

About the author:

LENA ELTANG was born in 1964 in Leningrad. In 1988 she left the USSR, lived in Paris, London and Copenhagen. She has been living in Lithuania since 1991. A journalist and a translator, she has also become known as a poet after the publication of two collections of poems in 2003 and 2004, and as a short-prose writer, when her works were included in the Five Names anthology. *Blackberry Shoot*, Lena's first novel, created a stir on the Russian literary scene, became a finalist of the National Bestseller Prize and Andrei Bely Prize, hailed by literary critics as "the best Russian novel in years". Lena has completed her latest novel, *Radin*, in August 2021.

*Selected Bibliography*

- 2022 — **Radin**, *novel*
2014 — **Cartagena**, *novel*
2011 — **The Other Drums**, *novel*
2008 — **The Stone Maples**, *novel*
2006 — **Blackberry Shoot**, *novel*

Longlisted for the **Big Book Award 2022**

Longlisted for the **Yasnaya Polyana Prize 2022**

Shortlisted for the **Big Book Award 2012**

Finalist of the **Russian Literary Prize 2011**

Winner of the **New Literature Award 2009**

Shortlisted for the **National Bestseller Prize 2006**

Finalist of **Andrei Bely Prize 2006**



Cartagena

The Gardener Is Gone

From the prize-winning author of *Blackberry Shoot* and *The Stone Maples*, comes a mesmerizing tale of unwanted love, unperformed vengeance and myths coming alive.

The action unfolds on the rocky coast in the northern Italy, set in the beautiful Briatico hotel — a snow-white manor turned a private nursing pansion.

Petra, a law student, arrives to Briatico from Rome as a nurse, set on her own investigation of the ruthless murder of her brother. The local police inspector is inclined to assign the murder to the result of a trivial ruffle among young men from the village, but Petra knows — the killer is one from the hotel staff. Petra is not the only one in the Briatico hotel who hides behind a false identity.

An Englishman playing the piano in the hotel's lounge lies not only about his real occupation, but also about his nationality. A writer, who has lost his ability to write or sustain a proper relationship, he looks for traces of his lost love. His girlfriend mysteriously disappeared years ago in the premises of the manor, leaving a blazing chapel behind... and a heartbroken Marcus, who has never recovered from what he sees as a betrayal of his love.

There is a hotel guest, who claims to be a captain, trading a false beard and boasting numerous stories of his fake sea adventures. A heir, deprived of the manor, he wants a pay-off for what belongs to him by birthright.

Finally, there's a killer who turns part a comedy of errors, part a blood-curdling crime drama, performed against the strikingly beautiful setting of the Briatico hotel, into an antique tragedy.

Torn by passions, haunted by murky secrets of the past, these different people are drawn to Briatico by fate's invisible threads, seeking vengeance and truth they will want to believe. Eltang brilliantly weaves an intricate web of dramatic turns and shocking riddles, tossing ever-elusive evidence and upturning facts, and follows her characters through the labyrinth of the text with an agile curiosity and genuine sympathy.

Told in Eltang's trademark poetic diction, with an immaculate pitch, unexpected plot twists and a unique delicacy in use of literary allusions, *Cartagena* is more than a spectacular literary achievement and a much-awaited literary sensation of the year. *Cartagena* is an engrossing human drama that will make readers shed tears, run from temptations, solve riddles and shake with sympathy, dread and love for its characters.

Ripol

Novel, 2014
544 pp

Alpina NF Prose
Novel, 2023

Translation rights sold

Albanian Fan Noli
Arabic AS Publishers
Armenian Oracle
Latvian Agdads Mansards
Bulgarian Labirynt
Slovenian Mladinska Knjiga

Complete English
translation
available

Shortlisted for the **Big Book Literary Award 2012**Finalist of the **Russian Literary Prize 2011**

Eksmo
Novel, 2011
640 pp

The Other Drums

In *The Other Drums*, Lena Eltang's brilliant third novel, the national prize-winning author completes the theme of escape and freedom in a work that has prompted comparisons to such classics as *De Profundis* and *Invitation to a Beheading*.

The novel begins with the arrest of 34-year old Kostas Kairis, a Lithuanian citizen, in his house in Lisbon, Portugal. Kostas is not the original owner of the house; his step-aunt Zoe inherited the ancient mansion after the suicide of her husband, scion of a noble Portuguese family. Zoe included Kostas in her will at the last moment, just a few days before her early demise from cancer at the age of 44, leaving virtually nothing to her own daughter. The aunt's will burdens Kostas with mortgage payments to the bank, and bans him from re-selling the property. An idle intellectual, Kostas pays the bills by selling the Braga family furniture and jewelry, and subletting the house to shadowy business operations. First, his childhood friend Ljutas installs cameras into the mansion to shoot porn movies. The built-in surveillance appliances come in handy for blackmailing Kostas' chance lover, who offers a share of her husband's settlement deal if they catch him with his pants down on a set-up date with a call girl. Kostas watches in awe as the date unravels and a stranger shoots the prostitute with the Braga family gun. The blackmailers turn the evidence of dead body against Kostas, and when the police come to arrest him several weeks later on murder charges, Kostas feels relieved — he will not hesitate to reveal the identities of the real murderers.

