

12 SWISS BOOKS

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EDITORIAL

12 Swiss Books: our selection of twelve noteworthy works of contemporary literature from Switzerland. With this magazine, the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia is launching an annual showcase of literary works which we believe are particularly suited for translation. Pro Helvetia also offers support to the publishers of these works in translation. Switzerland has had four official languages since 1938. But the dilemma over what constitutes 'Swiss literature' is much older. Which literature is considered Swiss? Does Swiss literature exist at all? With this magazine, instead of debating the problems of Swiss identity, we took up another challenge: to select a small selection of books from the country's abundant literary landscape that we particularly hope will succeed in reaching an international readership. The recommendations of the editorial team are the fruits of a Swiss-British joint venture, combining, we hope, an extensive knowledge of Swiss literature with a British curiosity about the outside world.

Switzerland is the result of a sometimes uneasy alliance between four linguistic regions: German, French, Italian and Romansch. Three of these four languages are also part of larger linguistic and cultural zones that cross national borders. So the Swiss often find themselves at the margins, and this has also shaped their literature.

But perhaps the opposite is true as well: Switzerland is actually a centre, a central meeting point, not only for different languages but for different traditions and tastes, which can inspire new literary ideas. With our selection of 12 Swiss Books, we invite publishers, editors and translators to discover Swiss literature, and to use it as a starting point for further discoveries.

The new works of literature presented here do share one – perhaps surprising – trait: they are all about movement, travel, transit.

David Collin's 'Les Cercles mémoriaux' (Memorial Circles) spans half the globe. Alexandre Friederich's 'Ogrorog' is an account of a bicycle tour across France. Hansjörg Schertenleib's two female protagonists are both on the move, but in opposite directions: one wants to return to Switzerland, the other to leave it. In Ursula Fricker's novel 'Außer sich' (Beside Ourselves), a short weekend-trip turns into a meeting with destiny. Marius Daniel Popescu's novel 'Les Couleurs de l'hirondelle' (The Swallow's Colours) unfolds in two countries, moving from Romania

to Switzerland, and back again. Irena Brežná's book 'Die undankbare Fremde' (The Ungrateful Stranger) describes the difficulties experienced after 1968 by a young Czech woman as she tries to adapt to the methodical orderliness of her new country – Switzerland. Popescu and Brežná represent a generation of immigrant authors whose accounts of a 'different' Switzerland today take a prominent place in Swiss literature. And finally, in 'Das Kalb vor der Gotthardpost' (The Calf in the Path of the Gotthard Mail Coach), Peter von Matt's witty and charming essays analyse the current concerns of Switzerland and its authors.

We have chosen twelve new works of Swiss Literature, which have particularly delighted us ... so we hope you will enjoy reading these books as much as we have. Further information on Pro Helvetia's support for translation can also be found in the following pages.

Movement, travel, transit – may these books find their publishers across the world!

Angelika Salvisberg (Pro Helvetia, Head of Literature and Society Division, Zurich)

Rosie Goldsmith (Journalist & Specialist of international literature, London)

Martin Zingg (Literary Critic, Basel)

MEMORIAL CIRCLES

LES CERCLES MÉMORIAUX

GENRE Novel, LANGUAGE French



"It is the combination of contemplation and suspense that makes David Collin's novel so captivating."

LE MATRICULE DES ANGES



DAVID COLLIN was born in 1968 and lives in Fribourg. He produces cultural programmes for Espace 2, channel 2 of Switzerland's French-language public radio. He also organizes literary events and is on the editorial board of the literary journal 'La Revue de Belles-Lettres'. Since 2011 he has been series editor of 'Im-prescriptible' for the Geneva publishing house Éditions Metispresses. 'Les Cercles mémoriaux' (Memorial Circles, 2012) is his second novel. His first, 'Train Fantôme' (Phantom Train), was published by Seuil in 2007.

PHOTO © Mario Del Curto

Who is this man stranded in the Gobi Desert? What brought him here? The 'Castaway' is found by a caravan, and it soon becomes clear that he has forgotten everything. He knows nothing about his past and has no idea why or how he has come to this rather forbidding place. With the help of a shaman he tries to reconstruct his past. He wants to understand who he is and what his previous life was like. How did he become the man he is now?

To do this, he has to travel halfway across the world. Small clues and scraps of memory gradually piece themselves together and help him regain his identity, and with it his name: Elias Alejandro Esquivel. Shen-li, a Chinese photographer, is his companion on this journey. First she takes him to an archaeological excavation site. Later they travel together through Ulan Bator and Shanghai and then all the way to Buenos Aires. Along the way, Shen-li continues to take photos. The captions to the photos become part of the novel – but without the images.

According to his identity papers which eventually turn up, Elias comes from Argentina. There, he is ultimately confronted with the consequences of the military dictatorship of the 1970s. In Buenos Aires, Elias searches for the truth about his life.

He becomes an archaeologist of memory: his own.

TITLE Les Cercles mémoriaux
PUBLISHER L'Escampette Editions,
 Poitou-Charentes (F)
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PAGES 205
ISBN 978-2-35608-040-0
TRANSLATION RIGHTS Sylviane Sambor,
infos@livre-poitoucharentes.org

LES CERCLES MÉMORIAUX DAVID COLLIN

French original (p. 13-14)

Surge de la brume écarlate, empoussiéré jusqu'aux yeux, le front brûlé par le soleil, les cheveux blanchis d'avoir trop vite espéré en l'horizon, d'avoir cru en une infinité de mirages, le Naufragé était un miraculé. Il ignorait tout de son destin. Il n'entendait pas les rumeurs, il ne voyait plus, il glissait dans la nuit sans un mot. Sans avoir retrouvé la parole.

Depuis son arrivée au monastère, un vieux moine s'occupait de lui. Il tentait de reconstituer son histoire en rassemblant les fragments épars de ses délires. Des images naissaient d'un cri, d'une plainte ou d'un mot libéré. Il en tirait de vagues hypothèses, dont la plus vraisemblable était que le Naufragé s'était enfoncé dans le désert sans repère, en quête d'une piste qui n'existait plus, car balayée par le vent, dissoute dans l'étendue. Bousculé pendant de longues heures par la tempête, il avait perdu son chemin, et celui de l'homme qu'il recherchait.

Des sédiments de vie se recomposaient, sans que l'ensemble se précise. Après l'apparition des premiers fragments volatiles, isolés les uns des autres, des couches de souvenirs stratifiés remontaient en remous agités des abysses les plus profondes. Et quand s'agrégeaient enfin des pans entiers de mémoire, il fallait les traduire avant qu'ils ne disparaissent, vite les décortiquer. La matière noire et invisible devait relier les souvenirs entre eux, leur donner un sens, dévoiler enfin les secrets de la mémoire. Mais cette matière manquait.

Sous la tente du Naufragé, deux vieilles femmes se relayaient jour et nuit, pour soigner celui qu'elles nommaient « le miraculé du désert ». Peu nombreux sortaient vainqueurs d'un tel combat avec la nature. On racontait que la nuit, des bêtes lugubres traversaient les étendues grises du plateau désertique en transportant les âmes des morts sur leur dos. Qu'il était impossible de leur échapper.

Les deux chamanes interrogeaient les nuits, s'immisçaient dans les rêves du Naufragé, combattaient l'emprise des créatures. Un véritable rituel de dépossession. Dans les moments les plus apaisés, elles épongeaient son front, assemblaient les pièces éparses de son intimité, interrogeaient le silence.

Puis une nouvelle crise éclatait. Un mauvais rêve.

Mal inspiré par l'une des âmes damnées qui hantaient les nuits du Gobi, le Naufragé se débattait contre les éléments.

MEMORIAL CIRCLES DAVID COLLIN

Excerpt translated by Tess Lewis

The Castaway emerged from the scarlet haze covered in dust to his eyes, forehead blistered by the sun, hair turned white from having hoped for too much from the horizon and having believed countless mirages. His survival was miraculous. He knew nothing about his fate. He heard no rumours. He could no longer see. He slipped into night without a word, without having recovered his powers of speech.

An old monk had taken care of him since he arrived at the monastery. The monk tried to reconstruct the Castaway's past from the scattered fragments that surfaced in his delirium, images born from a cry, a groan, or a word. The monk formed vague hypotheses. The most plausible was that the Castaway had set off into the desert without guidance in search of a trail that no longer existed, that had been swept clean by the wind and had dissolved into the desert's expanse. Buffeted by the storm, he had lost his way and the trail of the man he had been seeking.

Residue from his life began to accumulate, but without forming a whole. After the first erratic fragments appeared, each one isolated from the next, layers of memory welled up from the profoundest depths in turbulent counter-currents. And when full sections of memory finally coalesced, they had to be translated immediately, analyzed before they disappeared. Invisible dark matter should have bound the memories together, given them meaning, at last revealed their secrets. But there was no dark matter.

In the Castaway's tent, two old women took turns night and day nursing back to health the one they called 'the miraculous survivor'. Few emerged victorious from such battles with nature. It was said that dismal beasts wandered over the vast gray desert plateau at night, carrying the souls of the dead on their backs. There was no escaping them.

The two shamans interrogated the nights, invaded the Castaway's dreams, and fought to loosen the creatures' hold on his soul. It was a veritable exorcism. During his calmest moments, they wiped his brow, gathered the scattered scraps of his private life, and sounded the silence.

Then new fits seized him, nightmares.

Caught in the malignant grip of one of the damned souls who haunt the Gobi Desert, the Castaway struggled against the elements.

"David Collin has written an enchanting novel of great intelligence and subtle invention, full of astonishing plot twists and studded with literary allusions in the grand tradition of fantastic Argentine adventure novels." ALBERTO MANGUEL

FOREST OF GLASS

WALD AUS GLAS

GENRE Novel, LANGUAGE German



"Why do we dream by night of the things we fear by day?"

HANSJÖRG SCHERTENLEIB was born in 1957. He lives in County Donegal, Ireland, and in Suhr, Canton Aargau, Switzerland. He writes radio plays, drama, poetry, short stories, and novels, and has been a visiting professor at MIT (Boston, USA), and Oxford Brookes University (UK). His most recent novels are: 'Der Papierkönig' (The Paper King, 2003), 'Der Glückliche' (The Happy Man, 2005), 'Das Regenorchestra' (The Rain Orchestra, 2008) and 'Cowboysommer' (Cowboy Summer, 2010).

PHOTO © Milena Schlösser



In 'Forest of Glass', an old woman and a young woman meet. One is in search of her happier past, while the other flees from a future she fears. The two women could not be more different.

Roberta Kienesberger is seventy-two years old and has lost everything. They even took away her dog before putting her in a nursing home. But she resists and runs away. She rescues her dog and begins a journey from Switzerland back to Austria. She wants to return to her parents' house.

She wants to take control of her own life again. In secret, she plans her escape from the nursing home. She buys a small tent, hiking boots, a sleeping bag: everything she needs to return to her birthplace on foot.

On the way, she meets fifteen-year-old Ayfer, who was born and raised in Switzerland.

Ayfer's parents have sent her back to Turkey, where she has to work in her uncle's hotel on the Black Sea. There she is forced to confront the strict religious beliefs of her aunt and uncle. Ayfer, too, plans her escape in advance. "I am like a stone that is alive, she thought, a reptile waiting for the right moment, the moment it can't afford to miss." Now she is on her way back to Switzerland.

Roberta and Ayfer will briefly cross paths. And they will recognise each other as kindred spirits – in spite of the great difference in their ages.

TITLE Wald aus Glas

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WALD AUS GLAS HANSJÖRG SCHERTENLEIB**German original (p. 19-21)**

Roberta Kienesberger stand am Fenster des Bibliotheksraums und sah in den Garten hinaus. Die Wolkenbank, die sich schnell über den Himmel schob, war schieferfarben, das Sonnenlicht, gefiltert durch die Zweige der Bäume, sprenkelte die Fassade mit Flecken, die tanzten, wenn der Wind auffrischte. Anfangs hatte sie den Bücherdienst so oft wie möglich übernommen, aber seit sie nicht mehr stillsitzen konnte, hielt sie es kaum aus in der Bibliothek, in der es nach Essen roch, da sie an die Küche grenzte.

Humbel, ihr Zimmernachbar, saß auf der Parkbank und redete mit sich selbst, wie oft, wenn er sich unbeobachtet fühlte. Sie wusste, wovon Humbel redete, schließlich kannte er nur ein Thema: die Fortpflanzung von Tieren. Die Kieswege leuchteten in der fahlen Abendsonne, der Himmel war jetzt leer und weit, und sie trat auf den Gang hinaus und holte den Wagen herein, auf dem sich die zurückgebrachten Romane und Bildbände stapelten. Sie war nie eine Leserin gewesen und hatte sich nur dafür gemeldet, die Bücher alphabetisch in die Regale einzuordnen, weil es eines der Ämtchen war, bei denen man alleine war und seine Ruhe hatte. Sie interessierte sich noch immer nicht für Literatur, aber seit sie vor vier Wochen in 'Hiob' von Joseph Roth ein gefaltetes Blatt Papier gefunden hatte, auf dem in sorgfältiger Handschrift mit Bleistift Worte aufgelistet waren, schlug sie jedes Buch auf, bevor sie es zurückstellte. Sie hatte damals einen ganzen Nachmittag gebraucht, um die einundzwanzig Worte der Liste in Joseph Roths Roman zu finden: jedes einzelne Wort war, verteilt über die 297 Druckseiten, mit Bleistift unterstrichen gewesen. Sie sammelte die Listen, mittlerweile waren es acht, in einem Umschlag, aber sie hatte nie ernsthaft versucht, herauszufinden, wer sie schrieb. Die Handschrift gefiel ihr, sie war klein und doch großzügig, energisch und doch elegant.

Es war die Schrift eines Mannes, stellte sie sich vor, eines gebildeten Mannes, der sich gewöhnt war, Anweisungen zu erteilen, der seine Bleistifte messerscharf spitzte. Heute lag die Liste im untersten Buch des Stapels, 'Die Nacht von Lissabon' von Erich Maria Remarque. Remarques 'Im Westen nichts Neues' hatte sie in der Schule gelesen, viele Jahre war es her, gefallen hatte es ihr nicht. Sie nahm die Liste aus dem Buch, entfaltete sie aber erst, als sie wieder am Schreibtisch saß:

Passagierdampfer / Glaskabine / Indonesien / Obersturmbannführer / Girlanden / Lump / Bienengesumm / Monteuranzug / Ausreisevisum / Kostbarkeiten / Kanarienvogel / Mücke

FOREST OF GLASS HANSJÖRG SCHERTENLEIB**Excerpt translated by Martin Chalmers**

Roberta Kienesberger stood at the window of the library room and looked out at the garden. The bank of clouds pushing swiftly across the sky was slate-coloured, the sunlight, filtered by the branches of the tree, sprinkled the façade with spots which danced when the wind freshened. To begin with she had taken on book duty as often as possible, but now that she was no longer able to sit still, she could hardly bear being in the library, which smelled of food because it was beside the kitchen.

