the Estonian Institute), one of the main publications to promote Estonian literature abroad.

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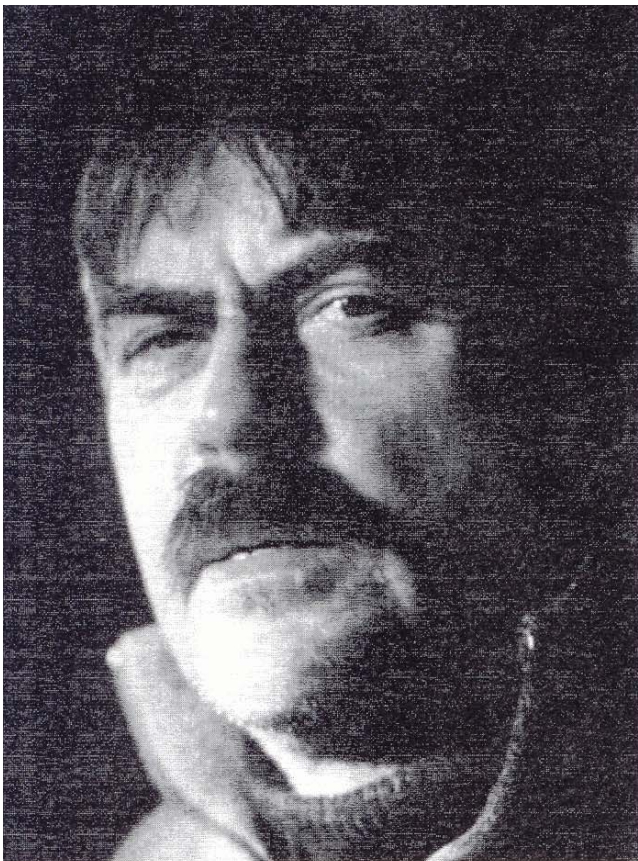
The Estonian Literature Information Centre is an independent, non-profit institution established by the Estonian Writers' Union and the Estonian Publishers' Association.

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Nikolai Baturin

(b. 05.08.1936, in the parish of Suislepa), poet, prose writer and playwright. He has written following novels: „The King of the King's Cabin” („Kuningaonni kuningas”, 1973), „Findings from the Echo” („Leiud kajast”, 1977), „Young Ice” („Noor jää”, 1985), „The Heart of the Bear” („Karu süda”, 1989), „Coy Nikas” („Kartlik Nikas, lõvilakkade kammija”, 1993) and „Prisoners of the Circle” („Ringi vangid”, 1996). He has also written dramatic works, like „A Joke about Haron's Boat” („Anekdoot Haroni venest”, 1980) and „The Diamond Path” („Teemandirada”, 1986), and poetry, including the longer poems „At Early-Late” („Varahilisel ajal”, 1974) and „Forests Far Extending, Wilderness Distantly” („Laiuvad laaned, kauguvad kõrved”, 1981).

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Russian:

Korol Korolevskoi izbuški
Kuningaonni kuningas
Mihhailova, E.
Moskva: Sovetski pisatel, 1978

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Moskva: Sovetski pisatel, 1989

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Karu süda
Mihhailova, E.
Tallinn: 1998

Molodoi ljot
Noor jää
Pozdnjakova, E.
Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1989

rights

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phone: +372 50 72 469

**Nikolai Baturin: „The Heart of the Bear”(„Karu süda”). Novel.
Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1989, pp. 493.**

Nikolai Baturin is one of the most neglected masters of the Estonian prose: he is perhaps one of the most adventurous, original and „exotic” writers in the literatures of the Baltic. Choosing his subject matter from the far East of Siberia, he has managed to create a type of a novel delicately analyzing the mentalities of the nomadic people of the taiga (an area of vast dense forests between the tundra and the steppe). He approaches the Evenki hunters as an outsider, but without much of an amazement and without any deep urge to dramatize cultural conflicts. Baturin’s protagonist is a sort of an „inborn outsider”, who never quite mingles with the nomads but is always accepted because of his delicate distance and lack of false pride: he never acts like a foolish „man from the West”, and thus never gets into imbecile situations (so ardently described in, for instance, Paul Bowles’ stories). Basically belonging into another minority (an Estonian in Russia), and being a hunter himself, he respects the nomads not only culturally, but intellectually, thus in turn commanding their respect and confidence. Baturin’s novels abound with witty paradoxical dialogue, exemplifying the polyvalent logic of the nomad thinking and, in many cases, their intellectual superiority.

„The Heart of the Bear” is a turning point in Baturin’s prose. It is a concluding novel, bringing together the most essential topics of his earlier writing. The hunter Neeka, called „Nganasan” by the Evenkis, is evidently an autobiographical figure (Baturin used to dwell periodically in taiga over many years, making his living as a traditional hunter). Neeka is a stranger, evidently an Estonian, who comes to dwell among the Evenkis. As he is living alone in taiga, the locals make several efforts to find him a bride, but always without success. Neeka’s marriage with a local teacher, of Polish origin, ends following her foolish decision to cut down the trees, that were sheltering the schoolhouse from the flood. Subsequently, the story takes on a more mythological turn. Neeka happens to see a bear-wedding in taiga; he does not kill the bears. An old male bear will start visiting his hunter’s hut, and they become friends. Finally, he will find a bear-girl from his traps, and she will become his real bride.

