

## EDUCATING THE ESTONIAN READING PUBLIC IN THE 1930s\*

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In the years of independence (1918–1940) Estonian culture enjoyed free and potent development.

In the 1930s, when numerous good original books as well as translations were published, the educated people were unwavering in their struggle against trivial reading matter.

While articles about the literature of artistic merit were mainly read only by educated people, the entire campaign to protect this literature — selective publication, translating, and propagation of good books, ample information about them — served all the reading public and made them more discriminating and appreciative of art.

We should not forget that the education of the reading public, is a vital issue for the culture of a small nation today as well.

Estonians are known as people favouring culture. It was thanks to our appraisal of spiritual values and retaining our culture that, despite the Soviet assimilation policies, we succeeded in preserving our national identity.

Our ancestors aimed at becoming people of learning. Like in Germany, England, Sweden and Finland the general literacy in Estonia had been achieved by the end of the 19th century.<sup>1</sup>

Estonians have not in vain obtained their reputation as people with profound respect for the book. Although our national literature was rather in its late formation, the book and written word in Estonia are connected with the invention of printing in Europe in the 16th century and the work of the Baltic German enlighteners. The book became important then and has not lost its significance even now at the times of TV and video.<sup>2</sup>

It goes without saying that the people's interest in books has differed through the ages, like their need for reading. The availability of books (i.e. their low price) did not bring along a passion for reading in all the people. And, naturally, not everything people read is really worth reading.

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<sup>1</sup> Aarma, L. Kirjaoskus Eestis 18. sajandi lõpust 1880. aastateni. Tallinn, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Järve, M. Lugeja muutuvast Eestis. — Raamatukogu, 1993, 3/4, 40–42.

Estonian literary intellectuals have always attempted to direct the reader towards works of real literary value.

In 1918—1940 — the years of independence — Estonian culture had a free and potent development. As our literature became more variegated and its development intensified especially in the 1930s, it might be interesting to observe the moulding of the reading public just then.

Issues about literature and its reader converged in the early 1930s. By that time the catchwords of the *Noor-Eesti* (Young Estonia) generation "More culture, more European culture! Let us be Estonians, yet let us also become Europeans!" in 1905<sup>3</sup> had been accepted and even realized. A. H. Tammsaare's, F. Tuglas', M. Metsanurk's, A. Gailit's, A. Kivikas', O. Luts', G. Suits', M. Under's, H. Visnapuu's, H. Raudsepp's and others' expressive creative work had already been published. The people had already been directed on the path of better understanding the more figurative work with a much wider cultural background. The younger generation of writers and critics was, however, conscious of some stagnation in the literary development.

In 1929—1930 the so-called nearness-to-life theorists launched a heated discussion. They asserted that the dominating Young Estonian ideology had fallen behind the times, that aestheticism was too strongly emphasized and much of the literature was aimed at the elite reader only. (Literary criticism of the time was strongly influenced by the economic world crisis.) Creators of literature feared the offensive of blunt realism that had become rampant after the publication of the successful novel *Vaeste-Patuste alev* (The Poor Sinners) by A. Jakobson. A dire warning was sounded about belittling readers' judgement.

Younger writers and critics converging around the paper *Kirjanduslik Orbiit* (Literary Orbit) (A. Aspel, A. Annist, A. Oras, D. Palgi, O. Urgart, O. Loorits, A. Jakobson, J. Sütiste, and others) emphasized the necessity to move towards more realistic, social and optimistic trends in our literature.<sup>4</sup> They pointed out that such trends existed in German, French, American, Finnish, and Latvian literature.

The most prominent writers, G. Suits<sup>5</sup> and A. H. Tammsaare<sup>6</sup>, as well as J. Kärner<sup>7</sup> criticized the previous trend's programme for its prolixity and forcing an open door (actually the nearness-to-life trend was born already in the 1920s) and especially the rather pallid work of the trend's representatives.

The discussion was published in much-read newspapers and journals (like *Olion* and *Looming* (Creation), for example), and caught the reading public's attention. Although the argument turned caustic, real anxiety about the destiny of Estonian literature could be felt. Both sides appealed to the reader. It was pointed out that the reader expected profound books with contemporary problems, whereas the other side insisted that the book must be a work of art with eternal values.

