

10 Books from Estonia



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Estonian
Literature
Centre

Andrei Hvostov

THE PASSION OF SILLAMÄE



ANDREI HVOSTOV (b. 1963) studied history at the University of Tartu and has worked for almost 20 years as a journalist. An Estonian writer with a Russian name (his father is from Siberia), Hvostov has a different way of approaching Estonia's history in his books – a certain wish to see Estonia from an unexpected angle. He crosses geographic borders easily, and retells basic myths in a different way. His most recent book, *Sillamäe passioon* (*The Passion of Sillamäe*, 2011), is an engrossing travelogue into the period his generation vividly remembers, but to a place that almost no one knew. The book was a success: it was awarded the Annual Award of the Estonian Cultural Endowment in 2012. The author was actually already awarded previously for writing about Sillamäe, receiving the 2007 Friedebert Tuglas Short Story Award for his exceptional short story, *Sinised Mäed* (*The Blue Hills*).

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Sillamäe passioon
 Petrone Print, 2011, pp. 304
 Rights' contact: Ilvi Liive at estlit@estlit.ee

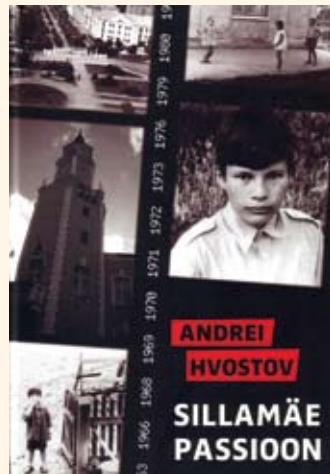
Rights sold to *Finland*: Moreeni

AWARDS

Free Award of the Estonian Cultural Endowment 2012
 Virumaa Literature Award 2012

Andrei Hvostov is a journalist and an author, who is often swimming against the current and liking it. Born to an Estonian mother and a Russian father, he is erroneously sometimes considered to be a Russian that just happens to speak Estonian. The local Russian minority's voice in the Estonian literature scene is not very strong, so Hvostov has somewhat undeliberately been presented as a voice of the minority population; or as merely expressing a different point of view on various critical issues concerning society, history, politics, and other topics.

Hvostov has had positive reception of his essays and short stories. *The Passion of Sillamäe* (*Sillamäe passioon*, 2011), which followed his first novel *Limping Achilles*, is by far his most popular book to date. It can be described as childhood memoirs with a strange twist. Location and social environment are key aspects in this book. Hvostov grew up in Sillamäe – a small industrial town that was known mainly for its factories, which produced strategically important material like uranium oxide and other components



primarily for use by the Soviet Union's military. Many people from other areas of the Soviet Union were brought to work in the town, and thus the vast majority of citizens were Russian-speakers. From 1947–1991, it was a “closed town” that one could enter only with a special permit. Hvostov was born in 1963, and so the main focus of the book is on life during 1970's.

It is not a sample of childhood “misery memoirs” like *A Child Called “It”* by Dave Pelzer, or for instance *Toast* by Nigel Slater, which focuses on food and growing up being gay. *The Passion of Sillamäe* is not a tragic or a funny work. Hvostov explains at the beginning of the book that he has to write it in order to explain to his son

what life was like in his childhood. Yet besides the familiar Soviet atmosphere, the interesting issue it addresses is describing the life of local Russians and the relations between Estonians and Russians. It's a very manly look at such a life, partly due to the setting: an industrial town and the site of large battles during World War II, which meant people still talked about the war a great deal and children dug up ammunition and explosives. No pink love stories, but an abundance of testosterone: you may live in strange small Soviet town, but jeans, sex, vodka, and rock 'n' roll are still important.

The protagonist is a bit of an outcast: he doesn't quite fit in with Russians, yet he is not a part of the “real Estonia”, where his grandmother lives. Up to a point, the book is comparable to *Stalin's Cows* by Sofi Oksanen, which also describes life in Soviet Estonia from child's perspective. The books complement each other in a way – a boy's perspective and a girl's perspective showing how a Soviet childhood was very similar for many, but different in some ways (small town vs. capital). It is not characterized as a tragic time, but merely strange and ironic in some aspects. It was, after all, still a childhood, and Hvostov's story is very similar to that of many others, who grew up in the 70's or 80's.

