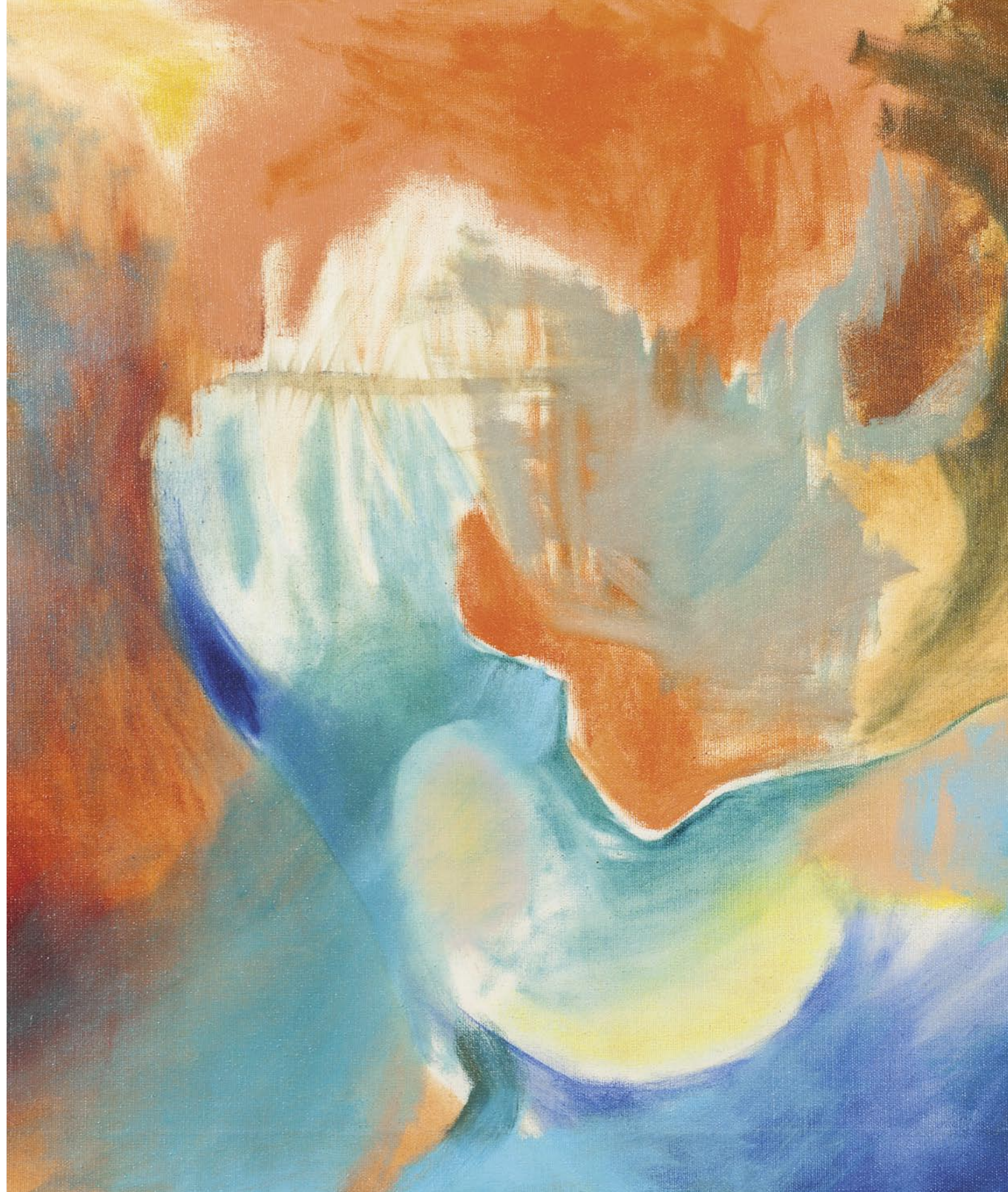


ESTONIAN Evergreen Books





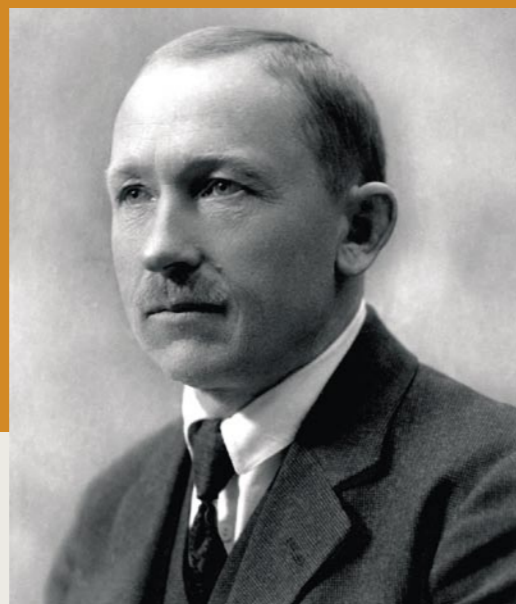


Epp Ojamaa-Kuhn, In Dramatic Vein (fragment, 1964) from the collections of the Under and Tuglas Literature Centre

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Anton Hansen TAMMSAARE



ANTON HANSEN TAMMSAARE (1878–1940) is the most highly regarded writer in Estonia. Influenced by Dostoyevsky and Hamsun, he developed an idiosyncratic version of realism that involves keen earthly observation, penetrating psychological insight and wayward musings on things existential as well as trivial. Educated at the University of Tartu as a lawyer, but never fully alienated from his rural background, he was consistently critical of all authorities and fashions, and retained an ambivalent view of modernism and traditions. Besides social relationships, he was always puzzled by man's attachment to the soil. Among his best-known works are the novel *Kõrboja peremees* (The Master of Kõrboja) and the five-volume roman fleuve, *Tõde ja õigus* (Truth and Justice). He is the most translated Estonian author till our days.

The New Devil of Hellsbottom

Põrgupõhja uus vanapagan

The last and perhaps most disturbing novel by the great Estonian novelist A. H. Tammsaare is a parable of redemption as well as a powerful piece of social critique. Although a radical agnostic and anticlerical publicist since his student days, A. H. Tammsaare throughout his literary work was always concerned with the ultimate theological questions of salvation and damnation, law and covenant, sin and saintliness, faith and reason, conscience and responsibility. One of his central problems was humanity's potential for self-redemption through hard work and persistence, and his views on the topic are diverse and ambiguous.

The plot is set in motion with a prologue in heaven, where God has started to entertain doubts about mankind's ability to live a pious life and achieve salvation on earth. If human beings are indeed constitutionally incapable of salvation, then hell will be shut down and the human race written off as an unfortunate mistake. Satan is given a chance to prove the contrary – if he succeeds at living a decent and righteous life as a man, hell will survive. Thus, Satan ends up living on Earth as Jürka: the put-upon tenant of a run-down Estonian farm. His patience and good nature are sorely tested by the machinations of his scheming, his unscrupulous landlord, and the social and religious hypocrisy he encounters.

In depicting the Devil, Tammsaare has drawn from Estonian folklore, where Old Nick is a dim-witted and gullible fellow often deceived by the cunning farmhand Ants. In Tammsaare's version, however, Ants has been transformed into a devious capitalist exploiter, who deceives the Devil into servitude and robs him of the fruits of his toil and eventually of his family and children. The Devil's attempts to adapt himself to the corrupt ways of modern society ultimately fail, bringing about an apocalypse. The novel combines sharp social critique, folk mythology and theological speculation with rural and magical realism, making it an enduring classic of European literature.

The New Devil of Hellsbottom (*Põrgupõhja uus Vanapagan*) has been translated into 14 languages. The English translation by Olga Shartze revised by Christopher Moseley was published by Norvik Press in 2009 under the title *The Misadventures of the New Satan*.

Text by Märt Väljataga



PUBLISHING DETAILS:

Anton Hansen Tammsaare.
Põrgupõhja uus vanapagan
First published in 1939 by Noor-Eesti Kirjastus,
298 pages
Rights are free

TRANSLATIONS:

Bulgarian: Avangard 2011
English: Norvik Press 2009 and Progress (Moscow) 1978
Russian: Tallinskii tsentr MADPR 1998, Художественная литература 1977, 1968, 1967, 1965, Гослитиздат 1957, 1956 and Эстгосиздат (Tallinn) 1955
Uzbek: Адабиет ва санъат нашриети 1984
Polish: Czytelnik 1983
Czech: Odeon 1978
Ukrainian: Дніпро 1978
Finnish: Kansankulttuuri 1977 and 1964
Swedish: Förlaget för litteratur på främmande språk 1963
Latvian: Gramatu Draugs 1962 and Latvijas Valsts izdevniecība 1951
German: Verlag der Nation 1960 and Kultur und Fortschritt 1959
Hungarian: Kossuth 1959
Lithuanian: Liesma 1957

Anton Hansen TAMMSAARE



PUBLISHING DETAILS:

Anton Hansen Tammsaare. *Tõde ja õigus* I–V
 First published in 1926–1933 by Noor-Eesti Kirjastus,
 vol I 605 pages
 Rights are free

TRANSLATIONS of vol I:

English: Haute Culture Books 2014
 French: Gaïa 2009 and P. Trémois 1944
 Lithuanian: Vaga 2009 and Valstybine grožines literatūros leidykla 1963
 Finnish: Otava 2002 and Söderström 1932
 Russian: KPD (Tallinn) 1998, Eesti Raamat (Tallinn) 1975, Гослитиздат 1959 and Эстросиздат 1953
 German: Paul List Verlag 1978 and Holle 1938
 Czech: Svoboda 1976
 Slovakian: Slovensky Spisovatel 1973
 Polish: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie 1971
 Hungarian: Európa Könyvkiadó 1967
 Latvian: Latvijas valsts izd. 1957 and Valtera un Rapas akc. sab. Izdevums 1936
 Dutch: De Kern 1939

Truth and Justice, I–V

Tõde ja õigus

A. H. Tammsaare's *Truth and Justice* I–V (1926–1933) is a completely unique work in world literature. It is hard to find an exact likeness to the pentalogy anywhere else. *Truth and Justice* has been compared to many European literary classics – F. Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Knut Hamsun's *Growth of the Soil*, and J. W. Goethe's *Faust*. Julius Diederich, who has translated Tammsaare's work into Dutch, sees the author as a synthesiser of Western European realistic practicality and Russian philosophy's mystical sentimentality.

