

*Of Hard Joy: Half a Century of  
Viivi Luik's Creations. Poetry*

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**Abstract.** Viivi Luik has been active in Estonian literature for half a century: from the times of Soviet censorship to regained independence. Her renowned novels *Seitsmes rahukevad* (*The Seventh Spring of Peace*, 1985) and *Ajaloo ilu* (*The Beauty of History*, 1991) have been published in a number of foreign languages. Her first collection of poetry *Pilvede püha* (*Holiday of Clouds*) appeared in 1965. Since then ten more collections have followed: *Taevaste tuul* (*Wind of the Skies*, 1966), *Lauludemüüja* (*Song Vendor*, 1968), *Hääl* (*Voice*, 1968), *Ole kus oled* (*Stay Where You Are*, 1971), *Pildi sisse minek* (*Entering a Picture*, 1973), *Põliskevad* (*Perpetual Spring*, 1975), *Maapäälised asjad* (*Earthly Matters*, 1978), and *Rängast rõõmust* (*Of Hard Joy*, 1982). In addition, she has published three books of selected verse together with the volume of collected verse (2006), as well as four books of fiction, three volumes of essays, several children's books and two dramas. Many Estonian songwriters have appreciated her lyrics, evident in dozens of music books and recordings. Guided by a methodologically holistic perspective and moving towards a “unified field theory” of literary criticism, this contribution to Luik scholarship makes available, for the first time, a biobibliographical comparative introduction of all of her works for the international audience. It illuminates the broadly representative character of her oeuvre and shows how Luik charts the course for an entire generation of “Soviet” writers of the Baltics as “border states”.

**Keywords:** Viivi Luik, Estonian literature, “Soviet” literature, Estonian history, poetics, literary reception, censorship, realism, modernism, “neosymbolism”, literary “unified field theory”

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*Meelde ajaloost / kõik sündmused / ei jää, /  
karta võib, / et sääl on / kannatusi suuri. /  
Vana päike / ajab / läbi pää / oma sitkeid /  
haralisi / juuri.*  
Viivi Luik, "MAJAHOIDJA HOOVIS  
RAIUB JÄÄD"

*From history not all / is remembered, /  
events and thoughts, / probably alas / there is /  
much suffering. / The old sun / stretches /  
through the head / its tough / forked / roots.*  
Viivi Luik, "THE CARETAKER IN THE  
YARD SPLITTING ICE"<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Viivi Luik is one of the most cherished and enduring writers of contemporary Estonian literature. With her poetry she addresses the reader of her own mother-tongue from the depth of their history, language and culture, whereas her renowned novels *Seitsmes rahukevad* (*The Seventh Spring of Peace*, 1985) and *Ajaloo ilu* (*The Beauty of History*, 1991) have been published in a number of foreign countries. Considering her growing intellectual presence and emerging poetics, Luik's work constitutes a representative model for a whole generation of authors in Estonian literature.

Surprisingly though, apart from short entries written primarily for Estonian and German reference works (see Nirk 1983/1987, Nagelmaa 1991, Dittmann-Grönholm 1998, Süvalep 2000, Hasselblatt 2001, Olesk 2001, Wilpert 2004, Org 2009), there are no major scholarly introductions to Viivi Luik's work and reception, particularly in English (except Merilai 2006a, 2007b). To fill this gap is the primary purpose of this article. The first half discusses poetry and its reception in Soviet and post-Soviet times. The second part considers Luik's prose (fiction, drama and essays). Necessarily biobibliographical and comparative, the approach is informed by a 'unified theory' of literary criticism, which might be regarded an ideal disposition for the study of literature. From literary history (Nirk 1983/1987, Hasselblatt 2004: 90–94), psychoanalysis (Jaanus 1988, 1989), (pragma)poetics and phenomenology (Merilai 2007a), to linguistic formalism (Hint 1986), or psycho-critical feminism (Kurvet-Käosaar 2007), postcolonialist (Kirss 2006) or ethnic studies (Verschik 2007), the

<sup>1</sup> Here and henceforth free translation of poetry examples. A. M.

article utilizes theories and perspectives that resonate with and further our critical appreciation of Luik's oeuvre and its deeply transformative reception.