Text by Tauno Vahter

CAVE PEOPLE GOING ON RECORD

Mihkel Mutt

Subtitled *Fate Stories from Gossip Columns*, the novel is a remarkable and monumental treatment of a rather long period, beginning with the decades after World War II and ending at the present. Amid the novel stands a pub known as The Cave – a meeting point of Tallinn’s cultural elite. Writers, artists, and musicians opposed to the oppressing power of Soviet rule come together in The Cave seemingly every evening of the year, except for some dull weeks in summer. (The prototype of this place, Tallinn’s famous Kuku Club, still exists today.) Throughout his works, Mutt’s protagonists have been cultural figures. The narrator in this novel is a rather modest man, who – first a translator (from Old Iranian), and later as a columnist at a tabloid – enjoys accompanying this fellowship. The man is likewise a keen observer.

The turning point of the novel is the change of power. In *International Man* (*Rahvusvaheline mees*, 1994), Mutt described the restoration of Estonian independence as an employee at the Estonian Foreign Ministry. This time, the event is reflected from a different point of view: as seen, participated in and even carried out metaphorically from

The Cave. There are two important heroes among an entire gallery of cultural figures in the novel, whose lives since boyhood are detailed. One of them is a rebel, the other a collaborator with the Soviet order. Although one is expelled from university and the other follows “the right path”, both ways expose the pressure of the time. It is also a story of adjustment, and notes with sarcasm that those, who fit well in one system are also suited for another, and vice versa.

What becomes clear from the novel is that the Soviet period, although a mental prison, was paradoxically the Golden Age for writers and artists if they at least apparently seemed to fit into the system. These figures had to take censorship into consideration and write between the lines to conceal their attitudes; however, they were honoured royally without having to push themselves publically. This is the tragedy that the protagonist witnesses: he sees his mission in advertising his friends through photos taken for gossip columns.

Mutt’s sharp pen likewise exposes strange behaviour in a variety of social contexts: the novel consists partly of letters from a friend living in a village, who undisguisedly attacks everything foolish in every kind of system.

Text by Elle-Mari Talivee



MIHKEL MUTT (b. 1953) is one of Estonia’s most interesting authors and is well known for his English sense of humour. He is the author of several novels, plays, short stories, critical works, political essays, travel stories, and recently also memoirs. His first novel, *Hired tuules* (*Mice in the Wind*, 1982) addressed theatre circles and became a cult item in itself. Through his works, Mutt has dedicated much to the lives of intellectuals, often with humour and self-irony.

Mutt graduated in Estonian philology and journalism from the University of Tartu. He has worked in literary magazines and newspapers, in theatre and the Estonian Foreign Ministry, has been a freelance writer, and since 2007 has held the post of editor-in-chief of the cultural monthly *Looming*. As a columnist, Mutt reviews theatre and social issues, and also holds an interest in public policy.

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Kooparahvas läheb ajalukku

Fabian, 2012, pp. 464

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

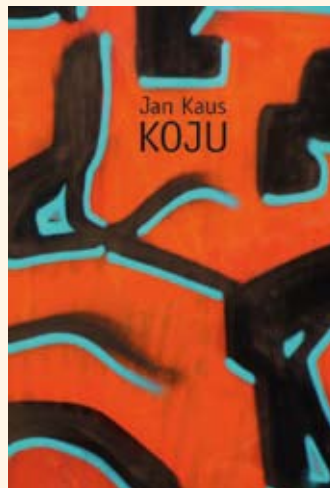
Jan Kaus **GOING HOME**



JAN KAUS (b. 1971) is an author of postmodernist short stories, poetry, and four novels. Kaus studied pedagogy and philosophy at Tallinn University, is active as an artist illustrating poetry books, and has played bass guitar in an underground band. As a writer, Kaus is a cosmopolitan; yet he is greatly inspired by Tallinn. He dedicated his third novel *Hetk* (*Instant*, 2009) to the city, and this scope is broadened by his remarkable, enjoyable prose poetry collection *Miniatuurid* (*Miniatures*, 2009), which consists of little colourful pictures of several cities around the world. Kaus has translated Finnish literature (by Sofi Oksanen, among others), and his own poetry has also been translated into Finnish, Russian and Swedish. Active as an essayist and literary critic, he was Chairman of the Estonian Writers' Union from 2004 to 2007, and annually organises the *HeadRead* international literature festival in Tallinn.