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Maimu Berg



(b. 27. 08. 1945, Tallinn), critic and prose writer. After starting as a literary critic, she has published two historical novels „Writers” („Kirjutajad”, 1987) and „Standing Alone on the Hill” („Seisab üksi mäe peal”, 1987), two collections of short stories „Has gone” („On läinud”, 1991) and „Me, the fashion journalist” („Mina, moeajakirjanik”, 1996). Her most famous and translated novel is „I Loved a Russian” („Ma armastasin venelast”, 1994), which can be called an Estonian „Lolita”. Her last novel, published in autumn in 1999 „Away” („Ära”) depicts the life of 1960s in Soviet Estonia and how Estonians tried to find ways to emigrate to the West. M. Berg writes sharp and emotional prose concentrating on the problems of love and human consciousness. Her text is full of details and she can be considered one of the best Estonian authors creating true atmosphere in her texts.

t r a n s l a t i o n s

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Oittinen, H.
Helsinki: Taifuuni, 1998

Pois

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Ottinen, H.
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German:

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Frankfurt/M.: DIPA, 1993

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Es mīlēju krievu
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Grinberga, Maima
Riga: Atņņa, 2000.

Swedish:

Jag älskade en ryss.
Ma armastasin venelast.
Melberg, E.
Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1997

rights

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**Maimu Berg: „Away” („Ära”). Novel.
Tallinn: Tuum, 1999, pp. 261.**

The latest novel of Maimu Berg (1945) is her first great novel. During the previous 12 years Berg has published short stories and short novels, which have found good reception, the most successful among them was I Loved a Russian (Ma armastasin venelast). The title Away is very precise, because going away was one of the mythological dreams during the Soviet time, one of the great narratives of the period. The Soviet press denounced those few outstanding people who had managed to leave the country. After the breakdown of Socialism the myth of escape changed as well.

Away is a love story, just like almost all other Berg's novels; it tells the love story of a student Tamara and an artist Enn, which took place sometime in the late 1960s. It is also a novel about the betrayal of love, the betrayal of oneself, and about the limits of personality. Enn and Tamara decide to escape from their socialist homeland. The safest way for such an escape is a fictitious marriage. A fictitious husband is found for Tamara, who has to be the first one to leave and wait for Enn, who will also leave using a fictitious marriage. But Tamara cannot wait, the transition from one system into another is too hard for her. As a text, Away is not easy and innocent at all. In Berg's novels love is in the past and connected with betrayal, it is always over by the moment of narration. Seemingly the traitors are women, but the deep reason for their betrayal is always the weakness of men. The same pattern is found in Away. But the relationship that can be interpreted in several different ways does not make the novel too complex. Away seems to have been written over many earlier texts, it corresponds with Berg's earlier works, and also with all other works that discuss the so-called problem of eastern Europeans. We could refer to some Estonian works (Viivi Luik's The Beauty of History, Tõnu Õnnepalu's Border State), as well as to Milan Kundera's The Unbearable Lightness of Being.

Away presents such a precise and recognisable image of its period that it can be read with the joy of liberation and even with a trace of nostalgia. Enn wants to get away, because he has recognised his mediocrity and suffers from both the lack of genius and the lack of freedom. The author gives the borders an internal and an external meaning. Also the betrayal of love can be differently interpreted, as Berg herself has pointed out in some interviews. Enn feels that he has betrayed nothing. For Tamara, freedom is everywhere where she can be herself, for Enn, there is no freedom anywhere. There is nowhere to escape, getting away is impossible. Berg leaves her characters in a limbo, she does not believe in happy endings, but still, she is not that cruel as to give up hope.

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(b. 22. 01. 1941, Tartu), writer and translator. He is at present the only Estonian poet whose works have gained wider international reputation. In 1996, Kaplinski was mentioned among the official candidates for the Nobel Prize of Literature. Kaplinski has been awarded several national and international prizes, the most recent ones being that of the Estonian Cultural Endowment (Eesti Kultuurkapital, 1997), for the books of essays „This and other“ („See ja teine“, 1996) and „The Possibility of Possibilities“ („Võimaluste võimalikkus“, 1997), and of the Baltic Assembly, for the essay echoing the tragedy of the Estonian ferry, the „Estonia“, „Ice and Titanic“ („Jää ja Titanic“, 1995) and the book of poetry „Several Summers and Springs“ („Mitu suve ja kevadet“, 1995). He also received the highest annual award of the Estonian Cultural Endowment 2000 for his novel „Eye. Hector“ („Silm. Hektor“, 2000), a book of essays, „Spring on Two Coasts, or a Sentimental Journey to America“ („Kevad kahel rannikul ehk tundeline teekond Ameerikasse“, 2000), and a collection of poetry, „Written“ („Kirjutatud“, 2000). A graduate in French philology from the University of Tartu, Kaplinski has worked as a sociologist and an ecologist. He has translated literary works from French, Spanish, English, and Swedish, but also from the Chinese. Since 1965 he has published altogether 14 collections of poems, five collections of essays, and some books of prose.

Jaan Kaplinski

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Yusuke Keida
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Kes mida sööb, kes keda sööb
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Rīga: Egmont, 1993

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Tolmust ja värvidest
Guntars Godinš.
Rīga: Daugava, 2001

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Salminen Johannes
Sjunger näktergalen än i Dorpat?
Kas Tartus laulab veel ööbik?
Iiste, I. and Göranson, B.
Helsinki: Söderström & Co, 1990

På gränsen som inte finns:
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Melberg, E.
Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1993

Titanic och isen
Jää ja Titanic
Melberg, E.
Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1997

rights

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Jaan Kaplinski: „An Eye. Hektor” („Silm. Hektor”. Novels.)
Tallinn: Tänapäev, 2000, pp. 205.

Jaan Kaplinski's book, which contains two short novels is the first in a new series by the publishers Tänapäev, designed to present new as well as already classic works by members of the Estonian PEN-Club, regardless of genre. As an essayist and poet, much-translated and acknowledged both at home and abroad, Kaplinski is a very fitting author to open this series.