Humbel, her neighbour from the next room, was sitting on the park bench and talking to himself, as so often when he thought himself unobserved. She knew what Humbel was talking about, after all he only had one subject: the reproduction of animals. The gravel paths were bright in the pale evening sun, the sky was now big and empty, and she stepped out into the corridor and pushed in the trolley on which the returned novels and picture books were stacked up. She had never been a reader and had only volunteered to put the books on the shelves in alphabetical order, because it was one of the little tasks in which one was left alone and had some peace. She was still not interested in literature, but ever since, four weeks earlier, she had found a folded sheet of paper in 'Job' by Joseph Roth, on which words were listed in pencil in careful handwriting, she opened every book before putting it back. Then it had taken her a whole afternoon to find the twenty-one words on the list in Joseph Roth's novel: every single word, spread over the 297 printed pages, had been underlined in pencil. She collected the lists, there were eight meanwhile, in an envelope, but she had never seriously tried to find out who wrote them. She liked the handwriting, it was small and yet generous, vigorous and yet elegant.

It was the writing of a man, she imagined, an educated man, who was used to giving instructions, who sharpened his pencil to a knife point. Today the list was in the very bottom book of the pile, 'The Night in Lisbon', by Erich Maria Remarque. She had read Remarque's 'All Quiet on the Western Front' at school many years ago, but hadn't liked it. She took the list out of the book, but did not unfold it until she was sitting at the desk again:

passenger steamer / glass cabin / Indonesia / SS Senior Assault Unit Leader / garlands / scoundrel / bees' hum / boiler suit / exit visa / precious objects / canary / mosquito

"We are all going to die, sooner or later. But a cracked vase lasts the longest."

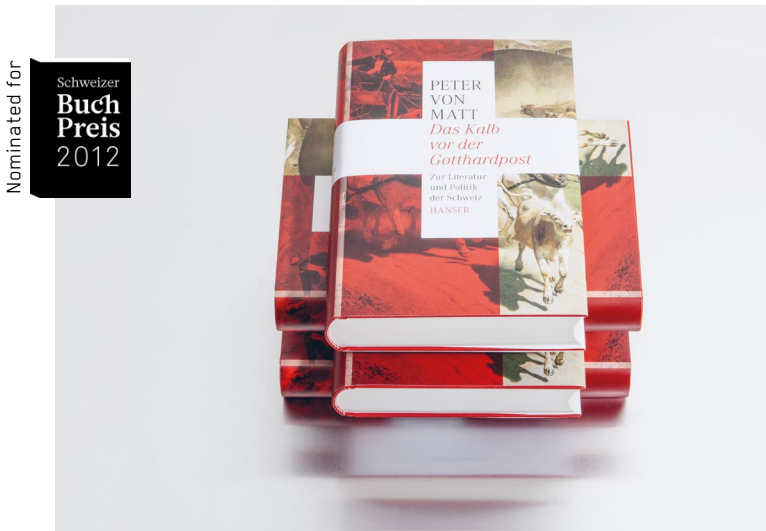
THE CALF IN THE PATH OF THE GOTTHARD MAIL COACH

Literature and Politics in Switzerland

DAS KALB VOR DER GOTTHARDPOST.

Zur Literatur und Politik der Schweiz

GENRE Essay, LANGUAGE German



"Simply the best book you can read
about the state of our nation."
NEUE ZÜRCHER ZEITUNG AM SONNTAG

PETER VON MATT was born in 1937 and lives near Zurich. He studied German, English and Art History in Zurich and London. From 1976 to 2002 he was Professor of German Literature at the University of Zurich. He has published extensively on Swiss literature and its links with politics, history and society, and is a frequent commentator on current affairs.



PHOTO © Annette Pohnert,
Hanser Verlag

Peter von Matt is a phenomenon: both an academic and an essayist, a writer who masterfully combines precision and readability. When Peter von Matt has something to say, everyone listens. 'Das Kalb vor der Gotthardpost' (The Calf in the path of the Gotthard Mail Coach, 2012) is his most recent collection of essays and articles on literature and politics in Switzerland. Peter von Matt applies his customary subtle analysis to a variety of topics, such as Switzerland and its myths, contemporary language issues, or the treatment of immigrants. He is interested in the contradictions that continue to characterize Swiss politics and Swiss literature. "The combination of conservatism and belief in progress, a Janus-headed forward and backward gaze, is characteristic of Swiss political and literary life."

Switzerland as a country is rife with ambivalence. On the one hand, it barricades itself against the outside world, but on the other hand it is tied tight to the rest of the world and reliant on international exchange. This conflict between retreat and renewal, local and global, has been taken up again and again by Switzerland's major writers, many of whom are profiled in this book: writers such as Gottfried Keller, Robert Walser, Max Frisch and Friedrich Dürrenmatt, but also lesser-known writers such as Adelheid Duvanel, Beat Sterchi and Otto F. Walter. One thing remains clear: Peter von Matt's witty analyses of their work will excite interest in a broad readership far beyond the borders of Switzerland.

TITLE *Das Kalb vor der Gotthardpost.*
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DAS KALB VOR DER GOTTHARDPOST. ZUR LITERATUR UND POLITIK DER SCHWEIZ PETER VON MATT

German original (p. 292-293)

Dada – eine Miniatur

War das nicht alles bloß Klamauk? Wenn man so hinhört, wie über DADA gesprochen wird, auch von Begeisterten, ist der Unterschied nicht ohne weiteres festzustellen. Lautgedichte und Kostüme aus Glanzpapier und viel Nonsense und Gruppenglück im Protestgehebe, hat sich das nicht in sich selbst erfüllt, damals, und wird fade, wenn man es aufzuwärmen sucht? Gibt es etwa Tristeres als DADA-Zeitungen in Vitrinen, DADA-Manifeste an heutige Wände gepinnt? Jeder hat einmal erlebt, wie er sich in DADA-Ausstellungen anstrengen musste, um weiterhin aufregend zu finden, was er aufregend finden wollte und aufregend finden zu müssen glaubte.

Dennoch ist DADA ein kulturhistorisches Monument, so einzigartig, schwierig, langweilig, wild und sensationell wie 'Finnegan's Wake' oder 'Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften'. Aber man muss den Zugang suchen. Sympathie allein tut's nicht.

Das erste 'factum brutum' ist der historische Zeitpunkt. In dem einen Jahr, da alles entsteht, was wir DADA nennen, von März 1916 bis März 1917, spielt sich die Hölle von Verdun ab: 700 000 tote Deutsche und Franzosen; findet die Schlacht an der Somme statt: eine Million Leichen; folgen sich in Italien nacheinander vier Schlachten am Isonzo; stirbt der Kaiser Franz Joseph zu Wien; beginnt der deutsche U-Boot-Krieg gegen alle Schiffe aus England, auch die neutralen; bricht die russische Revolution aus; dankt der Zar ab; lösen die USA ihre diplomatischen Beziehungen mit Deutschland auf und erklären diesem kurz darauf den Krieg. Weltmächte, die sich für unerschütterlich hielten, kollabierten. Mit ihnen stürzten Glaubenswelten ein. Kronen rollten auf dem europäischen Kontinent wie Blechspielzeug. Die Völker beteten alle zum gleichen Gott, er möge doch die andern krepieren lassen. Die Priester sangen dazu und segneten Kanonen und Gascontainer. Nichts, was gegolten hatte, galt weiterhin. Was die Maße gesetzt hatte, wurde lächerlich. Das sahen nicht alle. Die aber den Mut dazu hatten, standen vor furchtbaren Fragen: Was bleibt, wenn alle Strukturen bersten? Das Nichts? Gasgestank? Gott?

Dorthin wollte DADA vorstoßen, hinter alles Eingerichtete, ohne zu wissen, ob da Dreck sein würde oder das Absolute. Deshalb musste DADA aufreißen, zerfetzen, mit den bunten Partikeln spielen. Aber nicht um der flüchtigen Formen willen. Diese vergilbten und verwehten. Sondern um des ganz Anderen willen. Vielleicht war es grauenhaft, vielleicht herrlich. Aussprechen konnte man es nicht. Gelegentlich streifte es die Tanzenden.

THE CALF IN THE PATH OF THE GOTTHARD MAIL COACH.

LITERATURE AND POLITICS IN SWITZERLAND PETER VON MATT

Excerpt translated by Ross Benjamin

Dada – a Miniature

Wasn't all that mere clowning around? Based on the way DADA is spoken about, even by enthusiasts, it's not easy to tell the difference. Sound poetry and costumes made of glossy paper and much nonsense and collective joy in acting out – didn't that fulfill itself in itself, back then, and doesn't it turn bland when one seeks to warm it up? Is there anything sadder than DADA magazines in display cases, DADA manifestos pinned to present-day walls? Everyone who has attended a DADA exhibition has at some point strained to get excited about something they wanted to get excited about and believed themselves obligated to get excited about.

Still, DADA is a cultural-historical monument, as unique, difficult, boring, wild and sensational as 'Finnegan's Wake' or 'The Man Without Qualities'. But access to it has to be sought. Sympathy alone doesn't do it.

The first 'factum brutum' is the historical moment. In the single year when everything we call DADA comes into being, from March 1916 to March 1917, the hell of Verdun takes place: 700,000 dead Germans and French; the Battle of the Somme is fought: a million corpses; four Battles of the Isonzo ensue; the Emperor Franz Joseph dies in Vienna; German submarine warfare resumes against all ships from England, even neutral ones; the Russian Revolution breaks out; the Tsar abdicates; the United States severs diplomatic relations with Germany and shortly thereafter declares war on it.

World powers that thought themselves unshakable collapsed. With them belief-worlds came tumbling down. Crowns rolled on the European continent like tin toys. The peoples all prayed to the same God to bring about the deaths of the others. The priests sang along and blessed cannons and gas containers. Nothing that had been valid remained valid. What had set standards became ridiculous. Not everyone saw that. But those who dared faced terrible questions: What remains when all structures burst? Nothingness? The stink of gas? God?

That was where DADA sought to penetrate, behind all edifices, without knowing whether muck would be there or the absolute. That was why DADA had to rip things open, tear them to pieces, play with the variegated particles. But not for the sake of the fleeting forms. Those yellowed and blew away. Rather, for the sake of the wholly other. Perhaps it was horrifying, perhaps glorious. It couldn't be expressed. Occasionally it grazed the dancers.

"The Calf in the Path of the Gotthard Mail Coach is all about Switzerland, and because it doesn't do that from a purely national perspective it is also a book about Europe." TAGES-ANZEIGER

OGROROG

OGROROG

GENRE Novel, LANGUAGE French



"Is there anything worse than stopping?"



ALEXANDRE FRIEDERICH was born in 1965 in Lausanne. As a diplomat's son, he was brought up in Helsinki, Madrid, Mexico and Hanoi, as well as in Lausanne. He studied philosophy in Geneva before embarking on various artistic and musical projects. Since 2000 he has devoted himself mainly to writing and cycling. One result of these joint activities was his book 'Trois divagations sur le mont Arto' (Three Rambles On Mount Arto), published in 2006. For 'Ogrorog', Alexandre Friederich was jointly awarded the Prix Michel-Dentan in 2011 (together with Douna Loup).

PHOTO © Alexandre Friederich

Some like to travel on foot, but Alexandre Friederich prefers his bicycle. In his short, charming novel 'Ogrorog' he recounts a cycling tour across France, from the Jura mountains to the Atlantic coast, beginning in a small village in the Department of Ain, southwest of Geneva, and ending in Gers, in the Midi-Pyrénées region of southern France.

The important thing is not the destination, but the journey itself, which takes him through regions that are often wet, noisy, and at times simply unpleasant. It is autumn. The travelling cyclist is en route through open countryside, among animals and nature, often chatting to the people he meets along the way. In the villages, he asks for bread or a place to spend the night, leading to experiences both pleasant and unpleasant. His journey is always full of surprises. Throughout 'Ogrorog', Alexandre Friederich shows his talent for detailed observation.

The proximity of nature inspires him to reflect on the urbanisation of the landscape and the steady spread of suburban sprawl, prompted by the changing state of the forest, which he explores on this cycling tour: "I want to see where it is. Whether it is. Each time I find a forest, I will visit it, trespass through it." The forest – which "begins where the city ends, where politics ends" – has always been a place for society's outsiders, a place of refuge.

TITLE Ogrorog

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valerie@editionsdessauvages.ch**

OGROROG ALEXANDRE FRIEDERICH**French original (p. 7-9)**

Octobre – j'ai quitté ma maison, je me suis mis en route. Quand le ciel évacue à l'est, je renifle, j'appuie le vélo contre le talus, j'essore mon foulard, mes gants, mes yeux. Dans Puthiers, une meuleuse tourne, la pluie martèle. Un noir des îles sort de l'arrière d'une camionnette.

Vous arrivez d'où ?

De L'hôpital.

L'hôpital, plus haut, où j'habite une maison entourée de quinze stères de bois. Avec le noir nous regardons la boue qui dévale du Grand-Colombier. Le noir respire fort, la pluie goutte et le Jura fait une tache. Lui dans sa camionnette travaille. Il bâtit un mur. Il le désigne. Pour que je sache à qui j'ai affaire, il ajoute, je suis Ubald, j'aime les cailloux.

Moi je vais de l'autre côté de la France, dans l'Aquitaine.

Pas bon le ciel !

M'est égal.

Mmh ... Moi je vais jusque là-bas.

Et il montre la limite du terrain. Là-bas, où le mur va. Ainsi, depuis le mois de mai Ubald va, à coups de truelle, de mortier, de pierres.

C'est pour bientôt. Si j'y arrive ...

Car il y a le coteau.

Ubald se remet au travail. Il monte dans la camionnette, fait tourner la meuleuse, présente une pierre devant la lame.

Attention !

La casquette entre les dents, je bouche mes oreilles. Sifflement aigu.

La pierre enfonce dans la lame. Et casse. Alors le disque ralentit.

Parti de L'hôpital il y a une demi-heure, j'ai traversé trois villages : Chanay, Etranginaz, Puthiers. Il en reste cent à traverser. Vendredi dans sept jours j'ai rendez-vous dans une autre maison, là-bas, dans l'Aquitaine heureuse, à Gimbrède. Tandis qu'Ubald ajuste la pierre sciée dans le mur, je tousse mais je suis content. Content d'être dehors, debout dans les éléments. Je tousse encore et Ubald interrompt sa manœuvre. Ajuster une pierre exige de la concentration. C'est bon, j'ai fini de tousser. Il reprend. Sertit la pierre, frôle le fil à maçon. Moi je remets mes gants et regarde au fond du terrain. À cinquante mètres du mur, j'aperçois une villa. On la croirait à des kilomètres.

Vous voyez la villa ?

Oui.

Petite, dit Ubald.