### Biographical Milestones

Viivi Luik was born on 6<sup>th</sup> November in 1946 in Viljandi county near Lake Võrtsjärv. Her father was a travelling electrician, her mother worked at the local collective farm. The lonely child was mostly brought up by her grandmother. The girl was independent and imaginative, struggled to read already at the age of three and henceforth everything available (Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, Romain Rolland's *Jean-Christophe*, Estonian poets Gustav Suits, Marie Under, Ernst Enno...). Soon she tried to write something herself and, as any bright child, felt a bit bored at the elementary and basic schools. From 1965 to 1967 the budding poet studied at the Tallinn extramural secondary school, working at the same time as a librarian.

Luik's first poem appeared in the local daily in 1962. Next year she wins the first award of the magazine *Pioneer* for schoolchildren, although some suspicious editors visited her beforehand, to make sure that the poems had not been sent by an adult. In 1964 she debuted in the literary magazine *Looming*. The first collection of poetry, *Pilvede püha* (*Holiday of Clouds*), was published in 1965. Two years later she became a freelance writer and joined the Estonian Writers' Union in 1970.

Her collections of poetry *Põliskevad* (*Perpetual Spring*, 1975) and *Rängast rõõmust* (*Of Hard Joy*, 1982), as well as the stories for children (1974–1976), and the novel *The Seventh Spring of Peace* (1985), received the Juhan Smuul annual literary awards. In 1986 the collective farm named after A. H. Tammsaare awarded the novel its own prize. At the time when Soviet Estonia was already crumbling, the title of a Merited Writer and the state award was conceded to her in 1987. In 1988, on the threshold of the new independence arriving in 1991, Luik received the prestigious poetry prize named after Juhan Liiv. Her last novel *Varjuteater* (*The Shadow Play*) obtained the 2010 Cultural Award of the Republic of Estonia.

Since 1974 Luik has been in her second marriage, with writer and politician Jaak Jõeriüt. From 1993 on, she has been living as a diplomatic spouse in Helsinki, Rome, New York, Riga, and Stockholm. On different literary scholarships, she has resided in Switzerland and Germany on many occasions. Luik was the laureate of the State Cultural Award (1992) and the Order of the White Star, 4<sup>th</sup> class (2000), also the Order of the Lion of Finland (1995). In November 2006, an international conference on her creations was hosted by the the

University of Tartu, followed by the festive proceedings consisting of 29 contributions and a comprehensive bibliography (see Merilai (ed.) 2007).

## Nature Poetry

Viivi Luik's *Pilvede püha: luuletusi aastatest 1961–1963* (*Holiday of Clouds: Poetry from 1961–1963*) was published in the poetry cassette *Noored autorid 1964* (*Young Authors 1964*) together with debut collections of Jaan Kaplinski, Hando Runnel and Ly Seppel. This was the era preceding the Prague Spring, which re-introduced Kersti Merilaas, August Sang and Betti Alver into Estonian poetry, galvanised the free verse of Jaan Kross, Ellen Niit, Ain Kaalep and of Artur Alliksaar, the still banned linguistic magician, swung up such contemporaries as Paul-Eerik Rummo, Mats Traat, surrealist Andres Ehin, and the existential men of fiction and drama Mati Unt, Enn Vetemaa and Arvo Valton. The gentle naivety of the newcomer, carried by a direct sensual relationship with nature, clearly stood out beside Kaplinski's more cultivated and Runnel's rustic approach. The ecocritical conclusion, today, would be that "Luik's poetry owns and safeguards, Kaplinski's claims and asserts, the place that is, or is named as, their own" (Soovik 2001: 193).

