

Berman Literature Prize  
2022  
is awarded to the Hungarian author

**MR. PÉTER NÁDAS**

for his novel

**VILÁGLÓ RÉSZLETEK**

Swedish translation by Daniel Gustafsson and Péter Tóth

*Illuminerade detaljer*

(Albert Bonniers Förlag 2022)

**THE JURY'S MOTIVATION READS**

“Péter Nádas is awarded the Berman Literature Prize for his autobiographical novel *Illuminated Details*, in which he demonstrates, with razor-sharp observation and stunning artistic luminosity, how an individual's life can contain a microcosm that in every moment and every detail turns outwards to face the twentieth century's larger universe of losses and disasters.”

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## DONOR'S SPEECH

Thomas Berman

Translation by Alan Crozier

THE OLDER YOU GET, the more clearly you notice that the choices and lives of previous generations have repercussions in your own life. My paternal grandfather Jacob came to Sweden in the 1880s. Here is what my father's best friend from his school years, Buster von Platen, future editor-in-chief of *Svenska Dagbladet*, wrote in the first part of his memoirs:

The Berman family inspired respect. Jacob had an Old Testament kind of dignity; his eloquence of body was overwhelming. As a refugee from a ghetto in Russian Poland, he had come to Malmö: in his luggage, or his clothes bag, he brought a tradition of dealing in clothes, and over the years he built up a fine business in menswear ... Grandpa Berman, in short, had been successful – despite having to contend with a secret handicap. He was illiterate. Having fled Poland in his school years, he had never learned to read or write.

There was a great contrast between my grandfather's background and that of Catharina's maternal grandfather, Erik Olof Wiklund, but poverty was something they had in common. Erik came from Ådalen. The local priest could see that Erik was talented and ensured that he was given the opportunity to study in Uppsala.

Erik pursued an academic career and earned the title of docent in Latin and Greek. He later became involved in politics and ended up as one of Prime Minister Tage Erlander's closest associates. Erik Wiklund was the one who built up the modern Swedish health insurance system. Catharina's grandfather was rather stubborn by nature. This too can be illustrated with a quotation. Here is what Erlander wrote about him in his memoirs:

I remember how Wiklund bothered me by sitting and rambling on and on for what seemed to like hours about some problem in health insurance. This was on 9 April 1940, when the Germans had attacked Norway and Denmark. In the end, I had to impress on him the gravity of the situation, which meant that we could not calmly examine his health insurance concerns. Wiklund looked greatly surprised. The idea that Germany's attack on Norway and Denmark had something to do with us had apparently never occurred to him. "Ultimately it's all about our iron ore," were the words I flung at him to make him understand. But it was completely wasted on this member of the Swedish Parliament.

My father Nils Berman grew up in a poor home in Malmö. Jacob and Anna had twelve children, and Nils was the youngest of them, who had to share a bed with one of his brothers until he turned 21. When my father was 13, his mother passed away. He was raised and cared for by his older sister Rut. Love brought my aunt Rut to Paris during the war years. As a Jew, Rut was always in mortal danger when the round-ups started during the German occupation. It was her Swedish passport that saved her from Auschwitz. As Buster von Platen said above, Jacob was illiterate, and perhaps to

compensate for a father-related inferiority complex, my father Nils became a bookman. Buster and Father did their military service together in the infantry regiment in Halmstad, and von Platen goes on to quote my father's story of when he was later stationed as an ensign up in Norrland in 1940: "Everyone of the officers' corps were pro-German or Nazis; my only consolation was listening to de Gaulle's speeches on the radio."

When the French general's memoirs were published in Swedish, Nils wrote to de Gaulle, recounting his memories of the emergency years in the cold north, and asked for an autograph. To his surprise, the book came back to him with a dedication, formulated with a warmth that was foreign to the haughty general: "En souvenir d'une grande épreuve. Bien cordialement Charles de Gaulle."