Il rit. Puis il s'éloigne du mur, regarde la pierre par en haut, par en bas, par les côtés.

J'ai dit, c'est trop gros le mur, mais le client veut rien savoir. Tiens, vous voyez, il est là-bas, dans sa caravane, il me surveille.

OGROROG ALEXANDRE FRIEDERICH**Excerpt translated by Tess Lewis**

October – I left my house and set out on my way. When the sky clears in the east, I sniff. I lean my bike against the embankment wall and rinse out my neckerchief, my gloves, my eyes. In Puthiers, a grinder turns, the rain hammers down. A Black Man from the islands steps down from the back of a small truck.

Where are you from?

From L'hôpital.

L'hôpital, higher up, where I live in a house surrounded by fifty-four cords of wood. He and I watch the mud flowing down from Grand-Colombier. The Black Man breathes heavily, the rain drips and the Jura mountains look like a stain. Him, he works in his truck. He's building a wall. He points at it. So that I know who I'm dealing with, he adds, I'm Ubald, I like rocks.

Me, I'm heading to the other side of France, to Aquitaine.

Sky's not looking good!

Doesn't matter to me.

Mmh ... Me, I'll be going up to there.

And he points towards the far edge of the plot of land. Over there, where the wall is heading. Since May, Ubald has been advancing one trowelful at a time, of mortar, of stone.

It won't be long. If I make it ...

Because there's the hillside.

Ubald gets back to work. He climbs up on his truck, turns on the grinder, puts a stone up to the blade.

Careful!

Holding my hat between my teeth, I cover my ears. A shrill whine.

The stone goes into the blade. And splits. So the disk slows. In the half hour since I left L'hôpital, I've crossed three villages: Chanay, Etranginaz, Puthiers. There are a hundred more to cross. Next Friday, in a week, I've got a rendez-vous in another house, over there, in happy Aquitaine, in Gimbrède. While Ubald places the cut stone into the wall, I cough but am happy. Happy to be outside, exposed to the elements. I cough again and Ubald stops his work. Setting a stone requires concentration. It's ok, I'm done coughing. He starts again. Sets the stone. It grazes the mason's line. Me, I put my gloves back on and look out over the plot of land. I notice a villa fifty metres from the wall. You'd think it were kilometres away.

You see the villa?

Yes.

Small, Ubald says.

He laughs. Then he steps back from the wall and looks at the stone from above, from below, from the side.

I told them the wall was too big, but the customer doesn't want to hear it. Look, you see, there he is, in his caravan. He's watching me.

THE GOALIE IS ME

DER GOALIE BIN IG / DER KEEPER BIN ICH

GENRE Novel, LANGUAGE Swiss-German dialect, German



"This man wants something from life. With *The Goalie Is Me*, the Swiss author Pedro Lenz has written a refreshingly old-fashioned book." DIE ZEIT

PEDRO LENZ was born in 1965 in Langenthal, and lives in Olten. He is a regular columnist for newspapers and magazines, one half of the performance duo Hohe Stirnen and a member of the spoken-word artists group 'Bern ist überall'. His publications include: 'Das Kleine Lexikon der Provinzliteratur' (A Short Lexicon of Provincial Literature, 2005), 'Plötzlech hets di am Füdle. Banale Geschichten' (Banal Stories, 2008) and 'Tanze wie ne Schmäterling – Die Coiffeuse und der Boxer' (Dance Like a Butterfly – The Hairdresser and the Boxer, 2010).



PHOTO © Pedro Lenz

The goalkeeper is a young man from a village in the Swiss midlands. He is an indefatigable and gifted storyteller, a true rogue, both naive and crafty. His love for telling stories often gets him into trouble.

In colloquial language, the goalkeeper talks about his everyday life in the 1980s.

Following a stint in prison, he tries to regain a foothold in his home village of Schummerthal. At first this does not seem difficult, as the village has hardly changed during the year he had to spend in prison for a minor drug offence. His favourite pub is still there, and they still serve his beloved coffee 'with a shot'.

The goalkeeper finds work, and falls in love with Regula, a waitress. "If you think about it, it's really strange. You know a woman for years and don't think anything of it, and suddenly, my God, suddenly she has something." Regula already has a boyfriend, which makes matters more complicated, but she still takes a trip to Spain with the goalkeeper. In spite of all his attempts to keep his life on track, the past still catches up with him. He gradually begins to realise that he was betrayed by so-called friends, who made him the scapegoat for their shady dealing. And yet: "The past is there for a reason. Mine isn't all good, but at least I can tell it the way I want."

TITLE *Der Goalie bin ig* (Swiss-German dialect)

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PUBLICATION DATE 2010

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ISBN 978-3-905825-17-6

TRANSLATION RIGHTS Matthias Burki, info@menschenversand.ch

TITLE *Der Keeper bin ich* (German, translated by Raphael Urweider)

PUBLISHER Bilgerverlag, Zurich

PUBLICATION DATE 2012

PAGES 171

ISBN 978-3-03762-024-3

DER GOALIE BIN IG PEDRO LENZ**Swiss-German original (p. 4-5)**

Aagfange hets eigetlech vuu früecher. Aber i chönnt jetz ou grad so guet behoupte, es heig a däm einten Oben aagfange, es paar Tag nachdäm, dasi vo Witz bi zrüg cho.

Vilecht isches öppe zähni gsi, vilecht e haub Stung spöter. Spüüt ke Roue. Uf au Fäu hets Bise gha wi d Sou. Schummertau. Novämber. Und ig es Härz so schwär, wi nen aute, nasse Bodelumpe.

Goni auso i ds Maison, es Fertig go näh.

Ds Abschiedsgäud vor Chischte hani scho vertublet gha, ohni genau z wüsse wie. Ig ke Chole, aber unbedingt es Kafi Fertig und chli Gsöuschaft und chli Stimme bbruch, denn.

I säges jo, nüt im Sack aus es paar Sigeretten und chli öppis i Münz. En Ängpass äbe, aber e ziemlech e böse. Ha drum uf öppis gwartet, woni z guet hätt gha. Nume, säg das mou öpperem, wennde grad usem Loch bisch cho, säg mou öpperem, du heigsch zwar ziemlech vuu Gäud z guet, sigsch aber grad nid bsungers flüssig. Das interessiert jetz gar niemer. Auso, wi gseit, ig i ds Maison, es Kafi Fertig bschtöüt, frogtm i d Regula, obis chöng zahle.

Ke schlächti Frog, wemen überleit.

DER KEEPER BIN ICH PEDRO LENZ**German translation (p. 5-6), translated by Raphael Urweider**

Angefangen hat es eigentlich viel früher. Geradeso gut kann ich aber auch behaupten, es hat an diesem einen Abend angefangen, ein paar Tage, nachdem ich aus Witz zurück war. Ungefähr zehn, vielleicht halb elf. Spielt keine Rolle. Auf alle Fälle ein saukalter, beißender Wind. Schummertal. November. Und mein Herz so triefend schwer wie ein alter, feuchter Lappen.

Ich also ins Maison auf einen Kaffee mit Schuss.

Die Knastrente war schon verjubelt, ohne dass ich wusste, wo und wie. Ich also ohne Kohle damals, aber dringend einen Kaffee mit Schuss nötig, ein wenig Gesellschaft und ein paar Stimmen.

Wie gesagt, nichts in der Tasche außer ein paar Zigaretten und ein paar Münzen. Ein Engpass halt, aber ein ziemlich enger. Wartete auf was, das mir einer noch schuldete. Sag mal jemandem, wenn du gerade aus dem Loch raus bist, du hättest noch ziemlich Kohle zugute, doch seist du gerade nicht besonders flüssig. Das interessiert so keine Sau.

Eben, ich also ins Maison, bestelle einen Kaffee mit Schuss, da fragt mich die Regula, ob ich bezahlen könne.

Keine so schlechte Frage, zugegeben.

THE GOALIE IS ME PEDRO LENZ**Excerpt translated into Glaswegian dialect by Donal McLaughlin**

It aw started long afore that. Ah kid jist as well make oot but: it aw started that wan evenin, a few days eftir they let me ootae the Joke.

Boot ten in the evenin, it wis. Hawf past, mibbe. An' see the wind? The wind widda cut right through ye, fuckin freezin it wis. Fog Valley. It November an' aw. Ma heart wis like a soakin-wet flair-cloth, it wis that heavy.

So ah takes masel intae Maison's, fancied a wee coffee ah did, wi brandy in it.

The dosh they gi'e ye when ye leave the nick ah'd awready blown awready, naw that ah kidda telt ye whit oan.

So there ah wis: fuck-all dosh, desperate furra coffee but, wi brandy in it, furra bit o company an' aw, a cunt or two tae talk tae.

Ahm tellin ye, arent ah? Ma pockets wur empty, part frae a few fags, a few coins. Things wur a bit tight, like. Tighter than tight, tae be honest. Waitin on money some cunt owed me, ah wis. Try sayin that but when yir fresh ootae the nick. Ahm owed a whack o money, ah jist dont hiv it yet.

Impresses nae cunt, that.

So ah goes intae Maison's, like ah say, an' order a coffee wi brandy. Regula asks hiv ah the money fur it? Naw a bad question, ah admit.

THE GOALIE IS ME PEDRO LENZ**Excerpt translated by Donal McLaughlin**

It all started long before that, actually. I could just as well make out, though, that it all started that same evening, a few days after they let me out of the Joke.

About ten in the evening, it was. Half past, maybe. Not that it matters. The wind would have cut right through you, anyhow, it was that fuckin cold. Fog Valley. It November, too. My heart was like a wet floor-cloth, it was so heavy.

So I headed into Maison's. Fancied a coffee, I did, with brandy in it.

The money you get when they let you out I'd spent already – not that I could've said what on.

So there I was: no dosh, desperate for a coffee, though – with brandy in it. For some company as well, a person or two to talk to.

My pockets were empty, as I say, apart from a few fags, a few coins. Things were tight, as I say. Tighter than tight, to be honest. Waiting on money some guy owed me, I was. Try saying that, though, when you're fresh out of the nick. I'm owed a lot of dosh. Just not been given it yet.

Who would buy that?

So I head into Maison's, as I say, and order a coffee – with brandy. Regula asks: have I the money for it? Not a bad question, I admit.

"About ten, maybe half past. Doesn't matter. In any case, a flippin' freezing, biting wind. Schummertal. November. And my heart heavy and dripping like an old damp rag."

BESIDE OURSELVES

AUßER SICH

GENRE Novel, LANGUAGE German

Nominated for



"This is a great novel because it poses the only really important question: what makes us human beings?" FREITAG

URSULA FRICKER was born in 1965 in Schaffhausen and now lives outside Berlin. She was a social worker, actress and newspaper reporter before publishing her first novel 'Fliehende Wasser' (Fleeing Waters, 2004) to great acclaim, winning several literary awards. In 2009 she published 'Das letzte Bild' (The Last Picture).



PHOTO © Ursula Fricker

It happened on a drive to the countryside, to Mecklenburg. Katja and Sebastian, a couple of Berlin architects, were on a long-planned outing to visit friends for the weekend. Katja was behind the wheel. They had recently been wondering whether they wanted to have a child in their forties – but suddenly things take a different turn. First they get stuck because of a traffic accident. Then something terrible happens: Sebastian suffers a stroke. A helicopter flies him to the hospital. He is put in intensive care. Several operations are followed by a long period of uncertainty. Katja, the novel's first-person narrator, sits at Sebastian's side and waits for him to come out of his coma. She looks at the machines and the tubes, and when Sebastian finally opens his eyes, she knows he will never again be the man she loved. Sebastian now needs special care.

In this remarkable and skilful novel, Ursula Fricker shows how life can change from one moment to the next. Nothing is the same as before. But the novel also describes deep love. A stroke of fate has forced Katja's life in a different direction. What remains are the memories of a happy, intense time. Memories that bind her to Sebastian. What remains are existential questions about life, human dignity, and the choices modern medicine offers.

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TRANSLATION RIGHTS Andreas Simmen,
andreas.simmen@rotpunktverlag.ch

AUSSER SICH URSULA FRICKER**German original (p. 40-42)**

Ich trat ein. Ich sah etwas in einem Bett liegen. Eine Maske, beinahe so weiß wie das Laken. Ich ging. Den langen Weg von der Tür zum Bett. Ich sah nichts, nur diese Ahnung eines Gesichts, Schläuche aus Mund und Nase. So fremd, so fremd die Hände, wie hergerichtet für eine Reise, von der er nie zurückkehren würde. Ich legte meine Hand auf seine. Kühl. Ganz kühl. Bastian. Leer war mein Kopf, leer. Was war geschehen? Zum wievielten Mal? Wo waren wir? So was konnte doch mir nicht passieren. Uns nicht. Meinem Sebastian nicht. Ich fühlte mich noch auf der Autobahn. Schneller unterwegs, als ein Mensch verkraften kann. Gegen eine Wand fahren, die plötzlich aus dem Boden wächst. Das passte nicht zu uns. Wer war das in diesem Bett? War das jemand, den ich kannte? Ich verstand nicht. Wessen Hand? Was hatte ich hier zu suchen?

Ich streichelte die Hand ohne Leben. Diese einst kräftige, sehnige, warme Hand. Deren Berührung auf meinem Gesicht noch spürbar war. Wie die Fingerspitzen entlang meiner Augenbrauen glitten, über den Lidern zögerten, über die Wange zu den Lippen strichen. Ich seinen Finger suchte mit den Lippen, mit geschlossenen Augen, ihn in den Mund nahm, wir miteinander schliefen. Diese Hände so geschickt, so zärtlich, so gut. Lagen jetzt hier stumm und schon halb vertrocknet.

Nein, sagte ich, das ist er nicht. Als habe ich einen Leichnam zu identifizieren und als hinge nur von meinem Zeugnis ab, ob mein Mann noch lebte. Ich drehte mich um zu Doktor Manke. Das ist er nicht, wiederholte ich, laut, zornig. Im selben Moment klingelte das Telefon. Er müsse jetzt, leider, seien Sie tapfer. Er ging.

Ich holte einen Stuhl und setzte mich. Wächsern bleich dieses Gesicht. Augen geschlossen. Bastian, sagte ich. Seinen Namen. Meine Stimme klang heiser, hallte nach, als suche sie verzweifelt das Ohr, das zu diesem Namen passte. Bastian, sagte ich. Es geht weiter, du musst aufwachen. Du musst jetzt auch mal fahren. Bastian? Jana und Bernd und die Kinder warten. Die Kinder, ja. Ich will dir doch heut Abend noch etwas sagen. Eine Schwester kam und schickte mich hinaus.

Sie würden jetzt coilen, da könne ich nicht dabei sein. Ob ich es weit habe nach Hause? Was für eine Frage. Wenn sie wüsste, dass mein Zuhause eben abgerissen wurde, übrig bleiben würden zerfetzte Tapeten, zersplitterte Spiegel, verbogene Rohre, ein Haufen Schutt.