Jan Kaus is known in Estonian literature as a far-reaching and talented author, who has proven his worth in several areas – as a prosaist, a poet, a dramatist, and an essayist. He has emerged as one of the leading figures of the younger generation of writers, and in addition to creating literature, is also known as a keen thinker issuing comments on topics of both culture and society. Jan Kaus can, however, still be regarded foremost as a novelist: his work *He* (*Tema*, 2006) earned both the critics' favour and popularity among readers; the novel *Instant* (*Hetk*, 2009) was highly esteemed by critics, and was among the nominees for the annual award given by the Estonian Cultural Endowment.

Jan Kaus writes about the actuality of modern-day Estonia, which is one of his strengths. His latest novel, *Going Home* (*Koju*, 2012), also speaks of contemporary Estonia, which has been able to enjoy independence for 20 years, and wrestled its way free of the burden of Soviet memory. In that sense, Kaus' novel could occur in any modern European country: the work's focus is general and universal. Kaus studies man together with his flaws, fears, failures, and yearnings.



The novel comprises three parts, each with its own main character – the film critic Rasmus Susmar, the actor Asko Oksa, and Kalle Ellak, the owner of a PR company. These three parts appear independent of one another: it is as if there were no plot coherence between the sections. At the same time, that coherence is semantic, emotional. All three characters are successful in some sense, it seems as if everything is in order; however, each one's life is overshadowed by vague angst and a feeling of helplessness. One significant event that unites the different parts is an unexpected and even mysterious electrical outage that hits the entire city. The reason for the outage remains

unexplained, and the incident can be seen as a reference to Mati Unt's post-modernist novel *Things in the Night*. Kaus' work is not, however, a post-modernist game of irony; but rather is serious, genuine, sympathetic to the characters and understanding of them. Central to the book is the yearning to reach home – a place, where there is peace and safety, and where angst cannot enter.

The city of Tallinn also emerges as an important figure in the novel: Kaus sketches it with a masterful hand, also bringing pictures of the old, faded pre-war Tallinn forth to the reader. In this way, Kaus awakes the Tallinn of the past to life, together with its colours and smells.

Kaus' novel is serious, engrossing, and sensitively depicts modernity and the modern person. And as mentioned previously, the book is universal: above languages and cultures, about being human overall.

Text by Piret Viies

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Koju
Tuum, 2012, pp. 208
Rights' contact: Ilvi Liive at estlit@estlit.ee

Tõnu Õnnepalu's new, sixth novel, *Mandala* (2012), is a story of a writer, cats, and the formula for happiness. When the writer moves into his new home, the Yellow House, he finds two black cats there before him. Quite contrary to the writer's wishes, they become cheerful mirrors of his life and of human life overall. The telling of their tale leads to ever-new stories, which interweave and ultimately form the Mandala pattern. In this is a place for both the cats and their owner, but also for the little boy Joosep, the long-gone manor folk and its new residents... All of them (at least the people, if not the cats as well) have and are searching for their own formula for happiness. Sometimes, it seems so tangible and simple – just like the Ladakh monks' colourful sand painting made one summer at the manor in the Yellow House's neighbourhood. The writer finds his happiness in writing, but the manner in which this happens is revealed at the end of the novel.

Mandala is divided into three interwoven parts. The first, subtitled *Joosep*, tells the story of the writer's cats; the second, subtitled *Mandala*, speaks primarily about days and chores at the manor nearby the writer's home; and the third, subtitled *Water*, describes the writer's move to a forest ranger's homestead on an island, and his life there. In addition to the writer's persona, all three stories are connected by being told almost as if from a cat's perspective; or at least in connection with the cats. To borrow the words of modern-day advertising lingo, *Mandala* is a book that cats would read (not to mention cat-lovers).

Õnnepalu draws inspiration for the novel from his two places of living over the last few years: a house near Esna Manor in Järva County, and a forest homestead in Leigri on the island of Hiiumaa. Yet these experiences are conveyed by way of a certain shift, are interwoven with fantasy; thus, everything in the novel is both real and imagined all at once – both genuinely candid and well concealed. Õnnepalu has himself acknowledged: "Actually, writing is precisely where almost everything remains unspoken, but something important is perhaps still said, regardless. It isn't and can never be much, but it must *be* – that one something."