"This girl is a natural talent, extraordinary and bright," admired the witty poet-cum-KGB officer Uno Laht (1965: 786), supported by young sociologist Marju Lauristin (1965: 3), literary scholars Jaak Põldmäe (1965) and Maie Kalda (1965). The best part of the thin volume shows the influence of Estonian first modernist Juhan Liiv (1864–1913) who most sensitively captured nature in Estonian poetry; with Soviet poet Debora Vaarandi's (1916–2007) light shadow in the background. Composer Olav Ehala turned the poem "Võta mind lehtede varju" ("Take Me Under the Shelter of Your Leaves", 1962) into a popular song later: *I long for the bosom of the rowan-tree, / to bury my head in its branches. / I long for the bosom of the rowan-tree, / to rest where would be good.*

Minimalist and musical expression, skilful repetitions, airy sensitive metaphors, a sense of existential contrast – all Liiv's best qualities. On the other hand we perceive the growing impact of the introspective religious symbolism of Ernst Enno (1875–1934) and the poet and theologian Uku Masing (1909–1985) who spent his life in internal exile (whose intellectual guidance the young schoolgirl together with Kaplinski was fortunate enough to experience). This was something apparently alien to the sham optimism of socialist realism, making the Estonian reader happy and the editors, involved in censorship, alert from the start (e.g. Rimmel 1965, 1968). It was indeed already possible to observe how sceptical tones with social allusions were creeping into her serene

poetry, e.g. in “Teeidüll” (“Road Idyll”): *The fist of wind against the chin – / it is quite mad – I’ve known it for long. [...] I walk along a wet mud squelching road, / an aspen, dipped in blood, glows ahead. [...] it won’t, damn it, end as yet.* Years later Paul-Eerik Rummo calls this bitter motif premonition (1996: 721).

### Towards Urban Modernism

“The poet with a distinctive handwriting”, as the experienced Marxist critic Nigol Andresen assessed the beginner (1966), published a new collection *Tae-vaste tuul: teine luulevihik* (*Wind of the Skies: Second Booklet of Poetry*, 1966) already next year. Among the prevailing idyllic nature poems emerges a certain opposition to the urban landscape, an inkling about the hardships of people on their own. The poet polishes her style that resembles Vaarandi’s symbol-flavoured approach to ‘simple things’ (Kiin 1980: 1443). Alongside aspirations towards Oriental intuition, inspired by her mentor Masing (see Kuusk 2007), succinct and pictorial expression (Rummo 1966), the eschatological danger motif of the “burning world” and “cool night”, occasionally surfaces, to be augmented in future (Unt 1994).

The 1968 crisis of the Eastern bloc or Brezhnev’s tanks in Prague, signified a drastic change in the consciousness of many (although the crisis of the ‘Western bloc’ – student unrest, the Vietnam war, murder of Martin Luther King had their impact too). All that was partly reflected in her third collection *Lauludemüüja* (*Song Vendor*, 1968), especially the fourth booklet *Hääl* (*Voice*) published the same year. In the first, the principle of contrast, Weltschmerz, has deepened: a split appears between nature and town, dreams and reality, self-confidence and self-irony, freedom and duty, the individual and society. Joy is driven off by a sense of emptiness, aimless wandering, fear of a dead end: *I imagine leafless mornings coming / and my fingers get scared* (“Tardumus” / “Torpor”). Since this mostly free-verse collection, urban topics tend to dominate, blending with the emerging despondency: *One day / there is no longer anywhere to go. / Houses lurk through murky glass* (“Päev raudses raamis” / “A Day in an Iron Frame”). However, danger does not lie in the room but in the stagnating time.