A. H. Tammsaare replied to the reproach about our writers' alienation that a professional writer should be to some extent detached from everyday life, as his role is that of a prophet. He said: "We may be facing the same phenomenon that happened to the German public: Goethe and Schiller had to educate the people who were able to appreciate them only a hundred years later."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> «Noor-Eesti» toim. Noorte püüded. — Rmt.: Noor-Eesti. I. 1905. Tartu, 1905, 17.

<sup>4</sup> Lugejaile. — Kirjanduslik Orbiit, 1929, 21. dets.

<sup>5</sup> Suits, G. Vastus «Kirjandusliku Orbiidi» ankeedile. — Kirjanduslik Orbiit, 1930, 15. jaan.

<sup>6</sup> Tammsaare, A. H. Intervjuu. — Olion, 1930, 4, 15—18.

<sup>7</sup> Kärner, J. Lahti kirjanduspoliitikast! — Olion, 1930, 2, 33—34.

<sup>8</sup> Tammsaare, A. H. Eluvöörast kirjandusest. — Olion, 1930, 3, 12.

When J. Semper<sup>9</sup> in his article *Elulähedusest ja vaimulähedusest* (Nearless to Life and to Intellect) attempted to reconcile both sides, still emphasizing that intellectuality should be the final result, A. Annist<sup>10</sup>, D. Palgi<sup>11</sup> and O. Urgart<sup>12</sup> avouched that the synthesis of the two was their ultimate goal. They also warned the writers to beware of cheap popularity. The course to the elite reader was discussed again, too. Differences in readers' preferences were pointed out and shifts in their refinement stressed. A. Oras, who was known for his aesthetic approach to literature, summed up his fellow-ideologues' appearance in the journal *Põhjakaar* (North) in his review in *Looming*.<sup>13</sup>

At a certain distance in time from all these disputes, we can say that the nearness-to-life movement and the discussions it caused played an inciting role in the intellectual life of its time. It made intellectuals observe the role of literature and changing of literary ideas according to times, it made them pay attention to the importance of educating the reading public. The theorists of the nearness-to-life movement were young searching intellectuals who later played a significant role on the Estonian cultural scene. However, despite their claims to literary synthesis, the real life seemed to prove that the fears of their opposition were to a certain extent justified: at the beginning of the decade the contemporary prose and drama lacked psychological approach and were not figuratively revised.

The intellectual goal was to raise the artistic level of our literature and educate the reading public simultaneously. Here it might be of interest to mention O. Urgart's<sup>14</sup> profound article, where this active member of the nearness-to-life movement pointed out the drawbacks in the contemporary novel and discussed some means for achieving a better style. He admitted that the initial laurels of the nearness-to-life literature were rather cheap and stressed that the reader expected artistically mature, really impressive books. The idea that the reader's taste depends, above all, on publication and availability of high-quality literature became generally accepted.

Although there were interesting books and original authors (e.g. P. Vallak and P. Krusten) at the beginning of the 30s, the general literary scene was in need of a change. It was pointed out that dull, tardy novels were a danger to the developing discernment of the readers and thus they were generally opposed to. A counter-reaction to prose reflecting only everyday scenes was felt also inside the literary circles that appreciated deeper artistic approach and eternal topics. Tammisaare's last volumes of *Tõde ja õigus* (Truth and Justice), masterly in their artistic form, profound philosophy and precise psychology, as well as K. A. Hindrey's accomplished short stories, were a real delight to a discerning reader.

The novel of 1934 signified a general divergence from naturalism and slums. At the competition for the best novel new talented authors like L. Kibuvits and A. Hint emerged. The first of them enjoyed a special popularity among her readers. The definite signposts in the 1934 prose were *Armukadedus* (Jealousy) by J. Semper and *Ümera jõel* (On the River Ümera) by M. Metsanurk.

<sup>9</sup> Semper, J. *Elulähedusest ja vaimulähedusest*. — *Looming*, 1931, 4, 415—424.

<sup>10</sup> Annist, A. *Üks vaikne harmoonikamäng pärast plahvatust*. — *Kirjanduslik Orbiit*, 1930, 5. märts.

<sup>11</sup> Palgi, D. *Kirjandus ristteel*. — Rmt.: *Põhjakaar*. Tartu, 1931, 117—132.