There are similarities on my mother's side. My maternal grandfather Mauritz came impoverished to Sweden from the Russian part of Poland around 1900. He settled in Norrköping and founded the family company, Sterns. Later on, his brother came too. Sterns was a highly successful business which grew to become one of Norrköping's largest employers, with over 200 people on the payroll, a fully integrated garment company with production, wholesale and retail operations. Mauritz has been an influential person in my life. He taught me to never take a no for a no. Grandpa used to say that you cannot move mountains, but you get very far with a strong will.

Later in life, I also made contact with my father's friend Buster von Platen. In 1967 Bonniers launched a new economics magazine, *Veckans Affärer*. Buster was seconded from the magazine *Veckojournalen* to kick-start the new periodical. The newly appointed editor-in-chief Sören Larsson was recruited from the

newspaper *Norrköpings Tidningar* where he was responsible for, among other things, the youth page, and when I was at high school I contributed articles during the summer holidays. As a student at the Stockholm School of Economics, I was offered a role as a kind of correspondent, interviewing professors at the School. This was an offer that I gratefully accepted. The topics were perhaps not always crowd-pleasers. For example, I interviewed the professor of accounting and finance, Sven-Erik Johansson, about the Danish economist Vagn Madsen's *variability accounting*, a system that I shall not try to explain here.

But I was not the only writer in the family. My father sat at home writing almost every evening. The clatter of the typewriter could be heard several rooms away. It was then virtually impossible to get any response from him. For a curious and oppositional teenager, this was far from easy to understand. He himself explained it by saying that he had “flow” and did not want to be disturbed.

That is how I too inherited an interest in literature. Catharina had this ever since her childhood, having grown up in a reading family. Against this background, it may seem contradictory that we took the step from literature to the international metal trade in which we have both been involved. But sometimes the extremes meet.

My father Nils, Catharina's grandfather Erik and my grandfather Mauritz were talented people and extraordinary representatives of the upward mobility that existed in Sweden in the twentieth century, which made it possible for talented people to make something of their lives. Catharina and I are grateful to Sweden for giving my two grandfathers permission to settle here, and for giving Catharina's grandfather the chance to study.

They were allowed to realize their desires and dreams. In order to give something back to the country and simultaneously highlight the importance of literature in reshaping a person's world, our intention is to found the Berman Literature Prize.

We hope that the prize will draw attention to this in general, and in particular assist in honouring authors and giving them the opportunity to make a wish come true, and above all to continue to write and act in the spirit of the Jewish tradition. We hope that literature thus will not only change the lives of individuals, but also that through its multifaceted character it can give perspective and reduce prejudice, that it can make us more empathetic and understanding, thus fulfilling our best selves.

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**LAUDATIO  
PÉTER NÁDAS  
BERMAN LITERATURE PRIZE**

**Rebecka Kärde**

Translation by Alan Crozier

IN THE WORKS of Péter Nádas, two themes emerge more clearly than any others. The first is memory. The second is the relationship between the individual and the group. Perhaps this theme is best rephrased as a series of questions: What is a self? What is a “we”? In tune with what processes do a person’s distinctive features emerge?

These two themes are interrelated. Memory, just like the self, has a collective dimension. Indeed, it is more than a dimension: the shared history, what has been experienced and handed down for generations, constitutes the very framework for a person’s ability to remember his or her life, just as it determines how a group or a society understands the contours of their own being. Both memory and self are based on a series of negotiations. These can be linguistic, political, economic. They can be conducted between distinct actors, or between the kind of abstractions that we call historical processes, and which only in retrospect become visible.

Literature has the ability to expose the movements of memory and self. In Marcel Proust we reach them via the winding roads of individual consciousness. Robert Musil shows how the outside world shapes a person to such an extent that the idea of the freely choosing individual seems like a pragmatic expedient to solve the riddle of existence.

