



A
MODERN
INTROVERT'S
READING LIST

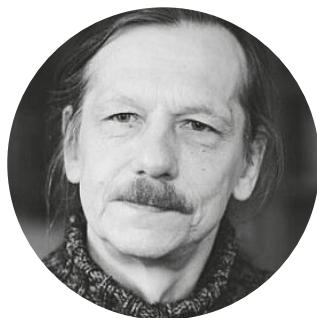
This catalogue is both an overview of the contemporary Latvian literature and a treasure chest of wonderful stories, bringing together fantasy, crime, literary fiction and everything in-between.

Why literature? This question – which contains both the answer and the attitude that gave rise to the question in the first place – pops up from time to time in a small nation with a small language. There are smoldering doubts: does the novel really teach us to know ourselves and the world better? But even doubts can be rewarding – Latvian literature published at the beginning of the 21st century surprises us with its diversity.

These are the works of those who understand and try to predict life, documentarians of the latest fads and shapers of their nation's beginnings, storytellers of their family origins and the adventures of folk heroes, ponderers of "the big questions," and the survivors of these answers who follow in the same craft. Synthesizers, creators, writers of the essential code that shapes each and every one of us.

Many of the books you will find in this catalogue can already be read in various languages around the world. These books are joined by new, interesting and original novels and short stories, that will suit all tastes. A book can't fix a nation's problems. Writing speaks to each of us differently, echoing and searching for all that's most worthwhile inside us, all that is good . . . searching for the humanity that was written into our source code as a law essential to survival.

We hope you seek and find the echoes of this code in the diversity of the works of Latvian writers!



GUNTIS BERELIS

Photo: Ģirts Raģelis

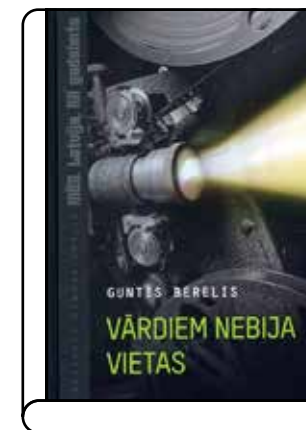
GUNTIS BERELIS (1961) was born in Cēsis, Latvia. He is Latvian prose writer and literary critic who studied physics and graduated with a degree in library science from the University of Latvia. One of Latvia's leading literary critics, he is known for his prose-like essay writing style. He has published *A History of Latvian Literature* (1999), a collection of essays about 20th-century national literature. He also runs a blog of literary reviews, studies, and criticism, called "Guntis Berelis Writes: Thoughts on Literature" (berelis.wordpress.com). He has also published three short story collections – *Mythomania* (1989), *The Hunt for the Minotaur* (1999) and *I Never Talk Rubbish* (2018) – and two novels, *Fiery Bulls with Golden Horns* (2007; winner of the 2007 Annual Latvian Literature Award) and *Words Were of No Use* (2015).

1 The novel *Fiery Bulls with Golden Horns* is set in present-day Latvia. There are two separate story lines that are nonetheless linked conceptually and metaphorically. The two stories converge in the final pages of the book, when its two protagonists cross paths. The "Writer's story" is centered on literary historian named (coincidentally) Guntis Berelis, who is the embodiment of both a pedantically analytical mind and narrow-mindedness. Berelis the historian has made the "discovery of the century": a hitherto unknown and brilliant poet, Eduards Bīskaps, who wrote in the 1930s and managed to publish a single small volume. Bīskaps, in contrast to the boring and conservative Berelis, is the embodiment of creative passion. The rest of the story involves the relationship between Berelis and Bīskaps. Finally, after one of their conflicts, Bīskaps turns out to have vanished along with his brilliant poetry.

The "Artist's story" – written in the second person – focuses on an anonymous painter who may be one of the most outstanding contemporary Latvian artists ever known. The artist specializes in female nudes and lives a rather secluded life: he doesn't have much contact with his colleagues, exhibits rarely yet to critical acclaim, and is obsessed with painting an ideal nude in such a way that



1
Published by
Dienas Grāmata,
2007
288 pages
All rights
available



2
Published by
Dienas Grāmata,
2015
256 pages
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the painting would come to life. His main struggle is in finding a model who would suit his vision. Time and again the artist finds that it is only possible for a painting to come to life if its model is killed, and he does not hesitate to do so. At the end of the novel, the two protagonists run into each other on the street – Berelis, who has just lost his Bīskaps, and the artist, who has managed to avert his creative crisis by murdering his model. Their eyes meet, but they walk past each other without making contact.

2 The novel *Words Were of No Use* is set in 1913 in the coastal Latvian town of Ventspils, the location used for the filming of the first locally-produced motion picture, *Kur patiesība?* (Where Is the Truth?). Rudolf Tush – a man known for his "hands of gold" and readiness to take on any job – finds himself by chance as part of the film crew. Nurturing a range of well-concealed sinister passions, such as his panache for arson (a reputation earned during the 1905 Revolution, when he reduced manor houses and castles to rubble), he is an obscure addition to the film crew. He is also mute, or rather has rejected speech following a rather foolish encounter with a Russian Cossack patrol in 1905. One night, after an evening of hearty carousing in a local pub and his first encounter with a pornographic film, he accidentally kills a man and is forced to flee. The story then jumps ahead to 1915. With World War I raging, Tush, certainly no patriot or devotee of the Russian Empire, embraces the flames of war as an opportunity for profiteering. Entering active combat in 1916, he finds himself on a battlefield strewn with the corpses of fallen soldiers following a German gas attack. There, he encounters the film crew he had once worked with, scheduled to shoot a film about Armageddon and finding the surrounding battlefields the ideal location for their needs. Tush embarks on a new phase of planning for a lucrative future, but luck turns its back on him once again. A character with a distinctively dark streak, Tush is the epitome of the sort of small-minded, outwardly apolitical individual who eventually paves the way to the war.

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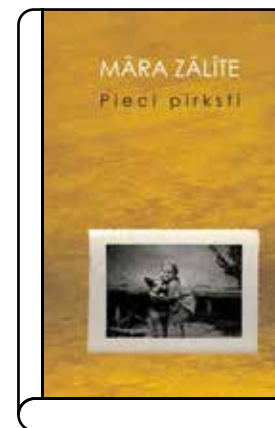
MĀRA ZĀLĪTE

Photo: Aiga Redmane

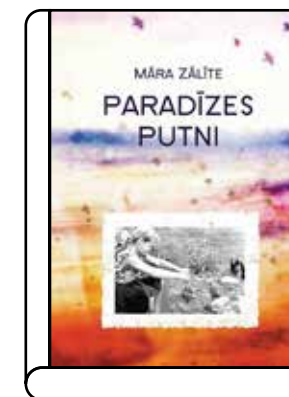
Poet and playwright **MĀRA ZĀLĪTE** was born in 1952 in Krasnoyarsk, Siberia, where her family had been deported in 1941 by the Soviet regime. When Zālīte was four years old, her family returned to Latvia. In addition to her writing career, Zālīte has worked at the Latvian Writers' Union, served as editor-in-chief of the literary magazine *Karogs*, and headed the Latvian Copyright Agency. She is the author of five poetry collections and 21 staged plays and musicals, several children's books, essay collections, and the novel *Five Fingers* (2013). She has won numerous literary award, including the prestigious J. G. Herder Prize in 1993. She is an emeritus member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences. Her works have been translated into several languages, including German, Russian, English, Estonian, Lithuanian, and Swedish, among others.

- ① ***Five Fingers*** was the winner of the 2013 Annual Latvian Literature Award. It is a fictionalized childhood memoir in which the author describes her family's return from Siberia to Latvia in the 1950s, and her life in Latvia in the late 1950s and early 1960s. "In her career, Zālīte has been best known as a poet and playwright... Poetry and drama are also present in *Five Fingers*; the best writing in the book has a combination of precise, poetic detail and dramatic purpose, carrying us to the end of the novel where the protagonist, Laura, promises to fulfil her grandfather's dying wish – to give his wedding ring to his son, Reinis, 'upon his return' from Siberia, where he disappeared without a trace after being deported. This means that Laura has taken on the task of remembering.

...The 'five fingers' are a metaphor for the branches of the apple tree in which Laura sets up her perch, and a metaphor for God's hand. They are also the fingers of Jewish opera singer Asia, broken during an interrogation by the Cheka. ...The repressive instrument, the ubiquitous Cheka, has been generalized as an absolute evil in the mythological character of the Ogre, at the same time without paying much heed to political correctness – that other enemy of freedom."
– Egīls Zirnis, journalist



1
Published by
Dienas Grāmata,
2018 (Originally
published by
Mansards, 2013)
304 pages
Rights sold to
Germany, Finland,
Estonia, Lithuania,
United States of
America, Ukraine,
Georgia, Albania



2
Published by
Dienas Grāmata,
2017
320 pages
All rights available

- ② ***Birds of Paradise*** is the sequel to the novel *Five Fingers* and is the winner of the 2019 Annual Latvian Literature Award. Its tightly woven drama and precise poetic details clearly and uncompromisingly describe 1960s Latvia – the only time and place in which ten-year-old Laura can grow, mature, and find the truth. The plot unfolds in the beginning of the 1960s when the main character, Laura, is ten years old and is forced to face all the realities of Soviet life – joining the pioneers, Communist political education, work on collective farm brigades. Laura's thoughts are occupied not only by her readiness to fight for the Communist party's ideals, but also by the beautiful vision of Pavlik Morozov and the secrets in the school's attic. Her luck turns sour when she takes chewing gum to school for the first time, and also when she is forced to be on duty with Grigorijs – called the "Goliath Gorilla" behind his back – the son of Communist Party organizer Smirnovs. As Laura grows up, she comes into contact with good and bad, and with the baggage she inherited from her parents and grandparents nearly always echoing in the background with their bitter experiences in Siberia.

"Māra Zālīte magnificently follows up on *Five Fingers* by perfectly conjuring up Kurzeme from the days when honest words had to be kept to yourself. Enchanting and gentle contact with the world is set in a dreamlike context as it blends with a growing perception of those whose futures had been trampled into the ground." – Inga Ābele, author

"It's doubtful whether Ionesco, Beckett, or Orwell could have done a better job showing the absurd drama in which we lived during that time." – Virdžīnija Lejiņa, film director

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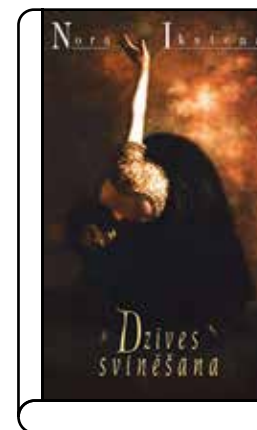
NORA IKSTENA

Photo: from the author's personal archive

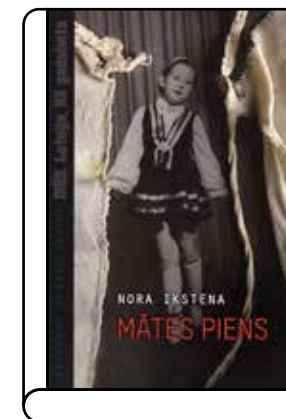
NORA IKSTENA (1969) was born in Riga, Latvia. In 1998, she was guest editor of *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* for an issue dedicated to Latvian fiction. She is the author of six novels: *Celebrating Life* (1998), *The Virgin's Lesson* (2001), *Amour Fou* (2009), *Besa* (2012), *Mother's Milk* (2015), and *Adventures of Insanity* (2017, in collaboration with artist Aivars Vilipsōns), along with collections of short stories and fairy tales, and books of biographical fiction, nonfiction, and essays. Her short story "Elza Kuga's Old Age Dementia" was included in the prose anthology *Best European Fiction 2011* (Dalkey Archive Press). In addition to English, Czech, German, and Italian, her work has also been translated into Lithuanian, Estonian, Swedish, Danish, Georgian, Macedonian, Croatian, Albanian, and Hungarian.

