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## **PAIN AND PROMISE OF NON-BELONGING: ANDREI IVANOV'S EXCEPTION IN ESTONIAN LITERATURE**

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Andrei Ivanov is one of the most interesting authors of contemporary Estonian literature, but he has not been easy to pigeonhole, both in terms of his personality and oeuvre. His texts written in Russian, but doggedly addressing vital issues of local culture, are often experienced as a challenge to the self-identity of Estonian literature and culture. The article investigates the role of Ivanov and his oeuvre in Estonian literature with the help of the concept of „exception“. The analysis of different identitarian categories, both on the institutional level of literature and the thematic level of Ivanov's works, demonstrates how those works problematise the ethnic as well as linguistic distinctions traditionally employed to define Estonian literature. The institutional level is discussed in the article focusing on Ivanov's novel *Peotäis põrmu* (A Handful of Dust). Some ideas of Jacques Rancière and Giorgio Agamben are used to analyse the debate that erupted around the novel in 2012 and to show that at stake in this debate was the definition of the boundaries of Estonian literature that the novel apparently blurred. The second part of the article addresses the thematic level of Ivanov's oeuvre, analyzing the refusal of Ivanov's protagonists to belong to the Estonian as well as the Russian Estonian community. The article pinpoints the intertextual relations between Ivanov and T.S. Eliot, in particular similar tropes of aborted and stillborn children in their oeuvre. Edward Said's ideas on exile and secular criticism allow to read those images as symbols of a broken lineages and crisis of filiation. With the help of these tropes Ivanov represents (internal) exile as a minority position, which enables a critical look at various ethnic and cultural communities.

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