In style and temperament, Péter Nádas is closer to the latter. But he reminds us of Proust in the way he gives language to the consciousness that experiences its dependence on others. Early in *Illuminated Details* there is a passage where the author describes what he believes is his very first memory, from a stairwell in his home town of Budapest. Nádas, an avid reader of Freud, realizes that he cannot possibly determine whether this memory is an authentic visual recollection, or whether it has been imprinted in him via later representations, such as stories and photographs. In this respect, one's intellect is not just one's own. It is part of a shared intellect, where "the processes of one's own consciousness ... make up only a small part".

Is it possible to access the first kind of memories? Can a person, beyond language and pre-understanding, recall a past impression? After all, this impression was not always linguistic. It existed as a perception even before it found its place in the orderly card index of memory. Consequently, Nádas writes, one might envisage that "behind the curtain of memory there could be a ... more stable state of consciousness", whose duty is to record "a precise knowledge of the set places of things and phenomena in time". Buried under the sediments of time and language there is still a shard of the original impression. In principle this shard ought to be accessible. But, Nádas admits, "This is something a sober person can hardly say out loud."

No, maybe he can't. But he can write it. In this case, he does so in a novel that would have been unprecedented in the oeuvre of most other authors. The remarkable thing about Nádas is that he has already written so many masterpieces. But it is for the latest, *Illuminated Details*, that he has been awarded this year's Berman Literature Prize.

According to the statutes, the prize is to go to an author who "regardless of background or genre, has worked in the spirit of the Jewish tradition." This does not necessarily refer to literature about the specific living conditions of the Jewish people. Rather, it is a tradition of knowledge, marked by exile, "in which interpretation, interpretive concepts and memory are at the centre", and whose core is "an enraptured and sincere belief in the ability of the literary text to transcend times and cultures".

I would like to say a few words about why I cannot think of a laureate who better meets these criteria than Péter Nádas. I will begin by presenting the work that is the reason why we are gathered here this evening.

*Illuminated Details* takes place between 1942, the year when the author was born, and 1956, when the popular uprising of the Hungarians was quashed by Soviet forces. The first part highlights his childhood in Budapest under siege during the war. Part two depicts events after 1945. The newly liberated Hungary then experienced a short-lived delirium of joy, before it became clear that life under communist rule was not as free as many had dreamed.

Two of these hopefuls are the author's parents. Klára Tauber and László Nádas were active in the underground socialist resistance movement during the 1930s. Both are Jews, but otherwise they come from completely different backgrounds: the mother is descended from humble eastern Jews, the father from a family in the high bourgeoisie with its roots in Germany. Among the ancestors is the liberal Hungarian member of parliament, Mór Mézei. During the nineteenth century, when the discussion of a Jewish state started to gather momentum, Mór and his brother Ernő were leading advocates of the opposing anti-Zionist line. They thought that the Hungarian Jews should aim for

assimilation. Instead of cutting themselves off even more from the majority society, they should claim full participation.

This opinion is shared by László and Klára, who perceive themselves as Jews in name only. In their case, this is due neither to self-hatred nor to patriotism, but to their communist convictions which prevent them from accepting the very concept of race, especially as formulated in the Nuremberg Laws. They therefore have their children baptized in the Protestant Church. Péter attends Reformed Sunday School. The Orthodox Yiddish-speaking children a few blocks away, with their strange traditions, are in equal measure frightening and fascinating for the boy. He is aware of his own family's Jewish background, but does not realize that it affects him personally until, as an eight-year-old, he tells his mother that he hates the Jews for murdering Jesus. To this she replies: Look in the mirror, there's a Jew, you can hate him as much as you want!