- 1 In Ikstena's *Celebrating Life*, a peculiar woman named Eleonora has invited seven colorful characters to her own funeral. Eleonora is peacefully laid to rest, but in the evening following the funeral, these seven people, seven ghosts from the past, share their memories of Eleonora, with the stories serving as the book's "celebration of life." In sharing their memories, the storytellers wander about in space and time, embarking upon expeditions to distant metaphysical places. Reading the novel is, first and foremost, an aesthetic experience. Its tone is serious, nostalgic, strangely unreal, and beautifully wise.

"It is possible to view Celebration of Life as a novel about death, one of the most impressive novels about death in the entire history of Latvian literature."
– Guntis Berelis, author and literary critic



- 1 Published by Dienas Grāmata, 2017 as a part of *Three* trilogy (Originally published by Apgāds Atēna, 1998) 128 pages



- 2 Published by Dienas Grāmata, 2015 176 pages Rights sold to Japan, Germany, Sweden, Syria, Croatia, Lithuania, Georgia, Estonia, Macedonia, United Kingdom, Hungary, Italy, Ukraine

- 2 The novel *Mother's Milk* deals with the post-war period and follows the fates of three generations of women, its narrative centering mostly on the 1970s and 1980s. Raised by a single mother, the central mother figure – a single mother herself – is a brilliant gynecologist who finds herself at odds with the dehumanizing effects of Communist ideology. While living in Leningrad, she successfully performed a secret, artificial insemination procedure on a young Russian woman who later loses her child as a result of the brutality of her war-veteran husband. With no prospects for advancing her scientific career, the talented doctor is sent off to practice in a rural area – her daughter sharing the experience of being uprooted. The doctor suffers from clinical depression and the entire burden of everyday life is placed on her young daughter's shoulders.

The daughter inherits her mother's hostility toward the system and suffers existentially from the turbulence of the 1980s; she responds emotionally to the dismissal of a free-thinking teacher, the Chernobyl disaster, and the string of deaths of "great Soviet leaders" seeking to bring reform. This is a novel about rejection and loss – rejection by husband and father; the loss of hopes and dreams, work and convictions, friends and loved ones. The sea of suffering is alleviated by drops of forgiveness: deprived of her mother's milk as a child lest she absorb the sense of loss and despair through her nourishment, it is nonetheless daughter who helps mother survive.

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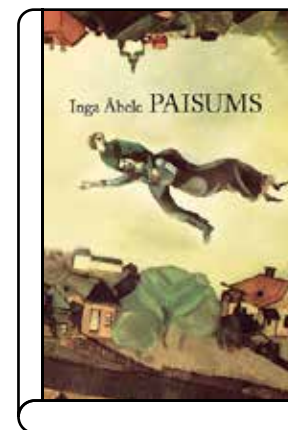


INGA ĀBELE

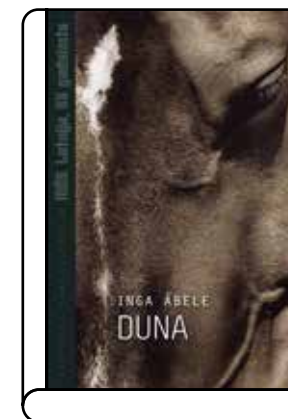
Photo: Raimonds Briedis

Latvian prose writer, playwright, and poet **INGA ĀBELE** (1972) was born in Riga, Latvia, and is one of our most celebrated writers, having received many literary accolades, both Latvian and international. She graduated from the Department of Theatre, Television, and Drama at the Latvian Academy of Culture in 2001. Equally successful across several literary genres, she has published short story collections, including *The Well House* (1999), *Observations in the Time of Snow* (2004), *Ants and Bumblebees* (2010), the novels *Fire Will Not Wake You* (2001), *High Tide* (2008), and *Wicker Monk* (2014), and a poetry collection *Night Pragmatist* (2000), in addition to a collection of her works as a dramatist, entitled *Plays* (2003). Most of Ābele's works have been translated into Swedish, Italian, and English, among other languages.

- 1 The novel *High Tide* addresses the question of why we are so dependent on the past, even when it has turned us into someone else. In the beginning, they were two. They have no values, no horizontals or verticals, and have to create their own. They joke that if something bad happens, they'll help each other end it all. And then something bad does happen. The boy gets sick, and the girl has to kill him. This "killing" turns out to be completely different from what you might see in movies or on stage. Everything turns out to be false, awkward, and horrible. Time goes on. One day, the middle-aged woman realizes she no longer knows whether what happened a long time ago really happened. Who were those two people who once lived together? Who was that girl who killed her boyfriend? Did he even exist if she only remembers him a couple times a year? She has nobody to talk to about it. So she writes, searching for an answer to the question: How many lives do we live in a single lifetime? By writing, she searches for the path to her former self. There is a high tide and a low tide: when you are in one, then you can understand the other. The plot of the novel is both real and imagined. The crime is also a symbol of the suicide we commit after each stage of our lives, in search of an answer to the question: What is it that continues to live?



1
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Dienas Grāmata,
2008
320 pages
Rights sold
to Egypt,
Switzerland,
United States of
America, Italy,
Sweden, Albania



2
Published by
Dienas Grāmata,
2017
432 pages
Rights sold to United
Kingdom

- 2 The events of the novel *Thunder* unfold in 1949 in three different geographical locations – the capital city of Riga, and the Latvian regions of Sēlija and Latgale. If his horse is not spared a single drop of life's overflowing cup of suffering, then why should someone like him, Andrievs Radvils, be spared? The protagonist's resigned stream of consciousness drives the trajectory of this novel and will remain with the reader long after the book has been closed.

"Inga Ābele sets herself a task worthy of an archaeologist – to restore the colors lining the canvas of Latvia's cultural history, which gleamed brightly until the second half of the 20th century. Torn apart in its unfair sweepstakes, connecting the biographical lines of people who find themselves on the losing side of history, thread by thread, the writer weaves them together around her novel's central metaphors: horses and the River Daugava. A drive shared by the river and the nation alike, the quest for freedom connects the currents of desire into a single, powerful word – *Duna*." – Vents Zvaigzne, author

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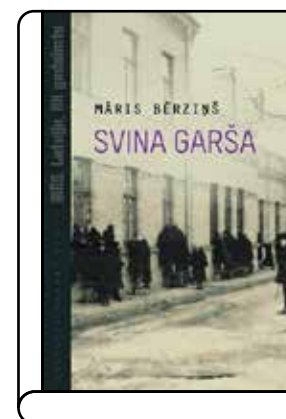


MĀRIS BĒRZIŅŠ

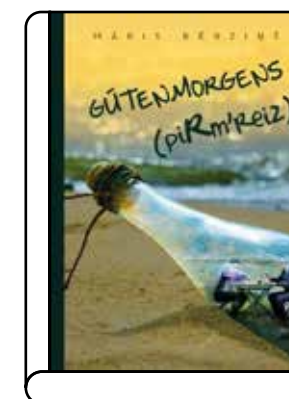
Photo: Ģirts Raģelis

MĀRIS BĒRZIŅŠ (1962) is a Latvian prose writer and playwright. He started writing relatively late in life, debuting as a novelist with *Ēriks Traums' Dream* in 2003. His most popular works to date are *Gutenmorgen. Once* (2003) and *Gutenmorgen. Once Again* (2017), a two-part tale recounting the life and exploits of an outlandish individual named Gutenmorgen. There are three short films based on the *Gutenmorgen* books: *Gutenmorgen and the Third Eye* and *Gutenmorgen and the Summer Solstice* (dir. Elīna Eihmane, Mistrus Media), and the made-for-TV film *In the One Village* (dir. Linda Olte). This was followed by the novels *Titanium Screws* (2011) and *Hi, Dzintar Mihail!* (2013). *The Taste of Lead* (2015) is Bērziņš' fourth novel.

- 1 Winner of several literature awards, *The Taste of Lead* is a narrative account focusing on a young Latvian man, Matīss, who seeks and eventually fails to avoid siding with either power at war in Europe in 1940. Facing the challenges and conflicts experienced by every young man – the discovery of the existence of love, betrayal, good and evil, and, on a personal level, the taste of lead in his mouth. A vehicle for dealing with weighty issues, this novel is characterized nonetheless by the signature irony, wit, and a taste for paradox noted in Bērziņš' other works. This book explores lines of division; those simple, qualifying lines that set a regular man apart from a hero, the tragically thin line separating peace from war, the demarcating line seen between words and actions, and the contrasting line between giving in and taking action. *Taste of Lead* satisfies the reader with the depth of its humanist voice. Set between the late 1930s and early 1940s, *The Taste of Lead* was published in 2015, becoming one of Latvia's most widely debated and in-demand books. In 2016, director Valters Siliis produced a stage version of the same title, *The Taste of Lead*, for the National Theatre of Latvia and is now in its third consecutive season. The Latvian Museum of Writing organizes tours of the places mentioned in the novel, and many schools have included it in their mandatory reading curriculum. An excerpt from this novel was included in the Dalkey Archive Press anthology *Best European Fiction 2017*.



- 1 Published by
Dienas Grāmata,
2015 344 pages
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- 2 Published by
Dienas Grāmata,
2017
Gutenmorgens
(pirm'reiz)
224 pages;
Gutenmorgens.
Otrreiz
192 pages
All rights available

- 2 Māris Bērziņš's short stories about Gutenmorgen have an absurd aesthetic, along with humor, irony, and sometimes a note of existentialism. These stories took shape over a period of twelve years (2005-2017, with new ones still being written), and have been collected in two books: *Gutenmorgen. Once* and *Gutenmorgen. Once Again*.

The stories are independent of one another, but all have one thing in common: the titular character, a man named Gutenmorgen. He appears to be a completely ordinary citizen, with a wife and children, with his TV, friends, and bottle of beer. He's sometimes indecisive and passive. As such things often go, however, appearance and behavior can be deceiving. Gutenmorgen is a hero at heart. Almost everything he thinks about or does is meant to make the world a better place, and to improve his own life. He doesn't forget about others, either. Gutenmorgen raises a monument to his friend the writer. He reconciles a couple who divorced twenty years ago. He even handles developments in geopolitical events, along with the unity of the Baltic States. Gutenmorgen is also never afraid to get his hands dirty. He shoots at opposing hockey players who beat his team, kills the entire Cabinet of Ministers at least three times a week, and scares other bad people, including his neighbor. Gutenmorgen will never lay a hand on his neighbor's dog, though; he loves animals.

Sometimes Gutenmorgen has a very sharp mind, and thinks very imaginatively. At other times, he does incredibly silly things. For example, while playing hide and seek with some children, Gutenmorgen hides so well that he can't find himself anymore. Like any upstanding member of society, Gutenmorgen cares what his neighbors and coworkers think of him. Sometimes he forgets this, and jumps out the second-story window of a building with a cake on his head. Most of the time, however, Gutenmorgen tries to find the meaning of life, and strives to understand the nature of events, as well as the rules that govern them. He never loses the ability to be surprised, to ask questions, and make brilliant deductions. What is a period—a small circle or a very short line segment? What is it like to be driven into a corner? Is the middle the best place for a person to be? What are the posthumous lives of writers like? Can you wade into the same sea twice?

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ANDRIS AKMENTIŅŠ

Photo: Gints Ivuškāns

ANDRIS AKMENTIŅŠ (1969) holds a university degree in journalism. He lectures in creative writing and translates animation films from English for dubbing. A celebrated bard and fly fishing enthusiast, his debut in the literary world was as a poet and organizer of poetry events. Laureate of the Klāvs Elsbergs Award (1992), he has published four poetry collections, a short story collection entitled *Warmer than a Tear* (Preses Nams award for Best Prose Work, 2001), and a children's book, *Three Brothers*, which explores the history of Old Riga. A former creative specialist in the field of advertising, Akmentiņš is remembered for campaigns like "Day of Song" by advertising agency RedCell Latvia, that received the 2006 Summit International Award for the PR campaign.