As works of fiction, Silm and Hektor mark a new departure in the author's work. Both novels, bordering on science fiction, can be classified as semiotic or essayistic conceptual literature, and have already been compared to the work of Jorge Luis Borges or Albert Camus by critics. Still, Kaplinski differs from Borges by his construction of real space-time and clarity of plots, and from Camus by his Buddhist outlook.

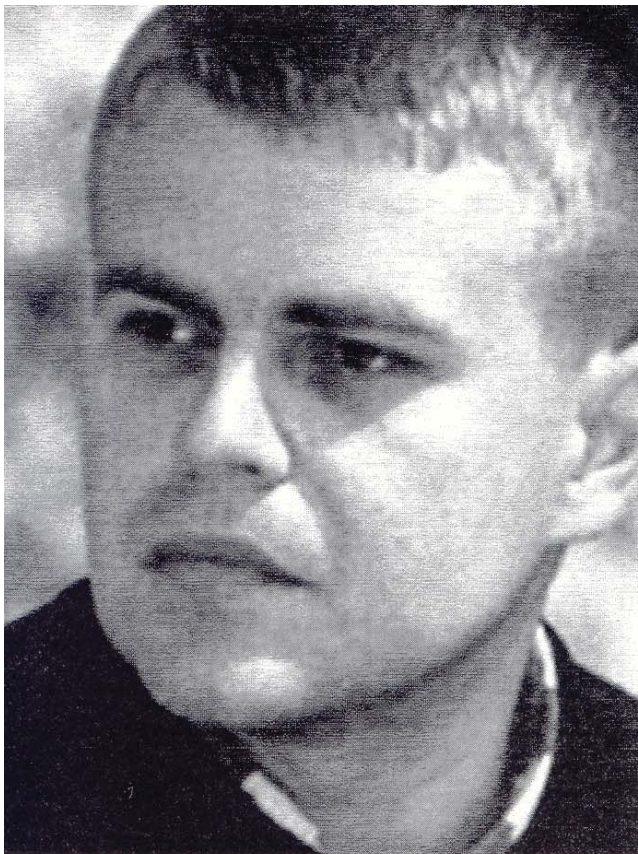
The themes of both short novels are familiar from Kaplinski's earlier essays: Hektor focuses on relations between man and nature, An Eye on those between man and god. Hektor has been inspired by genetics and the theory of evolution. Its main character, whose notes form the basis of the story, is a neotenic mutant dog with an exceptionally high IQ. After the death of his master – a scientist – the dog has assumed his role. He lives alone on the well-guarded territory of a laboratory and associates with the world via e-mail and a voice converter. Nobody knows about his strange existence and he has to hide from humans, especially from the police and people from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The dog tries to find the key to his master's safe, to familiarise himself with the material hidden there, and finally, to blow everything up. He sends electronic notes on his life as a human dog to various servers, to be opened only after the results of earlier experiments and the research itself has been destroyed.

The novel treats anthropogenesis not as phylogenetic accident, but as a deviation, an ontogenetic mutation that has become hereditary. The scientist, experimenting with animals, came upon this deviation by chance, leading to the birth of Hektor, who learned to speak, read and write. Nestor, the raven with a liking for philosophy, and Achilles, the monkey who went in for fine arts, were born the same way, but both died of brain cancer before the master's death.

Kaplinski has presented an original analytical history of human society and progress as viewed through the eyes of a mutant dog, making it, quite naturally, dubious in point of view. Because a dog cannot by nature be human, he cannot adopt the humanist ethic which elevates man above the rest of all living nature. Of all religions, only Buddhism, which respects all living creatures equally, can be relatively understandable for him. On the other hand, Hektor cannot return to being a mere animal either, and thus the novel is about the suffering and utter isolation of a unique creature. Philosophically, Hektor is about the chasm between man and nature and about the need to bridge this fatal chasm.

An Eye is slightly longer than Hektor, its style and structure hint at an Oriental parable. The first part of the work depicts the development of a young theologian under the omnipresent eye of the KGB in Soviet society, which the main character attempts to outwit with Cabala and Gnostics. The second part gives the notes of the same, now missing theologian, which describe his meeting with a Chinese magus with whom he goes on to evoke the creators of the world. Each forthcoming god is succeeded by a new, more powerful and higher god, until in the end a macrocosm is reached, in relation to which a human being is only a dream. The principal question the Chinese magus asks both the gods and the theologian is whether the world was created according to aesthetic or life-essential questions. In the search for the answer the theologian decides to follow the magus and thus disappears.

These novels by Kaplinski have been described as among the most important literary events on the Estonian literary scene in recent years. They are highlighted by original treatments of questions dealing with existentialism, slightly self-ironical presentation of ideas, and fascinating plots.



Andrus Kivirähk

(b. 17.08.1970, Tallinn), prose writer and playwright. Andrus Kivirähk is one of the most fascinating writers of the Estonian younger generation. A journalist by profession, graduated from the Tartu University in 1993, he is primarily known for his humorous, taboo-breaking satirical pieces published in newspapers. Kivirähk is an excellent story-teller who writes with warm gentle humour. His is certainly a highly original comic talent in Estonian literature. He is also quite prolific, having written several books both for adults and children. Books: „The Memoirs of Ivan Orav” („Ivan Orava mälestused”, 1995, for this book he was awarded the literary prize of the Estonian Cultural Endowment 1995), „Giraffe” („Kaelkirjak”, 1995), „Besides the Beer” („Õlle kõrvale” 1996), „Kalev’s Son” („Kalevipoeg”, 1997), „The Old Men from the Seventh Floor. A Walk on the Rainbow” („Vanamehed seitsmendalt. Jalutuskäik vikerkaarel”, 1997), collection of short stories „Baker’s Gingerbread” („Pagari piparkook”, 1999), romantic-fantastic novel „Butterfly” („Liblikas” 1999) and a book for children „Sirli, Siim and Secrets” („Sirli, Siim ja saladused” 1999). His last novel „The Barn-keeper” („Rehepapp”, 2000) is a witty allegorical story about the essence of Estonians. For this book he was awarded the literary prose prize of the Estonian Cultural Endowment 2000. Andrus Kivirähk has also written plays, several of which have been successfully staged in Estonian theatres. He has been a script-writer also for movies and TV-serials.

r i g h t s

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Andrus Kivirähk: „The Barn-keeper” („Rehepapp”). Novel.
Tallinn, Varrak, 2000, pp. 200.