BESIDE OURSELVES URSULA FRICKER**Excerpt translated by Katy Derbyshire**

I entered the room. I saw something lying in a bed. A mask, almost as white as the sheet. I walked. The long distance from the door to the bed. I saw nothing, only this notion of a face, tubes emerging from the mouth and nose. So unfamiliar, so unfamiliar the hands, as if arranged for a journey from which he would never return. I placed my hand on his. Cool. Quite cool. Bastian. My head was empty, so empty. What had happened? How many times? Where were we? Something like this couldn't happen to me, could it? To us. Not to my Sebastian. I felt I was still on the highway. Moving faster than a person can stand. Driving into a wall that suddenly shoots up out of nowhere. That wasn't like us. Who was that in the bed? Was it someone I knew? I didn't understand. Whose hand? What was I doing here?

I stroked the hand with no life. That once strong, sinewy, warm hand. I could still feel its touch on my face. Feel the fingertips gliding along my eyebrows, hesitating over my eyelids, stroking over my cheek to my lips. Me seeking his finger with my lips, my eyes closed, taking it into my mouth, the two of us sleeping together. Those hands so deft, so tender, so good. Lying here now, mute and half dried out.

No, I said, that's not him. As if I had to identify a corpse and as if it was entirely up to my testimony whether my husband was alive or not. I turned around to Doctor Manke. It's not him, I said again, aloud, angry. The telephone rang at the same moment. He had to go now, the doctor said, sorry, be brave. He left.

I drew up a chair and sat down. That face waxy pale. Eyes closed. Bastian, I said. His name. My voice sounded hoarse, echoed as if desperately seeking the ear to go with that name. Bastian, I said. Life goes on, you have to wake up. You have to do some driving too now. Bastian? Jana and Bernd and the children are waiting. The children, yes. There's something I want to tell you tonight. A nurse came in and sent me out of the room.

They were going to do the coiling now, she said, I couldn't stay. Did I have a long way home? What a question. If only she knew – my home was just being demolished, all that would remain were shreds of wallpaper, splintered mirrors, misshapen pipes, a pile of rubble.

"What remains is the knowledge of life's fragility and the certain knowledge of sharing a great love: a love in which virtues such as fidelity and responsibility are of great importance, a love that endures after death." NEUE ZÜRCHER ZEITUNG AM SONNTAG

GOOD TIMES FOR FOREIGN FICTION?

AN INTERVIEW WITH BOYD TONKIN

Journalist and fellow 'champion' of international literature in the UK, Rosie Goldsmith, interviews Boyd Tonkin, the renowned Literary Editor of the 'Independent' and a founder of the 'Independent Foreign Fiction Prize': How can literature in translation be successful on the British market?

ROSIE GOLDSMITH Is this a good time for foreign fiction in the UK today?

BOYD TONKIN It's a time of possibilities and I am reasonably positive. Clearly the situation for all serious publishing is difficult and will remain so. The impact of the revolution in electronic publishing has only just begun to be felt and will have far-reaching effects on all aspects of literary publishing, including on translations. However, there are some positive developments here. New publishers have shown that the economics of literary publishing allow for new entrants at a relatively small cost and that they can cultivate a readership and extend the remit of what publishers do. So, although the global landscape of publishing is fraught with problems, the options that publishers have for extending their impact in terms of translated literature, I think, are considerable. The situation is not easy, but equally no time for apocalyptic pessimism.

RG How would you describe the attitude of British publishers to translated fiction?

BT It varies, from those relatively few advocates and champions who have always been deeply committed, through to scepticism, indifference and outright hostility. Much of the hostility is not so much a principled antagonism towards translation, it's more a kind of laziness. That's because in order to make a work in translation effective in the British market all sorts of things have to happen, which is not the case in other kinds of fiction: the translation has to be commissioned, it has to be of an adequate quality and it has to be funded. Therefore as a publisher you need to know about things like the translation support available from embassies and cultural institutes. It also has to be marketed in a more intelligent and creative way than with a familiar home-grown name. And the author, in many cases, needs to be present and visible. This creates its own logistical problems, also with publicity, especially if the author is not an English speaker. None of these are insuperable problems but they do require work, effort and forethought on behalf of publishers. And when they are simply looking at the bottom line, when finding, sourcing and selling books, either to make a profit or at least cover their costs, but instead end up in the red, this can act as a disincentive to turn people away from translation. So I think the problems are practical, and problems of the resourcefulness of publishers, rather than any intrinsic resistance in the market itself.

RG How do you think readers regard international fiction today?

BT I usually say – and I hope it's true – that anyone who wants to read good and thought-provoking books will want to read in translation. People who are resistant to books in translation 'per se' are likely to dislike being stretched or challenged in their reading in any way. I think the core audience for translation is the same as the core audience for any intelligent writing. Readership could certainly be expanded, but, equally I don't think there is any intrinsic opposition to reading in translation. It's a very, very obvious point, but you only have to look at the extraordinary success of the Nordic crime writers to see that works in translation can penetrate into every corner of the British market.



RG Why then do we read so little in translation? It's often quoted – vaguely – that 'only 3 per cent' of what we read is translated fiction.

BT There are two issues here. First, the question of the sheer number of books being translated and published and their significance as a proportion of fiction output as a whole. Second, the impact and reach of those translated books. My focus is always on making sure that those books we do have in translation reach the widest possible audience. But the question of proportions and percentages is not something I as journalist or advocate of international fiction can directly affect. That is up to publishers. The 'percentages question' can be a bit of a fetish: the English-language market is so huge, so diverse and so global that the proportion of translated books within the UK is never going to approach that within continental countries. That is the consequence of the global status of the English language

RG How can translated fiction reach more people? Is it down to publicity, marketing, media?

BT As everyone in publishing tells you, 'one size does not fit all': every possible avenue needs to be addressed. That involves proper marketing, good design, amenable and helpful bookshops and online retailers. It involves media support and interest. It involves, if possible, the presence of authors at readings and festivals. Generally, the creation of a community of interest and of debate, which of course involves things like websites and social media. But still, in order to sell a book from an unfamiliar source, whatever it is, you probably need to hit four or five targets rather than simply one target. It's not enough to have a good bookshop display or a rave review. But once all those things come together then you can create a kind of synergy or critical mass that makes readers aware that this is a book they might like to explore for themselves.

RG In Britain we have a large number of festivals and prizes for fiction. Increasingly, they feature foreign writers. Does that help?

BT That certainly helps. But I have become vividly aware over the 12 years that I have been involved with The Independent Foreign Fiction Prize that there is a danger that you create a kind of two-tier category of foreign writers. The first category is those able to come to Britain, the US or any other English-speaking country and can promote their work easily as they happen to command fluent English.

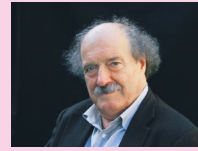
Then there are a very large numbers of good writers who don't, who are thereby slightly disadvantaged in this field of self-promotion. It would be terrible if somehow publishers start to judge the attractiveness of foreign fiction on the basis that the author is able to come and operate as effectively as an English language author in the British market.

RG You are known as a champion of foreign fiction. What is your personal mantra in this regard?

BT My personal mantra is that the novel I am reading in translation should strike me as a work of outstanding literary quality in English, which is not quite the same as saying – as reviewers often do – that 'I didn't know I was reading a translation'. I actually don't mind if I know that I am reading a translation, but I have to feel that the deployment of language is thoughtful, creative and considered – sentence-by-sentence, paragraph-by-paragraph. I don't have a dogmatic position in 'the great translators debate', between 'the natural-izers' and 'the foreign-izers'; those who believe that translation should be invisible, and those who believe the actual toil and process of translation should leave its traces. In practice I think it should vary from work to work depending on the qualities of the original.

On Being Translated

URS WIDMER, AUTHOR



The older I grow, the more I have the feeling when I write that I am not simply creating a new book, but in fact

taking part in the great shared adventure of all writers worldwide: writing my share of the Book of the World, the sum total of everything that has been written in the past and is being written by us today. I feel I am part of a tradition that is truly becoming global. When Goethe dreamed of world literature (he was the first to coin the term), it was a touchingly distant utopia, and Weimar a backwater surrounded by turnip fields. But today Goethe's dream is a near-reality. World literature does exist. That translations also exist considerably encourages my hope of being joined with the world and becoming a part of it. Translations are important to me, but most of the time I am compelled to simply trust my translators. My books have been translated into twenty-eight languages. Of these, I speak one well, one tolerably, and the third, almost. As for the rest: zilch. With my Chinese translations I do not even know which curl of brush-stroke is my name, and which is the title. Even the author's photo seems to me somewhat Chinese; it could also be a picture of Thomas Hürlimann. The rule is: the smaller the language, the sooner they translate you. Finnish (my very first translation), Montenegrin, Greek, Korean, Hungarian. Even French – which considers itself the only language capable of expressing mind and heart – is not an impossible goal. English, however...! I had to wait until I was over seventy to have an English book. Because, in the USA (and in Great Britain and Australia, too) people are content with what they write themselves. In the USA they seem unaware that other languages exist. As everyone knows, there are no bookshops there, and they say that in the entire American publishing industry there is only one person who can read German at all. The rare bestseller that makes it across the Atlantic (*Perfume*, *The Reader*) is bought on faith, blind. I was bought on sight.

A work of fiction that in its original language has a certain transparency, clarity and modesty of style can clearly be properly rendered in an English which has the same qualities and does not draw attention to itself. Equally, something that has a highly personal or idiosyncratic use of the original language requires a translation that shares those attributes. So I think with translation, as with many other aspects of literature, each case requires its own solution. There is no dogmatic mantra to adopt.

RG Who or what are the various 'gatekeepers' of translated fiction?

BT They are many and varied. They start with agents and publishers, who acquire knowledge of books they might want to translate, either directly through attendance at book fairs, or indirectly through the work of 'scouts'. Also, if they see that a book has been highly successful in its home market that might attract their attention. But I think there is a big problem here, and I am not the first to say it: the (foreign) language skills of British publishers have diminished over the last two generations and they are now more reliant on reports from scouts or on sample translations. These samples are of variable, and sometimes more inferior, quality than used to be the case. This is a very difficult problem to solve, especially if you look beyond a core group of European languages. But my impression is that in the post-War generation there were publishers who could read with confidence in several languages and make their own decisions about translation on that basis. Today that sort of expertise is often outsourced, which creates its own problems as to whether publishers trust their informants and the scouts. This can't be easily fixed, even if we had more multilingual publishers in Britain who knew French, German, Spanish, Italian, maybe Russian, because there is an entire wealth of literature in other languages needing professional advice. But I do think that it would be an advantage if some people felt they could succeed in publishing on the basis of their knowledge of languages, and that that was seen as a positive advantage, rather than simply an agreeable 'add-on'.

RG Should foreign publishers focus on promoting specific literary genres?

BT Publishers abroad wanting to sell a particular book or author on the English language market, above all, need to be confident in the quality of the work. It's not a good idea to 'second guess' what you imagine the British or American market would like. There've been a number of fairly disastrous translations of major bestsellers which haven't worked at all. Crime fiction occupies a world of its own – at the moment a world that flourishes mightily and requires less attention. Successful crime novels from wherever will find eager takers in English, I think. But if you look at the broader area of 'literary fiction', then I think publishers simply need to be passionate about the book they are selling. Don't imagine some sort of 'ideal reader', because that ideal reader does not exist. The market has to be created for an unknown author and it has to be created on the basis of quality. Just because you see that a particular genre has been successful in Britain or America, and you happen to have a best-selling novel in your language that seems to correspond to that genre, it would be catastrophic to imagine that therefore you can simply feed into that hunger. This is both a problem and a great advantage for people who want to publish fiction in translation in Britain. Every successful book has to create its own category. If you look at the pattern of books that have been successful in translation, all the way from Michel Houellebecq to Carlos Ruiz Zafón, from Umberto Eco to Peter Hoeg to Milan Kundera, these are books that created a space for themselves as unique self-standing contributions to literature, not simply as fresh additions to a pre-existing genre.

My publisher, Seagull Books, is in Kolkata, India, where there is an entire city district devoted exclusively to bookshops. There my works stand, small and thin and full of hope, squeezed in among ten or a hundred thousand paperbacks written in Hindi or one of the other hundred and twenty seven languages spoken in India.

URS WIDMER is one of Switzerland's best known authors. He has published numerous novels and is also a very successful playwright ('Top Dogs'), and an essayist. The novels 'My Mother's Lover' (Der Geliebte meiner Mutter) and 'My Father's Book' (Das Buch des Vaters) were recently published by Seagull Books.

PHOTO © Regine Mosimann / Diogenes Verlag

Never let a good crisis go to waste

TESS LEWIS, TRANSLATOR



The glass of translated literature in the English-speaking world is not running over but it is more than half-

full. No one needs reminding that the publishing industry is struggling to survive. Yet this crisis also presents an enormous opportunity for the smaller, more nimble, innovative, and less profit-dependent presses to thrive.

Impressive ventures devoted to publishing translations have sprouted up in the past decade: Archipelago Books, Open Letter, and Europa Editions in the US, and Peirene Press, And Other Stories, and Pushkin Press in the UK, to name a few. Larger presses like Dalkey Archive and Seagull Books have begun National Literatures Series, publishing several books a year from select countries. Whereas most university presses have reduced the translations on their lists or eliminated them altogether, Yale University Press founded the Margellos World Republic of Letters Series in 2010. In the ebook-only series The New York Review of Books (NYRB) will launch this year, four of the five novels are translations. The key to these presses' success is their

RG I am going to put you on the spot and ask you what you know about Swiss literature?

BT The answer is, probably very little. If you were to ask me who was the Swiss author I have read most consistently I would have to say Jean-Jacques Rousseau. But more recently I have read Robert Walser.

RG How can the Swiss help us to be less ignorant? (laughs)

BT They can create a space in which Swiss writers come together and are seen as part of a coherent whole, which is precisely the point of websites, magazines like this and new forms of discussing Swiss literature as an entity. They can make sure Swiss writers attend festivals together in ways in which they can be identified as Swiss. They can make more effort to brand Swiss literature when it is published in translation in Britain. Of course one is aware that Swiss writers might feel they belong more to a transnational space. But in Britain we know all about that – being a state made up of four nations – so I don't see that as forming an insuperable barrier to creating a stronger collective identity for Swiss literature.

RG The fact that the Swiss nation comprises French, German, Italian and Romansch – and several dialects – is that an advantage or disadvantage for creating this cohesive identity in the foreign fiction world?

BT Awhile ago the easy answer would have been to say, it was a drawback because it confuses people's perceptions and muddies the waters. These days, however, everyone is concerned with the ways nations can contain more than one kind of cultural identity. This is after all a common theme not just in Europe but way beyond Europe. Countries with a long experience of navigating and negotiating multiple identities are becoming more attractive and more interesting on the global scene. Switzerland is a prime example.