Jaan Kaplinski wrote the famous review of *Song Vendor* where he compared the poet with a canary down in the mine who warns people with its song at the slightest sign of danger (1968; also in Laaban 1985). Hando Runnel (1968), too, welcomed the more social stance, as his idea of the mission of poetry was to win everything existing over to goodness. It later turns out that in difficult

circumstances this task can be also fulfilled by means of apparent indifference or even cruelty – *similia similibus*.

Viivi Luik has said that the years 1967–1971 were quite complicated for her, forcing her to face serious choices: she realised what Estonia meant to her, and had to experience the entanglements of human relations. She discovers Russian symbolist poetry: Aleksandr Blok, Konstantin Balmont, Marina Tsvetaeva, Nikolai Gumilev. She reads Thomas Mann, Stefan Zweig; Hermann Hesse's *Steppenwolf*, Max Frisch's *Homo Faber* and Lion Feuchtwanger's *Jud Süß* leave a profound impression (Kiin 1980: 1446). Collections *Voice* and *Ole kus oled* (*Stay Where You Are*, 1971) are perceptually close, although their language of images differs from that in previous books of poetry. Hellar Grabbi, an exile critic in Washington and editor of the magazine *Mana* (*Spell*), wrote (1969): "These are no longer mere prints, but verbal paintings [...] where the impressionist element has retreated before the expressionist one, landscape of nature before landscape of ideas, fragility and tremor before planes of intersection with a cubist effect."

In the collection *Tānan ja palun* (*Thanks and Welcome*, 1983) the poet Juhani Viiding wrote: *There's a woman, an Estonian poet / what she writes is elevating. / I really need her songs. // Does her voice come from above?* Viivi Luik admits (Email to author 8.01.2006): "The collection *Voice* was very important to me. I remember that the book was seen as a bit weird back then, but I was pleased for the first time, as I managed to express what I had wished." The poems are not sharply distinguished, they move smoothly together, tense spiritual states are muted; the expression is seemingly cool, often in brief free verse: *the dying / forests / wrapped / cafes / in newspaper / thus / cellophane-love / crumples [...]* *I had myself / walled / into / this / century* ("hävivad laaned..." / "forests dying...") What prevails here is the grey urban atmosphere, suppressed anxiety opposed to the thirst for life and curiosity. The lucid picturesque description of the outer world is replaced by connotative intuition and dotted-line composition, personal and occasionally mysterious set of symbols is formed: *Once I talked about fields. [...] but now I am here. / Against wind, / against sharp glass / all alone...* ("Rääkisin väljadest ükskord" / "Once I Talked about Fields"). Key words such as *wind, glass, ice, snow, empty, death, blood, spirit, tree, spring*, emerge as semantic dominants (Luik 1998: 8). The poem "Väljas on veebruar täna" ("It's February Outdoors Today") becomes one of the most melancholy pop songs in Estonia.

Literary apparatchiks, however, were in for a shock: a public letter written by literary scholar Richard Alekõrs (1969) attacked the young poet, warning her that the smiling beat-generation mini-skirt poetry, the egocentric allogical impressions which resembled a lunar landscape (allusion to the 'dissident' role

model of Masing's collection *Neemed Vihmade lahte* (*Promontories into the Gulf of Rains*, 1935)), could easily lead to being declared a Soviet pariah. Ideological lackeys panicked – the prophet of which *Voice* are we talking about, anyway (reference to the strictly banned Voice of America): if things go on in this vein, the society “might be pushed back to antiquity”! Official offensives like that were not easy to overcome for anybody in this era – how would one resist it?

Later, at the turn of the millennia, the worldly-wise writer argues (Maiste 2000: 12): “The world has always been terrified of people's freedom [...] because if you are free you can no longer accuse anyone. The last millennium is not going to end until you and I realise that the world has just as much courage, goodness and freedom as have you and I.” Flee, free child! – an expression of support, “Saade häälele” (“Accompaniment to the Voice”), which warmed her soul for years, was published in the student paper of the Tartu State University by Paul-Eerik Rummo (1968). According to Luik (2006b), the latter's father, Paul Rummo, still Soviet Estonian poet and literary functionary, also played a lobbyist role in her ascent to the Parnassus.