Andrus Kivirähk has very often used elements of folklore and mythology in his work, deforming them into the absurd and grotesque. The plot of *The Barn-keeper* originates in national mythology, which Kivirähk treats rather playfully and freely, combining different elements without any restrictions.

The novel is set in some non-specified time during Estonia's period of serfdom, when Estonian peasants were totally subjected to foreign landowners. The classics of Estonian Romantic Realism (Ed. Bornhöhe) and Critical Realism (Ed. Vilde) depicted the same period in their works and exposed the violence of the landowners against defenceless peasants. *The Barn-keeper* begins with a scene in which a farm hand comes from the manor in a dazed state and his master laments that his only helper has been killed in the manor. After such an opening an Estonian reader expects that the farm hand has been beaten half-dead in the manor and that the book will tell a story of class conflict in former times. But Kivirähk has, from the beginning of his literary career, been known as a humorist, and again he does not fail his readers. The point is that the farm-hand had stolen into the manor, having taken the shape of a treasure-bearer, and has eaten a large amount of soap – an unknown new food of the gentry – which, of course, did not agree with him and made him feel awful. Kivirähk turns the situation, familiar from the works of the Realist classic, inside out. His landowners are simple and impractical; greedy and often cruel Estonian farmers use them unmercifully. The spiritual leader of the village community is the barn-keeper, who is brighter and smarter than all the others and who is finally able to beat even the devil himself. The book parades a number of archetypal characters in front of the readers: a cruel and greedy pair of old farm masters, a macho-like young master, a bragging old soldier, unhappy lovers, etc. Kivirähk has made them all very comical, exaggerating the traditional characteristics of the types, or depicting some characters in a radically different way from the tradition. Such a character is, for example, a manor overseer, who traditionally is greedy and cruel; in this book he is, on the contrary, presented as a sensitive and tender platonic lover. Only the barn-keeper himself, who is a witty character in folk-tales, plays the same role in the novel, being its ideological centre and the leader of the other characters.

The novel is based on folk beliefs connected with the treasure-bearer. Traditionally a farmer made a helper for himself – the treasure-bearer – out of all kinds of useless rubbish found in his home – old brooms, barrels, or other lifeless things. Such a creature was given life by the devil. The owner had to go to a crossroads on a Thursday night and give the devil three drops of his blood. In doing so, he gave up his soul, and after some time the devil came to claim it. The treasure-bearer did everything its master demanded of it; most often it had to gather riches for him. It had to be constantly provided with new tasks, otherwise it could attack its owner. However the owner would try to outwit the devil by giving his treasure-bearer tasks it couldn't complete. Besides treasure-bearers, all kinds of mythological creatures are in action in the book. The air is full of magic, mostly used to redistribute the riches.

In the novel the treasure-bearer rebukes the barn-keeper because all people are thieves who steal from the landowners, from each other and even from hell, but do not honour contracts. The wise barn-keeper tells the treasure-bearer that the people have nothing to pay with, except for things they have stolen. He says that their lives are also stolen and that they have to keep on stealing to stay alive; he cannot say what would become of them if they tried to pay honestly for everything. The barn-keeper's belief embodies a folksy wisdom, which could also be called a survival strategy. Kivirähk places his readers in front of a mirror. Although it is a false mirror, amusing the reader, he still sees his own face in it. A wise person recognises himself, but everybody can enjoy reading the book.



Jaan Kross

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(b. 19.02. 1920, Tallinn), the grand old man of Estonian contemporary literature. Studied at the J. Westholm high school in Tallinn 1928–38, graduated from Tartu University in 1944 as a lawyer, tried his hand also in journalism (1940–41) and as a translator. 1944 arrested, accused of the conspiracy against German occupation forces. 1944–46 was lecturer at the Faculty of State and International Law at the Tartu University. 1948–1951 prisoner in a stalinistic labour camp in the Komi Autonomous Republic, 1951–1954 was exiled into Krasnoyarsk region. After return home he dedicated himself to literature as a free-lance writer and literary translator. His first book of poetry „Coal-enricher“ appeared in 1958 and was followed by several influential poetry collections, before his interest turned to historical prose. His novels present important historical figures from the Estonian (cultural) history, their fictitious structure is based on deep-going historical research and they have received a broad international recognition (translations into all important world languages). His short stories have a more autobiographical background. Numerous Estonian and international awards, 1989 Honorary Doctor of Tartu University, 1990 Honorary Doctor of Helsinki University. Jaan Kross has published altogether 32 books, his works have been translated into 20 languages. Jaan Kross has been several times the nominee of the Nobel literary prize, also in 2000.