<sup>12</sup> Urgart, O. *Kirjanduslikust maitsest, massist ja eliidist*. — *Kunst ja Kirjandus*, 1932, 33, 129—130.

<sup>13</sup> Oras, A. *Põhjakaar*. — *Looming*, 1932, 1\*, 111—114.

<sup>14</sup> Urgart, O. *Märkmeid moodse proosa tehnikast*. — *Looming*, 1932, 7, 821—826.

The years 1934—1940 have been called the seven good years of the Estonian literary harvest.<sup>15</sup> The choice was extensive. Estonian literature became variegated, rich in topics and problems treated in depth and written in colourful style.

One of the major genres was the locally and nationally-based historical novel as introduced by M. Metsanurk (*On the River Ümera*) and A. Mälk (*Surnud majad* (Dead Houses)). K. A. Hindrey was quite original and suggestive in his treatment of historical subject-matter; A. Kivikas wrote the best novel on the War of Independence (*Nimed marmortahvilil* (Names on a Marble Plaque)); E. Kippel brought adventure into the chapters dealing with different periods of our past. As the fascinating historical novel appealed to the feelings of national self-assertion, the readers appreciated it very much, indeed.

The psychological novel and short story improved in mastery (A. H. Tammsaare, J. Semper, L. Anvelt, P. Vallak, K. A. Hindrey). In the late 1920s it had also been fostered by talented writers Reed Morn and Leo Anvelt. Psychological insight had become the main postulate of prose, and some writers wrote their masterpieces about man's destiny with psychological absorption (like *Elutee* (The Course of Life) by R. Roht).

In 1938 Karl Ristikivi, a powerfully gifted writer, published his first novel *Tuli ja raud* (Fire and Iron); he was immediately acknowledged as Tammsaare's successor.

The poetry of the 1930s did not experience such fluctuations as the prose. Mature poets like M. Under, H. Visnapuu, A. Alle and others were still active, newcomers like J. Sütiste and V. Adams were either suggestive or intellectually original. However, the nearness-to-life claim introduced social problems to poetry, making it more prose-like. In the mid-30s the artistic level was gradually rising, fresh and romantic approach to life was introduced by the group *Arbujad* (The Soothsayers) (B. Alver, U. Masing, H. Talvik, K. Merilaas, A. Sang, B. Kangro, P. Viiding), who came from the academic circles of Tartu and stood for classical clarity of form and treatment. Thus both groups of readers — the ones preferring intellectual as well as those liking lyrical poetry — could pick out their favourites either among the new or from among the older generation of poets.

Economic stabilization in Estonia certainly helped the development of literature. Economic support, sums from the culture capital, literary prizes, Book Fund premiums — all these promoted writers to strive for improvement. Thanks to the spread of general education and especially the increase in the number of people with secondary education, a new reader had appeared. An educated man needed a book of greater spiritual and artistic values.

Another reason for the artistic improvement of Estonian literature was certainly the development of world literature and influences of philosophical and psychological theories (S. Freud, A. Adler, H. Bergson, R. Steiner). Estonia belonged to the open world in every sense.

Our reader's general refinement and taste advanced also thanks to the best works of world literature, widely translated and published in the decade observed. It was made possible by the dedicated work of educated publishers, translators and editors.

Much was demanded from the translations: only the best of the world literature should be translated, there should be intensive studies as well as extensive books developing the readers' taste and outlook.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Ristikivi, K. Eesti kirjanduse lugu. Vadstena 1954, lk. 111—129.

<sup>16</sup> Oras, A. Mõtteid tõlkekirjanduse puhul. — Eesti Kirjandus, 1931, 12, 615.