It is a bit sad to think today how the prominent scholars like Karl Muru failed to recognise the new quality of the system of imagery, blaming the poet for her “limited sense of reality” (1971: 435–436): “In the politely cold attitude, the lyrical qualities may easily get lost or seriously damaged, and the muse of poetry will not leave it unpunished. [...] with her first collections of verse, V. Luik seems to have acquired a sufficiently wide circle of admirers. Alas [...] the author no longer adheres to simple sincerity of feelings, which used to be so charming [...] she mercilessly restricts her readership.” The public, however, expanded (incidentally, the print run of *Voice* was 18 000, of *Song Vendor*, 6000, no more than for one million Estonian speakers at home; for a bibliometrical approach see Tart 2007) – also to the readers of the ‘Socialist’ countries abroad (see Macura 1977), and exile Estonians behind the iron curtain. The translation anthology *Poeti Estoni* (1973), published in the Vatican by Vello Salo, included eight poems by Luik in Italian; introduction to the second print (1975) by him and writer Karl Ristikivi from Stockholm.

Years later Luik recalled the stagnated reception before an audience in Zurich (1998: 7–8): “My first collection of poetry [...] I had been in the unpleasant role of a Wunderkind for a few years, which meant that critics were betting on how soon I would flop. I was only saved by changing, through experience of life that altered and expanded me, and thanks to *myself*, towards whom I have been travelling all my life as towards the horizon.” In 1970 she could join the Writers' Union and admitted (Kiin 1980: 1449): “I became more secure, seemed to find my country, my people and my own place in that country. I took a greater interest in people and their relationships, the surrounding life. [...] At

eleven or twelve I wanted to be a writer, at fourteen I had to, at any cost, and at twenty-four I realised that I was an Estonian writer. It took that long.”

## Resistance and Symbolism

In the next three collections free verse retreats, giving way to metrical short verse, only to mix again in the fourth book. The collection *Pildi sisse minek* (*Entering a Picture*, 1973) moves from phrased self-observation towards outwardly indifferent, but internally painful social analysis: *Live or live not, / what difference does it make // when the trees have grown leaves // and shadows of sky / lie on the ground* („Ela või ära ela” / “Live or Live Not”). Endel Nirk writes (1987: 328): “Her perception of life has become more prosaic, in pursuing her new poetic line she reveals a certain ruthlessness in the prominence she gives to the constraining inevitabilities of life.”

The fragility of objects, landscapes, moments of time become more thematic; fine hidden nuances of mood against the background of the world’s dangers, the unknown beyond fate; verses consist of short sentences, they are final, convincing, texts have poignant final points (Mihkelson 1978): *Somewhere a window jingles / Vietnam eats out souls. / Each has his own life. / We all have five litres of blood* („1971”). Unfortunately there were always discouraging reviewers who claimed that Luik “could do better” (Reinla 1973), and tried to show searching as regression (Mirov 1973). In truth, the only thing moving backwards were her jealous critics – the split became remarkable.

A sensitive reader, on the other hand, saw clear development in the ten-year journey – the possibilities of method are limitless (Krimm 1975). *Põliskevad* (*Perpetual Spring*, 1975), awarded the annual poetry prize, continues in the state of social and existential affliction. With increasing self-confidence, boldness and enterprise, it carries on even more harshly and with keener contrasts: *Who knows life better, / is more ashamed. / Go, with clenched teeth, / and you’ll get through!* (“Pajud on urvas juba” / “Catkins on Willows Already”). Earlier Luik was monological, whereas face to face with society she becomes more dialogue-focused. Jaan Kaplinski says (1996: 1411): “The dialogue partner could be the reader, a close person, but sometimes it is the alien, menacing, impersonal force, history. [...] the poet mentions Auschwitz, tells about the destiny of people whom history has maimed or thrown into a mass grave.” Mentor Ain Kaalep (1975) applauds the usage of everyday objects that in the usual romantic atmosphere of poetry had a strange effect, although the deepening of realism marked the concealing of the romantic attitude on the level of subtext.