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Professor Martens' Abreise
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der Aufstand der Bürger
Viira, H.
München, Carl Hanser Verlag, 1998

Italian:
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Arnaldo Alberti
Milano, Garzanti, 1994

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Tokio: Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 1995

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Kross, Jaan
Keizara trakais
Grinberga, M.
Riga: Atcna, 1999

Norwegian:
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Oslo: Gyldendal, 1986

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Samma, O.
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Leningrad: 1990

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Joaquín Jordá
Barcelona: Anagrama, 1995

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Kejsarens galning
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Finland: Fripress/ Legenda, 1991

Utgrävningar
Iliste, I. and Göranson, B.
Stockholm: Bromma, 1991

Professor Martens avresa
Iliste, I. and Göranson, B.
Bromma: Fripress, 1986

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Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1992

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Iliste, I. and Göranson, B.
Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1992

Motstånd: Romanen om Jüri Vilms
Iliste, I. and Göranson, B.
Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1993

Motvindsskeppet
Iliste, I.; Göranson, B.
Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1997

r i g h t s

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**Jaan Kross: „Treading Air. A Novel of Ullo Paerand”. („Paigallend. Ullo Paeranna romaan”). Novel.
Tallinn: Virgela, 1998, pp. 376**

„Treading Air” is the 13th novel of the grand old man of Estonian prose Jaan Kross (born 1920), where he tells the story of his generation. The same subject – an unhealed wound in recent Estonian history – has been present in the majority of Kross’s short stories and in such novels as „The Wikman Boys”, „Mesmer’s Ring”, „Excavations”. The title of the new novel – „Treading Air” – is a striking metaphor. The story of Ullo Paerand is partly given as a first-person narrative, from the main character’s viewpoint, and partly as the recollections of his schoolmate Jaak Sirkel, a character of several Kross’s recent novels. The novel opens with Ullo’s reminiscences of a childhood trip to Germany in the 1920s and ends with his death, or more strictly, with his vision of meeting his aged father, who had fled from his creditors to the West together with his lover. The frivolous father deserted his family, just as the Western world was building a wall of silence and superciliousness between itself and Eastern Europe, blaming history.

Ullo is the exceptionally talented only son of a wealthy father, who preserves the travel memories of his happy childhood in his extraordinary memory. The more so, as he no longer receives any royal presents comparable to this trip from life. His father deserts his family and his luxurious childhood is followed by lean years. Together with his mother Ullo fights for a better future, in spite of small humiliations and an occasionally empty stomach he is able to get a secondary education in one of Tallinn’s best grammar schools. He has a rapid career, rising, due to his excellent memory and enterprising spirit, to an important position in the Prime Minister’s Office. Clearly discernible portraits of several historical characters can be found in the book. But fate lets Ullo down the second time round. The Soviet and German occupations do not leave him any chance for embarking on an honest career. Ullo works with nationalists for the restoration of the Estonian Republic, he refuses a favourable chance of escaping to the West offered by a representative of Vatican. He lives his remaining life – some forty years – in inner emigration, doing menial work, making suitcases in a factory. The fate of a wingless bird is the price he has to pay for not making compromises, this is the resistance of the prisoner. The language of the novel is brilliant, the composition is skilful and the symbols can be understood very clearly. This is one of the Kross’s best novels. The symbols of this novel, its enthusiasm about the courage to withstand history and its perfection can be compared to that to be found in „The Czar’s Madman”, the novel, which is regarded as Jaan Kross’s best novel to date.

In 1998 the National Cultural award was bestowed upon Jaan Kross for his novel „Treading Air” („Paigallend”). It also received the 1998 annual award of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia and the Baltic Assembly prize for literature in 1999.

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(b. 6. 11. 1946), poet and a prose writer, free-lance writer since 1967. Has lived in Finland and in Germany, now in Italy. One of the most famous and interesting poets of Estonia, she has published 11 collections of poems, 3 novels and some childrens' books. The most important are the novels „The Seventh Spring of Peace” („Seitsmes rahukevad”, 1985) and „The Beauty of History” („Ajaloo ilu”, 1991). The first depicts rural life in the 1950s in Estonia through the eyes of a child, the other depicts the resonances in Estonia and Latvia to the events of Czechoslovakia in 1968. V. Luik has published also a collection of essays „The Locker of One's Own” („Inimese kapike”, 1998). In 1998 a selection of her poems „The Sky of the Earth” („Maa taevas”) was published. Her novels have been translated into 13 languages.

Viivi Luik

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Behrndt, A.
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Dutch:

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Ajaloo ilu
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Reinbek: Rowohlt Verlag, 1991

Die Schönheit der Geschichte

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Rowohlt Verlag, 1995

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A történelem szépsége
Ajaloo ilu
G. Bereczki
Budapest: Osiris, 1998

Icelandic:

Taelandi fegurð sögunnar
Ajaloo ilu
S. Holmarsson
Reykjavikur: Mal og menning, 1998

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Septimais miera pavasaris
Seitsmes rahukevad
Žigure, A.
Riga: Preses nams, 1995

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Ajaloo ilu
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Oslo: Samlaget, 1988

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Oslo: Samlaget, 1994

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Seitsmes rahukevad
J. Kallonen
Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1988

Krasota istorii
Ajaloo ilu
J. Kallonen
Novõi Mir, 1992

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La séptima primavera de la paz
Bassols, R. M.
Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1993

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Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1995

Ukrainian:

Soma vesna bez viini
Seitsmes rahukevad
M. Slabopitski
Kiev: Dnipro, 1988

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Viivi Luik: „A Locker of One’s Own” („Inimese kapike”). Essays.
Tallinn: Vagabund, 1998, pp. 111

Viivi Luik arrived on the Estonian literary scene as a *Wunderkind* on the crest of an excited wave of poetry in the 1960s. Her first collection of poems „A Holiday of Clouds” („Pilvede püha”, 1965), published when she was only 18, was noted and approved by the critics. In total, she has published ten collections of poetry. The novels „The Seventh Spring of Peace” („Seitsmes rahukevad”, 1985) and „The Beauty of History” („Ajaloo ilu”, 1991), which followed her poetry, struck the audience with their highly poeticised language and the novelty of their subject matter. The first of these novels observes country life in Soviet Estonia seen through a child’s implacable eyes, the other reflects against the background of a love story the state of mind of Estonians and Latvians during the uprising in Prague in 1968. Both novels have been translated into several foreign languages and have been well received.