His novel *Teachers* highlights the significance of teachers and education in 20th-century Latvia. Akmentiņš strives to single out the heroic endeavors of rural teachers – the nurturing of a new generation of intelligentsia to replace those previously deported and exiled. Then novel is structured as a hyper-lively reality in the modernist spirit, which also echoes the atmosphere of Khrushchev's political thaw. Akmentiņš' heroes might misplace their cause and lose their lives, yet they refuse to play the part of the victim, instead getting by on their wits and cunning, a characteristic of peasants in Latvian folklore. The new post-war generation and the contradictions of Khrushchev's era are diverse and interesting themes, demanding a vivid dualism – hunger and the desire to live, modern science and fashion, the theory underpinning the Party versus its true face. Competitive in everything, two sisters intend to uphold the professional tradition of their pedagogical family.



Published by
Dienas Grāmata,
2018
240 pages
All rights available

The elder of the two, Velta, returns to teach in her native rural school after her studies. Having taught at school since the end of the 19th century, their father is now writing his autobiography, portraying himself as a prominent figure in the revolution. Their school is assigned a new and gifted teacher, Jānis, who throws himself into every task assigned to him. But being idealistic, he soon succumbs to the weight of his duties, burns out, and loses his life in a foolish protest against the Party. The long-suffering collective memory – a characteristic of the novel in its own right – is rewritten in turns within the novel's narrative frame. The work is written as a partly epistolary novel; the author's research included reading several hundred letters written in the 1950s by teachers from his own family and conducting interviews with teachers who worked during those years.

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GUNDEGA REPŠE

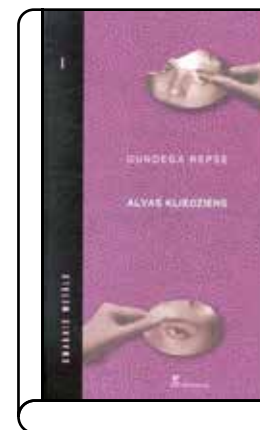
Photo: from the author's personal archive

GUNDEGA REPŠE (1960) was born in Riga, Latvia, where she studied art history and theory. She was a lecturer for the Artists Union (1985–1992), and wrote for the magazine *Liesma*, the newspapers *Labrīt* and *Izglītība un Kultūra*, and literary journal *Karogs*. She has been publishing prose since 1979. Repše has published ten novels, including *Thumbelina* (2000), *The Orphanage* (2008), the trilogy *Heavy Metal* (2012), *Nice People* (2014), six collections of short stories, and many books of nonfiction, including biographies, literary diaries, conversations with writers, and essays.

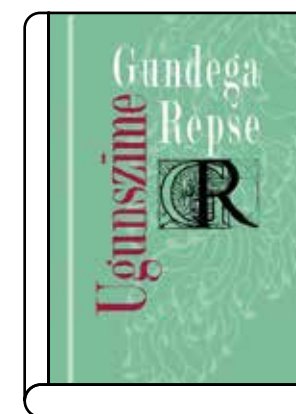
- 1 Written in the style of a diary, *The Tin Scream* centers on the world of a 1970s teenager, a world that reflects the ongoing social and psychological processes of society. At the beginning of the book, Rugetta, the protagonist, is in the 6th grade and, on a friend's recommendation, starts to keep a diary. This reveals the everyday life at an elite Soviet school, friendships and betrayals, a protest over the presence of Russians, and an admiration for Tarkovsky and world culture, including Bach and Shakespeare. There is also a realignment of ideals, hence the title of the novel: tin being a metal that is ductile and easily wrought, and the noise it makes when broken is called "the tin scream." With this novel, Repše offers readers a rich, evocatively drawn gallery of characters who have been delightfully and wittily rendered, despite the tragic circumstances of that era. The world-renowned Latvian theater director Alvis Hermanis and his theater company, the New Riga Theatre, staged a production based on motifs from the novel, and this too has enjoyed public acclaim.

"The integral foundation for the poetic whole of this work is the writer's panoramic view. Repše's world is constructed from a series of counterpoints, contradictions, and contrasts. She is radical." – Ilva Skulte, literary critic

Contact: Kaspars Eizentāls, kaspars.eizentals@petergailis.lv



1
Published by
Pētergailis,
2002
140 pages



2
Published by
Zvaigzne ABC,
2014
(Originally published
by Liesma,
1990)
160 pages

- 2 Gundega Repše's early novel, *Marked by Fire* (1990), is distinctive both among the author's works as well as within modern Latvian prose. The book describes a time before both the author and the novel's narrator, Erika, were born; its historical foundation is rooted in the post-war life of the Latvian intelligentsia, in the tragic fate of the so-called "French Group" and their search for intellectual nobility. The story is told from the point of view of Erika, born to Kārlis and Magda during the exile of Kārlis' wife, Dagmāra. Just as the French Group's members were exiled to Siberia, the novel's heroine, Dagmāra, also suffers the horrors of deportation, as did Kārlis' mother before her. Their lives are destroyed by the age in which they live – Kārlis stops painting because his work isn't being recognized, and he undergoes treatment for alcoholism. Dagmāra dies early, her translations unpublished. *Marked by Fire*'s cyclical style ends in 1987, when, rereading what she wrote thirteen years prior, Erika marvels at the self-righteous tone of her memories. Taking into account that these notes were written when she was eighteen, Erika's impatience with the vagueness of historical events is an understandable youthful ardor. At the end of the novel, Erika is working in the library of a seaside village, where she is more certain than ever that the passage of time is no excuse; even a world of valuable books is like an eternal flame – a memorial site that never grows dark.

Contact: Bārbala Simsons, barbala.simsone@zvaigzne.lv





INGA ŽOLUDE

Photo: Ģirts Raģelis

INGA ŽOLUDE (1984) is a prose writer and literary critic. She is the author of four novels, two collections of stories, and a historical story. She teaches creative writing. Her story "Dirty Laundry" (translated by Margita Gailītis and Vija Kostoff) was included in the anthology *Best European Fiction 2014* published by Dalkey Archive Press. Her prose has been translated into English, German, French, Swedish, Chinese, Czech, Hungarian, Slovenian, Croatian, Macedonian, Estonian, Lithuanian, and Armenian.

- 1 The story collection ***Stories*** is compiled of seven independent and meditative stories, each with a clearly laid out plot and individual characters. In "The Hike," three life-long friends go for a hike in the Swiss mountains and review their lives and relationships, revealing life-long, dark secrets; in "Energy," a wealthy husband and his biologist wife go on vacation with two friends to a rural resort in Norway, to reassess their marriage, and almost establish a love triangle in the process. In yet another story, a couple lives in a house near which a new motorway has been built, changing their household and disrupting their lives, which they suddenly decide to reconstruct. "The Hair" follows a man whose wife is dying of cancer and has freed him from their marriage – but when the man engages in a new relationship, everything becomes complicated. These stories are masterpieces of human psychology, viewing many different possible situations experienced by as many and different characters.



1
Published by
Dienas Grāmata,
2015
246 pages



2
Published by
Dienas Grāmata,
2018
352 pages

- 2 ***Materia Botanica*** was written as a sequel to the novel *Warm Earth*, picking up exactly where *Warm Earth* left off—just after its protagonist Daniel is in an accident. In *Materia Botanica*, Daniel wakes up in the hospital after the accident and finds a letter from his ex-girlfriend, Kira, and their son. He decides to return to them. He leaves his family home once again, a decision with which the rest of his family—especially his current partner, Voo, and his sister, Nelly, to whom he is tied with strange and intimate strings—are not happy. Nevertheless, he goes back to Kira and their son, and their reunion renews their bonds. But their new idyllic life is interrupted, first by Kira's pregnancy with their second child, and then by the arrival of Nelly, who is too dependent on Daniel. The strange intimacy between brother and sister flourishes once more, threatening to ruin his newly rebuilt family life. However, Daniel searches for a way out, often finding refuge in nature as he immerses himself in botany, but at times his immersion is too deep, as Daniel starts to think of himself as truly one with nature. He embodies the metaphor of a family tree, with its roots, branches, fruit, and seeds. Captivating are the unusual plants and their manifestation in the novel, both within Žolude's language and in the mind of Daniel.

Materia Botanica manages to resolve the conflicts in Daniel's family, who were the main focus in *Warm Earth*, and turns the spotlight on Daniel's life in a continuation of his personal and intimate path of existential pursuit. But the narrative does give voice to the other characters, as they reflect on events in their diary entries, giving readers a close and intimate view into each of their minds.

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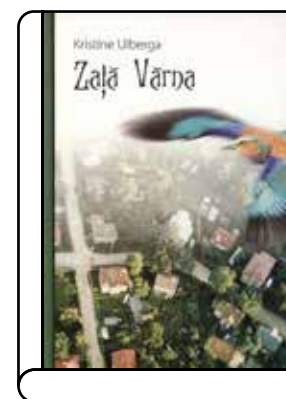


KRISTĪNE ULBERGA

Photo: from the author's personal archive

KRISTĪNE ULBERGA (1979) is a Latvian author of novels for young adults and adults. She studied theology at the University of Latvia. Her first novel, *I Don't Read Books* (2008), was awarded the Jānis Baltvilks Prize prior to publication as the best work of young adult fiction. Her first novel for adults, *The Green Crow* (2012) won both the Raimonds Gerkens Prize as best original work of literature and the 2013 Annual Latvian Literature Award. Ulberga has also published several short stories in Latvian literary magazines, newspapers, and anthologies.

- 1 The ***Green Crow*** is a novel that explores the relationship between a human being and a bird, and is based on the assumption that such a bird, symbolizing profoundly experienced, true freedom, lives within us all. The green crow – a rare, conceited, boisterous creature – is that of the novel's protagonist. She first meets the bird early in her childhood when the Green Crow emerges from her imaginary forest, a place to which the protagonist habitually runs to hide from the daily hurt and injustices she suffers, where she finds consolation in the tree house she has made herself. Searching for shelter and solace, she befriends the Green Crow. The main character's family is very well-off and she wants for nothing. However, one day she finds herself in a psychiatric clinic following a spate of peculiar behavior, culminating in her telling her family about the Green Crow. The novel has two plotlines. One follows the protagonist's adventures with the Green Crow, the other her search for some meaning to her life along the corridors of a mental institution, following her realization that family life has failed to confirm that life is beautiful and that anything more is needed.



1
Published by
Dienas Grāmata,
2018
(Originally
published by
Dienas Grāmata
in 2012)
192 pages
Rights sold to
Russia, United
Kingdom



2
Published by
Dienas Grāmata,
2019
All rights available

- 2 The novel ***Santiago*** tells the story of a woman who invites her friend's seventeen-year-old son to go on a pilgrimage with her to Santiago de Compostela, ostensibly in an attempt to help him get over a drug addiction, but in truth to ensure she has a companion for a trip she is scared to undertake alone. They start in Paris and hitchhike all the way down to the Spanish border. The novel is told in 22 chapters, each representing both an Arcanum from the Tarot Arcanology of Light and a single day's journey. The mismatched couple are ill-prepared for the trip; neither ever having climbed a mountain or embarked on such a long journey. The woman struggles to tolerate the young man's lack of animation and passivity, yet she cannot simply abandon him along the roadside. While travelling, they meet an old man named Liberty (based on a true story) who has already undertaken the pilgrimage fourteen times and is now doing it for the last time in his life. While walking, they discuss their pasts and life in general, their path frequently crossing that of Liberty's. Right up to the very end of the pilgrimage, the woman seeks to uncover the mysterious secret Liberty conceals and, in her quest to do so, discovers a secret hidden within herself.