Mandala is a comparatively uncommon work among Tõnu Õnnepalu's writings – it is basically the first novel written by him in the third person (*The Price* also uses the third person, although even this work actually represents the first person at the end). The novel's mildly self-ironic tone is also rather unusual: the author's alter ego – the main character of the book, a writer – is often presented to us in an ironic prism. The narrator engages in the protagonist's inner searching rather from a distance, utilising a cat's gaze to show the naiveness of the act. And lastly, *Mandala* is likely the first Õnnepalu novel that may be read with interest by all age groups – from juniors to seniors, there is something in it for everyone.

Text by Marek Tamm



TÕNU ÕNNEPALU (b. 1962), also known under the pseudonyms Emil Tode and Anton Nigov, gained renown with the novel *Piiririik* (*Border State*, as Emil Tode, 1993), which received the Baltic Assembly's annual literary award and has been translated into 19 languages. Õnnepalu studied biology at the University of Tartu and has worked as a teacher of biology and chemistry, a freelance writer, translator and journalist. He has been the editor of the literary magazine *Vikerkaar* and the director of the Estonian Institute in Paris. Through his prose and sensitive, remarkable poetry, he seeks the answers to various crucial human questions. Õnnepalu is a master of creating atmosphere and exceptional at writing about man and nature: his books are rich in subtle nuances and sad beauty. He often uses the form of a diary in his works. In 2006, Õnnepalu was recognised as the best author of Estonia since the restoration of the Estonian Republic.

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Mandala

Varrak, 2012, pp. 233

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

SELECTED TITLES IN TRANSLATION

Hind (Price)

Danish, Finnish, Norwegian, Swedish

Piiririik (Border State)

Albanian, Chinese, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Russian, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish

Kai Aareleid **RUSSIAN BLOOD**



KAI AARELEID (b. 1972), a translator of works from English, Portuguese and Spanish (David Mamet, Bruce Chatwin, Arturo Pérez-Reverte, Carlos Ruiz Zafón, Javier Marías, Paulo Coelho) into Estonian, and an author of several short stories and a play, made her debut with a novel in 2011. Aareleid's first attempt in this genre, *Vene veri* (*Russian Blood*) was quickly distinguished as a nominee for the Estonian Cultural Endowment annual prose award.

Aareleid studied dramaturgy at the Theatre Academy of Finland, and her play *Minnes kustuta valgus* (*Put Out the Light While Leaving*, 1992) has been staged in Finland.

Russian Blood (*Vene veri*, 2011) is a fascinating, fragmentary book with very brief chapters – a novel consisting of miniatures or even impressions, each one of them painting a whole, finished picture. The book could be a travelogue in its scarce, poetic, and precise manner; and in a way also resembles a diary. As the narrator often speaks of taking photographs, a vivid picturesque quality accompanies the reader on the journey.

Russian Blood is autobiographical on several levels. Firstly, it is the story of a diplomat's wife moving together with her husband from one foreign country to another, worrying about their four children having to grow up far from their homeland, and showing them the way of getting used to new environments. Then, it describes the way that a place – in this case, the metropolis of St. Petersburg – slowly engulfs and charms the initially distrustful newcomer, who herself strives to discover and capture the new world with its beauty, colours and ugliness; with its contrasts of sadness and joy; its bleakness and courageousness. This is the modern reality of a great Russian city steeped



in history and culture, combined with texts the author read about it somewhere before. Furthermore, it is the story of the narrator discovering her very own roots: Aareleid's great-grandmother Alexandra was a Russian girl from the banks of the Volga, who married an Estonian and came to the Republic of Estonia in the 1920's to live on a country farm and have nine children. Thus, it is a kind of dual journey that reveals a strange, even subliminally ashamed unconsciousness; although one that is strong and filled with love. The story of the narrator's ancestor had been something of a family secret, and from the very beginning of the book, a dialogue with her awakens in its own context in Narva, on the

border of Estonia and Russia. It is a deeply personal, but discreet story; an attempt to achieve understanding and happiness from feeling spiritual communion, even when comprehension is no clearer. It is a somewhat mystic manner of inheritance: an attempt to think the thoughts and dream the dreams of times long past.

The novel has been compared in style to Anton Chekhov, and the line of mothers and daughters is the axis running through the whole story. The narrator recounts stories starting with her great-grandmother and down to her little daughter, Sadu. At the same time, however, she is speaking to Alexandra, the young Russian woman from whom she has inherited her customs, the family traditions that she has not acknowledged before. It is a touching work about roots found in a foreign land, accompanied by a charming homesickness.