In recent years Viivi Luik has often published her polemical essays in the press, and these have dealt with the existence of man and the meaning of art in changing times. Her first collection of essays „A Locker of One’s Own” contains 24 essays and presentations, some of which have already been published in Scandinavian newspapers or presented to various audiences in Europe. Many of these essays can be read as a background and explanation to her works. The longest text of the book „Seven Women”, earlier published in Toronto as a collector’s book, is an exact and compact historical sketch about the major role of women authors in Estonian poetry.

Being an East European, Luik demonstrates herself in an original and poetically fruitful situation: on the border of two worlds, two eras, light and shade. The last contrast also contains all the others – the barbaric zone of darkness, withdrawing to the East, and the past, where light was only for the rich and powerful, are contrasted to modern and plentiful Western world. Luik believes that the forthcoming end of the century will be accompanied by the birth of new men and new art, which she, like Milan Kundera, envisions to rise on the basis of kitch. The best essay of this collection „Candied Monsters and Diluted Angels”, which also caused the largest amount of discussion, when it was first published, has been devoted to this subject.

Viivi Luik does not analyse or theorise in her essays and presentations. Her texts are inherently characterised by bold expression and an intuitive pursuit of truth, which may, now and then, allow some contradictions, and radiant images, which originate from her poetry. Ice, glass, blood and flesh dominate both her poetry and essays, which the critics have found to be full of childlike frankness, prophecy and adventurer’s challenge to obsolete ways of thinking.



Peeter Sauter

(b. 11. 03. 1962), an actor by education, worked as a night-guard, an actor and director 1978–1992. 1992–1994 lived in Liverpool in culture house „The Blackie“. Later worked as a journalist and copy writer in Tallinn. Has published prose, a short novel „Indigo“ (1990), a novel „Loafing“ („Luus“, 1997), a collection of short stories „All the Stuff“ („Kogu moos“, 1998). One of the most interesting prose writers of the younger generation, whose works depict the flow of life with the means of slang and colloquial speech. The characters are mostly young bohemians suffering from existential problems.

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**Peeter Sauter: „All the Stuff”. („Kogu moos”). Short stories.
Tallinn: Tuum, 1997. 206 pp.**

Many younger Estonian writers have taken pains to establish themselves, thus obtaining a certain identity: Kauksi Ülle is the writer who uses a South-Estonian dialect, Emil Tode is the ‘Eurowriter’, Sven Kivisildnik and Peeter Sauter are the writers who use obscene language. If we deconstruct the obscenity of those two, we can find at least two different ways how they do this.

To make it simple, we could say that the heroes of Peeter Sauter are of the kind who hide a sensitive soul behind their outward roughness and obscenity. Sauter very remarkably avoids romanticism, pathos, big and empty words, and beautiful things of all kinds. The so-called obscene language means, in his case, using the words of low style in the position of neutral style. Some critics have said that he uses the words of pornographic (i.e. masculine) discourse in a neutral position.

„All the Stuff” is a collection of short stories, containing Sauter’s best texts so far, and continues to express the same ideas as his novel „Loafing”. „Loafing” drew together short stories to form a novel. Some of the texts of the present book would have fitted into the novel as well, but the author decided to publish them separately.

„All the Stuff” consists of six stories of equal length (about 30 pages). They are a kind of travel story, which can not be woven into a continuous text, as each story has different characters. Sauter’s main hero is a man, the city his environment. He isn’t active in achieving any certain goal, his course runs the trajectory of everyday life: office, shop, bar, hospital, etc. The scenes describing everyday activities are accompanied by meditations that are often centred on the absurdity of being.

The most controversial story of the collection is „Stomach-ache”, which tells about a man and a woman who go to a maternity hospital, taking their other child with them. The birth of the child is described as seen by the dispassionate eye of the man. This intimate, private, physiological act, which is traditionally considered ennobling, is depicted in a harsh and naturalistic way. The woman giving birth is deaf, she only moans in pain. The man notes anatomical changes using vulgar words. The child is born with blood and shit.

Sauter vulgarises the process, but his hero keeps close, he participates and tries as much as he can to familiarise himself with this otherness (being a woman). He is caring and attentive, and tries to use as exact words as possible to describe all he can.

Sauter’s prose describes his fellow human beings. Its strong points are its directness and exactness, and its disillusioning effect. He knows and depicts the often described world of the so-called small people much better than many other authors. His illusionless and unpoetical world is never hostile or cold, on the contrary, it is as comfortable and homely as everyday life.



Mati Unt

(b. 01.01.1944), prose writer, playwright, literary critic and producer. He started his activity in the early 1960s as a „wunderkind“. His secondary school graduation essay developed into a novel „Goodbye, yellow cat“ („Hüvasti, kollane kass“ 1963), that immediately made him famous. The novel was followed by numerous short stories, shorter novels and plays: prose collections „The Moon Like the Outgoing Sun“ („Kuu nagu kustuv päike“, 1971), „Mattias and Kristiina“ („Mattias ja Kristiina“, 1974), „The Black Motorcyclist“ („Must mootorrattur“, 1976). In 1979 his novel „Autumn Ball“ („Sügisball“), which made its author also known internationally, was published. His collection of short stories and plays „Speaking and Being Silent“ („Räägivad ja vaikivad“) was published in 1986, followed by his two novels „There are Things in the Night“ („Öös on asju“) and „The Notebook of a Donor“ („Doonori meelespea“) in 1990 and the novel „Brecht Appears at Night“ („Brecht ilmub öösel“, 1997). His latest work is the play „Graal“ in 2001.