In the Nádas-Tauber family, various attitudes to Jewishness, and to existence in general, coexist. The portrait of the wily mother is one of the highlights of the novel. In every sphere of life, Klára is driven by an almost unbelievable creative will. In politics she is "a brilliant organizer," with the ability to involve the right people and make sure things get done. She loathes reformists and the petty bourgeoisie. For her, all forms of conventions and hierarchies are signs of narrow-minded superstition. Despite the family's elegant apartment and the fact that she herself is the daughter of a goldsmith, she considers herself a proletarian throughout her life. In the 1950s, with the increasing repression, authoritarian rule, and Stalinist purges, both she and her husband lose their positions in the party – but they do not lose their faith in a classless society.

Their son Péter basically shares their view of humanity. Precisely for this reason, he writes, it was inconceivable for him to become a communist. The strict demands of truth and justice could not be combined with the selective vision that party loyalty enforced on people. As a faithful communist, "in order to preserve a fitting self-image", it was essential to use "linguistic devices to conceal and drown out the abuses one has committed against others". One simply has to lie, consequently betraying the ethics that one certifies with the other hand.

And the parents do lie. They are unable to see their own hypocrisy, their own false dialectic, no matter how quick they are to identify it in others: "People cursed with radical political ideas never recognize themselves in anything."

Klára dies of cancer in 1955. Three years later, László, suffering from dementia, kills himself. László's sister Magda and her husband Pál Aranyossi assume guardianship of Péter, then 16 years old, and his brother. The impact of the deaths on the children is portrayed without rhetorical pathos. Nádas approaches the past with a kind of cool scientific gaze, which should not be mistaken for a lack of intensity. Rather, the distance is due to the fact that any claim to depict a memory also means a positioning. As a person remembers, a number of stations are activated in the historical trajectory of the self. You become the person you were then, when it happened; the person who has processed the memory since then; and, in this case, the adult writer who is giving form to the past experience and who must thus decide how it can most appropriately be regarded – fully aware that a different point of view would be just as viable.

This tangle means that memory cannot be studied directly. As soon as you try, it slips away, or else it is simplified into a

lie. Nádas therefore builds up the text in layers. One image from memory can flow into another via associations. Threads are abandoned, resumed, explained, or they disappear. Occasionally we realize that we are reading a record of something outside the narrative frame – an exchange of letters, the minutes of a meeting, a speech to parliament – without the transition between text types and perspectives having been explicitly marked.

The prose serves as a mimetic rendition of the aimless rambling of thought. You might imagine that this would make it heavy, compact, but no – on the contrary, it hovers above the gravitational force of classical storytelling. The complexity is never anything but crystal-clear; the detour is always the only way through the terrain of existence.

How does Nádas succeed? I believe it's a matter of sincerity. About the passion for truth, not only as a philosophical ideal but as a stance, as resistance. For Nádas, giving language to what one sees and experiences, and doing so with the greatest possible precision, is a matter of human dignity. "When everything else was ravaged by the dictatorship," he writes in the second part of *Illuminated Details*, "at least one's own sensation had to be the only thing, the last thing it was not allowed to permeate." This was true then, and it is true today, in a political reality that has banned utopias and where "the present is the only thing that exists". For Nádas that is the sad legacy of the Hungarian uprising. It marks the end of an era in which it was still permissible to imagine a different society. Since then, we have been living in the best of all possible worlds: despite the fact that both Sweden and Hungary are now partly ruled by fascists.

Nádas's political sensitivity is also visible on a micro level. One example is the depiction of his maternal grandmother.

Cecília Nussbaum, this simple, brutal, despairing creature of habit, an anomaly in the cultured Pest, has no time for communism, unlike her daughter. She conforms to an ancient ritual order, perceptible more through its effect than its architecture. The rest of the family's enlightened thinking is as alien to her as the notion that she herself could be wrong: "Her rural omniscience, the unchallengeable knowledge of the collective man, she could never translate into or exchange for urban knowledge, this partial knowledge in a constantly revisable system." She feels she is surrounded by evil, one person more insidious than the other, and worst of all, she says in Yiddish, are the Jews.