RG Swiss literature is very interested at the moment in 'immigrant literature' and 'literature in dialect': is this something positive that they can share with the UK market?

BT It is certainly something that would allow them to communicate with the UK market, where again publishing has been grappling with the presentation of a nation – Britain – which today constitutes not only its own original several cultures and languages, but also many others as well. These motifs within Swiss literature should ease its passage into the British market.

RG Since you've been running 'The Independent Foreign Fiction Prize' has a Swiss author ever won?

BT Unfortunately in my memory a Swiss author has not won. Obviously I hope at some point in the near future that will be rectified.

BOYD TONKIN Through his work as a literary editor and as a judge and founder of Britain's leading prize for foreign fiction, Boyd Tonkin is considered a leading authority on international fiction in translation in the UK. Since 1996, he has been the Literary Editor of 'The Independent', one of the UK's leading national newspapers. Before that he wrote for 'The Observer', was Literary Editor of the 'New Statesman' and has also taught literature in higher education. He has judged the 'Booker Prize', the 'David Cohen Prize', the 'Commonwealth Writers' Prize', and re-founded the famous UK-based 'Independent Foreign Fiction Prize' for literature in translation.

ability to develop readerships for their books through social media, blogs, extensive outreach and innovative projects. Dalkey Archive's annual Best European Fiction anthologies and Open Letter's yearly Best Translated Book Award draw attention to a large number of otherwise unknown translations. Archipelago, And Other Stories, and Peirene have cultivated devoted subscriber bases. Almost all of these presses have striking, immediately recognizable 'looks'; they keep their books in print indefinitely; and they leverage interest on the web through blogs and websites like Words Without Borders, The Literary Saloon, Conversational Reading, 3 Percent, and Love German Books. Less than 3% of the books published in the US each year are translations, yet a broader selection of foreign titles is being published than ever before and they are finding dedicated readers. Perhaps 'success' for translated literature should be redefined – rather than the number of copies sold or the pervasive exposure of a given writer, a more accurate gauge might be the breadth of titles published and the fact that, despite small print runs, these works are reaching a passionate and growing readership?

What are the prospects for Swiss literature? It is poised to shine as never before. Previously, a few names – Dürrenmatt, Frisch – eclipsed all others, who were subsumed into their respective linguistic groups as French or German writers. Now, particularly through the national series. Swiss writing could establish a presence as a distinct and multifaceted category. Two Swiss authors, Christoph Simon and Richard Weihe, are featured in publishers' subscription series this year. Seagull is finally bringing Urs Widmer and Jean-Luc Benoziglio to English readers, while Dalkey is introducing Noëlle Revaz, Arno Camenisch, and Giovanni Orelli, and NYRB Markus Werner.

As politicians say: never let a good crisis go to waste.

TESS LEWIS translates from French and German. Her translations include works by Peter Handke, Alois Hotschnig, Lukas Bärfuss, Philippe Jaccottet, Pascal Bruckner, and Jean-Luc Benoziglio among others.

PHOTO © Chloe Lewis

THE UNGRATEFUL STRANGER

DIE UNDANKBARE FREMDE

GENRE Novel, LANGUAGE German



"An amusing, spirited and wonderfully biased tale." DIE ZEIT



IRENA BREŽNÁ was born in 1950 in Czechoslovakia. In 1968 she emigrated to Switzerland, and has lived in Basel ever since. She is a journalist, writer, academic in Slavonic Studies, psychologist and human rights activist. In 2008 she published her autobiographical novel 'Die beste aller Welten' (The Best of All Worlds) and in 2010 the novel 'Schuppenhaut' (Scaly Skin). She has received numerous awards for her work, including the EMMA journalism award and the Theodor Wolff Prize for her war reporting from Chechnya.

PHOTO © Marian Strauch

"We left our land behind in the familiar darkness and came closer to the glow of the new. How much light there is! called Mother, as if that were proof that we were approaching a radiant future." That promising future lies in Switzerland, the destination for the narrator and her family.

The heroine of Irena Brežná's novel 'Die undankbare Fremde' (The Ungrateful Stranger) emigrates from Czechoslovakia to Switzerland in 1968 – as did the author herself – leaving behind oppressive years under a dictatorship. In her new surroundings she encounters new freedoms, prosperity and countless comforts, but also confronts a certain incomprehension and unfamiliar rules and regulations. While the mother delights in everything, the daughter views most things critically. "I felt like an object my mother had placed in a strange house, like an underage bride of a hundred years ago being forced to marry a country as if it were a forbidding old man." Irena Brežná narrates her protagonist's story from two different perspectives and on two interwoven timescales. First we have the newly arrived young woman, confused, often angry. Then we have the trained interpreter, years older and more tolerant, who accompanies asylum seekers to court or hospital. The experiences of these refugees have been far more painful than her own. The Swiss writer Alain Claude Sulzer has called Brežná's novel "a bitter national education, but ending with a reconciliation".

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TRANSLATION RIGHTS Iris Brandt,
 ibrandt@kiwi-verlag.de

DIE UNDANKBARE FREMDE IRENA BREŽNÁ

German original (p. 5-7)

Wir ließen unser Land im vertrauten Dunkel zurück und näherten uns der leuchtenden Fremde. »Wie viel Licht!«, rief Mutter, als wäre das der Beweis, dass wir einer lichten Zukunft entgegenfuhren. Die Straßenlaternen flackerten nicht träge orange wie bei uns, sondern blendeten wie Scheinwerfer. Mutter war voller Emigrationslust und sah nicht die Schwärme von Mücken, Käferchen und Nachtfaltern, die um die Laternenköpfe herumschwirrten, daran klebten, mit Flügeln und Beinchen ums Leben zappelten, bis sie, angezogen vom gnadenlosen Schein, verbrannten und auf die saubere Straße herunterfielen. Und das grelle Licht der Fremde fraß auch die Sterne auf.

In der Kaserne verhörte uns ein Hauptmann, der mehrere Sprachfehler hatte. Er konnte kein r rollen, weder ž, l', t', dž, ň noch ô aussprechen und betonte unseren Namen falsch, sodass ich mich nicht wiedererkannte. Er schrieb ihn auf ein Formular und nahm ihm alle Flügel und Dächlein weg: »Diesen Firlefanz brauchen Sie hier nicht.«

Er strich auch meine runde, weibliche Endung, gab mir den Familiennamen des Vaters und des Bruders. Diese saßen stumm da und ließen meine Verstümmelung geschehen. Was sollte ich mit dem kahlen, männlichen Namen anfangen? Ich fror.

Der Hauptmann lehnte sich zufrieden zurück:

»Sind Sie zu uns geflüchtet, weil es hier die Meinungsäußerungsfreiheit gibt?«

Wir kannten dieses lange Wort nicht. Mussten wir dem Mann jetzt unsere Meinung sagen, damit er jedem ein Bett und eine Wolldecke gibt? Zu sagen, was man denkt, sät Zwiebracht, man wird einsam davon, kommt in Einzelhaft. Der Hauptmann wartete vergeblich auf unsere eigene Meinung, dann senkte er die Stimme verdächtig tief:

»Was für einen Glauben haben Sie?«

Ich fürchtete, Mutter und Vater würden den Pakt mit dem Teufel schließen und Gott ins Spiel bringen, aber sie blieben sich gottlos treu und schwiegen.

Da wandte sich der Mann an mich:

»Woran glaubst du, Mädchen?«

»An eine bessere Welt.«

»Dann bist du richtig bei uns. Herzlich willkommen!«

Er zwinkerte mir zu und besiegelte mein Schicksal mit einem Stempel.

Eine hagere Frau führte uns durch lange Gänge. Ihr mitleidvoller Blick streifte mich. Ich suchte die Unglückliche, der ihr Blick galt, aber die Welt war leer.

THE UNGRATEFUL STRANGER IRENA BREŽNÁ

Excerpt translated by Katy Derbyshire

We left our land behind in the familiar darkness and came closer to the glow of the new. "How much light there is!" called Mother, as if that were proof that we were approaching a radiant future. The streetlamps didn't flicker in dull orange like back home, but dazzled like spotlights. Mother was full of emigrant's delight and didn't see the swarm of mosquitoes, bugs and moths buzzing around the heads of the streetlamps, sticking to them, thrashing their wings and tiny legs for their lives, until, drawn in by the merciless gleam, they burned and dropped down onto the clean street. And the glaring light of the new ate up the stars as well.

At the barracks, we were interrogated by a captain with several speech defects. He couldn't roll his rs, could pronounce neither ž, l', t', dž, ň nor ô, and he stressed our name so wrongly that I didn't recognize myself. He wrote it on a form and took away all its wings and tiny roofs:

"You don't need all that nonsense here."

He erased my round, feminine ending too, gave me the surname of my father and brother. They sat mutely and let my mutilation happen. What was I to do with this bare, masculine name? I shivered.

The captain leaned back, self-satisfied.

"Did you escape to our country because we offer freedom to express your opinion?"

We didn't know what that meant. Did we have to tell the man our opinions for him to give each of us a bed and a blanket? Saying what you think breeds discord, it makes you lonely, puts you in solitary confinement. The captain waited in vain for our own opinion, then lowered his voice to a suspicious depth.

"What is your faith?"

I feared Mother and Father would conclude a pact with the devil and bring God into it, but they stayed true to their godlessness and said nothing.

Then the man turned to me.

"What do you believe in, girl?"

"In a better world."

"Then you've come to the right place. Welcome to Switzerland!"

He winked at me and sealed my fate with a rubber stamp.

A haggard woman led us along long corridors. Her pitying gaze swept over me. I looked for the unhappy child her gaze was directed at, but the world was empty.

"Irena Brežná is one of eastern Europe's most important literary voices, even though she left Slovakia for Switzerland forty years ago and writes in German." SWISS RADIO DRS 1

GOLDFISH MEMORY

GOLDFISCHGEDÄCHTNIS

GENRE Stories, LANGUAGE German



"A book you just won't want to put down." TIROLER TAGESZEITUNG

'Vertigo' is the title of one of the stories in Monique Schwitter's collection 'Goldfischgedächtnis' (Goldfish Memory). And you might well become dizzy when you read these unusual short stories. Are they true or not? "Whether this story is true, I don't know, but I've heard it so often, I can't imagine it wouldn't be." In the fifteen stories making up this collection, the characters often find themselves on shaky ground. Things are not easy for them: on the contrary. In the end all they want is a secure place in an insecure world. These stories are above all about the struggle to survive. The characters take things to extremes, to where tragedy and comedy, hope and hopelessness, life and death, clash. A man sits in a hotel room and reads and reads, until reading takes over his life and becomes more real than reality. A small boy is shocked when his father grants his Halloween wishes. An actress complains that she remembers all the lines of all the parts she has ever had to learn in her life: "I've forgotten the technique of forgetting my lines!" She is forced to remember everything. Remembering and forgetting are recurring themes in these intricately crafted stories.

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TRANSLATION RIGHTS Annette Knoch,
annette.knoch@droschl.com;
 Spanish rights: Monika Mazegger,
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MONIQUE SCHWITTER was born in 1972 in Zurich and now lives and works in Hamburg. Between 1993 and 1997 she studied acting and directing at the Mozarteum University of Dramatic Arts in Salzburg and went on to perform in Zurich, Frankfurt and Graz. In 2005 she published her first volume of short stories, 'Wenn's schneit beim Krokodil' (When It Snows at the Crocodile's), for which she was awarded the 2006 Robert Walser Prize for the best literary debut of the year. In 2008 she published her novel 'Ohren haben keine Lider' (Ears Have No Lids).

PHOTO © Florian Thiele

GOLDFISCHGEDÄCHTNIS MONIQUE SCHWITTER**German original (p. 81-83)**

Er sitzt in Unterhose auf der Bettkante und fächelt sich Luft zu. Seine dunkelbraunen Hände tanzen vor den kleinen hellen Brüsten, die er so verachtet und stets vor Tageslicht und fremden Blicken unter einem Hemd verbirgt.

Er hat den schweren Acrylvorhang zugezogen, die weißen Sonnenflecken von der Matratze getilgt, und die Nachttischlampe angeknipst.

Sein Blick streift das Telefon auf dem Nachttisch, er lässt sich rückwärts auf die Matratze fallen und greift wieder nach dem Buch.

«Wie jeden Abend stand Bovet in der offenen Tür und schaute in die Dunkelheit hinaus. Er atmete tief ein, schloß die Hände zu einem Trichter um den Mund und schleuderte seine Verachtung in die Einsamkeit, die ihn umgab: «Bleibt bloß alle weg! Mir vom Leib!» Als er die Tür für die Nacht versperren wollte, dachte er an Solange und hielt lächelnd inne. Die plumpe Magd war in seiner Erinnerung die anmutige Fee geblieben, zu der er sie als kleiner Junge gemacht hatte. «Arthur», hörte er Solanges Stimme und sah sie das riesige Kissen im Arm wiegen, «husch ins Bett!»»

Er zwingt sich, Wort für Wort zu lesen, langsam, seine Gier zügelnd; die Worte dröhnen in seinem erhitzten Schädel. «Arthur! Mir vom Leib! Husch!»

Er döst ein, träumt von Solange mit dem Riesenkissen, sie sieht aus wie seine Mutter, im Traum, sie schüttelt aus dem Kissen Millionen von Muttermalen auf ihn, sie lächelt feenhaft, «hier deine Lebensgeschichte», ruft sie ihm mit einem Pustekuss zu und winkt adieu.

Er wacht auf, die Lampe sticht, sein Kopf liegt schwer auf dem Buch, er dreht ihn zum Telefon.

Er hebt den Hörer ab und wartet auf den Summton, legt dann sofort wieder auf, überlegt, ob er bei der Rezeption anrufen und das Zimmermädchen kommen lassen soll, mit einer Flasche Wasser oder einem Kaffee oder beidem, und entscheidet sich dagegen.

Er dreht den Wasserhahn auf, beugt sich und trinkt. Er hält den Kopf unter Wasser, hört ein Klingeln. Hört er ein Klingeln? Er dreht den Wasserhahn ruckartig zu und lauscht. Wasser rinnt ihm in die Augen, das Telefon bleibt stumm.

Gedankenlos schreibt er mit Kugelschreiber seine Initialen vorne ins Buch, dann betrachtet er die beiden Buchstaben und schüttelt den Kopf.

GOLDFISH MEMORY MONIQUE SCHWITTER**Excerpt translated by Eluned Gramich**

He sits on the edge of the bed in his underpants, fanning himself. His dark brown hands dance in front of his fair chest, which he so despises, and which he hides away from the daylight and from strangers' eyes, under his shirt.

He's drawn the heavy acrylic curtains, wiping out the white sunspots on the mattress, and switched on the bed-lamp.

His gaze passes over the telephone on the bedside table. He falls back on the mattress and reaches for the book again.