Whilst their nine-hundred-kilometer pilgrimage fails to deliver them into a state of ecstasy, they do however find that their lives have undergone a significant change. The novel flows easily in all its layers, but in no way can it be considered a Santiago travel guide. It is rather to be read upon returning from a pilgrimage to Santiago, savored in the twilight of desolation.

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DACE RUKŠĀNE

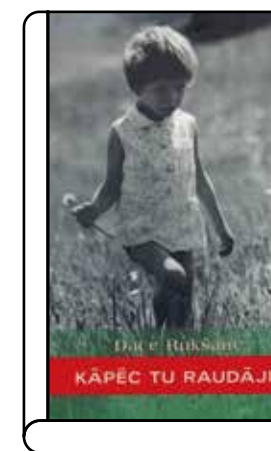
Photo: from the author's personal archive

DACE RUKŠĀNE (1969) is a Latvian writer and journalist, author of 11 books. Rukšāne became known in 2002 for her novel *The Little Love Affair*, which touched upon the subjects of feminine sexuality and gained great popularity. It was followed by the books *Beatrice's Bedtime Stories* (2002), and *Why Did You Cry?* (2003), as well as more than 500 articles and columns devoted to intimate subject matters and relationships. During the 1990s, Rukšāne also wrote poetry, and in the early 2000s several of her plays were staged in various theaters in Latvia. Her works have been translated into nine languages and her novels have been published in translation in Germany, Denmark, Switzerland, Macedonia and Egypt.

- 1 In the novel ***The Little Love Affair***, we meet Taņa, a young Latvian woman on an intense quest for her own identity. As the novel unfolds, Taņa's search becomes intertwined with the responsibility she feels for her children, falling in love and being in love, her countless losses and rebirths. After she is abandoned by her husband, Taņa suddenly finds herself alone with three children. She plunges into adventures – losing herself, then finding herself again. She gets involved in various messes, but never hangs her head in defeat; she is a character who might cry briefly, but then always gets up, dusts herself off with a smile, and carries on. *The Little Love Affair* offers a cross-section of an untamed, young woman's world, where all moral judgment is left up to the reader.



- 1
Published by
Apgāds Atēna,
2002
157 pages



- 2
Published by
Apgāds Atēna,
2003
207 pages

- 2 The novel ***Why Did You Cry?*** is set in the final chaotic years of the Soviet Union. The protagonist, Katrīna, is 15 and living in the outskirts of Riga. Just before her sixteenth birthday, she embarks alone on a long journey across half of Russia to a mountain-climbers' camp in the Caucasus. There, not only does she encounter the mountains and their challenges, but also meets her first love, who happens to be Russian. In Latvian society, where Russians are the occupiers, this is practically criminal. When she returns home, Katrīna must confront the uncomprehending shock of those around her over her relationship, as well a family tragedy. As these events unfold, so too does Latvia's liberation from occupation with the collapse of the Soviet Union.

"This is the story of a schoolgirl gradually becoming a woman and trying to help herself, to fight her way out of a hole dug by others. Only adolescents live both desperately to the point of bad taste, as though there were no other way, and lightly to the point of narrow-mindedness, as though at any moment they might fly away."
– Inese Zandere, poet and editor

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SVEN KUZMINS

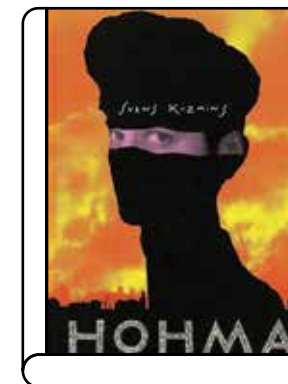
Photo: Toms Treibergs

SVEN KUZMINS (1985) is a Latvian writer, artist, and actor. A fiction writer and journalist, he also experiments with various forms of visual arts and literature. He is actively involved in other media projects and is known to the wider public as one of the initiators and authors behind the *NERTEN* sketch theater project. His works have been translated into English, Russian, Lithuanian, Estonian, and Spanish, and published in various printed and online platforms.

- 1 ***Urban Shamans*** (2016) is Kuzmins' first collection of short stories. It is a collection of interconnected stories where subtle mystical experiences find their way into everyday urban life. Separate plots seamlessly intertwine, creating a twisted and magical picture of the modern world. In spite of their surreal settings, the stories remain grounded in our reality, with a great deal of tongue-in-cheek humor. The book is designed and illustrated with a suitably bizarre visual aesthetic by the author himself. In 2016, *Urban Shamans* won the Ventspils Silver Quill Award and was nominated for both the Liepāja Egona Līva Literary Prize and the 2017 Annual Latvian Literature Award.



- 1 Published by Dienas Grāmata, 2016
168 pages
All rights available



- 2 Published by Dienas Grāmata, 2019
216 pages
All rights available

- 2 Kuzmins' first novel, ***Hokhmah*** unfolds in Hokhmah, a small, quiet coastal resort town in western Latvia. Hokhmah's seemingly calm day-to-day life, history, and mythology intertwine with the life stories of its residents, revealing their inner conflicts, complex relationships, and long-held secrets. Hokhmah's stories are comical, tragic and at times surreal, though they are bound together by a conflict known to anyone who grew up in the countryside: a longing for one's hometown and a simultaneous wish to break off any connections with it forever, regardless of whether or not that is actually possible.

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ARNO JUNDZE

Photo: Eduards Groševs

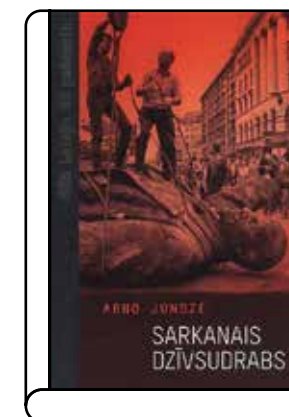
Writer and journalist **ARNO JUNDZE** (1965) was born in the Latvian town of Jaunpiebalga. He graduated from the Faculty of Education and has a PhD in philology. He has worked in Latvian television for over 10 years, directing various programs dedicated to culture and literature. Arno Jundze is an editor of the cultural news section for one of the biggest newspapers in Latvia, and helps in shaping the country's most important art and literary forums and outlets. He was a member of the council at the State Culture Capital Foundation and chairman of the board of its literature department from 2010-2012. Currently, Jundze is head of the Latvian Writers' Union. Jundze has received numerous prizes for both his literary work and his work in television. He has also published several children's books.

- 1 ***Dust in the Hourglass*** (2014) is a story about a naive young man who dreams of a romantic future and an open door to endless possibilities. Instead, he ends up in Afghanistan in the hellscape of war, where he is forced to do almost anything to salvage any semblance of a future. In this future, however, it will be easier to kill than to love. A Lutheran minister and Gulag survivor serves only God, because the villagers often avoid even saying hello to him. A talented researcher at the turn of the millennium dreams about a career in science, but in order to support his family, he ends up selling tractors. A once famous journalist, now an addict, is excited about getting the scoop of his career without realizing that he is being played by the secret service. There are echoes from witch trials, death and love in Paris, a walk into the realm of silence, and fragments of overheard phone conversations, secretly copied letters and text messages that the reader must put together like pieces of a puzzle. *Dust in the Hourglass* was shortlisted for the 2014 Annual Latvian Literature Award.

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1
Published by
Zvaigzne ABC,
2014
272 pages
Rights sold to
Mexico



2
Published by
Dienas Grāmata,
2017
480 pages
Rights sold to
Lithuania

- 2 The novel ***Red Mercury*** (2017) focuses on the residents of Latvia in the 1990s. Medieval kings longed to get their hands on the Philosopher's stone, a substance extolled by alchemists for its promise of eternal youth, happiness, and wealth. In the 1990s, history repeated itself much more simply – without any secret teachings or veiled intimations. People started chasing blindly after red mercury; a product of the imagination of Soviet intelligence services, an implausible miracle potion capable of granting world domination to whoever had it in their possession. Yet these people were outnumbered by those who simply wished to get on with their lives, to be happy and to love. As the wheels of the epochs turned, dreams and illusions crumbled – it was no easy task holding onto both oneself and one's self-esteem in the ensuing turmoil. Latvia suddenly broke free, but not everyone had the strength to find that freedom within, as each and every one of us strove for survival. The novel depicts a broad spectrum of society. There are those from an older generation who received, with independence, an unexpected opportunity to finally meet their relatives who had been driven into exile. There are KGB agents, and there are the defenders of independence. The last Forest Brother comes out of the forest after fifty years spent in hiding as a result of his rejection of Soviet power. And there are also the very young who desire to be happy, but are oblivious to how heavily their first steps into the free wild world are about to test them.

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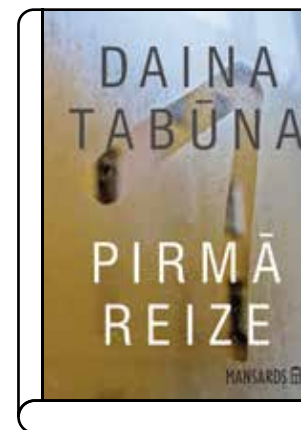


DAINA TABŪNA

Photo: from the author's personal archive

DAINA TABŪNA (1985) is a Latvian writer and graduate of the Latvian Academy of Culture. Her short stories have been published in numerous Latvian publications since 2000. Her first short story collection entitled "The First Time" was published in 2014, and was shortlisted for the 2015 Annual Latvian Literary Award for Best Debut. In 2016 Tabūna received the Prose Reading festival Award and in 2017 *The First Time* was published in the UK by The Emma Press as *The Secret Box*. Her works have been translated into German, Slovenian, Lithuanian and Chinese. She lives and works in Riga.

On the cusp of womanhood, Daina Tabūna's heroines are constantly confronting the unexpected. Adult life seems just around the corner, but so are the kinds of surprise encounters that might change everything. Two siblings realize they're too old to be playing with paper dolls and begin to re-examine their close relationship. A girl who dreads visiting her religious grandmother develops her own fixation with Jesus, and a disaffected young woman, listlessly wandering the streets, stumbles into an awkward relationship with an office worker. The narrators of these stories each try, in their own way, to make sense of how to behave in a world that doesn't offer any clear answers. Life, however, always has some sort of surprise in store, and suddenly nothing is as it was before.



Published by
Mansards,
2014
152 pages
All rights
available, except
English

"It's strange how poorly I remember my dad. If I hadn't dug up those couple of photographs from my mom's secret box buried deep down in the drawer, I might not even remember his face. I was my mother's daughter, and Edgars was his father's son; that's what everyone said. It's as if we weren't even brother and sister."
(from *The Secret Box*, translated by Jayde Will)

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PAULS BANKOVSKIS

Photo: Ģirts Raģelis

Writer and journalist **PAULS BANKOVSKIS** (1973) was born in Līgatne, Latvia. He studied glasswork at the Riga School for Applied Arts, and philosophy at the University of Latvia (1992–1996). He has been publishing works of prose since 1993. A prolific author, within a span of a decade Bankovskis had published 10 novels and two collections of short stories, as well as a children's book and a book of nonfiction. His focus tends to shift from Latvian history, its myths and legends, to the realities of the recent Soviet past, to the possibilities of the future. In late 2007, Bankovskis published his first children's book, *The Tiny-Noggins Play House* (2007), which was awarded the International Jānis Baltvilks Prize in Children's Literature and Book Art in 2008.

- 1 **Reds, Rats and Rock'n'Roll** (2002) is a retrospective on the era of socialism in Latvia. The action takes place between the 1978-1989, the most severely tarnished phase of Soviet splendor. Various colorful characters live their lives in the pages of this book: the thoroughly drunk poet Harry Mikelson, who, for the consolidation of his career, becomes a spokesperson for the Cheka; the old Cheka official who commits suicide for unknown reasons; the swimmer and potential champion, Eva Kallas, and her romance with the somber Israeli spy, Joren, who doesn't quite know whom he works for and what he gains from his spying; the ruffian Zmejs and his comrades; Jozef, who has decided to join the army; as well as an endless number of other individuals. Each character has a separate storyline, and at first glance it seems they do not have and could not have anything in common.