In the collection *Maapäälised asjad* (*Earthly Matters*, 1978), the share of everyday realities grows further, details of urban milieu acquire an increasingly lucid symbolic value that appeals to the nation's resistance and a sense of belonging together: *If you never see war during your lifetime, / you do not know the taste of peace. / A white sheet fluttering on the balcony. / The poet is filled with dark foreboding* ("Uued suured majad" / "New Big Houses"). The projection of an oppressing sense of danger into the everyday environment, affording it the value of symbols, becomes poetical mission that is not lacking a shamanist therapeutic effect. A child's sincere but eternal point of view increasingly prevails, which also denotes moving towards children's stories and poems: *The rooms where lives a child are often strange, / however new the house. / Warm shadows move around there – / black holes, openings in time* ("Vaade" / "Sight").

Reaching the 'simple' poeticising of simple things was the greatest achievement of Luik's poetry in the 1970s (Kiin 1980: 1452): "I think I found my style by getting to know myself. Talking about technical models, I probably got those at first from Tuglas and Laxness. I namely realised that what we could call the beyond, has the greater effect the more it is connected with everyday life. [...] The same happens in Blok's later poems, where the so-called low realities of life make the higher more poignant." Thus Viivi Luik joins the tradition of symbolist poets. However, better not expect too much mysticism or thickly applied colours from her – the exterior of the text not only maintains but even reinforces an apparent realism.

The apotheosis of Viivi Luik's resistance poetry, the collection *Rängast rõõmust* (*Of Hard Joy*, 1982) is, ironically, one of the top works of 'Soviet' Estonian poetry: *The hand writes. One day the dark ache / rises from paper and becomes a force of life* ("Inimese käsi liigub valgel lehel" / "A Hand Moves upon the White Paper"). According to Nirk (1987: 328–329) the collection shows that "Viivi Luik has continued to compose poetry which observes reality in depth, without any illusions and with open eyes, and which speaks with her characteristic seriousness and concreteness of the present day of her native land, of a longing for human warmth, of oppressive anxiety and undying hope. *Up in the sky a star is lit, / Oh see the growing light of it!*" Kaplinski reflects (1996: 1411): "This is one of the most powerful (in many ways) Estonian poetry books of all time. The poet achieves a synthesis between picture and sound, the abstract and the concrete, symbolic and real, big and small, heavenly and earthly. *Of Hard Joy* is resistance poetry [...] against the pressure of the abstract, ideology and stupidity that prevailed in the suffering of the stagnation era. [...] 1982, however, was historical: Brezhnev (definitely) dies, unleashing processes which drastically changed the world map and life in Estonia in ten years."

The superlative review (e.g. Veidemann 1985) emphasised cultural allusiveness, relying on the dark expressionism of the cycles of Gustav Suits' "Rängast ringist" ("From Hard Circle", 1922) and Heiti Talvik's "Dies irae" (1934), as well as on the ethical imperativeness of Betti Alver (1906–1989). With her aching spiritual wound, Viivi Luik stood beside Lydia Koidula (1843–1886) and Liiv, being at the same time in polylogue with Paul-Eerik Rummo's *Saatja aadress* (*Sender's Address*, 1972/1985/1989), Hando Runnel's *Mõru ning mööduja* (*Bitter and Passer-by*, 1976) or *Punaste õhtute purpur* (*The Purple of the Red Nights*, 1982), Juhan Viiding's *Elulootus* (*Hope of Life / Without a Biography*, 1980), Jaan Kaplinski and other writers concerned about their homeland, and tackling with the censorship. Rein Veidemann (1985): "There is no longer a single line not in the service of a message that would be a mere description or word play. Repetitions and pure rhymes are used to increase the power of persuasion, because even in constant pain hope must not be abandoned, and destiny has to be tolerated, standing tall."