"Like every evening, Bovet stood in the open doorway and looked out into the darkness. He breathed in deeply, closed his hands like a funnel over his mouth and hurled his revulsion into the surrounding loneliness: 'Just stay away! Keep off!' He thought of Solange as he locked the door for the night, and smiled inwardly. The plump spinster had, in his memory, remained graceful and elfine, just as he'd imagined her as a little boy. 'Arthur', he heard Solange's voice and saw her cradle the huge pillow in her arms, 'off to bed!' "

He forces himself to read it slowly, word for word, restraining his eagerness; the words droning in his hot head. 'Arthur! Keep away! Shoo!'

He dozes off, dreaming of Solange and her huge pillow. She looks like his mother in the dream; she shakes the pillow and out come millions of moles. She smiles fairy-like, 'here is your life's story', she calls to him and blows a kiss and waves goodbye.

He wakes up, the lamplight blinding him, his head lies heavily on the book. He turns to the phone.

He picks up the receiver and waits for the dial tone, and puts it down immediately, considers whether he should call Reception and have the chambermaid come up with a bottle of water or a coffee or both and decides against it.

He turns the tap on, bends and drinks. He holds his head under the water and hears ringing. Does he hear ringing? He turns the tap off jerkily and listens. Water runs into his eyes. The phone stays mute.

He writes his initials in the front of the book with a ballpoint pen, without thinking. Then he looks at the two letters and shakes his head.

"Whoever picks up these stories and believes in the powerful images they create will realize that they touch the very core of our existence."

WIENER ZEITUNG

SEXUALITY

SESSUALITÀ

GENRE Novel, LANGUAGE Italian



"This, and this alone, is what I wanted to address: the link between power and sex, between body and bloodline."



PIERRE LEPORI was born in Lugano in 1968, studied in Siena and Bern, and is now based in Lausanne. He is a writer and translator, and an arts correspondent for the Italian-language Swiss public radio network. He has translated French literature into Italian, including authors Monique Laederach and Gustave Roud. His literary works include: 'Qualunque sia il nome' (Whatever the Name, 2003), 'Vento' (Wind, 2004) and 'Grisù' (2006).

PHOTO © Anne-Hélène Darbellay

Pierre Lepori's novel has an unusual publishing history. 'Sessualità' was launched simultaneously in three languages: Italian, French and German. The author did his own translation from Italian to French, and the German translator based her version on the two 'originals'. In addition, there is a trilingual version that switches between all three languages, depending on which character is speaking.

Olivier has been out of touch for fourteen years. After a severe depression and an ensuing divorce, he moved to Paris. He left his three-year-old son Michele with his sister Laura and asked her to raise the boy. Over time, the nephew becomes like a son to her – until Olivier resurfaces years later and asks to see his child, now a young man. This is the starting point for the novel.

They are due to meet in Geneva. But the two adults want to meet and talk first, before Michele joins them three days later. Laura travels from Zurich with her partner Erika, a well-known theatre director. Erika has written a play called 'Sexuality'. Just like characters in a play, Olivier and Laura talk and argue – about their shared lives, their hopes, fears and suffering – while Erika watches them very closely.

TITLE Sessualità
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TRANSLATIONS RIGHTS
 edizioni@casagrande-online.ch

SESSUALITÀ PIERRE LEPORI

Italian original (p. 59-60)

Questo è quel che si dice un hôtel internazionale, di classe. Grigio e bianco dappertutto, sedie design e un televisore a schermo piatto. Due lati interi della stanza sono vetrati e l'impressione è di essere sospesi in un gabbiotto sopra la città, acquario gigante, prigionia silenziosa. Stanotte guardavo, di fuori, il fiume rapido, coi riflessi dei fanali, striati solo di tanto in tanto da un guizzo di fari veloci, glutinosi. Sono notti nere, agghiaccianti di pace surreale. Ho abitato molti hôtel, ma sempre mi lascio affascinare dalla costruzione di questi luoghi di passaggio. Nonostante la cura precisa e sofisticata dei dettagli, come in questo caso, l'impressione di scenografia ti perseguita.

Nel bagno, allo specchio gigante si contrappone un piccolo specchio su un braccio snodabile. Dentro vi trovo la mia faccia deformata, enorme e con gli zigomi rialzati. Non sto a guardare i già molti difetti della pelle, ma sono affascinato da questa lente d'ingrandimento involontaria, dallo sguardo penetrante che una leggera deformazione del viso non può che provocare. Nella luce al neon, resto a guardarmi e mi chiedo se questo è esattamente il viso che ho offerto nell'amore, un viso sformato dalla vicinanza, fino a chiudere gli occhi, i connotati di una maschera di Ensor. Ho sempre chiuso gli occhi facendo l'amore, spaventato dall'indecenza di quei volti troppo visibili. E questo specchio mi restituisce il mio in dimensioni che non vorrei conoscere.

Ho fatto un sogno erotico, stanotte. Non mi capitava da anni e non potrei descriverlo. Ma svegliandomi ero sicuro che fosse avvenuto. È chiaro che questa coreografa mi è piaciuta e mi sento in colpa: sono qui a Ginevra per incontrare mio figlio.

La danza mi affascina, la sua fragilità, l'impossibilità, di decidere a parole il perché, la storia. Il loro spettacolo mi è sembrato del tutto speciale, qualcosa che non avevo mai visto. Il prosieguito al ristorante non era previsto, ma mentre lo spettacolo si svolgeva sublime sotto i miei occhi mi sono sorpreso a sperare che, conoscendo le due artiste, Erika e Laura decidessero di passare insieme a loro la serata. Erika mi è sembrata imbarazzata, dicendomelo, ma il mio sorriso l'ha poi rasserenata, le mie parole commosse sullo spettacolo. Aveva trovato un locale marocchino, con una serie di stanze addobbate all'orientale, ognuna con un diverso colore, che abbiamo attraversato per accomodarci in fondo, intorno a un tavolo con cuscini rossi tutt'intorno.

Bevendo tè le abbiamo aspettate. È arrivato Ralf, molto gentile anche se insistente nel suo approccio, molto bello, con mani estremamente curate che mi sfioravano di tanto in tanto, in un modo indiscreto e naturale. Sentivo che aveva una presenza speciale e nonostante la mia completa indifferenza al fascino maschile, non ho potuto che ammirare il modo intrepido e schivo con cui tentava di sedurmi.

SEXUALITY PIERRE LEPORI

Excerpt translated by Jamie Richards

This is what they call an 'international hotel', high class. Grey and white, designer chairs, flat-screen TV. Two sides of the room are all glass, like a booth overlooking the city – a giant aquarium, a silent prison. Last night I watched the river rushing by, the reflection of headlights in the murky water. The nights are black, with a surreal peacefulness. I've stayed in my fair share of hotels, but I'm always fascinated by these transitory places. Despite the precision and sophistication of the details, the impression of being on a film set is unshakeable.

By the huge mirror in the bathroom, there's a small mirror with an extendable arm. It makes my face appear distorted, enormous. I don't linger on my many flaws, but am entranced by this unexpected magnifying glass; I stare with the penetrating gaze that any facial deformation can't help but provoke. In the fluorescent light, I look at myself and wonder if this is the face I show during lovemaking, a face deformed by proximity, eyes almost slits: the distinctive traits of an Ensor mask. I've always closed my eyes when I make love, frightened by the indecency of such visible faces. And this mirror casts mine in dimensions I'd rather not know.

Last night, I had an erotic dream. I hadn't had one in years and I couldn't describe it. But when I woke up I was sure it had really happened. Evidently the choreographer had sparked my interest but I feel guilty – I'm here in Geneva to see my son.

Dance fascinates me, its fragility, the indeterminacy of its motives, its story. The performance had struck me as utterly special. Going out afterwards wasn't planned, but as the sublime performance unfolded, I found myself hoping that Erika and Laura, who knew the two dancers, would invite them out. Erika seemed embarrassed when she told me, but my smile, my heartfelt enthusiasm about the show, reassured her. She found a Moroccan place, with a series of Oriental-style rooms, which we passed through to settle in at a red table surrounded by red pillows.

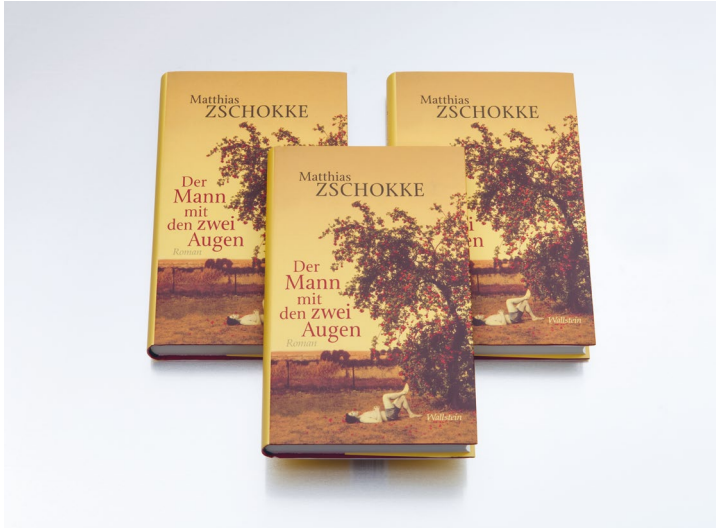
We drank tea while we waited for the ladies. Ralf showed up; he was polite but persistent in his advances, very handsome; his well-groomed hands brushed against me now and then in an indiscreet but natural way. He had a certain presence, and despite my complete indifference to masculine appeal, I couldn't help but admire the intrepid and unassuming way he tried to seduce me.

"It took me years to understand what I had only vaguely grasped after the shooting: that every perfect love and every beautiful family was an illusion, a well-oiled gearbox. A finely polished surface."

THE MAN WITH TWO EYES

DER MANN MIT DEN ZWEI AUGEN

GENRE Novel, LANGUAGE German



"My face should project calm and reliability, so that no one who looks at me will need to ask me anything about myself, inside or out – least of all myself."

MATTHIAS ZSCHOKKE, born in 1954, grew up in Canton Aargau and Bern and has lived in Berlin since 1980, where he works as an author and filmmaker. His debut novel 'Max', which was published in 1982, won the Robert Walser Prize. He has published novels and plays, written and directed feature films, and received several major awards, including the Gerhart Hauptmann Prize, the Solothurn Literature Prize and the Prix Femina Étranger for the novel 'Maurice mit Huhn' (Maurice Holding a Chicken, 2006).



PHOTO © Dirk Opitz

He has two eyes and a nose: that's about all the main character reveals about himself in Matthias Zschokke's novel. He seems unremarkable, but still it's impossible to overlook him. "I will be wearing a coat, sand-coloured, and in my left hand I will probably be holding a small, sandy-coloured suitcase. I am of average height, have average-length sand-coloured hair, and on my right will be a woman, about a head shorter than me, and whom you might as well picture as sandy-coloured too. We can't miss each other."

Although he works as a court reporter, the man with two eyes has a strong aversion to anything unusual. He clearly prefers things to be normal and ordinary – and it is in that very ordinariness that he discovers the unusual, the beautiful, the sad, and the comical. He finds it everywhere: in a café or on the street, whether he is meeting strangers or acquaintances, whether he is on the move or at home with his wife, whom he met and fell in love with years ago at choir practice.

Funny or tragic? What may at first seem banal, on closer inspection reveals hidden depths of meaning. Both Matthias Zschokke's novel and his protagonist inhabit the two extremes. In his writing, Zschokke is a master of the twists and turns, placing events and characters under a bright light in which they lose their familiarity and become extraordinary.

TITLE Der Mann mit den zwei Augen
PUBLISHER Wallstein, Göttingen
PUBLICATION DATE 2012
PAGES 244
ISBN 978-3-8353-1111-4
TRANSLATION RIGHTS Hajo Gevers,
 hgevers@wallstein-verlag.de

DER MANN MIT DEN ZWEI AUGEN MATTHIAS ZSCHOKKE

German original (p. 8-9)

Das Restaurant war leer bis auf einen Gast, der mit dem Gesicht zur Eingangstür an der Fensterfront saß und ihm bekannt vorkam. Der Mann mit den zwei Augen hatte nicht die Größe, sich mit einer knappen Verbeugung von diesem ihm seiner Meinung nach Bekannten fernzuhalten und den Tisch in der Nische rechts neben der Eingangstür zu wählen, um dort in Ruhe über die Gerichtsreportage, an der er gerade arbeitete, und darüber, ob es überhaupt noch einen Sinn habe, solche Gerichtsreportagen zu verfassen, nachdenken und speisen zu können, so wie er sich das vorgenommen hatte. Er errötete, die Wut stieg kurz in ihm empor, die Wut darüber, nicht allein bleiben zu dürfen. Doch er konnte nicht anders: Als ob er magnetisch angezogen würde, ging er quer durch den Raum und fragte: »Ist dieser Platz noch frei?« Der fremde Gast schaute von seinem Teller auf, deutete mit vollem Mund auf die vielen freien Stühle im Restaurant und fragte, warum er sich ausgerechnet zu ihm an den Tisch setzen wolle. »Weil wir einander meines Erachtens kennen«, antwortete der vor ihm stehende Mann mit den zwei Augen. »Wenn man sich kennt, ist es doch beinahe eine Verpflichtung, sich in der Situation, in der wir uns hier befinden, zu begrüßen und zueinander an den Tisch zu setzen, oder etwa nicht?« – »Ich kenne Sie nicht. Aber bitteschön, setzen Sie sich. Sie scheinen das Bedürfnis nach Gesellschaft zu haben?« – »Aber sind Sie nicht der und der? Kennen wir einander nicht von da und da?« »In der Tat, der und der bin ich, und da und da verkehre ich. Doch kann ich mich beim besten Willen nicht an Sie erinnern.« – »Das kann gut sein. Mir wurde schon oft gesagt, ich hätte einen sparsamen Gesichtsausdruck; meine Erscheinung sei nicht besonders einprägsam; man vergesse mich schnell. Aber haben Sie etwa nicht unlängst von einem, an den ich Sie erinnere, wenn Sie mich genau anschauen, behauptet, er sei ein Blender?! Und sind nicht Sie es, den ich umgekehrt für einen ebensolchen halte, einen Heuchler und Schmarotzer?! Deswegen war ich im ersten Moment ja auch versucht, mich nicht an Ihren Tisch zu setzen, aus Angst davor, von Ihnen zur Verstellung verführt und in den Sumpf hinuntergezogen zu werden.« – »In welchen Sumpf denn?« – »In den des höflichen Miteinander-Umgehens, um nicht zu sagen, in den der Schmeichelei und der Lüge. Gerade gestern Mittag habe ich beispielsweise wieder einmal in der Kantine des Chemiewerks, in der ich jeweils meine Kaffeepause mache, weil sie in der Nähe meines Büros liegt, ein paar Elemente beieinandersitzen sehen, über denen eine stinkende Wolke giftiger Gase dräute.«

THE MAN WITH TWO EYES MATTHIAS ZSCHOKKE

Excerpt translated by Imogen Taylor

The restaurant was empty except for one customer he thought he knew, who was sitting at the window front, facing the entrance. The man with two eyes did not have the grandeur to keep aloof from this man he believed he knew with a brief bow, and to pick the table in the alcove to the right of the entrance, so as to be able to do as he had intended and reflect in peace and quiet on the legal report he was working on just then, and on whether there was any point at all any more in writing these legal reports, and to sit and dine. He blushed; anger flared up in him for an instant, anger at not being permitted to remain alone. But he couldn't help himself; as if attracted by magnetic force, he walked across the room and asked, "Is this seat free?" The stranger looked up from his plate; with a full mouth he indicated the many free chairs in the restaurant and asked why he particularly wanted to join him at his table. "Because I believe we know one another," replied the man with two eyes who was standing before him. "When people know one another, it is almost their duty to pass the time of day and share a table when they find themselves in a situation like ours, don't you agree?" – "I don't know you. But please, take a seat. You seem to feel the need for company?" – "But aren't you so and so? Don't we know each other from such and such a place?" – "Indeed, I am so and so, and I do frequent such and such a place. But with the best will in the world, I can't recall you." – "That's quite possible. I've often been told that I have meagre features, that my appearance is not particularly memorable, that I am quickly forgotten. But if you have a good look at me, don't I remind you of someone you recently declared a fraud?! And aren't you the one I in turn consider just such a fraud, a hypocrite and a sponger?! That's why in the first instance I was also tempted not to sit at your table, for fear you might lure me into pretence and drag me down into the morass." – "And which morass might that be?" – "The morass of polite behaviour, not to say lies and flattery. Only yesterday lunchtime for example, in the canteen of the chemical works where I always take my coffee break because it's near my office, I saw a couple of elements sitting together with a stinking cloud of poisonous gases looming over them."