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Verenluovuttajan muistikirja
Doonori meelespea
Juvonen, S.
Jyväskylä: Gummerus, 1991

Murha hotellissa
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Juvonen, S.
Helsinki: Taifuuni, 1994

German:

Reden und Schweigen:
Zwei Erzählungen
Räägivad ja vaikivad
Hasselblatt, C.
Frankfurt/M: DIPA, 1992

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**Mati Unt: „Brecht Appears at Night” („Brecht ilmub öösel”). Novel.
Tallinn: Kupar, 1997.**

Mati Unt, a theatre producer and one of Estonian leading writers made the readers wait for his new novel for ten years. Maybe the reason why it took so long was, besides theatre work, also the historical subject of the novel which needed thorough research. Namely, the novel has been inspired by the exile of Bertold Brecht in Finland, after the Finnish Winter War with Russians in 1940, and it is set against the background of the coup in Estonia at the same time.

Unt loves to mystify things, so this novel is not only an episode out of the life of a German playwright, but a collage of „arbitrary treatment of facts”, the very words the author has written in the introduction, justifying all the liberties a writer is allowed to take. The writer who one night arrives in Finland across the dangerous Baltic Sea, together with his wife, mistress and secretary-mistress, has been marked only by initials BB. This character sees the surrounding political intrigues and Europe, dragged into the world war, through his short-sighted eyes and interprets it in the spirit of alienation and dialectics, both of which, in Unt’s presentation, sound equally simple and ironic. BB perceives the world events mainly as a subject matter for art and remains unconcerned. His attitude can be compared with the reaction of large states to the events in the Baltic countries in the 1940s. Unt has depicted BB not so much as a great social thinker and producer, but as a man who is, more than anything, concerned about women, money, cars and America.

Unt has hinted that one of his aims in writing this novel had been to introduce Estonian history to foreign readers. When BB, who is having sex with the women he had brought with him in Hella Wuolijoki’s country manor, looks over the Finnish Gulf just as if through an inverted spyglass, the truly historical matters are touched upon in other components of this fragmentary text: documents and extracts from the works of historians, and one chapter even renders an inner monologue of Unt’s namesake - M(aksim) Unt. Maksim Unt was the first Minister of the Interior of the ESSR, who later fell victim to the same regime he had served. The introduction of this character is one of the best finds of the novel, together with a hallucinatory meeting of BB with the seven brothers on Aleksis Kivi’s grave.

With this novel Unt has succeeded in creating an intellectual game on a predetermined subject, which binds together several cultures and is full of details and witty relations.

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Toomas Vint

(b. 05.03.1944, in Tallinn), prose writer and painter originally became well known as a painter, but nowadays he perhaps excels in the eyes of the public as a novelist. In former times he was appreciated mostly for his short-stories with their subtle descriptions of people and situations, such as „Pööre & veeremäng” (Turning Point & The Skittle Alley; 1979) and „Kahekesi” (Two Together; 1988). He has received several prizes for his short-stories. Towards the end of the 20th century, a series of Vint’s novels began to emerge, set in the mental world of artists and their entourage. These novels contain plenty of parody, pastiche and, to a significant degree, a debate with the prevalent ideas of postmodernism. Vint also polemicalises against the fashionable way art is organised where classical painting and the prevailing artistic hierarchy are jeopardised. Such themes are depicted, with a good deal of thematic nuance in, for instance, his novel „Lõppematu maastik” (An Endless Landscape; 1997) and „Kunstnikuromaan” (An Artist’s Novel; 1998), the latter of which won the Estonian Cultural Endowment Award.

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Toomas Vint: „The House-Husband’s Woman” („Kojamehe naine”). Novel.

Tallinn: Varrak, 1995, pp. 142.

Vint gained most popularity with a broad audience with his novel „Kojamehe naine” (The House-Husband’s Woman; 1995). This is a tale from Vint’s younger days in the 1960s when he was, for the first time, living alone in a student flat, at a time when he has an erotic relationship with an older woman. This relationship can be described as a manifestation of obsessive lust, which Vint depicts openly and without false modesty or shamefulness. The story is essentially a tragic one, covering sexual taboos and a sexual development whose complexes which springs from sexual frustration, but also the defencelessness of youth in the face of erotic pressures. The young man’s blazing passion drives him into alien and incontestably tawdry realms of experience where his emotional life threatens to drown in sickly debauchery. The novel also throws into sharp relief the abasement of the woman as she employs a superficial brand of journalistic feminist rhetoric, which soon proves inadequate. But the rôle of the victim is nevertheless played by the young man, in whose depiction there are undoubtedly aspects of autobiographical confession on the part of the author. Toomas Vint is indeed the novelist *par excellence* in Estonian literature who is most courageous in his confessions. „Kojamehe naine” is written in a strikingly pliant and subtle style which never for a moment allows the sensitive nature of the subject matter to slip over into shrill polemic. This novel is a warm and misanthropic masterpiece, a book which would undoubtedly benefit from reaching a wider audience.