Text by Elle-Mari Talivee

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Vene veri

Varrak, 2011, pp.200

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

LETTERS TO AUNT ANNE

Urmas Vadi

Urmas Vadi's first novel, *Letters to Aunt Anne* (*Kirjad tädi Annele*, 2010) is an epistolary book in form. It is a curious work about writing a novel and being a writer in itself.

The story goes as follows: a young writer, a narrator bearing the same name as the author of the book, writes to "Aunt Anne" for the first time in May 2008, promising to dedicate himself to writing. He is finally going to fulfil the expectations of his profession instead of wasting time on different things he has been doing up to then: writing the plays, film scripts, and texts that he is asked to write. The novel consists of eleven letters from over the period of about one year, and seven different excerpts sent to Aunt Anne.

The author of the letters is a fantastic storyteller, and the correspondence itself often transforms into actual tales.

The novel seems to already have a title: *The Anatomy of Foxes*. Seemingly beginning as a metatext about writing a novel, the letters even contain the first two chapters of the book to describe the writing process. However, the author has an immediate surprise in store:

instead of continuing, he conveys to Aunt Anne different pieces that he has written for several reasons.

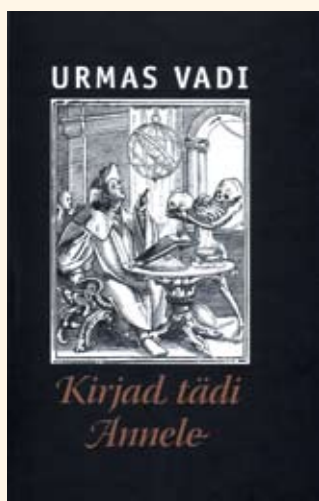
The stories he includes are bizarre: they are surprising and deeply humorous, frightening, sad, very realistic, and abruptly entirely surreal. Things from everyday life are mixed with absurd fantasy and black humour in a dreamlike and yet familiar world with local Estonian place names – the living and the dead meet with self-evident ease.

Still, every text delves deep into the experience of being a writer. *The Death of Tartu* goes into the very young man's days beginning his career and meeting the writer E (the prototype is the well-known Estonian writer Jüri Ehlevest), and confronting him to become a writer himself. Here, meeting personalized Death in Tartu's marketplace seems to be the most logical thing in the world.

Of the two other longer stories, *Revident (Inspector)* is a sort of thriller, in which the writer goes to live for a few days in a village of Russian Orthodox Old-Believers and write a story there. He becomes entangled in an old legend told in the village, and meets the Devil. *Toonesepad (Death Watch Beetles)* describes an old wooden house, in which the writer lives together with his cousins. The issue of fame arises in the story: as selling the apartment of a dead writer seems to be easier, he has to fake his death.

Although the segments resemble fragments in a way, they still make up a whole. The novel ends with a poem written to the writer's son, humorously and yet seriously summing up the fears he has: most of all, the fear that his son will become a writer, too.

Text by Elle-Mari Talivee



URMAS VADI (b. 1977) graduated in radio directing from Tallinn University. He has worked as a radio journalist, and is a playwright and producer.

Vadi was the youngest author to win the New Drama Competition with the children's play, *Varasta veel võõraid karusid (That's What You Get for Stealing My Bears!, 1999)*. Since then, his plays have been constantly on stage and repeatedly awarded; such as with the Annual Award of the Estonian Cultural Endowment in 2010. Vadi has written film scripts and short stories (winning the prestigious Friedebert Tuglas Short Story Award in 2011).

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Kirjad tädi Annele
Jumalikud Ilmutused, 2010, pp. 239
Rights' contact: Ilvi Liive at estlit@estlit.ee

AWARDS

Wordwormer Prize 2011

Peeter Sauter **OLD MAID**



PEETER SAUTER (b. 1962), an author of a dozen books, is an important name in Estonian short prose since 1990. He has studied drama at the Academy of Music and Theatre in Tallinn and at Liverpool John Moores University. His works include plays and film scripts, travel books and children's literature. A master of dialogues, the logic and rhetoric of Sauter's characters hold a kind of organic naturalism coupled with a very humane warmth. Sauter has translated the works of Jack Kerouac and Charles Bukowski into Estonian. His collection of short stories *Must Peeter* (*Old Maid*, 2011) was nominated for the Estonian Cultural Endowment annual prose award.