Publishing houses (*Loodus* (Nature), *Noor Eesti* (Young Estonia), *Eesti Kirjanduse Seltsi Kirjastus* (Publishing house of the Estonian Literary Society), *Eesti Kirjastuse Kooperatiiv* (Estonian Publishers' Cooperative), *Valik* (Choice) and others) aimed at printing really good books. Most translations were made from French, English, Finnish and Scandinavian languages. German and Russian translations that had prevailed earlier, were much less published, although the best of them were not forgotten either. The second half of the decade was characterized by high-quality translations. Several estimable series were published, such as: *Nobeli laureaadid* (Nobel Prize Winners), *Põhja-maade romaane* (Nordic Novels), *Eesti Kirjanduse Seltsi Maailmakirjanduse Sari* (World Literature Series of the Estonian Literary Society). Great novels consisting of several volumes (e.g. by R. Rolland, J. Galsworthy, T. Mann and others) and some writers' collected works (F. Dostoyevsky) were also published. The level of the translations had considerably improved, especially noteworthy translations were made by writers and scholars of literature. The readers had a really wide choice of good literature, yet also lots of sensational and attractive second- and third-rate books were available.

Reading public's taste was being spoilt by lengthy commercial novels, published in parts. Newspaper supplements offered a great amount of substandard reading material. Some readers certainly preferred undemanding books that offered light entertainment only. Educated people considered the situation rather alarming and began to demand that bad translations should be taxed. Several articles opposing such books as damaging the reading public's taste were published. Among others who protested against it, A. Oras said: "... the reader's judgement should not be dulled by whatever-rate products of the written word."<sup>17</sup> J. Semper demanded that "Commercial low taste should be curbed in its spread".<sup>18</sup> O. Urgart pointed out that, contrary to the 1930s, the earlier newspaper story was more often than not good literature aiming at educating and developing the reader.<sup>19</sup> He advised the reader to develop his reading skills in order to achieve a real artistic enjoyment instead of reading for pleasure or oblivion only.<sup>20</sup>

The achievements in translated literature in the 30s are worth mentioning. The Estonian reader was quite well informed about the literary world beginning from the antique up to the latest works.

Current literary criticism, professional and up-to-date, propagated outstanding original as well as translated works. Critical articles and literary surveys were published in various magazines and newspapers, which made them easily available to the reading public. Critics interpreted the authors' values (aesthetical, ethical, informative, etc.) in a subtle form full of impact. Thus, while choosing a book to read, ample advice was available though everybody was free to make up his own mind.

The recommendation lists of the Library Commission (founded in 1930), meant for replenishing public libraries, were certainly a great help in forming the reading public's judgement. As, in its initial form, the Commission was mainly made up of educationalists, books of moral and educational value were quite often preferred to artistically mature ones. That is why in 1933 writers J. Semper and E. Hubel were asked to join the Commission. Beginning with 1935, the well-known linguist

<sup>17</sup> Oras, A. «Best-sellerite» kultuur muljal ja meil. — Looming, 1932, 10, 1169—1171.

<sup>18</sup> Semper, J. Eesti nädal ja eesti tõlkekirjandus. — Looming, 1934, 6, 709.

<sup>19</sup> Urgart, O. Kirjanduse osatähtsusest eesti vanemais ajalehis. — Looming, 1938, 5, 564—569.

<sup>20</sup> Urgart, O. Kuidas loetakse — kuidas lugeda. — Looming, 1939, 3, 287—293.

J. Aavik was asked to preside. The lists were completed with the titles of valuable books, purchased for the sums allotted out of the state budget. Thus good books got into the libraries and through them to the reading public. Similar lists of recommendation were made for schools. The choice was made by language and literature teachers, among them Gustav Suits, professor of literature at Tartu University.

Like diligent gardeners the literary intellectuals of the 1930s nurtured the reading public's discernment.

While articles about the literature of artistic merit were mainly read only by educated people, the entire campaign to protect this literature — selective publication, translating, propagation of good books, ample information about them — served all the reading public and made them more discriminating and appreciative of art. Whatever the choice, the values of a good book were constantly emphasized. This systematic work was productive and the society learned to appreciate true spiritual values. Cultural life in Estonia developed in harmony with that of Europe and plans for the future were manifold and ambitious.

All this was brutally interrupted in 1940 when Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union: the first attack hit the intellectuals, the next the cultural values in general and books in particular — facts about vandalizing books have become known now. People were offered only alien and inimical ideology...

Still, the Estonian people preserved their cultural memory and our reading public their right values.

