

Ukrainian fiction

# Autochthones

**Novel.** Novel. Eksmo. Moscow 2015. 272 pages

**Foreign rights:** French/ Agullo

Galina set a triptych of novels in Ukraine: Little Boondock takes place in Odesa; Mole Cricets is set in the Odesa region, near Snake Island, where legend says Achilles was buried; and Lviv is the stage for Autochthons, an unusual detective novel. The three books play on fantasy, myth, geography, and history, creating characters and situations that nimbly combine coziness with unease.

In the 2010s a mysterious art critic comes from St. Petersburg to a certain European city with a complex history (Lvov is implied). He is interested in the one and only performance of the opera "Death of Petronius" by an avangarde theatre group. The premiere took place in the city in the 1920ies and became the fate of directors and performers. A single performance, as it turned out, launched a chain of strange events that the protagonist has to unravel. The protagonist is especially interested in the mysterious figure of the director - a certain Vertigo and the person hiding under this pseudonym (the prototype of Vertigo is the famous Ukrainian writer and literary critic Domontovich). Gradually, under the tourist gloss, the true face of the city is revealed to the protagonist, and completely different features appear under the mask of the art critic himself. The art critic, whose aims are anything but scientific, as it turns out in the end, finds himself at odds with the interests of the local tourism industry, who have not selflessly invented the city's fake simulacra. But these simulacra suddenly begin to take on a life of their own.

A novel about the search for one's own identity and „historical truth“, and whether both exist. A novel not only in the style of magic realism but twisting and blending detective and fantasy genres with local myth. Werewolves and ghoulish bikers are taken here as if from Gothic prose, and the "eternal Jews", undines and languid opera primas with a fatal secret in their chests are borrowed from the romantics.

"The novel „Autochthons“ immediately after the release became the subject of a local cult ... Maria Galina's book reminded me of David Lynch's „Twin Peaks“, which once opened up the abysses of everyday provincial life." NOVAYA GAZETA (Dmitri Bavliski)

"The author has managed in recent years to walk the fine line between entertaining genre fiction, astute chronicle of modernity and Borgesian metafiction... Galina creates a world of elusive certainties in which the diligent reader is no more certain of his own existence than that of aliens and sylphs." AFISHA (Aleksandr Gavrilov)

"Galina rewards her readers with humor, scary moments, a trove of emotions, and plenty of intellectual history... inviting readers to explore the mysteries of their own public and private lives through thoughtful, meaningful fiction." Liza C. Hayden

Born in 1958 in Kalinin (now Tver), she spent her childhood and adolescence in Kiev and Odesa, Ukraine. Graduating Odesa State University as a marine biologist, she later got a diploma as a doctor of biology. In the early 1990s she did research of salmon in Bergen, Norway, in 1990-2020 she lived and worked in Moscow, but in 2021 she moved back to Ukraine (Odesa). Maria Galina was one of the subscribers of the letter "Russian Writers support Ukraine". Now being in Odesa in the wartime she mostly spends her time volunteering - weaving masking nets for Ukrainian military forces.



## THE AUTHOR

### awards

- 2016 Big Book finalist
- 2016 Big Book Reader's choice 2. winner
- 2016 National Bestseller shortlist
- 2016 New Horizons Award
- 2016 Novy Mir Award
- 2015 Best Book of the Year by World of Fantastika

### other works

- Little Boondock
- Mole Cricets

# Maria Galina