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Must Peeter
Eesti Keele Sihtasutus, 2011, pp. 340
Rights' contact: Ilvi Liive at estlit@estlit.ee

FILMED

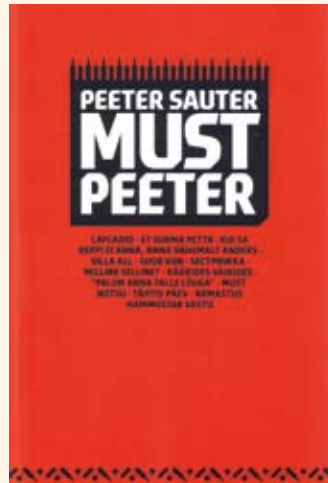
Must Peeter
Luxfilm 2008, directed by Priit Pääsuke
Best Estonian short film 2008

Peeter Sauter is a size of his own in Estonian literature – a star of the 1980's prose generation on one hand, and a reviled naturalist on the other. Whenever a discussion over contemporary Estonian literature arises – that is, when someone raises the topic of why it's good for nothing – then one example given is Sauter and his filthy world, his curse-ridden manner of speaking, and his homespun style.

This is the result of cursory reading, of course: the world is changing, and people are simply no longer able to look behind words. In that sense *Old Maid* (*Must Peeter*, 2011) is a very significant book – Sauter himself indeed may not recognise this (but maybe he doesn't deny it, either); however, he deals in some sense with linguistic philosophy, with how we could understand one another overall. With how we wrap ourselves into a net of our own words and thoughts. He uses many dialogues in a lively language; his narrator's voice and description are also above all brief and brittle.

The characters in Sauter's world are, for the most part, unhappy. Assaulted

by life. They are, in this sense, beat (Jack Kerouac is Sauter's spiritual relative – the guardian saint of all wanderers and drunks). The unhappy children of a welfare society. Ageing people that have lost their roots, the point of being. They go to get a divorce on Christmas Eve; they take up drinking again while there is an infant at home; at the pub, they celebrate the fact that they haven't fought in two weeks, and then get into an argument and land out in the night... Films have also been made based on the stories in the books; however, it would be right to give those manuscripts to Jim Jarmush or Aki Kaurismäki – they would likely be able to appreciate Sauter's rueful humour.



Sauter is Hemingway's pupil – 10% of the world is on the surface of the water, while the rest is hidden below a dark ocean; is in the reader's fantasy. Every story also has a punch line, but we may or may not like them. The thing is that Sauter doesn't offer us simple solutions, but rather photos – as a writer, he is an old-school street photographer, who doesn't allow pictures to be staged for him, but rather records what the world has to offer.

Someone somewhere recently spoke enthusiastically at a bar table about how Sauter is like Estonia's Charles Bukowski. But Bukowski is more boring in that sense – he's certainly also a good writer, but everything with him is so macho. He's so full of himself. Sauter's characters, his male characters, are still brittle and uncertain; are sad, mostly sad. And it is that sadness, with which he makes the world beautiful.

Text by Jürgen Rooste

HOMELESSNESS

Olle Lauli

At a time, when self-biographical literature is gaining popularity, the question may arise: to what extent is the field of novel literature capable of speaking to us? Olle Lauli's novel *Homelessness* (*Kodutus*, 2011) is brilliantly suited for finding an answer to this. And not only or foremost due to its voluminousness. *Homelessness* is rather made a credible novel by the fact that it is a story, in which one can sense both timing and timelessness. Lauli is undoubtedly capable of describing contemporary Estonia with a psychological alertness, as if beneath a magnifying glass – it is the young consumer- and success society together with all its frantic spasms. Yet not just that. The main character of *Homelessness*, a hero that takes several forms of name and moves in the peripheries of society (for simplicity right now, we'll call him Merko – one of his names), is an archetype of Prince Myshkin – an outright unbearably sensitive and sympathetic person, whose sheer existence contrasts sharply with all those types of the new, success-hungry era of Estonia's capital, Tallinn. This is, however, only at first glance. Something in Merko's being causes people to erode: cracks emerge in their carefully sculpted masks, and it is suddenly apparent that the people are not who they imagined themselves to be. A mute core or even darker gap glows behind their identity, behind their role, and the social role that seemed stable as such is swayed with uncommon ease, never to be restored again. Bursts of uncertainty, abstract fear, exhaustion, and a need for intimacy flow out from beneath the surface – not even the best instructor could teach them how to handle such currents. The characters must either descend ever deeper towards their inner self, or forever wander upon the shards of their identity.