The grandmother's world system is incompatible with that of the rest of the family. Yet they live close together, and perhaps each pushes the other further into their separate positions. Their life together reflects the conflicts in the city around them. Nádas enumerates just a fraction of all the histories that Budapest contains: German, Hungarian, Serbian, Jewish, designations that all have their subcategories: Sephardic, Hasidic, assimilated, atheist. The histories intersect, affirm and contradict each other. That has to be the case, Nádas observes, "because at the start of the twentieth century only 42 per cent of the Kingdom of Hungary's eight million inhabitants had Hungarian as their mother tongue. Their life stories are thoroughly intertwined with the stones and the streets, a city cannot live otherwise." And in the same way he himself is thoroughly intertwined with his ancestors: "or, as a result of my own unfortunate action, not with them at all but with a lot of others, whom my predecessors never heard anything about and possibly never would have wanted to hear anything about."

In a short text with the German title "In der Körperwärme der Schriftlichkeit" ("In the Body Heat of Writing"), Nádas tells

how he starts each day with an hour in analysis. Viewed from the outside, that hour is uneventful. After all, life is inevitably devoted mostly to eating, sleeping, going to the toilet, and similar repetitive activities that are rarely particularly arousing to experience or describe. But if a man studies his own consciousness actively and for years, he will eventually detect more and more subtle nuances. He will then realize that a lifetime is far too short a time to catch sight of all the details of this consciousness. And not only that: the process constantly generates new problems, as it requires incessantly stepping outside oneself, “letting one’s thinking carry on running through a system of parallel connections.”

Writing, according to Nádas, works in the same way. When you sit down in front of the computer or the blank page, you already know that you will never be finished, because it is not possible to be finished. It’s just a matter of starting over. For it is through writing that man has raised himself out of the “primordial slime,” out of what Kant called his self-incurred immaturity. He begins to think. And the last thing one can deprive him of is just that: that he, or something in him, whatever it may be, thinks.

And so Nádas’s study of life goes on, day in and day out. The result is as personal as it is linked to a tradition – the “web of secret conditions and complicated connections” that is European literature. For this tradition to be meaningful, Nádas writes, it must repeatedly transcend its ethnic, linguistic, religious, and national boundaries. Only thus can it say something truthful about the soil from which we all come: the primordial slime that is ours.

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**LAUREATE'S SPEECH**  
**“ALONG THE MYSTERIOUS BYWAYS**  
**OF THE LOSS OF THE INNER SELF”**

**Péter Nádas**

Translation by Judith Sollosy

I am not competent, I cannot judge the work in any of its particulars. Nonetheless, allow me to express my gratitude first and foremost to the translator, Daniel Gustafsson, for the Berman Literature Prize I have been awarded for my novel, *Illuminerade detaljer* – a great honor. And without delay, I wish to thank Eva Bonnier, my publisher, for I am fully aware of the risks involved in publishing such a voluminous book. And I owe no less a debt of gratitude to Erik Sidenbladh for the work I cannot see, for some of his sentences, some of his lines and comments, in short, with reliance only on my own decades of experience with editing, though I know that I cannot see into his work, not even figuratively speaking.

Without them I wouldn’t be here in the first place, and also, how could the honorable members of the jury have formed an opinion of my work. Furthermore, keeping in mind the deed of foundation of the Prize, was it my work they were judging, this question too gave me food for thought. For I could tell you only in the barest outlines in what relationship I stand to Jewish tradition and especially, what Jewish tradition. Whose book are we talking about, or whose relationship to what tradition is by no means self-evident. To be sure, the use of language and spirituality bear with personal and regional characteristics but are, in any case,

the result of collective and especially anonymous action. And so, I am not fully me, or rather, the share of my ego, the I, is very small in the person that I am, and so who is to say if this book contained within a dark blue binding with elegant gold lettering was in fact written by the writer. After all, taking their cue from the original order and dynamics of the text, Daniel and Erik had to recreate, in their own language, a text that I, too, had created with not a little reliance on a shared language.