The mystery of micro and macro worlds merging, and the significance of binary oppositions were noticeable (Unt 1982: 376): pain/joy, evil/good, darkness/light, cold/warm, fight/continuity, weakness/strength, loathing/love, cruelty/mercy, death/song of life. The sensuous somatic synesthesia catches the eye, even the unnerving impression of vivisection (Ligi 1983): *A map of Estonia was pierced into my skull; wring words from the mouth with pliers, / talk of the hour of death, of the traitor's collarbone; painfully through the ears / cut the winds of the world; A DARK CENTURY STRAIGHTENS THE WIRES IN CERVICAL VERTEBRAE*; etc.

Stylistically innovative, *Of Hard Joy* is symbolism not characterised by over-, but rather understatement. Not too much is staked on the symbol layer – which usually wipes out the primary meaning of the text in favour of a loftier idea – rather both layers are contrapuntally equal, producing a stereophonic ambivalence: *A LIFT RUNS IN THE HOUSE AT MIDNIGHT / Through the peephole / a human eye looks / into the harsh glare of the staircase* ("SÜDAÖÖSEL MAJAS SÕIDAB LIFT"). The starting point of the text is a minimalist fragment of life in the style of Kaplinski, the longing 'mundane' literature of high-rise houses typical of the time (Lõhmus 1982). The contrasts coded into the lyrical plot turn into larger generalisations, representing à la Runnel, the important ideological, cultural and psychological painful issues of the era, then sliding back from there to the primary level of the message without pathetically severing connection with it.

The poet does not cultivate an expression for the sake of expression; although extra sensitive and precise in language, she does not regard herself as a linguistic poet: "All kinds of word plays and books that rely solely on word are

alien to me. I would say this: the word must first of all serve a *message*. A word must of course be *precisely* chosen, it must express more than the word itself" (Oja 1987). Although occasionally sarcastic, Luik is nevertheless not ironic like Jüri Üdi / Juhan Viiding, which reveals her uncompromising attitude: in Paul Grice's terms, she lacks the readiness for conversational co-operation, i.e. hidden adaptation, in relation to the alien against which irony is directed (Merilai 2005). Similarly with the surrealist poetry of Andres Ehin, Luik's social space outside text and sacral space inside text exist in tense balance, without leaning towards any side, with a "Door on an Opening" (as one of the titles of Ehin's collections suggests) between them.

As a result of this neosymbolist, interlineal style, beyond the reach of censorship (see Bassel' 1984, Ruud 2007), it is suddenly possible to freely and calmly talk, in the refined language of images, about everything forbidden but therapeutic to people, such as communist terror, Stalinist mass deportations in June–March 1941 and 1949, Russification of society, persecution of 'dissidents', frustrating stupidity, the pain of loss in culture: "Suur moejuht" ("Big Fashion Guide"; literally, Great Leader), "Sa igavene, hele märtsipäev" ("You Everlasting, Bright Day of March"), "Istume laua juures" ("Sitting around the Table"), "Majaraamat" ("Housebook"), "Viina voolab karahvini suust" ("Vodka is Pouring from the Decanter Neck"), "Täie jõuga ma rusikas hoidma pean kää" ("I Clench My Fist with All My Might"). *Of Hard Joy: The heart startles and finally wears out / of hard joy just as of / hard pain, / but in June the serious white sparkle of apple-trees / is seen through many generations / from every farm.*

All these 'dangerous' topics are repeated later in the novel *The Seventh Spring of Peace*, seen through the eyes of a child. And although the censors were not blind they could not point the finger at anything in particular and ban the publication. Political reference, however, is not the only dominant in the book; like any good poetry, it also expresses general human sorrows and joys in the bleak grasp of the times past: *THE CARETAKER / IN THE YARD / SPLITTING ICE / with a heavy crowbar / cutting a narrow / winter path...*