Truth and Justice extends over a period from the late 19th century through the mid-1930s. The first and last volumes are set on a farmstead named Vargamäe. In the first volume, an optimistic young man named Andres and his wife Krõõt travel to their future home on Vargamäe Hill. The soil is poor, the work is endless, and their lives are complicated by their mischievous neighbour, Pearu. Readers of the time did in fact love the locking of horns that takes place between the two „tough men of Vargamäe”, as well as Andres' struggle with nature and his rural philosophy. The plots of volumes II–IV shift to the city, where the main character becomes Indrek – the son of Andres and his second wife, Mari (Krõõt having died in childbirth). Described over the three middle volumes are Indrek's academic years, his participation in events of the 1905 Russian Revolution, and his complicated, unhappily-ending marriage. In the fifth volume, Indrek returns to Vargamäe for „forced labour” – punishing himself for acts that were left unpunished by the courts, and which continue to torment him.

Truth and Justice is at the same time a family saga and a *Bildungsroman*, but has also been described as a *roman fleuve*, a redemption novel, an „unhappy consciousness” novel, a philosophical novel, etc. The work is monumental and exceptionally multi-layered – its most intriguing aspect for foreign readers is undoubtedly how it

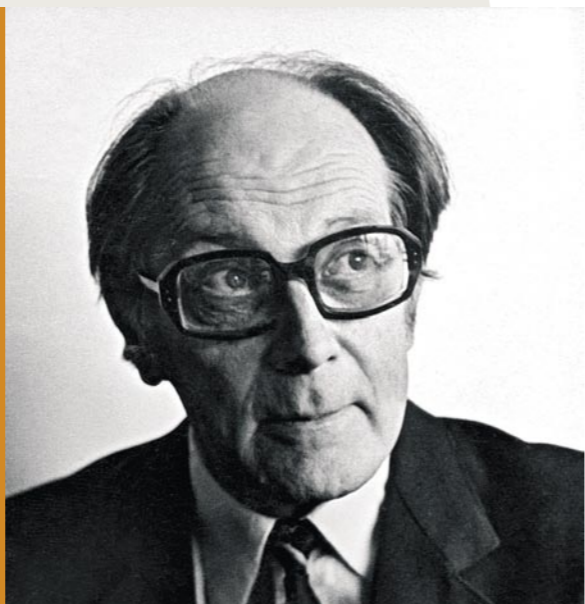
casts light on the particularities of Estonian society and history. At the beginning of the novels, Estonia is a part of Imperial Russia. In the second volume, Indrek is required to study in a partly Russian-language school. The third volume describes events of the Russian Revolution from an unexpected angle that holds tragic consequences in store for Indrek – both personally and affecting his whole family. The fourth volume observes urban-bourgeoisie life in the independent Republic of Estonia during the 1920s – the social customs and morals of its „new rich”. Tammsaare grippingly details the modernisation of local culture that was underway, as well as how Estonians' roots extend deep into peasant society. Eloquent descriptions of nature show the characters' deep love for it – something that foreigners continue to regard as a very special and intrinsic Estonian quality.

The fifth volume hosts a rich selection of characters, which brings forth a wide gallery of human natures as well as connate Estonian traits. However, one does not find only unequivocally good or bad characters in Tammsaare – all possess their own virtues and flaws. The author's deep and wide-ranging sense for life shines through his very human and psychologically-complex characters and events – something that makes the work engrossing and universally comprehensible.

Truth and Justice is directly tied to European cultural tradition in terms of its nature. At the same time, the work is exotically different – a glimpse into a world set on Europe's geographic periphery. This world cannot be seen with such a gaze from any other place, which makes *Truth and Justice* an exceptional reading experience.

Text by Maarja Vaino

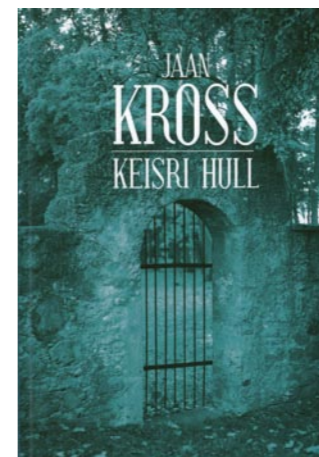
Jaan KROSS



JAAK KROSS (1920–2007) was the grand old man of Estonian contemporary literature. Having graduated from the University of Tartu in 1944 as a lawyer, he also tried his hand in journalism and as a translator. Kross was arrested in 1944, accused of conspiracy against the German occupation forces. From 1948–1951, he was held prisoner in a Stalinist labour camp in the Komi Autonomous Republic, and from 1951–1954 was exiled to the Krasnoyarsk region. After returning home, he dedicated himself to literature as a freelance writer and literary translator. His novels present important historical figures from Estonian (cultural) history; their fictitious structure is based on thorough historical research, and the works have received broad international recognition. His works have been translated into more than 20 languages. Jaan Kross was an Honorary Doctor of both the University of Tartu and the University of Helsinki. He has won numerous Estonian and international prizes, and has been a nominee of the Nobel Prize in Literature several times.

The Czar's Madman

Keisri hull



PUBLISHING DETAILS:

Jaan Kross. *Keisri hull*
 First published in 1978 by Eesti Raamat, 350 pages
 Rights' contact: Ilvi Liive at estlit@estlit.ee

TRANSLATIONS:

Macedonian rights sold to Prozar media
 Italian: Iperborea 2016, Garzanti 1997, 1994
 Finnish: Söderström 2010, 1999, 1991, 1982
 Croatian: Fraktura 2009
 French: Laffont 2008, 1989 and Seuil 1992
 German: Süddeutsche Zeitung 2007, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag 2004, 2003, Carl Hanser Verlag 1994, 1990 and Rütten & Loening 1988
 English: Harvill Press 2003, 1992 and Pantheon 1993
 Latvian: Atēna 1999
 Dutch: Ooievaar 1997 and Prometheus 1992
 Japanese: Nihon Keizai Shimbun 1995
 Portuguese: Publicações Dom Quixote (Lisboa) 1993 and Das Letras (São Paulo) 1992
 Danish: Gyldendahl 1992
 Spanish: Anagrama 1992
 Swedish: Fripress 1991, 1983
 Russian: Druzhba narodov 1991, Eesti Raamat (Tallinn) 1987, Известия 1985, Советский писатель 1984, 1985
 Polish: Panstwowy Instytut Wydawniczy 1988
 Norwegian: Gyldendal 1986
 Czech: Lidové 1985
 Lithuanian: Vaga 1985
 Slovakian: Slovensky Spisovatel 1985
 Bulgarian: Народна култура 1984
 Hungarian: Európa Könyvkiadó 1983

The historical novel's events transpire in the Russian Empire during the first half of the 19th century. Its main character is an actual historical figure: Timotheus von Bock from Võisiku Manor in the Livonian Governorate – a Baltic-German aristocrat, soldier, and trusted friend of Czar Alexander I. Or is he really?

Von Bock is a headstrong man who has always lived according to his own odd, even naïve ideals. To the horror of all high society, he has courted and wed the „aboriginal“ Estonian peasant Eeva, and resolves unresolvable dilemmas by a roll of the dice. Even so, these turn out to be innocent caprices compared with his next decisive step. As the Czar's friend, Von Bock once vowed to always tell the ruler the unadulterated truth – now, he sends the dictator a letter in which he frankly speaks his mind about what is wrong in the ruling of the Russian state. Of course, an act like this is not left without consequences. And inevitably, those around Von Bock have to wonder: is this kind of uncompromising honesty a sign of madness or, on the contrary, sounder reasoning than anyone else possesses? Can a madman write such well-reasoned criticism, and is an ordinary person able to dispatch it to the Czar?

Ethical predicaments like these set a century or two in the past were Kross' forte, and *The Czar's Madman* is one of his most famous and widely-translated novels. The work was first published in 1978, when Estonia was under Soviet occupation, and possesses its own subtext that was important in that era: candidly criticising actions taken by the Russian ruler(s) seemed impossible even a century and a half later. Even then, all one could do was claim: „there exists detriment in the Empire only because the good Czar does not know it yet,“ as Von Bock ironically wrote. But as the author himself emphasised, it is not worth solely boiling his text down to topical political motifs. In addition to its universal moral dilemma, the novel offers fascinating details about life in the Baltic governorates during the 19th century, as well as simply a gripping tale.

The reader is given a more expansive view of the developments by observing everything through the eyes of another character: the story is delivered as the diary of Von Bock's brother-in-law Jakob Mättik. The fictive character is an especially sharp-eyed observer because just like his sister Eeva, he is a peasant by birth and thus stands at a slight distance away from the actions of the aristocracy, even after rising to join the educated class. He witnesses his brother-in-law „Timo's“ ethical maximalism half with admiration, half with disbelief. Jakob furthermore needs to make his own life-choices, and although he proceeds more from pragmatic considerations when doing so, fate has a few strange surprises in store for him.

Text by Johanna Ross

Jaan KROSS



PUBLISHING DETAILS:

Jaan Kross. *Kolme katku vahel* I–IV
First published in 1970–1980 by Eesti Raamat,
1082 pages
Rights' contact: Ilvi Liive at estlit@estlit.ee

TRANSLATIONS:

English rights sold to MacLehose Press
Dutch rights sold to Prometheus
Latvian: Jānis Roze 2012
Finnish: WSOY 2003
German: Carl Hanser Verlag 1995
Russian: Советский писатель 1990, 1975
Polish: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy 1979

Between Three Plagues, I–IV

Kolme katku vahel

Between Three Plagues is Kross' epic tetralogy about medieval Tallinn and the chronicler Balthasar Russow, which has been published in Russian, Polish, German, Finnish and Latvian. Called a „symbol of the Estonian historical novel” and being the most voluminous of these, it derives in one way from tremendous historical research, but does not for a single moment fall behind any work of prose in terms of its pleasant readability. The unique manner of writing characteristic of Kross is to make a character familiar to a reader through and through—the novel's narrator is situated above the character, and conveys the flickering of his soul.