Once my brilliant German translator, the aged Hildegard Grosche, who at the time was more or less as aged as I am now, literally screamed in anger when I happened to say, excuse me Hildegard, but we are not talking about my book now, we are talking about yours.

What's more, the person standing before you now in the flesh, to what extent and in what way can he be said to be identical with the person who wrote the book in question. I cannot avoid asking this question either. For instance, what if my papers were mixed up at birth. Or if they had accidentally handed another newborn baby to my mother. Such things happen, and we have no reason to discount the eventuality. In which case, the person that I am should by all odds be living another life. Nor can I answer the question whether with another name, on another branch of another line of descent I'd have become the person who, following in wake of the system of my decisions and the vagaries of fortune, now stands before you in the flesh. At best, a man makes use of his traits, but he'd be hard put to say from where they lead him and to where and how they constitute his unique character in others' eyes. Who is he. Good Lord, if only we knew. Even with respect to others, we can at best answer the question relating to the 'how'. Despite the insistence on linguistic

and stylistic faithfulness, a book translated into another language surpasses the personal. Which in my eyes is a blessing, a stroke of incredible luck. The translated book enters the impersonal spaces that open up between languages and cultures, even if we know relatively little about these saturated spaces in which I am definitely not I, or not only I.

At most, lovers and monks know something about them, as long as they remain engaged with their kisses and prayers, that is.

As a sign of my gratitude I wish to tell all of you what happened when I placed the last period at the end of the last word. I sent the hefty manuscript to my brother. I had never asked him to read my works before, I didn't even hint at any such thing. But now I couldn't spare him, even though I was afraid that not only would he point out my factual errors but, in his impulsive way, would want to have a say – an unnecessary fear; after all, he was carved out of the same libertine family tree as I. He didn't even protest against what I wrote when he found it embarrassing with respect to himself or found me embarrassing. I'm not about to interfere in what my other self feels or thinks.

On the other hand, he saw that something was amiss with the proportions, and since he'd been visiting libraries and archives for months by then to do his own research, he decided to do something about it right away. If there are so many Mezeis in this manuscript, so many Nussbaums, so many Neumayers and Nádases, what on earth happened to the Taubers.

The family space was missing our grandfather's lineage. I'd have never noticed on my own, and with good reason.

You see, I held my our grandfather's taciturnity in high regard. In his proximity, the paucity of words gained what I might call material weight. And when I asked him, and I asked him

repeatedly about his ascendants, he skirted the issue. At most he'd resort to geographical generalities. On the other hand, he never characterized other people or judged them, whether friends or relations. At most he'd shake his head and fall to thinking. He fell to thinking so long that it would have no longer made sense for him to answer. He's such a quiet man, this was my general impression of him, because he doesn't talk about insignificant things, and surely there are more insignificant things in the world than significant. I am, and that should suffice. It is not worth asking insignificant questions either. Today I'd say that Grandfather Tauber nestled his existence in his eyes. By which I do not mean that he'd removed it from the sphere of influence of reason or tradition. He did not comment, and this had a profound effect on me. When I talked nonsense and went on and on, he didn't even blink an eye. He let the sound past his ear. At most, his features and eyes would come alive when by chance the subjective and the substantial met or united in the other person. Such a thing is a rare occurrence. Day in and day out, he'd sit straight and lean, on the same rather uncomfortable upholstered chair nearly motionless, his palms nestled between his knees, and he didn't look anywhere, or he looked out the window. On occasion, in company, he attended to the other people's pleasant chatter and followed their mimicry and gestures with his eyes, but he'd speak only when he had good reason to do so or was called upon to speak. He spoke to the point and with humor, and surprised, the others would generally laugh. His taciturnity, or I should say essentiality couldn't have been due to chance. His sister, to whom he bore no physical resemblance, listened with the same intense silence. I spent a great deal of time in their alert silences as the three of us kept silent about I know not what.