1
Published by
Valters un Rapa,
2002
301 pages



2
Published by
Valters un Rapa,
2003
180 pages

- 2 The Soviet Union was a project firmly based in scientific Communism and atheism. In spite of this, a few people in remote areas overgrown with alders kept on fostering centuries-old spiritual traditions. Eastern Orthodox Old Believers were one such group; they found refuge in eastern Latvia. They are at the center of Pauls Bankovskis's novel **Secrets**. The book follows several generations of Old Believers, in a kaleidoscope of love stories and family tragedies. Against an ever-changing backdrop of ruling powers and regimes—and in spite of them—these communities still try to hold on to their old traditions. At first, supernatural beings live near the Old Believers. With time, though, their role in people's diminishes, as the Old Believers' culture loses the ability to fight against the influence of time.

Bankovskis says that *Secrets* is "the story of the author coming into contact with and falling in love with two things: an old-fashioned routine of daily life, determined by faith, and the modern-day actions dictated by this routine." That's why the subtitle of this book is "a borderland romance." He does emphasize: "The overall theme of the book is to urge readers to imagine. Imagination is the very thing that can in a single moment transform scenes of saints and the past, painted in bright gold, into reality strengthened by faith."

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JĀNIS JONEVS

Photo: Edgars Jurjāns

JĀNIS JONEVS (1980) graduated from the Latvian Academy of Culture. Since 2002 he has been working as a copywriter, reviewer, and translator from French. His first novel, *Jelgava '94*, was published in 2013. The novel garnered acclaim from critics and readers alike, and received numerous awards: the 2013 Annual Latvian Literature Award for Best Debut; the 2014 European Union Prize for Literature; and the 2014 Kilogram of Culture Award presented by Latvian Television. It was also named among the 100 favorite Latvian books of all time on the television show *Great Reading*, and the Children's Jury (a project involving young readers from all over Latvia) chose the book as their favorite book in the 15+ age group.



Published by
Mansards, 2013
312 pages
Rights sold to
United Kingdom,
France, Norway,
Bulgaria, Turkey,
Poland, Slovenia

Jelgava '94 proved to be a real hit and bestseller in Latvia. The story takes place in the Latvian town of Jelgava and centers around the rather short-lived craze for heavy metal music in the 1990s. The reader is given a view into this world from the inside – the text is both an intimate diary of a youngster trying to find himself by joining a subculture, as well as a skillful, detailed, and almost documentary depiction of recent history, i.e. the beginnings of a Latvia that had just regained its independence.

The story seems even more captivating to the generation that shares the same perception and experience of the world – Jonevs is the first among this generation who has managed to stir its memories by transforming these images and that period into a full-fledged work of literature.

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OSVALDS ZEBRIS

Photo: Kristaps Kalns

OSVALDS ZEBRIS (1975) is a Latvian prose writer and publicist. Zebris' first book – a collection of short stories, *Freedom in Nets* (2010), brought him instant popularity among readers and won him the 2010 Annual Latvian Literature Award for Best Debut. In the *Shadow of Rooster Hill* (2014) is his third book. His novel, *People of the Wooden House* (2013), was shortlisted for the 2013 Annual Latvian Literature Award.

- 1 Winner of the 2017 European Union Prize for Literature and a nominee for the 2014 Annual Latvian Literature Award, the novel *In the Shadow of Rooster Hill* is about the birth of the national consciousness of the Latvian nation, one generation of the nation's teachers, the courage to oppose the insanity of violence and the consequences of failing to prevail over personal fear. It is 1905 in Riga, a city rocked by workers' riots, violence, and pogroms during the waning days of the Russian Empire, when the Tsar is gradually losing his grip over his vast domain. Revolution is in the air – brother pitted against brother, social unrest and turmoil force people to choose sides. Amid this upheaval, a former schoolteacher becomes involved in the revolution, but soon realizes that the impending war is bound to require more of him than he is willing to give. A year later, the dramatic kidnapping of three children has Riga's police force on edge. Who are the culprits? And what is their motivation? The answers to this mysterious investigation will shatter the lives of two families as they struggle to identify who they should blame for the revolution. Zebris weaves a powerful tale of a country's desire for freedom, set against the backdrop of the 1905 Revolution in Tsarist Russia, a process that gave birth to some of the most dramatic events in the 20th century.



1
Published by
Dienas Grāmata,
2014
176 pages
Rights sold to
France, Croatia,
Italy, Serbia,
Hungary, Albania,
Macedonia,
Bulgaria



2
Published by
Dienas Grāmata,
2019
224 pages
All rights available

- 2 *Māra* is a novel about a group of sixteen-year olds. It tells of their first encounter with pivotal choices and decisions. Māra, the protagonist, has been close friends with three classmates—Edgar, Paul, and Mārtiņš—since first grade. In high school, she is forced to deal with problems resulting from two new classmates, and with her friends' betrayal. Then, the long-cherished friendship suddenly shatters. When even her own home isn't safe anymore, when the old foundations have disappeared but she doesn't yet have new ones underfoot, Māra ends up making a desperate move...

This is a story about courage—about Māra's journey from self-awareness to her acceptance and manifestation of that awareness. In the four parts of the novel, Māra deals with what she believes are mistakes, inadequacies, and the fact that she doesn't fit in—issues that are all so significant in adolescence. Sometimes these issues remain significant throughout someone's life. That's why this isn't stereotypical "YA literature." Rather, it's literature that explores the process of growing up.

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INGA GAILE

Photo: Elizabete Lukšo Ražinska

INGA GAILE (1976) is a Latvian poet, prose writer, playwright, performance artist, and theater director. With her unique brand of humor, she explores inner states of being, her own experiences, the everyday lives of women and stigmatized groups of society, while promoting equal rights. She has won several awards, including the 2015 Annual Latvian Literature Award in the children's literature category. Inga Gaile is an active participant in the feminist movement in Latvia and is a founder of stand-up comedy group Women's Stand-up.

- 1 In the novel *The Glass Shards*, events evolve during the late 1930s at the time of president Kārlis Ulmanis' authoritarian regime. This period in Latvia is often associated with images of a burgeoning economy, social stability, and the swelling of national pride; at the same time, these are the years when concepts such as "reduced value individuals" – individuals who are perceived to be a threat to the future happiness of the nation – were also disseminated. Popular in Europe, the concept of eugenics has also infiltrated Latvia, creating negative attitudes toward mental health patients. Magdalēna, the novel's protagonist, has been raped and is subsequently diagnosed as mentally ill in a psychiatric clinic. There, she meets Kārlis, a young, progressive psychiatrist whose views on the treatment of mental illness have been influenced by Freud's psychoanalytical teachings. Patient and psychiatrist find themselves drawn to each other emotionally when the head of the state-endorsed eugenics program visits the clinic promoting the sterilization of mentally enfeebled patients "for their own good as well as for the benefit of our future." The novel's heroes find themselves in precarious situations, their decisions seemingly controlled by the shadow of Magdalēna.



1
Published by
Dienas Grāmata,
2016
176 pages
Rights sold to
Estonia



2
Published by
Dienas Grāmata,
2019
All rights available

- 2 In her novel *The Beautiful Ones*, Inga Gaile tries to understand how she and her contemporaries have been influenced by two tragedies of the 20th century: Nazism and Stalinism. It is the author's attempt to tell a story about people who managed to stay humane despite the impossible circumstances, guided by a hope to live more freely. One of her themes is that the dual value system—good/bad, beautiful/ugly—is limiting for humanity. The novel has three parts, each with a female protagonist. First is Violeta, who is imprisoned in the Ravensbrück concentration camp in 1941. The protagonist of the second part is Magdalēna, who is also a protagonist in Gaile's first novel, *The Glass Shards*. We meet Magdalēna in Latvia in 1953. The protagonist of the third part is Magdalēna's granddaughter, Duks—our contemporary. She has, however, never met her grandmother; she is also indirectly connected to Violeta. The novel's main themes are beauty, a woman's outer appearance, and the different ways women are objectified. This story also shows what happens to women who experience violence, and how they deal with it.

The novel talks about concentration camp brothels, which is a subject that hasn't really been discussed before. It describes the fates of women who worked in the brothels of the era, and the fates of any children born as a result. The broader descriptions of this period of history tend to lack the voices of witnesses. On the other hand, more and more historical researchers are trying to add the missing testimonies to history, giving authors like Gaile access to records about women who worked in concentration camp brothels, or women who were subject to the Soviet Army's rape march.

The Beautiful Ones is a literary work that employs many historical facts. Among them are Katrīna Vaica's lynching trial in the Ravensbrück camp, the punishment of prisoners during the subsequent search for Katrīna, the brothels themselves and how they were organized, experiments, how the camp was liberated, and how children deported to Siberia were sent back to Latvia.

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JANA EGLE

Photo: from the author's personal archive

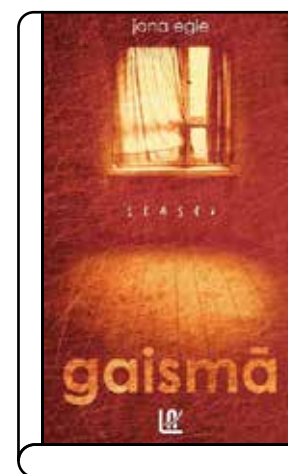
JANA EGLE (1963) is a poet and prose writer. Her poetry collection *To Hear the Unsaid* was published in 2002. She received the main prize at the Prose Readings Festival for her stories "Such an Autumn" and "Off to the Sea," and her story collection *Into the Light* (2016) received the 2017 Annual Latvian Literature Award for Best Prose. Egle is also a lecturer in Literary Studies at the University of Liepāja.

- 1 ***Into the Light*** is Egle's prose debut. It includes eight stories whose themes connect with the not-so-sunny moments and aspects of life. Egle explores subjects that have been kept hidden or considered unsuitable for discussion – violence against women, pedophilia, transsexuality. The themes running through this collection are guilt, domestic abuse, helplessness – how these form, how they affect a person's later behavior, what effects they have on the direction of one's life. All eight stories are about family relationships – about brothers, about mothers and daughters, fathers and sons. Each story brings to light secrets or occurrences that are typically hidden and not spoken of in our society.

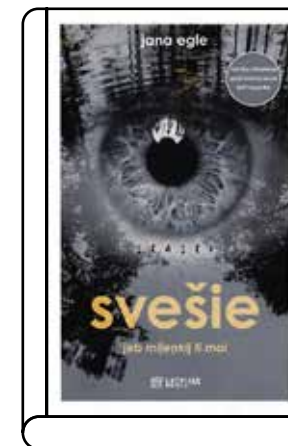
"This book brings a new, but mature, voice to the world of Latvian storytelling. The individuals in these stories seem both 'written off' by life as well as 'written out' of it. Exposing everyday violence, the author has gazed into the deep, dark current of human nature." – Rudīte Kalpiņa, literary critic

"Jana Egle's stories distinguish themselves in that as they show real life and reflect nearly unbelievable situations; in them life's dramatic and sometimes tragic aspects blend together with the comical. Jana talks about that which we typically keep hidden and generates so much empathy in the reader that at times the reader even forgets that this is literature." – Inga Žolude, author

"Egle's stories are focused; there is nothing unnecessary in them. All of their power is contained in their action, not a step to the right, not a step to the left, and there is also quite a lot of dialogue." – Arturs Skutelis, literary critic



1
Published by
Latvijas Mediji,
2016
128 pages
All rights available



2
Published by
Latvijas Mediji,
2018
272 pages
All rights available

- 2 Jana Egle's second collection of short stories, ***Strangers or Milenkiy ty moy*** (2018) consists of eight stories named for their protagonists: Margarita, Harold, Alyevtina, Sandris, Theophil, Adrian, Veronika and Carrie. Each narrative is closely connected to the others; this is revealed when reading the stories one after the other, in sequence. Egle has succeeded in incorporating a wider characterization of the period in each story. Through the stories of Margarita, Harold, Sandris, Theophil, Adrian, and Carrie we catch a glimpse of contemporary life; through the story of Alyevtina we are introduced to the harsh realities of the Soviet era; but Veronika's life story reaches back to events that took place during World War II. The collection could also be regarded as a novel in multiple voices, or an episodic novel.