"They all three knew very well that this wasn't even a story. But that is how stories begin. And suddenly you are caught up in them, and the blood flows or the little white dresses are ripped. He earned his living as a court reporter and understood that."

THE SLOWNESS OF DAWN

LA LENTEUR DE L'AUBE

GENRE Novel, LANGUAGE French



"A gripping mix of tenderness and violence, poetry and strangeness, slowness and intensity." LE COURRIER

ANNE BRÉCART was born in 1960 and is currently based in Geneva. She spent her childhood and teenage years in Zurich, growing up in a French-speaking family. She studied German literature and also works as a literary translator from French to German. She is the author of 'Les Années de verre' (Years of Glass, 1997), 'Angle mort' (Blind Spot, 2002), 'Le Monde d'Archibald' (Archibald's World, 2009) as well as 'La Lenteur de l'aube' (The Slowness of Dawn, 2012).



PHOTO © Yvonne Böhler

What kind of world does Hanna inhabit? She returns to the city she grew up in – and it is no easy return. Her mother, who had summoned her back, is still difficult, but Hanna had expected that. What was so urgent that she had to leave the United States and come back right away? Suddenly her terminally ill mother is in no hurry to see her daughter. So Hanna takes a room in a small boarding house where she and her mother had lived thirty years earlier, and begins to explore the neighbourhood. Walking through the 'city by the lake' that clearly refers to Geneva, she meets ghosts from her past. She meets people who were once important to her: friends, lovers, playmates from the old days. People for whom she once risked everything. They have remained here, while she has long been living in New Jersey.

They are all now present: Alma, with whom she once shared so much; Karim, her lover for one unforgettable summer; Marika, the artist for whom she once posed as a model, who no longer recognises her. Why are they all crossing her path? Are these meetings really taking place? It takes a long time for Hanna to realise that she is exploring her own past, thinking about farewells, remembering and forgetting. In the end it is her dying mother, and Hervé, whom she has come to trust, who accompany her on her path to a new life.

TITLE La Lenteur de l'aube
PUBLISHER Editions Zoé, Geneva
PUBLICATION DATE 2012
PAGES 169
ISBN 978-2-88182-859-1
TRANSLATION RIGHTS Caroline Couteau,
info@editionszoe.ch

LA LENTEUR DE L'AUBE ANNE BRÉCART

French original (p. 7-9)

Quelques semaines avant mon départ pour la ville du bord du lac, j'avais reçu une lettre de ma mère – elle communiquait surtout par lettre manuscrite, une vieille habitude prise au temps où le téléphone coûtait cher et où l'ordinateur n'existait pas – qui m'avait étonnée. Effrayée même. C'était d'ailleurs plutôt un appel à l'aide. Elle me parlait de visiteuses vêtues de noir passant devant la fenêtre de sa chambre entre cinq et sept heures du soir, elle mentionnait des courtiers qui venaient lui faire des offres pour lui racheter sa maison, offres qu'elle ressentait comme une menace d'expropriation comme si, une fois encore, le destin voulait la déloger. Le monde autour d'elle était hostile et dans la maison il y avait des insectes malfaisants remontant de la cave et attaquant la cuisine. Les courtiers, les visiteuses étranges et les insectes représentaient tous un seul et même danger dont j'aurais dû, moi sa fille unique, la protéger. J'avais promis de venir la voir, de mettre de l'ordre dans ses papiers, de chasser les courtiers, d'acheter du Baygon et de discuter avec les visiteuses.

Mais une fois mon billet réservé pour le début des vacances d'été, je l'avais appelée et j'avais appris qu'elle ne pouvait pas me « recevoir » – c'était bien le terme qu'elle avait utilisé – avant le 8 juillet, alors que je m'étais libérée tout exprès pour venir la voir le plus tôt possible. Je la connaissais assez pour savoir qu'elle serait inflexible, car elle était tout simplement « débordée, ma chérie », ce qui voulait dire que toutes sortes d'activités étranges requéraient son temps. Elle avait un rendez-vous chez son ostéopathe, un autre avec un conseiller spirituel dont elle voulait me parler mais j'imaginais déjà qu'elle ne m'en dirait rien ou seulement de manière allusive. Elle était très occupée et presque agacée par ma venue. C'était comme lorsque j'étais enfant, d'innombrables occupations mystérieuses l'empêchaient de me consacrer du temps et elle le regrettait. Elle ne « saurait pas que faire de moi » et préférait que je vienne après ses « obligations ». Je ne cherchais pas à comprendre, c'était ainsi que nous « fonctionnions » – encore un de ces mots qu'elle utilisait pour parler d'elle et de moi, un mot explicitement distancé et dépassionné.

Qu'elle m'ait appelée à l'aide n'était pas en contradiction avec le fait que, maintenant que je m'étais libérée pour venir, je devenais une charge. Il semblait que nous devions toujours « fonctionner » ainsi, elle avoir le dessus et moi être celle dont il fallait, d'une manière ou d'une autre, s'occuper. J'ai pourtant décidé de ne pas changer mes plans, sans lui en parler pour ne pas la contrarier. Pourquoi finalement ne pas passer quelques jours dans cette ville, aller me baigner, dormir longuement, bref me reposer ?

THE SLOWNESS OF DAWN ANNE BRÉCART

Excerpt translated by Tess Lewis

A few weeks before I left for the city on the lake, I had received a letter from my mother – she most often communicated through hand-written letters, an old habit dating from a time before computers and when telephone calls were expensive. It had surprised me. Frightened me, even. Besides, it was obviously a cry for help. She wrote of women dressed in black who passed by her window in the evenings between the hours of five and seven. She mentioned estate agents who came and made offers to buy her house, offers she experienced as threats to dispossess her as if, yet again, fate wanted to evict her. The world around her was hostile and in the house harmful insects were coming up from the cellar and attacking the kitchen. The estate agents, the strange visitors in black, and the insects all represented the same danger from which I, her only daughter, should have protected her. I had promised to come see her, put her papers in order, chase away the estate agents, buy insecticide, and talk to the visitors.

But after I reserved my ticket for the beginning of the summer holiday, I had called her and learned that she could not possibly "receive" me – that was the word she used – before the 8th of July, even though I had cleared my calendar especially so that I could come and see her as soon as possible. I understood her well enough to know that she would be inflexible, since she was simply "overwhelmed, my dear," which meant that all sorts of strange commitments would take up her time. She had an appointment with her osteopath, another with her spiritual advisor about whom she wanted to talk to me, though I knew she would say nothing or make only the vaguest allusions. She was very busy and almost irritated by my arrival. It was the same as when I was a child. Countless mysterious activities prevented her from devoting time to me and she regretted it. She "simply did not know what to do" with me and preferred that I come after she had met her "obligations." I did not try to understand. That is how we "functioned" – again one of those words she used to talk about the two of us, an overtly distanced and dispassionate word.

That she had called me for help did not contradict the fact that, now that I had freed myself to visit her, I had become a burden. It seemed we would always "function" this way, with her having the upper hand and me being the one who, one way or another, needed looking after.

Still, I decided not to change my plans, but did not tell her, so as not to aggravate her. After all, why not spend a few days in this city, going swimming and sleeping late, in short, why not take a rest?

"A book about absence. About all those things that never happened and were never discussed."

THE SWALLOW'S COLOURS

LES COULEURS DE L'HIRONDELLE

GENRE Novel, LANGUAGE French



"The modesty of his writing and his humility in face of the world are stunning. The story he tells is both serious and triumphant."

LES CHRONIQUES DE LA RENTRÉE LITTÉRAIRE

MARIUS DANIEL POPESCU was born in 1963 in Romania and has lived in Lausanne since 1990. He works as a bus driver for the city's transit authority as well as a writer of prose and poetry. Since 2004 Popescu has been editor of a literary review, 'Le Persil'. His first novel 'La Symphonie du loup' (The Symphony of the Wolf, 2007) received the Robert Walser Prize.



PHOTO © Aurélie Schopfer

The path leads from the morgue to the church, and it is long. The narrator of 'Les Couleurs de l'hirondelle' has returned to faraway Romania because his mother has died. Now she is to be buried, but first there are a number of bureaucratic hurdles. The route to the church, where the funeral is to take place, is transformed into a complex, winding path through the narrator's life so far. We hear not only about his newly-deceased mother and his childhood in this (unnamed) country, but also about his daughter. She is eleven years old, born in Lausanne, in the narrator's new homeland, and so the place she calls home is completely different from the one he grew up in. She is entering the unknown world of puberty and beginning to cast a critical eye on her father.

Popescu's novel displays a great polyphony of language and form. In his hands, the relatively short route through the town becomes a broad and diverse narrative journey through time. He describes a world of great colour and variety but also of broken fragments. The early years in Romania under Ceaușescu's dictatorship; a country whose messianic drive into the future actually forced it backwards; and the present as the author writes this book: all this is conjured up here, not in chronological order but in a brilliant rush of storytelling.

TITLE Les Couleurs de l'hirondelle
PUBLISHER Éditions José Corti, Paris
PUBLICATION DATE 2012
PAGES 197
ISBN 978-2-7143-1072-9
TRANSLATION RIGHTS Bertrand Fillaudeau,
bertrand.fillaudeau@orange.fr

LES COULEURS DE L'HIRONDELLE MARIUS DANIEL POPESCU

French original (p. 9-10)

Tu es devant la morgue de l'hôpital de la ville, il y a avec toi ta cousine et ton oncle, vous êtes debout et vous parlez de la morte que vous êtes venus chercher. «Ce jour-là elle n'était pas sortie comme d'habitude, les voisins ne l'avaient pas vue passer lentement dans l'allée en s'aidant de sa canne», tu regardes la camionnette avec laquelle vous avez fait le voyage depuis la campagne, tu regardes son plancher rouillé, vous êtes les trois à côté de cette voiture que ton oncle a empruntée auprès de l'un de ses amis. «Elle était malade mais elle allait bien avec ses médicaments, parfois elle refusait pendant des semaines de prendre ses pastilles, elle disait que c'étaient le bon Dieu et sa petite-fille qui la gardaient encore sur cette terre.» Vous faites la queue pour prendre votre morte, vous êtes en troisième position devant l'entrée principale de la morgue, tu regardes, une par une, les marches des escaliers en béton que tu dois bientôt monter pour aller chercher la dépouille de ta mère. «Au moins elle n'a pas souffert, elle est morte d'un coup, elle n'a pas eu à traîner des semaines ou des mois comme un légume.» Ta cousine commence à pleurer et tu la prends dans tes bras, tu la serres contre ta poitrine, tu entends ses pleurs, tu sens les spasmes de son corps et, par-dessus sa tête, tu vois le gardien de l'hôpital qui ouvre la grande porte rouillée pour laisser sortir une voiture des pompes funèbres de la ville: il porte des gants de travail usés et tachés d'huile de moteur, il enlève d'abord le loquet métallique, il tire, en reculant, le battant gauche vers l'intérieur de l'enceinte, il le soulève au-dessus des bosses de l'asphalte, il le pousse jusqu'au mur de sa guérite faite de briques. «C'est sa voisine d'en bas qui nous a appelés, elle avait attendu deux jours pour le faire, au début elle croyait que ta mère était en visite chez nous.» Ta cousine pleure et tu la serres dans tes bras, elle dit que ta mère était sa tante préférée, tu as le dos contre le battant latéral droit de la camionnette, tu vois le gardien de l'hôpital, tu le regardes, tu vois ses gestes, il ouvre la deuxième partie de la porte rouillée, tu vois quatre chiens sortir sur le trottoir. «C'est bien que tu sois venu enterrer ta mère, il y a des gens qui travaillent à l'étranger et qui ne viennent pas pour enterrer leurs parents.» Le gardien accueille auprès de sa guérite ces quatre chiens abandonnés, tu penses à ta mère, tu prononces dans ta tête le mot «abandon», tu penses aux enfants abandonnés par leurs parents, tu penses aux parents abandonnés par leurs enfants, tu penses aux milliers de chiens abandonnés chaque année dans ton pays, tu penses à ces chiens qui trouvent refuge là où ils peuvent, tu sens que ta cousine se calme, elle se retire de tes bras.