Through the will of history and people, the ideological pressure finally vanished and the poem "On aastasaja lõpp. On öö" ("It's the End of the Century. It's Night", 1987) at last earned Viivi Luik the prestigious Juhan Liiv poetry award in 1988. Upon handing over the award in Alatskivi near Lake Peipsi, Ain Kaalep interpreted Luik's poem as including an inkling about unexpected things happening in history, of which only madmen or the poets dare to dream (Hellat 1988). Kaalep alluded to the claim of the schizophrenic Liiv who during the tsarist era predicted the arrival of a free, independent Estonia – just as it was about to happen in 1991 again. *A hand turning the page, / the other supporting the forehead. / It's the end of the century. It's night. / Nothing's afoot as yet. //*

*When all is about to end, / should we then just hope, / that something new is coming  
which / none of us can guess?*

### Code Switching

Viivi Luik's first collection of poetry for children *Tubased lapsed (Indoor Children)* appeared in 1979, the second, *Kolmed tähed (Letters, Stars, and Bank Notes)*, in 1987. Her children's poetry resembles the collection *Earthly Matters*: polished short verse, simple resonant rhythm, providing daily things with a wider background, early adulthood. Linguistically as playful as Runnel, the author trusts children and defies common pedagogical principles, demolishing the myth of a happy Soviet childhood and offering the truths, occasionally bitter, of life instead. Luik talks about loneliness, defiance, desperation, nocturnal fears, sorrows and envy, stupidity and breaking, illness and blood, encourages the timid and the helpless – either humorously or sadly, tenderly or even with cruelty (Toomet 1983, 2007; Kruuspere 1988).

Before her major *Kogutud luuletused (Collected Poems)* in 2006 (see also Merilai 2006b), which contains some pieces never published in collections before, Luik has also released three collections of selected poetry: *Luulet 1962–1974 (Poetry 1962–1974, 1977)*, *Maa taevas (Sky of the Earth / Earth in the Sky, 1998)* and *Elujoon: Valitud luuletused 1962–1997 (Line of Life: Selected Poems 1962–1997, 2005)*. With the approaching turn of the century, more and more apocalyptic breath filters into her poetry, such as dark angels and other expressive images, revealing perhaps certain weariness.

Jaan Kaplinski, who will later also turn towards fiction like Ene Mihkelson did before, says (1996: 1411–1412):

*“Of Hard Joy concluded something. I wouldn't say poetry. Taking an idea of Juri Lotman further, we could say that prose is the most complicated form of poetry. [...] The grip has to be slackened. [...] The fact that Viivi turned to prose is not altogether surprising. Of Hard Joy is a poetic summary of the stagnation era [...] whereas Seventh Spring of Peace sums it up in prose [...] a kind of synthesis of the previous work of the poet. Pictures of childhood in poetry and stories of Leopold for children refer to that. [...] In 1985 when Seventh Spring of Peace appeared, Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in Moscow, and the era of what became to be known as 'perestroika', got started. [...] Many intellectuals who had lived in opposition [...] had to change their basic attitude or find another object for their opposition. [...] She proceeded along the road reflected already in Perpetual Spring and Seventh Spring of Peace, where foreign landscapes loomed beyond native ones, and familiar childhood landscapes*

beyond foreign ones. [...] the beehive at home is no longer a symbol of Estonia, but of the world of our time. [...] *The Beauty of History* (1991) is the first work to be written by such a world writer.”

During the rule of censorship the publication of *The Seventh Spring of Peace* (1985), written in 1979–1982 concurrently with the last collection of poetry, seemed nothing short of a miracle. Luik's high fiction will be discussed in the second half of this paper, forthcoming in *Interlitteraria*.

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