The underlying thread of the stories is about the relationships between Latvians and Russians, estrangement that can form between people, about the way we are able or unable to form relationships, and about the way that the foreign or unknown can suddenly become familiar and close, or vice versa. Egle herself says: "*Strangers or My Darling* is about bonds that have been broken. About strangers who in fact are very close, and their fate. No one knows whether estrangement can be reversed and a relationship given new life. Somebody has to have the courage to take the first step to overcome the passage of time, wrongdoings, a sense of guilt."

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BAIBA ZĪLE

Photo: from the author's personal archive

Writer **BAIBA ZĪLE** (1974) was born in Ventspils, Latvia, and now lives in Frankfurt am Main in Germany. She has translated into Latvian the works of Boris Vian, Albert Camus, and Simone Weil, among others. Prior to *The Master of Lies* (2017), Zīle published the novel *Simulating Life* (2006) under the pseudonym Anna Kravicka. Self help book *Dumpling and Karma* (2019) and the collection of stories *The Coldest Winter in One Hundred and Fifty Years* (2020) are the most recent works by Baiba Zīle. She has also written several books in English under the pen name Barbara Sea.

The novel ***Master of Lies*** is a fast-paced tale in which a classic thriller and crime plot are used to create a more profound theme – that of a person's path to self-awareness during a period of historic complexity, and the dilemma of balancing the desire for survival with that for a clear conscience. The engrossing story of love, crime, and a search for the meaning of life unfolds against a vividly depicted background of recent Latvian history. Alise and Aleksandrs grow up in late-Soviet Riga – in the same period of history, but in different worlds. Alise is a child of a well-to-do party functionary, while Aleksandrs, having arrived in the capital city from the countryside, ends up in a communal apartment and hanging out with street gangs. The grown-up Alise spends most of her time in her own world of dreams and feelings – living in a bubble that gently sweeps her through the times of change, while Aleksandrs flees the USSR and becomes part of an international mafia dealing in gemstones.



Published by
Zvaigzne ABC,
2017
400 pages

Alise and Aleksandrs don't know each other, however, they are linked by a mysterious person who calls himself the Master of Lies and who holds in his hands the threads of the silent instrument of power so popular in the USSR: a web of secret agents, informers, and denouncers. The paths of Aleksandrs and Alise gradually move closer until they finally cross, and in now-independent Latvia they, of course, fall for each other. However, there is an obstacle to their happiness, a betrayal that took place in the past: one that they would like to believe had been forced upon them by the prevailing situation, yet the question remains of just how far a ruling power can manipulate the conscience of person who on the inside remains free.

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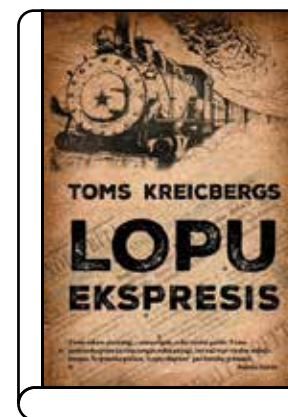
TOM CROSSHILL

Photo: Spīgana Spektore

TOM CROSSHILL'S (1985, pseudonym of Toms Kreicbergs) fiction has been nominated three times for the Nebula Award, the WSFA Small Press Award and the Annual Latvian Literature Award. He is the author of *The Cat King of Havana* (2016), a YA novel about Cuba, salsa, and lolcats. Crosshill lived in the United States for several years and now resides in Latvia.

- 1 ***The Cattle Express*** (2016) is a contemporary Latvian author's effort to pinpoint both his personal identity and a universal human one; he seeks to combine both into a coherent whole. Two plotlines run parallel in this text: the first takes place in Latvia in the first half of the 20th century; the second, in 21st-century New York City. Crosshill's story of occupation, deportations, war, and the authoritarian regime of Kārlis Ulmanis – the first Latvian Prime Minister – runs side by side along a tale of the modern world of Wall Street – which comes with a promising life full of possibility.

Two characters also act in parallel, with half a century separating them. Readers meet Laura – a girl from Ulmanis-era Latvia who endured deportation to Krasnoyarsk – and her grandson Peter – a young man who's landed in the tangled scheming of the Wall Street financial world with a lot of post-Soviet baggage. Many things make *The Cattle Express* not only a deeply meaningful read, but also an exciting one. Among these are shared intrigue between the two plotlines, masterfully depicted vignettes of New York City, the complicated love lives and journeys into adulthood for both young protagonists, as well as thriller-worthy plot twists. Crosshill proves he can write skillfully in a style that not only combines the hallmarks of historical fiction and contemporary prose, but is also completely different from his previous work. Black-and-white comics by young Latvian artist Mikus Duncis illustrate the novel. They also reflect one of protagonist Peter's hobbies: in his spare time, he draws comics, trying to illustrate his grandmother's life story.



1
Published by
Zvaigzne ABC,
2016
336 pages



2
Published by
Zvaigzne ABC,
2011
172 pages

- 2 The collection ***Seeing Double and Other Stories*** was published in Latvian in 2011. It contains 13 of Crosshill's stories, including 2011 Nebula nominee "Mama, We Are Zhenya, Your Son" and 2009 Writers of the Future winner "Seeing Double." From quantum mechanics to flying pigs, from hive minds to passenger dragons, from time travel back to the USSR to a future where Russia rules the Baltics, Crosshill's tales span numerous settings and genres.

"*Seeing Double and Other Stories* isn't the first sci-fi short story collection in Latvian literature. It's special, though, because it simultaneously is and is not traditional science fiction. The author touches on a number of themes that have often come up in both literature and movies during the science fiction boom of the last fifty years—mostly outside Latvia. These themes include future-era people under the control of technological achievements, A.I. trying to be just like humans, the paradoxes of time travel, and a creator's responsibility for his creations. In his stories, [Crosshill] skillfully uses a technique I like to call the crooked mirror, or multi-faceted prism approach. By changing the angle from which we look at an object or event, he gives a grotesque slant to our point of view. This slant reveals the object to us from a very human, intimate perspective." – Bārbala Simsons, literary critic.

Contact: Tom Crosshill, tom@tomcrosshill.com





IEVA MELGALVE

Photo: Spīgana Spektore

IEVA MELGALVE (1981) is a science fiction and fantasy writer with literary influences. She has also written books for children and young adults. Her first book was a collection that included her first short story and a play entitled *The Break-Even Point* (1999). In 2013, she self-published her play *The Inhumanity*. In the same year, her fantasy novel *The Dead Don't Forgive* was published and subsequently shortlisted for the 2013 Annual Latvian Literature Award.

- 1 Her novel ***Moon Theater*** (2015) combines dystopian fantasy with the storytelling techniques typical to literary fiction, creating a book that is both accessible and attractive to genre readers as well as to a wider audience that values intellectual challenges. In an enormous theater on many stages there are theater performances all happening at the same time. The actors don't have their own identity outside of their stage lives, and no objective other than trying to get the chance for a better role and trying not to wind up in the playwrights' bad books. Who are these playwrights, who is the audience, and do any of them really exist? No one knows (although a few of them – the inquisitive young Lapsa, for example – try to find out).

One of the book's central characters – a nameless Actor – tries desperately to take part in the scenarios scripted for him, but each time he tries to earnestly play his role, it becomes more and more bizarre, tearing down the border between performance and truth. Similarly, the Mime – one of the androids equipped with artificial intelligence who maintains order in the theater world – tries to play the role of guardian to the actors. However, as it gradually awakens to a consciousness that becomes its own, the mime can no longer react to what is happening in the theater without emotion. Perhaps they could continue to play their parts if the planned performances weren't shaken by a resistance movement trying to realize the Actor's identity behind the scenes, and possibly even altogether do away with



1
Published by
Zvaigzne ABC,
2015
320 pages



2
Published by
Zvaigzne ABC,
2018
192 pages

the theater's power. Yet their road isn't easy – the idealistic Malda, who's pregnant, can no longer separate true love from performed love, and the tricky Gurd, sensing imminent danger to the movement, tries to make a scapegoat out of the egotistical Vladis, who in turn has landed himself a good role, no longer wanting to resist the existing order...

- 2 In the novel ***The Cool Mind*** (2018), the body of Helen – a transhumanist, computer scientist and military drone programmer – is found with her head severed. The investigation is quickly entangled in the issues of cutting-edge technology and the opportunities it can give to both ending and saving lives. Soon enough, the investigator faces a question the legal system is not equipped to satisfactorily answer: namely, is Helen really dead, and how does one determine that? Is immortality something to be sought, or avoided? The issues of transhumanist technologies and bioethics and the ongoing investigation flows parallel to the story of Satu, Helen's genderqueer lover, who struggles to cope with the death of Helen, as well as their own identity in a society where language itself allows little room for anything but a strictly binary gender expression.

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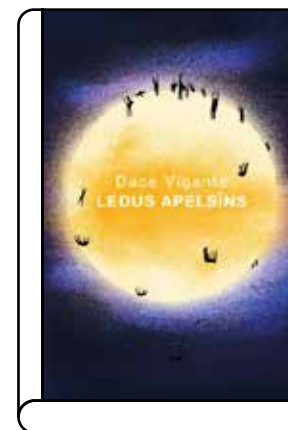


DACE VĪGANTE

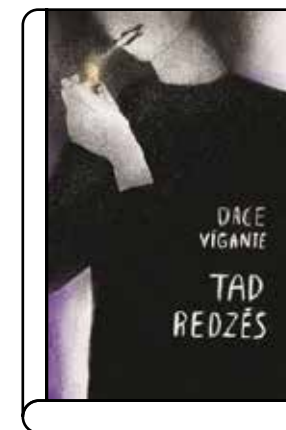
Photo: from the author's personal archive

Writer **DACE VĪGANTE** (1970) was born in Jūrmala, Latvia. She graduated from the University of Latvia Faculty of Law. Vīgante has also attended the Latvian Writers' Union's "Literary Academy" program. In 2017, her debut collection of stories, *Ice Orange* (2016), was nominated for the Annual Latvian Literature Award, as well as the Kilogram of Culture Award, and received the Children, Youth and Parents Jury Award. In 2018, Vīgante published her second collection of stories, *We Shall See*, that was also nominated for the Kilogram of Culture Award, and is currently working on her first novel.

- 1 Psychologically nuanced and dense with detail, the stories in her debut collection *Ice Orange* are mostly about women whose lives were shaped by the 20th century, a time when people learned to understand each other more from what was unsaid, when each step seemed to be both more difficult and more meaningful than it is now. These sketches of lives, from childhood through adulthood – both the minor as well as significant dramas – are full of familiar emotions, nostalgic details, and unspoken secrets. The stories in this short collection offer quick reads that will nonetheless leave a tangible impression, allowing insight into life through the prism of Vīgante's marvelous and delicate prose.