The new independence gave the Estonian people freedom and hope for the future. Our goal should be retaining the real values of our culture and developing them further. Alas, like in the 1930s we are forced to face the unpleasant by-effects of free commercial and publishing activities — the mushrooming mass culture threatening to suffocate the good book. It is quite essential to study the methods of dissemination of healthy attitudes of the past if we want to be able to struggle against the propaganda of mass culture. We must keep in mind that educating the reading public is a vital issue for a small nation's culture.

## EESTI LUGEJASKONNA KIRJANDUSLIKU MAITSE KUJUNDAMINE 1930. AASTAIL

Mall REINOLD

Eestlasi tuntakse vaimurikkusi hindava rahvana, kes rahvusliku identiteedi on säilitanud tänu oma kultuuri hoidmisele võõrvõimu ahistuseski. Eesti kultuuriline areng on tihedalt seotud kogu Euroopa arenguga. Üldine kirjaoskus saavutati Eestis nagu Saksamaal, Inglismaal, Rootsis ja Soomes 19. sajandi lõpul. Raamatute ulatuslikumast levikust ja lugemise hoogustumisest võib rääkida seoses rahvusliku ärkamisajaga möödunud sajandil. Vaba kultuuriareng toimus Eestis iseseisvusajal 1918—1940. 1930. aastail intensiivistus lugeja kirjandusliku maitse kujundamine väärtkirjanduse hindamiseks.

1920-ndate lõpuks olid omaks võetud «Noor-Eesti» generatsiooni heitsatud avarama kultuuritaotluse loosungid. Selleks ajaks oli lugejani jõudnud nii omamaist kui ka tõkelist kujunditihedat ja kõrgtasemega

kirjandust. Ometi tõsis kümnendivahetusel (1929—1930) terav kirjanduslik diskussioon, mis otseselt puudutas kirjanduse suundumusi ja lugejat. Elulähedusteoreetikud (D. Palgi, A. Annist, O. Urgart jt.) nõudlesid uues situatsioonis elulisemat ja sotsiaalsemat kirjandust, kritiseerisid estetismiilminguid ja elitaarsele lugejaskonnale suunatud ning osutasid lugejakihtide erinevatele maitse-eelistustele. Kirjanikud G. Suits, A. H. Tammsaare ja J. Semper aga rõhutasid, et lugejale on vaja ennekoike igavesi väärtusi ja vaimsust kandvaid kunstiteoseid. Hoiatati lugeja maitse allakiskumise eest lamerealistliku proosaga, mis kipus vohama pärast A. Jakobsoni menukat aguliromaani «Vaeste-Patuste alev». Väitlejad tõdesid peagi mõlemapoolselt, et 1930-ndate algusaastate kirjandus ootab nii elutunnetuslikku sügavust kui ka kunstilist tihenemist. Kirjandusesiseselt areng toimuski, omapäraseid teoseid pakkusid P. Vallak, P. Krusten, ilmusid A. H. Tammsaare «Tõe ja õiguse» meisterlikud viimased köited ja K. A. Hindrey psühholoogilised novellid.

Aastaid 1934—1940 on nimetatud eesti kirjanduse seitsmeks viljaaastaks. Kirjandus mitmekesisustus, avardus aine- ja probleemikäsitlusel ning edenes arvestatavalt kujutatava sügavuse ja stiilivärvikuse poolest. Lugeja valikuvõimalused suurenesid. Elavat huvi tunti ajaloolise romaani vastu, mille edukalt taaselustasid M. Metsanurk ja A. Mälk. Taidurlikule tasemele tõstsid J. Semper ja A. H. Tammsaare psühholoogilise romaani (viimast harrastasid andekalt 1920. aastate lõpul ka R. Morn ja L. Anvelt). 1930. aastate keskel kasvas kogu proosakirjanduses tähelepanu inimese siseheitleuste väljenduslikumale avamisele. See võimaldas lugejale sügavamaid emotsionaalseid ja stiililisi elamusi.

Lüürikasse tõi kümnendi keskel värsket puhangu romantilist elutunnet klassikalist selgust ja vormikindlust hindav arbujaate põlvkond (B. Alver, U. Masing, H. Talvik, B. Kangro, K. Merilaas, A. Sang, P. Viiding). Uusi meelisautoreid leidsid nii lüürilisema kui ka intellektuaalsema luule austajad. Samuti arendas oma loometegevust sügavuse poole eelnev luuletajate generatsioon. Eesti lugeja kirjandusemõistmine ja kunstitundlikkus avardusid omamaise ja ulatuslikult vahendatud tõlkekirjanduse paremiku kaudu.