Perhaps it is for this reason that even the style of *Homelessness* is especially intense, with outright astonishingly true-to-life dialogues and situations that nearly cause physical reactions. The characters' joints creak; suddenly, they have to start searching for their pieces on the ground, half-blind. It's thus that they stumble into a tunnel, at the end of which may shine the mouth of another tunnel. *Homelessness* might thereby take quite some readers' breath away. Nevertheless, one thing is clear – Lauli does not explain or clarify, does not want to make decisions for the readers or push the reader in a certain direction. Lauli is foremost a fantastic describer of situations and characters, a storyteller, who becomes involved in and lives along with the story in about the same way as a knife cuts into the body. He doesn't strive to condemn, but to comprehend. Therefore, *Homelessness* demands patience – Lauli is an author, who cannot manage to storm through his characters, plot lines or situations. He remains an observer, and arising as a result of that observation are jaw-dropping landscapes and detailed close-ups of human existence. Even people in early-21st-century Estonia search for intimacy, understanding, freedom, and loyalty to oneself.

Text by Jan Kaus



OLLE LAULI (Olev Lillemets, b. 1961), author of the monumental novels *Niguliste õpilased* (*The Students of St Nicholas*, 2007) and *Kodutus* (*Homelessness*, 2011), won with his second book the Prose Award of the Estonian Cultural Endowment. This work was also selected as “book of the year” in Estonia.

Lauli graduated from the Estonian University of Life Sciences, and is working as an official in the Estonian State Forest Management Centre. His topics of writing are very serious: *Homelessness* tells about homeless people in Tallinn, their suicidal everyday life dominated by alcohol, and questions the fate of the human soul.

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Kodutus
Tuum, 2011, pp. 487
Rights' contact: Ilvi Liive at estlit@estlit.ee

AWARDS

Prose Award of the Estonian Cultural Endowment 2012

Juhan Peegel

I FELL ON THE FIRST SUMMER OF WAR



JUHAN PEEGEL (1919–2007) was born on the island Saaremaa and studied at the University of Tartu after returning from World War II. He became a highly respected and much loved professor at the university, authoring several studies on folklore and the early history of the Estonian press. Many generations of Estonian journalists regard him as their mentor. Besides academic work, he wrote short stories and occasional pieces in light genres; nevertheless, his greatest literary achievement was *I Fell on the First Summer of War*: a “novel in fragments”. Steering clear of ideological pitfalls, this book became both popular and officially acclaimed.

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Ma langesin esimesel sõjasuvel

Tammerraamat, 2008, pp. 239, first published in 1979

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

Finnish: Weilin + Göös 1983, German: Perioodika 1982,

Latvian: Liesma 1983, Lithuanian: Vaga 1982, Polish: Państw.

Instytut Wydawniczy 1987, Russian: Eesti Raamat 1982

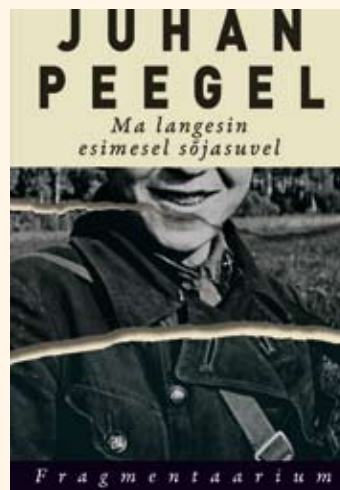
AWARDS

A. H. Tammsaare Literature Award 1979

National Award 1980

“This story won’t take that long, as I, Jaan Tamm, a simple private, have already fallen during the first summer of war. I was buried on a warm September day in a mass grave dug at the corner of the village cemetery by kolkhozniks, who had been rounded up from a half-burnt village.” – these are the first lines of Juhan Peegel’s novel in fragments written in 1978.

In the summer of 1940, Estonia was annexed to the Soviet Union by Stalin and the Estonian Army was incorporated into the Red Army. Most of the officers were imprisoned or executed, and the servicemen were sent a year later to fight the Nazi invaders near Pskov and Novgorod. One of them was the author Juhan Peegel: later a prominent philologist and a cultural historian. Drawing from his personal experience, the novel narrates the destinies of young Estonian men removed from their cosy environment and forced to adapt to the new ideology, deprivations and wartime ordeals. They suffer from the political pressures, the crude attempts at re-education, the mistrust of their commanders, and longing for their families and life before the communists and the war.