1
Published by
Zvaigzne ABC,
2016
174 pages



2
Published by
Zvaigzne ABC,
2018
112 pages

- 2 The nine stories in the collection *We Shall See* continue and add to the spectrum of themes already touched upon in Vīgante's debut collection, *Ice Orange* – the most prominent being the complicated relationships between people throughout time. Vīgante's prose possesses a specific "quiet" style, as it includes no loud epithets or overtly dramatic dialogues – and it is precisely this veiled approach that allows Vīgante to convey the "inner dramas" of her characters so well. The stories are often explicitly visual, concentrating, as it seems, on abundant detail; however, Vīgante manages to include the symbolic subtext in each visual image as well. The stories are largely set in a modern environment and feature average people – men or women around 30-40 years of age who have witnessed the dramatic political and social changes at the turn of the century, but nevertheless hold survival and personal happiness as their main goals in life. This allows readers to identify with the characters and situations, however complicated they are, because the familiarity of the environment and the details make it easy to do so.

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ANDRA NEIBURGA

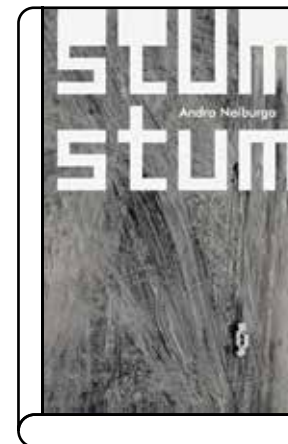
Photo: publicity photo

Although **ANDRA NEIBURGA** (1957-2019) has only published two short story collections and one children's book, they have all become modern classics and an integral part of contemporary Latvian literature. Her literary debut, *Stuffed Birds, and Birds in Cages* (1988), was warmly received at the time due to its sharp, uncompromising prose and the depth of her characters. After Latvia declared independence, her acclaim was aided by a wildly popular movie based on her children's book, *The Story of Tille and the Dog-Man* (1992). The publication of her second and most recent collection of short stories, *Push, Push* (2004), was called the cultural event of the year by the influential daily newspaper *Diena*.

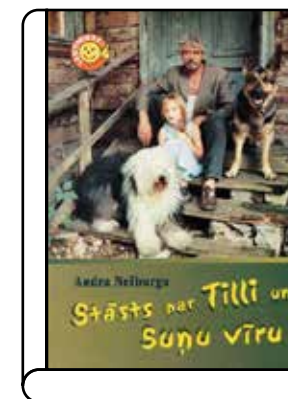
① ***Push, Push*** was received with great curiosity as Andra Neiburga returned to adult fiction after a 16-year absence, following her much-praised debut short story collection *Stuffed Birds, and Birds in Cages*. Not only was *Push, Push* one of the most talked-about books of the year, but it has since become a popular staple in secondary school curriculums, and hasn't lost its ability to surprise and even shock each new generation of readers.

"All of her stories are constructed from the inside out, building from the characters' individual experiences, memories, thoughts and reflections. . . . Her great variety of characters also considerably widens their appeal – even if there's a reader who hasn't spent a lot of time worrying about existential problems, they will have had to waste a considerable effort dealing with their lives and relationships in a manner similar to at least one of the possibilities offered by Neiburga." – Ieva Kolmane, literary critic

"The stories are full of drama and subtleties, which encapsulate the narratives that would normally require a generational novel. Neiburga's 'family' is her generation – the wounded souls, the unhappily happy people, those pushed and shoved by their lives and history, those left standing in the doorway between the 20th and 21st centuries. Her prose is colloquially grotesque yet at the same



1
Published by
Jānis Roze
apgāds, 2017
(Originally
published by
Valters un Rapa,
2004)
248 pages



2
Published by
Zvaigzne ABC, 2002
(Originally published
by Balta, 1991)
95 pages

time harshly ironic, poetic, and emotionally precise. . . . *Push, Push* is, without a shadow of doubt, the most notable book in 21st century Latvian literature." – Pauls Bankovskis, author

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② ***The Story of Tille and the Dog Man*** is about two lonely people who experience suffering and deep injustice. They persist, though, through friendship and mutual understanding, and by taking care of each other. Tille, the protagonist, is a 7-year-old girl. She ends up alone and neglected after her mother's death. The Dog Man, a drifter and recluse who goes to the tunnel to play his accordion every day, happens to be Tille's neighbor. He lives in a small, one-room basement apartment, in a building that was meant to be torn down ages ago. The Dog Man has pets—a cat, and two dogs with unusual names: Prince and Monk. In time, Tille and the Dog Man become best friends. The little girl makes sure everything in the Dog Man's house is neat and tidy, waits for him to come home every day, and tells the dogs stories. He, in turn, becomes a loving father-figure to Tille, and provides for her. At the end of the story, a representative from the local orphans' rights association gets involved. She arrives with a policeman to take Tille to the orphanage. But Tille doesn't want to live at the orphanage, and the Dog Man doesn't want to hand her over to the authorities. As the argument escalates, both dogs attack the policeman, who defends himself, shooting and killing Prince in the process. These two authority figures leave, promising to come back. Tille and the Dog Man don't wait around for them. Instead, they run away to the countryside in search of a better life, along with Monk the dog.

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JĀNIS EINFELDS

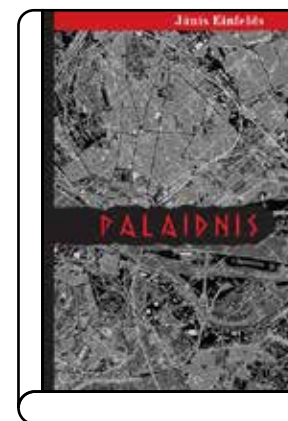
Photo: from the author's personal archive

JĀNIS EINFELDS (1967) is a Latvian post-modernist writer. His first publication was the story "The Battle of the Short Winter," published in 1988, in *Pionieris* magazine. He is the author of several stories, novels, novellas, and other works of prose. In 1999, he wrote a script for the Tristan and Isolde chapter of the film *Three Stories About . . .* The colloquial term *einfeld* has come to mean a certain principle of characterization in Latvian literature because of Einfeld's particular style. His works have been also published in the United States and Germany. Einfelds has been a member of the Latvian Writers' Union since 1996. In 1992, he received the Klāvs Elsbergs Literary Prize for his work in prose. His book *Non-people* (2005) received the 2005 Annual Latvian Literature Award.

- 1 ***The Rascal*** is a harsh, apocalyptic thriller about the fate of civilization. The author describes a world ruled by fake culture and mediocrity, by selfishness and cruelty. In this world, foolishness and power are one and the same, and inescapably lead to loneliness, pain, and death. Is there any hope of surviving in a world like this? The author never complains or lectures—he simply states the facts and delivers a verdict.

Children are at the center of the novel. They're the only ones who see, understand, and feel in earnest. They're the only ones who could change the world, if that were still possible; they're also, unfortunately, the most unprotected people in society. That's why this it is a child who is entrusted with the most difficult mission in the novel. The novel's hero is a street kid who has grown up in the gutter, on the "wrong side of the tracks." Child traders are in charge here, and our prankster-hero is unable to escape being sold into slavery. That's how he becomes a toy for the rich—a child gladiator. At this point, the fallen, degraded mentality of global economy has devoured everything else. There's nothing left to swallow but itself. And so the child gladiators head into their final fight...

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1
Published by
Dienas Grāmata,
2007
400 pages
All rights available



2
Published by
Pētergailis,
2001
150 pages

- 2 The structure of Jānis Einfelds's second collection of short fiction, ***The Man Who Sold Pornographic Pictures***, is based on three men telling stories about their erotic adventures. All together, there are 16 accounts of strange, traumatic, and sad sexual encounters. The author has said the stories are based on the "lewd" Latvian *dainas* (folk songs). Einfelds's characteristically heightened narrative style is clearly present here, and shows something in common with the language of myth and folklore, though the stories unmistakably take place in modern times.

That's why Jānis Einfelds's stories aren't erotica in the usual sense of the word, in spite of candid sexual descriptions. His multi-layered works use shocking settings and dense, unusual language to break readers out of their everyday perception. Each piece also seeks to show how strange the world really is. From the author's point of view, love at the turn of the century is merciless and absolutely unromantic, but also an unavoidable spiritual necessity.

"The book dissects our nighttime selves, which we suppress in daily life because of societal norms," wrote literary critic Rimands Ceplis after the collection was first published. He compared *The Man Who Sold Pornographic Pictures* to the works of the Marquis de Sade, and to classic Latvian author Jānis Poruks's utopian stories about a hero's journey of purification. By combining outwardly ugly, often fantastical scenes with a style close to poetic prose, Einfelds lifts the veil of existing preconceptions from love. At the same time, he replaces it with a new one.

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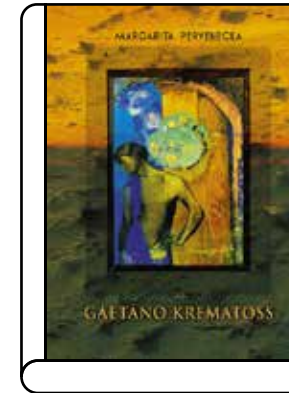
MARGARITA PERVEŅECKĀ

Photo: Kārlis Strautnieks

MARGARITA PERVEŅECKĀ (1976) is a Latvian playwright and writer. In 2001, Perveņeckā graduated from the Latvian Academy of Culture with a BA in film and theater, and since then has been publishing her writing, working for various creative platforms, and writing screenplays. Her first collection, *All the Trees Have Gone*, was published in 2006. Perveņeckā has written several plays for theaters in Latvia. Her writing stands out with her unusual ways of perceiving the world, her use of scientific terms, internationalisms, neologisms, and other peculiar and poetic means of expression. Her novel *Getano's Krematos* received the 2011 Annual Latvian Literature Award.

1 *Getano's Krematos* is a novel about a tired and shadowed soul's journey in the footsteps of lost gods. The main protagonist, Gaetano, interacts with divinely beautiful beings—wise superhumans who can create not only works of art, but whole worlds. He idolizes them, but his interaction with them is fleeting, like sunlight briefly reflecting off water in cupped hands. Unsuccessful attempts to repeat this interaction cause Gaetano to lose trust in his own abilities, which mentally paralyzes him. The only thing keeping him alive burns out in the dark. His comatose existence is sustained by memories of light, which once again awaken his longing to become one with absolute beauty and magnificence. Gaetano's journey ends with the creation of a culminating work of art—he finally breaks into a different state of consciousness and a different reality; a self-transformation into a higher plane: divinity.

The novel's language and structure are microscopically subtle and macroscopically detailed at the same time. Though it is frequently poetic, it is essentially an impassively technical description of episodes observed in the present. A verbalized manifesto of the characters' inner thoughts and emotions appears at the very end of the novel, taking the form of monologue poems. What appears as an objective description reveals the inner experiences and moods of the apparently indifferent characters. In this way, the novel becomes a biopsy of the soul and a projection of the consciousness.



1
Published by
Dienas Grāmata,
2011
256 pages
All rights available



2
Published by
Dienas Grāmata,
2006
296 pages
All rights available

2 The common theme throughout the short-story collection *All the Trees Have Gone* is the life stories of people who used to be (or still are) children. They all need to decide how they should approach life. Do they do it alone, or alongside someone else? Which is more important, their calling and the quests it requires (either inspired or clouded by childish imagination), or actual social relationships?

The collection's protagonists try to make sense of themselves and the world around them and try to find their place in it and master the rules of life. Yet the key to achieving this is always missing—a result of their childish selfishness. But they are also thwarted by and at the point when mental and physical existence meet, when love is shattered and lies out of reach. Childhood can be broken, but doesn't end. No one noticeably grows up. Loneliness seeps into the foundation of relationships. Some characters get pushed to life's sidelines by their defeats, and waste away like dried-out flowers. Others keep on trying to grow up.

The collection culminates in the last story, which describes the basic desire for something indefinably vast. And what is this vast thing? Becoming one with the Universe itself. For that to work, do you need another human being around? And does that person need to be someone whose existence causes deep emotions that open your eyes to the invisible world, and let you experience moments of epiphany? Or can you become one with the Universe on your own, once you're all grown up?