Once in our garden two rutting dogs, our bitch and the neighbor's dog, couldn't separate, they squirmed in the middle of the lawn, they whined, trying to pull apart. But the mutual pain prevented it. I ran to my grandfather, provoking him, saying I don't know, I don't understand, I don't know what happened. He should come at once. Excited, I described the situation of the two dogs. Sure you understand, son, he said, they're fucking. An expression such as this never left his lips, neither before nor after. Give them time. As my brother quickly found out, he'd even paid someone at the Jewish community archives for it. This grandfather of mine, Arnold Tauber, had rabbis among his ancestors reaching back to no less than ten generations of Moravian rabbis. What's more, they weren't just any rabbis; to our great amazement, nearly all of them married the daughters of rabbis. Also, nearly all of them followed mystic tradition which, in keeping with the meaning of the Greek word, is the teaching of hidden things and the experience of the infinite. Two of them left us several learned works on the philosophy of religion, in Hebrew, of course. I was dumbstruck. After all, when I was eleven or twelve years of age, I once said to myself as I kept striking the plants and my own legs with a stick out in the garden, that when I grow up I'm not going to be concerned with what people say, nor with the appearances they conjure around themselves, nor with the facades of the houses, but what is behind them, what they are hiding from each other and why, something all of us know about anyway. And now, at the end of my life, the covers of the books of my relatives that I can't even read lay before my eyes. In which case, I must start my own book from scratch. But first, I must learn Hebrew. And my goldsmith social-democrat grandfather did this to me. He tagged their knowledge as superfluous, and

along with their knowledge, he kept them from me. Forcing me to start everything from scratch. Our grandfather was never a confirmed atheist. On the other hand, he was a freethinker. Still, I wouldn't say that he didn't have a god, except it must have been a depersonalized and anti-anthropomorphic god in whom it was as impossible to believe as it was not to believe. If I were to look for a Christian simile within monotheistic thinking, I'd say that this was the distant and unknowable god of the Gnostics. He took me along with him to the synagogue several times. He didn't take me along to bring me closer to the one and only depersonalized and de-anthropomorphized god through prayer, but so I'd see his synagogue on István út close to Dembinszky utca with my own eyes, just as he'd shown me City Park, just as he'd shown me the Ferris wheel and the dodgems, just as he'd shown me the pulse on my wrist so I'd know that my own heart does exactly the same thing forty thousand times a day. As if scholars of religion couldn't have teachings and truths that could stand in opposition to human reasoning.

I saw right away that this was a special place in the world in which the men appear strangely equipped and are ritualistically separated from the women. I was proud that being just a boy, I could sit with the grown men. And meanwhile, the rabbi and the cantor go through various motions in the name of prayer and sacrifice, they speak and sing and remove an object bundled in velvet from a small cabinet and unroll mysterious written signs from inside it, while the others don't stop for a single moment. We're the others who move about between the benches, chat, greet the newcomer, Tauber's golden-blond little grandson, they pat his shoulder, clout him on the head, argue, get hot under the collar, laugh, may they never have it worse, they shout into

the prayer, they're familiar with this whole *tzores* inside and out. Still, from time to time they hastily do this or that, they know beforehand what and when, which no doubt I'll have to learn too; they pick it up, they put it down, they unwind it, they rewind it, they are engaged in their real lives and the shared ritual one might say simultaneously, in which case I will have to pay attention to the ritual within the common, too, to understand it, to know what to do with it. And I must say that I performed the procedure of the loss of the inner self in my own material properly, though I didn't know that I was doing the same thing my grandfather's ancestors had done before me. But how it could have happened like this, or what sense it makes, I can't tell you, as much as I regret it.

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### **BERMAN LITERATURE PRIZE**

was established in 2020 to reward an author whose works embody the statues of the Prize, in the spirit of the Jewish tradition and literary works aiming to explore the rich Jewish culture and at the same time “exceed times and cultures” thereby striving for the universally human. Berman Literature Prize is awarded for ten years and the prize money is 750 000 Swedish kronor annually.