The main character of the novel is Balthasar Russow: a pastor for the congregation at Tallinn's Church of the Holy Ghost and a historical figure, who wrote the much-read *Chronica Der Prouintz Lyfflandt* (1578). This work has spread far and wide via several re-prints, and relates the history of Old Livonia from the time before and during the Livonian War. In Kross' interpretation, Russow is of Estonian descent—the son of a hauler from the then suburb of Tallinn, Kalamaja: this claim is based on the research of Tallinn-born Danish historian Paul Johansen (1901–1965). Thus, the novel is woven from historical events recorded in Russow's chronicle, as well as those that the chronicler witnessed with his own eyes.

The novel is made extremely intriguing by the chronicler's position between two worlds as a result of his rural origins. Russow's talent and ingenuity bring him out from the conditions inhabited by the subjugated people, in which he began as a boy named Pall. This boy possesses an ability to read circumstances well, as well as his father's support for his urge to acquire knowledge; quite many fortunate occasions to be taken advantage of come up,

and his curiosity leads him onward from there. Young Balthasar studies at universities in Germany, and by the time he returns to Tallinn, is already a member of a different standing. It is essentially a transformation into someone else (regardless of the fact that the pastor never forgets his origins, and even takes part in the Estonians' rebellion), and the payment of dues to both sides: in this way, the main character is both a symbol of Estonian potential and an intellectual's positioning between two different worlds. The book has been called a „tightrope-walking novel” in which that, which was initially intended, cannot always be carried out according to plan when faced with the danger of tumbling. The novel indeed begins symbolically with a scene, where the boy views tightrope dancers while he is skipping school: Pall the schoolboy is likewise a tightrope walker by nature, who revels in danger. Connections to the status of the intelligentsia at the time that the novel was published, in 1970s Estonia, are undoubtedly a parallel story: one's personal echelon, the game of hide-and-seek with those in power, and compromises made with one's own conscience.

On the other hand, the novel can also be read as the compelling story of one man's development and love(s). His individuality is also a burden, and the chronicle a book written honestly throughout his life. Russow's heroic loneliness is assuaged by his loyal friend Märten Bergkam—the son of a Tallinn captain, and the voice of his conscience. The medieval town of Tallinn is an independent character, while the author's spellbinding writing style leads the reader into the 16th century. A film of same name was also made based on the novel (1970).

Text by Elle-Mari Talivee

August GAILIT



AUGUST GAILIT (1891–1960) was a writer of exuberant imagination, a late neo-romanticist, whose entire output focuses on the eternal opposition of beauty and ugliness. At the age of nineteen he published his first work *Kui päike loojub* (When the Sun Sets, 1910) and from then on, he lived the life of a writer for half a century. In 1944 he emigrated to Sweden where he also wrote his last oeuvre, the trilogy *Kas mäletad, mu arm?* (Do You Remember, Dearest? 1951–1959).

Toomas Nipernaadi

Toomas Nipernaadi

Toomas Nipernaadi is widely regarded as August Gailit's most personal work of fiction. It is the story of a man who leaves town in early spring, at the time when the ice starts to melt, and sets off to wander around, from one village to the next. Wherever he turns up, adventures and trouble ensue. Nipernaadi works as a rafter and a pastor, drains swampland, becomes the master of a farm. He spins wondrous (fairy) tales to the village maidens who then all fall in love with him.

Toomas Nipernaadi is a phenomenon in Estonian culture. Its heyday was just after its publication. Reviews abounded and critics were unanimously enthusiastic. Despite universal praise, readers interpreted the book in quite different ways. For some, the joyful motto of the book served as a key to understanding the whole thing: *A sailor came from Rasina, hey-ho, hey-ho*. Others were taken with the more serious side of the novel. Nipernaadi's adventures were by no means infinite merrymaking, but rather slipped constantly into tragicomedy. Nipernaadi was one of the first works in Estonian literature that was translated into many languages.

The first was the German translation in 1931. The German critics' reaction was lively and extremely positive (the critics included Hermann Hesse and Hans Fallada). Such success understandably increased the novel's popularity at home even further and raised great hopes in the author: the Nobel Prize and a Hollywood film.

Following Toomas Nipernaadi's wanderings through spring, summer and autumn, the reader perceives a mythical model of life in the novel: the sequence of seasons, repetition, the closed circle, the cycle of life. And in that circle is Toomas Nipernaadi – the eternal wanderer. What gives Nipernaadi the aura of a mythical character is his direct contact with nature. Nature is a significant component of the novel which, through Gailit's masterful descriptions, acquires the status of a character in its own right. Not by

chance was the German edition entitled *Nippernaht und die Jahreszeiten*, stressing the importance of nature. The whole composition relies on the seasons.

Gailit was a romantic, and his attitude towards women was romantic too. He never ceased to worship all those girls and women to whom he gave life in his work. Women also play a significant role in *Toomas Nipernaadi*. The novel, consisting in fact of seven short stories, focuses on love affairs and amorous adventures. Nipernaadi's famous passionate monologues might well seem to the reader like masterly adaptations of the Song of Solomon.

Toomas Nipernaadi is an ode to love, symbol of love. At that level, there is no doubt as to Gailit's attitude to women. The novel's central idea is that of deeply perceived human love. This book was written by a man who loved life and people for whom love was sacred.



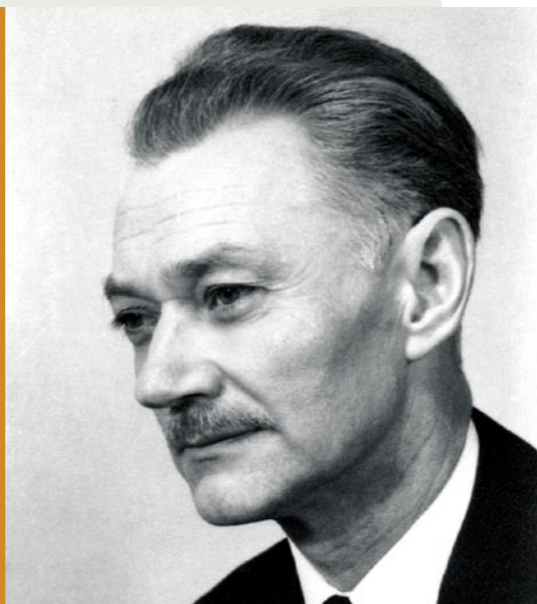
PUBLISHING DETAILS:

August Gailit. Toomas Nipernaadi
First published in 1928 by Loodus, 450 pages
Rights' contact: Ilvi Liive at estlit@estlit.ee

TRANSLATIONS:

English rights sold to *Dedalus Ltd*
Latvian: Liesma 1994, Gramatu Draugs 1953
and H. Rudziša apgadn. 1942
Russian: Александра (Tallinn) 1993
Polish: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy 1988
Lithuanian: Vaga 1971 and Spaudos fondas 1938
Finnish: WSOY 1955 and 1942
French: Editions de la Sixaine 1946
German: Propyläen-Verlag 1943, 1931
Dutch: Het Kompas 1942 and
Scheltema & Holkema 1932
Czech: Smolík 1935

Karl RISTIKIVI



KARL RISTIKIVI (1912–1977) was a writer of historical novels, one of the most European authors of Estonian literature. Studied geography at Tartu University, later settled in Sweden in 1944. He became an acknowledged writer publishing the novel *Tuli ja raud* (Fire and Iron) in 1938. Together with the two following novels, which were still published in Estonia, these books make up his Tallinn Trilogy, where the connecting motif of all novels is *Inimese teekond* (Man's Journey), depicted within the genre of psychological realism.

All Souls' Night

Hingede öö

All Souls' Night is a novel that may be understood – or misunderstood – on many levels. The narrator, who has spent seven years in exile, walks aimlessly in the streets of a strange town. Quite accidentally he enters a house he assumes to be a concert hall. A concert does actually take place, although there is something peculiar about the program. He makes the acquaintance of several individuals, some of whom seem to know him already; he attends a banquet, visits an art exhibit (consisting of only one picture), witnesses a wedding at which the bride gives birth, and ends up in the hall in which the master of the house lies in a coffin. Each individual encounter is realistic, but they are combined according to some perverse illogic; reality recedes into irreality, out of which there is no escape – as there is no escape from the weird house, where you may arrive on the top floor by going *down* the stairs, and where the same door may lead to different rooms in turn.

If the first half of the book shows some kinship to *Alice in Wonderland*, the godfather of the second half must surely have been Franz Kafka. The narrator happens to find himself somewhere resembling a frontier crossing point, then in a doctor's waiting room, is seen by the doctor and then taken to court, where witnesses are being examined in front of a judge and two counsels – the narrator can never figure out which is the counsel for the defendant and which is the prosecutor. It very soon becomes clear, however, that the witnesses are really defendants, each of them being charged with one of the seven deadly sins. Although their innocence would be obvious in any world functioning according to normal logic, in the upside-down world of *All Souls' Night* they meekly accept their guilt – with the exception of one, who receives praise and commendation from the

judge for a recitation of real crimes. The narrator finds that he is destined to be the seventh and final witness. He is accused of the double crime of having fled from communism out of pure selfishness and of *acedia* – the medieval crime of sloth and apathy. The court condemns him to go on living; he defies the court and walks out, finally finding his way to the exit, knowing at the same time that there is no escape from the doom of having to continue his life as an exile.

The story line does not do justice to the power of the book, which is derived mainly from the hypnotic intensity of its mood. The dead man's house can be taken as an allegory: it could be the narrator himself – or any one of us – who is imprisoned in his own body, called to testify before the court of one's own memories and conscience. There is no exit; the landscape of the soul is a dead man's house, and Reason lies in state in its catafalque.