His experience in jail is a rude awakening for Kostas: he is held in solitary confinement as a murderer; the interrogations and meetings with a lawyer are only

occasional; and the guards often forget to bring him his meals. Yet he's been allowed to use his laptop — a real treasure for an undereducated historian turned writer. Kostas begins by writing a letter to his Estonian wife, from whom he separated over fifteen years before. What begins as an explanatory letter grows during nine weeks of imprisonment into powerful confessional prose permeated with guilt, melancholy, and fear of loss. As Kostas Kairis speaks of people he once knew, loved and hated, befriended and betrayed, dreamt of and never came to understand, the reader of Kostas' "diary" becomes the spectator of a street puppetshow at which the director, with a wave of his wand or the sound of the other drums, exchanges roles with the cast. The tension and passion grows with every page, until one day Kostas begins thinking the door to the cell is not real either, throws it open — and walks out.

In her immaculate poetic diction, and with profound encyclopedic knowledge, Lena Eltang concocts a unique mosaic of a novel about guilt and memory that makes us all its voluntary prisoners.

English sample
available

Winner of the **New Literature Award 2009**

The Stone Maples

A stunning family drama told with the precision of Nabokov and the hypnotic intensity of Joyce.

AST
Novel, 2008
414 pp

Alpina NF Prose
Novel, 2023

Translation rights sold
Latvian Janis Roze
Lithuanian Vaga

Red-haired Sasha Saunley runs a Bed and Breakfast called The Stone Maples in the tiny, remote village of Wishguard, somewhere on the moors of Wales. Not only is she considered weird, she is also rumored to be a witch. Such a rumor is not absolutely groundless, since she has refused to speak since the next-door teenagers killed her dogs, Hugin and Munin, all the more as The Stone Maples long ago became a substitute for her five-o'clock meetings with the second cousins of her late father. Sasha's younger stepsister Edna disappears under obscure circumstances — while in the courtyard, a hummock appears with an epitaph for the «Younger One».

The possible crime of the Welsh witch becomes the pretext for a bet — and Llewellyn, a Londoner, arrives at The Stone Maples to investigate what is purported to be a murder. Sasha's journal falls into his hands — the passionate, poetic, and witty confession of an enigmatic woman. Her love-hate relationship with her younger stepsister, knotty affairs with the locals, envy and betrayal, fantasies, myth, and legend — all this enchants Llewellyn, and when he is about to admit his loss of the bet, he finds another of Sasha's journals, containing totally different entries. Why does she need two journals; and, more important, which of them is truth and which is fiction?

Told through the journals and letters of Sasha, her stepmother, and her younger stepsister Edna Alexandrina, Llewellyn, and Tabitha, the London girl who is in love with him, this entrancing family drama reveals one shocking mystery after another. The most significant puzzle is broached at the very end.

The Stone Maples is a breathtakingly deep and atmospheric novel inhabited by lovable and vivid characters. Masterly use of cultural layers, the delicacy of literary allusion reminiscent of Joyce and Nabokov, and an eerily prophetic gaze at reality — these are the trademarks of Lena Eltang, one of the most unique authors writing in Russian today.

English sample
available

Shortlisted for the **National Bestseller Prize 2006**

Finalist of **Andrei Bely Award 2006**



Amphora

Novel, 2006
396 pp

Alpina NF Prose

Novel, 2023

Blackberry Shoot

Umberto Eco meets Dostoyevsky in this spellbinding debut novel, unanimously hailed by critics as “the best Russian novel in recent years”.

British historian Theo Forge finds a letter written by a monk back in the 15th century. The letter tells the story of some artifacts that seemed so threatening to the Vatican that the monk was sent to Malta to hide and guard them. Forge assumes that the artifacts represent six of the alchemic elements and is obsessed with the idea of finding the treasures. The group of six people setting out to Malta is picturesque: Forge himself; his fiancée Nadia, a London lawyer; red-haired archaeologist Fiona; a Macedonian graduate student, Fiona's lover; French antiquarian Eugene Levas; and in Austrian doctor, York. Each has a secret in the past that sparks the decision to embark on this nearly absurd trip. The adventure of the cryptologists turns into a thriller, as members of the quest begin to die, one by one.

The escalating Maltese drama is witnessed not only by the police, but also by a young man of heavenly beauty and encyclopedic erudition, Moras. He suffers from an unnamed mental illness that is sometimes interpreted as permanent genius. Moras, a Lithuanian language student, is kept in an expensive mental hospital in Barcelona. During the remission of his illness, he is discharged and goes to Malta to be a compassionate pimp, a bellboy, and good company for everyone in the group.

The structure of the novel is complex and multi-voiced: it incorporates fragments of the archeologists' diaries, personal letters, and emails. Yet the major part of the novel is Moras' journal, which the reader follows, spellbound; because, in fact, it's all about Moras in the novel. In addition to being a specific account of the puzzling events, his journal is a poetic revelation, a metaphor, and above all — the central cryptogram to decode.