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LAIMA KOTA (MUKTUPĀVELA)

Photo: Kristaps Kalns

LAIMA KOTA (MUKTUPĀVELA) (1962) is one of Latvia's most well-known and beloved authors. She gained widespread recognition with her first novel, *The Mushroom Covenant* (2002), which won the 2002 Annual Latvian Literature Award. Kota has authored five novels since: *A Dozen True Life Stories* (2002), *Loop* (2003), *Emīlija Benjamiņa* (2005), *The Draw of Miera Street* (2016), and *The Room* (2016), as well as two collections of short-form prose: *Totems* (2007) and *My Turkish Coffee* (2012). Her range of writing extends to include her children's book, *Matilde and Teresa or How to Be Here, There and Elsewhere* (2013), and a biography entitled *BrotherBrother* (2008), which is about the brothers Imants and Gido Kokars, conductors and masters of Latvian choral music.

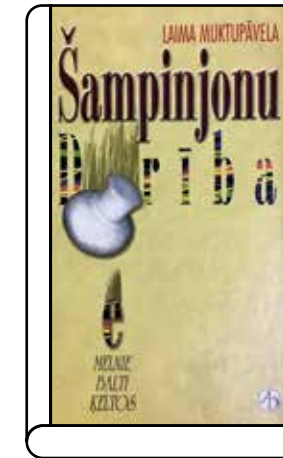
¹ Nominated for the 2016 Annual Latvian Literature Award, her novel *The Room* offers a glimpse into the everyday lives of Latvians thirty years ago, when Soviet power was in the process of abetting the country's rapid economic collapse. However, the political climate suddenly shifted in favor of the basic human desire to live in prosperity, and the Soviets declared Perestroika. The novel revolves around a communal apartment in Riga. Once the large, upmarket homes of the wealthy, during the Soviet years, these apartments were converted and shared by several families, who were forced to use the same kitchen and bathroom and often had to keep their cooking utensils and food in their own rooms to prevent them from being stolen. The protagonists are products of the everyday reality existing at the time. They are of different nationalities, work in different fields, and have a totally different perception of life and yet, they share the same roof.

In her work, Kota employs those styles characterizing various genres which, as a writer, she adores, such as burlesque and the absurd thriller, farce and heightened realism. In doing so, she succeeds in extracting the very essence of the era from the memories of those who lived through those times, concluding that in view of all we experienced during Soviet rule, we are extremely well-equipped to cope with the trials and tribulations the 21st century might throw at us.

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¹
Published by
Dienas Grāmata,
2016
320 pages
All rights
available, except
Lithuanian



²
Published by
Apgāds Daugava,
2002
369 pages

² *The Mushroom Covenant* tells the story of a young woman named Īva Baranovska, who goes to Ireland to earn money to pay off her debts and buy a flat back home in Latvia. Already interested in Celtic culture prior to her arrival in Ireland, Īva spends many hours listening to her colleague tell her local legends and myths, in which she begins to see connections with Latvian folk tales.

Gradually, Īva grows tired of spending long days on the fields picking mushrooms and decides to become a prostitute. She slowly sheds her former self and matures, both sexually and spiritually, yet finds it difficult to remain connected to her own culture, which eventually gets reduced to Latvian food and cooking (the novel itself features several mushroom recipes serving as capstones to chapters). The playful, ironic prose of *The Mushroom Covenant* keeps the reader's interest in the daily struggles of Īva, as she battles her way through the many difficulties facing her in Ireland before she decides to return to Latvia. The author's and protagonist's interest in the otherworldly is reflected in the parallels raised between Īva's trials in Ireland and Latvian myths, as well as Celtic and Biblical legends.

Latvian literary critic and writer Guntis Berelis concluded his review of the novel by saying: "*The Mushroom Covenant* is written with a talent and zest for life without any pretension to the highest echelons of literature, serious social analysis, or anything of the sort. But strangely enough, it's precisely the lack of pretension that allows the novel to find its place among these same higher echelons."

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SANDRA KALNIETE

Photo: from the author's personal archive

SANDRA KALNIETE (1952) is an art historian, politician, writer, and diplomat, former ambassador of Latvia to the UN and France, as well as former Foreign Minister of Latvia. Her book *With Dance Shoes in Siberian Snows* (2001) is the most translated work of Latvian literature since the restoration of independence, and has been published in numerous languages, including English, French, Italian, and German.

Sandra Kalniete's autobiographical novel, *With Dance Shoes in Siberian Snows*, is a moving and eloquent testimony to her family and to the Latvian nation—to their shared fate during more than fifty years of occupation. It is an indictment of the inhuman repression of both the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Above all, it is the story of human survival, and it has become the most-translated Latvian book in recent history



Published by
Jānis Roze apgāds, 2018
(Originally published
by Atēna, 2001)
282 pages
Rights sold to Albania,
United States, Egypt,
Czech Republic, France,
the Netherlands, Italy,
Japan, Poland, Finland,
Germany, Sweden

Kalniete explains: "I didn't know any suffering back then—my parents spared me from it. I learned about the realities of Siberia from the stories of my parents and their friends: horrible tales with evil monsters that make heroes battle against insurmountable obstacles to win the most coveted prize—getting to return to Latvia."

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INGUNA ULA CEPĪTE

Photo: Ģirts Raģelis

INGUNA ULA CEPĪTE (1960) grew up in the family of famous Latvian choir conductors Ausma Derkēvica and Imants Cepītis. Since 1991, she has been the director of Pētergailis Publishing House, which she has developed into one of the leading publishers of textbooks and original Latvian literature in Latvia. **Ulsiks** (2017) is her first book-length work of fiction for adults.

This apparently simple yet subtly painful tale of childhood memories shows life in Soviet-occupied Latvia during the 1960s and 1970s. At times the bitter secrets of the Soviet dictatorship invade the childhood of this small, inquisitive, mischievous girl named Ulsiks. Through a cultural environment – her father’s vast cultural knowledge; the immense combined Song Festival choir conducted by her mother’s practiced hand; and the many individuals from the art world (known to Ulsiks only by their nicknames) – the characters who surround Ulsiks work to keep the cultural DNA of the nation safe, and keep little Ulsiks and her childhood safe, too.



Published by
Dienas Grāmata, 2018
256 pages
All rights available
except Finnish

“This book is a perfect product of our time, it’s both memoir and literary event. It sparks the ever-present question of opposing forces – what happened and what will happen when Ulsiks transforms into a completely different being, meets her destiny, while remaining a symbol of eternal childhood in this life.” – Gundega Repše, author

“It’s easy to walk along a bright path even in a dark time. Inguna Cepīte’s book is just such a path through the 1960s and 1970s – a journey back to childhood and through childhood with Ulsiks – a magnet for trouble – through her mischief and observations about the world, which are not judgmental, but instead share in the joy of each day’s novelty.” – Anita Rožkalne, literary critic

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RVĪNS VARDE

Photo: from the author's personal archive

RVĪNS VARDE (1985) works as a transcriber for the intellectual monthly magazine *Rīgas Laiks*, literally filling himself with the thoughts and recollections of numerous wise and bright personalities from various countries, backgrounds, and professions. These daily, spiritual contacts have undeniably left a mark on his writing style and are sometimes referred to in his texts. It should be mentioned that birdwatching and photography are among his favorite pastimes. He has a keen eye for detail and remarkable ability to express himself in a rich and thought-provoking, yet approachable and entertaining manner.

What's Goin' on There is one of the most impressive literary debuts of 2019 in the category of documentary fiction. This is the vivid collection of Varde's observations on the everyday life of contemporary Latvian society – a string of over one hundred short episodes wherein his sharp, humorous descriptions of things happening here and now – either with Varde himself or with somebody right beside him – often turn into deeper contemplations on some aspect of our perception of current reality.



Published by
Jāņa Rozes apgāds, 2019
144 pages
All rights available

Varde calls his literary sketches “the chronicles of attempts to survive.”

“For the author, it might be enough to enjoy the soap bubbles which reflect all the world which is impossible to catch in the eye of the camera. But for us, the readers, this book is indeed a valuable gift – a tool to improve our perception of life's beauty and absurdity.” – Ingmāra Balode, poetess and translator

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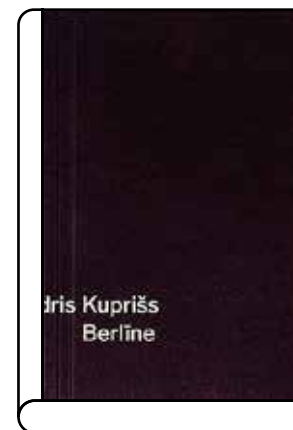


ANDRIS KUPRIŠS

Photo: Zīle Liepiņa

ANDRIS KUPRIŠS (1982) is a Latvian writer and translator. He studied journalism at the University of Latvia and obtained an MA in Photography from Goldsmiths University of London. He recently published his first book, a collection of stories titled *Berlin*. Kuprišs' essays and prose have been published in *Rīgas Laiks*, *Veto Magazine*, *Domuzīme*, *Punctum*, and *Satori* magazines, among others.

Berlin is a collection of 21 prose pieces and one short novella. Although the stories are not intentionally linked, they follow a vague narrative that seems to promise a resolution in the novella at the end of the book, the titular *Berlin*. Or, each story is yet another attempt to penetrate, from a different place and time, the city where the protagonist finds himself, stranded seemingly without a purpose. Berlin is a place where you really want to be, but find it almost impossibly difficult to get to, and when you finally do find yourself there, you learn that to escape this place is even harder than it was to arrive, no matter how much you wish to leave it. Something has happened—we're not sure what, and neither do any of the protagonists. Critics have called Kuprišs's prose manipulative, mathematical, even porous.



Published by
Orbita, 2019
145 pages
All rights available

"Andris Kuprišs's prose contains delicate, deliberate errors. These give an uncertain tension and absurd atmosphere to apparently autobiographical, everyday situations. Even the way language is used in Kuprišs's texts embodies this shift. It expresses estrangement, for example, or an atypical perception of time. *Berlin* confirms that a melancholy, ironic perspective has a place even in the newest Latvian literature." – Laura Brokāne, editor of the novel, writer.

Contact: Publishing house Orbita, orbita@orbita.lv



The **Latvian Literature platform** was established in order to promote Latvian literature and its distribution abroad, thus ensuring international cooperation among publishers, literary agents, writers, translators, and organizations working in the fields of literature and publishing. The Latvian Literature platform provides wide-ranging information about Latvian authors, books, translators and translations, the publishing industry and innovations within the industry.

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The aim of the grant program “**Support for Foreign Publishers Publishing Latvian Literature**” is to ensure that the best of Latvian prose, poetry, drama, journalism and children’s literature is accessible and known beyond the borders of Latvia. The program is developed, organized, and administered by the Latvian Literature platform, and is financed by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia and the State Culture Capital Foundation. The program provides financial support to international publishers who are publishing Latvian literature, thereby encouraging interest from international publishers in Latvian literature, and supporting its translation into different languages. Grant applicants can apply for financial support to cover book production costs. Any independent international publisher who is a legal entity and has experience working with foreign authors is eligible to take part in the grant program.

The deadline for the grant application takes place two times a year. Applications are accepted in accordance with the timeline set by the Latvian Literature platform. Each project must be completed by the end of the calendar year in which the grant was received.

The Latvian Literature platform provides **financial support for translators** who wish to translate Latvian literary works into foreign languages. In order to qualify for funding, the translator must submit a completed application form, a CV, a sample translation, and a letter of intent or an agreement signed with a publisher that confirms plans to publish the respective title. The translator may apply for a grant only if permission has been received from the original copyright holder to produce a complete translation of the entire literary work.

The deadline for the grant application takes place two times a year. Project applications are accepted in accordance with the timeline set by the Latvian Literature platform. Each project must be completed by the end of the calendar year in which the grant was received.