Text by Ilse Lehiste



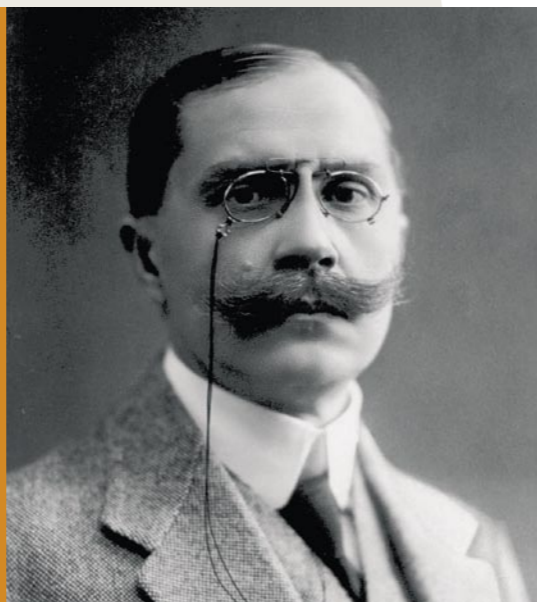
PUBLISHING DETAILS:

Karl Ristikivi. Hingede öö
First published in 1953 by Eesti Kirjaniike Kooperatiiv,
307 pages
Rights' contact: Ilvi Liive at estlit@estlit.ee

TRANSLATIONS:

English (excerpt): The Dedalus Book of Estonian
Literature, Dedalus 2011
Russian: Meie Raamat (Tallinn) 2009
Danish: Brage 1993

Eduard VILDE



EDUARD VILDE (1865–1933) was the first professional writer of Estonia, whose enormous output, comprising serious novels, dramas, short stories, comedies, various light pieces for magazines and political journalism, runs to 33 volumes in his collected works. He was the first writer to introduce realism or naturalism to Estonian letters, acquiring notoriety as a „filthy“ author. His historical novels did much to arouse Estonian national consciousness, and as an influential socialist journalist he had to spend several years in exile, mainly in Germany and Denmark, away from Czarist Russia. In the first months of the independent Republic of Estonia, Eduard Vilde served as the ambassador to Germany.

The Dairyman of Mäeküla

Mäeküla piimamees

When published in 1916, the last novel by Eduard Vilde was hailed by the critic Karl August Hindrey as the „first genuine Estonian novel“. Eduard Vilde, who had established himself as the most popular and prolific author of short stories, humour, historical novels and drama, achieved in this book, written in exile in Denmark, a new maturity and psychological insight. Whereas his earlier naturalist stories and novels were often *Tendentzliteratur*, serving the Estonian nationalist or socialist cause, *The Dairyman of Mäeküla* rises above political agitation.

The novel is set in the eighteen-nineties in a manor near Tallinn. The master of the manor, an ineffectual old bachelor, Baron Ulrich von Kremer, falls for Mari, the charming wife of his tenant Tõnu Prillup. Ulrich devises a plan of leasing his dairy to Prillup in exchange for having his wife as a mistress. Prillup, who is even more incompetent than von Kremer, becomes obsessed with the idea of managing a dairy and winning the recognition of his fellow men, which he has lacked so far. He insists that Mari accept the deal. Finally Mari gives in, begins seeing von Kremer and taking pleasure in urban luxuries, while Prillup, predictably, is not good in business, takes to drink, and develops a grudge against his wife. Finally he freezes to death while returning drunkenly from one of his market trips. Mari, now an attractive widow, rejects her suitors (who seem to be more interested in the dairylease anyway), dumps von Kremer, and escapes to the city.

What makes this rather banal plot into a brilliant novel is the author's impartiality, a mixture of cynicism and compassion. The deeper plot of the novel is concerned with what René Girard has termed the „triangular or mimetic desire“ – a disposition of modern human beings not to desire spontaneously but imitate the desire for the object entertained by the other. Thus Prillup's main aim is not so much prosperity itself as to be seen to be prosperous, and to evoke envy and admiration in others. Von Kremer's

motives are the exact opposite – he desires private happiness without being perceived as having any. Mari, the most sympathetic character in the novel, remains a mystery – without being a passive victim or a mere token in men's transactions, she retains a certain self-sufficiency, independence of will and curiosity towards the world.

Besides the psychology of desire, the novel has impressive socio-historical implications. The barren von Kremer becomes the symbol of the decadence of the Baltic German nobility, depicted with ironic empathy rather than the fierce condemnation of Vilde's earlier work. The subtle entanglement of sexuality, power and economic relations and post-colonial attitudes makes this stylistically innovative novel one of the great masterpieces not of only Estonian literature but of the novel genre in general.

Text by Märt Väljataga



PUBLISHING DETAILS:

Eduard Vilde. *Mäeküla piimamees*
 First published in 1916 by Mõte, 247 pages
 Rights' contact: Ilvi Liive at estlit@estlit.ee

TRANSLATIONS:

Portuguese: Cavalo de Ferro Editores 2004
 Russian: Avita (Tallinn) 2000, Художественная литература 1989, 1965, Эстгосиздат (Tallinn) 1960, Известия 1958
 Esperanto: Eesti Raamat 1983
 English: Eesti Raamat (Tallinn) 1976
 Hungarian: Európa Könyvkiadó 1967 and Kner 1933
 Lithuanian: Vaga 1965
 Latvian: Latvijas Valsts izdevniecība 1963
 Finnish: Ahjo 1920

Friedebert TUGLAS



FRIEDEBERT TUGLAS (1886–1971) was a writer, critic, literary expert, and translator. In 1906–1917 a political refugee in Europe, he strongly influenced Estonian cultural life from exile. In the Estonian republic, Tuglas became one of the leading figures of local cultural life: he founded literary magazines and organizations. Victim to Stalinist repression, his civil rights were restored in 1955. This was followed by the release of collected works and restoration of the literary classic's name.

An author of two novels, mini-genres, travelogues and poems, he dedicated himself to the perfection of the short-story genre. In 1970, he founded his own short-story award.

At the End of the World

Maailma lõpus

In the Estonian national epic *Kalevipoeg*, the hero and the crew of his ship journey to the end of the world. In Friedebert Tuglas' symbolist first-person novella, a young sailor is accidentally marooned on a lush island during a very similar fairy-tale-like odyssey, crossing uncharted waters through storms and absolute darkness. There, he meets with giants: a gorgeous, mild-mannered young giant-woman and her father. In an eternal summer, the boy and the giant shepherdess are consumed in the intoxicating flames of love – the whole island becomes grounds for their feverish affections. Yet the giantess' unfulfilled passion ultimately turns tortuous for the sailor; her amorousness becomes a hunt for the doomed escapee and an attempt to subject him to her lusts. It appears to the boy that „a giant's love is man's death” – he has wound up on man-eaters' territory. Infatuation transforms into a fear of perishing in the process and in the end, a little songbird reminds the protagonist of the sounds of his home-shores. Breaking his own heart, the sailor slays the excessively loving giantess with his sword. What's more – the giants do not speak, but merely communicate through glances; and so, the first time the young man hears his lover's voice is when she gives out her death cry.

The sailor flees by boat, the giantess' cries for help ringing in his ears. He traverses strange seas and strange lands for many a year. Upon ultimately arriving home as an old man, he is unable to find peace even in familiar surroundings. Thus, he is destined to remain a rover plagued by yearning for the rest of his days.

At the End of the World is certainly one of the most unusual romance tales ever written, delving into the human soul with rising tension and warnings against excessive, unchecked love. It is a tale of tragic sexual dissatisfaction with a perfect sense of literary rhythm and style; a description of erotic passion in exquisite language with an ending that is both crushing and sublime. The work's mystical and dream-like atmosphere – in truth, its multi-

layered composition overall – is fascinating. The story was finished in 1917, and the author's own biography interweaves with the fictive island's detailed history. The writer, who spent eleven years in political asylum while wanted by the Russian Empire, created a mystery-island rich in fantastical flora and fauna that no one will ever find. The kaleidoscope of colours and beauty melt together into an agonising silence, leading to despair over the inability to share one's thoughts with anyone else in that paradise. Inspiration for the story's sense of realism was taken from Tuglas' favourite author, Edgar Allan Poe; from Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*; as well as Paul Gauguin's Tahiti; while its rhythm and devices model the Old Testament's Song of Solomon.

The tale's final sentence as translated by Oleg Mutt reads:

Take my pain into thy rays, bear my sadness to the nameless sea, to the nameless island – farther away than a dream!

Text by Elle-Mari Talivee



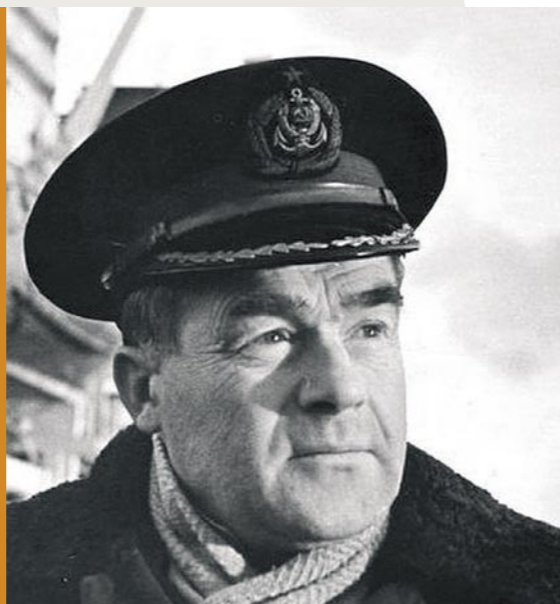
PUBLISHING DETAILS:

Friedebert Tuglas. *Maailma lõpus*
 First published in 1917 by Maa in a short story collection *Saatust*, 42 pages
 Rights' contact: Ilvi Liive at estlit@estlit.ee

TRANSLATIONS:

Polish: Wydawnictwo Literackie 1986
 English: *Perioodika* (Tallinn) 1982
 German: F. Schwartz 1982 and Krüger 1935
 Hungarian: Európa Könyvkiadó 1969 and Gyoma 1933
 Croatian: Hrvatski izdavački bibliografski zavod 1944
 Esperanto: Tamverk 1924
 Latvian: Leta 1923
 Finnish: Otava 1919

Herman SERGO



HERMAN SERGO (1911–1989) was born on the island Hiiumaa and trained in seafaring (he gained qualifications as a sea-captain), and worked at the same time as a writer of fiction, known chiefly for his works describing the life of seafarers and coastal dwellers, and the coastal villages of Hiiumaa. His novel *Põgenike laev* (The Refugee Ship, 1966) describes the life of the coastal people on pre-war Hiiumaa and their escape to Sweden in 1944, the first treatment of this subject in the literature of Soviet Estonia. His novel *Randröövel* (The Beach Robber, 1988) centres on the Hiiumaa landowner Otto von Ungern-Sternberg, who lured ships onto the reefs with an illusory lighthouse and plundered their goods. Sergo's works are marked by an intimate knowledge of life on the sea and the coast, realistic description and a fluent gift for narrative.