Üldorientatsioon oli 1930. aastail võetud prantsuse, inglise, skandinaavia ja soome autoreile, varem domineerinud saksa ja vene kirjandusest hoiti siiski vaatlusväljas olulisim. Kümnendi teisel poolel anti välja mitmeid tõlkeväärisarju (Nobeli laureaadid, Põhjamaade romanid, Eesti Kirjanduse Seltsi maailmakirjanduse sari). Samas paisati ajalehejoonealuste kaudu rahva sekka hulgaliselt ka sensatsioonilist ja teisejärgulist. Selle vastu protestis kirjanduslik intelligents korduvalt. Lugejal soovitati oma kirjandusmaitset arendada sügavuti, mitte lasta end tuimendada väheväärtuslikuga. Teravalt kritiseeriti äritsemist odava maitsega.

Kümnendi saavutusi tõlkekirjanduse vallas võib hinnata ikkagi väljapaistvaks, seda ka tänu erudeeritud kirjastajaile ning tõlkijaile. Eesti lugeja viidi kurssi maailmakirjanduse rikkustega antiigist kõige moodsamate teosteni.

Väärtkirjandust propageeris lugejale järjekindlalt professionaalse tasemega kriitika, pidades võrdse hoolega fookuses nii omamaist kui ka tõlkelist kirjandust. Arvustusi, ülevaateartikleid ja teoste eelinfotiooni pakkusid mitmed kultuuriväljaanded ja päevalehed.

Hea kirjanduse levitamisel etendasid 1930. aastail märkimisväärset osa ka kooli- ja rahvaraamatukogud, mille varud komplekteeriti haridus- ja sotsiaalministeeriumi juures asuva raamatukogu komisjoni koostatud soovitusnimekirjade alusel. Teoseid valisid nii avalikesse raamatukogudesse kui ka koolikogudesse tunnustatud pedagoogid, kirjanikud ja kirjandusteadlased. Põhiosas soetati selliselt raamatukogudesse väärtuslik varamu.

1930. aastail kandis kirjanduslik intelligents hea aednikuna hoolet lugeja kirjandusliku maitse parandamise eest. Laiema lugejakihi tead-  
vusse viidi sihikindlalt tõelise väärtusega kunstiteoseid. See pidev süs-  
teemne töö oli viljakas. Lugeja omandas kirjandusteose vastuvõtmiseks  
õiged väärtushinnangud, mida ei suutnud väärastada nõukogude ten-  
dentslik kunstiteoloogid. Väärtkirjanduse hindamist tuleb aga kaitsta  
samuti tänapäeva vabas Eestis, nüüd massikultuuri pealetungi eest. Siin  
võib õppida mineviku tervest suhtumisest ja selle levitamise võtetest.  
Väärtkirjanduse lugejani viimine on väikerahva kultuuri eluküsimus.

## ВОСПИТАНИЕ ВКУСА ЭСТОНСКОЙ ЧИТАТЕЛЬСКОЙ АУДИТОРИИ В 1930-е ГОДЫ

Малл РЕЙНОЛД

Бережное отношение эстонцев к своему духовному богатству и куль-  
туре в течение столетий позволило сохранить им национальное само-  
сознание вопреки противодействию чуждых властей. Всеобщая гра-  
мотность населения была достигнута к концу XIX в., что поставило  
Эстонию вровень с ведущими европейскими странами. Рост националь-  
ного самосознания пробудил в народе интерес к книгам, возросла  
читаемость на родном языке.

Свободное и динамическое развитие культуры в Эстонии пришлось  
на период независимости 1918—1940 гг. В 1930-е годы велась интен-  
сивная работа по воспитанию литературного вкуса читателей.

К концу 1920-х годов общественностью овладела идея широкого  
приобщения к мировой культуре, впервые выдвинутая узкой группир-  
ровкой младоэстонцев еще до обретения независимости. На столе чита-  
теля появилось много переводной литературы мирового значения, а  
также сочинения новых талантливых эстонских писателей.