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Ervin Õunapuu

(b. 30.07.1956, in Rapla county), prose writer, scriptwriter and film director, playwright and an artist well known for his theatre sets and surrealist water-colours. In 1996 he published his first novel „Olivia’s Master Class” („Olivia meistrikläss”), which immediately elevated him onto the position of a cult writer of the audience. This way he placed himself right into the centre of Estonian literary scene. After his debut novel, Ervin Õunapuu has published short stories in various magazines and his first collection of short stories, „Estonian Gothic” („Eesti gootika”, 1999), which is a far cry from conventional realism. A good example here is the short story „Little Lilli from Noarootsi” („Väike Lilli Noarootsist”) that earned its author the prestigious Fr. Tuglas Short Story Award. In 1999 he also published the grotesque spy novel „In Memory of You, Whoever and Wherever You Are” (Teie mälestuseks, kes iganes te olete ja kus asute”, 1999), novel „The Little Prayer Book” („Väike palveraamat”, 2000), collection of short stories „Morituri de salutant” („Surmaminejad lasevad tervitada”, 2000).

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Finnish:

Piirrä minulle kaupunki
Eesti Gootika
Matti Panula-Onto
Vaasa: Multiprint, 2001

Ekke ja Sirlimai
Väike palveraamat
Matti Panula-Onto
Helsinki, 2001

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Ervin Õunapuu: „Estonian Gothic” („Eesti gootika”). Short stories.
Tallinn: Varrak, 1999, 152 pp.

The key words, characterising Õunapuu's work are archetype, myth, absurd and dislocation. He knows how to tell a story, he has a sensitive eye for exact details; light and colours bear an important role in his stories. Generally, his story is a short, striking and dislocated unity. In the collection Estonian Gothic, short stories are divided into three cycles, each containing eight stories. The book opens with the title story Estonian Gothic, which does not belong to any cycle, but describes the rules of the game. A city is created by imagination, it is drawn, it is some kind of a city (Estonian word for it – mingi – creates an untranslatable word play: it is a girl called Ming, who draws this city with the tip of her braid). By some certain markers, the scene of Õunapuu's stories could well be laid in Estonia, usually he specifies the location somehow. But the most important parameter is time, time is never specified, because everything is the same; the action that seemingly begins sometime in the past, ends now or in the future. Sometimes time, as well as location, changes man, but both time and location have only external characteristics, such as costumes and customs. Actually, Õunapuu's man does not really change, he represents certain archetypal qualities and passions.

Kaalu's mother is an instructor at the local party committee, she raises her son with fanatical strictness, the boy is never allowed to laugh. The son wants to know, whether the man with big moustache in the photo is his father. His mother vows that this is a domestic secret that he will never discover (Domestic Things). Little lame Lilli likes to pretend she is a rat. When she tumbles in front of a car and is run over, it is reported that the car smashed a rat („Little Lilli from Noarootsi”). A boy Eesav, who had been raised by believers of some strange faith, sets himself on fire to get more light („Golf”). A father sends his son to fetch bread from a hot oven, other children are singing Christmas carols at the same time („A Good Child”). These are very intense stories that start like a fairy-tale about Hanshen and Gretchen in a realistically precise and brightly marked village milieu, but soon the characters break the rules, and grotesque evil that had already been waiting for its prey, intervenes. Nobody saves Hanshen or Gretchen. The pattern repeats itself: some character is always driven to do more than he is capable of, until he breaks. The milieu etches itself into the reader's memory, resembling the paintings of Pieter Brueghel or Hieronymus Bosch. And he has to guess, who is the driver and who is the driven one.

Õunapuu's novels are composed of sequences of pictures. Olivia from the first novel travelled in the time and experienced different possibilities of living. The pictures from the first novel were intriguing and it was quite easy to interpret them. In Your Memory... also presents a vivid chain of pictures, but the interpretation remains questionable. Critics have confessed that they do not understand the novel, they are not sure, whether there is any idea in it at all. Surrealist Õunapuu loves mysticism and passion, his romantic stereotypes usually turn into grotesque. A mining engineer Keller, the central character of In Your Memory..., writes down things that a mysterious somebody, who guides his hand, dictates him. This cryptic novel contains a number of stories, which are (or maybe, are not) intricately interrelated. Keller writes that his task is to write everything down, he has to search for relations. One possibility of relating things could be indicated by a picture of Sankt-Gotthard, which has been placed on the last page of the book. The author lets us glimpse the grandiosity of one possible way of interpretation, another ascent to The Magic Mountain. But even more he invites us to enjoy the beauty of the game.

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Traducta

Traducta is a major literary translation grant funded by the Cultural Endowment of Estonia (Eesti Kultuurkapital). The Traducta grant has been established in order to encourage the translation of Estonian authors into foreign languages and facilitate the publication of Estonian literature abroad.

It is estimated that the grant shall be of at least an equivalent magnitude to the normal translation fee expected of a professional translator for the translation of a literary work in his/her particular country. This means that a translator should be able to approach a publisher with a translation project, where (if necessary) the translator would be able to waive his/her fee - conditional of course upon receiving the grant - if the publisher agrees to publish the book.

The grant also covers accommodation in Estonia if the translator so requires, as well as the cost of a return air ticket.

Any translator of Estonian is eligible to apply for the Traducta grant. There is no special application form, rather the translator should send in a written application describing his/her translation project and enclosing a copy of the contract with a publisher to publish the translated work. The translator should also include a CV and a list of previous published translations. The Cultural Endowment would appreciate an estimation of the royalty that the translator would normally expect for the translation. (If the translator has already translated part of the book, a suitable excerpt may also be included with the application.)

Applications for this grant should be sent to the offices of the Cultural Endowment. The Traducta grant is issued at the sole discretion of the Cultural Endowment, which alone shall choose the recipient, and shall decide the value of the grant bearing in mind the size and difficulty of the book to be translated.

The deadlines for applications for the Traducta grant are four times a year: 20th February, May, August and November and they should be sent to the following address:

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23, Suur-Karja
10148 Tallinn
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Tel +372 644 69 22, or +372 631 40 82, fax +372 631 40 85
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**Estonian Literature
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Roosikrantsi 6; 10119 Tallinn; Estonia

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