Spriteshoals, I–III

Näkimalad

The novel *Spriteshoals*, regarded as Herman Sergo's main work (it originally appeared in three separate volumes in 1984) was written in the spirit of the historical fiction that appeared in Estonia in the early nineteen-seventies. The subject-matter is innovative in Estonian literature: Sergo portrays the life and fate of the Swedish diaspora on Hiiumaa, an island off the coast of Estonia, against the background of historic events in the 18th century. The action begins with the annexation of Estonian territory to the Russian Czar's empire in 1710 and ends with the forced deportation of the „coastal Swedes“ to the lower reaches of the Dnieper River by a ukase of Empress Catherine II.

The basic problem running throughout the novel is the question of the status of the coastal Swedes. With the transfer of Estonian territories from the Swedish crown to incorporation into the Czarist empire, the landowners tried to change the free Swedish peasants into serfs. The central axis of the novel is the stubborn struggle of the coastal Swedes for their rights, lasting over several generations. In writing the book, the author has made use of many kinds of studies and archive materials; particular documents and translations of them are introduced in the pages of the novel.

The work is a unique kind of family saga; its main figure is the plucky and stubborn Clemet, who fights for the rights of the coastal Swedes, as do his descendants. Clemet is one of Sergo's favourite types: physically strong, enterprising and successful in his undertakings on both land and sea. There is a love story running through the work – the story of Clemet and Getter, which has certain parallel motifs with Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*; just like Solveig, Getter comes to live with Clemet, but they do not become a couple immediately; their story has several twists. At first, Clemet marries Walborg and they have children. Getter, however, waits for years for her beloved in her little forest hut. In a poetic conclusion to the book, Getter meets Clemet, who had been lost at sea years previously and declared dead.

The novel follows the course of several generations. Clemet's son Bore becomes a champion of the rights of the coastal Swedes. The life of their grandson Jörgen, however, is bound of with the colourful tavern-keeper Britta, who turns out to be the descendant of a depraved priest who once served on Hiiumaa. The characters are individual and psychologically credible depictions. The author has skilfully drawn elements of adventure into the narrative, without falling into the clichés of light fiction.

With interest, empathy and expert knowledge he has described the living conditions, the seal-hunting and fishing, the customs and beliefs of the coastal Swedes. With its richness of detail, the novel has been called an „ethnographic novel“. Central to the work is the historical identity of Hiiumaa. In the novel, Sergo calls the shallows of Hiiumaa „Näkimalad“ („sprite-shoals“, Swedish: Näckmansgrund – later this became a historic place-name.

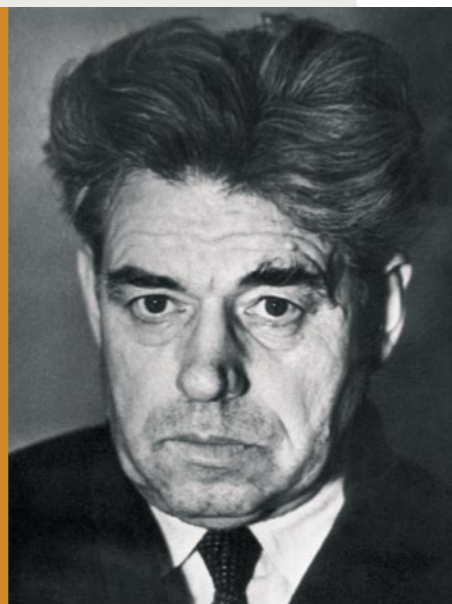
Spriteshoals was made into a four-part television series in 1989.



PUBLISHING DETAILS:

Herman Sergo. *Näkimalad I–III*
 First published in 1984 by Eesti Raamat, 916 pages
 Rights' contact: Ilvi Liive at estlit@estlit.ee

Aadu HINT



AADU HINT (1910–1989) started writing realistic novels in the 1930s and became a classic and highly canonized author after the Second World War. Yet, his work was also criticised for not being „socialist” enough and he was, for instance, forced to rewrite *The Windswept Shore*. Whereas the revised 1952 version is colourless „socialist realism”, the original 1951 version is a colourful description of Estonian life at the turn of the 20th century.



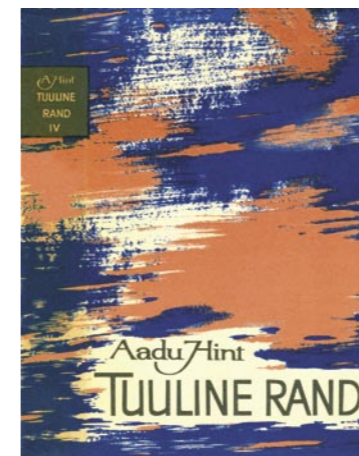
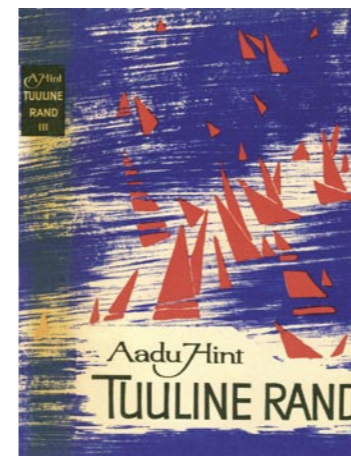
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The Windswept Shore, I–IV

Tuuline rand

The Windswept Shore is a realistic and historical novel on the events preceding the Revolution of 1905 in Estonia and the revolution itself. It richly and colourfully describes an interesting and important aspect of Estonian history.

The scene is a fishing village on Saaremaa, Estonia’s largest island, where the activity has traditionally formed the inhabitants’ economic basis. However, in order to improve their meagre material conditions, the villagers decide to join together to build a ship and start trading. With their common efforts and in the face of resistance from the local pastor and other adversaries, the ship is finally finished and sets sail. Everything runs smoothly for a while, but slight discrepancies gradually arise because the shipmaster will not yield to the principles of grassroots democracy that initially led to the vessel’s construction. The peasants and



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fishermen have one common enemy – namely the local German landowners and their government, which has harassed Estonians for centuries – but the means and concepts for fighting them turn out to be varied.

Then, the revolution that began with strikes in town factories is „brought to the countryside” when a worker returns from Tallinn to his native Saaremaa and dedicates himself to spreading socialist ideas. The poor peasants are receptive to the concepts and start an uprising during the potato harvest. Will it be possible to shake off their old yoke? The government maintains its power during a shoot-out at the manor, but the incident soon culminates in a powerful final chapter: the pastor is stuffed into a potato sack, the manor lord put into jail, and Nicholas II’s October Manifesto is declared. Ultimately, the manor goes up in flames. This is „witnessed” by blind Kaarli, one of the book’s protagonists: he imagines seeing the fire, but it is a vision he can only keep for a few weeks, because he is executed by Russian punishment battalions. The short-lived period of freedom ends in the restoration of the old order.

One of the book’s strengths is its vivid, partly naturalistic description of rural Estonian life combined with a discussion of current societal developments. It brings history „to life” and in this sense, Hint can be compared to the novels of Walter Scott or Émile Zola. For an international audience, the novel offers a fascinating view of both Estonian history in the early 20th century and the final decades of the Russian Empire.

Text by Cornelius Hasselblatt

PUBLISHING DETAILS:

Aadu Hint. *Tuuline rand I*

First published by Eesti Riiklik Kirjastus 1951,
304 pages (uncensored)

Rights’ contact: Ilvi Liive at estlit@estlit.ee

TRANSLATIONS:

Russian: Художественная литература 1989,
Советский писатель 1977, 1970, Известия
1963, Eesti Riiklik Kirjastus (Tallinn) 1956, 1952

Moldovian: Литература артистикэ 1981

Ukrainian: Дніпро 1981, 1974

English: Periodika (Tallinn) 1980

Lithuanian: Vaga 1975

Latvian: Latvijas Valsts izdevniecība 1968, 1964,
1961, 1955, 1954

Belarusian: Дзяржаўнае выд. БССР 1960

Finnish: Karjalan ASNT:n valtion kustannusliike
1959

Czech: Svet sovětu 1957

Juhan JAİK



JUHAN JAİK (1899–1948) was a dramatically-fated Estonian writer and journalist. At the age of six, he was deported for political reasons from his birthplace in Võru County to live in towns along Russia's Volga River. Estonia was still a part of the Russian Empire at the time. Upon arriving back in Estonia, Jaik was arrested by the Bolsheviks (which had seized power meanwhile) and sentenced to execution, which he narrowly escaped. Afterwards, the emerging writer took part in the Estonian War of Independence. When the war was over, Jaik worked for some time as an official in the Ministry of Education of the independent Republic of Estonia, and otherwise dedicated himself to writing. In 1944, Jaik and his family fled the invading Soviet forces to Sweden by way of Germany, and died in 1948. In 1990, Jaik's remains were exhumed from Stockholm's Skogskyrkogården Cemetery to be reburied in Tallinn's Rahumäe Cemetery.

Selected Ghost Stories

Tondijutud

Juhan Jaik can be regarded as one of the foundation-layers of original Estonian mystical literature. He entrancingly depicts the nature and inhabitants of Võru County in Southwest Estonia against the backdrop of its rich and mysterious folklore. Võru County's mighty forests and diverse landscape have given rise to many legends that have inspired a wealth of writers and artists over the ages. However, Võru County became Juhan Jaik's brand above all. The writer is comparable to J.R.R. Tolkien to a certain extent – an author, who likewise drew inspiration from old legends and folklore when writing his works, and who was deeply influenced by the nature and atmosphere of his home.

Jaik was one of the first authors to grasp Võru County's *genius loci*, and managed to enchantingly contain it in his works. His debut collection of short stories, *Võru County Tales* (1924), brings folklore figures to life and conjures a unique fairy-tale world. Many of these stories have been brought together in *Selected Ghost Stories* (2009).