В 1929—1930 гг. на страницах газет и журналов разгорелась дис-  
куссия, напрямую касающаяся воспитания читательского вкуса и самого  
читателя. Теоретики Д. Пальги, А. Аннист, О. Ургарт и др. выступали  
за отражение литературой жизненной правды и социальных проблем,  
критиковали элитарность и излишний эстетизм некоторых литератур-  
ных направлений. Они же подняли вопрос об адресной литературе,  
предназначенной для различных социальных слоев населения. Напро-  
тив, такие известные писатели, как Г. Суйтс, А. Х. Таммсааре и Й. Сем-  
пер, считали, что приоритетными в литературе должны быть вечные  
ценности и идеи, которые формируют духовный мир читателя и общую  
нравственную атмосферу. Серый реализм жизни, по их мнению, спо-  
собен только извратить читательский вкус. Наглядным примером соче-  
тания реализма и натурализма стал роман А. Якобсона «Поселок  
бедных грешников», имевший большой читательский успех.

После затухания дискуссии эстонские писатели создали ряд само-  
бытных и высокохудожественных произведений. Среди авторов были  
как молодые (П. Валлак, П. Крустен), так и зрелые мастера слова  
(А. Х. Таммсааре, К. Хиндрей).

Наиболее плодотворными в эстонской литературе по сей день счи-  
таются 1934—1940 годы. Произведения этого периода отличаются глу-  
биной знания жизни, бытовых проблем, интересными характерами,  
образностью, единством стилистики. Особый интерес возник к истори-  
ческому роману (М. Метсанурк, А. Мьялк). На значимый уровень под-  
нялся и психологический роман (Й. Семпер, А. Х. Таммсааре), хотя  
в этом жанре с успехом творили Р. Морн и Л. Анвельт в конце 20-х  
годов. В прозе середины 30-х годов основное внимание уделялось выра-



зительному раскрытию внутренних эмоций и душевным борениям человека, что доставляло читателю эстетическое и эмоциональное наслаждение.

Романтическими веяниями сопровождалось вступление на литературный парнас целой плеяды поэтов (Б. Альвер, У. Мазинг, Х. Тальвик, Б. Кангро, К. Мерилаас, А. Санг, П. Вийдинг), ценивших в поэзии прежде всего отточенность и классическую строгость выражения мысли. В поэзии развивалось как лирическое, так и интеллектуальное начало. В этом же направлении совершенствовались свое мастерство и лирики более старшей генерации.

Эстетический вкус читателя того периода формировался также на базе художественных переводов классиков мировой литературы, а также ведущих писателей разных стран, с общей ориентацией на английскую и французскую, а также на скандинавскую и финскую литературу. Начиная с 1935 г. издавались серии переводов лауреатов Нобелевской премии, известные сочинения скандинавских и финских писателей (т. н. романы Северных стран). Под эгидой Общества эстонской литературы вышла серия «Мировая литература». Эстонский читатель смог познакомиться с выдающимися произведениями начиная с античной эпохи до современности.

В то же время велась борьба со второсортной литературой, порой сенсационной или даже с «желтой» окраской, которой пестрели т. н. литературные приложения некоторых газет и журналов.

О «рекламе» хорошей литературы неустанно заботилась профессиональная критика, державшая в фокусе своего внимания как переводную, так и отечественную литературу. Регулярно в периодике появлялись обзорные статьи критического и реферативного характера, выдавалась предварительная информация о новой книжной продукции. Большую роль в деле распространения хорошей литературы сыграла сеть школьных и публичных библиотек, запасы которых пополнялись по рекомендациям специальной комиссии при Министерстве просвещения и социального обеспечения. В работе этой комиссии принимали участие известные педагоги, писатели и литературоведы. Таким образом наиболее просвященная часть интеллигенции, включая и литературных критиков, воспитывала вкус широкого круга читателей. Этот труд дал замечательные плоды, так как читатель приобрел правильные навыки оценки литературы вообще. Приобретенных навыков не смогла испортить даже тенденциозная советская идеология. Истинная литература требует защиты и в свободной Эстонии — на этот раз от наступления массовой культуры. Необходимо учиться у прошлого, как ценить и распространять настоящую литературу. От того, будет ли такая литература доведена до читателя, зависит судьба культуры малых народов.