The novel employs the device of the post-mortem first-person narrative voice of Jaan Tamm, a young man that falls in the first skirmishes with the invaders near Pskov. His early death is no obstacle to knowing and commenting on the future careers of his comrades, and the novel includes a cross-section of prototypical Estonian biographies. One of them concerns Raul Kirsipuu, the author’s alter ego, who learns immediately before the war of the deportation of his parents and brother’s family to Siberia. In the eyes of his fellows, this fact makes him liable to desert to the Germans’ side, but he stays in the ranks of the Red Army and later, in

the 1960’s, even joins the Communist Party. Writing during Brezhnev’s time, Juhan Peegel could not openly discuss the political reality of Soviet terror and the following mass desertions. However, his humane perspective on mundane details and the psychological reality of animal fear, bodily suffering, and death more than compensates for this hindrance.

Text by Märt Väljataga

THE NEW DEVIL OF HELLSBOTTOM

Anton Hansen Tammsaare

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.

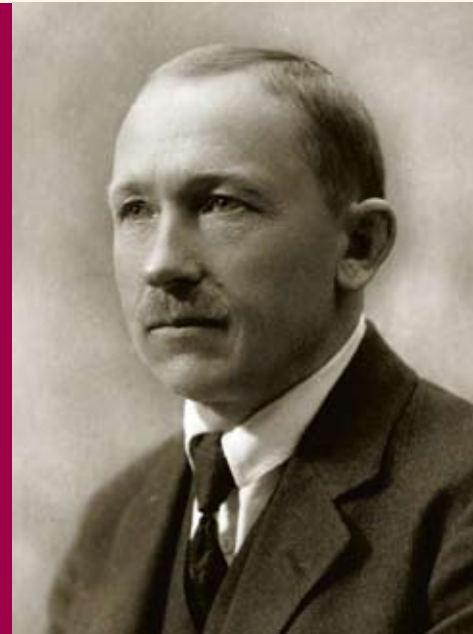
The plot is set in motion with a prologue in heaven, where God has started to entertain doubts about mankind's ability to live a pious life and achieve salvation on earth. If human beings are indeed constitutionally incapable of salvation, then hell will be shut down and the human race written off as 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 12 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



ANTON HANSEN TAMMSAARE (1878–1940) is the most highly regarded writer in Estonia. Influenced by Dostoevsky 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*). His books are available in more than 20 languages.

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Põrgupõhja uus Vanapagan
Avita, 2000, pp. 264, first published in 1939
Rights are free

Czech: Odeon 1978, English: Norvik Press 2009, Finnish: Kansankulttuuri 1977, German: Verlag der Nation 1960, Hindi: Pundareek Prakashan (expected 2013), Hungarian: Kossuth 1959, Latvian: Latvijas Valsts izdevniecība 1951, Lithuanian: Liesma 1957, Polish: Czytelnik 1983, Russian: Goslitizdat 1956, Swedish: Förlaget för litteratur på främmande språk 1963, Ukrainian: Dnipro 1978, Uzbek: 1984

SELECTED TITLES IN TRANSLATION

Tõde ja õigus (Truth and Justice)
Czech, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Russian, Slovak

Estonian Literature Centre

The Estonian Literature Centre (Eesti Kirjanduse Teabekeskus) exists to generate interest in Estonian literature abroad. The centre publishes information on Estonian literature in several languages. As well as being closely involved with translators, writers and publishers, ELIC also works in close partnership with book fairs and literary events, ministries, embassies, cultural and academic institutes, other literature information centres, libraries and universities both in Estonia and abroad. ELIC organizes numerous literature events and translation seminars around the world and coordinates the Translator-in-residence programme. ELIC also maintains a database of translations of Estonian literature in other languages. ELIC was founded in 2001.

Translation Grants

To support the translation of the works of Estonian authors into foreign languages there is a translation grant TRADUCTA for translators of Estonian literature. Applicants may request grants to cover translation expenses for translations from Estonian directly. TRADUCTA is financed by the Estonian Cultural Endowment. (For more information see www.estlit.ee/subsidies).

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