Jaik is frequently seen as primarily a children's writer, since all kinds of child-friendly fantasy figures surface in his stories time and again. However, Jaik's mysticism is much more a result of worldview. His stories include many typical Estonian nature-spirit beliefs, as well as an air of bygone eras. Such tales often begin with „In the olden days...” Even so, Jaik utilises his folklore sources very liberally. He does not merely retell old folk tales, but gives the stories unique twists, being sometimes ecstatically cheerful and sometimes mysteriously grim. Either way, Jaik's short stories take readers into a very otherworldly world, which only few chosen people have accessed before. His works are like top-secret materials, access to which is something of a privilege.

Despite the fact that Jaik's stories were written before the Second World War, they come off as contemporary and intriguing – foremost because the author is a fantastic storyteller. And regardless of the many difficulties he faced in his personal life, such as the death of his three-year-old son or his temporary blindness, Jaik's stories always contain incredible brightness and positivity. He was a writer, who created more good in the world; who never agreed to let evil win.

Jaik's magical realism is certainly set in Võru County, but something about the stories' atmosphere touches all readers who have any place, which they regard with a special kind of love and fondness. This aspect makes Jaik's works universal, but in a very personal way.

Jaik's daughter Ilo has poetically remarked that although her family was forced into exile, the ghosts did not escape from Estonia – rather, they remained in Võru County to wait for her father's return. We can state with certainty that his ghosts still exist in Võru County's forests today.

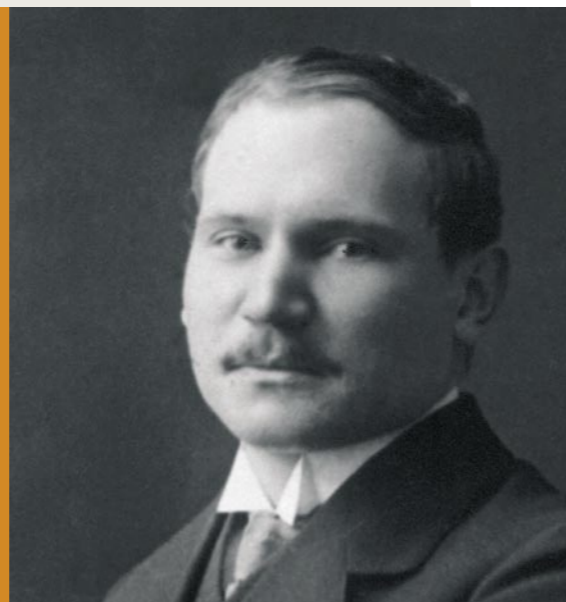
Text by Maarja Vaino



PUBLISHING DETAILS:

Juhan Jaik. *Tondijutud*
 First published in 1936 by Noor-Eesti Kirjastus, 132 pages
 Rights' contact: Ilvi Liive at estlit@estlit.ee

Oskar LUTS



OSKAR LUTS (1887–1953) has sometimes been called the Estonian Dickens, as both writers exhibit the same kind of mixture of melancholy and humour as well as technical inventiveness. He studied pharmacy in Tartu, and was conscripted into the World War soon after his literary debut with *The Spring*, and some comedies and short stories. His main literary model was Nikolai Gogol. Luts wrote several sequels to *Kevade*, exploiting the same characters and scenes and experimenting with metafiction. He was the author of more than 30 novels, plays, and short story collections and a cycle of third-person memoirs. Oskar Luts is by far the most popular but also one of the technically most inventive Estonian writers.

The Spring

Kevade

If asked to point out a single work of literature which has had the strongest impact on Estonian vernacular and popular consciousness by introducing new turns of phrase, figures of speech, proverbs and stock-characters continually alluded to and understood by the majority of Estonians, this work would undoubtedly be *The Spring* by Oskar Luts, modestly subtitled „Scenes from Schooldays“. First published in two volumes in 1912–1913, it has become the most frequently reprinted Estonian book, giving rise to various sequels by Oskar Luts himself as well as to film and stage adaptations. *The Spring* has been translated into 14 languages.

The narrative depicts one schoolyear in a small rural school of Paunvere in the mid-eighteen-nineties (inspired by Luts' own childhood village of Palamuse). Under the superficial veneer of gaiety and all kinds of schoolboy tricks and escapades runs a sombre, almost fatalistic stream of grave consequences caused by initially insignificant missteps, broken promises, and tiny lies. The main protagonist, Arno Tali, breaks a promise given to his schoolmate Teele, thereby starting a cycle of guilt, doubts, jealousy and resentment which leads to getting drunk with the sexton Lible and falling ill. In the second part of the narrative a similar cycle recurs when Arno gets involuntarily involved in a plot to sink the raft of the neighbouring gentry school and has to choose between betraying his friend Tõnisson or lying and thereby causing the indictment of the innocent Lible. Once again Arno falls into a deep depression but recovers after a dream-vision of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane.

The melancholy deep structure is not always easy to recognize behind the surface gaiety of schoolboy pranks, mainly started by the hyperactive, almost daemonic Joosep Toots. The gallery of other characters taps the deep resources of archetypes in the collective unconscious. All kinds of human relations – master/slave, teacher/disciple, man of action/contemplative man – and existential attitudes, temperamental and social types are exemplified by the characters and incidents of the story. This, together with vividly figurative language, and the range of sensibility, from sublime romanticism to coarsely burlesque, has made Oskar Luts' first novel an imperishable classic.

PUBLISHING DETAILS:

Oskar Luts. *Kevade*
First published in 1912 by Postimees,
159 pages
Rights' contact: Ilvi Liive at estlit@estlit.ee

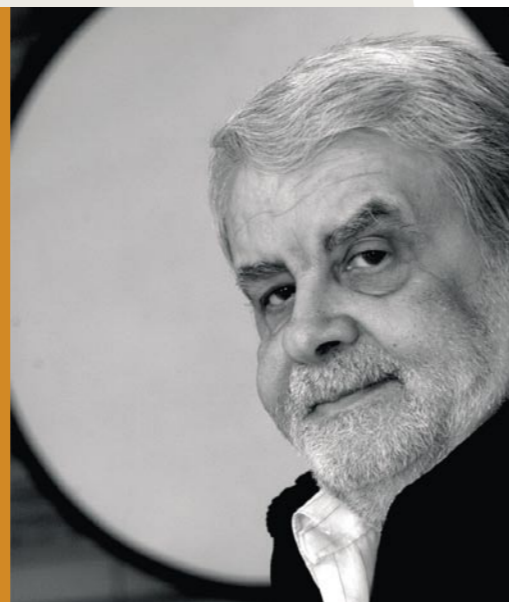
TRANSLATIONS:

Portuguese: Editora Biruta (São Paulo) 2014
Lithuanian: Vytyrys 1995 and Valstybine
grožines literatūros leidykla 1957
Bulgarian: Отечество 1989
Russian: Правда 1987, Periodika (Tallinn)
1984, Eesti Raamat (Tallinn) 1980, 1973 and
1968, Художественная литература 1972,
Eesti Riiklik Kirjastus (Tallinn) 1964, 1954,
Гослитиздат 1957, Детгиз 1955
English: Periodika (Tallinn) 1983
Romanian: București Univers. 1977
Slovakian: Tatran 1977 and Bratislava 1960
Finnish: Karisto 1973
Armenian: Айастан 1970
Polish: Nasza Księgarnia 1968
Latvian: Latvijas valsts izdevniecība 1965
Czech: Svět Sovětu 1961
Hungarian: Móra Könyvkiadó 1959
Ukrainian: Державне видавництво дитячої
літератури УРСР 1958



Text by Märt Väljataga

Mati UNT



MATI UNT (1944–2005) was an unconventional 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 *Hüvasti, kollane kass* (Goodbye, Yellow Cat, 1963) that immediately made him famous. The novel was followed by numerous short stories, shorter novels and plays. His novel *Sügisball* (Autumn Ball, 1979) made its author known internationally and has been screened with great success. His collection of short stories and plays *Räägivad ja vaikivad* (They Speak and Keep Silent) was published in 1986, followed by his three novels translated into English: *Things in the Night* 1990, *Diary of a Blood Donor* 1990 and *Brecht at Night* 1997.

Autumn Ball

Sügisball

Mati Unt was a writer perfectly tuned to the smallest vibrations of *Zeitgeist*. He had a special genius for capturing the latent myths and archetypes circulating in the collective unconscious of his time. *Autumn Ball: Scenes of City Life* (1979, written in 1977) is probably his greatest achievement as a novelist.

The novel observes the life of six characters during one autumn in the late 1970s in a Soviet-style new residential area Mustamäe, Tallinn. The characters are a lyric poet Eero, concerned with the lack of audience; a single mother Laura, obsessed with a Western TV soap; her son Peeter sensitively observing his environment; misanthropic hair-dresser August, technocratic architect Maurer, and restaurant porter Theo, a macho-man with esoteric interests.

Although they live in the same neighbourhood, their life-trajectories intersect only by chance. Mustamäe, the modernist apartment district of Tallinn, emerges as the seventh main character of the novel. The book is remarkable for its vivid style combining sensitively observed details of the late Soviet everyday life with (mock)erudition, urban folklore and apocalyptic intimations. The tone oscillates between understated humour and suffocating gloom. The modernist technological optimism of the 1960s is giving way to an ominous sense of alienation and doom. The slightly paranoid atmosphere is reminiscent of Don DeLillo's early work.

The Brezhnevist social background of *Autumn Ball* is actually the same as the one described in Sergei Dovlatov's book *The Compromise*. Although both works are set in Tallinn in the late 1970s, the artistic temperaments of Unt and Dovlatov cannot be more different. Living as a Russian journalist in Soviet Estonia, Dovlatov captured the cynicism, emptiness, irony, isolation, careerism, and dissonance of late

Soviet communism. Mati Unt, although an ironist too, was never directly interested in satire and social critique and his work had to pass the Soviet censorship anyway. Hence the rich symbolist texture of his novel, full of allusions, omens, signs and gossip, although emptiness and isolation are also Unt's topics.