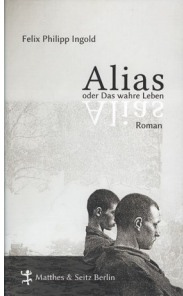
THE SWALLOW'S COLOURS MARIUS DANIEL POPESCU

Excerpt translated by W. Donald Wilson

You are in front of the morgue of the town hospital, your cousin and your uncle are with you, you are standing and talking about the woman whose body you have come to take away. "That day she didn't go out like she usually did, none of the neighbours saw her going slowly down the driveway, leaning on her stick," you are looking at the pick-up truck in which you drove in from the country, you look at its rusty floor, the three of you are next to this vehicle that your uncle borrowed from one of his friends. "She was sick but she felt fine on her medications, sometimes she'd refuse to take her pills for weeks, she said it was the good Lord and her granddaughter kept her in this world." You are queuing up to collect your dead, you are third in line at the main entrance to the morgue, you look, one by one, at the concrete steps you will soon have to climb to fetch your mother's remains. "At least she didn't suffer, she died right away, she didn't have to drag on for weeks or months like a vegetable." Your cousin starts to cry and you put your arms round her, you hold her against your chest, you hear her sobbing, you feel the tremors run through her body, over her head you watch the hospital gatekeeper open the big rusty double door to let a hearse from the town funeral services drive out: he is wearing worn work-gloves stained with engine-oil, first he lifts the metal latch, then, walking backwards, he drags its left side into the yard, he lifts it over the bumps in the asphalt, he pushes it right up to the side wall of his little gatehouse built of brick. "It was her downstairs neighbour called, she'd waited two days before she did, at first she thought your mother must be visiting at our place." Your cousin is in tears and you give her a hug, she says your mother was her favourite aunt, you have your back against the right side of the pick-up, you can see the hospital gatekeeper, you look at him, you can see his movements, he opens the other half of the rusty door, you see four dogs come out onto the pavement. "It's good that you came to bury your mother, there's people work abroad that don't come to bury their parents." The gatekeeper settles the four abandoned dogs alongside his little gatehouse, you think of your mother, you pronounce the word 'abandoned' in your mind, you think of children abandoned by their parents, you think of parents abandoned by their children, you think of the thousands of dogs abandoned in your homeland every year, you think of these dogs who find shelter wherever they can, you can feel that your cousin is calming down, she extricates herself from your arms.

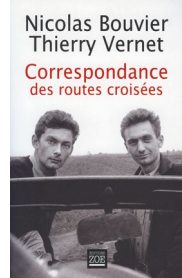
"Marius Daniel Popescu masterfully grips the reader from the very first line." CULTURACTIF

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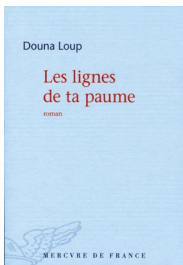
ALIAS ODER DAS WAHRE LEBEN
(ALIAS OR REAL LIFE)
FELIX PHILIPP INGOLD

GENRE Novel
PAGES 290
PUBLISHER Matthes & Seitz,
Berlin 2011
ISBN 978-3-88221-553-3
TRANSLATION RIGHTS Richard Stoiber,
rights@matthes-seitz-berlin.de



CORRESPONDANCE DES ROUTES
CROISÉES 1945-1964
(CORRESPONDENCE OF CROSSED
PATHS 1945-1964)
NICOLAS BOUVIER, THIERRY VERNET

GENRE Correspondence
PAGES 1650
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TRANSLATION RIGHTS Caroline
Couteau, info@editionszoe.ch



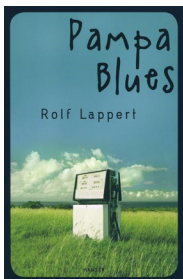
LES LIGNES DE TA PAUME
(LINES OF THE HAND)
DOUNA LOUP

GENRE Novel
PAGES 163
PUBLISHER Mercure de France, 2012
ISBN 978-2-7152-313-1
TRANSLATION RIGHTS Geneviève
Meyer, genevieve.meyer@mercure.fr



AUS DEN FUGEN
(FUGUE STATE)
ALAIN CLAUDE SULZER

GENRE Novel
PAGES 230
PUBLISHER Galiani Berlin 2012
ISBN 978-3-86971-059-4
TRANSLATION RIGHTS Iris Brandt,
ibrandt@kiwi-verlag.de



PAMPA BLUES
(PAMPA BLUES)
ROLF LAPPERT

GENRE Young Adult
PAGES 253
PUBLISHER Hanser, Munich 2012
ISBN 978-3-446-23895-4
TRANSLATION RIGHTS Anne Brans,
anne.brans@hanser.de



IL GIOCO DEL MONDO
(PLAY OF THE WORLD)
SERGEJ ROIC

GENRE Novel
PAGES 142
PUBLISHER Edizione Opera Nuova,
Lugano 2012
ISBN 978-88-96992-43-2
TRANSLATION RIGHTS
Raffaella Castagnola,
castagnola@operanuova.com

Es ist (schreit
Kraittmayer im
Wettach-
Zimmer) viel
geschrieben
worden über den
Sprung,
nachdem sich
Adolph Polak
anno 1872, ein

DER TRICK MIT DEM SPRUNG
AUS DEM STUHL
(THE JUMPING OUT OF YOUR
CHAIR TRICK)
BRUNO STEIGER

GENRE Short Stories
PAGES 197
PUBLISHER Urs Engeler roughbooks,
www.roughbooks.ch, 2012
TRANSLATION RIGHTS Urs Engeler,
urs@engeler.de



LAND SPIELEN
(BACK TO THE LAND)
DANIEL MEZGER

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ISBN 978-3-905801-71-2
TRANSLATION RIGHTS André
Gstettenhofer, ag@salisverlag.com

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How to proceed Applications must be submitted by the licenced publisher. Signed copies of the license agreement and the translation contract must be included in the application. Translation fees will be paid out directly to the translator by Pro Helvetia upon publication. Translation fees are based on the translation contract and calculated according to the current rates in the country in question.

Deadline We accept applications at any time, but they must be submitted at least two months before printing.

Application portal www.myprohelvetia.ch

We hope to receive applications from around the world. Please contact us if you have any further questions. We look forward to receiving your application.



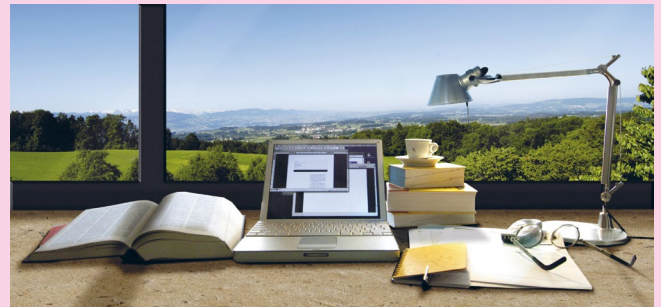
PHOTO © Cortis & Sonderegger, 2011

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TRANSLATION HOUSE LOOREN

Since 2005, the Translation House Looren in the Swiss canton of Zurich, has been offering professional literary translators from all over the world a place to work and study. All language combinations are welcome. As the first institution of its kind in a country that, with its four national languages, has always been a land of translation, Translation House Looren sees itself primarily as a location for concentrated work. In addition, a programme of events aims to increase the visibility of literary translation and support its practitioners. Through readings, workshops, and conferences, we offer translators a forum for continuing professional development and to enhance the public's awareness of their activities.



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www.looren.net

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.a-d-s.ch Autorinnen und Autoren der Schweiz (AdS)
www.swissbooks.ch Schweizer Buchhändler- und Verleger-Verband (SBVV)
www.sbv.ch/schweizer-verlage Schweizer Buchhändler- und Verleger-Verband (SBVV) → Verlage
www.asdel.ch Association Suisse des Diffuseurs, Editeurs et Libraires (ASDEL)
www.editori-sesi.ch Società Editori Svizzera Italiana (SESI)
www.unil.ch/ctl Centre de Traduction Littéraire de l'Université de Lausanne (CTL)
www.culturactif.ch
www.new-books-in-german.com
www.literatur.ch
www.werliestwo.ch

SWISS LITERATURE AGENDA 12/13

October 2012

Oct. 10.-14.

SWISS BOOKS AT FRANKFURT BOOK FAIR

SBVV Stand-Nr.: Halle 4.1, A 106
www.swissbooks.ch
www.asdel.ch
www.buchmesse.de

Oct. 12.-Nov. 10.

Lectures of the five nominees of the Schweizer Buchpreis (SBVV) Frankfurt Book Fair, Zürich, Bern, Hamburg, Wien, Düsseldorf, Berlin, Basel

Oct. 19.-21.

NEUSEELÄNDISCHE LITERATURTAGE ZOFINGEN

www.literaturtagezofingen.ch

Oct. 25.-28.

ZÜRICH LIEST

www.zuerich-liest.ch

Oct. 26.-28.

SWISS BOOKS AT PISA BOOK FAIR

www.editori-sesi.ch
www.pisabookfestival.it

Oct. 27.-Nov. 5.

SWISS BOOKS AT ALGER BOOK FAIR

www.asdel.ch
www.sila-14-livre.e-monsite.com

Oct. 29.-Nov. 6.

SWISS BOOKS AT BEIRUT BOOK FAIR

www.asdel.ch
www.salondulivrebeiruth.org

November 2012

Nov. 1.-4.

BUCHMESSE OLTEN

www.buchmesse-olten.ch

Nov. 2.-4.

DIS DA LITTERATURA A DOMAT

www.litteraturarumantscha.ch

Nov. 9.-10.

INTERNATIONALES POESIE-FESTIVAL AL-MUTANABBI, ZÜRICH

Nov. 9.-11.

INTERNATIONALES BUCH-UND LITERATURFESTIVAL BUCHBASEL

Presentation of the Swiss Book Prize (SBVV)
www.buchbasel.ch

Nov. 14.-19.

SWISS BOOKS AT MONTREAL BOOK FAIR

www.asdel.ch
www.salondulivremontreal.com

Nov. 15.-18.

SWISS BOOKS AT VIENNA BOOK FAIR

www.swissbooks.ch
www.buchwien.at

Nov. 28.-Dez. 2.

SWISS FOCUS AT NON/FICTION BOOK FAIR MOSCOW

www.asdel.ch
www.swissbooks.ch
www.moscowbookfair.ru/eng

December 2012

Dec. 6.-9.

SWISS BOOKS AT ROME BOOK FAIR

www.editori-sesi.ch
www.piulibripiuliberi.it

January 2013

Jan. 25.-27.

LYRIKFESTIVAL BASEL

February 2013

Feb. 28.-Mar. 4.

SWISS BOOKS AT BRUSSELS BOOK FAIR

www.asdel.ch
www.flb.be

March 2013

Mar. 8.-10.

LUZERN BUCHT

www.literaturfest.ch

Mar. 14.-17.

SWISS BOOKS AT LEIPZIG BOOK FAIR

www.swissbooks.ch
www.leipziger-buchmesse.de

Mar. 22.-25.

SWISS BOOKS AT PARIS BOOK FAIR

www.asdel.ch
www.salondulivreparis.com

Mar. 25.-28.

SWISS BOOKS AT BOLOGNA BOOK FAIR

www.swissbooks.ch
www.asdel.ch
www.bolognachildrensbookfair.com

April 2013

Apr. 15.-17.

SWISS BOOKS AT LONDON BOOK FAIR

www.swissbooks.ch
www.londonbookfair.co.uk

Apr. 17.-21.

CRIMINALE 2013 IN SWITZERLAND (BERN, THUN, SOLOTHURN, BURGDORF)

www.die-criminale.ch

Apr. 24.-29.

SWISS BOOKS AT ABU DHABI BOOK FAIR

www.swissbooks.ch
www.adbookfair.com

May 2013

CHIASSOLETTERARIA

www.chiassoletteraria.ch

May 1.-5.

SALON INTERNATIONAL DU LIVRE ET DE LA PRESSE DE GENÈVE

www.salondulivre.ch

May 4.-12.

WALSER WELTWEIT TRANSLATORS MEETING BERN, SOLOTHURN

May 10.-12.

SOLOTHURNER LITERATURTAGE Presentation of the Swiss Federal Literary Awards

www.literatur.ch

May 16.-20.

SWISS BOOKS AT TORINO BOOK FAIR

www.editori-sesi.ch
www.salonelibro.it

July 2013

July 5.-7.

INTERNATIONALES LITERATURFESTIVAL LEUKERBAD

www.literaturfestival.ch

August 2013

ABSOLUT ZENTRAL, BERN

SEETALER POESIESOMMER

September 2013

BABEL FESTIVAL DI

LETTERATURA E TRADUZIONE, BELLINZONA
www.babelfestival.com

LE LIVRE SUR LES

QUAIS, SALON DES AUTEURS DE MORGES
www.lelivresurlesquais.ch

SWISS FOCUS AT VILENICA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY FESTIVAL

www.vilenica.si

FRAUENFELDER LYRIKTAGE

Sept. 6.-8.

KIBUK, KINDER- UND JUGENDMEDIEFESTIVAL KÖNIZ

www.kibuk.ch

October 2013

SWISS BOOKS AT

FRANKFURT BOOK FAIR
www.swissbooks.ch
www.asdel.ch
www.buchmesse.de

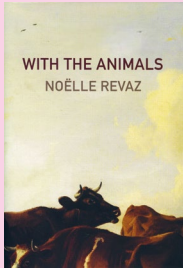
November 2013

NON/FICTION BOOK FAIR MOSCOW. GUEST OF

HONOUR SWITZERLAND
www.asdel.ch
www.swissbooks.ch
www.moscowbookfair.ru/eng

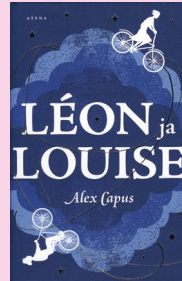
RECENTLY TRANSLATED SWISS BOOKS

with support from the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia



RAPPORT AUX BÊTES
(WITH THE ANIMALS)
NOËLLE REVAZ

Translated into English by W. Donald Wilson for Dalkey Archive Press



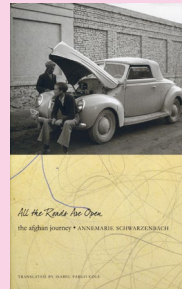
LÉON UND LOUISE
(LEON AND LOUISE)
ALEX CAPUS

Translated into Finnish by Heli Naski for Atena



PENSÉES SOUS LES NUAGES
(THOUGHTS UNDER THE CLOUDS)
PHILIPPE JACCOTTET

Translated into Georgian by David Akriani for Nectar Publishing



ALLE WEGE SIND OFFEN
(ALL THE ROADS ARE OPEN)
ANNEMARIE SCHWARZENBACH

Translated into English by Isabel Fargo Cole for Seagull Books



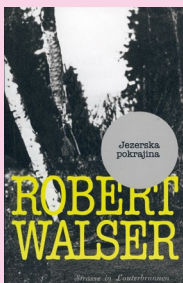
ALBERO GENEALOGICO
(FAMILY TREE)
PIERO BIANCONI

Translated into Hungarian by Margit Lukácsi for Bookart



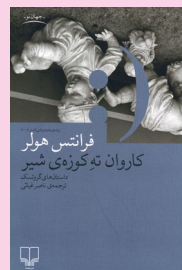
HERZ AUS SAND
(HEART OF SAND)
DANIEL GOETSCH

Translated into Chinese by Chen Wei for Shanghai Translation Publishing House



SEELAND
(LAKE COUNTRY)
ROBERT WALSER

Translated into Slovenian by Slavo Serc for LUD Šerpa



**DIE KARAWANE AM BODEN
DES MILCHKRUGS**
(CARAVAN AT THE BOTTOM OF
THE MILK JUG)
FRANZ HOHLER

Translated into Farsi by Ghiasi Naser for Cheshmeh