The first Berman Literature Prize was awarded 2021 to the Israeli author David Grossman.

### **BERMAN LITERATURE PRIZE HAS THE FOLLOWING ETHOS AND DECLARATION OF INTENT**

There is more than one Jewish tradition, and the tradition that the Berman Literature Prize seeks to highlight has developed in constant dialogue with other cultures and languages. This means that for thousands of years it has preserved a rich history and literature while simultaneously encountering the languages and texts of other cultures. Tradition and renewal have interacted, giving rise to a constant critical rereading of religious texts as well as literature and songs, poetry and philosophy. This is a tradition of knowledge in which interpretation, interpretative concepts and memory are at the centre, and because of historical circumstances involving persecution and discrimination, it is often written from a marginal position and from the experience of exile.

It is an ongoing exploratory discussion, and all the forms it takes have one thing in common: an impassioned and sincere belief in the ability of the literary text to transcend times and cultures, to let words convey experiences and thoughts between people. The aim of the Berman Literature Prize is to honour authors in recent years who, regardless of background or genre, have worked in the spirit of this tradition.

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**HANNA NORDENHÖK** author

**NA´AMA ROKEM**

associate professor at The University of Chicago

**THOMAS STEINFELD** author and journalist

**SVANTE WEYLER** publisher

## CONTRIBUTORS

**PÉTER NÁDAS** laureate

**REBECCA KÄRDE** critic and translator

**STRING TRIO:**

**Anders Lagerqvist** violin

**Miranda Lee Nordqvist** viola

**Mats Olofsson** cello

**JESSIKA GEDIN** host

**DANIEL PEDERSEN** chairman of the Jury

**THOMAS & CATHARINA BERMAN** founders

## THANKS TO

**THE JURY AND COMMITTEE OF  
BERMAN LITERATURE PRIZE**

**ALBERT BONNIERS FÖRLAG**

**ERIC ERICSONHALLEN**

**NORRBACKA TRYCKERI**

**NINA ULMAJA** designer

**RANG LI** diploma design and producer

**KLARA WALDENSTRÖM** calligraphy

**ANDERS LAGERQVIST** artistic director

**ANNA TILLGREN AB**

## PROGRAMME

### BERMAN LITERATURE PRIZE AWARD CEREMONY

Eric Ericsonhallen Stockholm, Sweden

Monday October 24th, 2022

**16.00**

Canapés and Wine

**16.45**

Prize Ceremony

#### **ERNST VON DOHNÁNYI (1877–1960)**

from "Serenad for string trio" op 10

**WELCOME** Jessika Gedin

**FOUNDER'S SPEECH** Thomas Berman

#### **GYÖRGY KURTÁG (1926– )**

"Hommage à J.S.B", "Ligatura Y" and "Hommage à Ranki György"

from Játékokat és üzeneteket (Signs games and messages)

**LAUDATIO** Rebecka Kärde

#### **BÉLA BARTÓK (1881–1945)**

"Braul" and "Jocul cu bata" from Romanian Folk Dances

#### **PRIZE CEREMONY**

Thomas & Catharina Berman and Daniel Pedersen will present  
The Berman Literature Prize Diploma, made by paper artist Rang Li  
and designer Nina Ulmaja, to Péter Nadas.

**LAUREATE'S SPEECH** Péter Nadas

#### **ZOLTÁN KODÁLY (1882–1967)**

"Intermezzo for string trio"

**FINAL** Jessika Gedin

#### **FRITZ KREISLER (1875–1962)**

"Marche miniature viennoise"

#### **BOOK SIGNING**

**“KNOWLEDGE IS SOMETHING  
THAT CANNOT BE TAKEN AWAY  
FROM YOU”**

**LITERATURE BERMAN PRIZE**

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**2022**