In 2007 Veiko Õunapuu directed an award-winning art house film *Sügisball* based on Mati Unt's novel. The film has transferred the setting to a thirty years later period and to another Tallinn neighbourhood, altered considerably the plot and the set of characters. But the combination of humour, apocalyptic gloom and quotidian anxiety of Mati Unt's novel has been wonderfully preserved.

Text by Märt Väljataga



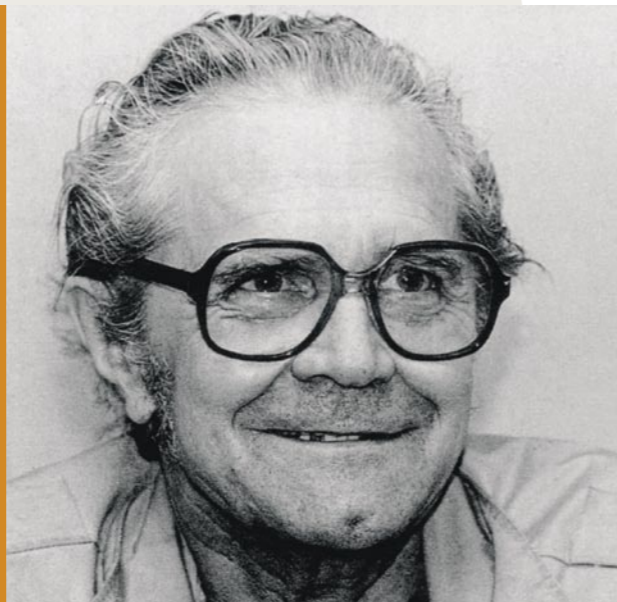
PUBLISHING DETAILS:

Mati Unt. *Sügisball*
 First published in 1979 by Eesti Raamat,
 184 pages
 Rights' contact: Ilvi Liive at estlit@estlit.ee

TRANSLATIONS:

Czech: Lidové 1988
 Slovakian: Smena 1988
 Polish: Wyd-wo Literackie 1988
 Norwegian: Aschehoug 1987
 German: Aufbau-Verlag 1987
 English: Periodika (Tallinn) 1985
 Swedish: Fripress Bokförlag 1983
 Hungarian: Európa 1983
 Russian: Советский писатель 1982
 Bulgarian: Hristo Danov 1981
 Finnish: Gummerus 1980

Raimond KAUGVER



RAIMOND KAUGVER (1926–1992) was a renowned Soviet Estonian author. Shortly after reaching adulthood, he fled to Finland, where he fought with the Finnish Army against the Red Army, and as a consequence was imprisoned in a Soviet prison camp in Vorkuta for five years. After his return, Kaugver became one of the most popular authors in Soviet Estonia who was even capable of speaking about banned topics, all under the cover of lighter plots.

Forty Candles

Nelikümmend küünalt

When Raimond Kaugver's novel *Forty Candles* was published in 1966, being one of the first Estonian books to speak in-depth about the Soviet prison camps, it seemed unbelievable to many. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, which introduced prison camps to literature, had indeed been translated into Estonian in 1963; however, it was considerably more difficult to speak on the topics from an Estonian point of view. Thus, when the novel was published after undergoing a harsh censorial gauntlet, the interest and response to it was also immense. The book's value increased even further after the repression of the Prague Spring in 1968, which put an end to any kind of disclosure in the Soviet Union.

The autobiographical novel recounts the plights of Estonian history from the perspective of a man, who was born in the early 1920s, fought in both the German and Finnish armies in the Second World War, and was sent to the Gulag because of it. He escaped the mines with his life thanks to his profession (a medic) and was freed after Stalin's death to return to Estonia and re-start his life from absolute zero at the age of 30. The novel is constructed as the protagonist looking back over his life on the eve of his 40th birthday. The 40 candles in the novel's title indeed stand for each year in the character's life and chapters in the book. Thus, it is a *Bildungsroman*, which strove for the first time to make sense of those interruptions in the lives of Estonians; interruptions, which were brought about by the Soviet occupation, the Second World War, and Stalinist repressions. A statement made by the main character's father was especially meaningful to Kaugver's contemporaries: „Estonia is like a house along a highway – anyone who wants to can enter and play 'owner'." This remark had a significant impact on Estonians' understanding of history in the twilight of socialism.

By employing a clever approach and depicting the protagonist as a morally questionable individual, Kaugver was able to speak – without making concessions to the censors over what was central – about unheard-of topics such as criminal violence and self-inflicted wounds at the Gulag, as well as corruption in the Soviet Union during the Khrushchev Thaw. To give a sense of the exceptional interest that surrounded the book: it was translated into Finnish in 1971, and in 1976 was published in Rome by an Estonian refugee who was otherwise critical of Soviet Estonian literature.

Today, the novel is seen above all as a crucial landmark in Estonian prison-camp literature, which offers a fascinating view on how the topic of the Gulag system surfaced in the Soviet Union and also expands it with Estonia's highly exceptional perspective. *Forty Candles* is among the classics of Gulag literature, right next to Solzhenitsyn and Shalamov.

Text by Eneken Laanes



PUBLISHING DETAILS:

Raimond Kaugver. *Nelikümmend küünalt*
First published in 1966 by Eesti Raamat,
247 pages

Rights' contact: Ilvi Liive at estlit@estlit.ee

TRANSLATIONS:

Latvian: Mansards 2016

Finnish: Gummerus 1971

Enn VETEMAA



ENN VETEMAA (b. 1936) graduated from the Tallinn Polytechnic Institute as a chemical engineer and from the Tallinn Conservatory as a composer. He has published two poetry collections as well as an abundance of prose and plays. Vetemaa is famed for introducing the short-novel genre into Estonian literature with his works *The Monument* (1965), *The Musician* (1967), *A Short Requiem for the Harmonica* (1968), and others. He has also published longer novels, including *The Möbius Strip* vols. I–II (1985, 1990) and *Men of the Cross* vols. I–II (1994, 1998). Vetemaa is also known for his humorous description of the fairer sex in the book *A Guide to Estonian Sprites* (1983).

The Monument

Monument

Enn Vetemaa's short novel *The Monument* was published in 1965, coinciding with a wave of innovation in 1960s Estonian literature and excitement on the literary scene that accompanied it. This literary shift occurred foremost in connection with the sense of freedom caused by the termination of the Stalinist era. Vetemaa began his career as a poet – his debut appeared in legendary poetry „cassettes” (small soft-cover collections held in illustrated cardboard containers) – a phenomenon, which introduced the „golden generation” of Estonian literature with authors like Jaan Kaplinski, Viivi Luik, Paul-Eerik Rummo, and others who are in modern-day classic status by now.

The Monument was the first novel written by then 29-year-old Vetemaa. It roused immediate attention and incited extensive discussion. One reason for this was the fact that since the canon of socialist realism prescribed positive characters, Vetemaa's narrator – a careerist antihero – caused confusion and alienation.

Careerism is indeed the central theme of the novel. Its protagonist is the ambitious and egoistic sculptor Sven Voore, whose primary aim in life is to achieve fame and success by any means possible. The book's plot revolves around a design competition for a monument to the victims of fascism. Voore, who has joined the Communist Party to further his career and has moved from Moscow to Tallinn, starts drafting the monument in collaboration with the talented sculptor Ain Saarma. Their competitor is an artist of older generation Magnus Tee. Saarma's concept is impressive, but he no longer needs Voore to accomplish it. Voore sees this as a danger to his career and future success, so he quickly switches sides. He declares Saarma's project „ideologically false” and continues his work together with Magnus Tee. The pair win the competition, and Voore gets the recognition he coveted. At the same time, Saarma's professional career crumbles, he is expelled from the Artists' Union for ideological reasons, and as a result, he suffers personal collapse.

Although the book is set during the Soviet period and revolves around Soviet-era art politics as well as the creation of ideologically-suitable commissioned artwork, Vetemaa's *The Monument* also includes more timelessly-applicable topics. The question of how far a person is prepared to go in order to achieve professional gain and monetary rewards is topical within every society and regime. In today's competition-based world, this is a frequently-encountered decision-making point at which people must stop and make choices according to their ethical convictions. The protagonist does indeed achieve his goals – fortune both in his career and financially – but Vetemaa leaves it up to the reader to decide whether the character's deeper conscious accepts the choices he has made.

Text by Piret Viires



PUBLISHING DETAILS:

Enn Vetemaa. Monument
First published in 1965 by Perioodika, 75 pages
Rights' contact: Ilvi Liive at estlit@estlit.ee

TRANSLATIONS:

Moldovian: Литература артистикэ 1986
Czech: Odeon 1984
German: Volk und Welt 1981
Latvian: Liesma 1979
Russian: ВААП-ИНФОРМ 1978 and Известия 1978
Romanian: Univers 1976
Polish: PIW 1975
Lithuanian: Vaga 1972

Mats TRAAAT



MATS TRAAAT (b. 1936) is one of the cornerstones of Estonian modern literature, both in poetry and prose.

Traat studied in Moscow at the Literature Institute and at the Institute of Cinema. He has worked as a film studio editor and since 1970 has been a professional writer. Especially significant for Estonian poetry have been his *Histories from Harala*, collections of epitaphs in the style of Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology*. Somewhat similar, also in significance, are his panoramic novels and short stories, where the writer concentrates on Estonian history. Translations of his poetry and prose have appeared in more than 30 languages.

Coffee Beans

Kohvioad

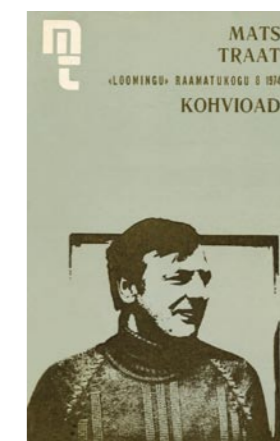
Coffee Beans by Mats Traat – one of Estonia's best novelists – is both an irritating and endearing story about the twilight of a single old woman's life and her helplessness in the quickly-changing world. It tells of one long day, when the pensioner Salme – who lives in a rural *sovkhos* settlement – discovers that the coffee her son's wife, a doctor, ordered her to drink every morning because of her low blood pressure has run out. So begins her hunt for coffee beans, which is a rare commodity in the tiny country stores nearby.

The third-person short story is an inner monologue in a way, comprising Salme's mental debates and discussions, concentrated into a longing for someone by her side who might listen and understand. Traat's characteristic theme of man's adjustment to various situations is reflected here in post-war urbanising Estonia, where the youth leave for the towns to study and work, and all the elderly left in the country have to do is to pointlessly wait. The long-lasting world order and system of rural farming were shattered, because people had undergone the enforcement of a new regime, war, forced collectivisation, and deportations. The background can be faintly surmised, but another issue is simply the intersection of the new world and the old. Salme's situation appears to be unresolvable, since the elderly woman from the world of livestock barns, tractors, and *fufaika* just can't seem to get her bearings in a far-away city like Tallinn – a place, where she begins to scorn everything modern in the neighbourhood of towering residential blocks. Staring at the windows of the opposite building from the apartment of a young, childless, working couple, Salme ultimately feels just as alone as she did in her little room in the *sovkhos* communal house. Salme's dialect likewise only deepens the sense of her being locked in a closed everyday circle: she appears to be the only one left, who speaks it. „Tall, thin, dressed head to toe in black, with only a blood-red shawl on her head like a radiant maple leaf”, she protects herself from the world by being curt and always on her guard.

Traat employs humour and sympathy to describe the old woman's barbed, wary nature; her errands on an ordinary late-winter day; her interpretations of and clashes with what surrounds her; and the confusion, with which everything culminates by evening. The story similarly conveys a modest but exact gallery of secondary characters' portraits – tiny stories of people living one next to the other in a society, which formed with violent interruptions in the new post-war regime.

Traat received his first Tuglas Short Story Award for the novel in appreciation of its tense and surprising final twist (as of now, he is a four-time laureate). *Coffee Beans* has also been staged in the theatre (1975).

Text by Elle-Mari Talivee



PUBLISHING DETAILS:

Mats Traat. *Kohvioad*
First published in 1974 by Periodika, 62 pages
Rights' contact: Ilvi Liive at estlit@estlit.ee

TRANSLATIONS:

Russian: Советский писатель 1986,
Художественная литература 1978,
Eesti Raamat (Tallinn) 1978, Известия 1977,
Молодая гвардия 1976
Ukrainian: Молодь 1979
Polish: PIW 1978

Arvo VALTON



ARVO VALTON (Vallikivi, b. 1935), one of the best-known short story writers and literary innovators of Estonia, has tried his hand at all genres, from voluminous novels to the briefest of aphorisms, and has also written literary criticism, plays, film scenarios, opera librettos, travel and children books, poetry and non-fiction.

Deported to Siberia in 1949, he graduated after the political rehabilitation from the Tallinn Technical University as a mining engineer, then from the Cinema Institute. Since 1968 a professional writer, he has worked at the Tallinnfilm studios and travelled a lot in the world, especially in the former Soviet Union.

His interest in the early history of Europe and Asia is reflected in some of his stories, and in his novel *The Journey to the End of Infinity*.

The Journey to the End of Infinity

Teekond lõpmatuse teise otsa

Arvo Valton's historical-philosophical novel *The Road to the End of Infinity* (1978; titled *The Journey to the End of Infinity* after its second, revised edition) tells of a meeting between two men: the Mongolian ruler and national hero Genghis Khan, and the Chinese Taoist master Chang Chun. Reviews focused on how Valton places the great, violent world conqueror face-to-face with a poet and wise man; however, Valton himself was inspired more by the idea of immortality, which led him to spend four years delving deep into historical sources (such as *The Secret History of the Mongols*); to travel to distant places such as Mongolia, Tuva, the Altai Mountains, and Central Asia; as well as to visit libraries in Moscow – all to ensure that the true historical characters spoke and acted in the work as they may have in real life.

The unparalleled description of the novel's setting and engrossment in its characters are no doubt a result of Valton's extensive research. Yet its central topic is just as intriguing. Specifically, Temüjin – a.k.a. Genghis Khan; a boy born on the Onon River, who rose from a prisoner to a conqueror – requires advice while on the way to the shore of his final sea: how to live either forever, or at least for very long. And so, he calls for the counsel of a Taoist teacher and living saint – Chang Chun, who he believes holds the secret to immortality.

The teacher's journey to meet the khan lasts three years. The two Great Men meet in Samarkand, where Chang Chun honestly acknowledges that immortality is impossible, but endeavours to instruct the ruler on how to live more sparingly and extend his lifespan. Their meeting is, in a way, a futile trip full of contradictions. As a teacher, Chang Chun hopes to put an end to the war and direct it away from his homeland, imparting the idea that an act not done cannot do harm either, since we often do harm while meaning good. On the other hand, he is teaching a world conqueror the secrets to a long life. The meetings constitute the men's

respective attempts to take advantage of the other for his own interests, but a convergence of wisdom and power does not transpire, either – something, which would undoubtedly have had a crushing effect.

The meetings are fleeting, and yet the two men feel an odd longing for the other's company later in their lives. As a result of the fascinatingly-depicted psychological relationship, Genghis Khan appoints Chang Chun the highest of all monks in all the world. Chang Chun senses that the honour does not hinder the great conquest, but rather the opposite.

Chang Chun – a man, who knew the secret to immortality – dies just before Genghis Khan, to the latter's indignation. As of today, both have gained historical immortality.

Valton's work begins with the statement, „Even the widest river starts with a tiny trickle,“ and is composed of three parts: 1) Temüjin's path to become the ruler of the world; 2) Chang Chun's path to the khan; 3) their meetings and conversations in Samarkand. Genghis Khan's path to world dominance spreads out like an Oriental rug from the novel's chronicle-like third-person aspect; passive to bloody 13th-century military history.

The Journey to the End of Infinity is Estonia's best Eastern novel.

Text by Elle-Mari Talivee



PUBLISHING DETAILS:

Arvo Valton. *Teekond lõpmatuse teise otsa*
First published in 1978 by Eesti Raamat, 383 pages
Rights' contact: Ilvi Liive at estlit@estlit.ee

TRANSLATIONS:

Bulgarian: Авангард Принт 2014
Russian: Советский писатель 1989

Viivi LUIK



VIIVI LUIK (b. 1946) is a poet and a prose writer, free-lance writer since 1967. She has published volumes of poetry, novels, essays and children's books. The most important are the novels *Seitsmes rahukevad* (The Seventh Spring of Peace, 1985) and *Ajaloo ilu* (The Beauty of History, 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. These two books are among the most translated contemporary classics in Estonian literature.

The Seventh Spring of Peace

Seitsmes rahukevad

During the rule of Soviet censorship the publication of *The Seventh Spring of Peace* seemed nothing short of a miracle, along with its publishing in Finnish next year. This was but the beginning of the remarkable success of Luik's novels in Europe. Joel Sang compares the novel with the paradigmatic childhood novel of Estonian literature, Friedebert Tuglas's *Väike Illimar* (Little Illimar, 1937; another tempting parallel would be Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster*, 1977). Both are autobiographical and observe the world through the eyes of a lonely 5–6-year-old country child, conveyed by an adult narrator, but the milieu could not be more different. Unlike Illimar's manor house idyll, the world of Luik's child means a parochial village during the Stalinist collective farm hysteria, empty farms of those deported and guerrillas hiding in the forests: life in the midst of poverty, irrational evil and fear as a contrast to the appealing and dashing Soviet utopias. Tuglas wrote: „I would like to be little Illimar again“, whereas a „Soviet“ writer claims to be „wholeheartedly happy that my childhood is behind me..“ Luik says: „I chose this child not because I wanted to describe myself and my childhood, but because she was most suitable in depicting that era. [...] The pathos, naivety and optimism of the time – I think the child has all that in her.“

The Seventh Spring of Peace is a highly poetic, figuratively braced text with dozens of budding poems inside; a kind of prose poem. The style is confessional, reflections of the past, present and future intermingle. The profusion of associations hides a simple story line provided with a palette of semi-animistic intuitions of an imaginative young girl. She wishes to act like a radio battery that captures all the voices fluttering in the air. The girl makes no distinction between friends and foes, victims and aggressors, she sees everything around her as a fascinating bustle which she eagerly tries to

communicate with. The linguistic universe of text is polyphonic and magic: the standard language of internal speech of the fictional narrator alternates with the dialogical colloquial and dialectal speech, the communist newspeak with national style layers from folksy ballads and church songs or from bourgeois reading material to allusions of high poetry. The work contains a peculiarly humorous sadistic pleasure, a special irony towards its character. The environment, often not understood by her at all, becomes perceptible in the consciousness of an adult reader – the fading tang of history comes alive again.



PUBLISHING DETAILS:

Viivi Luik. *Seitsmes rahukevad*
First published in 1985 by Eesti Raamat, 192 pages
Rights' contact: Ilvi Liive at estlit@estlit.ee

TRANSLATIONS:

Latvian: Lauku Avīze 2010 and Preses Nams 1995
Mari: Sarta 2008
Norwegian: Det Norske Samlaget 1998
Spanish: Seix Barral 1993
French: éditions Christian Bourgois 1992
German: Rowohlt Verlag 1991
Swedish: Fripress Legenda 1990 and Fripress Bokförlag 1988
Ukrainian: Dnipro 1989
Russian: Eesti Raamat (Tallinn) 1988
Finnish: Tammi 1988, 1987 and 1986



Estonian
Literature
Centre

Estonian Literature Centre

The Estonian Literature Centre (ELIC) exists to generate interest in Estonian literature abroad. As well as being closely involved with translators, writers and publishers, ELIC also works in close partnership with book fairs and literary events, embassies, cultural and academic institutes. ELIC organizes translation seminars and coordinates the Translator-in-residence programme in Estonia. ELIC has created a unique English language web site on Estonian writers and translators of Estonian literature and maintains a developing database of translations of Estonian literature. The web site and database can be accessed at:

www.estlit.ee

Translation Grants

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www.kulka.ee

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Translated by Adam Cullen

Photos by Jüri J. Dubov, Toomas Huik, Peeter Langovits, Kalju Suur and
Estonian Literary Museum

Designed by Tiiu Pirsko

Printed by Pakett Printing House

Special thanks to the Estonian National Library

ISSN: 2504-558X

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